Program Redesign to Prepare Transformative Special Educators

AUTHORS

Andrea Golloher
Matthew Love
Lisa Simpson
Sudha Krishnan

ABSTRACT

Teacher educators are in a unique position to prepare future educators to disrupt the status quo and enact changes that ensure equitable access to educational opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities. It is critical that those who prepare future special education teachers (SETs) ensure they are prepared to engage with the broader school community to foster inclusivity and positive outcomes for all students, in addition to designing specially designed instruction (SDI) responsive to the unique learning needs of individual students with disabilities. Addressing this task requires candidates who are prepared to employ high leverage and evidence-based practices, culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy, and universal design for learning. In this article, we describe how one small Department of Special Education sought to reinvent its program to center anti-racism and anti-ableism to inspire the next generation of SETs to adopt a transformative vision for public education. The result was a cohesive course roadmap that employs a "common trunk" of classes aligned with differentiated coursework needed for specialization for each credential that centers these principles while reducing assignments. The newly aligned roadmaps ensure candidates in our programs will be ready to situate their work with students with identified disabilities within the context of the broader goals of public education.

KEYWORDS
Course alignment, culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy, program revision, special education, teacher preparation, universal design for learning

As Shaull (2000) reminds us in his forward to Friere's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* "There's no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument . . . to bring about conformity or freedom" (p. 34). This observation is apparent in the structures of public education today. In the United States, public education was established as a means of ensuring citizens could participate in the great democratic experiment (Kober & Rentner, 2020). Concerns about the average voter's ability to understand the functioning of the government and to participate in the democratic process resulted in calls for the development of public education systems and influenced the structure of the systems.
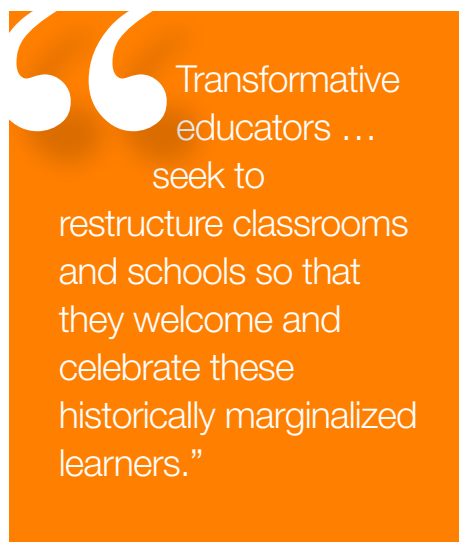
Although public education has been offered for free, it has not always been freely accessible to all. Early public-school students were primarily white, male, and able-bodied (Annamma, 2015). This resulted in white, able-bodied men in positions of power reinforcing the status quo and the barriers to keep out students of color and students with disabilities (Bahena et al., 2012). Societal movements in the mid-20th century disrupted this status quo and led to changes to public schooling, including mandates to desegregate schools and educate students with disabilities. Despite these movements, we

continue to grapple with the legacy of racism and ableism in public schools. Students with disabilities and/or from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds continue to fare worse than their non-disabled white peers (Fuchs et al., 2018).

Addressing these issues requires *transformative* educators who seek to restructure classrooms and schools so that they welcome and celebrate these historically marginalized learners. It is not possible to be neutral in these matters. One cannot be *not r*acist or *not* ableist (Kendi, 2019). If the goal is to enact changes that ensure equitable access to educational opportunities for all students, special education teachers (SETs) must understand the historical roots that separated general and special education students along with CLD students from white students. They must explicitly adopt anti-ableist and anti-racist attitudes to address these causes.

Three Pillars of Preparation for Transformative Special Education Teachers

In response to these historical issues, a growing body of research has emerged on three interrelated areas of pedagogical practice that seek to ensure *all* students benefit from public education: evidence-based practices (EBPs), culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy (CRSP), and universal design for learning (UDL). The field of special education has long emphasized the importance of responding to individual students' unique learning needs, relying on empirical practices to identify the strategies most likely to support student learning. Over time this growing body of empirical evidence has resulted in the establishment of evidence-based practices (EBPs) to improve student outcomes (Cook & Cook, 2011) and the identification of high-leverage practices

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(HLPs) SETs entering the field must master (McLeskey, et al., 2022). This history of empiricism focused attention on the role of SETs in critically analyzing the effectiveness of their instruction through ongoing progress monitoring and data-based decision-making. SETs have been taught to individualize instruction with specific emphasis on the understanding that what works for one student may not work for another student.

Although the HLP/EBP movement has focused on the development of effective instructional strategies to meet the unique needs of students receiving special education services, CRSP (Ladson-Billings, 2021) and UDL (CAST, 2018) have sought to remove barriers to accessing general education curriculum experienced by historically marginalized students. CRSP centers the experiences of CLD students. This is done by honoring students' funds of knowledge in order to engage them in authentic experiences relevant to their lives outside of school. These practices are in contrast to educational practices that have historically sought to assimilate CLD students into the status quo defined by white, middle-class, Americans. Not unlike CRSP, UDL seeks to ensure access to the general education

curriculum by providing multiple options for engagement, representation, and action and expression in the classroom. The UDL framework stresses students may need to access and use information differently to meet the same learning goals. In contrast, ableist notions that all students must engage in the same tasks and produce the same end products to demonstrate learning. Research in CRSP and UDL has identified many practices that engage students from diverse backgrounds and/or with differing abilities in meaningful learning (Aceves & Orosco, 2014; Israel et al., 2014).

