How the Commitment to Inclusion Has Highlighted the Need for Greater Collaboration in the United States[1]

Como o Compromisso com a Inclusão Tem Guiado a Necessidade de uma Maior Colaboração nos Estados Unidos

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ABSTRACT: In this article, we provide an overview of the special education policies and practices enacted in the United States over the past 25 years. Although there have been some improvements in conditions for students with special education needs, achievement data continue to indicate unacceptably low levels of achievement. We believe that the lack of achievement highlights the fact that greater collaboration is needed between special educators and general education educators. We describe the different forms of collaboration that have evolved over the past two decades and we provide recommendations for strengthening collaborations in the future.

KEYWORDS: Special Education. United States.

RESUMO: Neste artigo, nós fornecemos uma visão geral das políticas e práticas de educação especial promulgadas nos Estados Unidos nos últimos 25 anos. Embora tenha havido algumas melhorias nas condições para alunos com necessidades educacionais especiais, os dados obtidos continuam a indicar níveis inaceitavelmente baixos de conquistas escolares. Acreditamos que a falta de conquistas escolares destaca o fato de que é necessária mais colaboração entre professores de educação especial e do ensino regular. Descrevemos as diferentes formas de colaboração que evoluíram nas últimas duas décadas e fornecemos recomendações para o fortalecimento de colaborações no futuro.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação Especial. Estados Unidos.

1 INTRODUCTION

Urbanization, acculturation of new immigrants, service placement for children with disabilities, private versus public schooling, and prevention of criminal behavior weighed heavy on the shoulders of educational reformers in early 19th Century America. Remarkably, this same thesis statement could well describe the current educational climate in the United States. Today, the U.S. population has become more diverse and more concentrated in urban areas, education

reformers are advocating for privatization, the school-to-prison pipeline is a well-worn path for a disproportionate number of diverse students, and the tension between separate and inclusive service delivery continues. Thus, clear parallels can be seen between the challenges faced by the current U.S. education system and the challenges it faced one century ago. In this article, the authors reflect upon the past several decades of schooling in the United States, with a focus on policy related to special education and inclusion. The purpose of this retrospection is to both describe the history of collaboration between general educators and special educators, and, in light of that history, to make recommendations for future special education policy.

In the United States, the history of service for students with special education needs (SEN - defined as students with learning and/or physical differences, disabilities, exceptionalities, or difficulties) is a story of increasing inclusion, bringing those *untouchables* into the light to participate in the public sphere. However, while a retrospective look reveals this positive trend, the inclusion of students with SEN in the regular classroom cannot be thought of as a destination at which the United States has arrived, but, rather, it requires an ongoing commitment between general education and special education professionals to overcome systemic and dynamic challenges to an expression of inclusion that truly benefits students with differences. As Sabornie, Cullinan, Osborne and Brock (2005, p. 49) assert, "the who, along with the how and where, are core concepts and perpetual questions of great importance in the field of special education". This article takes a retrospective look at the *who, how, where,* and *when* of the evolution of inclusion in the United States. We discuss what has been accomplished up to this point, and how far we have to go.

2 DEVELOPMENT
2.1 PART 1: POLICY & PRACTICES RETROSPECTIVE

Early 20th century. In these early years the field began to wrestle with questions that continue to be debated today; how to define *what* a disability/special education need/exceptionality/difference was, *how* to educate a person with such a difference, and *where* to school them. Throughout history the answers to these questions were equally influenced by socio-political dynamics of the times, public perception, as well as from ideological and philosophical divisions between those advocating for the education of children with disabilities. Not only were children excluded from schools, they were often excluded from society through adulthood. With medical knowledge just emerging and no evidence base for effective educational practices, educational policy during this time typically espoused three societal values; protection, separation, and dependency (Winzer, 1993).

During this period, society viewed people with physical, social, and mental differences as inflicted with a disease and a threat to society and themselves. In order to protect the community, educational leaders designed institutions in remote rural areas to remove *derelicts* and *idiocy* from society and protect them from harm. Due to their perceived mental inferiority and incapability to learn, service providers assumed lifelong dependency. While these segregated settings ranged in quality and often acquired the reputation for maltreatment and severe abuse, others (e.g., Horace Mann School for the Deaf, Perkins Institution for the Blind) were founded by educational reformers who sought to demonstrate the possibility that rehabilitative

services and schooling could lead to enabling the blind, deaf, and those with intellectual challenges to be productive citizens (Winzer, 1993).

