

**A Teaching Residency Program in Special Education:
Improving Achievement of Students with Disabilities in High-Need Schools**

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INTRODUCTION

This project addresses the critical shortage of qualified special education teachers prepared to serve learners in high-need schools through a partnership between the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and California State University, Northridge (CSUN). It addresses this shortage through a comprehensive approach to recruitment, an 18-month credential/master's degree residency program in Special Education and a 2-year induction program. The program is designed to recruit promising special education teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, prepare them to serve learners with disabilities in high-need schools, enhance teacher retention and evaluate the impact of the project on new teachers and their students.

With the overall purpose to improve student achievement, this project will emphasize teaching diverse and English learners, the use of technology, collaboration and English/language arts instruction. A major focus will be on professional development to strengthen the knowledge and skills of LAUSD special education teachers and administrators, with a related goal to improve preparation of general educators in serving students with special needs. Finally, the project will research the linkages between teacher competencies, teacher preparation and pupil learning, disseminating findings and project products locally and nationally.

A.1. PROJECT DESIGN

There is a critical shortage of fully credentialed teachers in special education, particularly in urban high poverty areas serving culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Because of this shortage, teachers are increasingly hired with little or no training in special education, and few minority candidates are entering the profession (Rubin, 2007). This proposal, submitted jointly by

one of the largest high-need school districts in the nation and in partnership with one of the largest teacher preparation programs in California, responds to this need to increase the **quantity** and improve the **quality** of personnel available to serve learners in high-need schools with disabilities, through a teacher residency program. Special education candidates will obtain a California Education Specialist Credential with an authorization in early childhood special education, mild/moderate disabilities, moderate/severe disabilities, or deaf and hard of hearing, and a Master's Degree in Special Education.

A.2.i. Exceptional Approach to Address Priorities

The project is designed to meet the following absolute, competitive, and invitational priorities: the design of a teacher residency program for high-need subjects and areas (Absolute Priority, 2) collection of student achievement data and monitoring continuous program improvement (Competitive Preference Priority 1), a rigorous candidate selection process (Competitive Preference Priority 3), broad-based partnerships (Competitive Preference Priority 4) and Partnership with digital education content developer(s) (Invitational Priority). The three competitive priorities are discussed in the separate Competitive Priority Section. Absolute Priority 2 and the Invitational Priority are described within this text. The applicant meets all requirements as an “eligible partnership” with documentation in Appendix A. The Checklist for meeting all program requirements appears in Appendix B, and support letters in Appendix D.

The Partners in the Application

CSUN. CSUN is one of 23 campuses within the California State University system, the largest system of higher education in the nation and the third largest of the CSU campuses. CSUN is located in the heart of the San Fernando Valley, a geographical region of Los Angeles with a population of almost 2 million. CSUN serves approximately 36,200 students who

represent the rich cultural diversity of the region with over 50% from underrepresented minority groups. Fully accredited, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges in their last report stated that CSUN “stands as a model to other public urban institutions of higher education”.

The Michael D. Eisner College of Education (COE) is one of eight colleges at CSUN and offers one of the largest teacher preparation programs in California with 691 preliminary credentials granted in 2008 (CTC, 2008). The COE credential programs are fully accredited by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). All students in CSUN credential programs meet high academic standards and participate in an intensive clinical experience, preparing them to become highly qualified teachers. Graduates exhibit strong performance on state qualifying assessments, passing a test of basic skills (CBEST) and assessments of subject matter knowledge in academic content areas. On the most recent CTC report card (2007), 100% of program completers passed CBEST and demonstrated knowledge in the content areas in which they intend to teach; 99% passed the Reading Instruction Competency Assessment (RICA). These data provide evidence that CSUN ranks among the highest teacher preparation programs in the state (see Appendix A), qualifying CSUN as an **eligible partner** under Section 200(17) of the HEA.

The Department of Special Education offers one of the largest special education credential programs in California and granted 149 Education Specialist Preliminary Credentials in 2007-08. The Department offers teaching credential and master’s degree programs in the areas of mild/moderate disabilities (MM), moderate/severe disabilities (MS), deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) and early childhood special education (ECSE) specializations. The program’s relationships with graduates, history of externally funded projects, and strong partnerships with the community and local school districts will all serve as resources for the proposed project.

The **College of Humanities (COH)** is among the largest colleges at CSUN, housing seven academic departments and six interdisciplinary programs. The College is home to one of the oldest and largest Chicana/o Studies Departments in the U.S and the only Central American Studies Program in the country. The College has a history of successfully managing large grant awards, including a GEAR UP grant and the Strategic Language Initiative (a multi-year, Congressional earmark). Its programs have also received funding from Oprah Winfrey's Angel Network, the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford Foundation and the Annenberg Foundation. The mission of the College is to create a community of learners who explore the diversities of cultures, thought, perspectives, literatures and languages of humanity; critically reflect on and analyze multiple dimensions of human identity and experience; and contribute to scholarship, creative production and innovation.

LAUSD and District Need. Committed to an excellent education for all students, LAUSD is the second largest school district in the United States serving students in a geographic region that spans 710 square miles. LAUSD serves a total of 838,081 students who live in the city of Los Angeles, 32 other cities and several unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. The District is divided into eight mini districts each administered by a local superintendent. The student population is extremely diverse, with 73% Hispanic, 29% English learners (EL), and 11% African American. As in many urban areas, a large number of students come from low-income families. In LAUSD, 194,010 of the 838,081 students or 23.15% live below the poverty line, which qualifies LAUSD as a high-need school district under **Component A – Poverty Data** (Census, 2007)(see Appendix A.).

Despite the many reform efforts in LAUSD, there has been little improvement in the achievement of students in high-need schools who fall significantly under state and national

standards. Specifically, in 2008 the range of students scoring far below basic or below basic on the California Standards Test (CST) English/Language Arts ranged from a low of 17% at fourth grade to a high of 41% at eleventh grade. These percentages are consistent with national results ranking California reading scores as falling below all but one other state in the nation (NCES, 2007). Even more alarming are the scores of students with disabilities in LAUSD, who comprise a full 10% of the student population. On the same test a minimum of 60% of students with disabilities score below basic or far below basic at every grade level.

Compounding efforts to raise the achievement of students in LAUSD are teacher shortages. In 2007-08, 10.3% of the teachers in LAUSD were on emergency credentials, meeting the 1.37% qualification required under **Component B3-Teacher Need** (Appendix A). Even more critical is the shortage of highly qualified teachers in special education. LAUSD has a total of 5,046 special education teachers, 44% who have taught for five years or less. Notably, of all subject areas, special education has the lowest percent of classes taught by highly qualified teachers; only 56.91% at the elementary special education level and only 31.05% at the secondary special education level are highly qualified. These percentages are significantly lower than statewide averages at the elementary level (77.16%) and secondary level (49.42%) and for other high need secondary areas of math (78.2%) and science (75.47%).

Local District 2. Located near CSUN in the northeast San Fernando Valley is Local District 2, where efforts and activities of this project are concentrated. District 2 has a long history of working in collaboration with the Department of Special Education at CSUN including a number of reform efforts to improve the preparation of teachers and to involve all school personnel in the use of evidence to inform practice. Local District 2 serves 90,495 students with ethnic backgrounds relatively consistent with the District as a whole: 79.4%

Hispanic, 12.3%White, 3.3%African American, 4.6%Asian American, Filipino or Pacific Islander. For nearly two-thirds of the population in District 2, English is the second language (35.9% English learners and 36.5% reclassified fluent English proficient). There are 86 schools in District 2 of which 68 (79%) qualify under **Component C-High Need School Eligibility** (see Appendix A).

In summary, the LAUSD needs assessment data provide evidence of an acute shortage of special educators prepared to improve the achievement of students with disabilities. Therefore, the eligible partners, CSUN and LAUSD, will create a model teacher residency program that provides ongoing training and professional development, and facilitates the retention of highly qualified teachers in high-need schools throughout the District.

A.2.ii. Likely Impact of Services on Recipients

The acute teacher shortage in special education and large percentage of untrained teachers not only result in inadequate services for students with disabilities but also increase the likelihood that these teachers, who work with the most demanding students, will leave the profession (Graziano, 2005). Research indicates that students with teachers who stay in their classrooms for more than five years have higher achievement levels than teachers with less than three years of experience (Berliner, 2000; Fideler, 2000; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2003). The shortage of good teachers undermines attempts to educate *all* children given the significant impact of quantity, quality, and equity (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). Therefore, it is critical that teachers who are recruited into special education are provided the preparation and support from both colleagues and principals needed to facilitate their retention, ultimately providing high quality education to urban school students with disabilities.

The primary purpose of the proposed project is to increase the quantity and improve the quality of special education personnel that will in turn have an immediate, positive, and long lasting effect on students with disabilities in LAUSD high-need schools. With an overall purpose to impact student achievement in high-need schools, the project aims to provide highly qualified special educators, mentors trained as leaders, and principals who promote and support quality instruction. The project is designed to accomplish the following specific goals.

1. Recruit a total of 150 promising special education teachers (30 each year for five years) who reflect the personnel needs and culturally and linguistically diverse student population in LAUSD through significant outreach, financial incentives, a rigorous selection process and academic support.

