



TASH

Equity, Opportunity and Inclusion for People with Disabilities since 1975

TASH Resolution on Teacher Education

Statement of Purpose

University programs bear an important share of the responsibility for ensuring that the educational needs of students with severe disabilities are met in general education settings with their nondisabled peers. The purpose of this resolution is to establish guidelines for the preparation of teachers, both those seeking initial certification and those seeking advanced degrees.

Rationale

TASH's *Resolution on Education for Students with Disabilities* is grounded in principles of equity and social justice for all. It clearly states the educational and moral imperative that students with disabilities belong with their nondisabled same age peers in general education classrooms, and that they receive the supports and services necessary to benefit from their education in the general education setting. In conjunction with this, it is TASH's position that teacher education programs must be inclusive and collaborative, so that (a) special and general educators are prepared to meet the needs of all students through collaboration and effective teaching, and (b) the expertise required to meet the individualized needs of each student is easily accessible on education teams. TASH's position is based on the beliefs that teacher education programs should reflect research and ongoing reflection and discourse about effective practices both in educational services for students with disabilities and in teacher preparation. Teacher education programs must prepare teachers at two levels — entry level teachers with a broad base of knowledge in general and special education, and advanced level specialists with extensive expertise in either general education (e.g., reading methods, math instruction) or special education (e.g., modifications for students with mild or severe disabilities).

In relation in preparing teachers to meet the needs of students with severe disabilities, therefore, at least two types of efforts are warranted. First, entry level programs should provide all teachers a solid foundation in general education curriculum, instructional methods, and assessment, as well as basic expertise related to serving students with severe disabilities in general education settings. To this end, all teachers need to be prepared to:

1. teach a diverse population of learners within heterogeneous groups, including: (a) those with a range of abilities and needs; (b) those from a variety of racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and economic backgrounds; and (c) those from a variety of family configurations and support systems;
2. collaborate with families and other individuals who provide personal supports, in order to strengthen their role and ensure that they have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of children at school, at home, and in the community;
3. collaborate with school and non-school personnel (e.g., general and special educators; related services providers; support personnel; administrators; adult services providers; community agency personnel) to plan and provide individualized services;
4. gather assessment and other information relative to individual choices, growth, and progress, in order to ensure that each student's meaningful involvement within all aspects of community life is used as a foundation for making decisions related to curriculum and instruction;
5. employ a collaborative educational planning process (e.g., understanding of factors that influence school change; self-determination; person-centered planning) with the student and his/her family that results in increased voice, independence, interdependence, and control over the selection of valued educational outcomes;
6. design and use meaningful learner-centered curriculum and effective and non-intrusive instructional methods;
7. provide an individually appropriate education for all school-aged children and youth in the context of the general education curriculum, within general education activities, in general education settings, using (a) curricular and instructional modifications and accommodations, (b) assistive technology, (c) augmentative and alternative communication systems, and (d) supports provided in the least intrusive manner;

8. provide an individually appropriate education for all young adults who are in transition into adult life so that they can live and work in the community, including outcomes-oriented preparation for employment, community-based instruction, and supported living;
9. train, supervise, and evaluate non-professional members of education teams (e.g., paraeducators, peer tutors, volunteers); and
10. build classroom and school community, so that all children: (a) are valued members who are accepted and respected as individuals with differing voices, strengths, abilities, and contributions; and (b) learn to deal with controversy and conflict in creative and constructive ways.

Second, advanced level teacher education programs should provide opportunities for in-depth study of and specialization in services in general education settings for students with severe disabilities (see TASH Resolution on the People for Whom TASH Advocates) that reflect current effective practices and theory as grounded in careful inquiry and analysis.

Advanced level programs should include:

1. blending of research and theory into effective practices within all aspects of individuals' environments (e.g., school, home, community, work place), emphasizing participation in general education curriculum, activities, and settings
2. specialized knowledge required to meet the educational needs of students with severe disabilities (e.g., assisted eating and positioning; assistive technology; augmentative and alternative communication);
3. graduate students' utilization of current effective practices (e.g., general education curriculum and instruction modifications; instructional strategies; collaborative teaming strategies; natural support networks; positive behavioral supports; transition services; life-long learning and self-advocacy) with students who demonstrate a wide variety of abilities and needs (e.g., cognitive, emotional, sensory) across age ranges;
4. preparation of professionals who engage in reflection and life-long learning in relation to educational services for students with severe disabilities within the school community;

5. preparation of teachers to assume leadership roles within educational programs (e.g., the cycle of program evaluation, development, implementation, evaluation, etc.); and
6. preparation of teachers who employ strategies that teach students with disabilities to be self-advocates and community leaders.

In relation to effective practices in teacher education activities, programs must reflect research supported practices and innovations that result in effective teachers who are reflective life-long learners. Such practices include:

1. the use of authentic portfolio-based activities that support the development of teachers who collaboratively team and problem-solve with others, in order to provide effective and personally meaningful services for students with severe disabilities in inclusive settings;
2. a close link between content courses and field-based experiences, so that field-based experiences reflect the use of content as it is addressed in courses;
3. a coordinated set of courses, activities, and field-based experiences, accompanied by on-going mentoring relationships with 1-2 program faculty, that facilitates the continuous development of professionals from an emerging, to a proficient, to a mastery level of expertise (instead of a set of isolated courses or experiences); and
4. ongoing collaborative support of new teachers through the induction process by both program faculty and school district personnel.

Therefore, be it resolved, that TASH, an international advocacy association of people with disabilities, their family members, other advocates and people who work in the disability field, affirm that teacher preparation programs must prepare both generalists and specialists to provide services to students with disabilities that (a) are situated in general education settings for school-aged students and in natural community environments for young adults; (b) focus on access to, and the acquisition of, skills that are age- and/or grade-related; and (c) are based on knowledge of what constitutes effective educational practices.

Adopted January 2002