Fostering Inclusive Dispositions: Integrating Disability Studies in Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT
In the era of inclusive education, every educator can expect to have students with disabilities in their classroom. Unfortunately, preservice teachers who are not specifically pursuing special education licensure are often only expected to take one course focused on teaching students with disabilities. Given the increased emphasis on less restrictive educational placements of students with disabilities, it is vital for teacher education to promote asset-based, inclusive approaches. In this article, we share the rationale for embedding critical perspectives from the field of disability studies into teacher education courses. We further detail five course design priorities that support teacher candidates' development of inclusive dispositions: (1) centering models of disability; (2) integrating disability history; (3) addressing language and terminology; (4) prioritizing first-person narratives; and (5) illustrating disability-inclusive curriculum. Inspired by our own experiences with developing and teaching introductory courses, the article follows one teacher educator's fictional journey of redesigning a "Special Education 101" class with these priorities in mind. This article spotlights small but powerful shifts teacher educators can make to prepare future inclusive educators who think, talk, and teach about disability through a critical lens.

KEYWORDS
disability studies, dispositions, general education, inclusion, teacher education

Dr. Paige is a new Assistant Professor of Special Education who has been assigned to take over her College of Education's "Special Education 101" course for non-special education majors. This required class will be taken by students pursuing teaching licensure in the elementary grades, secondary content areas (i.e., math, science, social studies, English), or other areas (e.g., art education, music education, physical education). As she begins to review the previous year's syllabus and the course textbook, Dr. Paige notes that, in its current form, the course relies on a traditional "disability of the week" format. After a few classes introducing the principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the basics of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), the remainder of the class sessions are each dedicated to an individual disability category. The textbook chapters and class content cover the characteristics and causes of the disability, the learning and behavioral deficits commonly exhibited by students with that label, and a series of recommended interventions. Because Dr. Paige is committed to asset-based frameworks and critical perspectives on disability, she has some concerns about the portrayal of disability and special education in the course she has inherited.

Historically, educational training, systems, and policies have approached disability and special education with a deficit orientation (i.e., focusing on students' limitations and addressing weaknesses rather than building on strengths; Keefe, 2022). The system of special education in the United States remains relatively young and has been predominantly driven by the clinical perspectives of its roots in psychology and

medicine (Sandoval Gomez & McKee, 2020). Traditional educational policies and practices tend to pathologize disability, drawing a contrast between "normal" and "abnormal" and seeking to remediate individual differences (Keefe, 2022). As a result, general education teachers often view disabilities as pathological, fixed conditions beyond the scope of their practice (Jordan, 2018). Many general education teachers likewise presume that all disabled students will require a fundamentally different kind of education than their nondisabled peers, leading them to conceptualize inclusive placements as a privilege (Dignath et al., 2022; Lalvani, 2015). However, years of educational research have demonstrated that high-quality explicit instruction and other interventions initially intended to serve students with disabilities, when applied in inclusive general education settings, benefit all students (e.g., Hughes et al., 2017). Furthermore, the least restrictive environment (LRE) provision of IDEA establishes students' right to be educated alongside their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate given supplementary aids and services (Yell et al., 2020).

According to IDEA, schools must offer a continuum of alternative placements (e.g., general education classes, special classes, home- or hospital-based instruction), with a preference for education in the general education classroom as often as possible (Yell et al., 2020). Yell and Prince (2022) explain that "school districts must make good faith efforts to maintain students in a general education classroom" (p. 75) and removal from general education should *only* occur if supports and services in that environment prove insufficient to provide the student with an appropriate education. Trends in LRE data indicate that over the last 25 years, inclusive placements have increased (Williamson et al., 2020). In fact, recent

congressional reports show that about two-thirds of students with disabilities receive instruction in the general education environment for most ($\geq 80\%$) of the school day (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). As a result, a greater number of students with disabilities are spending more learning time with teachers who may not believe that such students belong in their classroom or are their responsibility to educate (Lalvani, 2015; Swindlehurst et al., 2019).

Despite this trend, non-special education teacher candidates often complete only a single course dedicated to teaching students with disabilities rather than seeing the needs of disabled learners represented throughout all content and coursework (Nusbaum & Steinborn, 2019). This common practice of separating general education and special education courses can ultimately reify preservice teachers' perceptions of disabled students as "others" (Keefe, 2022). Moreover, disability is commonly taught as a categorical list of psychological and medical conditions with much attention given to students' deficits and differences (Cosier & Pearson, 2016; Freedman et al., 2019). Critics of these approaches to teacher education note how they can perpetuate ableism – "attitudes, actions, and circumstances that devalue people because they are disabled or perceived as having a disability" (Ladau, 2021, p. 70) – at both individual and systemic levels (Keefe, 2022).