2. Develop and implement a model 18-month credential/master's degree teaching residency program that (1) incorporates new California special education standards emphasizing diversity and English learners, technology integration, and collaboration; (2) provides a concentration in language and literacy; (3) implements a one year apprenticeship, alongside experienced and trained special education mentors; and (4) creates a data-driven professional community of learners which promotes evidence-based practices and enhances academic student achievement.

3. Enhance teacher retention through a 2-year induction program that includes support in high-need schools and the participation of faculty, mentors and graduates in teacher inquiry groups examining pupil learning.

The anticipated impact of the proposed project will be to graduate 150 new credential teachers who will work in LAUSD high-need schools and be prepared to improve the achievement of students with disabilities. While it is difficult to determine the number of

students each teacher will serve, they have the potential of impacting hundreds of students each year, and thousands over the five year period.

A.2.iii. Quality, Intensity, and Duration of Training and Professional Development

The project has been carefully designed to reflect models of successful teacher residency programs: the alignment of educational theory and classroom practice; opportunities to learn alongside an accomplished mentor; progression through the program as part of a cohort; strong partnerships among colleges of education, school districts and communities; and an effective supported induction (Berry et al., 2008). This project specifically aims to capitalize on the shared expertise of LAUSD and CSUN to address LAUSD personnel needs by providing a clinically based model of teacher education within local schools used as laboratories for learning to teach. To facilitate a tightly woven program of study, the program is based upon three guiding principles: (1) integration of content knowledge with pedagogy, (2) connection of theory to practice, and (3) the use of evidence to inform practice.

The partners, LAUSD and CSUN have and will continue to collaborate through each of the following phases of the project: recruitment, preparation, induction, and evaluation – all critical components of successful residency programs As described by Darling-Hammond (2006), *a coherent program offers coursework that is carefully sequenced based upon a strong theory of learning to teach... Subject matter learning is brought together with content pedagogy through courses that treat them together...Faculty plan together...virtually all of the closely interrelated courses involve applications in classrooms where observations or student teaching occur. These classrooms, in turn, are selected because they model the kind of practice that is discussed in courses* (p. 306).

This project is designed to include features of effective residency programs (Berry et al, 2008; Honawar, 2008), adhere to our distinctive guiding principles, and build upon two innovative and ground breaking partnership initiatives already established between LAUSD and CSUN: Design for Excellence: Linking Teaching and Achievement (DELTA Project) and Teachers for a New Era (TNE). These collaborative initiatives document the structures and process already in place and are evidence of our readiness to embark upon a successful teacher residency project.

DELTA and the ACT Program

CSUN and LAUSD were selected in 1996 as one of four school/university partnerships to participate in Design for Excellence: Linking Teaching and Achievement (DELTA), an Annenberg initiative supported by a 5-year grant (1995-2000) from the Weingart and Ford Foundations. The purpose of the initiative was to restructure teacher education as a shared school-university responsibility and to reflect evidence-based practices in preparing teachers for urban schools. As part of the DELTA reform effort, the Accelerated Collaborative Teacher (ACT) preparation program was established in 1998 as a collaborative CSUN/LAUSD Local District 2 teacher preparation program. The 1-year full time credential program and its outcomes are described in several publications (Burstein, Kretschmer, Smith, & Gudoski, 1999; Lombardi, Burstein, Smith, & Cunningham, 2002; Lombardi, Kretschmer, & Burstein, 2004; Burstein, Czech, Kretschmer, Lombardi & Smith, 2009).

In 2000, the ACT Program was recognized nationally and at the state level as a model program, receiving two awards: the *Urban Impact Award* from the Council of Great City Colleges of Education and the Council of Great City Schools, and the *Quality of Education Award for Distinguished Service to Children and the Preparation of Teachers* from the

California Council for the Education of Teachers. ACT has continued its development of innovative and exemplary practices through federal and foundation funding, including a personnel preparation grant from the U.S. Department of Education (2001-2004) and an 18-month grant from the Orfalea Foundation (2009-10). Findings from an ACT graduate follow up study (Burstein et al., 2009) suggest that the program has been successful in providing qualified graduates, many of whom were hired in LAUSD. The average retention for graduates after five years is 71%, much higher than the retention rates reported in the literature that indicate up to one-half of new teachers leave teaching in urban schools within five years (Claycomb, 2000).

Teachers for a New Era

In 2002, CSUN and LAUSD were selected to participate in the 5-year Teachers for a New Era (TNE) initiative, a national teacher education reform project, funded through the Carnegie Corporation of New York. TNE emphasizes three design principles: (1) a teacher education program guided by a respect for evidence, (2) faculty in the arts and science disciplines fully engaged in the education of prospective teachers, and (3) education as an academically taught clinical practice profession. Through these principles, TNE was designed to strengthen K-12 teaching by developing state-of-the-art programs at schools of education. TNE strengthened partnerships with Local Districts 1 and 2 of LAUSD, collaboration between the COE and the COH, and enhanced clinical and evidence-based practices.

TNE resulted in a number of accomplishments, two of which will specifically inform the proposed project. First, through a pilot study conducted with LAUSD's Research and Evaluation unit and the CSU Center for Teacher Quality, a data warehouse was constructed that includes comprehensive information on CSUN candidates and the LAUSD pupils they teach. Second, through collaboration between faculty in the COH and COE, a language and literacy

concentration, Literacy Scholars for the Future of Los Angeles (LSLA) funded by the Los Angeles Times Foundation and now Oprah Winfrey's Angel Network, was developed in the undergraduate Liberal Studies Program. The proposed teacher residency program will utilize the data warehouse to monitor candidate progress and document student achievement, and extend the language and literacy concentration to teacher preparation and the graduate level.

Transforming ACT to the ACT Residency Program (ACT-R) for Special Educators

As described, the ACT Program, collaboratively designed and implemented by CSUN and LAUSD, has contributed significantly over the last decade to providing qualified special and general education teachers for urban schools and will provide the foundational design and structure for **ACT-R**. The ACT program was initially developed to recruit general and special education teacher candidates who progress through the one-year program as a cohort, completing two common core courses required of all candidates. The common core, a strength in ACT, will be retained in ACT-R, continuing *to provide both general and special educators training related to students with disabilities*. However, other major elements of ACT have been redesigned and enhanced, building upon TNE accomplishments and other successful urban residency programs (Berry et al, 2008; Honawar, 2008). Specifically, the following changes will be made to transform the ACT Program into the new ACT-R Program for special educators. The model for ACT-R is shown in Appendix D, delineating each program component and ACT-R guiding principles.

Increase recruitment of highly qualified special education candidates. Financial need is one of the greatest barriers in recruiting candidates for the one-year full time ACT program, particularly those **from underrepresented groups**; approximately 32% of ACT candidates are from minority groups, significantly lower than 50% of credential candidates from minority

groups in other special education credential programs at CSUN. Furthermore, the ACT Program prepares fewer special education candidates than any other credential pathway at CSUN. It is anticipated that financial support (e.g., providing a one year living stipend) and programmatic incentives (e.g., completing both a credential and MA in 18 months) would increase the number, quality, and diversity of special education ACT-R teacher candidates.

As demonstrated in the LAUSD needs assessment, the most critical shortage area for highly qualified teachers is in **secondary special education**, because of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirement for single subject matter competence. While upon admission all CSUN candidates are subject matter compliant, the majority satisfies this requirement through the multiple subject exam. Only a few candidates demonstrate competency in an academic subject area, taught at the secondary level. Therefore, in response to this specific district need, ACT-R is committed to the recruitment of subject area competent secondary special educators.

Enhance the preparation of highly qualified special educators in high-need schools.

New special education standards have been established by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC). Programs addressing the new state standards, which reflect changes in the field of special education, must be approved by December 2010 (CTC, 2008). Of the 16 common standards designated for all specializations, specific standards have been created to emphasize the education of diverse learners with disabilities (Standard 3), effective communication and collaborative partnerships (Standard 4), use of educational and assistive technology (Standard 6), teaching reading/language arts (Standard 9) and preparation to teach English learners (Standard 13). In responding to the new standards *ACT-R activities are consistent with state credentialing reform efforts and national strategies under IDEA*, to increase the number of highly qualified special educators.

According to achievement data, students with disabilities and English learners continue to perform at unacceptable levels in English/language arts in high need schools. To address this challenge, ACT-R proposes a graduate level **language and literacy concentration** through a partnership between COE and COH that enhances the integration of content knowledge and pedagogy and provides residents with in-depth knowledge of research and its application to practice in linguistics, language and literacy. This concentration represents an innovative cross-disciplinary effort and adds a master's degree component to the existing ACT Program.

Critical to any preparation program is a strong clinical experience with an accomplished professional who is a skilled teacher and mentor. While ACT provides a 1-year clinical experience, there are few resources to select and train mentor teachers or to provide common professional development for faculty, university supervisors and administrators, essential in explicitly connecting theory with practice. ACT-R is designed to provide an **exemplary residency** program by selecting effective special education teachers and providing high quality professional development with emphasis on tightly aligning clinical practice with coursework.

Provide an induction program to enhance retention. ACT-R would support induction, a program component not currently offered through the existing program. In specific, while ACT graduates participate in Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) induction programs through LAUSD there is little collaboration with CSUN. ACT-R extends our the LAUSD/CSUN partnership through the first two years of teaching and is designed to support the professional growth of graduates, mentors and administrators.

