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IN THIS BRIEF...

You will learn the essential structures needed for successful collaboration and state level supports in developing partnerships between local school districts and preparation programs.

Highlighting PIC Work...

The PIC is working with states to establish local program and higher education partnerships to increase opportunities for urban and rural candidates to access special education-related coursework in their local communities. PIC services include facilitation of planning meetings with SEA staff, local program and higher education partners. For more information on PIC's work in this area, go to <http://www.personnelcenter.org/personnelprep.cfm>.

About Us...

We are the National Center to Improve Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Personnel for Children with Disabilities (Personnel Improvement Center), a federally funded technical assistance and dissemination project, created on October 1, 2008 and maintained through cooperative agreement, H325C080001 between the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) and the U.S. Department of Education.



SPECIAL EDUCATION-RELATED PERSONNEL PREPARATION PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS: COLLABORATING FOR SUCCESS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

by Eve Müller, Ph.D.

Personnel preparation program partnerships between local programs (including both local school districts and birth to three Part C programs) and institutions of higher education (IHEs) have emerged over the past two decades as an effective means of tailoring programs to meet the personnel needs of individual locales. These programs often reach out to nontraditional teacher candidates and prepare personnel to serve in critical shortage areas such as special education, early intervention and related services. Preparation program partnerships are goal focused, emphasize shared leadership among IHE faculty and local program staff and include intensive field-based components. Partnerships emphasize serving the specific personnel needs of local programs, including increasing numbers of personnel from diverse groups.

Roles, responsibilities and involvement of preparation program partners vary across partnerships. Some are partnerships in name only—with most of the burden being shouldered by either the local program or the IHE. Other partnerships may divide responsibilities more equitably, but still not represent a true collaboration in which partners work side by side and share responsibilities. The most successful partnerships involve collaboration at every stage of the process, from program development through implementation. Partners

have shared input into every aspect of the program content, from recruitment into the preparation program to hiring and supporting of the novice employee. In this brief we identify the collaborative structures of preparation program partnerships considered to be best practices in the field. Examples are drawn from the literature on partnerships that prepare and employ special education-related personnel (see references at the end of the document) and from work conducted by the Personnel Improvement Center (PIC) in the states of Utah and Mississippi. A companion document, *Special Education-Related Personnel Preparation Partnerships: Program Features to Promote Recruitment and Retention*, is also available from the PIC.

ESSENTIAL COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURES

Collaborative structures refer to program features put in place to strengthen cooperation and communication among partners. These structures are critical to institutionalizing relationships between partners and ensuring the ongoing life of programs regardless of staff turnover. Preparation program partners committed to the collaborative nature of their work have established the following types of program infrastructure:



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Shared Planning and Development. A truly collaborative partnership includes both local program staff and IHE faculty in the initial phases of planning and goal setting. For example:

- Facilitated by the PIC and Utah's state education agency (SEA), the Granite School District (SD) Partnership and Weber School District (SD) Partnership collaborated with faculty from Utah State University, the University of Utah and Weber State University to plan their partnership's goals and directions. They met quarterly to identify leadership teams, conducted surveys of school district paraprofessionals, identified improved IHE program accessibility needs, and they also developed and implemented strategic plans with specific timelines that will enable an identified cohort of paraprofessionals to enter the IHE partner programs.
- The California State University (CSU) Dominguez Hills program involved shared planning with the local district coordinator, IHE coordinator and an advisory committee.

Infrastructure to Ensure Cooperation

Communication. An important feature of effective local program/IHE partnerships is the availability of formal opportunities for communication and cooperation among the partners. Building trust among partners requires time, face-to-face opportunities for discussion and consistent participation of key members. Some partnerships require monthly meetings between the IHE and the local program coordinator, bi-annual advisory board meetings and/or program steering committee meetings. Others develop multi-layered governance structures designed to promote open communication among partners. For example:

- The governance structure of the Professional Development School (PDS) Without Walls in North Carolina includes:
 - ⇒ a steering committee that meets annually to provide oversight. Members include top-level administrators from the local districts and IHEs;
 - ⇒ management teams responsible for day-to-day operations and comprised of local district administrators in special and elementary education, school based administrators, support staff and project directors and coordinators; and



⇒ an inclusion curriculum committee that consists of IHE faculty from all relevant departments as well as local district and student representatives.

