

## **ABSTRACT**

The Navajo Nation, a “High Need Community” (Section 2151(e)(5)(A), ESEA), identified two urgent needs in a 2002 Community Assessment of its 6,346 families in 110 local Head Start programs: 1) to increase literacy opportunities for young children and their families, and 2) to increase professional development education opportunities for teachers. These needs and the need to enhance school readiness of young children and prevent future difficulties frame project activities. The project is a partnership between the Navajo Nation, Southwest Institute for Families and Children with Special Needs, New Mexico State and Arizona State Universities. The partners will provide 15 credit hours of college-level professional development classes to 160 teachers at five agency-based centers on oral language, pre-reading skills, numeracy, LEP, disabilities and other special needs. Using a mentor-teacher model, agency-based Navajo mentor-teachers will provide in situ support and cognitive coaching. Project objectives are to have teachers: (a) acquire science-based teaching strategies, (b) establish print- and numeracy-rich classrooms, (c) monitor and make adaptations for all children including those with disabilities, special needs, and LEP, and (d) promote family-school-community linkages. Participating teachers will serve 3000 children. Each center will establish a community action leadership team that will work to develop and test strategies that promote successful school entry, family-school- community linkages, and program sustainability using the Participatory Action Research model. Program evaluation will use multiple designs to assess: a) performance on standardized measures of school readiness skills, b) changes in teacher knowledge and skills, c) effectiveness of mentor and teacher instruction, d) fidelity of curriculum implementation, and e) impact of family-school- community linkages. \$2,883,824 is requested from the US Department of Education to implement the NEEP Project, while \$2,102,318 is contributed in-kind by the partners.