

THE ILLINOIS STATE IMPROVEMENT GRANT: STAFF FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

ABSTRACT

Illinois is committed to improved performance for all students. This grant proposal is dedicated to improving success for Illinois children and youth with disabilities. It represents a partnership among the Illinois State Board of Education, public school entities, parent and professional organizations, and higher education, with the ultimate aim being student success.

School improvement, standards-based learning, and teacher quality are all critical components for Illinois student achievement. School improvement plans are an ongoing requirement for Illinois schools. The *Illinois Learning Standards*, applicable to **all** students, were adopted in 1997. The Illinois teacher certification system has changed recently so that new laws require significant reform in the way teachers are initially prepared and continuing professional development occurs. Concomitantly, school administrators face critical shortages of special education teachers and related services personnel and have many staff with temporary approvals.

Illinois does not have an adequate supply of appropriately trained special education personnel able to assure improved results for students with disabilities, nor staff sufficiently prepared to work collaboratively with personnel in general education. There are geographic pockets of severe shortages. There is not a coordinated system of professional development accountable to the Illinois State Board of Education. Stopgap measures have worked in part, but have been insufficient.

Illinois needs a systemic change in the professional development of current and future special education personnel in order to achieve student success. The ***Illinois State Improvement Grant: Staff for Student Success*** is the avenue to achieve the necessary

systemic change.

Budget Narrative

The following pages provide a detailed budget breakdown for each of five years under the *State Improvement Grant*. All budget expenditures are directly aligned with the proposed activities under the grant. Personnel costs are held at a minimum, in that only the salary and fringe benefits for the project coordinator are included. This position is considered essential to the project's integrity. All other personnel involved in the project are currently on staff at the Illinois State Board of Education.

Project evaluation is considered an important part of the project, in that evaluation data will provide a basis for improving the project and increasing its sustainability. The amount allocated for evaluation activities varies in each year of the project, depending on whether the majority of activities will involve internal (conducted primarily by staff administering the program) or external (requiring the services of an external evaluator) evaluation.

To ensure that the proposed personnel preparation and professional development activities are effectively implemented, the majority of the budget is allocated to funding grants and contracts to public education entities, Illinois Institutes of Higher Education, and Parent Training and Information Centers. Such funding is designed to support efforts toward a comprehensive statewide system of personnel preparation and personnel development.

Additional information regarding adequacy and cost effectiveness of the budget can be found in ***Part III, Section (e) Resources***. (See page 75, *Budget Adequacy and Cost-Effectiveness*.)

Illinois State Improvement Grant

Section A
Budget Summary

U.S. Department of Education Funds

Budget Category	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Personnel	\$ 60,984	\$ 62,814	\$ 64,699	\$ 66,640	\$ 68,640	\$ 323,777
Fringe Benefits	5,199	5,355	5,516	5,682	5,854	27,606
Travel	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500	27,500
Equipment	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Supplies	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	12,500
Contractual	1,422,585	1,420,502	1,418,356	1,416,146	1,413,868	7,091,457
Construction	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Other	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Total Direct Costs	1,496,768	1,496,671	1,496,571	1,496,468	1,496,362	\$7,482,840
Indirect Costs	3,232	3,329	3,429	3,532	3,638	17,160
Training Stipends	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Total	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$7,500,000

Illinois State Improvement Grant
Project Budget Breakdown, Year 1

Budget Category/Activity	Federal Funds
Personnel	\$ 60,984
Project Coordinator	60,984
Project Clerk	In-Kind
Fringe Benefits <i>(retirement, health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance)</i>	5,199
Project Coordinator	5,199
Project Clerk	In-Kind
Travel	5,500
Instate	3,000
Out of state	2,500
Equipment	-0-
Supplies	2,500
Supplies/Professional Organization Memberships	2,500
Contractual	1,422,585
Travel for CSPD Committee Meetings	17,500
Recruitment Plan Development Activities	In-Kind
Contracts for Educator Academies	164,856
Downstate Illinois Subgrants for Professional Devel. Academies	788,479
Chicago Subgrants for Professional Devel. Academies	375,000
Contracts to Plan and Conduct IHE Faculty Institutes	20,000
Parent Travel to Trainer-of-Trainer Seminar	8,000
Contracts to PTICs for “drive arounds”	30,000
Project Evaluation	18,750
Construction	-0-
Indirect Costs	3,232
Other	-0-
Year 1 Total	\$1,500,000

Illinois State Improvement Grant
Project Budget Breakdown, Year 2

Budget Category/Activity	Federal Funds
Personnel	\$ 62,814
Project Coordinator	62,814
Project Clerk	In-Kind
Fringe Benefits <i>(retirement, health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance)</i>	5,355
Project Coordinator	5,355
Project Clerk	In-Kind
Travel	5,500
Instate	3,000
Out of state	2,500
Equipment	-0-
Supplies	2,500
Supplies/Professional Organization Memberships	2,500
Contractual	1,420,502
Travel for CSPD Committee Meetings	17,500
Recruitment Plan Development Activities	In-Kind
Contracts for Educator Academies	164,856
Downstate Illinois Subgrants for Professional Devel. Academies	740,146
Chicago Subgrants for Professional Devel. Academies	375,000
Contracts to Plan and Conduct IHE Faculty Institutes	15,000
Parent Travel to Trainer-of-Trainer Seminar	8,000
Contracts to PTICs for “drive arounds”	40,000
Project Evaluation	60,000
Construction	-0-
Indirect Costs	3,329
Other	-0-
Year 2 Total	\$1,500,000

Illinois State Improvement Grant
Project Budget Breakdown, Year 3

Budget Category/Activity	Federal Funds
Personnel	\$ 64,699
Project Coordinator	64,699
Project Clerk	In-Kind
Fringe Benefits <i>(retirement, health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance)</i>	5,516
Project Coordinator	5,516
Project Clerk	In-Kind
Travel	5,500
Instate	3,000
Out of state	2,500
Equipment	-0-
Supplies	2,500
Supplies/Professional Organization Memberships	2,500
Contractual	1,418,356
Travel for CSPD Committee Meetings	17,500
Recruitment Plan Development Activities	In-Kind
Contracts for Educator Academies	164,856
Downstate Illinois Subgrants for Professional Devel. Academies	778,000
Chicago Subgrants for Professional Devel. Academies	375,000
Contracts to Plan and Conduct IHE Faculty Institutes	10,000
Parent Travel to Trainer-of-Trainer Seminar	8,000
Contracts to PTICs for “drive arounds”	45,000
Project Evaluation	20,000
Construction	-0-
Indirect Costs	3,429
Other	-0-
Year 3 Total	\$1,500,000

Illinois State Improvement Grant
Project Budget Breakdown, Year 4

Budget Category/Activity	Federal Funds
Personnel	\$ 66,640
Project Coordinator	66,640
Project Clerk	In-Kind
Fringe Benefits <i>(retirement, health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance)</i>	5,682
Project Coordinator	5,682
Project Clerk	In-Kind
Travel	5,500
Instate	3,000
Out of state	2,500
Equipment	-0-
Supplies	2,500
Supplies/Professional Organization Memberships	2,500
Contractual	1,416,146
Travel for CSPD Committee Meetings	17,500
Recruitment Plan Development Activities	In-Kind
Contracts for Educator Academies	164,856
Downstate Illinois Subgrants for Professional Devel. Academies	724,540
Chicago Subgrants for Professional Devel. Academies	375,000
Contracts to Plan and Conduct IHE Faculty Institutes	10,000
Parent Travel to Trainer-of-Trainer Seminar	8,000
Contracts to PTICs for “drive arounds”	45,000
Project Evaluation	71,250
Construction	-0-
Indirect Costs	3,532
Other	-0-
Year 4 Total	\$1,500,000

Illinois State Improvement Grant
Project Budget Breakdown, Year 5

Budget Category/Activity	Federal Funds
Personnel	\$ 68,640
Project Coordinator	68,640
Project Clerk	In-Kind
Fringe Benefits <i>(retirement, health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance)</i>	5,854
Project Coordinator	5,854
Project Clerk	In-Kind
Travel	5,500
Instate	3,000
Out of state	2,500
Equipment	-0-
Supplies	2,500
Supplies/Professional Organization Memberships	2,500
Contractual	1,413,868
Travel for CSPD Committee Meetings	17,500
Recruitment Plan Development Activities	In-Kind
Contracts for Educator Academies	164,856
Downstate Illinois Subgrants for Professional Devel. Academies	768,887
Chicago Subgrants for Professional Devel. Academies	375,000
Contracts to Plan and Conduct IHE Faculty Institutes	10,000
Parent Travel to Trainer-of-Trainer Seminar	8,000
Contracts to PTICs for “drive arounds”	50,000
Project Evaluation	19,625
Construction	-0-
Indirect Costs	3,638
Other	-0-
Year 5 Total	\$1,500,000

THE ILLINOIS STATE IMPROVEMENT GRANT: STAFF FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) vision of standards-led excellence for every learner is supported by strategic commitments stated in its Leadership Agenda for 1997-2000.

These commitments include:

- Implement and institutionalize the *Illinois Learning Standards* as the foundation for educational excellence in Illinois.
- Ensure that all students at risk of academic failure are able to meet the *Illinois Learning Standards*.
- Support early childhood education so that all children develop a strong foundation for learning.
- Ensure that school infrastructure and the learning environment are safe and supportive for student learning.
- Develop linkages with higher education to create an integrated system of educational opportunities that serve the needs of learners of all ages, with particular emphasis on students in preschool through college.

The clear intent of these commitments is to provide **all** students with appropriate learning environments, regardless of gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. The activities to be supported by the *State Improvement Grant* are designed with the broad array of diversity issues in mind, with the most immediate purpose being to provide students with disabilities the support and services necessary for improved results. Toward that end, the project will concentrate on increasing the availability and quality of services and identifying the personnel needed to maintain and support students with disabilities in the general curriculum and general education settings.

(a) NEED FOR THE PROJECT

Gaps and Weaknesses in Services, Infrastructure and Opportunities

Current Picture of Illinois Student Services

Illinois schools serve approximately 1.9 million students through 900 school districts. The December 1, 1997, Illinois child count reflects 272,624 students with disabilities served. Of that count, 26,460 were 3 to 5 years old, 235,503 were 6 to 17 years old, and 10,801 were 18 to 21 years old. (See Appendix A for child count data.)

Data from the *1995-96 Annual Profile of Special Education Data* indicates that Illinois served an ethnically diverse student population—62.8 percent white, 21.2 percent black, 12.8 percent Hispanic, 3.1 percent Asian, and 0.1 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native. Although educated in 900 school districts, 25 percent of the population is concentrated in the Chicago Public Schools.

Student enrollment in regular Illinois public schools declined from 1,800,584 in 1986 to a low of 1,766,186 in 1990. Since then, the trend changed and student enrollment increased to 1,962,026 in 1999. (Enrollment reported here includes only students in traditional public schools.)

The number of low-income students increased from 29.1 percent of the enrollment in 1987 to 36.1 percent in 1999. Pupils are considered low-income if they are from families receiving public aid, are living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, are being supported in foster homes with public funds, or are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.

The mobility rate declined slightly from 20.8 percent in 1986 to 18.1 percent in 1999. The mobility rate is the sum of the students transferred out and students transferred in, divided by

the average daily enrollment, multiplied by 100. A student may be counted more than once, depending on the number of transfers the student makes in the year.

The number of limited-English-proficient (LEP) students increased steadily from 3.2 percent in 1986 to 6.4 percent in 1999. LEP students include those who are eligible for bilingual education.

The dropout rate declined from 7 percent in 1994 to 5.9 percent in 1999. Dropouts include students in grades 9-12 whose names have been removed from the district roster for any reason other than death, extended illness, graduation/completion of a program of studies, transfer to another school or expulsion.

The chronic truancy rate was 2.3 percent in 1999, compared to 2.2 percent when first reported in 1993. Chronic truants include students subject to compulsory attendance who have been absent without valid cause from such attendance for 18 or more of the previous 180 regular attendance days.

In the 1997 *Transition Study of Former High School Students with Disabilities in Illinois*, the following information is reflected for students with disabilities and their participation in postsecondary education and employment:

- 69 percent of the students had jobs, working an average of 24 hours a week at \$4.42 an hour;
- 48 percent of the students had post-high school training; and
- 83 percent of the students had made their own decisions about what to do after high school.

Also from the 1997 study, regarding termination of services:

- 7,276 of Illinois' students with disabilities age 14 to 21 graduated with diplomas,

- 169 students left high school having earned only a certificate of attendance,
- 95 percent of the participants reported that they received a high school diploma,
- 4,781 students with disabilities dropped out of school,
- 526 students “aged out” of services, and
- 3,800 of the 14- to 21-year-olds returned to general education services.

Relevant National-Level Data

- 28.6 percent of students with disabilities drop out of high school. (USDE, 1997)
- Up to 45 percent of students with disabilities—three years out of high school—are not competitively employed. (USDE, 1995)
- Approximately 70 percent of all individuals with disabilities between 16 and 64 years of age are not in the labor force, compared to 10 percent to 25 percent of the general population in the same age range. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998)
- Approximately 15 percent of the individuals with disabilities between 16 and 64 years of age receive some form of means tested income, compare to 2.0 percent of the general population in the same age range. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998)
- More than 70 percent of students with disabilities—three years out of high school—are not living independently. (USDE, 1995)

The following factors were the most important indicators of whether or not a person with a disability was competitively employed after leaving high school:

- inclusion in general education,
- vocational training during high school, and
- paid work experience during high school.

These factors have important implications for the *State Improvement Grant* in that personnel

preparation and professional development must result in professionals who have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to support students in inclusive settings and in achieving positive post-school results.

The Illinois Education System

There are approximately 900 school districts in Illinois serving slightly more than 2 million students. Student populations range from fewer than 100 pupils in 19 local school districts to 430,914 pupils enrolled in the Chicago Public Schools.

In Illinois, the delivery system for special education services is complex. If districts are large enough, they provide their own services. If not, a special education joint agreement, or multidistrict agreement, provides services to meet student needs. There are currently 67 special education joint agreements providing special education and related services to eligible preschool and school-age children with disabilities. (See Appendix B for map.) Three state-operated schools also provide services, e.g., the Illinois School for the Deaf, and school districts may also use private special education schools to serve the hardest-to-serve students.

A network of Regional Offices of Education (ROEs) overlays the school districts throughout the state generally on a multicounty basis.

