

EPRRI Issue Brief Five

Essential Knowledge and Skills Needed by Teachers to Support the Achievement of Students with Disabilities



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Essential Knowledge and Skills Needed by Teachers to Support the Achievement of Students with Disabilities

Issue Brief Highlights

This Issue Brief examines the knowledge and skills teachers need in order to teach in an environment of accountability and standards-based reform. The Education Policy Reform Research Institute (EPRRI) conducted a national symposium that resulted in the identification and validation of essential knowledge and key skills that all educators need to increase the participation and performance of students with disabilities in standards-based environments.

These include:

- Understand state and federal legislation related to academic content and achievement standards and recognize that these laws apply to EVERY student.
- Understand state and district academic content and achievement standards and recognize that these standards apply to EVERY student.
- Design instruction that supports the achievement of grade-level academic content standards by students with disabilities.
- Develop IEPs that support the achievement of grade-level academic content standards.
- Design learning environments that support the achievement of grade-level academic content standards by students with disabilities.
- Understand state and federal legislation on state and district assessments and accountability, and recognize that these laws apply to EVERY student.
- Understand state and district assessment and accountability systems and recognize that EVERY student is expected to participate in general assessments with or without accommodations, or in alternate assessments.

- Make appropriate participation and accommodation decisions for students with disabilities and document on each student's IEP.
- Assist students with disabilities in selecting and using accommodations, including assistive technology.
- Understand the design and use of alternate assessments for students with significant disabilities.

When compared to national standards for teacher preparation, EPRRI found differences primarily in the specificity of language. For example, it could be argued that teachers could meet Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards without knowledge of their state's academic content and achievement standards or other important elements of standards-based reform.

Many states are revising their teacher education standards in order to more closely align them with standards-based reform initiatives and new requirements for accountability. For example, Texas has developed teacher education standards that contain the knowledge and skills needed by both general and special education teachers to support the achievement of academic content standards by students with disabilities.

Standards-based reform and new requirements for accountability for the achievement of all students require a thoughtful review of teacher preparation standards at both state and national levels. It is critical for institutions of higher education and state departments of education to ensure that all educators have the knowledge and skills needed to increase the participation and performance of students with disabilities in standards-based environments.

i n t r o d u c t i o n



The current environment of standards-based reform and new requirements for accountability is the result of a series of national initiatives and legislative mandates that have evolved over the last twenty-five years. Many changes have taken place since the Education Summit of 1989 set an agenda for educational reform that called for high expectations, rigorous educational standards, and assessment of achievement for all students. Schools are now held accountable for improving the achievement of all students, including students with disabilities. In order to improve achievement for all students, teachers need to be qualified to teach in an environment of accountability and standards-based reform. But what are the skills and knowledge needed in this new environment, and are they reflected in current standards for the preparation of general and special educators?

To answer these questions, the Education Policy Reform Research Institute (EPRRI) conducted a national symposium, which resulted in the identification and validation of essential knowledge and key skills that all educators need to increase the participation and performance of students with disabilities in standards-based environments. This Issue Brief provides a detailed explanation of the essential knowledge and skills identified by EPRRI, compares them with national and state standards for teacher preparation, and offers suggestions for policymakers to consider when developing standards for teacher licensure. This Brief is part of a series developed by EPRRI on investigating issues related to accountability and special education.

Current Context of Accountability

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 1997) and the Title I provisions of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 require the participation of students with disabilities in state assessments used for accountability and require public reporting of student performance. As shown in Table 1, IDEA requires the participation of students with disabilities in state assess-

In order to improve achievement for all students, teachers need to be qualified to teach in an environment of accountability and standards-based reform.

ments and the reporting of data related to participation and performance on these assessments.

NCLB imposes significantly more responsibility on school systems to ensure the progress of students with disabilities toward challenging educational standards. NCLB focuses on schools and requires annual yearly progress (AYP) for each student subgroup, including students receiving special education services, as all schools move toward 100% proficiency on state assessments within 12 years.

Table 1. Federal Laws Requiring the Participation of Students with Disabilities in State and District-Wide Assessments.

