

## Educators in Southern/Southeastern Ohio Join Forces to Address Critical State Shortages: *PART II*

The work of educators from Ohio's southern and southeastern regions – led by faculty from Shawnee State University (SSU) and the University of Rio Grande (URG) is featured in a two-part series for the OLAC Facilitators Hub. Part I of the series, released in April, described the critical shortages being addressed by the group, touched on evidence in support of identified needs, and outlined how the work of the group has been facilitated by SSU and URG through a consortium effort called *Broadening Horizons*.

Part II – featured here – addresses in more detail the substance of the group's work and how it can be used by school districts, institutions of higher education, and the state to provide instruction to students with varying degrees of sensory impairment.



### And, Not Or!

Members of the *Broadening Horizons* work group met over the past two years to create coursework that could be offered by Ohio institutions of higher education (IHEs) to currently practicing intervention

specialists (IS), building the competence of those ISs to more effectively support students with a range of sensory impairments (i.e., students with visual impairment, hearing impairment, or a combination of hearing-vision impairment) who are already served in their classrooms, schools, and/or districts.

*Broadening Horizons* was funded by the Ohio Deans Compact with support and involvement of leadership from the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Department of Higher Education for the express purpose of incentivizing the development of coursework that would lead to a to-be created endorsement in sensory impairment.

The endorsement does *not* replace teacher education programs leading to licensure as an IS in the areas of visual impairment (VI) or

#### Broadening Horizons: *Quick Facts*

- Developed five courses through an incentive grant funded to Shawnee State University from the Ohio Deans Compact on Exceptional Children
- Courses developed are intended to lead to an endorsement in sensory impairment once such a credential is created by the state of Ohio
  - Intervention specialists who hold Intervention Specialist: Moderate/Intensive Educational Needs license would be required to take 12 hours of coursework (i.e., 4 of the 5 courses)
  - Intervention specialists who hold Intervention Specialist: Mild/Moderate Educational Needs license would be required to take 15 hours of coursework (i.e., all 5 courses)
- The SI endorsement would be limited to practicing intervention specialists
- Courses include:
  - Orientation to Deafness/Hearing Impairment
  - Orientation to Blindness/Visual Impairment
  - Instructional Methods and Supports for the Child with Hearing Impairment/Dual-Sensory Impairments
  - Instructional Methods and Supports for the Child with Visual Impairments
  - Instructional Methods and Supports for the Child with Multiple Disabilities Sensory Impairments/Dual Sensory Impairments (for teachers with Mild/Moderate Licensure only)

hearing impairment (HI)<sup>1</sup>, and no preparation program for teachers of students with combined vision-hearing loss (i.e., deafblindness) exists in the majority of states, including Ohio, in the country.

To the contrary, the creation of the endorsement is viewed as one strategy – to be used in concert with other Compact efforts, such as the establishment of a multi-IHE Low Incidence Sensory Disability (LISD) Collaborative – for addressing the dire need for greater state capacity<sup>2</sup> to teach and support students with varying degrees of vision and/or hearing loss, whether students are identified as having a visual and/or hearing impairment or not (e.g., student with low vision, student with mild hearing loss, student with cognitive impairment and some degree of sensory impairment, student with multiple disabilities that include some degree of hearing/vision loss, etc.).

Dr. Paul Madden, Dean of SSU’s College of Professional Studies, was instrumental in assuming a lead role in the development of the LISD Collaborative and the *Broadening Horizons* initiative. He explains: “Shawnee State University is committed to being part of the solution of addressing the needs students in the southern and southeastern region of the state and, in fact, the entire state through our active engagement with colleagues in P12 schools, agencies, and in other institutions that are looking for new ways to approach the learning needs of students and the preparation and support of educators to meet these needs.”



“The University has been actively engaged in the development work of dual licensure programs, the sensory impairment endorsement program when that is approved at the state level, and the development of a preparation program for licensure for teachers of students with visual impairments. These programs when considered together should go a long way toward providing our schools and other stakeholders with the professional staff they need to best serve some of our neediest students,” explained Madden.

“This is not some big scary thing. It can be done manageably,” said Emily Maginn, a TVI and the only certified orientation and mobility specialist (COMS) serving the South Central Ohio and Ross-Pike ESCs.

