



SUMMER 2011

IN THIS BRIEF...

You will learn about program features that lead to successful recruitment and retention of personnel through preparation program partnerships.



Highlighting PIC Work...

The PIC has worked with Utah's state education agency to increase the accessibility of preparation programs for paraprofessionals planning to become special education teachers. This collaboration has included surveying those interested in learning more about the higher education system and improving access to information.

The PIC has also worked with Mississippi to improve prep program accessibility. For more information on PIC services relating to the development of personnel preparation partnership programs, 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 PERSONNEL PREPARATION PARTNERSHIPS: PROGRAM FEATURES TO PROMOTE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

by Eve Müller, Ph.D.

Personnel preparation partnership (PPP) programs between districts or local Part C programs and institutions of higher education (IHEs) can offer an effective means of promoting recruitment and retention of special education personnel. Successful partnership programs are characterized by collaboration among partners, tailoring of programs to meet the unique personnel needs of specific localities, offering of alternatives to traditional methods of course delivery in personnel preparation programs (e.g., distance and evening classes) and reaching out to nontraditional teacher candidates, including paraprofessionals already working in special education settings, culturally and linguistically diverse individuals and/or career changers. In this publication we identify a variety of program features of personnel preparation partnership programs that increase accessibility for local community members and are considered to be best practices in the field. Examples are drawn from throughout the literature on special education-related partnerships (see references at the end of this document), as well as from work conducted by the Personnel Improvement Center (PIC) in Utah and Mississippi.

COHORT MODEL

A common feature of personnel preparation partnership programs is the use of a cohort model where programs

build in opportunities for groups of candidates attending the program at the same time to move through the training program in concert with one another, enabling them to interact frequently and provide one another with support. For example:

- As part of the University of San Francisco (USF) Mild/Moderate Education Specialist Credential Internship Program, candidates continue through the program with the same group of peers and the same collaborative group of instructors, field supervisors and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) support providers.
- As part of the California State University-Dominguez Hills' PPP, candidates are grouped together in educational cohorts of 15-25 and provide peer support in both learning and working contexts.
- The Reaching American Indian Special Educators (RAISE) program serving the Navajo Reservation in Arizona sponsors an overnight hike by cohort members to the Havasupai school and community for professional development, cultural exchange and an opportunity for "bonding" among cohort members.
- Florida's Regional Partnership Alternative Special Education Preparation Program for Out-of-Field Educators at Florida Atlantic University reported



SPECIAL EDUCATION-RELATED PERSONNEL PREPARATION PARTNERSHIP: PROGRAM FEATURES TO PROMOTE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

that program completers frequently remarked during end-of-program evaluations on the value of the cohort model as a way of building connections and community.

For partnership programs serving rural and/or geographically dispersed groups of candidates, a cohort model may play an especially critical role in the formation of confident, well-prepared candidates. For example:

- The Northeastern California Partnership for Special Education at California State University- Chico utilizes a cohort support structure to ensure successful certification completion for candidates, while simultaneously building a professional support network across a vast rural, remote area that spans 40,000 square miles.
- As part of the University of Utah District Teacher Education Program, a cohort model enabled candidates who were physically isolated from one another to communicate via online chat rooms.

MENTORING AND SUPERVISION

Many personnel preparation partnership programs offer candidate support in the form of mentoring and/or supervision. Well-planned partnerships give consideration to selection and training of mentors, matching of mentors and mentees, size of mentoring caseloads and mentoring activities. For example:

- As part of the Wyoming Collaborative Mentorship Academy (WCMA), mentors are inservice educators who have volunteered to work with candidates seeking certification. Mentors and mentees reflect on shared readings, analyze case scenarios, prepare individualized education programs (IEPs) and co-teach. Mentors receive a certificate recognizing their skills as master mentors from IHEs as well as graduate hours to add towards a master's degree.
- As part of the Professional Development School without Walls, mentors are selected based on a screening procedure and structured interviews with a team of IHE and LEA staff. Mentors then participate in a semester-long course on mentoring novice teachers.
- The University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) Dual Preparation Partnership Program in Elementary and Secondary Education is unique in that it does not match candidates with a single mentor.



Instead, students experience a variety of field-based assignments with four different mentor teachers – typically two general education mentors working with different age groups and two special education mentors working in various service delivery models.

- The Innovative Special Education Program (ISEP) partnership takes a “support team” approach to mentoring. The partnership features collaborative mentoring by an onsite special education master teacher, a half-time in-district supervisor and the IHE supervisor. The support team meets regularly in collaborative consultation with the candidates. Mentors are paid annual stipends for their services.

