Grant Competition: Implementing Building-Based Collaborative Grants to increase Access to and Progress in the General Curriculum for Students with Disabilities (ACESS Grants)

1. Needs Assessment

2. Integration into Continuous Improvement Plan
This proposal shows exceptional evidence regarding support, joint planning, alignment between project goals and the continuous improvement plan (CIP), as well as plans that will produce significant positive results. The proposed project is a result of joint planning and work between Akron Public Schools, Kent State University, and the MEO-SERRC. All key stakeholders are committed to early intervention and the prevention of challenging behaviors as a means of increasing access and participation in the general curriculum. Of 12 primary goals outlined in Akron’s CIP, the proposed project is closely aligned with 8. One goal stated in the CIP is to provide ongoing, high quality professional development, particularly aimed at changing instructional practices and improving results for all student groups. As described in sections 5 and 6 of this proposal, the primary aim of the project is to prevent challenging behaviors and increase access and participation for all learners through school wide interventions. The project also aims to provide comprehensive and ongoing technical assistance to ensure changes in instructional practices across a minimum of 7 classrooms. A second goal stated in the CIP is related to prevention and intervention by providing focused supplemental supports for students most at risk. Students who present challenging behaviors often lack the basic academic, behavioral, and social skills needed to be successful within and outside of school (Kauffman, 1996). It is not surprising, then, that these students are among those most likely to fail at academic tasks, drop out of school and engage in delinquent behavior (e.g., D’Amico, & Blackorby, 1992; Frank, Sitlington, & Carson, 1991; Neel, Meadows, Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992). A third CIP goal is to align content standards and scientifically based research curriculum, instruction, and assessment. As noted in sections 5, 8, and 13, a key aspect of the project will be teaching personnel how to align their assessment, curriculum, and progress monitoring practices with Ohio’s content standards. A fourth CIP goal is to provide workshops, materials, and other opportunities to support parents. A crucial aspect of the project is the involvement of families. We will seek the participation of families and provide them with a 5 part educational series (Triple P) that will assist them in dealing with their children’s challenging behaviors. A fifth CIP goal is to target additional resources and attention on intervention to impact all students. The school wide aspect of the model is designed to target all students, while the other levels address those most at risk. Further, the collaboration between key stakeholders will seek additional federal funds to continue the work begun with this project. Another 3 CIP goals address the need for scientifically based research. All aspects of the proposed project have been empirically validated.

3. Capacity to Implement
The capacity to implement the proposed project is clear based upon existing partnerships and our extensive experience with grant administration and research. For the past several years, Kent State University faculty (special education and school psychology) have been in collaboration with Akron Public Schools, specifically with the Integrated Preschool Program (IPP) and Crouse Elementary. The collaboration began with the placement of students who were being trained to address challenging behaviors within school settings. Over time, KSU faculty and students have established strong working relationships with many of the teachers at IPP and Crouse. In fact, several teachers have already begun working on incorporating the principles of Universal Design
for Learning (UDL). KSU faculty have also provided inservices on the topics of alignment of practices with content standards, how to address children’s individual needs within the general curriculum, and universal design for learning. In addition to having a strong partnership, the key stakeholders have a long history of securing, implementing, and managing external funds. Faculty at KSU have a strong record of grant writing and management. For example, Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak currently oversees two federal grants and is in the process of submitting two more. Further, Crouse Elementary has experience specifically with ACCESS grants. We are confident in our ability to secure and manage funds. To ensure success we will 1) hold monthly conference calls to ensure the project is being implemented as planned and within budget, 2) set up and communicate via a listserv to keep all key stakeholders updated and involved, and 3) allocate enough time and resources to the project (e.g., over 1000 hours just by KSU students).