With an overall purpose to increase student achievement in high-need schools, the **Accelerated Collaborative Teaching-Residency (ACT-R)** program reflects sound research and evidence-based practices. The project is organized around the following three objectives each of

which will guide program development and implementation, evaluation, and management activities.

1. Recruit a total of 150 promising special education teachers (30 each year for five years) who reflect the personnel needs and culturally and linguistically diverse student population in LAUSD through significant outreach, financial incentives, a rigorous selection process and academic support.

Programs at CSUN enjoy a reputation of excellence and are able to attract highly capable students from diverse minority groups. In 2005-06, the minority student population represented the majority of students, with only 32% of the student population White. As a result, CSUN appears on the Office of Civil Rights list of institutions of higher education with “significant minority enrollment.” CSUN has been deemed a “Hispanic serving institution,” with 29% of its 36,200 students in 2008 identifying as Hispanic. According to federal statistics CSUN ranked fifth among 100 U.S. universities in bachelor’s degrees awarded to Hispanics and ranked 11th for total minorities (Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education, 2008), thus providing a rich pipeline for the recruitment of minority groups into ACT-R.

The College of Education (COE) has undertaken a number of initiatives to recruit underrepresented students and increase the supply of nonwhite teachers. This effort has been particularly effective through the Education Equity Center whose mission is to recruit and support traditionally underrepresented students into the education field. Initial credential student advisement and support from the Equity Office within the College of Education provides the Department of Special Education with direct access to candidates of diverse backgrounds who are interested in pursuing the teaching of students with disabilities. Further, the College of

Education has developed strong relationships within the university and the local community that foster access to CSUN programs for students traditionally underrepresented in teaching.

A comprehensive approach to student recruitment. Given a limited supply of educators from minority groups, the literature suggests that aggressive recruitment strategies are needed to attract a diverse teacher population, including targeting universities that serve large numbers of students of color, paraprofessionals working in urban schools, and older and often second career graduate students (Brownell et al., 2002; Talbert-Johnson, 2001). Teacher preparation programs have been successful at recruiting and retaining teachers from diverse ethnic backgrounds through the use of cohort groups, financial incentives, and support services (Billingsley, 2004; Honawar, 2006). Using these approaches, the state of Tennessee created the Each One Reach One program for minority recruitment and retention, with a 100% graduation rate and 80% of program completers working as teachers (Tennessee Department of Education, 2006). Adopting validated practices in recruitment and program retention, our project will recruit individuals from organizations that serve high percentages of minority groups, offer financial incentives, and provide support services through ongoing advisement and mentoring.

In addition to the need to recruit teachers from diverse backgrounds, the highest shortage area in LAUSD is secondary special education. Specifically, data from the needs assessment show that less than one third of special educators teaching at the secondary level are compliant in the core subject area(s) they teach (e.g., English, Social Science, Math or Science). Therefore, recruitment efforts will focus on developing a pipeline of subject matter ready teacher candidates. To do so, we will build upon the strong relationships with academic departments that have been forged across the university through the all university Teacher Education Committee (TEC). Chaired by the Provost, with representatives from

each College, the TEC will discuss strategies to enhance recruitment from subject matter programs and identify faculty in each College who can assist in the project.

A variety of strategies will be used to recruit candidates focusing on CSUN graduating seniors and others with a recent baccalaureate, mid-career changers, and school employees. A description of the program will be posted on the Department of Special Education's website and recruitment materials will be developed targeting specific audiences. Recruitment information will be mailed to graduating seniors, with a particular focus on secondary content area majors. Also targeted will be CSUN majors in deaf studies (the second largest deaf studies program in the nation) and child development, providing pipelines for the DHH and ECSE specializations. The project will also target students with disabilities, a population typically committed to serving student with disabilities. Project faculty will meet with Education Equity staff in the College of Education and attend their advisement meetings, informing potential candidates about ACT-R and grant support, and they will meet with subject matter faculty across campus, planning and implementing recruitment activities.

To target career changers, we will partner with WorkSource California, which has 40 WorkSource centers in the Los Angeles region, all with employment specialists. WorkSource is funded publicly through the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation for the "employment and training needs" of the Los Angeles area. Finally, through networks established within LAUSD the project will target school employees focusing on special education paraprofessionals and other employees who are interested in pursuing a special education credential. Information about ACT-R will be placed on district websites and information disseminated to central offices, schools and other potential recruitment sources in the district.

LAUSD Special Education Administrators from Human Resources and Local District 2 in collaboration with CSUN faculty will meet with each interested applicant to discuss ACT-R eligibility, financial and academic support, and the application process and program requirements. It is anticipated that through a comprehensive recruitment plan, financial incentives and candidate support, the project will attract and retain high quality candidates who are subject matter ready and diverse in culture and language.

Rigorous selection procedures and service obligation. A rigorous selection procedure will be used to select a cohort for each year of the program (See Competitive Preference Section, Priority 3). If selected for the program, applicants will sign an agreement to serve as a full-time LAUSD special education teacher in a high need area at a high-need school for a total of not less than three academic years immediately after successfully completing ACT-R, as a highly qualified teacher. A certificate will be provided from the chief administrative officer in LAUSD documenting implementation at the beginning and completion of each year of service. If the candidate does not complete the service obligation, he or she is required to repay the stipend to the partnership together with interest stipulated in the agreement. The partnership will have reasonable provisions for repayment, which will be used to carry out activities consistent with the purposes of the project.

Supportive learning environment to enhance program retention. Teachers are more likely to complete preparation if they participate in a supportive learning environment that provides academic and personal support (Bullough, et al., 2001; Koeppen, Huey, & Connor, 2000). Research from the ACT Graduate Study (Burststein et al., 2009) suggests that the high retention rate in ACT, despite the intensive and accelerated nature of the program, reflects the significant supports provided: instructors who were supportive and personable and a

collaborative community that fostered cohort support and a collegial atmosphere. Therefore, an *important feature of ACT-R is the organization of Residents into cohorts that will progress through their coursework and clinical experiences together.*

2. Develop and implement a model 18-month credential/master’s degree teaching residency program that (1) incorporates the new California special education standards emphasizing diversity and English learners, technology integration, and collaboration; (2) provides a concentration in language and literacy; (3) implements a one year apprenticeship alongside experienced and trained special education mentors; and (4) creates a data-driven professional community of learners which promotes evidence-based practices and enhances academic student achievement (*Absolute Priority 2*).

ACT-R is designed to reflect a coherent model of teacher preparation that integrates content knowledge, pedagogy, classroom practice and teacher mentoring and will be collaboratively planned and implemented by a team of LAUSD personnel and CSUN faculty. The program consists of five curricular components: 1) a common core for general and special education teacher candidates, that focuses on the needs of all learners; 2) core courses for special education candidates, designed to provide foundational knowledge and skills across specialization areas; 3) specialization courses which are tailored to MM, MS, DHH, and ECSE and aligned with the CTC specialization standards; 4) clinical experiences increasing in intensity and completed in classrooms of effective and trained mentors; and 5) a sequence of four master’s degree courses focusing primarily on language and literacy (see Table of Courses in Appendix D). The following are the distinctive features of the program with specific related objectives.

Meet New Special Education Standards

All CSUN credential programs are designed to meet accreditation standards established by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), the state body responsible for accreditation in California, and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). ACT-R will reflect new standards recently approved by CTC that place increasing emphasis on diversity and teaching English learners, technology, and collaboration (CTC, 2008). To facilitate the development and implementation of the new standards, a Credential Emphasis Workgroup will be established, comprised of district personnel and university faculty with expertise in EL, technology, and collaboration. This workgroup will be responsible for providing professional development to ACT-R faculty, university supervisors, mentors, and principals to support the specific content of the new credential emphasis in courses and clinical practice. Web-based modules will be developed (Dieker et al, 2009) and workshops provided that focus on validated instructional practices reflecting the credential emphases (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). The Credential Emphasis workgroup will provide ongoing support to faculty, university supervisors, mentors and principals in implementing courses and clinical practice models that reflect research-based practices in EL, technology and collaboration.

Improve the preparation of special education teachers to serve diverse and English learners (EL). A major concern among educators is that teachers are ill prepared to serve EL and other students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Olivera & Athanases, 2007). However, often from different backgrounds than their students, teachers have little knowledge about the socio-cultural factors that influence minority students' performance in school and are often frustrated by the wide range of English language and academic levels (Au & Blake, 2003; Gandara, Maxwell-Joy, & Driscoll, 2005). While credential programs typically

offer some preparation in teaching diverse learners, it is usually insufficient (Cho, 2006; Costa, McPhail, Smith & Brisk, 2005), particularly with an increasing number of ELs who tend to be over-represented in special education (McCardle, et al., 2005). Improving the preparation of teachers to serve ELs is a critical need throughout the CSU system, as reflected by an annual survey of graduates (2009) where 30% indicated that they were not adequately prepared to work with ELs and 26% of their employers agreed with this assessment. These percentages are consistent with CSUN data that rank EL as one of the lowest evaluation items on the survey from CSUN special education graduates.

