

Special Education Recruitment and Retention of Teachers Research Grants
2005-2006

Project Expansion Grant Final Report

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**Project Special Education Effectiveness Development in
Undergraduate Possibilities III (*Project SPEED UP III*)**

Texas A&M University-Texarkana

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Rationale of the Project

Project SPEED UP III was designed to meet the primary goals of (1) increasing the number of teachers entering the training program leading to special education certification and (2) increasing the number of completions of training and Texas certification requirements in Generic Special Education. Specifically, all efforts were directed toward the following objectives:

1. To provide information to recruits about the close relationship between general and special education in support of current federal and state legislation.
2. To assist participants in understanding the evolving role of special educators in public schools as a multi-faceted teacher, consultant, and ultimately a specialist for students struggling to learn in the general curriculum.
3. To provide participants with skills to help themselves in time management, stress reduction, and methods to work in high-intensity situations by themselves and with others.

The Teacher Demand Study 2000-2001 (Texas A&M University System/Texas Education Agency Partnership for Texas Public Schools) indicated that public school districts in Texas anticipated a need for almost 40,000 teachers with one of the greatest areas of need in elementary and secondary special education. The established need was for almost 6,000 special education teachers. Additionally, at the time of the study, approximately 33% of the state's secondary level special education teachers were uncertified in that area. Other national and statewide studies reached the same conclusions of present and future shortages of trained and certified teachers for students with disabilities (Simpson, Whelan, & Zabel, 1993; Rosenberg, Griffi, Kilgore, & Carpenter, 1997). The Secretary's Fourth Annual Report on Teacher Quality indicates that in Texas 7.9% of the 34,276 special educators (all levels) are teaching with a state issued waiver (2005).

Research data that identified indicators of why special education teachers stayed and why they left (Stempien & Loeb, 2002, pg. 8) are the identified factors of "(1) learning to handle and reduce stress levels, (2) building a collaborative culture and encouraging a supportive learning community, (3) developing collegial relationships, and (4) using one's creativity in a seemingly unchallenging environment." These factors will be utilized as the basis of involving project participants in training for time management, stress reduction, and skills found in emotional intelligence that help to withstand the pressure of working in high-intensity situations. Bringing this training into the preservice arena will hopefully provide students with skills they might use during university-level requirements as well as later use as beginning teachers. Therefore, research results will be infused into the project through the training of participants and by examining pre-and post- levels of these factors through the constructs of emotional intelligence and job satisfaction elements.

Research by Beason and Harris (2003) demonstrated significant correlations between several emotional intelligence and job satisfaction subskills. Generally, those teachers with high levels of emotional intelligence had high levels of job satisfaction. Therefore, this present project will extend this research into the preservice level with the contention that what is beneficial for practicing teachers, may also be beneficial for teachers-in-training and specifically for special education recruits.

Project Target Population

There were two target populations for the proposed project: (1) Regional high school students (approximately 100) who are members of Texas Association of Future Teachers (TAFE) organizations; (2) Undergraduate students (undeclared majors) enrolled at regional community colleges; (3) Undergraduate students enrolled in the teacher training program. There are approximately 400 students from the combined campuses who are working toward teacher certification who could possibly elect to become dually certified in EC-4, Grades 4-8 (Supplemental), Grades 8-12 (Supplemental) and Generic Special Education. Recruitment efforts were directed toward these three groups of students.

Principal Project Objectives

The project objectives were:

1. Recruit students for the teacher training program in special education (EC-4 and special education; special education supplemental).
2. Retain students in the teacher training program in special education until completion of the program and full certification requirements.
3. Research possible factors that support and influence the recruitment and retention of students in a teacher training program in special education.

Research Questions

The research questions were as follows:

1. Does development of collegial relationships influence the recruitment and retention of teacher trainees in special education?
2. Does participation in a university-level summer camp change attitudes toward individuals with disabilities?
3. Does training in time management, stress reduction, and methods to working in high-intensity situations influence the level of emotional intelligence of special education recruits?

