

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION****Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; Grants and Cooperative Agreements: Availability, etc.: Children With Disabilities Programs; Notice**

AGENCY: Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of proposed priorities.

**SUMMARY:** The Secretary proposes priorities for two programs administered by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), as amended. The Secretary may use these priorities in Fiscal Year 1998 and subsequent years. The Secretary takes this action to focus Federal assistance on identified needs to improve results for children with disabilities. The proposed priorities are intended to ensure wide and effective use of program funds.

**DATES:** Comments on all proposed priorities must be received on or before March 23, 1998.

**ADDRESSES:** All comments concerning proposed priorities should be addressed to: Debra Sturdivant, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 3521, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641.

Comments may also be sent through the Internet: comments@ed.gov

You must include the term "Technical Assistance and Dissemination and Research and Innovation" in the electronic message.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For further information on these proposed priorities contact Debra Sturdivant, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, SW, room 3317, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. FAX: (202) 205-8717 (FAX is the preferred method for requesting information). Telephone: (202) 205-8038. Internet:

Debra\_Sturdivant@ed.gov

Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-8953. Individuals with disabilities may obtain a copy of this notice in an alternate format (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) by calling (202) 205-8113.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This notice contains three proposed priorities under two programs authorized by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as follows: Technical Assistance and Dissemination to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities (two proposed priorities); and Research and Innovation to Improve

Services and Results for Children with Disabilities (one proposed priority). These proposed priorities would support the National Education Goals by helping to improve results for children with disabilities.

The Secretary will announce the final priorities in a notice in the **Federal Register**. The final priorities will be determined by responses to this notice, available funds, and other considerations of the Department. Funding of particular projects depends on the availability of funds, the content of the final priorities, and the quality of the applications received. The publication of these proposed priorities does not preclude the Secretary from proposing additional priorities, nor does it limit the Secretary to funding only these priorities, subject to meeting applicable rulemaking requirements.

**General Requirements**

All projects funded under the proposed priorities must make positive efforts to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities in project activities (see Section 606 of IDEA). In addition, all applicants and projects funded under the proposed priorities must involve individuals with disabilities or parents of individuals with disabilities in planning, implementing, and evaluating the projects (see Section 661(f)(1)(A) of IDEA).

**Note:** This notice of proposed priorities does *not* solicit applications. Notices inviting applications under these competitions will be published in the **Federal Register** concurrent with or following publication of the notice of final priorities.

**Technical Assistance and Dissemination to Improve Services and Results for Children With Disabilities***Purpose of Program*

The purpose of this program is to provide technical assistance and information through such mechanisms as institutes, regional resource centers, clearinghouses, and programs that support States and local entities in building capacity, to improve early intervention, educational, and transitional services and results for children with disabilities and their families, and to address systemic-change goals and priorities.

*Priorities*

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), the Secretary proposes to give an absolute preference to applications that meet one of the following priorities. The Secretary proposes to fund under these competitions only applications that meet one of these absolute priorities:

**Proposed Absolute Priority 1—Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports***Background*

Problem behaviors are one of the most common reasons children with disabilities are excluded from school, community, and work. Research on positive behavioral support is rapidly developing and demonstrates how school-wide approaches to positive behavioral interventions can enable students with disabilities who exhibit problem behaviors to achieve independence and become participants and contributing members in school, community, and work.

Despite this growing body of knowledge, however, awareness of the value of these approaches and their use in the educational environment remains limited. There is clearly a need to develop a greater awareness on the part of educators and others of the important contribution that positive behavioral interventions can make in achieving successful results for children with disabilities who exhibit challenging problem behaviors and for improving the overall climate of schools.

Part B of IDEA includes provisions intended to guide and assist schools in cases in which the behavior of a child with a disability impedes learning. For example, the Act specifies that teams developing individualized education programs (IEPs) consider, when appropriate, positive behavioral supports and other strategies to address behavior problems. The following priority is intended to assist schools in designing and implementing effective school-wide positive behavioral support programs by creating a greater awareness of these approaches, including identifying effective State and local policies which support the approaches, and by building the necessary knowledge base, momentum, and resource network to encourage their widespread application.

