

FROM *the guest*

## EDITORS

## Early Intervention/ Early Childhood Special Education Preparation: Building on the Momentum Created by the EI/ECSE Standards

## AUTHORS

Marla J. Lohmann

Ann M. Mickelson

Christine M. Spence

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**W**elcome to the special issue of the *Journal of Special Education Preparation (JOSEP)* on Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) Preparation! We are grateful to the *JOSEP* team and the Teacher Education Division (TED) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) for this opportunity to create space for exploration of special educator preparation in the early childhood context and to highlight the work of TED's Early Childhood Faculty Special Interest Group, long referred to as TeDeC. Throughout this introductory article we will use TeDeC and early childhood SIG interchangeably.

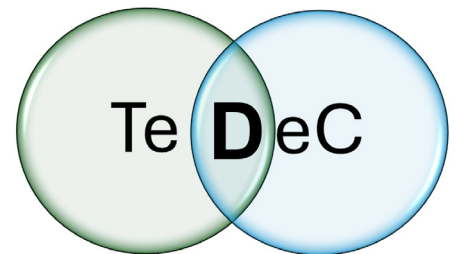
To introduce and contextualize this special issue, we first provide an overview of TeDeC including its original and ongoing purpose, scope, and history. We then provide a glimpse of the contemporary context of early childhood special education preparation which is experiencing a resurgence of scholarly activity since the development of the historic 2020 Initial Practice-Based Professional Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators (EI/ECSE Standards). Finally, we detail the development and structure of the special issue before introducing each article and author team.

### OVERVIEW OF THE TEDEC SIG

The Teacher Education Division (TED)'s Early Childhood Faculty Special Interest Group began in the early 2010's by a small group of faculty who saw opportunities to bridge their work and service across TED and the Division of Early Childhood (DEC). The group's original name was derived to symbolize that connection and bridge: TeDeC (See Figure 1).

TeDeC's original and ongoing mission is to create a space for early childhood special education faculty to gather and network. As many lamented, the timing of the conferences for the respective organizations has historically been close together, making it difficult for faculty to attend both events due to scheduling and financial constraints. Further, many faculty shared the perspective that it was difficult to find sufficient attention to and support for early childhood preparation in either TED or DEC, given the other important focus areas of the organizations. At the time, TED had more focus on K-12 preparation, while DEC had more focus on intervention and support for practitioners in the field, as opposed to preparation. Also, many early childhood faculty feel isolated as they are often one of only a few or even the only early childhood faculty member within a university department. These factors contributed to barriers for early

**FIGURE 1:** TeDeC represents the relationship between the Teacher Education Division (TED) and the Division of Early Childhood (DEC)



*Note:* The TeDeC Special Interest Group is a community of faculty with interests in EI/ECSE teacher preparation with ties to both TED and DEC.

childhood faculty who had a particular interest in preparation to engage with others with similar interests. TeDeC was formed to bridge the support of both organizations and strengthen the collective collaboration and voice of early childhood special education faculty who had particular interest in preparation.

Since its initiation, TeDeC has seen increased participation and the attention to early childhood teacher preparation within the two organizations has also evolved. There are now intentional and growing partnerships between the two organizations. For example, the DEC Personnel Preparation Committee has joined TeDeC in their SIG sessions at the TED conference for several years to share the work of both groups. TeDeC currently emphasizes teacher education generally but provides a forum to communicate and connect with faculty colleagues around issues related specifically to special education and early childhood, which is defined as birth to age 8 years. This preparation landscape includes Part C Early Intervention, preschool, and early elementary contexts which in turn represent a wide range of roles and responsibilities for EI/ECSE educators across home, community, and public school settings and service delivery models of family and peer coaching, consultant/itinerant, classroom teaching, and more.

## CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

While the field saw a flurry of program development and related scholarship in the 1990s and early 2000s after the 1986 reauthorization of IDEA that extended FAPE to preschool population and created Part H (now Part C), more recent decades have been marked by a paucity of research specific to early childhood special education preparation.

However, that seems to be changing. Perhaps the most important contextual

aspect of the contemporary context for early childhood special educator preparation is the first ever, stand-alone EI/ECSE standards. Since the development of the EI/ECSE standards, there has been a resurgence of literature including numerous individual articles across several journals and special issues from *Young Exceptional Children* (*YEC*; Volume 25 Issue 3, September 2022) and the *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education* (*JECTE*; Volume 44 Issue 2).

### Building on the Momentum: Introducing the Special Issue

During the TED Conference in 2022, there was great energy for the TeDeC SIG and the work in early childhood. *JOSEP* has published special issues to highlight the work of the various TED SIGs. The idea of having a special issue focused on early childhood preparation to highlight the work of TeDeC was discussed, and *JOSEP* graciously agreed to consider TeDeC for an upcoming special issue and identified guest editors.