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, P.L. 105-17 (1997)</p> | <p>The State will, (C) every two years, report to the Secretary and the public on the progress of the State, and of children with disabilities in the State, toward meeting the goals established under subparagraph (A); and (D) based on its assessment of that progress, and (D) will revise its State improvement plan under subpart 1 of part D as may be needed to improve its performance, if the State receives assistance under that subpart. [Sec. 612 (a) (16) (C) (D)]</p> <p>Children with disabilities are included in general State and district-wide assessment programs, with appropriate accommodations, where necessary. [Sec. 612 (a) (17) (A) (i)]</p> <p>As appropriate, the State or local educational agency develops guidelines for the participation of children with disabilities in alternate assessments for those children who cannot participate in State and district-wide assessment programs. [Sec. 612 (a) (18) (A) (i)]</p> <p>The State educational agency makes available to the public, and reports to the public with the same frequency and in the same detail as it reports on the assessment of non-disabled children, the following: (i) The number of children with disabilities participating in regular assessments; (ii) The number of those children participating in alternate assessments. [Sec. 612 (a) (17) (B) (i) (ii)]</p> |
| <p>No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, P.L. 107-110 (2001)</p> | <p>...the participation in such assessments of all students. [Sec. 1111 (3) (C)(i)] (The term "such assessments" refers to a set of high-quality, yearly student academic assessments.)</p> <p>The reasonable adaptations and accommodations for students with disabilities (as defined under section 602(3) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) necessary to measure the academic achievement of such students relative to State academic content and State student academic achievement standards. [Sec. 1111 (3) (C)(ii)]</p> <p>Each State plan shall demonstrate, based on academic assessments described in paragraph (3), and in accordance with this paragraph, what constitutes adequate yearly progress of the State, and of all public elementary schools, secondary schools and local educational agencies in the State, toward enabling all public elementary school and secondary school students to meet the State's student academic achievement standards, while working toward the goal of narrowing the achievement gaps in the State, local educational agencies, and schools. [Sec. 1111 (2) (B)]</p> <p>Adequate yearly progress shall be defined by the State in a manner that includes separate measurable annual objectives for continuous and substantial improvement for each of the following: (II) The achievement of- (cc) students with disabilities; Each year, for a school to make adequate yearly progress under this paragraph (i), each group of students described in subparagraph (C) (v) must meet or exceed the objectives set by the State under subparagraph (G). [Sec. 1111 (2) (C) (v) I, II(cc)]</p> |

Source: U. S. Department of Education, 2002.

Essential Knowledge and Skills

Based on the premise that new requirements for assessment and accountability would result in new requirements for teachers, EPRRI convened a national symposium to discuss this topic. Symposium participants included state and district level education personnel, representatives from universities and national organizations involved in the preparation and licensure of teachers, and representatives from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

The parameters of the symposium discussion were limited to specific knowledge and skills related to the increased accountability requirements for students with disabilities. These skills are listed in Table 2. Other broad skills that are critical to the makeup of a highly qualified teacher, such as pedagogy, knowledge about how children learn, and collaborative belief systems, have been studied for several years (see for example, Darling-Hammond, 1997; Tom, 1997; Valli & Rennert-Ariev, 2000), and though acknowledged by the symposium participants as extremely important, were not the focus of this symposium.

Table 2. Knowledge and Skills Needed by Educators to Support the Achievement of Students with Disabilities.

- 1.** Understand state and federal legislation related to academic content and achievement standards and recognize that these laws apply to EVERY student.
- 2.** Understand state and district academic content and achievement standards and recognize that these standards apply to EVERY student.
- 3.** Design instruction that supports the achievement of grade-level academic content standards by students with disabilities.
- 4.** Develop IEPs that support the achievement of grade-level academic content standards.
- 5.** Design learning environments that support the achievement of grade-level academic content standards by students with disabilities.
- 6.** Understand state and federal legislation on state and district assessments and accountability, and recognize that these laws apply to EVERY student.
- 7.** Understand state and district assessment and accountability systems and recognize that EVERY student is expected to participate in general assessments with or without accommodations, or in alternate assessments.
- 8.** Make appropriate participation and accommodation decisions for students with disabilities and document on each student's IEP.
- 9.** Assist students with disabilities in selecting and using accommodations, including assistive technology.
- 10.** Understand the design and use of alternate assessments for students with significant disabilities.