*Priority*

The Secretary proposes to establish an absolute priority to support a Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports that builds awareness and motivation for schools to design and implement school-wide support for children with disabilities who exhibit challenging problem behaviors. The Center must, at a minimum:

(a) Evaluate the state of policy and practice regarding school-wide behavioral support, including relevant State and local policies and guidelines, and financing and cross-agency coordination strategies for supporting

behavioral intervention services. Develop and apply criteria for identifying exemplary programs of school-wide positive behavioral support. Identify and publicize schools implementing such programs.

(b) Establish a coordinated network of researchers, educators, parents, mental health professionals, and policymakers who will serve as resources to schools and each other in designing and implementing school-wide positive behavioral support programs. Conduct outreach activities with relevant federally supported technical assistance and information activities and projects (e.g., the National Institute of Disability and Rehabilitation Research programs, the Federal Resource Center, regional resource centers, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education's Safe and Drug Free Schools program, the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, etc.), State and local organizations and other relevant organizations and projects to promote public awareness of positive behavioral support practices and the availability of information, supports and services.

(c) Provide for information exchanges between researchers and practitioners who direct exemplary behavioral support programs and educators who seek to design and implement effective school-wide programs. The exchanges must include, but are not limited to, two regional forums during each of the first four years of the project, and a national forum in the fifth year. The forums must be designed to expand the coordinated network, develop awareness of research-based practices, and create a dialogue about school-wide positive behavioral support programs. The forums must include examples and descriptions of exemplary school-wide programs and effective State and local policies, and may include other appropriate activities such as visits to exemplary sites.

(d) Provide information to the national information center for children with disabilities. Collaborate with the national information center for children with disabilities on the development and dissemination of materials on behavioral intervention and supports. Establish linkages with the national information center for children with disabilities to ensure timely and accurate dissemination of information to customers.

(e) Organize, synthesize, and report information to teachers, administrators, parents, and other interested parties regarding research, policy, and practice advances on positive behavioral support. Develop and disseminate

products that are easy to use and accessible (e.g., print and electronic formats). Respond to written and telephone inquiries with research-based information.

(f) Develop and implement a blueprint for providing technical assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs), which includes alternative designs of effective school wide positive behavioral support programs and alternative approaches to delivering technical assistance in their implementation. Identify barriers to assisting school districts across the country in developing and implementing school-wide positive behavioral support programs and develop strategies for overcoming these barriers.

(g) Budget for two trips annually to Washington, D.C., for: (1) A two-day Research to Practice Division Project Directors' meeting; and (2) a meeting to collaborate with the Research to Practice Division project officer and the other related projects, and to share information and discuss findings and methods of dissemination.

(h) Conduct, every two years, a results-based evaluation of the technical assistance provided. Such an evaluation must be conducted by a review team consisting of three experts approved by the Secretary and must measure elements such as—

(1) The type of technical assistance provided and the perception of its quality by the target audience;

(2) The changes that occurred as a result of the technical assistance provided; and

(3) The review team will examine the progress that the Center has made with respect to the objectives in its application.

The services of the review team, including a two-day site visit to the Center is to be performed during the last half of the center's second year and may be included in that year's evaluation required under 34 CFR 75.590. Costs associated with the services to be performed by the review team must also be included in the Center's budget for year two. These costs are estimated to be approximately \$4,000.

Under this priority, the Secretary will make one award for cooperative agreements with a project period of up to 60 months subject to the requirements of 34 CFR 75.253(a) for continuation awards. In determining whether to continue the center for the fourth and fifth years of the project period, the Secretary, in addition to the requirements of 34 CFR 75.253(a), will consider—

(a) The timeliness and effectiveness with which all requirements of the negotiated cooperative agreement have been or is being met by the Center; and

(b) The degree to which the Center's design and methodology demonstrates the potential for advancing significant new knowledge.