Regardless of grade level or subject area taught, all teachers must be prepared to include students with disabilities in their classrooms. Doing so requires not only an understanding of content and pedagogy but also the mindset that disabled students belong in and can succeed in general education classes (Jordan, 2018). Therefore, best practices for teaching students with disabilities should be meaningfully incorporated into all teacher candidates'

methods courses (e.g., content-specific pedagogy, classroom management, assessment) rather than relegated to a standalone course (Keefe, 2022). In this way, preservice teachers can learn strategies to ensure their instruction is accessible and responsive to a wide range of learner needs (Ashby, 2018; Cosier & Pearson, 2016). With these skills and teaching practices embedded more holistically across teacher education programs, the traditional "Special Education 101" course can be reimagined to emphasize the development of teacher candidates' inclusive dispositions; that is, the attitudes, values, and beliefs that enable teachers to meaningfully include students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Bialka, 2017; Kurth et al., 2021). Even without broader program-level shifts, disability studies can be integrated into these introductory courses alongside other content.

The field of disability studies presents an opportunity to nurture such inclusive dispositions by offering an alternative perspective that actively challenges deficit-based and ableist approaches to education. Here, we adopt Susan Baglieri's (2017) definition of disability studies as "an interdisciplinary field of scholarship that seeks to expand the ways that society defines, conceptualizes, and understands the meaning of disability" (p. 5). Disability studies centers the idea that disability is a natural form of human difference that is constructed in a sociocultural context (Freedman et al., 2019; Keefe, 2022). Accordingly, a disability studies approach to education prioritizes the removal of barriers in the school environment, culture, and curriculum (Gilham & Tompkins, 2016), highlighting the importance of proactive, asset-based approaches to achieving educational access and equity for students with disabilities (Cosier & Pearson, 2016; Sandoval Gomez & McKee, 2020).

COURSE CONTENT AND STRATEGIES

When Dr. Paige meets with her Department Chair about her course planning for the semester, she expresses her concerns with the syllabus she has reviewed. She explains that she wants to help teacher candidates think more broadly about issues of discrimination, accessibility, and equity as they relate to students with disabilities. The Chair shares that Special Education 101 has historically received poor student evaluation ratings, with feedback suggesting that teacher candidates still do not feel comfortable or confident as leaders of inclusive classrooms after completing the course. The Chair adds that she sees potential for this course to align with the College's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives with some of the changes Dr. Paige has proposed. Dr. Paige is invited and encouraged to redesign the course as she sees fit for the next semester. Where should Dr. Paige begin? What changes are most critical for shaping the mindsets her teacher candidates need to become inclusive educators?

When applied to teacher education, a disability studies approach nurtures all teacher candidates' inclusive dispositions, seeking to prepare future educators who view disability as diversity, promote inclusion as a form of educational equity, and consider themselves allies and advocates for students with disabilities (Ashby, 2018; Freedman et al., 2019). Several scholar-instructors have detailed their approaches to infusing disability studies into teacher education at either a programmatic or course level. Common elements include teaching about the history of disability rights and special education; critically analyzing disability representation in media, film, or art; and including first-person narratives from disabled people themselves (Derby, 2016; Freedman et al., 2019; Gilham & Tompkins, 2016; Van Hove

et al., 2014). These courses also often explicitly place disability into frameworks of social justice and critical theory (Ashby, 2018).

Although empirical studies of the impact of such courses are scarce, Derby (2016) demonstrated that a course introducing disability studies to preservice art education majors had a significant impact on their attitudes toward disability, particularly leading them to question the concept of "normal" and the binary of "able" versus "not able." Likewise, about half of the teacher candidates enrolled in a graduate disability studies in education course demonstrated shifts in their thinking about disability and inclusion (Broderick & Lalvani, 2017). More specifically, these preservice teachers began to conceptualize disability as a sociocultural experience rather than an individual impairment and to critically question educational practices that separate disabled and nondisabled students (Broderick & Lalvani, 2017). Bialka (2017) additionally revealed the power of coursework and fieldwork that frames disability as a form of diversity to shift teacher candidates' dispositions, regardless of their prior experiences with disabled people. Based on emerging scholarship, disability studies appears to be a promising approach to promoting preservice general education teachers' belief in the potential of students with disabilities and their commitment to inclusive education, both of which are correlated with higher-quality classroom instruction for all learners (Jordan, 2018).