The View on Illinois Personnel

Illinois has 26 institutions of higher education (IHEs) that prepare special education teachers, related service personnel and administrators. Of these 26 programs, half are located in public colleges or universities, whereas the others are in private institutions. Fourteen of the 26 programs are within the Chicago metropolitan area.

In 1998-99, the estimated number of public school teachers employed in Illinois for grades

Pre-K through 12 was 124,250, of whom 20,503 were public school special education teachers.

The following data reinforces the need for targeted professional development and improved teacher education opportunities.

- *Teaching Experience (Years) Continues to Increase.* The average teaching experience of Illinois public school teachers declined from a high of 16.0 years in 1993, to a low of 14.2 years in 1995, largely as a result of the state's Early Retirement Incentive (ERI) program in 1993. Since then, the average teaching experience has increased, reaching 15.0 years in 1999.
- *Many Educators Needed to Replace Retiring Baby Boomers.* To replace school personnel leaving Illinois public schools over the next decade, the state will likely need to hire tens of thousands of credentialed staff to maintain current staffing levels. In 1999, 57.1 percent of the full-time credentialed staff are at least 45 years old. The age breakdown is as follows: ages 45-49, 19.1 percent; ages 50-54, 21.8 percent; ages 55-59, 11.6 percent; age 60 and above, 4.6 percent.

Teacher Education Reform Initiatives

In recent years, policymakers across the United States have become increasingly aware of the nation's need for truly excellent teachers, school support personnel, and administrators who can effectively prepare students with diverse learning needs for life in the 21st century. Virtually all states are in some stage of restructuring initial educator training and continuing professional development for novice and veteran practitioners.

In Illinois, substantial reform efforts initiated in the past several years have begun to address significant gaps and weaknesses in teacher preparation programs. Many of the current teacher education reform efforts in Illinois can trace their roots to January 1995, when a Joint

Education Committee of ISBE and the Illinois Board of Higher Education described the teacher preparation system in Illinois at the time as “...*complex, inconsistent, and marked by curriculum requirements that were not aligned with the knowledge and skills needed by modern educators....*”

The following reform efforts stem from or relate to the work of the 1995 Joint Education Committee; each provides an important historical context for understanding the gaps and weaknesses to be addressed in the proposed *State Improvement Grant*:

- *Teacher Training Changes.* The Joyce/MacArthur Foundation Task Force of the University of Illinois at Chicago and ISBE was created (1994) to examine professional preparation in light of research findings and the experience of practitioners, and recommended a systematic state approach to teacher preparation, licensure, and continuing professional development. In 1996, ISBE adopted the *Illinois Framework for Restructuring the Recruitment, Preparation, Licensure, and Continuing Professional Development of Teachers* (Framework), which established reform policy initiatives for teachers, administrators, and related service personnel. The Framework is based on the study and recommendations of numerous groups and organizations, including the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, and the National Staff Development Council. In Phase II of the Framework, panels of teachers, administrators, parents and consumers were convened to develop standards for each of 19 content areas, including special education.
- *Recent Changes in the Laws on Teacher Preparation.* Another turning point for Illinois was Public Act 90-548, enacted in December 1997, which addressed many certification and professional development reform initiatives, including:

- establishment of a multilayered certification system;
- authorization to set standards for teaching, supervising, or holding other certificated employment in public schools;
- renewal of certificates based on continuing professional development;
- modification of the process for assessing the competence of novice and veteran teachers;
- establishment of alternative routes to teacher and administrator certification; and
- reconfiguration of several state teaching certificates, including one for special education.

Student Learning Standards/Assessment

The Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT), the new state assessment instrument, was administered for the first time in February 1999. Given the fact that it is a new test, based on the new (1997) *Illinois Learning Standards*, test results were low throughout the state. Also, for the first time, the 1999 reporting of scores included individuals with disabilities (report cards now report scores for “all students,” “students with Individualized Education Plans [IEPs],” and “students without IEPs” in aggregate).

Table 1 shows student participation in the 1999 ISAT, which was offered at grades 3, 5, 8 and 10 in reading, mathematics and writing.

Table 1. 1999 Student Participation in ISAT

Subject Area	All Students Tested	All Students Tested (with IEPs)	All Students Tested (without IEPs)
<i>Reading</i>			
Grade 3	87%	63%	90%
Grade 5	93%	67%	96%
Grade 8	91%	66%	95%
Grade 10	87%	63%	89%
<i>Math</i>			
Grade 3	88%	69%	90%
Grade 5	93%	70%	96%
Grade 8	91%	67%	95%
Grade 10	86%	64%	89%
<i>Writing</i>			
Grade 3	86%	61%	88%
Grade 5	91%	63%	95%
Grade 8	90%	63%	94%
Grade 10	85%	61%	88%

As shown in Table 1, not all students in any of the tested grade levels take the ISAT exam. A small percentage of students with disabilities will still take alternative assessments. Illinois already has a system in place for alternative assessment for students with limited English proficiency—the IMAGE test. Guidelines for alternative assessments for students with disabilities have been developed and distributed to all public school districts in Illinois.

As ISAT exams continue and the new Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) is added at the upper high school level in upcoming years, it is anticipated that more students with disabilities will be taking them. Staff and families first need a better understanding of the ISAT and the PSAE to ensure that students with disabilities have full opportunities to perform to the

standards and be assessed in a fashion similar to their nondisabled peers. This is another arena in which teacher education reform efforts in general and special education have become more closely linked than in the past, but there remains additional room for improvement.

In terms of student results on the 1999 ISAT, the following data has important implications for the *State Improvement Grant* in that students with IEPs performed significantly lower than their nondisabled peers.

- *More than 60 percent of all grade 3 and grade 5 students, and at least 70 percent of all grade 8 and grade 10 students meet or exceed state standards in reading.* The results of the 1999 ISAT indicate that the percentage of all Illinois students meeting or exceeding state standards in reading was: 61 percent for grade 3, 61 percent for grade 5, 72 percent for grade 8, and 70 percent for grade 10. However, the percentage of students with IEPs meeting or exceeding state standards in reading was: 32 percent for grade 3, 25 percent for grade 5, 30 percent for grade 8, and 26 percent for grade 10.
- *While 68 percent of all grade 3 students meet or exceed state standards in mathematics, only 43 percent of all grade 8 students meet or exceed state standards.* As observed from the 1999 ISAT data, the percentage of all Illinois students meeting or exceeding state standards in mathematics was: 68 percent for grade 3, 56 percent for grade 5, 43 percent for grade 8, and 52 percent for grade 10. The percentage of students with IEPs meeting or exceeding state standards in mathematics was: 46 percent for grade 3, 26 percent for grade 5, 10 percent for grade 8, and 10 percent for grade 10.
- *Among the four grades assessed, at least 56 percent of all the students meet state standards in writing.* The results of the 1999 ISAT indicate that the percentage of all Illinois students meeting or exceeding state standards in writing was: 56 percent for

grade 3, 75 percent for grade 5, 59 percent for grade 8, and 66 percent for grade 10. The percentage of students with IEPs meeting or exceeding state standards in writing was: 36 percent for grade 3, 47 percent for grade 5, 22 percent for grade 8, and 22 percent for grade 10.

As stated previously, because this was a baseline year for the ISAT, scores were expected to be low across the state. However, the fact that students with IEPs consistently performed lower than their nondisabled classmates must guide the implementation of the activities of the *State Improvement Grant*. Educators must be supported in expanding their knowledge, skills and abilities in effectively supporting students in the general education curriculum and students' efforts toward meeting the *Illinois Learning Standards*.

Current Special Education Reforms

- *Teacher Preparation.* The special education panel created in Phase II of the Framework (see page 7) worked collaboratively in 1998 and 1999 to develop recommended certification standards and a recommended certification structure for special educators. The standards are based on the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) publication, *What Every Special Educator Must Know: The International Standards for the Preparation and Licensure of Special Educators* (1998). Significantly, the new structure represents a shift from categorical to cross-disciplinary preparation.

The panel also developed a set of recommended standards, addressing areas of knowledge about students with disabilities needed by all teachers. The intent is to infuse these standards into the new Illinois Teacher Core Standards, significantly changing the content of teacher preparation in general education. The special education standards and structure documents, along with recommendations from other panels, have completed

public review. These are now being revised for final approval. Once adopted, the new standards and structure will guide teacher education in Illinois.

The newly developed special education certification structure and standards, the core special education standards for general educators, and the new requirement for continuing professional development by all educators are directed toward weaknesses in the current Illinois system. These reforms will provide one important basis for both goals of the proposed *State Improvement Grant*.

- *Office of Special Education Program (OSEP) Report.* Many of these efforts have been concurrent with Illinois' efforts to respond to the gaps and weaknesses identified in the 1995 OSEP monitoring report for Illinois and in issues specific to least restrictive environment (LRE), including litigation against the Chicago Public Schools and ISBE.

Compliance findings reported in the *Office of Special Education Programs Monitoring Report: 1995 Review of the Illinois Department of Education* pinpointed the lack of LRE and transition services and personnel shortages that have an adverse impact on the availability of services. In the OSEP report, Illinois was cited for not ensuring that students with disabilities are “...*educated with their nondisabled peers and removed from the general education environment only when the nature and severity of a student's disability is such that education in regular classes, with the use of supplementary aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily....*” OSEP also determined that special education and many related services were not consistently available to students with disabilities. This lack of services was attributed to an insufficient supply of service providers in many geographic areas of the state and students' not being provided services as stipulated on their IEPs. Local staff interviewed by OSEP indicated that, because

service providers were not available, needed services were often not written into IEPs, or the amount of service indicated was less than appropriate. To the extent that this is true, actual personnel shortages are far greater than the numbers reported here.

- *LRE Issues.* In addition to the OSEP compliance findings, further evidence for LRE concerns comes from information in the OSEP *20th Annual Report to Congress* (1998). Data on service delivery settings for 6- to 21-year-old students show that Illinois serves a significantly greater proportion of students in more restrictive settings than do other states. Nationwide, 45 percent of students with disabilities are educated in regular classrooms as compared with 29 percent in Illinois, although it should be noted that the federal definition of “regular classroom” is different from the Illinois definition.

Further evidence of the extent to which Illinois must focus attention on its service delivery system is demonstrated by the recent *Corey H.* lawsuit. *Corey H. v. Chicago Board of Education, et al., No. 92 C 3409* charged that the Chicago Public Schools and ISBE had failed to ensure that children with disabilities were educated in the least restrictive environment. In January 1998, the Chicago Public Schools entered into a settlement agreement, promising to change specific policies and practices, including an obligation to provide intensive staff development on a school-by-school basis. In March 1999, ISBE reached a preliminary settlement agreement with the plaintiffs that specifically addressed the policies and practices that contributed to the violation. In addition to making changes in the ISBE monitoring system for the Chicago Public Schools, the tentative agreement requires ISBE to provide approximately \$20 million over seven years to support professional development and other assistance on a school-by-school basis.

In highlighting the *Corey H.* settlement agreement (1999), it is not implied that funds received under the *State Improvement Grant* would be used to offset ISBE's obligations under the agreement. Rather, this information is provided to emphasize the importance of aligning the activities conducted under the *State Improvement Grant* with the requirements of the *Corey H.* settlement agreement.

Many of the statewide teacher certification reform efforts currently under way respond directly to the ISBE settlement agreement in the *Corey H.* case. These reform efforts will substantially change the way teachers are prepared. Specifically, the redesign must ensure that special education certification designations (with a few exceptions) are not made according to disability classifications. Further, the redesign must ensure that teachers are not trained or certified in ways that perpetuate a categorical segregation of children with disabilities. Emphasis is also placed on cross-disciplinary training both in preservice and in professional development programs, and on establishment of standards for general and special educators that support delivery of special education services in general education settings. Additionally, the court has required that the state's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) be designed to ensure that necessary personnel are available to implement IDEA '97 and that such personnel be trained and qualified. (See Appendix C for the certification redesign requirements of *Corey H.*)

- “*Project CHOICES/Early CHOICES*” (*Children Have Opportunities in Inclusive Community Environments and Schools*). This is a statewide training and technical assistance initiative, funded with IDEA, Part B and preschool, discretionary money, that is designed to increase the capacity of public school districts to educate children with disabilities ages 3 to 21 in typical preschool environments and age-appropriate general

education classrooms. In 1998-99, CHOICES/Early CHOICES worked with 98 school districts across the state, in addition to 47 Chicago schools.

The majority of districts that have received assistance from Project CHOICES and Early CHOICES report positive experiences and outcomes for students, staff and parents. However, available resources limit the project's ability to meet the needs of every Illinois district, particularly within the Chicago Public Schools. Thus, appropriately training new teacher and related services candidates and providing additional avenues of professional development and assistance for practitioners and parents are critical to increasing local capacity to educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

- STARNET (Support and Technical Assistance Regionally). This is a statewide training and technical assistance initiative for early childhood special education supported by IDEA, Part B, preschool discretionary funding. Recipients of STARNET training and technical assistance have included parents, early childhood special education teachers, early intervention providers, paraprofessionals, related service personnel, parents, and administrators.

STARNET conducts ongoing needs assessment and responds to individual, local, and regional concerns using current best-practice and research-based information. Those data reveal highest interest in the topics of: child growth and development, family systems/parenting, prevention of child abuse, transition from early intervention to early childhood special education, Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)/IEP development, autism/pervasive developmental delay, special education regulations and other legal issues, and assessment.

ISBE continues to fund STARNET but now in collaboration with the Illinois

Department of Human Services (DHS) for early intervention training and technical assistance. Since the transfer in 1998-99 of early intervention lead agency responsibility from ISBE to DHS, 1,490 practitioners have been enrolled by DHS as early intervention providers. Many of these providers have no training specific to early intervention family-centered services. As lead agency for Part C, ISBE had funded the early intervention training and credentialing project called Provider Connections. DHS will continue the implementation and funding of this project as a cooperative venture with ISBE.

- In addition to STARNET, DHS and ISBE provide funding for and implement the Child Find Project as partners. Child Find provides training and technical assistance to early intervention and school district personnel on child find and early childhood transition activities and responsibilities. The combined effort of all of these projects that target early intervention and early childhood special education will serve to enhance the regional professional development to be provided through this grant.