## **Proposed Absolute Priority 2—National Center on Dispute Resolution**

### *Background*

Disputes within the education community affect systemic change and results for children with disabilities. A dispute resolution process such as mediation is less costly to schools and families, can help to minimize adverse effects on a child's progress in school, and is more apt to foster positive relationships between families and educators than litigation. Technical assistance that focuses primarily on dispute resolution procedures would assist State educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), and families to resolve their differences in a less adversarial and more responsive manner than through standard due process hearing procedures, while enabling State and local entities to achieve systemic change and promoting improved early intervention, educational, and transitional results for children with disabilities. This priority would support a national center to provide technical assistance to SEAs, LEAs, and families on resolving their differences. The center would provide technical assistance on mediation and other effective dispute resolution procedures that do not impede parental rights under IDEA or otherwise conflict with the statute. As such the center would provide technical assistance as needed in order to facilitate the effective use of due process procedures. The chief aim of the center however, would be to provide needed technical assistance to enable parties to effectively resolve their disputes through more expedient and less confrontational means, including mediation.

### *Priority*

The Secretary establishes an absolute priority to support a national technical assistance center on dispute resolution procedures, including mediation. The center must—

(a) Provide technical assistance on dispute resolution procedures (with an emphasis on procedures other than due process hearings) to all States, outlying areas, and the freely associated States (to the extent such States participate in Parts B or C of IDEA), and the Bureau

of Indian Affairs. At a minimum, the center must—

(1) Conduct annual needs assessments;

(2) Develop technical assistance agreements with each entity; and

(3) Provide technical assistance, training, and on-going consultation based on the technical assistance agreements (including technical assistance, training, and on-going consultation at the local level, as appropriate).

(b) Coordinate with the existing technical assistance to parent project to provide technical assistance to all parent training and information centers and community parent resource centers on dispute resolution procedures;

(c) Develop informational exchanges about dispute resolution procedures between the center and other technical assistance and information dissemination systems;

(d) Establish an advisory group of persons with complementary expertise on dispute resolution procedures to advise the center on its technical assistance activities;

(e) Collect information on the use and effectiveness of mediation and other dispute resolution procedures. The effectiveness of any such procedure would be based on the degree to which all parties feel satisfied with the result and agree that an efficient and expeditious process had been followed;

(f) Identify, and disseminate information on, best practices in dispute resolution;

(g) Maintain an information data base that includes: (1) State practices on dispute resolution, including information on mediator training and the implementation of the mediation requirements in Parts B and C of IDEA; and (2) research, literature, and products about dispute resolution procedures.

(h) Examine the effectiveness of State efforts regarding mediation and other dispute resolution proceedings. Analyze information on the number of due process hearings, mediation sessions, and other dispute resolution proceedings conducted and on the outcome of each such hearing, session, or proceeding;

(i) Collaborate with the national information center on children with disabilities regarding the dissemination of information to respond to information needs. Establish linkages with the national information center on children with disabilities to ensure timely and accurate dissemination of information to customers;

(j) Serve as a clearinghouse for information on dispute resolution procedures;

(k) Conduct an annual forum each year of the project that identifies the unique features of dispute resolution procedures, the strengths of the procedures, and the potential for adopting the procedures. At least one forum must address the specific needs of under represented and underserved populations; another must address dispute resolution procedures (including mediator training issues) in the context of general education reform;

(l) Evaluate the impact of the center's technical assistance system and its components relative to the—

(1) Assessed needs of States and jurisdictions;

(2) Needs of parents; and

(3) Linkages with other technical assistance and information dissemination systems; and

(m) Budget for two trips annually to Washington, D.C., for: (1) A two-day Research to Practice Division Project Directors' meeting; and (2) a meeting to collaborate with the Research to Practice Division project officer and the other related projects to share information, and to discuss findings and methods of dissemination.