These three pillars are essential for the preparation of transformative educators, so much so that the pillars and practices are referenced in federal education policy (CAST, 2022) and state credentialing and licensure requirements (Muñiz, 2019). SETs are tasked, therefore, not just with creating specially-designed instruction (SDI) that is responsive to the unique learning needs of students with disabilities, but also with engaging with the broader school community to foster inclusivity and positive outcomes for all students. While other papers address the critically important work of understanding effective teacher preparation practices (e.g., see Dunst et al., 2020, for a synthesis of the literature), in this article, we discuss how one small Department of Special Education is working to reinvent its program to center anti-racism and anti-ableism to inspire the next generation of SETs to adopt a transformative vision for public education.

Context

We want to acknowledge that the work described in this article is time-intensive, and faculty in small programs may be limited in their ability to engage in similar work given the many demands on their time. Several factors

converged to create both a supportive context and a sense of urgency for this work within our department. First, it is important to note that this work took place in a California teacher preparation program. Compared to most other states and territories, Californian schools rely more heavily on segregated service provision for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). According to data from the U.S. Department of Education (2022), California is in the bottom quarter of states and territories for percentage of students with disabilities considered to be fully included with peers (educated in the general education classroom at least 80% of the day). Additionally, California schools are exceptionally diverse, which is reflected in the data for students receiving special education services. California has the highest percentage of any state of students receiving special education services that are classified as English learners (~26%) and one of the lowest percentage of students with IEPs who are identified as white (~21%).

Historically, our department has always centered equity and inclusion work in our preparation of pre-service special educators. Like many SET preparation programs, our program was centered on preparing candidates that would support positive and inclusive changes for students with disabilities in our community. However, our program redesign occurred at a time when educational researchers, advocates, and our communities called for an even greater focus on not just inclusion, but to address systemic racism in school systems. This helped in reshaping our program to focus on the intersecting issues of equity in schools and led to concurrent conversations about embedding anti-racism/anti-ableism in coursework, addressing state-level changes to our credential program re-quirements, and responding to feedback provided by our candidates. Within this context, we were motivated to identify ways to strengthen our program and we received support from the college in the form of summer funding to do so. Each of these factors influenced our program redesign and are described in the following sections.

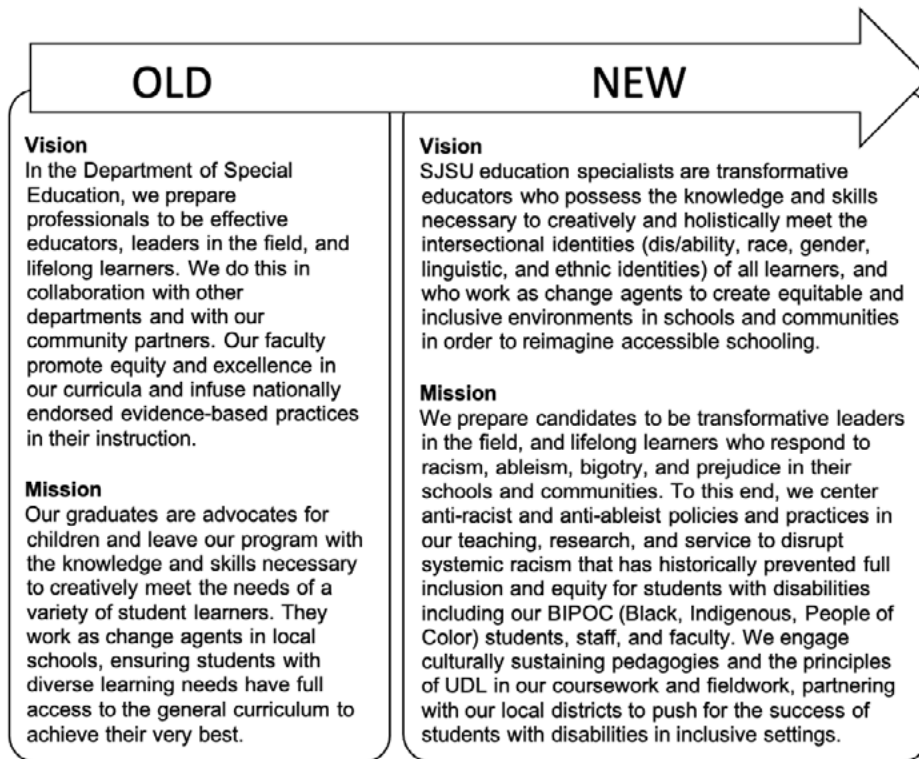## College-Wide Conversations About and Commitment to Anti-Racism

Against the backdrop of ongoing racial violence and political unrest that motivated the Black Lives Matter movement, faculty across our College of Education engaged in conversations regarding the importance of centering anti-racist and anti-ableist ideologies in all programs. These conversations led the college leadership (i.e., the Dean, Associate Dean, and Council of Department Chairs) to request all departments reflect upon their programs to identify possible mechanisms reinforcing racist and ableist ideologies and to develop strategies to disrupt these mechanisms. In our department, we agreed that the first step in this effort would involve a revision of our program's vision and mission statements. This work occurred as an iterative process in which faculty reflected on the college's vision and mission statement as well as our existing departmental vision and mission statements. We also reviewed statements from other programs, which allowed us to consider what might be viewed as essential features of special education that were not captured in the broader college mission. We engaged in several rounds of discussions as we rewrote the statements. Once the statements were drafted, feedback was solicited from critical stakeholders, including the college leadership, our community partners, and advisory board members (e.g.., district represen-tatives, including directors of special education, principals, and teachers), and current and former students.

