

Innovation in Clinical Experiences for Teacher Preparation Utilizing Simulations to Support Inclusion

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Abstract

As California teacher preparation programs respond to an expanding set of Teacher Performance Expectations (TPEs), innovative clinical experiences are needed to better prepare candidates for inclusive education and their legally mandated roles in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. This quasi-experimental study examined whether participation in a simulated IEP training impacted preservice educators' attitudes toward inclusion. Results showed no initial differences between groups; however, post-intervention analyses revealed statistically and practically significant improvements in the treatment group's attitudes towards inclusion ($t(43) = 3.55, p < .001, d = 1.07$), with within-group gains also significant ($t(29) = -6.26, p < .001$). These findings suggest that simulated IEP experiences can serve as powerful mastery experiences, enhancing candidate preparedness for inclusion and collaboration in diverse educational settings. This study supports embedding experiential learning models within teacher

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preparation programs to address persistent gaps in inclusive education training.

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Introduction

As the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing continues to expand the number of Teacher Performance Expectations (TPEs) teacher education programs must include to train credential teachers, it becomes paramount to find innovative models of clinical practice (CTC, 2016). This is particularly important as with an increase in the number of TPEs, teacher education programs must find unique ways to provide authentic experiences for candidates to be introduced, practiced, and assessed in multiple ways. One such way is through experiential learning that extends beyond the traditional classroom setting. The current study examined utilizing a Mock Individualized Education Program (IEP) training to provide an authentic mastery experience for candidates to address inclusion and learn about their specific roles in an IEP meeting. With so many TPEs focused on ensuring planning, engaging, teaching, and assessing students with disabilities, it becomes pertinent to provide candidates with authentic ways to engage in these skills to ensure candidates are prepared to serve the diverse learning needs of their students in diverse contexts.

Context

Within our own teacher education program, we have found through Educator Quality (EdQ) surveys and internal exit surveys that the TPEs surrounding inclusion are the lowest scoring in terms of “feelings of preparedness” by exiting candidates (California State University Chancellor’s Office, Educator Quality Center, n.d.). This demonstrates the need for programs to provide innovative ways to engage candidates in mastery experiences where they can feel more prepared and confident to address equity and inclusion in their classrooms. Engaging candidates in more authentic experiences through a Mock IEP training provides a mechanism by which programs can ensure that candidates can practice real life simulations in a safe learning environment. Further, the Mock IEP training was a way for our program to be sure that candidates had the crucial opportunity to practice, which became paramount as some candidates may never attend an IEP meeting during clinical practice. Thus, the Mock IEP training became an innovative approach to providing experiential

learning and addressing the needs of candidates to be able to serve their diverse student populations.

Literature Review

A longstanding challenge of the American education system has been to create effective programs for students with exceptional needs. A measure taken to address this is the implementation of the Individual Education Program (IEP), the action piece of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). IDEA is the legislation protecting and defining the civil right to an education for people with disabilities in the US, a previously undefined civil right for this population. The IEP, a legally binding agreement between school districts and the families of students with disabilities, spells out the specifics of how a student is affected by a disability and what steps the school district will take to ensure that the student receives an appropriate education (Turnbull, 2005). The IEP requires school districts to provide a long-time missing piece of the United States' education model—a plan for equitable educational rights for those with disabilities.

Though the IEP is the framework for access to equitable education for students with disabilities, protocols need to be followed in order for it to function meaningfully. One such requirement is the informed collaboration of the entire IEP team, as it has been demonstrated to be essential to the success of the student (Garro & Thompson, 2022; McLeskey et al., 2017). The IEP team is a grouping of professionals, the student's parents/guardians, and the student, who collaborate to decide what will be part of the IEP contract (Werts et al., 2002). The IEP team is mandated to acknowledge the needs of the student in all the educational settings they will participate. Therefore, the interprofessional team represents multiple disciplines and unique perspectives, and by integrating these viewpoints, the IEP is collaboratively developed (Causton & Theoharis, 2019; Garro & Thompson, 2022). The risk of harm when working with special education students as a member of the IEP team, as a special educator or a preservice educator, is real. When preservice educators are unfamiliar with research-based best practices, truly harmful outcomes for the student are possible (Strassfield, 2018; Woodfork, 2024). Any level of misunderstanding or lack of knowledge of best practices could result in a student's needs being neglected or not fully addressed.

