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# The Mock IEP For Educator Training

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**Abstract**

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is the foundation of the special education system. The IEP is the contractual agreement between a family and a school district regarding how a student's disability will be inclusively accommodated. A key element of the IEP is the collaboration between the team members, including preservice educators. Though preservice educators are required to participate in the IEP development, evidence shows they receive little training to do so and report feeling unprepared to participate meaningfully. Furthermore, it has been noted in the literature that educators' attitudes towards inclusive education impact their ability to effectively practice inclusive education. A quasi-experimental study using a pre-test/post-test design measuring preservice educator attitudes toward inclusive education was conducted for the Mock IEP. A total of 45 education credential candidates participated in this study. The simulation IEP (Mock IEP) was a 3-part meeting requiring participants to engage in 2 days of preparation for the 3rd meeting when the participants conducted the Mock IEP meeting. The results indicate that participation in the Mock IEP had a positive impact on educator attitudes toward inclusive education, indicating the potential of the Mock IEP as a tool for improving educator preparation for the IEP process and inclusion.

*Keywords:* Inclusion, Teacher Attitudes, Mock IEP, Special Education, IDEA, Simulation

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Mock IEP For Educator Training

## Literature Review

A longstanding challenge of the American education system has been to create effective programs for students with exceptional needs. A measure taken to address this is the implementation of the Individual Education Plan (IEP), the action piece of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 2004). IDEA is the legislation protecting and defining the civil right to an education for people with disabilities in the US, a previously undefined civil right for this population. The IEP, a legally binding agreement between school districts and the families of students with disabilities, spells out the specifics of how a student is affected by a disability and what steps the school district will take to ensure that the student receives an appropriate education (Turnbull, 2005). The IEP requires school districts to provide a long-time missing piece of the US's education model - a plan for equitable educational rights for those with disabilities.

Though the IEP is the framework for access to equitable education for students with disabilities, protocols need to be followed in order for it to function meaningfully. One such requirement is the informed collaboration of the entirety of the IEP team as it has been demonstrated to be essential to the success of the student (Turnbull, 2005). The IEP team is a grouping of educators, the student's parents/guardian, and the student, who collaborate to decide what will be part of the IEP contract (Werts, 2002). Each member represents a specialty of discipline and a unique perspective of interaction with the student, and by synthesizing the perspectives of the team the IEP is developed (Allday, 2015). The IEP team is mandated to acknowledge the needs of the student in all the educational settings they will participate in. This requirement stems as a result of the traditional exclusion of students with special needs from the

mainstream classrooms, a highly detrimental practice (Skiba, 2008). As a safeguard against this, the environment where students with disabilities are to receive their education is defined in IDEA (2004) as the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The LRE mandates inclusive practices whenever possible (Shippen, 2005). This policy toward the inclusion of students with disabilities leads to 96% of students with IEPs spending portions of their days working with preservice educators in the general education setting (Blanton et al., 2010). With the relatively recent federally mandated practice of inclusion, education systems have been challenged to effectively include students in settings previously deemed inaccessible to students with disabilities.

**Inclusion and Collaboration**

The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms is essential. Inclusion, or inclusive education, is a foundation of modern practices to improve the quality of society and education, defined by the effort to reduce to a minimum the amount of time students with disabilities are excluded from general education settings (Turnbull, 2005). It is well documented in the literature that all students, with disabilities or not, benefit from inclusive education (Salend, 1999). During the World Conference on Special Needs Education in 1994, a proclamation expressed the shifted perspective towards inclusion, stating that inclusionary practices improve the education of all students while improving the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of the entire education system (UNESCO, 1994). Since then, special education programs have adopted inclusive practices to the degree that 60% of special education secondary students receive 80% of their education in the general education setting (McKenzie, 2009). As inclusive practices have become the norm, it has become evident that at the core of inclusion are the collaborative practices between special educators and preservice educators (McKenzie,

2009). It is through collaboration that special educators, who specialize in serving students with disabilities, are able to advise and support inclusive practices for the general education classrooms. Given the importance of collaboration and ultimately inclusive education, the attitudes educators carry into engaging in the collaboration should be examined further.