ACT-R will be designed to embed across both the credential and master's degree curriculum, competencies related to diversity and English learners. These competencies will be used to guide implementation and revision of courses and clinical practice. First, the two core courses focus on diversity and English learners. Second, content related to diversity and English learners will be infused in each course of ACT-R and integrated in the language and literacy concentration. Third, ACT-R candidates will complete clinical practice in diverse high-need schools with ongoing faculty, mentor and principal support and discuss their experiences in seminar. Competencies related to diversity and English learners will be observed and evaluated through class assignments, teaching evaluations and PACT.

Improve the preparation of special education teachers in technology. The significant and expanding role of technology in teacher preparation is reflected in CTC and NCATE accreditation standards and is clearly important for today's classrooms. Teachers in California currently make limited use of technology in instruction. Only 12% report daily use of computers and the internet to deliver instruction and only 17% report using it two to four days per week (CTAP, 2002). Moreover, a study in Southern California indicated that technology is rarely used with ELs or

students with special needs (Warschauer, 2007). Teachers are more likely to integrate technology into teaching practices if they are proficient in using hardware and software and understand the connection between technology and their curriculum (Zhao, Pugh, Sheldon, & Byers, 2002). To prepare candidates to work in a connected digital world, the use of technology needs to be modeled and hands-on practice provided to teacher candidates (Wetzel, 2004).

CSUN has served as an implementation site for field-testing IRIS (IDEA and Research for Inclusive Settings) research-based online modules on differentiated instruction, behavior management, collaboration, accommodations, and diversity. IRIS modules will be incorporated into the ACT-R curriculum and faculty will identify additional online web-enriched materials. All technology utilized will be consistent with the principles of universal design for learning. To further enhance technology integration, the project will partner with a **Digital Education Content Provider (*Invitational Priority*)**, the **Multimedia Educational Resources for Learning and Online Teaching (MERLOT)** developed more than 15 years ago by the CSU Chancellor's Office. MERLOT has worked closely with teacher preparation programs and will collaborate with CSUN to create and post digital education content based on the effective practices established and examined in ACT-R.

For ACT-R candidates to utilize these technology resources, it is critical they have state-of-the-art equipment that is easily accessible and portable. However, most schools in LAUSD do not have adequate hardware or software to make the widespread use of technology feasible. Therefore, we are proposing the purchase of a laptop and LCD projector for each ACT-R candidate, providing a digital learning and teaching community and enhancing the integration of technology in clinical sites during the credential/master's degree and induction programs.

Improve the preparation of general and special education teachers in serving students with disabilities through collaboration. While an increasing number of students with disabilities are served in general education classrooms, general educators feel unprepared to serve these students (Keefe, Moore, & Duff, 2004; Pugach, 2005). According to a CSU survey of graduates (2001-2009), 40% of graduates indicated that they did not feel adequately prepared to work with students with special needs (CSU, 2009). These numbers are consistent with CSUN data.

A goal of ACT-R is to significantly improve the preparation of general education teachers in serving students with special needs and to prepare both general and special educators to be effective collaborators in this process. As described previously, the design of the program includes two common core courses, required of both general and special education teacher candidates. These courses focus on understanding and using research and data to modify and improve classroom instruction, and teaching EL and students with disabilities. *In these classes general education teacher candidates will participate as members of Individual Education Program (IEP) teams and work collaboratively on assignments with Residents.*

All candidates and their mentors will observe collaborative practices at model sites, and through clinical practice, work with university supervisors and mentors to develop, implement and evaluate instructional practices for students with disabilities. Specifically, CSUN has worked with LAUSD to provide high quality sites that model collaborative practices. Two of these have indicated their support of the project (see support letters, Appendix D). The CHIME Charter Elementary and Middle Schools, founded collaboratively by CSUN and LAUSD, will serve as demonstration/clinical training sites for inclusive education. The CHIME Charter Elementary School was selected as the California Charter School of the Year in January of 2005. The Northridge Academy High School, housed on the CSUN campus, serves as a clinical training site

for secondary CSUN candidates and provides services to students with mild/moderate disabilities within three small inclusive learning communities. Finally, competencies in serving students with special needs will be documented for both general and special educators through PACT and teaching evaluations.

Provide a Concentration in Language and Literacy

It goes without saying that failure to learn to read places children's futures and lives at risk for highly deleterious outcomes. It is for these reasons that the NICHD (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) considers reading failure a national public health problem (Hearing on Measuring Success: Using Assessments and Accountability, 2001).

Significant progress has been made in understanding the development of accomplished readers (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), the components of reading (National Reading Panel, 2000) and comprehension and comprehension instruction (Rand Reading Study Group, 2000). However, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores suggest that approximately one-third of all students fail to acquire literacy skills above or at the basic level. Of all national comparisons, those falling furthest behind are students with disabilities and English learners (NCES, 2007). Reports for LAUSD on the California Standards Test (CTS) mirror national findings. Specifically, the performances of students with disabilities and English learners (both limited-English and non-English proficient) are the lowest of all groups—at 2nd grade 64% of students with disabilities and 36% of English learners are reading below or far below the basic level. By 11th grade the achievement gap has widened with 86% of both groups of students scoring either below basic or far below basic in English/language arts. This disturbing trend is well documented (Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2002), but it is neither acceptable nor inevitable.

There now exists a science of reading (Snowling & Hulme, 2005) and we know much about how best to teach reading, and identify and help those struggling to learn to read at early ages (Farstrup & Samuels, 2002; Stone et al, 2004; Morrow, Rueda, & Lapp, 2009). However, critical to the implementation of scientifically-based instructional approaches are teachers, elementary through secondary, who are knowledgeable, prepared and capable of applying research to practice (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003). A contributing factor to the research to practice divide is the failure of teacher preparation programs to provide in-depth knowledge about the relationships between language and literacy and how language serves as the foundation for literacy learning (Catts & Kamhi, 2005; Moats & Lyon, 1996; Strickland et al., 2002; Wong, Fillmore, & Snow, 2000). As suggested by Sillman, Wilkinson, and Brea-Spahn (2004), *One barrier for translating policy into effective practices at the classroom level is the knowledge gap that many educators have about the linguistic underpinnings of literacy learning* (p. 98).

To address the widening achievement gap in English language arts, for English learners and students with disabilities, ACT-R will include a concentration in language and literacy that integrates content knowledge in linguistics, with literacy research and scientifically validated instructional practices in reading and writing. The concentration, which builds upon LSLA, will inform the common core, include credential courses in each of the specializations and be the focus of the concurrent master's degree.

Language and literacy concentration in the credential program. Integral to the concentration will be socio-cultural content--family literacy, cultural and community awareness. These topics will be infused throughout the two common core courses where a partnership with the Parent Pioneers will provide candidates opportunities for working alongside a trained Parent Leader, conducting home visits, and modeling interactive literacy lessons with families. As

suggested by Gallego (2001) when experiences with individual students occur in settings outside of, as well as within classrooms, they contribute to candidates' understandings of teaching and learning as complex tasks within specific cultural contexts.

*Other concentration courses within the credential program will focus on comprehensive literacy programs, drawing upon California achievement and academic content standards in English/language arts, individual assessments, including informal reading inventories, and curriculum based measures, differentiated instruction and grouping practices, and empirically based reading methods. More advanced content will differ by specialization with MM addressing explicit, systematic and intensive approaches to intervention; MS embedding literacy teaching in natural contexts; DHH teaching literacy skills in ASL; and ECSE language development and early literacy. Residents will have the option to complete field-based literacy assignments at their residency site and in the on-campus Special Education Literacy Laboratory, a facility that provides one-to-one tutoring to community K-12 students under the guidance and close supervision of faculty. Efficacy in teaching English/language arts will be measured using *Reading in Special Education (RISE)* and pass rates on the *Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA)*, a standardized California test required of all teacher candidates,*

Language and literacy concentration in the master's degree program. While credential courses will focus on instructional methods, linked to these are four master's degree courses examining the theoretical and empirical evidence for validated practices. Anchoring the master's program will be a new linguistics course offered through the College of Humanities. In the course, *Linguistics and Special Education*, Residents will examine research about language and its development in English learners and in students with special needs, and connect these linguistic

and developmental topics to reading—from its earliest stages through the needs of challenged adolescents. The course will be team taught by linguists and special educators.

The second course in the sequence, *Research Methods* will provide candidates with the knowledge and skills to understand and evaluate research articles with exemplars taken from the research literature in linguistics, and language and literacy across areas of disability. *Issues in Special Education* will begin with topics related to language and literacy and then broaden candidates' knowledge base within different areas of disability through specialization break out groups. The culminating experience, *Action Research*, will be conducted during the first semester of Resident's induction and will focus on the collection and analysis of student achievement data in English/language arts. Faculty from the Linguistics Program will guest lecture in the *Research* and *Issues* classes and participate as members of each master's degree committees.

The unique and innovative design of the Language and Literacy Concentration integrates content knowledge with pedagogy and directly and purposefully links theory to practice. It includes a K-12 focus on literacy instruction for students with disabilities, and offers clinical experiences in schools, a laboratory, and in the community. It builds upon a knowledge base in linguistics and culminates in a written product, suitable for dissemination at professional conferences. The implementation of the Concentration will also be innovative involving a workgroup of faculty from linguistics and education, and K-12 special education teachers. The workgroup will craft professional development modules focusing on literacy instruction. Similar to the Credential Emphasis Workgroup, web-based modules will be developed for faculty, university supervisors, mentors and principals and will be the basis for *language and literacy professional workshops available to all teachers at school sites*.