Preservice Educator Training for IEPs

Preservice educators report feeling unprepared to implement inclusive education and actively engage in the collaborative IEP process in their credential programs (Alsarawi, 2021; Harvey, 2010). Though most general education teachers will work with students with IEPs, there is a documented lack of instruction on how to be a member of an IEP team in preservice educator training (Werts et al., 2002; Woodfork, 2024). This is problematic as the informed contributions of preservice educators are federally mandated by IDEA (Turnbull, 2005). Without the informed collaboration of preservice educators, the IEP team loses a fundamental perspective of a student's needs.

Training that does exist for preservice educators to work with students with disabilities is commonly focused on collaborating with special education teachers (McKenzie, 2009). When preservice educators participate in coursework on collaborating in the IEP process, they not only contribute more to the IEP's effectiveness, but they also report being more receptive to working with students with disabilities (Puliatte et al., 2021; Shippen et al., 2005). Education on inclusive collaboration in the IEP process increases the preservice educator credential candidate's ability to be an effective member of the IEP team (McKenzie, 2009). Presently, there is little direction in the educational literature regarding how teacher credential programs should offer inclusive and collaborative coursework to their candidates (Allday et al., 2016).

Responsibility of Teacher Preparation Programs

Allday and colleagues (2016) conducted a study reviewing coursework at 109 university preservice educator credential programs from 50 states, noting the amount and categories of required coursework on inclusive practice. The researchers found that, on average, 1.9% of coursework for preservice educator credential candidates is focused on inclusion collaborative practices, while 67% of the schools surveyed did not have any collaborative coursework required (Allday et al., 2016). Furthermore, less than half of preservice educator credential programs were found to require candidates to participate in field experience working with students with special needs and collaboration with the IEP team (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009). In California, teacher candidate placements are expected to have a wide range of diverse learners; however, there is no mandate that candidates need to be placed in classrooms with students with IEPs. Therefore, candidates could complete their clinical practice and never have seen a real student IEP or been to an IEP meeting. In cases such

as this, it becomes pertinent for the teacher preparation programs to design interventions to support general education teachers in becoming more informed in the IEP process and integration of inclusion in their classrooms (Lautenbach & Heyder, 2019).

Educator preparation should be more about doing the work of educating and less about just discussing the process of educating. However, university-level courses in education have traditionally maintained a focus on disseminating theory and beliefs, modeling practices, and demonstrating best practices in more discussion-based formats (Ball & Forzani, 2009). What gets left out of this more rote-learning space is, then, the actual candidate practice, interaction, and skill iteration. This leaves some candidates in the position of figuring out how to do the work of their profession during their first years of working (McDonald et al., 2013).

As credential candidates prepare to enter the field, where they will likely be asked to collaborate as a member of an IEP team, the lack of preparation of preservice educators to work as members of the IEP team leaves a gap to be filled in most preservice educator credential programs. Thus, candidates can potentially leave programs lacking the knowledge, beliefs, and full understanding of their specific roles within an IEP meeting, beyond what they have read in course texts and seen on videos. This becomes problematic as, in accordance with Bandura's social cognitive theory, mastery experiences impact teacher attitudes and beliefs above all other forms of experiences (1977). Therefore, it becomes imperative that teacher preparation programs find innovative ways to increase mastery experiences for candidates; one way is through embedding simulations into teacher preparation programs, in this instance, in relation to IEPs and IEP meetings.

Innovative Models of Simulated Practice

Opportunities for clinical practice and diverse clinical experiences play an essential role in the education of preservice general education teachers; however, teacher preparation programs have the impossible task of ensuring all teacher candidates receive first-hand experience with IEPs. To bridge this gap, experiential learning opportunities such as role playing and simulations must be deliberately embedded into the curriculum to build clinical skills and to connect theoretical knowledge to clinical practice (Holdren, 2017; Werts et al., 2002). Role playing offers structured opportunities to practice the interpersonal and essential skills for participating in an IEP. Therefore, aligning structured, simulated IEP experiences strategically into the

curriculum can provide candidates with authentic, low-stakes practice opportunities that can build candidate capacity, understanding, and attitudes towards not only the IEP process but also inclusion in general.