### *Teacher Attitudes Towards Inclusion*

A key element of the effectiveness of a preservice educator's ability to collaborate and successfully employ inclusive practices with students with disabilities is the educator's attitude (Cochran, 1998; Metsala & Harkins, 2019). The attitude that preservice educators carry into inclusive settings includes their perceptions of how appropriate the inclusion is, and beliefs of how likely the inclusion is to be successful. A preservice educator who has an attitude towards inclusive practices, meaning that they believe in the importance of inclusive education, has been associated with higher levels of success for students with special needs in the general education setting (Salend, 1999). The relation between the attitudes teachers have about inclusive education and the effectiveness of the teacher in implementing inclusive strategies should not be overlooked. That is, when a teacher believes in the practices of inclusion the program is more likely to be implemented effectively. Therefore, the attitudes of preservice educators who work with students with special needs may be one measure of how effectively teachers are implementing inclusive collaborative practices.

## Preservice Educator Training for IEPs

Unfortunately, despite the high likelihood of preservice educators working with students with special needs, preservice educators feel they are not adequately introduced to inclusive education and the collaborative IEP process in their credential programs (Harvey, 2010). Though most general education teachers will work with students with IEPs, there is a documented lack of

instruction on how to be a member of an IEP team in preservice educator training (Werts, 2002). This is problematic as the informed contributions of preservice educators are federally mandated by IDEA (Turnbull, 2005). Without the informed collaboration of preservice educators, the IEP team loses a fundamental perspective of a student's needs in the inclusive classroom.

The cause for the lack of specific instruction on collaborative practices toward the development of IEPs for preservice educators is not well documented in the literature. Werts and colleagues (2002) maintain that there are often contradictions between the professional values posited by educational institutions and the day-to-day practice of policy. One cause of this could be that preservice educator credential programs are pressed to provide credential candidates with legally mandated coursework, whereby the coursework towards the unmandated collaborative best practices falls to the wayside. Another possible factor is the demand preservice educator credential programs face to produce qualified teachers during a longstanding teacher shortage. While there is a shortage of teachers and many open teaching positions at schools, coursework on best practices derived from research, such as collaborative practices, are often overlooked as credential programs struggle to field educators to meet the needs of school districts (Billingsly, 2009). For this reason, general education credential programs may not be able to offer in-depth training on working with students with disabilities.

Training that does exist for preservice educators to work with students with disabilities is commonly focused on collaborating with special education teachers (McKenzie, 2009). When preservice educators participate in coursework on collaborating in the IEP process, they not only contribute more to the IEP's effectiveness, but they also report being more receptive to working with students with disabilities (Shippen, 2005). Education on inclusive collaboration in the IEP process increases the preservice educator credential candidate's ability to be an effective member

of the IEP team (McKenzie, 2009). Presently, there is little direction in the educational literature regarding to what extent teacher credential programs should offer inclusive and collaborative coursework to their candidates (Allday et al., 2016).

Allday and colleagues (2016) conducted a study reviewing coursework at 109 university preservice educator credential programs from 50 states, noting the amount and categories of required coursework on inclusive practice. The researchers found that on average 1.9% of coursework for preservice educator credential candidates is focused on inclusion collaborative practices, while 67% of the schools surveyed did not have any collaborative coursework required (Allday et al., 2016). Furthermore, less than half of preservice educator credential programs were found to require candidates to participate in field experience working with students with special needs and collaboration with the IEP team (U.S. Govt. Accountability Office, 2009). As credential candidates prepare to enter their first placements, where they will likely be asked to collaborate as a member of an IEP team, the lack of preparation of preservice educators to work as members of the IEP team leaves a gap to be filled in most preservice educator credential programs. To address this, credential programs may find benefit in employing simulation training, a well-known, but often absent strategy in educator training programs.

**Simulations in Educator Training**

Participation in simulations of IEPs could be a strategy to bridge the gap between the collaborative expectations of preservice educators in the IEP process and the level of education they presently receive. Simulations are defined as scenarios where participants can practice solving realistic problems without harmful consequences with the ability to repeat scenarios for desired outcomes (Kaufman-Ireland, 2016). Therefore, participants can learn how to apply what they learned theoretically to realistic practice without the restrictions of a real risk of harm.

The risk of harm when working with special education students as a member of the IEP team, as a special educator or a preservice educator, is real. When preservice educators are unfamiliar with research-based best practices, truly harmful outcomes for the student are possible (Strassfield, 2019). Any level of misunderstanding or lack of knowledge of best practices could result in a student's needs being neglected, harkening to times in education from the past which IDEA was designed to end. With such risk of harm in the profession, educator training begins to align with other professions where simulations reduce risk in training, and ultimately through experiential learning, in professional practice.

