

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program

AGENCY: Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of final priority.

SUMMARY: The Secretary announces a final priority for the Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program. The Secretary may use this priority in Fiscal Year 1997 and subsequent years. The Secretary takes this action to focus Federal assistance on identified needs to improve results for children with disabilities. This final priority is intended to ensure wide and effective use of program funds.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This priority takes effect on May 12, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For further information on this priority contact the U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., room 3317, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202-2641. The preferred method for requesting information is to FAX your request to: (202) 205-8717. Telephone: (202) 260-9182.

Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number: (202) 205-9860. Individuals with disabilities may obtain a copy of this notice in an alternate format (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotope, or computer diskette) by contacting the Department as listed above.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program, authorized by Part E of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1441-1443), provides support to 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 in regular education environments—to provide children with disabilities effective instruction and enable these children to learn successfully.

On February 21, 1996, the Secretary published a notice of proposed priority for this program in the **Federal Register** (61 FR 6754-6755).

This final priority supports the National Education Goals by improving understanding of how to enable children and youth with disabilities to reach higher levels of academic achievement.

The publication of this priority does not preclude the Secretary from proposing additional priorities, nor does

it limit the Secretary to funding only this priority, subject to meeting applicable rulemaking requirements. Funding of particular projects depends on the availability of funds, and the quality of the applications received.

Note: This notice of final priority does not solicit applications. A notice inviting applications under this competition is published in a separate notice in this issue of the **Federal Register**.

Analysis of Comments and Changes

In response to the Secretary's invitation in the notice of proposed priority, five parties submitted comments. An analysis of the comments and of the changes in the proposed priority follows. Technical and other minor changes—as well as suggested changes the Secretary is not legally authorized to make under the applicable statutory authority—are not addressed.

Priority—Research Institutes to Accelerate Learning for Children With Disabilities With Curricular and Instructional Interventions

Comment: Two commenters noted that minority students comprise a disproportionate number of special education students, and that as students advance in grades the performance gap between African Americans and their white counterparts increases. The commenter recommended that the priority require involvement of minority researchers either as staff of the project or require collaboration with minority institutions of higher education to ensure that the specific educational needs of minority group students with disabilities will be addressed by the research institute.

Discussion: The priority, as written, requires research across multiple sites to represent organizational and demographic diversity, collaboration with experts and researchers in related subject matter and methodological fields, as appropriate. In addition, the selection criteria that will be used to evaluate applications include criteria for determining how the applicant will provide equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are members of racial or ethnic minority groups; and the extent to which the applicant, as part of its nondiscriminatory employment practices, encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of racial or ethnic minority groups that have been traditionally underrepresented.

Changes: None.

Comment: One commenter recommended that the priority address the needs of students with low-

incidence disabilities as a main area of concern. Specifically, the commenter recommended the priority emphasize students with deafness, blindness, and physical disability, who also experience secondary and tertiary disabilities such as developmental disability, behavior disorder, and multiple disabilities.

Discussion: The priority as written does not preclude an applicant from addressing the needs of students with low-incidence disabilities as a main area of concern. The Secretary prefers that the language of the priority be broad enough so that applicants may have the opportunity to propose and justify their particular project focus.

Changes: None.

Comment: Two commenters recommended that the priority be broadened to include students with disabilities through the eighth grade to include more middle school students. One commenter noted that in many States, students enter middle schools in the 5th or 6th grade, thus the proposed limit of grade six may prevent school-wide intervention programs in some areas. Furthermore, the commenters stated that it may be useful to follow students in the upper middle school grades who have completed interventions in grades K-6.

Discussion: The Secretary agrees with the commenters that it would be very useful to follow students in the upper middle school grades in addition to students in kindergarten through grade six. In order to accomplish this, the Secretary believes that the most beneficial approach would be to support two institutes instead of one. One institute would focus on curricular and instructional classroom based interventions that accelerate subject matter learning for children with disabilities in kindergarten through grade three, and the second institute would focus on grades four through eight.

Changes: The title and priority has been revised to establish two research institutes to study curricular and instructional classroom based interventions that accelerate subject matter learning for children with disabilities and promote its sustained use by practitioners. One institute would study curricular and instructional classroom based interventions in kindergarten through grade three. The other institute would study curricular and instructional classroom based interventions in grades four through grade eight.

