# Leadership To Ensure
# All New Teacher Candidates
# Are Prepared To Work Successfully
# with Students with Disabilities

**Jean Houck**
*California State University, Long Beach*

The information, the data, and the authors' perspectives in this theme issue of *Issues in Teacher Education* provide valuable information for higher education leaders in institutions preparing teachers. As dean of a College of Education that graduates over 900 teachers a year, I welcomed the update on the issues — complicated as they are — and I was struck by the clear need for action in our institutions educating new teachers. Most educators are aware of the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) federal legislation signed into law in 2002 (U. S. Department of Education, 2002), and its potential impact on both teacher preparation and prekindergarten through twelfth grade (preK-12). Unless education leaders have Special Education as their own discipline preparation, few of them are cognizant of issues around the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act. The Grenot-Scheyer, Coots, and Bishop-Smith article provides a brief overview of both IDEA and NCLB, and a convincing argument that faculty from a broad range of disciplines and their leaders need basic familiarity with the provisions of both pieces of legislation. Such awareness promotes compliance, but more importantly the faculty who teach the teachers will be knowledgeable about educating students with disabilities. In this article, I will use information from the expert authors in this theme issue and discuss its implications for education leaders. The essential question is, What do college leaders need to know

*Jean Houck is dean of the College of Education at California State University, Long Beach. E-mail houck@csulb.edu*

and do to ensure that new teacher candidates are prepared to work successfully with students with disabilities?

## Information Important for Leaders To Know

The following summaries are intended to provide very brief highlights of the legislation that seem most pertinent for teacher education.

### *No Child Left Behind*

The 2002 federal law was a significant reform of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act and requires that all teachers be highly qualified, with a deadline of 2005 to achieve that goal. Some flexibility is allowed in the definition of highly qualified, but there is no mistaking the focus on accountability and subject matter competence. An example of the impact of the requirements in California is that elementary teachers will no longer be allowed to use a major in an approved subject matter program to demonstrate subject matter competence. In addition to a subject matter major, all teacher candidates will be required to pass the California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET). The legislation will also require use of data disaggregated according to a number of factors, including disability status, to demonstrate progress in closing the achievement gap between poor and minority students and their more advantaged peers. The focus on accountability extends to stringent requirements for research based strategies and appropriate assessments of their effectiveness. Grenot-Scheyer, Coots, and Bishop-Smith (this issue) note, "Of particular importance to university faculty is the emphasis on teacher quality, reading methods, and promotion of English proficiency." Teacher quality for special educators will entail more command of subject matter knowledge in order to ensure that the students with disabilities have access to the core curriculum.

### *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*

The IDEA statute mandates that individuals with disabilities receive a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment and access to the general education core curriculum. Virtually all educators are aware that the former requirement has presented challenges for teacher education programs to prepare candidates in their general education programs to teach students with disabilities who are placed in their classrooms. All new teachers need to be able to teach a diverse population of students, including students with disabilities. The IDEA role for the general education teacher extends beyond the classroom. For example, the Individual Education Plan (IEP) team must include one

regular education teacher. General education teachers are going to need to know more about what is taught in special education. A theme one sees in the articles in this theme issue is that a collaborative approach to the education of students with disabilities is needed, and indeed will be necessary to comply with federal legislation. The Council for Exceptional Children's publication *IDEA Reauthorization Recommendations* (2002) also advises collaboration between disciplines. Realistically, however, in most institutions there is little interaction between special education and general education faculty and programs.

### *What Are the Essential Competencies*
### *for General and Special Education Teachers*
### *To Prepare Them for Inclusive Settings?*

Dingle, Falvey, Givner, and Haager (this issue) address how the expectations for essential competencies for teaching compare between general educators and special educators. They surveyed general educators, special educators and their administrators from schools that had successfully included students with disabilities. As one would expect, there were many competencies that were considered essential for both general and special educators. These fell into the categories of teacher dispositions (e.g., promotes a high level of integrity, competence), collaborative relationships, and meeting the instructional and social needs of a diverse student body, including students with disabilities. Essential competencies for general educators but not special educators related to the lead role for a teacher in managing a classroom. Essential competencies for special educators but not general educators included specialized skills such as identification and assessment of particular disabilities. Grenot-Scheyer, Coots, and Bishop-Smith (this issue) addressed the implications of IDEA and NCLB for teachers' knowledge and skills. They referenced the two part challenge to faculty in colleges of education made by the Special Education Focus Council of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2002). One of the challenges is that if children with disabilities are going to meet the same content standards as mainstream children, then special education teachers need to know more about the school district's curriculum, standards, and assessments than they have traditionally. The second challenge is that general education teachers serving children with disabilities in regular classrooms need to know more about the unique needs of students with disabilities. Echevarria, Powers, and Elliot (this issue) remind us that teachers in regular classrooms need effective strategies for ameliorating reading problems and good classroom management skills to address common academic and behavior problems.

