This proposal, Project EVOLVE (Expanding and Validating Options for Learning through Variations in Education): Support Strategies for Students with Disabilities in General Education Settings, is being submitted by the Center on Disability and Community Inclusion at the University of Vermont under the funding category, Model Demonstration Projects for Children with Disabilities (CFDA 84.324M). The Project EVOLVE model is a team planning process that relies on an adaptation of validated problem-solving methods. The model addresses an important need of national significance, namely the development, implementation, and evaluation of alternatives to current service delivery practices to support students with disabilities in general education classes. The need for the model builds on recent research that has described significant problems with existing service delivery support strategies that rely heavily, sometimes inappropriately, on paraprofessionals to deliver educational services. Despite the absence of efficacy data, the increasing utilization of paraprofessionals has become a prominent service delivery model for including students with disabilities. Although recent studies have highlighted numerous concerns about this approach, viable service delivery alternatives have not been described in the literature, implemented on a broad scale, or adequately evaluated. Project EVOLVE would help fill that void by contributing descriptive, practical, and evaluative information and strategies for school personnel, policy makers, parents and self-advocates to use in tailoring supports and building capacity to educate students with disabilities in general education settings. The project’s findings will be shared nationally and statewide through a coalition of advisory and dissemination partners.

Project EVOLVE Objectives and Outcomes
(on page two)
Project EVOLVE Objectives and Outcomes

1. To identify and describe a series of existing service delivery support strategies that have not yet been sufficiently described in the professional literature, and are underutilized.

2. To develop and refine a self-assessment tool to assist schools to reflect on their own status regarding service delivery strategies designed to support students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

3. To develop and refine a model planning process (based on an adaptation of validated problem-solving methods), to assist schools to identify locally relevant solutions by: (a) adopting existing strategies, (b) adapting existing strategies, or (c) inventing new strategies, that facilitate the education of students with disabilities in general education settings.

4. To collect evaluative data on the process, implementation, and outcomes of schools’ planning regarding service delivery support strategies to facilitate the education of students with disabilities in general education settings.

5. To collaborate with a national and statewide coalition of advisory partners to improve the quality of project activities and relevance to service providers, policy makers, families, and self-advocates.

6. To maintain and extend a web site to provide up-to-date information regarding service delivery support strategies to facilitate the education of students with disabilities in general education settings.

7. To disseminate project’s model steps, tools, and findings nationally through a variety of outlets and in a variety of media and formats.