Final Proposal for 2003 Christa McAuliffe Award
for Excellence in Teacher Education

Program Name: City Heights K-12 Credential Program
   San Diego State University
   College of Education
   School of Teacher Education
   5500 Campanile Drive
   San Diego, CA 92182-1153

   Contact Person:
   Nancy Farnan, Professor and Program Co-director
   San Diego State University
   College of Education
   School of Teacher Education
   5500 Campanile Drive
   San Diego, CA 92182-1153

   nfarnan@mail.sdsu.edu
   619.594-1366 (phone)
   619.594-7828 (fax)

----------------------------
Douglas Fisher, Associate Professor and Program Co-director
   San Diego State University
   College of Education
   School of Teacher Education
   5500 Campanile Drive
   San Diego, CA 92182-1153
   dfisher@mail.sdsu.edu
----------------------------
Nancy Frey, Assistant Professor and Program Co-director
   San Diego State University
   College of Education
   School of Teacher Education
   5500 Campanile Drive
   San Diego, CA 92182-1153
   nfrey@mail.sdsu.edu
a. Program description, including its mission, goals, and key components (two-page maximum.)

This innovative credential program focuses on learning across the K-12 grade levels. Central to the program are critical issues in urban schools, the teaching of diverse learners, use of technology, collaboration, and critical thinking. Program planning began in fall of 1998 and involved a Design Team with representatives from the partners (Hoover High School, Monroe Clark Middle School, Rosa Parks Elementary School, and San Diego State University), who, in turn, worked with their respective sites to ensure sufficient feedback to the program design so that all participants’ input actively shaped the program’s Memorandum of Understanding. This process recognized that each partner works within certain constraints, such as school-site schedules, specific reform agendas, and the state of California’s guidelines for teacher preparation established by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. The design process included articulating program objectives based on input from all partners. Program objectives, which are printed in the program handbook received by all faculty, supervisors, and preservice teachers, were articulated as follows:

Program Objectives

1. The program is based on a site-based cohort of students who remain together throughout their credential program.
2. The program is built on and will continue to develop through university and school-site faculty collaboration.
3. The unique perspectives of elementary and secondary teacher candidates are enhanced by collaboration and joint learning experiences.
4. The program will contribute actively to the elementary, middle school, and high school learning communities.
5. Teachers will have the opportunity to be involved in some way as Guide Teachers, experts, or fellow learners.
6. Technology is infused throughout the program as an integral component of the learning environment.
7. Program planning and development center on the concept that teachers’ first allegiance is to children, not to a particular content area. The program will prepare teachers of children, adolescents, and young adults first, and teachers of a particular discipline second.
8. Curriculum and instruction will focus on issues of diversity—in language, ethnicity, and gender in order to ensure learning for all students.
9. A central focus in instruction is on building a common, sharable knowledge base; theory will be taught in context.
10. Instruction will be oriented toward inquiry and action research.
11. Reflection will be emphasized.
12. Emphasis will be on making meaning, rather than on cloning the instructor's mind.
13. Curriculum will focus on central questions relative to exemplary elementary, middle, and secondary education.

In addition to these objectives, program design centers on the goal that program graduates will display the following qualities:
1. Commitment to high academic achievement for all children.
2. Creativity and eclecticism, an ability to improvise and augment instruction with a variety of materials and strategies.
3. Commitment to the "whole" child, including psychological, social, emotional, and physiological development.
4. Valuing of multiculturism and an ability to work among diverse students and colleagues.
5. Commitment to working and teaching through interdisciplinary teams.
6. Commitment to working with families and the community.

