



Surveying the Geography of Inclusion among Teacher Preparation Programs in the New York State Task Force on Quality Inclusive Schooling

Introduction

Since Assistant Secretary of Education Madeline Will's call for an educational system that accommodates the full range of learners (Will, 1984) was sounded, schools and teacher preparation programs have grappled with what quality inclusion is and how it can best be implemented. Based on several sources and for the purposes of this report, inclusion can be defined as meaning *the shared teaching of all students with a full range of abilities and disabilities through the general education curriculum in general education classrooms in home communities* (Connecticut University Health Center, 1996; Farrell, 2004; Lipsky, 1994).

With varying degrees of success, institutions have designed and developed courses and programs to try and foster teachers who can successfully promote the maximum participation for students with disabilities in the general education curriculum. This report summarizes a survey undertaken in 2008 by the New York Higher Education Support Center for SystemsChange to understand the successes and challenges of developing inclusive teacher preparation programs. The survey was also designed to inform the membership of the Task Force on Quality Inclusive Schooling, a consortium of 68 institutions in New York State with accredited teacher preparation programs, of the "lay of the land" regarding current inclusive practice among these institutions.

Background

In New York State, promoting inclusive practice at the institutional level has taken several forms over the last twenty years. During the first years of the New York State Partnership for Statewide SystemsChange (1990 – 1995), the educational community realized that traditional teacher preparation programs were not fully preparing teachers for the challenges and opportunities of inclusive schools. In 1996, teacher educators from 19 colleges and universities in New York State formed the Higher Education Task Force on Quality Inclusive Schooling. These institutions committed to examining their own practice regarding inclusion and to work toward the accreditation of the programs that taught and utilized inclusive practices. In 2000, an additional 22 colleges and universities statewide participated in a project to engender institutional

systems change. Funded through a series of mini-grants provided for this purpose, these teacher preparation programs could, after extensive self evaluation and planning, declare themselves as programs with inclusive focuses or with dual certification as an outcome.

The original goal of this Task Force was to plan, engender and support quality inclusive teacher preparation programs. In 2001, a second goal was added dedicating the Task Force to supporting the professional development needs of selected high needs schools. Over the next five year iteration of the project, over \$1,213,000 was distributed in 166 awards to faculty and institutions for initiatives ranging from the implementation of co-teaching to the design and development of inclusive adolescent programs to studies of teacher decision-making.

In 2006, the Task Force was again redesigned, this time to focus specifically on the New York State Performance Plan. As a result, recent work has centered on supporting VESID's (Vocational and Education Services for Individuals with Disabilities) professional development efforts in the areas of Special Education Practice, Literacy, and Positive Behavior Supports. In addition, the Task Force has supported the gathering of evidenced based practices state-wide for the S³TAIR project (Supporting Successful Strategies to Improve Results), also a VESID project. Finally, the Task Force supports the work of seven regions in New York State through the development of consortium based assistance to institutions and to schools in quality inclusive practice.

The 2008 Inclusion Survey of Task Force Institutions began as an effort to focus squarely on teacher preparation programs, a focus with which the Task Force project originated. Because the efforts of the Task Force and its umbrella organization at Syracuse University, the Higher Education Support Center, have been on inclusive practice at institutions *and* on partnerships with schools, it became important to understand the impact of these efforts on inclusive teacher preparation. At least eight years had passed since the Task Force had taken stock of its work with inclusion and the impact of undergraduate and graduate teachers. Likewise, during that time, a greater emphasis on evidence based practice and on standardized testing under No Child Left Behind (2001) may have shifted inclusion as a priority for teachers and teacher educators. Yet the challenge of developing and sustaining academic success for students with disabilities as a significant subgroup of learners remains at critical proportions. Among others, the questions this survey sought to explore included: What does inclusive teacher preparation across New York State look like? Do institutions see themselves as offering "inclusive" programs? How do institutional courses and materials support inclusion? How do field placements support inclusion and to what extent is it possible to place students in inclusive programs? Are significant disabilities built into programs or marginalized?

Method

A team of staff members from the Higher Education Support Center and evaluation personnel from the Syracuse University Office of Research and Professional Development designed, developed and implemented the survey. First, preliminary questions were drafted to cover a range of potential topics such as administrative structures, inclusive field placements, and the delivery of instruction and practice in areas such as Positive Behavior Support and Response to Intervention. Next, these questions

were offered for discussion and editing to 65 faculty members from New York State teacher preparation programs who attended the semi-annual Statewide Meeting of the Task Force on Quality Inclusive Schooling in April, 2008. After that, based on their comments, the 18 question survey was refined and finalized.