As can be seen in Figure 1, although the old vision and mission statements included language about candidates leaving our program as "effective educators," "leaders," and "change agents," they were lacking explicit statements about the purpose of this work and emphasized working with individual students. Faculty realized the mission and vision statements did not include explicit language around the SET candidates' roles in promoting equity and inclusion in schools, nor did the previous statements include explicit wording about preparation to work with the diversity of the students they would encounter in schools, beyond noting the diversity in abilities. The revised vision and mission statements responded to these concerns by highlighting the goal of producing SETs who engage in transformative work that is responsive to students' intersectional identities and who use their knowledge and skills to create equitable and inclusive environments for accessible schooling. These revisions contextualize the work of SETs to include both individual work with students with disabilities and engagement with the broader community to create schools that are accepting of all students and set the stage for coursework changes.

State-Level Changes to Credential Requirements

Fortuitously, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) issued new standards regarding the preparation of SETs at the same time these conversations on anti-racism and anti-ableism were occurring across the college and in our department. The credential changes were influenced in part by the California Statewide Task Force on Special Education report (2015)

FIGURE 1: Old and New Vision and Mission Statements

OLD

Vision
In the Department of Special Education, we prepare professionals to be effective educators, leaders in the field, and lifelong learners. We do this in collaboration with other departments and with our community partners. Our faculty promote equity and excellence in our curricula and infuse nationally endorsed evidence-based practices in their instruction.

Mission
Our graduates are advocates for children and leave our program with the knowledge and skills necessary to creatively meet the needs of a variety of student learners. They work as change agents in local schools, ensuring students with diverse learning needs have full access to the general curriculum to achieve their very best.

NEW

Vision
SJSU education specialists are transformative educators who possess the knowledge and skills necessary to creatively and holistically meet the intersectional identities (dis/ability, race, gender, linguistic, and ethnic identities) of all learners, and who work as change agents to create equitable and inclusive environments in schools and communities in order to reimagine accessible schooling.

Mission
We prepare candidates to be transformative leaders in the field, and lifelong learners who respond to racism, ableism, bigotry, and prejudice in their schools and communities. To this end, we center anti-racist and anti-ableist policies and practices in our teaching, research, and service to disrupt systemic racism that has historically prevented full inclusion and equity for students with disabilities including our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) students, staff, and faculty. We engage culturally sustaining pedagogies and the principles of UDL in our coursework and fieldwork, partnering with our local districts to push for the success of students with disabilities in inclusive settings.

which identified teacher preparation elements that contributed to barriers in establishing inclusive programs and supporting the diverse student population across the state. Changes were made to the authorization statements of the three credentials we offered in our program: mild to moderate support needs (MMSN), extensive support needs (ESN), and early childhood special education (ECSE). These changes expanded the range of student credentials SETs could be assigned to teach. Previously, students were assigned to SETs based on the disability category listed in their IEPs, leading to some students being relegated to self-contained classrooms based on their disability and not their learning needs. Instead of disability categories, students are now assigned to SETs based on the required level of support. This change allowed us to move away from talking about prescriptive approaches based on disability categories in our courses and focus on ways to provide support

for students based on level of needs, allowing a greater emphasis on the use of HLP/EBPs, CRSP, and UDL.

