

# **The Practices of Inclusive Teacher Preparation Programs**

## **Introduction**

Nowadays, teacher preparation programs across the country are undergoing continuous structural changes in response to the increased call for inclusive practices in schools. Special and general educators alike are required to have positive attitudes, dispositions, and the competency to successfully educate children with diverse backgrounds.

To better prepare preservice teachers for inclusive classrooms, two approaches to reshaping teacher preparation programs have been widely recommended. The first means is a continuous large-scale initiative through restructuring the teacher preparation programs into a unified one so as to fulfill all standards required both for special and general educators. Earlier efforts can refer to the works by Kemple, Hartle, Correa, & Fox (1994), Meyer & Biklen (1992), and Pugach (1994). Villa and his colleagues (1996) summarized four exemplary programs restructured in this fashion in the early 1990's.

Program enhancement is another more prevalent means to improve teacher preparation and ready preservice teachers for inclusive schooling. The program may be enhanced by revising existing courses, integrating diverse field practicum, adding new courses (Nowacek & Blanton, 1996; Peterson & Beloin, 1998; Strawderman & Lindsey, 1995), and the curriculum infusion has also been used to enrich the content of existing courses by infusing special education content throughout the teacher preparation program so as to meet the needs of both special and general educators (Cook, 2002; Lombardi & Hunka, 2001).

The works included in the annotated bibliography were conducted since 1996's. Studies that reported the program re-structuring experiences, or those that examined particular experiences of the teacher candidates during a course or practicum were summarized. Empirical studies that were conducted in a teacher preparation program claimed as inclusive but without delineating how the program was structured and what were the curricula were excluded from the review.

## Annotated Bibliography

### Restructuring

**Benner, S. M. & Lesar, Sharon. (2000). Teacher preparation for inclusive settings: A talent development model. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 27(3), 23-38. (No. 10)**

The paper described how the faculty group at the University of Tennessee restructured and developed their teacher education program to address the themes of inclusion, diversity, and developmentally appropriate practices. These themes were covered directly, embedded into other topics, and incorporated into field experiences that accompany the coursework. Students in this program needed to major in liberal arts, minor in education, and then complete one year full-time internship. The authors studied the restructuring process. The data were collected during the 1994 and 1995 spring semesters, and 13 mentoring teachers, 12 interns, and 6 faculty members took part in the event. Individual interviews, focus group interviews, observations, and study of artifacts were conducted. The researchers found during the pre-internship block, preservice teachers were confused about the constructivist view of knowledge and needed to have the support from professors, and the intern teachers considered the one-year full-time internship beneficial. The authors also pointed out the issues they needed to address: the need to incorporate more coverage of special education during the integrated pre-internship block, the necessity to provide more guidance to the interns in adjusting to teaching environments in which alternative approaches to instructional delivery, such as whole language instruction, cooperative learning groups, and alternative assessments, are not present or accepted, and the need to alleviate the workload of the interns. How to place interns with mentoring teachers who demonstrate best practices in classroom instruction, and state licensure requirements restricting the unification of teacher education programs were also the major challenges the authors faced. Two earlier versions of the study could be obtained as follows

\*Lesar, S., Benner, S. M., Habel, J., & Coleman, L. (1997). Preparing general education teachers for inclusive settings: A constructivist teacher education program. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 20(3), 204-220.

Lesar, S., Benner, S. M., & Habel, J. (1996). *Preparing general education teachers for inclusive settings: A constructivist teacher education program*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, NY. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 395913) (No. 4)

**Everington, C., Hamill, L. B., & Lubic, B. (1996). Restructuring teacher preparation programs for inclusion: The change process in one university. *Contemporary Education*, 68, 52-56. (No. 12)**

The curricular and organizational change of a teacher preparation program was implemented at the Miami University. In order to guide the change, the following activities were initiated: articulating a mission, having administrative support, conducting staff development, carrying out collaborative planning/implementation, and having ample common meeting times for

constituents. The following goals were achieved: (a) the documentation of the effectiveness of the current training; (b) the identification of competencies for preservice teachers; and (c) the establishment of a team teaching model--Distinguished Professional in Residence Project. The authors pointed out several barriers that must be addressed in the near future: team delivery of coursework is prohibited, the time needed to implement change lacks, and they lack qualified faculty to sustain the change and bring it further.