Outside of education, simulations have been shown to benefit many professional education programs including medicine, law, business, and fields like aviation where there is significant risk (Kaufman-Ireland, 2016). Unlike the many professions that employ simulations in their training programs, simulations have been notably absent from professional education training and credential programs (Meuller, 2019). Presently within teacher preparation programs, simulations have been used to train educators for real-time responses to scenarios such as recognizing students at-risk of a psychological emergency, how to respond in disciplinary situations, and the amount of student diversity that could be encountered in the classroom (Bradley, 2014). Simulations allow for teachers to begin practicing the application of the theories taught in their credential programs, which focus more on lesson planning and how students learn than the real-world application of these theories and the problems that might occur. Furthermore, simulations by design can address particular learning points to the participant (Sauvé, 2007), which in the field of preservice educator training could offer a focused opportunity to impart research-based best practices notably lacking in the program.

In the context of the documented lack of training for preservice educators to work with special education students and teachers in the IEP process, the simulation could be an under-utilized element of professional development and training for educators. There is evidence to suggest that simulations could benefit educators similarly to how simulations benefit other professional training (Ferguson, 2017), and there is evidence that simulation programs that have been introduced in education training have been successful (Bradley, 2015). Looking to the future, simulations of the IEP collaborative process could offer preservice educators the presently absent training to participate as a member of the IEP team.

## Methods

### Purpose

Though IDEA mandates preservice educators to be part of the IEP team, preservice educators receive little preparation to do so (Harvey et al., 2010). There is a need for a mechanism to better prepare preservice educators to collaborate as members of the IEP team (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009). Simulation training is a strategy employed by many professions, such as healthcare and air travel, which involve the risk of harm, but is underutilized in educator training despite the risk of harm in education (Mueller et al., 2019). Simulation training offers promise in providing collaborative practice coursework to educator training (Kaufman & Ireland, 2016). This study examined if the participation of preservice credential candidates in a simulation IEP process had an impact on their attitude towards inclusive education.

## Research Question

Does participation in a simulation IEP increase preservice credential candidates' attitudes towards inclusive education, as measured by the Survey of Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Classrooms?

## Hypothesis

Participation in simulations in educator training allows educators to experience realistic scenarios without the risk of causing harm to vulnerable students (Kaufman & Ireland, 2016). Simulations also provide the ability for the participant to practice what they have learned in coursework with time for reflection to gain perspective for future applications (Bradley & Kendall, 2014). It was hypothesized that participation in a simulation IEP would increase preservice education credential candidates' attitudes toward inclusive education.

## Research Design

This study was conducted as a quasi-experimental research pre-test/post-test design. Two groups (i.e., control and treatment) were involved in the study. The measure utilized in this study was the Scale of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusion (STATIC; Cochran, 1998). All participants completed the STATIC before participation in a simulation IEP event (i.e., pre-test). Following the pre-test, the treatment group was involved in a full simulation of an IEP process; while the control group did not receive the IEP simulation experience. After participation in the full simulation, both groups of participants completed the STATIC again to serve as the post-test (Cochran, 1998). Results from pre-test/post-test were evaluated for statistical and practical significance to determine the effectiveness of the simulation as an intervention for general education teacher candidates.

### *Independent Variable*

The independent variable in this study was participation in a simulation IEP event. Using simulations in training for real-world scenarios provides the participants with an opportunity to have first-hand experiences without harmful results, resulting in meaningful learning experiences (Mueller et al., 2018). The simulation IEP mimicked the development of an IEP, including goal development, assignment of services, accommodations, and modifications. The participants engaged in the simulation IEP from role-playing perspectives assigned by the researchers.

### *Dependent Variable*

In this study, the dependent variable was the teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. The participants' total score of the pre-test/post-test was used to operationalize the dependent variable. The total score of the STATIC was designed to be an assessment of teachers' attitudes toward working with students with IEPs in general education classrooms (Cochran, 1998). A five-point Likert scale was designed for the response format for 20 questions (see Appendix A), with possible responses ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicated positive attitudes toward inclusion while lower scores indicated negative attitudes toward inclusion; there were no cut-off scores (Nishimura, 2016).

