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TEACHER EDUCATION DIVISION OF THE COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

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

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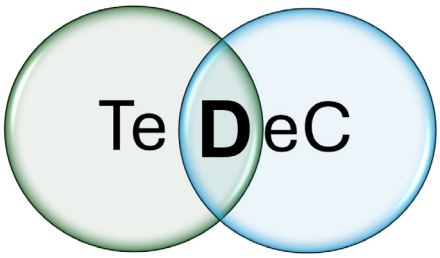
Welcome to the special issue of the *Journal of Special Education Preparation* (*JOSEP*) on Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) Preparation! We are grateful to the *JOSEP* team and the Teacher Education Division (TED) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) for this opportunity 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 (Figure 1).

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.

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

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 Riggleman, 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, Linday 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, Debra Berry Malmberg, Ya-Chih Chang, Nancy Hunt, Courtney O'Grady, Kimberly 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	https://exceptionalchildren.org/standards/initial-practice-based-standards-early-interventionists-early-childhood-special-educators https://www.dec-sped.org/ei-ecse-standards
Early Childhood Personnel Center (ECPC) Curriculum Modules focused on Standards	https://ecpcta.org/curriculum-module-2/
Division for Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices	https://www.dec-sped.org/dec-recommended-practices
Division for Early Childhood (DEC) Personnel Preparation Committee	https://www.dec-sped.org/personnel-preparation https://www.dec-sped.org/highereducation
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Professional Standards and Competencies	https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/professional-standards-competencies
IRIS Center	https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/env/ https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/ecbm/

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

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

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ABSTRACT

Clearly defined professional standards result in better prepared professionals who positively impact outcomes for children and families by ensuring an effective workforce. This article describes the evolution of early intervention early/childhood special education preparation standards from the on-the-job competencies of the 1960s to the historic 2020 Initial Practice-Based Professional Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators (EI/ECSE Standards), in concert with the evolution of the profession itself. Influencing factors include (a) changes in federal legislation and policy, (b) ages and characteristics of children served, (c) growing knowledge of effective practices, (d) collaboration with other disciplines, and (e) ongoing advocacy for EI/ECSE as a profession. The article concludes with a vision for using the EI/ECSE Standards to guide the future local, state, and national agenda of the profession around preservice preparation and accreditation, professional development, state and federal policy, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and standards-informed research.

KEYWORDS

Early intervention, early childhood special education, professional standards, preservice preparation, professional development

The importance of high-quality preparation for early interventionists/early childhood special educators cannot be overstated. Positive outcomes for children and families are linked to the quality of professional preparation, which in turn is related to professional standards (National Research Council, 2015). Research indicates that preservice educators think they are better prepared, remain in the field longer, and are more likely to positively impact children's development and learning when the preservice program is based on clearly defined standards that are used to guide and evaluate student performance (Darling-Hammond, 2012). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) influenced the move to performance-based standards that identify what educators should know and be able to do upon completion of a preservice institution of higher education (IHE) program (Darling-Hammond, 2020).

In 2020, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) approved the first stand-alone *Initial Practice-Based Professional Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators (EI/ECSE Standards*: CEC & Division for Early Childhood [DEC], 2020) for the preparation of personnel in early intervention/early childhood special education (EI/ECSE). This article describes the evolution of the stand-alone EI/ECSE Standards for initial entry into the profession. Numerous factors influenced this process from the 1960s to the present, including changes in federal legislation and policy, ages and characteristics of children served, growing knowledge of effective practices, collaboration with other disciplines and organizations, and DEC's continuing involvement and advocacy for EI/ECSE as a profession (Kilgo et al., 2019). The article concludes with the vision for using the EI/ECSE Standards to guide the future of the profession and the policy agenda needed to realize this vision.

TABLE 1: Key Terminology and Definitions

TERM	DEFINITIONS
Professional standards	What professionals should know and be able to do to practice effectively in the respective discipline
Initial standards	What beginning professionals should know and be able to do to practice effectively upon completion of a preservice program of study
Advanced standards	What professionals should know and be able to do to practice effectively in the respective discipline upon completion of a program of study beyond initial preparation
Specialty Set	Knowledge and skill statements for a specialization area (e.g., EI/ECSE) used to inform the CEC Standards
Competencies	Informal lists of knowledge and skills for a specialization area not formally approved by CEC
Certification	State requirements to practice as a professional in a specific discipline
Early intervention early childhood special education (EI/ECSE)	The field of professional practice for educators prepared to work with children birth through eight years with or at risk for disabilities and developmental delays and their families
Early childhood education (ECE)	The field of professional practice for educators prepared to work with children birth through eight years who are developing typically and their families

CLARIFYING THE CONTEXT

Relationship Between CEC and the DEC

DEC became a division of CEC during its 1973 annual conference in response to advocacy by the national network of Handicapped Children's Early Education Program (HCEEP) projects. DEC, one of 17 special interest divisions, has an international membership of "individuals who work with or on behalf of children with special needs, birth through age eight, and their families" (DEC, 2012, p. 1), including children with or at risk for disabilities and developmental delays. DEC also works to ensure a highly effective workforce through the initial preparation and ongoing professional development of EI/ECSE professionals, which is one of six goals in DEC's priority issues agenda (DEC, 2020).

To understand standards development within DEC, it is important to know that CEC, rather than DEC, is the professional association member of the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), representing all areas of special education. Although IHE programs preparing EI/ECSE professionals are now evaluated through CAEP using the EI/ECSE Standards, CEC remains the ultimate gatekeeper of the EI/ECSE Standards.

Terminology

Professional standards are defined here as what professionals should know and be able to do to practice effectively. Historically, each CEC division could develop knowledge and skill statements for their respective specializations. DEC and its members often referred to knowledge and skill statements as *standards*; however, they did not meet CEC's criterion for approval as standards. In 1995, CEC began referring to knowledge and skill statements as Specialty Sets and used them for program accreditation to inform the CEC Standards for a division's specialization area. To facilitate the readability of this paper, *EI/ECSE Standards* refers to the *Initial Practice-Based Professional Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators* (CEC & DEC, 2020) for entry into the profession. *Specialty Set* refers to different iterations of knowledge and skill statements from the mid-90s to 2020 validated to inform CEC's Standards for preservice EI/ECSE programs. The word *competency*, historically used interchangeably with *standard*, refers to informal lists of knowledge and skills that were not under CEC's umbrella.

Consistent with DEC's mission to serve children birth through 8 years with or at risk for disabilities and developmental delays, the term *EI/ECSE* now refers to the field of professional practice for educators prepared to work with children and their families across the birth through eight age range. State certification or licensure documenting competence is required to practice as a professional in various disciplines, including education. Although some states may utilize the term licensure, for this paper, *certification* will be used. Table 1 provides a listing of key terminology and definitions.

TABLE 2: Timeline of Key Events Leading to Development of EI/ECSE Standards

DATE	KEY EVENT
1968	• P.L. 90-538, The Handicapped Children's Early Education Assistance Act (HCEEP) funds projects to develop and demonstrate innovative approaches to meet the needs of young children with disabilities
1973	• Division for Early Childhood (DEC) becomes a specialization division of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
1975	• P.L. 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act – includes funding for state planning and incentive funds for preschool and early intervention (EI) services
1986	• P.L. 99-457, The Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments – Part B Section 619 mandates free and appropriate (FAPE) public preschool education for children with disabilities be in place by 1991; Part H (now Part C) requires that states receiving federal funds plan services for children birth to 3 years with disabilities and their families and be in place in 4 years
1989	• Recommendations for Certification of Early Childhood Special Educators (McCollum et al., 1989) delineates DEC's recommendations for EI/ECSE roles, content areas for preparation, and entry-level certification • A member of DEC's Personnel Preparation Committee (PPC) represents DEC on CEC's Knowledge and Skills Subcommittee (KSSC)
1990	• Carolina Institute for Research on Infant Personnel Preparation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill completes a series of survey studies on extent to which preservice and in-service personnel preparation programs address specialized EI competencies
1993	• DEC Position Statement on Personnel Preparation (DEC 1994a) defines DEC's policy on initial preparation and state certification • DEC publishes DEC Recommended Practices: Indicators of Quality in Programs for Infants and Young Children with Special Needs and Their Families (DEC Task Force on Recommended Practices, 1993)
1994	• DEC Personnel Standards for Early Education and Early Intervention: Guidelines for Licensure in ECSE (DEC, 1994b) identifies 77 performance-based statements in six content areas and recommendations for certification (i.e., DEC's first initial Specialty Set)
1995	• DEC's first initial Specialty Set approved by CEC and published in What Every Special Educator Must Know
2001	• DEC begins collaboration with CEC and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) to conduct accreditation program reviews for blended programs
2003	• The Center to Inform Personnel Preparation Policy and Practice in Early Intervention and Preschool Education, funded by OSEP, to conduct research to identify gaps in EI/ECSE Personnel Preparation
2007	• DEC initial Specialty Set with 10 content areas and greater emphasis on EI and DEC advanced Specialty Set with six content areas revised and validated
2011	• DEC completes alignment of the DEC initial and advanced Specialty Sets (2007) with the initial and advanced CEC Standards (2003, 2006) and NAEYC Standards (2003) and disseminates in Chandler et al. (2012)
2012	• Early Childhood Personnel Center (ECPC), funded by OSEP, to provide technical assistance in developing comprehensive systems of personnel development
2015	• DEC completes alignment of the DEC initial and advanced Specialty Sets (2007, 2017) with the initial and advanced CEC Standards (2012) and NAEYC Standards (2012) and disseminates in 2018
2017	• DEC initial and advanced Specialty Sets reviewed and validated with same content areas as the CEC initial and advanced Standards (2012) • DEC (2017) Position Statement on Personnel Preparation outlines recommendations for use of the Specialty Sets by IHE faculty, professional development providers, state policy makers for certification requirements, and to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration
2020	• DEC collaborates with CEC to develop and approve EI/ECSE Standards (CEC & DEC, 2020), ECPC provides support • NAEYC develops, with representation from DEC, and approves Early Childhood Education (ECE Standards: NAEYC, 2020) • DEC collaborates with NAEYC and ECPC to develop a crosswalk of the 2020 EI/ECSE Standards and ECE Standards (ECPC, 2020) • DEC develops a crosswalk of the EI/ECSE Standards, DEC recommended practices, and the CEC high leverage practices (Berlinghoff & McLaughlin, 2022) • EI/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) identified as a professional specialization area in Power to the Profession (PtP) Unifying Framework which provides a structure for early childhood professions
2022	• DEC (2022) Personnel Preparation Position Statement outlines recommendations for use of the EI/ECSE Standards by IHE faculty, professional development providers, and state policy makers, and to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration and blended preservice preparation • Special issue of Young Exceptional Children (YEC) focuses on the EI/ECSE Standards • DEC collaborates with CEC to begin Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) program review process for EI/ECSE preservice programs
2023	• Special issue of Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education focuses on the EI/ECSE Standards as a means for collaboration in teacher education

SETTING THE STAGE FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS: 1960-1990

A New Profession Emerges

The 1960s marked the beginning of EI/ECSE as a profession with increased public attention on young children's development and welfare in response to the war on poverty and the civil rights movement. Preschool programs in the United States for children with disabilities looked to European models for their conceptual frameworks, theories, and practices (Bricker, 2020), as well as to early experimental programs in the United States. They demonstrated that intervention could change the developmental and learning trajectories of young children with or at risk for disabilities and developmental delays (e.g., Kirk, 1977). These practices began to define the disciplinary knowledge and skills needed by early childhood special educators. See Table 2 for a timeline of key events in the evolution of EI/ECSE Standards from the 1960s to the present.

Influences on the Movement Toward Professional Standards

Legislation and Funding. The first federal funding for programs to serve eligible children and their families was P.L. 90-538 of 1968, The Handicapped Children's Early Education Assistance Act, which funded projects to develop and demonstrate innovative, experimental approaches to meet the needs of young children with disabilities, and to support other programs in adopting successful models and practices. Projects were implemented in a variety of settings by individuals from multiple disciplines and for children of varying needs. Each project built a base of knowledge and skills and developed approaches and materials for the three required components: individualized services, family involvement, and age-appropriate assessment and curriculum. This provided the foundation for what later would become knowledge and skill areas for EI/ECSE personnel preparation. P.L. 90-538 also required the formation of a national network, First Chance, to share the projects' conceptual frameworks, practices, and results, and in 1979, became part of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP; Bricker, 2020), thereby, aligning HCEEP with the field of special education.

P. L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, brought explicit attention to young children with disabilities and delays by including funding for state planning and incentive funds for both preschool programs and EI services. By the end of the 1970s, preschool mandates were in place in almost half of the states (Xie, 2020). Increased attention was placed on how to apply free appropriate education and access to least restrictive environments to preschool children. State and national planners focused on how to achieve this through mainstreaming, as demonstrated in some HCEEP projects, setting the stage for movement toward full inclusion (Guralnick, 2001). In addition, some programs demonstrated the efficacy of combining practices drawn from different theoretical approaches to meet both the developmental and instructional needs of each child (Xie, 2020). The results further expanded and clarified the EI/ECSE profession and its accompanying disciplinary knowledge and skills.

During the 1980s, P.L. 99-457 added further legitimacy and impetus to EI/ECSE as a profession. Part B Section 619 of the legislation mandated that publicly funded preschool education for children with disabilities be in place by 1991. Part H (now Part C) required that states receiving federal funds plan services for children birth to 3 years and their families, with state systems in place within 4 years (Gargiulo & Kilgo, 2020). Services expanded at a rapid rate and required researchers and program personnel to put immense effort into the development of assessments, curricula, and intervention practices. These efforts expanded and improved the quality of resources for EI/ECSE programs and enhanced disciplinary knowledge in EI/ECSE.

Growth in IHE Personnel Preparation Programs in EI/ECSE. Growth in IHE programs preparing personnel to serve young children with disabilities and their families also influenced the movement toward professional standards. A 1974 CEC survey of IHEs in special education found that only a few programs included an emphasis on the unique needs of young children with delays and disabilities (Xie, 2020). By the 1980s, this number had increased dramatically, further highlighting the need for standards. Additionally, OSEP funding in the 1970s for a small number of master's and doctoral ECSE programs facilitated growth. Both EI and ECSE personnel preparation was a priority area for funding (e.g., Rowan al., 1993), leading to an increased need for standards to guide IHE curriculum development.

First Steps Toward Professional Standards

Personnel Quality as a Priority

In the late 1970s, DEC formed a personnel preparation committee (PPC) to share information among universities, nurture the quality of IHE personnel preparation, expand the personnel preparation knowledge base, and provide leadership for establishing EI/ECSE as a profession. As EI/ECSE developed its disciplinary knowledge, efforts to articulate what was unique about EI/ECSE compared to K-12 special education and early childhood education (ECE) began. Through conversations with the National Association for the Education of Young

Children (NAEYC), the PPC explored similarities and differences between the perspectives and practices of ECE and ECSE. This collaboration began to clarify the roles and unique training needs of EI/ECSE personnel and ECE personnel to include children with disabilities (McCollum, 2000). In 1989, a PPC member was added to CEC's Knowledge and Skills Subcommittee (KSSC) to provide the perspectives of EI/ECSE personnel preparation. These activities contributed to a growing understanding of EI/ECSE as having a unique disciplinary knowledge and as a profession distinct from ECE, K-12 special education, and related service professions.

Precursors to Standards: Roles and Competency Studies

The content of EI/ECSE IHE programs in the 1970s was based primarily on areas identified as important through the HCEEP projects and other intervention programs (e.g., assessment, curriculum, families). In the few IHEs offering EI/ECSE preparation, faculty developed lists of competencies based on program descriptions and reviews of the literature across many areas of ECE, special education, and related fields (McCollum, personal communication, 2021). As more faculty participated in DEC's PPC, these lists of competencies were shared and used in developing IHE curricula and grant applications.

In 1986, P.L. 99-457 identified inadequate training as an obstacle to implementing the legislation's EI component (Silverstein, 1989). Papers describing the roles of special educators in EI increased (e.g., Thorp & McCollum, 1988). Researchers conducted state and national competency studies to define what EI personnel across disciplines should know and do (e.g., Maude, 1990). OSEP funded the Carolina Institute for Research on Infant Personnel Preparation to identify and assist in addressing these issues in preparation. The results of its research helped focus attention on cross-disciplinary roles and training needs in EI (Bailey et al., 1990).

First Recommendations for Competencies and Certification

DEC's PPC developed a white paper, *Recommendations for Certification of Early Childhood Special Educators* (McCollum et al., 1989), representing DEC's first step toward establishing standards for the profession. The paper provided guidance to IHEs and states for achieving highly qualified EI/ECSE personnel by identifying 12 roles (e.g., plan and implement developmental interventions) that subsumed 15 overarching content areas (e.g., assessment, intervention, families) for the EI/ECSE professional, which were expanded into 90 sub-areas. It also advocated for entry-level certification for EI/ECSE, birth through 5 years, with a state option for birth through 8 years, if more compatible with the state's existing ECE certification.

Transition to the 1990s

By 1990, the foundation was laid for a new profession, EI/ECSE. Federal legislation provided the impetus and mandates for EI/ECSE services and led to personnel issues in EI/ECSE being a primary focus. An increasing number of IHEs offered preparation in EI/ECSE. DEC's PPC was engaged in learning about and delineating what EI/ECSE professionals needed to know and do. Faculty and policymakers were integrating this information into IHE programs and state efforts. The body of knowledge in EI/ECSE was growing through research and practice. The stage was set for an escalation in work toward standards.

MOVEMENT TOWARD EI/ECSE STANDARDS:

1990-2000: DEC's First Specialty Set

The 1990s were replete with factors affecting the growing recognition of EI/ECSE as a profession (Ryan, 2020) and the evolution toward EI/ECSE Standards. EI/ECSE's body of disciplinary knowledge continued to expand, and DEC published its first iteration of Recommended Practices (DEC Task Force on Recommended Practices, 1993), providing guidance for evidence-based practices in key areas of service delivery. Collaboration between DEC and other organizations was further solidified and expanded as professions continued to address the intent and reality of legislation and policy. During this decade, DEC developed its first EI/ECSE Initial Specialty Set under the auspices of CEC and drafted advanced knowledge and skill statements.

Influences on DEC's Initial Specialty Set

Legislation and Funding. Although P.L. 99-457 was passed in 1986, its implementation remained the primary driver of activity during the 1990s. Preschool mandates were in place in all states, and EI/ECSE services at the preschool level were provided in many settings (e.g., public schools, Head Start, and childcare), increasing the focus on inclusion (Guralnick, 2001). Natural environments and inclusion also were of concern at the infant-toddler level, with many children receiving services in their homes or in childcare. Educators and researchers continued to debate and explore how to combine differing theoretical perspectives and strategies to meet the needs of all children birth through 8 years and families within and across these settings (Ryan, 2020).

P.L. 99-457 also brought changes

in perspectives toward families with a shift toward a family-centered model (Dunst et al., 1991), leading to consideration of professional knowledge and skills to support teams and families working together on program components such as instruction (Buysse & Wesley, 1993). Another key construct of family-centered practices was the provision of culturally responsive home- and center-based services (Lynch & Hanson, 1992).

The legislation also heightened the emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration. Services for infants, toddlers, and preschool children historically were implemented in segregated, center-based settings by multidisciplinary teams of professionals who did not always collaborate. With P.L. 99-457, services required more specialized knowledge within each discipline and a systems perspective encompassing all disciplines. All professionals providing EI services were required to integrate knowledge from multiple disciplines, consider systems of service in their interdisciplinary and interagency work, and assume roles as team members and consultants. The 1990s continued to focus on interdisciplinary relationships, with a shift toward how to prepare personnel to function as competent team members and partner with families. OSEP continued to fund IHE programs in which disciplines were trained together (e.g., Rowan et al., 1993). The focus on family-centered practices led to strategies for including families in preservice preparation and professional development (Whitehead et al., 1998).

Collaboration Among Professional Associations. The 1990s saw important collaborative activities between DEC and other associations. An issue for DEC and NAEYC was whether and how a key concept in ECE, developmentally appropriate practices (DAPs), applied to children with disabilities (Bredekamp, 1993). Some interpreted DAPs as broad guidelines encompassing the individualized instructional methods needed by children with disabilities (Fox et al., 1994); others considered the DAP guidelines as not specific enough to guide services for children with disabilities (Carta, 1994). Such discussions influenced and strengthened the content of EI/ECSE knowledge and skills and ECE Standards, as practices from each perspective were incorporated. DEC continued to participate in CEC's KSSC, advocating for improved representation of EI/ECSE in CEC's Standards.

Development and Validation of DEC's First Initial Specialty Set

In the 1990s, DEC moved away from identifying competencies and toward delineating knowledge and skill statements describing what entry-level EI/ECSE educators would be expected to know and do, and which also would be used to inform the CEC Standards when accrediting IHE programs. In 1993, a DEC workgroup was established with representation from NAEYC and the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), charged with developing a position statement (DEC, 1994), defining DEC's policy for initial EI/ECSE personnel preparation and certification.

In contrast to the 1989 DEC white paper, these new guidelines incorporated birth through 8 years, consistent with DEC's mission, and focused on six content areas: child development and learning, curriculum and implementation, family and community relationships, assessment and evaluation, professionalism, and field experience. These areas were elaborated further into 77 performance-based statements. As in the white paper, state policies requiring stand-alone EI/ECSE certification were recommended. In 1996, DEC and NAEYC collaborated to reorganize DEC's 77 statements for initial preparation under the content areas in NAEYC's Standards as a resource for IHEs that were designing blended programs in ECE and EI/ECSE (NAEYC, 1996).

In 1995, CEC approved the first DEC Initial Specialty Set, as identified in the 1994 concept paper. Soon to follow was the first edition of *What Every Special Educator Must Know* (CEC, 1995), which contained CEC's Standards and Initial Specialty Sets from DEC and other divisions. This Initial Specialty Set contained the same 77 knowledge and skill statements as those approved in 1994 by DEC and endorsed by NAEYC and ATE, grouped differently to fit the content areas of CEC's 10 Standards.

Transition to 2000

By the end of the decade, DEC had strong collaborative relationships with NAEYC and CEC. The DEC Initial Specialty Set delineated entry-level requirements for EI/ECSE, providing IHEs guidance for curriculum development and accreditation and offering guidance to states for professional development and certification policies. The age range was extended to birth through 8 years with increased emphasis on early development, family partnerships, and interdisciplinary teams. Collaborative efforts led to a new focus on blended programs for ECE and ECSE (Stayton & McCollum, 2002) and innovative models for cross-disciplinary preparation.

2000-2010: REVISION AND EXPANSION OF DEC'S SPECIALTY SETS

In this new decade, substantial work occurred to update and validate DEC's Initial Specialty Set with additional work on an Advanced Specialty Set.

New guidance documents were also developed.

Influences on Revisions in the Specialty Sets

Legislation and Funding

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was reauthorized in 2004, reiterating that professionals from each discipline should be highly qualified for their work in EI/ECSE. The role of the states was to determine what this meant with respect to entry-level certification. For some disciplines (e.g., occupational therapy, physical therapy), qualifications were determined at the national level. In other disciplines, including EI/ECSE, certification was determined based on state-level requirements, which varied widely (Geiger et al., 2003). Further, certification requirements inclusive of birth through 8 years continued to be problematic because existing entry-level requirements did not ensure experience with or content knowledge specific to young children with disabilities or delays and their families (Bailey et al., 1990). Both issues had to be addressed by IHE faculty preparing entry-level professionals and by professional organizations across disciplines. Continuing updates of the DEC Specialty Sets were required as part of CEC's revision process for special education and were needed for guidance by state planners and IHEs.

A strong push toward continued revisions to DEC's Specialty Sets also came from the work of the personnel institutes and centers funded by OSEP. The Carolina personnel institute continued. The Center to Inform Personnel Preparation Policy and Practice in Early Intervention and Preschool Education, which was funded in 2003 at the University of Connecticut, was followed in 2012 by the Early Childhood Personnel Center (ECPC). A primary activity of the centers was to examine competencies for EI and ECSE personnel within and across disciplines, with ongoing participation by representatives from multiple disciplines, as well as from states and other technical assistance centers (Bailey et al., 1990; Bruder & Dunst, 2005). Each center contributed information that influenced the understanding of roles and the knowledge and skills needed to serve young children and their families. The centers also provided guidance to IHEs and states on preparing highly qualified personnel. OSEP continued to support interdisciplinary preparation that included partnerships with EI/ECSE and related service disciplines and blended ECE and EI/ECSE programs.

Collaborative Efforts Influencing Revisions

DEC's work on the Specialty Sets during this decade continued to be influenced by collaboration with CEC and other professional organizations. The close partnership between DEC and NAEYC continued, with NAEYC participating in the revision and validation of DEC's Specialty Sets. In 2001, CEC and NAEYC, in collaboration with DEC, began conducting accreditation program reviews for blended programs. The majority of DEC's collaborative work with CEC was directed toward revising and validating the Initial Specialty Set in collaboration with CEC's KSSC (Lifter et al., 2011). Advocacy by DEC's KSSC representative influenced changes in terminology that better integrated EI/ECSE into CEC's Standards (CEC, 2009). *Professionals* replaced *teachers* to acknowledge the variety of EI/ECSE roles, and the term *early intervention* was formally added to acknowledge EI. The title of the Initial Specialty Set was revised to *Initial Special Education Professionals in Early Childhood Special Education/ Early Intervention (Birth to Eight)*.

Revision, Validation, and Alignment of the DEC Specialty Sets

In 2004, DEC charged the PPC with revising and validating both Initial and Advanced Specialty Sets and identifying a literature base supporting each one. A task force was appointed, and workgroups were formed to revise the Specialty Sets and develop a database of supporting literature for each (Cochran et al., 2012). Both the initial and advanced workgroups followed a similar process (Lifter et al., 2011). Validation studies for each Specialty Set were conducted with a group of constituents that included DEC members, NAEYC's IHE members, and Parts C and B619 coordinators, with subsequent revisions completed in 2007.

The Initial Specialty Set contained 10 content areas, matching the 10 CEC Standards: foundations, development and characteristics of learners, individual learning differences, instructional strategies, learning environments and social interaction, language, instructional planning, assessment, professional and ethical practice, and collaboration. It placed greater emphasis on infants and toddlers and on emerging practices in the field, both through terminology and content emphases (e.g., child development, inclusion, interdisciplinary teaming). As a resource, DEC's Initial Specialty Set and CEC's and NAEYC's initial Standards were aligned (Chandler et al., 2012). The Advanced Specialty Set, now validated by CEC, encompassed six content areas: leadership and policy, program development and organization, research and inquiry, evaluation, professional development and ethical practice, and collaboration.

Transition to 2010

The work of this decade resulted in revised, validated Initial and Advanced Specialty Sets, representing changing emphases in EI/ECSE as a profession.

Further, a new substantive research base was available to be used in IHE curriculum planning and accreditation.

2010-2020: NEW EI/ECSE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

The culmination of work toward standards in this new decade was the development of DEC's first stand-alone EI/ECSE Standards for the profession, an historic achievement. However, before that could be accomplished, DEC once again updated its Initial and Advanced Specialty Sets and engaged in alignment of the revised Initial Specialty Set with newly revised CEC and NAEYC Standards (Mickelson et al., 2023).

Influences on Emerging Professional Standards

National Agenda for Young Children

There were no significant legislative changes during this decade. Nonetheless, several national efforts and status reports influenced the movement toward EI/ECSE professional standards. In 2014, President Obama convened a White House Summit on Early Education for early childhood constituents (e.g., state and national policymakers, school administrators, community leaders) that resulted in increased investment in services. One particularly important outcome was increased support for public preschool for all children across many states and communities, adding impetus to the need for qualified personnel.

In 2015, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council published *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*, the result of an extensive study on the climate of the ECE profession. The report summarized the state of ECE and encompassed a "Blueprint for Action." Recommendations for IHEs included supporting preservice educators in acquiring the knowledge and skills to meet the diverse and changing needs of children and families.

Lagging Rates of Inclusion

A further influence on the movement toward professional standards came from data suggesting that rates of inclusion had not increased since P.L. 99-457 mandated public education for preschoolers with disabilities (Barton & Smith, 2015). In response, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) and the U.S Department of Education (USDOE) released a joint policy statement outlining the research supporting inclusion, re-emphasizing the need for well-prepared professionals, and highlighting the importance of preservice and in-service professional development. The policy statement also included clear recommendations for states for increasing the number of children with disabilities in high-quality, inclusive ECE programs (USDHHS & USDOE, 2015). The policy statement, coupled with the growth in public preschool programs, created increased inclusive education opportunities for all children and collaboration among early childhood agencies in states (e.g., Part B 619, Head Start, public schools).

Power to the Profession

Another national influence, Power to the Profession (PtP), was facilitated by NAEYC and resulted, in part, from the IOM report noted above. A 15-member task force, including DEC, was charged with establishing a framework for ECE services and defining the ECE profession. DEC partnered in developing a unifying framework with recommendations for career pathways, professional standards, qualifications, accountability supports, and compensation for the ECE profession (PtP Task Force, 2020). A key recommendation of PtP was for areas of specialization, with EI/ECSE identified as one of these areas. The PtP collaboration further enhanced the professional relationship between DEC and NAEYC, leading to NAEYC's support for the development of the 2020 EI/ECSE Standards.

Initial Specialty Set Yields to Stand-Alone EI/ECSE Standards

This decade included two major initiatives. The first was the revision of DEC's Initial and Advanced Specialty Sets. The second and more far-reaching was DEC's work toward and approval of a distinct set of stand-alone EI/ECSE Standards to replace the Initial Specialty Set.

Revision, Validation, and Alignment of Specialty Sets

In 2012, CEC made significant revisions to its initial standards. In addition, with representation from NAEYC, work groups within DEC's PPC were established to review and revise DEC's Initial and Advanced Specialty Sets, employing the same process as in the previous decade (Lifter et al., 2011). The revised Specialty Sets were approved in 2017 by both DEC and CEC. The 2012 revision of CEC's initial and advanced standards, revision of DEC's Specialty Sets, and new NAEYC Standards in 2010 required a new collaborative alignment of DEC's Specialty Sets and the CEC and NAEYC Standards with support from ECPC (Mickelson et al., 2023). Revision of the Specialty Sets also created a need to revise DEC's personnel preparation position statement (DEC, 2017).

Stand-Alone Initial EI/ECSE Standards Accomplished

In 2018, DEC requested approval from CEC to develop a stand-alone set of standards for initial entry into the EI/ECSE profession to replace the Initial Specialty Set. With NAEYC support, the request was approved, initiating the historic development of the first stand-alone professional standards for EI/ECSE.

DEC collaborated with CEC, NAEYC, and ECPC to appoint and

support a 15-member Standards Development Task Force (ECPC, 2020). This group met regularly for 2 years to draft EI/ECSE Standards, components, and supporting documents in accordance with CAEP's requirements for standards development. An iterative process was used, and input from the field was solicited through surveys, webinars, and listening sessions at professional conferences to ensure the validity of the new EI/ECSE Standards as they were being developed. The EI/ECSE Standards (CEC & DEC, 2020) were approved by CEC and disseminated in 2020.

Given new EI/ECSE Standards and NAEYC's new ECE Standards, a new standards alignment was needed. DEC, NAEYC, and CEC collaborated with ECPC to develop a 2020 crosswalk between the ECE and EI/ECSE Standards. The crosswalk identifies the specific knowledge and skills that are similar across these two sets of standards (ECPC, 2020). The new crosswalk has substantial potential to support blended models of preparation since both DEC and NAEYC now have standards that address the same age range (Mickelson et al., 2023). In addition, a crosswalk of the EI/ECSE Standards, the DEC recommended practices, and the CEC high leverage practices was developed (Berlinghoff & McLaughlin, 2022).