Nature and Magnitude of Gaps and Weaknesses

Despite the efforts described in the previous section, there are significant gaps and weaknesses in services to students and in teacher education. An additional weakness that appears obvious from the preceding review is the lack of a cohesive infrastructure for addressing personnel issues in Illinois. Although many entities are involved, a strong systemic approach is lacking. The goal is to achieve high-quality education for students with disabilities throughout the state and simultaneously to ensure that situations similar to those leading to the *Corey H.* lawsuit do not occur again. A strong, systemic personnel infrastructure is required to achieve this vision, thus the **Illinois State Improvement Grant: Staff for Student Services.**

Personnel Shortages

Illinois is the fifth largest employer of public school teachers in the United States. According to the USDE National Center on Education Statistics, the number of public school teachers increased from 110,830 in 1994-95 to an estimated 122,775 in 1998-99. If that growth trend continues, even without accounting for early retirement and a yearly decline in the number of educators being prepared, Illinois will need 122,000 additional teachers (in all areas) in the next five years. The current number of estimated special education vacancies (1,421) would be expected to increase proportionately.

Table 2 displays data based on the 1997-98 school year, as reported to OSEP. As these data indicate, the number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) teachers providing special education services during that year was 1,024 for children ages 3 to 5 and 19,654 for children ages 6 to 21. Included in that total were 43 preschool FTE positions and 808 elementary and secondary FTE positions that were filled by teachers who were not fully certified—3 percent to 4 percent of the total number of the filled teaching positions.

Table 2. Illinois Special Education Teachers (Full-Time Equivalent)

Service Category	Fully Credentialed	Not Fully Credentialed
<i>Serving Ages 3-5–All</i>		
Special Education Teachers	980.8	42.6
<i>Serving Ages 6-21–Specialty Areas</i>		
Autism	30.8	0.0
Hearing Impaired	679.8	12.0
Mental Impairment	2,380.3	130.0
Physically Disabled	305.0	52.0
Serious Emotional Disturbance	2,190.7	99.3
Specific Learning Disabilities	5,426.4	236.8
Speech/Language	2,702.1	263.4
Traumatic Brain Injuries	2.3	0.0

Visual Impaired	245.7	13.0
Cross-Categorical	4,883.6	1.0
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>18,846.70</i>	<i>807.50</i>
Total (Serving Ages 3-21)	19,827.50	850.10

A similar pattern of need is shown in Table 3, which contains data for other types of teaching and related service staff.

Table 3. Other Illinois Education Personnel Serving Individuals with Disabilities
(Serving Ages 3-21)

Service Category	Fully Credentialed	Not Fully Credentialed
Vocational Education Teachers	149.8	1.0
Physical Education Teachers	207.6	3.0
School Psychologists	1,583.2	120.4
School Social Workers	2,228.3	206.1
Occupational Therapists	468.4	0.0
Audiologists	44.1	0.0
Teacher Aides (no credential required)	19,312.2	0.0
Recreation and Therapeutic Recreation Specialists	11.7	0.0
Diagnostic and Evaluation Staff	15.9	0.0
Physical Therapists	267.3	0.0
School Counselors	935.8	18.0
Supervisors/Administrators (LEAs/JAs)	851.6	6.5
Supervisors/Administrators (SEA)	66.8	0.0
Interpreters	158.3	0.0
Rehabilitation Counselors	4.0	0.0
Other Professional Staff	1,031.2	104.0
Non-Professional Staff	3,481.4	0.0
Total	30,817.6	459.0

Additional need is evident from data on unfilled positions in Table 4. Drawn from the 1998 *Teacher Service Record Supplement: Unfilled Positions*, these data indicate a total of 1921.88 FTE vacancies in Illinois during that year.

Table 4. Unfilled Special Education Positions (Full-Time Equivalent)

Service Category	Number of Unfilled Positions (December 1, 1998)
▪ Teachers	
Behavior Disordered	101.50
Visual Impaired	10.00
Cross-Categorical	83.50
Hard of Hearing	5.93
Early Childhood (Pre-K)	25.00
Mild/Moderate Mental Impairment	9.00
Learning Disabilities	60.00
Physically Disabled	56.00
Severe/Profound Disabled	12.00
Speech/Language	136.38
Severe/Profound Mental Impairment	5.00
▪ Other Personnel	
Adapted Physical Education	2.00
Art Therapy	1.00
Interpreter (for the deaf)	5.00
Occupational Therapist	20.10
Orientation and Mobility Specialist	1.00
Physical Therapist	16.85
Program Assistant/Aide	53.10
Other Special Education	49.00
▪ Specialized Personnel	
School Nurse	7.00
School Psychologist	43.30
School Social Worker	13.50
▪ Administrators	
Special Education Director	1.00
Special Education Supervisor	5.00
Other Special Education Administrators	4.00
Total	726.16

Illinois school administrators have consistently reported shortages of special education teachers and related services personnel. In order to obtain a more recent estimate of need than

is available from the OSEP *20th Annual Report to Congress* (1998), Illinois directors of special education were asked in July 1999 to provide information on personnel shortages in their respective areas. Half of the 98 total directors responded to this survey (n=49). Consistent with national data on critical needs in high-poverty rural and urban areas, most of the directors who responded were from Chicago, urban and rural areas. Statistics provided by the 49 directors included:

- There are currently 3,662.5 special education teachers in the Chicago Public Schools, with 592 vacancies, and 180 additional teachers working with temporary special education approval.
- 85 FTE special education teachers, five speech/language pathologists, four school psychologists, and some bilingual special education staff are needed in Rockford, a densely populated urban area in northwestern Illinois.
- 17 FTE special education teachers, 11 speech/language pathologists, one school psychologist, two physical and occupational therapists, seven supervisors and 45 classroom aides are needed in one rural southern Illinois joint agreement.
- 20 FTE special education teachers, 12 speech/language pathologists, two school psychologists, four special education supervisors, and 20 classroom aides are needed in Waukegan, a northeastern Illinois district with a highly mobile, multicultural population.
- 90 FTE special education teachers are needed in Elgin, a small city in Kane County west of Chicago.
- 10 FTE special education teachers, coordinators, and speech/language therapists are needed in LaSalle/Putnam counties, rural central Illinois areas with large proportions of families living in poverty.

Directors shared testimonials on the need to fill the unfilled vacancies, delineated the extraordinary measures used to locate and attract qualified personnel, and outlined the extensive recruitment efforts conducted throughout the United States. Several directors reported having to start this current school year with unqualified teachers, such as general education teacher substitutes. In the past, some have had to use unqualified teachers for most of the school year. One special education joint agreement reported paying more than \$70,000 in contractual services for one speech/language pathologist, more than \$40,000 for a half-time occupational therapist, and \$41,000 for a half-time physical therapist.

Shortages in Illinois reflect national special education shortage data. The CEC reports that *“...the shortage of (special education) teachers is fast becoming a national crisis. In the next decade, the Recruiting New Teachers Organization predicts that we will need an additional 2 million new teachers, with the most severe shortages occurring in high-poverty urban and rural schools”* (Haselkorn, 1997). The need for special education teachers is significantly higher than for general educators. Each year of the past decade there has been a national shortage of more than 25,000 fully certified special education teachers (Boe, Cook, Bobbitt and Terhanian, 1998). Moreover, according to a report from the American Association for Employment in Education (1998), an additional 206,000 special education teachers will be required during 1994-2005, an increase of 53 percent (CEC, *The Mentoring Induction Project*, 1999).

In the Chicago Public Schools, several creative initiatives developed jointly by the school district and ISBE have addressed the extensive need for additional special education personnel in that high-density, urban area.

- The Chicago Public Schools created a project called **Special Teachers Aspiring to**

Retraining (STAR), which offers tuition-free courses to teachers working on temporary certificates, as well as to special education teachers who need to obtain additional special education approvals or certification. This coursework is offered through three universities in the Chicago area. In FY99, there were 67 teachers with temporary approval and 52 special education teachers working on additional certification areas.

- The Chicago Public Schools have also implemented Creating a Special Teacher (CAST) in collaboration with two local universities, which provides a bachelor's program in special education for paraprofessionals working in the special education field. The paraprofessionals who graduate through this program will sign an agreement to teach in public school special education programs in Chicago for at least five years.

These innovative programs are, however, not available in other areas of the state, nor can they thoroughly address the full extent of the severe shortage in Chicago.

There are significant shortages of special education personnel in Illinois; in certain geographic areas the shortages are severe. Many of these shortage areas have great difficulty recruiting qualified staff and little access to training opportunities. Through the *State Improvement Grant*, this need will be addressed by providing certification and retraining opportunities that are financially and geographically accessible and responsive to local needs. With ISBE support, some of the action already undertaken in Chicago, such as STAR and CAST, will provide excellent models.

Personnel Needs Beyond the Numbers

Increasing the number of certified staff, although critical for eliminating shortages, does not address qualitative issues for school personnel. There are ongoing educational challenges that have an impact on all special education services and provide the foundation for many of the

objectives and activities of this proposal. These have included and will include:

- Early intervention and early childhood special education and related service providers do not have an adequate working knowledge of special education regulations and other legal issues, assessment, child development, and the needs of young children with autism/pervasive developmental disorder or severe medical involvement.
- There is no mechanism to document IFSP or IEP outcomes statewide, or to follow children who leave the early intervention system or early childhood, elementary, or secondary special education programs to their next placement or postsecondary destinations.
- There is no systematic means of ensuring that local and state assessment programs and educational accountability systems, including school improvement planning efforts, address the performance of all students with disabilities.
- General educators and administrators do not have an adequate working knowledge of and/or demonstrated skills in the characteristics, capabilities, and range of needs of students with disabilities; individualized instructional strategies; and their role in the development and implementation of IEPs.
- General educators and administrators have not consistently assumed shared responsibility for educating students with disabilities in the general curriculum and education settings to the maximum extent appropriate.
- Special educators often lack skills in providing the general education curriculum to students with disabilities.
- There is a continuing, widespread shortage of certain special education and related service supervisory and provider personnel to address the needs of Illinois' 3- to 21-year-

old children and youth with disabilities.

- IEP transition planning and services are insufficient to ensure positive postsecondary outcomes for Illinois students with disabilities.
- Parents of students with special needs require greater support and training than is presently provided.

General and special educators have been called upon to collaborate in accommodating children with disabilities in the general education curriculum. IDEA '97 has made this collaboration a priority by reemphasizing that special education does not mean removing students from the general education curriculum, but maintaining them successfully within it, as individually appropriate. Therefore, it is critical that the professional development activities of this project address this priority.

Research conducted in Illinois indicates that general educators (Reed and Monda-Amaya, 1995) and administrators (Barnett and Monda-Amaya, 1998) lack the knowledge and skills to implement appropriate programs for students with disabilities. Furthermore, personnel preparation and professional development for special and general educators have failed to address the increasingly complex roles for which they must be prepared. Personnel preparation programs also face the challenge of training for an increasingly multicultural population (Harry, Torguson, Katkavich, and Guerrero, 1993). In Illinois, a categorical certification system supported by categorical programs in colleges and universities has ill-prepared new teachers for these roles.

For all students to achieve consistently high standards and expectations, bridges must be built between general and special education. There must be shared ownership and increased levels of collaboration among families, schools, and service providers to support diverse

learners of every age. There are multiple examples of teaching models and instructional adaptations that are of value in supporting students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms (Elliott and McKenney, 1998; Reinhiller, 1996; Scott, Vitale and Masten, 1998). For young children to be successfully included in community-based programs, child care personnel also need to be trained appropriately (Dinnebiel, McInerney, Fox and Juchartz-Pendry, 1998). In addition, there is information that can be of assistance in addressing the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners who receive special education (Harry, 1997; Garcia and Malkin, 1993). In short, there is a strong knowledge base available to support successful inclusion and success in the general education curriculum, but that knowledge base does not seem to be infused universally into the teaching or professional development programs. Therefore, it is critical to incorporate the knowledge base into the professional development training addressed through this project.

As indicated earlier, special education personnel in Illinois are somewhat aware of emerging trends in special education, but it is essential that the awareness levels be increased and knowledge and skills be strengthened. To address some of these issues and assure improved student outcomes, ISBE conducted surveys in late 1996 and again in 1999 to determine the perceived technical assistance needs of local school personnel with respect to students with disabilities. Among the areas identified as important were several that relate to the issues previously described and to the focus of the *State Improvement Grant* proposal. (See Appendix D for survey results.) For instance, the survey results of the top 10 instructional areas included the following that relate directly to gaps to be addressed through this project:

- adaptation and modification of the curriculum for diverse learners,
- use of technology by students with disabilities,

- inclusion and behavior intervention, and
- the roles of general education staff in IEP development and delivery.

Similarly, the 1999 surveys' top 10 administrative areas included:

- new federal and state laws,
- communication between general and special education teachers,
- policies and procedures required by the state,
- special education compliance issues,
- existing best practices, and
- special education rules.

From the 1997 *Transition Study of Former High School Students with Disabilities in Illinois*, training for middle and high school educators is needed in the following areas:

- inclusion,
- person-centered planning,
- transition goal writing,
- evaluation of student outcomes, and
- provision of meaningful linkages between classroom curriculum and postsecondary goals, i.e., work, independent living, and postsecondary education/training.

Based on the results of these surveys and other areas of need, such as transition planning and services, and student assessment information, some of these topics have been addressed through statewide training, regional conferences or local workshops. For example, statewide training was done in 1998 on "An Overview of IDEA '97." In 2000, a statewide trainer-of-trainers model of personnel development will be implemented "to provide a systematic delivery of IEP resources and technical assistance to the special education community." The ability to

address these areas of need will be enhanced through the *State Improvement Grant*.

Delivering Professional Development

Despite the addition of some of the necessary reforms to address improving the success of students with disabilities, Illinois still does not have an infrastructure or systematic approach to providing professional development. While ROEs provide some workshops and local school districts provide one-day institutes, there is not a strong or comprehensive network for coordinating training or for ensuring that state priorities for professional development are consistently addressed. The intent of this proposal, however, is to address these needs within a larger framework, using a well-planned, systematically implemented array of approaches to providing professional development within the framework provided by new reforms in service delivery and teacher education.

In line with the proposed changes in the structure of certification and teacher education, and IDEA '97, there is a compelling need to design and implement a coordinated, comprehensive statewide system of personnel preparation and development that will address issues of both quantity and quality.