### Disproportionate Representation of Minority Students in Special Education

The articles by Echevarria, Powers, and Elliott and by Grenot-Scheyer, Coots, and Bishop-Smith describe the continuing national problem of overrepresentation of minority students in special education. African American students are twice as likely to be identified as meeting the mental retardation criteria as other groups, and Latinos continue to have more students served in special education than would be expected from their percentage in the general school population (Echevarria, Powers, and Elliott, this issue). Despite long-standing awareness of the problem, the situation has not improved significantly. Issues cited as impacting the placement of minority students in special education programs include lack of effective instruction in reading and math, ineffective classroom management, a mismatch between learner characteristics and the materials and methods in the school environment, effects of poverty, language differences, and more recently, standards-based education. Often students who are the most needy have the least well-prepared teachers, and they are inappropriately shunted into special education classes.

## Leadership To Bring About Change

Earlier, referring to the issues and information presented in the articles in this issue, I commented on the need for action in our institutions preparing teachers. I believe that it is incumbent upon leaders in colleges of education (deans, department chairs, program coordinators, senior faculty) to play a key role in the institution's response. Speaking to the role of the dean, in cases where major challenges call for changes across different programs the dean's status as leader of the college or school is critical. Deans are expected to display the dimensions of leadership described by Gardner (1989). According to Gardner (1989), leaders think long term, they look beyond their unit to the larger environment, they reach and influence constituents beyond their immediate sphere of responsibility, they emphasize vision and renewing the organization, and they have the political skills to manage the competing demands of different constituencies.

In order to lead faculty to work together to address issues and make changes in what they do, a dean of education should be convincing in establishing the issue as a priority for the college and be prepared to back up the stated conviction with action. As a dean, I participate in the process both formally, e.g., serve on coordinating committee or steering committee, and informally, e.g., maintain regular communication with key

faculty involved and assist when needed to remove obstacles to progress or solve problems. I personally enjoy participating in these kinds of challenging projects, particularly when the outcomes have potential to significantly improve teacher preparation and the education of children with and without disabilities. But such efforts can require enormous amounts of time and energy from both the faculty and the leaders, and a dean should be ready for resistance.

Admittedly, universities are bureaucracies, and working toward change seems fraught with obstacles. Ann Lieberman described the frustration of faculty working in the bureaucracy of higher education thusly, "meetings often don't lead to anything but more meetings; that stopping the usual flow of work in order to do something different requires enormous effort; that protecting one's turf, whether it be a classroom, a research project, or a program, is what one is supposed to do; that gatekeepers are hired specifically to keep the bureaucracy running; that paperwork takes a large part of everyone's daily life; and that the role of top leadership is to keep all the parts of the bureaucratic chain working…" (1992, p. 149). For most faculty and deans, the list will elicit a smile, albeit a rueful one. However, higher education's bureaucratic obstacles haven't deterred Lieberman, who has been a national leader in educational reform, nor should they deter other education leaders.

## Leadership for Collaboration

A theme across the articles in this issue of *Issues in Teacher Education* is that programs of teacher preparation for general education, special education, and other related disciplines take a "silo approach," viewing their specializations in isolation from other fields. Such lack of collaborative modeling and skill building in preparation programs occurring at universities across the country creates a dilemma as to how to adequately prepare preservice professionals for effective collaboration once they are on the job. Everyone agrees that collaboration is called for, indeed, that the mission to ensure qualified teachers for all youngsters and comply with NCLB and IDEA reauthorization can't be accomplished without it.