As proponents of a disability studies-integrated approach to special education, we suggest that the standard "Special Education 101" course (i.e., an introductory-level course for non-special education majors) offers a compelling opportunity to instill in future inclusive educators a critical understanding of disability, a commitment to accessibility

and inclusion, and the dispositions necessary to lead a classroom in which every student belongs (Keefe, 2022; Kurth et al., 2021; Sandoval Gomez & McKee, 2020). Accordingly, teacher educators can leverage disability studies to foster inclusive dispositions by incorporating the following five priorities:

1. Centering models of disability
2. Integrating disability history
3. Addressing language and terminology
4. Prioritizing first-person narratives
5. Illustrating disability-inclusive curriculum

Centering Models of Disability

First and foremost, teacher candidates need to be introduced to different ways of conceptualizing disability. In order to become more culturally competent educators of students with disabilities, preservice teachers should begin to think about different frameworks, or models, of disability and how those models influence the individuals, families, classrooms, and educational systems with whom they will engage throughout their careers (Dunn & Andrews, 2015). Although individuals think, feel, and understand disability in unique ways, models help explain collective perspectives and, often, the policies and practices they inform (Ladau, 2021).

Two primary models of disability are typically discussed in contemporary educational settings: the *medical model* and the *social model*. These models highlight two distinct ways of conceptualizing disability. The *medical model* conceptualizes a disability as an individual impairment. The aim is to provide services so that the person's difficulties can be minimized or eliminated (Shyman, 2016). On the other hand, the *social model* defines disability as a societal construct rather than an individual condition. According to the social model, an individual's impairment only

TABLE 1: Comparison of Medical Model and Social Model Views

	MEDICAL MODEL	**SOCIAL MODEL**
Disability is…	A deficiency	A difference
Disability arises from…	Impairments (e.g., physical, cognitive, sensory) resulting from a medical condition	Barriers in environments, systems, and/or attitudes
Experts on disability are…	Doctors, scientists, and professionals	Disabled people
Disability issues are…	Individual problems	Societal concerns
The goal is to…	Minimize the impact of disability via intervention and remediation	Increase societal understanding and decrease environmental barriers

(Haegele & Hodge, 2016; Ladau, 2021; Shyman, 2016)

becomes a disability when an environment is inaccessible and thus prevents them from functioning fully. As a result, this model promotes social change focused on reducing barriers and increasing understanding rather than attempting to "fix" or normalize the disabled person (Haegele & Hodge, 2016). See Table 1 for a simple comparison of views commonly associated with each model.

Importantly, the medical and social models should not be viewed as a mutually exclusive dichotomy that requires "choosing sides" (Gallagher et al., 2014). For instance, an individual may experience a medical impairment that undeniably impacts their daily life (e.g., a painful physical condition) but also recognize the disabling barriers (e.g., physically inaccessible buildings, ableist assumptions, inadequate accommodations) that prevent their full participation and inclusion in society (Ladau, 2021).

Although the social and medical models are the most well-known, others have been identified in the literature. These include religious, charity, economic, human rights, cultural, and affirmation models. In the *religious model,* disability can be viewed as either a punishment or gift from God. The *charity model*

frames disability as a reason for pity, with disabled people seen as dependent upon the aid of nondisabled people. The *economic model* analyzes the costs of disability and focuses on how much a disability prevents a person from working and contributing to a financial society (Retief & Letšosa, 2018). In contrast, other models promote the celebration of disability as part of a person's identity. In the *cultural model,* disability is seen as a category of human diversity and a communal experience marked by shared history, language, and/or culture (Hopson, 2019). Similarly, through the *identity* or *affirmation model*'s framework, disabled people view their disability as central to their identity and as a source of pride. Lastly, the *human rights model* centers concerns about the quality of life of people with disabilities as basic rights issues and advocates for accessibility and civil rights for all (Retief & Letšosa, 2018).