Building the State Improvement Grant from the Ground Up

To assist ISBE in conceptualizing and preparing a proposal for a *State Improvement Grant*, a task force of 25 parents, special and general education teachers, administrators, university faculty, advocates, and parent organization members gathered in July 1998 to discuss and narrow the focus for the grant proposal within the context of what was known about the current system. The task force met again in August 1999 to reaffirm the needs. These individuals represented the partners required by the grant, in addition to other organizations with which ISBE works. (See Appendix E for task force membership.) The task force identified the

following specific gaps and weaknesses in the special education personnel system:

- Illinois has a shortage of teachers and support personnel in specific fields and in particular geographic “pockets” of the state.
- Personnel have not assumed shared responsibilities, including special educators who are not adequately prepared in collaborative teaching practices that support inclusion.
- In Illinois there is a lack of coordination and collaboration among training initiatives, as well as a lack of networking among districts/joint agreements.
- Many Illinois practitioners have not moved beyond thinking of special education as a *place*; training and a change in attitude are needed for special education to be understood as *services* that can be provided in many different places, depending on the individual needs of children.
- All educators do not have access to ongoing, continuous professional development.
- Training resources in a community or region may be vast, but there may be difficulty identifying what is available and how to get it.
- Early intervention services in many communities are not adequate to meet needs because of unavailable or inadequately trained personnel.
- IHE training programs isolate special education trainees from general education trainees during their teaching preparation, and local educational agency staff development continues this practice.
- Professional development activities are limited in variety (e.g., workshops vs. mentoring opportunities), restricting their usefulness for addressing individual needs.

Although some of these are being addressed through the reform and training efforts described in previous sections, many are either not being addressed or have been limited in

scope to particular audiences or particular locations. What is needed is a comprehensive system that will link efforts to meet these gaps to a core framework, guided by a consistent vision of special education and teacher education. This is the purpose of the proposed *State Improvement Grant*.

The common theme emerging from all of this information is that Illinois does not have an adequate supply of special education personnel who are available and prepared to work in concert with personnel in general education toward the goal of ensuring that students with disabilities can succeed in their post-school years. Adding additional certified teachers to the system is not a sufficient answer. Current and future special education personnel must also be prepared to work collaboratively with general education personnel toward achieving the goals of IDEA '97 and of special education reforms in Illinois. What is needed is a systemic change that will address the cited personnel needs to allow for improved outcomes for individuals with disabilities. This is the vision that will guide the goals and activities of the proposed *State Improvement Grant*.

Illinois now has state learning standards for all students and students with disabilities are included in statewide assessments. **All** teachers need knowledge and skills regarding the education of students with disabilities and improving student outcomes. While the ultimate audience of this proposal and IDEA '97 is students and improved results, the immediate target audience is professional development activities, which includes all general and special education teachers, administrators, and other school personnel. The personnel development activities outlined in this proposal are directed toward the larger purpose of providing services to **all** students, using models in which general and special education teachers work together collaboratively and **all** children benefit.

Illinois does not have an infrastructure that both coordinates these efforts and supports collaborative efforts that address the differing needs of schools throughout the state. Hence, the guiding framework that will underlie all of the various activities to be undertaken by the current project will be to support and enhance partnerships among entities at local, regional, and state levels.

Statement of Need

Illinois needs a personnel preparation and professional development system that:

- provides a sufficient supply of special education personnel to reduce the shortages of qualified staff in Illinois schools, particularly in areas of the state experiencing the greatest shortages, based on professional standards consistent with IDEA '97 and with education reforms in Illinois;
- supports and enhances coordination and partnership in personnel activities at local, regional, and state levels, and links these into a unifying infrastructure guided by a common vision of personnel who have the attitudes, knowledge, and skills required to achieve a blending of special and general education services in order to improve outcomes for students; and
- meaningfully engages parents as equal partners in all aspects of the system.

Addressing these needs will require fundamental changes in how special education services are delivered and in the qualifications of special and general education teachers and other staff. The *State Improvement Grant* will support a variety of personnel preparation and development activities, with a focus on local, regional and state needs related to supplying an adequate number of individuals prepared to provide the kind of special education services outlined in

IDEA '97 and in education reform in Illinois, and envisioned by the *State Improvement Grant* Task Force. Activities will be developed and delivered through collaborative structures and efforts at local, regional, and state levels, to develop and support systemic change for students by having sufficient and qualified staff on an ongoing basis.

(b) SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT

System Change and Improvement

The *State Improvement Grant* encompasses two broad project goals that directly address the identified needs:

Goal 1: *To increase the number of appropriately trained and credentialed special education and related service personnel, meeting student needs and addressing identified geographic areas of shortage.*

Goal 2: *To provide a network of professional development that coordinates local, regional and state resources to parents and educators who share responsibility for implementing an integrated service delivery model focused on improving outcomes for children and youth with disabilities.*

A set of underlying assumptions will be used to provide a common framework for the activities directed toward achieving these two goals:

- No one entity has the resources or expertise to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities, birth to 21, and their families.
- Partnerships to accomplish particular goals, objectives, and outcomes through coordination, collaboration, and/or the sharing of resources and expertise, may occur within and across multiple layers (e.g., state, regional and local), be formed in many ways, and consist of varying structures.
- Locally based needs assessment and systems change efforts ensure that local needs will be better met, and that communities will be more committed and responsive to such efforts.
- Current Illinois initiatives that support various aspects of an integrated service delivery

system for individuals with disabilities and their families provide the history, experience, and expertise needed to expand and build capacity, given an infrastructure and common vision upon which to build.

In the proposed *State Improvement Grant*, these assumptions will be addressed by basing all activities on specific sets of criteria as prerequisites for funding. Common threads running through these assumptions include:

- collaborative activities that link partners who are interested in, and who have resources and interests to contribute to, the development of highly qualified personnel;
- engaging parents as equal partners;
- linking and integrating the preparation and professional development of special and general education personnel;
- providing an infrastructure for a variety of personnel preparation and development efforts at local, state, and regional levels, in response to identified needs at those levels and in those localities; and
- achieving a high level of coherence with respect to the intended purpose of all personnel activities, with a focus on improved results.

Criteria created for funding each major type of activity will link all activities back to the assumptions so that all activities reflect these common themes. Additionally, these criteria will link local, regional and state activities to the new standards-based certification structure, to common evaluation and data collection, and to research and recommended practice in the field of special education. Each effort also must demonstrate that it responds to identified personnel needs at the local, regional or state level.

This approach is designed to penetrate the core of the current system of personnel

preparation and professional development and bring about systemic change and improvement from the “inside out.” Partnerships and collaboration will be a major part of this structure at all levels. Thus, each of the two broad goals of this proposal directly addresses the identified areas of need by linking personnel development with particular standards of quality, and by linking quantity and quality improvement to a central network of values, guidelines, and oversight.

Goal 1 will be achieved through successful implementation of **Educator Academies**—personnel preparation programs to be located in geographic areas that have documented, substantial shortages of personnel. The Educator Academies will be linked to a special education joint agreement or school district, but will include broad collaboration with colleges and universities; other education entities (e.g., other districts and ROEs); other partners, such as the early intervention system; other agencies that work with the same population; parents; Parent Training and Information Centers (PTICs); and the business community. This high level of collaboration will be encouraged through the selection criteria used for funding. (See Appendix F for draft RFP, including selection criteria.) The Educator Academies will also be linked to the recently revised Illinois procedures for certificate renewal, which require continuing professional development. (See Appendix G.) Such coordination would allow individuals who already hold a certificate and are interested in earning either a special education certificate or a different special certificate to incorporate coursework for that purpose into their professional development plans.

The Educator Academies will also go hand-in-hand with Illinois’ efforts to expand the supply of special education personnel through a provisional approval process. Plans are under way to institute a provisional certification structure by which an individual would receive a three-year provisional approval as a special education service provider. During the three-year

timeline, the individual would be required to complete coursework for special education certification as specified in his/her completion plan filed with a teacher education IHE. The Educator Academies could provide a vehicle for completion of such coursework.

A common core of knowledge, skills, and abilities, based on the results of 1996 and 1999 ISBE surveys on technical assistance needs of local school personnel, in relation to students with disabilities (see Appendix D), and the 1997 *Transition Study of Former High School Students with Disabilities in Illinois*, will provide the foundation for the basic curriculum developed under the Educator Academies. Educator Academies may propose uses of funds that best meet their own needs with respect to preparing additional certified teachers, provided that any training or coursework offered incorporates the common core of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Uses of funds might include offering incentives for entry into special education, offering geographically accessible training in collaboration with universities in their region or elsewhere, or subcontracting with a university for distance education. The university linkage can provide ongoing technical assistance with the Educator Academies. The triad of local districts, joint agreements, and universities provides an avenue for technical assistance on both research-based and successful teaching practices. This goal represents a new system for recruitment and retention of special education personnel through locally initiated collaborative certification opportunities and incentives that respond directly to local needs.

While some districts have used incentives and retraining strategies to recruit or retain teachers for less desirable locations or areas of critical personnel shortages, this effort has been minimal. In the 1993-94 school year, for example, 12.8 percent of districts used pay incentives for purposes of recruitment and retention. In that same year, 12.9 percent of districts used free training to prepare staff to teach in fields with current or anticipated shortages. Research on

rural education has repeatedly shown that training local residents for the teaching profession increases the available supply of teachers, especially in specified need areas. Individuals who already have “roots” in the community are more likely to stay and teach in the area than those who move there from other communities. *State Improvement Grant* funding will provide an opportunity for special education joint agreements or other legal education entities, such as school districts, to develop locally based training programs in their respective geographic regions in partnership with university trainers; other training entities, including PTICs; and business and community leaders.

Goal 2 will be achieved using a similar process and structure, through successful implementation of **Professional Development Academies** that provide professional development activities directed toward the vision of special education outlined in this proposal, in reform efforts, and in IDEA '97, for students with disabilities. (See Appendix H for draft RFP.) As in Goal 1, it is expected that these collaboratives will be composed of multiple partners, including parents, with an interest in the quality of schools and the future work force. It is also expected that a common core of knowledge, skills, and abilities, based on the results of 1996 and 1999 ISBE surveys on technical assistance needs of local school personnel, in relation to students with disabilities (see Appendix D), and the 1997 *Transition Study of Former High School Students with Disabilities in Illinois*, will provide the foundation for the basic curriculum developed under the Professional Development Academies. For example, one of the content areas is on behavior intervention that can be used to reduce or eliminate the need to use suspension and expulsion as disciplinary options for children and youth with disabilities. This common core/basic curriculum will enhance the consistency of training statewide. As with the Educator Academies, the Professional Development Academies may propose a variety

of approaches for achieving professional development objectives to meet local needs. These approaches will be outlined in a regional professional development plan. To improve the consistency of plans statewide, a format and set of common criteria will be established and funding recipients will be required to complete their plans according to the format and criteria.

The Regular Education Initiative (REI), a model previously used in Illinois, will be used for the Professional Development Academies to assist local collaborative efforts to achieve high-quality professional development. In this trainer-of-trainers model, cross-discipline teams attend training and then replicate it with other entities. The REI model has fostered local capacity building on topics of greatest need for individual buildings or at the district level. In this proposal, teams of participants, including parents, from the Professional Development Academies will receive the same kind of preparation for their roles in professional development. These teams will bring content and process knowledge back to their communities to assist in achieving professional development goals.

Professional Development Academies will establish partnerships that will continue after the “seed money” provided through this grant is gone. Through the *State Improvement Grant*, many approaches to professional development would be possible depending on need, but would be linked to the core network of professional development provided through the *State Improvement Grant*. These Professional Development Academies will also be linked with the Illinois certificate renewal process by providing a mechanism for special and general education staff to obtain continuing professional development, as is now required for certificate renewal. (See Appendix G.)

In addition to this primary approach to addressing Goal 2, the *State Improvement Grant* will also support statewide personnel preparation and development activities that meet

statewide needs and lend coherence and vision to locally developed and managed efforts under both goals. One statewide objective of Goal 2, but with major implications for addressing Goal 1 as well, will be to plan and support annual IHE faculty institutes to retool IHE faculty with respect to training general and special education personnel for roles in inclusive classrooms and schools, and with respect to providing the kinds of alternative formats (e.g., distance education) that will be needed to meet local needs for additional personnel.

The annual interdisciplinary IHE faculty institutes will provide faculty from all colleges and universities ongoing access to new and innovative research-based practices in the field. For instance, highly successful similar faculty institutes for faculty preparing early intervention personnel and the REI model have focused on the themes of matching teaching processes to new content, and including parents as co-trainers in personnel development. Special and general education faculty from colleges and universities, as well as from other related areas, such as educational administration and educational psychology, will be encouraged to attend in cross-discipline teams. Networking provided through these institutes is also critical as faculties begin to share expertise and resources on an ongoing basis. This activity, like those at the local level, will be based on collaboration among entities concerned with the knowledge and skill of faculty who prepare special education personnel, including the PTICs, the Illinois Teacher Education Division of the Illinois Council for Exceptional Children (ICEC), the Human Resource Committee of the Interagency Council on Early Intervention, and the professional development arms of related professional organizations.

Another statewide objective of Goal 2 is development and implementation of local “town meetings.” These meetings are viewed as a primary source of information for designing local personnel preparation and development initiatives that will have an impact on both goals. A

state-level trainer-of-trainers model will be used to train local teams to develop and conduct local “town meetings” to discuss topics such as transitioning in or out of new programs and schools or to postsecondary situations, rights of children with disabilities and their parents, and appropriate ways to collaborate in educating children. The state training team, as well as each local training team, will include representatives from community agencies, parent information groups, general and special education teachers and administrators, and related services staff. Each team will include a minimum of two parents, with an emphasis on parents from diverse backgrounds.

As outlined for Goal 2, every special education joint agreement will send a cross-discipline team that includes one or more local parents, general and special education teachers and administrators, related services staff, and community leaders to a trainer-of-trainers event. To further build local capacity, these teams will be trained to replicate the training for similarly designed district teams. Local district teams will then conduct regularly scheduled local “town meetings” in their own areas, with technical assistance provided by the state training team, if needed. These local “town meetings” will provide parents and professionals with a forum to openly discuss special education support for students and will give parents an active voice in defining the qualities of the personnel who work with their children. Schools and parents often perceive each other as adversaries or as being in a hierarchical relationship, which may interfere with the development of collaborative relationships on behalf of children. The local “town meetings” will engage parents and professionals as equal partners and will encourage greater participation by parents from diverse backgrounds. It is also anticipated that these meetings will provide an avenue through which parents can be recruited into the training activities in each region, e.g., by becoming co-training partners. Local “town meetings” are

anticipated to be highly sustainable approaches to community involvement at the end of the grant period.

The final statewide objective of Goal 2 is to establish and conduct annual “drive arounds.” Past collaboration between ISBE and the four PTICs resulted in a highly successful two-day “drive around” on IDEA ’97, with a special emphasis on discipline and multicultural awareness. The idea behind the “drive around” conference is to simultaneously blanket different areas of the state with the same state-of-the-art information within a short period of time and to provide an accessible opportunity for hundreds of parents to participate with professionals in learning important new information. Through the efforts of the PTICs, the IDEA ’97 “drive around” was successful in involving parents of diverse cultural backgrounds, many of whom had limited English-speaking ability.

