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Developing, Recruiting, and Retaining Preservice Trainees: Lists of Strategies From Research and Practice

Attached are four lists that summarize strategies from literature on developing new pools of potential trainees, recruiting traditional trainees, and retaining students in general and special education preservice programs. These strategies are presented as follows:

1. Developing adult populations for careers in special education;
2. Career development for high school/middle school students: A sampler of initiatives actually being implemented in various locations;
3. Recruiting trainees from historically under-represented racial/ethnic populations: Strategies and recommendations from various institutions; and
4. Retaining and graduating trainees from historically under-represented racial/ethnic populations: Suggestions from literature and practice.

A List of Strategies for Developing Adult Populations for Careers in Special Education

Retiring/Retired Military Personnel

- * Where projects and programs have targeted retiring service members, they have often had more applicants than they could accommodate.
- * Retired military personnel have an income already, and may become interested in teaching as a second career at a supplementary income. Salary is usually not a major issue.
- * Many service members have a college degree or college credits and instructor experience.
- * Most retirees will remain in areas near a military base because they can continue to use the base's services and benefits. Many bases are near inner cities.
- * Development of this personnel pool is likely to increase the number of males in teaching.
 - * This strategy is particularly applicable to preservice programs in the vicinity of military bases -- but distance learning technologies can bring training to service members in any location.
 - * Work with appropriate officers on military bases; the Department of Defense operates a program for service members leading up to retirement.
 - * Provide information on preparation requirements, your preservice program, stipends,
 - career options, and demand for personnel.
 - * Offer preparation beginning up to four years before an individual's retirement.
 - * Provide alternative programs leading to certification, with early teaching placement and on-the-job practica.
 - * Give credit for prior training, instructor roles, and other experience.
 - * Structure adult learning to fit this population.

Former and Retiring Public Service Personnel (Probation Officers, Police Officers, Social Workers, Juvenile Justice Workers, others)

- * These personnel have experience and strengths that are particularly valuable to education.
- * Many have a college degree or college credits.
- * For those who have retired with an income, salary is usually not a major issue.
- * Many strategies recommended for retiring military personnel are also viable for this group.
- * One way to begin is by inviting personnel from these populations to speak to classes, serve on advisory committees, and otherwise participate with preservice programs & public schools.

New Immigrant Populations, Welfare Law Changes, and Paraprofessional Career Ladders

- * Many new immigrants have been well educated professionals in the country of origin, but are not qualified for professional positions in the USA; these people could be outstanding paraprofessionals and should have access to career ladders leading to teacher certification.
- * Some parents in new immigrant families would like to be in the schools their children attend, and could play roles as aides, translators, and cultural transmitters.
- * Some individuals who are welfare recipients (particularly parents) should be considered for paraprofessional roles and eventual career ladders (welfare to work).
- * Children of both of these groups are in school, and therefore contacts with and information for these individuals can be expedited through the schools.
- * The current paraprofessional pool represents education's largest group from historically under-represented populations. These personnel should receive information, encouragement, and incentives for career ladders, with specially structured and scheduled teacher training.

The Reserve Pool of Qualified Personnel Who Are Not Teaching

- * The major reason for early attrition is marriage and child rearing. This suggests the merit of job sharing, day care, and other arrangements to accommodate retraining and working.
- * For some years, education's largest surplus has been in physical education. This is a recruiting source in colleges and universities, and in the community's reserve pool.

**A List of Strategies for
Career Development for High School/Middle School Students:
A Sampler of Initiatives Actually Being Implemented in Various Locations**

Consider ways to adapt these strategies to promote careers in special education.

Career education as early as grade 6

- * "Family groups" of students, teachers, parents: Advice, encouragement, assistance
- * Exposure to successful people from many disciplines
- * Guidance from business, industry, professions in the community
- * Case management approaches involving community partners
- * Future Teacher Clubs and activities
- * Guidance counselor training workshops
- * Service learning / community service opportunities in various vocational / professional / volunteer settings
- * Summer jobs to try out various career settings and skills
- * Magnet schools and high school magnet programs on teaching

Graduation from high school on an academic track

- * Mentoring of students in school and in the community
- * Incentives for maintaining good grades
- * Parent involvement activities
- * After-school enrichment programs
- * Instruction in study habits and skills
- * College preparatory work: Algebra and geometry (gatekeeper courses); writing and self-expression; problem solving; computer skills, etc.