Participation in IEP simulations is a strategy to bridge the gap between the collaborative expectations of preservice educators in the IEP process and the level of education they presently receive. Simulations are defined as scenarios where participants can practice solving realistic problems without harmful consequences, with the ability to repeat scenarios for desired outcomes (Kaufman-Ireland, 2016). Therefore, participants can learn how to apply what they learned theoretically to realistic practice without the restrictions of a real risk of harm.

Outside of education, simulations have been shown to benefit many professional education programs, including medicine, law, business, and fields like aviation where there is significant risk (Kaufman-Ireland, 2016). Unlike the many professions that employ simulations in their training programs, simulations have been notably absent from professional education training and credential programs (Meuller, 2019). Presently, within teacher preparation programs, simulations have been used to train educators for real-time responses to scenarios such as recognizing students at-risk of a psychological emergency, how to respond in disciplinary situations, and the amount of student diversity that could be encountered in the classroom (Bradley & Kendall, 2014). There is evidence to suggest that simulations could benefit educators similarly to how simulations benefit other professional trainings (Ferguson, 2017), and there is evidence that simulation programs that have been introduced in education training have been successful (Bradley & Kendall, 2015; Holdren, 2017). Simulations of the IEP collaborative process could offer teacher education programs a mechanism by which to provide authentic mastery experiences in an effort to increase candidates' attitudes towards inclusion and the IEP process.

Teacher Attitudes Towards Inclusion

A key element of the effectiveness of a preservice educator's ability to collaborate at an IEP meeting and successfully employ inclusive practices with students with disabilities is the educator's attitude (Cochran, 1998; Metsala & Harkins, 2019). Teachers with positive attitudes are more likely to use innovative, student-centered methods, provide constructive feedback, experiment with various instructional strategies, and adapt to diverse needs (Puliatte et al., 2021; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). In relation to the IEP process, if an educator

does not feel prepared and lacks foundational knowledge, they may be less inclined to fully engage in the process. This can manifest itself in the teacher's attitudes towards inclusion as inclusion requires intentionality and does not simply occur (Guillemot et al., 2025).

Inclusion is mandated by law, and therefore, general education teachers must be prepared to provide quality instruction to all students and engage in all aspects of the student learning process, including participation in IEPs (Turnbull, 2005). Therefore, the onus is on teacher preparation programs to design innovative and experiential learning opportunities for candidates to engage more fully in the IEP process. By doing so, these mastery experiences (i.e., Mock IEP simulations) could in turn impact candidates' feelings of preparedness, which impacts their beliefs and attitudes towards the IEP process, concluding in a more positive attitude towards inclusion. Thus, offering candidates a way to practice their roles within an IEP, learn about the process, and engage in a simulation before being mandated to do so by law as teachers of record.

Methods

Purpose

Werts and colleagues (2002) maintain that there are often contradictions between the professional values posited by educational institutions and the day-to-day practice of policy. Coupled with the demands to include a multitude of TPEs and a robust clinical practice for candidates, best practices can often fall by the wayside. This can be clearly seen in the notion of IEPs and the experiences candidates receive in their credential programs. Though IDEA mandates preservice educators to be part of the IEP team, preservice educators receive little preparation to do so (Harvey et al., 2010; Lautenbach & Heyder, 2019). There is a need for a mechanism to better prepare preservice educators to collaborate as members of the IEP team (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009). Simulation training is a strategy employed by many professions, such as healthcare and air travel, which involve the risk of harm, but is underutilized in educator training despite the risk of harm in education (Mueller et al., 2019). Simulation training offers promise in providing collaborative practice coursework to educator training (Kaufman & Ireland, 2016). This study examined if the participation of preservice credential candidates in a simulation IEP process had an impact on their attitude towards inclusive education.

Research Question and Hypothesis

Does participation in a simulation IEP increase preservice credential candidates' attitudes towards inclusive education, as measured by the Survey of Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Classrooms? Based on research, we hypothesized candidates in the simulations IEP would increase their attitudes towards inclusion more than candidates who did not participate (Bradley & Kendall, 2014; Kaufman & Ireland, 2016).