(n) Conduct, every two years, a results-based evaluation of the technical assistance provided. Such an evaluation must be conducted by a review team consisting of three experts approved by the Secretary and must measure elements such as—

(1) The type of technical assistance provided and the perception of its quality by the target audience; and

(2) The changes that occurred as a result of the technical assistance provided; and

(3) The review team will examine the progress that the Center has made with respect to the objectives in its application.

The services of the review team, including a two-day site visit to the center is to be performed during the last half of the center's second year and may be included in that year's evaluation required under 34 CFR 75.590. Costs associated with the services to be performed by the review team must also be included in the center's budget for year two. These costs are estimated to be approximately \$4,000.

Under this priority, the Secretary will make one award for a cooperative agreement with a project period of up to 60 months subject to the requirements of 34 CFR 75.253(a) for continuation awards. In determining whether to continue the center for the fourth and fifth years of the project period, the

Secretary, in addition to the requirements of 34 CFR 75.253(a), will consider—

(a) The timeliness and effectiveness with which all requirements of the negotiated cooperative agreement have been or is being met by the center.

(b) The degree to which the center's design and methodology demonstrates the potential for advancing significant new knowledge.

Program Authority: Section 685 of IDEA.

## **Research and Innovation to Improve Services and Results for Children With Disabilities**

### *Purpose of Program*

To produce, and advance the use of, knowledge to: (1) Improve services provided under IDEA, including the practices of professionals and others involved in providing those services to children with disabilities; and (2) improve educational and early intervention results for infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities.

### *Priority*

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), the Secretary proposes to give an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary proposes to fund under this competition only applications that meet this absolute priority.

### *Proposed Absolute Priority—Directed Research Projects*

This priority provides support for projects that advance and improve the knowledge base and improve the practice of professionals, parents, and others providing early intervention, special education, and related services, including professionals who work with children with disabilities in regular education environments and natural environments, to provide those children effective instruction and interventions that enable them to learn and develop successfully. Under this priority, projects must support innovation, development, exchange of information, and use of advancements in knowledge and practice designed to contribute to the improvement of early intervention, instruction, and learning of infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities.

A research project must address one of the following focus areas and the Secretary intends to award at least one project in each focus area:

#### *Focus 1—Beacons of Excellence*

Research projects supported under Focus 1 must identify and study schools or programs achieving exemplary results for students with disabilities in the

context of efforts to achieve exemplary results for all students. Projects must develop and apply procedures and criteria to identify these schools or programs, and to identify factors contributing to exemplary learning or developmental results, and examine how those factors and other factors relate to achieving exemplary learning or developmental results for children with disabilities. Projects may focus on early intervention, preschool, elementary, or secondary levels, or a combination of levels. Following the second year of the project, the Secretary may fund an optional six-month period for additional dissemination activities.

#### *Focus 2—The Sustainability of Promising Innovations*

A growing body of practice-based research and model demonstration work in schools, local districts, and early intervention programs, including projects supported by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), has focused on meeting the needs of, and improving results for, children with disabilities in schools, districts, or early intervention programs involved in reform and restructuring initiatives. Some of this work is yielding promising positive results for children with disabilities. However, little is known about the extent to which the innovations developed and implemented in these efforts are sustained in project sites beyond the term of time-limited external support and assistance.

Focus 2 supports projects to study the implementation of practices that have been found to be effective in meeting the needs of children with disabilities by reform and restructuring initiatives in local and district schools, or early intervention programs. The study must address: (a) The extent to which practices that have been shown to be effective have been sustained beyond the existence of the projects; and (b) factors that influence the level of sustainability. Factors to be studied may include, but are not limited to: (a) The nature of the innovations and the extent to which the innovations have undergone adaptation or alteration over time; (b) the type and extent of support strategies employed during initial implementation stages and over time; (c) planned and unplanned changes in agency, school organizational or structural contexts, or both; (d) the level of penetration of the innovation; (e) the actual or perceived, or both, cost and benefit for participants; (f) constancy of site leadership, staff, and policy requirements; (g) the extent of consonance or dissonance between

critical features of the innovations and existing (and emerging) school and district or agency practices and policies; and (h) resource access and allocation. Projects must provide comprehensive descriptions of the targeted effective practices to be studied, and evidence of positive results for children with disabilities. In addition, projects must dedicate the bulk of support requested to research on the issues of sustainability including the ability to sustain the project results beyond the life of the project. The Secretary particularly encourages an in-depth case study research design where the site or sites to be studied is the case (unit of analysis).