The survey was distributed as a PDF to the 68 institutions who count themselves as members of the Task Force in August, 2008. The PDF was provided to support easier distribution to colleagues at institutions for the purpose of widening the circle of conversations about inclusive practice. Instructions with this version of the survey alerted a single faculty member who would serve as a point person for the responses to the survey to anticipate the arrival of an electronic version of the survey via SurveyMonkey. In addition, the point person received instructions about the purpose of the PDF and about the process of completing the survey. Potential point persons had been contacted during June and July to ascertain their willingness and availability to convene a group of colleagues to answer the questions on the survey. Electronic responses to the survey were gathered from August 5th through November 16th, 2008 with two additional reminders provided to non-compliant institutions to encourage participation in that time frame. 41 Task Force institutions were represented in the survey results for a 60% participation rate.

Author, (1996). *Inclusion: A right, not a privilege*. Connecticut Univ. Health Center, Farmington, CT. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 407816)

Farrell, P. (2004). School psychologists: Making inclusion a reality for all. *School Psychology International*, 24(5).

Lipsky, D. (1994). National survey on inclusive education. *National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion Bulletin*, 1(1). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 383135)

Will, M., (1984). *Bridges from school to working life*. Washington, DC: Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.



Program Structure and Design

Question 1: Our institution (department, school, college) has made an explicit commitment to inclusive teacher preparation.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
42.9%	40.0%	14.3 %	2.9 %	0 %

How is this commitment evident or not evident?

Strong Agreement:

- Dual certification, institutional policy/mission/philosophy, inclusive class content (inclusion in all or most classes), inclusive placements, publicly/visibly support inclusion through course descriptions/marketing/hosting conference.
- "We have no separate elementary program. No one can get single certification. "The word inclusive is in the title of the program. All courses, regardless of prefix (i.e. EDU or SPE) require students to consider a full range of learners."

Agreement:

- Specific coursework on inclusion, may be contained to special education programs, mission/conceptual frameworks (may not be fully actualized?), new programs/majors which have inclusive content/focus.
- "This is true at the department level. We have an inclusive teacher preparation program for individuals seeking special education certification. Some of our courses for candidates seeking general ed certification are inclusive but not all."

Disagreement:

- Limited content in inclusion, either actualized at program or conceptual/commitment level but not both, lack of specific 'official' commitment at institutional/departmental level.
- "The inclusive programs are housed in a segregated educational model."



Defining Institutional Commitment to Inclusion

Question 2: Our department leaders and core faculty think of “inclusive teachers” as special education teachers.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable
5.7%	48.6%	31.4%	11.4%	2.9%



Administrative Structure and Support

Question 3: The way our department, school, or college is structured administratively facilitates inclusive teacher preparation programs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
20.7 %	37.1 %	34.3 %	8.6 %	0 %

If you agree with this statement, how is this support demonstrated? For example, has the institution provided sufficient institutional resources in support of your inclusive teacher preparation programs, made decisions about housing programs that support collaboration in support of inclusive teacher preparation programs, or considered how the administrative structure influences the design and delivery of the programs?

Strong Agreement:

- No separation of special education/gen ed program, funding to support Taskforce work, collaborative delivery of courses, creative management of course load.
- "General and special education are housed in the same department. The department budget includes funding for materials and conference(s). Faculty is encouraged to attend task force meetings."

Agreement:

- Separate department or intermingling, housing of special education faculty in same office, collaborative approach, freedom to develop courses, consideration of credentials and experience in hiring.
- "Our School of Education embraces a conceptual framework...teaching for social justice, authentic learning and collaboration. In our graduate program, we have autonomy to develop our courses to prepare...teachers who are effective with diverse learners."

Disagreement:

- General education program only, difficulty collaborating due to structure, no capacity to train inclusion teachers, separate departments.
- "We had a five year program that lead to certification in childhood education and special education, housed in the Department of Elementary Education. That program lasted 3 years and the university decided to terminate it (with) problems related to resources, acceptable field and student teaching placements, collaboration between elementary and special education faculty, and the structure of the program."