In preparation for the special issue, the first *JOSEP* issue devoted entirely to EI/ECSE preparation, we first identified that a primary purpose of this special issue would be to increase the visibility of TeDeC in TED and the broader educator preparation community. There are many individuals who teach in preparation programs that cover the birth-age 8 years age range, and we want to ensure that they know TeDeC can be a home and space for community. Our discussions illuminated the need to try to prioritize representation of the wide range of contexts, roles, responsibilities, and populations for which EI/ECSE faculty are charged with preparing candidates for—a daunting task given the breadth of variance seen across this landscape.

In this special issue, we sought to highlight the work of TeDeC members and provide a look at the wide range

of work and research being conducted. We were overjoyed at the response as we were inundated with excellent proposals for this special issue. That response clearly indicates the level of interest and commitment to personnel preparation in the EI/ECSE community. However, sadly, the number of abstracts submitted meant we were not able to include all voices. In an effort to bring in as many voices and diverse topics as possible, we first considered the range of topics across submissions to help ensure the issue would represent the full landscape of EI/ECSE preparation. Noting that we received a number of excellent proposals focused on coursework and fieldwork, we decided to include two articles where many author teams submitted brief descriptions of activities they embed into coursework or fieldwork. The resulting special issue brings together a large number of perspectives on a range of topics! It includes more than 50 authors sharing expertise across the wide range of foci, contexts, ages, and more that comprise the field of early childhood education. Indeed, in an effort to collect and represent as many of the perspectives and contexts that makeup the early childhood landscape, we applied innovative strategies to include as many voices in this special issue as possible. We also acknowledge that in the limited space available, we missed crucial and excellent work that is happening in the field.

The special issue is grounded by the first article by Stayton and colleagues who provide a history of early childhood personnel preparation standards leading up to the historic development of the 2020 Initial Practice-Based Professional Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators (EI/ECSE Standards). The next two articles focus on preparing EI/ECSE candidates to improve practice as related to Evidence-Based Practices and interventions, first by applying

strategies to promote change at micro and macro levels and second by attending to ways faculty can enhance early childhood educator preparation to support children with complex support needs. The issue then takes a closer look at the centrality and importance of family-centered practice across the EI/ECSE landscape. The next article addresses the early elementary context, one that faculty often report receives limited attention in early childhood preparation programs. That article provides guidance for preparing early elementary special educators to positively support students who exhibit behavior perceived as challenging. Finally, in the last two articles, we brought a myriad of perspectives together by asking author teams to collaborate under a lead author to create complications of work on two broad areas of early childhood special educator preparation: 1) course-based instructional practices, and 2) field-based learning experiences. The following provides a brief overview of each contribution.

### **Evolution of Professional Standards: Reflecting on the Past to Inform the Future**

*Vicki D. Stayton, Jennifer L. Kilgo, Jeanette A. McCollum, Karin Lifter, Ann M. Mickelson, Megan L. Purcell, Christine M. Spence, Cynthia O. Vail, Hasan Zaghlawan, and Erin E. Barton*

Stayton and colleagues take us on a journey through the decades to share the evolution of early intervention/early childhood special education profession. Intertwined with the discussion of the profession is an overview of preparation standards from the on-the-job competencies of the 1960s to the historic 2020 EI/ECSE Standards. Knowing the history helps us all to imagine where we might go next, and so the article ends with a vision for the future to extend on the work started by our pioneers.

### **Innovative Approaches to Teacher Preparation for Improving Use of Evidence-Based Practices in EI/ECSE**

*Katherine Szocik, Clarissa B. Wade, Heather L. Walter, Christan G. Coogle, Sondra M. Stegenga, Sarah A. Nagro*

Recognizing the importance of the role of preparation in the effective implementation of Evidence-Based Practices across the early childhood landscape, Szocik and colleagues provide strategies at both the micro (individual) and the macro (preparation program and broader systems) levels, for faculty to engage in reflection and collaboration with candidates and community partners. The authors outline how the application of practical strategies such as coaching and reflective practice through a professional identity lens can support faculty, candidates, and community partners to examine the philosophical *why* behind a practice and its implications for equity. Further, they suggest such an approach can help address the research-to-practice gap across the EI/ECSE landscape through deep individual reflective practice and systems change with community partners in an effort to impact equity and social justice.

