Dividing Practices

Preservice Teacher Quality Assessment and the (Re)production of Relations between General and Special Education

By Marleen C. Pugach & Charles Peck

Promoting the education of children with disabilities in general education classrooms has been a clear and consistent goal of federal education policy since the enactment of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) over forty years ago. However, among the many challenges to achieving this goal, one of the most persistent has been the ambiguous, uneasy, and oftentimes conflictual quality of working relationships between special and general educators (Lilly, 1988; Meredith & Underwood, 1995; Young, 2011). One way to interpret the ongoing tensions between the fields of general and special education is to understand them as manifestations of cultural conflict between different ways of knowing and doing things (Cochran-Smith & Dudley-Marling, 2012). Ironically, separate cultures of professional practice, each operating within the affordances and constraints of its own conceptual and material tools, also function as processes of induction into the profession, thus reproducing the tensions between professional cultures and communities of practice that have been so problematic in achieving the goals of IDEA.

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In this article, we draw on ideas from several streams of sociocultural learning theory (Engestrom, 2001; Lave, 1993; Wenger, 1998) to examine some of the concrete ways in which contemporary—and even "cutting-edge"—practical tools used to evaluate preservice teacher quality may unintentionally contribute to the reproduction of cultural tensions between general and special education. Our underlying assumption is that policy, practice, and professional identity mutually construct one another (Holland, Lachiocotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998)—such that divisions in preparation for practice, whether explicitly or implicitly, become reified as essential and may then be enacted as conflict between members of the general and special education communities. It is important to note that these sociocultural dynamics can operate across licensure options, that is, whether students are seeking stand-alone licensure in general or special education or one of the varied types of dual-licensure options (Blanton & Pugach, 2011) that exist. Young (2011), for example, demonstrated how deeply the divisions between the fields remained entrenched, even in a credential program explicitly designed to integrate general and special education teacher preparation.

To provide a concrete example of the ways cultural tensions between special education and general education may be unintentionally reflected and (re)produced in current preservice teacher education policy and practice, we analyzed several of the specific requirements of the increasingly visible national teacher education performance assessment, the edTPA (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity, 2013). Specifically, we conducted a comparative analysis of the language, performance expectations, and underlying assumptions about learning in the edTPA *Assessment Handbook for Elementary Literacy* and the edTPA *Assessment Handbook for Special Education* from the state of Washington. This analysis is significant in illustrating how deeply and unconsciously the division between general and special education may be embedded in even the most contemporary tools used to prepare and assess new teachers. We argue that constructing and maintaining separate communities of practice, which occurs through the use of these cultural tools, can function as an obstacle to fostering teachers' capacities to work across general and special education. In so doing, they also function as a barrier to serving today's students, who bring complex and intersecting learning needs and cultural identities to the general education classroom (Artiles, 2003). Our analysis provides an example of the ways the separation of special education and general education may remain rooted in divided preservice practices—even as the policy pressures for inclusion expand.

Context

The context for this study is rooted in three important considerations. First, we briefly discuss the history of the relationship between special and general preservice preparation and the related research on collaboration between general and special

education teachers. Then we consider implications of viewing teacher education policy and practice through the lens of sociocultural theory. Finally, we describe the edTPA as an example of the ways in which cultural "tools," including those used to measure preservice teacher quality, may reify and reproduce tensions between the fields of general and special education.

Historical Perspective

In light of the long-standing national commitment to educating students with disabilities in inclusive educational settings, teacher educators have struggled, since the passage of IDEA in 1975, with how to frame and enact the relationship between the preparation of general and special education teachers. Since the original work of the Deans' Grants projects, which represented the first large-scale effort to address how best to prepare general education teachers for "mainstreaming" (Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2003), and subsequently for what has come to be called inclusion, a range of national, state, and local efforts have been undertaken to move teacher education forward in this regard. The most visible of these efforts, and the one that is most common in teacher education, has been state-level mandates for all general education teachers to complete a course or courses in special education (Voltz, 2003). Other efforts have included integrating special education into specific general education preservice curricular components, developing collaborative field experiences, and, on a much smaller scale, systematically redesigning some preservice programs, with a recent surge in the development of programs of dual certification in general and special education (Blanton, Griffin, Winn, & Pugach, 1997; Pugach, Blanton, & Boveda, 2014; Pugach, Blanton, & Correa, 2011).