Several social and technological factors in the 1920s -1940s, led to a societal shift in the treatment of people with special needs. The social context of two world wars brought disability into the lives of many first hand, as wounded soldiers came home from war with brain injuries, the country was confronted with how to support these war veterans who once did not have cognitive learning difficulties but now did. In addition, the internal economic struggles provided educational leaders, such as John Dewey, the public platform to call for educating children who had physical, intellectual, and learning differences on the grounds of a human capital argument. At the 1930s White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, proponents argued: "Special education is not charity. It is good economy and sound public policy to provide medical treatment, special education for the disabled rather than leave them unemployed and dependent their lifetimes long" (Winzer, 1993, p. 369). Harnessing an untapped human resource, this message offered US society a new perspective of SEN as assets to the workforce rather than a burden.

This shift in societal views was one component initiating the trend toward providing services, increasing the self-determination of individuals with special needs, and including them in schools and the public sphere. However, these aims were accomplished under 'separate but equal' conditions. Indeed, *some* children were educated. However, their education occurred in special schools apart from their peers without special needs. Still, millions of other children with special needs received no schooling at all. It would take further external political and internal social pressures to bring the needs of people with disabilities out from the shadows.

Growing advocacy for individuals with special needs (1950s-1970s). The external political pressure to accelerate the quality of public education arose when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957. In 1958, the first federal education law provided funds to states to improve science education and included a small appropriation for the preparation of special education teachers in universities. Internally, the growing Civil Rights movement challenged the instrumental in advancing advocacy for students with special needs. For example, the desegregation orders of *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* reinforced the notion that "separate but equal" was not an appropriate educational approach for the country. Parents of children with special needs began to organize which led to the development of formalized lobbying efforts representing parents of children with disabilities (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996).

With the culmination of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, the notion of "desegregation" was formalized into law and this advanced momentum for access to education for SEN. The passage of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was an important step towards the US acknowledging the importance of equal access to a quality education for all. ESEA also provided funding for schools to support educational services for students from rural and urban low income households.

By 1968, it had become apparent that a disproportionate number of African American students were being identified and overrepresented in special education, particularly in the area of educable mental retardation (EMR). Consequently, these students were being placed in special schools or separate classes (Dunn, 1968). Dunn's evidenced assertion was

preceded by an increase in labeling processes and the conception of learning disability (LD) and emotional disturbance (ED) (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987). In the 1950s, the four main categories that existed for low-achieving students were largely populated by students of color, namely African American students (Sleeter, 1995). However, with desegregation mandates placed upon schools through *Brown v. Board of Education* and the surge of academic rivalry sparked by Russia's Sputnik, dominant parties manufactured LD and ED labels to create a space for struggling white students that would help them maintain their sense of cognitive and competitive normalcy as well as separation from Black and Brown students (Sleeter, 1987). However, as legal pressure from parents and communities affected by the disproportionate EMR categorization of their children increased (e.g. *Diana v. State Board of Education*, 1970; *Larry P. v. Riles*, 1972), more of these students were moved into categories previously designated for white students (Sleeter, 1995). Sadly, the disproportionate representation of Black and Brown students in various ethnic categories has persisted since the time of Dunn's seminal work. Instead of leveled representation of students in special education, we now face disproportionate representation of select students in the extremely subjective categories of LD, ED, *and* EMR (Ferri & Conner, 2005).

The revelation of disproportionality certainly caused some rifts between disability rights and civil rights activists who saw special educators as enacting racist policy through misidentifying African American children as "disabled" and segregating them to special classes (Semmel, Gerber, & MacMillan, 1994). Nonetheless, two landmark cases propelled disability rights in education and raised the need for federal intervention in providing special education services. From 1971-1973 the federal courts heard, *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* and *Mills v. Board of Education,* and applied the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that schools are compelled to provide all children "equal protection of the law without discrimination on the basis of disability" as with race. In addition, the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment provided parents with the right to due process and compelled schools to provide prior notice to parents to discuss any changes in their child's education and the right to appeal decisions made by the school district (Martin et al, 1996).

