

Highly Qualified Special Educators Program Improvement Project (HI-Q SPED)

US Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

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Principal Investigator ANN FULLERTON

Phone: 503-725-4254

Purpose: The goal of this project is to increase the number of graduates who meet standards for highly qualified special education teachers at both the elementary and secondary levels. Program graduates will receive the master's-level special education teaching licensure to improve outcomes for children with high-incidence disabilities.

Method: Project partners include Portland State University (PSU) Graduate School of Education (GSE), PSU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS), Portland Community College (PCC), the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), and diverse urban/suburban school districts. The project will: (a) enhance recruitment and retention of increasing numbers of undergraduate and returning students with content area and multiple subjects undergraduate majors to become highly qualified special educators; (b) collaborate with PSU and PCC content area advisors to further develop pathways to licensure through undergraduate programs that combine a major with a minor in education and special education; (c) develop a system of tutors, mentors and other innovative practices to support retention and success for individuals planning careers as special educators; (d) integrate competencies for evidence-based strategies that improve outcomes for children with high-incidence disabilities into undergraduate content area coursework and other prerequisite coursework for the special educator programs, using effective personnel preparation strategies including practica in diverse schools; (e) incorporate research-based foundations for teaching children with high-incidence disabilities from diverse cultural and language backgrounds into undergraduate content area coursework and other prerequisite coursework; (f) plan and implement improved university-school partnerships involving local public schools with high enrollments of culturally and linguistically diverse children, including schools not making Adequate Yearly Progress under No Child Left Behind for children with high-incidence disabilities; and (g) improve the Special Educator Program Assessment System to provide technically sound formative and summative evaluation of applicants, candidates, and graduates to ensure they acquire knowledge and skills necessary to assist children in achieving state learning standards, meet state and national highly qualified teacher requirements, and maintain school district support for improvements after federal funding ends.