Provide a One-Year Apprenticeship Alongside Experienced and Trained Mentors

If we are to avoid the “revolving door” in special education, the clinical experience must be of sufficient duration and rigor to be considered a significant investment by the candidate (Connelly & Graham, 2009); well-prepared novices with intensively supervised clinical experience are more likely to stay in teaching than others with limited clinical experience (NCTAF, 2003). Researchers recommend a minimum of one year of clinical experience in residency programs (Berry et al., 2008) that provide a rich array of fieldwork across grade levels with intensive teaching experiences in specialization areas (Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006a/b).

One-year clinical experience. Each semester in ACT-R, LAUSD administrators from Human Resources and Local District 2 will arrange for candidate interviews with principals at local school sites. In consultation with principals, LAUSD administrators will arrange clinical experience placements in Local District 2. Candidates will complete a full year of increasingly intensive clinical experience; during the fall semester they will participate in a half-day clinical experience (Monday-Friday) and attend classes in the evening. During the spring semester, they will participate in a full day clinical experience at a second site (Monday-Thursday) and attend classes several evenings and on Friday. To support the integration of theory and practice Residents will enroll simultaneously in coursework and the apprenticeship providing opportunities to practice what is taught in university classes and continuously test, reflect on, and improve their skills. Residents will demonstrate their proficiency not only through course grades but also through performance-based assessments and projects that are informed by research and theory, and grounded in actual classroom experiences.

ACT-R will capitalize on the shared expertise of outstanding district mentors, principals, and other administrators. Mentors, who have undergone a rigorous selection procedure, will model validated instructional practices, and provide guidance and feedback regarding classroom performance. Principals will observe and consult regularly with the mentor teacher regarding the candidates' classroom performance. University supervisors, faculty who teach in the program and many of whom are outstanding experienced teachers in the district, will monitor the progress of candidates, observing and conferencing with the candidate, mentor, and principal. To further enhance the experience, seminars collaboratively taught by supervisors and mentors will be connected to each clinical experience, forming a coherent professional community that links practice with coursework (Grossman et al., 2008).

As suggested by Berry et al., (2008), in many ways the quality of the Residency Program rests on the skills, capacities, and commitment of mentor teachers. Therefore, critically important to the clinical experience in this project is the careful selection and support provided mentors, and the professional development afforded all involved in the apprenticeship experience-- conditions that unfortunately do not currently exist in many special education programs (Prater & Sileo, 2004).

Mentor selection. Mentor teachers will be carefully selected through an application, observation and interview process that involve both LAUSD Administrators and CSUN faculty. Clear criteria will be developed for the selection of mentors based on their expertise in the following specific areas: planning and preparation that demonstrates knowledge of content and pedagogy and the use of assessment to improve pupil learning; engagement of students with different learning styles through appropriate instruction; collaboration with colleagues to improve the instruction of students with disabilities; use of multiple measures that are valid and

reliable to analyze gains in student learning; and exemplary skills in the essential components of reading instruction and ability to implement literacy strategies across the curriculum. In addition, a priority will be given to applicants from underrepresented groups and individuals who demonstrate high potential as school leaders and are interested in assuming leadership roles. Mentors who meet the selection criteria will be interviewed to assure their willingness to participate in the clinical experience and the induction program. Mentors will *be relieved from teaching duties, to visit model programs with ACT-R candidates* and to participate in professional development.

Mentor training. In this project mentors will be provided intensive and ongoing support and training, specifically focused on the processes, skills and strategies needed for successful mentoring and leadership. All activities involving mentors will be collaboratively developed and facilitated by LAUSD and CSUN educators, members of a Residency Workgroup. The Workgroup will plan and implement a Summer Institute where mentoring models developed through the nationally recognized New Teacher Center will be presented by LAUSD personnel and practiced with ACT-R mentors and their principals. Led by LAUSD personnel, sessions will focus on supporting new teacher development and building the capacity of principals to nurture the development of site leaders. Throughout the school year mentors will attend monthly meetings with their principals, facilitated by LAUSD administrators, discussing common issues surrounding the development and support of new teachers. In the induction year mentors will continue to be involved in the project participating with their residents in teacher inquiry groups, focusing on the collection and examination of student achievement data in English/language arts.

Create a Data-Driven Professional Community of Learners Which Promotes Evidence Based Practices and Enhances Academic Student Achievement.

Failure to establish shared goals of field-based experiences and coherent views of effective instruction creates tension among the participants, and disharmony between the academic and the practical (Freedman & Appleman, 2009). As a result, clinical experiences, rather than being the high point of one's preparation program become a missed opportunity for the candidate to learn, and for the local education community to build human capital (Dai, et al., 2007).

In contrast, school-university partnerships that provide opportunities for teachers to apply what they have learned in meaningful contexts help link theory to practice and create professional learning and teaching communities (Allsopp et al., 2006; Whitcomb, Borko & Liston, 2007). In these communities, educators are immersed collectively in sharing knowledge, inquiry, and problem solving and teachers who learn through this process are likely to develop into reflective professionals who can respond to the complex and diverse needs of students in urban schools (Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005).

Professional development workshops and web-based modules. In order to establish significant linkages between knowledge and practice, the workshops and web-based modules developed by the Credential Emphasis and Language/Literacy Workgroups will be presented throughout the school year, both of which are supported in the research literature as potentially highly effective professional development strategies. The workshops and modules will focus on EL, technology and collaboration (emphases in the new credential standards) and English/language arts instruction (the focus of the Language and Literacy Concentration), providing video models of exemplary instructional practices and content specific learning strategies for diverse students (Dieker et al., 2009). Although it is anticipated that mentors and

their principals will be the target audience, all teachers and administrators at school sites where residents are placed will be invited to attend, for the explicit purpose of building local capacity and aligning coursework with application.

Virtual community of learners (VCL). One of the most effective models for professional growth is a community of learners (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Professional Development Schools (PDS), in which a strong community of practice can be created and nurtured, have been shown to improve teacher practices and increase student performance (Shroyer et al., 2007). In these communities, coursework is closely aligned with clinical experiences and there exists a shared knowledge base between university faculty and practitioners. However, creating these communities of practice for special educators can be challenging, with few special educators at a school site, and the time and resources for collaboration limited. For these reasons, special educators often feel isolated, resulting in lowered job satisfaction and attrition. Therefore in order to retain quality special educators it is critical that an administrator creates an environment that is collegial and supportive (Whitaker, 2003).

Given the challenges in creating a PDS for special educators, ACT-R will create an on-line PDS, the Virtual Community of Learners (VCL), where special education teachers and principals, university supervisors and mentors come together regularly to share practices and explore new teaching methods. The VCL will be designed using a variety of on-line technologies including Elluminate, a real-time learning and collaboration tool, and a website that will house the web-based modules. The networking of this learning community will facilitate the sharing of best practices across all settings and the close involvement of university and district personnel.

Mentors emerging as school leaders (Competitive Priority 2). Given the professional development, mentoring skills, and experience supporting and sharing their expertise with

Residents, mentors will serve as a potential pipeline to leadership positions (Berry et al., 2008). This project prepares mentors for school and district leadership positions through mentor training, participation in a data-driven professional learning community and involvement in teacher inquiry groups (see induction program). Given the integral role of mentors in the project and a climate conducive to professional development, mentors will be prepared with strong leadership skills that focus on improving student academic achievement. Specifically, the mentors will develop effective leadership techniques that include the following: teaching and assessment skills to support classroom instruction, using data to inform instruction, managing resources and school time, engaging and involving parents, community members, the local educational agency, business, and other community leaders to leverage additional resources, and understanding how students learn and develop. The Community of Learners model that frames the Residency focuses on data utilization as the key ingredient to improving student learning and bridging the achievement and opportunity gaps of students. The goal is to institutionalize data use for program improvement into the organizational culture of every partner, thus realizing a higher level of sustainability than currently exists.

Selection of individuals for the leadership program. Mentor teachers participating in this project will be natural recruits for the school leadership programs at CSUN and to participate in the LAUSD leadership academy. The performance of mentors during project activities will help identify individuals, including those from underrepresented groups, who have the skill set and desire to serve as school leaders. Mentors will be encouraged to submit applications to administrative programs and supporting in this effort by CSUN/LAUSD project personnel.

3. Enhance teacher retention through a 2-year induction program that includes support in high-need schools and participation in teacher inquiry groups with mentors, examining pupil learning.

There is a growing body of research which argues that teacher education programs must address teacher retention, providing continuous preparation and support to beginning teachers, particularly in high-need schools where they are disproportionately assigned (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Teachers who participate in these induction programs are more committed and satisfied with their jobs and more likely to remain in the profession (Carver & Katz, 2004; Kelley, 2004; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). In special education, critical components of support programs include frequent contacts with a mentor who provides assistance with “mechanics” of the job and is a special educator, and emotional and informal support that responds to the identified new teacher’s needs (Kennedy & Burstein, 2004; Westling et al., 2006; Whitaker, 2003; White & Mason, 2006).

