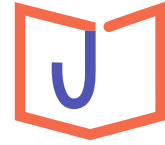


A new chapter for JAASEP



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Dear Readership,

We are honored to introduce ourselves as the new Co-Editors of the Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals (JAASEP). As we step into this role, we carry deep appreciation for the journal's long-standing commitment to applied scholarship, professional relevance, and accessible publishing in special education. Our vision for JAASEP centers on expanding the journal's reach and impact by fostering work that is inclusive, equity-focused, practice-informed, and grounded in real-world educational challenges and opportunities.

Although we were not serving as editors when the manuscripts in this Fall 2025 issue were selected and accepted, we are proud to present the articles in this issue. Together, they represent a strong foundation from which we are building the journal's next phase. The themes, insights, and critical questions raised across these articles align with our renewed focus on amplifying diverse voices, challenging deficit-based thinking, and supporting actionable, systems-informed research and practice.

Reaffirming JAASEP's Aims and Scope

As part of our editorial transition, we have refined the aims and scope of JAASEP. The journal continues to welcome a wide range of methodologies and perspectives, but with greater emphasis on:

- Research that is directly relevant to the daily work of special education professionals
- Studies that foreground inclusion, equity, and the lived experiences of students and educators
- Articles that inform practice, preparation, and policy across educational settings

- Work that bridges research and action, especially within underrepresented or under-resourced contexts

We are especially interested in manuscripts that reflect collaboration across disciplines, promote strengths-based approaches to disability, and address structural challenges in the field.

Themes from the Fall 2025 Issue

This issue features ten articles that cover a broad range of timely and enduring topics in special education. While each study offers distinct insights, several key themes emerge that exemplify the kind of scholarship we aim to elevate in future issues.

Elevating Educator Voices and Lived Experience

Several authors highlight the importance of teacher knowledge and experience in shaping inclusive, responsive practice. Juarez's phenomenological study on educators working with young students with autism offers a deeply personal look at the social dynamics of the classroom. Wildmon and colleagues examine how special education teachers perceive the supports and training they receive when using AAC devices, underscoring the value of individualized, sustained professional development. These studies recognize teachers as both informants and change agents in improving services for students with disabilities.

Confronting Systemic and Structural Challenges

Other authors grapple with structural barriers that shape how students are identified, served, and supported. Bagley interrogates the misidentification of trauma-affected students as having disabilities, raising important questions about teacher preparation and systemic bias. Gotte and colleagues examine factors influencing teacher retention in a rural district, revealing how administrative support and community connection can mitigate widespread shortages in special

education. These studies help push our field toward more contextually responsive and ethically grounded systems of support.

Reimagining Core Practices in Special Education

Several papers take a close look at foundational practices in the field. Claude, Nagro, and Brigham examine the quality of IEPs and PLAAFP statements, advocating for better training and tools to ensure meaningful educational planning. Horne's survey study points to both the promise and persistent challenges of co-teaching models, particularly the lack of time and preparation that impede successful collaboration. These contributions call attention to the need for stronger alignment between policy mandates, teacher preparation, and instructional reality.

Centering Strengths-Based Inclusion

Tobon and Hughes explore general education math teachers' perceptions of Latinx students with learning disabilities, revealing a tension between high expectations and deficit views. Smith and colleagues focus on creative self-efficacy among students with learning disabilities, challenging assumptions about ability and talent. Both studies call for greater recognition of student strengths and more inclusive pedagogical approaches.

Preparing the Next Generation of Educators

Two papers look to the future by exploring how teacher candidates are being prepared. Lewis-Pratl and colleagues examine preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, particularly when working with students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Ahmed and Al Jaffal present a peer-mediated intervention to support writing development in students with autism, offering one example of inclusive instructional design that can be embedded in general education classrooms. These articles underscore the critical importance of research-informed teacher preparation.

Looking Ahead

The Fall 2025 issue reflects the breadth, complexity, and practical relevance of current scholarship in special education. As new editors, we are energized by the opportunity to build on this strong foundation.

Readers may also notice some subtle but important changes in this issue. The updated layout and formatting reflect our commitment to increased professionalization and consistency in how the journal presents high-quality, accessible scholarship. These design improvements are just one part of our broader effort to bring greater clarity, rigor, and visibility to the important work being published in JAASEP.

Looking forward, we welcome submissions from special education researchers, practitioners, teacher educators, and interdisciplinary partners whose work can inform, challenge, and advance the field. Whether you are exploring innovative practices, evaluating inclusive policies, or addressing persistent systemic inequities, we invite you to share your scholarship with the JAASEP community.

To view our updated aims and scope, consult author guidelines, or submit a manuscript for future consideration, please visit our new website: <https://www.aasep.org>. We are excited to support and feature work that contributes to a more inclusive, equity-focused, and practice-centered future for special education.