Successful collaboration has some basic features, noted in the literature by Darling-Hammond (1994), Goodlad (1988), and others. The commitment of leadership is very important. Leaders need to develop and communicate common goals for the initiative, goals that emphasize the interrelatedness of the faculty groups. There needs to be a long term commitment to continue the relationships that are established. Deans can be instrumental in encouraging key faculty within programs to demonstrate mutual trust and regard for one another. I know of several

examples where a dean facilitated the successful resolution of a problem among interdisciplinary groups by reassigning a faculty member who seemed to have personal issues that stalled the group's progress. The external threats posed by compliance with NCLB and the IDEA reauthorization, as well as new state standards for teacher education will push faculty groups toward cooperation. Education faculty are accustomed to external mandates governing what they do, they regularly contend with national and state legislation, accreditation standards, and university system requirements. Grenot-Scheyer, Coots, and Bishop-Smith's article identified successful collaborations for teacher preparation, and the lessons learned. These included: a commitment to the values, an alternative governance structure, establishing linkages across and throughout the curriculum, and requiring meaningful field experiences.

The Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at California State University, Long Beach, Dorothy Abrahamse, is widely recognized in California for her collaboration with education and support of teacher preparation. She has stated, "The dean's role in major curricular decisions on campus is always problematic. The stakes for a college can be very high, but leadership means trying to bring faculty to look beyond their immediate enrollment and budget interests to the needs of the university as a whole. It is also important that deans respect the faculty oversight of curriculum and program development, and that they try to take an equitable stance among the programs in their own colleges" (Houck, Cohn, & Cohn, 2004, p. 83).

## Leadership for Collaboration To Ensure New Teachers Are Prepared To Work with Diverse Students, Including Students with Disabilities

Earlier sections looked at leadership and leading collaboration generally; in this section I will look more specifically at strategies that could be used to address moving university programs toward compliance with NCLB and IDEA. I'll describe and elaborate on strategies from the articles in this issue, as well as suggest some other steps. The suggestions given here are meant to be illustrative, not prescriptive.

### *Determine the Dean's Role*
The dean's role may range from being more symbolic to being a frequent participant in meetings. S/he may decide to "kick off" the college efforts by means of a retreat, a meeting with key faculty from different programs involved, or other means. As stated earlier, it is important to communicate that it is a college priority to coordinate the efforts of general education and special education to ensure the preparation of high

quality teachers, as well as compliance with NCLB and IDEA. Another expectation for the dean is to support the collaboration through providing resources for the work, or assisting the participants to locate resources from other sources. Sadao, Gonsier-Gerdin, and Smith-Stubblefield (this issue) report that funds were obtained from Academic Affairs to support the activities of the inter-professional collaborative group. I think it is important for a dean to model collaborative behavior by working collegially with other deans and school district leaders.

### *Support and Pressure*

Regardless of the level of direct involvement of the dean, ongoing support is important, perhaps crucial to the collaborative process necessary to ensure compliance with IDEA reauthorization. Regular updates are recommended in order to stay current on events at the federal level as requirements for NCLB and IDEA continue to develop. The dean needs to be current, prepared to facilitate or assist with a problem if necessary. Support, as mentioned above, may take the form of stipends, funded faculty time, or supplying food for meetings. In California at the present time, a severe state budget crisis is leading to cuts in the budgets of universities in the state system. Unfortunately, in the near future state supported universities will not be able to afford much in the way of assigned time for faculty to engage in these collaborative efforts, regardless of the priority they hold in the college. This tight budget situation is expected to extend several years, so like many colleges and universities throughout the nation, leaders wishing to support collaborative efforts will have to be creative.

In the California State University System, colleges have the opportunity to apply for and receive lottery funds. A project for faculty to collaborate on curriculum is ideally suited to qualify for lottery funding at our university, as one of the highest priorities for lottery funds is special initiatives necessary to advance the mission and goals of the university. Most colleges have small grants for program enhancement and other purposes available at the central level, e.g., Academic Affairs. Many colleges of education are applying for grants, as both the federal government and the state are currently awarding teacher quality grants. University of the Pacific found that when faculty were demonstrating willingness to collaborate across departments/programs, Academic Affairs agreed to provide some funding. That has been our experience at Cal State Long Beach, too. On several occasions, two or more colleges have embarked on a creative project, and have received modest amounts of funding after sending a jointly signed request to the Provost for support. We have found that even minimal resources, such as $500 to $1000 per

participating faculty member, can be effective incentives for faculty when the project is something that they see is important. When the project involves a lot of faculty, including faculty from different departments and colleges, I like to have an informal contract for faculty. The form defines the time period, the tasks they will perform, the product they will submit (e.g., revised course outline), the due date, and the amount of money, travel, instructional resources, etc. they will receive.

