

## Press Release, UAB School of Education

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### **UAB PARTNERS WITH SHELBY, HOMEWOOD SCHOOLS FOR ESL EDUCATION RESEARCH**

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) School of Education has won two new five-year federal grants totaling more than \$2.5 million for English as a Second Language (ESL) training for teachers in the Shelby County and Homewood City schools.

The UAB School of Education received \$1.3 million in funding to create the Sheltered Teaching Accommodations for Reaching Success (STARS) program for Shelby County schools and a \$1.25 million grant for Project HEART (Homewood Educators Accommodating Reading and Teaching).

Through Shelby STARS and Project HEART, teachers in grades 4-12 will learn how to support English language development for children who are English Language Learners (ELL) while they are learning content subjects like math, reading or science. This technique is called sheltered learning, and it allows ELL students to progress in all their subjects while learning English. Sheltered instruction also supports non-ELL students, particularly at-risk students, as they learn challenging subjects

The UAB researchers and co-principal investigators Julia Austin, Ph.D., and Susan Spezzini, Ph.D., will use the grants to create models of sheltered instruction that can be transported to school districts similar to Shelby County and Homewood City that have increasing numbers of students who are learning English as a second language, says Austin. Research has shown that sheltered instruction is effective in helping ELL students to become proficient in English, to develop high levels of academic attainment and to meet challenging state standards, Spezzini said. Through Shelby STARS and Project HEART:

- Sixty-five Shelby County teachers grades 4-12 and 40 Homewood teachers, grades 6-12, specializing in specific subjects, will take four ESL teacher preparation courses.
- Twelve Shelby County teachers and eight Homewood teachers will take eight ESL certification courses.
- Twelve Shelby County and eight Homewood ESL teachers will take up to eight courses in subject areas like math, reading or other subjects.
- Twelve Shelby County early childhood education teachers will take up to eight courses in ELL Family Literacy.
- Eighty percent of both Shelby County teachers in schools with mid- to high numbers of ELL students and Homewood City teachers will participate in ESL professional development workshops.
- UAB education students and teachers' aides who are bilingual can take UAB coursework for ELL teacher certification. Professional development workshops will be held for 80 percent of all Shelby County and Homewood City counselors and administrators.
- Thirty-two area college and university faculty members who provide teacher training will receive assistance in incorporating sheltered education in their curriculum.

UAB researchers will measure the effectiveness of the two programs through surveys, and ELL proficiency tests mandated through No Child Left Behind, each school's Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) reports and other measurements.

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