In addition to changes in credential authorization statements, CTC also implemented additional fieldwork components which included increasing the required hours of fieldwork, requiring fieldwork in both general education and special education placements, and mandating the passing of a Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA). These changes provided an opportunity for us to create an early fieldwork course that included general education and inclusive education placements, supporting our mission of preparing candidates to be advocates for inclusion in our communities. Often candidates leaving our program remarked that the students in programs where they found jobs were "not ready" for inclusion. Their remarks indicated to us that they were unsure how to meaningfully provide services in inclusive placements given their lack of experience in such place-
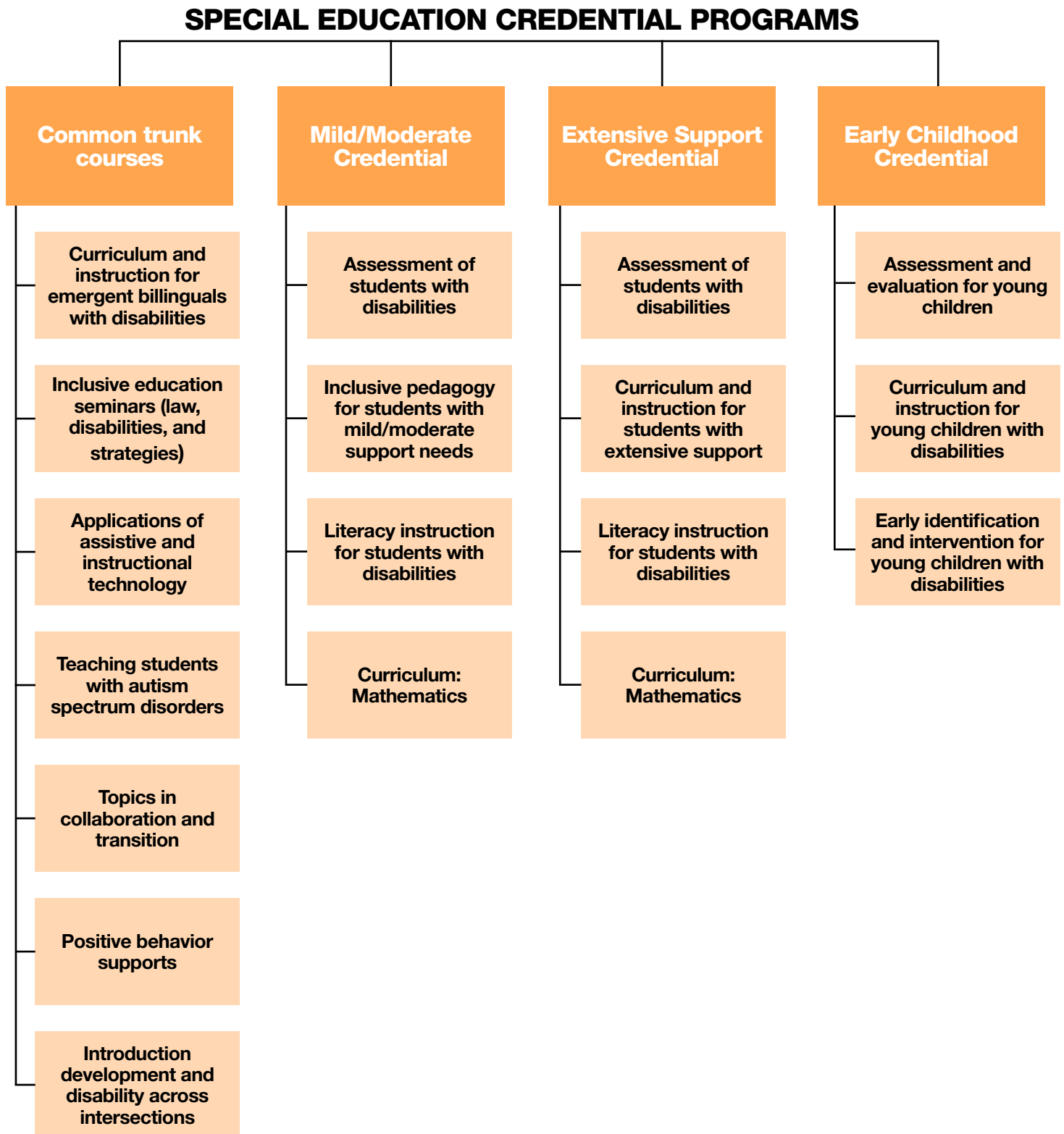
ments –an issue that is not surprising given California's reliance on providing services in more restrictive placements. By pairing inclusive fieldwork placements with coursework on inclusive strategies (i.e., how to implement HLP/EBPs using CRSP and UDL strategies), our hope is candidates will leave our program better prepared to advocate for and implement changes to their future employment settings that will support more inclusive opportunities for students with IEPs.

Similarly, the addition of TPA to our credentialing requirements led to a consideration of how we support candidates in demonstrating specific competencies in coursework and fieldwork placements. Using the TPA as a summative assessment, we backward planned how and when candidates would demonstrate specific skills in their preparation program. The process of addressing the TPA led to in-depth discussions on the alignment of coursework and fieldwork (described below) and challenged us to identify how skills would be developed across courses offered concurrently and sequentially.

Practical and Logistical Considerations

Finally, as we were engaging in this work to envision how we could build a more robust program for our candidates, we were faced with practical and logistical considerations associated with running three credential programs within a small department, particularly ensuring that each course would enroll enough students to avoid cancelation. Additionally, students expressed frustration with what was perceived to be busy work, with the length of time needed to complete our program (2 years), and with the lack of summer courses. The reality was that most of our students were interns who sought to take courses in the summer when they

FIGURE 2: Common Trunk and Unique Coursework for the Three Credential Programs

SPECIAL EDUCATION CREDENTIAL PROGRAMS

Common trunk courses

- Curriculum and instruction for emergent billinguals with disabilities
- Inclusive education seminars (law, disabilities, and strategies)
- Applications of assistive and instructional technology
- Teaching students with autism spectrum disorders
- Topics in collaboration and transition
- Positive behavior supports
- Introduction development and disability across intersections

Mild/Moderate Credential

- Assessment of students with disabilities
- Inclusive pedagogy for students with mild/moderate support needs
- Literacy instruction for students with disabilities
- Curriculum: Mathematics

Extensive Support Credential

- Assessment of students with disabilities
- Curriculum and instruction for students with extensive support
- Literacy instruction for students with disabilities
- Curriculum: Mathematics

Early Childhood Credential

- Assessment and evaluation for young children
- Curriculum and instruction for young children with disabilities
- Early identification and intervention for young children with disabilities

were not teaching. Because faculty did not engage in course alignment, it was also common for major assignments to be due at the same time in multiple courses. This limited SET candidates' ability to engage meaningfully in the work we were asking of them. Program evaluation found students were not independently making connections between courses (e.g., understanding how assessment practices learned in one course impacted lesson plan development in another course). Based on these observations, we decided to take an intentional approach to planning coursework and the major assignments were used to evaluate student progress in the courses.