Thank you for being part of the JAASEP community. We look forward to your continued engagement as readers, reviewers, and contributors to the field.

Drs. Morris and Boquet
Co-Editors-in-Chief, JAASEP

Effectiveness of a Peer-Mediated Intervention on Writing Skills for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Authors: Siddiq Ahmed & Mohammed Al Jaffal

Abstract: The current study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of a Peer-Mediated Intervention (PMI) on writing skills for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the inclusive classroom. The participants in this study were two seventh-grade students, one neurotypical student who acted as a tutor and has achieved high academic outcomes in the area of writing, the other participant is the tutee, who had been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and struggled with development of writing skills. The study utilized multiple-baseline design across behaviors to identify the effectiveness of a PMI on writing skills for the student with ASD in three areas of writing skills (i.e., subject-verb agreement, capitalization/spelling, punctuation). The results of the present study showed that PMI yielded significant improvements in academic achievement for the target student. This study suggests that further studies replicate the current study with an intensive focus on other academic skills, such as reading comprehension and mathematics.

Special Education and Trauma: Are We Correctly Identifying Our Students?

Author: Gretchen Bagley

Abstract: The number of students who have experienced trauma is impacting education in greater numbers. This trauma manifests as behavioral or academic issues that result in the students being placed in a special education setting. However, special education classrooms may not be the correct setting for these students. The needs of trauma students are in some cases very similar to those in special education, however, research shows that there are additional needs that today's teachers are ill-prepared to address in the traditional special education classroom setting. This pilot study examines the knowledge of special education teachers and how the identification of trauma students as special education students impacts their daily teaching. As a result of this pilot study, it is evident that more research is needed to determine the best course of action for students identified as having trauma and how to help them succeed in a classroom setting.

IEP Quality in Focus: Legal, Research, and Practical Perspectives

Authors: Christopher Claude, Sarah Nagro, & Frederick Brigham

Abstract: Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are crucial for the educational planning and service provision for students with disabilities (SWDs) in special education. Within the IEP, the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) statement forms the basis for developing goals and interventions. Despite its importance, there is limited empirical research on the quality and consistency of PLAAFP statements. In this paper, we underscore the necessity of evaluating IEP and PLAAFP quality, tracing the evolution of special education laws and their impact on the academic and functional expectations for the individual progress of each SWD. By examining various IEP assessment rubrics and psychometric considerations, we highlight the relationship between IEP quality and student outcomes, as well as its implications for teacher preparation and retention amidst special education teacher shortages. With our findings, we advocate for further investigation into IEP quality to enhance outcomes for both SWDs and educators.

Retaining Special Education Teachers in a Rural Southern United States School District

Authors: Eric R. Gotte, Jessie S. King, Karen Farley, Paula Rose-Greer, and Annette R. Hux

Abstract: Rural school districts across the United States need help to recruit and retain special education teachers. This study presents findings based on special education teachers' experiences teaching within one rural Southern United States school district. This instrumental single case study investigates the factors that encourage special education teachers to remain in their current position within a rural Southern United States school district. Qualitative data is analyzed from 11 participants: nine current special educators, one special education director, and one retired special education teacher. All participants are from one rural Southern United States school district to gain insight from their experiences and perspectives. Significant findings include factors that positively influence the retention of special education teachers within one rural Southern United States school district: the small scale of the district, administration support, student rapport, positive school culture, extended family living in the local area, and the supportive culture of the rural community.

Current Challenges and Practices in Co-Teaching in K-12 Schools

Author: Sarah Horne

Abstract: The inclusive classroom has become an increasingly popular classroom model but is not consistently implemented in schools. This paper seeks to find which collaborative teaching practices are commonly used in K-12 schools today, how teachers perceive the effectiveness of co-teaching methods, how teachers are prepared for co-teaching and their perception of the effectiveness of their training, the current challenges of co-teaching, and how those challenges are resolved. To achieve this, a survey was conducted amongst 54 anonymous and voluntary participants to compare the perceptions and experiences of those

currently co-teaching with varying years of teaching and co-teaching experience. The results show that most teachers enjoy co-teaching and collaborating with their co-teaching partners, but the most common challenge of co-teaching is finding time to meet and plan. Similarly, most are not adequately prepared for pre-service or in-service teaching training, leading many to use ineffective co-teaching practices.