Results

Research Questions	Findings
1. Does development of collegial relationships influence the recruitment and retention of teacher trainees in special education?	The responses from participants on the post-camp surveys, particularly for the community college camp (BEE CAMP) indicate positive responses to the collegial atmosphere of the camp. Participants stated that they felt comfortable with the campus because of the friendships they had made with the campers and with the counselors. As to the actual recruitment number evolving from the BEE Camp, we had 19 participants 3 participants enrolled for fall 2006; 1 will enroll Spring 2007; 9 enrolled prior to fall 2006; 5 have not enrolled. We are continuing to follow-up with these students to facilitate their expressed interests in teaching and in special education. We know that two students did changed their major to include special education; however currently we do not have the data to determine how many students elected to pursue special education.
2. Does participation in a university-level summer camp change attitudes toward individuals with disabilities?	The responses from the participants on the post-camp surveys for both the community college "BEE CAMP" and high school "Block Party" camp indicate a significant change in attitudes toward individuals with disabilities. Although the attendance at the "Block Party" was low, those students were very enthusiastic about the learning they had achieved concerning disabilities. Participants from the BEE Camp indicated that they were not aware of the many career possibilities in Special Education and that this knowledge helped changed their attitudes towards teaching individuals with disabilities. One student told us that she came into the camp just for the fun of it and ended up changing her major to include special education.
4. Does training in time management, stress reduction, and methods to working in high-intensity situations influence the level of emotional intelligence of special education recruits?	Within the BEE Camp counselors as well as the presenters addressed time management and stress reduction strategies. The immediate feedback was positive and the survey indicated that this was one of the strengths of the camp.

Project Methodology

The methodology used in the implementation of Project SPEED UP III was multifaceted. The following activities were planned, organized, and implemented to meet the established project goals and objectives as well as address the research questions. The results were as follows:

Components	Results & Recommendations
<p>1. <u>Regional TAFE Conference –A&M-</u> Texarkana will host the Regional TAFE conference in Spring 2006. Members of TAFE from the regional high schools will be invited to come to campus for a one-day conference in which relevant topics will be presented about the field of education and specifically special education. Teacher training program requirements as well as career options will be presented. Brochures and other informational material will be provided. Participants will learn about how children with disabilities feel through the unique experience of watching a Kids On The Block puppeteer performance given by A&M-Texarkana special education majors</p>	<p>As stated in the progress report (April 2006) we had difficulty scheduling this event with the public school districts. Specifically the spring TAKS preparation and testing make it difficult to schedule. We ended up combining this event with our high school summer camp in May.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold this event in January before students are involved in TAKS testing preparation. • Contact parents to ensure attendance.
<p>2. <u>Project SPEED UP III Summer Camps (May & June, 2006) –A&M-Texarkana</u> will host two summer camps targeting: (1) high school TAFE members who have expressed an interest in special education teaching; (2) community college students who have expressed an interest in special education teaching. Participants will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be involved in activities with students 	<p>High School Camp “A&M-Texarkana Block Party” was well received by the students who attended; however since the event was held after the public schools had ended their school year, the attendance was very disappointing (5 students). We had telephone responses from 80 students stating they would attend but only four attended. We had prepared for the larger group including the “working lunch”. Since we had a tremendous</p>

with disabilities in recreational settings (horseback riding school for students with disabilities, swimming, exercising, etc.)

- learn about how children with disabilities feel through the unique experience of watching a Kids On The Block (KOB) puppeteer performance given by A&M-Texarkana special education majors. Kids on the Block is a national puppeteer organization that addresses disabilities and issues that all children face. A&M-Texarkana Student Council for Exceptional Children (SCEC) has KOB troupe.
- receive initial puppeteer training to give puppet shows addressing disabilities (SCEC KOB Puppeteers).
- Immersed in simulation activities for students with various disabilities.
- Involved in training to develop personal skills in time management, stress reduction, and methods to work in high-intensity situations by themselves and with others.
- Involved in collaborative skill-building activities with current special education 'majors' and experienced special educators.

amount of food leftover, that food was made available to A&M Texarkana staff, faculty and students. Donations were then deposited back into the grant account.

Recommendations:

- Consider holding a January event for High School Students
- If an event is held in the spring contact parents to ensure attendance.
- Keep same curriculum, camp agenda, location, and camp design (camp counselors that are university students).

Community College Camps (BEE Camps)

BEE Camp 2006 had 19 participants and the feedback from all participants indicated they found the camp very valuable and informative and would recommend that their friends attend. In particular they rated the simulations, speakers, activities, Kids on the Block puppets and puppeteers, as well as the technology components of the camp as highly beneficial. As to the actual recruitment number evolving from the BEE Camp, we had 19 participants 3 participants enrolled for fall 2006; 1 will enroll Spring 2007; 9 enrolled prior to fall 2006; 5 have not enrolled. We are continuing to follow-up with these students to facilitate their expressed interests in teaching and in special education. We know that two students did changed their major to include special education; however currently we do not have the data to determine how many students elected to pursue special education.