Transition to the Future

The EI/ECSE profession is solidly grounded in a history that demonstrates development from its beginning to full recognition as a profession. History and challenging work over many years laid a solid foundation for the 2020 EI/ECSE Standards.

EI/ECSE STANDARDS: THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The EI/ECSE Standards represent full recognition of EI/ECSE as a profession. Now is the time for EI/ECSE to be represented in interdisciplinary efforts and apply the EI/ECSE Standards to a new vision in which these standards guide the preparation of highly qualified EI/ECSE professionals who develop and implement evidence-based practices that lead to positive outcomes for young children and families.

This vision is consistent with long-term DEC advocacy efforts and policy as represented in personnel preparation position statements over time (e.g., DEC 1994a, 2017, 2022). DEC, in collaboration with the EI/ECSE field, has the primary role in achieving this vision. DEC developed a comprehensive action plan aligned with this vision that delineates advocacy, dissemination, and support strategies to ensure that the EI/ECSE Standards are used by multiple stakeholders targeted to each specific stakeholder role. This action plan is designed to facilitate comprehensive systems of personnel development (CSPD) at the local, state, and national levels. A CSPD contains multiple integrated and coordinated elements that can draw upon the EI/ECSE Standards for guidance in developing systems that can lead to the consistent quality of services and a strong common foundation for preparation and support of the workforce.

EI/ECSE professionals, in alliance with DEC and CEC's Teacher Education Division (TED), will work with policymakers to ensure that they are aware of the EI/ECSE Standards and understand the value of adopting them for multiple purposes, including the foundation of preservice programs of study, the framework for the state's professional development system, IHE accreditation, and certification policies.

Several dissemination activities have occurred to both raise awareness and provide guidance. Several manuscripts have been published in refereed journals. For example, a 2022 special issue of *Young Exceptional Children* included manuscripts focused on using the EI/ECSE Standards in a preservice program, in a state EI professional development system, and by families to ensure their children receive services from qualified practitioners. DEC leaders have made presentations at professional conferences focused on resources to facilitate alignment of preservice curriculum with the EI/ECSE Standards and support the development of CAEP accreditation program review documents (e.g., DEC, TED). Further, multiple resources designed to support IHE faculty and professional development providers in their use of the EI/ECSE Standards are housed on both the DEC and ECPC websites (DEC, n.d.; ECPC, n.d.).

Additional advocacy and technical assistance efforts will ensure that all groups responsible for different elements of a CSPD have guidance for the application of the EI/ECSE Standards to achieve comprehensive systems at the local, state, and national levels. What follows is a discussion of specific steps that the EI/ECSE field can pursue toward accomplishing the vision of a CSPD: (a) aligning preservice preparation and accreditation with the EI/ECSE Standards, (b) guiding professional development systems and content around the EI/ECSE Standards, (c) using these standards to influence state and national policy, (d) applying the standards to achieve visibility as a profession, including more formal cross-disciplinary collaboration with CEC, NAEYC, and other professional organizations (e.g., AOTA, ASHA), and (e) encouraging research utilization and generation informed by the EI/ECSE Standards.

Supporting Higher Education Program Planning and Accreditation

Preservice preparation is an essential component of CSPDs. For over 3 decades, the early childhood field has advocated for IHE programs to be based

on rigorous and measurable standards (e.g., DEC, 1994a, 2017; McCollum et al., 1989). Yet, Part B 619 and Part C providers have reported that their preservice preparation did not adequately prepare them to work with children with delays and disabilities (Bruder et al., 2013). Clearly, there is a gap between what professionals receive during their initial preparation and what they need for their jobs.

The EI/ECSE Standards provide a powerful opportunity to improve the quality of *all* EI/ECSE preservice programs, as the expectation is that *all* IHE programs align their curricula with the EI/ECSE Standards. Moving forward, IHE preservice programs leading to initial EI/ECSE certification that seek CAEP accreditation will be evaluated based on the new EI/ECSE Standards. These standards provide clear guidance for rigorous program-wide curriculum and assessment benchmarks, as well as for developing courses and field experiences and for assessing attainment of the standards by graduates. The supporting explanations (Berlinghoff & McLaughlin, 2022p) for each *practice-based* EI/ECSE Standard provide multiple examples of their application in settings with children and families.

DEC has committed to the ongoing development of resources to support IHE faculty in aligning their preservice curriculum with the EI/ECSE Standards and to support them in preparing for program review. These resources are housed in the personnel preparation section of the DEC website. Also, as previously noted, the ECPC (n.d.) website has multiple resources to facilitate aligning IHE curricula with the EI/ECSE Standards.

Guiding Professional Development Content and Processes

Another essential component of a CSPD is ongoing professional development. The EI/ECSE Standards support this element by providing a framework for designing content that responds to and addresses the significant variability in participants' prior preparation and professional experience. Professional development content should be based on needs assessments aligned with the EI/ECSE Standards so that appropriate content can be designed to address the assessed needs of individuals or subgroups of providers. The required content could be used to fill gaps in initial preparation in some or all of the EI/ECSE Standards to supplement initial preparation.

At the school or program level, employers could use the EI/ECSE Standards to facilitate EI/ECSE professionals' self-assessment of their professional growth needs and to align their staff evaluation system with the standards to determine the skills staff demonstrate. Employers could use the results to support staff in developing and implementing professional growth plans that include individual and/or group professional development activities (Lifter et al., 2011).

Strengthening State and Federal Policy

One vital role of EI/ECSE professionals and professional associations (e.g., CEC, DEC, TED) is to engage in advocacy to promote new policies and changes in policies that impact outcomes for children and families. The existence of national professional standards strengthens the position of the early childhood field to advocate for policies that support workforce development and services for children and families (PtP Task Force, 2020), as well as enhance reciprocity across state lines in recruiting and retaining personnel.

Professional associations and leaders in personnel preparation have emphasized the critical role of state certification offices, in collaboration with other partners, in developing certification policies based on national standards (Darling-Hammond, 2020; PtP Task Force, 2020). Unfortunately, alignment of state standards with national standards is limited (Stayton et al., 2012). Certification requirements related to young children vary widely across states with respect to the age ranges represented (Chen & Mickelson, 2015; Sindelar et al., 2019), required content, and depth of content. Some states require educators providing EI Part C services to have certification addressing infants and toddlers; however, many states do not have this requirement. In states that do, information often is not available on training content (Center to Inform Personnel Preparation Policy & Practice in Early Intervention & Preschool Education, 2007).

DEC has long advocated that state certification policies be based on national standards (DEC, 1994, 2017; McCollum et al., 1989). By adopting the EI/ECSE Standards for certification purposes, states can facilitate the alignment of IHE preservice programs and professional development content with the EI/ECSE Standards, thus addressing those CSPD components. For example, Minnesota's Department of Education and Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, with support from ECPC, recently collaborated to adopt the EI/ECSE Standards as the state's EI/ECSE certification standards.

At the national level, advocacy for legislation and policies that support a systems approach with the EI/ECSE Standards as the guiding force in achieving a coordinated infrastructure for personnel preparation is critical. Another key area of advocacy is to support the coordination of policies affecting personnel initiatives across federal agencies responsible for supporting young children and their families. Elements of the CSPD, with a grounding in the EI/ECSE Standards, could support such an effort.

OSEP has played a key role in enhanc-

ing the quality of preparation and the quantity of EI/ECSE professionals, as well as supporting research and technical assistance in personnel preparation. Since the 1980s, OSEP has funded IHE personnel preparation grants focused on EI/ECSE with the requirement that the curriculum for those projects be aligned with national standards and recommended practices. Therefore, curricula for future funded projects will be based on the EI/ECSE Standards. Historically, OSEP has funded centers to conduct research and/or provide technical assistance focused on personnel preparation. These projects have provided key technical assistance and resources to IHEs and states. Continued support and leadership from OSEP are critical to facilitating the national application of the EI/ECSE Standards.

Enhancing Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration

For several decades, early childhood professionals have advocated for cross-disciplinary preparation to ensure that professionals representing multiple disciplines are qualified to work collaboratively on behalf of young children and their families (Kilgo et al., 2019). Historically, CEC Standards were used in conjunction with the DEC Specialty Sets and emerging literature to provide guidance for cross-disciplinary preparation. This has been cumbersome and confusing when applied in collaborative efforts with disciplines that have national professional standards.

The EI/ECSE Standards place the EI/ECSE profession in a similar position with other disciplines, supporting continued collaboration among disciplines and their respective professional organizations. For example, as blended models of preservice preparation increased, CEC and NAEYC, in collaboration with DEC, began jointly conducting CAEP program reviews for blended programs in ECE and EI/ECSE. Although CEC, NAEYC, and DEC have collaborated to develop alignments of the Standards and Specialty Sets that would facilitate the development of blended curricula (Chandler et al., 2012; Mickelson et al., 2023), program development and review have been complicated by having no stand-alone EI/ECSE Standards. The EI/ECSE Standards, coupled with the 2020 ECE Standards, allows DEC to provide increased support for planning and accrediting programs seeking to implement a blended approach. However, since NAEYC is no longer a member of CAEP and now has its own IHE accreditation process, the previous process for reviewing and accrediting blended programs is no longer viable. Therefore, a collaborative initiative among DEC, NAEYC, and CEC will be required to develop a review and accreditation process based on the ECE and EI/ECSE Standards.

> “With the development of EI/ECSE Standards, the EI/ECSE profession is at an exciting point in its journey to enhance the quality of personnel who provide services to young children and their families.”

Using and Generating Research Informed by the EI/ECSE Standards

DEC will update the EI/ECSE Standards on a regular basis in response to current and future research. Ensuring continued efficacy of the EI/ECSE Standards depends on research to support ongoing revisions that will then impact the content and process of preservice and professional development as well as other elements of a CSPD. It will be critical for the EI/ECSE field and professional associations (e.g., CEC, TED, DEC) to use the EI/ECSE Standards to advocate for research that generates and contributes to new bodies of knowledge, including research on different models and approaches in IHE preservice programs and professional development. It also will be the responsibility of EI/ECSE professionals to disseminate those research findings through journal articles (e.g., *Journal of Early Intervention*, *Teacher Education and Special Education*), conferences, and other venues. A research agenda based on the above factors will provide empirical evidence to support advocacy and policy decisions that promote systems efficacy in all elements of the CSPD.

CONCLUSION

The evolution of the EI/ECSE Standards and the recognition of EI/ECSE as a profession developed in tandem over many years. These efforts involved many individuals and required extraordinary commitment to the vision that underlies the EI/ECSE Standards, as well as to their foundation in ongoing research, practice, policy, and advocacy. These standards validate EI/ECSE as a profession dedicated to enhancing outcomes for young children and their families.

With the development of EI/ECSE Standards, the EI/ECSE profession is at an exciting point in its journey to enhance the quality of personnel who provide services to young children and their families. Opportunities for IHEs to collaborate more closely with policymakers afford increased possibilities for enhanced consistency in services and provide families with assurance that services are provided by professionals

with specific knowledge and skills. CSPDs based on the EI/ECSE Standards will facilitate increased collaboration and coordination within states, while revised certification requirements will facilitate reciprocity for qualified EI/ECSE professionals across states. At the national level, the research-based EI/ECSE Standards will strengthen efforts to increase recognition and support of personnel who provide services to young children and their families.

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

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ABSTRACT
Making connections between macro and micro-level practices help teacher candidates to better understand the interdisciplinary nature of the system in which they work. Therefore, we present a collaborative approach to support an increase in early intervention and early childhood special education teacher candidate knowledge and application of best practices. We use a case study to illustrate example approaches and resources (e.g., coaching and reflective practice) that address both macro and micro-level considerations for leaders as they support cross-disciplinary collaboration and teaching practices. Implications for leaders are included to support their preparation of early intervention and early childhood special education teacher candidates.

KEYWORDS
Collaboration, early intervention, early childhood special education, evidence-based practices, interdisciplinary, systems change, teacher education

Early Intervention (EI) and early childhood special education (ECSE) professionals support children ages birth to eight years and their families across a variety of inclusive settings (CEC & DEC, 2020), and are frequently one of the first contacts young children and their families have with the special education system. To be career-ready to meet the unique needs of this diverse population of infants, children, and families, EI/ECSE professionals must be prepared to implement evidence-based practices (EBPs; CEC & DEC, 2020). In practice, this translates to recognizing a need in real-time, understanding viable EBPs for addressing that need, and making decisions to implement the selected EBPs in the classroom. Further, once an EBP is implemented, career-ready professionals know to evaluate the success of their decisions based on student outcomes in order to use these insights to inform future instructional decision-making. This degree of career-readiness requires highly effective preparation focused on the contextualization of implementing EBPs in authentic classroom settings.

Although EBPs have been used widely in education and educational research (e.g., Coogle et al., 2015; Nagro et al., 2017), by explicitly connecting their implementation to both activities targeting the micro-level domain (e.g., reflecting on the self and use of EBPs) and activities targeting the macro-level domain (e.g., reflecting on leadership and the ways EBPs are presented in teacher preparation programs and valued in school systems), teacher educators, as well as teacher candidates, are encouraged to look beyond each individual practice to the philosophical *why* of what they are doing in the classroom and its implications for equity. These choices are influenced by the beliefs and knowledge built by one's professional identity, or how one thinks and acts as a member of a given profession (Mockler, 2011). Throughout the practices illustrated in this manuscript, teacher educators and teacher candidates first reflect on their own professional identities and then relate them to EBPs and professional standards and competencies. By connecting specific instructional practices for both EI/ECSE teacher educators and teacher candidates with system-

ic practices for ethical collaboration such as reflection on one's professional identity, we are demonstrating a novel approach to preparation that is both comprehensive in scope and cohesive in practice. Teacher preparation practices that are cohesive as opposed to disjointed, promote meaning-making for teacher candidates, and ultimately, encourage generalizability during candidates transition into the workforce (Nagro, 2022).

EBPs are practices with documented effectiveness in enhancing outcomes for children with disabilities (Cook et al., 2018). There are multiple approaches for identifying EBPs in education, with most approaches evaluating at least the following four fundamental components of the knowledge base: research design, research quality, quantity of research, and magnitude of effect for supporting studies (Cook et al., 2018). Although EI/ECSE preparation programs have focused attention on the qualifications, knowledge, and skills of the workforce, there remain gaps in the translation of knowledge to practice (Cook & Odom, 2013; McLeod et al., 2021). As educators integrate the material they learn from their coursework with their own understanding of the field and their professional identity, they enact these practices in various ways (e.g., Hsieh, 2016; Song & Park, 2016). One way to reduce this knowledge-to-practice gap is through reflective and practice-based learning opportunities within teacher preparation programs (e.g., Nagro et al., 2022; Schaffer, 2018; Walter & Tuckwiller et al., 2023) and throughout educational systems.

The teacher preparation landscape in EI/ECSE is vast, with licensure covering multiple age groups and settings (Chen & Mickelson, 2015). For example, an EI/ECSE licensed teacher may be expected to (a) coach and support parents interacting with their infant or toddler in their natural environment using a primary service provider approach; (b) teach in an inclusive preschool classroom and support a team of instructional assistants or paraprofessionals; (c) or provide push-in special education services in inclusive early elementary settings and collaborate or co-teach with general education elementary teachers. Given the broad scope of roles and responsibilities that EI/ECSE teachers may assume, teacher preparation programs must be intentional about preparing teacher candidates to work in diverse settings and collaborate across disciplines using research-supported strategies. There are many such ways to accomplish this, and the present article will focus on bringing the lens of professional identity to collaborative work and the implementation of EBPs for long-term sustainability through practical strategies such as coaching and reflective practice.

Given the broad scope of roles and responsibilities that EI/ECSE teachers may assume, teacher preparation programs must be intentional about preparing teacher candidates to work in diverse settings and collaborate across disciplines using research-supported strategies.

Standards and Cross-Disciplinary Competencies in EI/ECSE

One goal in EI/ECSE teacher preparation is to use high-quality, EBPts throughout EI/ECSE systems. Different sets of standards and competencies address this, including the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and Division for Early Childhood's (DEC) Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators (CEC & DEC, 2020), and the ECPC Cross-Disciplinary Competencies (Bruder et al., 2019). The EI/ECSE Standards are focused specifically on high-quality preparation of educational professionals who work with children ages birth through 8 with or at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities and their families (DEC, 2020). These are the first set of standards that recognize the unique set of skills and competencies required from EI/ECSE teachers to support children and families across a variety of education settings. The EI/ECSE standards (CEC & DEC, 2020), focus on key knowledge of the profession, including collaboration and teaming (Standard 3) and using responsive and reciprocal interactions, interventions, and instruction (Standard 6). For collaboration and teaming, sub-indicators focus on the importance of cross-disciplinary collaboration and using evidence-based collaboration strategies. Similarly, Standard 6, focused on instruction, emphasizes responsive interactions, using evidence-based instructional strategies, and facilitating equitable access and participation.

In addition to EI/ECSE educator-specific standards, the Early Childhood Personnel Center (ECPC), along with seven other national organizations representing multiple disciplines providing services and supports to young children and their families, has developed a set of common core competencies to prepare all EI/ECSE professionals across disciplines

(Bruder et al., 2019). The partnering national organizations included the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA); the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA); the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA); the Council of Exceptional Children (CEC) and the Division for Early Childhood (DEC), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); and ZERO TO THREE. The cross-disciplinary competencies consist of four main areas of focus including: (a) coordination and collaboration, (b) family-centered practice, (c) evidence-based intervention, and (d) professionalism. For example, the ECPC Cross-Disciplinary Competency Area "Evidence-Based Intervention" includes multiple indicators to support teacher educators in ensuring EI/ECSE teacher candidates not only have knowledge of EBPs but implement them in their practice (Bruder et al., 2019). The ECPC Cross-Disciplinary Competency Area "Professionalism" also provides indicators to support teacher educators in preparing teacher candidates to implement professional practice (Bruder et al., 2019).

EI/ECSE teacher preparation programs are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring teacher candidates are well prepared to engage professionally as they enter the workforce. This includes a commitment to following professional standards and policies, demonstrating discipline-specific knowledge (e.g., EBPs), and learning from and with other professionals in the field. Given this collective guidance for the preparation of EI/ECSE professionals, the purpose of this article is to provide practical examples at both the macro and micro levels within teacher preparation programs to collaboratively embed innovative practice opportunities to support teacher candidates' use of EBPs across disciplines through a lens of reflective practice to inform professional identity. The macro-level domain of the profession consists of the larger education system, of which teacher candidates are participants. Whereas the micro-level domain of the profession are those that teacher candidates entering the workforce have direct interaction (autonomy) with on a daily basis. This multidimensional framework suggests that both individuals (micro) and the environment (macro) they inhabit include internal factors (e.g., personality, values, attitudes, emotions, and goals) and external factors (e.g., job requirements, behavior, organizational culture, and pay; Edwards & Billsberry, 2010), which widens the interactions and influences that each domain may exert on one another (Fox et al., 2020). An individual teacher candidate's professional identity will likely shape the micro and be shaped by the macro, however career-ready professionals who take an active role in their ongoing development though collaboration and reflection will also influence the larger environment they are working in ideally for the betterment of student learning (Nagro et al., 2022). In these ways, while macro-level practices tend to focus on larger systems, these practices are still made up of individuals values and goals at the micro level. The macro-level practices and tools are grounded in research-based approaches to collaboration and leadership. We will make clear connections to specific indicators for each suggested practice at the micro level along with vignettes to support implementation.

Systems Level Supports for Implementing EBPs

Although important for teacher preparation programs, working to support the implementation of EBPs can also happen more broadly. Overall, to support the success of planning for and implementing EPBs, teacher educators can use implementation research to solve practical, local problems through continued collaboration between one another and practitioners in the field by modeling for, and targeting EI/ECSE teacher candidates in direct, concrete, and tangible ways in teacher preparation programs (e.g., Moir, 2018). This use of research and intentionality in planning ultimately serves a dual purpose of addressing systems-level needs while also modeling the following guiding principles for EI/ECSE teacher candidates: (a) focusing on persistent problems of practice through use of research, (b) collaborative and iterative cycles of improvement for the implementation and sustained use, (c) developing organizational capacity, and (d) commitment to developing theory, knowledge, and practice-based expertise for ongoing advancement of practices in the field (LeMahieu et al. 2017; Penuel et al., 2015).

As part of this planning for EBP implementation, it is also helpful to promote reflective practice at the systems level. Utilizing a framework to promote reflection fosters collaboration in these macro-level planning phases. As illustrated by Table 1, the Leadership Thought Framework (i.e., to ground thinking in three areas most directly related to systems work), and the reflective questions in Table 2 (e.g., the use of implementation science to support sustainability), leaders across the field are encouraged to consider problems of practice in an interdisciplinary manner. These may be varied and include questions surrounding: (a) finance (can you sustain your goal or practice monetarily and for how long), (c) strategic alignment (how you will achieve your goals), and (c) overarching generative thinking (mission and values), which is used in other fields such as organizational leadership, helps to drive reflection at multiple phases of systems change and foster true collaboration amongst vested

TABLE 1: Leadership for Ongoing Collaboration

Focus Area	Definition	Question	Cross-Collaboration Example
Fiduciary	Means-focused: (resources and legal compliance)	Will a school district pay for the placement of a child in a private school if the child cannot be served in the district?	Team acknowledges their positionalities when discussing resources and compliance of school placement. For example, the school director may worry about the availability of resources, while the EI agency is primarily focused on legal compliance.
Strategic	Future-Thinking: end-focused (setting and evolving priorities)	How many children will be placed in home or hospital settings and what personnel do we need to support these children?	A university supervisor supports teacher candidates to identify goals when using peer coaching of naturalistic communication strategies for children who may be placed in home or hospital settings.
Generative	Neither end-nor means-based (identity; mission fit focus; creative, critical and deeper thinking/ big thinking)	Are we joining in on all the other EI programs in the area and only hiring resource teachers? Are we playing it safe instead of providing other models to the community?	University Supervisor asks teacher candidates to reflect on their use of peer coaching and if others around the country are using the same models?

parties at the systems level (Creeden, 2019; Walter & Spence et al., 2023). The Leadership Thought Framework consists of engaging with the talents of the organization or workplace with the outcome of increasing value-added wisdom, organizational culture, active learning, and innovation (Kern, 2019). Although substantial research has indicated that organizational resources and management processes are driven by leaders, most leadership frameworks focus solely on an individual level without considering the broader context. The Leadership Thought Framework can help build a foundation for a more holistic approach incorporating both individual and contextual factors that support successful implementation (Kern, 2019).

Practices that build a foundation of structure, trust, and respect for the organization support change at the forefront, which often leads to improved long-term outcomes (Patel, 2020; Walter & Spence, 2023). One way leaders can address some of the questions in the initial implementation phases is through targeting conversations in focused and specific ways to get at individuals' perspectives. The following table and vignette depict examples of how leaders can use the Leadership Thought Framework to ask specific questions and support ongoing collaboration and reflection on the use of EBPs.

Dr. Smith, an EI/ECSE department chair and a university supervisor, is working to build community partnerships to enhance the EI/ECSE program's field experiences. She meets monthly with representatives from the local Early Intervention agency, an Elementary School Principal, and a childcare center director. Through these conversations, Dr. Smith notes that while her priority is on preparing EI/ECSE practitioners to think deeply about educational systems change and evaluate models of inclusive practice, others do not always have the same priorities. For example, the local elementary school is concerned about hiring enough teachers and having the money to pay for support staff. The representative from early intervention, on the other hand, wants to discuss the impact of overflowing hospitals on medically fragile children's access to services. Although seemingly disparate priorities, everyone at these meetings is working towards the same goal: supporting young children with disabilities. Dr. Smith remembers a training she took on the Leadership Thought Framework to support collaboration and reflection and introduces it to the team so they can work on perspective-taking through this leadership lens. Through their discussions, the team realizes that they are coming from different focus areas and commits to acknowledging their positionalities when discussing priorities for the field. In this way, they approach each other with compassion and understanding, which leads to open and honest discussion and improved collaboration when challenges arise.

After the team spends some time getting to know one another and acknowledging their positionalities through differing activities, Dr. Smith asks if this team would mind if she uses this example in her preparation program to demonstrate how interdisciplinary teams want the best for the children and families they are working with, but may approach goal-setting from different perspectives and therefore focus on

TABLE 2: Reflective Questions for Planning EBP Use Across the Implementation Phases

Exploration	Installation	Initial Implementation	Full Implementation/ Sustainability
Do you have a broad range of stakeholder representation for input on your policies, curricula, and teaching practices? Do stakeholders involved adequately represent the diversity in your community? Are all voices represented?	Do you have regularly planned bi-directional communication with community members and stakeholders for ensuring understanding of the plan and needs related to implementation of evidence-based teaching practices?	Do you have a mode for gathering stakeholder feedback to help make recommendations for improvement in initial implementation as part of improvement cycles?	Are there modes for ongoing bi-directional communication with community members and stakeholders to ensure improvements can be made as community and stakeholder needs change over time and as new research evidence emerges related to the EBP implementation?
Have you established a team focused on supporting implementation of the EBP (i.e., 'implementation team')?	Do all implementation team members know their roles in supporting the implementation of the EBP AND have time to support implementation of the EBP?	Are coaches providing feedback and support to staff about implementation of the EBP?	Is the feedback from coaching on implementation of the EBP regularly being implemented by staff as part of improvement cycles?
Is the practice you propose to implement clearly defined?	Do you have a fidelity measure and data collection plan in place related to the EBP?	Are staff beginning to use the data gathered to improve implementation?	Are all staff consistently gathering and using the data to improve implementation?
Is the practice you propose to implement based in research and a good fit for the setting?	Have staff been trained in the EBP and data collection measures?	Are most staff using the EBP AND starting to show fidelity of implementation?	Have all staff achieved fidelity of implementation (i.e., is the practice implemented with high levels of quality, consistently over time)?
Is there adequate support from leadership (funding, time)?	Has leadership put policies in place to support the implementation of the EBP (i.e., dedicated time for teaming and collaboration or funding for training and ongoing professional development related to the EBP)?	Is there a process for ensuring policies put in place for supporting the EBP are regularly being followed? And, if any difficulties are noted, a process for making changes or providing additional supports?	Are newly hired staff trained in the implementation and any policies and/ or procedures related to the EBP to ensure sustainability over time?

Note. Questions based upon the Implementation Stages Planning Tool (NIRN, 2020).

different priorities. Dr. Smith would like her students to use this "real life" case study example as a way for students to think about what educators would do in a situation when people are not on the same page before true interdisciplinary collaboration begins.

Practices and Tools to Support Teacher Educators

Although there is a call for cross-disciplinary collaboration across EI/ECSE disciplines, this may be challenging to fully achieve (Bricker et al., 2020). Balancing the demands of preparing EI/ECSE professionals to serve families with children who experience disabilities can be challenging by itself, without adding in the complexity of supporting cross-disciplinary collaboration across various systems comprised of academic divisions or colleges, preparation, field placements, and post-graduation retention and quality. Importantly, it is critical for teacher educators to understand their own professional identities, perspectives, and feelings about collaboration prior to attempting to engage in cross-disciplinary approaches to preparation. Without this important step of self-reflection, teacher educators may inadvertently experience unacknowledged emotions, biases, or thought patterns that influence decision-making. This may unintentionally lead to decisions and choices being made that do not align with one's personal values or the best interest of the individual or system with whom you are partnering. When decisions are being made that are not in alignment and self-reflective work has not been a focus before collaboration, working together may lead to language barriers, dispositions differences, conflict, anxiety, depression, or burnout, which negatively affects the quality of work, and decreases individual and educational outcomes (Gossameier, 2022). Reflection and collaboration are frequently disconnected from one another (Daily & Hauschild-Mork, 2017), however,

they are an important way to ensure a comprehensive and cohesive preparation process for EI/ECSE teacher candidates.

To support the success of these macro-level efforts, leaders (e.g., deans, department chairs, professors, practitioners in all fields) can build off of their own individual professional and ethical identities to model and form collaborative relationships as well as create more robust systems as part of an intentional plan for systematic improvement (Soicher et al., 2020). In doing so, professionals who train EI/ECSE teacher candidates need to specifically and concretely illustrate how high-quality collaborations are formed. For example, an interdisciplinary team of faculty members can create and implement a problem of practice assignment where teacher candidates either: (a) receive a practitioner role (i.e., PT, OT, SLP, District Leader…) or (b) collaborate with other teacher candidates in their respective fields on a problem of practice "case" in which the team has to come up with a solution together, as a team, integrating multiple perspectives. Working through problems of practice encourages teacher candidates to move from focusing mostly on the self to focusing on others (Yeigh, 2018). This mindset shift may reduce disconnects within and between professionals, as well as increase self-reflection and communication, interdisciplinary and strategic thinking, and integration at both the micro and the macro levels.

When making macro-level changes to improve the implementation of EBPs and collaboration, faculty should reflect on the anticipated needs and supports available across all phases of implementation (i.e., exploration, installation, initial implementation, and sustainability). This includes reflective questions for planning for EBP implementation in the 'exploration' phase through reflecting on necessary supports for ensuring the long-term use of the EBP in the 'sustainability' phase (see Table 2). Pre-planning for activities and support during each phase of implementation has been linked to improved rates of sustainability of EBPs (Wong et al., 2022). Thus, leaders and/or faculty members can consider the questions in Table 2 during each phase of the implementation process to help bridge the gap from knowledge to practice in their EI/ECSE teacher preparation programs (Active Implementation Frameworks; National Implementation Research Network, 2020). Ultimately, this depth of reflection is foundational to ensuring an intentional and planned approach to systemic change at the teacher preparation level.

Prior to the semester starting, Dr. Smith, an EI/ECSE department chair, holds a meeting with program faculty. She begins by asking everyone to consider their positionality (e.g,. one's own experiences and biases that may impact their relationships and work with students) and reflect on their priorities for the coming year relating to supporting teacher candidates' practices. Then, they review the exploration questions in Table 2 to determine their alignment and differences in goals. Through this discussion, the team decided that while they are committed to supporting teacher candidates' reflection and collaboration, they need to practice working collaboratively using the skills they will model, with faculty in different departments or school administrators before they can support others with these skills. The department makes a plan to reach out to a few different members from other disciplines to "workshop" respectful dialogue and have hard conversations about a real-life problem of practice, writing steps along the way to then help support and model for teacher candidates. Through this experience, the EI/ECSE department has gained macro-level knowledge on how they may coach teacher candidates through self-reflection of their professional identities.

Micro-Level Practices and Tools to Support Teacher Candidates

Through applying this macro-level programmatic knowledge gained from using the Leadership Thought Framework, teacher preparation programs can move to the micro level and focus on the practices of individual EI/ECSE teacher candidates. High-quality teacher preparation programs, focused on preparing candidates to implement EBPs, are one avenue to ameliorate the research-to-practice gap (e.g., Nagro et al., 2022; Schaffer, 2018; Walter & Tuckwiller et al., 2023). Furthermore, the method by which they implement this learning process is equally as important as the EBPs themselves (Nagro, 2022). Although there are many important ways to support teacher-candidate learning, two research-based approaches include coaching and reflection. These approaches allow teacher educators to embed innovative and engaging practice opportunities to assist teacher candidates in demonstrating proficiency in the EI/ECSE initial preparation Standard "Using Responsive and Reciprocal Interactions, Interventions, and Instruction" as well as the Cross-Disciplinary Competency "Evidence-Based Intervention" and "Professionalism" Indicators.