Embedded within these teacher education redesign efforts over time has been the call for collaboration, which is meant to serve as a fundamental practice for solving the problems of working across these historically disconnected communities of practice. Collaboration was identified as a goal both for inclusive teacher preparation and K–12 practice concurrent with the earliest efforts to enact IDEA. From an initial top-down consultation model where special educators shared their expertise with their general education counterparts (Reynolds, 1978), this work quickly developed into a model based on greater parity across general and special education professionals (Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin, 1986;) as well as greater respect for the contributions of general education teachers in the process (Chalfant, Pysh, & Moultrie, 1979; Pugach & Johnson, 1988).

Recent research has suggested that although the importance of collaboration between general and special education continues to be widely acknowledged, achieving and sustaining collaborative relationships between these communities of practice remains highly problematic (Cochran-Smith & Dudley-Marling, 2012). For example, after completing a comprehensive review of the implementation research describing coteaching arrangements involving general and special education teach-

ers, Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2007) concluded that "if the qualitative research to date represents general practice, it can be stated that the ideal of true collaboration between two equal partners—focused on curriculum needs, innovative practice, and appropriate individualization—has largely not been met" (p. 412). McKenzie (2009) arrived at a similar conclusion based on results of a national survey of teacher preparation program curricula and instructional practices related to collaboration between general and special educators. In addition, McKenzie argued that "many of the concerns related to collaboration in public schools are paralleled by, and perhaps attributable to, those between special and general education in college and university training programs" (p. 379). Taken together, these studies suggest that progress toward achieving a robust practice of teacher preparation for collaboration between general and special educators remains limited, even as the achievement of students who have disabilities continues to falter (Council for Exceptional Children, 2013).

In fact, one could argue that overcoming the intractable separation of the communities of general and special education has been the dominant struggle in achieving the goals of IDEA. With this historical context in mind, we argue that despite periodic advances, the core issue in teacher education (as well as in K–12 practice) as it relates to the goal of inclusive education continues to be the separation of these two communities of practice—a separation that derives in large part from policy and practice in teacher preparation (Pugach, Blanton, & Correa, 2011).

Teacher Preparation Policy and Practice: A Sociocultural Perspective

Our analysis of relationships between teacher certification policy and issues of *practice* in general and special education draws on some of the general assumptions of sociocultural learning theory (Chaiklin & Lave, 1993), particularly cultural–historical activity theory (CHAT; Engestrom, 1987; Leont'ev, 1975/1978; Tobach, Falmagne, Parlee, Martin, & Kapelman, 1997). One of the principal ideas that is thematic to this perspective has to do with the ways in which human subjectivity—that is, our ways of perceiving and experiencing the world—are shaped by the nature of the tools we use as we participate in practical activity (Vygotsky, 1978). Goodwin (1994) observed the significance of this in the context of professional activity:

> Through the construction and use of coding schemes, relevant classification systems are socially organized as professional and bureaucratic knowledge structures, entraining in fine detail the cognitive activity of those who administer them, producing some of the objects of knowledge around which the discourse of a profession is organized, and frequently constituting accountable loci of power for those whose actions are surveyed and coded. (p. 628)

Berkenkotter and Ravotas (1997) documented some of the ways psychotherapists used the categorical frameworks of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of*

Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) to interpret the narratives of therapy clients, often reducing the experiences described by their clients to the set of psychological categories and related diagnostic terms in which they had been trained—and to which they were institutionally accountable. In the context of the present discussion, we might think of relevant tools as including both material artifacts, such as curriculum and assessment instruments, and conceptual tools, such as those used to assign children to "categories" of exceptionality. Our interests here have to do with the way in which teacher credentialing policies are enacted through development and use of cultural tools, which in turn afford (and constrain) specific ways of understanding and enacting the work of teaching. Our concern is with how some of the prominent cultural tools currently used to implement teacher certification polices may serve to reify and reproduce tensions between special and general education—tensions that then, ironically, function as obstacles to achieving some of the fundamental goals of IDEA. In this analysis, we make this argument more concrete by analyzing the affordances and constraints of one dominant cultural tool currently being developed and pilot tested in 40 states: the edTPA.