It should be noted that no single model can fully encapsulate the individual lives and experiences of all disabled people (Ladau, 2021). Nevertheless, understanding a variety of models that have been embraced differently over time and by different people can offer teachers a

framework to begin to critically analyze educational systems and practices (Freedman et al., 2019). For example, preservice teachers need to understand the medical model in order to participate in the existing processes of disability categorization and special education eligibility that are largely based on this perspective (Gilham & Tompkins, 2016). Alternately, the social model underpins accessibility considerations and classroom accommodations, both of which are meant to minimize environmental barriers to learning (Sandoval Gomez & McKee, 2020). Additionally, teachers are likely to encounter families who perceive their child's disability through the lens of a particular model, such as the religious or charity model. Teachers need to be sensitive to these perspectives even when they differ from their own. Although a disability studies approach tends to be most aligned with the social model of disability (Cosier & Pearson, 2016), helping teacher candidates to understand the ideology of many different models will support their ability to critically reflect on their roles and practices as educators of students with disabilities.

Dr. Paige decides that the models of

disability would be a great way to start the semester and set the foundation for the rest of the course. On the first day of class, she invites her students to free-write for 5 minutes in response to the prompt "What do you know and believe about disability?" Students then engage in a jigsaw activity in which small groups become experts on one model of disability before creating new, mixed groups and sharing their information with others. She then has students analyze their free writing responses to look for evidence of different models within their perspectives. For instance, one teacher candidate recognized the charity model when she wrote "I believe it is important to help people who are less fortunate, like those who struggle with disabilities." Many others identified the influence of the medical model on their tendency to define disability in terms of diagnostic labels and symptoms.

As the course continues, Dr. Paige prompts her students to identify how the content they are learning about special education eligibility and IEPs aligns with one or more models of disability. After several weeks, she notices that her students have begun to reference the models on their own and often spontaneously suggest how traditional practices could be reframed through the lens of the social model.

Integrating Disability History

As teacher educators, it is important to remember that teacher candidates are likely entering our courses with little to no knowledge of disability history. More than likely, events central to the disability rights movement were not taught in their social studies classes (Mueller, 2021; Nusbaum & Steinborn, 2019). Further, most preservice teachers seeking initial certification have only ever lived in a world in which the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) exists. Most would have personally experienced

school settings educating students with disabilities in compliance with the most recent reauthorization of IDEA. Such lived experience can cultivate assumptions that special education has always existed in its current form or that accessibility was always the norm. Today's teacher candidates may be unaware of the long history of discrimination and exclusion of disabled individuals and the significant advocacy efforts that led to change.

The time constraints and content expectations for a single introductory course can make it challenging to incorporate a comprehensive, stand-alone unit on disability history. Instead, instructors can prioritize key events and strategically integrate historical content with mandatory course objectives. For instance, instructors typically cover the provisions of relevant federal legislation, such as IDEA, ADA, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, in an introductory course. However, knowing the requirements of the law and internalizing the significance of the law are two very different things. A disability studies approach to teaching these laws would accentuate the socio-political context surrounding their history as well as their intersections with human and civil rights. For example, rather than simply presenting the guarantees of Section 504 as they exist today, instructors can share historical narratives from the 504 Sit-In that demanded the passage of regulations regarding the Rehabilitation Act following lengthy delays. Likewise, they may teach about the Capitol Crawl to illustrate the key role played by disabled people in the passage of the ADA or highlight the impact of parent advocacy through critical court cases in securing the IDEA and subsequent amendments (e.g., *PARC*; *Mills v. Board of Education; Larry P. v. Riles;* see Yell et al., 1998). Sharing the stories behind the laws may enable preservice teachers to

gain an appreciation of the significance of key legislation and policies.

In addition to understanding the historical context of legislation, teacher candidates need to recognize the pervasiveness of ableism throughout history. This recognition is vital to shaping their ability to think deeply and critically about disability in the present day. Even briefly, instructors can introduce weighty realities such as institutionalization, forced sterilization, exploitative "freak shows," wage discrimination, and the eugenics movement (Anti-Defamation League, 2017). Although such topics may seem disconnected from the field of education at first glance, these historical contexts have and continue to impact systems, policies, and societal values.

Incorporating disability history into an introductory course has the potential to shape future educators' values, beliefs, and practice. Looking to the past provides context that is crucial for understanding current conditions and advocating for a better future. An awareness of disability history is essential for educators as they approach the important tasks of helping their students with disabilities develop a positive disability identity and cultivating accessible and inclusive learning environments (Mueller, 2021; Freedman et al., 2019). Furthermore, an increased awareness of the long history of discrimination against people with disabilities is likely to strengthen teachers' commitment to upholding the rights of their students under IDEA (Gilham & Tompkins, 2016).

