FISCAL YEAR 2010
APPLICATION FOR NEW GRANTS UNDER THE
INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)

Personnel Development to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities (CFDA 84.325)

SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESERVICE PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT GRANTS
(CFDA 84.325T)
Absolute Priority 3--Special Education Preservice Program Improvement Grants (84.325T).

Background:

State educational agencies, institutions of higher education (IHEs), and local educational agencies (LEAs) consistently report that personnel preparation programs for kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) special education teachers should be restructured or redesigned so that graduates of these programs meet the highly qualified teacher (HQT) requirements in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). To accomplish this goal, personnel preparation programs must ensure that their graduates who expect to be providing instruction in a core academic subject are able to meet State special education certification or licensure requirements, as well as have the necessary content knowledge, consistent with the HQT requirements in IDEA.

In A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (Blueprint),\(^1\) the Department emphasizes research that shows that “top-performing teachers can make a dramatic difference in the achievement of their students, and suggests that the impact of being assigned to top-performing teachers year after year is enough to significantly narrow achievement gaps.” Reflecting this research, in both the Race to the Top competition\(^2\) and the Blueprint, the Department has called for a focus on teacher effectiveness, determined by multiple measures, including in significant part the growth of each teacher’s students. High-quality information on teacher effectiveness that is based on multiple measures can be used to provide feedback to teachers for on-going improvement and support every teacher’s access to effective preparation, on-going support, recognition, and the collaboration opportunities he or she needs to succeed.

Priority:

The purpose of this priority is to support the improvement and restructuring (through expansion or redesign) of K-12 special education teacher preparation programs to ensure that program graduates meet the HQT requirements in IDEA and effectively serve children with high-incidence disabilities. For the purposes of this priority, the term high-incidence disabilities refers to learning disabilities, emotional

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\(^1\) The following Web site provides more information on A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA): www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/blueprint.pdf

\(^2\) The following Web site provides more information on the Race to the Top competition: www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html
disturbance, or mental retardation. In order to be eligible under this priority, applicants must currently prepare special education personnel (at the baccalaureate or master's level) to serve school-age children with high-incidence disabilities.

Note: This priority only supports the improvement or restructuring of existing programs for high-incidence personnel, through, for example, the expansion of a program for elementary school teachers to include a program for secondary school teachers serving children with high-incidence disabilities. This priority does not support the development of new programs for high-incidence personnel. In addition, this priority does not support the improvement of programs in institutions of higher education (IHEs) that are preparing preschool teachers.

Note: This priority does not authorize the selection of trainees on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, or disability status.

To be considered for funding under the Special Education Preservice Program Improvement Grants priority, applicants must meet the application requirements contained in the priority. All projects funded under the absolute priority also must meet the programmatic and administrative requirements specified in the priority. The requirements of this priority are as follows:

(a) Demonstrate, in the narrative section of the application under "Quality of Project Services," how--

(1) The first year of the project period will be used for planning an improved or restructured K-12 teacher preparation program that includes induction and mentoring for program participants in LEAs. The planning activities during the first year must include revising curriculum; integrating evidence-based interventions that improve outcomes for children with high-incidence disabilities into the improved or restructured program (including providing research citations for those evidence-based interventions); and coordinating with the IDEA '04 and Research For Inclusive Settings (IRIS) Center for Training Enhancements on the use of its Web-based training modules (see www.iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu). Applicants must describe first-year activities and include a five-year timeline and implementation plan in their applications. This plan must describe the proposed project activities associated with implementation of the improved or restructured program. Implementation of the plan may not begin without approval from OSEP;
(2) The improved or restructured program is designed to integrate coursework with practicum opportunities that will enhance the competencies of beginning special education teachers to--

(i) Collaborate and work with general education teachers and other personnel to:

(A) Provide effective services and instruction in academic subjects to children with high-incidence disabilities in K-12 general education classrooms; and

(B) Address the challenges of serving high-need children with disabilities.

Note: For the purpose of this priority, “high-need children with disabilities” refers to children (ages birth through twenty-one, depending on the State) who are eligible for services under IDEA, and who may be further disadvantaged and at risk of educational failure because they: (1) are living in poverty, (2) are far below grade level, (3) are at risk of not graduating with a regular high school diploma on time, (4) are homeless, (5) are in foster care, (6) have been incarcerated, or (7) are English language learners.