In addition to offering "carrots," deans may be called upon for "sticks" as well. An accountability system needs to be in place. Beware of what Ann Lieberman (1992) called meetings that often don't lead to anything but more meetings. Key faculty leaders need to establish measurable goals and a timeline for the process, and see that the group makes progress toward those goals. Associate deans, chairs and program coordinators often provide the leadership for seeing that there is follow through on the tasks that need to be accomplished. Deans may be called upon to apply pressure to get things started initially, and later in instances such as a case of "the ball being dropped" and efforts waning, or a stalemate occurring. When conflicts occur between chairs or colleges, deans often need to step in to mediate the discussions. Staying in contact with the collaboration process enables the dean to learn about difficulties earlier, and often the situation can be smoothed over before it escalates into a public squabble or official complaint.

Accountability extends to the products as well as the process. In this case, in the collective judgment of the faculty and leaders, have curriculum or policies been established that ensure that new teachers will be able to teach diverse students, including those with special needs? And are those policies tightly linked to the practices so that stakeholders are confident that there will be effective implementation? An example of this would be inserting a statement in the college curriculum guidelines that "All new course proposals in elementary education must state how the course addresses educating students with special needs in general education classrooms." Once this is policy, make sure that the curriculum committees enforce it.

### *Support Cross Professional Responsibilities and Affiliations*
A dean can promote different disciplines working together, including at a minimum special education and general education, and work to expand the collaboration considerably farther. Since special education candidates will need increased preparation in subject matter areas to ensure that their students have access to the full curriculum, the collaboration should include Arts and Sciences faculty as well. A dean can work to include related helping professions that are likely to be partici-

pating in Individual Education Planning teams, e.g., faculty from school psychology. At the University of the Pacific, they established an inter-professional collaborative group to plan strategies for teaming and created an interdisciplinary undergraduate course "Introduction to the Helping Professions" (Sadao, Gonsier-Gerdin, Smith-Stubblefield, this issue). York-Barr, Bacharach, Salk, Frank & Beniek, (this issue) described a project in which general and special education faculty team taught classes. They reported that preservice students benefited from the exposure to different fields and perspectives. Faculty benefits included becoming more familiar with the other specializations.

### Establish or Expand Quality Early Field Experiences

Several articles in this issue discuss field experiences as a means to provide general education teaching candidates with experiences working with students with disabilities. Our college can serve as an example. We have a large service learning program that places about 900 Liberal Studies and multiple subject students in 28 school districts each semester. It is not difficult to incorporate a special education component in the placements. We identify the districts, schools, and classrooms where successful inclusion of students with disabilities occurs, and place students in those classrooms. Teacher candidates use their journals to describe the students with disabilities and the instructions and accommodations provided to them.

### Extend the Collaboration to K-12

The NCLB legislation has a focus on strengthening math and science instruction in the public schools. It calls for math and science partnerships to unite K-12 schools, institutions of higher education, and other stakeholders in improving K-12 students' math and science achievement. It would be wise for faculty involved in the collaboration across general education, special education, and other programs at the university to take a K-16 approach and include individuals from K-12, especially key people from special education. The Echevarria, Powers, and Elliot article reflects such collaboration; the authors include a special education faculty member, a school psychology faculty member, and the Assistant Superintendent for Special Education from the Long Beach Unified School District. My colleagues in the Long Beach Education Partnership and I are convinced that the most powerful way to address pervasive problems such as the overrepresentation of minority students in special education is for university and K-12 representatives to accept shared responsibility for the complex problem and work together to find ways to improve it.

This theme issue of *Issues in Teacher Education* informs all educators about the work that lies ahead in complying with No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act reauthorization. It presents a special challenge for leaders in higher education, one we cannot ignore. It is up to us to provide leadership for our faculty and programs to ensure that all new teacher candidates are prepared to work successfully with all students, including those with disabilities. It's the right thing to do.

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