These multiple approaches to reaching the goals of the *State Improvement Grant* represent significant systemic changes in the way that personnel preparation and professional development are delivered in Illinois, and will address the gaps identified by the *State Improvement Grant* Task Force. ISBE has provided various workshops and statewide conferences for teachers over the years. The Illinois Administrators Academy, a statewide system for the professional development of administrators, has been in effect for several years, and a regional system for delivering professional development to directors of special education has been offered through the Special Education Leadership Academy (SELA). (See page 61 for SELA.)

What is different about the proposed system is that it targets and addresses local-level certification and quality issues. It also addresses the 1999 Illinois law that continuing professional development requirements be linked to each local school’s School Improvement

Plan, and that opportunities be available to expand knowledge and skills into additional teaching fields or toward the acquisition of another teaching certificate.

Statewide improvement in the professional development system also will be addressed at this level by directly linking the content and process of personnel preparation to new requirements for initial certification and certificate renewal. Improvement in the professional development system will also result from a more focused approach to local need and from collaboration and involvement by a variety of local collaborators. All activities will be linked together through specified criteria and evaluation requirements, and together will form and demonstrate a new state infrastructure for personnel preparation and development.

It is expected that improvement will occur throughout the teacher education system, resulting in ongoing collaborative efforts that can be maintained once the *State Improvement Grant* has concluded. Continued impact will be further supported by the extent to which the proposed activities are congruent with new laws and policies on personnel preparation and professional development, as well as with emerging research and recommended practice.

(c) PROJECT DESIGN

Project Goals, Objectives, Timelines and Outcomes

Content emphasized through the Academies established under Goals 1 and 2 and through statewide activities will be aligned with Illinois' new student learning and personnel standards, and will emphasize strategies for successful inclusion of students with disabilities within general education environments and curricula. It will also reflect results of the survey shown in Appendix D. A variety of training formats will be provided through the Academies and districts will be encouraged to support participation by teams of special and general education teachers and administrators, support services personnel, university faculty, early intervention staff, parents, and staff from other entities serving children with disabilities and their families.

Goal 1

There are three aspects of Goal 1 that are particularly important: 1) local efforts supported by local partnerships, 2) linking these efforts to guiding criteria that are based on furthering IDEA '97 and the new standards and structure for certification in Illinois, and 3) developing more accessible avenues to certification that will enable schools to recruit individuals from within their own communities who might not otherwise select special education as a career. This approach will not only provide current professionals with new opportunities for additional certification, but will enable others, including parents of children and youth with disabilities and underrepresented populations, to move into the field of special education.

The two objectives for achieving Goal 1 outline a process of developing, implementing, and evaluating local Educator Academies to address the supply of highly qualified and appropriately skilled teachers. This goal is directed toward those areas of the state experiencing significant shortages of teachers, i.e., rural and urban areas with high levels of

poverty.

The primary outcome expected from Goal 1 will be a lessening of shortages in targeted areas of the state, and an increased number of quality personnel who reflect the ethnic and geographic diversity of Illinois through the establishment of Educator Academies. An additional expected outcome will be a comprehensive picture of recruitment and retention strategies that work in Illinois. For instance, these might include partnerships with professional organizations such as the Illinois affiliate of CEC, or including parents or community leaders on interview teams for hiring new special educators. In these examples, school district personnel, representatives from professional organizations and parents of students with disabilities are brought closer into an alliance of building a network that strengthens the parent/school/community bond.

Table 5. Goal 1: Objectives, Activities, Timelines and Outcomes

Goal 1: <i>To increase the number of appropriately trained and credentialed special education and related services personnel, meeting student needs and addressing identified geographic areas of shortage. (Educator Academies)</i>
Objective 1.1: To provide funding that will facilitate development of local systems of personnel recruitment and training to meet student needs and address identified shortages.
Activities 2.4.1 Develop and implement Educator Academies through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking implementation strategies for local/regional systemic change that will encourage personnel to prepare for careers in special education, including individuals who are culturally and linguistically diverse and individuals with

disabilities (with appropriate consultation from parents, administrators, and higher education).—*Project Coordinator; RFP developed by May 2000, then revised and issued annually*

2.4.2 Disseminate RFP; receive, rate, and rank proposals; and award contracts to support Educator Academies for implementation strategies for systemic change.—*Project Coordinator; by June 2000, then annually*

2.4.3 Share implementation strategies with appropriate stakeholders.—*Project Coordinator, special education joint agreements, and PTICs; by December 2000, then annually*

2.4.4 Provide technical assistance to all contract recipients.—*Project Coordinator; ongoing*

2.4.5 Support completion of implementation strategies by contract recipients.—*Project Coordinator; annually*

2.4.6 Seek and analyze evaluation information regarding implementation of strategies for local systems of personnel recruitment and training.—*Project Evaluator; by 2001, then annually*

Objective 1.2: To develop a state-level infrastructure to address personnel shortages and enhance long-term capacity for minimizing and/or eliminating shortages.

Activities

2 Build and maintain an ISBE database to provide a validated, comprehensive, current knowledge base on effective recruitment and retention strategies that will serve as the foundation of a special education personnel clearinghouse.—*Project Coordinator and ISBE staff; May 2000-December 2005*

3 Develop and use partnerships with professional organizations to recruit needed personnel, particularly individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups. –*Project Coordinator and ISBE staff; May 2000-December 2003*

3.4.1 Collaborate within ISBE to develop and implement a standards-led special education credentialing system. –*Project Coordinator and ISBE staff; May 2000-December 2003*

Anticipated Outcomes

- Educator Academies will be established in identified geographic shortage areas of shortage.
- There will be an increased number of appropriately trained and credentialed special education and related services personnel who will be available to deliver the necessary services for individuals with disabilities.
- There will be an expansion of higher education offerings to prepare personnel in accordance with the standards-led system, in partnership with local school districts and special education joint agreements.

Requirements for obtaining a grant under Goal 1 will include verification of a partnership with participating IHEs, and verification of shortage needs in the area. Other criteria for obtaining funding will be developed as part of this project, but will include or expand upon the following: extent to which administrators have attempted to fill vacancies, involvement of parents in development and subsequent implementation of the proposal, interdisciplinary training, commitment to ongoing communication with ISBE, and commitment to using a data collection system that will be common across all projects. As part of the partnership agreement, college and university faculty must demonstrate collaboration with parents of

children with disabilities, including them as co-trainers, as appropriate. Business and community leader partners will be encouraged in order to focus on transition to work. The entities applying for these funds must also show local contribution toward training expenses.

Goal 2

The second goal addresses qualitative issues regarding education personnel by supporting professional development activities that not only respond to local need, but are based on IDEA '97 and special education certification reform in Illinois. As demonstrated through the objectives and activities, this goal will be accomplished primarily through establishing Professional Development Academies designed to respond to local needs and be compatible with local School Improvement Plans. Goal 2 will also help to build a long-lasting infrastructure for professional development by encouraging collaboration among local entities and by linking the Professional Development Academies to central themes and guidelines. Illinois has never had a systematic professional development infrastructure. Professional development activities are provided at the state level, by ROEs, and by local school districts. Through the *State Improvement Grant*, these multiple entities will work collaboratively to provide professional development in Illinois (e.g., local interagency councils on early intervention) to develop a response to the RFP to establish Professional Development Academies that respond to their local needs. This new infrastructure for providing professional development will provide statewide consistency while keeping the integrity of local needs at the forefront.

The primary outcome expected from Goal 2 is a statewide professional development infrastructure of local, regional, and state activities that builds on partnerships at each of these levels and is linked together by a central focus on the inclusion of students with disabilities

within general education environments and curricula. Individuals who receive training through these activities will receive Continuing Education Units or Continuing Professional Development Units toward renewal of their teaching certificates, as now required in Illinois. This goal therefore has a direct relationship to the retention of qualified special education staff.

Table 6. Goal 2: Objectives, Activities, Timelines and Outcomes

<p>Goal 2: <i>To provide a network of professional development that coordinates local, regional and state resources to parents and educators who share responsibility for implementing an integrated service delivery model focused on improving outcomes for children and youth with disabilities. (Professional Development Academies)</i></p>
<p>Objective 2.1: To provide a systematic service delivery system of professional development through development and implementation of regional plans that follow a common format and set of criteria established at the state level and are prepared in conjunction with educators, parents, and community partners.</p>
<p>Activities</p> <p>2.1.1 Develop and implement regional Professional Development Academies and expand over time, as locally needed, based on an RFP.—<i>Project Coordinator, CSPD Advisory Committee, and PTICs; RFP developed by May 2000, contracts awarded by July 2000</i></p> <p>2.4.1 Provide training through Professional Development Academies for participants to gain knowledge and skills in the characteristics, capabilities and needs of children and youth with disabilities; appropriate and varied instructional strategies; and development and implementation of quality IEPs.—<i>Project Coordinator, CSPD Advisory Committee, and PTICs; July 2000-December 2005</i></p>

2.4.2 Integrate the service delivery system with other Illinois and ISBE systems regarding continuing professional development in order to assure a seamless system. *—School districts, special education joint agreements, and parents; July 2000-December 2005*

2.4.3 Provide for continuous improvement of regional plan development and implementation through a feedback loop with educators, parents, and community partners, and with information from the special education personnel clearinghouse. (See activity 1.2.1.) *—Project Coordinator; July 2000-December 2005*

Objective 2.2: To establish annual statewide IHE faculty institutes that will provide all higher education faculty in the field of education or related disciplines with cutting-edge information, policies, practices, knowledge and skills.

Activities

2.2.1 Develop specifications and negotiate contracts with one or more lead colleges and universities to administer funds and coordinate activities for the IHE faculty institutes, requiring that parents serve as co-trainers. *—Project Coordinator, university representatives, and parents; Summer 2000, then annually*

2.2.2 Integrate knowledge and skills built at the local and regional levels through the Professional Development Academies into the IHE faculty institutes regarding best practices in education, research to practice, and information about improving results for individuals with disabilities, using school-based teams as presenters. *—Project Coordinator; annually*

2.2.3 Prepare and disseminate information from the annual IHE faculty institutes to local

school districts, special education joint agreements, education service centers, and PTICs across Illinois. *—Project Coordinator; annually in August, 2001-2005*

Objective 2.3: To develop and implement a trainer-of-trainers model for providing a series of local “town meetings” on quality education for individuals with disabilities.

Activities

2.3.1 Work across Illinois to develop school-based, cross-disciplinary teams of parents/educators/agency personnel to participate in the model. *—Project Coordinator, CSPD Advisory Committee, special education joint agreements, and parents; September 2000-December 2005*

2.4.1 Train school-based, cross-disciplinary teams appropriately in terms of content and process on issues relating to quality education for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities, e.g., standards, assessment, alternative assessment, problem-solving, behavior management, consensus building, group dynamics, etc. *—Project Coordinator; Winter 2000*

2.4.2 Replicate the training with other school-based, cross-disciplinary teams statewide. *—Original team members from 2.3.1; Spring 2001*

2.4.3 Use the state-trained teams to conduct quarterly, interactive “town meetings” locally for parents, educators, and community partners. *—Original team members from 2.3.1; Spring 2001, then quarterly*

Objective 2.4: To establish an annual PTIC “drive around” conference to assure annual dissemination of state-of-the-art information on improving outcomes for children and youth

with disabilities.

Activities

- 2.4.1** Develop and issue RFP and negotiate contracts with the PTICs to collaboratively implement annual “drive around” conferences. –*Project Coordinator and PTICs; May-July 2000, then annually reissue RFP and award contracts*
- 2.4.2** Review and approve presenters and conference materials, and provide technical assistance to PTICs. –*Project Coordinator and PTICs; by July 2000, then annually*
- 2.4.3** Evaluate the effectiveness of this model of professional development delivery and modify as needed. –*Project Evaluator, Project Coordinator, and PTICs; ongoing*

Anticipated Outcomes

- Professional Development Academies will be established regionally.
- There will be an increased number of parents, educators, and community members with current information and up-to-date knowledge and skills regarding improving results for individuals with disabilities.
- More parents from diverse and traditionally underrepresented populations will be able to and will participate in the local and regional professional development offerings.

As with the Educator Academies, grants for the Professional Development Academies will be awarded based on specified criteria. These criteria will be developed as a part of the proposed *State Improvement Grant*, but will include at least the following: verification of partnerships with special and general education teachers and administrators, parents, colleges

and universities, early intervention agencies, transition personnel, and community and business leaders; interdisciplinary training; commitment to ongoing communication with ISBE; and commitment to using a data collection system that will be common across all projects. In addition to meeting these criteria, a statewide geographic distribution of projects will be considered.

Criteria similar to those used to fund the Educator and the Professional Development academies will also be used in awarding contracts in order to link each of them into the assumptions underlying this project. Specific types of data will also be required, including: the number and types of partners participating in each effort; the number and types of individuals completing training and obtaining certificate renewal through each effort, and the number and types of training activities that have been provided at each level.

An important aspect of all of these activities is the extent to which they will support collaboration between the *State Improvement Grant* and other initiatives and functions within ISBE, enabling ISBE to collect more accurate and timely data on teacher supply and demand. A 1999 law requires that an annual report on personnel supply and demand be submitted to the Governor, the General Assembly, and to IHEs that prepare teachers, administrators, school service personnel, other certified individuals, and other professionals employed by school districts or joint agreements. It is anticipated that the reporting system for the *State Improvement Grant* will blend with and support the new overall reporting system with respect to supply and demand of special education personnel.

Alignment of Design to the Needs of the Target Population

The ultimate target population for the *State Improvement Grant* is the students with disabilities who will benefit from the availability of highly qualified personnel who are

prepared to work toward ensuring their success within the general education curriculum. The more direct target for the activities of the grant are these personnel themselves, and thus the rationale for this proposal being subtitled: **Staff for Student Success**. Through these activities, special education personnel, and the general education personnel with whom they team, will have access to initial training and ongoing professional development that is not only geographically and financially more accessible, but also prepares them for roles that are congruent with IDEA '97 and special education reform in Illinois. Activities planned through the *State Improvement Grant* are designed to match the target populations of teachers and children by taking professional development opportunities directly to their communities and by allowing communities to tailor approaches to fit their own needs. Other target populations important to the infrastructure that will support these efforts are also included in project activities, including college and university faculty, parents, business and community leaders, and other partners who form the fabric of a system of personnel preparation and professional development.