## Setting & Participants

The setting for this study was a 4-year public university teaching credential program located on the central coast of California with an enrollment of approximately 6,500 undergraduate students and 900 graduate students. During the year of this study, all students attended classes online in the fall semester and had the opportunity to attend hybrid in-person classes in the spring semester. The simulation IEP program included 3 virtual preparation meetings (see Appendix B). The participants were all credential candidates at the university,

comprising of preservice credential candidates, special education credential candidates, or school psychology candidates. The sample size was conducted as a purposeful convenience sampling. The sampling was convenient in that the sample was from the same university the researchers were conducting the study, and purposeful in that the sample was selected by credential programs in which interaction with IEPs will be mandated. Assignment status was self-selection, as students either opted into the simulation or opted out to either not participate or to be part of the control group. A consent form (Appendix C) was sent to the participants outlining the details of the study and a description of any risk involved which participants signed and returned to consent and enroll in the study. To ensure internal validity the control and treatment groups were comparable in size.

***Control Group***

For the control group 15 volunteers participated in the study. Control group members were self-selected by volunteering to participate. The demographics of the control group were measured by credential program enrollment. There were secondary credential candidates (n = 13) and elementary credential candidates (n = 2).

***Treatment Group***

36 participants were selected for the treatment group. There was an attrition of 6 participants dropped out of the study during the course of the intervention. Treatment group members were self-selected by volunteering to participate in the 3 meeting Mock IEP program. The demographics of the treatment group were measured by credential program enrollment. The intervention group comprised of special education credential candidates (n = 3), elementary credential candidates (n = 18), secondary credential candidates (n = 7), and school psychology credential candidates (n = 2).

## Measure

The measure for this study was the total score of the STATIC (Cochran, 1998). The sum score of the STATIC was indicative of a teacher's attitude toward inclusion (Cochran, 1998; Nishimura, 2016). A five-point Likert scale was used for the response format for 20 questions (see Appendix A), with possible responses ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree,* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The STATIC took approximately 10 minutes to complete and was completed online through a Google Form survey sent to each participant. There were 4 factors used in the score of STATIC, each representing perspectives comprising educator attitudes towards inclusion: "Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education (*n* = 7); Professional Issues Regarding Inclusive Education (n = 5); Philosophical Issues Regarding Inclusive Education (n = 4), and Logistical Concerns of Inclusive Education (n = 4; " Cochran, 1998, p. 6). The 20 questions were formatted as statements to which the Likert scale was utilized to respond to. Sample item: *I am confident in my ability to teach children with special needs.*

### *Validity*

Content validity of the STATIC is supported by the literature, using previous studies of a similar nature in the construction of items and factors (Cochran, 1998). Construct validity and internal consistency are demonstrated with item-to-total coefficients scoring from .26 to .70, and factor analysis of the four factors that qualify the theoretical construct of *attitude towards inclusion* demonstrates construct validity (Cochran, 1998). Moreover, these results are similar to two previously conducted pilot studies.

### *Reliability*

Reliability, consistency over time, and studies on the STATIC indicated a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of .89 (Cochran, 1998). This alpha value establishes high internal

reliability for the STATIC. Reliability for Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education was found to be at .87, Professional Issues Regarding Inclusive Education at .83, Philosophical Issues Regarding Inclusive Education at .57, and Logistical Concerns of Inclusive Education at .62 (Cochran, 1998). The measure has been shown to have high reliability in measuring teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices (Nishimura, 2010).

**Intervention**

The program developed to serve as this study's intervention was a three-month program consisting of preparation work and interactive meetings. Full participation in the simulation IEP consisted of three meetings. A pre-test completion of the STATIC (Cochran, 1998) was required of all participants. Meeting #1 consisted of an explanation of the rationale for developing the Mock IEP (Harvey et al., 2010) and the increased effectiveness of the IEP implementation with informed educator participation (Salend et al., 1999). Meeting #2 included an explanation of the planning period for the IEP, which listed the preparations before an IEP meeting required of the IEP team members. In meeting #2 participants were divided up into IEP groups for their Mock IEPs. An essential element of the first two meetings was the allocation of time for questions and answers after all instruction.

Meeting #3 was the participation in the Mock IEP event, the debrief, and post-test completion of the STATIC (Cochran, 1998). The Mock IEP consisted of an agenda (Appendix D) given to each group and the completion of the IEP requirements. Each group had the same fictional student information and the same agenda. The groups had one hour to work through the agenda and come to agreements on student goals, services, accommodations, and modifications, which was modeled after real-world IEP meetings. It was emphasized that the groups do not need to draft goals in the exact language required by the IEP, but they did need to determine

appropriate skills to include in the goals for the fictional student. After completing the Mock IEP, all intervention group members participated in a group debrief and discussion, completed the post-test STATIC, and were dismissed.