To address both state-level changes and student and faculty concerns, we established a "common trunk" of coursework for students in all three credential programs (see Figure 2). The courses in the common trunk addressed HLP/EBPs that are common across credentials, such as planning for collaboration and transition, using assistive and instructional technology, and supporting multilingual learners. This common trunk provided an opportunity to ensure all SET candidates, regardless of their credential area, developed a solid foundation of knowledge and skills in the three pillar areas deemed important to achieving the vision and mission of the department in preparing transformative SETs (HLP/EBPs, CRSP, and UDL). Additionally, this common trunk allowed for innovations in curriculum development, pushing our instructors to work together to ensure the content in each of the common courses addressed the learning needs of candidates in each of the credential programs. The remaining differentiated courses enabled students to gain deeper familiarity with the practices more salient to their future professional roles. For each credential, these differentiated courses included

assessment and methods courses. These changes allowed us to shorten the program to three semesters, and with increased summer coursework, students could complete the program in one calendar year.

This alignment work, described in the next section, also addressed the issue of many assignments due at the end of the semester. As instructors of both common trunk and differentiated courses collaboratively reviewed and revised their syllabi, it became evident that some assignments could be eliminated or restructured to fit within a learning progression across courses taken in the same semester. Also, this process reduced the number of assignments due at the end of the semester. We engaged in deep conversations about how our courses supported students' successful entry into fieldwork and completion of the new TPA, and about ways which our curricula promoted our core values of anti-racism, disrupting deficit notions of disability, promoting UDL, and using HLP/EBPs. Additionally, focusing on the learning progressions of the students allowed us to identify opportunities to use textbooks across several courses to maximize student learning and reduce student textbook costs.

Enacting the Three Pillars

To establish a foundation for preparing high-quality SETs, all program development work was built on and guided by the three pillars of our program. New SETs must enter classrooms with the knowledge and skills necessary for serving diverse student populations in a variety of learning environments. Our goal is to graduate candidates that can address the holistic needs of their students and consider their academic, behavioral, and social-emotional wellness. Guided by recommendations for enacting responsive practices (see Paris & Alim, 2017) our coursework rede-

sign considered the cross-pollination of the UDL Guidelines (CAST, 2018) and CRSP, that is to not only develop the candidates' abilities to implement HLP/EBPs that support positive student outcomes, but to do so in ways that leverage student assets and is responsive and supportive of their cognitive, cultural, and linguistic diversity (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Rather than seeing UDL or CRSP as solutions to issues faced by certain student groups, our approach is meant to prepare candidates to see equity and access as a right for all students. In the next section, we highlight how these areas intersected with examples of how students interact with and implement these pillar areas across multiple courses.

Implementing Evidence-Based and High-Leverage Practices

Mirroring the recommendations in the literature to embed pedagogical development in practice-based settings (see McCleskey et al., 2019), our program redesign systematically developed the candidates' ability for enacting HLP/EBPs as a top priority in course planning and ensured that across courses and semesters key HLP/EBPs were introduced, practiced, and assessed. Although the enactment of contextually situated EBPs in academic disciplines and instructional settings had previously driven our course planning, the adoption of HLPs by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC; McCleskey et al., 2022) shifted the focus to how these practices could be infused across our coursework to reflect the dynamic nature of serving students with disabilities across instructional settings. While EBPs are modeled and practiced in discipline-specific methods courses (e.g., class-wide peer tutoring, dialogic reading in literacy methods), the HLPs are developed across coursework cov-

TABLE 1: Selected Resources for Disability Representation

GENRE	TITLE
Readings by Disabled Authors	
	*Guide Dogs Don't Lead Blind People**
	*Gaining Power Through Communication Access**
	*Lost Cause**
	(*M*)*othering Labeled Children* (Cioè-Peña, 2020)
	We're Not Broken: Changing the Autism Conversation (Garcia, 2021)
	Black Disabled Art History 101 (Moore, 2017).
First-Person Narratives	
	Interviews with AAC users
	Interviews with parents of children / young children with disabilities
Non-Traditional Media	
	Crip Camp (Newnham & LeBrecht, 2020)
	Special Books by Special Kids videos (SBSK, 2022)
	Deej (Rooy & Rutenbeck, 2017)
	The Miseducation of Larry P podcast (Romney et al., 2019)
	The Power of 504 (Veltri et al., 1997)
Anti-ableism Assignments	
	Create literacy lesson plan / dialogic reading plan with disability representation
	Create a social (liberatory) narrative with students

*Works included in Disability Visibility (Wong, 2020)

ering assessment (e.g., HLP- multiple forms of information), instructional methods (e.g., HLPs-explicit instruction, scaffolded supports) and educational technology (e.g., HLP-assistive and instructional technology), before being practiced and assessed in two semesters of fieldwork.

Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Pedagogy

Recognizing that home and school experiences for students are equally important for the effective implementation of HLP/EBP, our program embeds CRSP in all coursework. CRSP preserves linguistic and cultural pluralism by honoring and centering the stories and practices of people of color while rejecting the notion that their variation from the dominant culture is pathological (Paris & Alim, 2017). Scholars have suggested educators can practice CRSP by developing social and cultural awareness, building a classroom community based on trust and a positive mindset, using students' cultures and funds of knowledge to promote deep learning and higher-order thinking, and raising critical consciousness of the students and staff through rigorous interrogation of the contexts of learning (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Paris & Alim, 2017). Creatively and holistically meeting the intersectional needs of students requires that SETs select and implement HLP/EBPs considering both the learning needs and the cultural contexts. For example, candidates implementing a social story intervention (EBP) for teaching social skills must also consider the cultural norms and the student's funds of knowledge that intersect with social development.

