

BREAKTHROUGH RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

PREPARING TEACHERS TO TEACH CHILDREN WITH DIVERSE ABILITIES

More and more classrooms are blended with students of varying abilities—which means future teachers need to be prepared to effectively teach children with a wide range of abilities. *Project Blend* prepares teacher educators who can help realize this goal.

PREPARING TOMORROW'S TEACHERS FOR ALL LEARNERS

Through *Project Blend*, doctoral students are prepared to equip future teachers to teach children with diverse abilities. Nine doctoral students at a time take part in the project, which focuses on four competencies:

- Knowledge of disability law and educational policy for children birth to 5
- The ability to align early childhood education curriculum to state and Common Core Standards for early learning
- The skills to translate research into practice
- The ability to improve child outcomes through rigorous research and data-based decision making

Susan Fowler, professor in Special Education in the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is principal investigator, and Rosa



“We’ve developed a model program for preparing doctoral students who will work in early childhood education, including early childhood special education.” —Susan Fowler

Milagros Santos, professor in Special Education, is co-principal investigator for the project, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education for \$1.24 million. “We’ve developed a model program for preparing doctoral students who will work in early childhood education, including early childhood special education,” Fowler says. “And we’ve developed experiential modules that can be used in other universities and by other teacher trainers.”

STUDENTS GAIN EXPERIENCE, READY TO MAKE IMPACT

The doctoral students gain hands-on experience in numerous ways, including



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with the Illinois Early Learning website project, a resource for prekindergarten teachers throughout Illinois. Project Blend participants have already published articles, which are being widely used in modifying curriculum, Fowler says. In addition, Project students have developed a set of newsletters that have been distributed to 22,000 parents across the state, taught preservice teacher education courses, presented their original research at conferences, and served on policy committees at the state level. “Our students are nationally recruited,” Fowler says. “They’re all going to highly rated places where they are likely to have a strong impact.”

LEARN MORE

Learn more at education.illinois.edu or contact Fowler at safowler@illinois.edu or Santos at rsantos@illinois.edu.



EDUCATION AT ILLINOIS

BREAKTHROUGH RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

PROJECT BLEND: PREPARING TOMORROW'S TEACHERS

Project Blend, funded by the **U.S. Department of Education for \$1.24 million**, is a model program for preparing doctoral students who will work in early childhood education, including early childhood special education. Students are prepared to effectively teach children with a wide range of abilities within the same classroom. Susan Fowler, professor in Special Education, is the principal investigator, and Rosa Milagros Santos, professor in Special Education, is co-principal investigator for the project.

BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

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