



# Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning

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## Reforming Special Education Teacher Education Programs: Preparing Culturally Competent Teachers



The National Outreach and Technical Assistance Center  
on Discretionary Awards for Minority Institutions

### *Guest Editors*



Mary Bay



Norma Lopez-Reyna



Barbary L. Guillory



Ebony Joy Wilkins

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## Introduction to the Special Issue

### Guest Editors

Mary Bay, Norma A. Lopez-Reyna, Barbara L. Guillory, Ebony Joy Wilkins

*Monarch Center  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
Chicago, Illinois*

For more than two decades, teacher education programs have been responding to the opportunity and challenge of preparing future teachers for a racially and linguistically diverse student population. In response to this diversity, many in the education community have strongly recommended a stance toward teaching often referred to as culturally relevant pedagogy or culturally responsive instruction as an effective instructional approach to educating our nation's youth, including those with special needs. This stance has, at its core, a set of beliefs about the qualities and abilities teachers should demonstrate. In short, teachers must demonstrate the ability to: (a) hold high expectations for all learners; (b) read their students in culturally accurate ways and incorporate these cultural understandings into the design of their educational programs; (c) value students' families, communities, and the cultural resources they provide; and (d) engage students academically to build on prior experiences, current knowledge bases, and stated interests (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Gay, 2000; Hollins, 2012; Lucas, 2011; Sleeter, 2011).

There is a wealth of information that describes and discusses the culturally responsive teacher, but scant information that explores how teacher educators design preservice programs that prepare future teachers who demonstrate these qualities and abilities. To help fill this gap, this special issue describes how five cohorts of teacher educators improved their programs to better prepare candidates for teaching a culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse student population.

As these program improvement initiatives unfolded, faculty at these and other minority serving institutions received support from the Monarch Center, a technical assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The primary purpose of the Monarch Center is to provide guidance and support to faculty at minority-serving institutions (MSIs) so that they can build capacity by securing funds for scholarships and program improvement initiatives and work to improve the quality of their personnel preparation programs in special education and related services.

This issue of the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning* focuses on the Monarch Center's support for the improvement of special education teacher education programs. The ultimate goal of the Monarch Center is to improve Pre K-12 outcomes for students with disabilities by improving the quality of special education teachers in early childhood settings and elementary and secondary schools. The Monarch Center seeks to do this by stimulating the improvement of teacher education programs at MSIs.

The five institutions invited to discuss their program improvement initiatives were selected for several reasons. First, each initiative had a specific focus regarding program improvement, which led to candidates who were better prepared to engage in a culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy. Second, each institution planned to transform their program and not simply implement small, piecemeal changes. Third, each institution was successful in achieving their goals. Fourth, each institution worked extensively with the Monarch Center. Finally, the institutions were diverse in terms of type and student characteristics.

The five institutions represented in this issue are: the University of the District of Columbia, an HBCU (Historically Black College and University); the University of Texas at Austin, a predominately Hispanic-serving institution; the University of South Carolina, a predominately Black-serving institution; Springfield College in Massachusetts, which serves multiple minority populations; and the University of Guam, a predominately Asian/Pacific Islander serving institution. The institutional types suggest the range of racial-ethnic diversity of the student body. The targeted certification programs represented different levels: Some programs were blended, some were offered at the graduate level, and one led to an associate's degree. Additionally, the institutions selected have different missions and priorities.

This special issue begins with an article about the Monarch Center, focusing primarily on the Center's technical assistance approach, which is followed by five articles wherein each describes and discusses a program improvement initiative. The issue closes with an article that presents the findings of a cross case analysis in which the similarities and differences across the five programs are highlighted and explored.

Our purpose in presenting this special issue is four-fold: to discuss the guidelines that direct the services offered by a technical assistance center focused on program improvement efforts; to present the program improvement work of five minority-serving institutions, each aiming to prepare future teachers who are culturally competent; to highlight the similarities and differences across these institutions' efforts; and to encourage those in the special education teacher education community to explore and discuss the myriad factors involved in the complex, difficult, and often gratifying work of special education teacher preparation reform. We think this special issue will be of interest to teacher educators, educational policy makers, and educational researchers.

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**Mary Bay, PhD**, is an Associate Professor Emeritus of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago and Associate Director of Program Improvement at the Monarch Center. Her research interests include teacher learning, teacher education reform, professional development, and systems change initiatives. **Norma A. Lopez-Reyna, PhD**, is an Associate Professor of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago and Director of the Monarch Center. Her research interests are in the areas of assessment and literacy instruction of English learners with disabilities, family engagement, teacher preparation, and use of qualitative inquiry to inform instructional practices. **Barbara L. Guillory, PhD, CCC-SLP**, is Co-Principal Investigator and Associate Director of Grant Proposal Development at the Monarch Center, University of Illinois at Chicago. She has more than 35 years of service in the fields of both speech language

pathology and special education. Her research interests are in the areas of language development and disorders. **Ebony Joy Wilkins, M.Ed., MFA**, is a writer and graduate student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Literacy, Language, and Culture at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research interests are in the areas of African American Children's literature and writing responses.

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## Purpose

The Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning (IJTL) - formerly the E-Journal of Teaching and Learning in Diverse Settings, is a scholarly, triple-blind, peer reviewed, open access electronic refereed journal that is published three times each year by the College of Education at Southern University - Baton Rouge. Publication occurs in the Spring, Summer, and Fall.

The IJTL is designed to provide opportunities for divergent ideas, views, and opinions on various topics and issues from professionals in diverse disciplines and professional arenas. It strives to be highly interdisciplinary in content that is likely to be of interest to teachers, principals, other school administrators, policymakers, graduate and undergraduate students, researchers, and academicians.

Manuscripts that focus on special education, general education (including subject content areas), bilingual education, cultural and linguistic diversity, innovative methods in teaching, assessment, exemplary programs, technology (assistive and instructional), educational leadership and reform, public policy, current issues and practices, and research relevant to education are encouraged.

Manuscripts submitted to the IJTL should be interesting, thorough, innovative, informative, well-documented, and have practical value that embraces and contributes to effective teaching and learning.

## Call for Manuscripts

The Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning (IJTL) welcomes submissions that contribute to effective teaching and learning. It provides a forum for the dissemination of articles focused on a wide variety of topics and content subject areas.

The IJTL is comprised of four departments -- Feature Articles, Educational Tweets, Online Resources, and the Event Zone.

**Feature Articles** provide scholarly articles on important topics, theoretical perspectives, current issues, practices, strategies, and research related to teaching and learning in PK-12 and higher education settings. All manuscripts submitted to this department undergo a triple-blind peer review.

Manuscripts for feature articles may be submitted by faculty, graduate students (whose work is co-authored by faculty), school administrators, policymakers, researchers, classroom teachers, and other practicing educators on current and compelling educational topics, issues, practices, and concerns at all levels (PK-12 and higher education) from a wide range of disciplines.

Manuscripts that focus on special education, general education, bilingual education, cultural and linguistic diversity, innovative methods in teaching, assessment, exemplary programs, technology (assistive and instructional), educational leadership and reform, public policy, current practices and issues, and research relevant to education are encouraged. The manuscripts should



be interesting, informative, well documented, appeal to the IJTL diverse audience, and have practical value that embrace and contribute to effective teaching and learning.

Additionally, the manuscripts should be original, well written, and offer new knowledge or a new and insightful synthesis of existing knowledge that has significance or importance to education. They should also have a solid theoretical base and offer an appropriate blend of teaching and practice. The conclusion, summary, final thoughts, or implications should be supported by the evidence presented.

The complete review process for manuscripts submitted to this department may take up to three months. The author guidelines provide additional information on what you should know about the submission process.

**Educational Tweets** feature brief informative tidbits, views, and opinions on hot topics, current events/issues, educational policies, interesting readings, and other areas that impact education or inform teaching and learning. The information, views, and opinions tweeted in this department reflect those of the author.

Papers submitted to Educational Tweets are limited to 350 words and are generally solicited by the section editors. Persons interested in submitting a paper should make an inquiry. Include in the subject line "Educational Tweets".

**Online Resources** highlight Internet Websites that provide information on instructional resources for PK-12 classroom and preservice teachers as well as resources that may be of interest to school administrators and teacher education faculty in higher education. Resources featured in this department are generated by the section editors.

**The Event Zone** features educational events such as conferences, meetings, workshops, forums, professional development opportunities, and webinars sponsored by various agencies and organizations that embrace effective teaching and learning. Events featured in this department are generated by the section editors.

<b>Submission Deadlines</b>		
<b>Spring 2013 (March/April)</b>	<b>Summer 2013 (July/August)</b>	<b>Fall 2013 (October/November)</b>
Manuscript Deadline November 15, 2012	Manuscript Deadline February 15, 2013	Manuscript Deadline May 15, 2013

## Author Guidelines

The Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning (IJTL) is a scholarly, triple-blind, peer reviewed, open access electronic refereed journal that welcomes manuscripts from scholars, academicians, teachers, researchers, graduate students (whose work is co-authored by faculty), administrators, practitioners, and policymakers on a variety of topics and content areas as well as educational issues, evidence-based practices, and topics of educational significance.

Manuscripts submitted must be an original contribution that has not been previously published (in whole or substantial part), or is being concurrently considered for publication by another publisher. A cover letter stating these conditions should accompany the submission.

Manuscripts must be submitted electronically using word processing software. Acceptable formats include Microsoft Word (doc /docx) and Rich Text format (rtf).

Manuscripts should be formatted for printing on standard 8 x 11 inch paper with 1-inch margins, double spaced (including quotations and references), and prepared in Times New Roman 12-point font size. Titles, headings, and subheadings should be in upper and lower case fonts.

Manuscripts should not exceed 25 pages in length, including the title page, abstract, references, and tables or figures.

A separate cover sheet should provide the author's full name, organization or institutional affiliation, mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address; and the corresponding author should be identified. The author's name should not appear on any other pages of the manuscript. It is the responsibility of the corresponding author to notify the corresponding editor of the IJTL of changes in address, organization, or institutional affiliation occurring during the review process.

An abstract (100 - 150 words) should be included that summarizes the content of the manuscript. Five or six key words should be placed below the abstract.

Tables and figures should be placed in a separate file, and need not be double-spaced. Tables should only be used when appropriate and should include only essential data. Figures should be camera ready. Indicate the location for tables and figures in the text in boldface, enclosed in brackets, on a separate line.

The author is responsible for the accuracy and completeness of all references. References should be double-spaced and follow the specifications of the 6th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. The author is also responsible for obtaining permission to use copyrighted material, if required.

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Submit completed manuscripts or inquiries to the editor at [coeijt1@subr.edu](mailto:coeijt1@subr.edu). The IJTL is published by the College of Education under the auspices of the Executive Editor, Vera I. Daniels, Joseph Kermit Haynes-Casino Rouge Endowed Professor, Special Education Programs, Southern University and A & M College, P. O. Box 11298, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70813. Telephone/Fax (225) 771-5810.

## Review Process

Manuscripts submitted to the IJTL undergo a triple-blind peer review. All identifying information about the author is removed to ensure that the author's identity is not revealed.

Manuscripts received will be screened by the journal editors for conformity to the editorial guidelines, appropriateness of topic, and appropriateness for the journal readership. Manuscripts will also be assessed for content, relevance, accuracy, and usefulness to those in educational settings and stakeholders with an interest in educational policies and issues.

Appropriate manuscripts will be sent to peer reviewers. Poorly written or incorrectly formatted manuscripts will not be sent out for peer review.

All manuscripts received by the IJTL are assigned an identification number that is used to track the manuscript during the review process.

Within two weeks of receipt of the manuscript, an e-mail acknowledging receipt of the manuscript with notification of the assigned identification number will be sent to the author. The author may contact the journal corresponding editor at any time during the review process to obtain information about the status of their manuscript. Include in the subject line "Request for Manuscript Status Update (Manuscript #\_\_\_)."

The manuscript review process is generally completed within three months. This process may be slightly longer during major academic breaks or holidays.

Peer reviewers make one of the following decisions concerning a manuscript: (a) accept for publication (b) accept for publication and request minor revisions, (c) consider for publication after major revisions with the stipulation for a second peer review, (d) reject with resubmission invited, or (e) reject and decline the opportunity to publish.

Authors of manuscripts that have been accepted for publication will be notified by e-mail through the corresponding author. In some instances, authors may be asked to make revisions and provide a final copy of the manuscript before it is forwarded for publication.

Manuscripts accepted for publication may be susceptible to further editing to improve the quality and readability of the manuscript without materially changing the meaning of the text. Before publication, the corresponding author will receive an edited copy of the manuscript to approve its content and answer any questions that may arise from the editing process.

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## **Supporting Minority-Serving Institutions in Their Program Improvement Efforts: A Responsive Technical Assistance Approach**

**Mary Bay**

**Norma A. Lopez-Reyna**

**Barbara L. Guillory**

*Monarch Center*

*University of Illinois at Chicago*

*Chicago, Illinois*

To reform a special education teacher preparation program can be gratifying, difficult, complex, political, and urgently needed. The Monarch Center, a federally funded technical assistance center, was established to guide and support minority-serving institutions in their efforts to improve their teacher preparation programs. Four guidelines direct the Center's technical assistance approach: shaping new ideas to meet unique needs; understanding the impact of working simultaneously in shifting contexts; building relationships that foster learning "in context;" and nudging participants toward reaching their goals. The article discusses each guideline.

**Keywords: Teacher preparation reform; Technical assistance approach**

The mounting evidence that reveals the powerful impact teaching has on students' academic performance is stunning in its clarity and exciting in its implications. Powerful teachers graduate from well-conceptualized, rigorous, and comprehensive preparation programs (e.g., Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, & McIntyre, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2006). More than ever, the teacher education community is effectively positioned to advance the argument that excellent teacher preparation programs are needed to graduate caring and competent teachers prepared to make positive differences in students' academic performance (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Simultaneously, teacher education programs have been subjected to considerable criticism for the lack of rigor and relevance in preparing future teachers to meet the learning needs of today's students (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Kirby, McCombs, Barney, & Naftel, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). As the field strives to place a high-quality teacher in every classroom, the nature and success of teacher preparation programs comes under greater scrutiny. Therefore, the focus on designing and offering excellent programs is front and center in today's colleges of education.

Like all change initiatives, improving the quality of a preparation program can be gratifying; at the same time, it can be challenging, difficult, and fraught with thorny issues. Supports from a technical assistance center can be a critical factor in reaching successful outcomes. Below is information about The Monarch Center and the services it offers, guidelines that have shaped the Center's technical assistance approach, and suggestions for future research regarding program improvement reform.

## The Monarch Center

The Monarch Center is a national technical assistance center funded by the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, for nine years. The Center was established to provide services to minority serving institutions (MSIs) that offer special education and related services personnel preparation programs. The federal definition of an MSI is an institution that has, at a minimum, 25% minority enrollment. Examples of MSIs are Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges, Predominately Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and those institutions serving multiple groups of minority students. The total number of MSIs eligible for services by the Monarch Center is 385.

Many faculty members at MSIs who have received technical assistance services from the Monarch Center have aimed for, and secured, grants to provide scholarships to their teacher education and/or related services candidates, as well as funding for program improvement initiatives. Among the technical assistance provided are workshops to learn how to develop grant proposals, and ongoing mentoring, guidance, and continual feedback when developing a proposal. Subsequent to receiving grants, the Monarch Center provides new grantees with a post-award session on how to manage a grant and respond to the funders' numerous requests. For those who achieve scores close to recommendation for the funding category, the Monarch Center provides an on-site session, wherein the grant writer receives guidance from mentors on ways to improve the proposal prior to its resubmission.

For MSI faculty members who aim to improve a specific dimension of their preparation program (e.g., the clinical component; the curricular content with greater attention to cultural and linguistic difference) or the entire program, the Monarch Center offers numerous forms of assistance. In our Year-Long Model, cohorts of institutional teams are formed; each cohort focuses on a specific program dimension. Working with professors who are experts on the targeted topic and strategic personnel preparation, the cohort engages in a knowledge exchange seminar to learn about the research and standards relevant to the topic and to shape that information into a strategy that will meet the program's unique needs. Each team develops an Action Plan that includes goals and objectives to be completed by the end of the year. After the seminar, the Monarch Center provides mentoring and other individualized follow-along activities that provide direction and feedback as well as suggestions for additional resources that are helpful to achieve goals and objectives. The Year-Long Model concludes with a "Comeback Session" in which each team reports on the extent to which it was able to attain each objective on its Action Plan. Time is also allocated for a discussion about strategies used to achieve the objectives, as well as a description of any barriers that were encountered. The Comeback Session is not only an information sharing session, but also a celebratory one.

To provide the technical services that are needed by faculty, the Monarch Center maintains a cadre of professors, primarily from MSIs, who have expertise in a wide range of special education topics, grant preparation, accreditation procedures, and teacher education reform. Regularly scheduled sessions are held for these mentors to discuss their roles and responsibilities as well as to problem solve around specific mentoring issues.

The Monarch Center also maintains an extensive online Professional Library that holds four major collections, including: (a) modules for program improvement assistance; (b) tutorials for grant proposal development support; (c) materials that were distributed to participants in the knowledge exchange seminars; and (d) numerous resources (articles, books, university classroom materials, reference lists, and links to websites). Within each collection, the resources are organized around specific topics, such as Autism, Collaboration, Early Childhood Education, and the Development of Logic Models.

Finally, to encourage participants to disseminate their work, the Monarch Center provides mentoring to faculty who want to transform program improvement and grant proposal results into articles for publication in special issues of journals and other nationally recognized journals. The Monarch Center also invites participants to join panels to present their work at local, state, and national conferences.

Over a nine-year period, the Monarch Center has worked with 279 institutions and 1,010 participants. As evidenced by evaluation data, participants have been extremely satisfied with the technical assistance provided by the Monarch Center. For example, when asked to provide their general satisfaction using a scale of 1 to 10 ranging from extremely dissatisfied to extremely satisfied, 83% of participants indicated that they were extremely satisfied (10); another 11% reported being slightly less than extremely satisfied (9). Moreover, the data indicated that when participants received grant proposal development support, they had a 40% greater chance of securing the grant. Lastly, approximately 70% (150 MSI teams) that completed the program improvement Year-Long Model significantly enhanced the quality of their programs, and 12 institutions designed and started new programs.

### **The Monarch Center: Technical Assistance Guidelines**

Our initial conceptualization of the Monarch Center's technical assistance was based on various domains of scholarly work, including understandings of teacher education reform, K-12 professional development, and systems change initiatives, which, as we learned from our experience of providing technical assistance, was modified and ultimately developed into guidelines. In reality, these "guidelines" are post hoc value statements that reflect the culture that is building within the special education teacher preparation community at MSIs through our technical assistance approach. The guidelines, then, function more like a compass than a blueprint. Below is a discussion of the guidelines.

#### **Guideline 1: Shaping New Ideas to Meet Unique Needs**

The technical assistance approach that the Monarch Center uses is one that continually seeks to find the balance between maintaining evidence-based practices, national and state priorities, and accreditation procedures on the one hand, and the institution's unique needs, norms, and values on the other. To achieve this balance, we gently steer the faculty member or faculty team toward these practices, priorities, and procedures while encouraging them to shape decisions and determine actions within the context of programmatic needs and the institution's culture. In other words, this technical assistance approach balances generalized, evidence-based strategies for obtaining program improvement with a consideration of the nuances and context of the

individual institution. It is based on the idea that institutional culture strongly influences the success, or lack thereof, of a change initiative (Kezar & Eckel, 2002).

With regard to steering faculty members and teams from the top, the Monarch Center places particular emphasis and attention to enhancing the quality of the preparation programs with the goal of graduating future professionals who are prepared to work with racially, ethnically, and ability diverse PreK-12 students. The aim is to assist MSIs in the design and implementation of programs that prepare individuals who can provide effective and appropriate services to children and youth with disabilities from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. The focus on diversity reflects a commitment to embody the culture and traditions commonly found in the academies we serve, and a responsibility to the children and youth the graduates of those academies will teach. Additional examples of the Monarch Center's "steering from the top" approach include incorporation of national, state and accreditation priorities; attention to relevant sets of standards; and a focus on evidence-based practices.

With regard to the institution's unique needs, norms, and values (bottom-up forces), the Monarch Center's approach involves careful attention to the participants' goals and interests. Needs assessment surveys are used to gather information and scanned for patterns in topics and issues raised in work session discussions. Additional information is gathered based on reports of mentoring interactions, email exchanges, and an examination of Action Plans. Interviews of faculty members from HBCUs, Predominantly Hispanic-Serving institutions, and Tribal Colleges provide information regarding barriers to the process and the institution's unique needs. Our stance is that any effective technical assistance for faculty must have the flexibility to attend to institutional culture and the circumstances of the home campus.

To create a climate in which attention to unique needs and interests can occur, program designers must value teacher educators' existing knowledge base, professional experiences, and life experiences that may differ from the dominant culture. This viewpoint embraces the co-construction of knowledge by linking current knowledge to new knowledge. This co-construction of knowledge provides an outlet for learning opportunities across several venues for a sustained period of time.

Thus, shaping new ideas to meet the participants' unique needs is a critical element in the Monarch Center's approach to technical assistance. Similar to considering change initiatives in K-12 schools, the issue of balance is important. Fullan (2007) emphasizes this stance— "The solution, in my view, is to develop strategies that integrate top-down and bottom-up forces in an ongoing dynamic manner, achieving what I call "permeable connectivity" (p. 262).

## **Guideline 2: Working Simultaneously in Shifting Contexts**

Understanding the importance of working simultaneously in shifting contexts is critical. Consider, for example, the extent to which a program improvement initiative must be accomplished within multiple contexts. Teacher education reformers, working at various levels in their institutions (committees, departments, colleges), must know the practices and procedures, as well as the requirements, relationships, and resources at these different levels. Because of certification or licensure requirements, reformers must work with numerous state

requirements and the ease, efficiency, and stability, or lack thereof, with which they function. Typically, reformers must also incorporate standards and reporting procedures of one or more accreditation agencies. Finally, the reformer's work is influenced by the nation's priorities and mandated requirements as well as the local school district's unique personnel needs.

The hundreds of teacher educators with whom the Monarch Center has worked indicated the challenges of having to work in several different contexts simultaneously while remaining flexible to accommodate shifting agendas and requirements. An analysis of interview data and content of the Year-Long Model final reports indicate that working in several shifting contexts simultaneously can be a barrier to accomplishing program improvement goals, or result in a major shift in the nature of the goals. Examples of shifting contexts that strongly impact a reformer's work include: a state-initiated change in the standards for teacher preparation programs; a switch in the department chairperson (or other key administrator) that results in a new set of priorities; a change in the accreditation agencies' requirements; and an unexpected loss of resources (human and otherwise).

An element of this "shifting context" phenomenon—the frequent need to change—is receiving attention in the organizational change literature. When organizations engage in initiative overload or change-related chaos, the symptoms can include widespread employee anxiety, cynicism, and burnout. "The results? Not only do relentless tidal shifts of change create pain at almost every level of the company and make organizational change harder to manage, more costly to implement, and more likely to fail, but they also impinge on routine operations and render firms inwardly focused on managing change rather than outwardly focused on the customers these changes should serve" (Abrahamson, 2004, pp. 2-3). Elmore (2004) describes this same "tidal shifts of change" phenomenon as it pertains to the K-12 setting in this manner: "Local reform initiatives are typically characterized by volatility-jumping nervously from one reform idea to the next over relatively short periods of time and superficiality-choosing reforms that have little impact on instruction or learning and implementing them in shallow ways" (p.2). Thus, this notion of "change-related chaos" or "tidal shifts of change" is an important feature the special education community should consider as it engages in program improvement initiatives.

The recognition of the impact of context on the reformer's work is a critical guideline in our technical assistance approach. As Kennedy (2010) stated, "...they must accommodate the rules and customs of their academic institutions, and of the content area programs on their campuses, not to mention their state education agencies, their accreditation agencies, their alumni and their students" (p. 4).

To support teacher education reformers in these demanding and shifting contexts, the Monarch Center has sent mentors to campuses to meet with administrators to discuss reform efforts, to guide institutions through state approval procedures, and to assist with various accreditation procedures (e.g., NCATE). Additionally, the Monarch Center personnel have met with administrators, faculty members, and grant writers to discuss the contextual factors that act as barriers to program improvement and how those barriers may be replaced with supports.