## Procedure

The study began with submission to the university's internal review board (IRB) for research with human subjects and an interest survey distributed to the participating university's preservice credential candidate student body. Once approved by the IRB (See Appendix E), a final participation request was distributed to those students who responded positively to wanting to participate in the study. The final participation request was a contract requiring them to participate fully in the pre-test/post-test measure and three meetings. As this project fell within a larger US Department of Education Teacher Quality Partnership Grant, participants were compensated by the grant, $300.00 for full participation which was defined as engaged attendance of all three meetings and completion of both the pre and post-test survey. Once enrolled in the study, all participants (i.e., control and treatment groups) completed the STATIC (Cochran, 1998) as the pre-test measure. The participants attended the 2 preparation meetings virtually on Zoom and attend the simulation IEP virtually through the same Zoom format. To conclude their participation, all participants completed the STATIC (Cochran, 1998) as a post-test measure at the end of the Mock IEP.

### *Data collection*

Data were collected in the form of the responses to the STATIC (Cochran, 1998) in a pretest/posttest model, which was electronically completed by the participants and collected in Google Forms. The survey was administered as a pre-test measure before the first meeting and

completed as a post-test measure immediately after the third meeting, which was the Mock IEP simulation event. No other data were collected throughout this study.

### *Fidelity*

Fidelity to intervention was important to ensure that no diffusion of treatment occurred and only the treatment group received the Mock IEP intervention. Documentation of consistent implementation of the intervention was conducted by an outside observer provided with a checklist of the required elements of the intervention (Appendix B). The fidelity for this study was 100%. Further, attendance was taken at each of the IEP events to ensure only treatment group participants were attending the trainings.

## Ethical Considerations

The Mock IEP was based on a fictional student to respect confidentiality. All participants were volunteers. Respect for persons, beneficence, and justice were the governing principles of this study. To achieve respect for persons, all participants were volunteers freely agreeing to participate and provided consent to be a part of the study. Beneficence in this study was demonstrated by maximizing the benefit of the study through seeking to offer further experience-based learning opportunities to the participants, and the results of this study were intended to improve present educator training. Justice was addressed in the distribution of benefits to the educators participating, balanced with the burdens being of minimal risk considering that the participants were only asked to participate in the study on a voluntary basis. Participants were compensated $300.00 if they participated in all 3 events.

## Validity Threats

The following was examined in consideration of threats to the validity of this study. A threat to the validity of this study could exist if participants did not fully participate in the entire

study by missing a meeting. Furthermore, any intervention missed for any reason threatened the validity of this study. If a participant missed a meeting they were dropped from the study. To avoid sampling bias the intervention was offered to all credential candidates at the university. Participants for the control and treatment groups were required to opt into the study. Convenience sampling and participant opt-in were necessitated for this study as participants had to volunteer outside of their credential program hours to participate. Information for the intervention was derived from a federal legal compliance perspective to avoid researcher bias. The threat of diffusion of treatment was considered by administering the intervention solely to the treatment group by confirming participation records.

**Data Analysis**

All data were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences® (SPSS®) for Windows, version 27.0.0 (SPSS, 2021). No names or identifying information were included in the data analysis. Before analyses were conducted all data were cleaned to ensure no outliers were present (Dimitrov, 2012). After cleaning the data, Independent sample t-tests (control and treatment groups) and dependent samples t-tests (pre-test and post-test) were conducted to determine the significant difference in attitudes towards inclusion between the two means scores on the STATIC (Cochran, 1998). Further, before interpreting the analytical output, Levene's Homogeneity of Variance was examined to see if the assumption of equivalence has been violated (Levene, 1960). If Levene's Homogeneity of Variance was not violated (i.e., the variances were equal across groups), data were interpreted for the assumption of equivalence; however, if the variances were not equal across groups the corrected output will be used for interpretation.

## Results

Two independent samples t-tests were conducted on the whole sample ($n$ = 45) for both the pre and post-assessment scores. Results for the pre-test were: Levene's Homogeneity of Variance was not violated ($p > .05$), meaning the variance between groups was not statistically different and no correction was needed and the t-test showed non-significant differences between the mean scores on the pre-tests between the two groups $t(43) = -.49$, $p = .63$. This means that the two groups were not statistically different and are similar (see Table 1). Further, this shows that the two groups had a similar average in their attitudes towards inclusion before the study began; thus making any changes seen on the post-test likely due to the intervention, and not group differences based on participants. Results for the post-test were: Levene's Homogeneity of Variance was not violated ($p > .05$), meaning the variance between groups was not statistically different and no correction was needed and the t-test showed a significant difference between the mean scores on the post-test between the two groups $t(43) = 3.55$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.07$. The mean average for the two groups was statistically different on the post-test; moreover, the practical significance (i.e., effect size) was considered moderate to large as any effect size over 1 is considered strong practical significance This provides initial support that the intervention was impacting attitudes towards inclusion (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Results of Independent Samples T-Tests*

| | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Pre Test | | |
| Treatment | 3.37 | 0.30 |
| Control | 3.42 | 0.40 |
| Post Test* | | |
| Treatment | 3.71 | 0.25 |
| Control | 3.41 | 0.31 |