## Addressing Real and Persistent Shortages

Dr. Megan Trowbridge, State Support Team (SST) 14’s Autism and LI Consultant and Team Leader, has been struggling for the better part of the 2016-17 school year to employ a professional with expertise in visual impairment (VI) to serve as one of two itinerant TVIs for districts in her rural, five-county region of the state. Currently, SST 14’s fiscal agent employs one TVI to serve close to 50 children identified as having a visual impairment across 17 school districts.

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<sup>1</sup> Teachers with intervention specialist (IS) licensure in the areas of visual impairment (VI) or hearing impairment (HI) are commonly referred to as teachers of the visually impaired (TVI) or teachers of the hearing impaired (THI).

<sup>2</sup> See Part I of this two-part series for more information about the need for qualified personnel in the area of SI in Ohio.

“The perception is that if the endorsement becomes a reality, it will take jobs away; it won’t. It’s difficult to find anyone with specialized training to work in rural areas, so a better strategy is to build the capacity in districts to meet the needs of learners with a range of sensory challenges,” explained Trowbridge.

“In thinking about our region, there’s a limited understanding of what a sensory or dual sensory impairment is and how it affects student learning. The endorsement would increase the knowledge and skills of ISs and the awareness of district and school leaders about the needs of a range of students already served in their schools. I would prefer to have ISs that are currently in the classroom do this work with support from their TVIs and THIs who can’t be in the buildings every day. If we can’t find a TVI, we’ll have to resort to putting someone on a long-term sub license. Wouldn’t it be better to have our ISs who are already working with children have more competence in teaching their assigned students?”



Maginn tells a similar story: “We have four counties where we serve all districts and three other counties that have districts no one else serves. I have 35-40 children on my caseload because I also provide O&M services; the other TVI serves more children. We’ve been trying for the last two to three years to get someone to help and work with us.”

“It would be a huge help to have an IS with the SI endorsement in the buildings because so many times when I do get to go see my students, I have the plan in my head and know what I want to accomplish. But when I get to the building and have to put out 20 different fires that have come up since the last time I’d



been there, that plan dissolves. The SI-endorsed IS could look over assignments, consider the best way to make adaptations, re-arrange the room to support students, etc. They would take care of all these kinds of things so when I go in, I can work just with the student who needs me,” explained Maginn.

Roger Taylor, Principal of West Union Junior/Senior High School in the Adams County Ohio Valley School District, and a former IS, agrees, explaining “I can see a lot of rural campuses like mine with a K-6

and 7-12 school that could share the expertise of the IS with an SI endorsement. I think you could still serve a lot of kids that way.”

Abbey Weaver, THI and the hearing impaired-deaf (HI-D) team leader for State Support Team Region 14, agrees that having ISs with the endorsement would allow TVIs and THIs to provide more service to children with the most intense needs. “I think you’d have to look at each building and say, ‘OK, on this campus, I’ve got three buildings, or I’ve got one person in this building, one person in that building, etc.’ so you, as the IS: VI or IS: HI provide the neediest students with optimal time by providing the instruction no one else can deliver.”

“Having a network of ISs with the SI endorsement would allow for more networking among districts,” said Lawrence County ESC Special Education Consultant Julie Mayo. “I might be in one district but I could call

someone in another district. ESCs could help facilitate that kind of networking, which would build the capacity of districts and schools.”

## The State of the State

As early as 2006, issues associated with the current IS licensure model (see licensure options below) were identified by a cross-center ODE committee. These issues, still relevant today, included:

- Increasing academic content knowledge of teachers working with diverse populations;
- Ensuring that graduates of special education teacher licensure programs would be highly qualified in multiple academic content areas;
- **Finding ways to increase the pool of teachers able to support learners with visual and/or hearing impairments through changes in licensure or through the addition of other licensure options;**
- Increasing knowledge of consultative roles for special education teachers;
- Supporting dual licensure options that would prepare all teachers to implement differentiated instructional strategies based on student needs;
- Considering breaking down intervention specialist licensure by grade-bands (e.g., K-6, 7-12; or P-3, 4-9, and 7-12);
- Creating licensure options that would address learners considered to be low-functioning, as well as providing instruction to students with disabilities who do not have cognitive impairments; and
- Allowing for multiple pathways to obtaining licensure as an intervention specialist (e.g. requiring a general education content area license for all teachers with the addition of special education endorsements, creating an endorsement for teachers working with children with intensive needs).

The overriding concern of the committee was to ensure that any changes made would increase opportunities to learn by providing greater access to grade-level content to students with disabilities (and to students from all marginalized groups), articulate more clearly that instructional needs should drive service delivery, and maintain a four-year preparation model at the undergraduate level.