By seating "disability at the table of social justice and multicultural education" (Connor, 2012, p. 1), the faculty added ability to the CRSP power matrix of whiteness, maleness, heteronormativity, and wealth. This broadened CRSP lens allowed us to draw parallels between the experiences of individuals from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds and those with disabilities. The faculty identified two paths to further this endeavor: (a) faculty development and (b) coursework modification.

Although not all faculty had expertise in this area, multiple supports for engaging in this work were provided

at university, college, and department levels. Many of the faculty joined a college-wide initiative to read anti-racist materials including books like *White Fragility* (DiAngelo, 2018) and *How to be an Anti-Racist* (Kendi, 2019) to raise critical consciousness and be able to examine power and privilege in educational systems. To increase the focus on establishing anti-ableist course materials, a college-wide book study of *Disability Visibility* (Wong, 2020), an anthology of work by disabled authors describing their experiences with disability was offered. Participation in this book club prompted a discussion of departmental policy requiring the use of person-first language (i.e., "people with disabilities," "person with hearing loss") versus the use of identity-first language (i.e., "disabled person," "deaf individual") when referring to the disabled community, ultimately leading us to update the policy to reflect that the decision on language must be informed primarily by opinions of disabled people. These opportunities also prompted a discussion about including the voices of people with disabilities in our coursework to highlight contentions between special education programs and the disability community.

Coursework Modification

As faculty developed their own social and cultural awareness, they worked to include points of inquiry and praxis throughout course materials, particularly to discuss intersectionality and promote notions of divergence rather than deficit (Banks, 2014; Connor, 2012). For example, faculty decided to include Latina mothers' perspectives in the course on teaching emergent bilinguals through the work of Cioè-Peña (2021). The course also adapted the evidence-based practices originally formulated for monolingual learners to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Additionally, discussions on racial disproportionality and over-representation, restorative justice, and the school-to-prison pipeline were included in courses across the program (Anamma et al., 2014).

Given that the current special education system essentially stems from a deficit paradigm and nearly all the textbook materials echo the medicalized perspective of disability as deficient, unchanging, and essential (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017), the faculty agreed that it was important to include supplementary materials through additional readings by disabled authors, first-person narratives, non-traditional media materials, and assignments that included disability representation, as shown in Table 1. In addition, the department removed ableist/deficit language from the course titles and descriptions to reflect the new vision and mission statement. For example, we renamed the course *Methodologies for English Learners with and without Disabilities* to *Promoting Access: Teaching for Social Justice at the Intersections of Language and Disability* and the course titled *Curriculum and Instruction for Mild and Moderate Disabilities* to *Inclusive Pedagogy for Students with Mild/Moderate Support Needs.*

By embedding the principles of anti-racism and anti-ableism into assignments we challenged SET candidates to reflect on and transform their understanding of disability and support the development of strategies to connect HLPs/EBPs with CRSP. Several faculty used *Undoing Ableism: Teaching About Disability in K-12 Classrooms* (Baglieri & Lalvani, 2019) to help them consider how to redesign assignments. The discussion of CSRP was included in multiple courses to ensure candidates considered all the ways to reflect on and celebrate multiple identities, including disability. For example, faculty teaching literacy instruction agreed to require SET candidates to develop literacy lessons that included disability representation. Similarly, the course in curriculum and instruction included an assignment to develop a social (liberatory) narrative that uses anti-ableist perspectives to address a social or behavior challenge.

Universal Design for Learning

As part of our vision to produce SETs "who work as change agents to create equitable and inclusive environments in schools and communities in order to reimagine accessible schooling," we adopted UDL as the third pillar of our program. UDL and the UDL Guidelines (CAST, 2018) offer educators a framework for proactively designing learning environments that are meaningfully accessible and inclusive to all students (Hall et al., 2012) and provide a useful and consistent framework for considering each element of curriculum development and instruction (Rao et al., 2014).

Implementation of the UDL Guidelines supports candidates to consider *how* students will be assessed across lessons or units of study, *what* methods and materials they will use to deliver content to students and communicate *why* students are engaging with or learning about specific topics or skills. For example, when considering using a social story (an EBP), candidates would consider how this social story might be constructed (e.g., paper book vs digital book) and when it would be used with students (e.g., whole group versus individual readings) based on their understanding of the learning needs of both individual students and the whole class.

Like many SET preparation programs, we offered separate classes that developed SET candidates' knowledge and skills for addressing the assessment, instructional, and social/behavioral aspects of classrooms, likely leading to some of the disconnect we observed in