Relationships to Schools with Inclusive Practice

Question 7: In relation to the identified teacher preparation program, my colleagues and I have developed robust relationships with local schools with strong inclusive practices, resulting in opportunities for teacher candidates to observe, participate in, and teach using inclusive practices.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
27.8 %	58.3 %	8.3 %	0 %	0%

Please describe these relationships with schools. For instance how are these relationships maintained and/or why are partnerships challenging.*

Strong Agreement:

- Course embedded fieldwork, no placements in segregated classrooms, tutoring support including summers/after-school, urban/high needs placements, provision of professional development to schools; collaborative projects.
- "Students must complete 2 field experiences and a student teaching requirement in schools. These are often done in general education inclusive settings. The student teaching is done primarily in inclusive classrooms. We emphasize UDL as a basis for planning and teaching."

Agreement:

- Still developing relationships with special education teachers, placements in general education and/or inclusive classrooms, placements not always controlled by the IHE due to financial/work commitments of students; difficulty locating inclusive sites, personnel turnover is a threat, courses taught in schools, load credit for partnership development, partnership limited to field experiences.
- "Our relationships are growing in both number and depth. Faculty have done professional development for school personnel and students."

Disagreement:

- Uneven relationships and finding schools with strong inclusive programs. Finding schools that have strong inclusive programs that also are willing to have students in their classrooms is a challenge.
- "Often schools feel that their programs are just starting and don't want a student in the situation when teachers are just beginning to get their bearings."

* Note: there were a number of Childhood education programs in this respondent pool.



Inclusive Field Experiences

Question 8: The field experiences associated with the named teacher preparation program address serving the needs and interests of all learners in the regular classroom.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
44.4 %	38.9 %	5.6%	0 %	0 %

Please comment on the nature of such experiences in the regular classroom. Please provide one or two examples. Consider the extent to which these experiences take place in intentionally inclusive settings.

Strong Agreement:

- Diverse placements in variety of settings, work with resources, literacy, and teacher assistants, full time internships, inclusive placement settings, designing lesson plans.
- "Candidates experience a variety of settings with an inclusive focus. They shadow consultant teachers working in inclusive classrooms."

Agreement:

- Coursework in inclusive settings, students may be working in self-contained settings, diverse settings, some in segregated settings due to shortage of quality inclusive settings, co plan and co teach content, RTI, UDL.
- "All our teacher candidates are placed in schools with diverse student needs. Many of our candidates are placed in inclusion classrooms."

Disagreement:

- Difficulty accessing general education settings as candidates are working in special education placements.
- "Unfortunately, there are few truly inclusive programs in the area, and many of our teacher-candidates are already teaching in the local schools. This limits the availability of placing students in intentionally inclusive settings."



Positive Behavior Supports

Question 9: Teacher candidates in this teacher preparation program explicitly learn positive behavior support (PBS) strategies with their students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
52.8%	33.3%	13.9%	0.0%	0.0%



Positive Behavior Supports

Question 10: Teacher candidates in the named teacher preparation program have the opportunity to practice positive behavior support (PBS) strategies with their students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
41.7 %	41.7 %	13.9 %	0 %	2.8%

Please comment on how learning and practice relates to positive behavior support (PBS) occurs:

Strong Agreement:

- Student may not get to decide to implement this approach; expectation throughout placements and fieldwork application, woven into program/content throughout, course on PBS with case studies.
- "Students take a specific course in Positive Behavior supports. They learn to analyze and understand communicative intent of behavior and complete an FBA and PBS plan for an individual child during practicum and then again in Student Teaching."

Agreement:

- Student teaching experience, specific class on behavior management, develop PBS practices in collaboration with colleagues in the field, taught and observed; still in beginning stage, expectation in fieldwork but no formal structure for observing/supervising this; focused on one or two children.
- "PBS is an area where we are making some initial steps. We partner with one area school that implements PBS very effectively, and they will be presenting a seminar at our college on this topic in the fall."

Disagreement:

- PBS not used, classroom teachers a barrier.
- "Schools are not particularly cooperative with allowing students to implement behavior change projects."



Response to Intervention

Question 11: Teacher candidates in this teacher preparation program explicitly learn intervention (RtI) strategies with their students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
30.6%	52.8%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%



Practicing Response to Intervention

Question 12: Teacher candidates in this teacher preparation program have the opportunity to practice intervention (RtI) strategies with their students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
20.7 %	54.3 %	25.7 %	0 %	0 %

Please describe how learning and practice related to RtI occurs.