### **Guideline 3: Building Relationships that Foster Learning**

Building relationships that foster learning “in context” has had an unintended positive effect of allowing those who have been successful in navigating this type of situation to share their strategies and solutions with those who are new to the endeavor. This critical guideline addresses the importance of organizing teacher educators in ways in which they can learn from each other. The Monarch Center establishes a connection between MSI faculty so they have the opportunity to exchange ideas, provide feedback and advice, and support and encourage each other with regard to program improvement and grant proposal development efforts. A substantial body of research points to the positive impact of creating mentoring arrangements as well as professional networks or learning communities when an organization is engaged in a change initiative (Senge, 1990).

Consider the research on professional development for Pre K-12 teachers, one of the most heavily studied areas in education. The evidence is clear. Professional development activities should be designed so that teachers have opportunities to learn from their peers. Not only does this allow teachers to receive feedback, but it also gives them opportunities to analyze their performance and evaluate their results. Teachers advance in knowledge, abilities, and skills when working in peer-to-peer and group or network formats (e.g., Millett & Johnson, 2004; Smith, Hofer, Gillespie, Solomon, & Rowe, 2008).

The research on professional development for higher education faculty mirrors this same finding. Effective models provide opportunities for professors to support each other. These opportunities may come in the form of mentoring arrangements, monthly seminars, and “dinners” (e.g., Wangberg, Nelson, & Dunn, 1995), peer coaching (Brancato, 2003, Huston & Weaver, 2007; Sorcinelli, 2000; Tillman, 2001), and online discussions (Becker & Schaffner, 1999). Positive outcomes include feeling less isolated, improving faculty morale, increasing attention to pedagogical choices, and improving collaborative work (Cook-Sather, 2010; Plumb & Reis, 2007). As teacher educators come together, they develop new competencies, access new ideas, co-construct the design of target program dimensions, collaborate for innovation, and motivate each other to keep learning.

The strength of this approach is not based solely on the notion of “bringing teacher educators together;” it is also heavily influenced by the fact that their professional learning is occurring “in context.” Learning “in context” means the participant is learning to do the right thing in the setting where he or she works (Fullan, 2009). It refers not only to the structural changes in the setting (e.g., time to meet and talk, physical proximity), but also to the re-culturing that may occur (e.g., openness to improvement and change, a willingness to experiment and reflect upon the results in the company of colleagues, the demonstration of respect and trustworthiness for colleagues’ ideas). Monarch services provide sessions that act as springboards to the participants’ work that is expected to be carried out primarily on the home campus.

### **Guideline 4: Nudging Participants Toward Reaching their Program Goals**

One of the challenges of providing technical assistance to a large number of MSIs across the nation is to find ways to nudge participants to keep striving toward their goals. How does the

Monarch Center prod the faculty member who attended a grant proposal development workshop and received mentoring to actually write the proposal and submit it? How does the Monarch Center prod a faculty team who attended program improvement sessions toward carrying out the work and reaching their program objectives? The research indicates that the reliance on solely external accountability measures seldom works because this method cannot re-culture the organization to create the beliefs and actions necessary for change (e.g., Fullan, 2007). Therefore, the amalgamation of some external accountability strategies (better labeled “positive pressure”<sup>1</sup>), internal accountability measures, and capacity building may result in getting participants to attain their goals.

The Monarch Center uses several strategies to hold participants accountable, which are undergirded by the concept of “positive pressure”. For example, each program improvement team must develop an Action Plan and submit it before the team leaves the session. The Action Plan (which consists of goals the team plans to attain, proposed activities to reach those goals, deadlines, responsible persons, and potential facilitators and barriers) reflect how the participants shaped new ideas to meet their program’s unique needs. Moreover, each team must participate in two follow-up conference calls to describe their team’s progress and provide advice and suggestions to others in the cohort. Finally, twelve months later, each team must attend a final session wherein the team “reports out” to others in the cohort regarding the status of their work. Another example pertains to grant proposal development. Prior to attending a grant proposal development workshop, participants are required to write a draft abstract that includes the significance of the grant proposal, the specific area they plan to address in their proposal, the goals they aim to attain, and the procedures they will use. Subsequent to the proposal preparation workshop, a mentor is assigned to assist during the writing process. Participants are required to work closely with the mentor and to send drafts of the proposal to him or her. Mentors are required to notify the Monarch Center if the process fails. These are a few examples of strategies used by the Monarch Center to apply “positive pressure” to move participants toward their desired outcomes.

The Monarch Center approach also includes an internal accountability strategy. Across the technical services, participants are encouraged to self-regulate or monitor their progress. This is done by asking participants to contact their mentor on a regular basis and to provide drafts of documents for feedback. The program improvement conference calls and final session have caused participants to more carefully pace their work. Self-reflection is encouraged through the various self-determined products (e.g., goals, activities, deadlines). Finally, participants have reported that working in a team format within a cohort results in feeling accountable to their colleagues on the team as well as to others in the cohort.

The final prong of the fourth guideline is capacity building. The Monarch Center places great importance on capacity building and helps each institution build capacity by assisting with the coordination of top-down, bottom-up forces in formats that allow those in the professional community to work in interactive ways. The Monarch Center also helps to advance knowledge, skills and competencies, provide resources, and re-culture organizations toward becoming effective learning settings.

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<sup>1</sup> For additional information about “positive pressure,” see Fullan (2007).

## Factors Needed for an MSI to be Successful: Emerging Patterns

The Monarch Center collects various data sets to determine needs as well as engage in continuous progress monitoring and summative evaluations. These data sets include needs assessment surveys; participant satisfaction questionnaires; interviews; OSEP reports pertaining to grant funding; and content analyses of Action Plans, conference call discussions, final reports, and participants' written unsolicited comments. From these data analyses, institutional qualities emerge that have the potential to predict the institution's likelihood of success in reaching its program improvement goals. At the *local department or college level*, these qualities include a commitment to a process of continual program improvement that results in ongoing learning and holding each other accountable; a teacher education reformer to guide the effort; a stable environment in terms of leadership, vision, policy, and procedures; strong partnerships with K-12 schools; substantial resources, including a critical mass of faculty as well as space and time to meet, think, discuss and decide; and a culture that recognizes program improvement work as something to be highly valued in terms of promotion and tenure. At the *state level*, it is becoming clear that program improvement can best occur when state-level policy environments put forth innovative and reasonable standards and requirements that are based on research that provide support and resources that are stable and do not create "change chaos." Finally, it is our view that *external technical assistance* that balances top-down and bottom-up forces that allows teacher educators to work in professional communities is extremely useful in assisting them in reaching their goals.

### Future Research

Although our knowledge of the teacher education program reform process is scant, but growing, we were able to identify a few areas of these programs that need to be investigated.

Exploring the idea of "readiness" is the first critical area for investigation. Specifically, which MSIs are ready to engage in a program improvement initiative? What qualities should they demonstrate? What structures, cultures, and commitments are needed for the possibility of success? As a corollary to these questions, we recommend determining the factors and contexts that result in small, piecemeal, incremental work as compared to the factors and contexts that are needed to support a transformative effort.

A second area in need of investigation pertains to the qualities, characteristics, and circumstances of the participants, especially those who have worked with the Monarch Center more than once; specifically, the need to understand the individual who functions as the leader of the program improvement initiative (e.g., the author of the grant proposal; the teacher education reformer). Our experience suggests that like outstanding K-12 teachers, these individuals possess not only research-based knowledge, but also craft knowledge, which is local, contextualized, and accumulated via experience (Barth, 1988).

A third area of investigation relates to our understandings of the types of problems and challenges that surface when improving a program. For example, technical problems are those in which current knowledge is sufficient to address the problem; adaptive challenges are more complex and suggest that the solutions may go beyond what we know. An example of a technical

problem may be a concern about the number of teacher candidates who do not pass their state's licensure subject matter knowledge and basic skills test. An example of adaptive challenges may be our current requirement of designing and implementing assessment systems that provide us with information that links a teacher candidate's performance to their students' academic gains. It may be useful to know the nature of these types of problems, how frequently each type is addressed, institutions' success rates, and the factors needed for success.

A final area for future investigation pertains to the idea of repetitive change syndrome. As described above, these "tidal shifts of change" may be creating havoc with reform initiatives. Do they occur? What is the nature of these changes? Who initiates them? What is their effect? In other words, how does the policy arena impact personnel preparation change?

### **Final Thoughts**

This article focused on the technical assistance offered by the Monarch Center to guide and support faculty at minority-serving institutions as they aim to improve their special education personnel preparation programs. By discussing the work of the Monarch Center and focusing on the guidelines that direct the work, we think the message is clear. Meaningful and lasting program change is often complex, political, and urgently needed. While there is no magic bullet that will address all that is involved in reforming a program, those in our professional community have increased our understanding of the teacher education reform process, and when we work collaboratively on these initiatives, the likelihood of success is strong.

### **AUTHOR NOTES**

**Mary Bay, PhD**, is an Associate Professor Emeritus of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago and Associate Director of Program Improvement at the Monarch Center. Her research interests include teacher learning, teacher education reform, professional development, and systems change initiatives. **Norma A. Lopez-Reyna, PhD**, is an Associate Professor of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago and Director of the Monarch Center. Her research interests are in the areas of assessment and literacy instruction of English learners with disabilities, family engagement, teacher preparation, and use of qualitative inquiry to inform instructional practices. **Barbara L. Guillory, PhD, CCC-SLP**, is Co-Principal Investigator and Associate Director of Grant Proposal Development at the Monarch Center. She has more than 35 years of service in the fields of both speech language pathology and special education. Her research interests are in the areas of language development and disorders.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Mary Bay, The Monarch Center, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1640 West Roosevelt Road (M/C 947) Chicago, Illinois 60608 [marybay@uic.edu](mailto:marybay@uic.edu)

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## Preparing Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Special Educators: It “Does” Take a Village

**Phyllis M. Robertson**

**Shernaz B. García**

**Laura A. McFarland**

**Herbert J. Rieth**

*The University of Texas at Austin  
Austin, Texas*

The preparation of culturally and linguistically responsive special educators requires planning, substantive collaboration, and valuing the perspectives of underrepresented groups. This article describes restructuring efforts of one special education preparation program that included coursework and field-based experiences designed to enhance candidates' understanding of the complex, dynamic interrelationships among culture, language, and disability as the basis for culturally and linguistically responsive practice. Major activities included identifying key competencies, aligning those competencies with specific coursework and activities, and working with faculty in general education to design opportunities for candidates in both programs to develop collaborative skills. Results of ongoing program evaluation indicate that efforts were successful based on positive responses from participating candidates, cooperating teachers who host them, and the principals who subsequently hire them. Successes, challenges, and future directions are discussed within the context of program design and delivery.

**Keywords:** special education teacher preparation, cultural and linguistic diversity

The Department of Special Education at The University of Texas at Austin (UT) has more than three decades of experience preparing teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004). As reflected in the program's mission statement (Department of Special Education, 2008), an emphasis on preparing future special educators to effectively serve culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners and their families has been a long-standing priority. Courses designed to increase candidates' understanding of the influence of linguistic and cultural diversity on the delivery of special education programs and services have been expanded and enhanced over the last 30 years with leadership by the Multicultural/Bilingual Special Education Program faculty. During recent years, the undergraduate program has undergone major restructuring efforts to ensure that candidates enrolled in specially designed courses are provided with opportunities to develop and demonstrate the requisite knowledge and skills through carefully aligned university-based and field-based experiences with ongoing supervision and mentoring. This article describes the accomplishments, lessons learned, and challenges encountered as faculty utilized federal resources to undertake this complex, and often daunting task.

## Context

The University of Texas at Austin is a high performing, research institution located in a major metropolitan area. The student body includes over 50,000 undergraduate and graduate students representing the 50 states and over 100 countries (University of Texas at Austin, 2012). The College of Education houses five departments: Special Education, Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Psychology, Educational Administration, and Kinesiology and Health Education. The college enrolls a diverse group of undergraduate students, 56% of whom are White, 23% Hispanic, 8% African American, and 8% Asian. Seventy percent of the students are female and 30% are male (The University of Texas at Austin, 2010).

The Department of Special Education offers a stand-alone certification program designed to prepare future educators to teach students with disabilities. Texas certifies all special educators as EC-12 generalists. Specialized certifications are available only for teachers of children who are deaf and hearing impaired or visually impaired (State Board for Educator Certification [SBEC], 2001). Therefore, the stand-alone program must prepare pre-service teachers to serve students with a wide range of disabilities between the ages of 3 and 21. Certification seekers complete a 127-hour Bachelor of Science degree program in Applied Learning and Development (ALD) with an academic specialization in Special Education (SPED). Upon completion, the majority of students obtain Texas Generic Special Education Certification (EC-12) along with Elementary Generalist Certification (EC-6), meet the requirements for highly qualified special education teachers, and begin their careers in Texas schools. Texas is a diverse state responsible for educating nearly five million students, of whom 60% are designated as economically disadvantaged (the state's term for students eligible for free/reduced price lunch). According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2011), 50% of Texas students are Hispanic, 31% White, 13% African American, and 6% other. Sixteen percent of Texas students are served in bilingual/ESL programs and 9% are served in special education programs.

Prior to beginning preparation in Special Education, candidates must complete the UT core curriculum and other coursework to meet requirements for the ALD degree. Following completion of these requirements, typically in the second semester of their sophomore year, candidates enroll in the undergraduate program in special education. This five-semester program utilizes a cohort model, enrolling 25 or fewer candidates. Once candidates become part of a cohort, they take no courses outside of their program (e.g., bilingual education, elementary generalist, secondary). The program of study for special education candidates is described in Table 1.



**Table 1**  
*Special Education Program Course Sequence by Semester*

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**Foundations Block**

ALD 322	Individual Differences
ALD 327	Sociocultural Influences on Learning
SED 376	Foundations and Issues in Special Education
SED 332	Field Experiences in Special Education 88 hours of observation in six diverse special education placements

**Professional Development Sequence (Semester One)**

EDC 670EA	Reading Methods (Grades 1-8)
EDC 670EB	Language Arts Methods (Grades 1-8)
EDC 331E	School Organization and Classroom Management
ALD 328	Applied Human Learning: Foundations of Positive Behavioral Supports and Classroom Management 224 hours of internship in a general education classroom

**Professional Development Sequence (Semester Two)**

ALD 326	Language of Children With and Without Disabilities
SED 378E	Advanced Early Childhood Intervention
SED 378D	Assessment Practices in Autism and Developmental Disabilities
SED 378S	Teaching Individuals with Autism and Developmental Disabilities 112 hours of internship in an early childhood special education classroom 112 hours of internship in a classroom for students with autism or other developmental disabilities

**Professional Development Sequence (Semester Three)**

SED 375C	Teaching Individuals with Mild/Moderate Disabilities
SED 378R	Reading Difficulties with Diverse Populations
EDC 370E	Mathematics Methods (Grades 1-8)
SED 372	Assessment of Individuals with Mild/Moderate Disabilities 224 hours of internship in a resource/inclusion classroom that serves students with mild/moderate disabilities

**Professional Development Sequence (Semester Four)**

SED 337	Intercultural Communication and Collaboration
SED 960	Apprenticeship: Research to Practice 600 hours of student teaching in a special education setting for students with autism or other developmental disabilities

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**Program Redesign**

The redesign of our special education program was initiated through Project RISE (Restructuring Instruction in Special Education), a five-year federally funded project by the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. This project, which began in 2007, is designed to examine and enhance the quality of the undergraduate special education teacher preparation program at UT. The major program goal is improvement in the preparation of pre-service

teachers to serve CLD students with disabilities. To accomplish this goal, Project RISE faculty and staff revised the existing Pre-service Knowledge and Skills Matrix to include linguistic and cultural competencies to become responsive special educators. Next, these competencies were aligned with specific course content, and all course activities were reviewed and enhanced. Third, course-related and field-based projects were designed to strengthen the development of these competencies. Finally, in collaboration with the Monarch Center ([www.monarchcenter.org](http://www.monarchcenter.org), 2010), program faculty, together with colleagues in general education teacher preparation programs, designed the Collaborative Intervention Project (CIP). This project focused on the development of collaboration skills for pre-service teachers who share responsibility for serving students with disabilities in inclusive settings. Project efforts were guided by formative and ongoing program evaluation activities.

Project RISE served as the catalyst for substantive program change. Faculty members responsible for implementation are integrally involved in college administrative committees and their multiple roles have enhanced communication and highlighted project accomplishments. For example, the fourth author is chair of the Department of Special Education, Project RISE Co-Principal Investigator and serves on the Dean's Management Team which represents the administrative decision making structure for the college. The Applied Learning and Development Committee oversees the design and implementation of numerous teacher certification programs, including special education. As a department representative to the committee, the first author similarly serves as a liaison between the project and the college administration. The project also established an advisory committee including college administration, faculty representing the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and local school district personnel. This group reviewed program evaluation results from all teacher preparation programs offered in the college and reached consensus on the need for increasing pre-service teachers' knowledge and skills in cultural and linguistic diversity and collaboration. Most importantly, selected tenure-track faculty and long-term clinical and adjunct faculty in the department supported the development of the program, continued improvement of the undergraduate program, ensured that program revisions were implemented with fidelity, and evaluated progress regularly and consistently. Faculty in Curriculum and Instruction with interest in the collaboration component of the project contributed substantively to the design and implementation of the CIP. These supports have been invaluable in accomplishing project objectives and institutionalizing the changes that have been made to date.

### **Matrix Revisions**

Faculty began by conducting a substantive review of the literature and defining the "Highly Qualified" competencies and culturally responsive practices needed by special educators. Research on the multicultural preparation of special education teachers is scant (Trent, Kea, & Oh, 2008) and recommendations are similar to those found in the multicultural general education literature. The results of this review and the current national and state standards were incorporated into the Matrix of Pre-service Special Education Knowledge and Skills requirements. Next, project faculty collaboratively identified specific competencies to be mastered during the five-semester program. Once the matrix was completed, the competencies required to effectively teach culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities were highlighted, and a second matrix emerged that guided subsequent restructuring that focused

specifically on this program component. This curriculum is guided by a socio-cultural theoretical framework as the foundation for developing pre-service candidates' cultural understanding (Hollins, 2008; Rogoff, 2003), using a "culture-general" (etic) approach to intercultural communication competence (García, 2012; Gudykunst & Kim, 2003; Hollins, 2008; Kalyanpur & Harry, 2012). A more detailed description of the curriculum follows in the course overviews below.

## Mapping Standards to Syllabi

Mapping standards to syllabi is a critical component of effective programming. Faculty mapped competencies identified in the matrix to specific courses and assignments used to assess mastery of specific competencies. To quote one faculty member, "although I didn't want to do this (just because it's a daunting task), it really did help me to see the intent of [my] course and actual continuity/discontinuity in the readings, activities, products, and evaluations." If a competency was identified as a major focus in a given course, then the syllabus specified the assignment where candidates needed to demonstrate that knowledge and/or skill. Below is an example from the most recent syllabus for *ALD 327, Sociocultural Influences on [Teaching and] Learning* that will be discussed in more detail in a subsequent section.

A course goal is specified, followed by the specific foci linked to CEC and SBEC standards (identified in parenthesis below).

**Goal 4:** *Critically examine how identities, beliefs, teaching styles, and educational philosophy influence teacher-student interactions, approaches to instruction, and achievement outcomes for students from diverse cultural and linguistic communities.*

**G4-1:** Ways specific cultures are negatively stereotyped and the impact of deficit views on students and their families. CC5K9

**G4-2:** Personal cultural biases and differences that affect ones teaching and the ways in which those factors influence the behavior of individuals with exceptional learning needs. CC5K4 (7.1K, 10.4K), CC9K1 (2.2K)

## Aligning CLD Content Across Courses

Over the past five years, Project RISE supported the successful design and implementation of the two-course sequence that lays the foundation for cultural and linguistic understanding and promotes application in the classroom. An overview of these courses is described below:

**Developing candidates' sociocultural understanding.** During their Foundations Block semester, candidates enroll in *ALD 327 Sociocultural Influences on [Teaching and] Learning*. All UT undergraduates are required to successfully complete at least one course that addresses cultural diversity in the United States. This course fulfills that requirement and is mandatory for all teacher education candidates in the college. Special education candidates, however, are enrolled in a special section of this course, which is aligned with CEC and Texas special education certification competencies and coordinated with activities across courses in the Foundations Block semester.

**Course overview.** A major goal of *ALD 327* is to develop candidates' understanding of the complex, dynamic interrelationships among culture, language and disability, and a culturally and linguistically responsive practice. Candidates acquire critical knowledge and skills that enable them to build cultural self-awareness and intercultural competence<sup>1</sup>. In this course, candidates deepen their understanding of the cultural contexts of human development through the study of cultural variability (e.g., sociocultural sources of identity, distribution of power, communication style), identity formation, family systems, socialization practices, and the culture of schools. Additionally, the socio-political contexts of difference, through analyses of stereotyping, bias and discrimination, power and privilege, bilingualism, second language acquisition, and dialectal differences are explored. Throughout the course these topics are related to the cultural foundations of special education law and practice, culturally responsive practices in identification, assessment, instruction and behavior management, and school-family partnerships.

**Activities and assignments.** The instructional goals and learning outcomes of *ALD 327* are best served in an experiential course design, with a high level of active participation and group interactions during each session. Activities for increasing cultural awareness (of self and others) include simulations, critical incidents, and analysis of video-based scenarios (Fowler & Mumford, 1995). Candidates work in small and large group formats to respond to activities and to debrief their reactions. In addition, they develop a series of autobiographical reflections focused on their cultural worldviews, the formation of their identities, and the development of communication styles. These personal reflections provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge related to goal G4-2 as described in the section above. A community-based project connects their formal, academic learning to their field experiences in *SED 332* (see Table 1), and provides opportunities for candidates to engage in dialogue with a member of a different socio-cultural community than their own, or with a teacher who serves CLD students in general or special education. In effect, the course design aims to create a learning environment in which candidates will experience intercultural communication and explore implications for their future professional practice with CLD learners, families, and communities.

**Application during student teaching.** In their final semester, students enroll in *SED 337 Intercultural Communication and Collaboration* in conjunction with student teaching. Pairing the courses in this manner provides opportunities for guided practice and application of the candidate's theoretical knowledge in the classroom. Due to the heavy demands associated with student teaching, *SED 337* has been recently re-structured into an intensive format at the beginning of the semester. Candidates begin attending class the week prior to the beginning of the semester, with the majority of class meetings completed by the third week of the term. For the remainder of the semester, candidates complete *SED 337* assignments in their student teaching setting and receive feedback from the instructor via Blackboard and email communication. Face-to-face meetings are also held to provide additional feedback and guidance as needed.

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<sup>1</sup>For this course, and throughout the program, culture is defined as “a learned meaning system that consists of patterns of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, meanings, and symbols that are passed on from one generation to the next and are shared to varying degrees by interacting members of a community” (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012, p. 16).

**Course overview.** Building on concepts taught in *ALD 327*, *SED 337* emphasizes the development of inclusive special education practices for students with disabilities from diverse socio-cultural and linguistic communities, and it examines successful collaboration with families and other educators to ensure appropriate services to all students. Candidates explore the implications of their socio-cultural, racial, and linguistic identities on their instructional practice, and develop reflective, inquiry-based teaching practices within a culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogical framework. Additionally, they increase their understanding of the principles of intercultural communication, collaboration, problem solving, and conflict management. Lastly, candidates complete assignments that promote application of this knowledge in the classroom. These experiences are designed to enhance their ability to develop and implement culturally and linguistically responsive interventions and services, and to collaborate with families, other teachers, paraeducators, and related service professionals.

**Activities and assignments.** The format of all *SED 337* class meetings and assignments reflects the goals of the course to foster an inquiry-based, reflective practice that supports learning for all students (Hollins, 2008). Inquiry-based activities include analyses of readings from the professional literature, as well as assignments focused on personalized learning through two dialogue projects—one with a family member of a student in their classroom, and the second with a paraeducator. As part of lesson planning activities, candidates maintain a series of reflection logs, through which they demonstrate how they are utilizing new knowledge to analyze and select appropriate instructional strategies and materials, manage the classroom environment, develop social skills, and collaborate with family members, paraeducators, and other professionals. During their total teaching assignment (typically three weeks), candidates submit weekly teaching self-evaluations that respond to a series of planning-implementation-reflection-planning prompts corresponding with an inquiry-based model of critical, reflexive teaching (Hollins, 2008; Zeichner & Liston, 1996; Zimmerman, 2009). This process is initially limited to two students in the student teaching classroom, who serve as focus students for these assignments. Limiting attention to fewer students allows candidates to experience the process in greater depth. Once candidates acquire these skills, they are typically able to generalize these activities to other students in the classroom.