FIGURE 3: Assignment Alignment Across One Semester of Coursework
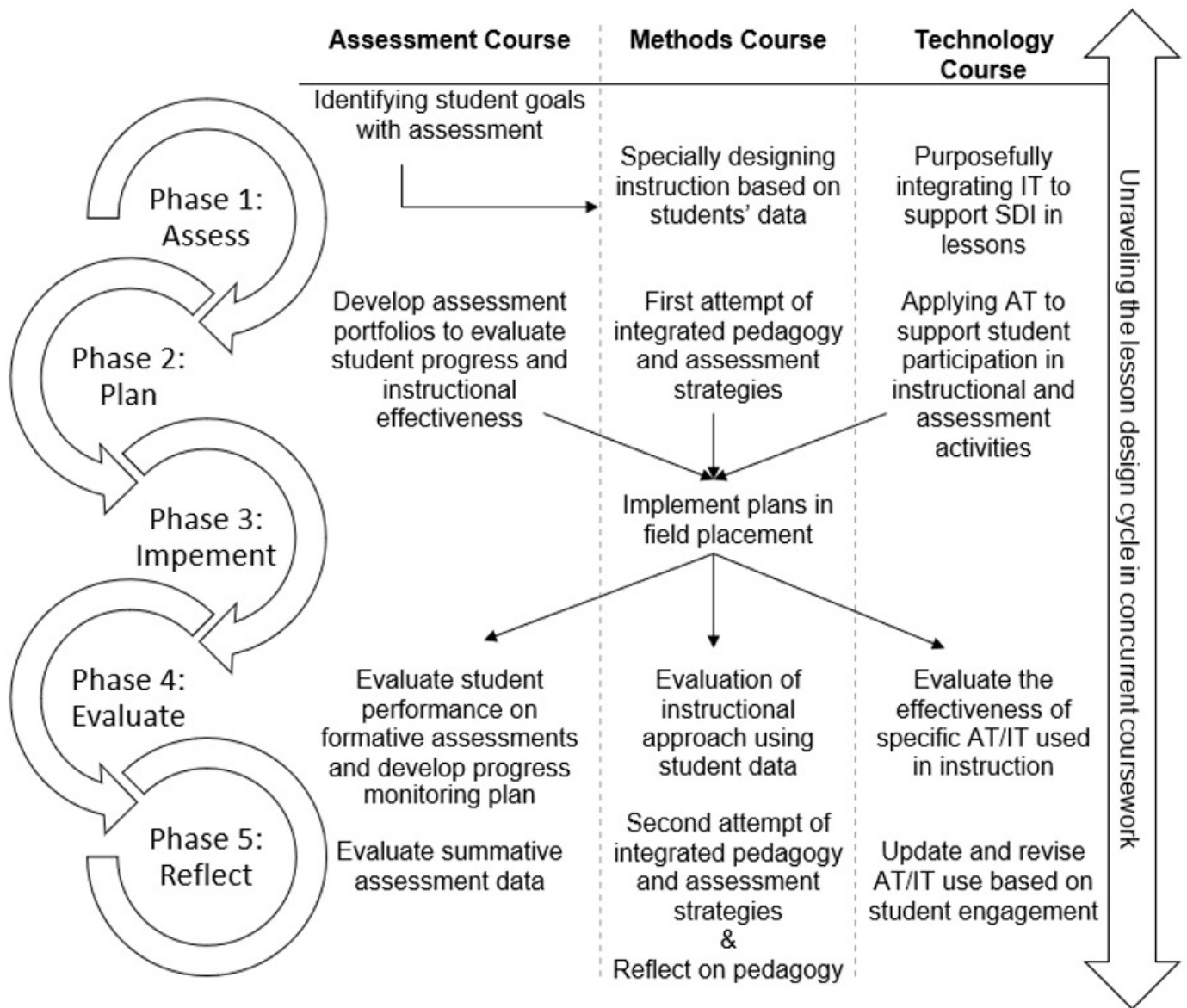
Note: SDI = specially designed instruction; IT = instructional technology; AT = assistive technology

our candidates. Thoughtful and meaningful incorporation of UDL practices provided us with a consistent thread to make connections between multiple courses and support our candidates in considering all elements of learning environments.

Connecting the Pillars Across Coursework

In our program redesign, our goal was to ensure that candidates saw each HLP/EBP modeled in their coursework as an interconnected part of the teaching and learning cycle. Historically, each program pillar was emphasized in individual courses and programs, but not necessarily as systematically as in our redesign. While all instructors agreed that the principles of our program pillars should be embedded throughout candidates' programs, it became clear through both candidate feedback and early fieldwork observations that candidates were not developing their understanding or skills for enacting a data-based instructional cycle that effectively enacted HLP/EBPs, UDL, and CRSP. As we examined the courses offered in the first semester of the program, we recognized that it would be possible to deepen candidates' understanding and abilities for enacting these pillars by aligning assignments across our traditional special education coursework offerings.

This included an assessment course (differentiated for credential programs), a methods course (differentiated for credential programs), and a course on educational technology (common trunk) taught in the same semester to better simulate an instructional cycle and the enactment of the ELP/EBPs. This work formed the foundation for courses on positive behavior support, collaboration and co-teaching, teaching emergent bilingual students, and literacy in later semesters. The pillars of our program helped guide this alignment as we reflected on the ways in which candidates needed to be prepared to use assessment to guide the instruction design.

We offer the following example to illustrate how preparation programs can build on foundations of HLP/EBPs, UDL, and CRSP to align assignments across multiple courses as candidates (a) engage in a data-driven instructional planning process in their assessment course, (b) thoughtfully engage learners in flexibly planned and culturally responsive lessons in their curriculum and instruction class, and (c) provide flexible means of representation and action and expression through technology in a course on educational technology. In coordinating across concurrently offered courses, instructors can reinforce the connections between each step of the instructional cycle while at the same time remaining focused on developing candidates' proficiency in one step in this process. Figure 3 highlights how topics are covered in these courses and how assignments completed in one class are purposefully built upon in another course to highlight the connections between assessment, instructional planning, purposeful use of AT/IT, implementation of lessons, and reflection of pedagogical efficacy.