Congressional hearings in 1975 revealed that fewer than 20% of children known to have a disability were receiving services, despite every state and school district providing some form of special education during that time period. Congress responded through two forms of legislation, Section 504 of the 1973 Vocational Rehabilitation Act and the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), also known as Public Law 94-142 (1975). Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act was the first disability civil rights law enacted in the United States and it prohibited discrimination based on disabilities in any program receiving federal funding (i.e., public schools). Public Law 94-142 provided states with funds to supplement state funding for special education, with the caveat that the state would comply with certain procedures: 1) implement a "child find" system, 2) enact an evaluation procedure to determine eligibility under 13 different disability categories, 3) provide each child with an Individual Education Program (IEP), and 4) provide services in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

Before passage of the EHA, school districts had the option of refusing students defined as "uneducable" by local school personnel. When schools did serve these

children, they were often served inappropriately. For example, children with physical disabilities were required to be in a setting created for students with mental retardation (Martin et al,1996). A key provision of the EHA was that educational services must be provided in the "least restrictive environment" (LRE) meaning that, to the extent possible, educational services for students with special needs should be provided alongside their peers without special needs.

Protective integration 1980s-1990s. The notion of the *Least Restrictive Environment* (LRE) became a center of attention in the continued advocacy for students with special needs after the passage of the EHA and is an important aspect of, what is now referred to as, *inclusion.* The National Center on Education Restructuring and Inclusion [NCERI] (1994, p. 15) described inclusion as

> providing to all students, including those with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplementary aids and support services, in age appropriate classrooms in their neighborhood schools, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society

In 1986, United States Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Madeleine Will, advocated for the Regular Education Initiative (REI) which focused on creating a more unified system of support for students with SEN. This unified system would require close collaboration between general and special educators and would result in children with SEN being taught in the regular education classroom with appropriate supports (Will, 1986). The REI led to a greater emphasis on *mainstreaming*, where schools were encouraged to increase the amount of time students with SEN were educated in the general education classroom while also providing individualized instruction for students with SEN as needed.

The REI did not argue for full inclusion but only inclusion for those students with special education needs who would benefit from general education instruction given reasonable accommodations and supports. With this advancement came an emerging role for special education teachers, that of bridging the gap between instruction from a special education perspective and the type of teaching that was common in a general education classroom. Many special education teachers became *resource teachers* who had the responsibility of providing more intensive supports for students in particular areas of learning such as reading, mathematics, science, social studies, etc. Typically, resource teachers would deliver instruction in a resource room away from the general education classroom. Resource teachers were tasked with communicating with general education teachers about the needs of students with SEN as well as how their resource instruction complemented instruction in the general education classroom. Despite these efforts, learning outcomes for students with special needs remained poor and many students lacked basic skills necessary for success in school. As a result, many schools started to put greater emphasis on the remediation of basic reading, writing, and mathematics skills for students with SEN. Special education teachers were encouraged to take a highly structured approach to their teaching and scripted curricula were developed to be used by special education teachers. During these years, scholars debated about "inclusion" - what it meant, what it didn't mean, and whether it was best for all students with SEN. Litigation

ensued and over time, the courts began to interpret the LRE as increased access to the general education classroom for students with disabilities.

The 21st century: Age of high stakes testing, accountability, and access to the general education curriculum. The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) led to a greater emphasis on access to the general education curriculum for all students. Also, educators questioned the validity of identification practices for disabilities including the disproportional identification of students of color with particular disabilities (i.e., specific learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and emotional and behavioral disorders). Additionally, researchers began to place an emphasis on the use of scientifically validated instructional practices. Collectively, these factors led to a push to enhance access to the general education curriculum for students with SEN and a more valid and reliable process for identifying students with special needs. The results were reform movements meant to address these concerns, *Multi-Tier Systems of Support* (MTSS) and *Response to Intervention* (RtI). These initiatives had significant ramifications regarding the role of the special education teacher, particularly related to students with specific learning disabilities. MTSS and RtI offer a school-wide system of support that includes the components of (a) school-wide data collection systems using reliable and valid measures for screening and progress monitoring of students within regular data collection cycles, (b) multiple tiers of support in the domains of assessment, curriculum, and instruction, (c) evidence-based practices (EBP) in behavioral and academic curriculum and instruction, and (d) teaming and decision-making processes that use data to guide instruction and support (Gersten, Baker, Shanahan, Linan-Thompson, Collins, & Scarcella, 2007; Fletcher & Vaugn, 2009; Shinn, 2010; Sugai & Horner, 2009; Vaughn & Fuchs 2003). Simply put, MTSS refers to a system in which students are provided a progression of more intensive instruction/intervention that is connected to the general education curriculum based on performance based data. RtI, as a process for improving the validity and reliability of identification of students with special needs, was conceived to operate within a MTSS structure and significantly changed identification procedures in schools across the nation (Berkeley, Bender, Gregg Peaster, & Saunders, 2009; Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012).

