

Part A: Summaries of Project Request

Professional Summary

There is a shortage of special education teachers across the nation (Boe, et. al., 1998; Katsiyannis et.al., 2003). In 2003, the U.S. Department of Education reported a shortage of 53,000 special educators. The issues are magnified for special education teachers with specialization in autism. There is an increase in the identification of children with autism who require special education services (Bitterman et. al., 2008). As stated in Yell et. al. (2003) there was an increase from 5,415 students with autism in 1991-1992 to 65,424 in the 1999-2000 school year. However, little is known about personnel preparation in autism even though lack of qualified personnel to serve students with autism has been successfully litigated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Yell et. al., 2003).

This project will add to the knowledge base in teacher preparation for Autism. Special Education program faculty responded to a request from the two school districts in Laredo to develop an additional program specialization for Autism. The specialization is a minor area under the MS in Special Education. This project will create an evaluation system for the new specialization analyzing program candidate knowledge and skills for evidence-based practices within the special education field of Autism.