General Program Description: Key Components

The City Heights credential program was established in 1999 as a partnership involving San Diego State University, Hoover High School, and Monroe Clark Middle School. In Fall 2001, this credential program expanded to include Rosa Parks, making it a unique K-12 program. This program is structured around several critical attributes: integration of educational technology into teaching and learning, integration of student teachers into the role of partner teachers with school-site faculty, and collaboration between university and school-site faculty who serve as supervisors of student teachers. The program provides credential candidates a rich range of experiences where they learn, among other things, state-of-the-art applications of educational technology in classrooms, how to develop and implement curriculum and instruction for diverse learners in urban classrooms, and how to ensure literacy development and learning across the content areas. Student teachers learn to use technology to develop lesson plans, handouts, hypermedia, and Internet-based materials. From the start, technology is considered an essential part of professional development. Student teachers are welcomed as partners into the schools from the start of the school year, where they have opportunities to participate in curriculum planning and school-site committee work. The student teaching experience takes place primarily at one assigned site, with opportunities to supplement the experience with team teaching and project work at the other sites. The overarching goal of this program is, over the course of an academic year, to move participants from being student teachers to being well prepared, confident, knowledgeable new teachers.

This program is located in the urban area of City Heights in San Diego California. About 40% of the adult residents of City Heights have not graduated from high school, and only 5% have graduated from college. The City Heights schools suffer from overcrowding, with enrollment oftentimes exceeding the designed capacity. In addition, students typically score 20 percentage points below the district average on standardized tests, and are several grade levels behind in reading and math skills. City Heights is the city of San Diego's poorest and most ethnically diverse community. The median household income is $25,000, 40% less than the city average. This results in low rates of home ownership and high levels of transience. The nature of this community creates a mandate to build programs that will ensure all students learn and achieve in order to maximize their life’s potential. That purpose lies at the heart of the City Heights K-12 Credential Program.

b. Description of how the program is a cooperative effort between the faculty in the college of education, arts and sciences, and P-12 schools (one-page maximum.)

As a fifth-year post-baccalaureate program, credential programs in the state of California are positioned in a unique arena. While not part of undergraduate studies, the School of Teacher Education collaborates closely with degree programs across campus, as many candidates first graduate from B.A. and B.S. programs at San Diego State. The recent development of a Liberal Studies Blended program is designed to engage students interested in the field of education beginning in their freshman year. Students in the Blended program take courses with faculty from the City Heights K-12 block and complete early field experience hours at Rosa Parks Elementary. This collaboration between the School of Teacher Education and the Liberal Studies undergraduate program resulted in 60 students working for a total of 1800 hours at Rosa Parks in the fall of 2002.
This cross-campus collaboration extends to program development and advising, as well. Every subject matter credential program (science, social studies, mathematics, physical education, and visual and performing arts) has a subject matter advisor from the respective college or department.

The City Heights Professional Development Schools view collaboration with faculty from all colleges on campus as another means of infusing excellence in the school day. This belief is coupled with university president Stephen Weber’s directive that all colleges must submit a plan each year demonstrating their collaboration with the City Heights community. Many of these collaborative relationships have resulted in exciting school projects. One example is that undergraduates from the College of Engineering team with science teachers and teacher candidates at the same school to mentor students who are participating in the county science fair. Undergraduates in the Mathematics and Statistics department mentor math fair students in a similar fashion. Perhaps the most powerful example of long-term collaboration with another college can be found in the School of Music and Dance. For the past two years Dr. Nan McDonald, a musician and faculty member, has led the City Heights K-16 Integrated Arts team. This committee, comprised of educators from all content areas in the three public schools, meet to design and implement an integrated arts curriculum. These efforts focusing on the arts have resulted in the creation of a new marching band at the high school and an increase in the requests for art electives by the student body. Hoover now offers more sections of visual and performing arts classes than any other high school in the district. A positive trend we have discovered in our credential program is that increasing numbers of students tell us that their choice of the City Heights K-12 block was influenced by their previous experience with the community. Because all colleges are required to have a plan for collaboration in City Heights, many students have completed fieldwork assignments in the neighborhood as part of their course requirements. We believe that the sustained efforts by the faculty across the campus have made our job infinitely easier. Many teacher candidates come to us with a deep understanding of the challenges and promise offered by such a diverse community, even when it is different from their own experiences. We also look forward to seeing teacher candidates in our program who have graduated from City Heights schools. It is hoped that the presence of so many teacher candidates in City Heights’ classrooms will influence students to consider college as an option, and perhaps teaching as a career choice.

c. Examples of evidence that demonstrate the program’s positive impact on teacher candidates’ learning (two-page maximum.)