#### *Focus 3—Research on Improving Reading Comprehension Results for Children With Learning Disabilities*

In recent years, research has advanced our understanding of how skilled readers comprehend and instructional strategies that support children with learning disabilities to comprehend text. Comprehension is not merely a text-based process where meaning resides in the text and the role of the reader is to get the meaning. Meaning comes from both the text and the reader. Many children with learning disabilities need an instructional program that: (a) Teaches them how to access prior knowledge (e.g., strategies such as story grammar elements, semantic mapping, or think aloud sheets); (b) motivates and supports persistence on a task (e.g., including expressions of a student's own thoughts when reading and writing, questioning the expert or inquiry, or using technology or grouping practices); and (c) teaches them cognitive and metacognitive strategies for reading with understanding, including how to monitor one's own progress (e.g., summarizing, generating questions, mnemonics, or imagery). Therefore, becoming a skilled reader is not automatic. Teachers need to teach reading comprehension, and, in particular, children with learning disabilities need effective instructional approaches.

Under Focus 3, a research project must pursue a systematic program of applied research that focuses on one or more issues related to improving reading comprehension results of children with learning disabilities related to reading. These issues include, but are not limited to:

- (a) The extent to which children with learning disabilities need differential strategies to comprehend narrative and expository text;
- (b) The types of effective comprehension instruction for children

with learning disabilities in grades K–2, 3–5, and 6–8 inclusive; the components of particularly effective programs for children with learning disabilities; the basal materials, supplemental materials, and instructional strategies used by teachers; and how families support the instructional program;

(c) The types of effective questioning strategies used by teachers, peers, and experts affecting comprehension; and

(d) The kind of contexts that promote critical analysis and evaluation for comprehension and learning, and the grouping practices, instructional strategies, and curricula that promote comprehension and problem solving.

#### *Focus 4—Studying Models That Bridge the Gap Between Research and Practice*

Educational research most often includes the following phases: (1) Planning and preparation; (2) information gathering; (3) analysis and interpretation; (4) reporting and dissemination; and (5) use of findings. In traditional research models, the researcher is solely or primarily responsible for all phases but the last. Using research findings is seen as a job for the practitioner. However, it has been observed that research knowledge rarely translates directly into practice.

In recent years, a variety of promising models have been developed to bridge the gap between research and practice by altering the roles of researchers and practitioners for one or more phases of the research. In some models (e.g., interactive research and development, practitioner-researcher, partnership research) researchers and practitioners collaborate in all phases of the research process. Some of these models include parents on their site-based research teams. In other models, practitioners, working individually (e.g., practitioner-research linkers), in groups (e.g., practitioner study groups), or in pairs (e.g., peer coaching) interpret extant research to understand how to integrate research into practice. In some models, teachers conduct research (e.g., action research, or collegial experimentation). To date there have been few systematic examinations of the effectiveness of the various models to improve practice in special education or early intervention.

Under Focus 4, research projects must implement and examine a model or models for using research knowledge to improve educational practice and results for children with disabilities.

In studying a model or models, projects must apply methodologies with the capacity to determine the effectiveness of the model or models as implemented in practice settings. The projects must identify the knowledge

utilization model or models to be studied, specify the components of the knowledge utilization model or models selected or created, the supports and policies necessary to support the model or models, both alterable and unalterable factors affecting practice improvement, and the effect of the model or models to improve organizational culture, practitioner attitudes and practices, and child results. In judging effectiveness, the projects must address improvements for researchers, practitioners, and children with disabilities.