National Standards for Teacher Preparation

Standards set by national organizations have influenced changes in teacher preparation and licensure in many states. One set of standards that states look to for guidance was developed by INTASC. Released in 1992, the Model Standards for Beginning Teacher Licensing, Assessment and Development: A Resource for State Dialogue serves as a starting point for states as they develop policies that shape teacher preparation programs for new teachers, as well as professional development for continuing teachers (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1992). The teacher preparation standards of 30 states are based on the INTASC standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2000).

INTASC began work on special education standards in 1997. Other organizations involved in this effort included the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE). The INTASC Special Education Subcommittee released a draft document for comments in May 2001 called Model Standards for Licensing General and Special Education Teachers of Students with Disabilities: A Resource for State Dialogue (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2001). These model standards represent one of the first efforts to develop consensus on defining what a quality educator of students with disabilities actually does. According to Mainzer and Horvath (2001), “there have never before been national level principles for what all educators need to effectively teach children and youth with disabilities in regular education classrooms” (p. 6).

Table 3 shows that all of the essential knowledge and skills introduced in this Brief are addressed in the INTASC standards in some form. Important similarities include agreement on the need for all teachers to understand disability legislation, know the content that they teach, design instruction and ensure that students with disabilities participate in state and district assessments. Differences between the EPPRI skills and the INTASC standards are primarily in the specificity of language used and the distinctions made between what all teachers should know and be able to do and what special education teachers should know and be able to do. An example of the difference in the specificity of language used is found in the EPPRI skill

that requires teachers to understand state and district academic content and achievement standards. Although the INTASC standards state that all teachers must have a solid understanding of the content they teach, it could be argued that teachers could meet the INTASC standards without knowledge of their state's academic content and achievement standards or other important elements of standards-based reform.

The other key difference between the two lists is the assigning of different skills to general and special educators. This difference is illustrated in the EPPRI skill that addresses the design of learning environments. INTASC Standard 1.03 requires that “all teachers understand that students with disabilities may need accommodations...” but relegates the responsibility of knowing “when and how to develop, structure and implement accommodations...” to special education teachers. Because accommodations are critical to providing students with disabilities access to the general curriculum, knowledge of their design and use in the classroom is an essential skill for all teachers.

Although the INTASC standards state that all teachers must have a solid understanding of the content they teach, it could be argued that teachers could meet the INTASC standards without knowledge of their state's academic content and achievement standards or other important elements of standards-based reform.

Table 3. EPRRI Identified Knowledge and Skills Documented in INTASC’s Model Standards for Licensing General and Special Education Teachers of Students with Disabilities.