Coherence Achieved through a Sustained Program of Training

The primary purpose of this project is to bring about a dramatic change in how Illinois manages its personnel preparation and professional development system for special education purposes, resulting in an infrastructure that will last beyond the grant period. The goals, objectives, and activities are linked together through overarching themes that represent recommended practice in special education and personnel preparation, as well as through themes of partnership and collaboration. The major activities will be guided by criteria that are grounded in these themes.

All of the primary activities are designed to go well beyond the “one-time” workshop

approach and to greatly expand the benefits to be derived from sustained, long-term professional development opportunities. In view of the fact that many of the primary activities will occur on a local or regional basis in collaboration with colleges and universities and other partners, it will be possible to offer training over time, i.e., over weeks or months, for sustained effect. Hence, training can be targeted to particular training needs, rather than providing a “one-size-fits-all” approach at the state level.

Current Knowledge of Research and Practice

The integration of current knowledge of research and practice into all aspects of professional development will be accomplished in several ways.

- The focus of the *State Improvement Grant* and the content of training are directly linked to teaching and learning standards recently developed in Illinois. The use of the *Illinois Learning Standards*, addressing the education of all children in Illinois, will help to ensure that students with disabilities achieve success within the general education curriculum. The Illinois Teaching Standards, designed to complement the learning standards, form the basis for the new certification structure that is being supported through this project. Both sets of standards are based on current research involving students with disabilities. These standards, as outlined by the certification panels, will provide the primary core content for the Academies and other activities.
- The content for the Professional Development Academies is composed of topics that current practitioners rated as needed.
- The REI model for delivering the professional development system reflects current research and practice in collaboration.
- The processes to be used in the *State Improvement Grant* also reflect current knowledge

in the training field.

- Activities supporting the goals and objectives are based on collaborative structures that involve participants in the design of learning activities that are relevant at local and regional levels, as well as statewide.
- Each of the goals and the accompanying objectives and activities are designed to bring about systemic change by ensuring involvement of multiple partners, as well as by providing common criteria that will enable local entities to make maximum use of their resources and to carefully match their training processes to desired content (McCollum and Catlett, 1997).

An Emphasis on Partnerships

Collaborative partnerships are an integral part of the *State Improvement Grant*. Required and other partners were involved in the development of this proposal through the *State Improvement Grant* Task Force. The CSPD Advisory Committee will serve in an ongoing oversight capacity. With the addition of new members representing required and other desirable partners, such as individuals from the business community, the CSPD membership will be expanded to include others with interests and resources that are congruent with the targeted goals.

Collaborative partnerships also form an integral part of the new infrastructure for personnel preparation and development, as previously described. Such a structure is built directly into the primary activities of the project through the requirements for receiving subgrants or contracts to accomplish the prescribed activities. The intent is to coordinate efforts at local, regional, and state levels, and to involve specified partners in each effort.

Multiple partnerships will be formed within and across local, regional, and state levels. At

all levels, partnerships will be encouraged and supported through criteria used in awarding Educator Academies contracts and Professional Development Academies subgrants. The roles of those partners who will participate actively in specific, known ways in the activities outlined in this grant are described briefly below. An extensive list of required and other partners and their possible roles with respect to this project is included in Appendix I.

Partnering with Parents of Children with and without Disabilities

Illinois has four federally funded PTICs: 1) Family T.I.E.S. Network–Springfield, 2) Family Resource Center on Disabilities–Chicago, 3) the National Center for Latinos with Disabilities–Chicago, and 4) Designs for Change–Chicago. The PTICs were represented at the original and reconvened *State Improvement Grant* Task Force meetings. The four PTICs and ISBE collaboratively planned and delivered a “drive around” conference in fall 1999 for parents and other interested individuals. A team of nationally known presenters presented information on IDEA '97, focusing on discipline and multicultural awareness, to all parts of Illinois on two consecutive weekends. The program was offered to parents in Chicago and its suburbs, Springfield, and southern Illinois. Sign language and Spanish language interpreters were available, and materials were provided in Spanish. Due to the success of this unprecedented format, the partnership between the four PTICs and ISBE will continue over the next five years, expanding and refining this delivery format through *State Improvement Grant* activities. The PTICs will be offered contracts to implement the annual “drive around” conferences to be implemented through the *State Improvement Grant*. They will also be invited to recommend co-trainers to the annual IHE Faculty Institutes and local “town meetings,” and to become involved with the Academies funded through the *State Improvement Grant*.

The Illinois Parent Teacher Association was represented at the original and reconvened *State Improvement Grant* Task Force meetings and contributed many of the ideas contained in the current proposal, providing a statewide representation of families and districts.

Partnering with Individuals with Disabilities

The Illinois Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities was created in 1983 to develop a state plan for the identification, assessment, evaluation, and referral of all children with disabilities to appropriate adult services when they reach age 22 or upon completion of a secondary school program. ISBE and the Planning Council collaborated in 1992 to provide a two-day symposium for university deans on including children with disabilities in the general education classroom. The Planning Council has since funded five university/public school partnerships to prepare general and special educators to teach this population in the general education classroom.

The Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities in Illinois is a grassroots organization created to promote the rights, health, welfare, and education of people with disabilities. The executive director participated in the original and reconvened *State Improvement Grant* Task Force meetings to provide input on development of the proposal.

Partnering with Professional Organizations

Numerous professional organizations in Illinois provide professional development to their members and nonmembers throughout the state. Examples of these include the ICEC and its various subdivisions (e.g., the Illinois Division for Learning Disabilities and the Illinois Teacher Education Division), the Illinois Council for Children with Behavior Disorders, the Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education, the Learning Disabilities Association of Illinois, the Illinois Speech and Hearing Association, and the Illinois Vocational

Association. These organizations will provide professional development opportunities for educators as they fulfill their obligations with respect to the newly required Individual Professional Development Plans. Many ISBE staff members support these organizations through volunteer time, money and professional expertise. For example, staff from ISBE has been working with ICEC to help establish a system for offering continuing education hours for attendance at their annual Fall Convention. Representatives of many of these organizations have been involved with the development of the *State Improvement Grant* proposal. ICEC has two representatives on the CSPD Advisory Committee. Others have requested, and will continue to request, information about the *State Improvement Grant* and its outcomes for their statewide conference sessions, newsletters and journals.

Speech/language coordinators meet with ISBE staff twice a year, along with representatives from the Illinois Board of Higher Education and/or the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation on an as-needed basis, to share innovative practices. For the past several summers, ISBE has provided a week-long training session for speech/language aides. The speech/language coordinators will be encouraged to participate in the special education joint agreement recruitment efforts through the Educator Academies.

Partnering with School Districts

Local school districts in Illinois are required to have current School Improvement Plans. Educational opportunities for **all** students, including students with disabilities, are included in the plans. The School Improvement Plans encourage schools to make decisions about school improvement at the local level. *State Improvement Grant* professional development activities will provide a link between these plans and improved results for students with disabilities, and will encourage districts to give “free appropriate public education” a prominent role in their

plans.

Directors of the special education entities, through the Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education and ISBE, meet at least twice a year to learn about innovative programs and services. Special education directors jointly develop topics for these meetings. A special administrators' forum is sponsored by ISBE each August to update directors on changes in law, rules, policies, etc. ISBE also enters into various partnerships with these entities for assurance of service delivery by visiting schools and providing consultation. Professional development and technical assistance is provided to staff at these sites at the time of visits, as well as other times upon request.

This ongoing partnership will be enhanced through the *State Improvement Grant*. The special education joint agreements and other organizations will have the opportunity to apply for competitive contracts for recruitment and training or retraining of teachers and related services personnel to go into the field of special education contracts. The Educator Academies will provide a needed impetus for recruitment and retention at the local/regional level. The directors of special education will also have an opportunity to apply for the competitive Professional Development Academies subgrants. The training provided through these subgrants will provide a systematic service delivery system that is developed in conjunction with educators, parents and community partners.

ROEs provide ongoing professional development and technical assistance to Illinois teachers, administrators and support services personnel. A core of ISBE staff works with the regional staff on a continual basis and information is supplied to them via a regularly scheduled electronic and hard copy newsletter. A representative of the ROEs has been involved in the development of this proposal. Ongoing involvement of the ROEs will be accomplished

through their continuing representation on the CSPD Advisory Committee. ROEs will partner with special education joint agreements for the Professional Development Academies.

Chicago Public Schools and ISBE have a long history of partnering to provide and encourage the provision of professional development to Chicago educators. ISBE representatives have served on the Chicago Public Schools Special Education Teachers' Shortages Committee since January 1998. This consortium of university and college representatives has been meeting to explore solutions to the shortage of special education teachers in the Chicago Public Schools, to determine how best to provide needed course work to targeted professions, and to identify needed professional development topics for Chicago teachers. Chicago Public Schools have been represented on the CSPD Advisory Committee since its inception. Chicago Public Schools staff also participated on the panel for special education certification restructuring and in the development of this proposal.

These and other professional preparation and professional development opportunities have been and will continue to be offered to Chicago Public Schools staff. The *State Improvement Grant* will provide new funding for shortage areas in special education through the Educator Academies and will provide new professional development opportunities for special education teachers and administrators through the Professional Development Academy serving Chicago.

State Agencies Involved in the State Improvement Grant and Related Activities

The Illinois Deputy Governor for Education plays a critical role for education and has participated in the development of this proposal. (See Appendix J for the Governor's letter of support.)

The Illinois Department of Corrections is a designated school district that serves incarcerated youth. The department has a staff of fully certificated special education teachers

who teach incarcerated students with disabilities. These teachers, as confirmed by the CSPD Advisory Committee in 1997, receive the same professional development opportunities as other teachers in the state; therefore, they will also benefit from the retraining and professional development opportunities provided through the *State Improvement Grant*. (See Appendix J for letter of support.)

DHS is an umbrella state agency that addresses mental health, rehabilitative and other social services. DHS is the lead Illinois agency for early intervention services. ISBE and DHS have developed a formal interagency agreement to assure that children age birth to three receive special education and related services. (See Appendix K for the interagency agreement.)

The Interagency Council on Early Intervention provides the forum for partnership among DHS, ISBE, other state agencies, and other required Council partners. (See Appendix J for letter of support.)

Two Illinois residential schools—the Illinois School for the Deaf and the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired—hold annual parent-infant programs, support in part by IDEA, Part B, funds. Parents and children are housed on campus during the five-day conference. Recently identified deaf or hearing impaired and visually impaired infants and toddlers, their parents and their siblings attend the institute. A representative of these schools is a member of the CSPD Advisory Committee and assisted in the development of this proposal. The state residential schools staff will be encouraged to participate in the Professional Development Academies.

State Projects Involved in the State Improvement Grant and Related Activities

Since July 1990, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) “Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities/Local Area Networks (LANs) Initiative,” in

collaboration with ISBE, has supported the development of enhanced community-based options and supports with the intent of improving student outcomes and reducing the placement of students with emotional/behavior disorders outside of their homes and communities. This partnership with DCFS has expedited systemic changes at state and local levels. Restructured school-based options based on the wrap-around approach have been developed with community-based mental health, child welfare and other human service providers. This initiative provides leadership for the development of interagency supports for youth and families that reach beyond the classroom. LANs is an area network where training needs are identified and addressed. ROEs participate in LAN planning and implementation. The training topics for the LANs project are aligned with those of the *State Improvement Grant*.

SELA is a statewide partnership with directors of special education supported through IDEA, Part B, funds. A steering committee of seven peers design professional development activities through:

- A two- to three-day intensive summer institute focused on a single topic of concern to general and special education administrators (e.g., “Aggression Replacement Training”).
- Fall and spring statewide conferences based on “hot topic” issues.
- Regionally designed training activities that take place throughout the school year.

Topics for these activities are based on a collaborative effort and joint planning between the ROEs and the directors of special education in each region.

The SELA Steering Committee also keeps special and general education administrators informed of innovative projects and ongoing professional development options through a quarterly newsletter. All new state-approved directors of special education have an opportunity to receive mentoring services through this organization.

The SELA Steering Committee, through its partnership with ISBE, created the first set of standards for special education administrators in the United States in 1996. The steering committee worked closely with ISBE in developing this proposal and will continue to work collaboratively to achieve the goals.

The Illinois Administrators Academy provides ongoing professional development for all Illinois administrators. Entities such as SELA provide professional development and are able to secure continuing education credits from this Academy for their training programs. Administrators participating in the ROE professional development grant activities can request Administrators Academy credit for the training. Trainers participating in *State Improvement Grant* activities may apply for Administrators Academy approval when designing their training through the *State Improvement Grant* activities.

Pursuant to a 1990 Illinois law (20 ILCS 2405), the DHS Office of Rehabilitation Services, in partnership with ISBE, supervised the establishment of Regional Transition Planning Committees (TPCs). TPCs are interagency collaboratives responsible for regional transition planning and service delivery for high school students with disabilities. By law, TPC membership must include representation from these constituencies:

- general and special education,
- vocational education,
- postsecondary education,
- students with disabilities,
- parents of students with disabilities,
- adults with disabilities,
- local business and industry,

- rehabilitation service providers,
- case coordinators, and
- other appropriate consumer, school and adult service providers.

ISBE collaboratively provided a series of regional technical assistance workshops regarding state and federal transition guidelines to TPCs, which included 61 regional systems, 41 community colleges, three state agencies, and more than 200 local education agencies. A transition technical institute was also provided.

The State Advisory Council on the Education of Children with Disabilities has been reconfigured to meet the requirements of IDEA '97. The Illinois council now has membership from the following categories:

- nine members who are parents of children and youth with disabilities between ages 3 and 21 who are currently receiving special education services at public expense;
- five individuals with disabilities, including one recent high school student who is at least 18 years old and who, up until the time of completion of a secondary program, was receiving special education services at public expense;
- one regional superintendent of schools;
- one IHE representative;
- one teacher of students with disabilities;
- one public school district superintendent;
- one director of a special education cooperative;
- one representative of a public charter school;
- one representative of a private school serving children with disabilities;
- one representative of a vocational, community or business organization that provides

transition services to children with disabilities; and

- one member-at-large representing the general public.

Ex-officio members include the DHS Secretary/designee, the DCFS Director/designee, the Department of Corrections Director/designee, and the Chicago Public Schools director of special education.

The State Advisory Council is a partner with ISBE through their advice on the education of children and youth with disabilities. The State Advisory Council reviewed and offered recommendations during the development of this proposal and will continue to advise on *State Improvement Grant* implementation activities.