Dr. Paige knows she wants to expand the discussion of IDEA and other federal legislation to include an overview of disability history. Given the lack of emphasis on this during her own education, she feels the need to educate herself first, so she downloads the audiobooks A Disability History of the United States *by Kim E. Nielsen and* Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disabil-

TABLE 2: Examples of Non-preferred and Preferred Terminology

Non-preferred	Preferred (person-first)	Preferred (identity-first)
Handicapped Differently abled Handi-capable Special needs	Person with a disability	Disabled person
Afflicted by… Suffers from… Victim of…	Has a disability	Is disabled
Mentally handicapped Mentally retarded Mentally challenged Slow	Depending on specific area of disability: • Person with an intellectual disability • Person with a learning disability • Person with autism	Depending on specific area of disability: • Intellectually disabled • Learning disabled • Autistic
Wheelchair-bound Confined to a wheelchair	Person who uses a wheelchair	Wheelchair user
Normal Average	Person without a disability	Nondisabled

(Adapted from Ladau, 2021)

ity Rights Activist by Judith Heumann to listen to on her daily walks. In her research for course resources, Dr. Paige is excited to learn that Netflix offers the full version of Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution for free on YouTube. This documentary first highlights the experiences of teenagers with disabilities at Camp Jened in the early 1970s, and then follows their journey through active involvement in the disability rights movement in the United States. She decides to assign Crip Camp as "required viewing" and to hold structured class discussions before and after the students watch the film. She facilitates these class sessions using the Educator Discussion Guide in the Educational Curriculum

offered on the official documentary website.

Addressing Language and Terminology

The words used to discuss disability are important. Historically, education and related professions have promoted (and often required) the use of "person-first" language (Dunn & Andrews, 2015). Person-first language, as the name suggests, places the person before the disability. For example, person-first phrases would include "a person with autism," "a student with dyslexia," and "children with disabilities." The intention of this language structure is to place the focus on the individual as a human

being rather than on a diagnostic label or category. The emphasis on person-first language began in the 1970s and was directly related to the self-advocacy movement's goals of highlighting the inherent personhood of an individual with a disability (Crocker & Smith, 2019). Person-first language gained traction among professionals and soon became the preferred form of addressing people with disabilities (Dunn & Andrews, 2015). However, a growing group of disabled people prefer "identity-first" language, which uses the adjective form of the disability to describe the person, as in "autistic person," "dyslexic student," and "disabled children." The use of identity-first language is connected to the disability pride movement and the idea that one's disability is an essential part of their identity (Andrews et al., 2019). A preference for identity-first language is especially prevalent among Deaf, blind, autistic, and neurodivergent people who connect their disabled identity to a community or culture (Sharif et al., 2022; Taboas et al., 2023).

Appropriate and acceptable language changes over time, and individuals can have different preferences about how they and their disability are described. For example, terms such as "mental retardation" and "handicapped," though once widely used, are now outdated and considered offensive. Teachers need to ensure that they have replaced these words in their vocabulary with words like "intellectual disability" and "disabled" (Crocker & Smith, 2019). Additionally, words that convey negative assumptions about disabilities, like "suffers from," "confined to [a wheelchair]," or "mentally challenged," should be replaced by positive or neutral descriptors (Ladau, 2021). Teachers should be similarly aware that euphemisms, or words used to avoid saying "disability," are often viewed as condescending or demeaning by people with disabilities. Euphemisms like "differently abled" or

"handicapable" express that disability is inherently a bad thing that needs to be softened or downplayed (Andrews et al., 2019; Ladau, 2021). Understanding the contemporary pushback against euphemisms is especially pertinent in educational spaces, where terms like "special needs" and "exceptional learners" are widespread in policies and systemic structures (Keefe, 2022). See Table 2 for examples of non-preferred terms and their preferred alternatives in both person-first and identity-first forms.

Increasingly, professional organizations are shifting their language guidance to allow for both person-first and identity-first approaches (American Psychological Association [APA], 2021; Wooldridge, 2023). Rather than demanding rigid adherence to one form of language alone, educators can and should choose words that demonstrate respect for individual preferences. Nevertheless, many textbooks and professional materials continue to promote only person-first language and maintain the use of euphemisms in place of the word "disability" (Keefe, 2022). Educational policies and laws may contain outdated terms as a result of not having been updated in years or even decades. Teacher educators need to prepare preservice teachers to navigate the current terminology of educational systems while simultaneously interrogating their own roles in the respectful use of language related to disability (Ashby, 2018; Baglieri, 2017).

