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INTASC Principles: How They are Addressed by Five Specialty Program Association Standards

by Paula Burdette

INTRODUCTION

A recent report published by The Education Schools Project (Levine, 2006), concludes that many teacher education programs are inadequately preparing teachers for the diverse classrooms of today. The report states that many teacher candidates are graduating without the skills and knowledge they need to be effective. Sixty-two percent of the alumni surveyed said that their university experiences did not prepare them to cope with the realities of today's classrooms. Of the principals interviewed, 30% said that their teachers are prepared to address the needs of students with disabilities; 28% that they were prepared to meet the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds; 21% that they were prepared to work with parents; and 16% that they were prepared to help students with limited English proficiency.

The Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) general education principles—*Model Standards for Licensing General And Special Education Teachers of Students with Disabilities: A Resource for State Dialogue*—currently provides the only well-known form of guidance addressing standards that all teachers should meet to teach in classrooms that include all students, including those with disabilities. “Specialty program associations” (SPAs) is the generic term for organizations that represent specific groups of teachers (e.g., English, science, math, middle school, special education).

Both INTASC principles and SPA standards are designed for preparation programs to use in the development of their programs and to evaluate teacher candidates for readiness. While INTASC principles are designed specifically to address the concern that teachers be prepared to work in diverse classrooms, SPA standards are typically developed to address specific content areas or age groups. For example, one SPA standard says: “Students understand the importance of each content area in young children’s learning.” Implementation of both the principles and the standards in teacher education programs will help teachers, districts and states meet the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act to have highly qualified teachers in every classroom.

The INTASC principles were first developed in May 2001 by the Center for Improving Teacher Quality at the Council for Chief State School Officers. These principles were developed as

standards for licensing teachers who work with students with disabilities. Both of the program accreditation associations—National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE)—have strongly encouraged SPAs to incorporate INTASC principles into their standards. The purpose of this document is to delineate how five sets of SPA standards address the INTASC principles for general education teachers, thereby encouraging teacher education programs to incorporate INTASC principles into their preparation of teacher candidates and enabling new teachers to better serve students with disabilities in general education classrooms. This document was developed as part of Project Forum’s cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs.

METHODOLOGY

Fifteen sets of SPA standards were reviewed and five were chosen for in-depth analysis based on clarity and representation of a wide range of content areas and age groups. The following sets of SPA standards are addressed in this document:

- The International Reading Association (IRA);
- The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE); The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM);
- The National Middle School Association (NMSA); and
- The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

In addition to the five sets of SPA standards, Project Forum staff reviewed a number of additional SPA documents, such as codes of ethics and guidelines and collaborated closely with representatives from each SPA to ensure accuracy. For the analysis purposes, when standards mentioned “students,” “all students”, “children” or “all children”, Project Forum assumed the term included students with disabilities. This determination was based on wording found and/or conversations with SPA representatives.

FINDINGS

This section is organized according to the 10 INTASC principles and their implications for students with disabilities. Project Forum staff have identified the extent to which the five SPAs have addressed each of the principles.

INTASC Principle One

According to INTASC, *“The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.”* In reference to students with disabilities, INTASC writes, *“Both general and special education teachers demonstrate an understanding of the primary concepts and ways of thinking and knowing in the content areas they teach They understand the underlying values and implications of disability legislation and special education policies and procedures as they relate to their roles and responsibilities in*

supporting the educational needs of students with disabilities. All teachers provide equitable access to and participation in the general curriculum for students with disabilities.”

Content-specific SPA standards (IRA, NCTE, NCTM) address the knowledge foundations for their content areas and include various aspects of each field (e.g., standards for English teachers addressed reading and writing). Age/grade-level standards (NMSA and NAEYC) also address the knowledge foundations for all content areas in which teachers would work.

None of the SPA standards specifically indicate that teachers must understand the implications of special education law, policies and procedures. However, two sets of SPA standards expect teachers to understand the importance of school district policies regarding interagency collaboration, a matter of utmost importance when working with students with disabilities: NMSA expects teachers to be knowledgeable about legal and ethical issues in education, and NAEYC expects teachers to understand laws pertaining to the rights of children with disabilities.