Continuing information and experience about college and specialized training

- * Clear information about training required for specific careers and where it is available, particularly locally available
- * College credit courses for high school seniors at high school or college sites
- * Audits of selected freshman courses
- * High school / college counselor teams
- * Involvement of higher ed faculty and students with high schools and high school students
- * Leadership training programs for high school / middle school students
- * College student mentors in schools, in community, on campus
- * Summer collegiate programs for high school students
- * College weekends or Saturday Campus programs
- * Passes / tickets to college resources and activities: Computer lab, student union, sports and cultural events
- * Assistance in applying to college and for financial aid
- * Preparation for college entrance exams
- * Special programs for transition to college
- * Local and state scholarship incentives
- * College entry in student cadres

Community efforts involving business, industry, churches, higher education, civic and professional groups to engage with schools, recognize teachers, value teaching, raise scholarship funds, etc.

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**A List of Strategies for
Recruiting Trainees from Historically Under-Represented Racial/Ethnic Populations:
Strategies and Recommendations from Various Institutions**

- * Aggressive and personalized recruitment.
- * Targeting of recruitment information, media, vehicles, and events to reach the target group and respond to its values and characteristics.
- * Heavy involvement of faculty members (and of graduate and undergraduate students) from minority backgrounds in planning and carrying out recruitment activities and developing recruitment materials.
- * Deployment of currently enrolled students in target communities (e.g., African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian) as local liaisons to identify and encourage potential students for the training program.
- * Inclusion of local school district personnel in the trainee recruitment effort.
- * Success stories about minority graduates as part of recruitment literature.
- * Promotion of campus features, such as minority student associations, curricula that reflect diversity, etc.
- * Clear and adequate advice about the kinds of experiences and problems that students from minority backgrounds might encounter on majority campuses.
- * . . . But it is also important not to give minority students a completely different view of the campus than is given to white students.

- * Partnerships and articulation agreements between 2-year and 4-year institutions / programs.
- * Transfer Centers that provide central sources of information about transferring from 2-year to 4-year institutions and programs.
- * Organized activities on 4-year campuses for students enrolled in 2-year institutions.
- * Cooperative research internship programs to connect community college students with graduate students at nearby institutions.

- * Partnerships with school districts to recruit general educators for special education certification; to recruit paraprofessionals, uncertified substitutes, school secretaries and others for teacher preparation; to provide various approaches to career education for middle school and high school students (and for mutual school improvement efforts that result in better practicum sites).
- * Academic partnership programs that join the K-12 system, community colleges, and four-year institutions, with academic alliances that allow faculty members from each tier to develop a coherent sequence of coursework in specific disciplines.
- * Magnet schools (or magnet programs within high schools) for teacher education, as a university-school district effort.

- * Moving coursework to geographic areas where there are many potential recruits, through distance learning technologies and /or direct outreach by faculty members.
- * Provision of coursework on site in local public schools, with follow-up mentor teachers as adjunct faculty members -- and use of the paraprofessionals' or interns' classrooms as their practicum sites.
- * New forms of post-baccalaureate teacher training programs aimed specifically at individuals from historically under-represented groups (for example, an updated version of the National Teacher Corps, with stipends and on-the-job internships).

- * Fellowships or stipends to cover financial needs.
- * Information on sources of financial aid.

A List of Strategies for
Retaining and Graduating Trainees from Historically Under-Represented Racial/Ethnic
Populations: Suggestions from Literature and Practice

Some of These Strategies Also Reflect Values that Should Be Featured in Recruitment Efforts

- * Development of goals and action plans for removing barriers that interfere with retention.
- * Selection of appropriate trainees in the first place. (For example, develop a profile of personal characteristics most likely to be successful in the settings and circumstances for which individuals will be trained, and include this profile among selection criteria.)