The syllabus that Dr. Paige inherited includes the following statement:

"Students are expected to use person-first language at all times and in all assignments in this course. For example, say "student with autism" instead of "autistic student." Person-first language reflects an understanding that a child is more than their limitations or special needs. This is a professional expectation in

our field, so failure to use person-first language in written assignments will result in a grading deduction."

Dr. Paige recognizes that this policy is outdated and oversimplified. Rather than simply adding a language policy to her syllabus, she decides to lead a short class activity about terminology and language preferences early in the semester. Her students watch short videos of people expressing their preferences for person-first or identity-first language and read Section 5.4 of the <u>APA Style Guide</u>. They engage in a class discussion about the nuances of language choice as educational professionals. Together, Dr. Paige and her students co-create a set of class guidelines related to using current terminology and respecting language preferences in all class discussions and written assignments.

Prioritizing First-Person Narratives

The disability community commonly reaffirms the phrase "nothing about us, without us" when speaking about disability issues (Ladau, 2021). This mantra communicates the idea that decisions about disability policy, practices, and services should only occur with the full participation of members of the disabled community. Including first-person accounts in teacher education is especially important given that the vast majority of instructors are nondisabled and, therefore, have only experienced special education as a professional (Dolmage, 2017). Integrating the voices of disabled people into introductory courses can effectively demonstrate real-world impacts and personal experiences with special education systems. Furthermore, direct experience with disabled people has been shown to benefit preservice teachers' attitudes toward disability (Carlson & Witschey, 2018).

Storytelling is a valid and useful pedagogical tool for instructors to use in

the classroom. Research has shown that first-person narratives are exceptionally memorable due to their novel structure and emotional nature (Landrum et al., 2019). The emotions and narrative structure of storytelling from an individual within a disability can produce critical discussions with a classroom of teacher candidates (Jorgensen et al., 2011). Utilizing stories from real people with disabilities is additionally useful because teacher candidates often come with limited to no experience with disabled people. As a result, they may hold unconscious biases that result in stereotypes and stigmas (Jordan, 2018). Sharing a range of first-person narratives can help candidates understand the variability of experiences with special education and, in turn, reflect on the variability of the students they will one day teach.

The voices of individuals with disabilities can also serve to contextualize the often-abstract concepts of special education. For example, central principles of IDEA, such as the right to an IEP, procedural safeguards, or parental participation, can be difficult to explain without the critical context of how these policies play out in the real world. The narratives of students, families, and professionals can help to make complex ideas and concepts more relevant and personal to preservice teachers (Suzuki et al., 2018). By hearing a personal story of how an IEP comes together, for example, preservice teachers can gain a glimpse into how real-world policy gets put into practice.

Including first-person narratives in courses provides an opportunity for the disability community to be involved in the preparation of professionals across the United States (Ashby, 2018). Instructors can use different strategies and mediums to highlight disabled voices. Some may have access to local disability groups that can assist with coordinating in-person or virtual guest speakers

TABLE 3: Evaluative Criteria for Disability Representation

Look For	Avoid
Promotion of respect and acceptance	Undercurrents of pity or sorrow
Accurate information	Tokenistic or stereotypical characters
Portrayal of strengths	Representing ordinary achievements as heroic or inspirational
Full character development beyond the disability	
Representation of invisible disabilities in addition to visible ones	Use of inappropriate terminology (e.g., special, crazy, sick, slow, dumb, suffering)
Depictions of diverse and valued roles and occupations of people with disabilities	Presentations of disability as an individual problem, not a societal one
Representation of disabled people with intersectional identities across diverse races, cultures, gender identities, ages, etc.	Portrayals of allies, friends, or siblings as inspirations or "saints"
Materials written or made by disabled creators	

(The Anti-Defamation League, 2013; Zepp et al., 2022)

or panels. Even if such synchronous interaction is not feasible, books, videos, and podcasts created by individuals with disabilities can be used to supplement course materials. In any case, instructors should abide by the idea of "nothing about us, without us" to ensure teacher candidates are learning from the lived experiences of disabled people in addition to the content expertise of professionals.