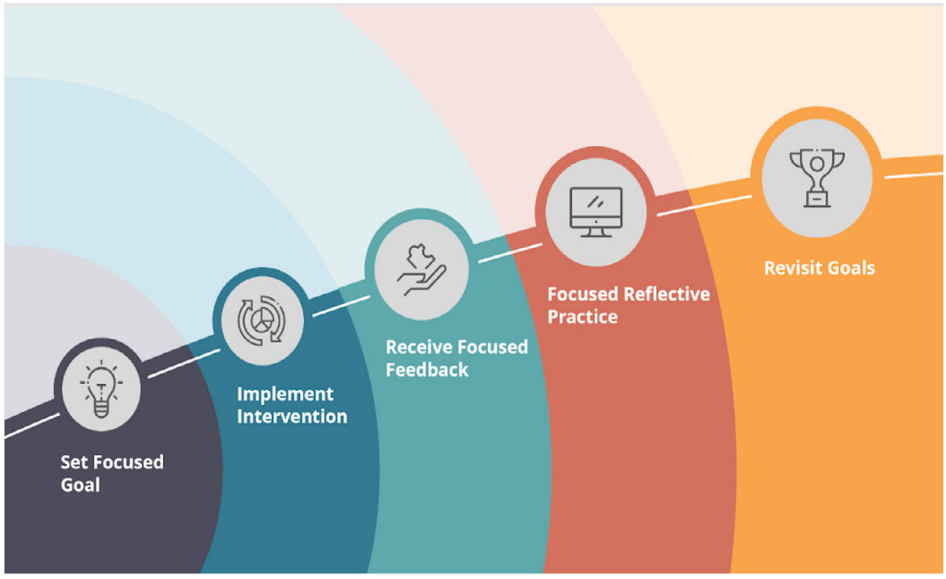
Coaching

Coaching can support teacher candidates in their practice by allowing an outside observer to provide feedback and support reflection on what they witnessed (e.g., Coogle et al., 2023). Although coaching can take many forms, one common element across models that supports teaching practice is performance-based feedback (Cornelius & Nagro, 2014). Specific, immediate, affirmative, and suggestive feedback has been identified as the most effective in

changing practice (Scheeler et al., 2004). Researchers have implemented performance-based feedback using a variety of models including university instructor-to-teacher candidate (e.g., Barton et al., 2016; Coogle et al., 2020; Coogle et al., 2015) and peer-to-peer (e.g., Coogle et al., 2023). In the university instructor-to-teacher candidate model, the instructor has traditionally partnered with the teacher candidate to identify a goal and then met with them regularly to review the goal, observe, and provide feedback related to the goal. In the peer-to-peer model, teacher candidates have engaged in a similar process to what was identified; however, they provided feedback to one another as opposed to the instructor (Coogle et al., 2023).

Although all types of coaching can support educators to use EBPs, peer coaching provides some specific benefits. First and foremost, university supervisors have many teacher candidates to supervise and a limited amount of time. By using peers as a resource, teacher candidates both receive more coaching feedback and have the opportunity to reflect on each other's practices. In fact, a recent study demonstrated a statistically significant connection between teacher candidate EBP implementation and preschool child desired target behavior through technology-based peer coaching (Coogle et al., 2023). Embedding the peer coaching process within courses supports both the EI/ECSE standards 3 (Collaboration and Teaming) and 6 (Using Responsive and Reciprocal Interactions, Interventions, and Instruction; DEC, 2020) as well as the Evidence-Based Intervention Cross-Disciplinary Indicators (a) uses evidence-based practices during interventions with a child, family, and/or other caregivers and teachers, (b) incorporates evidence-based practices across learning opportunities (activities and routines) within the child's home, community, and classroom, and (c) systematically collects and uses data to monitor child and family progress to revise intervention plans as necessary and document intervention effectiveness.

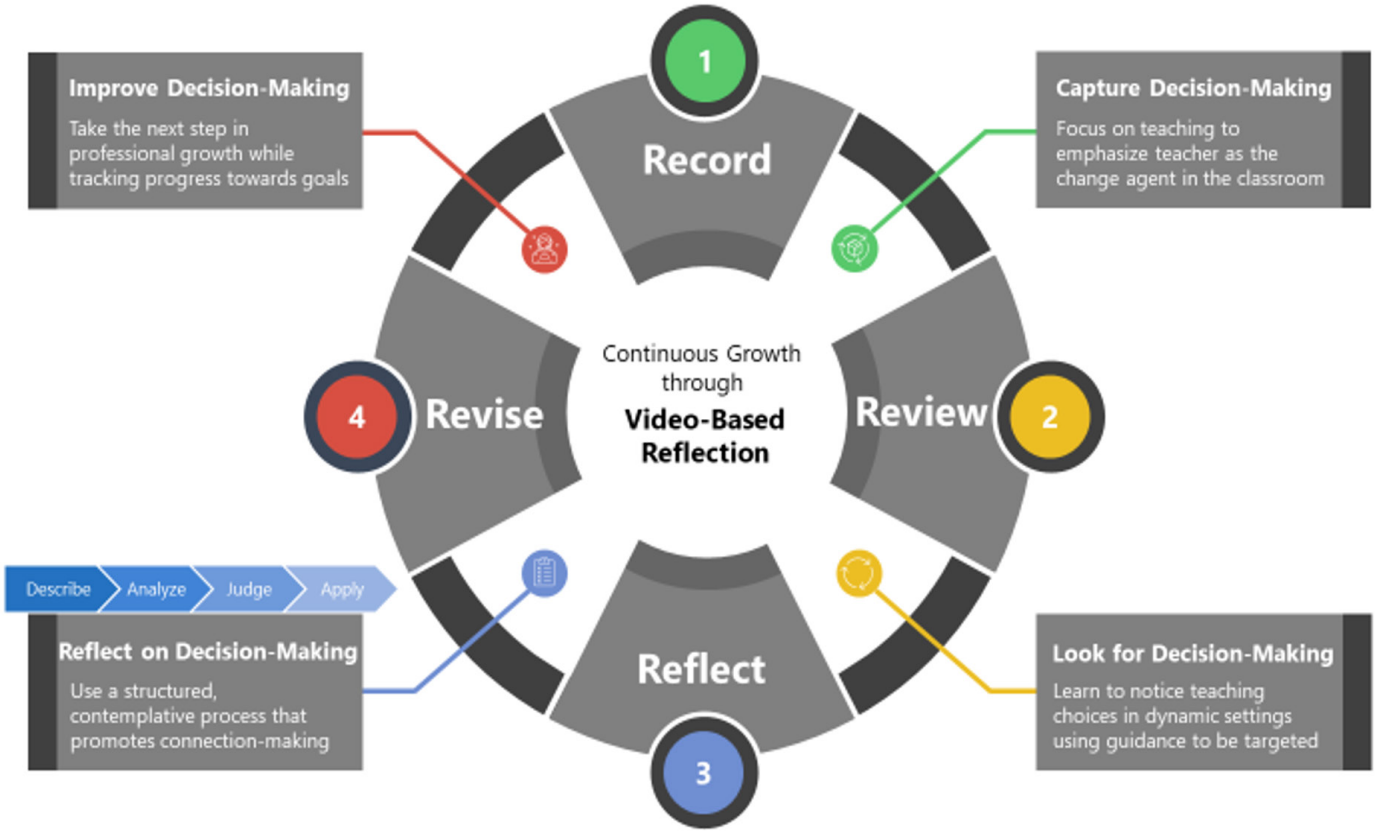
FIGURE 1: Coaching Process



Peer coaching also aligns with Professionalism Cross-Disciplinary Indicators through (a) collaborative consultation practices when working with service providers and families and (b) provision of performance feedback from mentors and teachers, reflective supervision to other service providers (Bruder et al., 2019). Additionally, peer coaching can be embedded in a collaborative process within teacher preparation coursework when working on problems of practice or "real life" case studies to help teacher candidates refine reflection and self-awareness skills and improve collaboration practices. Furthermore, peer coaching may help empower teacher candidates to share their perspectives and describe their instructional choices based on their understanding of their professional identities (Abbasian, 2018). The following figure and vignette illustrate how universities and schools can work together to support teacher-candidate peer coaching and the use of EBPs.

Sarah, an undergraduate student in speech and language pathology, and James, an undergraduate EI/ECSE major, are completing their field experience with their school-based supervisors, Ms. Lopez, and Ms. Boaz, in an inclusive preschool setting. Their university supervisor, Drs. Smith and Hope have asked them to practice peer coaching on the use of naturalistic communication strategies with a young child receiving services for Autism Spectrum Disorder using this coaching cycle. First, Sarah and James work with Drs. Smith and Hope and Ms. Lopez and Boaz to set goals for themselves and their target preschool students. Sarah decides to focus on language modeling and James selects offering choices. They then take turns video-recording each other in the classroom while working with this student. After school, they meet and watch the videos together, discussing their relevant perspectives, knowledge, and expertise in their respective disciplines, and then discuss successes and challenges. Then they individually write a short reflection on the process which they share with their instructors. Both instructors and faculty agree that they see significant growth and ownership over the implementation of EBPs when

FIGURE 2: Reflection Cycle



the teacher candidates coach each other in this way. It is then time to refine their goals and begin the cycle again (see Figure 1).

Reflective Practice

As illustrated in the previous vignette, coaching and reflection have been used in conjunction to support teacher candidates' quality use of practice. Reflective practice is common in teacher preparation because through reflection, teacher candidates recognize their own strengths and limits, explore new ways of improving, and develop competence in instructional decision making (Nagro et al., 2017). In one study, instructors facilitated goal-setting sessions with teacher candidates, conducted ongoing teaching observations, created multiple opportunities for performance feedback, and prompted candidates to reflect upon their use of practices using a record, review, reflect, revise cycle (Nagro & Monnin, 2022). In this cycle, candidates recorded their instruction, reviewed their recorded instruction, reflected on their instructional decision-making across four dimensions of reflection, and then made plans to revise their practice in subsequent lessons. These four dimensions of reflection (describe, analyze, judge, apply) are intentionally organized to guide candidates toward deeper, more critical reflective practice as opposed to superficial summarization exercises (Nagro et al., 2017; Nagro, 2020, 2022). Specifically, during the reflection portion of the record, review, reflect, revise cycle, candidates completed a graphic organizer ("Reflection Matrix") where they were prompted to describe a teaching choice they made about the teaching practice they were targeting for improvement, analyze why they made that decision, judge the success of their decision based on early childhood student outcomes, and apply these insights to plans for future instructional decision-making (Nagro et al., 2022). In this manner, reflecting collaboratively and independently can support an increased tolerance of others' perspectives and knowledge, increased awareness of strengths and areas for growth, as well as improved communication skills. Figure 2 offers a modified version of this framework that teacher candidates could use to reflect on a video recording of their teaching.

Recent research found that teacher candidates' rate and quality of effective teaching practices including the quality of reflective ability increased over time as a result of structured reflection activities that included opportunities for performance feedback (Nagro et al., 2022). Reflective practice that is structured and directly linked to instructional

decision-making paired with opportunities for feedback can improve both how candidates think about their teaching and the quality of their instruction (Nagro et al. 2017; Nagro et al., 2022). Thus, the use of embedded reflection supports Professionalism in Cross-Disciplinary Indicators (a) uses self-reflection and professional development to stay current in evidence-based disciplinary and interdisciplinary practices, (b) demonstrates knowledge of one's discipline-specific practice standards and guidelines, and (c) demonstrates ethical decision making and professional behavior (Bruder et al., 2019).

As it can be difficult to determine the exact line between micro and macro-level practices, using the reflection matrix (See Figure 2) in conjunction with the Thought Leadership Framework (Tables 1 & 2) provides an innovative approach to identify resources needed for a high-functioning system. This integration also supports the ever-present goal of EBP implementation at every level. Further, this emphasis on reflection for the purpose of goal setting and ongoing improvement, promotes the professional lens of sustainability through data-driven results and outcomes. This is crucial in higher education with teacher candidates (and students in other fields) as a preventative measure to support increased reflective practice and collaboration within and across fields.

Both Sarah and James are surprised by how in-depth their reflection on Dr. Smith and Dr. Hope's co-taught class needs to be. In previous courses, their written reflections comprised summarizing what they did and then saying if they felt positively or negatively about it. However, Dr. Smith introduced them to the reflection matrix depicted in Figure 2 and asked them to use this as their framework when reflecting on their video-recorded lessons. Though challenging at first, Sarah and James believed that they were change agents in the classroom and intentionally focused on their decision-making when reflecting. By describing what they saw, analyzing it, judging their choices, and then applying this knowledge in the future, Sarah and James started to become reflective practitioners, independently and together. They knew that even though their mentors would not be there to coach them through every challenge they would face as a speech pathologist and or EI/ECSE practitioner in the future, this foundation of reflective practice would allow them to continually assess their teaching and practice effectively and proactively with other professionals within and across disciplines as the field grows and evolves.

Dr. Smith and Dr. Hope then use the same matrix to reflect on their systems level practices of supporting interdisciplinary preparation and teacher candidates' use of EBPs. They then come together and discuss how their reflections on their educational leadership this semester impacted their collaboration. They go through questions in the Thought Leadership Framework. Through this iterative process, they begin working together towards full sustainability by bringing other faculty into the process of designing next year's co-taught course.

CONCLUSION

Embedding best practices at both the macro and the micro levels can support teacher candidate use of EBPs in the field and extend to professionals in related fields in collaborative and inclusive contexts. As illustrated throughout this article, there are numerous resources for leaders, including teacher educators, systems leaders, educational administrators, and mentor teachers to support cross-disciplinary collaboration and teaching practices. Coaching and reflective practice are strategies that teacher educators can use to facilitate both specific instructional practices and a mindset focused on reflection and growth. The tables and figures integrated throughout this article provide strategies that teacher educators can use both when designing programs as well as when teaching individual courses. By connecting both micro-level and macro-level domains during preparation, we help teacher candidates better understand the dynamic and nested nature of the education system. This understanding enables them to collaborate effectively with the broader community while recognizing the system they work within. Moreover, it empowers them to maintain a level of autonomy over their implementation of evidence-based practices (EBPs) through a commitment to reflective practice and ongoing improvement. This comprehensive yet cohesive approach equips teacher candidates to navigate the complexities of the educational landscape, fostering meaningful partnerships with stakeholders and driving systemic change toward equity and inclusivity. The vignettes provide examples of ways to use these strategies in both leadership and with teacher candidates. We know that early childhood is a key time in the lives of young children with disabilities, and with high-quality teacher preparation that integrates advanced practices of reflection, collaboration, and thoughtful implementation processes for EBP use, we can make a difference in the lives of children and families.

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

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ABSTRACT

Improving outcomes for young children with high-intensity needs requires a high-quality workforce trained in equitable, intensive, individualized instructional practices and supports incorporating culturally and linguistically responsive evidence-based practices (Gunn, 2020) and developmentally appropriate practices (DAP; NAEYC, 2021) Nationally recommended practices (Division of Early Childhood [DEC], 2014) and teacher preparation standards (DEC, 2020) provide the frameworks for early childhood special education training. However, guidance on intensifying individualized instructional practices and supports is needed. The intensive intervention taxonomy (Fuchs et al., 2017) offers educators guidance on improving the effectiveness and intensity of interventions for K-12 students for whom current approaches are unsuccessful. However, more guidance is needed on intensifying instruction in early childhood (0-8 years old). To offer support to early intervention/early childhood special education (EI/ECSE) education preparation programs, we offer an adapted version of the taxonomy that is transformed into competencies that EI/ECSE educators with expertise in supporting young children with high-intensity needs. We ground these competencies in a strengths-based (Wehmeyer, 2019), culturally responsive approach to learning and instruction (Gay, 2010). Next, we aligned these competencies with critical features of early childhood (e.g., naturalistic instruction, family partnerships, DAP). We offer these competencies and a sample program of study to ensure EI/ECSE educators are equipped with intensification competencies through their pre-service preparation to support all young children, including those with high-intensity support needs.

KEYWORDS

Early childhood special education; intensive intervention; developmentally appropriate practice; preservice teacher preparation; data-based decision-making

Early childhood educator preparation programs equip educators to teach and support all young children accessing supports and services through early intervention (EI), early childhood unified/blended education (blended), early childhood (EC), and early childhood special education (ECSE) focused pre-service educator programs. Specifically, educators prepared in all of these licensure areas must be equipped to provide responsive, reciprocal interaction and instruction (DEC, 2020) to young children who require support and services across multiple developmental domains (e.g., young children with multiple disabilities, intellectual disability, developmental disability, autism, behavioral support needs), as well as children who require intensive intervention in one developmental domain (e.g., children with complex communication support needs; Horn et al., 2019). While diverse workforce training pathways exist through EI, blended, EC, and ECSE programs, all are guided by national preparation standards such as the EI/ECSE Standards (DEC, 2020) and the Early Childhood Educators (ECE) Professional Standards and Competencies (NAEYC, 2020).

National Preparation Standards and Initiatives

National professional preparation standards specifically articulate the skills edu-

cators need to serve all young children through learning opportunities highlighting children's strengths and areas of need (DEC, 2020; NAEYC, 2020). Standards articulate broad domains in which educators can display knowledge and skills (Harbin et al., 2005). Standards for supporting joyful and equitable learning opportunities for all young children, including children with disabilities, are further defined in standards produced by early childhood professional organizations (DEC, 2020; NAEYC, 2020). One specific strategy named in these standards includes data-based decision-making (DEC, 2020).

Additional national educational initiatives influencing educator preparation programs also promoted data-based decision-making as fundamental to improving school outcomes (e.g., Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Although professional preparation standards and national initiatives have emphasized skills designed to support all young children, including children with disabilities, teachers' experiences suggest data-based decision-making is not commonplace in educational settings today. Teachers rarely engage with data (Datnow & Hubbard, 2016), lack data literacy (i.e., the knowledge and skills to interpret data; Datnow & Hubbard, 2016), and rarely access training on data literacy (Mandinach et al., 2013). Limited data-based decision-making skills may be further sustained in ECSE preservice teacher (PST) preparation given few early learning and development state standards reference young children with disabilities and developmental delays (Bruder & Ferreira, 2021).

Trends in Early Educator Preparation

Educator training for ECSE PSTs historically moved to blended training models to provide knowledge, skills, dispositions, and competencies needed to support all young children, including those with and without disabilities and support needs (see Mickelson et al., 2023 for a historical review). Recent data, however, suggests training all ECSE PSTs to support all young children may have been an aspirational goal that has resulted in the absence of critical training components such as meaningful field experiences and content expertise for the diversity of strengths and high-intensity support needs (LaMontagne et al., 2002; Mickelson, 2013; Piper, 2007). Further, while blended training is a conceptual emphasis, there is limited evidentiary support for how to enact competencies, experiences, and training to develop high-quality educators who can support the diversity of young children with and without disabilities to guide current practice (Mickelson et al., 2022).

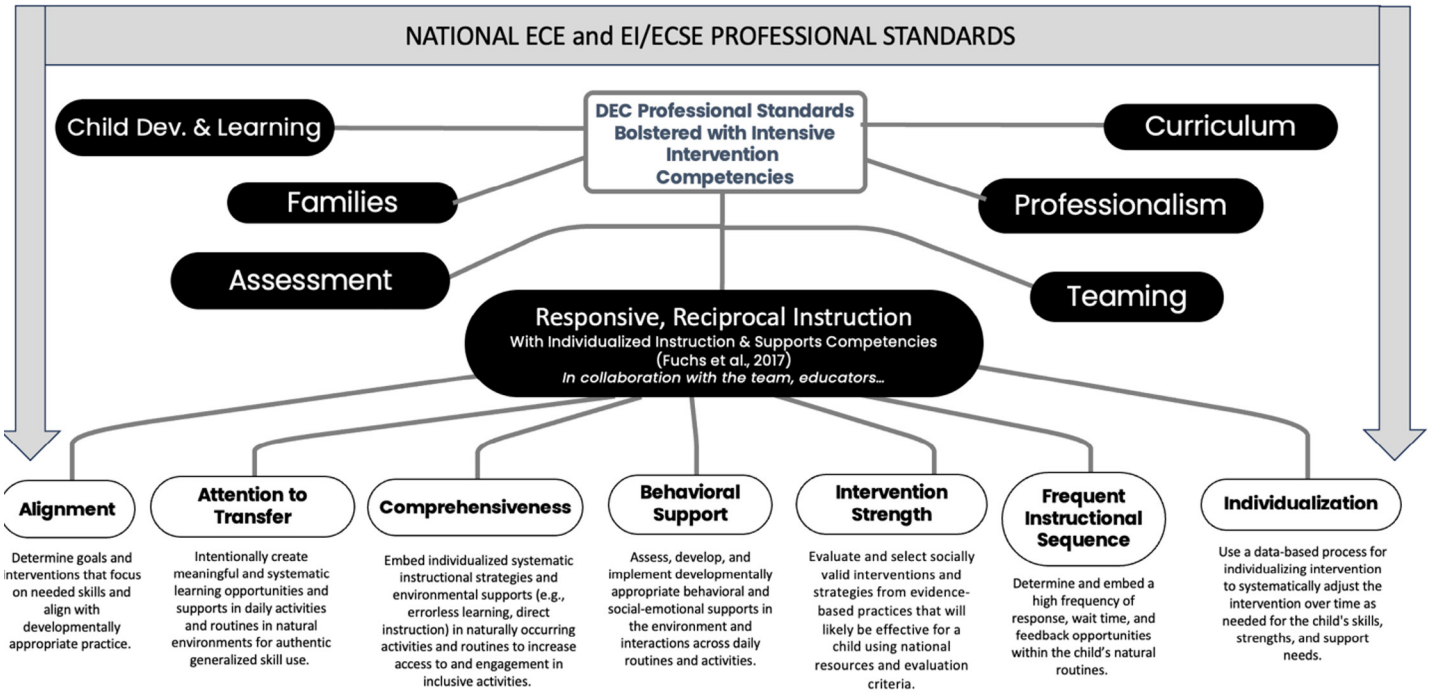
There is room to revise and supplement the well-intentioned ECSE PST program organization, national initiatives, and professional preparation standards in their application to prepare a subset of the ECSE workforce with expertise specifically in supporting young children with high-intensity needs. Although current preparation trends and standards suggest supporting young children with high-intensity needs through data-based individualization is a relative area of need in the field (Bruder & Ferreira, 2021), there is an opportunity to leverage and adapt existing K-12 frameworks (e.g., Fuchs et al., 2017) to provide ECSE pre-service teachers (PSTs) learning opportunities that develop the necessary skillset for acquiring the expertise needed to improve outcomes with and for children with high-intensity needs.

Considerations of leveraging existing frameworks to prepare these experts align with recent calls to action to (a) reframe ways of training ECSE PSTs through blended programming (Mickelson et al., 2022); (b) create early learning standards to include children with disabilities (Bruder & Ferreira, 2021); and (c) conceptualize educating young children with disabilities in inclusive environments as a form of justice and equity (Pugach et al., 2020; Wahman et al., 2023). There is a fundamental need for a high-quality workforce that integrates equitable, intensive, individualized data-based intervention incorporating culturally and linguistically responsive evidence-based practices (Gunn et al., 2017; 2020), developmentally appropriate practices (DEC/NAEYC, 2009), and data-based intervention to improve outcomes for young children (Carta, 2019).

Purpose and Audience

In the remainder of this article, we posit one way to transform ECSE PST education is to explicitly integrate data-based decision-making and intensification frameworks into existing ECSE PST professional preparation standards to train experts to address the specific learning strengths and needs of young children with high-intensity needs, which we believe can address the need for equitable and inclusive teacher education (Mickelson et al., 2022; Pugach et al., 2020). To address the need for improved data literacy and data-based decision-making for young learners with high-intensity support needs (Carta, 2019), we propose an approach to teaching intensification competencies for ECSE teacher preparation programs. This paper aims to share seven key intensification competencies through a focused program of study. First, we situate intensive individualized instruction and support within critical early learning multi-tiered and universal systems of support. Next, to adequately reflect and respond to the rich and diverse group of children with high-intensity support needs, we outline the need and ways in which a program can ground instruction

FIGURE 1: ECE and EI/ECSE Professional Competencies



in these competencies in a strengths-based (Wehmeyer, 2019), culturally responsive and sustaining (Gay, 2010), and intensified (Fuchs et al., 2017) approach.

Following, we offer these competencies along with an illustration of their alignment with the national preparation instructional standard (Standard 6; DEC, 2020), the National Center for Intensive Intervention Taxonomy (Fuchs et al., 2017), the DEC Recommended Practices (2014), and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (NAEYC, 2022). Finally, we articulate an example program of study with activities that explicitly teach and evaluate these competencies in a preparation program training EI/ECSE and EC educators.

CENTERING EXPERT TRAINING IN PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND EXISTING FRAMEWORKS

National and state standards represent the breadth of skills PSTs must acquire, focusing on collaborative, child-focused instruction that promotes learning (DEC, 2020; NAEYC, 2020). The EI/ECSE preparation standards (DEC, 2020) note six key areas that align with DEC Recommended Practices (2014) for high quality early learning experiences: (1) child development and learning, (2) family collaboration and partnership, (3) collaboration and teaming, (4) child observation, documentation and assessment, (5) knowledge, application, and integration of meaningful learning, (6) responsive and reciprocal interactions and instruction, and (7) professionalism (ECPC, 2020). The content within *Standard 6. Using Responsive and Reciprocal Interactions, Interventions, and Instruction* emphasizes systematic, embedded instruction across developmental areas (DEC, 2020) for each and every young learner. The question becomes, what does it look like for a PST to demonstrate these standards when individualizing instruction for a young child with high-intensity needs? Explicit competencies in intensive and individualized instruction can guide preparation programs in articulating what delivering intensive intervention that is developmentally and culturally appropriate for young children with high-intensity needs can look like within Standard 6. Figure 1 depicts the seven proposed competencies for Standard 6.

Teaching Across the Continuum

There are evidentiary universal designs and tiered systems of support for young children with and without disabilities that guide educators in planning and implementing individualized support. For instance, the Pyramid Model (Fox et al., 2003) is an evidence-based, tiered model to support young children's social-emotional competence through universal, targeted, and individualized support across early childhood ages and contexts (Hemmeter et al., 2016). Strategies for engaging in individualized instruction and supports in the context of universal design for learning (Lohmann et al., 2023), response to intervention (Greenwood et al., 2011), and the Building Blocks framework (Sandall et

al., 2019) also support systematic efforts to intensify supports and instruction for young children with and without disabilities. Educators need more guidance on how to use data-based individualization (DBI) to intensify instruction and supports for young children (Datnow & Hubbard, 2016; Mandinach & Schildkamp, 2021). In other words, we need to establish processes for engaging in DBI that are integrated into known evidence-based frameworks and systems to support the learning of young children with high intensity support needs (Al Otaiba et al., 2019).

KEY ASPECTS OF EXPERT TRAINING IN HIGH-INTENSITY NEEDS

Strengths-Based, Culturally Sustaining Foundation

Expert training grounded in culturally responsive, sustaining, and strengths-based approaches centers intensive intervention and instruction around utilizing children's strengths as levers for growth. A strengths-based approach celebrates the child and their unique capabilities and characteristics (Niemiec, 2017) by viewing them as resourceful and resilient rather than just their disability (Saleebey, 2013). A strengths-based approach uses existing frameworks and resources, such as the social model of disability (Harry & Klinger, 2014) and the Communication Bill of Rights (Brady et al., 2016), by sharing and reiterating these concepts in classes and seminars to ensure PSTs understand and can apply these concepts to their teaching. Another approach to improve EC educators' expectations and attitudes is learning from people with lived experiences, particularly those whose identities have been multiply marginalized as panel guests, seminar speakers, or consultants for their expertise to be leveraged as knowledge generation (Hancock et al., 2021; Beneke & Love, 2022).

Another important aspect of recognizing and building on children's strengths is honoring their cultural identities. As such, these competencies require applying DAP using a sociocultural framework (Rogoff, 2003) paired with culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010) throughout coursework, field experiences, and assignments. Culturally sustaining teaching is evidence-based and values the child and family and their beliefs, attitudes, interests, knowledge, and skills, which connects teaching meaningfully to children's and families' lived experiences. Culturally sustaining teaching practices are aligned with the intensification competencies in coursework and fieldwork by having PSTs (a) examine their own culture; (b) acquire knowledge of family cultures; (c) build culturally sustaining practices; and (d) evaluate how they sustained and supported the child's cultural or linguistic expression (Beneke & Love, 2022; Scott et al., 2017).

Intensive Intervention

Another important aspect of instruction for learners with high intensity support needs is using data to inform instruction. Historically, "experimental teaching" used data to inform instruction (Burello et al., 1973; Deno & Mirkin, 1977). Personalized approaches to intervention, recently identified as DBI within special education, involve continually monitoring student responsiveness to evidence-based interventions and systematically introducing adaptations until the student achieves acceptable performance levels (Lemons et al., 2017). This process has empirically developed over time and is currently recognized as an intensive intervention (see Danielson & Rosenquist, 2014; Fuchs et al., 2014). Specifically, evidence-based practices (EBPs) are recommended as the basis for instruction and procedures intensified in response to student-level data (McLeskey et al., 2017). The emphasis of DBI on improving learning and behavioral outcomes continues to show promise for students with disabilities who have persistent needs (e.g., Jung et al., 2018).

The National Center for Intensive Intervention (NCII) presents an intensive intervention taxonomy that guides educators in developing, selecting, and adapting EBPs to promote positive outcomes for young children with persistent learning and behavioral challenges. The taxonomy of intensive intervention is at the foundation of the DBI process and is recommended for use to intensify interventions (Fuchs et al., 2017). The taxonomy includes seven dimensions: (1) intervention strength based on research, (2) frequency dosage, (3) behavioral (or academic) support, (4) comprehensiveness, (5) alignment to targeted need, (6) attention to transfer, and (7) individualization. The taxonomy emphasizes that behavioral support should be considered alongside academic intervention for synergistic effects. This is especially critical for early childhood, as these skills influence one another as children develop and can be addressed more quickly in the early years (Arnold, 1997). Although this model was developed for K-12 academic intervention, it is highly relevant for learners of all ages and skill domains (Jung et al., 2018).

