

# Norm Ames Named New Director Of USU's Special Education Center | CPD Blog

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The Center for Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education has a new director, but his face is familiar.

Norm Ames assumed leadership of TAESE this year. He has been part of the center since 2012, after working as a school psychologist, school administrator and director for special education in Washington state. He is a USU alumnus, a veteran of the Gulf War, and the father of four boys. One of his sons is autistic, and that has informed his work in special education.

The TAESE center, located within the Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State University, provides professional development and expertise to state education agencies and administrators in 27 states.

"We feel like they see us as a genuine, trusted partner," Ames said.

In his new role, he will lead TAESE's 34 staff members as they work to improve special education services for children with disabilities. Much of that work involves helping state administrators understand and meet the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which ensures a free and appropriate education for children with disabilities in the United States.

His plan is to continue building that trust. "Relationships are extremely important, both personal and professional," he said.

In addition, Ames said he and the TAESE staff will continue to stay on the cutting edge. TAESE staff members meet regularly, identify what the hot topics are, and analyze data and identify the next steps as they provide professional development to their clients. They meet with state directors to learn what their needs are, then read, research and work to fill those gaps.

"We see ourselves as an extension of that state education agency, helping them to build capacity," Ames said.

He replaces John Copenhaver as TAESE director. Copenhaver will continue to provide technical assistance to TAESE clients and to direct the Technical Assistance Division of the Center for Persons with Disabilities.