

The California Department of Education
Improving the Special Education System in California
A State Personnel Development Grants Program CFDA 84.323A

Abstract

Background: The original State Improvement Grant (SIG), as delineated in the 1997 Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), provided the California Department of Education (CDE) with a unique opportunity to forge broad-scale, collaborative partnerships to improve outcomes for children with disabilities. As a result, the CDE changed the system of stakeholder input, opening the planning and resource allocation process to a highly representative and inclusive stakeholder group, in compliance with IDEA Section 1452(b). The original grant, followed by the SIG Supplement and SIG2, enhanced California's vision of a special education system of services to meet and align with California's state performance goals.

Project Purpose: The purpose of the FY 2006 State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) is to continue to reform and improve California's system of personnel preparation and professional development to increase student achievement and improve outcomes for students with disabilities birth through 21.

Project Outcomes & Objectives: Project outcomes were selected by CDE, together with the SPDG advisory group and the State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Report (APR) stakeholder groups (now combined into one large and diverse stakeholder group called *Improving Special Education Services: Through Planning, Personnel Development, and Performance Reporting Group*, or ISES.) Project activities aligned with SPP improvement strategies are designed to achieve the project's objectives and produce outcomes that directly address needs as articulated by California's SPP and APR.

- Objective 1: To provide personnel development training and technical assistance that is aligned with improvement strategies in the California SPP
- Objective 2: To increase the percentage of personnel receiving professional development in scientific/evidence-based instructional practices by scaling up successful SIG2 activities within districts and statewide
- Objective 3: To provide professional development activities and training based on scientific or evidence-based practices, specifically ERIA (Effective Reading Intervention Academy) and BEST (Building Effective Schools Together), improving personnel knowledge and skills
- Objective 4: To implement strategies and practices that sustain the knowledge and skills of personnel in the implementation of scientific/evidence-based practices
- Objective 5: To facilitate parent/family involvement with schools and the educational system as a means of improving services/results for children with disabilities
- Objective 6: To improve the recruitment/retention of highly qualified special education (SE) teachers

Project Design and Activities: To achieve these objectives, California's State Personnel Development Plan will provide and scale up high quality professional development, training, and technical assistance in the use of literacy strategies and positive behavioral supports that are

scientific or evidence-based; will employ follow-up sessions, wrap-around training and technical assistance, intensive coaching, and Web-based tools and communications to sustain and support the knowledge and skills that personnel have previously gained; and will enhance California's ability to recruit and retain highly qualified special education teachers. The California SPDG's significant activities include the following:

- Providing professional development, training, and technical assistance in the use of scientific or evidence-based interventions in literacy (Effective Reading Intervention Academy or ERIA)
- Maintaining and expanding the Leadership Community (State Leadership Institute, Regional Leadership Institutes, and Leadership Site Award Program activities), which is characterized by collaboration between general education and special education; and developing and sharing the knowledge and skills that are gained through the institute's activities and that address the evidence-based, CDE-approved "core message" areas
- Making available centrally coordinated technical assistance (TA) that is provided by content experts, along with site-to-site TA provided by the Leadership Community and centered around the evidence-based "core message" areas
- Creating, refining, and disseminating data tools for data-informed decision making at the state and local levels
- Enhancing the Family Participation Fund and Parent Training and Information Centers' parent/family outreach efforts; and developing the Parent-School Involvement Facilitation Survey
- Expanding the capacity of the California State University Los Angeles (CSULA) education specialist credential intern program
- Expanding the content and increasing the readership of the TeachCalifornia.org website to help recruit special education (SE) teachers

Age group & disability type: All school levels, all age groups, and all disability types (mild/moderate/severe) are addressed in all other SPDG activities. The ERIA literacy professional development intervention will be delivered primarily in middle schools.

Geographical reach: Schools/districts in all areas of the state may participate in all SPDG professional development activities. For program efficiency, the scaling up of professional development activities will be concentrated in regions across the state that provide a representative cross-section of schools/districts with respect to their geographic, urban/rural, ethnic/racial/cultural, and socio-economic mix.

Proposed Deliverables of SPDG professional development activities:

- 30 school teams previously trained in ERIA will be supported and sustained in implementing ERIA
- 50 new school teams will be trained and supported in implementing the ERIA literacy program
- 28 existing Leadership Sites will be supported and sustained in improving SE services

- 25 schools/Local Educational Agencies will receive an award to participate as a Leadership Site in the Leadership Community activities
- 25 Regional Leadership Institutes will support general/special education collaboration; and
- Over 300 technical assistance events for over 12,000 participants will occur in the first 2 years.

Names/affiliations of key collaborators: All required partners and many optional partners are included in the activities of the grant, with an emphasis on enhancing the involvement of parents/families of students with disabilities in the activities of schools and educational systems. The subcontractor for SPDG operations is Napa County Office of Education. While many institutions of higher education (IHEs) are involved in the ISES stakeholder group, the partner IHE is CSULA. Other subcontractors include Sacramento County Office of Education and key expert consultants.