ECSE EXPERT INTENSIVE INTERVENTION COMPETENCIES

Expert PST training includes introducing seven competencies that align with the NCII framework to the pre-existing EI/ECSE Personnel Standard 6: *Using Responsive and Reciprocal Interactions, Interventions, and Instruction* (DEC, 2020). Figure 1 displays these competencies in further detail for the reader. Each of these competencies was created by adapting the NCII Intensification Elements (Fuchs & Malone, 2017) to

TABLE 1: Crosswalk of Instructional Practice Guidance and Personnel Preparation Standards with Proposed ECSE Intensive Intervention (II) Competences for A Young Child with High-Intensity Needs

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE GUIDANCE			PERSONNEL PREPARATION STANDARDS	
Individualized Intensified Intervention Taxonomy (NCII)	DEC Rec. Practices (2014)	Developmentally Appropriate Practice Guidance (NAEYC)	Professional Preparation Standards for EI/ECSE Educators (DEC, 2020)	State Blended Educator Preparation (KSDE)
COMPETENCY 1. INTERVENTION STRENGTH: Evaluate and select socially valid interventions and strategies from evidence-based practices that will likely be effective for a child using national resources and evaluation criteria.				
How well the program works for students with intensive intervention needs, expressed in terms of effect sizes	INS6. Systematic instructional strategies with fidelity		Identify systematic, responsive, and intentional evidence-based practices and use such practices with fidelity…	2.2.7 Developmentally appropriate & research-based practices
COMPETENCY 2. FREQUENCY OF INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE (DOSAGE): Determine and embed a high frequency of response, wait time, and feedback opportunities within the child's natural routines.				
The number of opportunities a student has to respond and receive corrective feedback	INS10. Implement the frequency, intensity, & duration of instruction needed INS7. Use explicit feedback and consequences		Use responsive interactions, interventions, and instruction with sufficient intensity and types of support across activities, routines…	
COMPETENCY 3. ALIGNMENT WITH DAP: Determine goals and interventions that focus on needed skills and align with developmentally appropriate practice.				
How well the program (a) addresses the target student's full set of academic skill deficits, (a) does not address skills the target student has already mastered, and (c) incorporates a meaningful focus on grade-appropriate curricular standards	A4. Conduct assessments in all areas INS4. Plan for and provide the level of support needed INS2. Identify skills to target for instruction, with the family	E. Build on individual children's funds of knowledge, interests, languages, and experiences. B3. (Educators Target) identified learning goals and applicable early learning standards…		3.1.7 Designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum in alignment with standards
COMPETENCY 4. ATTENTION TO TRANSFER: Intentionally create meaningful and systematic learning opportunities and supports in daily activities and routines in natural environments for authentic generalized skill use.				
The extent to which an intervention is designed to help students (a) transfer the skills they learn to other formats and contexts and (b) realize connections between mastered and related skills	A7. Obtain information about the child's skills in daily activities and routines in natural environments			6.1.10 Identify and apply learning accommodations for children with diverse needs
COMPETENCY 5. COMPREHENSIVENESS: Embed individualized systematic instructional strategies and environmental supports (e.g., errorless learning, direct instruction) in naturally occurring activities and routines to increase access to and engagement in inclusive activities.				
The number of explicit instruction principles the intervention incorporates,	INS6. Use systematic instructional strategies with fidelity INS4. Plan for and provide the level of support needed for the child to learn	Make meaningful connections a priority in the learning experiences they provide each child.	... identify systematic, responsive, and intentional evidence-based practices and use such practices with fidelity to support young children's learning and development across all developmental and academic content domains	6.1.8 Provide integrated systemic approach to meeting the needs of all children, including struggling (learners)

BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT: Assess, develop, and implement developmentally appropriate behavioral and social-emotional supports in the environment and interactions across daily routines and activities.				
The extent to which the program incorporates (a) self-regulation and executive fundtion components and (b) behavioral principles to minimize nonproductive behavior	INS1. Identify child's strengths, preferences, and interests INT1. Promote social-emotional development E3. Modify and adapt the physical, social, and temporal environments	C. A system is in place to collect, make sense of, and use observations, documentation, and assessment	Promote young children's social and emotional competence and communication, and proactively plan and implement function-based interventions to prevent and address challenging behaviors.	1.3.8 Applies principles of effective classroom management to establish clear rules and standards of behavior
INDIVIDUALIZATION: Use a data-based process for individualizing intervention to systematically adjust the intervention over time as needed for the child's skills, strengths, and support needs				
A validated, data-based process for individualizing intervention, with which the special educator systematically adjusts an intensive intervention platform over time to address the student's complex learning needs	A10. Use assessment tools with sufficient sensitivity to detect child progress, especially for the child with significant support needs INS3. Gather and use data to inform decisions about individualized instruction.	B. Use their knowledge of each child and family to make learning experiences meaningful, accessible, and responsive B4. Individualize teaching strategies to meet the specific needs of individual children, including children with disabilities	Plan for, adapt, and improve approaches to interactions, interventions, and instruction based on multiple sources of data across a range of natural environments and inclusive settings.	5.1.9 Designs and implements developmentally appropriate lessons & techniques to evaluate the effectiveness 5.1.13 Adjusts instruction based on assessment data

Note. Each proposed competency spans the aligned instructional practice guidance (NCII, DEC RPs, DAP) and Personnel Preparation Standards (DEC, 2020; KSDE) from left to right to indicate to indicate what knowledge, skills, and dispositions are required to serve young children with high-intensity needs in ways that address or use these standards or practices. The recommended practices and standards are abbreviated to include the most relevant aspect that overlaps with the proposed competency.

support DBI when focused explicitly on individualized instruction and support. These elements were adapted to (a) identify competencies ECSE educators should demonstrate to serve young children with high-intensity support needs; (b) build a curriculum of coursework and fieldwork experiences around these competencies; and (c) empower future ECSE teachers with skills to individualize and intensify instruction and supports for young children with high-intensity support needs. As displayed in Table 1, we developed the ECSE Intensive Instruction competencies for birth through 8 years old through analysis of alignment with the NCII taxonomy, National Preparation Standards (DEC, 2020), DAP, and DEC Recommended Practices (RPs). To illustrate how to consider alignment with state standards for preparation programs that require state rather than national standards, we provided Kansas state standards to support individualizing the ECSE expert training in high-intensity needs to readers. Although this exemplar has been provided, national preparation standards should be utilized following ECPC guidelines.

ECSE expert educators should demonstrate these competencies to at least one young child with intensive instruction and support needs during their preparation so they can have experiential learning with cyclical opportunities for feedback and rehearsal necessary to equip them as experts. We acknowledge that all students are different and only one student may be insufficient in learning the diverse strengths and needs of young children; however, through the application of these knowledge, skills, and dispositions represented within these competencies, we believe PSTs will be equipped for the data-based individualization process individualized to their future students.

Within the table, each proposed competency spans the aligned instructional practice guidance (NCII, DEC RPs, DAP) and Personnel Preparation Standards (DEC, 2020; KSDE, 2015) from left to right to indicate what knowledge, skills, and dispositions are required to serve young children with high-intensity needs in ways that address or use these standards or practices While there is substantial overlap between these, the competencies we propose differ in a few critical ways from existing guidance. First, these are targeted for demonstration and use with one child, even through group-based delivery in natural settings, to highlight how ECSE expert teachers need to deliver individualized instruction and support systematically within and across activities to individual children. This focus on one child emphasizes the need to ensure expert PSTs can adequately support young children with high-intensity needs across all areas to ensure they do not get overlooked in different activities, inclusive environments, and contexts (Dingel et al., 2004). Second, some cells are blank because there are gaps in the existing models/standards or frameworks, where no singular set encompasses all aspects of the NCII model

in a developmentally appropriate way for young learners. Third, and finally, the competencies differ from standards, recommended practices, and developmentally appropriate practice guidance because they represent observable and descriptive skills (e.g., explicit instruction, opportunities to respond) that PSTs can practice and demonstrate on which they can be assessed through fieldwork and coursework (Dingel et al., 2004).

The resulting competencies adapt the NCII taxonomy to ECSE and include (a) intervention strength based on research and family perspectives; (b) frequent instructional sequence (dosage); (c) behavioral support; (d) comprehensiveness; (e) alignment with DAP; (f) attention to transfer in natural environments; and (g) individualization. Below, we articulate each competency, critical skills within each, and our approach to adapting them to support young children in the context of ECSE educator training. To identify the foundation of the competencies from NCII taxonomy on intensifying intervention, we have maintained the language of their taxonomy to the greatest extent possible, even when that language may represent ableist structures such as the medical model of disability deficit thinking (e.g., the term dosage). We added contextual information where necessary for early childhood (i.e., "dosage" from NCLII is "frequent instructional sequence." Although many competencies have overlapping features (i.e., intervention strength and data-based individualization), we highlight primary alignment for each. Each competency begins with a core aspect of EI/ECSE: partnership with families and interdisciplinary team members. Below, we specifically articulate the competencies and alignment with DEC EI/ECSE Standards (DEC, 2020) and NCII Taxonomy, given the focus on children with disabilities and high-intensity needs.

As noted in Figure 1, the national professional standards are over-arching these aims, while each of the following competencies are specifically designed for enhancing EI/ECSE Standard 6 (DEC, 2020). Further, some exemplar skills and dispositions from DAP and RP guidelines were integrated in each competency to provide tangible skills that could be measured by educator preparation programs during candidate and program evaluation measures. A summary of these skills and dispositions within each competency can be found in Table 1 and the narrative text below. As the reader moves through the remainder of the article, we encourage references to Figure 1 as a global framing of the professional standards. Table 1 should be used as an in-depth reference to explore each competency and associated skills and dispositions within the professional preparation standards (Figure 1; final two columns of Table 1) to support integration with instructional practice guidance (first three columns of Table 1) from NCII, DEC, and NAYEC to develop expertise in young children with high-intensity needs.

ECSE II Competency 1. Intervention Strength

In collaboration with the team, educators will evaluate and select socially valid interventions and strategies from evidence-based practices that will likely be effective for a child using national resources and evaluation criteria. This competency aligns with DEC INS6 (DEC, 2014). Educators are guided to select and use systematic instructional strategies based on the evidence (empirical, clinical) demonstrating the likelihood of positive outcomes for a specific child. Like the NCII taxonomy, ECSE PSTs learn to select from practices with empirical evidence. Traditional evaluation of effect size estimates to determine intervention strength may be uncommon in the ECSE literature for two reasons: (1) limited access to effect sizes from single case research, and (2) historical exclusion of learners from marginalized groups in studies (Steinbrenner et al., 2020). Packaged programs or interventions most likely to be evaluated in a randomized control trial are minimally available due to the limited inclusion of young learners with high-intensity needs. Instead, children's idiographic needs often require individualized combinations of discrete interaction practices (i.e., opportunities to respond, natural reinforcement; Ford et al., 2022) and strategies (i.e., visual supports; Zimmerman et al., 2019). Empirical evidence should be combined with child and family input, preferences, and clinical judgment to ensure instructional decisions center on child and family priorities.

ECSE II Competency 2. Frequent Instructional Sequence (Dosage)

In collaboration with the team, educators will determine and embed a high frequency of response, wait time, and feedback opportunities within the child's natural routines. For young children with disabilities, opportunities to respond (OTRs) must be embedded within and across their daily routines and natural contexts (DEC INS10, DEC 2014). While the NCII Taxonomy incorporates OTRs with other dosage elements (instructional group size, duration, number of sessions; Fuchs et al., 2017), we propose maintaining dosage within ECSE primarily through OTRs for the focal skill within natural routines, which aligns with empirical work demonstrating the number of OTRs delivered across different instructional contexts and delivery dimensions (i.e., group size, session duration) can produce desired growth (Van Camp et al., 2020). We added the critical component of wait time to ensure an OTR is effectively presented with time to process and develop a response, which can improve

children's accuracy (Doyle et al., 1990). Last, in alignment with NCII, we include natural and positive feedback.

ECSE II Competency 3. Alignment with DAP

In collaboration with the team, educators will determine goals and interventions that focus on needed skills and align with DAP. The NCII taxonomy incorporates alignment with academic content and focuses on developing new and necessary skills. For ECSE, we propose rather than academic content, in the absence of a grade-level general education curriculum and concerning the multi-domain focus of EI/ECSE, we align with DAP and apply the curriculum they develop for all young learners. Specifically, for children with high-intensity needs, alignment with standards (B3) builds on children's "funds of knowledge" (i.e., what they already know and contribute to the learning experience). In addition, we specify these goals should be developed in collaboration with the family (INS 2. With family, identify skills to target). We also supplement the NCII element with specific DEC RPs for Assessment (A4. Assess all areas of development and behavior to learn about strengths, needs, preferences, and interests), Environment (E4), and Instruction (INS5. Embed instruction within and across routines; INS6. Use systematic instructional strategies).

ECSE II Competency 4. Attention to Transfer

In collaboration with the team, educators will intentionally create meaningful and systematic learning opportunities and supports in daily activities and routines in natural environments for authentic generalized skill use. Attention to transfer and generalization are inherent aspects of critical EI/ECSE developmental practice. The ECSE II competency closely aligns with the NCII taxonomy element and connects with DEC RPs within Assessment (A7. Obtain information about skills in daily activities), Environment (provide services in natural and inclusive environments), and Instruction (INS2. Identify socially meaningful skills; INS4. accommodations and support needed to participate; INS5. Embed instruction within and across routines). Finally, attention to transfer was adapted for ECSE with the addition generalized skill use in natural environments.

ECSE II Competency 5. Comprehensiveness

In collaboration with the team, educators will embed individualized systematic instructional strategies and environmental supports (e.g., errorless learning, direct instruction) in naturally occurring activities and routines to increase access to and engagement in inclusive activities. Though explicit instruction is often used for academic skills in K-12 instruction (Hughes et al., 2017), the principles of explicit instruction, such as the systematic delivery of simple instructions, modeling responses, and fading supports, are also core components of systematic embedded, individualized instruction for young children (Riccomini et al., 2017). Within RPs, these practices align with using systematic instructional strategies with fidelity (INS6). Providing ECSE PSTs comprehensive instruction in various effective systematic instructional or environmental procedures will support them in the critical individualization of EBPs needed to support the diverse array of young children in EC (Ledford et al., 2016).

ECSE II Competency 6. Behavioral Support

In collaboration with the team, educators will assess, develop, and implement developmentally appropriate behavioral and social-emotional supports in the environment and interactions across daily routines and activities. This competency remains close to the original NCII taxonomy; rather than focusing solely on executive functioning and self-regulation, we concentrate on social-emotional competence and communication skills. Access to high-quality social-emotional intervention centered on children's cultural, linguistic, and racial identities is a critical form of justice in early childhood contexts (Wahman et al., 2023). Further, young children's behavioral performance is critically linked to their communication and language skills (Chow et al., 2020), thus necessitating behavioral support to address skills in tandem as they develop in young children: social-emotional competence, language, and communication skills and prosocial behaviors. The competency aligns closely with DEC RPs for Instruction (INS1. Contingent responding and social-emotional development; INS3. Supporting communication development; INS9. functional assessment), Environment (E3. Ensure the physical, social, and temporal environment promotes access and participation) and Family (F4. Developing plans and choosing outcomes meaningful to the family).

ECSE II Competency 7. Individualization

In collaboration with the team, educators will use a data-based process for individualizing intervention to systematically adjust the intervention over time for the child's skills, strengths, and support needs. While individualization based on progress monitoring is inherent to quality early education, more frequent data collection (i.e., daily, weekly, as opposed to quarterly) and individualization is necessary for individualized support. Within RPs, these ideas are represented within Assessment (A10. Use tools with sufficient sensitivity; A7. Uses clinical reasoning and assessment for child's current levels; A9 Uses systematic, ongoing assessment to plan activities and monitor progress) and Instruction (Ins1,

FIGURE 2: Program of Study Case Example

Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 3
Overview of Early Childhood and Early Childhood Special Education • Introduce Developmentally Appropriate Practice (***Alignment with DAP***) • Introduce DEC Recommended Practices (***ALL***) • Introduce ECSE II within Tiered Systems of Support ***(ALL)*** • Natural Routines and Environments for Young Learners (***Alignment with DAP, Comprehensiveness, Attention to Transfer***) • Teach Evidence-Based Practice Process incorporating learner preferences ***(Intervention Strength)*** Assessment Methods in Early Childhood Education • Measure Behavior within Natural Environments via Authentic Assessment (***Alignment with DAP***) • Understand environmental contingencies (***Intervention Strength, Behavioral Support)*** • Daily Progress-Monitoring on individualized goals (***Individualization***) • Ecological Congruence Assessment (***Attention to Transfer***) • Communication Bill of Rights (Brady et al., 2016; ***Attention to Transfer; Alignment with DAP)*** • Assignment on Selecting Appropriate Data-Based Decision-Making Approach (Kumm et al., 2018; ***Individualization***)	Curriculum and Methods for the Learner in Early Childhood Education • Incorporate intensive instruction in lessons for individual children through case studies and observations (***Comprehensiveness)*** • Emphasize antecedent-based interventions within daily routines and natural environments, leveraging national resources (e.g., AFIRM Modules for Toddlers; Steinbrenner et al., 2020; ***Behavioral Support).*** • Examples across a child's day and curricular approach (e.g., Montessori) or environment ***(Individualization, Attention to Transfer).*** Supporting Children with Significant Learning and Behavioral Support Needs • Focus on environment and high-quality instruction (Love & Beneke, 2021; ***Behavioral Support*).** • Explicit case study and practice in worksite of all 7 competencies ***(ALL)*** • Select EBPs and strategies using national resources (e.g., Leko et al., 2019) and input from people with lived experience (***Alignment, Attention to Transfer, Intervention Strength, Individualization,*** Love and Beneke, 2021).	Family and Interprofessional Collaboration in Special Education • Routines-based interviewing (McWilliam et al., 2009) with families of young children with disabilities and educators serving children in inclusive settings ***(Attention to Transfer).*** • Integrate learner and family culture and preferences in intervention selection and implementation ***(Alignment with DAP, Attention to Transfer, Intervention Strength)***
Semester 4	**Semester 5**	**Semester 6**
Preschool and Kindergarten Methods • Activity Matrix: Child-level opportunities to respond (OTRs) within natural routines (task directions at the child's language level and response options via the child's communication mode; **Frequent Instructional Sequence).** • Intervention plans with feasible and reliable measures of intervention delivery **(*Individualization*)** Infant/Toddler Methods • Activity Matrix & Data Collection: Embed and maximize learning opportunities through play that honors the child's unique interests, strengths, and cultural practices (Love & Beneke, 2021; ***Alignment*).** • Use child-level opportunities to respond (OTRs) within natural routines (***Frequent Instructional Sequence*).** • Family Partner Project: Support other educators and caregivers in selecting effective practices from national resources and clinical and family expertise **(*Intervention Strength, Frequent Instructional Sequence*).**	Preschool-Kindergarten Practicum • Task analyze and take data on various opportunities within family and school routines where a child naturally needs to use a focal skill **(*Instructional Sequence, Alignment with DAP, Attention to Transfer*).** • Systematic self-reflection and data collection on the number of opportunities they presented, (2) duration of wait time, and (3) feedback provided (***Frequent Instructional Sequence).*** Communication Assessment & Supports • Student Communication Profile and Assessment across form-function-content-context to develop a communication matrix **(*Frequent Instructional Sequence*; *Attention to Transfer*, *Comprehensiveness, Behavioral support*)** • Communication Skills Instruction and Support Plan **(*Alignment; Intervention Strength Behavioral Support*)**	Masters Project Embedded within Infant/Toddler Practicum • Partnership with a family and education team to engage in the complete DBI process in alignment with DAP **(*Alignment with DAP*)** • Co-develop a goal and identify individualized instruction and support needs **(*Frequent Instructional Sequence*)** through RBI (***Comprehensiveness*),** eco-behavioral analysis **(*Attention To Transfer*),** child preference, and communication support **(*Behavioral Support)*** • Use practical instructional approaches (***Intervention Strength***) • Collect data; and evaluate and modify instruction based on child progress **(*Individualization*).** • Communicate data with the family and educators to gather their input on progress and adaptations and build data-based literacy ***(ALL).***

Identify each child's strengths, preferences, and interests). This concept is also represented across DAP (Individualizing teaching strategies and knowledge of the child and family; D. Effectively implements a comprehensive curriculum with individualized goal attainment). We operationalize that this competency requires PSTs to collect individualized data via different sampling methods (Lane et al., 2014) across developmental domains and analyze time-series graphs.

CASE STUDY: OPPORTUNITIES FOR PSTS TO PRACTICE AND DEMONSTRATE ECSE II COMPETENCIES

The following is a case example of how these competencies (*explicit focal competencies are italicized in parentheses)* can be applied in preparation programs to support candidates in developing skills related to data-based individualization. This is a program of study for an accredited initial licensure-leading blended program (0-5 years old) that utilizes both state and national standards (DEC, 2020). We aim to share how we explicitly link the competencies to practice and demonstrate within and across courses for other pre-service educator preparation instructors to consider these and other ways to embed the competencies within their programs and help bring developmentally appropriate intensive intervention to all young children with high-intensity needs.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There is an increasing need for a high-quality workforce equipped to create enriching, joyful, culturally relevant, and effective learning experiences for all young children with and without high-intensity support needs. By Integrating DEC Professional Preparation Standards, DEC RPs, DAP, and National Center for Intensive Intervention (NCII) Framework into these ECSE Intensive Intervention competencies, PSTs may acquire skills and dispositions required for high-quality teaching of children with disabilities and developmental delays. Although these competencies are grounded in empirical support (Fuchs et al., 2017) and national guidance (DEC, 2020), empirical studies via formative and summative assessment are needed to evaluate the effects of training PSTs to acquire these competencies (see Robertson et al., 2012; Scott et al.,2017 for examples). We hope that educators equipping educators in any early intervention, early childhood special education, or blended program with these competencies will result in a community of ECSE educators who can provide intensive instruction and support for the children who may benefit from it as a form of ensuring equitable access to high-quality teaching and improved outcomes.

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Addressing Students' Beliefs to Enhance Family-Professional Collaboration in Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education Preparation

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ABSTRACT

Preservice educators' attitudes and beliefs towards families can have a profound impact on family-centered practices (FCPs) and family-professional partnerships (FPPs); unfortunately, negative beliefs about families can surface during preservice early childhood preparation and can be a challenge for faculty in higher education to address. This article shares promising instructional practices (e.g., projects, assignments, teaching methods) that have been shown to reshape preservice educators' existing beliefs about families. In addition, these instructional practices aim to cultivate positive perspectives in preservice educators by aligning with the recent joint policy statement from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S Department of Education on inclusive early learning programs (2023) regarding engaging families as full partners. The purposes of this article are to: (a) briefly summarize the literature on relational FCPs and FPPs, (b) describe the connection between beliefs about families and their contribution to strengthen or hinder relational FCPs and FPPs, and (c) present instructional practices that faculty can use to support preservice EI/ECSE students' constructive beliefs about families. Examples of instructional practices are organized and presented as: in class activities with families (e.g., guest speakers); in class activities without families (e.g., role playing); and out of class activities with families (e.g., attending an Individualized Education Program [IEP] meeting). By integrating these instructional practices, faculty can equip preservice educators with necessary skills and attitudes to build authentic connections with families, which can lead to improved outcomes for young children with disabilities and their families.

KEYWORDS

Early childhood, family-centered practice, inclusion, partnerships, preservice

Across settings, ages, and grade levels in education, families are their child's first and most important teachers; they are experts in a unique position to offer valuable information about their children with education professionals (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services [U.S. DHHS] & U.S. Dept. of Education [U.S. DOE], 2016). Various theoretical frameworks, evidence-based practices, and developmentally appropriate practices make this realization especially evident when working with families of young children with disabilities or developmental delays in early intervention (EI) and early childhood special education (ECSE). The recent policy statement on inclusion in early childhood programs (U.S. DHHS & U.S. DOE, 2023) emphasizes the need for inclusive early childhood programs to ensure each family's goals for their children with disabilities are considered. Given the needs of young children with or at risk for developmental delays and disabilities, EI/ECSE professionals must possess confidence and competence to effectively work with young children and their families.

Despite the expertise that families bring to collaborative interactions with EI/ECSE professionals, research suggests that faculty in EI/ECSE preparation programs experience challenges to prepare preservice teachers to collaborate

with families (McCorkle et al., 2022). Curricula used to teach preservice EI/ECSE professionals to collaborate with families vary in the pedagogical methods and depth of exposure to family-professional collaboration content across courses (Kyzar et al., 2019), as well as the number of opportunities available to students to interact with families (Evans, 2013). While some studies suggest pedagogical methods such as case studies, parent interviews, and developing communication materials to teach content on family-professional collaboration, the number of evidence-based pedagogical methods available to inform faculty instruction in this area is low (Francis et al., 2021).

Faculty may also encounter challenges regarding EI/ECSE student beliefs about families. For example, research conducted with students in preservice teacher programs suggests that, even before beginning their careers as educators, preservice teachers can develop negative assumptions, stereotypes, and deficit-based views about families (D'Haem & Griswold, 2017; Santamaría Graff et al., 2020). Students may also be exposed to teachers who complain about their students' families during field experiences (Francis et al., 2021). A teacher's beliefs about families are impacted in part by their training and field experiences (Hindin & Mueller, 2016). This makes it crucial for preservice preparation programs in EI/ECSE to address negative beliefs about families, such as assumptions, implicit biases, stereotypes, judgment, deficit-based views, and blame. It is equally important to enhance students' positive beliefs about families, which entails recognizing family strengths, increasing empathy, and demonstrating open-mindedness.

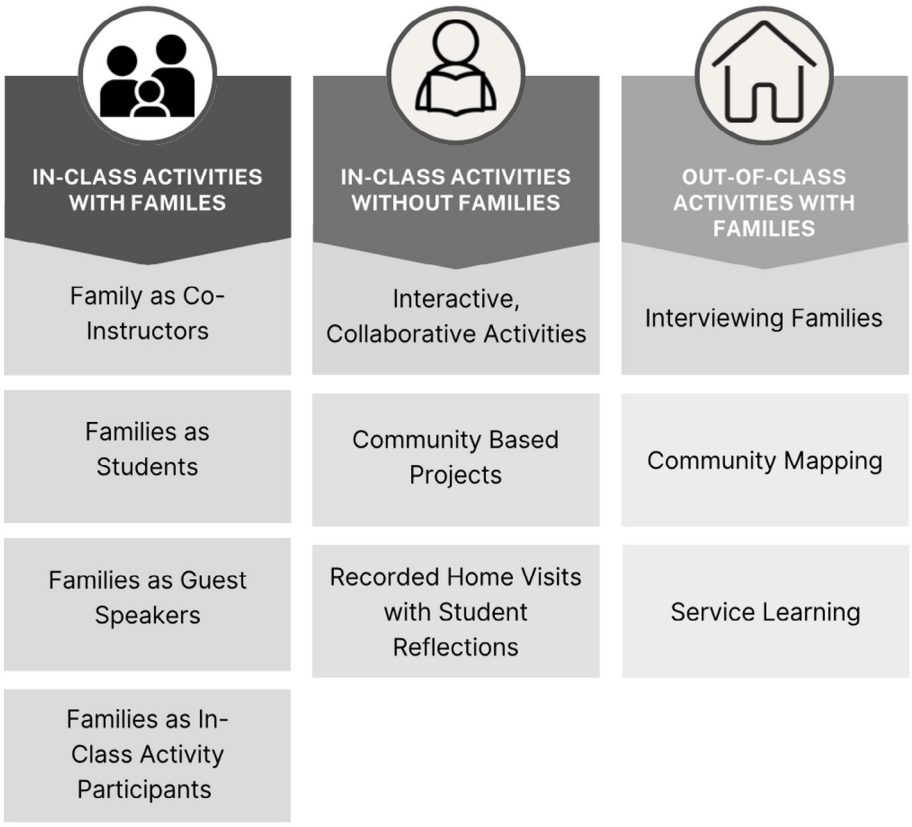
The IDEA (2004) mandates that professionals provide families with meaningful opportunities to participate as members of their child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or IEP team (Sec. 300.322). As a result of this legal mandate, the ability to collaborate with families is a required competency that preservice EI/ECSE students must be able to demonstrate prior to entering the field (Council for Exceptional Children, 2020; Division for Early Childhood [DEC] Recommended Practices, 2014). It is the role of EI/ECSE preparation programs to provide meaningful experiences to enhance student learning on evidence-based family-professional collaboration practices, such as family-centered practices (FCPs) and family professional partnerships (FPPs; McCorkle et al., 2022). When opportunities to interact and collaborate with families are implemented in coursework alongside direct instruction, preservice EI/ECSE students will be better prepared to collaborate with families effectively and positively. Research spanning decades has shown that when family-professional collaboration is positive, there are several short and long-term benefits for children with disabilities, including: reduced family stress (Burke & Hodapp, 2014); increased parental competence and confidence in supporting their child's development (Dunst & Dempsey, 2007); increased family quality of life (Summers et al., 2007); increased family satisfaction with services received (Goldrich Eskow et al., 2018; Kurth et al., 2019); an increased likelihood of inclusive educational placements for the child (Miller et al., 2019); and positive social emotional and academic child outcomes (Smith et al., 2020). The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of relational FCPs and FPPs, summarize connections between preservice EI/ECSE student beliefs and ways they strengthen or hinder relational FCPs and FPPs, and describe a variety of instructional methods aimed at fostering positive beliefs about families. The instructional methods, activities, and projects described are designed to supplement instruction focused on FCPs, FPPs, and implicit biases in university coursework.

> Given the needs of young children with or at risk for developmental delays and disabilities, EI/ECSE professionals must possess confidence and competence to effectively work with young children and their families.

RELATIONAL FCPS AND FPPS

The literature on FCPs (Dunst et al., 2007) and FPPs (Blue-Banning et al., 2004) provide guidance on family-professional collaboration within EI/ECSE that can be incorporated into preservice preparation programs. A FCP approach is defined as "treating families with dignity and respect; information sharing so families can make informed decisions; family choice regarding their involvement in and provision of services; and parent/professional collaborations and partnerships as the context for family-program relations" (Dunst, 2002, p. 141). These practices are made up of two categories, relational and participatory (Dunst & Trivette, 1996). While both relational and participatory practices are crucial for preservice EI/ECSE students to know and be able to apply,

FIGURE 1: Activities to Support Relational FCPs and FPPs in Preservice Teacher Coursework



the practices that make up the relational component of FCPs are of particular interest. Relational FCPs include practices that build positive relationships with families, such as active listening, compassion, empathy, respect, and taking a nonjudgmental stance (Dunst et al., 2002). Additionally, components of relational FCPs include positive beliefs and attitudes about families, especially views that pertain to parenting capabilities and competencies (Dunst, 2002).

Similar to relational FCPs, FPPs also emphasize the need to build positive relationships with families to enhance collaboration. The characteristics that make up FPPs include communication, commitment, equality, skills, trust, and mutual respect (Blue-Banning et al., 2004). According to Blue-Banning and colleagues, active and nonjudgmental listening are emphasized within the area of communication, and respect encompasses accepting the family where they are and exhibiting a nonjudgmental attitude toward the family. Although FCPs and FPPs are distinct concepts, there is a degree of overlap regarding the need for positive beliefs about families. A key consideration in EI research is that positive beliefs about families (e.g., viewing families as equal partners, valuing family expertise, adopting a strengths-based lens) can influence professionals' abilities to develop authentic connections with families (Park & Turnbull, 2003; Trivette et al., 2010).

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES USED IN PRESERVICE PROGRAMS

All studies cited in this section specifically examined the impact that instruction, activities, and assignments had on preservice students' beliefs about families. We included studies that have used empirical designs to assess the impact of these methods on student beliefs. The studies described span from 2001-2023, and as such represent a variety of ideas that we hope will serve as sources of inspiration to faculty to inform their instruction. The instructional methods are categorized into three areas: in-class activities with families; in-class activities without families; and out-of-class activities with families (see Figure 1). To our knowledge, no studies describe out-of-class activities without families.

In-Class Activities with Families

Integrating families into courses serves several purposes and yields multiple benefits. The primary purposes of this approach are twofold: first, to increase the number of opportunities students have to practice interacting and collaborating with families; and second, to provide an opportunity for EI/ECSE students to apply what they have learned about FCPs and FPPs. Since the classroom is a safe space for students to make mistakes, learn, and engage in reflective practice, integrating families is a beneficial way to support student confidence to interact with families. It is important to note that the activities described in this section require an extensive time commitment from families. Compensation for family members' expertise, time, and participation should be provided if possible.

Family as Co-Instructors

One impactful approach to include families in coursework is *Family as Faculty* (FAF) (Collier et al., 2015; Patterson et al., 2009; Santamaría-Graff & Boehner, 2019; Williams, 2012). In FAF, families play an active role in co-planning and co-teaching a course in special education, allowing them

to share their expertise, experiences, and insights directly with preservice students. Recent studies on FAF have also examined the impact of incorporating cultural humility (Santamaría-Graff & Ballesteros, 2023) and placing families in a position of power (Santamaría-Graff, 2021) on student dispositions. Findings from both qualitative studies suggest that most preservice students showed increases in self-awareness with regard to biases and prejudices they held about families. Many were also able to identify oppressive circumstances that families with intersecting identities faced. Of note, Santamaría-Graff and Ballesteros (2023) found that some students did not come to the realization that their actions or words could perpetuate inequities, though the authors note that the students were at the beginning stages of learning this content. Collier et al. (2015) found that the FAF approach continued to have positive effects on preservice students' beliefs about family-professional collaboration three years after course completion.