INTASC Principle Two

According to INTASC, *“The teacher understands how children learn and develop and can provide learning opportunities that support the intellectual, social and personal development of each learner.”* In reference to students with disabilities, INTASC writes, *“Both general and special education teachers understand that all children have similar patterns of learning and development that vary individually within and across cognitive, social, emotional and physical areas. They recognize that children with disabilities may exhibit greater individual variations in learning and development than students without disabilities and that a disability often influences development and functioning in more than one area. Teachers use knowledge of the impact of disabilities on learning and development to optimize learning opportunities for each student.”*

All five sets of SPA standards reviewed make note of the variability across and within children and expect that teachers should be able to create learning situations that take this variability into account.

INTASC Principle Three

According to INTASC, *“The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.”* In reference to students with disabilities, INTASC writes, *“Students with disabilities come from a variety of cultures, languages, classes, and ethnicities. Disability, like other aspects of diversity, may affect a student’s approach to learning and a teacher’s approach to teaching. Teachers understand students with disabilities within the broader context of their families, cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic classes, languages, communities and peer/social groups.”*

Only one set of standards (NMSA) explicitly addresses the interaction between disability and other student variables. These standards also expect teachers to understand the role that interrelationships between family, classrooms, peer groups, and communities play in student

learning. The NAEYC standards note that teachers “must recognize that every child constructs knowledge in personally and culturally familiar ways.”

INTASC Principle Four

According to INTASC, *“The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students’ development of critical thinking, problem solving and performance skills.”* In reference to students with disabilities, INTASC writes, *“Ensuring that students with disabilities can participate successfully in the general curriculum requires teachers to tailor their instructional strategies to the particular learning needs of individual students. General and special education teachers use a variety of instructional strategies and technologies and know how to modify and adapt the general curriculum to accommodate individual students’ needs. Students with disabilities who have goals related to an expanded curriculum will also need specialized instruction to achieve those goals.”*

All five of the SPA standards reviewed address this principle: accommodation of teaching strategies and adaptation of the curriculum for students with disabilities. IRA expects teachers to use information about children’s reading abilities and backgrounds to plan instruction and select materials that match their reading levels. Teachers are expected to use a variety of instructional groupings, practices, approaches, methods and curricular materials to accommodate the differences of students. NCTE expects teachers to plan and implement instruction that recognizes students’ abilities using a variety of instructional strategies. Teachers are also expected to reflect on their performance and adjust instruction accordingly. NCTM standards discuss using concrete materials, multiple instructional strategies, planning lessons to meet appropriate learning goals, and refining practices based on reflection. The NCTM standards also expect teachers to use instructional technologies to promote learning of all students and give specific examples for students with disabilities. NMSA expects teachers to understand the range of individual differences of young adolescents and the implications of these differences for teaching and learning. According to NMSA, teachers must know a variety of strategies that capitalize on student developmental characteristics and be able to make decisions about curriculum that reflect an understanding of development.

INTASC Principle Five

According to INTASC, *“The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning and self-motivation.”* In reference to students with disabilities, INTASC writes, *“Students’ affiliation and acceptance within a community is an important basis for developing social responsibility, self-esteem and positive peer relations. Students learn more effectively when they are valued members of a learning community in which everyone can grow and learn. Teachers welcome students with disabilities and take deliberate action to ensure that they are included as members of the learning community. Teachers may also need to structure activities that specifically foster engagement, self-motivation and independent learning in students with disabilities.”*

Each of the five SPA standards addresses the principle of including students with disabilities as members of the learning community. Furthermore, each set of standards expects teachers to motivate students to learn, with both IRA and NCTE encouraging self-motivation as well as external forms of motivation. NMSA expects teachers to create positive learning environments where developmental differences are respected and supported. NAEYC standards address this principle aggressively by expecting teachers to understand that children with limited social skills or who are rejected may have difficulty in other areas. Teachers are expected to work actively to increase social competence and treat this as an educational priority. Teachers are expected to explicitly model and facilitate appropriate social interactions especially for children with disabilities.

INTASC Principle Six

According to INTASC, *“The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication technologies to foster active inquiry, collaboration and supportive interaction in the classroom.”* In reference to students with disabilities, INTASC writes, *“Students with disabilities often have communication or language delays or disorders associated with their disabilities. They may require multiple and alternative modes of communication. Teachers set a high priority on establishing a safe and comfortable environment in which students with disabilities are encouraged and supported to use language and contribute their ideas. They teach language and communication skills, make accommodations to promote effective communication and encourage and support the use of technology to promote learning and communication.”*

Both IRA and NCTE standards focus on language-based content areas and consist of teaching language and communication skills. NCTM’s equity principle, on which the standards are partially based, notes that some students with disabilities might need special attention in the area of communication. NAEYC standards expect teachers to embed all aspects of curriculum within the context of rich oral language and other communication strategies, “using technologies to augment communication for children with disabilities.” Only NAEYC mentions multiple and alternative modes of communication.