Onsite support. This project addresses the need for continued preparation and support of new teachers through a 2-year induction program. First, as required by CTC all candidates must complete advanced standards to be fully certified. CSUN will collaborate with a state supported professional development program, District 2 **Beginning Teacher and Support Assessment (BTSA)**. Through BTSA, an inquiry based formative assessment system, each new teacher will be assigned a support provider to provide on-site assistance and facilitate the development of an Individual Induction Plan (IIP).

Research also suggests that those beginning teachers who stay in urban settings develop strong networks of professional support and have learned to adopt the reflective stance of teacher as researcher (Quartz et al., 2004). Combining these features of effective induction are teacher inquiry groups that engage in the joint activity of solving instructional problems and improving

teaching. As suggested by Gallimore et al., groups focused on recursive inquiry have the potential to make more explicit the connections between teaching and student learning (2009).

Action research project and teacher inquiry groups. In their first semester of induction ACT-R graduates will enroll, as a cohort, in the final course in their master's degree program—*Action Research*. Sustaining the cohort has been found to be a significant contributor to new teacher retention (Freeman & Appleman, 2009) and action research a powerful approach to professional growth and development (Johnson, 2005). Projects will focus on improving English/language arts performance of students in teachers' classes and at their schools by identifying specific questions or areas for inquiry, gathering relevant assessment data, and determining implications for instructional practices. Throughout this process the graduates will be engaged in collective problem solving and collegial assistance and support.

Linked to the course will be teacher inquiry groups comprised of graduates and their mentors. Through these groups, mentors will continue to serve as resources to new teachers helping them implement evidenced-based practices throughout their two-year induction period. Mentors and ACT-R graduates will systematically examine the English/language arts performance of their students including achievement test data and curriculum-based measures (see Competitive Preference Priority 1).

In summary, to improve the achievement of students with disabilities, this project has been designed to reflect research and effective practices in urban residency programs. Through aggressive and comprehensive recruitment and selection strategies that attract culturally and linguistically diverse candidates who are subject matter ready, we will create an integrated credential/master's degree teaching residency and induction program that serves a high need district

by responding to identified needs, connects content knowledge with pedagogy and theory with practice, capitalizes on the shared expertise of district and university professionals, and uses evidence to inform practice, building long-standing capacity in urban schools.

a.2.iv. Collaboration of Appropriate Partners

This project represents the opportunity to address personnel needs in LAUSD with the ultimate goal of improving academic student achievement. In the inception of this project a needs assessment, conducted collaboratively by LAUSD and CSUN, identified special education as the District's most critical personnel shortage, particularly in high needs schools. It was decided that the project could best impact change and build capacity of special education personnel by concentrating project resources in one of LAUSD's local districts. Local District 2 was selected, given that the majority of their schools qualify as high need, their commitment to the project (see Appendix D), and close working relationship with CSUN on a number of reform efforts. CSUN faculty and LAUSD Central and Local District 2 personnel have met on an ongoing basis, collaboratively designing the model, program components, and identifying project personnel. As shown in the management plan (Appendix D) the development, implementation and evaluation of all project activities is the joint responsibility of LAUSD and CSUN, evidence of the strong collaborative partnership between the University and the District.

In addition, several community partners have agreed to contribute to this project. First, three parent organizations have been selected to address the critical need for special educators to learn to collaborate with parents from low-income and diverse backgrounds: The Parent Pioneers, Family Focus Resource and Empowerment Center, and Parents as Learning Partners. Second, to facilitate collaborative practices of special and general educators, the CHIME Institute for Children with Special Needs and the Northridge Academy High School will serve as model sites to

Residents and Mentors. Third, two community partners WorkSource and California Business for Education Excellence will assist in recruitment efforts, particularly at the secondary level. Finally, the CSU is offering exceptional support through MERLOT, the Center for Teacher Quality and the Center to Close the Achievement Gap. Together these partners will serve as strong resources to the project and are described in the **Competitive Priority Section**. (See support letters, Appendix D)

B.1. PROJECT EVALUATION

As recommended by Darling-Hammond (2006) and Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005), comprehensive evaluation of teacher preparation should provide evidence of candidate performance, perceptions of preparedness, and the impact of teacher preparation on teaching practice and student learning. Further, evaluation should include periodic assessment to monitor progress and inform program practice. Incorporating these recommendations the ACT-R evaluation plan uses multiple quantitative and qualitative measures for both formative and summative purposes and includes teacher, student and program data. The triangulation of these (Darling-Hammond, 2006) should provide comprehensive and valid information regarding ACT-R's effectiveness in the recruitment, preparation, and induction of special education teachers and their impact on pupil learning in high-need schools.

An independent, objective evaluator, Dr. Anne Wilcoxon (see resume, Appendix D), in collaboration with other evaluation resources at the CSU, CSUN and LAUSD levels, has been selected to guide the evaluation effort. In years one through four, Dr. Wilcoxon will work with the Management Team in the collection and analysis of data for the purpose of evaluating and revising project activities. In the final year of the project Dr. Wilcoxon will conduct a summative evaluation specifically addressing the following research questions: (1) To what extent did ACT-

R accomplish program objectives; (2) What was the impact of these services on program recipients; and (3) How effective were the program recipients in improving student achievement?

B.2.i. Objective Performance Measures

Data collection will include the following longitudinal data sets already in place: CSUN Teacher Evaluation data; CSUN teacher candidate and employer perceptions of preparedness (CSU Exit and Follow up Surveys); RICA pass rates; LAUSD CTS and API scores in English/language arts; CSU Center for Teacher Quality teacher and district report card data in high need schools. New measures will include project surveys and focus group interviews (resident, faculty, mentor) and evaluations (Summer Institute, monthly mentor meetings, workshops, web-based modules, VCL, teacher inquiry groups) and PACT and RISE ratings. As seen in the Evaluation Plan (Appendix D) the project evaluation aligns measureable objectives with projected outcomes and includes continuous and recursive project examination and revision, based upon data.

Objective 1. Recruit a total of 150 promising special education teachers.

Evaluation of Objective 1 will focus on the effectiveness of recruiting candidates who represent the diversity of Los Angeles, demonstrate strong academic and professional backgrounds, and who meet NCLB requirements to teach at the secondary level. Data will be collected on the number, demographic backgrounds and qualifications of applicants recruited and of those accepted. Each application will include an item on recruitment to determine the relative effectiveness of recruitment activities with different target audiences. Each semester candidates will complete a program survey indicating the effectiveness of supports provided (e.g., faculty advisement, academic assistance, and financial support). Program progress and retention will be monitored each semester

through digital tracking forms that will record courses completed by semester with grades. The form will also include advisement dates and any additional supports recommended or provided.

Objective 2. Develop and implement a model credential/MA teaching residency program.

Evaluation of Objective 2 will focus on the effectiveness of the preparation program as measured by the assessment of candidate competencies to effectively teach EL, integrate technology, collaborate in addressing the needs of students with disabilities, and provide effective literacy instruction. Resident competencies in reading instruction will be assessed by university faculty and mentor teachers using *RISE* and *RICA* scores. These as well as all other candidate competencies, including EL strategies, use of technology, and collaboration will be assessed on the CSUN Department of Special Education Teaching Evaluation and through PACT, both of which will be completed by university supervisors, mentors and principals. Ratings of Residents will be compared to those of other past and present CSUN special education credential candidates, and using a quasi-experimental design Residents' scores on *RISE* and *RICA* will be compared to a group of non-ACT-R teacher candidates.

Residents will complete the *CSU Exit Survey*, a comprehensive coverage of perceptions of preparedness including EL, technology, collaboration and teaching reading. The survey has been conducted in a similar manner since 2001 allowing for comparisons of Residents with previous CSUN and CSU graduates. With the support of the CSU Center for Teacher Quality, overall and item specific Resident ratings will be compared to those of non-ACT-R candidates.

Data on the demographic backgrounds and professional experiences of mentors, and their participation and evaluation of professional development activities will be collected and examined. The participation of faculty, university supervisors, mentors, and principals in the professional community of learners (web-based modules, workshops, VCL) will be monitored

and their evaluations of these used to inform the project. At the end of each project year the external evaluator will conduct focus groups with project participants discussing strengths and weaknesses of the program and perceived connections between content knowledge and pedagogy, theory and practice, and the use of student achievement data to inform practice. Finally, *Residents will be tracked to determine the percentage of highly qualified teachers hired by LAUSD, the percentage of those hired from underrepresented groups, and the percentage teaching in high need subjects and/or areas, and in high need schools.*

Objective 3. Enhance teacher retention through a 2-year induction program.

Evaluation of Objective 3 will focus on the effectiveness of the induction program to facilitate teacher retention in high need schools, and to support the continued professional development of new teachers through the collection and use of student achievement data. Progress in meeting the advanced credential standards, including the development and implementation of the IIP, will be jointly monitored by LAUSD and CSUN personnel with the intent of facilitating a coordinated induction effort.

Project evaluation of residency graduates will focus on their use of pupil language and literacy performance data to inform English/language arts instruction through an Action Research Project. In addition ACT-R graduates and their employers will complete the *CSU Follow Up Survey*. Ratings on this measure will be compared to non-ACT-R graduates. Program surveys and focus groups will provide additional quantitative and qualitative data evaluating the induction program.