Math Teachers' Perceptions, Practices, and Self-Efficacy Related to Supporting Latinx Students with Learning Disabilities

Authors: Geraldo Tobon & Marie Tejero Hughes

Abstract: Latinx students with learning disabilities (LD) possess inherent strengths and bring valuable contributions to math learning, yet teachers often view them through a deficit-oriented lens. These students frequently experience limited opportunities to participate in math learning beyond learning procedures. This limiting exposure to math learning can adversely affect their self-perception as competent math learners. In this study, we administered surveys to general education (GE) middle school math teachers. Subsequently, we interviewed a subset to delve deeper into their perceptions, practices, and confidence in teaching this population. Our research yielded three main insights: (a) While teachers typically endorsed the inclusion of these students in GE math settings and recognized their potential for math achievement, there was also a sentiment that students lacked foundational knowledge and motivation; (b) the teaching methodologies employed reflected these beliefs; and (c) teachers expressed confidence in their ability to instruct Latinx students with disabilities effectively.

The Lived Experiences of Teachers Working With Young Students With Autism

Author: Suzy Lea Juarez

Abstract: In the last 5 years, teachers have reported challenging experiences while educating young children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) as the diagnostic numbers have increased from one in 60 in 2019 to one in 33 in 2021, impacting the classroom ratios and social dynamics (Artigas-Pallarès & Paula, 2020; Maenner et al., 2020; Rosen et al., 2021). The increase in the prevalence of ASD diagnosis is impactful, specifically for teachers educating these students in the classroom. Educational psychology and ASD research highlights the issues students with ASD have during the school day, struggling with social skills, social communication, and social exchanges with their peers and teachers (Baron-Cohen, 1988, 2006, 2017; Silverman, 2015; Simó-Pinatella et al., 2021). This trend made a study regarding teachers' lived experiences (i.e., social interactions) essential for informing professional development content for special education teachers working with students with ASD (Baron-Cohen, 1988, 2001, 2006, 2017; Josilowski, 2019; Silverman, 2015). This transcendental phenomenological study, using constructivist research questions, captured teachers' lived experiences of social activities with students with ASD. Educational psychologists, educators, and professionals in the ASD field will benefit from better understanding of the lived experiences, specific knowledge about teacher-student social interactions to inform training practices, and detailed evidence to enhance professional development.

Understanding Preservice Special Education Teachers' Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy: A Mixed Methods Study

Authors: Krystal Lewis-Pratl, Yojanna Cuenca-Carlino, Tara Kaczorowski, & Mark Zablocki

Abstract: There have been increases in the culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) student population over the last two decades; however, these changes have not been realized in the diversification of educators in the field. This sequential explanatory mixed methods study examined preservice special education teachers' (N = 54) culturally responsive self-efficacy beliefs and the factors and experiences that influenced their self-efficacy through semi-structured interviews (n = 8). This study sought to extend the work of Siwatu (2011a) by administering the culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy (CRTSE) scale and modifying it to include the language of disability (Chu & Garcia, 2014). Results indicate special education preservice teachers have moderately high CRTSE for teaching CLD learners with disabilities. Differences and commonalities between high and low self-efficacy groups are discussed.

Perceptions of Creative Self-Efficacy of Students with Learning Disabilities

Authors: Jennifer Elaine Smith, Tracy Griffin Spies, Kyle Higgins, Monica R. Brown, Joseph John Morgan, & Randall K. Boone

Abstract: Creative self-efficacy, a subcomponent of creativity, is the belief in one's ability to be creative. It is a necessary construct for a well-developed sense of creativity. With creativity being a vital skill cited by employers for employees to be prepared for 21st century careers, it is necessary to research creative self-efficacy early on and with all students. Limited research regarding students with learning disabilities and creativity, creative thinking, and creative self-efficacy exists. Because higher creativity is necessary for greater positive post-secondary outcomes, research in creative self-efficacy is needed. This study examined the perceptions of creative self-efficacy of students in the third, fourth, and fifth grades (n=495). A comparison between students with learning disabilities and their peers in general education and peers with gifts and talents was made. Results indicate similar perceptions of creative self-efficacy amongst students with learning disabilities and students in general education. However, a significant difference was indicated between students with learning disabilities and students with gifts and talents.

Special Education and AAC Devices: Teachers' Perspectives on Training Needs and Support

Authors: Mark E. Wildmon, Jamie Moss, Mattie Williams, MacKenzie D. Sidwell, Julie C. Herbstrith, and Kasee K. Stratton

This study investigates special education teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of support and training received while working with Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device users. The research evaluates important components of AAC implementation, such as the range of support available, quality of training programs, degrees of adaptation, and levels of inter-professional support from a teacher's perspective. The conclusions drawn from this study indicate a need for continuous professional development, which necessitates personalized, individual training approaches and interdisciplinary collaboration to enhance the use of AAC devices. The study also confirms that individualized training is crucial in meeting the unique requirements of AAC users and special education teachers. These findings are meaningful in understanding AAC device use in special education classes, leading to appropriate interventions and improved communication outcomes among individuals using low- and high-tech devices.