

# Educational Research and Development Journal

*Educational Research and Development Journal* is a refereed journal published by the *Chinese American Educational Research and Development Association*, a non-profit professional organization. *Educational Research and Development Journal* can be accessed from the *CAERDA* website, the Directory of Open Access Journals, Electronic Journals Library, EBSCO, OCLC-WorldCat, and Proquest data bases. **ISSN: 1526-8659**

## *Educational Research and Development Journal* Summer 2022, Volume 25, Number 1

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## **Teaching and Preparing Teachers for Diverse and Special Need Student Populations in Multicultural Classroom Contexts**

Jian Wang and Raymond Flores

We welcome you to the Summer 2022 Volume 25 Issue of the *Educational Research and Development Journal*. This issue presents five studies addressing teaching, teacher leadership, and teacher preparation for diverse and special needs students in multicultural classrooms and schools.

Preparing teachers to address the needs of diverse and special needs students in classrooms and support them to learn successfully has become an increasingly important task for teacher educators (Nieto, 2000). In their article, Osipova and Lao propose the tasks for teacher educators in preparing teachers for students of linguistically diverse and exceptional needs based on their review of the literature on culturally and linguistically responsive literacy effective for teaching diverse students with disabilities. These tasks include 1) Providing preservice teachers the quality core content-based instruction, 2) Supporting them in learning how to engage students in academic language and literacy development in English, and 3) Developing their competencies in addressing students' differences in learning. They recommend improving the quality of teacher education programs in preparing preservice teachers to work effectively with diverse exceptional learners. Additionally, they offer instructional tools for breaking the cycle of misidentification.

It is always challenging to prepare teachers for working with students with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and special needs at the same time in teacher education programs. This challenge is due to the limited space and time in the program on the one hand and the difficulties that teacher educators face in integrating different kinds of knowledge necessary for working with students with diverse backgrounds and special needs (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Using an empirical study, Carrizales, Greenlees, and Lara address how to prepare teachers for diverse and special needs students drawing on assessment data. They analyzed a special population course that first integrated the content important for teaching ESL, bilingual, and special needs students. Then, they examined its effects on preservice teachers' comprehensive and domain knowledge as assessed by the ESL, bilingual, and special education certification exams. This study offers the implications for teacher preparation policy and program developers to co-constructing integrated programs that promote teaching diverse student populations in K–12 classrooms.

Working closely with parents and involving them in teaching diverse and special needs students is an irreplaceable component of effective teaching for culturally diverse students with disabilities (Shepherd, Fowler, McCormick, Wilson, & Morgan, 2016; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). Thurlow, Liu, and Mentan examine how to engage parents and guardians in supporting the needs of English learners with disabilities in the school contexts. By reviewing the literature from general, special, and English learner education, they first discuss the characteristics of English learners with disabilities and their parents and then identify the barriers in engaging these parents in teaching students with disabilities. Finally, they offer strategies for helping educators and parents work with each other in teaching English learners with disabilities.

Increasing and retaining teachers with diverse cultural backgrounds are presumably useful in effectively addressing the issue of teaching diverse and special needs students (Payne, 2005). Thus, what will influence their teaching is an important question worth examining (Yoder, 2001). In their article, Lau and Gritter empirically investigate the cross-national experiences of Chinese immigrant teachers in shaping their implementation of culturally inclusive teaching in United States classrooms based on interview data. They identified that although Chinese immigrant

teachers developed extensive training in second language teaching, they had a gap in their knowledge of American student culture. These Chinese immigrant teachers also believed that an ideal classroom was a place of cultural harmony where divergent views could be valued and shared. This study helps develop some initial understanding of Chinese immigrant teachers' experiences in the US classrooms absent in the literature.

School principals play an increasingly important role in supporting teacher development at the school level (Brown & Militello, 2016) and leading the design and implementation of school curriculum innovations (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). In their study, Chan, Ridley, and Morris interviewed principals with diverse ethnic backgrounds on their perceived roles in leading school-level curriculum and professional development at the high, middle, and elementary school levels. They found that principals were more likely to share their perceptions of their curriculum leadership roles than other roles that they assumed.

We thank all the reviewers for their thorough and constructive suggestions and comments that made this issue possible. We hope that these articles will help enrich your thinking about the issues related to the teaching and teacher preparation for diverse and special needs students in the classroom context. Moreover, we hope that they are informative for you to examine similar issues deeply, extensively, and continuously. Finally, we sincerely encourage all the Chinese American Educational Research and Development Association members, other professional researchers, and practitioners to contribute to the *Educational Research & Development Journal*. Such contributions are central to developing the journal as a high-quality outlet that will advance our understanding of various professional education issues.

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