Similarly, studies have included families as co-instructors who help plan and deliver instruction alongside faculty (Murray et al., 2008; Robinson & Sadao, 2005). In Robinson and Sadao's study, the authors asked families to serve as consultants to provide input on course curricula and interact with students (e.g., families served as audience members and provided feedback on student group presentations). Both the FAF and co-instructor approaches place families at an expert level, which helps students recognize the valuable expertise and knowledge families bring to IFSP and IEP teams.

Families as Students

Alternatively, families may participate as students alongside preservice EI/ECSE students (Curran & Murray, 2008; Murray & Curran, 2008; Murray et al., 2008; Murray et al., 2013). In this approach, family members are recruited by faculty and asked to join the class for the purpose of sharing their experiences and knowledge with students. Studies that utilized this approach stated that participants did not need to pay tuition because they were not considered students enrolled at the university. However, the family member participants were actively involved in the course by attending class meetings, completing readings, contributing to in-class discussions, and participating in small group projects with students.

The studies evaluating the families as students approach found that EI/ECSE students benefited from hearing families' viewpoints on different topics. This approach places families in a role as equals with students in the class, which has potential to address power differentials. In addition, hearing family members' perspectives provides EI/ECSE preservice students with opportunities to develop empathy, understanding, communication skills, and respect in their interactions with families.

Families as Guest Speakers

Families invited to share personal narratives and expertise as guest speakers requires less time commitment than the previous two strategies. Studies that have evaluated this approach intentionally recruited families representing diversity in their experiences, family composition, disability severity, and backgrounds as much as possible (Collier et al., 2015; Kim & Vail, 2011). Allowing families the opportunity to practice telling their stories prior to presenting to preservice EI/ECSE students is recommended (Collier et al., 2015; Prosser, 2009). Including several families as guest speakers throughout the semester is also recommended, as one guest speaking experience is not enough to change preservice students' dispositions toward families (Epstein, 2005).

Families as In-Class Activity Participants

Families can participate in one-time in-class activities, such as simulations. Simulations can take several forms, such as role play scenarios with volunteer family members who act as IEP team members (Werts et al., 2002). For example, Mueller and colleagues (2019) recruited family members and school professionals as volunteers to participate in an IEP simulation activity. Preservice students read a vignette about a student, then sent procedural safeguards, a meeting invitation, and communicated with a volunteer family before the simulation. Students then engaged in simulated IEP meetings in rotating small groups which allowed students to observe their classmates' simulated meetings.

We recommend allowing family members to provide feedback to the simulated meeting groups, which could be in-person or video recorded to accommodate family schedules. This project could also be adapted as a simulated IFSP meeting with families of young children receiving EI services under Part C of IDEA (2004) recruited as volunteers. Reflection opportunities on relational FCP and FPP characteristics would be beneficial for students to make connections between their theoretical knowledge and application to the simulations.

Putting It All Together: In-Class Activities with Families and Student Beliefs. Beyond their immersive nature, in-class activities with families actively shape beliefs by providing preservice students with real-world examples that challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about families and

support the development of FCPs and FPPs. Having experiences to engage with families directly allows students opportunities to witness the unique strengths and challenges families face within EI/ECSE. By involving families in simulated meetings or collaborative exercises, preservice students gain firsthand experience in co-creating interventions, goals, and outcomes with families. When families provide insights and suggestions to students, students see what they are doing well and where there is room for improvement. The in-class activities with families described foster an understanding of diverse family experiences and can be used as an opportunity to challenge pre-existing beliefs and deficit-based lenses about families. This, in turn, encourages a more empathetic understanding of family dynamics, decisions, and perspectives. To revisit the findings from Santamaría-Graff and Ballesteros (2023), a 16-week semester was insufficient time for students to fully develop to critically conscious change-agents, even with multiple opportunities to interact with families. We recommend faculty embed opportunities to engage with families across courses in preservice programs to support students in achieving this higher order thinking.

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In-Class Activities Without Families

Faculty may have limited direct access to families for several reasons. Despite constraints, there are methods that faculty can incorporate into instruction to enhance preservice EI/ECSE students' beliefs about families to support their proficiency in relational FCPs and FPPs. These approaches may be particularly relevant for junior faculty who are new to their university, those who lack funding to compensate families for their involvement, or faculty seeking activities to serve as a starting point for students prior to engaging in activities directly with family members.

Interactive, Collaborative Activities

In-class activities that focus on family-professional collaboration without families present include role-playing, value clarification exercises, viewing and discussing videos, and case studies (Carr, 2000). Carr's (2000) qualitative study described the impact of a course titled *The Exceptional Family.* Examples of course activities included case studies and videos that depicted rural families with children with disabilities. These activities were used to support preservice students in being able to identify family needs and priorities. As a result, students expressed increased empathy, compassion, and understanding of families, and indicated they would try to be nonjudgmental when approaching value conflicts, all of which align with relational FCPs and FPPs.

Identifying Community-Based Resources

Preservice EI/ECSE students can engage in projects to research community resources relevant to families of children with disabilities (Bingham & Abernathy, 2007; Carr, 2000). This exercise equips students with valuable insights they can use to connect families to essential community support networks and resources. Bingham & Abernathy (2007) found that researching community resources gave preservice students a more holistic understanding of available family supports and resources that included extended family members, neighbors, and friends. Carr (2000) required students to use the internet to identify and compile available resources. Carr also described an activity that involved exploring a family's completed ecomap, which is a visual for identifying a child and family's support systems and network. This exploration was followed by a class discussion on resources available to families in rural areas. Since the community-based resources identified will be unique to each family, we suggest requiring preservice students to explore ecomap examples for several families. Multiple opportunities would likely expand student experiences and knowledge of community resources that are unique to diverse families' strengths and needs.

Recorded Home Visits with Student Reflections

Utilizing video recorded home visits of a child and family receiving EI services offers a unique opportunity for students to view relational FCPs and FPP characteristics in action. In Keilty and Kosaraju's (2018) study, students viewed two recorded EI home visits

with families and responded to Likert-scale items (e.g., *Recommendations/ strategies addressed the priorities of the family*) and open-ended questions (e.g., *What went well?*). These questions enabled students to critique family-professional interactions, reflect on what went well and what they would do differently, and observe nuances in verbal and nonverbal interactions. When the authors analyzed students' reflection responses, relational FCPs were observed including building and sustaining a friendly, trusting relationship with families and utilizing active listening approaches. The authors note that it is likely more beneficial to show students a recording of an ideal home visit that demonstrates all recommended EI home visiting practices.

Putting It All Together: In-Class Activities Without Families and Student Beliefs. In-class activities provide a starting point for students prior to direct engagement with families or a resource for faculty when access to families is limited. Identifying community resources has the potential to increase the strengths-based lens about the communities where families of young children with disabilities live. Capitalizing on the assets and the wide range of learning opportunities available to families in their communities has the potential to address various stereotypes that can lead to negative beliefs. Value clarifications and role-playing exercises can be intentionally utilized for students to identify unknown prejudices and increase their self-awareness (Carr, 2000). In addition, Keilty & Kosaraju's (2018) activity on critiquing recorded EI home visits according to relational FCPs and FPP characteristics introduced students to family-professional collaboration during home visits, while showcasing how relational FCPs and FPP components can be applied in natural environments. These activities can serve as tools to analyze diverse family scenarios and step into the shoes of families and professionals, both of which require students to experience different perspectives and understand the many factors that can influence family-professional collaboration.

Out-of-Class Activities with Families

Busy families may wish to share their knowledge and expertise without the significant time commitment required to co-plan and co-teach courses. Offering experiences out of class to engage with families supports EI/ECSE students to engage with families at times that are convenient for the family. The activities described here require creativity and setting expectations for preservice students at the beginning of a term for out of class time.

Interviewing Families

Interviewing families of children with developmental delays or disabilities is an immersive approach that provides preservice students with insights into diverse family perspectives. Faculty conducting these studies emphasized the importance of connecting students with families from varied cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or gender identities. For example, George & Kanupka (2019) required students to interview fathers of children with disabilities. Results from this qualitative study suggest that students recognized unique barriers fathers encountered when collaborating on IEP teams. Findings also suggest that the interview experience challenged and helped the preservice students recognize stereotypes they harbored about father involvement in raising a child with a disability.

An assignment such as this could be especially beneficial for preservice EI/ECSE students. For example, one study found that father involvement was viewed as important by EI providers, but they were unsure how to increase father involvement (Curtiss et al., 2021). We recommend that faculty who wish to have preservice EI/ECSE students interview families provide students with an interview guide or guiding questions for students to use specific to relational FCPs and FPPs. In addition, recruitment could expand on cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and gender identity diversity to include families representing diversity in socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and family structures (e.g., foster families, single-parent households).

Community Mapping

Another recommendation that is similar to identifying community-based resources is to engage in community mapping activities. Community mapping involves identifying community-based activities and settings that can serve as natural sources of learning opportunities for young children with disabilities while enhancing family outcomes (Dunst et al., 2001). Ordoñez-Jasis & Myck-Wayne (2012) assigned students a community mapping project during practicum. In this study, preservice EI/ECSE students engaged in community mapping by asking families to share priorities, concerns, and resources specific to their child's needs. The students then identified community resources located within a specified radius of their practicum setting (e.g., nonprofits, libraries). Students gained additional insight about available resources by talking to professionals (e.g., teachers at practicum) as well as a member of the community. The students compiled the artifacts, resources, and information they found, and also reflected on how their knowledge of these resources impacted their ability to develop trust and mutual respect with both families and school personnel.

Service Learning

Service learning provides students with real-world experiences by combining community service with academic instruction. Service learning has been shown to reduce students' biases (Dunn-Kenney, 2010) and allow preservice EI/ECSE students to confront stereotypes, fears, and prejudices (Hampshire et al., 2015). Engaging in service learning allows preservice EI/ECSE students to participate in a project addressing a need or problem in the community. There are several opportunities for preservice EI/ECSE students to reflect and address real-world challenges in special education and demonstrate their ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations. Hampshire et al. (2015) provided EI/ECSE students with a choice between five service-learning sites (e.g., a homeless shelter or Head Start program) which students participated for 15 hours in a semester. An example of a service-learning project included developing family-friendly information on the process of early identification under IDEA in a Head Start program. When designed in ways that maximize student engagement with families, service learning has the potential to directly influence preservice students' beliefs about families. For example, Novak and colleagues (2009) found that students who participated in service learning in their *Collaboration and Consultation* course went from viewing families as subordinate to teachers to viewing families as caring, competent partners who were equals on their child's team. Additionally, the authors found that this experience helped students realize that families may have priorities or values that differ from theirs as professionals.

Putting It All Together: Out of Class Activities with Families and Student Beliefs. Out-of-class activities involving families, such as interviewing, community mapping, and service learning, offer valuable opportunities to support preservice EI/ECSE students' beliefs about families. These activities create opportunities for students to interact with families in authentic contexts and can also challenge stereotypes students may hold about the areas where families live, family experiences, or family belief systems. The ability for preservice students to apply their theoretical knowledge to real-life situations outside the classroom will also prepare them for future collaborative interactions in EI/ECSE settings.

CONCLUSION

This article underscores the role instructional methods, activities, and projects can play in supporting preservice EI/ECSE students to foster positive beliefs about families while allowing opportunities to apply relational FCPs and FPPs. The three primary instructional methods described included: in-class activities with families, in-class activities without families, and out-of-class activities with families. Instructional activities provide preservice students with opportunities to interact with families, engage in reflective practice, and develop positive beliefs about families. Ultimately, influencing preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs about families holds the promise of equipping preservice EI/ECSE students with the essential skills and positive attitudes necessary to establish authentic connections with families. By doing so, they will increase trust families place in them as professionals and be better able to actively listen to families; this will allow them to provide individualized suggestions and utilize practices that better align with families' priorities and concerns for their children with developmental delays or disabilities. We explored the published literature with depth to provide comprehensive recommendations for faculty in preservice training programs to support their existing direct instruction in the classroom on relational FCPs and FPPs. However, we recognize that there may be instructional activities and strategies being implemented by faculty that are not documented in research. We would like to make a final recommendation and call on the field to consider additional research that documents the instructional strategies faculty are using in their coursework focused on student application of FCPs and FPPs in EI/ECSE preparation. In turn, this would improve training experiences for preservice EI/ECSE students by supporting them to best serve the needs of young children with disabilities and their families.

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

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the significance of equipping preservice teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively approach behavioral challenges with early elementary students (i.e., kindergarten to third grade). Early elementary years are crucial for a child's academic and social development, and students who exhibit challenging behaviors early often face academic struggles and potential long-term negative effects. When educators are prepared to effectively manage challenging behaviors, they provide students with the support needed to succeed. This article also highlights the need for teacher preparation programs to include coursework and practical training emphasizing evidence-based practices in behavior management, effective communication, and behavioral supports. By doing so, teachers can create inclusive and supportive classrooms, reduce disruptive, unexpected behaviors, and improve students' overall well-being by intervening early and providing a foundation for positive behaviors in school. Early intervention and skill development in K-3 preservice teachers can lead to better academic outcomes, enhanced classroom dynamics, and a brighter future for students with challenging behavior. The authors share recommendations for classroom activities, learning materials, and applications for teacher educators.

KEYWORDS

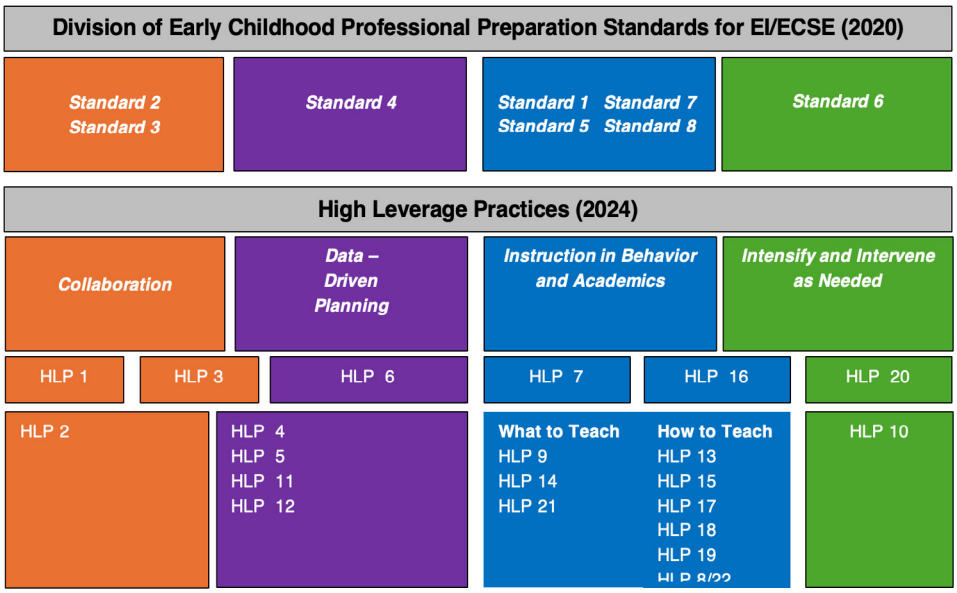
Classroom management, early childhood, early elementary, positive learning environment, proactive behavior supports

Early childhood years are a critical period for a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and brain development (Shonkoff et al., 2009; UNESCO, 2022). Providing high-quality experiences during the first eight years of childhood is vital as these experiences influence the quality of the brain architecture and build a robust foundation for children's health, behaviors, and successful learning (Shonkoff et al., 2009). Children can achieve their full potential development when they are exposed to healthy, welcoming, safe, and supportive learning environments during their early years (UNCESCO, 2022).

Teachers play a pivotal role in promoting a positive classroom environment and facilitating student learning (Ghorbani et al., 2018). They are the primary influence on their students' social-emotional development and academic achievement (Heatly & Votruba-Drzal, 2017; Lippard et al., 2018; McCormick & O'Connor, 2015). Students who frequently display challenging behaviors tend to struggle in academic learning and growth (Kremer et al., 2016; Ross et al., 2023). However, teachers' intentional practices, behavioral approach, and evidence-based classroom management strategies help students learn positive behaviors and ultimately impact their academic achievement (Freeman et al., 2014). Therefore, equipping preservice teachers with the knowledge, confidence, and skills to foster student development is essential.

All teachers must be well-prepared to face the realities of teaching, specifically managing challenging student behaviors (Morgan & Sideridis, 2013). Preparing preservice teachers to effectively support students' positive behaviors requires univer-

FIGURE 1: Overview of Division of Early Childhood Standards and High Leverage Practices



Note: Adapted from the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators (EI/ECSE; 2020) and the CEEDAR Center (2024).

sity-based teacher preparation programs to offer skillfully integrated coursework and practical training in evidence-based classroom management practices with a particular focus on behavior management strategies, effective communication, behavioral supports, and inclusive classroom environments (Greenberg et al., 2014; Freeman et al., 2014). Given this preparation, preservice teachers will be able to approach behavioral challenges effectively by implementing evidence-based practices (EBPs) and providing students with specific support to foster positive behaviors and learning in school (Simonsen et al., 2014).

Importance of Early Elementary Preservice Teacher Preparation

Currently, a major concern in the American education system is the impact of insufficient teacher preparation and poor teacher retention (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Guha et al., 2016). Nearly half of teachers leave the teaching profession within the first five years (Zhang & Zeller, 2016) and the rate of teacher turnover has slightly increased in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2023; Barnum, 2023). Research has shown that low teacher retention rates negatively affect students' academic achievement (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Young, 2018). Adequate teacher preparation is needed to increase the teacher retention rate in the field. For this reason, teacher preparation programs need to provide preservice teachers with the knowledge, skills, and authentic learning experiences to be successful in their profession. Providing high-quality coursework and training emphasizing classroom management and behavioral support is essential for novice teachers to feel adequately prepared to meet the behavioral and academic needs of diverse students (Freeman et al., 2014; Shank, 2023).

High-quality preservice classroom management coursework and experiences can have a positive and lasting impact on teachers, which ultimately benefits their students. In-service teachers who are highly skilled in classroom management stay in the profession longer, note higher levels of job satisfaction, and experience lower levels of teacher burnout than their less-skilled counterparts (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Moreover, first-year teachers report feeling unprepared to use prevention strategies and EBPs when challenging behaviors arise (Freeman et al., 2014; Shank, 2023). This is especially prevalent in high-need areas, including special education, and causes many teachers to experience burnout and leave the field prematurely (i.e., prior to retirement or promotion; Hester et al., 2020).

The purpose of this article is to highlight the need for high-quality behavior and classroom management training in teacher preparation programs and to offer practical solutions for teacher educators. There has been, and continues to be, a shortage of educators who are prepared to address challenging behaviors and meet the social-emotional needs of young children (Osofsky & Lieberman, 2011). To ensure that all early elementary (i.e., kindergarten through grade three) teachers are prepared for their roles, including supporting students' social-emotional needs, the Division for Early Childhood (DEC; 2020) published a list of initial standards for preparing special educators to teach young children. Each of the eight standards includes components with explanations that further outline best practices in early childhood special education teacher preparation. For example, component 6.4 directly guides teacher educators to prepare preservice teachers to effectively address student behavior: "Candidates promote young children's social and emotional competence and communication, and proactively plan and implement function-based interventions to prevent and address challenging behaviors" (DEC, 2020). Social-emotional skills are considered a vital component of early childhood education and impact students' academic success (Durlak et

TABLE 1: Detailed Overview of Division of Early Childhood Standards and High Leverage Practices

HLP Pillar	High Leverage Practice		DEC Standard
Collaboration	**HLP 1:** Collaborate with professionals to increase student success. **Embedded HLPs:** **HLP 2:** Organize and facilitate effective meetings with professionals and families.	**HLP 3:** Collaborate with families to support student learning and secure needed services.	**Standard 2:** Partnering with families **Standard 3:** Collaboration and teaming
Data-Driven Planning	**HLP 6:** Use student assessment data, analyze instructional practices, and make necessary adjustments that improve student outcomes. **Embedded HLPs:** **HLP 4:** Use multiple sources of information to develop a comprehensive understanding of a student's strengths and needs. **HLP 5:** Interpret and communicate assessment information to collaboratively design and implement educational programs. **HLP 11:** Identify and prioritize long and short-term learning goals. **HLP 12:** Systematically design instruction toward a specific learning goal.		**Standard 4:** Assessment Processes
Instruction in Behavior and Academics	**HLP 7:** Establish consistent, organized, and responsive learning environments. **Embedded HLPs – What to teach:** **HLP 9:** Teach social behaviors. **HLP 14:** Teach cognitive and metacognitive strategies to support learning and independence. **HLP 21:** Teach students to maintain and generalize new learning across time and settings.	**HLP 16:** Use explicit instruction. **Embedded HLPs – How to teach:** **HLP 13:** Adapt curriculum tasks and materials for specific learning goals **HLP 15:** Provide scaffolded supports. **HLP 19:** Use flexible grouping. **HLP 19:** Use assistive and instructional technologies. **HLP 8/22:** Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning (HLP 22) and behavior (HLP 8).	**Standard 1:** Child Development and Early Learning **Standard 5:** Application of Curriculum Frameworks in the Planning of Meaningful Learning Experience **Standard 7:** Professional and Ethical Practice **Standard 8:** Field and Clinical Practice
Intensify and Intervene as Needed	**HLP 20:** Provide intensive intervention for academics and behavior. **Embedded HLPs:** **HLP 10:** Conduct functional behavioral assessments to develop individual student behavior support plans.		**Standard 6:** Using Responsive and Reciprocal Interactions, Interventions, and Instruction

Note: HLP – High Leverage Practice; Adapted from the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators (EI/ECSE; 2020) and the CEEDAR Center (2024). For HLP Pillar and embedded HLP overlap, see Figure 1.

al., 2022; Stefan et al., 2022), appearing alongside other standards focused on effective instruction and developmentally appropriate practices.

The DEC (2020) standards should be integrated into teacher preparation programs with shared emphasis on the high leverage practices (HLPs) for students with disabilities (McCleskey et al., 2022). Based on continually evolving research, the HLPs were recently restructured to reflect overlap between the HLPs within 'pillar' and 'embedded' practices (Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform [CEEDAR], 2024). Figure 1 provides an overview of how university teacher preparation programs can align the DEC standards and the HLPs.

The DEC standards can be aligned with HLP pillars within the categories of (a) collaboration; (b) data-driven planning; (c) instruction in behavior and academics; and (d) intensify and intervene as needed. Preparation programs can use the DEC-HLP alignment to guide and enhance their coursework. Table 1 provides a more detailed alignment between the DEC standards and HLPs.

Academic and Social Issues for Students with Challenging Behaviors

It is well documented that children who exhibit challenging behavior (e.g., non-compliance, refusal, physical altercations) in their younger years have more persistent and severe academic, social, and mental health challenges later in life (Ross et al., 2023). Children with behavior problems are more likely to experience academic failure, drop out of school, or develop delinquent, hostile, or violent behavior as adolescents. Likewise, these children are less likely to productively participate in society as adults (U.S. Public Health Service, 2000). Challenging behaviors exhibited by young children can adversely affect their academic achievement and social development (Chazin & Ledford, 2016; Kremer et al., 2016). Additionally, children who exhibit challenging behavior have lower socially competent interactions and less positive engagement with peers (Bulotsky-Shearer et al., 2020). Children entering preschool must grapple with increased academic demands, getting along with others, and following instructions. These demands can be difficult for a child to navigate and understand, leading to inappropriate responses and behaviors (Stormont & Young-Walker, 2017). Challenging behaviors may result in delayed social and emotional growth, which can eventually lead to retention, suspension, or expulsion (McGuire & Meadan, 2022).

Social-emotional skills learned in early elementary grades, specifically kindergarten, serve as the developmental building blocks for necessary academic and behavioral skills (Rana, 2022). Beginning in early childhood (i.e., birth-age five), children learn basics in academics such as emergent reading, writing, and mathematics. They have opportunities to explore and question their environment and learn through successes and failures. Both academic learning and social skill development begin at home with parents and siblings (El Nokali et al., 2010), with kindergarten serving as the connection from preschool to elementary school (Rana, 2022). As children enter preschool and matriculate to elementary school, learning continues and is fostered by teacher-student relationships. Studies have shown that teachers influence the social-emotional growth of students, which is directly correlated to both appropriate and inappropriate student behaviors (Harvey et al., 2012; Poulou, 2017). Stormont and Young-Walker (2017) suggest that educating early childhood professionals in behavior management and social-emotional learning helps effectively develop children's growth and development of socially appropriate behaviors.

While the long-term challenges are grave, there are also more immediate academic and social challenges faced by students who exhibit challenging behavior. One negative consequence of unaddressed behavioral issues in early childhood is suspension and expulsion. While suspension and expulsion data are under-reported, it is estimated that approximately 2,800 preschoolers received one or more out-of-school suspensions in the 2017-18 school year (Office for Civil Rights, 2021). Additionally, as many as 8,710 three- and four-year-old children may be expelled from their state-funded preschool classrooms each year (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2016). The suspension and expulsion rate for young children is as much as thirteen times higher than that of their school-age peers (Gilliam & Shahar, 2006). Even if programs and states enact policies to prevent or limit the use of exclusionary discipline practices, these policies do not necessarily help teachers manage challenging behavior in the classroom more effectively (Wymer et al., 2020). Because one of the strongest predictors of persistent behaviors across childhood is the rate of behavior problems at kindergarten entry, it is vital to investigate behaviors and intervene in early childhood and preschool (Morgan et al., 2009; Ross et al., 2023). A practical alternative to exclusionary discipline practices is providing preservice teachers with more training and support in managing challenging behaviors.

Overview of Classroom Management Offerings in Teacher Preparation Programs

Student behavior can impact teachers directly and is also related to teacher turnover, which has progressively worsened since the COVID-19 pan-

FIGURE 2: Schoolwide Expectations Matrix Exemplar for Classroom Management Courses

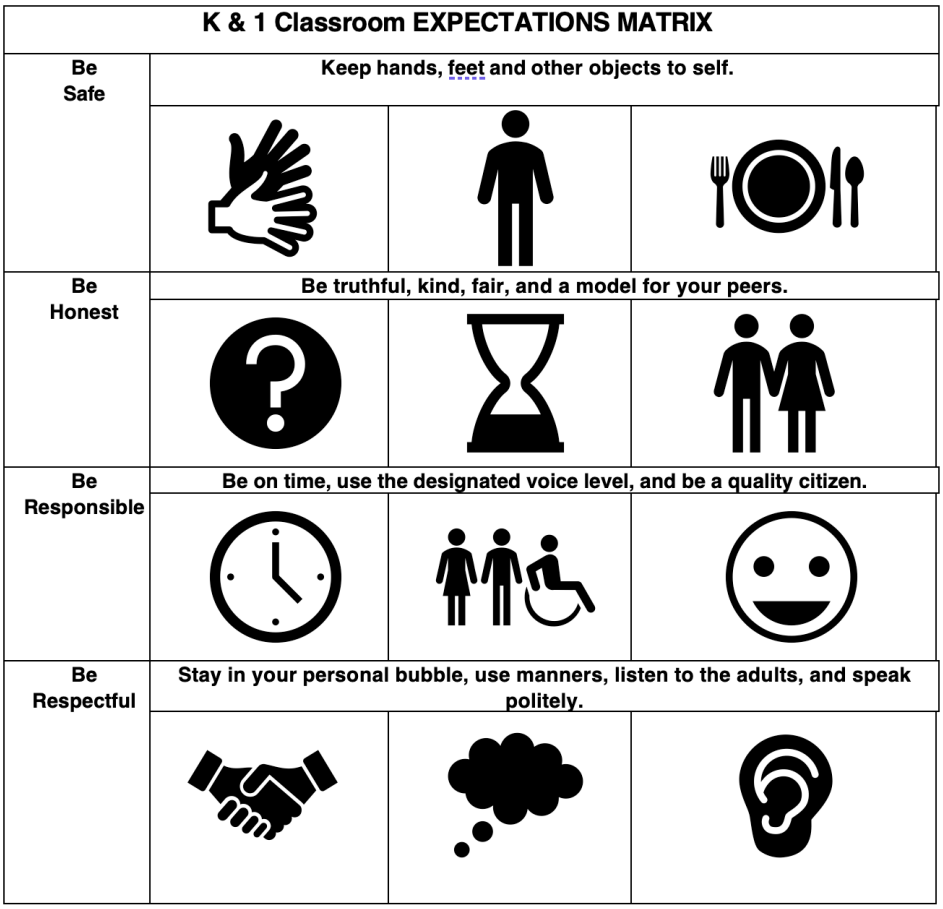
SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS MATRIX					
	Classroom	**Hallway**	**Cafeteria**	**Playground**	**Bathroom**
Be Safe	**Keep hands, feet and other objects to self.**				
	Example: Hands and feet in your desk area or carpet square **Non-Example**: Hitting or kicking other students, rolling around on the floor	**Example**: Hands and feet in your personal bubble **Non-Example**: Hitting or kicking someone	**Example**: Food is in your designated area **Non-Example**: Hitting someone or throwing food	**Example**: Playing safely with friends and toys **Non-Example**: Tackling or pushing someone	**Example**: keeping hands and feet to self and waiting your turn **Non-Example**: hitting or kicking someone that walks by or while in line waiting
Be Honest	**Be truthful, kind, fair, and a model for your peers.**				
	Example: Use your brain to answer questions **Non-Example**: Taking someone's worksheet	**Example**: If you find something, turn it in to the teacher **Non-Example**: Taking someone else's stuff	**Example**: Eating what you brought from home **Non-Example**: Stealing and eating someone else's food	**Example**: Participate and play by the rules **Non-Example**: Making rules up and cheating	**Example**: Waiting your turn in line and then going in when it is your turn **Non-Example**: Cutting in line
Be Responsible	**Be on time, use the designated voice level, and be a quality citizen.**				
	Example: Arriving on time for class **Non-Example**: Coming late and yelling about it as you walk in the room	**Example**: Picking up trash in the hallway **Non-Example**: Kicking trash around the hallway and leaving it where you saw it	**Example**: Cleaning up your lunch area and double checking to make sure it is clean **Non-Example**: Leaving trash at the cafeteria table	**Example**: Lining up as soon as the whistle is blown **Non-Example**: Ignoring whistle and continuing to go up the steps to the slide	**Example**: Reporting a clogged toilet to the teacher **Non-Example**: Throwing used toilet paper on the bathroom floor
Be Respectful	**Stay in your personal bubble, use manners, listen to the adults, and speak politely.**				
	Example: Raising hand to get teacher's attention **Non-Example**: Running around to get teacher's attention and invading other students' bubbles	**Example**: Walking in hallway with your quiet coyote **Non-Example**: Running in the hallway tearing down artwork	**Example**: Saying please and thank you **Non-Example**: Grabbing things from other students without asking	**Example**: Taking turns on slides and listen to adults on playground **Non-Example:** Calling people losers if they lose or laughing at them	**Example**: Using the restroom, washing hands, and waiting in line to return to class **Non-Example**: Looking under stalls at someone else using the bathroom

demic began (Barnum, 2023; Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Therefore, classroom management is a critical foundational teaching skill that must be learned, developed, and honed. In the preservice period, classroom management courses provide the components necessary to equip future teachers with the skills to create conducive social, emotional, and academic environments, and should be based on empirical evidence from the field (Greenberg et al., 2014). However, teacher preparation programs traditionally provide only one classroom management or behavior-focused course, with some programs embedding it in other coursework (Greenberg et al., 2014). Oftentimes, these courses do not align with practices occurring in K-12 schools and lack implementation practice or support (Stevenson et al., 2020). Classroom management may be folded in with similar topical areas (e.g., positive behavior intervention and support), take a negative approach (e.g., focused on discipline), or promote practices that lack an evidence base (e.g., clip charts, learning styles). It is critical that classroom management courses emphasize evidence-based behavior management strategies, fostering positive relationships, and creating classroom structures for student success (Freeman et al., 2014).