In concert with NCLB, the reauthorization of the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act provided local education agencies additional authority to determine whether a child has a specific learning disability through "responsiveness to intervention", a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention (IDEA, 2004 [p. 118 STAT. 2706]). This statute created the authority and political pressure for schools, districts, and states to implement MTSS. These policy changes reinforced a movement toward integrating behavioral and academic interventions through school-wide MTSS that would redistribute the burden of more intensive intervention from special education providers *exclusively* to *all* education providers.

2.2 Part 2: Collaboration retrospective

As we discussed in the first half of this article, the passage of The Education of All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 (Public Law 94-142, 1975) established the need for collaboration between special education and general education teachers. The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act of 2004 (Public Law 20, 2004) reinforced the mandate for stu-

dents with SEN to receive adequate educational services in the least restrictive environment. In order to fulfill this legal mandate, general education teachers and special education teachers have had to find multiple avenues for collaboration. Overall, empirical research in the United States has clearly demonstrated that collaboration between general and special education teachers has resulted in benefits to students with SEN (Arthaud, Aram, Breck, Doelling, & Bushrow, 2007; Cross, Traub, Hutter-Pishgahi, & Shelton, 2004; Friend & Cook, 2012). Furthermore, the literature base has also demonstrated that the lack of collaboration has been connected to negative outcomes for students with SEN (Hunt, Soto, Maier, Muller, & Goetz, 2002; Murawski & Hughes, 2009; Wallace, Anderson, & Bartolomay, 2002).

Classifying collaboration by disciplinary approach. By definition, the term *collaboration* implies a working together. Snell and Janney (2005, p. 6) described this working together as "a positive interdependence among team members who agree to pool and partition their resources and rewards and to operate from a foundation of shared values". One way of classifying the many different approaches to collaboration in the United States has been by the following terms: multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary (Friend & Cook, 2010; Hernandez, 2013). In a multidisciplinary approach, each professional acts independently to meet the needs of the student with SEN. A student with SEN may receive services from a speech therapist, and occupational therapist, a school counselor, a special education teacher, and a general education teacher. Each one of these professionals is seen as having a unique knowledge base that is relatively independent of the others and they offer simultaneous but fairly independent help. The interdisciplinary approach involves more interaction between professionals. Professionals consult with each other and exchange information about their work with the student with SEN. In this case, there is in increased level of engagement but still distinct boundaries between professionals with different backgrounds. The transdisciplinary approach has shown the most potential. It has been defined as "an integrated team environment [in which] team members are to engage in a collaborative and collective power structure that emphasizes parental participation and cross discipline intervention methodologies" (Hernandez, 2013, p. 485). In the transdisciplinary approach, clear lines of communication must be established and multiple perspectives must be valued (Downing & Bailey, 1990). Unfortunately, there is very little research in the United States on how to prepare teachers for the complex activity of transdisciplinary collaboration.

Classifying collaboration by role and activity. In addition to considering the disciplinary approach to collaboration, researchers and educators in the United States have often reflected upon the roles and activities that are involved in collaborations. In this article, we discuss the two most common types of collaborative activities: co-teaching and consultation.

Co-teaching. In the United States, special education teachers and general education teachers have engaged in multiple forms of co-teaching. In general, co-teaching occurs when both the special education teacher and the general education teacher are in the same classroom at the same time. Yet, as Friend and Bursuck (2009) and then Sileo (2011) explained, there are six unique expressions or models of co-teaching that have been observed in the United States. For the *one teach and one observe* model, only one of the teachers is engaged in the activity of teaching while the other is an active observer. Ideally, the observer is gathering information about the classroom learning environment and student learning/thinking so that this informa-

tion can inform future instruction. In the *parallel teaching* model, both the special education teacher and the general education teacher are teaching at the same time, but there is limited interaction between the two teachers. This model allows the teachers to differentiate instruction for the needs of different learners. The teachers are working in the same classroom, but the work of one teacher is not necessarily informed by the work of the other.

The next model is *station teaching*. In this model, students rotate to stations or groups that are each led by one of the teachers. This is different from parallel teaching in that students have the opportunity to be taught by each teacher instead of only one teacher. The next model of co-teaching is *alternative teaching*. In this model, one teacher instructs the whole class, while the other teacher takes a small group of students and provides alternative instruction (perhaps remediation or pre-teaching in order to develop foundational skills/knowledge). The model *one teach, one assist* allows one teacher to provide whole group instruction while the other teacher is available to walk around the classroom and offer assistance to individual students Finally, the sixth model is *team teaching* in which both teachers work interdependently and simultaneously to deliver instruction. The teachers are actively communicating with each other as well as with students in order to provide a common vision of instruction.

