

## **Walking the Walk: Promoting Diversity in Early Childhood Intervention through Campus-Community Partnerships**

The demographics of young children in the U.S. are changing dramatically. By the year 2005, children and adolescents of color will make up as much as 40% of the U.S. youth population. Large numbers of the young children participating in early childhood intervention (ECI)<sup>1</sup> in our country are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Unfortunately, the teachers, specialists, and administrators who serve them are most often *white and female*. Current trends in college and university recruitment, which have yielded dramatic under-representation of diversity among students in ECI training programs, are unlikely to address this discrepancy. Because of their gate-keeping function in a field where college degrees are essential for entry-level positions, institutions of higher education (IHEs) have been cited as one of the major barriers to diversity in ECI leadership. Despite much “talking the talk” about these problems, solutions that can move campuses to action (“walking the walk”) have been in short supply.

**Walking the Walk** will refine, replicate, evaluate, and disseminate a model for improving the recruitment, preparation, and support of culturally and linguistically diverse individuals through campus-community partnerships. The purpose of the project is to increase the quality and diversity of leadership personnel serving young children (0-9) and their families, with emphasis on young children with disabilities in urban communities.

The project is based on a proven systems change model that has produced **documented, long lasting, and meaningful changes** in preservice personnel preparation. We will use a participatory approach that involves key stakeholders (family, individuals with disabilities, administrators, faculty members from diverse disciplines at community colleges, universities, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), students, and practitioners) in every aspect of the project.

Salient features of the **Walking the Walk** implementation plan include: **(1)** identifying needs, priorities, and support for addressing diversity issues with stakeholders from urban communities in North Carolina; **(2)** providing models, materials, and experiences, including an intensive training institute designed to address diversity priorities for community-based teams of family members, administrators, faculty, students, and practitioners; **(3)** facilitating the development of individual and community action plans for addressing diversity issues; and **(4)** providing technical assistance and follow-up training over an 18-month period in support of the action plans.

Anticipated outcomes that will result from this outreach project include:

- Increasing the knowledge and skills of faculty related to using innovative instructional approaches to address diversity in personnel preparation programs;
- Building the capacity of personnel preparation programs to recruit, prepare, and support diverse students to work with young children and their families;

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<sup>1</sup> “Early childhood intervention” refers to infants, toddlers, and young children (0-9), their families, and the programs serving these groups. It is abbreviated as ECI throughout this proposal.

- Increasing the capacity of graduates of early childhood and early intervention programs in IHEs to work effectively with diverse children, families, and practitioners in natural environments; and
- Strengthening the linkages among North Carolina IHEs (including community colleges, 4-year institutions, and HBCUs), community practitioners, and families.