Now, 11 years later, these concerns are still highly relevant and have been the basis for discussion by members of the Ohio Deans Compact. In particular, the need to *increase the pool of teachers able to support learners with visual and/or hearing impairments through changes in licensure or through the addition of other licensure options* led to the Compact’s recommendation to establish an endorsement in the area of sensory impairment.

### CURRENT INTERVENTION SPECIALIST LICENSURE OPTIONS

Intervention specialist licenses are valid for teaching learners in the areas designated below. A minimum of 12 cumulative semester hours in the teaching of reading as described in section [3319.24](#) of the Revised Code shall be required for the professional intervention specialist license.

Licenses shall be issued in the following areas:

- **Gifted**, valid for teaching learners ages five through twenty-one and kindergarten through grade twelve;
- **Mild/moderate educational needs**, valid for teaching learners ages five through twenty-one and kindergarten through grade twelve;
- **Moderate/intensive educational needs**, valid for teaching learners ages five through twenty-one and kindergarten through grade twelve;
- **Visually impaired**, valid for teaching learners ages three through twenty-one and prekindergarten through grade twelve;
- **Hearing impaired**, valid for teaching learners ages three through twenty-one and prekindergarten through grade twelve.
- **Early childhood** intervention specialist license, valid for teaching learners with mild/moderate/intensive educational needs from prekindergarten through grade three, and for providing service coordination. A minimum of twelve cumulative semester hours in the teaching of reading as described in section [3319.24](#) of the Revised Code shall be required for the professional early childhood intervention specialist license.

Source: Ohio Administrative Code, Rule 3301-24-05

Under Ohio’s licensure standards, all licensed ISs – irrespective of the particular area of IS licensure – are permitted to work with and teach students with visual and/or hearing impairments without having received any specialized training. ISs must hold licensure as an IS: VI or IS: HI only when they are assigned solely to teach/support students identified as VI or HI, respectively. In most schools, however, ISs serve students with a range of disability conditions. For children with deafblindness, any IS credential suffices.

### Ohio IS Licensure Required to Serve Students with Sensory Impairments

Without Endorsement		With Endorsement	
Student Designation	IS License Required	Student Designation	IS License Required
VI	IS license – any area	VI	IS license – any area
HI	IS license – any area	HI	IS license – any area
DB	IS license – any area	DB	IS license – any area
MD	IS license – any area	MD	IS license – any area
Other Disabilities	IS license – any area	Other Disabilities	IS license – any area

The endorsement would simply *add some specialized training* to bolster these ISs levels of competence for working with some of students (i.e., those with sensory impairments) whom they are already serving in co-teaching situations, resource rooms, and special classrooms. Furthermore, the establishment of the endorsement will not require teachers to go back to school, but rather will give them an incentive for augmenting their skills through graduate course work that might, at least in some institutions in Ohio, become part of masters-level programs.

### Moving Forward?

As of May 2017, conversations are still under way at the state level regarding the creation of an endorsement in sensory impairment. The Ohio Deans Compact will release a request for application (RFA) for a third round of incentive grant funding in June 2017. It is anticipated that one area of funding will include simultaneous/symbiotic renewal involving P20 partnership efforts in the area of sensory impairment.

As the Compact continues to work toward the viable strategies for improving Ohio’s capacity to address critical shortages, IHEs stand ready to work together as part of the solution. “Shawnee State University is proud to be engaged with the Ohio Deans Compact on Exceptional Children, the Ohio Department of Education, and our colleagues across the state to help meet the needs of all learners. As we begin the development of essential programming to better support children and families, we look forward to the results of our collaborative efforts,” said Madden.

#### **For More Information**

For more information about the work being facilitated through the Shawnee State University and educators in southern/southeastern Ohio, contact Dr. Doug Sturgeon, Associate Professor, College of Professional Studies, Shawnee State University, 940 Second St, Portsmouth, Ohio, 45662; 740.351.3270; or via email at [dsturgeon@shawnee.edu](mailto:dsturgeon@shawnee.edu).

For more information about the **Ohio Deans Compact**, contact Deborah Telfer, Ph.D., Director, at 614.456.9855, or via email at [deborah.telfer@uc.edu](mailto:deborah.telfer@uc.edu) or visit the Compact website at <https://www.ohiodeanscompact.org/>.

For more information about the **OLAC and OIP** resources, contact Dr. Jim Gay, OLAC Co-director, at [jimgay@basa-ohio.org](mailto:jimgay@basa-ohio.org).