In the assessment course, UDL and CRSP encourage the adoption of an assets-based orientation to student development as candidates consider how students experience assessment strategies (representation), the ways in which students demonstrate their learning (action/ expression), and their motivations to participate in assessment activities (engagement). We, therefore, wanted candidates to establish robust assessment plans, rooted in established HLP/EBPs, for planning and crafting IEPs and flexible methods for formative and summative assessment of student progress toward IEP and curricular goals. Knowing that candidates would be developing instructional plans and strategies for using assistive and instructional technology in other courses, the assignments in the assessment class asked students to add an evaluation plan to their instructional plan assignment completed in their methods course. They would submit this evaluation plan both in their assessment course and in their methods course. Similarly, they were asked to consider how to employ AT/IT to ensure students have the tools necessary to demonstrate their learning within their instructional plan, which they submitted both as part of their assessment course and assistive technology course. To manage student workload, the iterations of these assignments were spread out over the semester (See Figure 3).

Meanwhile, in the methods course, students developed instructional plans that included considerations for cultural responsiveness of their materials, instructional sequencing, and enactment of HLP/EBPs. In preparing to implement each of these pillars, SET candidates are tasked with taking what they know about their students, based on available data and observations (i.e., assessments) and designing learning environments that are culturally responsive and inclusive for all learners. Preparing candidates to consider the cross-pollination of CRSP and the UDL Guidelines for engagement and representation allows programs to highlight that engagement is not only captured at the beginning of lessons and units but is maintained over time by interesting and culturally relevant lessons that ensure students have barrier-free access to instructional activities and materials. Preparing candidates to approach lesson planning and implementation in this way reinforces instruction in special education, or the enactment of HLP/EBPs, most definitely does not take a one-size-fits-all approach, but instead takes an individualized approach that offers all students options and varied pathways for developing new knowledge and skills. To support candidates' developing skill in using UDL to promote student access to the curriculum, they first begin developing their instructional plan in the methods class, then consider how to enhance this plan with AT/IT, which they submit in the educational technology course.

Connecting components of theory and practice across courses took thoughtful planning and was guided not only by UDL and CSRP but also by the HLP/EBPs in discipline-specific and common trunk courses. To further highlight assessment, instructional practices, and the use of technology are all interconnected and not standalone elements of instruction, we purposefully allowed students to begin a comprehensive assignment in one course and continue to add elements to the assignment in other courses. Through this process, students could see how all these instructional practices (i.e., the three pillars) come together to support student success across learning environments.

Putting it all Together

Through the engagement of all our faculty, the program redesign resulted in

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Andrea Golloher
Andrea Golloher is an Associate Professor of Special Education and the Director of the Early Childhood Institute. Her scholarship explores barriers to implementing effective inclusive education, seeking to establish educational systems that appropriately respond to the needs of all students.

Matthew Love
Matthew Love is an Assistant Professor of Special Education. His scholarship focuses on the preparation of pre- and in-service teachers' implementation of universal design for learning (UDL) to create inclusive learning environments for all students.

Lisa Simpson
Lisa A. Simpson is an Associate Professor and Department Chair in Special Education. Her scholarship focuses on effective pathways of teacher preparation for Education Specialists and supporting inclusive environments for all learners.

Sudha Krishnan
Sudha Krishnan is an Assistant Professor of Special Education and a co-founder of the Intersectional Disabilities Strand in the Institute of Emancipatory Education. Her scholarship explores deficit perceptions of disability in educational professionals and how educational practices sustain or disrupt these perceptions.

a combination of coursework and fieldwork intended to enrich candidates' understanding of their role in meeting the vision of public schools. For new SETs, the ability to systematically choose and implement HLP/EBPs in a manner that is both culturally sustaining and responsive while maximizing UDL and individualized support develops over time and with guidance from mentors. It was important, therefore, that the program redesign highlight that HLP/EBPs, UDL, and CRSP are not *add-ons* or *standalone* components of curricular development for students with disabilities. Rather than narrowly conceiving our work as *remediation of disabilities*, our revised program reflects the important role SETs play in supporting disabled students' learning as well as their full participation in all aspects of schooling.

Another important outcome of this work has been the development of a streamlined program, allowing candidates to complete their credentials in one calendar year (summer, fall, and spring semesters). Through our intentional collaboration, we were able to remove unnecessary redundancies while highlighting cross-curricular alignment, allowing students to deepen their understanding of how to employ HLP/EBPs, CRSP, and UDL in an integrated fashion. These changes require ongoing collaboration between faculty members to ensure that the course syllabi continue to complement each other and to ensure each of the three semesters build upon each other (e.g., building upon the curriculum unit assignment described in Figure 3 to include positive behavior support strategies and collaborative strategies for instruction with co-teachers in future semesters). As candidates progress in this program, we intend to monitor their outcomes to determine the impact of this course alignment on their ability to demonstrate effective teaching practices in their final fieldwork placements.

Program redesign is not necessarily easy work, but this important shift ensures disabled students are provided the best opportunity for in school and post-school success while also communicating to the entire community that all students are valued and supported. Elements of diversity and divergence are to be celebrated as they allow each student to authentically engage in our democratic experiment.

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