A second major thrust of the course is collaboration with other professionals and families. Key concepts related to the collaboration and communication process, include teaming, problem solving, conflict management, and working with paraeducators (Dettmer, Thurston, Knackendoffel, & Dyck, 2009; Friend & Cook, 2010). A major assignment is the Collaborative Intervention Project is described below. A final, cumulative reflective essay at the end of the semester documents candidates' perceptions of their learning and growth as culturally and linguistically responsive special educators. Typically, candidates are given the option of writing a more traditional reflective essay, or developing a concept map to depict their growth.

**Collaboration.** Teacher candidates develop collaborative skills by working in teams with candidates in bilingual education (in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction). Together, they plan academic and social behavioral interventions for English language learners in the bilingual classroom who are struggling or who are receiving special education services. An all-day seminar at the beginning of the semester serves as a preliminary orientation to the Collaborative Intervention Project (CIP), and is followed by two additional meetings over the

semester. The focus of the seminars is to bring the groups together to provide structure and guidance for the development of the intervention plans, and to monitor progress, respectively. Intervention plans are jointly developed and maintained on Google Docs, which allows instructors access to these documents, and it facilitates feedback and communication. In addition, CIP teams communicate with each other and with instructors using text, email, Google Docs, Skype, and face-to-face meetings.

### **Formative and Summative Program Evaluation**

The overarching goal of the project is to improve the quality of the high-incidence special education undergraduate teacher preparation program, ensuring that future special education program graduates are well prepared to serve ever-increasing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse children and youth with disabilities. To guide program modifications, participant feedback is gathered at regular intervals throughout the program and following the first year of teaching. In this section we summarize sources and types of data gathered as part of the program evaluation, followed by project outcomes and a discussion of the ways these findings have been used to guide program modifications.

### **Data Sources Guiding Program Modifications**

Following implementation of the revised program sequence, which began Spring 2010, feedback was gathered from special education teacher candidates, cooperating teachers who host interns and teacher candidates, and principals who hire program graduates. Special education candidates participate in focus groups at the end of the Foundations Block and each semester of the Professional Development Sequence (PDS) (see Table 1). Candidates are asked to respond to three questions regarding their preparation across 16 topical areas. The questions are: (1) What activities or experiences in the program have resulted in you being well prepared in this area? (2) What content do you feel you need to explore in greater depth? And (3) If there was one thing you could change about your preparation in this area, what would it be? Candidates are asked to rate their preparation in elementary education, secondary education, legislation/regulations, professional and ethical practice, understanding of specific disabilities, effective instructional practices, research-based practices, classroom management, home-school collaboration, professional collaboration, working with CLD students, differentiated instruction, assessment and progress monitoring, Response to Intervention, and assistive and instructional technology. Additionally, candidates are asked to respond to the three questions as they pertain to each semester's experience as a whole. At the end of the student teaching semester, participants are asked to consider the entire special education pre-service preparation program.

Surveys are sent to cooperating teachers at the end of each semester. Surveys are also sent to principals who hire program graduates at the end of the first year of their employment as full-time teachers. Both cooperating teachers and principals are asked to indicate the extent to which they agree that program participants/graduates (i.e., pre-service and first-year teachers) demonstrated knowledge and skills across the following 12 domains: (1) effective instructional practices, (2) age/grade level appropriate practices, (3) issues of cultural and linguistic diversity, (4) strategies for assessment and continuous progress monitoring, (5) use of assessment data in differentiating instruction, (6) methods for positively and proactively managing student behavior,

(7) Response to Intervention and its implementation, (8) appropriate practices for students with disabilities in a specific setting, (9) legal requirements and professional responsibilities associated with serving students with disabilities, (10) appropriate use of assistive and instructional technology, (11) collaboration with paraprofessionals/colleagues, and (12) home/school collaboration.

### **Results of Formative and Summative Evaluation Activities**

Information gathered from the data sources presented below was used to guide continued program revision activities.

**Focus groups.** Program participants are convened at the end of each semester to respond to a set of three questions applied to 16 topics (as described above). Based on formative feedback gathered from the focus groups, four primary areas of concern led to the following program modifications. First, candidates wanted more infusion of multicultural content in all courses, as well as better alignment of content in the two multicultural courses. Project staff modified the matrix to more carefully sequence content in the two courses and established a working group to address the infusion of multicultural content into all special education courses. Second, candidates indicated that content related to diversity should be taught earlier, both in the program sequence and during their student teaching semester. As a result, the second author and doctoral students in Multicultural Special Education realigned course content across *ALD 327* and *SED 337*, and redesigned *SED 337* to be taught intensively during the first month of the semester. Third, candidates expressed the need for more preparation to work with paraprofessionals. This was addressed by including additional information on professional collaboration in two courses, and adding the paraeducator dialogue project in *SED 337*. Finally, the self-evaluation forms that candidates complete after teaching a lesson were cumbersome and needed to focus on salient features of their teaching. These forms were modified accordingly and updated to include the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners; and they were recently piloted.

**Cooperating teacher feedback.** To date, cooperating teacher survey responses have been analyzed for five consecutive semesters: Spring 2010, Fall 2010, Spring 2011, Fall 2011, and Spring 2012. The mean rating of cooperating teachers' (CTs) survey responses in aggregate was 3.4 on a scale of 1 to 4, indicating overwhelming agreement among cooperating teachers that program participants are generally competent across the 12 domains. Disaggregated by semester, the survey data showed that the CTs rated the interns as increasingly competent as they progressed through the program (see Table 2).

**Table 2**  
*Cooperating Teachers and Hiring Principals Mean Ratings of  
 Program Participants Across Domains*

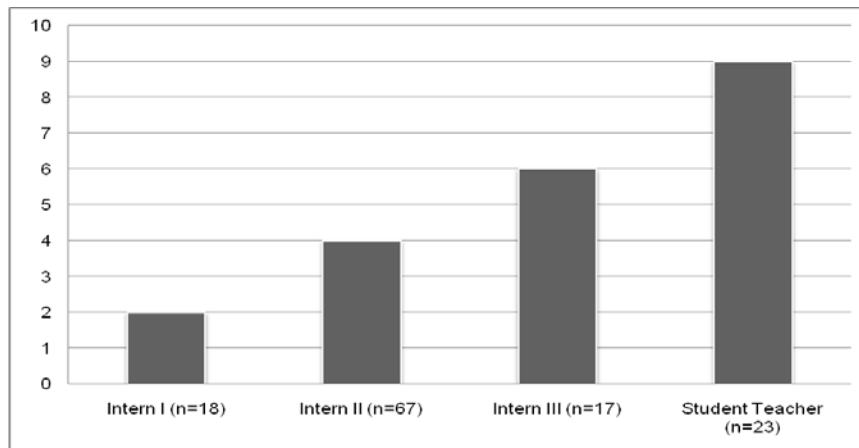
	Cooperating Teachers' Mean Ratings				Principals' Ratings			Mean Ratings
	Intern I F '10, '11 (n=18)	Intern II S '10, '11, '12 (n=67)	Intern III F '10, '11 (n=17)	Student Teachers S '10, '11, '12 (n=23)	2010 (n=5)	2011 (n=4)	2012 (n=7)	
Effective instructional practices	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.8	3.8	3.5	3.6	<b>3.6</b>
Age/grade level appropriate practices	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.4	<b>3.5</b>
Issues of cultural and linguistic diversity	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.4	3.8	3.4	<b>3.5</b>
Strategies for assessment and continuous progress monitoring	3.0	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.4	<b>3.4</b>
Use of assessment data in differentiating instruction	2.8	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.6	4.0	3.6	<b>3.7</b>
Methods for positively and pro-actively managing student behavior	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.4	3.8	3.3	<b>3.5</b>
Response to Intervention and its implementation	2.8	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.3	3.4	<b>3.4</b>
Appropriate practices for students with disabilities in this setting	3.2	3.6	3.6	3.9	3.8	3.5	3.4	<b>3.6</b>
Legal requirements and professional responsibilities associated with serving students with disabilities	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.6	<b>3.6</b>
Appropriate use of assistive and instructional technology	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.3	3.0	3.5	3.5	<b>3.3</b>
Collaboration with para-professionals/ colleagues	3.7	3.4	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.8	3.4	<b>3.6</b>
Home/school collaboration	3.1	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.8	3.4	<b>3.5</b>

*Note:* Responses are on a 4-point scale: 1=Strongly disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly agree.



Mean ratings of 3.5 and higher for any given domain indicate strong agreement with respect to interns' knowledge and skill. For interns in their first semester, two of the 12 domains were rated 3.5 or higher on average. As those interns completed their second semester, the number of domains for which CTs strongly agree they are knowledgeable increased to four, then to six at the end of the third semester, and to nine at the completion of student teaching (see Figure 1).

*Figure 1.* Number of Categories for which Cooperating Teachers' Mean Ratings of Intern Competencies were 3.5 or Higher (Strongly Agree).



Note. Data are based on 2010 and 2011 cohorts and numbers reflect the numbers of CT surveys received and not necessarily the numbers of interns. Intern IIs each have two CTs, one for their early childhood placement and one for their autism and developmental disabilities placement, so more surveys were collected from CTs of intern IIs than from any of the other internship semesters for which each intern had one CT.

Table 2 also summarized areas of relative program strengths and opportunities for improvement through a comparison of mean ratings for each domain over time as cohorts matriculated through the program and began their professional careers. As evaluated by their CTs, Interns I (semester one program participants) received the highest ratings on effective instructional practices and collaboration with paraprofessionals and colleagues. Interns II (second semester program participants) were rated highly on effective instructional practices, issues (e.g., understanding) of cultural and linguistic diversity, strategies for assessment and continuous progress monitoring, use of assessment data in differentiating instruction, and appropriate practices for students with disabilities in this setting. Interns III (third semester program participants) continued to receive high ratings in common with Interns II and additionally on legal requirements and collaboration with professionals. Finally, student teachers (fourth semester program participants) received ratings higher than 3.5 in every category except management of student behavior, response-to-intervention, and the appropriate use of assistive and instructional technology. Areas of opportunity for growth are identified as those categories receiving mean ratings of less than 3.0. The only instances where this occurred were for Interns I in use of assessment data in differentiating instruction and response-to-intervention and its implementation. These findings were perplexing given the first semester internship is in a general education setting where these components would be of critical importance.

Improvement is also evident when comparing successive PDS cohorts (see Table 3). Cooperating teachers' ratings of the knowledge of Interns I and III were compared from Fall 2010 to Fall 2011, while ratings for Interns II and student teachers were compared for three successive years (Spring 2010, 2011, and 2012) over 12 domains. For each domain, mean ratings of 3 or 4 (agree or strongly agree) were calculated and compared across years. For Interns I, improvement was evident between Fall 2010 and Fall 2011 for seven of the 12 domains. For Interns II, improvement was evident for six domains across years. Interns III improved in four domains, and student teachers in seven. Improvement across years is evident for each group of interns with the exception of Interns II between 2011 and 2012. This may be influenced by the fact that an unusually small cohort of students was enrolled in 2011. Improvement over time is noted in several categories, including age/grade level appropriate practices, methods for managing student behavior, response to intervention (RtI), and collaboration. Categories that received consistently high levels of agreement include effective instructional practices, issues of cultural and linguistic diversity, strategies for assessment and progress monitoring, use of assessment data in differentiating instruction, and appropriate practices for students with disabilities.

**Principal feedback.** Principal feedback was collected, recorded, and analyzed for three consecutive years, and at the end of the 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 school years. Principals who hired program graduates as first-year teachers were asked to rate those teachers on their knowledge of each domain similar to the cooperating teachers. Overall, principals agreed that program graduates demonstrated the targeted knowledge. Mean responses ranged from 3.0 to 4.0, and the mean overall rating was 3.5. Nine of the 12 domains could be considered areas of relative program strength, receiving mean ratings of 3.5 and above. These included all of the domains except strategies for assessment and continuous progress monitoring, RtI and its implementation, and the appropriate use of assistive and instructional technology, all of which received mean ratings of 3.3-3.4.

### **Accomplishments, Challenges, and Next Steps**

Ongoing evaluation efforts have yielded information that indicates that the program is adjusting to successfully meet the needs of participating candidates. Focus group meetings continue to be conducted at the end of each semester and further program adjustments are anticipated as results are analyzed. Our candidates' growth across the 12 domains, particularly in the areas of diversity and collaboration, are well documented by the ratings received from cooperating teachers as well as employing principals. These data also indicate that competence increases as candidates matriculate through the program. This feedback suggests that program redesign efforts through Project RISE have created more systematic linkages of content across courses and increased graduates ability to implement culturally and linguistically responsive practice.

Despite these successes, much remains to be done. For example during PDS I, candidates' competence in RtI and differentiation of instruction received the lowest rating. Ratings in RtI continue to remain fairly low throughout the program and employing principals' mean ratings is 3.4 in this area. Given the importance of RtI and differentiation in addressing the needs of CLD learners, program faculty will continue to explore the reasons for this relative weakness and efforts will be made to strengthen these program components. Since candidates are completing

**Table 3**  
*Percentage of Cooperating Teachers Who Assigned 3 (agree) or 4 (strongly agree) in Rating Pre-service Teachers' Competence across 12 Domains*

	<u>PDS I</u>		<u>PDS II - FLS/A-DD</u>		<u>PDS II - PPCD</u>			<u>PDS III</u>		<u>Student Teacher</u>			
	Fall '10 (n=9)	Fall '11 (n=9)	Spring '10 (n=10)	Spring '11 (n=8)	Spring '12 (n=16)	Spring '10 (n=12)	Spring '11 (n=2)	Spring '12 (n=20)	Fall '10 (n=12)	Fall '11 (n=5)	Spring '10 (n=5)	Spring '11 (n=11)	Spring '12 (n=7)
Effective instructional practices	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Age/grade level appropriate practices	100%	100%	86%	100%	94%	92%	100%	100%	92%	100%	80%	100%	100%
Issues of cultural and linguistic diversity	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	92%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Strategies for assessment and continuous progress monitoring	78%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Use of assessment data in differentiating instruction	78%	89%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	92%	80%	100%	100%	100%
Methods for positively and proactively managing student behavior	88%	100%	71%	100%	94%	92%	100%	95%	92%	80%	80%	100%	100%
Response to Intervention and its implementation	66%	67%	57%	60%	88%	50%	100%	100%	58%	80%	80%	100%	100%
Appropriate practices for students with disabilities in this setting	77%	66%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Legal requirements and professional responsibilities associated with serving students with disabilities	88%	66%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	80%	100%	90%
Appropriate use of assistive and instructional technology	56%	77%	71%	100%	93%	92%	100%	80%	83%	80%	80%	91%	100%
Collaboration with paraprofessionals/colleagues	89%	100%	86%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	83%	80%	100%	91%	100%
Home/school collaboration	77%	100%	100%	60%	100%	92%	100%	100%	67%	80%	100%	91%	100%

their first semester of internship and just beginning their methods courses, it may be premature to expect them to demonstrate high levels of competence during PDS I. The department maintains a state-of-the-art assistive and instructional technology lab. Candidates visit the lab each semester of the PDS and are expected to utilize technology extensively in their field placements. Ratings in this area indicate that more needs to be done and careful attention must be given to assignments requiring utilization of assistive and instructional technology during fieldwork. Continued efforts will be made to develop preservice teachers' competence in positively and proactively managing student behavior with an emphasis on culturally responsive behavior management.

Now that two courses have been designed to lay the foundation for cultural and linguistic understanding, the next step is to integrate diversity-related concepts and skills across the three semesters between the Foundations Block and student teaching. This will require the involvement of faculty who teach these courses to compare existing syllabi with the matrix to identify opportunities for readings, activities, and assignments that will deepen candidates' understanding of the relevance of diversity across all domains. In effect, our goal is to shift faculty and candidate views of culturally responsive teaching from an add-on competency to an inclusive, equity-oriented framework of special education that situates *all* learning within its socio-cultural and linguistic contexts.

Another area of future activities will be to increase collaboration between faculty in the departments of special education and curriculum and instruction. Although the collaborative intervention projects (refined and implemented with the Monarch Center support) have been successful in fostering interactions between general and special educators, there is a continuing need for deeper and broader connections for both groups. For example, such interactions would promote a clearer understanding of general education candidates about their roles in RtI as well as inclusive special education services, while simultaneously building parallel skills for SED candidates related to collaboration and teamwork. Just as the CIP project has been institutionalized in the SED curriculum, efforts are needed to integrate and institutionalize these components in the general education teacher education curriculum.

Preparing pre-service special educators to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities is an often-espoused priority among teacher education programs. Professional literature, national and state standards, and the nation's changing demography highlight the importance of this focus. It has become an explicit priority in federal funding for personnel preparation programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2006), including Project RISE. However, accomplishing this objective is no simple task. Although the literature is clear about the importance of infusing diversity content throughout the program (Kea, Campbell-Whatley, & Richards, 2006), implementation efforts have been difficult to sustain due to a linear approach to problem solving, and a focus on a single-course rather than the transformation of the teacher education program (Trent et al., 2008). As a result, content related to diversity may rely on the commitment of individual faculty, or is "infused" in less than substantive ways. Our experience with Project RISE suggests that both approaches are important but must be intertwined for optimal results. That is, core concepts related to diversity—including the development of cultural self-awareness—require intensive and focused attention that can only be provided through specialized courses, but these competencies must be systematically infused across the program if

candidates are to become highly skilled in culturally and linguistically responsive practice. Ultimately, a continued commitment of institutional resources and faculty development are needed to achieve equity and social justice for all students with disabilities.

### AUTHOR NOTES

**Phyllis M. Robertson, PhD**, is a Clinical Associate Professor, **Shernaz B. García, PhD**, is an Associate Professor, **Laura A. McFarland, M.Ed.**, is a doctoral candidate, and **Herbert J. Rieth, PhD**, is a Professor, all in the Department of Special Education at The University of Texas at Austin.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Phyllis M. Robertson, Department of Special Education, 1 University Station, D5300, The University of Texas, Austin, TX 78712. E-mail: [probertson@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:probertson@austin.utexas.edu)

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# USC Upstate: A Journey Toward Improving a Learning Disability Teacher Preparation Program to Meet the Diverse Needs of Today's Classrooms

**Holly Pae**

*University of South Carolina Upstate  
Spartanburg, South Carolina*

**Susan D. Whitaker**

*University of South Carolina Upstate  
Spartanburg, South Carolina  
and  
Walden University*

**Roberta Gentry**

*University of Mary Washington  
Fredericksburg, Virginia*

Areas of our country are headed toward significant social and political unrest if education ignores the demographic trends reshaping our schools. This article describes how one teacher training program in South Carolina examined its cultural context, accreditation standards, and course offerings to restructure its curriculum to address cultural and linguistic diversity.

**Keywords:** diversity, teacher training, multicultural education, culturally responsive pedagogy, teacher preparation.

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners continue to fail in school at rates that are significantly higher than those of White students (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010; Chu, 2011; Kober, Usher, & Center on Education, 2012; Lee, 2006) and they are overrepresented in the high-incidence special education categories (Blanchert, 2006; Ford, 2012; Sullivan 2011). Parrish (2002) found that states with a history of racial apartheid under *de jure* segregation (i.e., Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, and the Carolinas) account for five of the seven states with the highest overrepresentation of African-Americans identified with mental retardation. African-American students in the Carolinas were more than four times as likely to be identified with this label than White students. Currently, communities in the South are undergoing dramatic changes in terms of their racial, cultural, and economic profiles. Arguably, this geographical area and others in our country are headed toward significant social and political unrest if education, along with public policy, ignores the demographic trends that are reshaping our schools' identities. This article examines how the University of South Carolina Upstate is setting new priorities to restructure its special education teacher preparation program in order to promote the well being of the community it serves. We address the context for change, revisions made to the program, and suggestions for future policy and practice.

## **Redefining the South**

In 1996, the U.S. Census Bureau projected that the population of the United States may top 300 million shortly after 2010 (Day, 1996). This prediction was achieved on October 17, 2006. While this rapid growth impacts the supply and demand of new teachers, the most important aspect to be considered is the shift in demographic trends that have occurred along with this growth during the first decade of the new millennium. The minority population grew 11 times as rapidly as the non-Hispanic White population, and the Hispanic population (of any race) more than doubled (Haverluk & Trautman, 2008; William & Casey, 2011). While the U. S. population increased by an estimated 24.8 million (2000-09), slightly more than half (51.4%) of this growth was concentrated in the South (Johnson & Kasarda, 2011; Parrado & Kandel, 2010).

North Carolina led the nation in immigration-driven population change during the 1990s (237.7% change in foreign-born population), followed by Georgia (233.4%), Nevada (202%), and Arkansas (196.3%) (Urban Institute, 2007). The top two states with the largest growth in Hispanic population between 2000 and 2010 were also in the South: South Carolina and Alabama (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). In addition, this region holds the second largest concentration of Hispanics (14.5%) in the country. About 57% of the net growth in the North Carolina school system is Hispanic children (Lopez, 2006). Of the ten states (plus the District of Columbia) that had child poverty rates of 25% or higher (Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia), nine are located in the region that the U.S. Census defines as the South (American Community Survey, 2011). In a 2010 Census analysis, Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Tennessee had Hispanic child-poverty rates above 40% (Macartney, 2011).

Noteworthy is how the demographic changes are creating a new melting pot in states not commonly thought to experience immigration population influx. Johnson (2009) suggests that we are in a crisis, a “train wreck waiting to happen if we don't figure out how to educate the new majority” (p. 22). In addition to the alarming number of children under 18 living in families with incomes below \$30,000 a year (19% of the White population, 43% of the non-White population [African American, American Indian and Alaska native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander], and 43% of the Hispanic population), he also points out that 48% of all students live in households where neither parent has any college experience (42% of the White population, 46% of the non-White population [African American, American Indian and Alaska native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander], and 68% of the Hispanic population). Clearly, educators must equip future teachers to meet the needs of this changing population.

### **Accreditation's Role in Shaping the Terrain**

At a minimum, the new racial diversity among children in the South has heightened the imperative for attaining appropriate policies and practices, particularly in the realm of public education. National education professional bodies that define teacher education practices have recognized this need over a decade ago. At the institutional level of accreditation, for example, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) revised its 2001 evaluation criteria to include Standard Four: Diversity.



Standard 4: Diversity expects that the unit designs, implements and evaluates curriculum and experiences for candidates to acquire and apply knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to help all students learn. It includes the expectation that candidates have the opportunity to interact with candidates, faculty, and P-12 students from diverse groups. (NCATE, 2008, p.34)

A focus upon multicultural pedagogy is also found at the program-accreditation level. Specialized Professional Associations have made revisions to add to the number of assessment indicators related to diversity. Indeed, whereas 13 of the 1995 Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) Common Core and the Learning Disability Standards pertained to diversity, in the 2009 revisions candidates must satisfy 25 performance requirements associated with culturally responsive practices. This is virtually a 100% increase of criteria for targeting the needs of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The newfound emphasis placed upon diversity and pre-service teachers' ability to work effectively with all children provides institutions and teacher preparation programs with a guide for evaluating their offerings and identifying areas for improvement. Teacher educators must now verify existing practices, and in the process identify, develop, and implement measures to address weaknesses, as well as conduct evaluations of the programs' effectiveness given any restructuring. Unfortunately, although many teacher education programs have attempted to address the issues of multicultural education, and for the most part culturally responsive pedagogy and multicultural education have not truly been integrated into the curriculum in a thorough, comprehensive manner (Eunhyun, 2011; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). Research indicates, however, that teacher candidates who have learned culturally responsive pedagogy are less likely to embrace culturally deficit views and are more confident in their ability to teach a culturally diverse student population (Gay, 2010; Harmon, 2012; Irvine, 2003; Rychly, & Graves, 2012).

### **Contextual Factors for Change: The University**

The University of South Carolina Upstate is a senior comprehensive public institution of the University of South Carolina (USC) system. The University is located in Spartanburg, South Carolina and serves the Upstate (an area defined by school districts along the I-85 corridor between Atlanta, Georgia and Charlotte, North Carolina), and adjoining regions. It has a minority enrollment that exceeds 30%, and 71 nations are represented among the student population.

The School of Education has NCATE accreditation and is fully approved by the South Carolina Department of Education and the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education. It has an enrollment of nearly 1,000 students, with 21 full-time, tenured, and tenure-track and six full-time, non-tenure-track faculty members. USC Upstate first offered the Learning Disability (LD) Bachelor of Science degree in the Fall, 2000. The LD Program specifically prepares candidates to meet the South Carolina certification and highly qualified requirements for licensure in Learning Disabilities (K-12). The program of study consists of 123 credit hours of coursework, 44 hours of general education requirements, 15 hours of educational foundation and support

courses, nine hours of a content concentration in psychology, and 55 hours of professional education courses in the areas of learning disabilities and literacy.