- As part of the Granite SD Partnership, a Paraprofessional Learning Community, which includes program participants as well as district and IHE representatives, meets regularly to ensure that the partnership is meeting the needs of the district's paraprofessionals as they move through the pipeline to become fully certified special education teachers.

LEA Partnership Liaisons. Programs frequently create liaison roles for local district personnel to ensure a more seamless connection between on- and off-campus components of partnership programs. For example, as part of the PDS without Walls, partner schools identify site-based coordinators to serve as the primary liaisons between the IHE and the school. Site coordinators (usually teachers or administrators) hold clinical appointments at the IHE and are responsible for overseeing internships of students placed at schools, including assigning mentors, assisting teachers as they work with candidates, monitoring candidates' progress, leading school-based seminars with candidates and communicating with the IHE about the candidates' progress.

Shared Recruitment. The recruitment process works more smoothly when IHEs are involved since potential program participant questions/concerns can better be addressed. For example:

- Local district and IHE representatives from the Granite SD Partnership co-hosted two recruitment events for paraprofessionals to address potential participants' questions concerning the higher education application and admissions process. Each participating IHE created a webpage listing financial opportunities for paraprofessionals as well as steps to becoming a special educator in Utah based on various entry points into the system.
- In a partnership at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Greensboro, IHE faculty and staff have assumed responsibility for two recruitment sessions per year at local districts and community colleges as well as the construction of a project website to help with recruitment and dissemination of information.

Shared Admissions and Local Program Placement Decisions. Many local program/IHE partnerships share responsibilities for IHE





admissions and local placement of program participants. The division of responsibilities differs from partnership to partnership. For example, as part of the Recruiting and Preparing of Special Education Teachers with Survival Skills (RAPSETTS) program in Florida, there is a strict division of labor: the IHE makes decisions relative to eligibility of candidates for program admission and the local district handles classroom assignments and/or employment decisions.

Shared Supervision and Mentoring of Candidates. Local programs and IHE partners can also share responsibilities for the supervision and mentoring of candidates. For example, as part of the University of South Florida Mild/Moderate Education Specialist Credential Internship Program, intensive field supervision is provided by IHE supervisors, expert field-based doctoral students who serve as co-instructors and advisors and local district support providers. Although local programs are frequently responsible for mentoring of candidates, IHEs often take responsibility for the supervision and/or training of mentors.

Financial Support. Local program and IHE partnerships are funded in various ways, most often via the pooling of resources such as federal grants, state grants, local program and IHE contributions and/or private grants. Local program contributions most commonly include tuition stipends and/or release time and in-kind donations. For example:

- The Hawaii Department of Education has offered tuition stipends for students participating in the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) Dual Preparation Partnership Program for Elementary and Secondary Education who are seeking dual preparation in special education and elementary education.
- As part of the Regional Partnership Alternative Special Education Preparation Program (RPASEPP) for Out of Field Educators Program, the five participating Florida school districts agreed to identify and support new teacher participants with tuition stipends.
- As part of San Diego, California's Internship Credential Program, local districts have committed to provide up to three release days per semester for intensive coursework and training for master teachers so that they can serve as coaches for the interns.

IHE funding in support of LEA/IHE partnerships is frequently used to cover the cost of support personnel. For example, as part of the PDS without Walls, the IHE pays mentors from local districts with funds that were once used to pay adjunct faculty for supervision of IHE candidates.



STATE-LEVEL SUPPORT FOR PERSONNEL PREPARATION PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS

As linking agents, state education agencies (SEAs) are able to span boundaries and help leverage state and local resources to develop and sustain successful preparation program partnerships. Most importantly, SEAs can build the relationships necessary to deliver partnership programs that are beneficial to all partners. Examples of SEAs' support of these partnership efforts include Utah and Mississippi, both of which have participated in the PIC's state services over the past two years:

- Utah's SEA has committed personnel and resources in order to coordinate partnership meetings among district and IHE partners, facilitate the development of action plans and provide tuition support using State Professional Development Grants (SPDG) to paraprofessionals participating in the Granite or Weber SD partnerships.
- Mississippi's SEA has established a state level leadership team that helps to provide the needed infrastructure to support the development of local preparation program partnerships. The leadership team teleconferences on a regular basis to facilitate the partnership plans developed by district and IHE representatives.