In this K-12 credential program, candidates for both Multiple Subject (elementary) and Single Subject (middle/secondary) credentials take some of their coursework together and some separately, as relevant to the credential being earned. For example, when possible (e.g., to study classroom management, educational psychology, foundations of education, reading in the content area, and educational technology), students are brought together. In some of the content methods courses, secondary and elementary student teachers are in separate courses. In the program, candidates work together in collaborative assignments—planning lessons, working in one another's classrooms, and participating together in class sessions and discussions. At the heart of this program is the premise that it’s imperative that teachers have a wide-angle view of what children and adolescents experience in classrooms across the grades, for only then can teachers’ plans for learning be solidly based on the dual contexts of student needs and academic expectations.

Because the program’s co-directors, as well as the Dean, the schools, and other stakeholders, were committed to assessing the K-12 program’s affect on the credential
candidates, we surveyed the group of preservice teachers who graduated from the program in spring of 2002. We also reviewed supervisor evaluations and interviewed administrators at the three schools. We began our evaluation of the program by examining the supervisors' final evaluations. Each preservice teacher is assigned a supervisor for the year. These supervisors are school-site teachers who, as part of the PDS collaborative effort, were hired by the university and given release time from one or more of their classes to supervise student teachers. In their role as supervisor, these teachers work closely with university faculty, and observe and meet weekly with preservice teachers to provide support and feedback on their work. At the end of each of the two semesters, supervisors complete a final evaluation that contains both narrative and numeric data. A review of the anecdotal comments made by the supervisors on their evaluation forms suggest that the teachers in the K-12 program were “skilled in individual and small group instruction,” held “high expectations for students and scaffolded instruction to get there,” and “differentiate[d] instruction for diverse learners in a way that ensures success.” The message in each of these comments was noted repeatedly. At least half of the student teachers’ evaluations contained these themes. In terms of the numeric scores, 93% of the teaching competencies were evaluated to “exceed standard (4, which is the highest score)” and 7% were “met standard (3).” None of our graduates were evaluated as “acceptable (2)” or “needs improvement (1).” These comments became increasingly meaningful when we analyzed the preservice teachers' reflections on the program.

We surveyed the preservice teachers, asking several questions related to their credential program experience. The one most relevant here is the question, “Describe what you see as the strengths of the K-12 structure.” Students’ comments clustered into three general categories or themes: 1) an opportunity to see the “whole picture” (quoted from a student response) of public education; 2) an unprecedented opportunity to develop insights about children across the K-12 spectrum; and 3) an opportunity to learn various strategies, procedures, and techniques from colleagues at all grade levels. The preservice teachers articulated that they observed--through their experiences across grade levels--how teachers used various teaching practices. As a result, several of these prospective teachers expressed new insights regarding the importance of adapting teaching practices according to children's grade and ability levels. They commented that the program engaged them in active speculation regarding how practices across grade levels could be adapted for diverse students. This is a critical skill if teachers are to adapt what they know in order to ensure learning for every student. We believe that this focus on student learning is a critical outcome of the K-12 teacher preparation program, as opposed to a primary focus on teachers' knowledge base.