The LD Program is in full compliance with CEC Standards, with no weaknesses cited. Given this context, faculty members saw the LD Program as being well situated to take an aggressive stance in improving training practices to alleviate service gaps and weaknesses in the field. With the help of the Monarch Center, a federally funded technical assistance and dissemination center established to support special education and related service faculty from minority institutions of higher education, the LD Program submitted and received a 325T Program Improvement Grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in 2009. During its first year, the LD Program Improvement Project established a 13-member Curriculum Committee of College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and School of Education (SOE) faculty members, as well as one public school special educator, to assist in the planning and oversight of the LD Program's curriculum. Individual members within this body were paired with another based upon shared expertise. One set of SOE and CAS faculty members contributed knowledge of multicultural education. All members received a grant-funded stipend to support the work completed together toward identifying the current practices of each discipline's curriculum, sharing the bodies of standards used to guide respective instructional orientations, and establishing teaching approaches proven effective in the field. This endeavor served as a guide for revising the LD Program curriculum.

The Committee's efforts became the catalyst in recognizing the need to revise the LD Program's course offerings to include culturally responsive pedagogy, an instructional aspect found conspicuously absent in its curriculum. The clarity used to articulate the necessity of this change was supported by the literature extolling multicultural perspectives (Banks & Banks, 2006; Garcia, 2000; Hawley & Nieto, 2010; Nieto, 2004, 2006) and was promoted by the Project members' recognition of how the community's demographic profile warranted a pedagogical shift in preparation.

### **Contextual Factors for Change: The Community**

Recognition of the South Carolina teaching force, special education needs, and student profiles, guided the restructuring of the LD Program toward achieving a multicultural curriculum. The following demographic data were identified from the South Carolina (SC) Center for Educator Recruitment, Retentions and Advancement (2009) and the U. S. Census Bureau (2012).

- SC teacher diversity is higher than that of the national population (20% vs. 14%)
- The highest numbers of employed SC special educators teach in the area of Learning Disabilities (35%)
- Among SC students in special education, 42% receive services for learning disabilities
- Spartanburg County minority population is 35%, the University is 38%, and the School of Education is 26%

- Minorities account for approximately 45% of students enrolled in SC public schools, while 76% of teachers are White
- Only 16% of SC teachers are identified as African-American and the percentages of SC teachers from other ethnic groups (Hispanic, American Indian and Alaska native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander) are less than 1 each; and
- Among the 74 students currently enrolled in the LD Program at USC Upstate, 23% African American, 1% Hispanic, and 76% Caucasian

### **Restructuring Program Guideline**

***Establishing a conceptual framework.*** Prior to the program restructuring, candidates completed one course that specifically focused upon cultural diversity and multicultural perspectives in teaching before Program admission. To strengthen this preparation, three options were considered: (a) a stand-alone Program-level diversity course, (b) a programmatic diversity integration, and (c) a combination of the two. The second (programmatic integration), systematically embeds culturally responsive teaching practices across course offerings, was deemed to be the most effective role. This approach allows for achieving a deep restructuring of the LD Program's curriculum. Subsequently, the goal to establish a philosophy of teaching that affirms and responds to each student's unique culture (Aldridge, 2003; Gay, 2000) was recognized as a necessary condition to underpin all practices. To this end, coursework and clinical offerings now include assignments that target how issues of race, ethnicity, class, and family roles can be used in creating productive classrooms conducive to meeting all students' needs (Sampson, 2005; Turner-Vorbeck, 2005).

The revisions to the LD Program's coursework were also driven by the theme that candidates must be nurtured to explore their beliefs and critically reflect upon them (see Ball, 2000; Ball & Lardner, 1997; Ball & Muhammad, 2003; Pajares, 1992). Course readings, assignments, and field experience projects were selected in terms of opportunities to engage candidates in critical literacy, "a method used to enable readers to view how texts [and actions] are socially situated" (Wake & Modla, 2008, p.182). Candidates are now urged to question the status quo, challenge prevailing ideas, and rethink the world from multiple perspectives (Freire, 2005; Shor, 1999). Finally, practices associated with culturally responsive classrooms were identified and included in the curriculum based on a review of the literature (e.g., Au, 1993 [literacy]; Brown 2002 [urban perspective]; Cochran-Smith, 2000 [racism]).

***Redefining the coursework.*** The LD Program was originally designed to ensure that candidates gain knowledge to be applied in public school classrooms in a recursive developmental manner. Keeping this model's perspective, Project members categorized the instructional focus into three areas (a) content, (b) skill-subject specific and skill- theory, and (c) field experience (see Table 1). This framework served as a structure for identifying how to best infuse multicultural perspectives and practices throughout the Program. In addition to assuring that the *content-based courses* targeted corresponding CEC Standards (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 5, 8 and 9) to establish the candidates' knowledge in those areas, they also were revised to establish bodies of knowledge regarding multiculturalism, child advocacy, and diversity. In the skill-based classes, improve-

**Table 1**

*Multicultural Topic areas and Culturally Responsive Practices Infused in the Course Types: Content, Skill-Theory and Skill-Subject, and Field Experiences by Stage in the LD Program*

	Content	Skill	Field
Stage I	<p><b>Characteristics of Students with LD</b></p> <p>Multicultural perspectives, • Schools as change agents • Diversity • Values, languages, and customs—differences between home and school • English Language Learners • Discrimination</p>	<p><b>Methods for Students with LD</b> (Behavioral Theory)</p> <p>Alternative and authentic assessments • Equity and excellence through mastery learning • Cultural variation needs (motivation, morale, and engagement)</p>	<p><b>Practicum in Disabilities</b></p> <p>Special education as a model for empowerment • School cultures and social structures • Child advocacy • Inclusion and LRE • Social-economic status • White privilege • Barriers</p>
Stage II	<p><b>Assessment of Students with Disabilities</b></p> <p>Bias • Identification issues and trends • Validity • Test modifications and alternatives • Parent communications • Ethical practices • Language barriers • Case studies w/ cultural dimensions</p>	<p><b>Curriculum for Students with LD</b> (Cognitive Theory)</p> <p>Universal design • Content integration • Equity pedagogy • Differentiation • Cooperative learning • Alternative learning styles and modalities</p>	<p><b>Instruction Practicum in LD</b></p> <p>Classroom interaction designs • Culturally relevant materials • Diversity decor • Multicultural content • Active participation • High expectations • Scaffolding • Applied learning</p>
Stage III	<p><b>Behavior Management in Special Education</b></p> <p>Social Skill development—gender and ethnic considerations • Mutual respect • Positive and diverse role models • Proactive discipline • Socio-cultural consciousness • Dispositions of care</p>	<p><b>LD Reading Methods</b></p> <p><b>LD Language Methods</b> (2 courses)</p> <p>Responsive instructional content Resources for cultural and linguistic differences • Diverse language needs • Language-based strategies</p>	<p><b>LD Reading and Language Practicum</b></p> <p>Growth and development-- effects of cultural and linguistic differences • Progress-monitoring for all student success • Strategies individualized for diverse needs • Interconnections</p>
Stage IV	<p><b>Issues and Trends in Exceptionalities</b></p> <p>Accountability • Cultural identification and biases • Special educator as a change agent • School culture and social structure empowerment • Impact of the dominant group • Multiculturalism goals</p>	<p>←- 15 Credit Hours -→</p>	<p><b>Directed Teaching of Learners with LD</b></p> <p>Multiple assessment strategies • Parent and community involvement • Student confidence builders • Communication and collaboration • Proactive behavior management</p>

ments included field-based assignments in which candidates apply multiple CEC Standards (e.g., 3, 4, 6, 7) through applications of culturally responsive practices. Two additional *skill-based classes* require candidates to apply principles of behavioral and cognitive theories and examine the research regarding different perspectives toward effectively meeting diverse student population needs. The *field-based experiences* were revised to encompass activities involving collaboration (CEC #10) in terms of building positive student-centered supports and all-inclusive learning environments

***Bridging the content with field experiences.*** Many individuals have suggested that there should be congruence between the on-campus classes and the field experiences, and that the field experiences should be closely connected to the program goals and to the individual course components (see Cochran-Smith, & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006). Mason (1999) found that learning the theory of culturally responsive pedagogy in the classroom was not enough, but that when the field experience was added, the information about culture and ethnicity and the implications for planning and teaching were made much more meaningful to the candidates. Thus, it became evident that there was a need for a field experience each semester that was closely tied to the on-campus classes to transfer the on-campus learning to the real-world setting. Courses were examined at each program stage to identify relevant skills, attitudes, and concepts for every course and then integrated into the field experience for that stage.

A further issue was ensuring that each teacher candidate had field experiences in a variety of settings. A database was developed listing all student and school characteristics (i.e., socioeconomic status, ethnicity, English language learners [ELL], and disabilities) as well as information regarding the school's size, location (urban, suburban, rural), and school report card data (including achievement and adequate yearly progress for No Child Left Behind reporting). The development of this database revealed that additional field placements were needed to increase the diversity required to meet the revised Program goals. Placement selection was also based upon identifying field-based teachers who could serve as role models and have a thorough knowledge of culturally responsive education. Moreover, placements need "strong principals, small student/teacher ratios, fair discipline policies, high teacher expectations for students, and programmatic efforts to include parents in the educational process" (Kea, Campbell-Whatley, & Richards, 2006, p. 10). As additional sites were identified and added to the first database, a second one was generated to monitor candidates' placements across the LD Program stages to ensure that they were placed in appropriately diverse settings.

### **Programmatic Integration Model: An Example**

To understand how the integrated approach works, consider the following CEC Common Core and LD Standards:

**ICC1K10** Potential impact of differences in values, languages, and customs that can exist between the home and school;

**ICC6K1** Effects of cultural and linguistic differences on growth and development;

**ICC6K2** Characteristics of one's own culture and use of language and the ways in which these can differ from other cultures and uses of languages;

**ICC6K3** Ways of behaving and communicating among cultures that can lead to misinterpretation and misunderstanding;

**ICC6S2** Use communication strategies and resources to facilitate understanding of subject matter for individuals with exceptional learning needs whose primary language is not the dominant language. (Council for Exceptional Children, 2009)

Candidates are introduced to these practices in the 412: LD Characteristics and 410: LD Methods courses (Stage I). In 483: Assessment of Students with LD/ADD course (Stage II), candidates additionally learn about due process, non-biased assessment, and factors leading to misidentification of students. During the following semester (Stage III), in the 445: Language Disorders and Language Arts Methods course, these concepts are expanded upon and directly applied to language arts. Requirements for this class include numerous readings on cultural diversity and language differences. Candidates gain a knowledge base related to the Standards through in-class presentations and discussions. After viewing video clips of various students, candidates discuss language in terms of linguistic difference or disability. Given the scenarios, they identify possible attitudes others may take based on the students' language and how that would impact planning for assessment and instruction. This activity provides guided practice in application of the knowledge.

The instructor assesses the candidates' performance in the class using a case study focusing on a CLD student. Candidates have to examine the relevant cultural and linguistic differences, analyze the impact of the teachers' attitudes, and make decisions regarding the identification of a student with a disability, as well as formulate recommendations for further assessments and instructional planning. Furthermore, throughout the semester, as the candidates learn about teaching various aspects of language arts, such as vocabulary, phonological awareness, composition, etc., they are given case studies where they plan lessons to teach specific skills to students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Candidates are required to discuss the relevant factors related to diversity and explain how they will meet diverse student needs.

Finally, the candidates have a field experience course associated with the language arts and the concurrent 415: Reading Disorders and Reading Methods course where they are required to plan a unit of instruction. They must discuss contextual factors (socioeconomic levels, disabilities, ethnicities, gender, etc.) for their field experience placement and explain how those factors impact their planning. Upon completion, candidates write a reflection that again questions how the cultural background, primary language, gender, socioeconomic status, and disability impacted their planning, assessment, and instruction in their unit. During the field experience, candidates are observed teaching their unit and evaluated on numerous CEC Standards. Candidates' teaching reflections explore how they created environments in which diversities are valued, and how they cultivate settings for all to retain and appreciate their own and other's language and cultural heritage. They also examine how they fostered an appreciation of diversity

and use resources that respond to cultural, linguistic, gender, and other differences, in addition to accommodating varied learning styles.

### **Assessing Candidates' Competencies Related to Diversity**

In addition to the assessments used in each course and field experience, the LD Program uses a Dispositions and Professional Conduct Survey Self-Assessment as another means for assuring that all candidates endorse and demonstrate the desired dispositions and practices related to diversity. Candidates complete and submit this self-assessment at each stage of the Program. Faculty members also complete a survey to evaluate the candidates (Stage II) and field experience host teachers complete one during the candidates' student teaching experience (Stage IV). The recurrent use of this instrument in the Program's assessment system not only reinforces the candidates' knowledge of the behaviors expected of them, but also serves as a mechanism to monitor their professional growth across all stages of the Program.

At each LD Program stage, candidates develop a portfolio to demonstrate teaching competencies, including meeting diverse student needs. Candidates write statements explaining the philosophical, theoretical, and practical principles underpinning each section. Additionally, the portfolio includes artifacts, the candidates' justification for the selection of the artifacts, and a reflection on their learning and growth as a potential teacher. These written descriptions, rationales, and reflection statements are used as a foundation for evaluating the candidates' culturally responsive pedagogical knowledge across the Program stages in a recursive, developmental manner. Subsequently, this instrument is used as both a formative and summative assessment tool for providing candidates with routine feedback toward improvement. In order for candidates to advance beyond (Stage II) in the LD Program, apply for student teaching in (Stage III) and then complete the Program (Stage IV), they must attain a rating of satisfactory.

### **Recruitment Initiatives**

LD Program members devised a recruitment plan designed to increase recruitment of candidates from underrepresented groups, including African-Americans, Hispanics, and individuals with disabilities, in order to supply greater diversification in the special education workforce. The Plan specifies four activity categories (a) dissemination of electronic and printed recruitment materials, (b) attendance at campus recruitment events, (c) participation in two off-campus recruitment events, and (d) creation of a website for the LD Program. (The Website continues to be developed.) Additionally, the Program members have engaged in formulating a new school-wide recruitment initiative that was implemented in 2011. Through the Teaching Man Program, the School of Education makes efforts to attract males into the teaching profession as one measure to increase the diversity of the South Carolina teacher population (16% SC teachers are male; 2% of these males are African American). Those participating engage in leadership activities, serve as a mentor to a public school student, and attend additional education opportunities. The male candidates in turn are assigned a mentor to assist and guide them throughout their studies.

In the third year of implementing recruitment plan activities, the LD Program's student enrollment increased by 17 students, or 30% in comparison to the baseline enrollment

established at the beginning of 2009. The LD Program student diversity also increased. Twenty-five students, or 34% of the LD Program majors, represent a diverse pool of candidates in terms of race, disability, and gender.

### **Future Directions**

The LD Program will continue to refine its offerings based upon candidates' performances and feedback from its school partnerships. Although the initial phase of revising the Program syllabi was a time-consuming process, it was a worthwhile undertaking. All classes have been implemented as planned. Credit for this feat is attributed to the fact that the members who revised the coursework are also the courses' instructors. In response to recent reform efforts, such as the *No Child Left Behind's* performance-based highly qualified standard and the *Race to the Top Competition* incentive, Program members are now placing an emphasis upon revising candidate observation instruments to gauge their performance in relation to student-learning outcomes and classroom culturally responsive practices. The challenge is to clarify observed actions of multiculturalism, pluralism, and culturally responsive practices and capture these behaviors on a one-two page evaluation form that is feasible and user-friendly.

### **Suggestions for Policy and Practice**

If teacher education programs are truly going to promote the well being of the communities they serve and provide leadership in these reform initiatives, they must be willing to review and revise their programs in terms of the changing demographics of the population their candidates will teach. To achieve this aim, the following suggestions are provided:

- Establish the demographics of the communities that candidates will serve
- Review program offerings to verify coursework alignment with professional standards and community characteristics
- Restructure programs to provide candidates opportunities to demonstrate competencies in instruction for CLD students in both coursework and field experiences
- Identify diverse field-based placements with mentors who are good role models that implement culturally responsive pedagogy
- Offer training for school and University personnel to mentor candidates in the field
- Provide multiple and varied field settings that allow candidates to practice the knowledge and skills taught in coursework each semester
- Conduct multiple evaluations of candidates' knowledge, skills, and dispositions in both coursework and field experiences throughout their program
- Recruit diverse faculty and candidates who represent the communities in which they teach.



Kozol (1981) raises the question of what teaching and schools are for - maintaining an inequitable status quo or achieving a vibrant democracy in which all students (and teachers) feel they participate. Unquestionably, higher education and its teacher education programs must play a key role in promoting schools as one of the few social enterprises well positioned to change the society it mirrors. When we view schools and teachers who work in them as change agents, teacher preparation will value the necessity of achieving pluralistic, democratic, and equitable practices through culturally responsive pedagogy. If we do not, the bifurcation of American society will widen in terms of student opportunity and the ability to achieve the American dream. Shifts in demographic trends make the transformation of schooling a comprehensive, on-going, systematic process. It is a responsibility that teacher education programs and public schools share in making the changes necessary for meeting the needs of today's classrooms.

### AUTHOR NOTES

**Holly Pae, Ed.D.**, is an Associate Professor in the School of Education at the University of South Carolina Upstate. Her research interests are in the areas of accreditation, alternative routes to certification, teaching evaluation, and minority recruitment. **Susan D. Whitaker, Ed.D.**, is an Adjunct Professor in the School of Education at the University of South Carolina Upstate and Walden University. Her research interests are in the areas of mentoring and reading instruction. **Roberta Gentry, Ph.D.**, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Foundations, Leadership, and Special Populations at the University of Mary Washington. Her research interests are in the areas of mentoring, bug in ear, pre-service teacher education.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Dr. Holly Pae, Learning Disability Program Coordinator, University of South Carolina Upstate, 800 University Way, Spartanburg, SC 29303; (864) 503-5556; [hpae@uscupstate.edu](mailto:hpae@uscupstate.edu)

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# **The University of Guam Special Education Program: Preparing Special Education Teachers in a Very Diverse Culture**

**Richard W. Fee**

*Lincoln University  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

**Julie M. Fee**

*University of Guam  
Mangilao, Guam*

**Peggy A. Snowden**

**Nicole M. Stuart**

**Dana Baumgartner**

*University of Illinois at Chicago*

Only 12 students graduated from the M.Ed. – Special Education program at the University of Guam during its first 20 years. In the spring of 2007, with technical assistance from The Monarch Center, the University of Guam School of Education in partnership with the Guam Department of Education and the Guam Commission on Educator Certification began a major program improvement effort. Designed to provide strong support to a diverse student population, the new program uses an accelerated cohort model composed of practicing and experienced teachers. Since the program redesign, 130 students have graduated. Current outcomes suggest that the benefits of this personnel preparation program extend beyond students with disabilities on Guam to include the larger Guam community.

**Keywords:** Special Education Teacher Preparation, Global Education, Asia/Pacific Education, Minority Education

## **Historical Background**

Guam is unique. It is a small tropical island roughly 30 miles long and four to eight miles wide located 13 degrees above the equator. Approximately 6100 miles from the west coast, it is the most distant United States territory. Affiliated with the United States since 1898, Guam is a formal territory like Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 2012). The indigenous people known as Chamorros obtained U.S. citizenship under the Organic Act of 1950 (Guam Online, n. d.). Due to its strategic military location, it was not until the late 1960's that the military opened the island to non-military visitors and granted the people the right to elect their own non-federally appointed governor. The Spanish rule brought trade and Catholicism to the island and over 85% of the current population is Catholic (CIA, 2012).

According to the recent 2010 U.S. Census, 37.1% of the 159,358 residents identified themselves as Chamorro (U.S. Census 2012). Today, although many local people call themselves Chamorros, they are really a mix of Chamorro, Spanish, Filipino, Mexican and Micronesian backgrounds (Guam Online, n. d.). In this matriarchal society, mothers tend to list their children as Chamorro when they register them for school. However, due to peer pressure, many adolescents later identify themselves with other ethnic groups as they enter high school. Students are likely to become Filipino because their friends are Filipino or more importantly, their father or grandparents came from the Philippines. Most local people have some Filipino background, with 26.3% identifying themselves as pure Filipino (CIA, 2012).

The official languages of Guam are Chamorro and English (Guampedia, n. d.). Chamorro is a dying language as it was previously forbidden in the schools by the United States military (Clampitt-Dunlap, 1995). It was considered the home language rather than a language to be taught in schools. Many local people saw the acquisition of strong English skills as a way to obtain better jobs and opportunities on the U.S. mainland. During the 1990's, with a resurgence of interest in language and culture, the public elementary and middle schools introduced one period a day of Chamorro instruction. The "American" influence is quite strong on Guam due to the media and ease of travel, so it is very rare to hear Chamorro spoken except by the *manamokko* (elderly) or politicians during the election season. By late 1990's Guam began to develop a tourist industry for the Asia-Pacific region, which now attracts over 1.5 million visitors each year (CIA, 2012). While students may never acquire proficiency in Chamorro, they will probably absorb sufficient Japanese language skills to work in the continually growing tourist industry.

### **Educational System**

Guam follows the U. S. educational system with an administrative structure very similar to Hawaii. The territory (state) has only one school district with approximately 31,095 students in 41 schools. (Guam Department of Education, 2011). The superintendent serves as both the territorial (state) and district leader of the Guam Department of Education (GDOE). The Guam Education Policy Board, made up of elected and governor-appointed members, also serves in a dual advisory role.

Despite a thriving tourist industry and military presence, Guam schools receive little funding, less than \$6,000 per student each year (Guam Department of Education, 2011). Except for five new schools built in recent years, most schools are in very poor shape (Temkar, 2012). Tropical weather combined with little or no maintenance has caused the Attorney General's office to make regular health inspections. As a result, many schools are closed for weeks at a time due to poor conditions.

According to the last *Annual State of the Public Education Report SY 2010-2011* (Guam Department of Education, ASPER 2011), 97% of public school children on Guam qualify for free or reduced lunches. The federal government designates all 41 public schools as low-income (Bureau of Statistics and Plans, 2011). In addition, there are 19 parochial schools on Guam, and local residents who serve in the military can place their children in the Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) military school system.

## Multicultural Society

On the United States mainland, many issues concerning multicultural education revolve around the education of African-American and Hispanic students. Once again, Guam enjoys a unique status as one of the most multicultural societies in the America. *ASPER 2010-2011* listed the ethnic backgrounds of students in the GDOE system. Table 1 indicates the distribution of Guam public school students by ethnicity.

**Table 1**  
*SY 10-11 Distribution of Students by Ethnicity*

Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Chamorro	15,116	49%
Filipino	6,891	23%
Pacific Islander	7,038	23%
Asian	488	2%
CNMI	413	1%
White Non-Hispanic	229	1%
Other	194	1%
Unaccounted	233	1%
Total	31,095	100%

Although it appears that there are eight ethnic groups, a footnote in the report describes the actual breakdown:

...at least 21 ethnic groups are represented. The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) includes students from Rota, Saipan and Tinian. Asians are comprised of Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Indonesian and Vietnamese ethnic groups. Pacific Islanders includes Hawaiians, Samoan, Kosraean, Pohnpeian, Chuukese, Yapese, Marshallese, Palauan, and Fijian. Other is comprised of African-American, Hispanic, American Indian-Native, Alaskan, Unknown and Unclassified. Unaccounted represents students who did not officially report their ethnicity information (*ASPER 2010-2011*, p 23).

In addition, three distinct Filipino regional groups are not included in this list. Not surprisingly, the GDOE reported that 14,449 or 46% of the total population are English Language Learners (ELL). Within the ELL population, 18 different languages are spoken (*ASPER 2010-2011*).

Therefore, the average classroom teacher would expect to work in a deteriorating school, instructing students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and working with students (97%) who are living below or near the poverty level. GDOE follows an inclusionary model, so the ELL and special education students are in the general classroom for the majority of the school day. In many ways, the only difference between poor urban schools on the mainland and Guam schools is the tropical weather.

## University of Guam

The University of Guam (UOG) recently celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as the first and only American Land-grant University in the Asia/Pacific region (University of Guam, n.d.). The mission of the university has expanded to serve not only Guam, but also the islands of Micronesia, a geographical area the size of the continental United States. The university now maintains B.A. level teacher training centers in Yap, Pohnpei, Kosrae and Chuuk.

In the fall of 2011, there were 3,839 students enrolled in the University. UOG enrollment is similar to that of the GDOE with the exception that Chamorros make up 39.8% of the overall student population while Filipinos are close behind with 35.9%. Since only 4.5% of students fall under the “White” category, the university is considered a minority serving institution by the U.S. Department of Education (UOG Factbook, 2010-2011).