Research Design

This study utilized a quasi-experimental two group quantitative design. The simulation IEP was utilized as an intervention and offered to the treatment group. To assess participants' attitudes towards inclusion both before and after the simulation, the Scale of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusion (STATIC) was given as both a pre-test and post-test (Cochran, 1998). The treatment group completed the pre-test, engaged in the full simulations of an IEP process, and completed the post-test. The control group did not receive the simulation, but completed the pre-test and post-test at the same time as the treatment group.

Setting and Participants

The setting for this study was a 4-year public university teaching credential program located in Central California with an enrollment of approximately 6,500 undergraduate students and 900 graduate students. During the year of this study, all students attended classes online in the fall semester and had the opportunity to attend hybrid in-person classes in the spring semester. The simulation IEP program included 3 virtual preparation meetings (see Appendix A). The participants were all credential candidates at the university in one of the following pathways: secondary or elementary education, special education, or school psychology. We utilized convenience sampling as all participants were part of the credential programs and candidates self-selected to participate in the simulation (i.e., treatment group) or opted to participate in the study but not the simulation (i.e., control group). We received IRB approval for our study, and all participants regardless of group, completed and signed a consent form in order to participate.

Control Group

The control group included 15 credential candidates across two programs: secondary credential candidates ($n = 13$) and elementary credential candidates ($n = 2$).

Treatment Group

The treatment group included 30 credential candidates across four programs: special education ($n = 3$), elementary education ($n = 18$), secondary education ($n = 7$), and school psychology ($n = 2$). In order to be included in the treatment group, participants had to participate in all three meetings and complete the pre and post survey. In total, six participants were excluded from data analysis as they did not meet the inclusion requirements; thus, the final group size was 30 participants (final $n = 30$).

Instrumentation

To quantify candidates' attitudes towards inclusion, the sum score of the STATIC was used (Cochran, 1998; Nishimura & Busse, 2016). The STATIC is a 20 item survey that uses a five-point Likert scale with possible responses ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree*, to 5 = *strongly agree*. The STATIC was given to participants via Google Form and took approximately 10 minutes to complete. The STATIC includes four factors, each representing perspectives comprising educator attitudes towards inclusion: Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education ($n = 7$); Professional Issues Regarding Inclusive Education ($n = 5$); Philosophical Issues Regarding Inclusive Education ($n = 4$), and Logistical Concerns of Inclusive Education that are summed together to create a composite attitudes score ($n = 4$; Cochran, 1998, p. 6). One sample item is: "I am confident in my ability to teach children with special needs."

Validity and Reliability

The STATIC has established construct validity and internal consistency, which are demonstrated with item-to-total coefficients scoring from .26 to .70, and factor analysis of the four factors that qualify the theoretical construct of *attitude towards inclusion* demonstrates construct validity (Cochran, 1998). Moreover, these results are similar to other two previously conducted pilot studies. The STATIC has high internal consistency reliability as indicated by a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .89 (Cochran, 1998). The overall measure has been shown to have high reliability in measuring teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices (Nishimura & Busse, 2016).

Intervention

The program developed to serve as this study's intervention was a

three-month program consisting of preparation work and interactive meetings. Full participation in the simulation IEP consisted of three meetings. A pre-test completion of the STATIC (Cochran, 1998) was required of all participants. Meeting #1 consisted of an explanation of the rationale for developing the Mock IEP (Harvey et al., 2010) and the increased effectiveness of the IEP implementation with informed educator participation (Lautenbach & Heyder, 2019). Meeting #2 included an explanation of the planning period for the IEP, which listed the preparations before an IEP meeting required of the IEP team members. In meeting #2, participants were divided up into IEP groups for their Mock IEPs. An essential element of the first two meetings was the allocation of time for questions and answers after all instructions.

Meeting #3 was the participation in the Mock IEP event, the debrief, and post-test completion of the STATIC (Cochran, 1998). The Mock IEP consisted of an agenda (Appendix B) given to each group and the completion of the IEP requirements. Each group had the same fictional student information and the same agenda. The groups had one hour to work through the agenda and come to agreements on student goals, services, accommodations, and modifications, which were modeled after real-world IEP meetings. It was emphasized that the groups do not need to draft goals in the exact language required by the IEP, but they did need to determine appropriate skills to include in the goals for the fictional student. After completing the Mock IEP, all intervention group members participated in a group debrief and discussion, completed the post-test STATIC, and were dismissed.