Priority

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3) the Secretary gives an absolute preference to

applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary will fund under this competition only applications that meet this absolute priority:

Absolute Priority—Research Institutes to Accelerate Learning for Children With Disabilities With Curricular and Instructional Interventions: Kindergarten Through Grade Three and Grade Four Through Grade Eight

Background

The consequences of failing to learn are serious. Lack of learning in one domain reduces an individual's capacity to benefit from educational experience. Failure establishes a self-perpetuating cycle and negatively affects the individual's disposition toward lifelong learning, employment, and contribution to society. Most children with disabilities face challenges to learning. These challenges are amplified as calls are made for higher standards to be achieved by all students, including children with disabilities, and as more children with disabilities are educated in general education classrooms.

Evidence from the National Longitudinal Transition Study indicates children with disabilities are not learning subject matter content. An urgency exists to develop powerful curricular and instructional interventions that maximize rates of development, promote generalized learning, and reduce discrepancies between their performance and that of their peers.

Intervention research has demonstrated that children with disabilities possess the potential to learn, participate, and contribute in school, home, community, and work place. Research on instructional interventions for children with disabilities has been the hallmark of special education research. For example, research on direct instruction, behavioral management interventions, learning strategies, peer mediated learning, and reciprocal teaching has led to improvements in professional practice.

Yet, single solution interventions are insufficient for teaching children with disabilities complex subject matter content. In many instances, these interventions are content free. Moreover, little empirical evidence is available on the context of the classroom for supporting the implementation of these solutions.

Priority

The Secretary establishes an absolute priority for the purpose of establishing two research institutes to study

curricular and instructional classroom based interventions that accelerate subject matter learning for children with disabilities and promote its sustained use by practitioners. One institute will be established to study curricular and instructional classroom based interventions that accelerate subject matter learning in kindergarten through grade three. Another institute will be established to study curricular and instructional classroom based interventions that accelerate subject matter learning in grade four through grade eight.

Both institutes must examine—

- (1) The effectiveness of the intervention for children with disabilities; and
- (2) The classroom context that supports the implementation of the interventions that produce and sustain positive learning outcomes for children with disabilities, including such factors as classroom groups; classroom and cross-classroom management strategies; curriculum design principles; classroom settings; instructional materials; amount of time on task; integration into the curriculum; and teacher actions, skills, and attitudes.

The research may include, but need not be limited to, studying classroom based exemplars and models, designing and implementing interventions, and collecting student and teacher data from exemplars, using a rich array of research methods to reach the intended goals of this priority and as articulated by the proposed research hypotheses.

Both the Kindergarten through Grade Three Research Institute, and the Grade Four through Grade Eight Research Institute must—

- (a) Design and conduct a strategic program of research that focuses on helping students with disabilities learn subject matter content in critical areas such as reading and math, and builds upon the existing research knowledge for teaching children with disabilities;
- (b) Design and conduct a strategic program of research across multiple sites to represent organizational and demographic diversity;
- (c) Collect, analyze, and communicate student outcome data and supporting context data, and multiple outcome data for teachers, parents, and administrators, as appropriate;
- (d) Collaborate with other research institutes supported under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and experts and researchers in related subject matter and methodological fields, as appropriate for the program of research, to design and conduct the strategic program of research;

(e) Collaborate with communication specialists and professional and advocacy organizations to ensure that findings are prepared in formats that are useable for specific audiences such as teachers, administrators, and other service providers;

(f) Develop linkages with Education Department technical assistance providers to communicate research findings and distribute products;

(g) Provide training and research opportunities for a limited number of graduate students including students who are from traditionally underrepresented groups; and

(h) Meet with the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) project officer in the first four months of the project to review the program of research and communication approaches.

The project must budget for two trips annually to Washington, D.C. for: (1) A two-day Research Project Directors' meeting; and (2) another meeting to meet and collaborate with the OSEP project officer.

Under this priority, The Secretary will make two awards:

(a) One award for a Research Institute to Accelerate Learning for Children with Disabilities with Curricular and Instructional Interventions in Kindergarten through Grade Three; and

(b) One award for a Research Institute to Accelerate Learning for Children with Disabilities with Curricular and Instructional Interventions in Grade Four through Grade Eight.