*Note.* SD = Standard Deviation. * = $p < .05$.

After determining the differences between pre and post-assessment scores between groups, two paired t-tests were run for both groups (i.e., treatment and control) to determine if participants' mean scores from pre to post were significantly different within each group (i.e., growth). Results for each group were as follows: treatment group, $t(29) = -6.26$, $p < .001$; control group, $t(14) = .18$, $p = .83$. The treatment group showed statistically significant growth and the control group did not show statistically significant growth (see Table 2). More specifically, the treatment group's attitudes towards inclusion increased, while the control groups attitudes actually decreased just slightly. Coupled with the findings of the independent t-tests, these results indicate that the intervention was not only effective at showcasing a statistical and practical difference between the treatment and control groups on the post-test, but also that the treatment groups growth as statistically meaningful.

Table 2

*Results of Paired T-Tests*

| | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Treatment Group* | | |
| Pre | 3.37 | 0.30 |
| Post | 3.71 | 0.25 |
| Control Group | | |
| Pre | 3.42 | 0.40 |
| Post | 3.41 | 0.31 |

*Note.* SD = Standard Deviation. * = $p < .001$.

## Discussion

Inclusive practices for students with disabilities have been propelled by a modern understanding of inclusion's educational benefits for individuals and the school system as a whole (Blanton et al., 2010; Salend, 1999; UNESCO, 1994). The IEP process is how the inclusive education for each student with a disability is designed, individualized, and implemented (Turnbull, 2005). As part of the IEP process, the informed collaboration of all relevant educators is mandated when designing the IEP (Shippen, 2005). It is clear in the literature that preservice educators feel unprepared and poorly trained to participate in the IEP process and inclusive education (Allday et al., 2016; McKenzie, 2009). Therefore, additional research is necessary to better understand how to properly prepare preservice educators to be members of the IEP team and to participate meaningfully in inclusive education.

The intention of this study was to examine the relationship between a simulation IEP development process (i.e., Mock IEP) and preservice educator attitudes towards inclusive education. Educator attitudes have been shown to be indicators of the effectiveness of collaboration and inclusive education (Cochran, 1998; Metsala & Harkins, 2019). In order to examine the relationship between the Mock IEP and educator attitudes, an interest survey asking for volunteers for the Mock IEP was distributed to credential candidates at the university. In response, 45 participants volunteered to participate in the Mock IEP, 15 as the control group and 30 as the treatment group. The treatment group participated in a 3-day Mock IEP program while the control group did not. It was hypothesized that participation in the Mock IEP would influence educators' attitudes to be more positive toward inclusive education.

The analysis of the data collected supports the hypothesis that participation in the Mock IEP positively affects educator attitudes towards inclusion. The treatment group scored significantly higher on the post-test than on the pre-test, while the control group scored lower on the post-test than on the pre-test. Additionally, the standard deviation for the treatment group decreased from pre-test to post-test, indicating the intervention caused the participants to be more aligned in their attitudes towards inclusion. According to the measure, the findings suggest that the treatment group felt more prepared, confident, and comfortable, implementing inclusive education after the intervention. The results support previous studies on simulation training's effectiveness for educators, providing further rationale to explore simulations in educator training (Kaufman-Ireland, 2016). The findings expand on what has been shown by previous studies on the effectiveness of practicing inclusive education, which is simulation training can increase teacher attitudes towards inclusion, therefore increasing the effectiveness of inclusive practices (Cochran, 1998; Harvey, 2010). Furthermore, Salend (1999) posits that educators who feel more prepared, confident, and comfortable with inclusive education will have a more positive impact on the students they serve, whether the students have a disability or not. Therefore, preservice educators who participate in the Mock IEP can enhance the quality of education for all students. The control group scores align with what is documented in the literature on preservice educators' opinions of their own preparedness for IEP collaboration and inclusive education- that preservice educators without intervention feel unprepared for, and have lower attitudes towards, inclusive education. The findings from the research of the Mock IEP offer promising opportunities for future studies.