4. Partnership Commitment: Stakeholder Involvement/Collaboration
The major partners responsible for jointly developing the proposal and who will collaborate on the implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of proposed activities include: Kent State University (KSU), MEO-SERRC, Akron’s Integrated Preschool Program (IPP), and Crouse Elementary. Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak is an associate professor in the department of Educational Foundations and Special Services at KSU. Dr. Pretti-Frontczak’s areas of expertise include authentic assessment, developing functional individualized education plans, designing curriculum built upon the principles of universal design, and standards-based accountability reform. Dr. Pretti-Frontczak will be responsible for overseeing the entire project in partnership with Lynn Dies (principal of the IPP). Dr. Pretti-Frontczak will also be responsible for providing training and technical assistance, coordinating data collection, entry, and analysis, and for disseminating and ensuring continuation of collaborative efforts. Dr. Pretti-Frontczak will contribute approximately one day a week to the project if funded. KSU students in the early childhood intervention program and those being trained as behavior intervention specialists will also participate in the project. A doctoral student will work 20 hours a week directing the project and providing ongoing technical assistance to the teams as well as facilitating the family educational sessions. Master’s degree students will also provide technical assistance and will be responsible for data collection, entry, and analysis. The master’s degree students supported by the grant will spend approximately 10 hours a week on project activities while other students funded by a federal grant will each provide 20 hours a week of technical assistance and support (approximately 2 students in each building). Lucky McKeen, the early childhood coordinator for the MEO-SERRC is another key partner. Ms. McKeen will oversee the inservice on Universal Design for Learning, will provide guidance and resources for teachers as they learn more about UDL and class wide interventions. Ms. McKeen will also participate in monthly conference calls to ensure the project is being implemented on time and within budget. Lastly, Ms. McKeen will assist in replication and dissemination of project activities and will help secure funding for continuation efforts. Lynn Dies is the principal at IPP and will play a critical role in ensuring the proposed project is accepted and implemented by school personnel. Mae Walker, the current principal at Crouse Elementary, and will also provide leadership for the teachers in her building. See the final section of this proposal for a more detailed description of the role of the building principals.

5. Scientifically Based Research (SBR)
The proposed project aims to increase access and participation of students with challenging behaviors by implementing a comprehensive model of prevention and intervention built upon strategies that are scientifically-based. The model has three levels. The first level is a school
Professional Development

The professional development associated with the proposed project is systematic, intensive, and ongoing. Further, the professional development plan will serve as a model that can be replicated by the MEO-SERRC in subsequent years. Professional development will take place at three levels. First, at the school wide level, we will provide a one day intensive inservice for all teachers on Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The inservice will utilize strategies shown to be effective when teaching adult learners. The inservice will provide concrete examples of UDL as well as case studies and video demonstrations. Each participant will receive a set of resources on UDL that can be taken back to their building and implemented in their classrooms. Following the training, technical assistance will be provided to all of the teachers as they implement the principles of UDL as a means of preventing challenging behaviors. Second, at the class wide level, a minimum of seven (7) teams will work with KSU personnel to identify which
scientifically-based strategies they want to use. They will be trained on implementing the strategy and will receive feedback and support as they implement the strategy. Third, at the individual level, teachers, assistants, and family members will work together to address the most challenging behaviors. Teachers and assistants will receive in the classroom technical assistance and families will be invited to attend five (5) educational sessions where they will learn scientifically-based strategies for dealing with reducing challenging behaviors. Across all professional development activities, principles from The Teaching Research Inservice Model (TRIM) will be used. TRIM is a process for the design, development, and evaluation of inservice training efforts. TRIM ensures systematic, comprehensive staff development planning as a means of reaching educational goals (for ensuring teams can increase access and participation in this case). The model has shown to assist educators with developing training activities that will make a difference in classroom teaching.

7. Program Evaluation
Project personnel from KSU, with assistance from the principals, teachers, and assistants will measure, report, and analyze results to demonstrate successes. Data will be collected regarding implementation, satisfaction, barriers, and most importantly child/student outcomes. Data will be collected for all school wide, class wide, and individual interventions. First, implementation or fidelity of implementation checklists will be created and used to ensure the model is implemented and to document the degree to which interventions are implemented. Data regarding teacher and parent satisfaction and barriers to implementation will also be collected through brief questionnaires and focus groups. Again, data regarding school wide, class wide, and individual interventions will be sought. Lastly, because student performance will provide the ultimate evaluation as to whether the goals of the project were met, various student outcome data will be collected. Specifically, to measure the effects of the school wide intervention (i.e., UDL) on student outcomes, we will monitor suspension/detention rates at Crouse Elementary and the number of timeouts and times students have to be removed from participation in the general curriculum due to challenging behaviors at IPP (i.e., number of office referrals). To measure the effects of class wide interventions (e.g., class wide peer tutoring) a comprehensive curriculum-based measure (CBM) will be administered for all children in the seven (7) classrooms four (4) times a year. The CBM will provide an indication of overall growth and development. Two social emotional competence ratings scales (the Social Strategy Rating Scale and the Preschool Socioaffective Profile ) will be used to measure gains made in children’s/student’s social emotional competence. Finally, an observational instrument, the System for Observation of Children’s Social Interactions (SCOSI) will be used to identify and measure children’s use of behavioral strategies and progress on targeted social goals (e.g., engagement, persistence to task, assistance, pretend play). Lastly, to measure the effects of the individual interventions, students’ progress on behavioral intervention plans and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) will be monitored.

