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Florida's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG): Successful Graduates

Florida's SPDG is a five year project funded by the USDOE, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The grant planning was designed to respond to concerns about the graduation, proficiency and dropout rates of students with disabilities. The projects funded by the SPDG will build capacity to increase school completion rates of secondary-aged students with disabilities (grades 6–12) through the provision of professional development to support and scale-up existing research-based practices, develop capacity for use of evidence-based dropout prevention strategies, and enlist parental support of these research-based practices.

Activities include (a) providing supports to districts and schools in implementation of the *Check and Connect*, a research-proven model of sustained intervention for promoting student engagement with school and learning; (b) scaling-up an existing initiative related to the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM™) to enable both rural and urban schools and districts to deepen their implementation of this evidence-based program; and (c) support to sustain the implementation of these practices by increasing the awareness and knowledge of parents. Additionally, as part of the other activities included in this proposal, the project will convene a work group to recommend changes to the certification requirements for teachers serving students with disabilities.

The performance of districts on SPP Indicators 1, 2 and 3c will be used to select districts who will be invited to apply for support with implementation of Check and Connect and/or SIM™ for a two year period. Implementation sites will be provided with financial support for hiring of Check and Connect Mentors, funds for travel to allow school personnel to attend professional development in C&C or SIM™, funds for substitutes or stipends, onsite and virtual coaching, teacher and student materials and ongoing technical assistance to ensure fidelity of implementation of C&C and/or SIM™

Grant partners include;

1. Florida Gulf Coast University- responsible for grant administration and oversight
2. The Institute of Community Integration at the University of Minnesota (developers of the Check and Connect program)- responsible for supporting Florida to provide training in Check and Connect and support efforts to build state capacity
3. University of South Florida, St. Petersburg campus- home of the Check and Connect Project in Florida
4. Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) Administration/HRD Project-home of the SIM™ Project in Florida
5. Central Florida Parent Center, Family Network on Disabilities, Inc., and Parent to Parent of Miami-subcontracted to provide various forms of support for engaging family members with implementation efforts.

Targeted long-term outcomes for students with disabilities include an increase in school academic achievement as defined by proficiency on state assessments statewide to 53% proficient reading and 55% proficient math, a decrease in the dropout rates to 3% or less statewide, and an increase in the standard diploma high school graduation rate to at least 58% statewide.



The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, #H323A120025. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer, David Guardino.