In larger states, regional-level efforts may also play a critical role in the development of successful partnership efforts. For example:

- The Northeastern California Partnership promotes personnel preparation partnerships with representation from every LEA on its advisory board and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed by every participating LEA that spells out the LEA's roles and responsibilities in support special education teacher candidates in California's Alternative Certification or Internship Program.

For more information on personnel preparation program partnerships, see:

Rosenberg, M.S., Brownell, M., McCray, E.D., deBettencourt, L.U., Leko, M., & Long, S. (2009). *Development and sustainability of school-university partnerships in special education teacher preparation: A critical review of the literature*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, National Center to Inform Policy and Practice in Special Education Professional Development (NCIPP) (http://education.ufl.edu/grants/ncipp/files/6/NCIPP_Partner_010310.pdf).



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This practice brief is part of a series intended to provide examples of how states and localities throughout the nation are employing recruitment and retention strategies to address personnel shortages in the area of special education, early intervention and related services. The series is produced by the Personnel Improvement Center (PIC) and highlights recruitment and retention efforts in states and localities supported by the PIC. There are no copyright restrictions on these practice briefs, but the PIC requests that proper citation be used.



References for Personnel Preparation Partnership Programs Collaborating for Success at the Local Level

Programs	Related References
California State University (CSU) at Dominguez Hill	Esposito M.C. & Lal, S. (2005). Responding to special education teacher shortages in diverse urban settings: An accelerated alternative credential program. <i>Teacher Education and Special Education</i> , 28(2), 100-103.
Northeastern California Partnership for Special Education, California State University, Chico	U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement. (2004). <i>Innovations in education: Alternative routes to teacher certification</i> . Washington, D.C.: Author.
Professional Development School (PDS) without Walls	Epanchin, B. C. & Colucci, K. (2002). The professional development school without walls. <i>Remedial and Special Education</i> , 23(6), 349-358.
Recruiting and Preparing of Special Education Teachers with Survival Skills (RAPSETTS) Program	deBettencourt, L.U. & Howard, L. (2004). Alternatively licensing career changers to be teachers in the field of special education: Their first-year reflections. <i>EXCEPTIONALITY</i> , 12(4), 225-238.
Regional Partnership Alternative Special Education Preparation Program for Out of Field Educators	Keller, C. L., Brady, M. P., Duffy, M. L., Forgan, J., & Leach, D. (2008). If you build it and they still don't come: Effective versus successful alternative teacher preparation. <i>The Educational Forum</i> , 72, 228-244.
San Diego's Internship Credential Program	Cegelka, P., & Alvarado, J. (2000). A best practices model for preparation of rural special education teachers. <i>Rural Special Education Quarterly</i> , 19, 15-29.
University of Hawaii at Manoa Dual Preparation Partnership Program for Elementary and Secondary Education	Jenkins, A. A., Pateman, B., & Black, R. S. (2002). Partnerships for dual preparation in elementary, secondary, and special education programs. <i>Remedial and Special Education</i> , 23(6), 359-371.
University of North Carolina (UNC) at Greensboro	Kurtts, S.A., Cooper, J.E., Boyles, C. (2007). Project RESTART: Preparing nontraditional adult teacher education candidates to become special education teachers. <i>Teacher Education and Special Education</i> , 30(4), 233-6, 238-248.
University of San Francisco (USF) Mild/Moderate Education Specialist Credential Internship Program	Andrews, L., Miller, N., Evans, S., & Smith, S. D. (2003). An internship model to recruit, train, and retain special educators for culturally diverse urban classrooms: A program description. <i>Teacher Education and Special Education</i> , 26(1) 74-78.