	<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep basic camp design (use of camp counselors, speakers, Kids on the Block puppets & puppeteers, hands-on & simulation activities, working lunches, curriculum materials, and use of Quizdom individual response system) but continue to refine the design. • Continue to infuse technology into the camp curriculum and activities. • Invite parents of students with disabilities to be speakers. • Develop or obtain videos of real special education classrooms and real special educators in action. • Improve the advertisement of the event. • Develop a CD that shows what camp is like to send to potential participants. • Expand the BEE Camp to include Hallsville students. • Expand the BEE Camp opportunities to include universities and their partner community colleges across the state.
<p>3. <u>Discover Teaching Day (Community Colleges)</u> – A&M-Texarkana will host Discover Teaching Day at region community colleges (Texarkana College, Northeast Texas Community College, Kilgore College, etc.) Each of the workshops will be scheduled during the lunch break time for the respective campuses and include activities that mirror</p>	<p>Two “Discover Teaching Days” were held in April, 2006. Expenditures for these events were reported in May, 2006. At North East Community College we had 19 participants and from Texarkana Community College we had 31 participants attend the A&M-Texarkana event. Feedback from these events was very positive. We found that holding these events in April over the noon hour greatly</p>

<p>those of the summer camp. Teachers or other professionals in special education or regular education who work with students with disabilities will speak at these workshops. SCEC KOB Puppeteers will present.</p>	<p>increased the participation as compared to the previous year.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase advertising of the event over the radio and television. • Have representatives from the Student Council for Exceptional Children of A&M Texarkana attend as hosts. • Hold a similar event at Hallsville. • Consider having these events once in the fall and once in the spring on each campus. • Expand Discover Teaching day to other universities and their partner community colleges across the state.
<p>4. <u>Web Page Update and Expansion</u> –</p> <p>Through SPEED UP II A&M-Texarkana established a department website that focuses on the program explanation, career opportunities, and scholarships. The website design and logo have been popular with students and have received national recognition at the Teacher Education Division and Technology & Media Division Conference November 2005. Recognizing that recruitment and website development are on-going processes, funding from SPEED UP III will be used to update the department website and develop new requirement segments that highlight the accomplishments of graduates from A&M-Texarkana.. A specific web component that focuses on the</p>	<p>Web page Update and Expansion</p> <p>We were successful in planning the updates and expansion, however we were unable to complete this project prior closing date for expenditures.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate graduate students to assist with the updating of website early! • Coordinate with the technology department early to ensure university requirements are met. • Locate graduate students to conduct video interviews with students and graduates in the special education program. • Maintain a data base of contact information about students and graduates of the special education program, to facilitate contacting those individuals for interviews.

<p>A&M-Texarkana Kids on the Block Puppeteer troupe training and performances will be developed. Additionally, links to the statewide special education recruitment initiative will be established.</p>	
<p>5. Research or Project Evaluation – Pre and post participation data will be collected from project participants as to their attitude about working with students with disabilities, skill levels in time management, and stress reduction. The basis of this data collection will be the emotional intelligence and job satisfaction instrumentation reflective of the original work by Beason and Harris (2003).</p>	<p>Data collection was complete.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to refine data collection instruments and the use of associated technology. • Share data collection methodologies and instruments with other universities.
<p>6. TExES Support – A seminar to specifically assist students with TExES preparation will be developed. Participants will review special education competencies and standards. After participation in the TExES SPED Seminar, students will receive a stipend to pay the registration fee for the TExES Special Education/Supplemental certification exams to be taken before graduation.</p>	<p>TExES Success Seminar was developed, implemented, and funded through the TExES Success Grant.</p> <p>Within this seminar we used an individual response system to facilitate review of the TExES competencies. Although we can state definitively that the use of the individual response systems (<i>Quizdom</i>) within a TExES review seminar completers in special education, we can state that the seminars and the response system encouraged the students to complete the TExES examination in a timely fashion. The feedback received from participants revealed a higher confidence level and preparedness for the exam. This influenced their decision to take the exam than they had originally planned. Out of the 15 participants, 13 took the exam and passed.</p>

We believe that it was a combination of the actual seminar and the use of the individual response system (*Quizdom*) that increased the passage rate. Participants received immediate feedback from the *Quizdom* which solidified the correct response to questions in their mind. Coupled with the discussion and the use of graphic organizers to examine each domain, Quizdom allowed students to gain confidence in test taking strategies and their knowledge level. It is significant that all participants who took the TExES exam in June and August, 2006 passed on their first try. Out of the 15 participants, 13 took the exam and passed.