The projects must report their findings in a manner which can serve as a "blueprint" so that practitioners in other school districts or agencies can implement the model using research knowledge to improve practice in special education or early intervention.

*Focus 5—Inclusion of Students With Disabilities in Large-Scale Assessment Programs*

IDEA includes a number of provisions to ensure the participation of students with disabilities in general State and district-wide assessment programs. Students with disabilities must participate in large-scale assessment programs if they are to benefit from the educational accountability and reforms that are linked to these assessments. While much information has been gained from prior efforts to include disabled students in assessments such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, applied research is needed to build on this base of information in order to provide technical and implementation information to guide the effective inclusion of students with disabilities in large-scale assessment programs.

Focus 5 supports projects that pursue systematic programs of applied research to determine how State and local educational programs can best meet one or more of the following requirements:

- (a) Including students with disabilities in either general State or district-wide assessment programs or both;
- (b) Developing and using appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities on general State or district-wide assessments, or both;
- (c) Developing and using alternate assessments for students with disabilities who cannot participate in State and district-wide assessment programs;
- (d) Reporting on the participation or performance or both of students with disabilities in either general assessment programs, or on alternate assessments, or both; and

- (e) Making decisions during the development of individualized education programs concerning individual modifications in the administration of State or district-wide assessments, or individual participation in alternate assessments.

*Focus 6—Synthesize and Communicate a Professional Knowledge Base: Contributions to Research and Practice*

Traditionally researchers have communicated their findings from individual research projects and systematic lines of research through journal publications and conference presentations. These findings are communicated to other researchers and engage researchers in dialogues. These dialogues contribute to innovation and development in special education and early intervention. In recent years the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has sought to expand these traditional approaches. While continuing to support innovation and development, OSEP has established a goal to foster the use of a professional knowledge base by professionals who serve children with disabilities and parents who are involved in the education and development of their children with disabilities.

Focus 6 supports projects that synthesize and communicate an extant professional knowledge base on curricular, instructional, early intervention, or organizational strategies and approaches that would contribute to professional practice as a means for achieving better results for children with disabilities. In past years, the Department has supported syntheses on positive behavioral supports of children who exhibit challenging behaviors, grouping practices in reading, differences between children with learning disabilities and low achieving students, instructional approaches for special education students who speak English as a second language, generalization strategies for using augmentative communication devices, interventions for children with learning disabilities, and effects of setting on social and academic outcomes. Building upon these previous efforts, the Secretary intends to support and fund a limited number of new syntheses in other areas such as—

- (a) Effects of self-determination and self-advocacy interventions on children with disabilities;
- (b) Effects of interventions on children with disabilities that promote generalization of academic or developmental skills;

- (c) Effects of teacher or practitioner efficacy on children with disabilities' achievement or development;

- (d) Effects of technology for improving literacy results for children with disabilities;

- (e) Effects of school-wide approaches for improving reading results of children with disabilities; or

- (f) Effects of school-wide approaches for improving math results of children with disabilities.

Under Focus 6, a synthesis project must—

- (a) Identify the topical focus and the relevant and irrelevant concepts under review, and pose hypotheses around which the synthesis would be conducted;

- (b) Identify and implement rigorous social science methods for synthesizing the professional knowledge base (e.g., integrative reviews (Cooper, 1982), best-evidence synthesis (Slavin, 1989), meta-analysis (Glass, 1977), multi-vocal approach (Ogawa & Malen, 1991), and National Institute of Mental Health consensus development program (Huberman, 1977));

- (c) Develop hypotheses with input from potential consumers of the synthesis to enhance the usability and validity of project efforts. Consumers include researchers, technical assistance providers, policy makers, educators, other relevant practitioners, individuals with disabilities, and parents;

- (d) Develop linkage of synthesis with technical assistance providers and disseminators and prepare products for use by practitioners, technical assistance providers, and disseminators;

- (e) Implement procedures for locating and organizing the extant literature and ensure that these procedures address and guard against potential threats to the integrity, including generalization of findings;