A major evaluation activity beginning at the end of the second year and continuing throughout the five years of the project will be the collection of student achievement data, including the use of periodic assessments to inform practice and the collection of other more contextual indicators of learning for students with disabilities. California Standard Test (CTS)

and Academic Yearly Progress (API) scores for the students of ACT-R graduates and for those of a non-ACT-R comparison group will be collected (see Competitive Preference Priority 1).

Resources from CSUN, including the data warehouse, LAUSD's Research and Evaluation Unit, and CSU's Center to Close the Achievement Gap and Center for Teacher Quality, will be used to:

1) study the impact of the project on student outcomes; and 2) research the complex linkages between the characteristics of teachers recruited, the design of preparation and induction programs, and student achievement. Guiding these efforts will be the Model of Teacher Efficacy for Special Education (Appendix D).

B.2.ii. Evaluation requirements of Section 204 of HEA (GPRA)

Methods of evaluation of GPRA requirements follow.

Performance Measure 1: Graduation. Monitor and verify the attainment of the Education Specialist credential within 12 months and completion of master's degree within 18 months.

Performance Measure 2: Employment Retention. Retention data on ACT-R candidates three years after graduation, documenting continued employment in the partner high-need LEA.

Performance Measure 3: Improved scores. The RICA and PACT scores of ACT-R students will be compared to scores of other CSUN special education credential graduates.

Efficiency Measure: Employment Retention: Analyses will be performed on the efficiency of the teaching residency project, based on the cost associated with preparation of retained teachers, calculated using (a) training costs and (b) retention of participants in LAUSD three years after being hired (Federal Register, p. 25233).

Short Term Performance Measure: Persistence. Candidates who do not complete the credential program within 12 months and the master's degree within 18 months will be followed throughout the reporting period.

Short Term Performance Measure: Employment Retention: Follow-up data will be collected on ACT-R candidates one year after graduation to document continued employment in the partner high-need LEA.

B.2.iii. Performance Feedback and Periodic Assessment of Progress

As shown in the Evaluation and Management Plans, periodic assessment of program activities will be the responsibility of the project evaluator, Dr. Anne Wilcoxon. The evaluator will develop, collect, analyze and summarize evaluation data related to recruitment, preparation and induction. As a member of the Management Team, Dr. Wilcoxon will play an integral role in the project, providing performance feedback toward intended outcomes and benchmarks. She will prepare annual reports for each of the workgroups and the Management Team who will use yearly analyses to inform and revise as indicated all project activities.

C.1 SIGNIFICANCE

The proposed project will make important contributions to the preparation of special education teachers and to the learning of students with special needs in high-need schools. Representing a partnership between one of the largest teacher preparation programs in California and high-need school district in the nation, ACT-R will recruit and prepare 150 special educators over the 5-year grant period, significantly impacting the high-need area of special education in LAUSD. ACT-R graduates will be hired in LAUSD, receive support through a 2-year induction program focusing on the use of pupil learning data to inform practice. As a result of the 1-year residency, 18 month integrated credential/master's program and 2-years of induction, it is anticipated that ACT-R graduates will significantly improve the achievement of students with disabilities in high-need schools. Throughout, the project will build local capacity and work toward institutionalization.

C.2.i. System Change or Improvement

In California schools, serving the most diverse student populations, 28% of special education teachers are underprepared (Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2004). Further, among first and second-year special education teachers the figures are even more alarming; 47% were underprepared compared with 23% in general education (Esch et al., 2005). LAUSD figures are consistent with those reported; specifically and as previously reported, only 57% of elementary special education and 31% of secondary special educators are fully credentialed, **significantly lower than any other subject area in LAUSD**. Preparing 150 highly qualified teachers to work in LAUSD and providing the supports to retain them in LAUSD schools, will specifically address the shortage of special education teachers in a high need district. Concentrating special education preparation and professional development activities in District 2 will improve special education services in this targeted geographic area with potential to make significant systemic changes.

The project will also change the system of teacher preparation at CSUN and potentially throughout the CSU, as it would be the first integrated credential/master's degree program on campus and one of only a few efforts that explicitly connects faculty expertise across colleges and with district colleagues. Collaboration between the Linguistics Program, Chicana/Chicano studies, and the Department of Special Education brings together a unique combination of disciplines not typically aligned in teacher education. Including LAUSD teachers in this conversation and our other community partners (See Competitive Preference Priority 4), engages professionals in productive co-constructed activities that bridge “the cultural divide...between...the language of researchers and the language of practitioners” (p. 113,

National Research Council, 1999). This disconnection must be addressed if we are to bring scientific research to practice.

C.2.ii. Build Local Capacity

ACT-R will engage in a number of activities designed to build local capacity and human capital. First, Work Groups for EL, technology, collaboration and language and literacy will develop web-based modules and workshops that will be posted on the VCL and made accessible throughout District 2 and other districts in LAUSD, in CSUN classes and to other universities; the VCL will be extended to support all field experiences in the Department of Special Education and will be sustained after the project has ended.

Second, Work Groups are strategically comprised of university faculty and district personnel connecting research to practice and informing each individual participant about the other. Similarly, *Linguistics and Special Education* will be team taught with faculty in linguistics and special education rotating through the experience. In the process CSUN linguists will learn about disabilities and CSUN special educators, the study of language and its implications for those struggling to read and write.

Finally, the project will support the identification and professional development of LAUSD mentors who will participate in professional development with their principals and collaborate with university supervisors in evaluation activities, including *RISE*, Teacher Evaluation and PACT. Given these responsibilities and experiences, mentors will be poised to assume leadership roles, thereby building tremendous capacity in District 2 special educators.

C.2.iii. Improvements in Teaching and Student Achievement

This project targets student performance in English/language arts where testing reveals achievement gaps that widen over time, particularly for EL and students with disabilities who are

scoring at the lowest levels of the population in LAUSD (See Section A.2.i). To address the need to improve student performance in reading and writing ACT-R focuses on literacy, and the preparation of teachers particularly effective in teaching English/language arts. We do this by providing candidates an unparalleled depth of subject matter knowledge offering master's degree coursework simultaneously with K-12 reading methods, the residency with mentors who demonstrate exemplary English language arts instruction, and an induction program that examines the use of student performance to inform practice. When combined with a credential emphasis in EL, technology, and collaboration, all driven by the changing roles and responsibilities of special educators, these opportunities prepare effective new teachers of English/language arts specifically, and exceptional special educators more generally--the goal of which is to increase student learning.

But the question remains how best to assess the learning of students with disabilities. As suggested in Competitive Preference Priority 1, standardized testing does not always capture progress nor inform practices in special education. Determining when it is appropriate to use and not use test scores, and the alternative to replace and/or augment these more traditional measures will be a focus of the project in years 3, 4, and 5. Finally, linking pupil learning to teacher characteristics and preparation is the aim of the Model of Teacher Efficacy for Special Educators.

C.2.iv. Potential for Continued Support

The project has been strategically designed to lead to institutionalization of its component parts. First, ACT-R will strengthen an already existing partnership between LAUSD and CSUN through meaningful collaborative efforts that involve shared decision making and parity. Second, the project has the support of high-ranking administrators at CSUN including the Deans of COE

and COH. Third, the LAUSD Superintendent, who initiated this endeavor, is contributing significant resources and committing personnel to the project. Finally, the local Superintendent welcomes the opportunity to house ACT-R, given its potential to improve services in District 2 (see support letters, Appendix D).

By entry of the first cohort all courses will have been developed and approved by CSUN and CTC with no additional costs to the University. Therefore, funding is requested primarily to assist in the recruitment and support of an increased number of teacher candidates and the design and implementation of professional development for mentors and ACT-R graduates. Both of these are intended to build capacity in District 2 resulting in benefits to students with disabilities and their families that will last far beyond the funding period.

By the end of the project, the data warehouse will be expanded to include recruitment, preparation, induction and student achievement. Finally, the Model of Teaching Efficacy for Special Education will have been developed and validated, enhancing the capacity to measure teacher effectiveness at CSUN, the CSU, and other institutions.

D. QUALITY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The project management plan has been developed to ensure that activities can be completed in a systematic way, with decision-making and participation by all project partners and participants. The plan takes into consideration that program needs will change over time, as initial design and implementation of early experiences lead to professional induction activities necessary to sustain teacher growth and retention. In recognition of the scope and complexity of this project, we have developed a management structure intended to achieve all the objectives of the project, and to meet all statutory reforms and improvements stipulated in the teacher quality partnership application.

D.2.1 Responsibilities, Timelines, and Milestones for Accomplishing Project Tasks

Management Team

The Management Team will be comprised of LAUSD administrators and CSUN faculty who have leadership roles and responsibilities in the recruitment, preparation, and retention of special educators. Leadership on the management team will be a shared responsibility capitalizing on the unique experiences and expertise of its members. Dr. Nancy Burstein will serve as chair the Management Team and grant administrator. In addition, many of her responsibilities as Chair of the Department of Special Education will support and facilitate the success of the project. Dr. Sue Sears, CSUN Professor, will oversee project curricular activities and workgroup activities. Dr. Burstein and Sears have co-directed several grants in previous years and their administrative and curricular expertise complement one another. Mr. David Dill, Administrator, LAUSD Human Resources Unit will serve as the District Administrator for the project assisting with recruitment, Residency placements, professional development activities, employment and induction. Ms. Cindy Weldon, LAUSD District 2 Administrator for Special Education will coordinate the selection and training of mentors and facilitate professional development. Ms. Phyllis Gudoski, CSUN instructor and former LAUSD professional development administrator and trainer will serve as the CSUN PreK-12 Coordinator for clinical experience. Finally, Dr. Anne Wilcoxon, independent evaluator, will serve as the sixth member of the team, overseeing and facilitating evaluation activities. Taken together these individuals represent a strong and balanced leadership team.