**Limitations and Future Studies**

In conducting the Mock IEP there were several limiting factors. Sample size is the most limiting factor of this study. Convenience sampling was used as the grant funding was available and the credential candidate volunteers were accessible to the researcher. A larger sample size would provide enough data to warrant analysis of the measure's four factors comprising the STATIC (Cochran, 1998), which the sample size of the current study did not. The statistical analysis of the subcategories would provide information on what aspects of the attitudes of educators are changing towards inclusion when interacting with the Mock IEP. This could provide more focused specialized programs for certain qualities of attitudes towards inclusion. Therefore, future studies should explore scaling the Mock IEP to larger participant numbers in order to offer an effective training tool as well as to collect more information on the subcategories of the STATIC (Cochran, 1998). Another limitation was the sample size of the control group was 50% of the treatment group's size. Due to attrition, 6 participants dropped out of the study.

Implications from the current study for future research are promising. In this case, simulation has been shown to be a statistically significant tool in educator training and beckons further research. Future research may focus on how to scale the Mock IEP program to a larger size, and through different formats. This particular study was conducted virtually, and the effectiveness of the study remained statistically significant, indicating that virtual programs of this nature are effective. Though this study only examined credential candidates' attitudes towards inclusion, further research should be conducted on simulation training programs as professional development opportunities for practicing educators.

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## Appendix A

Survey of Teacher Attitudes Towards Inclusion (Cochran, 1998)

Strongly Disagree [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Strongly Agree

1. I am confident in my ability to teach children with special needs.
2. I have been adequately trained to meet the needs of children with disabilities.
3. I become easily frustrated when teaching students with special needs.
4. I become anxious when I learn that a student with special needs will be in my classroom.
5. Although children differ intellectually, physically, and psychologically, I believe that all children can learn in most environments.
6. I believe that academic progress is possible in children with special needs.
7. I believe that children with special needs should be placed in special education classes.
8. I am comfortable teaching a child that is moderately physically disabled.
9. I have problems teaching a student with cognitive deficits.
10. I can adequately handle students with mild to moderate behavioral problems.
11. Students with special needs learn social skills that are modeled by regular education students.
12. Students with special needs have higher academic achievements when included in the regular education classroom.
13. It is difficult for children with special needs to make strides in academic achievement in the regular education classroom.
14. Self-esteem of children with special needs is increased when included in the regular education classroom.

15. Students with special needs in the regular education classroom hinder the academic progress of the regular education student.
16. Special in-service training in teaching special needs students should be required for all regular education teachers.
17. I don’t mind making special physical arrangements in my room to meet the needs of students with special needs.
18. Adaptive materials and equipment are easily acquired for meeting the needs of students with special needs.
19. My principal is supportive in making needed accommodations for teaching children with special needs.
20. Students with special needs should be included in regular education classrooms.

# Appendix B

Fidelity Checklists

Meeting #1 2/28/2022

- Rational for Mock IEP explained & ensure all participants have completed pre-test STATIC (Cochran, 1998)
- Complete IRIS module sections 1-5, 7, & assessment questions in Google Form
- Complete group discussion questions & share group findings in the main room
- Receive and review Mock IEP forms
- Meet in small-discussion group to discuss Mock IEP observations

Meeting #2 3/19/2022

- IEP agenda overview
- Participants receive Mock IEP roles
- Small group discussions in groupings of Mock IEP roles
- Instruction and group discussion for pre-IEP best practices
- Small groups of Mock IEP teams for pre-meeting discussion

Meeting #3 4/9/2022

- Group review of meeting agenda and timing expectations
- Mock IEP
- Post Mock IEP large group debrief discussions
- Small group discussion in Mock IEP teams
- Complete post-test STATIC (Cochran, 1998)

## Appendix C

Consent Form

Please consider participating in a research study conducted by Dr. Kerrie Chitwood, CCC-SLP, Assistant Professor of Speech-Language Pathology at California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB) and Dr. Erin Ramirez, Associate Professor in Secondary Education at CSUMB.

This study will examine if participation of credential candidates in a simulated Individualized Education Program (IEP) process has an impact on their attitude towards collaborating as a member of an IEP team. The Mock IEP experience will include a total of 3 meetings-the first 2 meetings will be over Zoom and are designed to prepare for the event, including reviewing the case study and developing roles / responsibilities. The final meeting for the Mock IEP event is currently planned to take place in person (based on Covid-19 protocols).