- (f) Establish criteria and procedures for judging the appropriateness of studies;

- (g) Meet with the Office of Special Education Programs to review the project's topical focus and methodological approach for conducting the synthesis prior to the start of its synthesis;

- (h) Analyze and interpret the professional knowledge base, including identification of general trends in the literature, points of consensus and conflict among the findings, and areas of evidence where the literature base is lacking. The interpretation of the literature base must address the contributions of the findings for improving the practice of professionals serving children with disabilities; and

(i) Submit a draft report in the 21st month of the project and, based on peer reviews, revise and submit a final report of the synthesis in the 24th month. During the second year of the project, the Secretary may fund an optional six-month period for additional dissemination activities.

*Focus 7—Improving the Delivery of Special Education and Related Services or Early Intervention Services to Children Who Are English Language Learners*

Appropriate instruction and intervention for children with disabilities who are limited in their English language proficiency can be achieved in a variety of ways. Ultimately, the responsibility for assuring that the English language learner is receiving appropriate access to the curriculum or intervention rests with the school district or agency in its provision of necessary training and ongoing support to the teachers or practitioners. Providing native speakers of the child's language in the classroom or intervention program, including parents, may not be sufficient to assure delivery of appropriate education or interventions. Limitations of resources and availability of qualified bilingual personnel to provide special education, related services, or early intervention services throughout the Nation suggest that other approaches should be investigated that will enhance the availability and assurance of the provision of meaningful education.

Under Focus 7 projects must pursue a systematic program of applied research that focuses on one or more areas related to improved approaches to the delivery of special education and related services or early intervention services to children who are English language learners. These areas may include, for example—

- (a) Examination of early reading practices (K–3) for children with learning and behavior issues who are limited in their English proficiency;
- (b) Improvement of reading comprehension in content area instruction in grades 4–8;
- (c) Examination of alternatives in the delivery of services to children with disabilities who are English language learners (e.g., is placement optimal in regular classes or programs with support from special education resources or is the child better served in placements with other children with similar disabilities with support from bilingual resources?);
- (d) The role cultural issues play in the provision of services (e.g., how do the perceptions of families regarding

disabilities and services affect delivery of services?);

(e) The preferred strategies to support the transition from bilingual to mainstream English speaking classes or programs (e.g., what teaching or intervention strategies are most effective?);

(f) Examination of specific instructional approaches that promote problem solving and comprehension in reading, science, math, and social studies;

(g) Examination of instructional or intervention approaches for growth in English language learning for these children;

(h) Factors that improve the effectiveness of cooperative learning and classwide peer tutoring for English language learners;

(i) The techniques that improve the transfer of proven practices to practitioner; and

(j) The qualitative differences that exist in implementation of proven practices with practitioner and children who are English language learners who are located in inner-city schools or served through inner-city agencies (e.g., what is the involvement of families).

*Focus 8—Educating Children With Disabilities in Inclusive Settings*

Focus 8 supports research projects to (a) identify new or improved systems change strategies that provide all children with disabilities, including children with severe disabilities, effective access to the general curriculum in regular classrooms as well as to nonsegregated extracurricular activities, and (b) describe how these school inclusion efforts as identified in (a) are aligned with systemic reform and school improvement strategies for all students.

Each project will identify, describe, and examine: (1) The efficacy and linkages of existing systemic reform and school inclusion strategies; (2) how school systems provide administrative and other supports in general education settings to meet the needs of students with disabilities and other diverse learners; (3) how standards established for all children and authentic assessment practices are implemented for students with disabilities, and (4) social support strategies, including peer mediated strategies, that promote positive interactions among students with disabilities and their same-aged peers to foster cohesive school and classroom communities.

To be considered for funding under Focus 8, a research project must—

- (a) Identify specific interventions or strategies to be investigated;

(b) Design the research activities in a manner that is likely to improve services for all students in inclusive classrooms, including students with severe disabilities;

(c) Conduct the research in schools pursuing systemic education reform and school inclusion; and

(d) Use methodological procedures designed to produce findings useful to program implementers and policy makers regarding the impact and interaction effects of systemic reform and school inclusion strategies in State and local contexts and demonstrate the benefits to students including the reciprocal benefits of inclusive schooling for all students.