8. Budget/Allocation of Resources/Costs/Budget Integration
All monies will be used to directly support the implementation and evaluation of the proposed project. Dollars are requested for personnel, family stipends, KSU faculty and students, and supplies. Personnel support is requested to pay for substitutes for Crouse Elementary teachers to attend a one-day inservice on Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The inservice will be held on a professional development day for Akron’s Integrated Preschool Program (IPP) so substitutes are not needed. A total of $1635 for substitutes s is requested (17 teachers at a rate of $96.15/day). Personnel support is also requested to compensate a minimum of seven (7) teams of
teachers and their assistants in the implementation of scientifically-based class wide interventions. A total of $4831 for teacher extended time (28 meetings, one hour a week at a rate of $24.65/hr) is requested. A total of $2352 for assistant extended time (28 meetings, one hour a week at a rate of $12.00/hr) is requested. Personnel support and personnel retirement fringe benefits totals $10,423. Dollars are requested to compensate approximately seven (7) families to attend 5 two-hour parent education sessions and 5 follow-up phone calls. A total of $1575 is requested for the families to compensate them for time, travel, and child care at a rate of $15.00/hr. A total of $1750 is requested to compensate Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak for overseeing the project, providing training and technical assistance, coordinating data collection, entry, and analysis, and for disseminating and ensuring continuation of collaborative efforts. Dollars are requested to fund a doctoral student to work 20 hours a week during the school year on project activities. The doctoral student will be responsible for providing training to the seven (7) teams, providing onsite technical assistance, collecting data, and facilitating the parent education series. KSU will contribute funds to support the doctoral student during the planning stages of the project (i.e., in July and August 2005). Dollars are also requested to fund a master’s degree student to work 10 hours a week during the school year on project activities. The master’s degree student will be responsible for data collection, entry, and analysis. The master’s degree student will also provide support at inservices, parent education sessions, and in the development of learning modules. KSU will contribute funds to support the doctoral student during the planning stages of the project (i.e., in July and August 2005). A total of $35,760 is requested to support KSU students working on the project over 1000 hours across the life of the project. Lastly, a total of $450 is requested for the purchase of materials for teachers and family members to implement project activities. For example, books, handouts, social-skills curricula, and assessments. All supplies purchased with grant dollars will remain at IPP or Crouse Elementary.

9. Timeline
A reasonable, specific, and effective plan for full implementation has been created. The timeline begins upon notification of funding (i.e., in early July of 2005) and continues through the end of June, 2006. The primary activities are outlined by month in the following section.

- July: KSU personnel, Lucky McKeen (MEO-SERRC), and the principles from IPP and Crouse meet to review project outcomes and begin implementation. Observational/fidelity measures are finalized.
- August: Teachers are given introductory information about the project and an outline of expectations for involvement. KSU students are trained and establish reliability on all observation measures.
- September: All teachers from IPP and Crouse attend a day long training sponsored by the MEO-SERRC on the principles of UDL and baseline data are collected (fidelity and child outcome data). Process of aligning assessment, curriculum, and progress monitoring practices and content standards begins.
- October: Seven teams are identified from IPP and Crouse to begin implementing class wide interventions. Teams select from a menu of scientifically-based strategies and receive training and technical assistance. Children in need of individual intervention are identified and their families invited to participate in a parent education series. First parent education session is held. Data collection continues. Alignment process is completed.
- November: KSU personnel continue to support the implementation of UDL principles school wide. Technical assistance and weekly meeting continue to be
held with seven teams. Functional behavioral analyses are conducted on individual children and intervention plans developed. Second and third parent education session is held. Data collection continues.

- **December:** KSU personnel continue to support the implementation of UDL principles school wide. Technical assistance and weekly meeting continue to be held with seven teams. Individual intervention plans are revised as needed. Fourth parent education session is held. Data collection continues.

- **January:** KSU personnel continue to support the implementation of UDL principles school wide. Technical assistance and weekly meeting continue to be held with seven teams. Individual intervention plans are revised as needed. Fifth parent education session is held. Data collection continues.