| EPRRI Identified Knowledge and Skills for All Teachers | INTASC Standards for All Teachers | INTASC Standards for Special Education Teachers Only |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Understand state and federal legislation related to academic content and achievement standards and recognize that these laws apply to EVERY student. | 1.04: All teachers have knowledge of the major principles and parameters of federal disabilities legislation. This includes knowledge of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). | 1.12: Special education teachers serve as a resource to others by providing information about the laws and policies that support students with disabilities (e.g., IDEA, Section 504, Americans with Disabilities Act) and how to access additional information when needed. |
| 2. Understand state and district academic content and achievement standards and recognize that these standards apply to EVERY student. | 1.01: All general and special education teachers have a solid base of understanding of the content areas that they teach. | 1.06: All special education teachers have a solid base of understanding in the content areas of math, reading, English/language arts, science, social studies, and the arts comparable to elementary generalist teachers. . . . Special education teachers who teach content at the secondary level should demonstrate additional understanding in at least one content area (e.g., science, mathematics, history). |
| 3. Design instruction that supports the achievement of grade-level academic content standards by students with disabilities. | 2.04: All teachers are knowledgeable about multiple theories of learning and research-based teaching practices that support learning. They use this knowledge to inform their decisions about the needs of individual students and to construct ways to promote student learning. 7.02: All teachers plan ways to modify instruction, as needed, to facilitate positive learning results within the general curriculum for students with disabilities. | 4.10: Special education teachers know a range of specialized instructional strategies that have been found through research and best practices to support learning in individual students with disabilities. |
| 4. Develop IEPs that support the achievement of grade-level academic content standards. | 1.04: All teachers . . . also understand the purpose and requirements of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)...and their responsibility for implementing these plans. 7.01: All general and special education teachers contribute their expertise as members of a collaborative team to develop, monitor and periodically revise Individualized Education Programs | 1.11: Special education teachers have knowledge of the requirements and responsibilities involved in developing, implementing and evaluating Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and Individual Accommodation Plans (IAPs) for students with disabilities. |
| 5. Design learning environments that support the achievement of grade-level academic content standards by students with disabilities. | 1.03: All teachers understand that students with disabilities may need accommodations, modifications or adaptations to the general curriculum depending on their learning strengths and needs. 7.04: All teachers design a learning environment so that the individual needs of students with disabilities are accommodated. | 1.08: Special education teachers have knowledge of when and how to develop structure and implement accommodations, modifications and/or adaptations to provide access to the general curriculum. 1.10: Special education teachers have knowledge of the range of assistive technology that support students in the learning environment and know how to access resources related to this. |

Table 3. (continued) EPRRI Identified Knowledge and Skills Documented in INTASC’s Model Standards for Licensing General and Special Education Teachers of Students with Disabilities.

| EPRRI Identified Knowledge and Skills for All Teachers | INTASC Standards for All Teachers | INTASC Standards for Special Education Teachers Only |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6. Understand state and federal legislation on state and district assessments and accountability, and recognize that these laws apply to EVERY student. | 1.04: All teachers have knowledge of the major principles and parameters of federal disabilities legislation. This includes knowledge of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), and the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). | 1.12: Special education teachers serve as a resource to others by providing information about the laws and policies that support students with disabilities (e.g., IDEA, Section 504, Americans with Disabilities Act) and how to access additional information when needed. |
| 7. Understand state and district assessment and accountability systems and recognize that EVERY student is expected to participate in general assessments with or without accommodations, or in alternate assessments. | 8.05: All teachers understand that students with disabilities are expected to participate in district and statewide assessments and that accommodations or alternate assessments may be required when appropriate. | 8.11: Special education teachers ensure that students with disabilities participate in district and statewide assessments and document on the IEP the use of accommodations or an alternate assessment when appropriate. They ensure that decisions regarding accommodations or alternate assessments are aligned with state guidelines and are consistent with accommodations or modifications provided routinely in the classroom. They facilitate the participation of students with disabilities by providing accommodations and alternate assessments when specified. |
| 8. Make appropriate participation and accommodation decisions for students with disabilities and document those decisions on each student’s IEP.9. | 8.03: All teachers collaborate with others to incorporate accommodations and alternate assessments into the ongoing assessment process of students with disabilities when appropriate. | |
| 9. Assist students with disabilities in selecting and using accommodations, including assistive technology. | 4.08: All teachers expect and support the use of assistive and instructional technologies to promote learning and independence of students with disabilities. 6.01: All general and special education teachers have knowledge of the general types of communication strategies and assistive technologies that can be incorporated as a regular part of their instruction. | |
| 10. Understand the design and use of alternate assessments for students with significant disabilities. | 1.03: All teachers . . . recognize that some students may require an expanded curriculum with learning goals targeted in areas beyond the general curriculum... 8.03: All teachers collaborate with others to incorporate accommodations and alternate assessments into the ongoing assessment process of students with disabilities when appropriate. | |

State Standards for Teacher Preparation

Many states are revising their teacher education standards in order to more closely align them with standards-based reform initiatives and new requirements for accountability. Texas, one of the four EPRRI core research states, has developed teacher education standards that contain the knowledge and skills needed by both general and special education teachers to support the achievement of academic content standards by students with disabilities. Table 4 illustrates how the knowledge and skills proposed by EPRRI are already contained in the Texas Teacher Education Standards.