Both awards will be for cooperative agreements with project periods of up to 60 months subject to the requirements of 34 CFR 75.253(a) for continuation awards. In determining whether to continue the institutes for the fourth and fifth years of the project periods, the Secretary, in addition to the requirements of 34 CFR 75.253(a), will consider—

(1) The recommendation of a review team for each institute consisting of three experts selected by the Secretary. The services of the review teams, including a two-day site visit to the institutes are to be performed during the last half of each institute'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 teams must also be included in each institute's budget for year two. These costs are estimated to be approximately \$4,000 for each institute;

(2) The timeliness and effectiveness with which all requirements of the negotiated cooperative agreement have

been or are being met by each institute; and

(3) The degree to which each institute's research designs and methodologies demonstrate the potential for advancing significant new knowledge.

Applicable Program Regulations: 34 CFR Part 324.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1441–1443. (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 84.023, Research in Education of Individuals with Disabilities Program)

Dated: April 8, 1997.

Judith E. Heumann,

Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

[FR Doc. 97–9401 Filed 4–10–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000–01–P

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[CFDA No.: 84.023V]

Research in Education of Individuals With Disabilities Program; Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 1997

Purpose of Program: To 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 in regular education environments—to provide children with disabilities effective instruction and enable them to learn successfully.

This notice supports the National Education Goals by improving understanding of how to enable children and youth with disabilities to reach higher levels of academic achievement.

Eligible Applicants: Eligible applicants are State and local educational agencies, institutions of higher education, and other public agencies and nonprofit private organizations.

Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 75, 77, 80, 81, 82, 85, and 86; and (b) The regulations for this program in 34 CFR Part 324.

Note: The regulations in 34 CFR Part 86 apply to institutions of higher education only.

Priority

Absolute Priority—Research Institutes to Accelerate Learning for Children With Disabilities With Curricular and Instructional Interventions: Kindergarten Through Grade Three and Grade Four Through Grade Eight (84.023V)

The priority Research Institutes to Accelerate Learning for Children with Disabilities with Curricular and Instructional Interventions: Kindergarten through Grade Three and Grade Four through Grade Eight in the notice of final priority for this program, published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register**, applies to this competition.

Applications available: April 16, 1997.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: June 2, 1997.

Estimated Number of Awards: Two.

Project Period: Up to 60 months.

Maximum Award: The Secretary rejects and does not consider an application that proposes a budget exceeding \$700,000 for any single budget period of 12 months. However, because of budgetary considerations contingent upon congressional action, the Secretary may change the maximum amount through a notice published in the **Federal Register**.

Page Limits: Part III of the application, the Application Narrative, requires applicants to address the selection criteria that will be used by reviewers in evaluating individual proposals. The applicant must limit the Part III—Application Narrative, to no more than 60 double-spaced 8 1/2 x 11" pages (on one side only) with one inch margins (top, bottom, and sides). This page limitation applies to all material presented in the application narrative—including, for example, any charts, tables, figures, and graphs. The application narrative page limit does not apply to: Part I—the cover sheet; Part II—the budget section (including the narrative budget justification); and Part IV—the assurances and certifications. Also, the one-page abstract, resumes, bibliography, or letters of support, while considered part of the application, are not subject to the page limitation. Applicants should note that reviewers are not required to review any information provided in addition to the application information listed above.

All sections of text in the application narrative must be double-spaced (no more than 3 lines per vertical inch). If using a proportional computer font, use no smaller than a 12-point font, and an average character density no greater than 14 characters per inch. If using a nonproportional font or a typewriter, do not use more than 12 characters to the inch. Double-spacing and font requirements do not apply within charts, tables, figures, and graphs, but the information presented in those formats should be easily readable. The Secretary rejects and does not consider an application that does not adhere to these requirements.

Note: The Department of Education is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

For Applications and General Information Contact: Requests for applications and general information should be addressed to the U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., room 3317, Switzer Building, Washington, D.C. 20202–2641. The preferred method for requesting information is to FAX your request to: (202) 205–8717. Telephone: (202) 260–9182.

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 contacting the Department as listed above.

Information about the Department's funding opportunities, including copies of application notices for discretionary grant competitions, can be viewed on the Department's electronic bulletin board (ED Board), telephone (202) 260–9950; on the Internet Gopher Server (at Gopher://gcs.ed.gov); or on the World Wide Web (at http://gcs.ed.gov). However, the official application notice for a discretionary grant competition is the notice published in the **Federal Register**.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1441–1443.

Dated: April 8, 1997.

Judith E. Heumann,

Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

[FR Doc. 97–9402 Filed 4–10–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000–01–P