

Rhode Island State Personnel Development Grant

GOAL 1

To redefine the role of secondary special educators and to increase the number of highly qualified secondary special educators who are practicing in RI schools.

There are six major components connected to this goal – (a) review and revision of certification requirements; (b) review and revision of pre service training programs in secondary special education; (c) recruitment; (d) development of a non-traditional path to certification; (e) continuing education to already certified secondary special educators; and (f) technical assistance and support to new teachers.

Review and Revision of Certification Requirements

The RIDE Office of Educator Quality will convene a workgroup to review requirements for certification as a Special Educator of Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities in Middle/Secondary schools. Workgroup membership will consist of (a) the Director of the RIDE Office of Teacher Certification, (b) the Director of the RIDE Office of Special Populations, (c) RIDE personnel responsible for secondary special education, (d) representatives from three LEAs, (e) representatives from all colleges and universities that prepare secondary special educators, (f) SPDG personnel, and (g) a representative from the State Special Education Advisory Committee. Review will focus on four issues:

- Expanding the secondary curriculum content requirements for the certificate;
- Possibly requiring secondary certification as the foundation for secondary special education;
- Requiring coursework in collaboration and collaborative decision-making;
- Requiring coursework in transition planning and self determination.

Year 1 will focus on reviewing the literature, analyzing responsibilities of existing RI secondary special educators, and developing recommendations. Once recommendations are finalized, they will be submitted to the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education for formal approval – this includes public hearings. We anticipate the new requirements to be approved by the end of Year 3 and fully implemented by 2011.

Review and Revision of Pre-service Training Programs

There are currently three colleges that offer pre-service preparation of secondary special educators – Rhode Island College, Providence College, Johnson & Wales University. Rhode Island College is partnering with RIDE to implement this project. Department of Special Education faculty and Department of Secondary Education faculty will jointly develop a curriculum proposal. The same four topical issues referenced above will be analyzed. We anticipate recommendations to:

- Require a content area major or the equivalent in general curriculum courses and experiences;
- Revise Special Education 424 (*Assessment, Curriculum, Methodology for Adolescents and Young Adults with Mild/Moderate Disabilities at the Middle/Secondary Level*) to include a significant focus on general curriculum accommodations and on collaborative decision making (e.g., *Applied Collaboration*, as discussed earlier).
- Revise Special Education 427 (*Career Exploration and Vocational Preparation of Adolescents and Young Adults with Mild/Moderate Disabilities at the Middle/Secondary Level*) to focus on transition planning and self determination.
- Revise Special Education 440 (*Home and School Collaboration*) to include discussion of several models for collaborating with general education teachers.
- Insure that student teaching occurs in an inclusive, collaborative setting.

Recruitment

The Sherlock Center has an ongoing statewide recruitment effort. A full time Recruitment Coordinator (with a background in College Admissions) is charged with recruiting candidates for disability related pre-service programs at several colleges and universities. Recruitment efforts are targeted to four groups – (a) high school students with disabilities, (b) family members, (c) persons from minority races and cultures, and (d) paraprofessionals already working in the field.

The primary recruitment tasks include:

Task 1 - Continue outreach effort to recruit Special Education Teacher Assistants in collaboration with the **Teacher Assistant Network**. Develop a brochure describing career opportunities in Special Education and listing the programs offered by each of the participating colleges and universities. The recruitment information will be available in several languages and in alternate formats.

Task 2 – Develop a similar outreach to family members of children with disabilities in collaboration with the state Special Education Advisory Committee, local Special Education Advisory Committees and through the family organizations who are SIG partners.

Task 3 – Outreach to individuals with disabilities and individuals from minority racial and ethnic groups.

Task 3 – Provide one-to-one advisement to assist potential candidates with their applications, with securing financial aid, with course selection, and other retention issues.

Task 4 – As these students complete their programs, the Recruitment Coordinator will connect candidates to various job fairs to increase their knowledge of employment opportunities.

Non-traditional Path to Certification

This activity focuses on the secondary special educators who currently hold emergency certificates. SPDG staff will develop a joint process with the RIDE Office of Educator Quality to evaluate the academic credentials of these teacher candidates and to determine a program of study for them. The plan of study will be written into an “I Plan” that defines the details of professional development for that candidate. Each candidate will be assigned an advisor. Using the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards and the proposed new certification requirements as a guide, the advisor will develop a set of strategies and experiences through which the candidate can meet the Standards and a set of indicators for evaluating the candidate’s performance. These strategies may take the form of existing courses or may be packaged into individual learning experiences for which the colleges can grant credit. The Higher Education Coordinating Committee and the local school district will explore a mechanism for permitting the teacher candidate to use an extended “emergency position” to meet the requirements of student teaching. Each teacher candidate will compile a portfolio which documents the experience of the candidate, the manner in which the Beginning Teacher Standards indicators were met, and the other competencies the candidate demonstrates. The development of the portfolio will be supervised by the College advisor. 80% of the personnel who now hold emergency certificates will achieve full certification by the end of the SPDG project.

Continuing Education to Existing Certified Secondary Special Educators

Three continuing education modules (based on the three revised courses) will be developed and offered once each year at regional school sites:

- Transition Planning and Self Determination
- Aligning curriculum and content standards with the individual needs of students
- Collaboration and Collaborative decision making.

Technical Assistance and Support to New Teachers

Targeted technical assistance will be provided to new teachers who are employed in schools and school districts that are receiving interventions through the RIDE Progressive Supports and Interventions system. Technical assistance will focus on implementing the practices described throughout this section.

Logic Model – Goal 1		
Activities	(a) review and revision of certification requirements; (b) review and revision of pre service training programs in secondary special education; (c) recruitment; (d) development of a non-traditional path to certification; (e) continuing education to existing teachers; (f) technical assistance and support to new teachers	Activity Log Participant Interviews
Outputs	(a) certification requirements will be revised; (b) pre-service training programs will be revised (c) 10 non-traditional candidates each year will achieve full certification through I-Plans; (d) 25 new students will be recruited into pre-service programs – 30% of these from minority cultures and races; (e) 75 teachers will participate in continuing education; (f) Teachers in PS&I districts will receive technical assistance.	(a) Document Review (b) Document Review (c) Certification Records (d) Contact Log maintained by Recruitment Coordinator (e) Sherlock Center registration information (f) Sherlock Center tracking
Outcomes	(a) the number of highly qualified secondary special educators will increase; (b) teachers will demonstrate the use of evidence-based practices; (c) more students will (1) achieve the standard on state assessments, (2) graduate from high school with a diploma, (3) participate actively in transition planning, (4) have quality transition plans, (5) be employed or in post secondary education two years after graduation.	(a) Certification Records (b) Classroom Observation of a 10% random sample of project participants