Procedure

The study began with submitting to the university's internal review board (IRB) for research with human subjects and an interest survey distributed to the participating university's preservice credential candidate student body. Once approved, a final participation request was distributed to those students who responded positively to wanting to participate in the study. The final participation request was a contract requiring them to participate fully in the pre-test/post-test measure and three meetings. As this project fell within a larger US Department of Education Teacher Quality Partnership Grant, participants were compensated by the grant, \$300.00 for full participation, which was defined as *engaged attendance of all three meetings and completion of both the pre and post-test survey*. Once enrolled in the study, all participants (i.e., control and treatment groups) completed the STATIC (Cochran, 1998) as the pre-test measure. The treatment group

participants attended the 2 preparation meetings virtually on Zoom and attended the simulation IEP virtually through the same Zoom format. To conclude their participation, all participants completed the STATIC as a post-test measure at the end of the Mock IEP.

Fidelity

Fidelity to intervention was important to ensure that no diffusion of treatment occurred and only the treatment group received the Mock IEP intervention. Documentation of consistent implementation of the intervention was conducted by an outside observer provided with a checklist of the required elements of the intervention (see Appendix A). The fidelity for this study was 100%. Further, attendance was taken at each of the IEP events to ensure only treatment group participants were attending the trainings.

Ethical Considerations and Validity Threats

The Mock IEP was based on a fictional student to respect confidentiality. All participants were volunteers. Respect for persons, beneficence, and justice were the governing principles of this study. To achieve respect for persons, all participants were volunteers freely agreeing to participate and provided consent to be a part of the study. Beneficence in this study was demonstrated by maximizing the benefit of the study through seeking to offer further experience-based learning opportunities to the participants, and the results of this study were intended to improve present educator training. Justice was addressed in the distribution of benefits to the educators participating, balanced with the burdens being of minimal risk, considering that the participants were only asked to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

To ensure validity to the study, if participants did not fully participate in the entire study by missing a meeting, they were dropped from the study. To avoid sampling bias, the intervention was offered to all credential candidates at the university. Participants for both groups were required to opt into the study. Convenience sampling and participant opt-in were necessitated for this study as participants had to volunteer outside of their credential program hours to participate. Information for the intervention was derived from a federal legal compliance perspective to avoid researcher bias. The threat of diffusion of treatment was considered by administering the intervention solely to the treatment group by confirming participation records.

Data Analysis

All data were entered into SPSS® (SPSS, 2021). No names or identifying information were included in the data analysis. Before analyses were conducted, all data were cleaned to ensure no outliers were present (Dimitrov, 2012). After cleaning the data, independent sample *t*-tests (i.e., across groups) and dependent samples *t*-tests (i.e., within groups) were conducted to determine the significant difference in attitudes towards inclusion between the two means scores on the STATIC (Cochran, 1998). Before interpretation, Levene's Homogeneity of Variance was examined to see if the assumption of equivalence had been violated (Levene, 1960).

Results

Two independent samples *t*-tests were conducted on the whole sample ($n = 45$) for both the pre and post-assessment scores. Results for the pre-test: Levene's Homogeneity of Variance was not violated ($p > .05$), and the *t*-test showed non-significant differences between the mean scores on the pre-tests between the two groups $t(43) = -.49$, $p = .63$. Meaning the two groups were not statistically different. Further, this shows the two groups had a similar average in their attitudes towards inclusion before the study began; thus any changes seen on the post-test likely due to the intervention, and not group differences based on participants.

Results for the post-test were: (1) Levene's Homogeneity of Variance was not violated ($p > .05$), and (2) the *t*-test showed a significant difference between the mean scores on the post-test between the two groups $t(43) = 3.55$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.07$. Moreover, the practical significance (i.e., effect size) was considered moderate to large as any effect size over 1 is considered strong practical significance. This provides initial support the intervention was impacting attitudes towards inclusion (see Table 1).

Table 1
Results of Independent Samples T-Tests

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Pre Test		
Treatment	3.37	0.30
Control	3.42	0.40
Post Test*		
Treatment	3.71	0.25
Control	3.41	0.31

Note. SD = Standard Deviation. * = $p < .05$.