The edTPA as a Tool for Teacher Preparation

The Teacher Performance Assessment, now known as the edTPA, has its conceptual roots in the portfolio assessment model developed for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (Porter, Youngs, & Odden, 2001). This assessment methodology was further developed and refined for use in the context of preservice teacher assessment as the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (Pecheone & Chung, 2006). The methodology is now being taken to scale as the edTPA in an attempt to create a nationally available, standardized teacher performance assessment instrument. The edTPA portfolios include a variety of artifacts of preservice teachers' classroom practice, including samples of teacher planning work, video records of instruction, and samples of K–12 student work. These artifacts are collected using very specific guidelines and evaluated using standardized performance evaluation rubrics (see edTPA, n.d.). Performance assessment guidelines and associated rubrics are specified using a consistent conceptual structure across grade levels and content areas; that is, the procedural handbooks for various content areas, specializations, and grade levels all require artifacts of teaching practice related to three major areas of practice: (a) planning, (b) instruction, and (c) assessment of instructional outcomes. However, the specific artifacts required in the portfolio, as well as their related evaluation rubrics, vary across the handbooks for general and special education. While minor differences in the edTPA requirements across various content areas are not inherently problematic, our interests in such differences in this context is related to the long-standing goal of IDEA to foster more collaborative relations between these two fields.

With this issue in mind, the differences between the tools were a particular focus

of interest as we compared two versions of the edTPA handbooks: the handbook developed to assess teacher candidate performance in elementary literacy and the handbook developed to assess candidates in special education. In the following sections, we describe how we analyzed these assessment tools, identify some of the differences between them, and comment on the significance of these as affordances and constraints on the working relationships between general and special educators.

Method

Using a content analysis approach (Neuendorf, 2002), we compared the version of the edTPA used to evaluate preservice special education teachers and the version used to evaluate elementary general education teachers in literacy. To begin the analytic process, each author reviewed the January 2013 edTPA *Elementary Literacy Assessment Handbook* and the *Special Education Assessment Handbook* for the state of Washington, noting major issues identified as salient to the question of the relationship between special and general education in terms of teacher preparation. We selected the state of Washington owing to its status as an early adopter of the edTPA and also as the first state to require successful completion of the edTPA as a condition of initial certification. Although Washington's version of the edTPA uniquely includes a set of state-specific rubrics related to the construct of "student-voice," all other aspects of the tasks, instructions, and evaluation rubrics in each handbook remain identical to the versions of the instrument used in the other 28 states in which the tool has been pilot tested.

The edTPA assessments are divided into three major tasks across all certifications, planning, instruction, and assessment, denoting, in the conceptual scheme advanced by the edTPA, the major and recursive activities of teaching, or "the cycle of effective teaching" (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity [SCALE], 2013a, p. 2; SCALE, 2013b, p. 3), that need to be formally assessed to determine a novice's readiness to teach. The formal titles for these sections across the two handbooks used in the analysis differ slightly for the instruction and assessment tasks. We looked at the handbooks in their entirety, reviewing not only the rubrics but also the task guidelines (i.e., summaries, overview, and the enumeration in each task section of what to think about, what to do, what to write, and how evidence of practice would be assessed). We paid special attention to the rubrics, however, as they represent how the specific artifacts of practice for each task area are to be assessed as representative of a novice's practice.