### **Meeting the Need: Proposed Early Childhood Special Education Intensive Intervention Competencies for Pre-Service Preparation**

*Maria L. Hugh, Kathleen Tuck, Alana Schnitz, Lisa Didion, and Andrea Nelson*

While acknowledging the array of important and useful guidance afforded early childhood special education faculty for designing and implementing preparation programs, Hugh and colleagues suggest there is a need to supplement that guidance to fully prepare candidates to work with children with complex support needs. Drawing

from national preparation standards, the DEC Recommended Practices (RPs), Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), and an intensive intervention taxonomy from the National Center for Intensive Intervention (NCII), the authors propose a set of 7 competencies centered on intensive intervention to enhance preparation, specifically related to *EI/ECSE Standard 6: Using Responsive and Reciprocal Interactions, Interventions, and Instruction*.

### **Addressing Students' Beliefs to Enhance Family-Professional Collaboration in EI/ECSE Preparation**

*Chelsea Pansé-Barone, Annie George-Puskar, and Bobbie Jo Bensaid*

In this article, Pansé-Barone and colleagues discuss how preservice educators' beliefs toward family-centered practices and family-professional partnerships can impact their interactions. The authors report on the published literature of practices and partnerships that have been embedded into coursework through in-class activities with families, in-class activities without families, and out-of-class activities with families. With the recognition that more faculty may include families in innovative ways than what is currently reported in literature, there is a call to the field to share the practices used to truly have family voice in the preparation process.

### **Preparing Early Elementary Preservice Teachers to Positively Support Students with Challenging Behavior**

*Kathleen M. Randolph, Samantha Riggelman, Matthew S. Taylor, Ji Hyun Oh, and Marla J. Lohmann*

Randolph and colleagues discuss the important responsibility teacher preparation has in ensuring that all early elementary (i.e., K-3) teachers are prepared for their roles, including sup-

porting social-emotional needs, enacting effective classroom management, and supporting students who exhibit behavior that is perceived as challenging. After detailing the academic and social issues for this population, the authors provide an overview of classroom management offerings in teacher preparation programs. They then present practical strategies to equip preservice teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively approach classroom management and behavioral challenges with early elementary classrooms.

### **Meaningful and Engaging Learning Experiences in Early Childhood Special Education Preparation Programs**

*Andrea Laser, Serra Acar, Karen H. Brown, Katherine B. Green, Lindsey A. Chapman, Chelsea T. Morris, Lauren Hart Rollins, Annie George-Puskar, Monica Gonzalez, Alesia Mickle Moldavan, Kathy R. Doody, Katrina Fulcher-Rood, Pamela Schuetze, Kaitlin Jackson, Bradley Mills, Lindsay R. Dennis, Tai Cole, Kelly Farquharson, and Marisa Macy*

This article highlights the work of 19 authors who share effective course-based instructional practices in EI/ECSE teacher preparation. When we initially sent the call for abstract proposals, we received many fantastic submissions around this topic. In order to highlight as many voices and perspectives as possible in this special issue, we asked Andrea Laser to lead the efforts to create this compilation article focused on course-based instruction. Laser, Acar, and Brown open the manuscript with an overview of the DEC EI/ECSE Standards and Recommended Practices, as well as descriptions of a Think-Pair-Share activity and self-reflections. Green, Chapman, Morris, and Rollins share how they use

case studies for culturally responsive teaching. George-Puskar, Gonzalez, and Mickle Moldavan offer a strategy for case-based instruction. Doody, Fulcher-Rood, and Schuetze describe an approach to use assessments for increasing cross discipline collaboration. Jackson and Mills offer an idea for a literacy service learning project. Dennis, Tae Cole, and Farquharson share about using a problem-based learning simulation to support communication and collaboration. Finally, Macy describes how she uses podcasts to support teacher candidate learning.

### **Field Experiences in Early Childhood / Early Childhood Special Education: Preparing Teachers for Success in Diverse Early Education Settings**

*Ragan H. McLeod, Zhen Chai, Debora Berry Malmberg, Ya-Chih Chang, Nancy Hunt, Courtney O'Grady, Kimberley Tomeny, Jisun R. Oh, and Ankita Bhattashelli*

Field experiences are a foundational and critical component of personnel preparation. In this article, four author teams provide brief descriptions of innovative approaches to supporting students in a variety of field experiences. These descriptions cover a range from a brief practicum attached to a content-based course to an experience that is intensive throughout a full semester. Dr. McLeod led the development of this article, providing an introduction to the importance and benefits of fieldwork, and sharing a concluding look at the similarities and differences across the approaches. Chai and Malmberg share a description of a joint fieldwork opportunity for students enrolled in either Early Childhood Special Education or Applied Behavior Analysis programs. Chang and Hunt provide information on how they introduce students early in

their preparation programs to inclusive practices and classrooms. McLeod, O'Grady, and Tomeny describe a field experience that is linked with a course, focuses on specific practices, and provides opportunities for peer coaching on the implementation of these practices. Oh and Bhattashelli describe a coaching approach for students who are supporting young, multilingual learners. We hope these short descriptions provide opportunities for programs to consider a wider variety of approaches to including and structuring meaningful field experiences within personnel preparation.