(ii) Incorporate universal design for learning principles\(^3\) into curricula and instructional practice;

(iii) Integrate instructional and assistive technologies into the delivery of services;

(iv) Collect, manage, and analyze data to improve teaching and learning for the purpose of increasing student academic achievement; and

(v) Support and work with parents and families of children with disabilities;

(3) The improved or restructured program is designed to prepare special education teachers to address the specialized needs of high-need children with disabilities (as defined in this absolute priority) with high-incidence disabilities by identifying the competencies that special education teachers need to work effectively with this population;

(4) The improved or restructured program is designed to provide extended clinical learning opportunities,\(^4\) field experiences, or supervised practica and ongoing high-quality mentoring and induction opportunities in local schools. Applicants also must demonstrate how they will collaborate with

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\(^3\)For purposes of this priority, the term universal design for learning under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended: “a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that—(A) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and (B) reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient” (20 U.S.C. 1003(24)). For consistency across U.S. Department of Education programs, we use this definition for priorities that intend to prepare personnel to teach and work in schools and other settings.

\(^4\)Clinical learning opportunities are a method of instruction for students to apply knowledge and skills in highly controlled or simulated situations to ensure that they possess needed skills and competencies prior to entering actual or typical environments with children with disabilities.
the National Center to Inform Policy and Practice in Special Education Professional Development in designing the program to provide extended clinical learning opportunities, field experiences, or supervised practica (see www.ncipp.org);

(5) The improved or restructured program is designed to include field-based training opportunities in diverse settings including high-need LEAs, high-poverty schools, and low-performing schools, including the persistently lowest-achieving schools;

(6) The improved or restructured program will--

(i) Enable scholars to be highly qualified, in accordance with section 602(10) of IDEA and 34 CFR 300.18, in the State(s) to be served by the applicant; and

(ii) Ensure that scholars are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to assist children in meeting State academic achievement standards;

(7) The improved or restructured program is designed to provide support systems (including tutors, mentors, and other innovative practices) to enhance retention in and successful completion of the program; and

(8) The improved or restructured program will be maintained once Federal funding ends.

(b) For programs that will be restructured to produce graduates who meet the HQT requirements for teachers who teach core academic subjects, applicants must establish partnerships with the appropriate academic departments. Funds may be used to support faculty from the academic

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5For purposes of this priority, the term high-need LEA means an LEA (a) that serves not fewer than 10,000 children from families with incomes below the poverty line; or (b) for which not less than 20 percent of the children served by the LEA are from families with incomes below the poverty line.

6For purposes of this priority, the term high-poverty school means, consistent with section 1111(h)(1)(C)(viii) of the ESEA, a school in the highest quartile of schools in the State with respect to poverty level, using a measure of poverty determined by the State.

7For purposes of this priority, the term persistently lowest-achieving school means, consistent with the section 1003(g) of the ESEA, School Improvement Grants (74 FR 65618), as determined by the State: (i) Any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that (a) is among the lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring or the lowest-achieving five Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring in the State, whichever number of schools is greater; or (b) is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) that is less than 60 percent over a number of years; and (ii) Any secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds that (a) is among the lowest-achieving five percent of secondary schools or the lowest-achieving five secondary schools in the State that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds, whichever number of schools is greater; or (b) is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) that is less than 60 percent over a number of years. To determine whether a school is a lowest-achieving school, a State must take into account both (i) The academic achievement of the “all students” group in a school in terms of proficiency on the State’s assessments under section 1111(b)(3) of the ESEA in reading/language arts and mathematics combined; and (ii) The school’s lack of progress on those assessments over a number of years in the “all students” group.

8For purposes of this priority, the term scholar means an individual who is pursuing a degree, license, endorsement, or certification related to special education, related services, or early intervention services and who receives scholarship assistance under section 662 of IDEA (see 34 CFR 304.3(g)).
departments for their involvement in the activities outlined in paragraph (a)(4) of this priority. To address this requirement, applications must--

(1) Describe how representatives of relevant academic departments with expertise in the core academic subjects being addressed in the application will be involved in the partnership;

(2) Provide evidence that such partnerships will include a permanent faculty member from the appropriate academic departments, who will be involved in developing the overall project and designing the curriculum used to train scholars in the particular core academic subject; and

(3) Provide evidence that permanent faculty members from the appropriate academic departments participated in the design of the program.