Dr. Paige recently read <u>Demystifying Disability</u>, a short paperback guidebook on disability written by a disabled author. As a nondisabled person herself, Dr. Paige recognized the power of learning about disability from someone who experiences it every day. She decides to assign the book in her class and to have students engage in a book study activity throughout the first month of the semester. She also uses several episodes of the <u>Disability Visibility</u> podcast to supplement class readings and assignments with perspectives from disabled individuals.

Later in the semester, as Dr. Paige begins planning her class session focused on postsecondary transition planning, she recognizes an opportunity to em-phasize the individualized and personal nature of transition by inviting a guest speaker to class. Using her network within the local school district, Dr. Paige connects with a high school special education teacher with extensive experience leading the transition process. The teacher recommends that Sam, a recent graduate with a learning disability, visit the class with her to share how he participated in transition planning and made a successful transition to community college. Before class begins, Dr. Paige reminds her students that experiences are personal and that the visitors' stories are not reflective of everyone's experience. Students hear from the guest speakers, view Sam's transition plan, and have time to ask questions. After the visit, Dr. Paige and the class debrief in order to ground concepts from IDEA in the real-life experiences that were shared.

Illustrating Disability-Inclusive Curriculum

Once future educators have developed a critical perspective themselves, the next step is to bring these concepts into their future early childhood through grade 12 (EC-12) classrooms. Again, most teacher candidates never learned about disability history or experienced open discussion about disability in their own educational experiences; engaging with this content in teacher education can help preservice teachers become more comfortable infusing disability into their curriculum and, in turn, breaking this cycle for the students who will one day learn from them (Mueller, 2021). Instructors of introductory courses have the opportunity to prepare preservice teachers to represent disability in their instructional materials and to actively challenge ableism through the curriculum.

Disability awareness activities tend to be the most common way of reflecting disability in EC-12 classrooms. However, these often center on narrow views of disability during specific "awareness months," or even spotlight specific students (Cosier & Pearson, 2016; Lalvani & Broderick, 2013). For instance, schools may plan a spirit week for Autism Awareness in April, or a teacher may read a book about a d/Deaf character at the beginning of the year when there is a d/Deaf student in their class. Such activities

TABLE 4: Recommended Resources

Resource	Link	Brief description
Demystifying Disability	https://emilyladau.com/book/	This brief, accessible guidebook offers approachable information about disability models, language, etiquette, ableism, and more.
Disability Studies and the Inclusive Classroom	https://www.routledge.com/Disability-Studies-and-the-Inclusive-Classroom-Critical-Practices-for-Embracing/Baglieri/p/book/9780367682590	This textbook integrates key information about special education (e.g., law, policy, curriculum) with contemporary perspectives from the field of disability studies.
Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFS8SpwioZ4 www.cripcamp.com/curriculum	This Academy Award-nominated documentary focuses on a group of teenagers with disabilities who spend their summers together at camp in the 1970s and go on to become activists in the disability rights movement. Free discussion guides and lesson plans are available to supplement the documentary.
A Disability History of the United States	https://revisioningamericanhistory.com/portfolio/a-disability-history-of-the-united-states/	This book retells US history from pre-1492 through the present with the experiences of people with disabilities placed at the center of the narrative.
Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist	https://judithheumann.com/being-heumann/	This memoir tells the story of one of the most influential disability rights activists who played a leading role in the 504 Sit-In and the passage of the ADA.
The Year of Willowbrook 2022: The Last Great Disgrace	https://youtu.be/63lmoby2X6c	In recognition of the 50th anniversary of the original exposé of the inhumane conditions at the Willowbrook state institution, the Willowbrook Legacy Project presented an evening of reflection and discussion with Geraldo Rivera.
Disability: A Parallel History Podcast Mini-Series	https://www.yarnpodcast.com/disability-a-parallel-history	This three-episode *Yarn* Podcast Mini-Series traces the history of disability in parallel with the history of humanity from prehistoric times to the present day.
APA Disability Guidelines	https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/disability	Expanded guidance on using bias-free language when writing about disability using American Psychological Association (APA) style, the standard style used in the education field.
Disability Visibility Podcast	https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/podcast-2/	100 podcast episodes released between 2017 - 2021 feature conversations among disabled people about disability in culture, politics, and media.
One Out of Five Student Voice Videos	https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUExuVzzZ1EUAXf4hUHTTTz-PK8WnR2CvS	In this collection of short videos, students with disabilities share their experiences in schools and communities.
Schneider Family Book Award List	https://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/awards/1/all_years	Awarded yearly since 2004, The Schneider Family Book Awards honor children's and adolescent books that embody the disability experience.
Social Justice Books	https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/disabilities/	This webpage provides a selection of critically reviewed books for children, young adults, and adults that feature positive disability representation.
Reform to Equal Rights: K-12 Disability History Curriculum	http://www.emergingamerica.org/curriculum/reform-equal-rights-disability-history-curriculum	This comprehensive curriculum includes units of study for all grade levels that emphasize the history of disability activism and civil rights. Each unit includes supporting teaching materials and primary and secondary sources.
The Nora Project	https://thenoraproject.ngo/	*The Nora Project* works to promote disability inclusion in schools and communities. Their website includes free classroom resources, lesson plans, media recommendations, and the Nora Notes blog.