The School of Education (SOE) offers BA and Masters degrees in a variety of areas including early childhood, elementary, secondary, TESOL, and special education. Along with programs to train ESL and Chamorro teachers, the SOE also prepares school and mental health counselors as part of the Master of Arts in Counseling Program.

### *UOG Special Education Program*

Like many universities, UOG is facing major changes in the way they prepare special education teachers. The BA level program prepares teachers to be certified by the Guam Commission on Educator Certification in generalist special education K-12. Graduates, however, are expected to teach all special needs children from Birth to 21.

With the changes in the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) regarding the preparation of “Highly Qualified Teachers” (HQT), UOG is in the process of removing the undergraduate preparation program in favor of a graduate level preparation program. It does not seem possible for students to complete a major and all the certification requirements within the traditional four-year period. The idea of developing a fifth year Masters program has not received much interest from students or faculty. Therefore, the undergraduate program is expected to close in the next two years.

At the present time, the Master of Education – Special Education program has the largest enrollment and the most graduates than any other graduate program on campus. This was not always the case. This Masters was initiated in the 1980’s as a research degree that did not include teacher certification. Only 12 students graduated with this research degree prior to 2006.

There is a great need on Guam for certified special education teachers (Guam Department of Education (n. d.)), as there are about 400 special education positions in GDOE that require formal special education certification. Prior to 2007, approximately 100 teachers met the requirements of special education certification, and the turnover rate was high. Also, as of 2006, only one of the approximately 30 administrators held either a Masters degree or special education certification; that person was the Associate Superintendent of Special Education.



In the spring of 2007, the Executive Director of the UOG School of Education directed the Program Chair of the Special Education program to partner with GDOE to resolve this problem. The critical needs areas for teachers were special education and ESL. The university had recently created an experimental one-year fast track or accelerated program for career changers who wanted to teach in secondary schools. This program used a common approach found in other universities. Students received temporary teaching certificates, obtained a teaching position (all vacancies), and took undergraduate classes as a group or cohort over a 12-18 month period. At the end of the program, they earned a teaching certificate. While UOG worked on changing this to a traditional MAT program, these early students could not obtain a Masters degree due to the pace of the higher education administrative structure. While this was not a perfect situation for graduates, GDOE did obtain more certified special education teachers.

When it came time to partner with GDOE in training more special education teachers, the assembled planning committee discussed the following issues:

1. *Need for an accelerated program* – GDOE needed more trained educators because the federal government was putting great pressure on GDOE to have qualified teachers and administrators. There was also a high demand by currently employed educators who lacked certification and a Master’s degree.
2. *Attention to high attrition rates* - New BA level special education teachers quickly became overwhelmed with the normal demands of special education and either left the profession, or the island with the hope that mainland schools could provide better support.
3. *Responsiveness to diversity* – The majority of new graduates had little experience with teaching children with disabilities from diverse backgrounds.
4. *Need for Master’s program redesign*– The program at the time was a research degree with none of the current course offerings applicable to certification.

After several months of discussion with the leaders in the GDOE Special Education Division, a plan of action was developed that would meet the challenges presented above in a short time frame.

***Need for an accelerated program.*** While other university programs were experimenting with self-paced online courses and fast-track programs, the conditions were right for the development of an Accelerated Master of Education – Special Education program. During the spring of 2007, the School of Education, the GDOE Special Education Division and the territory’s Guam Commission on Educator Certification (GCEC) worked closely to modify the new Masters in special education. The goals were to fit the schedule of full-time educators, meet the unique multicultural needs of the schools, assist the graduates in completing the certification requirements of the “HQT” status under the *NCLB Act*, and build in an evaluation system to measure success.

As this was a trial project, the planning group modified the new program in such a way as to avoid the normally slow university approval process. The old program required 36 credits that consisted of nine credits in core research courses, 15 credits in the specialized area, six credits of electives, and six credits for the thesis or special project. The goal was to modify the program so that graduates would also be able to complete the teacher certification requirements of the Guam Commission on Educator Certification (GCEC) while completing the Master of Education – Special Education. At that time, GCEC required 24 credits in special education with very specific course requirements including an internship experience. They could accept the undergraduate student teaching experience as long as the Masters had a strong internship component. Table 2 reflects the program requirements prior to and after revision.

**TABLE 2**  
*Accelerated Program Revision*

<b>Original</b>		<b>Credits</b>	<b>Revised</b>		<b>Credits</b>
<b>M.Ed. Special Education</b>			<b>M.Ed. Special Education</b>		
<b>Core Courses (9 Credits)</b>			<b>Core Courses (9 Credits)</b>		
ED 601	Introduction to Research	3	ED 601	Introduction to Research	3
ED 602/3	Quantitative/Qualitative Methods	3	ED 602/3	Quantitative/Qualitative Methods	3
ED 600	Diversity	3	ED 654	Multicultural Special Education	3
<b>Specialization (15 Credits)</b>			<b>Specialization (15 Credits)*</b>		
ED 446/G	Inclusion of Special Needs Students in the Regular Classroom	3	ED 446/G	Inclusion of Special Needs Students in the Regular Classroom	3
ED 457/G	Behavior Management in Special Education	3	ED 457/G	Behavior Management in Special Education	3
ED 443/G	Audio-Visual in Special Education	3	ED 694	Special Topics - Principles and Practices in Special Education	3
	None of the other courses met certification requirements.		ED 694	Special Topics - Teaching Techniques for Students with Learning Disabilities	3
			ED 694	Special Topics - Teaching Techniques for Students with Moderate to Severe Disabilities	3
<b>Electives (6 Credits)</b>			<b>Electives (6 Credits)</b>		
			ED 694	Special Topics - Special Education Law	3
			ED 698	Internship	3

Table 2 (continued)

Original M.Ed. Special Education				Credits	Revised M.Ed. Special Education				Credits
<b>Thesis/Special Projects (6 Credits)</b>					<b>Thesis/Special Projects (6 Credits)</b>				
ED 690/695	Thesis	or	Special	3	ED 690/695	Thesis	or	Special	3
	Projects					Projects			
ED 691	Overview Seminar			3	ED 691	Overview Seminar			3

\*All 5 courses were mandatory under the GCEC certification requirements)

By using the existing graduate level course, ED694: Special Topics, the committee was able to create a program that would meet the certification requirements absent the lengthy university approval process. It was not necessary to have approval by the university or the accrediting bodies because the total number of 36 credits did not change.

A one-year modified program was initiated that followed a weekend and summer school model. Students began the program by completing four classes in an eight-week summer school session. They then completed four courses in the fall and spring semesters on a weekend schedule. This schedule permitted them to complete the required 12-course sequence for the Masters and the teacher certification in one intensive year.

The committee decided that in order for adult learners to participate in this very intense and demanding program, they needed to have the support of other adults who also had full-time teaching jobs, family, and community obligations. It was noted that the cohort model, which was common practice in mainland universities but unfamiliar to Guam, would provide the structure to overcome some of the normal anxiety experienced by adult learners returning to school (see Burnett, 1999; Horn, 2001). Given the chronic shortage of special educators, a new cohort of no more than 15 students was enrolled each semester. Given the attrition rate, the goal was to graduate at least 30 fully certified Master level special educators each year.

While avoiding full university approval, the program was reviewed at the college and department level. The revision occurred during the 2006-2007 initial visit of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) committee. The GDOE had just been put on the U.S. DOE watch list for grant management issues (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvLcsIBn3Fo>) and had a vested interest in showing improvement by employing more certified educators and administrators, given the mounting pressures of the *NCLB Act*.

The spring of 2007 became the “perfect storm” for making significant change in the preparation of special educators – pressure from NCATE on the SOE, pressure from the U.S. DOE on the Guam DOE to manage federal grants in a more professional manner, and additional U.S. DOE pressure to hire more certified and highly qualified special educators. Stakeholders were very interested in seeing the modified program succeed.

**Attention to high attrition rates.** The GDOE, like many school districts, had a poor track record in recruiting and retaining special education teachers. This could be attributed to the complex demands of the field and low salaries. Guam also has the persistent problem that recent graduates often use their degrees to pursue employment options on the mainland.

Therefore, recruitment efforts focused on two types of students for the new program. The first group consisted of older teachers with deeper family roots in the community, who also were more familiar with the diverse student population they were serving and the generally low level of supports that the school district offered. It was assumed that older seasoned teachers would most likely remain on Guam after completing the program because of their deep commitment to teaching and to the community they served.

The second group included the administrators and supervisors in the Special Education Division. Again, only the Associate Superintendent of Special Education had a Master's degree and special education certification. Program participants were required to currently hold a BA, be a certified teacher in any field, have passing scores on the Praxis I, and possess at least five years of teaching experience, preferably in special education.

**Response to Diversity.** Guam's school population is highly transient and diverse in nature, which poses some unique challenges to educators. Students represent 21 different ethnic groups and 17 languages (Brown, Hammond, & Onikama, 1997; Leung, Keir, & Terada, 2006). It is well known that the parents of children in the public schools will eventually move to Hawaii or the mainland. According to 2010 U.S. Census data, the Chamorro population is more geographically dispersed than any other population in the Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander category (U.S. Census, 2012). Business and military personnel typically reside on Guam for two to three year periods. The middle class seeks private school education while the military maintains its own education system.

Another factor affecting the public schools is the enrollment of Micronesian island students, many of whom have not attended school on their home islands where compulsory education laws are not strictly enforced and school attendance is not given much attention (Heine, 2002). This poses a variety of challenges regarding parents' understanding of regular school attendance and children's socialization into expected school norms. These variables, coupled with high mobility rates, further exacerbate the provision of early identification services. As the M.Ed.- Special Education program was being revised, all of these multicultural factors were taken into consideration.

Once again, the AY 2006-2007 was an ideal time for change in addressing these issues. The Monarch Center, the National Outreach and Technical Assistance Center, invited professors from various minority serving institutions to attend a Program Improvement seminar that was designed to assist faculty in making appropriate changes to their teacher preparation programs that would create better educational outcomes for students with disabilities from diverse backgrounds. The seminar motivated the UOG professors to make significant changes in the courses and overall program by initiating the creation of a plan of action and providing ongoing follow-along support and technical assistance. With Monarch's guidance, every special education graduate course was examined, and modifications were made to include more

evidence-based and culturally responsive practices. The faculty agreed that students had to demonstrate direct experience with a wide range of diverse students. For example, to correspond with NCATE Standard 4-Diversity, an online rubric was created on which instructors gauged the graduate students' abilities to respond to multicultural needs. Both NCATE and Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) require that students complete online E-Portfolios at entry, mid-point and exit stages (MacEntee & Garii, 2010). Disposition rubrics were included in each portfolio, which were evaluated by three professors and a current school supervisor.

As we began to infuse culturally responsive practices into our coursework, it was noted that the contributions of the M.Ed. students, who themselves were diverse, promoted a deeper understanding of the life experiences of Guam's public school population. These discussions and interactions are important in assisting teacher candidates in examining their attitudes and beliefs and confronting their own biases and values, which is an important step in becoming more culturally competent (Irvine, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). More importantly, the newly revised course content and the required practicum experiences combined with weekly class discussions provided additional opportunities for the application of new knowledge and skills in the classroom.

***Need for Master's Program Redesign.*** Over the last five years (2007-2012), the program evolved into a highly individualized program that graduated 130 students in 14 cohorts. The impact of this new program goes beyond the classroom. As the first cohort consisted of mostly administrators in the Special Education Division, they embarked on a project to create a new Division website, and subsequent cohorts created manuals and other resources on a variety of topics. After being reviewed by GDOE staff and attorneys, these items were posted on the GDOE Special Education Division website. The topics, which included Transition, 504 Plan, Private School Placement (ISP), and IEP Guidelines for Teachers and Administrators, were based on similar resources found in districts and states on the mainland, and then adapted to fit Guam's multicultural context.

As the interest in the certification program grew and the SOE noted the success of the initial cohorts, they moved to formally revise the Master's program with the introduction of non-special topic courses and a certification track. Hence, during the summer and fall semesters of 2008, the SOE developed new courses based on the special topic courses from the accelerated program and created a formal certification track. The certification track retained the opportunity for students to conduct research but placed an emphasis on action research. This was particularly beneficial to a subset of the graduate students, native Chamorro speakers, for whom writing a thesis in English posed significant challenges. The first graduates were the leaders in the GDOE, so word quickly spread that this was an intensive but extremely valuable program. These graduates were instrumental in the redesign of the new certification track.

The new dual track program, while giving up the formal thesis/special project requirement, permitted the SOE to create specialized courses (e.g., ED658: Special Topics – Education of Children with Autism). Further, it was decided that the revised program would include the traditional weekend classes, but all students would begin with an eight-week Special Education Summer Institute designed to immerse the students in the coursework and create very strong personal bonds within the cohort. It was not uncommon for the cohorts to socialize together

outside of this context. Furthermore, some of the students who dropped out due to family commitments or financial problems later returned to complete the program.

The first cohort included some of the most dynamic special educators in the GDOE Special Education Division. These seven students consisted of administrators for elementary and secondary special education, an assistive technology specialist, an adaptive PE specialist, a private school placement specialist, a legal compliance officer, and a transition specialist. Although they all had many years of experience in the field, prior to program completion none of the students had a Masters or special education certification.

Students in subsequent cohorts were recruited from general and special education classrooms. As mentioned previously, the cohorts were richly diverse. Table 3 reflects the ethnic background of the students. An unexpected outcome of this program was the synergy created between the revised course content and practicum and the multicultural backgrounds and experiences of the program participants. As a whole, the graduates have become a powerful professional force for the education of diverse students with disabilities.

Table 3  
*Ethnicity of Graduates*

Academic Year	Total Graduates	Chamorro	Filipino	Pacific Islander	Japanese	Korean	White	Other
2007-2008	7	6	1					
2008-2009	26	16	5	4			1	
2009-2010	40	29	5			1	3	1 Hispanic 1 Iranian
2010-2011	28	20	5		1		1	1 Hispanic
2011-2012	29	16	5	3	1		4	
Total	130	87	21	7	2	1	9	3

**Funds.** The internal funding for the new program came from existing funds, as no extra funds or grants were allocated from UOG. All courses had to maintain specific enrollment to remain open. Fortunately, this requirement was met.

Student financial aid came from a number of sources. The university has a special fund, the Yamashita Educator Corps, for training teachers in high needs areas like special education. This funding paid student tuition with the provision that teachers would work in GDOE for one year. Many teachers took out federal student loans with the understanding that loan forgiveness would be provided if a teaching position in a low-income school were obtained. The total tuition cost of less than \$11,000 for the Masters was modest by mainland standards. Additionally, the SOE received special ARRA funding, which covered tuition on a one-year payback basis.

**Measuring Success.** As this was a new program in the SOE, it came under a great deal of scrutiny, especially by long time faculty who questioned the effectiveness of the program structure to foster student success. Therefore, it was important to use as many external tools as possible to evaluate program success.

In 2007, the only requirement for admission to the SOE graduate program was a low passing score of 900 on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) plus a teaching certificate, which showed that Praxis I test had been passed. To parallel the undergraduate program requirements, the Praxis II content test was made part of the graduate program comprehensive examination. The comprehensive examination consisted of an NCATE E-Portfolio evaluated by three professors and a passing score on the Praxis II content test. As the evaluation system evolved it became apparent that the GRE was a poor predictor of overall success in the program; therefore, it was eliminated as a requirement.

Realizing that the Praxis II measured test-taking ability as much as actual knowledge, UOG created a Praxis II Preparation program. This 12-hour study program, which consisted of practice exams, study games, door prizes and a buffet, became a major study and social activity for the students. Students who attended the Prep Day generally scored 10-15 points higher than those who did not. By using the NCATE E-Portfolio system along with the Praxis I & II tests, program faculty were able to demonstrate that students have done extremely well in the newly revised program.

***Success is more than a test.*** The Praxis II content scores and an online exit portfolio were the primary methods used to demonstrate that the initial goal—to offer a program that prepared certified Masters level special education teachers and administrators—was met. The two major assessment tools clearly showed that UOG M.Ed. students performed as well as graduate students on the mainland. This is an important point, as students who attend a rural university or schools in isolated areas often wonder if they are receiving a quality education. A great sense of pride is conveyed when students state, “I was in the “first cohort” or “...seventh cohort”. Guam has approximately 400 professionals who teach about 2,100 students with disabilities, and the UOG M.Ed. graduates stand out among these teachers.

In May 2010, the first 73 graduates of the revised program received an on-line survey. The return rate was high with 56 (77%) students responding. Results indicated that students were overwhelmingly satisfied with the program. A summary of the survey included the following findings: (a) all 41 public schools and 3 military schools now have Masters level graduates in their special and regular education programs, (b) 97% of program graduates received special education certification with 79% working in special education contexts, (c) 21% teach in general education classrooms, and (d) a strong professional network persists among the graduates.

Additional outcomes were noted as a result of the new program. At the university level, the SOE capitalized on the expertise of program graduates by using them as adjunct instructors. A number of teachers from the outer islands (i.e., CNMI, Kosrae, Chuuk, and Palau) and military school teachers have enrolled in the program. Prior to the new program revision, many of these teachers preferred mainland online degree programs. Program recruitment now occurs exclusively via word of mouth and many applicants submit strong letters of recommendation written by former program graduates. Since inception of the revised program, the SOE has gone through the NCATE and CEC - Specialty Professional Association (SPA) renewal accreditation process. The emphasis in the last round was assessment. To this end, the special education program supplied a great deal of data. Finally, UOG graduates serve as valuable consultants to GDOE administrators regarding the topics of *Response to Intervention (RTI)* and *504 plans*.

## Conclusion

During the first 20 years of the M.Ed. – Special Education program, only 12 students graduated. The University of Guam School of Education in partnership with the Guam Department of Education (Territory/School District) and the Guam Commission on Educator Certification redesigned the research-based program in the spring of 2007. The new program uses an accelerated Cohort model composed of practicing and experienced teachers, which has garnered the attention of Guam's special education community. The program started in a Special Education Summer Institute in 2008, with a cohort of seven. Initially, the university offered three cohorts a year, but as the number of experienced teachers grew and the need for personnel declined, one cohort per year was offered. By May 2012, 130 educators from 14 cohorts graduated from the program. Current outcomes suggest that the benefits of this personnel preparation program extend beyond students with disabilities on Guam to include the larger Guam community. It is for this reason that the preparation of special education teachers on Guam and in the Micronesian islands will continue to grow to meet the unique multicultural needs of this region.

## AUTHOR NOTES

**Richard W. Fee, PhD**, formerly Associate Professor of Special Education and Chair, M.Ed.-Special Education Program at the University of Guam, is now Assistant Professor in the Graduate Education Program at Lincoln University Graduate Center, Philadelphia, PA. His research interests lie in global special education and teacher preparation. **Julie M. Fee, M.Ed., ABD**, is an Assistant Professor of Special Education at the University of Guam. Her research interest is in the area of inclusion. **Peggy A. Snowden, M.Ed.**, is a doctoral candidate in the Special Education Program at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research interests are in the areas of culturally responsive teaching and teacher education. **Nicole M. Stuart, M.Ed.**, is the Program Associate for Communications and Partnerships, Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois. Her research interests are in the areas of science literacy, bilingual special education, and family involvement. **Dana Baumgartner, PhD.**, is Research Associate in the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research interests are in the areas of teacher education, mild/moderate/severe disabilities, and teacher collaboration.

This work received guidance and support from the Monarch Center. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Dr. Richard W. Fee, Lincoln University, Graduate Center, 3020 Market St., Philadelphia, PA 19102. E-mail: rfee@lincoln.edu

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## Creating a Dual Licensure Program in Elementary and Special Education that Prepares Culturally Responsive Teachers

Eileen Cyr  
Patricia McDiarmid  
Bridget Halpin  
Jennifer Stratton  
Linda C. Davis-Delano  
*Springfield College*  
*Springfield, Massachusetts*

In light of shifting demographics in today's classrooms, the faculty at Springfield College recognized a need to revamp their teacher licensure program to incorporate a leadership component. The journey began with a self-evaluation process and culminated with creation of a dual licensure program in elementary and special education to encourage more effective instruction and culturally responsive teaching. The authors present a roadmap for the launch of the dual licensure program, designed to prepare teachers in collaborative inclusion classrooms to take leadership roles as change agents in today's increasingly diverse schools.

**Keywords:** dual licensure program, culturally responsive teaching, collaborative teaching, English language learners, ELLs, special education, leadership, effective instruction, differentiated instruction, teacher preparation

The face of our nation is changing and our public schools bear a major responsibility for addressing disparities through the design and delivery of effective instruction. School leaders must address the change in makeup of the overall student population if schools are to serve the needs of all learners. Minority populations, especially Hispanics, are growing more quickly than the population as a whole. Between 2000 and 2010, 15 states—six of them in the Northeast—saw their White populations decline. During this same period, the African American population declined in Alaska and Hawaii while Hispanic and Asian populations grew in every state (Jiandani, 2012).

The persistence of disparities between students of color and White students in academic achievement continues to present challenges within the educational community. Graduation rate is one important indicator of high school performance that reflects academic achievement levels. Between 1940 and 2011, the graduation rates for all minorities increased. However, in 2011, the graduation rates for Hispanics and African Americans were still lower than the rate for Whites (Jiandani, 2012). The graduation rate among students of color has been reported to be as much as 25 percentage points below their White peers (*Alliance for Excellent Education Fact Sheet, 2010*).

The National Center for Education Statistics published data in June of 2009 promulgating that 99% of elementary schools in the United States reported enrolling students on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 72% of elementary schools reported serving students who were identified as Limited English Proficient. The National Education Association and National Association of School Psychologists (2007) reported that the disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in special education programs has been a national concern for nearly four decades. English language learners (ELLs)— children for whom English is often a third or fourth language —are the fastest growing subgroup of students in public schools, representing nearly nine percent of the population. The number of ELLs entering into special education is a significant problem (Zamora, 2007). For decades, many school districts have struggled with differentiating the educational needs of ELL students from students with learning disabilities.

After careful review, the faculty at Springfield College realized that the licensure programs did not fully address the challenges and opportunities that accompany the demographic shift. The journey began with the self-evaluation process that precedes an accreditation visit. It was determined that the program was at variance with the mission of the college, which is “to educate students in spirit, mind, and body for leadership in service to humanity.” In particular, it was determined that a leadership component was needed as part of the preparation program (Bazron, & Fleischman, 2005). Consequently, the first priority was to chart a course that would prepare teachers to take leadership roles as change agents in schools. There was also a need to design a roadmap that would lead to a dual licensure program in elementary and special education. This dual licensure program would prepare culturally responsive teachers to serve and lead in collaborative inclusion elementary classrooms.

In short, at the time this project began, the pre-service elementary teacher preparation program at Springfield College would have been described as a traditional model that encompassed a four-year bachelor’s degree program leading to initial licensure. While the Springfield College teacher education program enjoyed a proud reputation for field intensive preparation that integrated theory and practice, it lacked strategies consistent with the changing demographics in schools.

Springfield College offers ten educator preparation programs at the undergraduate level. There are teacher preparation programs in physical education, health, elementary, special education (leading to licensure in moderate disabilities), early childhood, biology, English, history, mathematics, and the visual arts. In addition programs in chemistry, earth science, political science, school guidance and school adjustment counseling are available at the graduate level. Over the years, hundreds of quality educators for PreK-12 school settings have been prepared. For the academic year 2010-2011 the total number of Springfield College students enrolled in educator preparation programs was 262 (116 males and 146 females). The enrollment by race was 91% White, 3% Black or African American, 3% Hispanic/Latino of any race, 2% Asian, and 1% race undisclosed. The elementary licensure program was selected for restructuring because the faculty members in this program were most willing to pilot the proposed integrated program and because several of the courses in the program were required of all licensure candidates.

Through their fieldwork experiences candidates were already immersed in the new demographic. All of our candidates complete fieldwork in the Springfield Public Schools (SPS). This urban district serves 22,230 students: 14% White, 21% Black or African American, 60% Hispanic/Latino of any race, 2% Asian, and 3% Multiracial. There are 5,006 students receiving special education services (20%), 16% are identified as Limited English Proficient, and 25% reported that they do not speak English as a first language. These students represent 50 different native languages. In addition to meeting the needs of a diverse student population, the socioeconomic levels pose another challenge in Springfield Public Schools. Of the students enrolled in SPS, 86% qualify for free or reduced lunch and 54% are eligible for free transportation.