In addition, we solicited comments from the three school-site administrators regarding the student teachers. The high school principal was very positive about the K-12 program, and his comments reinforce its value. He stated, “These are softer, gentler, kinder teachers. They know their subject matter, but they have learned that students matter. Working across grades has taught them to think about student needs, not just the curriculum standards. I'd hire any one of these folks [that come from the K-12 block].” The middle school principal likewise expressed an appreciation for the student teachers' knowledge of subject matter, but also their expertise working with children. He commented that at the middle level he wanted to hire teachers well versed in their content but who were also able to work well with students. He also noted that in his years of administration at three school sites, this group seemed most able at managing a classroom and most effective at interacting with the students. We realize that these skills may be attributed to various factors associated with their teacher preparation. However, the PDS has been in existence for four years, and these experienced administrators expressed important differences noted in this year's K-12 group: skills in classroom management, strong subject-
matter knowledge, and notable expertise in classroom management and interactions with students. The elementary school principal commented that these are good student teachers with very high expectations for students, higher than in the past. She speculated that this might be due to the increase in the teachers' expectations because of the master's program and inservices, all part of the larger PDS setting. However, she also reflected that it might be due to the fact that students preparing to be elementary school teachers had spent time in the middle school and high school, where they saw what the elementary students are going to have to do in their future years of school as they work toward graduation. She gave an example of the elementary student teachers going to an inservice on the state's high school exit exam and coming back saying that they knew high expectations and good instruction would be important to ensure their students would be prepared someday. This administrator also noted that in job interviews it would be a considerable strength for a newly credentialed teacher to understand the whole K-12 teaching structure, with its similarities and differences. To use her words: "Using actual examples of teachers in the [K-12] program would be beneficial to the new teacher in an interview." It appears that these future teachers developed a broad view of student learning across grades and schools by experiencing various classroom cultures across grade levels. Based on administrators' comments, they clearly value this ability in prospective teachers.

Beyond the teacher comments, we examined hiring and retention rates. Several factors have been found to influence teacher attrition, and one of those is teacher preparation. Data show that "teachers who lack adequate initial preparation are more likely to leave the profession" (Darling-Hammond, 2003, p. 9). Darling-Hammond cites other researchers who found that nearly half of new teachers without teacher preparation programs leave the field within five years, while that is true for only 14% of certified teachers. Furthermore, research indicates that the more training preservice teachers receive, including extensive disciplinary study, thorough training in pedagogy, and extensive student teaching, the more likely they are to stay in teaching. Research also indicates that the most influential factor in student learning is the well-trained teacher who stays professionally active and becomes an expert veteran. The high cost, economically, for teacher attrition has been documented; but the costs are not only monetary. The effect on student success and achievement with high teacher turnover is the most devastating cost. Retention of highly qualified novices with the potential to become expert veterans is an important goal the K-12 City Heights credential program is meeting. In light of these alarming statistics, the retention rate of newly credentialed teachers from the City Heights program is impressive. Between 1998-2002, only 1 of the 124 teachers who earned a credential in City Heights credential program has left the profession.

In addition, the state of California requires an exit exam for multiple subject credential applications called the Reading Instruction Competency Assessment (RICA). The City Heights candidates collectively possess a pass rate of 100%, with 97% of them passing on the first attempt. Their professional knowledge has served them well, judging by their accomplishments. Among their numbers are a peer coach for Denver Public Schools, an award-winner for her standards-based instruction, a girls’ basketball coach, and several site-based governance committee members. This is nothing new for this high-achieving group. One was named outstanding student teacher for the university and two others have been similarly honored by the Greater San Diego Reading Association. Investing in their professional development has also been a hallmark of this program. Twenty-six of them have returned to SDSU to pursue a master’s degree and several have already completed this level of graduate work.

d. Examples of evidence that demonstrate the program’s positive impact on graduates’ ability to improve P-12 pupil learning (two-page maximum.)
Consistent with the NCATE Standards, this Professional Development School partnership centers on three elements: preparation of teacher candidates, professional growth for educators, and positive student outcomes. Likewise, the City Heights K-12 credential program uses these as guiding principles for program development and assessment. The growth in student achievement at the three public schools during the four years of this partnership is significant. Indeed, this was one of two SDSU credential programs singled out for commendation by the NCATE/CCTC review team final report in spring of 2003 as a “powerful collaborative relationship” that is “expanding the range of educational opportunities for urban… students.”