The Texas Teacher Education Standards explicitly address many of the skills, knowledge and dispositions that beginning educators need to have to teach and test all students in a standards-based environment. As shown in Table 4, nine of the ten essential knowledge and skills proposed by EPRRI are documented for one or both types of educators. The EPRRI skill that addresses the design and use of alternate assessments does not appear to be documented in the Texas Teacher Education Standards for either the beginning general education teacher or the beginning special education teacher.

A notable difference in specificity of language between the EPRRI skills and the Texas standards is contained in Row 3 of Table 4. The EPRRI list suggests that both general and special education teachers need to know how to design instruction that supports the achievement of grade-level academic content standards by students with disabilities. The Texas standards, however, require that only beginning general education teachers know how to design instruction based on the state's essential knowledge and skills. The related standards for the beginning special education teacher call for knowledge of instructional strategies related to the needs of individuals with disabilities, with no mention made of designing those instructional strategies to meet the learning needs of individuals with disabilities relative to the content standards.

Table 4. EPRRI Identified Knowledge and Skills Documented in Texas Teacher Education Standards.

| EPRRI Identified Knowledge and Skills for All Teachers | Texas Standards for General Educators | Texas Standards for Special Educators |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1. Understand state and federal legislation related to academic content and achievement standards and recognize that these laws apply to EVERY student.</p> | <p>4.13k: The beginning teacher knows and understands the legal requirements for educators (e.g., those related to special education students' and families' rights, student discipline, equity, child abuse).</p> | <p>1.1k: The beginning special education teacher knows and understands the historic foundations, classic studies (including the major contributors) and major state and federal legislation that has affected knowledge and practice in the education of individuals with disabilities.</p> |
| <p>2. Understand state and district academic content and achievement standards and recognize that these standards apply to EVERY student.</p> | <p>1.7k: The beginning teacher knows and understands the importance of the state content and performance standards as outlined in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).</p> <p>1.8k: The beginning teacher knows and understands relevant content of the discipline being taught, including concepts, principles, relationships, methods of inquiry and key issues.</p> | <p>5.1k: The beginning special education teacher knows and understands state and federal laws (e.g., IDEA, Title I) that require the assessment of the progress of all students toward state standards.</p> |
| <p>3. Design instruction that supports the achievement of grade-level academic content standards by students with disabilities.</p> | <p>1.6s: The beginning teacher is able to use the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) to plan instruction.</p> <p>1.19k: The beginning teacher knows and understands the importance of designing instruction that reflects the TEKS.</p> <p>1.19s: The beginning teacher is able to plan instructional activities that progress sequentially and support stated instructional goals based on the TEKS.</p> | <p>4.9k: The beginning special education teacher knows and understands various ways to adapt instruction to meet unique learning needs of individuals with disabilities.</p> <p>10.2s: The beginning special education teacher is able to use effective, research-based instructional strategies and practices to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.</p> |
| <p>4. Develop IEPs that support the achievement of grade-level academic content standards.</p> | | <p>3.1s: The beginning special education teacher is able to work collaboratively with parents, students and school and community personnel in the development of clear, measurable Individual Educational Plan (IEP) goals and objectives that are aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).</p> <p>10.9k: The beginning special education teacher knows and understands the role of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) in the development of the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) for individuals with disabilities.</p> |

Table 4. (continued) EPRRI Identified Knowledge and Skills Documented in Texas Teacher Education Standards.