Overview of Management Plan

The management plan, including outcomes, activities, personnel responsible, timeline and milestones/benchmark for each objective and an organizational chart are shown in Appendix D.

Year 1 (1/1/10-12/31/10) will focus on grant start-up activities, recruitment and planning

for Cohort 1, and implementation of the first semester of ACT-R. Dr. Burstein will be responsible for the overall management of the project and will monitor activities, timelines, and the budget. She will hire office staff and project personnel, and establish office procedures. Initial project activities will focus on recruitment and selection of ACT-R candidates, design and implementation of the ACT-R program and evaluation activities to measure program implementation and candidate performance. The Management Team and the Evaluator will guide program planning and implementation (see Organization Chart, Appendix D).

In the spring of year 1, Dr. Sears will establish and oversee the workgroups to design the credential emphasis and the language/literacy concentration. These workgroups will develop web-based modules and workshops. ACT-R candidates and their mentors will be recruited and selected for the program during the spring and summer of Year 1. Ms. Weldon and Ms. Gudoski in collaboration with the Residency Workgroup will design and implement the Summer Institute and oversee the development of the VCL. In the fall of Year 1, program implementation will begin with candidates attending first semester courses and assigned to Local District 2 classrooms with mentor teachers. Faculty, university supervisors, mentors and their principals will participate in professional development workshops, web-based modules, and the VCL. The evaluator will assess all project activities, with findings used to inform program practices for Year 2.

During Year 2 (1/1/11-12/31/11) workgroups will continue meeting to plan for spring semester and summer program implementation. Cohort 1 will be placed for their second clinical experience and complete the credential program in summer of 2011. Professional activities will continue as in Year 1. The LAUSD Administrator of Human Resources will coordinate employment activities including scheduling of interviews and facilitating the overall hiring process. As in Year 1, spring and summer recruitment activities will focus on interviewing and

selecting ACT-R Cohort 2 candidates, their mentors and implementing the first semester of coursework in the fall.

Activities during fall semester of Year 2 will also focus on the induction program for the first year graduates. LAUSD Administrators and the PreK-12 Coordinator will work with BTSA Support Providers to identify on-site support. Dr. Sears will establish and lead teacher inquiry groups for ACT-R graduates and mentors. As a part of this experience, graduates will engage in Action Research, completing their master's degree program. As in Year 1, evaluation activities will be completed regarding the program, with findings used to inform the credential emphasis, the concentration, and the residency. In addition, the evaluator will work with LAUSD and other evaluation resources to develop evaluation procedures for the Induction Program including multiple measures of student achievement (See Competitive Preference Priority 1).

During Year 3 (1/1/12-12/31/12), Cohort 2 will complete the credential program in ACT-R and Cohort 3 will be recruited. Workgroups will continue to meet, focusing on program implementation and professional development. Credential/master's degree and induction activities will continue as described in Year 2. A major focus in Year 3 will be evaluation efforts examining the impact of the program on student achievement and the development of a model of teacher efficacy. The Project Evaluator, in collaboration with a data analyst, will work with LAUSD and the CSU system to gather data on the students of ACT-R graduates and the students of a non-ACT-R comparison group. A pilot study will be conducted to examine differences in student achievement between teacher groups. Using teacher, program, and student data the feasibility of the model will be examined and revised, and the program will be evaluated, with data used to inform practices for Cohort 3. In addition, project findings and products will be disseminated through professional conferences and publications.

During Year 4 (1/1/13-12/31/13), Cohort 3 will complete ACT-R and Cohort 4 will be recruited. Program and evaluation activities will be similar to previous years. The major focus in Year 4 will be to refine and validate the Model of Teacher Efficacy for Special Education. The Evaluator/data analyst will continue to study ACT-R and non-ACT-R graduates and their students, examining the relationships between recruitment, preparation, induction and pupil learning. As in Year 3, project findings and products will be disseminated.

Finally, in Year 5 (1/1/14-12/31/14) Cohort 4 will complete ACT-R and Cohort 5 will be recruited and begin the program. Program and evaluation activities will be similar to previous years. The evaluator, in collaboration with the Management Team, will summarize project activities, evaluation findings, and implications for future research and practices. A final project report will be written and submitted to the funding agency. Articles will be written and submitted for publication.

2.2.iii Ensuring Quality in Products and Services of Project

Mechanisms have been established to ensure high-quality products and services from the proposed project. First, the Management Team, with oversight of every aspect of the project, will meet monthly to review accomplishments toward objectives and monitor the quality of products (e.g., workshops, web-based modules, VCL, model) and services provided to Residents, faculty, university supervisors, mentor teachers and principals. Second, the independent evaluator will review and implement the evaluation plan, completing evaluation activities in an efficient and timely manner. She will report progress in accomplishing evaluation activities at monthly meetings. Finally, the Advisory Board will meet with the Management Team once a semester, reviewing products and services developed through the project and providing recommendations.

A significant strength of the proposed project, contributing to the quality of products and services, is the expertise of project personnel. As shown in vitae (see Appendix D), they are highly qualified for their positions in the project. The level of effort allocated to personnel is judged to be adequate and reasonable as described in the budget justification. The qualifications of key personnel are described below.

Dr. Nancy Burstein, Project Co-Director is Chair of the Department of Special Education at CSUN and a founding member of the ACT Program. As shown in her vita, she has significant experience in administration and management given almost 20 years as director and co-director federal and state grant projects. She has developed a number of programs to prepare special education teachers for diverse and urban school populations with disabilities and that have been successfully institutionalized at CSUN. Dr. Burstein's research focuses primarily on the preparation of teachers to serve culturally and linguistically diverse students. She has published widely in teacher education journals and is a frequent presenter at professional meetings.

Dr. Sue Sears, Project Co-Director is a Professor in the Department of Special Education and founded the Special Education Literacy Lab, an on campus clinical experience for teacher candidates that serves K-12 struggling readers and writer. Dr. Sears initiated with colleagues in the COH, the undergraduate literacy concentration, LSLA, and teaches in the program. For over 15 years she has served as Co-Director and evaluator on large-scale federal and state grant projects focusing on teacher preparation in urban schools. Dr. Sears teaches graduate courses in reading disabilities and methods of reading instruction with particular interest on preparing teachers as effective providers of intensive literacy instruction.

Mr. David Dill, Assistant Director, LAUSD Human Resources oversees the recruitment, selection, and processing of special education personnel in LAUSD. He supervises the Special Education Certificated Employment Operations staff and facilitates partnerships with universities within the area of special education. Mr. Dill has extensive experience in special education as a teacher, mentor teacher, coordinator, and Dean. He has served as a Program Specialist, facilitating IEP meetings, consulting with school personnel regarding policies and procedures and coordinating services on school sites and as a district-wide professional development advisor.

Ms. Cindy Weldon, LAUSD Administrator of Special Education for Local District 2 oversees all special education staff in District 2 and provides support to schools regarding compliance and the least restrictive environment (LRE). For nearly 30 years, Ms. Weldon has been a special educator as a teacher, coordinator, and specialist. She has experience in data collection, consultation to school site administrators, and professional development.

Ms. Phyllis Gudoski, PreK-12 Coordinator, is a lecturer at CSUN in the Department of Special Education. As a former employee of LAUSD in Local District 2, Ms. Gudoski was the K-12 ACT Coordinator and a founding member of the ACT Program. She has coordinated the Local District 2 BTSA Program, providing professional development to new teachers. Recently retired from LAUSD, Ms. Gudoski has strong relationships with administrators and teachers throughout Local District 2 and has also worked closely with faculty on TNE and other initiatives at CSUN.

Dr. Anne Wilcoxon will serve as the independent evaluator on the project. Formerly, Director of the Special Education Teacher Preparation Program at Mount St. Mary's College, Dr. Wilcoxon has extensive program evaluation experience. Under Dr. Wilcoxon's leadership, numerous program documents were developed for CTC, including program satisfaction surveys and teacher performance assessments. She is currently serving as evaluator on the Orfalea

Initiative at CSUN, working closely with faculty to evaluate the impact of a neurodevelopmental approach to improving student achievement. Given her background in teacher education, experience in evaluation and strong working relationships with CSUN and LAUSD personnel, Dr. Wilcoxon has the knowledge and expertise to serve as the project evaluator.

Other key faculty will be:

- **Specialization Coordinators/Advisors**, faculty members in the Department of Special Education who have experience and expertise in the specialization.
- **Credential Emphasis Specialists**, experts in EL, technology integration and collaboration from CSUN and LAUSD who will provide professional development to faculty and mentors.
- **Language and Literacy Specialists**, experts from the COH and LAUSD who will develop the Language/Literacy concentration.
- **VCL Coordinator**, Dr. Sally Spencer, Teacher Education Coordinator in the Department of Special Education who is responsible for working with university supervisors and mentors and is skilled in the use of technology.

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