Strong Agreement:

- Opportunities to practice throughout degree, participation in school RTI teams, application in fieldwork.
- "Student teachers participate with mentor teachers on school based RTI teams."
- **Agreement:** Coursework and practice in fieldwork, RTI not a requirement in placements, required coursework, variable application depending on school; focused on one or two children, school interpretation of RTI varies.
- "We give explicit attention to RtI as a construct, but the degree to which student teachers are able to implement EXPLICIT RtI strategies varies from school to school. We have intentional steps in place to increase the attention given to RtI in our preparation program."

Disagreement:

- Depends on placement, RTI not taught, faculty may not agree with approach.
- "RtI as I understand is not specifically used by the Early Childhood Education program."



Team Teaching and Co-Teaching

Question 13: Teacher candidates in this inclusive teacher preparation program explicitly learn teaching, consultant teaching, and/or team teaching practices in their field experiences.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
41.7%	47.2%	8.3%	0.0%	2.8%



Practicing Co/Team Teaching

Question 14: Teacher candidates in this inclusive teacher preparation program have the opportunity to practice teaching, consultant teaching, and/or team teaching practices in their field experiences.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
36.1 %	50 %	5.6 %	2.8 %	0 %

Please describe how learning and practice related to teaching, consultant teaching and team teaching occurs:

Strong Agreement:

- Modeled by faculty team teaching, field placement in pairs, differentiated practices/models, 5 month internship with master teacher, lesson planning in collaboration, placements in variety of settings including those which admit a CTT/team approach.
- "This is a central component of our program."

Agreement:

- Coursework, not a priority for general education students but opportunity's for special education teacher candidates, possibly to a limited degree—depending on setting, still in the initial stages, assignments.
- "This varies by field placement. While we try to provide them with information on collaborative teaching methods and often require them to do presentations and microteaching with others, placements do not always provide for these opportunities."

Disagreement/Strong Disagreement:

- Depends on placement, some content in courses./ Teacher and school reluctance.
- "It depends on their day job, most do not have the opportunity."/ "Not as much as we'd like."



Engaging Parents and Caregivers

Question 15: Teacher candidates in this inclusive teacher preparation program explicitly learn and use approaches to engaging parents and caregivers.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
36.1 %	61.1 %	2.8 %	0 %	0 %

Please describe how and to whom approaches to engaging parents and caregivers are typically taught. Please comment on both their opportunity to learn and opportunities to practice.

Strong Agreement:

- Fully integrated into program, foundation courses, case based assignments, dependent on field setting for application, readings, panel discussions/interviews with parents, mock scenarios and practice.
- "Students participate in Person-Center-Planning and IEP meetings, with a specific focus on involving families."

Agreement:

- Elective course, attendance at parent/school functions and meetings; dependent on placement, not always a factor in field experiences, coursework (though not consistent), communication training/strategies, seminar.
- "Case study assignments require candidates to work with children and their parents/guardians. In addition, thematic unit assignments must include parental/guardian support and engagement."



Engaging Parents and Caregivers

Question 16: Teacher candidates in this inclusive teacher preparation program have the opportunity to practice approaches to engaging parents and caregivers.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
20.6%	58.8%	20.6%	0.0%	0.0%



Evaluation of Student Teacher Inclusive Practice

Question 17: The named teacher preparation program evaluates student teachers on their ability to carry out inclusive practice in teaching.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
40 %	37.1 %	17.1 %	0 %	5.7%

Please comment on the evaluation process. You might consider whether a candidate can fail student teaching if she/he cannot demonstrate inclusive practices and/or the degree to which elements of inclusive teaching are incorporated as criteria for effective teaching in the evaluation process.

Strong Agreement:

- Will pull students out of the program and offer another pathway, use of evaluative criteria related to inclusion for practicum, need to demonstrate in classroom setting, must meet needs of all children, collaborative evaluation including multiple cooperating teachers, ability to work collaboratively with school staff, meaningful engagement of student learners, professional disposition, literacy, behavior supports, panel approach to evaluation.
- "Students must justify in their plans and demonstrate in their teaching how they are addressing diverse learning needs and following UDL principles. If they are not teaching all students in the classroom they can fail."

Agreement:

- Must show capacity to accommodate all learners with numerous opportunities to demonstrate this, will not pass without demonstrating mastery, students rarely fail, criteria not traditionally specific to learners with disabilities, general education students may not need to demonstrate same mastery, college supervisor and cooperating teacher evaluation, must demonstrate ability to meet diverse needs.
- "The student teaching experience requires that the student self evaluate, the college supervisor evaluates and the cooperating teacher all evaluate on the quality of inclusive practices demonstrated by the student teacher."

Disagreement:

- No performance criteria used.