**Heston, M. L., Raschke, D., Kliewer, C., Fitzgerald, L. M., & Edmiaston, R. (1998). Transforming teacher preparation in early childhood education: Moving to inclusion. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 21(4), 278-92. (No. 11)**

In this paper, The University of Northern Iowa (UNI) described their efforts to transform the early childhood education major and the early childhood special education major into a single unified major. They started the change by taking the following steps: 1) initiating collaboration: in the fall semester of 1995, the Interdisciplinary Task Force of four faculty members began meeting regularly to develop a plan and early discussions with some faculty members indicated strong doubts about the value of inclusion; 2) identifying inclusive school settings: schools in which effective inclusion practices were being utilized were identified so that faculty members could observe first hand how inclusion could be successfully implemented, and by the end of the year, some faculty who were negative to inclusion seemed to “have taken a more reflective posture”; 3) developing a list of competencies: the Task Force developed an extensive list of specific competencies in each major area and competencies related to child development, instruction, assessment, and professionalism were identified. The challenge the author mentioned is that faculty members’ professional identities and deeply held beliefs about teaching could be the major roadblocks to the merger of teacher education programs.

**Jenkins, A. A., Pateman, B., & Black, R. (2002). Partnerships for dual preparation in elementary, secondary, and special education programs. *Remedial and Special Education*, 23(6), 359-371. (No. 15)**

Since 1993, the faculty members in the College of Education at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) have been working with local schools to design a field-based dual licensure program in special education and elementary education. As a result, the roles of university faculty members, school-level mentor teachers, and school administrators were redefined and the implementation of the program in 1996 helped forge new school-university partnerships. Due to the success of the elementary program and the need for qualified special educators at the secondary level, the program was expanded to dually certify secondary education majors in special education. The authors summarized that recruiting schools and mentor teachers with greater emphasis on inclusion, integrating special & general education practices and philosophies, modifying coursework and assignments, and increasing communication among stakeholders were crucial for the success of restructuring the programs.

**Keefe, E. B., Rossi, P. J., de Valenzuela, J. S., & Howarth, S. (2000). Reconceptualizing teacher preparation for inclusive classrooms: A description of the dual license program at the University Of New Mexico. *The Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 25(2), 72-82. (No. 9)**

In this paper, the Dual License Teacher Preparation Program at the University of New Mexico was introduced. Graduates of the Program are eligible for licensure in general education (K–8) and special education (K–12). Two faculty members formed a collaborative team and designed the university based coursework and school-based field experiences. Both modeled collaboration between general and special education to prepare apprentice teachers to collaborate in the schools. They made specific academic and dispositional requirements on admitting students to programs, detailed the requirements of student competencies, streamlined the program structure, coursework, and staffing. The study specifically highlights the inclusion of best practices for students with severe disabilities as an integral part of curriculum development right from the start. Also, the authors noted the barriers to implement the reform and admitted it was challenging to maintain collaborative relationships with all participants in the university and partner schools. In addition, some students occasionally commented that the faculty members did not fully demonstrate the inclusive philosophy to the degree which they advocated.

**Sobel, D. M., Iceman-Sands, D., & Basile, C. (2007). Merging general and special education teacher preparation programs to create an inclusive program for diverse learners. *The New Educator*, 3(3), 241 – 262. (No. 13)**

The article reported the program restructuring efforts that the School of Education at the University of Colorado at Denver made in 2000 to merge the special and general education programs, which resulted in all students in all fields taking the same core courses (23 credits in total). Before this change, the general education program had infused the issues relating to special education in multiple courses, but students pursuing a special education license had no courses that overlapped with their general education peers. Based on a shared philosophical foundation of social justice, inclusion, equity, and access, as the authors stated, a more formal process was carried out to integrate special education, technology, and ELL in the curriculum. Thus, each syllabus was designed with the review of the content-area specialists across the three areas to meet the professional standards; secondly, key course activities and readings were identified to support those learning goals; thirdly, the associate dean of the teacher education program initiated a structure which consisted of a lead instructor and a course team, in which “all instructors of a particular course (often three to five instructors) met as a course team on a weekly or biweekly basis with a designated lead instructor to make sure issues related to special education, technology, and ELL were addressed, and lead instructors met monthly as a group to support program coherence, address student concerns, mentor new and honoraria faculty, and address program-level issues.”