Consultation. Although there have been clear benefits to co-teaching in inclusive classrooms in the United States, there simply are not enough resources to place a special educator in every inclusive classroom (e.g., McLeskey, Tyler, & Flippin, 2004). In many schools in the United States there may be only one or two special education resource teachers for an entire school. In these cases general education and special education teachers may have the opportunity to collaborate through consultation rather than co-teaching. Consultation occurs when the special education teacher and general education teacher meet together to create a plan to address a problem of teaching or learning in the classroom. There have been many consultation models in the literature, and Authors and Co-Authors (XXXX) summarized the steps to the general consultation process as follows:

1. Initiate rapport building
2. Negotiate consultation relationship
3. Identify the problem
4. Develop recommendations
5. Finalize recommendations and solidify plan
6. Implement the plan
7. Evaluate the plan
8. Learn from results
9. Check back
10. Re-engage

One of the challenges that has remained unresolved in the United States is how to prepare teachers to engage in the complex process of consultation. There has been limited research on preparing practitioners to engage in consultations (e.g., Cummings, 2002; Gravois, Knotec, & Babinski, 2002; Pugash, Johnson, Drame, & Williamson, 2012; Truscott, Kreskey, Bolling, Psimas, Graybill, Albritton, & Schwartz, 2012) and although there are some indivi-

dual preparation programs that do prepare preservice teachers for consultation, this is not yet standard practice in the United States.

3 Conclusion
Changes to policy

Despite the fact that different forms of collaboration have evolved in the United States over the past several decades to support the learning of students with SEN, there are many indicators that the needs of students with SEN are still not being met. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), in 2015, only 12 % of 4th grade "students with disabilities" met or exceeded proficiency levels on the NAEP's standardized reading assessment in comparison to 40% of general education 4th grade students. In the same year, only 16% of 4th grade "students with disabilities" met or exceeded proficiency levels on the NAEP's standardized mathematics assessment in comparison to 44% of general education 4th grade students (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2015). Because NAEP results are a common metric for all states and selected urban schools, the longitudinal standardized data is an accurate reflection of the great disparity in achievement between students with SEN and those without. Although this disparity highlights a grave concern regarding access to equitable education, it is perhaps not as concerning as the fact that some schools have *pushed out* (i.e., encouraged to dropout or otherwise not participate in schooling) students with SEN due to concerns that their low test scores might lower the school's overall rating (Peters, Johnstone, & Ferguson, 2005; McLaughlin & Rouse, 2000). Indeed in the United States today, the high school dropout rate for students with SEN is, approximately, 2.2 times greater than for a student without SEN (13.9% for SENs vs. 6.2% for non-SENs) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Why might the lack of equity persist for students with SEN and what might be done in the future to help the United States move forward in offering *every* child a "fair, equitable, and high-quality education" (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015)?

Peters, Johnstone, and Ferguson (2005, p. 140) noted that the "goals of inclusive education are underdeveloped, elusive and difficult to measure". At the federal, state, and local levels, policy makers and educators alike need to have more conversations about the goals for inclusion and what might be appropriate indicators that can be used to evaluate success in reaching those goals. In the United States, the time is right for us to think more broadly about the intended and unintended outcomes of how we evaluate the extent to which we are meeting the needs of students with SEN. A favored measure of educational success in the United States has been the high stakes achievement test. However, if our current system of high-stakes accountability has had the unintended outcome of encouraging schools to *push out* students with SEN, we need to develop and use multiple measures of success that more accurately reflect the needs of students and their teachers.

Changes to teacher preparation

Teacher education programs in the United States have not been effective in preparing special education and general education teachers to successfully engage in collaborations that positively impact SEN (Laframboise, Epanchin, Colucci, & Hocutt, 2004; McKenzie, 2009;

Otis-Wilborn, Winn, Griffin & Kilgore, 2005). As a result of this insufficient preparation, new teachers have felt unprepared for the collaborative work in inclusive classrooms (Keefe & Moore, 2004). In an effort to remedy this lack of preparation, Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2013) identified four strategies that had empirical support for preparing future teachers to effectively engage in collaboration: (a) integrate programs with different disciplines or content areas, (b) offer classes that teach collaboration skills, (c) provide opportunities for co-teaching during field placements, and (d) model co-teaching in the university classroom. In the following section, we provide an example of how teacher educators at the University of South Florida have integrated these four recommendations in an effort to strengthen teacher preparation for collaboration.

