

Chapter 17

Building a Conceptual Framework for Culturally Inclusive Collaboration for Urban Practitioners

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ABSTRACT

Special education teacher preparation is one of the most critical areas of teacher preparation in higher education. The field is even more complicated depending on the environment in which it takes shape given urban, high-needs, suburban, and rural school communities. Equally important in today's teacher preparation paradigm is supplying pre-service teachers with the pedagogical skills necessary to meet the needs of their 21st century learners, especially those students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds and who attend urban schools. This chapter attempts to construct a practitioner friendly framework to examine inextricable linkages between teacher preparation and the role higher education institutions play in providing pre-service special education teachers the requisite skills necessary to become successful urban educators/practitioners. Teacher preparation programs can better support new teacher retention through CRT and family diversity training.

INTRODUCTION

The field of special education in American public schools takes on a myriad of forms depending on the context, culture and systematic framework in which the practitioner finds him or herself (Bleicher, 2011; Robertson, McFarland, Sciuchetti, & Garcia, 2017; Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry, 2009). However, what remains key across education, within a global continuum, is the need to prepare qualified teacher candidates and other related service providers on how to meet the needs of students with special needs, who live in high-needs or urban school communities. Since special education in a traditional sense includes collaboration across a variety of disciplines within the field of public education, the role of the higher

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education institution is to prepare these pre-service teachers with the 21st century skills that can open up dialogue with diverse family members, caretakers and students themselves about education in general, and special education in particular (Robertson, et al., 2017; Brown, 2007; Seidl & Pugach, 2009). Since these various fields involve many professionals with intersecting duties and tasks, it becomes paramount that schools, special education programs, and post-baccalaureate teacher training programs provide the pedagogy, skills, and conceptual framework for pre-service and early entry teacher candidates working in urban schools (Ford, 2014; Brown, 2007; Seidl & Pugach, 2009). The field is primed to prepare pre-service teachers with lesson planning, assessment, evaluation and progress monitoring (Gable, Tonelson, Sheth, Wilson, & Park, 2012; Markelz, Riden, & Scheeler, 2017; Robertson, et al., 2017). However, data on first year teachers working in urban public schools indicates that these pre-service teaching programs rarely get to the core of special education programming for their pre-service teachers. This does not adequately prepare teacher candidates for effective advocacy and service when they encounter any number of challenges in the field. Thus, traditional teacher preparation programs have not provided them meaningful experiences to use to address these complex issues that their student's and schools confront daily (Gable et al., 2012; Robertson, et al., 2017; Seidl & Pugach, 2009). Additionally, most pre-service teaching programs offer some minor field experience or a course within urban schools and charter schools, but few provide comprehensive programming therein with mentor teachers, school leaders and substantive experiences that deepen the candidate's conceptual understanding, rather than provide them with a deficit view of urban schools (Bleicher, 2011; Ford, 2014; Seidl & Pugach, 2009). As such, the urban school teacher pipeline remains sparse with highly qualified teacher candidates who are able to enter the classroom within three years and promote student achievement amongst a culturally and linguistically diverse ("CLD") student body (Bleicher, 2011; Robertson, et al., 2017; Seidl & Pugach, 2009).

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. First, the chapter attempts to elucidate a number of long-held assumptions about American university teacher preparation programs' ability to provide substantive training and teacher-leadership skills to pre-service teachers who choose to work within high-needs urban school classrooms. Additionally, this chapter provides a set of 21st century global conceptual tools for schools, principals, curriculum supervisors, teachers, parents, university administrators, and faculty to consider as critical factors that can be used to enhance the program they currently offer to pre-service teachers interested in teaching special education in high-needs urban school classrooms. The author maintains that in addition to extensive and meaningful research-based field experiences, programs must train pre-service teachers in culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogies with a focus on increasing achievement interwoven with strong family and community collaboration. A conceptual framework is offered for teacher mentors and programs to utilize to engage their practice, while it is also open to invitation for further deconstruction, in addition to critique. The dual purpose is to strengthen methods currently in place for urban teacher training, while at the same time provide an analytical paradigm that focuses on the pre-service teacher's needs, strengths, and role as a special educator/advocate working within a high-needs urban special education classroom (Akiba, 2011; Bleicher, 2011; Brown, 2007; Kea & Trent, 2013; Robertson, et al., 2017; Seidl & Pugach, 2009).

Collaboration in Special Education and Urban Education

Guidance counselors, medical specialists, physical therapists, speech and language therapists, social workers, regular and special educators, and other service providers may play a critical role in providing

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