While the licensure programs taught pre-service teachers about differentiating instruction to support ELL students and students with IEPs, the institutional self study revealed that not enough was being done to prepare candidates to work with the diverse population in the SPS. Also, candidates were not adequately prepared to work collaboratively with the team of professionals who were supporting these students. The initial self-study revealed that while standards were met for accreditation, the program strategies were not consistent with that aspect of the mission of the College which calls for "...students for leadership in service to others." It was determined that there was a need to change the programs to ensure that pre-service teachers were entering field experiences equipped to meet the needs of all learners. We determined that for our programs to meet this goal the best approach was to create a dual licensure program in elementary and special education that was grounded in the principles of differentiated instruction and culturally responsive teaching (Anderson & Madigan, 2005; George, 2005; Utley, Delquadri, Obiakor, & Mims, 2000).

Simultaneous to discussions about changing the programs, a planning team was trained and supported by the Monarch Center, a national technical assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education, to identify design strategies to ensure the accomplishment of the objectives of a dual licensure program in elementary and special education. The three-member team consisted of (a) the chair of the education department, (b) an action research faculty member from the education department, and (c) a faculty member from our physical education department who specialized in adaptive physical education. This interdepartmental collaboration helped promote institutional buy-in while at the same time supported divergent thinking about the potential for a dual licensure program.

In preparation for the work with the Monarch Center, the planning team met to establish a common language based on the shared understanding of differentiated instruction, collaboration, and culturally responsive teaching. Our working definitions and baseline parameters were as follows:

### **Differentiated Instruction**

Huebner (2010) maintains that at the core of effective differentiated instruction (DI), the needs and learning styles of each student must be identified, and appropriate learning activities and assessments aligned to meet those needs. This approach allows all students to access the same classroom curriculum. The approach provides entry points, learning tasks, and outcomes that are

tailored to students' needs (Hall, Strangman, & Meyer, 2003) with the underlying goal of maximizing "...student growth and individual success" (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000, p. 4). Once baseline data are collected to determine student readiness, the teacher designs whole group, small group, and independent activities based on student needs, learning styles, and areas of interest. One major tenant of differentiated instruction is the concept that learners discover how to demonstrate mastery of the content. Assessments must also be differentiated based upon a learner's ability and interest. Learning packets including individualized rubrics help guide students to attain the assessment benchmarks.

The foci of differentiated learning strategies parallel the underlying constructs of the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) process. Differentiated instruction complements the body of research that informs teachers of how to meet the needs of students who qualify for special services per Public Law 94-142 and its subsequent reauthorizations (IDEA 1997, IDEA 2004) and broadens these constructs to include all students, with, and without IEPs.

### **Collaboration**

Based on the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark decision in 1982 (*Hendrick Hudson School District v. Rowley* (458 US 176, 1982)), followed by the 2004 amendments to IDEA (P.L. 108-446, 2004), the merger of special education and general education is viewed as benefiting all children in the classroom (Pugach, Blanton & Correa, 2011).

When two or more professionals utilize the expertise of each other for the educational gains of individual students, this can be a dynamic process for student learning. Friend and Cook (2003) describe five specific collaborative parameters: (a) parity, (b) mutual goals, (c) shared responsibility in decision making, (d) shared resources and accountability, and (e) valuing personal opinions and expertise. The special education professional has the expertise to provide the support for learners who qualify for special accommodations. Together with the general classroom educator, and based on a mutually respectful co-teaching or team-teaching model, teachers can foster the teacher-centered component of the lesson. However, the preparation of teachers to work effectively in a collaborative model has lagged behind the philosophical premises that underlie this concept.

Teacher educational programs must prepare teachers to address a range of student abilities by using a range of instructional approaches, student response options, and learning assessment techniques. The goal of Springfield faculty is to prepare highly qualified teachers who, at the end of their teacher preparation program, will be licensed as elementary education teachers and special education teachers. The current merged program incorporates all of the highly qualified teacher preparation standards in an integrated spiraling series of courses and placements designed to address the needs of all children with and without disabilities from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds in the elementary education classroom.

### **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

Culturally responsive teaching recognizes that all students bring rich cultural and linguistic experiences to the classroom that influences personal learning styles. Additionally, the teacher's

cultural experiences impact his/her chosen pedagogical strategies (Brandan, 2007; Gay, 2002; Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2006). Gay (2010) maintains that culturally relevant teachers display cultural competence that she described as “the ability to design and deliver instruction in a cross-cultural or multicultural setting.” This instructional skill set enables each student to relate course content to his or her cultural context and provides effective strategies for students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Scholars who discuss a culturally responsive pedagogical approach insist that the structure is a matrix of practices and concepts rather than a singular fixed concept. According to Tiedt and Tiedt (2010), the term multicultural education was used for the first time as a topic heading by Education Index in 1978, at which time the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education included it as a standard. Manning and Baruth (2009) suggested that multicultural education is both a concept and a process, designed to “teach learners to recognize, accept, and appreciate differences in culture, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, religion, special needs and gender” (p. 5). Bennett (2011) characterizes cultural responsive instructional strategies as a “complex approach to teaching and learning that includes equity in schools and classrooms, transformation of curriculum, multicultural competence, and commitment to address societal injustices” (p. 3). Banks (1991, 2004, 2006) has historically advanced a definition of multicultural education as a broad concept embracing five specific dimensions: (a) content integration, (b) knowledge construction process, (c) prejudice reduction, (d) equity pedagogy, and (e) empowering school culture and social structure (2004). Nieto and Bode (2008) describe the main characteristics of multicultural education as “antiracist, basic, important for all students, pervasive, education for social justice, a process and critical pedagogy” (p. 44).

Effective culturally responsive teachers reflect and engage in critical self-analysis and understand how personal cultural and linguistic context influences educational strategies and student learning. Teachers use this information to set high expectations for their students, provide scaffolding to support student achievement, and learn about, as well as alongside, their students (Gay, 2002, 2010; Nieto, 2010). Culturally responsive instruction provides educators with the opportunities to respond to and honor diversity within a classroom. Additionally, it gives students the ability to sensitively respond to one another by adjusting a mono-cultural curriculum to an atmosphere where learners, according to Bennett (2011), move towards greater understandings of different systems of perceiving, evaluating, believing, and doing.

## **Creating a Plan**

In June of 2010 the three-member team attended the Monarch Center’s interactive training seminar, and constructed an action plan that included goals, timelines, responsible individuals, and potential barriers for accomplishing those goals. Our overall goal was agreed upon prior to attending. We aimed to use collaboration as the context and content for supporting a SPED/Elementary Education dual licensure program. The seminar team created the objectives and timelines based on information and resources provided. The first objective was to create a professional learning community including general education, special education, and physical education faculty members at Springfield College as well as other stakeholders needed to ensure the success of our program. The three key senior administrators, the Director of Teacher Preparation and Licensure, the Dean of Arts and Sciences, and the Academic Vice President had

already pledged support for the proposed dual licensure program. The details and procedures of the action plan were presented to the key senior administrators to determine how best to move forward as an institution.

The second objective was to use the knowledge base on collaboration to examine the curriculum for alignment with dual licensure requirements. Initially, it was believed that this could best be accomplished by starting with one course as a model. Later it was decided that the process would be better served if three courses were used so as to provide a more synergistic outcome. Hence, the initial pilot consisted of three methods courses.

The Director of Teacher Preparation and Licensure and the Vice President for Academic Affairs were eager to assist in the implementation of the proposed dual licensure program and fully supported the action plan. Because the existing licensure programs had seen declining enrollments over the past decade, there had been multiple discussions about strategies for creating a “niche program” that could be marketed to reverse this trend.

### **Gaining Critical Internal Supports**

The administrative support was both financial and structural. Internal grants were awarded to two faculty members to take an on-line course for retooling. The faculty recognized that the teacher pre-service preparation programs were not preparing teachers to work in collaborative inclusion and culturally responsive settings. An Appleton grant was received for internal retraining of faculty, which was necessary to ensure that support would be in place to collaborate on the new program. Additionally, one of the team members was given a three-credit release to conduct contributory research. The intent of the release time project was to ensure that the changes proposed were data driven and aligned with current best practices and accreditation standards.

The implementation of the proposed plan progressed with the curricular changes. Departmental commitment to the dual licensure program was evident as other financial supports for faculty development opportunities continued. The faculty development committee and the senior administration recognized the enormity of the work involved and the expertise necessary to transition from a traditional preparation program to a collaborative model. Funding support was given to two faculty members for sabbaticals to investigate culturally responsive teaching, instruction for English Language Learners, and the collaborative inclusion classroom. In addition to these internal grants, a retired special education faculty member was hired as a consultant to help faculty redesign syllabi to include objectives and activities to ensure that all courses in the Elementary Education / Special Education licensure program met the new standards.

The support was not just financial. Meetings were arranged by senior management to give credence to the need to move forward with the dual licensure program. The Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Director of Teacher Preparation and Licensure, the Dean of Arts and Sciences, the Dean of Physical/Health Education and all the chairs of departments associated with licensure met on a monthly basis to ensure that the institutional collaboration that was necessary to move this new program through the internal curriculum committee and ultimately state accreditation process was in place. While most institutional change is more of an evolution than a revolution, the dual licensure initiative moved forward with unprecedented speed. With

the guidance of the educational consultant, the department concomitantly worked through redesigning methods courses as models for inclusion classrooms in a culturally responsive environment.

The purpose of any methods course is to provide models and frameworks for teaching. The main scaffolding for any lesson is the lesson plan. As our work unfolded, we saw the need to alter the templates for pre-service lesson plans to include tiered instruction and address the tenants of culturally responsive teaching. For course modifications to acquire approval from the internal curriculum committee, the rationale, the specific changes, and the assessments needed to be clearly articulated and supported. Each new objective required the specific parameters for assessing the outcomes. The first three courses to go through this overhaul were the mathematics methods class, the reading methods class, and the social studies methods class.

Given that the mathematics methods course was the first in the sequence of methods courses, we decided that the concept of collaborative teaching, within our spiraling curriculum, would be introduced in this course and reinforced in each subsequent methods course. Furthermore, we decided that whatever format was selected for collaborative teaching, the five collaborative “Ps” had to be addressed: Presence, Planning, Presenting, Problem Solving, and Processing. To better understand these five tenants, consider their underlying questions:

- Presence – How will co-teaching be conveyed to students?
- Planning – When/how will faculty collaborate on the lesson planning?
- Presenting – Who will take the lead on each lesson component and what is the responsibility of the other teacher?
- Problem solving – How will management issues and the needs of struggling students be addressed?
- Processing – When /how will the process be reflected?

As candidates worked through course assignments, they determined how these questions would be answered within each lesson. Because the candidates were, and continue to be, introduced to lesson planning as a collaborative process, we assert that they be exposed to unified planning. The collaborative approach will become a familiar process for them. Candidates’ ability to design collaborative lessons was, and will continue to be, assessed through the effectiveness of their team-designed lessons and unit plans where team members include the special education and general education candidates.

The committee was determined to move forward with a uniform transformation process. Many meetings were held to determine what changes were necessary within the individual courses and how consistency would be ensured. Ultimately, it was decided that each of the methods courses would, at a minimum, include three new objectives that demonstrated that these methods courses were designed to prepare candidates to teach in culturally responsive, collaborative, inclusion classrooms. The instructors for the three methods courses determined that the three objectives added to each syllabus would be:



1. Candidates will be able to design and implement lessons that differentiate concepts (i.e. *mathematical*) across ability levels.
2. Candidates will be able to design lessons that are culturally relevant.
3. Candidates will be able to design lessons that address the needs of English language learners.

Candidates demonstrate their proficiency with each objective by the following activities. Differentiation is demonstrated by: (a) differentiation of the degree of content difficulty, (b) differentiation of the delivery medium, and (c) differentiation of directions and support materials. Cultural relevance is demonstrated by the application of our shared definition and the movement away from a superficial focus on food, fashion, and festivals. The ability to design lessons responsive to English language learners represents the third objective and is demonstrated by activities such as word walls and simple identification of key terms.

Before candidates were required to meet these objectives, it was essential that the faculty had a full understanding of the process. Several meetings were dedicated to providing specific examples of how these objectives would be incorporated into the methods classes. The instructor for the math methods course took the lead and shared several model lessons created. Faculty members were invited to observe candidates present the lessons created for the assessment of this competency.

### **Conclusion**

The program redesign is a continuous process. There is a need to continue to meet to review ways that the program can be improved. The biggest challenge is finding sites that are models of culturally responsive teaching in collaborative settings. Whereas sufficient sites have been found where the classes represent the demographics described earlier and have special education teachers supporting students with IEPs in the classrooms, the special education teachers sometimes express concern that they are not fully included as collaborative partners with the classroom teachers. Teacher candidates are entering field experiences with the aim of becoming change agents, but are working with experienced teachers who, while expressing a willingness to move towards a collaborative model, have often not yet made this transition.

Five factors emerged as critical components of changing and modifying curriculum:

1. It is critical that an institution has commitments from participating faculty as well as financial and personnel resources.
2. Time is the next biggest challenge. It is difficult to arrange all the necessary meetings and to schedule the time necessary for collaboration. This is a very time intensive process. Consider transforming your curricula prior to an accreditation visit when faculty members are engaged in similar efforts.

3. Professional development for teacher educators is necessary so they can learn new teaching concepts, approaches, and techniques.
4. Set a timeline for steps in the process and include a clear distribution of tasks and responsibilities.
5. Many faculty are comfortable in their current roles and prefer working in isolation rather than face new challenges and time commitments. Involve faculty members as much as possible in planning and decision-making to help foster the attitude of collaboration.

It was our experience that the individuals involved in this process wanted clear examples. Faculty members wanted to know what specific changes were needed to modify syllabi. We determined that requiring three new objectives and changing the format of the departmental lesson plan template were the best ways to get faculty started. Examples of syllabi were shared with faculty from other courses, which was critical in making the process transparent to all.

The most successful aspect of our work pertained to the reading methods course because it was a field-based course and all of the candidates attended the same school for their fieldwork. Teachers who were willing to ensure that our candidates were exposed to good models of collaborative teaching were selected. In contrast, in the math methods course, candidates produced excellent lessons in class, but the field placements did not offer consistent opportunities for practice.

Reflecting on this process and acknowledging that the final destination has not yet been reached, it is hoped that other teacher educators can use this experience as a framework for curricular change. The process in which we engaged, and continue to engage, is about transforming teacher education curricula into a collaborative and culturally responsive model. The research data support the rationale and legal requirements to move in this direction.

#### AUTHOR NOTES

**Eileen Cyr, Ed.D.**, is a Professor of Education in the Department of Education at Springfield College. Her research interest is culturally responsive pedagogy. **Patricia Lynch McDiarmid, Ed.D.**, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Physical Education Health Education at Springfield College. Her research interests are teacher mentoring and learner-centered active teaching strategies. **Bridget Halpin, M.S., CAPE**, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Physical Education Health Education at Springfield College. Her research interest is adapted physical education. **Jennifer Stratton, Ed.D.**, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Education at Springfield College. Her research interests include: preparing culturally responsive educators in the elementary and physical education settings and developing sustainable, multicultural early literacy training for under-served populations. **Linda C. Davis-Delano, Ph.D.**, is the Director of Educator Preparation and Licensure, Interim Chair of the Education Department, and Professor of Physical Education and Health Education at Springfield College.

Her research interests are in the areas of content delivery in inclusive classrooms and meeting the needs of diverse learners.

The Monarch Center was instrumental in providing guidance and support for Springfield College's program initiative. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Eileen Cyr, Department of Education, Springfield College, 263 Alden Street, Springfield, MA, 01109-3797. E-mail: [ecyr@springfieldcollege.edu](mailto:ecyr@springfieldcollege.edu)

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## When the Music Changes . . .

**Arlene King-Berry**

*University of the District of Columbia  
Washington, DC*

**Rosalie Boone**

*Howard University  
Washington, DC*

Paraprofessionals play an important role in the education of young children with, or at risk for, disabilities. Yet, because few training programs sufficiently infuse content related to serving special needs infants and toddlers, paraprofessionals typically lack the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to address effectively the requirements of this population. The article describes how a program designed to prepare urban ECE paraprofessionals was modified to ensure preparation of individuals equipped to deliver high quality services to young children with diverse abilities and characteristics. The program improvement process was supported by funding from the USDOE Office of Special Education Programs and by technical assistance from the Monarch Center.

**Keywords:** paraprofessionals, early childhood education, special needs

There is an African proverb that says, “When the music changes, so does the dance,” (<http://www.wiseoldsayings.com/wosdirectoryw.htm>). Viewed from an educational perspective, the proverb suggests that as educational standards change based on sound research and the demands of a complex world, the delivery of educational services to students with diverse demographics, experiences, and ability levels and therefore the preparation of personnel who provide these services must change as well. To this end, faculty at a university in a major metropolitan area embarked on an initiative to modify the institution’s program for preparing highly qualified paraprofessionals. The program modification was largely inspired by faculty attendance at a *Program Improvement Seminar* sponsored by the Monarch Center - a national technical assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The seminar provided step-by-step procedures on how to modify programs to reflect evidence-based standards designed to improve outcomes for young children, particularly those with special needs or those at risk for developmental delays.

In considering how best to describe the implementation and outcomes of the modified program, project leaders reflected on the meaning of the dance proverb and its implication for the change process in which they have been engaged. Learning a new dance is about changing—altering familiar responses in ways that may be challenging or uncomfortable. It requires strength, balance, flexibility, and risk acceptance on the part of the dancer. Having acknowledged that the music had indeed changed, project leaders opined that a change in dance would likely require

*dance instruction.* Teaching a new dance seemed an appropriate analogy for the change initiative because, like educational change, dance involves both art and science. As an art form, dance generally involves moving rhythmically, usually to music, often with a partner or partners, using prescribed or improvised steps and gestures. Likewise, successful educational change involves executing timed activities in accord with others. As a science, both dance and educational change require knowledge of energy, force, and motion combined with their relationship to one another. Dance, like educational change, reflects a broad spectrum of social, cultural, aesthetic, artistic, moral, and other human characteristics.

Thus, improvements made to the paraprofessional pre-service program described in this article were based on the realization that the context in which early childhood education occurs (the music) has changed. As a result, change is required in the preparation of Early Childhood Education (ECE) personnel (the dance) such that they are able to deliver high quality services to diverse young children and their families.

### **The Changing Context of ECE: New Music**

Out-of-the home early childhood care is a prominent feature of life for millions of preschoolers. More than half of the nation’s 21 million infants, toddlers, and preschool children below age six are in childcare. Approximately 80% of children age five and younger with working mothers spend an average of almost 40 hours per week in a child care arrangement with someone other than a parent. African American children are especially likely to be cared for by a non-parent, and African American preschoolers are more likely than Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asian preschoolers to attend center-based care (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2012) (See Table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Differential Likelihood of Non-Parental Childcare for Young Children*

	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Caucasian
Children in a Non-parental Childcare Arrangement at 9 Months	63%	49%	47%	
Children in Center-Based Childcare at 9 Months	14%	5%	4%	9%
Children in Center-Based Childcare at 3-6 years of age (2007 data)	65%	39%	64%	58%

The ever-increasing diversity of our country has significantly influenced the context of early childhood education. During the past two decades, young children have become the most racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse age group in the United States. According to census data, there have been dramatic increases in the population growth of Hispanic and Asian

children, accompanied by a decline in the number of Caucasian children along with a slight decline in the number of African American children. As a result, in 2010, Hispanics represented almost a quarter (23%) of all children while Caucasians represented a little more than half (53%) (Frey, 2011).

Children from diverse racial and cultural groups, particularly those under the age of six, are disproportionately impacted by poverty. For example, 2010 data from the National Center for Children in Poverty indicate that while African American, Hispanic, and Native American children represent 40% of all children less than six years of age, they comprise 56% of those from low-income families. These data highlight the differential relationship between poverty and ethnicity and parent’s country of origin (Addy & Wight, 2012). See Table 2.

**Table 2**  
*Differential Likelihood of Children Under Age Six Living in Low-Income or Poor Families*

<b>Demographic Group</b>	<b>Level of Poverty</b>	
	<b>Living in Low Income Families</b>	<b>Living in Poor Families</b>
African American Children	70%	44%
Hispanic Children	66%	35%
Caucasian Children	35%	15%
Asian Children	30%	
Children with Immigrant Parents	64%	
Children with Native Born Parents	45%	

Further, these data imply the potential for related social, economic, and educational challenges because poverty puts children at risk for disabilities and other factors that threaten healthy development. The rising percentage of children from low income and poor families, the deleterious impact of poverty on their growth and development, and the disproportionate impact of poverty on racially and culturally diverse young children unquestionably influence the context in which their early education occurs.

Research confirming long-term benefits of early education is also exerting a significant influence on the context of early childhood education. Empirical evidence indicates that high quality early education programs can have positive impacts on children and families in terms of school success, family self-sufficiency, and parental support of child development. A rigorous, large-

scale evaluation of Early Head Start and Head Start programs reported improved cognitive and social-emotional development for children. Among the significant participant effects were (a) improved literacy skills (e.g., vocabulary, sound and letter identification, and pre-writing skills), (b) improved math skills, (c) fewer hyperactive or withdrawn behaviors, and (d) improved health status (Child Trends, 2012). Early intervention has the potential to modify the developmental trajectories of young children already identified as having a disability. Children who have disabilities enter childcare at rates similar to children without disabilities (Smolensky & Gootman, 2003). Early childhood education programs also have the potential to ameliorate or prevent developmental delays and other negative outcomes for young children considered at risk (Anderson et al., 2003).

### **ECE Personnel Preparation: The Need for a New Dance**

Key to addressing the changing context of ECE and to reaping the benefits it can provide is the provision of high quality services delivered by well-prepared, skilled early childhood service providers. Consequently, IDEA-2004 (P.L. 108 446) requires that professionals who work with infants and toddlers with disabilities who receive Part C (early intervention) services be fully qualified to provide those services and places responsibility for ensuring their qualifications on each state. Specifically, IDEA requires that states offer a “*comprehensive system of professional development including the training of paraprofessionals...*”[20 USC 1435].

There is substantial agreement among researchers and others that paraprofessionals play an important role in the education of children with disabilities (Wallace, 2003). Paraprofessionals assist and provide services ranging from implementing behavior management plans, to providing complex life-sustaining health procedures delegated by medical personnel for medically fragile children, to being involved in daily administrative duties (Killoran, Templeman, Peters, & Udell, 2001; Pickett, 1996). In fact, Killoran and colleagues (2001) maintain that “the paraprofessional has become the backbone of inclusive early childhood education and is frequently serving as a child’s primary interventionist in inclusive and community settings” (p. 68). Despite substantial agreement among researchers and others that paraprofessionals play an important role in the education of children with disabilities (Wallace, 2003), evidence abounds documenting their lack of training to address the needs of young children with developmental delays or disabilities, or considered at risk for them (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; French & Pickett, 1997). Further, evidence exists that, even when training is provided, it is often insufficient in terms of quantity and quality (National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education, 2002; Whitaker, 2000).

In response to the need for paraprofessional training, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) established a priority to provide federal support to improve the quality of existing paraprofessional certificate or associate degree programs. Institutions receiving support under this priority are required to enhance or redesign the program curricula so that paraprofessionals are well prepared to work with children who have disabilities and their families. This article describes one such program funded by the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)—*Paraprofessional Pre-service Program Improvement Grant (CFDA84.325N)*. The following chronicles the change process undertaken to make the paraprofessional preparation program more responsive to the diversity of the young children and



their families, particularly children with, or considered at risk, for disabilities and children from culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

### **Urban Paraprofessional Program (UPP): Changing the Dance**

The *Urban Paraprofessional Program* (UPP), located at a community college in a metropolitan setting, targeted improvement of the Associate Arts Education degree program (AAE) and the early childhood faculty of that degree program (AA EC faculty). Over the past decade, approximately 210 individuals completed the AA degree through the institution's early childhood institute, an entity created as the city's organ for professional development in early childhood education. Currently, there are 400 candidates matriculating in the improved AAE program. Seventy percent of the candidates are African American. Hispanic individuals comprise 20% of program enrollment, while Asian and Caucasian individuals comprise five percent each of candidates enrolled.

The program offers two training strands: (a) an Infant/toddler training focus and (b) a pre-Kindergarten - Grade 3 training focus. These programs were developed to prepare early childhood personnel to address the needs of the city's 35,356 young residents who are under the age of six. More than half of the children (58%) are African American; 13% are Hispanic; and 24% are Caucasian. Virtually one-half (47%) live in low-income families, including 16% who live in extreme poverty. According to 2010 data from the National Center for Children in Poverty (Addy & Wight, 2012), two-thirds of the children under age six are exposed to multiple *risk factors* (e.g., single parent home, poverty, linguistic isolation, parents with less than a high school education, and parents who have no paid employment). This figure represents a nine percent increase from 2007 figures. Specifically, 40% of the children under age six are exposed to one or two risk factors, while approximately one-fourth (27%) are exposed to three or more risk factors—an eight percent increase in three years. The combination of low-income and other risk factors raises the vulnerability of the city's young children to disabilities and developmental delay.