| EPRRI Identified Knowledge and Skills for All Teachers | Texas Standards for General Educators | Texas Standards for Special Educators |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5. Design learning environments that support the achievement of grade-level academic content standards by students with disabilities. | <p>1.3s: The beginning teacher is able to use effective approaches to address varied student learning needs and preferences.</p> <p>2.1k: The beginning teacher knows and understands the importance of creating a learning environment in which diversity and individual differences are respected.</p> | <p>5.8s: The beginning special education teacher is able to use information from teachers, other school and community personnel, individuals with disabilities and parents/guardians to make or suggest appropriate accommodations/modifications to learning environments.</p> <p>8.6k: The beginning special education teacher knows and understands the role of assistive technology, devices, and services in facilitating students' access to the general curriculum and active participation in educational activities and routines</p> |
| 6. Understand state and federal legislation on state and district assessments and accountability, and recognize that these laws apply to EVERY student. | 4.17k: The beginning teacher knows and understands the importance of adhering to required procedures for administering state- and district-mandated assessments. | 5.1k: The beginning special education teacher knows and understands state and federal laws (e.g., IDEA, Title I) that require the assessment of the progress of all students toward state standards. |
| 7. Understand state and district assessment and accountability systems and recognize that EVERY student is expected to participate in general assessments with or without accommodations, or in alternate assessments. | 1.30k: The beginning teacher knows and understands the connection between the Texas statewide assessment program, the TEKS and instruction. | |
| 8. Make appropriate participation and accommodation decisions for students with disabilities and document those decisions on each student's IEP. | | 5.8s: The beginning special education teacher is able to use information from teachers, other school and community personnel, individuals with disabilities, and parents/guardians to make or suggest appropriate accommodations/modifications to learning environments. |
| 9. Assist students with disabilities in selecting and using accommodations, including assistive technology. | | 8.1s: The beginning special education teacher is able to link individual student needs with appropriate assistive technology, devices and services. |
| 10. Understand the design and use of alternate assessments for students with significant disabilities. | | |

Source: Texas State Board for Educator Certification (No date, a, b, and c). The Special Education Standards and Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities Standards (EC-Grade 12) were used to compile this chart. Texas also has separate standards at each of three certification levels (EC-Grade 4, Grades 4-8, and Grade 8-12).

In reviewing what each group of teachers should know and be able to do, the Texas standards include language specific to state content and performance standards, but assign the responsibility for knowing and understanding their importance to general educators. In comparison, EPPRI skills, such as developing IEPs and making accommodation decisions, are only required for beginning special education teachers with no mention made of those skills for general educators. However, the Texas standard on teachers' understanding of state and federal legislation provides an example of how a skill can be represented for both types of educators, with the distinction being not within different knowledge but within the depth of knowledge. For example, in Row 1 of Table 4, Texas requires the beginning teacher to “know and understand the legal requirements for educators...” while the beginning special teacher is required to “know and understand the historic foundations and classic studies...and major state and federal legislation...”

Conclusion

The reform of teacher education is complicated and multifaceted. Model standards for teacher preparation are available and many states have used them to make changes in their standards for licensing both general and special education teachers. These standards, however, may not contain all of the knowledge and skills necessary to ensure that teachers understand the elements of standards-based reform and how to appropriately include all students in state and district assessments.

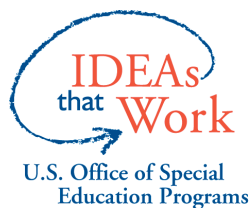
This Issue Brief introduced a list of the required knowledge and skills, documented their presence in national and state standards for teacher preparation, and identified key differences between the list proposed by EPPRI and current standards. The more obvious differences between the EPPRI list and the example standards were the omission of a particular knowledge or skill entirely or the lack of language that is specific to standards and student accountability.

A more subtle difference was found in the ways in which the knowledge and skills were assigned to one group of teachers or the other. During the EPRRI symposium, participants were initially asked to determine if the proposed skill was important for special educators, regular educators or all educators. After a lengthy discussion, symposium participants generally thought that all ten were necessary for all educators, especially those related directly to access to the curriculum. One participant said, “The more we want all teachers to be responsible for all kids, the less we want categories of responsibility.”

Standards-based reform and new requirements for accountability for the achievement of all students require a thoughtful review of teacher preparation standards. All teachers need to become knowledgeable about standards, assessments, and the accountability system in their respective State. This need places an increasingly important responsibility on institutions of higher education and State departments of education as they consider how to ensure that all educators have the knowledge and skills needed to increase the participation and performance of students with disabilities in standards-based environments.

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