At Hoover High School, state accountability targets have been met for three years, a feat that had not been accomplished in more than 15 years. The school has made the largest gain (62 points) in the district on the Academic Performance Index (API) summary, the measure used to evaluate all schools in the state of California. This is by far the largest growth for high schools in the district. A focus on literacy across the content areas has led to gains in the reading levels of students as well. The average ninth grader now reads at a 6.4 grade level as measured by the Gates-MacGinitie, and the average reader at the school is now at a 7.5 – a distinctive gain from a level of 4.3 four years ago. This is quite a gain; historically, students at inner city high schools improve their reading by half a year for every year they are in school. Hoover students have more than doubled the performance of their historical peers and their peers in other district high schools.

Improvement in partner schools can be found in other areas as well. At Monroe Clark Middle School, 78% of students’ scores were at a level 3 or below (on an 8-point scale) on the state writing assessment two years ago. Focus on writing at the preservice and inservice levels has had a remarkable impact. Last year, only 18% were still considered “below basic’ on the state exam. Focus on writing improvement extends to teacher candidate learning, as well. This year, two faculty members from the School of Teacher Education (including the contact person) conducted a two-week writing seminar during winter break for 55 middle school students. These young writers were further supported in their efforts by four middle school teacher candidates and four teachers. One teacher candidate described it as “the most powerful teaching and learning I’ve witnessed yet. I don’t think I’ll ever look at writing the same way again.”

Student achievement results at the elementary level are most profound. In the same time period, Rosa Parks Elementary has scored 164 points higher on the state API summary, from 455 in 1999 to 619 in 2002. These schoolwide measures translate into meaningful achievement for students. For example, 43% of all second graders read at grade level today, compared to 22% four years ago. The impact of student teachers on academic growth at this elementary school was evaluated in a recent study, soon to be published in Teacher Education Quarterly. The focus of this study was the 485 students in kindergarten and first grade at the time of the study. Of these students, 80% were identified as English language learners at various stages of proficiency and all of them qualified for free lunch. Of these 485 students, 188 were in classrooms with student teachers, and the remaining 297 were in classrooms without student teachers.

Twenty student teachers were randomly assigned, in pairs, to five kindergarten and five first grade classrooms for a period of 10 weeks. All 485 students were assessed using the Developmental Reading Assessment [DRA] (Beaver, 1997) as well as the Yopp-Singer Test of Phonemic Segmentation (Yopp, 1995). These two assessments were routinely given three times per year across the school district and were the only measure of achievement available in the district for the primary grades at the time of this study. The pre- and post-test DRA and the Yopp-Singer Test of Phonemic Segmentation scores were compared using independent t-tests. At the beginning of the study, there were no significant differences on the DRA between students whose teachers would have or would not have student teachers. By the end, however, the differences were statistically significant. For the
kindergarten students who had student teachers, the mean DRA score in July was 3.21 compared with 2.22 for students without access to student teachers ($t=2.51$, $p<.01$). For the first grade students who had student teachers, the mean DRA score in July was 14.70 compared with 8.35 ($t=6.15$, $p<.001$). On the Yopp-Singer Test of Phonemic Segmentation, there also were no differences between the groups before the student teachers began working the classrooms. By the end, however, the differences were significant for the kindergarten and first grade students. For the kindergarten students who had student teachers, the mean Yopp-Singer score in July was 16 compared with 9 for students without access to student teachers ($t=27.45$, $p<.01$). For the first grade students who had student teachers, the mean Yopp-Singer score in July was 20 compared with 16.5 ($t=13.75$, $p<.01$).

Taken together, the profiles of these three schools have shifted significantly in the past four years. As reported earlier, the overarching goal of this Professional Development School partnership is to improve student achievement by supporting professional growth and development for teacher candidates and teachers. Therefore, it can be difficult to artificially tease out the impact of one aspect of teacher development on achievement. However, a fact that cannot be overlooked in this formula is that in the previous four years, nearly 300 multiple subjects and single subject student teachers have spent their credential year in City Heights’ classrooms. In view of the trajectory of positive gains witnessed since this partnership began, it appears that their contributions continue to reap rewards even after they have taken their place in their own classrooms around the nation.