(c) Include, in the narrative section of the application under “Quality of Project Evaluation,” a clear, effective plan for evaluating the extent to which graduates of the training program have the knowledge and skills necessary to provide scientifically based or evidence-based instruction and services that result in improved outcomes for children with disabilities. This plan must include a description of how the project will--

(1) Track training program graduates after they exit from the training program;

(2) Collect reliable data on the academic outcomes of students with high-incidence disabilities receiving special education and related services from program graduates; and

(3) Assess the quality of services provided by program graduates using student academic outcomes data, and data on other student outcomes as appropriate. Applicants must discuss how they intend to use any results and findings from this evaluation as a basis for informing and validating any proposed changes to the improved or restructured program. Applicants also must clearly describe, under “Quality of Project Evaluation,” how the project will report these evaluation results to OSEP in the grantee’s annual performance reports and final performance report.

(d) Include, in the application appendix, all course syllabi for the existing teacher preparation program.

(e) Submit to the Department, at the end of the first year of the project period, revised syllabi for the improved teacher preparation program.

(f) Meet the statutory requirements in section 662(e) through 662(f) of IDEA.
(g) Budget for planning and improvement activities, including activities to be performed by consultants. This priority does not provide financial support for scholars during any year of the project.

(h) Budget for attendance at a three-day Project Directors’ meeting in Washington, DC, during each year of the project.

(i) If the project maintains a Web site, include relevant information and documents in a form that meets government or industry-recognized standards for accessibility.

Competitive Preference Priorities: Within this absolute priority, we give competitive preference to applications that address the following priority. For FY 2010 and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applicants from this competition, these priorities are competitive preference priorities.

Competitive Preference Priority 1: Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i) we award an additional 5 points to an application that meets this priority.

This priority is:

Competitive Preference Points Based on Collaborative Activities with an SEA or State Licensing Agency.

Applicants that document how the project will collaborate with the SEA or State teacher licensing agency on issues of program improvement that affect teacher quality and effectiveness. For purposes of this competitive preference priority, documentation must include at least a letter from both the Dean and Department Chair of the appropriate college or department that supports high-incidence special education teacher preparation and from the relevant SEA or State teacher licensing agency verifying their intent to collaborate to improve teacher quality and effectiveness. The letter must include examples of the methods to be used for collaboration (i.e., establishing a statewide consortium of teacher preparation programs for program improvement, program evaluation support, or other activities that would directly support program improvement of the projects within that State).

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i) we award an additional 5 points to an application that meets this priority.

This priority is:
Competitive Preference Points Based on Dual Certification (i.e., high-incidence disabilities and regular education).

Applicants that document that the improved or restructured program will prepare graduates to be dually certified in high-incidence disabilities and regular education. Documentation for purposes of this competitive preference priority must include at least a letter from both the Dean or Department Chair of the appropriate college or department that supports high-incidence special education teacher preparation and from the Dean or Department Chair of the appropriate college or department that prepares regular education teachers verifying their intent to collaborate to ensure that the improved or restructured program will prepare graduates to be dually certified in high-incidence disabilities and regular education. The applicant must include examples of collaboration in the letter of intent.

Waiver of Proposed Rulemaking: Under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) (5 U.S.C. 553) the Department generally offers interested parties the opportunity to comment on proposed priorities and requirements. Section 681(d) of IDEA, however, makes the public comment requirements of the APA inapplicable to the priorities in this notice.


Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 75, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 97, 98, and 99. (b) The regulations for this program in 34 CFR part 304.

II. Award Information

Type of Awards: Discretionary grants for competitions CFDA 84.325D and 84.325K, and cooperative agreements for competition CFDA 84.325T.

Estimated Available Funds: $22,900,000.

Estimated Range of Awards: See chart.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: See chart.

Maximum Award: See chart.

Estimated Number of Awards: See chart.

Project Period: See chart.