After determining the differences between pre and post-assessment scores between groups, two paired t-tests were run for both groups (i.e., treatment and control) to determine if participants’ mean scores from pre to post were significantly different within each group (i.e., growth). Results for each group were as follows: treatment group, $t(29) = -6.26, p < .001$; control group, $t(14) = .18, p = .83$. The treatment group showed statistically significant growth, and the control group did not show statistically significant growth (see Table 2). More specifically, the treatment group’s attitudes towards inclusion increased, while the control group’s attitudes actually decreased slightly. Coupled with the findings of the independent t-tests, these results indicate the intervention was not only effective at showcasing a statistical and practical difference between the treatment and control groups on the post-test, but also the treatment groups had statistically significant growth.

Discussion and Conclusion

All general education teachers are legally required to be inclusive towards all students, whether they feel prepared to do so or not. However, teacher education programs, particularly in California, are given the insurmountable task of preparing candidates with an ever-increasing number of TPEs and an ever-expanding teacher shortage (CTC, 2016). This leads teacher preparation programs to rely on clinical experiences to expand on TPEs that are otherwise difficult to teach in the traditional classroom setting. Yet, not all candidates will be in clinical settings where they are exposed to students with disabilities, the IEP process, or inclusion; impacting their attitudes and beliefs. This has been demonstrated in the research as studies have shown preservice educators feel unprepared and poorly trained to participate in the IEP process and inclusive education (Allday et al., 2016; Lautenbach & Heyder, 2019; McKenzie, 2009). Therefore,

Table 2
Results of Paired T-Tests

	Mean	SD
Treatment Group*		
Pre	3.37	0.30
Post	3.71	0.25
Control Group		
Pre	3.42	0.40
Post	3.41	0.31

Note. SD = Standard Deviation. * = $p < .001$.

teacher preparation programs must find unique approaches to clinical experiences to ensure that candidates leave prepared to engage in all facets of their teaching career including engaging in IEPs and inclusive education.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether participation in a simulated IEP experience would increase preservice teacher candidates' attitudes toward inclusive education. Attitudes towards inclusion have been shown to be indicators of the effectiveness of educator collaboration in the IEP process as well as determinants of teacher's beliefs towards inclusive education (Garro & Thompson, 2022; Metsala & Harkins, 2019; Strassfeld, 2018). The results support the hypothesis that experiential learning through a structured Mock IEP significantly improves candidates' perspectives on inclusion. The treatment group, which participated in the simulation, demonstrated both statistically and practically significant growth in attitudes toward inclusion, whereas the control group showed no meaningful change. Additionally, the standard deviation for the treatment group decreased from pre-test to post-test, indicating the intervention caused the participants to be more aligned in their attitudes towards inclusion; thus, their attitudes not only improved towards inclusion, but they did so for participants consistently. These findings are consistent with prior research highlighting the importance of mastery experiences (Bandura, 1977) and experiential learning models in shaping professional beliefs and preparedness (Bradley & Kendall, 2014; Kaufman & Ireland, 2016; Lautenbach & Heyder, 2019).

The statistically significant improvement in the treatment group's post-test scores indicates that the Mock IEP provided a valuable opportunity for candidates to practice critical collaborative and decision-making skills in a low-risk, high-fidelity setting. As noted in the literature, general education teachers are increasingly required to participate meaningfully in the IEP process, yet many report feeling underprepared (Harvey, 2010; Werts et al., 2002). By simulating the IEP process, this study's intervention helped bridge the gap between theory and practice, offering candidates the chance to explore their roles within a supportive and structured environment.

Moreover, the results reinforce the argument that traditional teacher preparation programs do not sufficiently provide authentic opportunities for candidates to interact with the inclusive aspects of teaching (Allday et al., 2016; Alsarawi, 2021; McCall et al., 2024). Given that inclusion is a legal and ethical expectation, it is incumbent upon credential programs to embed such experiential opportunities more systematically. The success of the Mock IEP demonstrates that even short-term interventions can

significantly shift candidates' attitudes when those interventions are authentic, collaborative, and tied to real-world expectations.