**Villa, R. A., Thousand, J. S., & Chapple, J. W. (1996). Preparing teachers to support inclusion: preservice and inservice programs. *Theory into Practice*, 35(1), 42-50. (No. 8)**

The paper debriefed the exemplary efforts that took place in four universities to retool their teacher preparation programs for meeting the challenges of inclusive schooling. The four places are Trinity College (Burlington, Vermont), Syracuse University (New York), the University of California at San Marco, and Arizona State University-West (Phoenix) in the early 1990's. These institutions have been active in partnering with the local communities and school personnel to better ready graduates for meeting the challenges of inclusion and diversity in contemporary schooling.

### **Enhancement**

**Cook, B. G. (2002). Inclusive attitudes, strengths, and weaknesses of pre-service general educators enrolled in a curriculum infusion teacher preparation program. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 25(3), 262-277. (No. 16)**

At a large Mid-western university, the teacher education program infused special education and inclusion curricula into a series of four seminar courses (designed for students to take one in each year of their undergraduate career) that cover a variety of topics such as diversity, technology, educational psychology, and history and culture of American schooling in addition to special education and inclusion. In order to learn the preservice teacher's attitudes toward inclusive schooling and the program, 136 undergraduate students completed a survey instrument, namely, the Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities scale. Additional comments were also collected. It was found: (a) pre-service teachers were more positive toward the inclusion of students with learning disabilities than of students with behavior disorders, mental retardation, and multiple disabilities and (b) pre-service teachers of different class standings did not have significantly different attitudes toward inclusion, their teacher preparation experiences, and instructional skills related to inclusion were inadequate, and attitudes and relevant strengths and weaknesses regarding inclusion did not typically improve corresponding to years of teacher preparation. In addition, four themes emerged from the comments of 136 participants regarding their strengths and weaknesses related to inclusive teaching. The most frequently mentioned strengths were in the area of Personal Characteristics, Dispositions, and Talents. The most commonly noted weaknesses were in regard to Teaching Experience, Teacher-training, and Instructional Knowledge and Skills. Comments specified lack of college coursework, preparation, and training, lack of classroom teaching experiences, lack of relevant knowledge regarding instructional techniques. It is therefore recommended all pre-service general educators take extensive coursework focused on effective practices for educating students with disabilities.

**Jung, W. S. (2007). Preservice teacher training for successful inclusion. *Education*, 128 (1), 106-113. (No. 1)**

The study investigated the attitudes and confidence levels of the preservice teacher candidates in a teacher education program in working with students with special needs. The program was modified to prepare preservice teachers for working with children with special

needs. The researcher taught a compulsory two-week block (special education unit) for Introduction to Teaching in a Diverse Society. Sixty-eight first year students enrolled in Introduction to Teaching in a Diverse Society and fifty-seven student teachers who were majoring in Early Childhood and Intervention Specialist and took four special education related courses in spring 2006 participated in the study. The participants completed a 25-item questionnaire, Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities. The results showed that first year students rated themselves significantly higher than student teachers on the confidence of teaching in inclusive classroom, indicating they had more favorable attitudes toward inclusion than student teachers. The author claimed that following student teaching, there was a significant decline in the favorability of attitudes toward inclusion.