Evidence-Based Practices for Classroom Management in Teacher Preparation

The cornerstone of a well-managed classroom is engaging instruction (Myers et al., 2017), in which students complete interactive tasks and activities that are incompatible with unexpected

FIGURE 3: Kindergarten/First Grade Expectations



school behaviors (Gage & MacSuga-Gage, 2017). Furthermore, classrooms that have a high level of organization have been shown to predict changes in preschool children's learning behavior (Domínguez et al., 2011). Accordingly, a preservice early elementary classroom management course should emphasize the following EBPs: (a) structured and predictable classroom environment, (b) schoolwide and classroom expectation knowledge and practice, (c) active engagement, and (d) acknowledgement and reinforcement of appropriate behavior (Simonsen et al., 2008). Because kindergarten through third grade expectations and learning outcomes are vastly different in their behavioral and academic foci, they also come with differentiated expectations within the learning environment. By emphasizing classroom management EBPs in teacher preparation, early elementary preservice teachers can engage in meaningful activities and graduate ready to implement such practices in their future classrooms.

An essential activity for preservice teachers is engaging in the creation of a classroom management plan using EBPs as the foundation. First and foremost, young students need a structured and predictable classroom environment, which must be supported by an overarching matrix of school expectations. Figure 2 provides an exemplar of a schoolwide expectations matrix and includes examples (what the students *should* be doing) along with non-examples (what students *should not* be doing) within each overarching expectation and area of the school. Preservice teachers should practice creating such a matrix with an emphasis on developmental appropriateness in the classroom management course.

Additionally, each classroom should have its own expectations for the learning environment. Preservice teachers can, therefore, practice using a schoolwide matrix to develop their individual classroom expectations. Figure 3 provides an example of classroom expectations for kindergarten and first grade students. These expectations contain visuals, but once students start identifying letters and words, teachers can transition the posted classroom expectations to meet student needs. Second and third grade expectations typically utilize more written words as students develop their reading skills.

Next, students must be taught these schoolwide and classroom expectations and have opportunities to rehearse them in all relevant parts of the school day. Preservice teachers should learn to use explicit instruction by modeling the expectation (*I do*), practicing the expectation alongside students (*we do*), and having students act out meeting the expectation (*you do*) until students can meet all schoolwide and classroom expectations proficiently and consistently (Archer & Hughes, 2010). Explicit instruction can be demonstrated, rehearsed, and incorporated into assignments in a teacher preparation program. For instance, preservice teachers may simulate teaching expectations in various ways, such as teaching peers during a face-to-face class or through a videoconferencing platform (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet), recording a video of themselves modeling an expectation, or engaging with mixed reality simulations (e.g., TeachLivE, Mursion).

Active student engagement is key to a well-run, highly efficient classroom (Myers et al., 2017). Within their classroom management plan, preservice teachers should address all facets of the school day. For example, students need to know the routines for entering

FIGURE 4: Online Resources for Early Elementary Classroom Management Courses

Type	Title	Website
Webinar	Prevent-Teach-Reinforce for Young Children: An Intervention Model for the Most Challenging Behaviors	https://challengingbehavior.org/webinar/prevent-teach-reinforce-for-young-children-an-intervention-model-for-the-most-serious-challenging-behaviors/
Webinar	Understanding Challenging Behavior: The Path to Behavior Support	https://challengingbehavior.org/webinar/understanding-challenging-behavior-the-path-to-behavior-support/
Learning Modules	3a: Individualized Intensive Interventions: Determining the Meaning of Challenging Behavior 3b: Individualized Intensive Interventions: Developing a Behavior Support Plan	https://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/training_preschool.html
Learning Module	Addressing Challenging Behaviors (Part 1, Elementary): Understanding the Acting Out Cycle	https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/bi1-elem/
Learning Module	Addressing Challenging Behaviors (Part 2, Elementary): Behavioral Strategies	https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/bi2-elem/
Learning Module	Early Childhood Behavior Management: Developing and Teaching Rules	https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/ecbm/
Resource	Division of Early Childhood EI/ECSE Standards (2020) Resources	https://www.dec-sped.org/highereducation
Resource	High-Leverage Practices for Students with Disabilities	https://highleveragepractices.org/

and exiting the classroom, turning in assignments, asking questions, and transitioning among activities within and outside of the classroom. This can be addressed by creating a classroom theme and relating all parts of the day back to the theme. It is important that preservice teachers recognize that classroom management is directly tied to academic engagement and high expectations.

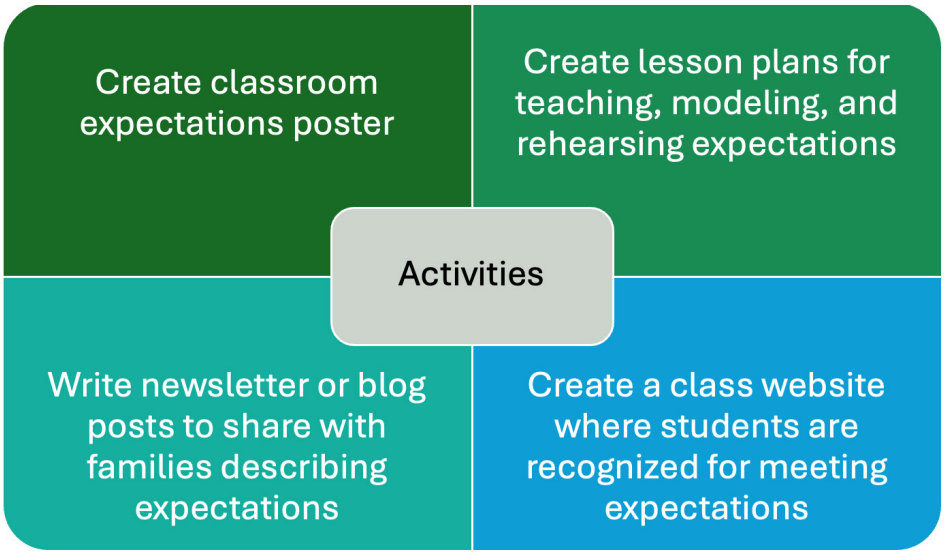
Finally, preservice teachers must learn to recognize and acknowledge when students meet the expectations in their classroom. They should practice building a system of recognition, acknowledgement, and reinforcement into school days by using class-wide and individual reinforcement systems, such as token economies (Heiniger et al., 2022). In a token economy, students earn a token (often aligned with the class theme) when they demonstrate expected behaviors as specifically outlined in the classroom management plan. Students might also earn extra tokens for going above and beyond these expectations. Crucially, students should never have a negative balance of tokens. Students can visit a classroom store and exchange their tokens for no-cost incentives (e.g., extra recess, time with teacher) as reinforcement. Collecting and cashing in tokens can also help support academic skills (e.g., counting, numeral identification).

Preparing Early Elementary Special Education Teachers for Classroom Management

It is imperative that effective classroom management strategies are used in the early elementary classroom. Without appropriate behavior interventions, young children who exhibit challenging behaviors in the early childhood years are likely to continue exhibiting challenging behaviors throughout their school career and into adulthood (Ross et al., 2023). However, evidence indicates that teacher preparation programs are not adequately preparing preservice teachers to address challenging behaviors (Flower et al., 2016). Teacher educators must prepare preservice teachers to provide a foundation for positive behaviors in their classrooms, as well as respond to challenging behaviors with EBPs. To support early elementary preservice teachers in gaining and refining these skills, a variety of free online instructional resources, including webinars, online learning modules, and additional resources, are displayed in Figure 4.

Many teacher preparation programs do not require preservice teachers to practice the behavior management skills they learn (Greenberg et al., 2014). Bridging the research-to-practice gap through practical application is vital for supporting preservice teachers in being prepared to manage challenging behaviors in the classroom (Mpu et al., 2022). With this in mind, we suggest pairing the tools provided with course readings, class discus-

FIGURE 5: Classroom Management Course Activities to Promote Positive Behaviors for K-3



sions, and practical application activities. Figure 5 offers recommended activities to incorporate such authentic practice into classroom management courses (Greenberg et al., 2014).

CONCLUSION

This article was designed to explore ways to equip preservice teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively approach behavioral challenges with early elementary students. As previously discussed, children who exhibit challenging behaviors during their early years are more likely to experience difficulties in their later life, such as academic failure, socioemotional maladjustment, and mental health challenges (Ross et al., 2023). In addition, they may display aggressive behaviors in adolescence and not be able to actively participate in society as adults (U.S. Public Health Service, 2000). Implementing a proactive approach through developmentally appropriate EBPs can prevent and reduce challenging behaviors of early elementary students (DEC, 2020). Therefore, teachers entering the profession must be cognizant of the significance of creating a positive learning environment for student success in school and prepared to skillfully implement evidence-based behavior and classroom management strategies (Freeman et al., 2014).

Because teachers are responsible for promoting a positive classroom environment and supporting students' social, behavioral, and academic development (Ghorbani et al., 2018; Heatly & Votruba-Drzal, 2017; Lippard et al., 2018; McCormick & O'Connor, 2015), it is imperative for teacher preparation programs to provide high-quality behavior and classroom management coursework. To prepare well-equipped educators, university-based teacher preparation programs must offer well-designed behavior and classroom management courses consisting of interactive activities and learning materials. Moreover, teacher educators should provide practical tools and application opportunities to maximize preservice teachers' grasp of EBPs for behavior management. Preservice teachers need opportunities to practice newly learned intervention strategies by engaging in in-class or virtual activities, mixed reality training simulation systems, interactive cloud-based teaching performance feedback platforms (e.g., GoReact), or a combination of application activities. Given these learning tools and practices, preservice teachers will be prepared to effectively structure and manage their future classrooms by creating well-organized, routine-based classroom structures, providing students with engaging learning activities, and fostering students' positive learning and behaviors (Domínguez et al., 2011; Myers et al., 2017).

Educators "need to equip students with the skills they need to become active, responsible, and engaged citizens" (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018, p. 4). Well-prepared and effective teachers develop proactive plans and implement EBPs that are developmentally, culturally and functionally appropriate to prevent and address challenging behaviors. In turn, teachers who are skillful in managing classrooms show lower levels of burnout and are likely to stay in the teaching profession longer (Madigan & Kim, 2021). As a result, committing to high-quality preparation of preservice teachers promotes teacher retention and, ultimately, student success in school both socially and academically.

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

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ABSTRACT

The personnel preparation of early intervention/early childhood special educator (EI/ECSE) candidates is a pivotal stage in supporting the development of professionals who can effectively work with young children with and at-risk of developmental disabilities, their families, and other service providers. This process encompasses a multifaceted approach to equip candidates with knowledge, skills, and attitudes/dispositions to successfully work within the field. This compilation article includes multiple authors of each section who share strategies, assignments, tools, and experiences to center the Initial Practice-Based Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators (Division for Early Childhood [DEC] of the Council for Exceptional Children [CEC], 2020; hereafter referred to as the EI/ECSE Standards) and DEC's Recommended Practices (RPs). These strategies are shared through a "spiraling curriculum" framework, and progress from an awareness level to reflection of candidates' own practice. In addition, this article shares related resources to consider in planning for innovative coursework and practicum/student teaching opportunities. Specific examples of spiraling experiences to deepen learning through opportunities to introduce content aligned to RPs and EI/ECSE Standards are included.

KEYWORDS

Division for Early Childhood, early childhood special education, early intervention, educator preparation, DEC Recommended Practices, university coursework

The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) published Recommended Practices (RPs) for practitioners working with children and families at risk for or having identified disabilities, with an intention to help bridge research to practice (2014). They have been revised three times since the original publication in 1991 (DEC, 2022) and include eight different topic areas: (1) Leadership; (2) Assessment; (3) Environment; (4) Family; (5) Instruction; (6) Interaction; (7) Teaming and Collaboration; and (8) Transition. In addition to the RPs, the DEC recently published the EI/ECSE Standards (2020). The EI/ECSE standards outline key content knowledge, experiences, skills, and dispositions and were developed in collaboration with ongoing input from the field at large. There are eight EI/ECSE Standards, including: (1) Child Development and Early Learning; (2) Partnering with Families; (3) Collaboration and Teaming; (4) Assessment Processes; (5) Application of Curriculum Frameworks in Planning of Meaningful Learning Experiences; (6) Using Responsive and Reciprocal Interactions, Interventions, and Instruction; (7) Professional and Ethical Practice; and (8) Field and Clinical Experience, with specific components described under each standard. Utilizing the RPs and EI/ECSE Standards in tangent provides a solid foundation for development of well-prepared personnel in the field.

Many curricular approaches can (and should) be considered in designing experiences and assignments that are relevant to recommended practices and dispositions in the field. A spiral curriculum approach supports candidates' depth of understanding of curricular content while also allowing for adequate time and competency in

TABLE 1: Example of Planning for Topic Areas

Week	RP Topic Area	Site/Guests*
1	Environment	Sunshine Center for Children
		Director of Education
		ECSE
2	Instruction	Sunrise School of Denver
		Executive Director
		Director of Inclusion
3	Assessment	Child Find - Lakeview School District
		Child Find Director
		ECSE
		Speech Language Pathologist (SLP)

*all site names are pseudonyms

meeting the EI/ECSE Standards. Spiral curriculum (Bruner, 1960) refers to a model in education in which a concept, theme, or subject matter is taught progressively and repetitively. The process reinforces ideas over time, which contrasts with attempting to learn all at once (Harden & Stamper, 1999). This includes a continuous revisiting of topics, with the level of difficulty gradually rising, and each new learning opportunity builds on the one that came before. The benefits of a spiral curriculum are its characteristics—reinforcing, evolving complexity, incorporation of stages and building from one to the next (Harden & Stamper, 1999).

For purposes of organization and structure, the assignments and learning experiences in this article approach this "spiraling" through three distinct and successive categories: awareness learning experiences, application learning experiences, and self-reflection learning experiences. Each category includes experiences aligned to both DEC RPs and EI/ECSE Standards. In a final section, innovative platforms and approaches are presented that can be used with a variety of content. At the end of each section, a table is included that maps corresponding RPs and EI/ECSE Standards relevant to the described experience.

AWARENESS EXPERIENCES TO INTRODUCE THE RPS

The first type of learning experiences in this section involve introduction and awareness of the RPs and related content to EI/ECSE candidates. This introduction supports candidates in becoming familiar with the language, how they are organized, and key components/content of each. The RPs are currently available in English and Spanish, which allows for affirming candidates' home language and potentially increases comprehension by allowing them choice in which language they access them. Introductory and awareness experiences are important components of building foundational knowledge and competency early in preparation coursework.

Awareness Learning Experience: Guest Speaker Seminars

Although candidates build some basic understanding of the RPs by reading them, they become more meaningful when they begin to see the wide variety of ways that they are implemented in the field. Since multiple visits to programs are challenging and can be impossible in a virtual context (with candidates from multiple geographic areas), inviting guest partners and organizations to come and present over virtual platforms (e.g., Zoom) around an RP topic area in practice provides an opportunity for candidates to begin more deeply to understand the RPs.

In this design, a selected course or seminar series is intentionally planned to focus on one topic area per session. The faculty member then identifies and invites local partners to share information about their program in alignment with the corresponding RP topic area (see Table 1). As an example, during a week about the "Environment" topic area, candidates might hear from a director of education and classroom teachers in an inclusive program about specific examples of how they adapt an environment to be accessible for children who are blind or visually impaired. The program is invited to bring artifacts (e.g., photos and/or videos, tools, etc.) of the topic area in practice.

As the guests share, candidates observe "real life" application of the RPs in action which helps them concretely understand how to implement them in practice. During the presentation, candidates utilize a note taking form to capture ideas/examples of how they saw the RPs in action. This form would include the focus topic area RPs with space to take notes under each (see Table 2). At the end of the session, candidates reflect on what they observed aligned with each RP with a partner.

An additional benefit to this structure is a reciprocal benefit to partner sites, as EI/ECSE candidates are exposed to a wide variety of programs that they may not have been aware of previously. This provides an opportunity for exposure of

TABLE 2: Note Taking Example

As you visit with and hear from our guest presenter today, write down examples of how you see each Environment Recommended Practice in action.

E1. Practitioners provide services and supports in natural and inclusive environments during daily routines and activities to promote the child's access to and participation in learning experiences.

E2. Practitioners consider Universal Design for Learning principles to create accessible environments.

E3. Practitioners work with the family and other adults to modify and adapt the physical, social, and temporal environments to promote each child's access to and participation in learning experiences.

TABLE 3: Related DEC EI/ECSE Standards and RPs

Initial Practice-Based Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators	Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices
7.3 Candidates exhibit leadership skills in advocating for improved outcomes for young children, families, and the profession, including the promotion of and use of evidence-based practices and decision-making.	Applicable across all Recommended Practices

the site and future contacts and networks for employment or practicum opportunities.

This course organization and structure aligns with several Professional Practice Tools and within the given structure, allows for exposure to any or all the Recommended Practices (see Table 3). The key feature of this experience is ensuring that explicit connections are made to the practices.

Awareness Learning Experience: Think-Pair-Share Activity

For candidates to fully understand and be ready to apply the RPs in practice, they must have multiple exposures and opportunities to explore the content in different formats. This in-class (or online) activity supports candidates in generating their own ideas, activating prior knowledge, and fostering their learning through engagement in small group discussion. Before this activity, candidates would have had previous introduction to the RPs (for example, asked to pre-read them before the course session). To begin, the faculty member highlights a specific RP category (for example, "Recommended Practice Family (F1) states, Practitioners build trusting and respectful partnerships with the family through interactions that are sensitive and responsive to cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic diversity."). The faculty member then poses a question prompt related to this RP (for example, "What do you believe is the most critical for building trusting and respectful partnerships with families of young children?" *OR* "In what ways can you be sensitive and responsive to cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic diversity?"). The faculty member would ask candidates to take some time to "think" about their response. After providing wait time, the faculty member then asks candidates to "pair" with another member of the group for an additional amount of time to discuss their individual ideas when engaging in independent thinking. Finally, the faculty member asks candidates to share with a larger group. Through group participation candidates benefit from enhancing their own and each other's learning (Cloud, 2014; Johnson, 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 2008; Slavin, 2012).

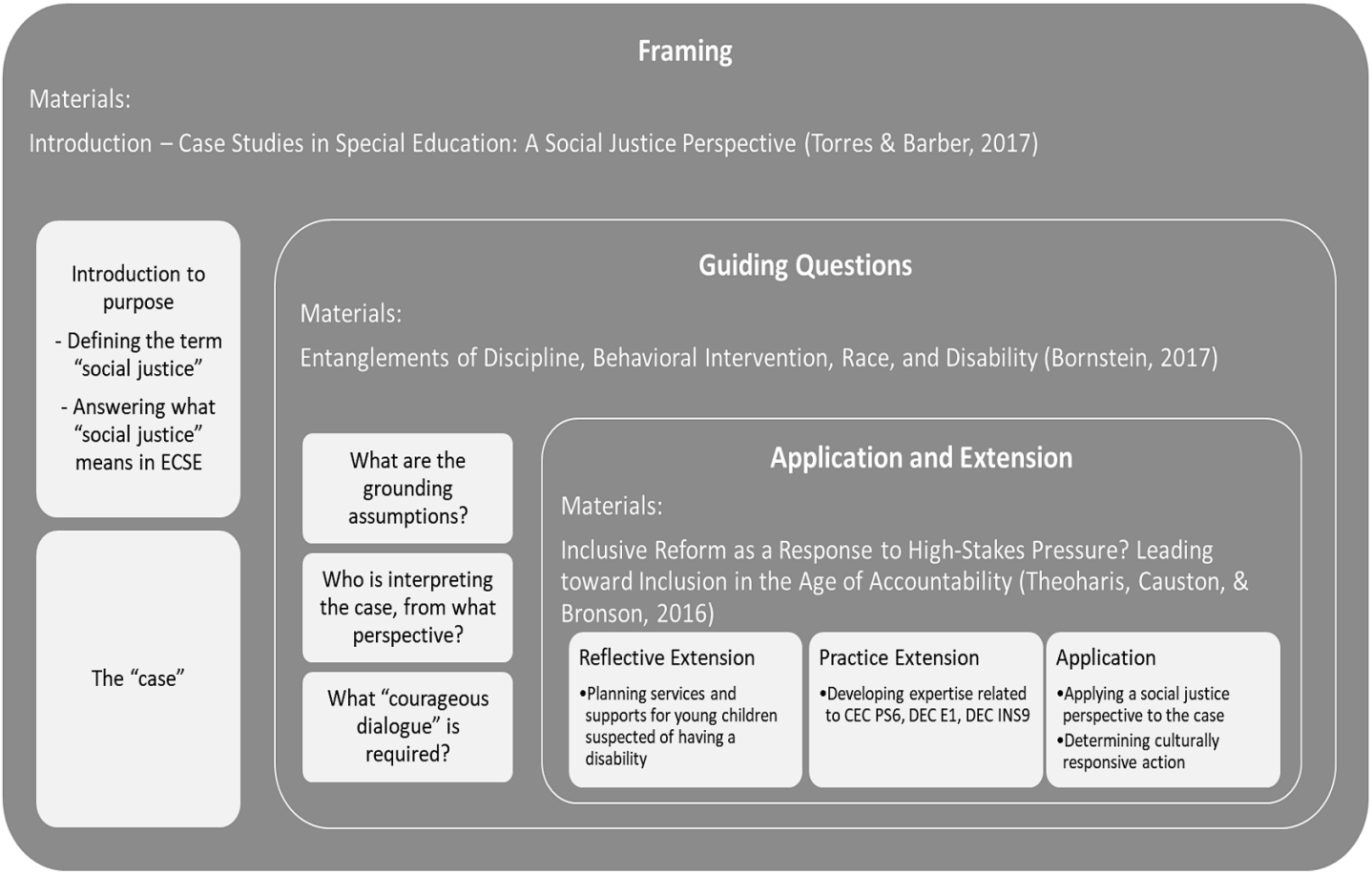
APPLICATION EXPERIENCES: OBSERVING AND USING RPS

After introducing the RPs through various awareness experiences, candidates can begin to deepen their learning through considering how they observe application of the RPs and related practices in a supervised field-based application. Providing opportunities for candidates to extend their learning gives them an opportunity to deeply consider how to apply these practices and use them as professional resources throughout their career.

Application Learning Experience: Case Studies as Catalysts for Culturally Responsive Teaching in Inclusive Settings

Ensuring candidates graduate from institutes of higher education with a culturally responsive lens is an important aspiration of many EI/ECSE preparation programs. However, faculty in higher education settings may not be well equipped to nurture culturally responsive teaching skills in candidates (Ladson-Billings, 2023). In order to better prepare teacher candidates for diverse settings, and in response to a university special education advisory board concern noted below, a case study assignment was developed for an undergraduate special education educator preparation program. The advisory board reported concerns related to educator preparation for early childhood inclusive environments, emphasizing a need for programs to focus on culturally

FIGURE 1: Overview of Case Study Assignment Components, Materials, and Prompts



responsive practices (e.g., setting high expectations for all children, positive relationships with families and communities, involving and including all children, child-centered instruction). Coupled with the fact that young children face suspension and expulsion at alarming rates, especially for certain populations according to national databases and current ECSE literature (e.g., Black children, dual language learners, children with disabilities; Gilliam et al., 2016), there was clearly a need to build an assignment within the program that focused on culturally responsive practices. In other words, university faculty need to provide engaging content and assignments centered on preventative and culturally responsive practices to support young children's behavior to reduce exclusion in early childhood settings, particularly for young children at greater risk.

To meet an ever growing need to develop candidates' pedagogy, a case study assignment was designed to encourage pre-service candidates to interrogate their own skillset related to young children's behavior, centered on applying a critical lens on discipline practices and the eligibility processes in ECSE. The assignment was designed to support candidates' sense-making of culture, race, disability, and risk in young children.

Case study assignments in educator preparation offer a valuable learning opportunity. Case-based instruction is an instructional approach to help candidates understand new pedagogical content and think about teaching and learning in real-life situations (Lengyel & Vernon-Dotson, 2010). By analyzing real-life situations, candidates can bridge theory and practice, narrow their skills in a specific topic/practice, and gain insights into the complexity of teaching. The use of case studies in educator preparation programs has been found to provide a platform for candidates to reflect on and examine their practice and ability to adapt to the unique needs of individual children as well as enhance their pedagogical understanding and collaborative capabilities (Brownell et al., 2019; Butler et al., 2006; Kilgo et al., 2014a). Although there are many advantages to using case studies as assignments in educator preparation programs, there are specific challenges to ensuring case studies do not demonstrate an oversimplification of young children's instructional and support needs. Therefore, this case study assignment is built to address several dimensions of diversity. Additionally, as Brownell and colleagues (2019) cautioned, case

TABLE 4: Related Professional Preparation Standards and RPs

Initial Practice-Based Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators	Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices
6.6 Candidates use responsive interactions, interventions, and instruction with sufficient intensity and types of support across activities, routines, and environments to promote child learning and development and facilitate access, participation, and engagement in natural environments and inclusive settings.	**Environment 1 (E1):** Practitioners provide services and supports in natural and inclusive environments during daily routines and activities to promote the child's access to and participation in learning experiences.
6.7 Candidates plan for, adapt, and improve approaches to interactions, interventions, and instruction based on multiple sources of data across a range of natural environments and inclusive settings.	I**nstruction 9 (INS9):** Practitioners use functional assessment and related prevention, promotion, and intervention strategies across environments to prevent and address challenging behavior.

studies may limit the ability of candidates to practice enacting high-leverage practices. To this end, the case study was designed to include opportunities to allow candidates to expand and apply their learning.

Building a case study assignment can support others in the ECSE community who are navigating similar concerns and challenges, especially considering continued inequitable outcomes and opportunities in inclusive early childhood settings (e.g., National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, 2022). Figure 1 offers a framework for university faculty to build a case study assignment that will provide practical guidance and recommendations that candidates can reflect on and shift their practice to increase inclusion and, thereby, reduce exclusion of young children from early childhood care and education settings. Three components were included in this assignment: (1) framing, (2) guiding questions, (3) application and extension. The purpose of Figure 1 is to support programs to build a case study that analyzes the circumstances of children suspected of having a disability and critically reflect about the relationship of the case to culturally responsive teaching, responses to behavior, and the systemic nature of eligibility processes in special education.

Although the specific details of this case study assignment cannot be fully captured within the scope of this section, Figure 1 provides a template that can be used when ECSE faculty members want to sharpen the pedagogical purpose of case studies and move beyond simply providing a scenario about a child for general analysis and discussion. The template provides a mechanism for ensuring that candidates understand the pedagogical purpose of the assignment (framing), have an opportunity to cultivate critical perspectives about the case (guiding questions), and make sense of culture, race, disability, and risk in young children (application and extension). In addition, this template can be used across multiple RPs and is aligned with EI/ECSE Standards as well (see Table 4).

In sum, this development and design process for building a critical case study assignment has potential to serve as a model for supporting candidates develop a culturally responsive approach to responding to young children's behaviors and that the resources and recommendations for readers will support university faculty in the adaption of case study methodology in their programs. This process for building a critical case study assignment can serve as a model for helping candidates develop a culturally responsive approach to responding to young children's behaviors and that the resources and recommendations for readers will support faculty in the adaption of case study methodology in their programs.

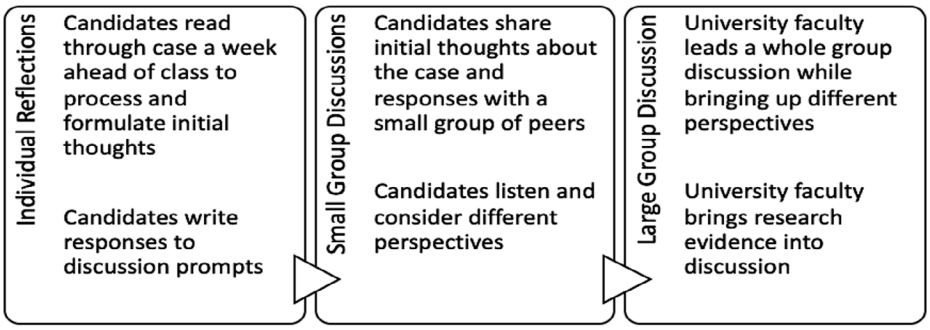
Application Learning Experience: Using Case-Based Instruction to Disrupt Preservice Teachers' Racial Bias in Early Childhood Special Education

Inequities in early childhood education, particularly regarding referrals to special education, impede access to high-quality and inclusive learning environments. Over half of the young children receiving special education services in early childhood are educated in separate environments from their non-disabled peers (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services [DHHS] & U.S. Department of Education [DOE], 2023), further marginalizing young children with disabilities and developmental delays. Educators' attitudes, perceptions, and training strongly impacts referral decisions for special education (Fish, 2019; Woods, 2023), and how educators attend to their instructional decision-making can be in response to explicit and implicit biases (Staats, 2012). One example is racial bias that is seen in the alarming statistics indicating that there is an overrepresentation of Black young children receiving referrals for early childhood special education, particularly Black boys (Cruz & Rodl,

TABLE 5: Summary of Case and Discussion Prompts

Tay, an inquisitive 5-year-old Black boy, is in a Kindergarten class with an early career teacher. It appears that when Tay does not know how to proceed with a task, he will loudly ask questions and get out of his seat to find the answer with his peers. During a counting collections task, Tay misses instructions while he picks up the objects he dropped on the floor. The teacher gets frustrated that Tay is crawling on the floor and calls him to the carpet to put his collection back without finishing the task. Tay argues that he wants to finish, tells the teacher how many objects he counted, and pleads with her to explain what he needs to do next. The teacher ignores him and uses his incomplete work on this task as a piece of evidence that Tay needs an evaluation for his classroom behavior.
• Did the teacher miss an opportunity to evaluate Tay's counting? How would you have responded? • How would you describe Tay's behavior in relation to his age and developmental level? • Does the teacher have sufficient evidence to refer Tay for special education services? • What implicit biases might the teacher have, and how do those biases impact her instruction with Tay?

FIGURE 2: Implementation Guide



2018). Black students are more likely to be identified with intellectual disabilities and emotional disturbance more than other disabilities (U.S. DOE, 2020), and the perceived challenges in behavior of Black boys are at a greater risk for disciplinary actions in school (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

There continues to be an emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion in early childhood settings that sets the expectation for research informing educator preparation (e.g., DHHS & DOE, 2023). There is a need for educators to have a strong understanding of early child development and knowledge of how factors, such as social, cultural, and linguistic diversity, are considered when facilitating meaningful learning experiences (DEC, 2020; EI/ECSE Standard 1). Educators must also facilitate equitable access and participation for all children in inclusive settings through culturally responsive and affirming practices and relationships (DEC, 2020; EI/ECSE Standard 6; see Table 6). Educator preparation programs are tasked with helping candidates develop strong equity (Cochran-Smith & Keefe, 2022), which requires candidates to unpack, interrogate, and unlearn harmful educational practices. Since educators play an important role in identifying young children for special education support, it is essential to ensure candidates are equipped with the necessary skills and critical lens to evaluate (and reframe) how to recognize and respond to their own internal biases. Without building candidates' strong equity, unproductive and non-inclusive framings, such as "color blindness" and meritocracy, will continue to shape how educators operate (Nasir et al., 2016).

