

RESEARCHERS from page 4

(1,475), Florida (1,243), South Carolina (1,070), California (651) and Ohio (463). Overall, there are 23,937 national certified teachers in the United States.

“Research tells us that teachers do make a difference,” said Graham, who has mentored local teachers in their pursuit of national certification since 1994. “But we haven’t had the tracking system in place to provide convincing evidence of the link between board certified teachers’ instruction and the depth of their students’ learning.”

Researchers say determining if one board certified teacher can make a difference on students’ standardized test scores is difficult.

“We’re trying to determine if there are other ways that student achievement can be valued and validated,” she said. “We’re trying to find out what changes or innovation national certification has on teachers’ practice. How that expresses itself in assessment practices. How that ultimately leads to students changing what they know and how they know it.”

The researchers are tracking 15 Georgia high school teachers – 5 in math, 5 in science and 5 in language arts – who are currently going through the 12-16 month national certification process. They are also tracking the same number of teachers who have completed the process and another 15 who are thinking about going through the process. Next year, they will recruit a new group of 15 who are considering it.

The research questions focus specifically on the following:

- What is the nature of teacher motivation to prepare for and complete National Board Certification?
- What is the nature of change in teaching practices implemented by the NBPTS participant before, during and after experiencing the certification process?
- How is teacher change reflected in student work over time, and how is the nature of this change related to the depth of student understanding?

“We needed to put together a large team of people because we’re collecting data over a large geographic area here in the middle of Georgia, and we want to carry it on for three years or more,” said Oliver.

Oppong came up with the idea of funding three doctoral fellows to assist the researchers.

“Perhaps, the fellows are going to do their

dissertations about this research,” said Oliver. “It’s a great opportunity. They’ll not only get a really good assistantship, but they’re also going to work with a team of people that works really seriously on research.”

Oppong believes the solid research design of the project is responsible for the UGA researchers winning the grant, but he sees a bigger purpose than its stated goals.

“Two years from now, I think we’ll be seeking continued funding because the evidence has begun to demonstrate that this is something worth doing,” he said. “If you look at our proposal, you can clearly see – this is not a linear project. This is a project that goes on indefinitely.”

In educational research there have been relatively few longitudinal studies, but Oliver believes this study is worth it.

“I think we could really make a big contribution to our field if we are able to maintain a 10-year study,” he said. “Anything we can do to show the complexity and difficulties of teaching and the real accomplishments being made by teachers for which they are seldom credited.” ■

TELL from page 6

or Hall counties or Gainesville.

Participants enroll in one of UGA’s graduate certification programs – Teaching Additional Languages (TAL) or Early Childhood Certificate Option (ECCO) – or one of UGA’s undergraduate TALs depending on their educational background.

The programs require 30-40 semester hours of work and may be completed in anywhere from three to six semesters. TELL provides 100 percent of the tuition, up to \$5,000 per participant, and the cost of expenses such as books, parking and fees, up to \$1,000.

Other support includes: preadmissions counseling, college readiness workshops, opportunities to attend colloquia and workshops with scholars of bilingualism and TESOL, English language classes, tutoring, and formal mentoring relationships. Schools will allow flexible work scheduling so that scholars may attend UGA classes and events.

Focusing on high-need schools in Clarke and Hall counties, Rymes hopes the five-year project will result in at least 55 new bilingual certified teachers. ■

For more information on TELL:
www.coe.uga.edu/dev/tell/index.htm

ERP from page 7

more bilingual personnel in our schools.”

As soon as she began helping with translation at the school, Erp realized the Latino students needed more help in overcoming the language barrier. But with a limited budget and few bilingual personnel, the question remained: *How?*

Then she came up with a great idea. If she could recruit UGA students studying Spanish and get them involved at Chase Street Elementary, she would have the volunteers she needed – not only to help Latino parents talk to teachers, but to help their struggling children keep up with their peers. In the process, the UGA students would get real-world experience as translators.

After several failed attempts, Erp finally connected with UGA Spanish professor Betina Kaplan, who loved the idea and designed a course that gave credit to her students for participating in the community effort.

In its first year, about 40 UGA students assisted with parent-teacher conferences, and the project was expanded to all four Clarke County elementary schools. In the next year, Erp developed “Survival Spanish” classes for teachers who have Latino students, extra tutoring for Spanish-speaking students who have trouble keeping up in class, and bilingual reading programs for students and translators.

This year, Erp has added a weekly English class at the school for about 15 Spanish-speaking parents and run by volunteer UGA professors and students.

Erp pauses as she reflects on how she got here.

She spent much of her childhood in France while her father attended graduate school at La Sorbonne, a prestigious university in Paris.

“The five years I spent in Europe created many great experiences, traveling and visiting museums and historic places in countries such as Spain, Russia, Belgium, Italy, Poland and Austria,” she said.

“My parents always stressed that we should appreciate the differences in local cultures and people. ‘Let’s learn from our differences.’ That was our message growing up,” she said.

It’s hardly surprising that Erp is now using her knowledge of another language to help bridge the cultural gap for others. ■