rarely result in more than surface-level consideration of disability. Worse, they can serve to reinforce stereotypes and the medical model of disability by over-focusing on labels and differences (Baglieri, 2017). Future teachers should instead be prepared to incorporate disability into broader diversity-focused curriculum efforts and to embed disability-related issues into relevant content. Preservice teachers might practice developing lessons on the disability rights movement to align with social studies standards or creating science activities that highlight accessibility in engineering, design, and technology. These experiences can help teacher candidates become comfortable including disability within academic content rather than setting it aside as a "special" lesson.

Children's and young adult literature can be another powerful way to represent varied disabled identities and issues in the classroom. Unfortunately, a 2019 study found that less than 4% of children's books featured a disabled main character (Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2020) which falls far short of representing the roughly 27% of people who identify as disabled (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). Even within the subset of books that do include disability, many of their depictions can be stereotypical, tokenistic, or otherwise problematic. Therefore, it is vital that future teachers learn how to evaluate the texts that they may use in their instruction (Zepp et al., 2022). Instructors of introductory courses can help teacher candidates use their understanding of disability models, language, and perspectives to critically review potential classroom materials. For example, instructors might provide a selection of books featuring disabled characters and have students use a set of criteria like those shown in Table 3 to evaluate each book's portrayal of disability. Preservice teachers might even extend their

FIGURE 1: Sample Student-generated Core Values

5 Core Values
of critically inclusive teachers

1. There is no such thing as normal
2. Disability is not a bad word
3. Needs aren't special, they're human
4. Accessibility benefits everyone
5. Inclusion is a right, not a privilege

application one step further by crafting a complete lesson plan for a picture book read aloud activity or a young adult book study (Zepp et al., 2022).

Dr. Paige realizes that most of her students likely never learned about disability in their own school experience and that many of the representations they have seen in various forms of media focus on deficits or stereotypes. She decides that a simple starting point for her introductory course would be to expose teacher candidates to positive and diverse representations of disability in books. Using the list of Schneider Family Book Award winners and the Social Justice Books list (see Table 4, she selects a picture book that incorporates disability to read aloud in class each week. Dr. Paige aligns her book choices to her weekly topics when possible. For instance, she reads Fighting for Yes! *when she teaches about the disability rights movement,* Keep Your Ear on the *Ball in the class session focused on accommodations, and* I Talk Like a River *when she covers communication. She adds each title to a collaborative online document where students can contribute ideas for how they might use the book in a lesson in an EC-12 classroom.*

MOVING FORWARD

By the end of the semester, Dr. Paige's students are engaging with the concepts of disability, inclusion, and special education in profound and insightful ways. During their final class session, students work in small groups to brainstorm their major takeaways from Special Education 101 that will guide their practice as critically inclusive teachers. After combining their lists and concept mapping the big ideas, the class agrees on five shared values to which they will commit. One teacher candidate even volunteers to create a digital graphic that she shares with her classmates (see Figure 1).

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As training grounds for new educators, teacher education programs can serve either to preserve the status quo or to reimagine inclusive education alongside the future practitioners and leaders in the field. Through the lens of disability studies, teacher educators and preservice teachers commit to critically considering issues around disability rights, identity, ableism, accessibility, and inclusion. In turn, teacher candidates can deepen their appreciation for the "why" behind the "what" in special and inclusive education. The recommended resources found in Table 4 can be used to enhance teacher education courses with content related to disability models, history, language, first-person narratives, and curricular representation. Given that more students with disabilities than ever are being educated in inclusive classroom placements, it is imperative that all educators adopt asset-based, inclusive dispositions toward disability. Using disability studies to reframe "Special Education 101" courses is a first step toward reaching this goal.

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