COURSE DELIVERY ACCOMMODATIONS

Preparation Program Partnerships often provide a variety of course delivery accommodations.

For example:

Professional Development Schools.

Some personnel preparation partnership programs take the form of professional development schools (PDS). PDS are intensely collaborative partnerships between practicing teachers and IHE faculty customized to meet the personnel needs of individual LEAs and/or schools. PDS partners work to improve recruitment and retention of future teachers by offering field experiences similar to the medical field's internship model. For example, George Washington University offers a one-year, full-time program to prepare teachers of elementary-aged students with emotional and behavioral disabilities using a PDS model. Graduate interns complete a two-semester clinical internship during the school day and do course work at night. The model is centered on the daily team teaching experience at one of two PDS partnered with the university. Interns receive support from master teachers, are thoroughly immersed in school environments and become active in the daily operation of all aspects of the school.

Modifications to Traditional Course Delivery. Many personnel preparation partnership programs are characterized by the modifications they make to traditional course delivery. For example, partnership programs may include alternatives to weekday morning/





afternoon coursework such as evening classes, condensed coursework, intensive seminars, summer institutes and/or accelerated programs. Some preparation programs offer coursework in locations other than the main IHE campus. For example:

- The RAISE program delivered all coursework onsite at the RAISE classroom located on the Navajo Reservation.
- California's Project IMPACT established a southern cohort, holding courses at a county office of education facility in order to alleviate special education students having to travel long distances to attend courses.
- San Diego's Internship Credential Program makes coursework locally available during the school year and provides instructional experiences on the main campus during the summer months.

Partnerships serving rural and/or remote areas may offer virtual programming, including online courses. For example:

- The University of Utah Distance Teacher Education Program uses interactive video instruction and chat rooms, and offers virtual office hours in order to facilitate communication among cohort members and between candidates and instructors.
- As part of a special education partnership program involving California State University-Chico, courses simultaneously combine a live studio audience with real-time videostreaming in order to include geographically remote students.



- University of San Francisco's (USF) Mild/Moderate Education Specialist Credential Internship Program, a collaboration between USF and central city schools, designed instruction/field experiences to better prepare candidates for the reality of urban, culturally diverse special education classrooms.
- The RAISE program tailored its curriculum to address the cultural context of the Navajo Reservation. American Indian values are respected and incorporated and American Indian students are encouraged to act as cultural advisors to non-native students.

COORDINATION OF FIELD-BASED EXPERIENCES

Another common feature of personnel preparation partnership programs is the coordination of coursework with candidates' field-based experiences. Some of the ways partnership programs attempt to bridge the gap between theory and practice is by ensuring that the same faculty member both supervises field experiences and leads related seminars or using instructional teams combining IHE and LEA or local Part C program staff. For example:

- The USF Mild/Moderate Education Specialist Credential Internship Program uses methods such as roundtable discussions and a case method approach to connect participants' field-based experiences with their coursework.
- Florida's Regional Partnership Alternative Special Education Preparation Program for Out-of-Field Educators ensures that all courses have field-based assignments required to be completed in real classrooms with real students.

TAILORING SUPPORTS FOR LOCAL NEEDS

Personnel preparation partnership programs are designed to accommodate the unique personnel preparation needs of participating LEAs or local Part C programs such as offering supports that help to ensure participants succeed academically and in their practicum placements. For example:

- The Texas Education Aide Exemption Program is tailored to meet the needs of participating paraprofessionals by offering an IHE-level course designed to assist them in developing skills necessary for success in college.
- A partnership program based in California's Stanislaus County designed coursework to reflect interns' immediate need for foundational information to increase their competence in the classroom.

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*. Gaineville, 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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Acknowledgments. The PIC gratefully acknowledges the following people for participating in interviews and reviewing an earlier version of this document: Kris Marubayashi, Executive Director, Teach California; Greg Halopoff, Director of Student Human Relations and Payroll Central Information Systems, Clark County School District, Nevada; Gayle Sawyer, Executive Director, and Phyllis Archie, Job Bank and Online Application System Manager, Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA), South Carolina; and Brett Spodak, CEO, Teachers-Teachers.com.



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

Program Features to Promote Recruitment and Retention

Programs	Related References
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Professional Development School without Walls	Epanchin, B. C. & Colucci, K. (2002). The professional development school without walls. <i>Remedial and Special Education</i> , 23(6), 349-358.
Reaching American Indian Special Elementary Education (RAISE) Program	Heimbecker, C., Medina, C., Peterson, P., Redsteer, D., & Prater, G. (2002). Reaching American Indian special/elementary educators through a partnership with a Navajo nation school district. <i>Remedial and Special Education</i> , 23(6), 372-378.
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.
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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.
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