

# Abstract of Project

Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education

The Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education, or COPSSE, is supported by a cooperative agreement between the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), and the University of Florida. The Center is directed by Drs. Paul Sindelar and Mary Brownell.

In addition to Drs. Sindelar and Brownell, scholars from UF, Johns Hopkins University, and Vanderbilt University contributed to the project's Phase I agenda. Ten teacher education research syntheses were written, and, with the assistance of a Research Design Panel (RDP), these syntheses were used to develop a research agenda in special education personnel preparation. In Phase I, we also solicited syntheses of research in 10 related service disciplines and will conduct a design panel with these authors in February.

RDP members represented the essential disciplines of teacher education research: special education teacher educators and policy experts, teacher education content specialists, and quantitative and qualitative methodologists. They helped identify four guiding questions for our research, presented below ranked by importance and feasibility.

>What characterizes efficient and effective practice in initial preparation as measured by beginning teacher quality and retention?

>How do school and district context influence beginning teacher quality and retention?

>How does state policy context affect the shortage of qualified special education teachers?

>How does policy context affect the content and process of teacher education?

In Phase II, in collaboration with colleagues at Johns Hopkins University, the University of Colorado at Boulder, and the Instructional Research Group of Long Beach, California, we will conduct research drawn from these guiding questions. Our initial work will focus on validating measures of beginning teacher quality using measures of student performance as criteria. Next year, we will use these measures in studies of initial preparation with a larger sample of beginning teachers. By doing so, we hope to identify teacher preparation practices associated with beginning teacher competence as well as improved student outcomes. We also are planning a study of the cost effectiveness of training options.