

Special Issue: Preparing Special and Inclusive Educators for Their New Roles in the 21st Century

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For over four decades now, AASE has provided leadership at a peak, national level in the education of students with special needs. Integral to this leadership has been the dissemination of research evidence to inform best practice, achieved through the *Australasian Journal of Special Education* (AJSE). AJSE is now entering 2018 and its 42nd volume and is increasingly recognised internationally through measures of impact and scholarship. In 2011, the companion journal *Special Education Perspectives* (SEP), with a practitioner focus, joined AJSE as a national publication of AASE. For their support of the journals over this time, we sincerely thank all contributors, reviewers, members of the Editorial Board, production team, and the leadership of AASE.

Our field has moved constantly in these years, and yet the core mission of AJSE has and continues to be astute leadership to guide educators supporting those with a range of learning needs. Modern special education and inclusive practices are now part of one continuing challenge for excellence: How can we best support the achievement of personalised and appropriate learning outcomes for all students? With this in mind, the decision was made to merge SEP with AJSE and rename the journal as the *Australasian Journal of Special and Inclusive Education* (AJSIE).

In this special issue, we invited authors to write about how best to prepare special and inclusive educators for their new roles in the 21st century. We received a number of submissions, and six articles were finally accepted for the special issue.

McLeskey, Billingsley, and Ziegler present a well-conceived analysis of a significant problem that teacher education programs face internationally. They argue that too often teachers fail to apply evidence-based practices when teaching students with disabilities. The research-to-practice gap, they argue, could be because teachers lack confidence in using the practices, or sometimes teachers find it unfeasible to use evidence-based practices. The authors provide useful guidance about how best teacher education programs could be revised/reformed so that future generations of teachers could confidently use evidence-based practices. The article has significant implications for teacher educators internationally.

Wilson, Sokal, and Woloshyn's article provides a new and refreshing perspective about the preparation of preservice teachers with disabilities. They identify some serious systematic problems that preservice teachers with disabilities face and provide hope for building a new inclusive teaching force. The research was conducted in Canada, but it has implications for the teacher education programs internationally.

Bradford and Loreman, in their article on preparation of elementary preservice teachers to include students in physical education, argue that teachers must have a high sense of efficacy, lower degree of concerns, and positive sense of inclusion in order to teach in inclusive classrooms. Using open-ended questions with the Canadian sample of preservice

teachers, they report that not all teachers feel fully prepared to include students with disability in physical education. The authors make a strong case for the necessity of resources available for the teaching of inclusive physical education.

Billingsley, DeMatthews, Connally, and McLeskey present an international perspective about the preparation of inclusive school leaders. They provide an example of national collaboration between two agencies that resulted in the development of the Professional Standards for Inclusive Leaders (PSEL). The authors then present recommendations about how the future leaders could be prepared to apply the professional standards. International implications of the article for how best to prepare leaders for inclusive education are also presented.

Carter and Abawi provide an in-depth case study of an inclusive school. Through an intensive 6-month examination of leadership practices employed by the school principal, the head of special education, and close examination of school data, the authors identify what might have contributed towards the development of the inclusive school. The authors tease out practices employed by the leadership team that transformed the culture of the school. The article has clear implications for school leaders who are keen to create a culture of inclusion in their schools. The article also has significant implications for organisations involved in preparation of inclusive school leaders.

The article by Grima-Farrell continues the SEP tradition of practitioner-focused papers. Responding to directives at a state, national, and global level, the author conducted a longitudinal case study involving six experienced teachers implementing research-based practices in their classrooms. The use of a research-to-practice model to guide their decision-making throughout the study is an approach that has implications for practitioners striving to translate into daily practice the findings of current and well-validated research.

We would like to commend all authors for their contributions and hope the articles will be of great value to researchers, policymakers, teacher educators, educators, parents, and family members of people with disabilities.

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