The fundamental purpose of the UPP is to enable AA EC faculty and field site personnel to better prepare paraprofessionals to deliver early childhood education to diverse young children with disabilities or considered at risk for disabilities. Specific goals of the project are to:

- Revise 15 courses and the internship experiences that comprise the AA curricula to infuse evidence-based practices and professional standards designed to meet the needs of young children with disabilities;
- Create and deliver professional development that prepares ECE faculty and field site partners to effectively deliver the revised course content and fieldwork;
- Utilize the revised curricula and practice to provide high quality training to pre-service paraprofessionals; and
- Institutionalize project course/practice revisions and professional development.

Implementation of the UPP has occurred in two main phases. Phase I of the project focused on readiness issues such as institutional climate, buy-in, communication, barriers, etc.; Phase II, which is still ongoing, addresses the implementation of specific change activities.

### **Phase I: Addressing the Readiness for Change**

Project implementation actually began with a review of literature regarding educational change and reflection on the change-related implications of teaching and learning a new dance. The review and reflection helped to pinpoint both readiness concerns and strategies or steps for preparing the institution and targeted faculty for the desired curriculum changes. Following is a description of these readiness concerns and the project's incorporation of literature-based steps for facilitating change as adapted from recommendations by Kotter and Cohn (2002).

*Ensure supportive institutional climate. Describe the new music, explain the need to learn a new way of dancing, and solicit support for learning the new dance.*

While teaching some courses in the AA Education Program, the Principle Investigator (PI) of the UPP, a special education faculty member, recognized a need among pre-service paraprofessionals for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to working with diverse young children with disabilities and their families. Having identified this need, she identified external funding (i.e., OSEP's *Paraprofessional Pre-service Program Improvement Grant*) that would contribute meaningfully to creating an institutional climate supportive of the desired change. This led to the development of a successful grant proposal supported with assistance from the Monarch Center.

The creation of a climate conducive to implementation of the proposed changes involved apprising key university and community stakeholders of the need for change and soliciting their support. Conversations were held with the Director of Sponsored Research and other university stakeholders, such as the Coordinator of the AA Education program. The project PI also considered her professional and community service activities and reached out to individuals and organizations whose affiliations and/or missions were aligned with project goals. Thus, the CEO of a community nonprofit that focuses on issues affecting individuals with intellectual disabilities, the Director of the local chapter of the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), respective directors of special education and early childhood education for the local school district, as well as former and current students in the AA program were solicited as project advisory board members. These individuals were contacted via a formal letter describing the grant and articulating the value their support/involvement could provide. Letters were followed up with phone calls inviting these individuals to a luncheon where the project and project activities were described in more detail. Each attendee was given an opportunity to ask questions and then asked to sign a contract confirming their role as a project Advisory Board member.

Of particular importance to ensuring that the institutional climate was supportive to the UPP was the need to address the University's restructured organization. Prior to transmitting the project application for federal funding, a number of programs (e.g., the AA Education) that had previously been offered by the flagship university were resituated in a newly developed

community college that maintains some administrative and programmatic relationship with the parent university. Given that the AA program resided in the community college while the special education program (and the project PI) retained residence in the flagship university, it was essential that administrative, fiscal, and other issues be addressed and resolved. It was necessary to develop supportive institutional climates across two institutions and to establish clearly articulated understandings about how the change initiative would be implemented.

***Form a powerful coalition.*** Identify individuals who are familiar with the music and experienced in the dance to be taught, and committed to facilitating the change effort.

The institutional leaders listed above comprised a critical component of the project coalition. Additionally, a balanced change initiative team of key project personnel was formed consisting of individuals representing a variety of administrative roles, responsibilities, and experiences in special education, early childhood education, and personnel preparation. Finally, a project Advisory Board was established that reflected broad representation from the ECE community, including parents of preschoolers who have disabilities or were considered at risk for disabilities.

***Create and communicate a vision for change.*** Provide opportunities for holder of the dance vision to emerge and communicate the vision for the dance.

The teaching experience of the project PI allowed for the emergence of a vision related to improving the quality of early education paraprofessionals. Both before and after submission of the proposal, the PI facilitated multiple discussions with key project personnel, AA EC faculty and field supervisors, and project consultants (including an individual recommended by the Monarch Center) regarding the implications and impacts of the current and proposed way of preparing paraprofessionals. Discussants agreed that the perceptions of both AA EC faculty and candidates needed to change, as did their knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to disabilities, instructional strategies, and universal design. The proposed changes to curriculum and professional development were linked to a shared vision of high quality educational services delivered by outstanding education personnel to young children and families who resemble our children and families.

***Remove obstacles.*** Anticipate obstacles that have the potential to interrupt, postpone, or cancel the flow of the dance.

The impact of obstacles to the change desired can be greatly mitigated by immediate intervention, positive leadership, and a determined, focused support network. A not uncommon obstacle that had major implications for the UPP was the institutional sluggishness that impacted project access to and use of grant funds. When appeals to institutional administrators produced less than satisfactory results, the project PI tactfully solicited suggestions for resolution from the funding agency. This strategy, when pursued with discretion and diplomacy, can be quite effective in removing logjams, particularly when an obstacle negatively influences expenditure of funds, adherence to funder policies, and/or project ability to honor commitments and meet specified deadlines.

*Plan and reward short-term successes. Present the new dance in small movement phrases and provide recognition for competent performance of the dance phrases.*

Key project personnel developed achievable short-term project targets that could be implemented without help from critics of the change. After each successful project activity, project personnel analyzed what went well and what needed improvement. By leveraging project momentum, they were able to maintain a focus on continuous improvement. Individuals who helped the project meet curriculum revision, professional development, and project management targets were given rewards commensurate with their positions and affiliation with the project. Specifically, AA EC faculty who met syllabus revision targets received summer compensation, community partners who met material review targets received public recognition at an advisory board luncheon, and a local project consultant who facilitated meeting project management targets received a campus-parking discount.

*Articulate a plan for building on and institutionalizing the change. Consider dancers' skill set and adapt choreography as needed to meet their needs.*

Efforts were made to ensure that the institution's leaders continue to support project changes and these changes remain visible throughout the institution. For example, in addition to written project documents, periodic face-to-face meetings were scheduled with key university administrators to apprise them of project accomplishments. Moreover, project-developed professional development modules will be submitted for certification through the institution's Quality Matters Review. Such certification would enable all faculty to complete and use the modules as evidence of the professional development required by the faculty performance review process.

## **Phase II: Teaching a New Dance**

Perusal of web-based resources related to teaching a new dance indicated that the process should incorporate the following steps: (a) know the characteristics of target learners, (b) know what dance needs to be taught, (c) help individuals learn the dance steps, (d) be fun and energetic, (d) allow learners to add their own moves, and (e) be patient with learner differences (retrieved from <http://www.wikihow.com/Teach-Dance-Steps>).

*Know the characteristics of learners.* The immediate learners targeted by UPP's change initiative were the six ECE faculty members who provide training for individuals seeking AA degrees in early childhood education. After completing the Phase I readiness activities described in the previous section, project personnel focused on identifying and describing the relevant characteristics of these individuals. In addition to a review of each faculty member's demographic and professional experience data, a pretest was administered to determine their knowledge of special education and service delivery to young children with special needs. Demographic and experiential data indicated that faculty were diverse and had extensive knowledge and experience in the preparation of early education personnel (see Table 3).

**Table 3**  
*Characteristics of AA Degree Faculty*

Number of Faculty	Ethnicity	Employment	Degree	Degree Area	ECE Experience
6	1 Hispanic	3 Full time	2 PhD	ECE	At least 25years each
	5 African American		1 Masters	General Ed Ed Admin.	
		3 Adjunct	3 Masters		At least 15 years each

Pretest results revealed that faculty had experience in preparing early education paraprofessionals for service delivery to young children *without disabilities* and felt adequately prepared to address issues related to the racial and cultural diversity of children and families in our city. However, the pretest feedback also indicated that AA EC faculty was far less knowledgeable, confident and comfortable with issues related to the diversity and educational programming for young children with disabilities.

***Know what dance needs to be taught.*** In determining the curriculum modification and professional development needs of AA EC faculty and field-site personnel, UPP key personnel considered AA EC faculty characteristics, pretest results, and priorities of the UPP funding agency. Course revisions and professional development content and strategies were designed to address OSEP requirements that:(a) each course in the AA program incorporate evidence-based and competency-based special education content and practices, and (b) the AA program provide practicum experience in an early education setting serving children with disabilities. Additionally, key personnel sought to incorporate general content and a knowledge base specifically responsive to the context of early education in our city. Finally, project leaders instituted a systematic syllabus assessment process designed to identify faculty needs with regard to course content and pedagogy.

A consultant identified through the Monarch Center, who had expertise in early childhood special education and experience in curriculum revision, was employed to guide faculty dyads through an intensive assessment of their existing course syllabi. Faculty used a rubric provided by the consultant to assess the extent to which their syllabi incorporated elements (e.g., diversity, evidence-based practices) designed to prepare paraprofessionals for effective service delivery to young children with disabilities and their families. Table 4 provides a cross section of the attributes addressed by the syllabus assessment rubric. The entire rubric is presented in Appendix A.

**Table 4**  
*Syllabus Assessment Rubric*

Syllabus Elements	Assessment Questions
a. Course description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the course description reflect the core value of diversity?</li> <li>• Does the course description reflect evidence-based practices?</li> </ul>
b. Course objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do course objectives reflect clear expectations?</li> <li>• Do course objectives address instructional strategies for meeting the needs of young children with disabilities?</li> <li>• Do course objectives address technology-related knowledge, skills, and dispositions important for meeting the needs of young children with disabilities?</li> </ul>
c. Texts, readings, resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do course resources support candidates in learning how culture, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status influence early childhood development?</li> <li>• Do course resources support evidence-based practices? Community involvement?</li> </ul>
d. Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do course assignments engage candidates in diverse settings?</li> </ul>
e. In Class Instructional Experiences/Guest Speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are instructional experiences linked to program values?</li> <li>• Do guest speakers include family and community members?</li> </ul>

As a result of these activities, it was necessary to infuse courses with updated curricular content and experiences designed to facilitate the development of infants and toddlers with developmental delays and/or disabilities, assist families in meeting the needs of their children, ensure that paraprofessionals have knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively with licensed/certified ECE practitioners, and ensure that paraprofessionals meet qualifications consistent with State standards in accordance with part C of IDEA (2004). More specifically, course content needed to be revised in four areas—understanding basic special education terminology, laws, policies, procedures, and services; assessment; instructional strategies; and assistive technology, particularly as these relate to service delivery in early childhood settings. Similar professional development needs were identified in the areas of disability awareness, evidence-based instructional strategies for early education settings, effective practices for

facilitating diverse family involvement, assistive technology for early education settings, and pedagogy and instructional technology supporting delivery of revised coursework.

***Implement choreography to help individuals learn the dance.*** UPP project leaders systematically instituted carefully planned procedures to achieve desired changes and meet UPP goals. Below are the five essential elements that characterized the project's change initiative.

- *First*, throughout UPP course revision activities and course delivery-related professional development activities, project leaders incorporated supports/approaches designed to enhance faculty ability to work effectively in collaboration with one another. Course revision activities (i.e., syllabus assessment and subsequent content infusion) were conducted by AA EC faculty dyads who taught the courses assigned to them for revision. Professional development activities (i.e., creation of professional development modules) were conducted by small work teams consisting of an AA EC faculty member, a SPED faculty member, a student, and a community partner or resource consultant with training in early education, language development, assistive technology or some other critical content area. Project leaders endeavored to create course-revision dyads with complementary personalities. Leaders facilitated team-building activities for module development teams. A tactful change in personnel was implemented in response to a particular instance in which a faculty dyad remained incompatible.
- *Second*, leaders created an environment for learning and working that promoted continued buy-in and provided numerous resources (e.g., consultant, rubrics, templates) to support the work expected. Additionally, acknowledging that a learning environment that is fun and high energy is as important for adult learners as it is for young learners, project leaders endeavored to create such an environment. For example, meetings and work sessions included humorous icebreakers, team-building activities, and refreshments appropriate to the occasion.
- *Third*, project leaders provided a number of guided and independent practice opportunities. For example, AA EC faculty received feedback on their course revisions from internal (project personnel) and external (community partners and Advisory Board members). Their reviewers provided feedback regarding trial implementations of some syllabi.
- *Fourth*, leaders reinforced successive approximations, as well as competent demonstrations of expertise (i.e., syllabus revisions, module development). Incentives for continued effort were also provided. For example, following trial implementation of revised syllabi, AA EC faculty were invited to a one-day retreat to which project Advisory Board members and community partners were also invited. The retreat provided the opportunity to review project implementation, celebrate project accomplishments, acknowledge AA EC faculty and other change agents, and solicit and discuss areas for project improvements.

- *Fifth*, in the instances where resistance to learning the dance occurred, project leaders attempted to understand and address the source of the resistance. In virtually all cases, both the source of and the response to the resistance could be found in one of the elements above (i.e., the level or type of support provided to facilitate faculty work, attributes of the learning/working environment, availability of practice opportunities, or the nature of reinforcement and incentive structures). Development and ongoing maintenance of an environment that fostered open communication allowed for fairly rapid identification of resistance. Once the source and the nature of resistance were identified, adjustments or corrections were made to address the issue. For example, when faculty expressed uncertainty about completing a task within a given timeframe, project leaders provided assistance (work support) in organizing the task such that it could be completed in the desired timeframe. The utilization of Scope of Work contracts, with clearly articulated work tasks, timelines, and compensation amounts provided an incentive that proved helpful in ameliorating resistance.

***Allow learners to add their own moves.*** The UPP change process involved planned choreography, in which motion and form (e.g., course revision activities) were dictated in detail, as well as improvisation, in which AA EC faculty learners received generalized directives, then had latitude to express their personalized interpretations. Each approach contributed uniquely and meaningfully to the overall effort. The best example of faculty improvisation was their *trial run* implementation (or dress rehearsal) of the revised syllabi. As faculty utilized the revised content, assignments, etc. with AA EC candidates, they made adaptations, adjustments, and took notes regarding the practical usage of the revisions. This feedback is currently being used to further refine AA EC courses.

***Be patient with diverse learning styles and speeds.*** Any competent instructor knows that some may find it harder to learn than others, particularly when the instruction involves learning something new or modifying something previously learned. UPP project leaders remained cognizant of common barriers people often have while in motion (e.g., fear of being embarrassed or negatively judged; self-perceived lack of coordination or rhythm, etc.). They supported one another in responding sensitively to the learning diversity of the adult learners targeted by project activities. A variety of supports were provided to AA EC faculty learners. Among these were aids provided to AA EC faculty and project personnel to assist them in organizing their project-related responsibilities (e.g., activity calendars, specification of concrete deliverables and associated due dates, written contracts tying summer compensation to specified work products); and individual supports such as timeline extensions and one-on-one consultations.

### **Current Status and Plans for Improvement**

For the most part, the UPP has proceeded according to schedule. As a result of readiness activities (Phase I) and well-organized dance instruction (Phase II), two primary goals of the UPP project are near completion. The 15 courses that comprise the AA Education program have been revised, refined, undergone limited implementation, and been further modified. As part of an online approach to faculty development, professional development modules for course content are undergoing modification and refinement. Subsequent steps are: (a) full implementation of the



revised curriculum with AA candidates; (b) assessment of the curriculum's impact on candidates' knowledge, skills, and dispositions; (c) overall evaluation of project execution, and (d) institutionalization of project associated curriculum revisions and professional development materials and methods.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In the past, preschool personnel were only prepared to serve children without disabilities, even though children who were subsequently diagnosed with disabilities may have enrolled. Consequent to the passage of IDEA 2004 (P. L. 108-446), states have made great strides in identifying children who have developmental delays. However, the Act does not require ECE teachers or paraprofessionals to be certified in special education. Recently, projects like UPP have received OSEP funding to address this gap in services for young children under IDEA Part C (2004). Today's early childhood programs must be responsive to the needs of children who represent diverse ability levels, as well as diverse cultures, languages, and religions. Thus, the following recommendations are offered to others engaged in similar personnel preparation efforts.

- Identify compatible dance partners. Target influential and/or passionate individuals in the IHE and the community (including families) who share the vision of change desired.
- Establish a rhythm or pattern for creating change. Systematically structure change-related activities such that they can be communicated in a way that engages others.
- Allow for sufficient dance practice. Establish or develop strategies that enable learners to implement the change in venues both with and without an audience that will judge their performance.
- Don't forget the recital! Create or take advantage of opportunities to showcase the results of the change initiative, as well as the change agents.
- Take the performance on the road. Contribute to the state of the art and to the motivation of your professional peers by disseminating effective aspects of your change initiative.

Finally, to rephrase Lee Ann Womack's popular song, [*We*] *Hope You Dance!*

### **AUTHOR NOTES**

**Arlene King-Berry, M.Ed., J.D.** is an Associate Professor of Education at the University of the District of Columbia, Washington, DC. Her research interests are special education, disability law, and student success. **Rosalie Boone, Ed.D.**, is a Professor in the School of Education at Howard University. Her research interests are special education, personnel preparation, and cultural and linguistic diversity.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Arlene King-Berry, Department of Education, University of the District of Columbia, 4200 Connecticut Ave., Washington, DC 20008.

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Appendix A  
Syllabus Assessment Rubric

### Rubric for Assessing Current Syllabi

Element	Indicators	Extent that the Syllabus Emphasizes Core Values					Notes
		Little or None	Some	Significantly	Extensively	Not Applicable	
Course Description	An emphasis related to cultural, linguistic, and ability diversity is articulated in the description of the course.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	An emphasis on evidence-based practices is articulated in the description of the course.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
Course Objectives	Course objectives provide clear expectations for outcomes related to children of diverse abilities and their families.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Course objectives address implementing instructional strategies to support early development and learning or pre-academic achievement.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Course objectives address using technology to enhance children's development and access to natural learning opportunities and participation in the general curriculum.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Course objectives address skills for observation and data collection.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Course objectives address assisting in the implementation of transition plans and services across settings.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Course objectives address communicating effectively with children and families.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Course objectives provide clear expectations on outcomes related to children who are culturally and linguistically diverse and their families.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Course objectives underscore the emphasis on evidence-based practices and decision making.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
Texts, Readings, Resources	Assigned resources support students in learning how culture, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, and other factors influence early childhood development and practices.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Assigned resources support students in learning how to support the full participation of young children with disabilities in diverse home and community settings.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Assigned resources support students in learning about evidence-based practices for supporting children who are culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse.	L	S	SI	E	NA	

## Rubric for Assessing Current Syllabi

Element	Indicators	Extent that the Syllabus Emphasizes Core Values					Notes
		Little or None	Some	Significantly	Extensively	Not Applicable	
<b>Assignments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assignments engage students in learning how to support the full participation of young children with disabilities in diverse home and community settings.</li> </ul>	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assignments engage students in learning how culture, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status and other factors influence early childhood development and practices.</li> </ul>	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assignments provided opportunities for students to reflection upon the experience and similarities and/or challenges to their own cultural background.</li> </ul>	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assignments provide students with a variety of experiences in problem solving and evidence-based decision making.</li> </ul>	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assignments provide students with different opportunities for collaboration with children, family members, and colleagues</li> </ul>	L	S	SI	E	NA	
<b>In-class instructional experiences including guest speakers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-class experiences are clearly linked to core program values (e.g., inclusion, evidence-based practices).</li> </ul>	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-class activities engage students in learning how to support the full participation of young children with disabilities in diverse home and community settings.</li> </ul>	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-class activities engage students in learning how culture, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status and other factors influence early childhood development and practices.</li> </ul>	L	S	SI	E	NA	
<b>Guest Speakers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guest speakers include family members and community partners with stories related to the core values.</li> </ul>	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guest speakers support students in learning about the strength and diversity of their community.</li> </ul>	L	S	SI	E	NA	

## Critical Features of Program Improvement: Lessons From Five Minority Serving Universities

**Norma A. Lopez-Reyna**

**Peggy A. Snowden**

**Nicole M. Stuart**

**Dana Baumgartner**

**Michael J. Maiorano**

*Monarch Center*

*University of Illinois at Chicago*

Nationwide, personnel preparation programs are responding to the changing population demographics and its impact on Pre K-12 classrooms. Needs surveys conducted by the Monarch Center over the past ten years have consistently yielded a need for support in redesigning program course and fieldwork components to better prepare their teachers and other professionals for effectively serving children who are culturally and linguistically diverse and have disabilities. The five university programs featured in this special journal issue each described their work in a context of their past program work, specific needs grounded in the populations of teacher candidates they were preparing, and the children that the graduates would be serving in schools. All of the programs had a shared set of overlapping foci in their plans and actions that included (a) diversity and the need to link coursework to field experiences, (b) the use of stakeholder input and feedback, and (c) the use of multiple formative and summative assessments of teacher candidates and of the programs themselves. We discuss these similarities across the programs, discuss their relevance to the field of teacher education, and provide a summary of lessons learned.

**Keywords:** Monarch Center, minority serving institutions, program improvement, program redesign

In this article, we present observations and reflections based on our work with more than 250 teams of faculty members who are engaged in the education of professionals to serve children with disabilities, specifically with the teams whose work is featured in this special issue. The success among the teams of faculty that we worked with on their program improvement initiatives has steadily increased as we continually improve our approach and provision of supports (see Bay, Lopez-Reyna, & Guillory, this issue). We note similarities across the programs, discuss their relevance to the field of teacher education, and provide a summary of lessons learned.

The Monarch Center has been engaged with personnel preparation faculty in special education and related services at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) for almost a decade. As described by Bay and colleagues (this issue; see also Bay, Lopez-Reyna, Snowden, & Zazycki, 2011), the Monarch Center Technical Assistance (TA) approach began as an approach based on

professional development (Lick, 2000; Lieberman & Miller, 2001), systems change (Fixen, Blasé, Naoom, & Wallace, 2007; Fullan, 1998; 2001), and standards for effective technical assistance (Trohanis, 2001). As we interacted with and learned from our participants, the Monarch Center TA model has evolved across the years. Generally speaking, we have found that the literature provides only indirect guidance toward the process of program redesign and even less with regard to program improvement (Lopez-Reyna, Bay, Zazycki, & Snowden, 2011).

Teams of special education teachers and related services preparation faculty attend Knowledge Exchange Seminars hosted by the Monarch Center as they launch into a year of concentrated and focused attention to improving the quality and content of their programs on a particular theme or area of need. For example, there have been cohorts that focused on: (a) creating blended programs for early childhood and special education, (b) collaborating with their higher education colleagues to redesign programs that prepare teacher candidates to teach in inclusive settings, (c) infusing culturally responsive practices to assure that candidates can effectively teach children with disabilities from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, or (d) rethinking their program to include practical, field based experiences throughout the program. When teams sign up with the Monarch Center yearlong model of technical assistance and support for program improvement, they commit to focus on goals and objectives co-written with colleagues. Goals are constructed during the Knowledge Exchange Seminar with an assigned mentor who has expertise related to their focus. They also become a part of a cohort that report to one another via listserv and periodic phone conferences, exchange resources and materials, and serve one another in the sense of providing a group of comrades who are sharing in a similar initiative to change an aspect of their preparation programs. For the most part, the work of personnel preparation is multi-faceted, including attention to state and local standards, federal mandates, campus level regulations, and the specific needs of future educators, while also continuing the typical responsibilities of a higher education faculty member. Evaluation data have consistently revealed the strength and value of the initial Seminar for creating bonds among teams across institutions, teams who rarely have opportunities for sustained thinking and working with their colleagues (team members), and with teams from other parts of the country. Teams are uniquely aware of the needs and constraints of their work, as well as, dedicated to attaining the highest outcomes for their graduates and ultimately, the students that they will be serving.

The five universities featured in this issue describe working in a context of their past program efforts, specific needs grounded in the populations of teacher candidates they were preparing, and the students graduates would be serving in schools. In addition to these social cultural contextual features, all of the programs had shared overlapping foci in their plans and actions that included: (a) diversity and the need to link coursework to field experiences, (b) the use of stakeholder input and feedback, and (c) the use of multiple formative and summative assessments of teacher candidates and of the programs themselves. The following is a discussion of each of these three areas with examples from the participating institutions. Detailed accounts of the work of these five institutions may be found in this special issue for the University of Texas Austin (Robertson, Garcia, & McFarland), University of South Carolina Upstate (Pae, Wittaker, & Gentry), University of the District of Columbia (King-Berry & Boone), University of Guam (Fee, Fee, Snowden, Stuart, & Baumgartner), and Springfield College (Cyr, McDiarmid, Halpin, Stratton, & Davis-Delano).