Participants will complete a survey prior to the start of the Mock IEP meetings and will complete the same survey at the end of the Mock IEP experience.

There are little to no risks involved in this study. The surveys are used to help us learn more about the pre-service credential students attitudes associated with the IEP process. The benefits of this study may include increasing your knowledge of the IEP process and providing you with tools to use throughout your educational career.

Confidential information will be kept secret during the program and destroyed after the program is over. Any documents with your name will be secure and locked away.

After the study:

1. Papers with your name will be shredded.
2. Your information will NOT be used in future programs without your consent.

If you have questions, contact:

Dr. Kerrie Chitwood, CCC-SLP at kchitwood@csumb.edu, at 831-582-3574. If you have any questions about your rights, or if you need to report a research-related injury, contact the CPHS at cphs@csumb.edu, (831) 582-5130, or the Chair of the CPHS, Dr. Chip Lenno, at (831) 582-4700.

The dates of the meetings are:

- February 26, 2022 (9-12)
- March 19, 2022 (9-12)
- April 9, 2022 (9-12)

If you consent to this study and attend all three meetings, you will receive a stipend of $300 from Project POPPY.

Your participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will not affect you in any way. You may stop participating at any time.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kerrie Chitwood, CCC-SLP

Dr. Erin Ramirez

## Appendix D

Meeting Agenda- Brad's Annual IEP Meeting - 1 hr

1) Welcome, introductions, and agenda overview … 1-2 min.
2) Purpose of the meeting … 1-2 min.
    a) To complete the annual IEP review, review goal progress and propose new goals
    b) To determine the student's Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
3) Parents' rights
    a) Confirm parents have been offered the Procedural Safeguards, an explanation of their rights as a parent with a student with disabilities
4) Present Levels of Performance … 5-10 min.
    a) Each team member (SPED, Psych, Math Gen. Ed., ELA Gen. Ed.) represents their perspective of working with the child (this is derived from the IEP paperwork for the Mock IEP scenario)
5) Goal Progress and proposals … 20-30 min.
    a) All previous goals were met
    b) Previous goals are the baseline for the new goals
    c) Present goal proposals. The goal is not to word the goal but to determine the next progression that is appropriate for the students
        i) For example, this is acceptable: Brad will demonstrate the ability to keep his papers organized.
            (1) Goal #1: Number Awareness
            (2) Goal #2: Paragraph Writing
            (3) Goal #3: Self-Monitoring
            (4) Goal #4: Organization
6) Accommodations & Modifications … 3-5 min.
    a) Review of any appropriate accommodations & modifications recommendations by the IEP team members
7) Services … 3-5 min.
    a) Discussion of services and placement
8) Closure & meeting dismissal

# Appendix E

California State University MONTEREY BAY
Extraordinary Opportunity

Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS)
IRB: 00003173 FWA: 00004739

| | |
|---|---|
| **Issue Date:** | 02/02/2022 |
| **To:** | Chitwood, Kerrie |
| **CC:** | Ramirez, Erin |
| **Re:** | CPHS 22-022-K206 |
| | |
| **Protocol Title:** | Mock IEP for Educator Training |
| **Permalink:** | https://csumb.kuali.co/protocols/protocols/61830b549d138a00355179fe |
| **Funded by:** | Externally funded: Department of Education, U336S190006; Kuali #561; Project #5055101A<br>PI: Ramirez, Erin M<br>CSU Monterey Bay Teacher Quality Reform, Project POPPY: Preparing Observational Practitioners through Partnerships Yearlong |
| **Action and Status:** | Initial Review |
| **Determination:** | Exempt, 2: 45 CFR 46.104(d)(2) |
| **Expiration Date:** | NA |
| **Population:** | General - adult; Vulnerability due to Perceived or Real Power Differentials (i.e.: your own students or employees) |
| **Consent Procedure:** | Fully informed with all required elements including signature or other identifying information |
| **Conditions:** | Requirements prior to commencing research:<br>1. While COVID-19 restrictions apply, all research is subject to: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities Considerations in the Context of COVID-19. Contact University Risk Management for training and answers regarding COVID-19 procedures applicable to your protocol. |
| **Periodic Report:** | One (1) close out report at the conclusion of subject intervention/interaction and in which activity is limited to final analysis of identifiable data. |
| **Lead Researcher Responsibilities:** | Lead Researchers play a crucial role in protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects and are responsible for carrying out sound ethical research |