Recommendations:

- TExES Success Seminars should be continued and expanded to occur more than once a year.
- On-going evaluation of the TExES Success Seminars should facilitate improvements and refinement such as
 - The development of an effective seminar curriculum and seminar instructional design should be further refined.
 - Additional expertise such as a math master teacher should be used to refine the math section of the TExES Success seminar.
 - Data collection should be expanded and refined.
 - Additional technological support and practice to increase the ease of use of the Quizdom program
- TExES Success Seminars should be expanded to be a statewide program available to other universities to support increased program completers and TExES passage rates, thus increasing the number of special teachers prepared as highly qualified educators in Texas.

Project Work Plan

Project Personnel	Affiliation/Department	Primary Responsibilities
Mr. Toney Favors	Teacher Recruitment Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordinate planning meetings for all events • responsible for the daily administration of the project • serve as the primary investigator • assist with expenditures reports
Ms. Sonya Jewell	Student Activities Programmer, A&M-Texarkana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assist event planning & implementation on Texarkana campus
Dr. Marty Harris	Assoc. Prof of Special Education, A&M-Texarkana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning & implementation activities to meet project goals • coordination of KOB puppeteer activities & simulation activities during all events • research implementation, data collection, data analysis • development of TExES SPED Seminar materials • expenditures reports, project evaluation & final report
Dr. Elaine Beason	Professor of Special Education, A&M-Texarkana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning & implementation activities to meet project goals • coordination of activities addressing the development of emotional intelligence of the event participants • research implementation, data collection, data analysis • development of TExES SPED Seminar materials
Dr. Arlene White Ms. Sonya Roberts- Woods	Texarkana Community College, Director of Teacher Development Center Northeast Texas Community College, Director of Teacher Preparation Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsible for having initial and direct contact with potential recruits and students who have committed themselves to a certification in special education as well as potential students • assist with planning & implementation of Discover Teaching Day on respective campuses

Project Timeline

TASKS	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JULY	AUG	SEPT
1. Program planning meetings with all personnel	☑	☑	☑					
2. Plan SPED Website Update & Expansion						☑		
3. Plan Discover Teaching Day (regional community colleges)		☑	☑					
4. Implement Discover Teaching Day (regional community colleges)				☑				
5. Plan Regional TAFE Conference	☑	☑	☑					
6. Implement Regional TAFE Conference								
7. Plan TExES Seminar		☑	☑	☑				
8. Implement TExES Seminar						☑		
9. Contacting & scheduling personnel for the summer camp and professionals		☑	☑					
10. Arrange for lodging and food for summer camp.		☑	☑					
11. Plan for data collection for research questions and Final planning meeting for summer camp.				☑				
12. Summer Camp (High School Students)					☑	☑		
13. Summer Camp (Community College Students)						☑		
14. Collect TExES Seminar research data & analyze						☑	☑	
15. Submit Progress Report				☑	☑			
16. Follow-up contact of camp participants, advisement						☑	☑	☑
17. Work on SPED Website Update & Expansion								
18. Complete Project Evaluation and submit project final report							☑	☑

 = Completed Tasks

Project Budget

BREAKDOWN OF EXPENSES*	ITEMIZED EXPENSES	BUDGET	EXPENDITURES	BALANCE
		\$11,000.00		
REGIONAL TAFE CONFERENCE	Due to scheduling conflicts this event was incorporated into the High School Summer Camp		00.00	
SUMMER CAMPS				
High School Camp (one day, planned for 50 participants) Community College Camp (two day, planned for 25 participants)			\$8,229.56	
DISCOVER TEACHING DAY (Regional Community Colleges)	Was funded by the Capacity grant		00.00	
TEXES SEMINAR	Was funded by the TEXES Success Seminar		00.00	
				\$2770.44

*See attached Excel Sheet

References

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