- **February-April:** KSU personnel continue to support the implementation of UDL principles school wide. Technical assistance and weekly meeting continue to be held with seven teams. Individual intervention plans are revised as needed. Follow-up phone calls (part of the Triple P model) begin with parents who attended the 5 education sessions are conducted. Data collection continues.

- **May-June:** Training modules created. Data entered, analyzed, and prepared for dissemination. Meetings between all key stakeholders to debrief and make plans for sustaining efforts and continuing collaboration.

**10. Continuation**
The project has an effective and realistic plan for continuation as funding is reduced or ended. The plan is composed of four levels. Level One: KSU faculty will continue to place graduate students from the Behavior Intervention Specialist training program at IPP and Crouse Elementary. The graduate students will help sustain project activities and train new personnel on several scientifically-based interventions (e.g., the Good Behavior Game, Class-wide Peer Tutoring). Level Two: KSU faculty, in collaboration with Akron Public Schools and the MEO-SERRC will seek funding from federal agencies with competitions aimed at addressing the needs of students with challenging behaviors as well as implementing the principles of Universal Design for Learning. Level Three: KSU faculty and principals from IPP and Crouse will collaborate with the Center for Leadership in Education in Elyria, Ohio to make use of existing resources to support the implementation of UDL as a prevention of challenging behaviors and a means of ensuring access and participation in the general curriculum by all learners. Level Four: Ensure sustainability of all interventions and create easy to use learning modules. Sustainability is ensured because the seven teams will be composed of expert teachers committed to playing a leadership role in their building. Further, the seven (7) teams will be required to commit to providing training to additional teams and new personnel in the subsequent school year. The seven (7) teams will receive training on how to teach others as well as how to use the learning modules. The learning modules will contain all of the information discussed during the project, case studies and video demonstrations of dealing with challenging behaviors, additional resources, and all of the products created as a result of the participation in the project (e.g., alignment rubrics, intervention plans etc.).

**11. Special Education ACCESS Requirements**
Grant monies will be used to align curriculum and instruction with Ohio’s content standards in two ways. First, the Baldrige strategy of planning, doing, studying, and acting will be implemented. Specifically, following training on the principles of universal design, a minimum
of seven (7) teams (teachers, assistants, related service providers) will validate the need to improve access and participation by students with challenging behaviors (plan), adopt building wide scientifically-based strategies to deal with challenging behaviors (do), analyze results (study) and make improvements regarding student outcomes (act). Using the Baldrige strategy will not only ensure alignment between the curriculum and content standards, but between the project and the district’s continuous improvement plan as well. Second, a valid and reliable process for aligning assessment, curriculum, and progress monitoring practices with state standards will be implemented. The process was developed by several of the key stakeholders involved with the proposed project (i.e., Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak from KSU and Lucky McKeen from the MEO-SERRC). The alignment process ensures teams consider the Big Ideas which are highly selected concepts, principles, rules, or strategies that facilitate efficient acquisition of knowledge. The alignment process includes a glossary of Big Ideas that encompass all the indicators for preschool through third grade from across the four content areas and scoring rubrics.

The project will improve access and progress therefore, reducing the gap between performance of children with and without disabilities on statewide assessments by (a) intervening early and preventing increases in challenging behaviors, (b) by implementing scientifically-based intervention strategies, (c) fostering collaboration between school, home, and the community, and (d) training and supporting families in dealing with challenging behaviors. The general curriculum (daily activities for preschoolers) is conceptualized as academic and non-academic in nature. Further, challenging behaviors occur across the school day (not just during instructional times). The proposed project will provide training and support for school personal allowing them to acquire an understanding of how to address challenging behaviors in all settings and situations.

Lynn Dies, the principal of Akron’s Integrated Preschool Program (IPP) will play a critical role in setting and communicating with school personnel the direction of the project. Lynn will serve as the primary contact person and will ensure open lines of communication between KSU, the MEO-SERRC, and the two participating buildings (i.e., IPP and Crouse Elementary). Both Lynn Dies and Mae Walker (current principal at Course Elementary) will work closely with KSU and MEO-SERRC personnel to ensure the grant is implemented on time, within budget, and that stated outcomes are met. The principals will also meet regularly with school personnel to discuss and review progress and ensure alignment between the project and the CIP. The principals will also set a tone and sustain a climate for learning. Specifically they will assist in scheduling staff development dates, arrange for substitute teachers, ensure teams have time and space to work on project activities, and recruit families to participate in parent education series. The principals will also attend all group training activities to ensure they are well-informed and trained on all aspects of the project.