### **CONCLUSION**

We want to thank *JOSEP* once more for the opportunity to celebrate EI/ECSE preparation by compiling this collection of manuscripts. We are honored to highlight the work of TED members, including members of TeDeC, by bringing together so many unique voices and perspectives across a wide range of topics related to early childhood preparation. We sincerely hope this special issue helps raise awareness regarding the importance of early childhood preparation and leads to even more engagement and collaboration across our professional communities. Equity demands that we work together for the benefit of all, and breaking down silos and barriers many faculty face is one step.

As evidenced by the tremendous response to the call for this special issue, there is a plethora of amazing work to explore and share. Indeed, we hope to see the momentum and increased scholarly activity regarding EI/ECSE preparation that has been observed since the onset of the 2020 EI/ECSE preparation standards continue. We offer suggested resources about EI/ECSE preparation, as well as information about joining TeDeC (Table 1).

**TABLE 1:** Additional resources for EI/ECSE Preparation

RESOURCE	WEBLINK
Division for Early Childhood (DEC) EI/ECSE Standards	<a href="https://exceptionalchildren.org/standards/initial-practice-based-standards-early-interventionists-early-childhood-special-educators">https://exceptionalchildren.org/standards/initial-practice-based-standards-early-interventionists-early-childhood-special-educators</a>  <a href="https://www.dec-sped.org/ei-ecse-standards">https://www.dec-sped.org/ei-ecse-standards</a>
Early Childhood Personnel Center (ECPC) Curriculum Modules focused on Standards	<a href="https://ecpcta.org/curriculum-module-2/">https://ecpcta.org/curriculum-module-2/</a>
Division for Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices	<a href="https://www.dec-sped.org/dec-recommended-practices">https://www.dec-sped.org/dec-recommended-practices</a>
Division for Early Childhood (DEC) Personnel Preparation Committee	<a href="https://www.dec-sped.org/personnel-preparation">https://www.dec-sped.org/personnel-preparation</a>  <a href="https://www.dec-sped.org/highereducation">https://www.dec-sped.org/highereducation</a>
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Professional Standards and Competencies	<a href="https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/professional-standards-competencies">https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/professional-standards-competencies</a>
IRIS Center	<a href="https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/env/">https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/env/</a>  <a href="https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/ecbm/">https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/ecbm/</a>

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### Marla J. Lohmann

*Dr. Marla J. Lohmann is an associate professor and Program Director of Special Education and Alternative Licensing Programs at Colorado Christian University. She currently serves as the Chair of the TED Early Childhood SIG. Dr. Lohmann's research interests include early childhood inclusive practices, online teacher preparation, and supporting learners with disabilities in faith-based schools.*

### Ann M. Mickelson

*Dr. Ann M. Mickelson is an assistant professor of special education and child development at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Her research centers on collaborative approaches to educator preparation and authentic partnerships with families and professionals to promote meaningful and equitable inclusion.*

### Christine M. Spence

*Dr. Christine Spence is an assistant professor of special education at Virginia Commonwealth University, program faculty for Virginia Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND), and the program coordinator for the Early Childhood Special Education programs (BSEd and MEd). She currently serves as the Chair for the Personnel Preparation Committee for the Division of Early Childhood (DEC). Her research focuses on 1) analyzing and delivering personnel preparation and professional development focused on culturally responsive teaching and learning; 2) hearing the voices of families engaged in and impacted by the early childhood and disability-focused services and systems; and 3) investigating the systems themselves, particularly focused on collaboration between systems (i.e., developmental and medical, educational and child welfare).*

## Learn more and join TeDeC

To learn more about TeDeC or join us in supporting ECSE personnel prep, be sure to look for us at the 2024 TED conference in Pittsburgh in November. Some of the authors from this special issue will be presenting about their work during a special highlighted session. In addition, we will have a business meeting for planning future SIG activities and can be found at our table in the exhibit hall throughout the conference. In the meantime, learn more about us by checking out our website and completing the membership form - membership is free to all TED members!

- **TeDeC SIG Website:** <https://tedcec.org/special-interest-groups/early-childhood-faculty>
- **Membership Form:** <https://forms.gle/ZBNgES9w4HAHtrvdA>