- * Genuine humanity among all personnel and students involved in the program; an emphasis on human interaction, connectedness, and caring.
- * Special orientation programs that do not isolate these students but help to integrate them into campus life.
- * Support groups that allow students to share success.
- * Counseling and advising services that are sensitive to these students' needs.
- * Organized mentoring programs that include faculty and student mentors, within a campus culture that encourages mentoring.
- * Academic support services (such as tutoring in specific subjects; adaptations for language-minority students; assistance with study skills, writing skills, computer skills, academic language, scheduling of time).
- * Summer courses that prepare students for the next, more difficult level of training.
- * A "Returning Students Organization" for trainees who have been out of school for some time.
- * A designated student advocacy resource for students who need help or have problems that mentors or advisors are unable to resolve.
- * An atmosphere of expected success, and a climate that welcomes diversity.
- * Emphasis on students' diversity as a real strength.

- * Curricula that reflect racial/ethnic diversity and multiculturalism.
- * Training that draws on students' own culture and experiences to shape their programs.
- * Coursework that diverges from traditional study-and-memorize methods, and focuses on problem-solving, group work, hands-on applications, interactivity, public school-based training (e.g., professional development schools), community-based training.
- * Beginning course sections with optional extra hours of classroom instruction, supplemented by learning laboratories.
- * Coursework that is partially offered via technologies (e.g., local cable or satellite; computer-based instructional modules; multimedia packages), with "Weekend College" programs and other adaptations that respond to the convenience and pace of individual students.
- * Adequate materials and resources in a central location readily accessible for student group work, projects between new and veteran students, graduates and undergraduates.

- * Structuring and delivery of coursework that is responsive to trainees' ages, collective experience, and backgrounds (e.g., a program for retired military personnel would be structured and delivered in a manner different from a program for paraprofessionals on a career ladder).
- * Cluster programs in major fields so that freshmen in selected majors take several courses together each semester, with a mentor to assist them (e.g., teaching clusters).
- * Cadres of students in cohorts that proceed through the training program together, with seminars, special activities, study groups, and encouragement of mutual support.
- * Other types of peer support systems, such as peer coaching and focus groups.

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Retaining and Graduating Trainees/Continued

- * Adequate minority representation among full-time and adjunct faculty, guest speakers, administration, and other program leadership.
- * Organized links to the surrounding community and its resources (churches, social activities, service opportunities).
- * Organized efforts to connect students with the professional community (state and national conferences; paid organization memberships; internships with professional associations).

- * Assistance for students in obtaining loans, fellowships, grants and other financial aid to complete their programs.
- * Paid internships with faculty members conducting research.
- * Work-study programs that encourage student involvement with faculty members, department staff, and university resources.
- * Emphasis on school-based roles during training, with district remuneration for service as substitute teachers, teacher aides/associates, and other functions.

- * Assistance and advice with academic planning; individualized programs to increase basic academic skills, fulfill requirements, and complete the major -- and quarterly assistance in selecting courses and designing a balanced course load.
- * Early, frequent, and aggressive (intrusive) advisement, review of competencies and progress, immediate corrective action for academic problems, and referrals to campus and community opportunities and services.
- * Counseling about personal problems and for the promotion of personal growth.
- * Day care services for children of trainees.

- * Early criterion-reference and performance-based assessment of basic skills, with use of results for self-analysis and monitoring of strengths and weaknesses.
- * Use of a learning styles inventory to aid self-regulating behaviors, for counseling and advisement, and to guide corrective activities.
- * Evaluation of competencies and demonstrated behaviors, rather than predictive testing, whenever possible (teaching skills versus screening functions).
- * Support and training in the skills necessary for success on teacher tests and other instruments required for certification.

- * Engagement with public schools in teacher retention projects involving graduates (e.g., induction programs of mentoring and support for first-year and second-year teachers).
- * Establishment of continued networking among graduates through newsletters, reunions, personal contact by faculty members.
- * Graduate follow-up to elicit graduates' suggestions on ways to improve the program and the retention of students in the future (and to use success stories of graduates in recruitment literature).

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