**Lombardi, T. P., & Hunka, N. J. (2001). Preparing general education teachers for inclusive classrooms: Assessing the process. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 24*(3), 183-197. (No. 18)**

The authors reported their experiences in strengthening the West Virginia University's five-year preservice teacher education program in order to meet the need of inclusive schooling. An array of special education learning outcomes and competencies were incorporated into the core courses required of all education majors. They studied the degree of competence and confidence to which students in their second, third and fourth year of the teacher education program and faculty teaching the core courses felt regarding the issues of working with children with special needs. The fourth year students reported acquiring more outcomes and competencies, suggesting they were more likely to be confident as compared to their peers in the second year of the program. Four of the 11 professors reported that they felt both competent and confident to teach future educators to work with special needs students in inclusive settings, but one of the professors felt a lack in both competence and confidence to teach in this area. It is suggested that faculty from both general and special education should team teach core courses and special education faculty members need to make themselves available to assist their colleagues in strengthening the special education core courses.

**Peterson, M., & Beloin, K. S. (1998). Teaching the inclusive teacher: Restructuring the mainstream course in teacher education. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 21*(4), 306-318. (No. 19)**

This article describes the experience of two faculty members, one at a teaching university in central Wisconsin and the other at a research university in Detroit, Michigan, regarding their experiments in restructuring a mainstreaming or inclusion course from one that heavily emphasized on disability-specific information. The responses from university students suggested that the course could be made most valuable by focusing on providing information on instructional support and accommodation strategies, rather than exclusively on specific disabilities. The authors recommend the restructured approach as a first step to begin developing an effective inclusive teacher education program, stating that their experiences may provide a model upon which individual faculty can lay the foundation for change in their own departments while meaningfully enhancing the preparation of teachers in responding to the needs of inclusion through a simple mechanism--the restructuring of the typical "mainstreaming course."

**Smith, S. J., Frey, B. B. & Tollefson, N. (2003). A collaborative cohort approach to teacher education: Modeling inclusive practices. *Action in Teacher Education*, 25(1), 55-62. (No. 14)**

The report describes a collaborative cohort experience where “seamless instruction” was provided by four faculty members to demonstrate inclusive practices. In the program, the professional development year consists of a six-week student teaching experience, a 10-week block of graduate level coursework, and a 16-week internship. The candidates select two tracks of study: a campus-based program or a collaborative cohort program. For the campus-based group, the graduate coursework included enrollment in five graduate classes. For the collaborative cohort, the five graduate courses were integrated into a block and taught on-site every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon at two professional development schools. Altogether, 130 students elected to complete the campus-based program and 30 students be part of the collaboration cohort. The authors found that the collaborative cohort model improved preservice teacher attitude towards integrating effective collaboration and the perceived ability to meet the needs of diverse learners in an inclusive general education environment, but measured levels of actual collaborative behavior decreased. The research suggests that modeling collaboration increases knowledge about collaboration, promotes positive attitudes towards inclusion, but does not increase collaborative behaviors among preservice teachers in school environments where collaboration is not the norm.

**Van Laarhoven, T. R., Munk, Dennis D., Lynch, K., Bosma, J., & Rouse, J. (2007). A model for preparing special and general education preservice teachers for inclusive education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 58(5), 440-455. (No. 5)**

The Project ACCEPT was an experiment that an Illinois university initiated to enhance its teacher education programs. The major features of the Project are a shared course and clinical experience for pre-service special and general educators, instructional modules on critical competency areas for teachers in inclusive classrooms, and hands-on experience and assessment with assistive technologies. Eighty-four pre-service teachers from different majors (elementary, secondary, and special education) participated in Project ACCEPT across three semesters and were enrolled in sections of an existing course entitled “Collaborative Teaching in Inclusive Settings.” This course was taken in the third year of the students’ programs, after completion of initial instructional methods courses, but prior to student teaching. The participants took a 10-hour institute, were enrolled in a course, and had a minimum of 6-hour clinical experience in an inclusive classroom. A major distinction between the traditional course and that of Project ACCEPT was the clinical experience. Students from elementary, secondary, and special education were placed into teams or cohorts (one student from each major) and expected to collaborate with one another throughout the experience. Cohorts in Project ACCEPT first collaborated on a simulated lesson plan as a class assignment and then completed a field experience in an inclusive classroom near the end of the semester. For the clinical component, the cohorts were required to spend a minimum of six hours together in the inclusive classroom, and eventually delivered a co-planned and co-taught lesson on the last visit. Course modules, standards addressed, and project materials are available on the Project ACCEPT website at <http://www.cedu.niu.edu/tlrn/projectaccept>. Surveys designed to assess attitudes toward inclusion and toward instructional adaptations were completed by the experimental and control groups prior to and upon completion of the Project ACCEPT course and clinical experience using a pretest and posttest design. Curricular probes