The Illinois State Curriculum Center (ISCC) is located on the University of Illinois at Springfield campus. It has a 28-year record of providing expertise in technical assistance to educators throughout Illinois and the nation, with particular emphasis on training conference delivery in a variety of disciplines, information clearinghouse functions and professional development for local teachers, counselors and administrators. ISCC is currently under contract with ISBE to provide a statewide trainer-of-trainers model on the changes inherent from IDEA '97 regarding implementation of IEPs. ISCC staff also assisted in developing this proposal.

The Assistive Technology Exchange Network (ATEN), a partnership of ISBE and the United Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Chicago and associated with the national Cristina Foundation, was initially funded through ISBE with IDEA, Part B, funds. ATEN offers access to assistive technology devices and services and provides a statewide database of available assistive technology equipment, online database search capability, facilitation of equipment exchange, assistive technology information, and technical support. ATEN will be part of the

content available for the Professional Development Academies.

Improving Teaching and Learning to Support Rigorous Academic Standards

One way in which this project will help students achieve rigorous academic standards is by making highly qualified teachers available, with a special emphasis on underserved areas of the state. More importantly, this project links personnel preparation and development activities directly to standards for certification and recertification. These in turn are directly related to the *Illinois Learning Standards* for students.

The *Illinois Learning Standards* apply to **all** students in general and special education, except in extraordinary circumstances. The new goal for the special education system is to ensure that students with disabilities have access to the rigorous academic curriculum embodied in the *Illinois Learning Standards* and that they move beyond high school into postsecondary education or employment.

The Illinois Teaching Standards are designed to ensure that special and general education personnel will have the knowledge and skills to make this possible. The assumption behind this proposal is that students with disabilities will be taught in general education classrooms, using the general education curriculum, unless this is found to be individually inappropriate for a student. The Illinois Teaching Standards ensure that teachers not only have knowledge of curriculum and how to teach it, but also have knowledge of how to work together to help students achieve and be successful. The Illinois Teaching Standards will form an important source of content for the activities of the current project, linking training activities directly to outcomes for students.

(d) PROJECT PERSONNEL

Support for Underrepresented Groups: General Education Provisions Act

As an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, ISBE is committed to providing equity in employment and services, irrespective of gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. Applicants for advertised ISBE positions funded through the *State Improvement Grant* will be sought from underrepresented groups and encouraged to indicate whether special accommodations are required for them to participate in the application or interview process. If hired, workplace accommodations will be made to enable them to perform their roles efficiently and effectively.

Barriers that might otherwise prohibit program beneficiaries with special needs from accessing and participating in project activities and services will also be addressed. For example, ISBE requirements for procuring meeting facilities specify that all sites for ISBE programs must be accessible to individuals with disabilities. Interpreters are routinely made available to participants who are deaf or hard of hearing. As needed, project materials are printed in English and Spanish or produced on audiotape or in Braille. The same requirements are applied to all applicants for grants and contracts awarded through this project.

The project goals and design also directly relate to support for underrepresented groups at the local and regional levels through the activities of this project. Goal 1 addresses shortages of personnel. Many of these shortages are in areas populated by a high concentration of families in poverty. In some areas, these families also represent a higher concentration of ethnic and cultural groups. The structure of the current proposal will provide increased access and impetus to the indigenous residents of each geographic area to pursue additional education, and once qualified, to remain in their geographic areas. Thus, school personnel will, over time,

become more representative of the populations in the geographical areas they serve. Goal 2 also addresses the involvement of underrepresented groups in the activities of this project, particularly through the local town meetings and “drive arounds,” which are designed specifically to facilitate a broad representation of parents and professionals in local opportunities as a means toward achieving this goal.

Qualifications of Key Personnel

Dr. Gordon Riffel, Deputy Superintendent for Special Education, will provide oversight for this grant on behalf of ISBE. Dr. Riffel is responsible for the overall coordination of special education projects and services for ISBE, and facilitates, coordinates, supports, and promotes teamwork throughout ISBE in relation to special education. As a member of the agency’s Leadership Team, he provides leadership in special education and is responsible for associated policy and procedural recommendations to the State Superintendent of Education and the agency Leadership Team. In addition to his oversight role within ISBE, Dr. Riffel will act as a liaison to local, regional, state, and national special education organizations and agencies and serve as a resource to the activities developed through the *State Improvement Grant*.

Dr. Riffel holds certification in both general and special education as a school psychologist, a director of special education, and a local district superintendent of schools. He has extensive knowledge and skills in writing and speaking, is especially gifted with partnership development, and will be working with identified partners associated with the project. Dr. Riffel has worked with many professional organizations during his 25 years in education. (See Appendix L for resume.)

Dr. Cindy Terry will serve as the project coordinator. She will be responsible for the overall operation of the *State Improvement Grant* and for accomplishing project activities in

accord with the outlined timelines and milestones. She will work with other ISBE staff to integrate data collection systems; develop an ongoing statewide survey system to annually identify issues related to shortages and personnel development needs; develop specification and principles; and develop, disseminate, and oversee RFPs for the Educator and Professional Development academies. She also will negotiate contracts for the annual IHE faculty institutes, local town meeting training, “drive arounds,” and project evaluation, and will provide technical assistance to grantees and contractees as needed. Dr. Terry will work closely with the project evaluator to ensure that data collected by the evaluation are useful to the project and its participants. Dr. Terry will also work closely with the CSPD Advisory Committee and other short-term working groups formed to address specific project needs. She will be responsible for initiating, facilitating, and overseeing these groups. As the project coordinator, she will report directly to Dr. Riffel.

Dr. Terry has worked with the CSPD Advisory Committee and implemented the IDEA, Part D, grant for the past seven years. She is certified in elementary education and three areas of special education, and holds the Illinois Director of Special Education endorsement. Dr. Terry has taught general education elementary-age students and students with learning and emotional disabilities, as well as university students at the graduate level. She has studied personnel preparation and professional development in six other countries, and has 25 years of experience with the ISBE. She has been active in various professional organizations, such as the CEC, at the national, state and local levels. She has developed an expansive network of partners relevant to this project in both the special and general education fields. (See Appendix L for resume.)

The agency will contribute clerical support for the project from current personnel. Support

activities will include completing activities related to preparing for CSPD Advisory Committee meetings and follow-up work; processing travel vouchers and inputting information to the ISBE computerized fiscal system; tracking all project subgrants and contracts; and providing other typing, printing and follow-up activities as needed.

Dr. Terry will work throughout the life of the project with various short- and long-term teams within ISBE, including staff from relevant agency divisions who will contribute services to the implementation of the *State Improvement Grant*. (See Appendix M for 1999 agency organizational chart.)

The CSPD Advisory Committee will also perform a key role in project implementation. The vision and work of the CSPD Advisory Committee is congruent and intertwined with that of the proposed project. Members will not only work in an advisory and oversight capacity to the project, but will also act as a “think-tank” work group, assisting the project coordinator in fulfilling the goals, objectives, and activities. New members will be brought into the committee to provide additional representation from required and other desirable partners for the proposed *State Improvement Grant*. (See Appendix N for current membership and affiliations.)

Qualifications of Consultants and Subcontractors

The qualifications required of consultants and subcontractors are directly linked to the specific requirements of the appropriate activity to be addressed. Eligible applicants for grants to support the Educator and Professional Development academies will be awarded only to special education joint agreements/local school districts. In each case, applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have met the collaborative and other criteria specified in the relevant RFP. Similarly, entities receiving contracts or subgrants under these goals must show

that they can meet all outlined specifications.

Additional entities targeted for contracts are PTICs and IHEs. In addition to the qualifications that relate to their current roles in the educational system, PTICs and IHEs must also agree to collect the required evaluation information. An evaluator for the *State Improvement Grant* will be sought through an RFP process, and will be selected based on professional qualifications and the quality of the proposal in relation to the stated goals and anticipated outcomes of the *State Improvement Grant*.

(e) RESOURCES

Support from the Applicant Organization

The principal ISBE office facility is located adjacent to the Capitol in Springfield, Illinois, with satellite offices located in Chicago and Mt. Vernon. Staff are provided with adequate space and equipment, such as up-to-date computers, printers, Internet access, etc., to perform their job responsibilities. The agency's video teleconferencing system connects the Springfield and Chicago offices, allowing staff and agency committees to interact in both video and audio formats.

As noted in *Section (d) Project Personnel*, the Deputy Superintendent for Special Education will provide oversight for this project; the project coordinator will be responsible for the overall operation of the project, including convening the CSPD Advisory Committee and serving as ISBE staff to the committee; the project clerk will provide clerical support for the project; and other ISBE staff from throughout the agency will contribute in-kind services.

Additional ISBE Personnel Support

- *Kathy Cox*, former Project CHOICES coordinator and current acting division administrator of the Division of Intervention and Assessment in the Center for Special Education, served on the internal planning committee for this proposal and will continue working in the area of professional development.
- *Pam Reising-Rechner*, whose background and work experience has been with early childhood special education and Early CHOICES, served on the internal planning committee, and continues to provide a link to the early intervention and early childhood special education programs.
- *Vaughn Morrison*, School Social Worker Consultant, was a member of the internal

planning committee and continues to be active in the areas of personnel preparation and professional development.

- *Jodi Fleck*, Speech/Language Consultant, served on the internal planning committee and will continue to be active in the area of personnel recruitment.
- *Dr. Sue Easton*, who led the agency IEP team for the Office of Special Education Programs training in 1999, will continue to be involved with professional development.
- *Jim Meeks*, Deaf/Blind Coordinator, coordinates the Deaf/Blind Advisory Committee with the CSPD Advisory Committee and *State Improvement Grant* activities.

(See Appendix L for resumes.)

Additional ISBE Resources

There are significant and varied federal and state resources available to supplement the resources being sought in the *State Improvement Grant*. These resources don't address the infrastructure or systemic needs but are potential sources for local and regional implementation of the activities of the Educator and Professional Development academies.

- *The Title II, Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program*—provides sustained and intensive high-quality professional development in mathematics, science and reading. Depending on annual appropriation levels, a portion of the funds may be spent on professional development in other core subjects.
- *Goals 2000 Grants*—emphasize the integral relationship between reading and learning activities, provide the coherence and focus for schoolwide improvements, and encourage school districts to take a more holistic approach to school improvement by addressing any of the following three components: districtwide improvement implementation (supporting learning improvement strategies that target student performance assessed as

not meeting standards), preservice teacher education (funding districts to improve preservice education programs in collaboration with an Illinois college/university faculty), and professional development (supporting innovative programs that focus on increasing knowledge and skills to improve student achievement of the Illinois Learning Standards). Since the funding source will terminate in September 2000, pursuant to the recent Class Size Reduction federal law, these funds will be available for 1999-2000 and as carryover funds thereafter.

- *Professional Development Block Grant*—provides state funding for professional development activities to improve learning pursuant to locally established priorities.
- *IDEA Preschool Grants*—provide supplemental funding for children with disabilities ages 3 to 5 and include a required professional development component. These funds are distributed to school districts and special education joint agreements.
- *IDEA Preschool Discretionary Grants*—used for professional development activities, including Early CHOICES, STARNET and Child Find training. These funds also provide summer parent training institutes at the Illinois School for the Deaf and the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired.
- *IDEA, Part B, Discretionary Grants*—used, in part, to fund Project CHOICES, a statewide training and technical assistance initiative to address the issue of LRE. Another grant will provide a single point of entry for Chicago-area parents and professionals who have concerns and questions related to the *Corey H.* settlement agreement and its implementation through an information clearinghouse. These grants are also used to fund LANs. (See page 60.)
- *IDEA Deaf/Blind Funds*—a federal grant to provide technical assistance, information,

and training to address early intervention, special education, related services, and transitional services needs of children with deaf-blindness and enhance state capacity to improve services and outcomes for children and their families.

ISBE supports professional development for all educators across the state, including its own staff. Such training is available to staff at all levels and across the agency. For example, the agency purchased the 1998-99 National Association of State Directors of Special Education satellite conference series. This series included the topics of “Functional Behavioral Assessment and Planning,” “The Continuum of Behavior Interventions,” “Linking the General Curriculum to the IEP,” and “Developing Quality IEPs.” Staff also attended two satellite conferences that were presented by OSEP on “Guidance on Implementation of IDEA ’97.” In February and March 1999, ISBE staff participated in two CEC satellite conferences titled “IEPs that Work for Everyone” and “Get Disciplined! Addressing Student Challenging Behavior.” Plans are to continue this mode of internal staff development during the next fiscal year.

ISBE is committed to having highly qualified, caring and competent teachers and administrators in every Illinois school and classroom. The Board fosters a belief that all professional development plans and activities should be integrated and linked. Teams working across agency divisions will be equipped to continually assess professional development sources and needs across the state. Recruitment efforts will be coordinated with the Professional Preparation and Research divisions and the Communications and External Relations Unit. Data collection systems will be aligned. Program areas that provide professional development will be coordinated.

ISBE staff have worked diligently to develop, coordinate and collaborate the effects of this grant with other federal grants and state initiatives that significantly improve educational

services in Illinois.

Budget Adequacy and Cost-Effectiveness

Budget expenditures for the current project as outlined in **Part II** are directly related to the activities outlined in this proposal. The salary and fringe benefits for the project coordinator are the only personnel costs included, and are essential to maintain the integrity of this project and to accomplish its many activities and anticipated outcomes. The project clerk and additional ISBE personnel will contribute time and expertise to the project at no cost to the *State Improvement Grant*. Most notable is the oversight that will be provided by Dr. Riffel on behalf of ISBE. Other ISBE staff will also provide assistance with activities such as RFP development, data collection, and report writing. In addition, ISBE will provide facilities, equipment, and space for personnel and meetings. Cost savings also will be accomplished in other ways, such as ISBE divisions handling many functions of the grant, such as fiscal management.

As stated in **Part II**, project evaluation is considered essential to improving the quality and ensuring the sustainability of the project. Every effort has been made to allocate funds judiciously according to the evaluation activities to be conducted in each of the five years. Therefore, the portion of the budget allocated for evaluation varies each year. Specifically, evaluation activities in years 1, 3 and 5 will primarily involve staff who administer the project and therefore require fewer dollars. In years 2 and 4 external evaluation activities will be increased, thus requiring a greater allocation of resources for the services of an external evaluator.