## **Diversity and the Need to Link Coursework to Field Experiences**

Nationwide, personnel preparation programs are responding to the changing population demographics and its impact on Pre K-12 classrooms. Needs surveys conducted by the Monarch Center across the years (internet based, event feedback, focused surveys, etc.), have consistently yielded a call for support in redesigning program course and fieldwork components to better prepare teachers and other professionals for effectively serving children who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) and have disabilities. Indeed, teacher education graduates continue to express the lack of preparedness to teach diverse students (Warren, 2002; Helfrick & Bean, 2011; Voltz, Brazil, & Scott, 2004). Colleges and schools of education are responding to mandates by national, professional, and state requirements to infuse diversity throughout their pre-service programs for teachers and professionals. This has been met with less than thorough integration (Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). Some institutions add one stand-alone course, others focus on a few courses in which to attend to culturally diverse needs, while others commit to integrating diversity throughout their programs (Scott & Mumford, 2007).

Faculty at the institutions featured in this issue represent several approaches to program improvement. The program coordinators at the University of Texas Austin (UT) describe the arduous process of creating a series of intersecting matrices to develop courses and specific assignments within each course that align with both CEC (Council for Exceptional Children) and their state standards. In doing so, the faculty designed a curriculum that blended the specific competencies to be mastered during the five-semester program with the specific competencies required to teach CLD students with disabilities. They created a two-course sequence to bookend their program. During the first semester, an intensive course on intercultural communication and collaboration was paired with a practicum to lay the foundation. The special education teacher candidates explored their own racial identities through reflective inquiry-based coursework, which required teaming with their bilingual education peers from the department of curriculum and instruction. Candidates were tasked with designing a curriculum to meet the needs of bilingual students with disabilities, while at the same time developing collaborative skills. UT Austin faculty considered their program to be a work-in-progress and stated that there is still much to be done, including integrating culturally responsive concepts and skills throughout the curriculum and increasing collaboration between special education and general education faculty.

In a similar fashion, the University of South Carolina Upstate (USCU) revised their program to be in full alignment with CEC Core and Learning Disabilities Standards along with securing NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) accreditation. With the goal of program integration, faculty restructured the curriculum to include assignments that targeted culturally responsive issues and topics in all coursework and clinical settings. The content courses were revised to ensure teacher candidates acquired the appropriate knowledge regarding multiculturalism and diversity, while the field-based assignments were revised to allow candidates to apply principles of behavioral and cognitive theories, practice collaboration, and explore different perspectives, all through a culturally responsive lens.

Concerned with the ever-increasing diversity within the Guam schools, the University of Guam (U Guam) aligned its program content to provide teacher candidates' with experiences and



course content that would prepare them for serving multiple diverse populations and used the rubric required by NCATE Standard 4. Their faculty thought it imperative to include a cadre of guest speakers that represented the many different cultures that made up the community to allow the teacher candidates opportunities to listen and ask questions relevant to their future classroom positions.

Springfield College, faced with a population of school children who are not culturally represented in the teacher education student enrollments, focused the urgency of their needs by redesigning their instructional methods courses. Redesigned content emphasized teaching practices that were culturally responsive and could be adapted to multiple content areas, such as math, reading, and social studies. This provided for better preparation of their candidates in the dual licensure program to work in collaborative inclusive settings. Beginning with the math methods course, the faculty team developed objectives through which their candidates had to demonstrate proficiency across the content areas. These objectives included planning for culturally relevant lessons designed to meet the needs of students who are English language learners and had a variety of life experiences. Additional professional development gave the Springfield College faculty the opportunity to scrutinize examples of ways to incorporate the new objectives into their courses, therefore learning new teaching concepts and practices that could positively impact the outcomes for CLD students.

Along with incorporating content related to diversity in coursework, the programs exemplified in this special issue also focused on the provision of clinical experiences in diverse settings where teacher candidates would gain practical and applied knowledge with diverse students. Indeed, well-planned coursework and content connected with structured field experiences serves to instill teacher candidates' awareness of issues and their attitudes toward CLD students (Bodur, 2012; Kyles & Olafson, 2008). Darling-Hammond (2009) referred to the lack of connection between campus courses and field experiences as "the Achilles heel of teacher education" (p. 91) (Zeichner, 2012). This statement underscores the belief that many pre-service education programs do not adequately bridge the divide between coursework and school classroom experiences for their teacher candidates. Darling-Hammond (2006) also described the current method for educating teachers as analogous to a factory model, calling for a shift in program design that calls for coursework to be intertwined with clinical practice. Whereas traditional schools of education front-load courses early in the program and end with a few weeks of student teaching, more progressive programs imbed at least two semesters of clinical experiences, including student teaching. Such extended coursework/clinical experiences provide a context for professors and practitioner teachers to align concepts with strategies and create favorable conditions for teacher candidates to learn and practice in a seamless manner. In such programs, teacher candidates are afforded opportunities to understand theories of teaching and learning, experience how theory directly affects practice, and learn how students are affected (Henry, 1983; Koerner, Rust, & Baumgartner, 2001).

Similar to the course practicum formats utilized by UT Austin, the U Guam augmented all of its courses to include more attention to multicultural education, to be taken in tandem with a practicum experience component. Hence, all pre-service educators were provided with meaningful assignments and purposeful field-based activities that afforded them the opportunity to connect culturally relevant coursework to practice. Conversely, the USCU candidates

concurrently enroll in methods of teaching and a clinical course where they were required to plan and implement a unit of instruction, design activities, and reflect upon their abilities to appropriately provide instruction in responsive ways. Though they have made great strides in restructuring their program and to secure clinical sites with a diverse student population, the Springfield College program redesign continues to be an urgent work-in-progress as they struggle in their efforts to obtain model field-based sites of collaborative teaching in multicultural settings.

As outlined by these examples, coordinated coursework and field experiences is key to infusing diversity, as well as, state and professional standards into teacher preparation programs that strive to prepare teachers who are knowledgeable and skilled for the demands of today's classrooms. These institutions are making systematic and reflective efforts within and across programs to improve outcomes for students with and without disabilities.

### **Responsiveness to Stakeholder Input and Feedback**

A characteristic shared by the innovative, culturally responsive teacher preparation programs described in this special issue is the use of stakeholder input and feedback in the program improvement process. Though varying in approach and degree of intensity, these programs used stakeholders to inform the inception of the change process, throughout the change initiatives, and to inform program evaluation. For example, UT Austin held teacher candidate focus groups and administered surveys to cooperating teachers and principals. Similarly, feedback on course revisions and trial implementation of syllabi from internal (program personnel) and external (community partners and Advisory Board members) stakeholders was provided to faculty at the University of the District of Columbia (U DC). Springfield College collected data from both a Collaboration and Needs Self-Assessment Survey distributed to their local partner schools. In a contrasting example in response to the Executive Director of the U Guam School of Education, the Program Chair of the Special Education program sought to partner with the Guam Department of Education to create a solution for the critical shortage of special educators on the island.

These examples are consistent with the patterns noted by Lopez-Reyna, Bay, Zazycki, and Snowden (2011) in their study of successful program improvement efforts. Based on their work with 67 personnel preparation teams, participants cited the ability to gain approval and hence, buy-in, both internally (e.g., from faculty colleagues, department heads, and administrators) and externally (e.g., from school district personnel and community stakeholders) were among the most critical supports to their efforts. In fact, previous research supports the notion of transparency in program evaluation by including stakeholders across the entire process, from design (e.g., needs assessment surveys, focus groups, interviews, discussion forums) through implementation (e.g., follow-up surveys, induction year observations, interviews, and open-ended questionnaires) (Brett, Hill-Mead, & Wu, 2000; Jarrell, 2000; Ryan & Johnson, 2000; Torres & Preskill, 2001). By participating in the entire evaluation cycle, stakeholders develop a sense of ownership, which increases the likelihood of their commitment to program improvement goals (Lusky & Hayes, 2001).

Many researchers argue that school-university partnerships, particularly the relationships between teacher candidates, supervising teachers, and clinical faculty, are weak and disjointed (Allen, 2011; Johnston, 2010; Korthagen, Loughran, & Russell, 2006; Patrick, Peach, & Pocknee, 2008; Yayli, 2008; Trent & Lim, 2010; Zeichner, 2006). This underscores the critical need for creating collaborative, equal, and equitable relationships among all stakeholders in the teacher education program evaluation process.

Teacher education programs involve a large number of external stakeholders, those directly involved with program graduates (e.g., cooperating teachers, mentor teachers, pupils, and principals) and those who form opinions after experiencing the work of program graduates (e.g., local school districts and parents) (Wineburg, 2006, p. 58). In a survey of members of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), Wineburg (2006) observed that feedback from multiple stakeholders requires programs to collect a variety of data, in various formats in accordance to the purposes for their use. To accomplish this, teacher education programs need to: (a) identify the data needed by various constituencies to provide evidence of quality and areas for improvement, (b) work together with state agencies and professional practice boards, the federal government and national accrediting agencies, university faculty and administrators, K-12 partners, and policy makers, and (c) reach consensus about what data are useful, at what levels, and for what purposes (Wineburg, 2006, p. 63).

As Stronge (2006) points out, “In order to accomplish personal and professional goals, the individual needs the institution. In order to accomplish organizational goals, the institution needs the individual” (p. 4). A high quality teacher assessment and evaluation system builds upon a dynamic balance between school and teacher improvement. To achieve this balance, Stronge suggests that program evaluation should include mutually beneficial goals, emphasis on systematic communication, collaborative climate for evaluation, technically sound evaluation systems, and the use of multiple data sources (pp. 6-7). Interconnected school-university networks benefit all stakeholders (Smedley, 2001). The CLD special education program improvement models described in this special issue add value to the practice of including stakeholder’s voices in their program evaluation, both with regard to graduates and the program itself.

### **Use of Multiple Forms of Data for Formative and Summative Assessment**

A third theme noted across the five programs featured in this special issue was the precise use of data to inform program faculty with respect to the program and teacher candidates on a formative basis, as well as, to provide summative information that could be used in other contexts, such as in response to accrediting agencies. A variety of methods are used to assess the development of pre-service teacher candidates during their educational program and practicum. These measures have evolved beyond the use of quizzes, tests, and sample lesson plans, which Takona (2003) attributed to the “old paradigm” of teacher progress assessment. Under the “new paradigm” of pre-service candidate assessment, qualities of effective teaching and measurement of candidates’ achievement of these qualities is the focus. Authentic, performance-based assessment, or other systematic evaluation methods have been adopted by teacher education programs to inform decisions about the competence of teacher candidates and to appraise whether they can

appropriately apply the knowledge, skills, and strategies that they have learned (Cummings, Maddux, & Richmond, 2008; Dean & Lauer, 2003; Takona, 2003). Among measures used to these ends are portfolio assessment, reflection logs, and disposition instruments.

Student portfolio assessment is utilized for varying purposes within education. It may be employed to document student achievement or growth over time, to review a teacher's performance, or to facilitate continuous program improvement within a teacher education program (Cummings et al., 2008; Dean & Lauer, 2003; Takona, 2003). Portfolios can be paper-based (Berrill & Addison, 2010; Imhof & Picard, 2009) or web-based (Bannink, 2009) or employ a combination of platforms (Cáceres, Chamoso, & Azcárate, 2010; Cummings et al., 2008). The literature suggests ways to evaluate student portfolios and improve faculty engagement (see Cummings et al., 2008), as well as, the explicit instruction required to facilitate teacher candidates and faculty use of portfolio methods of assessment (Imhof & Picard, 2009). The effects of close instruction and analysis of portfolios on the improved quality of program course and practicum content is also noted (Berrill & Addison, 2010).

Several programs that were discussed in this special issue used portfolios in their special education personnel preparation programs. For example, the USCU program required candidates to prepare a portfolio to demonstrate their teaching competencies, including responsiveness to student diversity. Candidates were asked to include in their portfolios: (a) statements regarding their teaching decisions during lesson planning, (b) artifacts from their teaching, and (c) reflections on their learning. USCU faculty used student portfolios for formative and summative purposes with regard to evaluating students' developing cultural competence.

Additionally, faculty at UT Austin required assignment submissions through *Blackboard* and *Google Docs*, which facilitated instructors' feedback on students' collaborative work. The ease of supporting the revision and iterations of students' work, assessing students in real-time, and facilitating students' professional development is one advantage attributed to e-Portfolio platforms. U Guam also adopted e-Portfolio assessment to meet NCATE requirements, as well as, to conduct their teacher candidate and program evaluation. Program faculty teams reviewed students' portfolios three times during the program and comprehensive exams. Fee and her colleagues (this issue) commented on the importance of this metric to communicate the revised program's effectiveness to internal stakeholders, which distinguishes this program from the others described in this journal.

Reflection logs may be included in a candidate's portfolio and provide another distinct measure of teacher candidate growth, as reflection on experiences to facilitate personal or professional development is considered an essential teacher practice (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Takona, 2003). Critical reflection has been defined as a form of self-study (Parkison, 2009) that includes an individual's culture, histories, worldview, and experiences that form personal knowledge and professional practice (Sharma, Phillion, & Malewski, 2011). Moreover, reflection activities are thought to support the connection between research and practice in teacher preparation programs (Oner & Adadan, 2011).

Reflection activities were included as stand-alone assessments, as well as, part of larger portfolio assessment practices employed by the personnel preparation programs discussed in this special

issue. As previously noted, USCU required their teacher candidates to prepare reflections on their learning with regard to inclusion. Autobiographical reflections and reflection logs were incorporated across different courses within UT Austin's program to support the documentation of candidate growth. These assignments reflect current research findings, which suggest that teacher candidates require numerous opportunities to reflect on their teaching experiences to integrate reflection into their professional practice.

In addition to portfolio assessments and reflection activities, pre-service teacher dispositions have also been a candidate evaluation focus in personnel preparation programs for decades. Professional dispositions are frequently defined using the language of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2007): "Professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development." Despite their importance, measuring individual dispositions and making decisions based on what is found remains a challenge for teacher educators (Englehart et al., 2012).

Competency-based dispositional assessment was a priority for U DC faculty, particularly as the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) related it to one of the funding requirements. After substantial work reviewing and revising their Associate of Arts Paraprofessional Program, faculty defined their next program improvement steps. These steps included assessment of their candidates' knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The U DC faculty expressed their interest in using disposition assessment to evaluate their candidates' growth and to monitor the impact of their program.

UT faculty also received OSEP funding and made special educator competencies, as defined by CEC and the Texas State Board for Educator Certification standards, a priority in their program redesign efforts. Courses and assignments were aligned with the standards, and teacher candidates' competency dispositions were assessed using these assignments. Cooperating teachers and hiring principals completed an additional, comprehensive measure of the candidates' competency dispositions. This contributed to the dual purposes of candidate and program assessment. Summarized data from this instrument was used to identify weaknesses and to make improvements to UT Austin's teacher preparation program.

Disposition assessment was also integrated into U Guam's special education preparation program. Disposition rubrics that evaluated student competencies were completed by program faculty and at least one current school supervisor, entered into students' portfolios, and used to evaluate candidates' application of knowledge. These stakeholder ratings allowed U Guam faculty to follow their candidate's cultural competence as they progressed through the program.

Consistent with Jung and Rhodes's (2008) call for competency-based dispositional assessment in teacher education programs, a recent focus for teacher candidate assessment high-leverage practices parallels an emphasis on assessing teacher candidates based on their teaching competencies. *High-leverage practices*, for the purposes of teacher education programs, are considered to be core teaching practices that cross disciplines and grade levels (Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009); lead to greater gains in student learning when used proficiently (Ball, Sleep, Boerst, & Mass, 2009); can be articulated and taught by teacher

educators and practiced and mastered by teacher candidates, regardless of teaching style (Ball et al., 2009); are research-based (Grossman et al., 2009); and, can be assessed more readily than dispositions (Sawchuk, 2011). Borko and Whitcomb (2008) highlight “learning about student understanding” and “orchestrating classroom discussions” as two prominent examples of core teaching practices found in the literature.

Several authors noted the complex challenges of restructuring their teacher education programs and developing assessments around core teaching practices, as opposed to the typical ways of teaching and assessing future teachers, which emphasize content knowledge (e.g., teacher certification, coursework completion, and teacher licensure tests) (Borko & Whitcomb, 2008). Grossman and colleagues (2009) describe the program work in terms of reorganizing the curriculum around a set of core practices and then fostering within teacher candidates the professional knowledge, skills, and an emerging identity around those practices. Specific to assessment, they suggest that pre-service teachers will require numerous opportunities for practice in K-12 classrooms with targeted feedback from faculty who may also guest teach in those classrooms. Ball and colleagues’ (2009) effort to revise their K-8 mathematics teacher education program with respect to high-leverage practices involved: (a) identifying and choosing the core teaching practices; (b) creating a library of detailed instructional materials; (c) developing structures for collective work, including planning meetings, studying one another’s teaching, detailing lesson plans for each university course to be used by new instructors; and, (d) collective grading. Regarding assessment, the faculty evaluated candidates’ videos of field-based teaching, and a practice-based final exam was adopted for the math methods course. The evaluation tools for these assessments were created through faculty collaboration with particular attention to high-leverage practices as well as the time constraints that their colleagues may experience.

Although the programs discussed in this special issue made strides in meeting this assessment priority as they scrutinized and revised their programs, and used assessment to understand their students’ growth as well as areas for improvement in their personnel preparation programs, additional restructuring is required. However, the strides they have made thus far will serve them well in moving forward toward a comprehensive assessment of high-leverage practices.

## **Discussion**

When we invited the contributors in this special issue to write about their experiences with program improvement, we specifically asked them to address barriers to and supports for their work. For the most part, they all chose to focus on their process of moving forward, noting barriers only as a feature of the contexts in which they were working. That is, they all made deliberate collaborative decisions to work with those factors over which they had control as a means of overcoming, or at least navigating through, obstacles and barriers. For example, some faculty members received specific supports such as course release to review research related to the targeted program improvement initiatives, sabbatical time to concentrate on proposed program improvement, and funding to hire retired faculty. Their goals and objectives were fully embraced by the faculty in adjoining departments, as well as, their higher administration. Another team, by contrast, referred to their struggle with “institutional sluggishness” and described how they got the work done in spite of this challenge. All teams accomplished

significant program changes that improved the quality of the content and process of personnel preparation.

Key to positive change in program improvement efforts was the investment of time to secure the agreement (or “buy-in”) from their colleagues. As has been previously noted (see Lopez-Reyna et al., 2011), the extent to which participants were able to accomplish program reform efforts of the nature that are likely to be sustainable was founded on the extent to which they had the collaboration or cooperation of not only those within their immediate home departments but also the extent to which the interests of other departments, the candidates themselves, and field-based teachers were represented.

Our participants’ program improvement progress reports, particularly final reports often referred to a journey, defined as “a process, passage, taking a rather long time.” We believe this descriptor captures the nature of the work we have had the privilege of being a part of for almost a decade. The teacher educators who contributed to this special issue are deeply committed to the hard work of improving the quality of the teachers they prepare to serve children with disabilities. They often state that their program improvement efforts are a work-in-progress and we have observed that there is typically a steady forward movement that does not diminish under external pressures. Given the multiple demands on the time of teacher educators, those outside of field are often awed that reform is accomplished in an environment of ever changing demands. Inevitably, the question emerges of “finding time” to do the work. We have learned that most often the Monarch Center participants don’t “find time,” they strategically *prioritize* their time and work long hours beyond the workday and workweek.

As noted by Bay and her colleagues (2011), it appears that change and reform are best accomplished when the participants are responsible for determining both *what* they want to focus on and the *pace* at which they wish to progress. Allowing such breathing space for the participants, their unique (and potentially changing) program contexts, and their self determined goals, is grounds for lasting change that is goes beyond a response to the daily external pressures and serves to strengthen the very foundation and build the capacity of the program.

#### AUTHOR NOTES

**Norma A. Lopez-Reyna, PhD**, is an Associate Professor of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago and Director of the Monarch Center. Her research interests are in the areas of assessment and literacy instruction of English learners with disabilities, family engagement, teacher preparation, and use of qualitative inquiry to inform instructional practices. **Peggy A. Snowden, M.Ed.**, is a doctoral candidate in the Special Education Program at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research interests are in the areas of culturally responsive teaching and teacher education. **Nicole M. Stuart, M.Ed.**, is the Program Associate for Communications and Partnerships, Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research interests are in the areas of science literacy, bilingual special education, and family involvement. **Dana Baumgartner, PhD.**, is Research Associate in the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research interests are in the areas of teacher education, mild/moderate/severe disabilities, and teacher collaboration. **Michael J.**

**Maiorano, M.Ed.**, is a PhD candidate in the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His research interest is early literacy instruction and children with intellectual disabilities.

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## Online Resources

*Peggy Snowden ♦ Chauncey Carr-McElwee*

**4Teachers.org** – a site which helps teachers integrate technology into their classrooms by offering a variety of online tools and resources such as ready-to-use Web lessons, quizzes, rubrics, and classroom calendars. It also offers tools for student use. Although a primary interest of the site is on web-based resources, it also focuses on professional development, program support, scalable online assessment, and assistance for special needs.

**Smithsonian Education** – the central education website for the Smithsonian Institution. The mission of this website is to offer resources for educators, families, and students. Resources for educators include lesson plans in art and design, science and technology, history, culture, and language arts, a searchable database of more than 2,000 resources, the Smithsonian educational resources that align to state, national, or common core standards, professional development, online events, and field trips. For families, the website provides links to educational and fun things in Washington, DC and other nearby locations such as sightseeing at museums and the National Zoological Park, exhibitions, events, cultural programs. Students are able to explore, discover, and learn about art and culture, history and travel, science, and take interactive web explorations of the Smithsonian. And, they can use the interactive Idea labs to assist with homework.

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)** – a portal that is designed to assist educators in accessing free educational materials across various websites. The materials on this sight are “organized by themes, topical collections, and content type that are aligned with common teaching topics and expressed needs of educators”. The resources are organized into collections that provide a toolkit of materials and activities that are suitable for integration in different educational settings. There are also additional NOAA resources that support educator professional development, academic scholarship, career exploration, and educational grants.

**Federal Reserve Education** – a website that offers classroom resources such as lesson plans, publications, activities, tours, programs, and academic competitions that are organized by grade and topic area. The public resources section has games, competitions, fun facts, and quizzes for students. There is also information about the Federal Reserve’s history, structure, function, and the districts. Lastly, the news and multimedia section covers general news, has video clips, podcasts, games and simulations, and quizzes.

## The Event Zone

*Martha Jallim Hall ♦ Michael J. Maiorano*

### **2012 ASHE Annual Conference**

Association for the Study of Higher Education  
*Freedom to Learn*  
November 14-17, 2012  
Las Vegas, Nevada

### **2012 ASHA Conference**

American Speech-Language Hearing Association  
*Evidence of Excellence: Opportunities and Outcomes!*  
November 15-17, 2012  
Atlanta, Georgia

### **NAGC Annual Convention and Exhibition**

National Association for Gifted Children  
*Reaching Beyond the Summit: Education with Altitude*  
November 15-18, 2012  
Denver, Colorado

### **NCSS Annual Conference**

National Council for Social Studies  
*Opening Windows of the World*  
November 16-18, 2012  
Seattle, Washington

### **Learning Forward Annual Conference**

*Connect. Engage. Learn.*  
December 1-5, 2012  
Boston, Massachusetts

### **Modern Language Association**

128th Annual Convention  
January 3-6, 2013  
Boston, Massachusetts

### **ASTE 2013 International Conference**

Association for Science Teacher Education  
*Science Education through a Historical and Cultural Lens*  
January 9-12, 2013  
Charleston, South Carolina

### **Lilly Conference on College and University Teaching**

*Evidence-Based Learning and Teaching*  
February 15-17, 2013  
Greensboro, North Carolina

### **National Association for Alternative Certification**

Ensuring Excellence: *Innovations in Alternate Routes*  
March 13-16, 2013  
Los Angeles, California

### **ASCD 68th Annual Conference & Exhibit Show**

*Our Story. Our Time. Our Future*  
March 16-18, 2013  
Chicago, Illinois

### **SITE 24th International Conference**

Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education  
March 25-29, 2013  
New Orleans, Louisiana

### **CEC Convention and Expo**

Council for Exceptional Children  
April 3-6, 2013  
San Antonio, Texas

### **UPCEA Annual Conference**

University Professional and Continuing Education Association  
April 4-6, 2013  
Boston, Massachusetts