AN EXAMPLE OF PREPARING TEACHERS FOR THE WORK OF CONSULTATION

At the University of South Florida, teacher educators from both the undergraduate elementary education program and the undergraduate special education program recognized the need to prepare future general education teachers and special education teachers for greater effectiveness in their future collaborations with each other. To address this need, faculty at the university created an innovative project that integrated three of the four recommendations of Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2013). From the results of a previous baseline study, Authors and Co-Authors (2016) found that preservice elementary education teachers and preservice special education teachers at the University of South Florida did not know how to engage in consultations, specifically about the mathematics learning needs of students with SEN. Therefore, they created an innovative project that was designed to prepare preservice teachers specifically for the complex task of engaging in a mathematics-specific consultation.

The project was called Reaching All Learners in Mathematics, and it provided preservice elementary education teachers the opportunity to consult with preservice special education teachers about the mathematics learning needs of an elementary student with SEN. A cohort of elementary education preservice teachers were in field placements (elementary school classrooms) twice a week. These preservice teachers identified a student with SEN and interviewed that student to identify a specific mathematics standard with which the student had difficulty. The elementary teacher was required to learn about the student and to identify what the student *could* do as well as what the student could not do with regard to that specific mathematics standard. The university faculty members used a co-teaching model with a mathematics teacher educator and a special education teacher educator to advise both the preservice elementary education teachers on how to ask questions and the special education preservice teachers on how to answer questions about the student's special education need and potential teaching actions that might address that need. The general education and special education preservice consultants met together in person three times over the period of a month in order to engage in the consultation process, and the co-teaching faculty members provided specific feedback to the consultants on this process.

This project integrated the Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2013) recommendations by: (1) creating a project that integrated both the elementary and special education programs, (2) directly teaching preservice teachers about consultation, and (3) modeling co-teaching in the university classroom. Although the project was highly successful, it involved only one cohort of students

at the University of South Florida. The challenge for this university, as well as the United States as a whole, is to make this type of preparation the norm rather than the exception.

LOOKING TO THE PAST TO SEE THE FUTURE

Education research in the United States has made progress in laying the foundation for *what* constitutes exceptional needs, *where* students with SEN are best served, and *how* to provide the most effective instruction. Nevertheless the United States has lacked the political will to provide the necessary structural supports for the type of systemic change that is responsive to research findings. Policy makers, educators, and the general public alike hold the common vision for inclusive education in the least restrictive environment, and yet the infrastructure to enact such a vision has remained underdeveloped to this day in the United States, particularly with respect to content specific instruction such as mathematics.

As we reflect upon the evolution of special education policy over previous decades, we find that internal and external socio-political factors have acted as catalysts for enacting advances in the implementation of educational strategies that meet the needs of students with SEN. In the early 20th century, two world wars and the race for space travel served as the impetus for educating children and adults with SEN. The drive to improve the economy became the financial lever that fostered investment in educating students with SEN who could then contribute to the country's economic strength. This financial lever was followed by the social movements of the mid-century that brought the recognition of equal rights for all. This movement for social equality advanced the notion that "separate but equal" educational conditions are not in fact equal, nor do they support the foundation of a democratic ideal for an inclusive society where all citizens have equal rights to participate.

Now, at the dawn of the 21st century, we must ask ourselves what internal or external socio-political conditions might catalyze politicians, educators, and the general public alike into taking the next steps toward realizing the promise of truly inclusive schools? From where will the champions arise at the federal, state, and local levels who will insist on the conditions necessary to advance the promise of inclusion? We know that teacher preparation must radically and systematically change in order to equip teachers for the collaboration that is required of special education and general education teachers in inclusive contexts. Like the aforementioned example of the University of South Florida, teacher educators must be willing to work in collaborative and interdisciplinary ways to prepare teachers to effectively engage in inclusive practices. Such examples ought not to be the exception but the norm during teacher preparation. It is encouraging to see that there are now students with SEN who have graduated from K-12 learning and are now entering teacher preparation programs in the United States (e.g. Dieterich, Chan, & Price, 2017; Papalia-Berardi, Hughes, & Papalia, 2002). As we look to the lessons of the past, it is our hope that the United States moves closer to the day when it will be common understanding that excellent education for students with SEN is not an optional improvement that benefits a small minority of students but rather it is the necessary condition for improvements across our entire educational system.

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