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Texas Teachers Sought for Bilingual, Gifted Training

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BY MARY ANN ZEHR

With the help of a \$1.5 million federal grant, Southern Methodist University in Dallas is starting an unusual scholarship program that will train teachers in both bilingual education and gifted education.

Experts in gifted education say they do not know of any other university that formally offers the same combination of teacher preparation. They hope the new program will give teachers better tools to help identify gifted and talented students who are learning English. They also would like to see it replicated.

"It's an absolutely excellent idea," said Peter D. Rosenstein, the executive director of the Washington-based National Association for Gifted Children. "One of the clear issues is that it's always harder to identify bilingual youngsters for gifted and talented programs. Very often, their language barrier

prevents regular methods from identifying these children."

"There's good work going on in this area, but it's frustrating how slow it is," added Jay A. McIntire, the executive director of the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented. "Theoretically speaking,

giftedness should occur equally in all segments of the population."

Texas is one of at least 29 states that require schools to provide programs for students who are deemed gifted and talented. The federal government, which man-

dates that schools provide special education, lets states determine whether to require gifted and talented education.

Program seen
as first of
a kind by a
university.

Following an Example

William J. Pulte, the director of teacher-training programs in bilingual education at Southern Methodist, said he got the idea to create the dual-emphasis scholarship be-

cause a local school district—the 21,600-student Grand Prairie school system—had established gifted education for students who are learning English. It also helped that the university already had separate programs in each of the specialty areas.

Teachers from six Texas districts are eligible to apply for the scholarships. Mr. Pulte received more than 100 applications for 30 scholarships that will begin in January. The university plans to provide 90 such scholarships over five years.

Scholarship recipients will complete a 36-hour master's-degree program in bilingual education, which will include six to nine hours of course credits in gifted education. Professors will also incorporate material about gifted education in other courses that are part of the special program.

The grant to Southern Methodist University was provided under Title III of the "No Child Left Behind" Act of 2001. Title III, which is the new federal law's section that authorizes programs serving English-language learners, replaced Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.