also were used as pre- and posttest measures to assess knowledge and competence in the areas of instructional accommodations, assistive technologies, and functional behavioral assessment. A Lesson Plan Evaluation Form was used to evaluate the teaching performance included 20 items rated on a 5-point scale across three separate instructional areas. They found: (a) probe scores increased from pre-to posttest for all groups, with significantly more growth observed in the experimental groups (i.e., special and general education majors enrolled in Project ACCEPT); (b) the largest effect sizes were observed for general educators in the experimental group. Staff gave high ratings to Project ACCEPT cohorts on lesson planning and implementation, with 91% percent of students scoring at least 85 out of 100 or higher and 92 being the average score (range = 74-99). Only five (5) students scored below 85 on their lesson (i.e., group 1 score 74; group 2 score = 81). To determine if participation in Project ACCEPT and traditional courses prepared students for their first year of teaching, outcome surveys were sent to the experimental and control group students two years following their participation in their respective experiences. Project ACCEPT participants overwhelmingly positive (91%) about their experience, indicated that the most beneficial aspects of their experience were collaboration with students from different educational areas followed by participation in simulations and hands-on experiences with assistive technologies, but only 40% of the control group indicated that enrollment in the traditional course was beneficial. As a result, student blocks have been arranged across program areas so that special educators can collaborate and co-teach with general educators during their second professional clinical experiences. An earlier version is as follows:

Van Laarhoven, T. R., Munk, Dennis D., Lynch, K., & Bosma, J. (2006). Project ACCEPT: Preparing pre-service special and general educators for inclusive education. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 29*(4), 209-212. (No. 6)

**Voltz, D. L. (2003). Collaborative infusion: An emerging approach to teacher preparation for inclusive education. *Action in Teacher Education, 25*(1), 5-13. (No. 7)**

Collaborative infusion approaches have been used by some programs as an alternative to or augmentation of single course approaches to the delivery of content related to students with disabilities. The researcher studied the practice of collaborative infusion in 432 four-year institutions of higher education that include both general and special education teacher preparation programs. Among the 252 (58.3%) returned completed survey instruments, 13 (20.6%) were interviewed by telephone. Findings showed that approximately 25% (63) of programs surveyed used collaborative infusion in some form, with the majority of these programs using it to supplement other approaches, such as a separate class. The interviewing data indicated that the majority of these persons found this approach beneficial to both students and participating faculty. However, the disadvantages of the approach, such as time-intensiveness, faculty's heavy workloads, and lack of congruence with university structures, prohibit it to be widely implemented.



## Further Readings

### Restructuring

Campbell, D. M., Fyfe, Brenda. (1995). *Reforming teacher education: The challenge of inclusive education*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education, Washington, DC. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED386439) (No. 2)

\* Kemple, K. M., Hartle, L. C., Correa, V. I., & Fox, L. (1994). Preparing teachers for inclusive education: The development of a unified teacher education program in early childhood and early childhood special education. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 17*, 38-51.

\* Meyer, L. & Biklen, D. (1992). *Preparing teachers for inclusive schooling: The Syracuse University inclusive elementary and special education teacher preparation program*. Unpublished report. Syracuse University.

\* Pugach, M. (1992). Unifying the preservice population of teachers. In S. Stainback & W. Stainback (Eds.), *Controversial Issues Confronting Special Education*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Stayton, V. D., & McCollum, J. (2002). Unifying general and special education: What does the research tell us? *Teacher Education and Special Education, 25*(3), 211-218. (No. 17)

### Enhancement

\*Nowacek, E. J., & Blanton, L. P. (1996). A pilot project investigating the influence of a collaborative methods course on preservice elementary education teachers. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 19*, 298-312.

\*Strawderman, C., & Lindsey, P. (1995). Keeping up with the times: Reform in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 46* (2), 95-101.

**Note:** \* means the article has not electronic version.