Case-based instruction as a pedagogical approach in educator preparation can help candidates recognize the impact of biases on instructional decision-making and facilitate discussions to challenge and disrupt unproductive framings of young children in classrooms. The use of case-based instruction provides a learner-centered opportunity to practice applying theoretical ideas in the context of real-life scenarios to critique inequities (Moldavan & Gonzalez, 2023). Cases aim to demonstrate real-life examples of the ramifications of candidates' biases related to race, gender, language, and ability. Strategic discussion questions can accompany the cases to challenge candidates' perspectives on teachers' actions and how those actions impact young children. These discussions can also help candidates discuss varying perspectives on the same case and support university faculty in identifying the differences between deficit and anti-deficit noticings that can lead to different outcomes for already marginalized children (Louie et al., 2021). Through the continued use of case-based instruction, candidates can practice anti-deficit noticings and build strong equity.

The example case with discussion questions provided here is framed within the context of a mathematics lesson in a kindergarten classroom (see Table 5). The case was written to demonstrate how racial biases can lead to an inappropriate response as well as influence inappropriate evaluation for special education services.

Figure 2 provides an implementation guide for using case-based instruction

TABLE 6: Related DEC EI/ECSE Standards and RPs

Initial Practice-Based Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators	Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices
1.2 Candidates apply knowledge of normative sequences of early development, individual differences, and families' social, cultural, and linguistic diversity to support each child's development and learning across contexts.	Instruction 3 (INS3): Practitioners gather and use data to inform decisions about individualized instruction.
6.6 Candidates use responsive interactions, interventions, and instruction with sufficient intensity and types of support across activities, routines, and environments to promote child learning and development and facilitate access, participation, and engagement in natural environments and inclusive settings.	Instruction 9 (INS9): Practitioners use functional assessment and related prevention, promotion, and intervention strategies across environments to prevent and address challenging behavior.

with candidates. This process allows the candidates to have a common experience to draw from and reference while continuing to learn more about the impact of racial biases in classrooms.

If we, as the early childhood special education field, continue to let systems exist in their current state, then minoritized groups will continue to experience marginalization and further limited access to high-quality and inclusive educational services (U.S. DHHS & DOE, 2023). Candidates need to know how their interpretation of behaviors of young children and the internal biases in their analysis of such behaviors can impact their instructional decision-making, in turn impacting young children's support and learning.

Application Learning Experience: Utilizing Assessment to Increase Cross Discipline Collaboration

University candidates with related majors in disciplines such as ECSE, SLP, and psychology often express an interest in working with children and families (DeVeney & McKevitt, 2021). Although the primary focus of this work in early childhood education (birth to age 8) may differ across disciplines, a shared objective is to identify young children in need of additional supports and services to appropriately meet developmental milestones. The importance of gaining insights from many disciplines with respect to a child's development is well recognized. Guralnick (2000) states, "The interdisciplinary team assessment of young children with possible developmental delays or of those with established developmental disabilities constitutes a critical component of the larger system of services and supports for children and their families during the early childhood years" (p.3).

It may be challenging for university faculty to create assignments that mirror the collaborative process that EI/ECSEs encounter once working in the field as professionals. For example, at the university level, interprofessional educational (IPE) teams may face logistical barriers in terms of transportation or availability or perhaps they are resistant to working with others especially in regard to a high-stakes, graded assignment. Faculty in higher education may be challenged by the time required to design an interprofessional assignment for candidates, or by other institutional demands on their limited time (Ward et al., 2018).

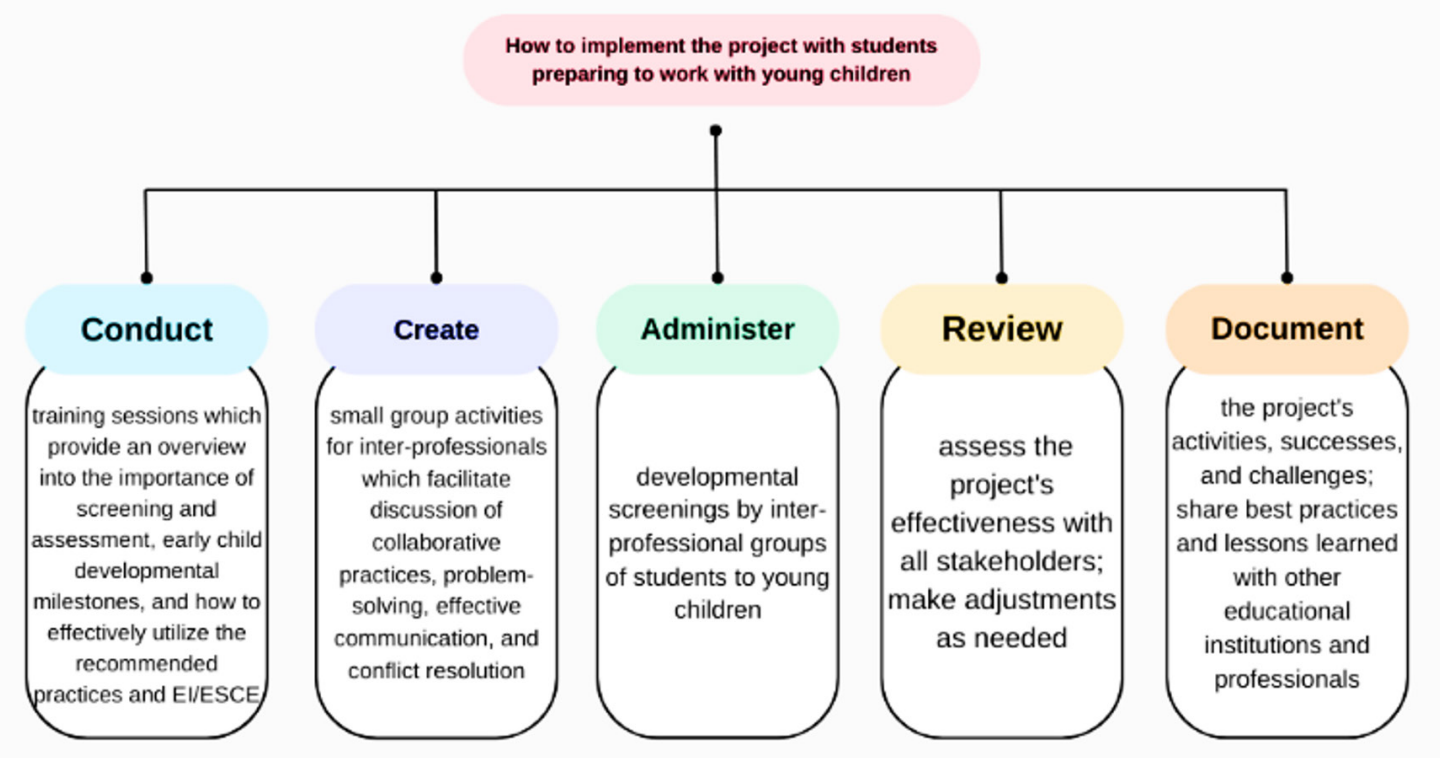
To address these challenges, university faculty from ECSE, psychology, and SLP programs created an assignment that emphasized IPE for university candidates while conducting universal preschool assessments for children within community organizations. To firmly anchor this IPE assignment in best practice, the university faculty turned to the DEC EI/ECSE Standards and the RPs.

Essential aspects of this project were aligned to EI/ECSE Standards and the RPs. Although the RPs do not explicitly reference interprofessional collaboration, they do provide a framework well-suited for professionals from many related disciplines to partner (Rausch et al., 2021). In this project, university faculty incorporated the RPs and EI/ECSE Standards into their early childhood assessment assignments thereby laying the groundwork for future professional collaborations amongst candidates.

By administering assessment tools in natural environments embedded within daily routines and activities and following the principles of the RPs, candidates appreciated the value of authentic and collaborative experiences while learning about screening tools and best practices. The EI/ECSE Standards and RPs, outlined in Table 7, reflect the framework that informed the university faculty when creating their IPE project, assessing young children in authentic settings, utilizing observation and interviews.

The project also facilitated ongoing communication between members of the assessment team regarding the current functioning and progress of young children in a variety of settings and stressed the importance of collaboration within related but differing professional disciplines. In design, this project encourages

FIGURE 3: Implementation of the IPE Project



novel and innovative approaches for early childhood assessment practices while stressing the importance of adherence to EI/ECSE Standards and RPs. See Figure 3 for additional details about the organization and implementation of this project.

IPE is a critical component and precursor to interprofessional collaborative practice. Interprofessional collaborative practice is one of the most prevalent assessment models used in early intervention (King et al., 2009). In interprofessional collaborative practice, teams of individuals from different disciplines collaborate with one another to complete professional work such as assessment and intervention planning (Kaczmarek et al., 2000; Nash, 2008).

This approach differs from a more traditional model wherein each professional assesses or supports a child individually. An interprofessional model allows all professionals to assess the child synchronously and collectively, which not only eliminates the need for the child to participate in multiple assessments but provides the professionals with the opportunity to confer and consult with each other in tandem (Grisham-Brown, 2000). Additionally, providing candidates from diverse disciplines with an opportunity to confer and consult with each allows for a team-based problem-solving approach. This IPE team can then dynamically brainstorm solutions to real-world scenarios, effectively demonstrating that there is no "cookbook approach" or single correct answer to a given situation (Kilgo et al., 2014b).

IMPLEMENTATION AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE EXPERIENCES

After observing others implementing the RPs and EI/ECSE Standards, candidates should begin to implement and integrate these in their own field-based experiences and reflect on their practice. Specific assignments that support candidates in implementing the RPs while aligning to the EI/ECSE Standards support candidates in understanding the bridge from research to practice. Providing candidates with structures, tools, and experiences to base their reflections on will support them in deepening both reflective teaching and evidence-based practice. Darling-Hammond (2006) describes this as developing "reflective decision makers" in teacher candidates and connects the importance of this disposition to teacher candidates' learning.

Implementation and Reflective Experience: Literacy Service-Learning Project

In recent years, the field of education has experienced a nationwide shift toward structured literacy, fueled by the science of reading movement. While families of young children are not expected to be reading teachers, EI/ECSEs can work with families to support early literacy development within the context of the child's natural environment, which is linked to both language and

TABLE 7: Related DEC EI/ECSE Standards and RPs

Initial Practice-Based Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators	Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices
3.2 Candidates use a variety of collaborative strategies when working with other adults that are evidence-based, appropriate to the task, culturally and linguistically responsive, and take into consideration the environment and service delivery approach.	**Assessment (A6):** Practitioners use a variety of methods, including observation and interviews, to gather assessment information from multiple sources, including the child's family and other significant individuals in the child's life.
3.3 Candidates partner with families and other professionals to develop individualized plans and support the various transitions that occur for the young child and their family throughout the birth through 8 age-span.	**Family (F3):** Practitioners are responsive to the family's concerns, priorities, and changing life circumstances.
4.1 Candidates understand the purposes of formal and informal assessment, including ethical and legal considerations, and use this information to choose developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate, valid, reliable tools and methods that are responsive to the characteristics of the young child, family, and program.	
4.4 Candidates, in collaboration with families and other team members, use assessment data to determine eligibility, develop child and family-based outcomes/goals, plan for interventions and instruction, and monitor progress to determine efficacy of programming.	

literacy readiness (Brown & Sheridan, 2023; Brown et al., 2019). University faculty can provide structured opportunities to support teacher candidates in working directly with families of young exceptional children to promote early literacy development within the child's natural environment. A substantial body of literature exists that demonstrates the positive impact of family involvement in literacy development (Bruns & Pierce, 2007; Hindman & Morrison, 2011) as well as the role of parents as children's first teachers (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020), and much of the existing literature focuses on shared or interactive reading or engaging in conversation with young children. Given research findings that suggest a positive influence of family involvement in early literacy, sharing information and strategies related to early literacy practices may help engage families further while improving child outcomes (Hindman & Morrison, 2011). The following section will propose a service-learning project designed to empower teacher candidates with early literacy content knowledge (focusing on oral language, concepts of print, and phonological awareness), family engagement strategies, and tangible experience serving the families of young exceptional children prior to graduation.

The proposed service-learning project can be incorporated into methods courses or during a clinical experience semester. By this point in their program, candidates should have had several credit hours of courses in reading instruction and content related to family partnership in early childhood. The goal of the project centers on bridging content knowledge of early literacy development with practice engaging families to promote early literacy among exceptional toddlers and preschoolers. The project would require candidates to organize and host a family night within an existing structure in the university, such as a reading clinic, lab school, or early childhood center, or in the context of a field-based placement site. Candidates would present content knowledge of early literacy development in family-friendly, approachable language as well as several examples of strategies that demonstrate how to promote early literacy within several contexts of the young child's natural environment. For example, candidates may describe how families can expand on oral language while shopping at the grocery store, playing at the playground, or stacking blocks at home. Parent education opportunities have been shown to engage families in their child's education, especially when those opportunities prioritize parent participation and responsiveness to their unique needs (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). Parent education opportunities in the form of literacy events or family reading events (Bruns & Pierce, 2007) and parent coaching on literacy strategies and practices (Brown et al., 2019) are also positively linked to early literacy outcomes. However, based on prior research on family outreach, university faculty should consider including the project as a multi-step endeavor to provide more communication and involvement to extend the parent education opportunity (Hindman & Morrison, 2011).

The proposed project also allows candidates to understand better and apply the RPs for working with young children who have or are at risk for disabilities and/or developmental delays. Table 8 presents examples of specific alignment between the proposed project compo-

TABLE 8: Project alignment with the RPs

Project component	DEC Recommended Practice
Family outreach and relationship building	**F1.** Practitioners build trusting and respectful relationships with the family through interactions that are sensitive and responsive to cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity.
Information sharing with examples and resources	**F2.** Practitioners provide the family with up-to-date, comprehensive, and unbiased information in a way that the family can understand and use to make informed choices and decisions.
Model and practice early literacy strategies based on child's needs	**F4.** Practitioners and the family work together to create outcomes or goals, develop individualized plans, and implement practices that address the family's priorities and concerns and the child's strengths and needs.
Information sharing and practice with early literacy strategies	**F5.** Practitioners support family functioning, promote family confidence and competence, and strengthen family-child relationships by acting in ways that recognize and build on family strengths and capacities.
Information sharing, modeling, and practice with early literacy strategies	**F6.** Practitioners engage the family in opportunities that support and strengthen parenting knowledge and skills and parenting competence and confidence in ways that are feasible, individualized, and tailored to the family's preferences.
Information sharing with examples and resources for oral language development	**F8.** Practitioners provide the family of a young child who has or is at risk for developmental delay/disability, and who is a dual language learner, with information about the benefits of learning in multiple languages for the child's growth and development.

TABLE 9: Related DEC EI/ECSE Standards and RPs

Initial Practice-Based Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators	Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices
2.3 Candidates engage families in identifying their strengths, priorities, and concerns; support families to achieve the goals they have for their family and their young child's development and learning; and promote families' competence and confidence during assessment, individualized planning, intervention, instruction, and transition processes.	Environment (E1): Practitioners provide services and supports in natural and inclusive environments during daily routines and activities to promote the child's access to and participation in learning experiences.
3.2 Candidates use a variety of collaborative strategies when working with other adults that are evidence-based, appropriate to the task, culturally and linguistically responsive, and take into consideration the environment and service delivery approach.	See Table 8 for relevant Family RPs
3.3 Candidates partner with families and other professionals to develop individualized plans and support the various transitions that occur for the young child and their family throughout the birth through 8 age-span.	

nents and the DEC RPs, which are also delineated in Table 9.

In conclusion, incorporating a service-learning project that embeds content and practice holds significant potential to improve candidates' ability to engage families in early literacy once they work independently in the field while providing tangible support to families and young children. Additionally, a service-learning project focused on early literacy could expose young children to evidence-based literacy practices that improve long-term literacy outcomes due to early intervention at home.

Implementation and Reflective Experience: Self-Reflections Using RPs and Performance Checklists

In order to evolve and progress in their own practice, candidates must build an understanding of and capacity for self-reflection. The capacity to self-reflect and determine strengths and next steps in an educator's practice is critical for continuous improvement and supporting young children's learning. It is through reflection that educators become responsive, and it is necessary to develop these skills and dispositions in educator preparation programs (Loughran, 2002).

TABLE 10: Self-reflection prompts

- What are your strengths in each strand? What are some next steps and related goals?
- What resources do you need or do you have available to help meet your goal?
- What was the biggest success/challenge this past semester? How did you approach this challenge? What would you do differently next time?
- How effectively did you implement RPs to support child and family outcomes?
- What RPs worked well in building meaningful relationships with parents/caregivers?
- How did you use feedback from my site supervisor and/or cooperating mentor teacher to enhance my practice?
- In what ways can you further enhance implementation of culturally and linguistically responsive practice?

TABLE 11: Related DEC EI/ECSE Standards and RPs

Initial Practice-Based Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators	Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices
7.2 Candidates engage in ongoing reflective practice and access evidence-based information to improve their own practices.	Applicable across all Recommended Practices
Standard 8: EI/ECSE Field and Clinical Experience Early Interventionist/Early Childhood Special Education candidates progress through a series of planned and developmentally sequenced field experiences for the early childhood age ranges (birth to age 3, 3 through 5 years, 5 through 8 years), range of abilities, and in the variety of collaborative and inclusive early childhood settings that are appropriate to their license and roles.	

This assignment can be completed in multiple different approaches, depending on the course format. One approach is at the beginning of the semester (or each month), candidates choose performance checklists from the eight RP topic areas available via the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center's (ECTA) webpage. After completing their selected checklist(s) and considering their own practice and upcoming field-based experience, candidates describe their strengths and next steps for each topic area and develop a goal for the semester (or month) in each strand they selected. At the end of the semester (or month), candidates again complete the same checklist and revisit their progress towards that goal, reflect on what they have learned and include next steps and resources for continuous growth (Table 10). These reflections should be processed with mentor teachers and university supervisors to ensure the candidate has opportunities throughout the semester to work on and meet their goals.

The use of the ECTA checklists connects the RPs directly to a candidate's own practice and introduces them to tools that can be used throughout their career, for both individual self-reflection and to center team based reflective conversations. Table 11 connects the importance of reflection and field experiences to the EI/ECSE Standards and recommends consideration across RPs.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO LEARNING

The final section of this article focuses on innovative structures and approaches to consider for use with a variety of course content. As courses are increasingly offered in multiple formats (e.g., asynchronous online, remote, hybrid, "hyflex"), faculty must continue to be nimble and responsive in designing content that is relative and engaging for candidates.

Innovative Approaches: Problem-Based Learning Simulation (PBL-S) to Support Communication and Collaboration in Personnel Preparation

One goal of EI/ECSE is the delivery of comprehensive services to infants, toddlers, preschool-age children, and their families. This goal requires sharing and integrating the expertise of team members to meet children's and families' needs. However, an examination of preparation programs in higher education suggests that most curriculum content and practicum experiences are centered on a specific discipline. For example, SLP candidates are prepared with other SLP candidates, and their curriculum is almost entirely focused on content relevant to communication science and disorders. Similar disciplinary preparation occurs for candidates in the fields of psychology, education, social work, and health. Limited attention and time are given to interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary collaborative practices in pre- and in-service training (Campbell et al., 2009; Gilbert et al., 2010; Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014). Consequently,

TABLE 12: Fictional example of case study

Laura is 4 years old and has recently been enrolled in an inclusive public preschool setting. She has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) with a qualification under developmental delay. The IEP indicates Laura has strengths in cognitive and motor skills but has difficulty communicating, struggles with transitions, following directions, and at times is aggressive towards adults and peers. Laura is currently receiving ECSE and SLP services. Additional paperwork indicates Laura has recently been removed from her mother's custody and lives with her grandmother. A caseworker has been assigned to the team.

In a PBL-S approach, candidates identify facts, generate hypotheses from these facts, specify next steps needed to confirm or deny these hypotheses, and then iterate on this process when new information is gathered. The table shows an example, based on the vignette above from the first week. This table might vary depending on which professional perspective a student is assuming (e.g., school social worker, teacher, special education coordinator, or SLP). The experience can also be done as a whole class from the perspective of a multi-disciplinary team.

The "Learning Opportunities" section includes topics that candidates need more information on to make hypotheses and identify relevant next steps. Learning Opportunities are broader subjects, not specific solely to the case being developed. These can be sources for future lectures or research assignments for candidates.

1. Facts	**2. Hypotheses**
• Laura is 4 years old and currently has an IEP. • Laura scored above the cut-off in physical and cognitive skills in a developmental screening. • Laura struggles with transitions, following directions, managing emotions. • Laura receives special education and speech-language services. • Laura is currently living with her grandmother.	• Laura is meeting physical and cognitive developmental milestones. • Laura's mother needs to be invited to IEP meetings. • She is behind in social/emotional development. • Her behaviors could be trauma responses. • Laura's father is not involved and does not need to be invited to the IEP meeting.
3. Next Steps	**4. Learning Opportunities**
• Determine who is the legal guardian for IEP/educational decision making. • Refer Laura to the school social worker to screen and possibly assess for potential trauma related to her home life. • Assess and determine (as a team) whether Laura is receiving the right services and supports for her needs.	• Who needs to be invited to an IEP meeting for children in custody outside their birth parents? • What do potential trauma responses look like in a 4-year-old? Where can I find information on typical development? • What school-based supports and interventions support young children? • How do I advocate when someone in a professional team disagrees with me?

in their first job, many beginning practitioners are poorly equipped to participate in collaborative practices with other team members (Bruder & Dunst, 2005). An interdisciplinary approach incorporating principles of adult learning by connecting content to real-life applications using problem-based learning-simulations (PBL-S) has potential to support cross-discipline collaboration. PBL-S is deemed a critical strategy for adult learners (Bryan et al, 2009.; Steinberg & Vinjamuri, 2014) and can be used to support learners from a variety of disciplines as they develop communication and collaboration skills necessary to adequately support children with disabilities and their families.

As a student-centered instructional approach, PBL-S mainly directs candidates' involvement in group study to solve ill-defined and open-ended scenarios using the following learning steps: analyzing problems, setting goals, collecting resources, summarizing ideas, and reflecting on problem-solving experiences (Lin et al., 2010). This process is designed to promote analytic reasoning, problem-solving, and collaborative learning and is aligned with Teaming and Collaboration RP 3 (TC 3): *Practitioners use communication and group facilitation strategies to enhance team functioning and interpersonal relationships with and among team members* (see Table 13).

PBL-S denotes learning within a safe educational environment, in which some part of reality is simulated. Candidates must learn and act within this environment. Simulation learning, thus, is a form of experiential learning that is person-centered, integrates many facets of learning (e.g., cognitive, motivational, affective, psychomotor, social) and has a high degree of authenticity (Breckwoldt et al., 2014). Simulation learning allows learners from various disciplines and of all performance levels to gain knowledge, to acquire skills, and/or to understand complex procedures in a controlled and safe environment. Simulation aims to provide close-to-authentic experiences to prepare learners for real

TABLE 13: Related DEC EI/ECSE Standards and RPs

Initial Practice-Based Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators	Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices
3.1 Candidates apply teaming models, skills, and processes, including appropriate uses of technology, when collaborating and communicating with families; professionals representing multiple disciplines, skills, expertise, and roles; and community partners and agencies. **3.2** Candidates use a variety of collaborative strategies when working with other adults that are evidence-based, appropriate to the task, culturally and linguistically responsive, and take into consideration the environment and service delivery approach. **3.3** Candidates partner with families and other professionals to develop individualized plans and support the various transitions that occur for the young child and their family throughout the birth through 8 age-span. **7.3** Candidates exhibit leadership skills in advocating for improved outcomes for young children, families, and the profession, including the promotion of and use of evidence-based practices and decision-making.	**Teaming & Collaboration (TC 3):** Practitioners use communication and group facilitation strategies to enhance team functioning and interpersonal relationships with and among team members. *Note: Within each PBL-S, the content could focus on a variety of RPs.*

future situations.

Participation in PBL-S involves learners working in small groups to address the learning and developmental needs of a fictional child. Each member of the group is assigned to a different stakeholder role in the child's life and can vary depending on the specific child/family scenario presented. University faculty individualize the scenarios as they see fit. The "problem" aspect of the scenario involves candidates reviewing weekly modules providing specific information on the child and family's life, as well as familiarizing themselves with the information contained within these modules according to their stakeholder role. As much as possible, the events occurring in the fictional child/family's life unfolded in 'real-time' during the semester, mimicking as closely as possible a real-life teaching situation.

University faculty begin each class session with a short lecture to address topics relevant to the weekly module that are also paired with a matching event in the child/family's life. Each class session would require learners to engage in PBL-S, facilitated by the faculty member; for example, candidates would need to evaluate information, engage with other professionals, make pedagogical decisions and adapting their plans for the child as the child's circumstances changed. Additionally, the candidates would need to work together according to their assigned stakeholder perspectives to address the child and family's immediate and long-term learning and developmental needs. Table 12 provides a fictional example of the PBL-S process that could be used with pre-service teachers.

"Teaching can improve the lives of students, neighborhoods, and society. However, teaching practices to prepare future educators for classrooms are sometimes outdated, lack student-centeredness, and may not provide a curriculum with an eye toward inclusion and equity.

In conclusion, university faculty can utilize PBL-S as a means to support interdisciplinary collaboration and communication when working with families and young children, while simultaneously extending candidates' knowledge base and experiences relative to their future careers. Specific connections to the DEC Standards and RPs are noted in Table 13.

Innovative approaches: Podcast as a Pedagogical Tool for Accessible EI/ECSE Preparation

Education is the key to making communities and the world better (Edelman, 1992). Teaching can improve the lives of students, neighborhoods, and society. However, teaching practices to prepare future educators for classrooms are sometimes outdated, lack student-centeredness, and may not provide a curriculum with an eye toward inclusion and equity. Candidates can engage with course content in a variety of ways, though opportunities to engage with technology in education

TABLE 14: Considerations for Using Podcasts in Coursework

1. Determine purpose for podcast for early childhood education courses.
2. Decide which early childhood podcasts to use in the course(s).
3. Collaborate with early childhood candidates and faculty to share podcast resources.
4. Implement practices and evaluate effectiveness of early childhood podcasts in curriculum.

TABLE 15: Related DEC EI/ECSE Standards and RPs

Initial Practice-Based Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators	Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices
3.1 Candidates apply teaming models, skills, and processes, including appropriate uses of technology, when collaborating and communicating with families; professionals representing multiple disciplines, skills, expertise, and roles; and community partners and agencies.	Applicable across all Recommended Practices.
7.3 Candidates exhibit leadership skills in advocating for improved outcomes for young children, families, and the profession, including the promotion of and use of evidence-based practices and decision-making.	

may be one area that is exclusive and not accessible to all candidates (Macy et al., 2018; Shahriza et al., 2022). Podcasting is a form of technology that could be considered when designing accessible college courses (Lonn & Teasley, 2009). This section focuses on using podcasts in higher education as an accessible practice for personnel preparation. Four considerations will be discussed for adopting podcasts in university coursework summarized in Table 14.

To start planning for using podcasts, university faculty must start by determining the purpose of using podcasts in coursework. Some guiding questions might include: (a) Why use podcasts in my course? (b) What will students take away from the podcasts? and (c) What early childhood course(s) are best for podcasts? For example, if a faculty member was teaching an assessment class, they would consider how using podcasts could support assessment concepts taught, and how candidates could better understand the profession with real-world examples discussed in the podcast. For example, in an episode of the BUTTERCUP podcast, guest Dr. Iheoma Iruka discussed a new contextual assessment tool she created with her colleagues that aims to assess the early learning setting with an equity lens (Goldberg et al., 2022; Macy & Bagnato, 2023). Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES) measures the sociocultural context of the early childhood environment (Curenton et al., 2018). By listening to the podcast interview with Dr. Iheoma Iruka (Macy, 2022), EI/ECSE candidates learn directly from the scholar who developed ACSES and gain insights into how to create inclusive environments and personalized learning for all children.

Once the purpose and podcasts that fit course objectives have been determined, then faculty would decide which podcast and/or episode to use for each course. Familiarity with different relevant podcasts can be helpful for faculty making these decisions. Colleagues, friends, and candidates may be sources of referrals for learning about different podcasts that could be used in coursework. One way to decide which podcasts to use in courses might be to select keywords and use those in a search for content. Another way is to review early childhood websites and resources created by government funded agencies and centers. For example, the Illinois Early Learning Project has a website with a collection of several episodes to choose from that can be used in early childhood professional development and early childhood coursework.

Collaboration with early childhood candidates and other faculty to share resources and discuss use can be helpful with implementation. The more people who engage in the practice the more support that it can offer when getting started. Collaboration can support sustainability of practices as the foundation established at the beginning can create a way to have accountability in the process. For example, discussing practices with other university faculty can promote follow-up and idea generation.

Once university faculty determines the reason for including a podcast and selects the relevant podcast/episode, the next step is implementing podcasts as a tool for learning. There are many ways to use free podcasts in teaching. University faculty should consider assignments that make sense for the course (Hew, 2009). For example, in a Preschool

Methods course, candidates listening to an early childhood teaching practices podcast could select one practice described in the podcast and plan for implementation at their field-based site.

Of great importance is also eliciting feedback from the candidates, including their perceptions of using podcasts and any relevant feedback that can offer that will help inform future practice. Evaluating candidates' satisfaction with podcasts is an important step in the process (Macy, 2023).

The global pandemic resulting from COVID-19 health crisis presented an opportunity for university faculty to reconsider teaching and learning with an eye toward equity and inclusion. Podcasts and other alternatives to traditional teaching were explored as university faculty pivoted and found different ways to create learning opportunities for candidates (Dang et al., 2022). Podcasts as a pedagogical tool are a way to engage candidates with an alternative to traditional teaching that can enhance course content and expose candidates to "real-world" professional practices (Campbell, 2005). Podcasts can specifically be chosen to align across RPs and promotes EI/ECSE Standards as well (see Table 15). When university faculty use pedagogy tools such as podcasts, content may become more inclusive and accessible which offers a possible way to increase student engagement.

CONCLUSION

As the field currently faces a large and concerning educator shortage (Economic Policy Institute, 2022), faculty must consider how to support candidates in becoming well-prepared early childhood special educators who feel competent in their work. Leveraging the DEC Recommended Practices alongside the EI/ECSE Standards provides resources that candidates can continue to reference long after they complete their preparation program. Designing a multitude of engaging and relevant experiences for candidates has great potential to create meaningful opportunities to make meaning of practices and standards in the field. Sharing and collaborating with other faculty members about approaches and learning experiences in preparation programs elevates outcomes for all candidates. It is through this type of collaborative effort and support that we begin to move forward towards a brighter future in preparing the next generation of early interventionists and early childhood special educators.

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Field Experiences in Early Intervention/ Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE): Preparing Teachers for Success in Diverse Early Education Settings

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ABSTRACT
Field experiences provide opportunities for early childhood and early childhood special education (EC/ECSE) educators to implement effective practices in learning settings, and are, therefore, a vital part of EC/ECSE teacher preparation. In this article, we describe field placement models from four universities in the United States: The Bridge Project, Getting Started Early, Peer Coaching to Increase Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions, and University Supervisors Coaching Teacher Candidates: Supporting Young Bi/Multilingual Children with Disabilities. Although there is variety in the settings and effective practices supported through these field placements, performance feedback and collaboration are clear themes across models.