As indicated in **Part II**, a significant portion of the budget will be used for personnel preparation and professional development activities. Although the activities of this project are

ambitious, two aspects indicate that the requested amounts are reasonable and cost-effective:

- Similar models have been used before, providing ISBE staff and partners with experience regarding cost and satisfactory completion of these activities.
- Local contributions will be required as a condition for receiving grants for Educator and Professional Development academies. Thus, in part, the funds to be provided through these grants are seen as “seed money” around which to build collaborations that will remain beyond the conclusion of project funding.

The CSPD Advisory Committee and the State Advisory Council on the Education of Children with Disabilities will provide advice at no cost other than expenses incurred to attend meetings.

Potential for Continued Support

The proposed *State Improvement Grant* is designed to change the infrastructure of personnel preparation and professional development in Illinois by improving accessibility and responsiveness to the needs of different areas of the state. The systemic nature of the *State Improvement Grant* ensures that its impact will continue beyond the conclusion of project funding.

- A lasting outcome of the grant will be a new structure for personnel preparation and professional development. Through the Educator Academies, local school districts will have a sustainable recruitment system in place for future needs and an ongoing relationship with colleges and universities for the provision of special education personnel and professional development for experienced teachers. This relationship will enhance the ability of colleges and universities to respond to the changing priorities and everyday realities of schools and will also enhance the ongoing placement of student

observers and teachers in training at local schools.

- The partnerships developed to support these new structures will remain in place. For instance, local consortia and universities that develop alternative training systems in partnership would be expected to continue such an arrangement to both of their benefits. Through these collaborative efforts, colleges and universities also will increase their capacity to prepare additional personnel and to offer blended training programs to general and special education personnel.
- ISBE will use a quality database to determine state priorities for professional development and maintain a special education personnel clearinghouse.
- A variety of outcomes for addressing local and regional needs will be explored and evaluated, and this knowledge will be used in later stages.
- The partnerships developed between well-trained general and special education personnel will continue to increase the potential of students beyond the duration of the project.
- Quality teacher preparation expectations will be raised and more systematic approaches to professional development will be ingrained into the educational service delivery system. Teachers, related services personnel, administrators, parents, community members, and college and university faculty will have come to look to the system as a resource for individual and collective growth on behalf of students with disabilities.

The *State Improvement Grant* offers an opportunity to build a systemic, sustainable infrastructure that connects to other student and personnel reform efforts by providing strategies for integrating general and special education; strengthens partnerships among stakeholders, including parents; and sets in place a new and permanent way of viewing

personnel preparation and professional development.

(f) MANAGEMENT PLAN

Responsibilities in Relation to Project Tasks

The *State Improvement Grant* management plan meets the federal requirements, including provision of sufficient personnel and financial resources through the grant proposal and ongoing daily responsibilities to produce quality deliverables in a timely manner.

As noted in *Section (d) Project Personnel*, ISBE personnel assigned project responsibilities are Dr. Gordon Riffel (general oversight), Dr. Cindy Terry (project coordinator), and a project clerk.

Job Responsibilities

The project coordinator will be responsible for the overall operation of the *State Improvement Grant* and for accomplishing project activities in accordance with the timelines and milestones. The project coordinator will:

- work with other ISBE staff to develop and integrate data collection systems;
- develop, disseminate and oversee RFPs for the Educator and Professional Development academies;
- develop specifications and negotiate contracts for the annual IHE faculty institutes, town meeting training, “drive around” conferences, and project evaluation;
- develop an ongoing statewide survey system to annually identify issues related to shortages and personnel development needs;
- work closely with the CSDP Advisory Committee and the State Advisory Council on the Education of Children with Disabilities; and
- provide technical assistance to subgrantees and contractors as needed.

The project coordinator will work closely with other ISBE staff members (e.g., staff

responsible for compliance, early childhood services, grants management, personnel certification, continuing professional development, standards and assessment, school improvement, etc.) and other state agencies (e.g., DHS, the Illinois Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities, etc.) or organizations (e.g., TPCs and Early Intervention Councils) as needed. The project coordinator will also work closely with the project evaluator to ensure that data collected are useful to the project and its participants. The project evaluator's role in determining effectiveness of the grant activities will also link to the project coordinator. As with any other key ISBE personnel, the project coordinator will be responsible for initiating, facilitating and overseeing other short-term working groups constructed to address specific project needs.

Existing ISBE staff will provide clerical support for the project, including completing activities related to preparing for CSPD Advisory Committee meetings and follow-up work; processing travel vouchers; completing all work related to the ISBE electronic financial system, including tracking subgrants and contracts; and providing other typing, printing and follow-up activities as needed. Also, appropriate ISBE staff will handle fiscal activities for the *State Improvement Grant*.

Responsibilities, Timelines and Milestones

Tables 5 and 6 delineate all *State Improvement Grant* activities, responsibilities and timelines. (See pages 43-50.) Table 7 specifies the expected milestones.

Table 7. State Improvement Grant Milestones

Activity	Milestones	Completion Date
1.1.1 & 1.1.2	Finalize and issue Educator Academies RFP and award annual contracts, <i>Year 1</i>	June 2000
1.1.1 & 1.1.2	Issue Educator Academies RFP and award annual contracts, <i>Years 2-5</i>	Annually
1.1.3	Share Educator Academies implementation strategies statewide, <i>Years 1-5</i>	December 2000, then annually
1.1.6 & 1.2.1	Build personnel database, <i>Year 1</i>	December 2000
1.1.6 & 1.2.1	Add to personnel database; analyze evaluation information, <i>Years 2-5</i>	Annually
1.2.2	Develop and use partnerships, <i>Year 1</i>	May 2000
1.2.2	Continue working with partnerships, <i>Years 2-5</i>	December 2003
1.2.3 & 2.1.3	Collaborate as an agency to develop and implement standards-led special education credentialing system; integrate into one system, <i>Years 1-5</i>	December 2003
2.1.1	Finalize and issue Professional Development Academies RFP and award subgrants, <i>Year 1</i>	July 2000
2.1.1	Continue Professional Development Academies subgrants, <i>Years 2-5</i>	Annually
2.1.2	Provide training through Professional Development Academies, <i>Year 1</i>	Winter 2000
2.1.2	Expand and continue training through Professional Development Academies, <i>Years 2-5</i>	December 2005
2.1.4	Solicit continuous feedback; update clearinghouse, collect evaluation information on local implementation of program components, <i>Years 2-5</i>	Annually

2.2.1, 2.2.2 & 2.2.3	Contract for and conduct annual IHE faculty institutes; disseminate content statewide, <i>Years 1-5</i>	Summer 2000, then annually in summer
2.3.1 & 2.3.2	Develop and train school-based teams for “town meetings” model, <i>Year 1</i>	Winter 2000
2.3.3	Replicate school-based teams, <i>Years 2-5</i>	Spring 2001, then annually
2.3.4	Conduct local “town meetings,” <i>Years 2-5</i>	Quarterly, as of Spring 2001
2.4.1	Develop and issue RFP for annual “drive around” conferences and award contracts, <i>Year 1</i>	July 2000
2.4.2 & 2.4.3	Implement “drive around” conferences; replicate through issuing RFP and awarding contracts; evaluate effectiveness of models and modify as needed, <i>Years 2-5</i>	Annually
all	Evaluate effectiveness of models and modify as needed, <i>Years 1-5</i>	Winter 2000, then annually

Approaches to Ensuring a Diversity of Perspectives

Ensuring diverse perspectives is a core guiding assumption of the *State Improvement Grant*. Methods for obtaining them are built into every level and all activities. Collaborative partnerships are built into major objectives of both goals; occur at local, regional, and state levels; and are generally a precondition of obtaining a subgrant or contract.

Proposal development was also based on ensuring a diversity of perspectives. The CSPD Advisory Committee represents the required partners, such as parents, teachers, members of the broad education community, and others. They have been closely involved in proposal development and will meet regularly to advise the project coordinator on project activities. A

specially constituted task force and individual university faculty members also assisted in development of the proposal.

On an ongoing basis, it is anticipated that the quarterly, interactive local “town meetings” and annual “drive around” conferences will elicit a diversity of perspectives from the participants. Having the Educator and Professional Development academies located and focused locally and regionally will also provide a geographically diverse viewpoint. These views will be useful in the continual improvement of the Illinois education system and refinement of various *State Improvement Grant* elements.

(g) PROJECT EVALUATION

Relation of the Evaluation Plan to Project Goals, Objectives, Activities and Outcomes

The two goals of the *State Improvement Grant* will be evaluated using both state-level data collection and contracted in-depth evaluations. The information to be gathered for each of the goals is specified below. As advocated by Brewer and Hunter (1989), multiple methodologies will be used to address as many of the questions as possible, thus allowing for data triangulation. Further, the external evaluation will use comparison groups derived using subtractive factors logic (Lachman, Lachman, and Butterfield, 1978), along with other methodologies. Areas of greatest need for teachers will be verified against the data collected for the Illinois teacher supply and demand database. The project coordinator will provide documentation regarding completion of certain activities not requiring data collection or evaluation (e.g., dissemination of an RFP). In addition, ISBE routinely conducts evaluations of any conference or workshop it offers. These data will also inform the evaluation of the activities undertaken in this grant.

Goal 1 Evaluation

The focus of the evaluation of Goal 1 will be on the number of individuals participating, perceived preparedness, the quality of preparation of individuals trained as teachers of children with disabilities, and the type of teaching certificates that individuals participating in funded programs receive. Staff administering the program will collect annual state-level data addressing the areas listed in Table 8. The knowledge gained through these efforts will be used to report on, refine, and redevelop (if necessary) programmatic elements.

The external evaluation portion of Goal 1 will take place in years two and four and will focus on in-depth assessment of the areas listed in Table 8. Other issues may develop as a result of state-level data collection efforts.

Table 8. Goal 1 Evaluation Areas

ISBE Efforts (Years 1-5)	Contractual Efforts (Years 2 and 4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of participants trained by program and certification area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which trained participants are observed using best practices, as defined by the special education research literature.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of trained participants retained in rural and urban settings by program and certification area from year-to-year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which preparing teachers in this manner has changed preservice teacher education in Illinois.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of participants recruited from the ranks of parents of children and youth with disabilities and those working in paraprofessional positions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The nature of the linkage between teachers trained in this manner and student achievement, successful transitioning of students to postsecondary education or employment, successful attainment of goals and objectives specified on an IEP, and student access to general education curricula.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The perceived readiness of participants to teach (in areas covered through professional development components). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which the curricula used to train teachers is based on the <i>Illinois Learning Standards</i>.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The percentage of participants trained as cross-categorical teachers (thus broadening the preparation of potential teachers and potentially meeting the future needs of employing school districts). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which the curricula used to train teachers is based on Illinois' new teacher standards for all teachers, including the field of special education.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of participants who pass the Illinois test for certification and obtain initial certification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which faculty, staff, and parents are satisfied with the teachers prepared under Goal 1.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The nature of the technical assistance and support provided to grant recipients toward completion of implementation strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which the teacher preparation models are efficient and effective.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which partnerships have been developed and the nature of the partnerships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which the results attained by students of teachers who participated in training provided as part of Goal 1 compare to the results attained by similar students whose teachers did not participate in the training provided.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which local systems of personnel recruitment and training were developed to meet student needs and address identified shortages.

Goal 2 Evaluation

Data similar to those collected as part of the efforts associated with Goal 1 will also be collected for those teachers participating under Goal 2. The focus of this component of the evaluation will be on the number of teachers participating, perceived preparedness to implement best practices, and the quality of the training offered. Knowledge gained through

these efforts will be used to report on, refine, and redevelop (if necessary) programmatic elements. More specifically, staff administering the program annually will collect state-level data addressing the areas listed in Table 9.

The external evaluation effort for Goal 2 will take place in years three and five and will focus on those issues requiring greater analysis than program staff are able to provide. Specifically, the external evaluation for Goal 2 will focus on the areas listed in Table 9. Other issues may arise as a result of state-level data collection efforts.

Table 9. Goal 2 Evaluation Areas

ISBE Efforts (Years 1-5)	Contractual Efforts (Years 3 and 5)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of teachers participating by program and certification area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which participating teachers are observed using best practices, as defined by current special education research literature.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of participating teachers receiving Illinois-required recertification credit as part of this program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The nature of the linkage between teachers trained in this manner and student achievement, successful transitioning of students to postsecondary education or employment, successful attainment of goals and objectives specified on an IEP, and student access to general education curricula.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The perceived ability of teachers participating in this part of the project to implement best practices, as defined by special education research literature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which the curricula used to train teachers is based on the Illinois Learning Standards.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The percentage of teachers securing additional certification as a direct result of the training provided as part of Goal 2. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which the curricula used to train teachers is based on Illinois' new teacher standards for special education.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The perceived effectiveness of the training provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which faculty, staff, and parents are satisfied with the teachers prepared as part of this goal.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of regional Professional Development Academies initially developed and ongoing after three years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which the teacher preparation models are efficient and effective.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of statewide annual IHE faculty institutes developed, the number of participants and institutions represented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documentation of change in curriculum content used by participants as a result of attending annual IHE faculty institutes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opinions expressed by participating parents on the efficiency and content adequacy of the local "town meetings." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which the results attained by students of teachers who participated in training provided as part of Goal 2 compare to the results attained by similar students whose teachers did not participate in the training provided.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opinions expressed by participating parents on the efficiency and content adequacy of the PTIC "drive arounds." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which the service delivery system was integrated with other Illinois and ISBE systems regarding continuing professional development.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which regional plan development and implementation was improved through input of educators, parents, and community partners.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The nature, quality, and effectiveness of the established statewide IHE faculty institutes.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which the trainer-of-trainers model was effective.

To ensure a comprehensive evaluation, the plan outlined here will provide for collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Further, evaluation will occur in three stages: baseline, formative and summative. Formative evaluation data will be used to measure progress toward achieving the project objectives and their related outcomes. This evaluation data will also provide a source of feedback by which the project can be improved and strategies for sustainability of the project can be identified and incorporated.

The summative evaluations will provide a summary of the formative data collected each year and will facilitate the determination of whether the project goals are being met. In the final year of the project, an overall summative evaluation will be completed and will provide a longitudinal picture of the project results.

SUMMARY

Illinois is committed to improving the system of educational, early intervention, and transitional services for children and youth with disabilities, and the student results. Teachers, administrators, related services personnel, parents, and concerned citizens are vital links for improving these services. High-quality schools cannot exist without high-quality faculty members and informed, involved parents. ISBE is committing resources to achieve the absolute priority of improvement of educational services for all children through quality personnel preparation and professional development. Receipt of the *State Improvement Grant* funds is essential to making **Staff for Student Success** a reality.