INTASC Principle Seven

According to INTASC, *“The teacher plans instruction based on knowledge of subject matter, students, the community and curriculum goals.”* In reference to students with disabilities, INTASC writes, *“While students with disabilities often pursue the same learning goals within the general curriculum and benefit from instruction in a manner that is similar to that of their non-disabled peers, they may require adjustments in goals, teaching strategies or supports. Some students with disabilities may require an expanded curriculum that may include areas such as functional life skills, communication skills, or behavior/social skills. Planning for students with disabilities requires an individualized plan of instruction and is a collaborative process that involves special and general educators, the student (when appropriate), families and other professionals.”*

None of the SPA standards that were reviewed discuss teachers having the capacity to develop individual instructional plans based on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) that might include expanded curriculum for some students. However, since NAEYC's standards define curriculum as more than academic and cognitive content areas, including language development, social and emotional competence, all curriculum is functionally expanded to meet individual needs. IRA and NCTM standards expect teachers to know when to consult with other professionals for guidance on working with individual students.

INTASC Principle Eight

According to INTASC, *“The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social and physical development of the learner.”* In reference to students with disabilities, INTASC writes, *“Individualized comprehensive assessments are required for students with disabilities and are used to determine eligibility for special education services, to plan individualized instruction and to monitor and evaluate student performance. It is also expected that students with disabilities will participate in the overall assessment programs of the classroom, school district and state and that they may require accommodations to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. In addition, some students with disabilities may require assessments related to achievement in an expanded curriculum (i.e., alternate assessments).”*

All five of the SPA standards reviewed discussed the importance of using appropriate assessment tools to evaluate student progress. NAEYC expects teachers to understand that responsible assessment should support children rather than exclude them or deny them services. Mention of student participation in large-scale assessments was found for IRA (i.e., teachers are expected to select and administer group standardized tests) and NCTM (i.e., large-scale and high-stakes assessments are mentioned).

INTASC Principle Nine

According to INTASC, *“The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.”* In reference to students with disabilities, INTASC writes, *“Teacher reflection is essential for designing, monitoring and adapting instruction for all students, including students with disabilities. Teachers reflect on their knowledge of the learning strengths and needs of individual students with disabilities and question and evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of their instructional choices and practices for building on those strengths and meeting those needs. Based on their data-based reflections, teachers engage in actions that consistently support and promote the achievement of students with disabilities.”*

All five of the SPA standards reviewed address this principle to varying degrees. For instance, NMSA standards expect teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies; base instruction

on assessment results; and continually reflect on student development and the instructional process. Teachers are expected to refine practices that address the needs of all students based on research, successful practice and experience. NCTE, on the other hand, mentions reflection and research, but does not mention challenging teachers' beliefs about how students learn.

INTASC Principle Ten

According to INTASC, *“The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, families and agencies in the larger community to support students’ learning and well being.”* In reference to students with disabilities, INTASC writes, *“Families, schools and communities are important contexts for teaching, learning and development. Teachers advocate for students with disabilities to receive the support they need to be successful in the general curriculum and to achieve the goals of their individual education plans (IEPs). They collaborate with each other, with other professionals and with families to ensure that students with disabilities are valued members of the classroom, school and larger communities.”*

Four of the five sets of standards reviewed mentioned collaborative relationships between teachers and a variety of professional colleagues, families and communities. Only the two age/grade-level standards (NCTM and NAEYC) expect teachers to be part of a team process, specifically including multi-disciplinary teams, as a structure for student achievement.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is a great need in the United States for public school teachers to be prepared to teach diverse groups of students. For decades, the nation’s teacher education programs have been under fire regarding their ability to produce graduates who are adequately prepared. In order to teach all students appropriately, including those with disabilities, teachers must be able to provide quality instruction to diverse students within the general education environment. Teacher candidates must be prepared for this charge during their preservice instruction. SPAs must strongly encourage teacher preparation programs to train teacher candidates in instructional strategies, assessment, legal aspects, developmental levels and more in order to meet the goal of all teachers being ready to teach in today’s diverse classrooms.

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