Expanding teacher preparation pathways for paraprofessionals: A recruiting seminar series

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Changing Demographics and Community-Based Research

- In 2004, the Salt Lake City School District was identified as one of the fastest growing districts in the nation with regard to student diversity.

- 53% of Salt Lake City School District’s students are identified as “minority” with 89 languages spoken.

- Building on a 20 year partnership and a willingness to collaborate – The University Neighborhood Partnership (UNP) serves as a linking agent between the College of Education and SLCSD.
Who are paraprofessionals?

Nationally, approximately 500,000 paraprofessionals work within school settings (Shkodriani, 2004).

The work of paraprofessionals is becoming increasingly more technical, requiring increased training and evaluation.

Changes in the work responsibilities of paraprofessionals have brought an increase in accountability standards.
Paraprofessionals and NCLB

NCLB mandates require that paraprofessionals meet highly qualified standards including:

1) completing post secondary education;

2) completing an Associate’s degree; and/or

3) completing a state or nationally based test, demonstrating competencies in reading, writing, math and reading, writing, or math readiness – in addition to possessing a high school diploma.
Project Components

■ Year-long graduate level professional development course on entry into a teacher education program.

■ Course curriculum included the legal, historical, and philosophical underpinnings of teacher education in the US, with an emphasis on the experiences of immigrant populations.

■ An introduction to teacher licensure and strategies for navigating policies and procedures in higher education and state licensure programs.

■ Course activities included book study groups on urban education, interviews and observations with school personnel, micro-teaching using instructional strategies for students with diverse learning and language abilities, and portfolio development.
Data Themes

- 1. Expanding the teaching profession to include the unique experiences, skills, and professional goals of paraprofessionals.

- 2. Creating a responsive curriculum.

- 3. Understanding the benefits of site-based mentors.

- 4. Thinking beyond applications and form completion.
Policy Recommendations

- **Finding One:** Paraprofessionals possess an astute awareness of the demands placed on classroom teachers and their students in response to NCLB.

- **Finding Two:** Tools such as professional book clubs serve as an effective pedagogical and curricular approach to learning about teaching.

- **Finding Three:** The unique perspective of immigrant paraprofessionals influence curriculum development.

- **Finding Four:** The benefits of immigrants’ voices for non-native and native English speakers are profound.