*Requirements for All Directed Research Projects*

In addition to addressing one of the above mentioned focus areas, projects must—

(a) Apply rigorous research methods (qualitative or quantitative, or both) to identify approaches contributing to improved results for children with disabilities;

(b) Provide a conceptual framework, based on extant research and theory to serve as a basis for the issues to be studied, the research design, and the target population;

(c) Prepare dissemination materials for both researcher and practitioner audiences and develop linkages with U.S. Department of Education dissemination and technical assistance providers, in particular those supported under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, to communicate research findings and distribute products; and

(d) Budget for two trips annually to Washington, D.C., for: (1) A two-day Research to Practice Division Project Directors' meeting; and (2) another meeting to collaborate with the Research to Practice Division project officer and the other projects funded under this priority, and to share information and discuss findings and methods of dissemination.

*Executive Order 12866*

This notice of proposed priorities has been reviewed in accordance with Executive Order 12866. Under the terms of the order the Secretary has assessed the potential costs and benefits of this regulatory action.

The potential costs associated with the notice of proposed priorities are those determined by the Secretary as necessary for administering this program effectively and efficiently.

In assessing the potential costs and benefits—both quantitative and qualitative—of this notice of proposed

priorities, the Secretary has determined that the benefits of the proposed priorities justify the costs.

The Secretary has also determined that this regulatory action does not unduly interfere with State, local, and tribal governments in the exercise of their governmental functions.

To assist the Department in complying with the specific requirements of Executive Order 12866, the Secretary invites comment on whether there may be further opportunities to reduce any potential costs or increase potential benefits resulting from these proposed priorities without impeding the effective and efficient administration of the program.

#### *Summary of Potential Costs and Benefits*

There are no identified costs associated with this notice of proposed priorities. Announcement of the priorities will not result in costs to State and local governments, recipients of grant funds, or to children and youth with disabilities and their families. The benefit from these priorities will be to focus activities and Federal assistance on improving results for children and youth with disabilities.

#### *Intergovernmental Review*

All programs in this notice (except for the Research and Innovation Projects) are subject to the requirements of Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR Part 79. The objective of the Executive order is to foster an intergovernmental partnership

and a strengthened federalism by relying on processes developed by State and local governments for coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance.

In accordance with the order, this document is intended to provide early notification of the Department's specific plans and actions for this program.

#### *Invitation to Comment*

Interested persons are invited to submit comments and recommendations regarding these proposed priorities.

All comments submitted in response to this notice will be available for public inspection, during and after the comment period, in Room 3524, 300 C Street, SW, Washington, D.C., between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday of each week except Federal holidays.

On request the Department supplies an appropriate aid, such as a reader or print magnifier, to an individual with a disability who needs assistance to review the comments or other documents in the public rulemaking docket for these proposed priorities. An individual with a disability who wants to schedule an appointment for this type of aid may call (202)-205-8113 or (202) 260-9895. An individual who uses a TDD may call the Federal Information Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339, between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., eastern time, Monday through Friday.

#### *Electronic Access to This Document*

Anyone may view this document, as well as all other Department of

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To use the pdf you must have the Adobe Acrobat Reader Program with Search, which is available free at either of the previous sites. If you have questions about using the pdf, call the U.S. Government Printing Office toll free at 1-888-293-6498.

Anyone may also view these documents in text copy only on an electronic bulletin board of the Department. Telephone: (202) 219-1511 or, toll free, 1-800-222-4922. The documents are located under Option G—Files/Announcements, Bulletins, and Press Releases.

**Note:** The official version of a document is the document published in the **Federal Register**.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Numbers: Research and Innovation to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities, 84.324; and Technical Assistance and Dissemination to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities, 84.326)

Dated: January 29, 1998.

**Judith E. Heumann,**

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