KEYWORDS
Early childhood, field experiences, special education, teacher preparation

Early childhood and early childhood special education (EC/ECSE) teacher candidates need ongoing, in-context support in field experiences to implement interventions effectively with children (Grossman et al., 2009; Joyce & Showers, 2002). Course materials and discussions can support knowledge of evidence-based practices, but didactic instruction and decontextualized practice do not translate into the use of evidence-based practices in the classroom (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Field experiences provide opportunities for EC/ECSE teacher candidates (TCs) to apply knowledge to real-world contexts, problem-solve through implementing practices with children and families, and develop self-efficacy (Maheady et al., 2014; Peebles & Mendaglio, 2014). Without field experiences that include opportunities to practice with children and families, TCs have difficulty connecting theory with effective practices (Leko et al., 2012). However, field experiences in EC/ECSE are variably defined and implemented (Maheady et al., 2014; Nagro & Bettencourt, 2017; O'Brien et al., 2023). In this article, authors from four teacher preparation programs in the United States provide an overview of how field placements in their programs have been structured to support TCs' use of effective practices.

Given the research support for field placements and the variability in delivery, there is a need for guidance for specific field experience activities for EC/ECSE practitioners (O'Brien et al., 2023). EC/ECSE educators are unique in education for the variety of roles they can serve (e.g., early interventionist, classroom teacher, itinerant/consulting teacher, co-teacher) and the populations with which they are certified to work (e.g., families, children considered at risk, children with a variety of identified disabilities). It is important that EC/ECSE TCs have opportunities with diverse children in the many settings that they will serve and that they have opportunities for working with a variety of other education personnel (e.g., general education teachers, related services personnel, and paraprofessionals). More information is needed on how to identify effective and high-quality field placements to ensure diverse experiences and how to evaluate TCs' learning during fieldwork (Bruder, 2016; Maheady et al., 2014).

In the following accounts, four field placement models across the United States are described. The models' activities and goals for field placements vary, mirroring the current literature. Our purpose is to provide different examples of how field placements can be structured for successful TC application of evidence-based practices, rather than to compare different field placement delivery methods. We begin with *The Bridge Project*, a model of interdisciplinary field experiences enhancing the skills of both ABA therapists and ECSE teachers. Next, the *Getting Started Early* model provides an example of supporting preservice teachers to implement effective practices in inclusive environments. In *Peer Coaching to Increase Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Intervention (NDBI) Practices*, we describe a field experience for preservice teachers support NDBI in inclusive classrooms. The final model, *University Supervisors Coaching Teacher Candidates: Supporting Young Bi/Multilingual Children with Disabilities*, describes a field experience focused on using Practice-Based Coaching to support bi/multilingual children in EC/ECSE. Despite the variety of field experiences across the models, there is a focus on targeted, specific feedback to support effective practice use by TCs and an emphasis on collaborating in diverse EC/ECSE placements.

The Bridge Project: Preparing Interdisciplinary Professionals through Supervised Joint Fieldwork Experiences

The Bridge Project is a partnership between California State University, Northridge (CSUN)'s Master of Arts in ECSE and the Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) programs. The primary objective of the project is to enhance student understanding of the roles and practices within each discipline while developing competencies in both fields. The main components of the Bridge Project include shared coursework and jointly supervised practicum experiences, both taught and supervised by interdisciplinary faculty (i.e., an ECSE faculty member and a Psychology faculty member who is a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst; BCBA©). The program incorporates case-based instruction to promote team-based problem-solving skills, supervised joint fieldwork experiences focusing on addressing the educational and behavioral needs of young children with disabilities, and interdisciplinary seminars and trainings that include professionals representing a variety of disciplines. This section presents a practicum model designed to structure and enhance these collaborative training experiences for ECSE teachers and behavior analysts (BCBAs©).

The Interdisciplinary Bridge Project Practicum Model

The rationale for the Bridge Project stemmed from the recognition that while professionals in ABA and ECSE often work with the same child, teaching similar skills – such as communication and social skills — there are distinct differences in their training and professional practices. Notably, the two professions adhere to distinct standards of training. To meet professional standards and competencies, ABA programs typically prioritize producing versatile practitioners capable of practicing across diverse settings (e.g., homes, community settings, large organizations) and various populations, spanning across individuals and/or groups and different age ranges. Due to standards requirements for behavior analysts, there is limited space within the curriculum for specific coursework pertaining to young children with special needs and their families, including developmental milestones (Campbell et al., 2009; Kelly & Tincani, 2013). At the same time, ECSE teacher preparation programs often have difficulty embedding opportunities to address topics related to social-emotional development and challenging behaviors into their curriculum and field placements, leading to reports from teachers that they do not feel equipped to manage problem behavior (Garrity et. al., 2019). Differences between disciplines extend into professional practice, as the teaching procedures, structure, data collection, and formality or specificity of interventions differ, all of which can impact collaboration (Lane & Brown, 2023). Professionals from each discipline may perceive the needs of young children through different perspectives and may lack understanding of each other's roles, which is only compounded by limited systemic support and time for interdisciplinary collaboration in the workplace. Given these challenges, it is important to foster increased understanding and collaboration among ECSE professionals and behavior analysts to facilitate successful service coordination and collaboration.

Every year, five students each from the ECSE master's program and the ABA master's program begin the Bridge Project. Students engage in three semesters of joint practicum under the regular supervision and mentorship of Bridge faculty alongside their master's program coursework and practicum experiences. The development of Bridge practicum activities adheres to the DEC Recommended Practices (DEC, 2014) in Teaming and Collaboration, with particular emphasis on TC2 and TC3.

Students participating in the Bridge Project begin their joint practicum in the second semester of their respective master's programs, following completion of their foundational coursework. At this stage, ECSE students hold their preliminary teaching credentials and are employed as lead teachers in local preschools. Each ABA student is partnered

TABLE 1: Bridge Scholars Model

Evidence-Based Practices	Activity	Deliverables
Semester 1: Scholars collaborate in pairs to: 1. operationally define one target behavior for 5 students, 2. develop data collection procedures, collect and graph data, 3. develop a simple intervention plan, and 4. coach each other on implementing the intervention.	• Target behavior operational definitions • Data sheets • Graphed data	• Student summary • Intervention plan
Semester 2: Scholars collaborate in pairs to conduct a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) for one student.	• Indirect assessment data (e.g., interview, survey) • Descriptive assessment data (e.g., observations) • Functional analysis data	• FBA report
Semester 3: Scholars collaboratively develop and implement a Function-Based Intervention Plan based on the results of the FBA from the previous semester.	• Baseline data • Plan for implementing MTSS • Performance monitoring plan	• Intervention Plan • Presentation: FBA and intervention outcomes

with an ECSE student and joins their classroom one day per week. Together, they engage in collaborative activities aimed at deepening their understanding of each other's expertise, honing collaboration skills, and practicing competencies relevant to each other's fields. Under the supervision of Bridge faculty mentors, ABA students guide ECSE peers on implementing behavioral assessment and intervention techniques while ECSE students guide ABA peers on developing and carrying out developmentally appropriate teaching activities suitable for a classroom setting.

During the first semester of practicum, the pair of students collaborate to identify a target problem behavior of a young child with disabilities in the ECSE classroom (see Table 1). They collect data, then develop and implement a simple behavior strategy. As part of this collaborative activity, the assignment provides opportunities for coaching and providing feedback to each other. For instance, ECSE students provide feedback on the feasibility of the data collection procedures the ABA student designed, and the ABA student provides feedback on the ECSE students' data collection while coaching them on reliability measures. These coaching and feedback opportunities are embedded into each semester of practicum.

During the second semester of the practicum, as students further develop their competencies in ECSE/ABA in the Bridge Project as well as their core curriculum, each pair collaboratively conducts a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA). Together, they identify precursor or maladaptive behaviors for functional assessment, collect FBA data, and write an FBA report under the supervision of Bridge faculty.

In the third and final semester, students engage in a collaborative capstone project that showcases the synthesis and application of key competencies learned throughout the Bridge Project. Working in pairs, students design function-based interventions based on the functional assessment data obtained in the previous semester. The project includes a literature review, baseline data, an implementation plan for multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), program evaluation, and a training and performance monitoring plan. Students present this culmination project at the conclusion of their final semester.

Focus Practices

Researchers have identified several essential elements for interdisciplinary training (Association of University Centers on Disabilities, 2001; Roncaglia, 2016): a) understanding the common and unique skill set and knowledge across different disciplines and involving families, b) valuing the importance of collaboration, c) emphasizing shared decision-making, d) ensuring frequent and sustained communication among all team members, and e) establishing co-created goals. Importantly, it is recommended that interdisciplinary training start early in training, including both shared coursework and clinical practica (Barrington et al., 1998; Wahlstrom et al., 1997). Furthermore, students

require ongoing mentoring and support throughout their program to effectively apply knowledge gained in university coursework into real-world classroom settings (Leko et al., 2012; Noel & Nelson, 2010; Zeichner, 2012). The Bridge Project has incorporated these strategies into its training model, offering a structured, collaborative practicum model with regular supervision and mentorship from ECSE and BCBA© Bridge faculty mentors.

Getting Started Early: An Alternative Practicum Model Towards Inclusionary Practices

Pre-service candidates come into the teacher preparation programs with various levels of experience. Some have worked in early childcare centers, while others have been teaching assistants in self-contained early childhood special education classrooms for many years. Very few have had experience working in inclusive early childhood programs serving children with a wide range of abilities. This section presents an early fieldwork practicum model in a teacher education program at California State University, Los Angeles that provides pre-service candidates the opportunity to work in an inclusive early childhood classroom setting and provides examples of how they learn to use inclusionary practices.

Early Fieldwork Practicum Model

The early fieldwork practicum model provides pre-service candidates the opportunity to learn and teach in an inclusive early childhood community setting with culturally and linguistically diverse learners with varying levels of abilities. For example, some children may not have language yet, while others may be fluent and speak in complex sentences. Additionally, future teachers must be prepared to support the learning and development of monolingual learners (e.g., Spanish-speaking only) and dual-language learners in their classrooms.

The early practicum is a critical aspect of the supportive, inclusive learning environment that is provided to the candidates. Prior to the start of the semester, information regarding each candidate's background and teaching experiences is collected. Based on the information, pre-service candidates are assigned co-teaching teams for the semester. The teams are designed so that the candidates can learn and support each other. For example, team members may include candidates with different teaching experiences (e.g., no classroom teaching experience, many years as a teaching assistant, experience in general education, experience in self-contained classrooms) and different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (e.g., bi/multilingual). The mixed teams are designed to promote diversity and inclusion (Drescher & Chang, 2022).

Each team works together weekly to develop and implement meaningful, developmentally appropriate classroom activities. The candidates are expected to identify and recognize the individual differences in their students and then make the necessary accommodations and modifications for the different activities throughout the day.

For the evidence-based strategies described below, assignments are created so that pre-service candidates have the opportunity to reflect, discuss, and practice the implementation of strategies with on-site coaching. They receive feedback, reassess, and practice the implementation of strategies again. Additionally, on-site coaching is individualized to the needs of the individual pre-service candidate, from self-reflection to direct modeling (e.g., Shire & Chang, 2022). Examples of the assignments and practices for candidates to implement the two evidence-based practices, visual supports and behavior-specific praise, are provided in Table 2.

Focus on Practices

Establishing a routine in the classroom is one of the most important responsibilities in getting the program started. Most of the pre-service candidates have worked in classrooms, but they have not been the teachers of record for setting up and establishing the classroom schedule and routines from the start of the school year. Having clear expectations and routines will support the pre-service candidates in creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all the students in their classrooms, for both children with and without disabilities (Hancock & Carter, 2016).

Pre-service candidates understand that they should have clear rules, expectations, and routines set up for their classrooms. However, the common pitfall is the implementation of these strategies (e.g., Boyd et al., 2023). The early fieldwork practicum provides the pre-service candidates the experience to implement evidence-based strategies to set up their classrooms in a scaffolded and supportive environment. Preparation starts with short readings, assignments, and reflections about setting up the classroom (e.g., IRIS modules) and proceeds to hands-on experiences with active coaching and modeling with university supervisors in the classroom during the implementation phase (Shire & Chang, 2022; Snyder et al., 2015).

Visual Supports. Two evidence-based strategies are emphasized in the first weeks of the semester to prepare the candidates to set up their classrooms to include all students, both children with and without disabilities. The use of visual supports is an evidence-based practice recognized by the National Professional Development Center (NPDC) to support children's learning (Odom et al., 2010). Visual supports can have different forms and functions (e.g., pictures, icons,

TABLE 2: Getting Started Early Model

	EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES	
Activities	**Visual Supports**	**Behavior-Specific Praise**
Reflective readings and assignments	**Reading/ Activities:** IRIS Module Early Childhood Behavior Management http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/ecbm/#content **Reflective discussion and activities:** Based on the module, discuss how classroom rules, expectations, and transitions will be prepared, including the types of visual supports that will be necessary for the first day of class.	**Reading/ Activities:** IRIS Behavior Specific Praise https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/wp-content/uploads/misc_media/fss/pdfs/2018/fss_behaviro_specific_praise.pdf Collins, L. W., Cook, S. C., Sweigart, C. A., & Evanovich, L. (2018). Using performance feedback to increase special education teachers' use of effective practices. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 51(2), 125–133.* https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059918802774 **Reflective discussions and activities:** Based on the readings, how and what will they praise their students for?
Practice with on-site coaching	Create visual supports and implement their use with students.	Use behavior specific praise throughout the day with students.
Individual feedback	Discussion of how the visual supports were used and whether changes are needed. Did all the students respond to the strategy used, or are there individual students who may need more support? If so, what type of individualized visual supports are needed?	Discussion of how and when behavior-specific praise was used and whether changes are needed. Who were you praising and for what types of behaviors? Are there things that you would have done differently to ensure that all students are included?
Re-assess and practice	If modifications were made based on the individual feedback, practice strategies again with the modifications.	If modifications were made based on the individual feedback, practice strategies again with the modifications.

words, organization) to increase prosocial behaviors, decrease challenging behaviors, and support language development. Visual supports are typically used for whole-class instruction in setting up rules and routines. Individual visual supports are provided as necessary.

Behavior Specific Praise. The second evidence-based practice that we emphasize at the beginning of the semester is behavior-specific praise. This strategy is an effective tool used for positive behavior support to increase prosocial and academic behaviors in children (Menzies et al., 2023). Behavior-specific praise should be used throughout the semester, but it is essential when establishing rules and routines. By providing positive feedback on specific behaviors, children are able to learn the classroom rules and expectations.

These strategies are aligned with DEC Recommended Practices (DEC, 2014) and the Early Intervention/ Early Childhood Special Education Standards (DEC, 2020), particularly Standard 5: Application of Curriculum Frameworks in the Planning of Meaningful Learning Experience and Standard 6: Using Responsive and Reciprocal Interactions, Interventions, and Instruction (DEC, 2020). Both strategies used in setting up the classroom routines ensure that all students, including children with and without disabilities, are able to access and participate in meaningful, developmentally appropriate activities.

Peer Coaching to Increase Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Intervention Practices

Coaching has been identified through numerous studies as an effective professional development activity for increasing early childhood practitioners' use of teaching strategies with fidelity (Elek & Page, 2019). Although there is no agreed upon definition of coaching in education settings, characteristics of effective coaching have been identified across coaching models as planning, observation, reflection and feedback (Artman-Meeker, 2015). However, coaching with systematic focused feedback is not consistently provided to teacher candidates, because of the constraints of preservice teacher

TABLE 3: Peer Coaching Model

Evidence-Based NDBI Practices	Activity	Deliverables
Practices Set 1 • Face-to-face • On the child's level • Following the child's lead • Display positive affect • Display animation **Practices Set 2** • Language matches child level • Comments on child actions or interests • Expands child language by adding 1-2 words • Models appropriate vocabulary **Practices Set 3** • Provides wait time for the child to communicate • Verbally responds to child attempts to communicate • Response relates to the child's communication • Uses environmental arrangement (EA) strategies to promote communication • Waits for child to respond after EA strategy **Practices Set 4** • Provides relevant/ motivating teaching opportunities • Prompts child for target language • Provides increasing support as needed for the child to use target language/ communication (WAIT, ASK, SAY) • Provides natural and social reinforcement	**Didactic Training** • Operational definitions • Video examples • In-class practice **Observation** • Peer implementation of practices	**Peer Observation** • Examples of each strategy observed • Examples of missed opportunities **Self-Reflection** • Identification of strengths • Identification of goal for improvement **Reflection Paper** • Strengths • Areas for growth • Effects on child

field placements and lack of availability of university personnel to observe and provide feedback (Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009). Reciprocal peer coaching, in which practitioners observe each other and provide feedback on the use of an identified set of practices, offers opportunities for TCs to receive feedback more often and more consistently than traditional field placement supervision and is effective in supporting teacher practice and child outcomes (Kohler et al., 2010). This section describes a field experience at the University of Alabama that supports the use of Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions (NDBI) through peer coaching.

Peer Coaching Model

To provide opportunities to practice and receive feedback on the use of NDBI practices, early childhood special education TCs enrolled in a semester-long course focused on early language and pre-literacy were assigned to a field placement, which they attended once per week for two hours. Each TC identified a child, conducted a language sample with the child, and analyzed the sample for areas of strength and areas for improvement. In each of the four class meetings, TCs were provided instruction on a set of NDBI practices, including operational definitions, examples and non-examples, and role-play. The TCs viewed a video and completed a form based on observation of the interventionist in the video.

After the class session, TCs used the same peer coaching documents to observe each other implementing the practices in the field placement and provide feedback on the peer's use of the NDBI practices. See Table 3 for information about specific practices, activities, and deliverables. Peer coaching forms were adapted from a previous study (Golden et al., 2021). After receiving feedback forms from their peer coach, the TCs identified an area of strength and a goal for improving practice based on the peer coach's observations. TCs completed this observation and feedback process approximately once every 2-3 weeks.

Focus on Practices

NDBI are evidence-based strategies that EC/ECSE educators can use to support a variety of child outcomes (Tiede & Walton, 2019; Schreibman et al., 2015). NDBI are based in both be-

havioral and developmental principles of teaching young children, combining developmentally appropriate practice with systematic instruction in natural contexts. Key components of NDBI are a) being face-to-face and on the child's level, b) engaging in child-led instruction, 3) using positive affect, 4) modeling appropriate language, 5) responding to communicative attempts by the child, 6) using communicative temptations, 7) providing frequent, high-quality direct teaching episodes (Frost et al., 2020). As Bruinsma and colleagues (2020) note, these practices are used across a variety of well-researched interventions including Incidental Teaching (IT; Hart & Risley, 1975; McGee et al., 1985), Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT; Koegel & Koegel, 2016), Enhanced Milieu Teaching (EMT; Kaiser & Hester, 1994), and the Early Start Denver Model (Dawson et al., 2010). Across these different intervention packages, NDBI has been used with children with disabilities, including autism, developmental delays, and speech-language delays.

Despite the evidence for the use of NDBI by educators, recent research indicates that NDBI is not consistently used by in-service teachers in early childhood settings (D'Agostino et al., 2023a). This may be due to a lack of knowledge of and training in NDBI. However, there is a growing body of literature demonstrating the successful training of early childhood educators to implement NDBI with children with disabilities (D'Agostino et al., 2020). Additionally, there is evidence that early childhood educators in both special and general education identify the practices as feasible (D'Agostino et al., 2023b). The use of NDBI aligns directly with DEC Recommended Practices (RPs) topic areas of Instruction and Interactions (DEC, 2014).

University Supervisors Coaching Teacher Candidates: Supporting Young Emergent Bilinguals with Disabilities/ Developmental Delays

The EC/ECSE workforce has not been adequately prepared or equipped to address the diverse educational needs of young children from linguistically minoritized groups, such as young emergent bilinguals (EBs) with disabilities or developmental delays (DDs) (Birth-Age 8) (Kea & Trent, 2013; Martínez-Alvaréz, 2019). For instance, research indicates that EC/ECSE educators continue to predominantly teach in English only and provide families with recommendations that may be biased or discriminatory, like prioritizing the English language only and eliminating the use of the home language (del Hoyo Soriano et al., 2023). Very few EC/ECSE educators feel or are equipped to teach young EBs with disabilities or DDs (Wang & Woolf, 2015). The DEC (2014) encourages the need for comprehensive efforts to overcome barriers (e.g., instructional practices) and implicit biases (e.g., assumptions about a child and family's race, ethnicity, culture, language) to ensure inclusive, equitable support for young EBs with disabilities or DDs and their families (e.g., F8, INS11). Thus, TCs need ongoing, in-context support in field experiences from University Supervisors (USs) to consider and support the role of bilingualism in the development of young EBs with disabilities or DDs.

Practice-Based Coaching Model

USs implement Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) with a focus on translanguaging strategies (Beatty et al., 2021) for TCs to meet the diverse needs of linguistically minoritized groups during their field experience at a midwestern university. PBC is an evidence-based practice where TCs undergo rigorous coaching sessions from the US to implement quality teaching practices within the classroom context (Snyder et al., 2015). Before the TC practicum semester begins, information regarding each TC's background, teaching experience, and interests is collected. For example, TCs may request to be placed in a dual language program or a site with many EBs with disabilities or DDs (e.g., Early Head Start, Head Start Program), which may include a monolingual setting. Based on the information and interest form, TCs are assigned to a field placement with a specific focus on supporting young EBs with disabilities or DDs. Additionally, TCs are assigned to the US, who can coach them throughout the semester.

Translanguaging Professional Learning (PL). At the beginning of the semester, the USs collectively conduct one or multiple PL cycles, contingent on time allocated and resources, focused on translanguaging practices embedded within a course syllabus, Inclusive Strategies for Infants and Toddlers/Preschoolers, and for TCs to apply the knowledge they gained on translanguaging in EC/ECSE settings or programs. The sessions are presented using a format such as PowerPoint, Prezi, or Google Slides. The USs create the presentation, drawing from reputable sources like peer-reviewed articles (e.g., Souto-Manning et al., 2021) or books (e.g., Garrity et al., 2018) on translanguaging. The slides cover the definition of translanguaging, various translanguaging strategies (refer to Beatty et al., 2021), and the development of lesson plans that incorporate translanguaging, utilizing free and accessible resources available on the City University of New York-New York State Initiative on Emergent Bilinguals (CUNY-NYSEB) website. During the PL session, the USs incorporate effective adult learning strategies such as vignettes, discussions, and reflective questioning (e.g., How might translanguaging challenge or reshape

these perspectives?), multiple modes of learning (e.g., hands-on learning, videos, visuals), and practitioner-based articles (e.g., Beatty et al., 2021).

Establishing Collaborative Partnership and Building Rapport. Throughout the PBC process, the US and TC will build rapport by exchanging continuous information about their professional experiences and backgrounds, personal reflections on biases, assumptions, and practices, and information irrelevant to teaching (e.g., discussion about personal life), cultivating a relationship built on trust. In the initial meeting, after a TC is assigned to a specific US (e.g., four TCs assigned to one US), the US individually discusses with the TC their interests in teaching young EBs with disabilities or DDs and teaching philosophies (e.g., learning through play). Then, the US systematically describes the coaching process to the TC, outlining the cyclical nature of the PBC model.

Shared Goal and Action Planning. Next, the US invites the TC to choose a translanguaging strategy from Figure 3 (although not limited to Figure 3) they wish to focus on during coaching. TCs will then articulate their goal, (e.g., "My goal is to collaborate with families and learn common/words or phrases in their home language and embed it in my teaching during center time.") Ideally, the goal should align with a translanguaging strategy and be defined, measurable, and attainable within the time frame of their practicum. Thus, TCs will need some flexibility and time to get to know the children and their families before deciding on a goal. Once the TC has determined the goal, the US facilitates a discussion of the TC's concerns (e.g., time constraints) and needs (e.g., required resources) regarding the identified focus area for coaching and co-developing an action plan. For example, the TC may express their interest in creating opportunities for young EBs with disabilities or DDs to use their full linguistic repertoire during circle time. Then, the US and TC co-develop an action plan to determine how the goal will be accomplished (e.g., First, TC will learn everyday words in the students' languages by listening to the students, writing the words down on a notepad, and if needed using a translator. Then, TC will fluidly use languages to speak with young EBs with disabilities or DDs during [targeted routine/context]). See Figure 3 for an example.

Focused Observations. Regular focused observations will be arranged based on the mutually agreed-upon schedule between the US and TC (e.g., once or twice biweekly). The TC provides the US with a lesson activity plan one week before the observation with translanguaging strategies guided by their action plan and associated goals. The observations occur at a time convenient for the TC, typically during a specific routine like snack time or literacy time after they consult with their Clinical Supervisor (CS) (i.e., homeroom teacher). The US checks in with the TC to determine a suitable area within the classroom for optimal vision of the TC's activities. The US observes the TC implementing translanguaging strategies. Observational notes are recorded using a notepad and pen or laptop. The US can also set up an electronic device (e.g., iPad) to record the TC implementing their selected goal for 15-20 minutes for reflection and feedback purposes.

Reflection and Feedback. Following each focused observation, the US will set time aside for the TC to watch their filmed observation and reflect on their teaching practices. The US ask squestions such as, "What went well? What would you have done differently? What specific positive outcomes or improvements did you observe in your students' language development and understanding?" Then, the US provides performance feedback, which involves supportive (e.g., "You did a great job incorporating the child's home language into your whole-group lesson.") and constructive feedback (e.g., "I noticed that there were many missed opportunities for you to incorporate the child's home language during small-group time.") aligned with the action plans steps (Snyder et al., 2015). The US then provides targeted support and coaching to the TC by suggesting translanguaging strategies aligned with their identified goal (e.g., next steps). The crucial aspect is to foster discussion regarding the integration and promotion of the home language in instructional practices.

Focus on Practices

Translanguaging is a fluid bi/multilingual language approach that recognizes and leverages young EBs' abilities in learning and counters the traditional view that languages should be kept separate in the classroom (Beatty et al., 2021). A child's two or more languages are seen as one linguistic entity (Grosjean, 2021). Translanguaging encourages these children to flexibly draw on their full linguistic repertoire, utilizing all their languages, including their home language, within a specific social and cultural context (e.g., classroom) to enhance their understanding and learning. Additionally, translanguaging affirms these children's language, cultural identity, and cultural ways of thinking, speaking, and behaving. It is a form of social justice as it resists any linguistic discrimination. Thus, it is critical for all teachers (i.e., monolingual, bilingual teachers) in the field of EC/ECSE to employ creative strategies and instructional approaches that optimize the utilization of home language practices. To do so, TCs must position themselves as language learners and learn directly from the young EBs and their families (Beatty et al., 2021)

TABLE 3: Translanguaging Strategies Embedded in Practice-Based Coaching Model

Evidence-Based Practice	*Sample TC Goals*	*Strategy Examples*
Increase communicative potential of bi/multilingual children with disabilities by facilitating the use of their complete linguistic repertoire and range during specific routines/contexts.	Learn everyday words in the students' languages by listening to the students, writing the words down on a notepad, and using a translator. Fluidly use languages to speak with bi/multilingual children with disabilities during [targeted routine/context]. Document the number of instances where students seamlessly switch between languages during [targeted routine/context].	***Infant/Toddler Focused Practices*** During snack time, TC can encourage child to use baby sign language as a communicative practice such as requesting for more sign while asking for wat er ("[more sign] *agua*."); translated: "[more sign] water.") ***Preschool Focused Practices*** During dismissal time, TC asks the child, "Where is your *mochila*?" (translated: "Where is your backpack?"). The student responds, "points to cubby (gesture) *aquí*."; translated: "points to cubby (gesture) here."
Expand the use of common words/phrases and vocabulary words of bi/multilingual children with disabilities, showcasing a richer and more diverse lexicon through translanguaging by incorporating common words/phrases and vocabulary words in multiple languages during specific routines/contexts	Ask families for common words/phrases used in the child's everyday lives and vocabulary words they would like their child to learn while in school so they can incorporate the words in the classroom. Engage in language mixing during [routine/context] by incorporating common words/phrases and vocabulary words in the students' languages and supporting children in making meaning using multiple languages. Assess and record the variety and depth of vocabulary students employ in different languages during specific routines/contexts.	***Infant/Toddler Focused Practices*** The infant crawls and tries reaching for her bottle right after she is done playing. The TC asks, "Do you want *leche*?" (translated: "Do you want milk?")," a word the TC learned from the child's mother. ***Preschool Focused Practices*** During literacy time, the TC goes through a picture walk and says, "Lia sees pink *flores*!" Two students respond, "Pink flowers!" TC responds, "Yes, *flores* are flowers in Spanish! They mean the same thing!"
Encourage collaborative language use among peers fostering an environment where translanguaging promotes inclusive communication.	Give precedence to play by designing play experiences and incorporating culturally relevant props (e.g., puppets, multilingual characters, multilingual books) into play areas where children are encouraged to engage in translanguaging Monitor and document instances of students working or playing together, using multiple languages to support each other in group tasks, projects, pretend-play, and many more.	***Infant/Toddler Focused Practices*** During playtime, a toddler plays with a red truck and calls it, "*Rojo."* (translated: "Red."). Another toddler comes and says, "Firetruck!" The TC joins in the play and says, "The firetruck es rojo." (translated: "The firetruck is red!"). ***Preschool Focused Practices*** During literacy time, a group of children role play, "The Three Little Pigs." One child says, "*El es* [translated: he is] little pig and un wolf *malo* [translated: bad] says, "Little pig, little pig, let me in." Another child chimes in and says, "Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin!"

and establish a learning environment that embraces diversity. For example, TCs learn how to say common words or phrases from the child and family in Spanish and incorporate them into their daily teaching (e.g., "Do you want [more sign] *leche*?"; translated: "Do you want [more sign] milk?") (Garrity et al., 2015).

CONCLUSION

Nagro and Bettencourt (2017) outlined five steps for creating effective field experiences and determining the effectiveness in supporting teacher candidates' practice: 1) identify the context of the field experience (e.g., number of hours, types of setting), 2) identify teacher candidate activities (e.g., planning, instruction, and/or assessment of children), 3) identify teacher candidate products (e.g., video of lesson implementation, portfolio of student work), 4) evaluate teacher candidates' practice, and 5) provide feedback. We have provided models which follow these five steps in various ways with the purpose of providing examples of different, effective field

placement implementation methods.

Across the four models of field placement experiences, there is a consistent focus on observation of and feedback on use of effective practices. This aligns with both the knowledge of supporting use of evidence-based practices (Joyce & Showers, 2002) and the literature on effectual teacher preparation (Maheady et al., 2014). Although the described models target TCs' development of different effective practices, there is consistency in structured, focused feedback on the identified effective practices. Feedback is most effective when it is targeted and focused on fidelity of implementation of effective practices (Cornelius & Nagro, 2014). As evidenced by the field experience models described in this article, there are a variety of ways that this targeted, specific feedback can be provided to EC/ECSE TCs.

The field experiences models described reiterate that collaboration is a key element of personnel preparation in EC/ECSE. EC/ECSE personnel work in collaboration with families, related service personnel, and other disciplines to support the development and learning of young children and their families (DEC, 2014). Across the models presented, collaboration occurred between personnel from differing disciplines, peers supporting effective practices, and supervisors providing feedback to TCs. Providing opportunities to collaborate and learn from a variety of personnel in field placements will better prepare EC/ECSE personnel for their careers.

More information sharing about how field placements are delivered and specific outcomes is necessary to move our preparation of EC/ECSE practitioners forward. In the current context of teacher and personnel shortages in education, EC/ECSE preparation programs need to collaborate and replicate field placement models to identify effective practices that lead to successful, confident EC/ECSE personnel (Bruder, 2016). A compendium of examples, data collection and sharing of TCs' outcomes from field experiences, and communication across EC/ECSE preparation programs is necessary to build an effective network of personnel preparation institutions.

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