Importantly, this study contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting the inclusion of simulations in educator preparation, a practice already widely adopted in other high-stakes professions such as healthcare and aviation (Mueller et al., 2019). Further, the results support previous studies on simulation training's effectiveness for educators, providing additional rationale to explore simulations in educator training (Kaufman-Ireland, 2016). While education has historically relied heavily on theoretical and discussion-based formats, this research affirms that simulations can be effective tools for increasing teacher self-efficacy, preparedness, and alignment with TPEs, particularly those centered on inclusion and equity.

Limitations and Future Studies

In conducting the Mock IEP, there were several limiting factors. Sample size is the most limiting factor of this study. Convenience sampling was used as the grant funding was available and the credential candidate volunteers were accessible to the researcher. A larger sample size would provide enough data to warrant analysis of the measure's four factors of the STATIC (Cochran, 1998). The statistical analysis of the subcategories would provide information on what aspects of the attitudes of educators are changing towards inclusion when interacting with the Mock IEP. This could provide more focused and specialized programs for certain qualities of attitudes towards inclusion. Therefore, future studies should explore scaling the Mock IEP to larger participant numbers in order to offer an effective training tool as well as to collect more information on the subcategories of the STATIC (Cochran, 1998).

Implications from the current study for future research are promising. In this case, simulation has been shown to be a statistically significant tool in educator training and beckons further research. Future research may focus on how to scale the Mock IEP program to a larger size, and through different formats. This particular study was conducted virtually, and the effectiveness of the study remained statistically significant, indicating that virtual programs of this nature are effective. However, one avenue for future studies could be the notion of an in-person Mock IEP simulation to examine whether candidate attitudes towards inclusion are increased via an in-person versus virtual simulation. Though this study only examined credential candidates' attitudes towards inclusion, further research

should be conducted on simulation training programs as professional development opportunities for practicing educators.

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Appendix A

Fidelity Checklists

Meeting #1 - 2/28/2022

- Rational for Mock IEP explained & ensure all participants have completed pre-test STATIC (Cochran, 1998)
- Complete IRIS module sections 1-5, 7, & assessment questions in Google Form
- Complete group discussion questions & share group findings in the main room
- Receive and review Mock IEP forms
- Meet in small-discussion group to discuss Mock IEP observations

Meeting #2 - 3/19/2022

- IEP agenda overview
- Participants receive Mock IEP roles
- Small group discussions in groupings of Mock IEP roles
- Instruction and group discussion for pre-IEP best practices
- Small groups of Mock IEP teams for pre-meeting discussion

Meeting #3 - 4/9/2022

- Group review of meeting agenda and timing expectations
- Mock IEP
- Post Mock IEP large group debrief discussions
- Small group discussion in Mock IEP teams
- Complete post-test STATIC (Cochran, 1998)

Appendix B***Meeting Agenda- Brad's Annual IEP Meeting - 1 hr***

- (1) Welcome, introductions, and agenda overview ... 1-2 min.
- (2) Purpose of the meeting ... 1-2 min.
 - a) To complete the annual IEP review, review goal progress and propose new goals
 - b) To determine the student's Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- (3) Parents' rights
 - a) Confirm parents have been offered the Procedural Safeguards, an explanation of their rights as a parent with a student with disabilities
- (4) Present Levels of Performance ... 5-10 min.
 - a) Each team member (SPED, Psych, Math Gen. Ed., ELA Gen. Ed.) represents their perspective of working with the child (this is derived from the IEP paperwork for the Mock IEP scenario)
- (5) Goal Progress and proposals ... 20-30 min.
 - a) All previous goals were met
 - b) Previous goals are the baseline for the new goals
 - c) Present goal proposals. The goal is not to word the goal but to determine the next progression that is appropriate for the students
 - i) For example, this is acceptable: Brad will demonstrate the ability to keep his papers organized.
 - (1) Goal #1: Number Awareness
 - (2) Goal #2: Paragraph Writing
 - (3) Goal #3: Self-Monitoring
 - (4) Goal #4: Organization
- (6) Accommodations & Modifications ... 3-5 min.
 - a) Review of any appropriate accommodations & modifications recommendations by the IEP team members
- (7) Services ... 3-5 min.
 - a) Discussion of services and placement
- (8) Closure & meeting dismissal