We took individual notes during these initial readings, followed by a set of common notes during a first follow-up discussion. Each author then each took responsibility for different edTPA tasks (i.e., planning, instruction, and assessment), analyzing similarities and differences across the general and special education versions but focusing on segments of text that represented particularly salient areas of affordance and constraint with respect to collaboration between general and special

educators. We then discussed the identified segments from each of the three tasks separately and looked across tasks together to determine themes that represented the collection of segments that were identified as maximally relevant to our focus on the relationship between special and general education. Finally, we compared these segments in a tabled format according to the themes we had identified. Some themes spanned the three tasks (e.g., individual and collective learning); others were specific to a particular task (e.g., subject-specific pedagogy for the instruction task).

Results: Comparing the Tools

In this section, we present a comparison of text excerpts from the planning, instruction, and assessment sections of the instruments. These comparisons, illustrated for each task separately in Tables 1–3, respectively, indicate a number of thematic differences in the ways teaching and learning were defined and operationalized within each of these two edTPA documents.

Planning

Table 1 illustrates three important differences in the planning tasks and requirements of the special education and general education versions of the edTPA, differences that appear to carry substantive implications for collaboration between the two groups. One of the clearest issues reflected in both of the instruments has to do with the extent to which each identifies the need for collaboration at all. The general education planning task guidelines and evaluation rubrics require that preservice teachers attend to students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 Plans in designing instruction; in fact, failure to do so generates a failing score in the evaluation rubrics for the planning tasks.

The special education edTPA, in contrast, includes only minimal reference to the social and academic contexts of the general education classroom as a consideration for instructional planning. Special education candidates are directed to use the academic curriculum as one of the two learning targets for a focal student *if* that student is working on one of the four major areas of the academic curriculum; depending on the learner, *academic curriculum* may be defined as functional academics or early literacy or numeracy. Planning considerations related to the articulation of individual instructional needs with those of other students in the classroom are almost completely absent in the special education version of the edTPA. Yet the task guidelines and evaluation rubrics for the special education edTPA consistently refer to planning instruction related to the goals of generalization and maintenance of acquired skills—introducing concepts and related language that are absent from the general education instrument.

Finally, with regard to planning, the general education literacy planning commentary explicitly prompts students to take into account what they know about their

students' personal, cultural, and community assets, asking the question, "What do you know about your students' everyday experiences, cultural backgrounds and practices, and interests?" This same commentary does not appear in the planning section of the special education handbook, although it does appear elsewhere in it—perhaps indicating that disability is the sole (or at least the primary) social

Table 1

Affordances and Constraints in Planning Requirements and Rubrics

Theme	Special education	General education
Contexts of curriculum planning	Special education planning rubrics do not require attention to students' cultural and community backgrounds as part of the justification for instruction. "If the focus learner(s) is/are working on academic (including functional academic or early literacy/numeracy) content in literacy, mathematics, social studies, or science, select a learning target related to one of these content areas. You will select an academic or functional academic learning target whether or not there is a related individual education plan goal" (planning guidelines).	"Personal/cultural/community assets related to the central focus—*What do you know about your students' everyday experiences, cultural backgrounds and practices, and interests*?" (Planning commentary guidelines). "Lesson plans should include the following information: *State-adopted student academic content standards* and/or *Common Core State Standards* that are the target of student learning" (planning guidelines).
Individual *and* collective perspectives on learning	Planning guidelines reference only individual learning. Planning guidelines do not reference general education.	"Planned supports are tied to learning targets and the central focus *with attention to the characteristics of the class as a whole*" (planning rubrics). "*Assessment adaptations required by IEP or 504 plans are made*" (Planning rubrics).
Maintenance and generalization	"Explain how, throughout the learning segment, you will help the focus learner(s) *to generalize, maintain, or self-manage the knowledge, skills, and supports, as appropriate*" (planning commentary guidelines).	Planning guidelines do not reference considerations around maintenance or generalization of learning.

Note. Emphasis in quotations is added.

marker of identity that is to be taken into consideration at the instructional planning stage.

Instruction

Table 2 presents text segments excerpted from the instruction sections of the edTPA *Handbook for Elementary Literacy* and *Handbook for Special Education*. This table illustrates important differences in the way instruction is assessed for the special education and general education versions of the edTPA. Several major differences emerge across the task descriptions, instructions, and five instruction rubrics.

First, the special education rubrics are consistently concerned with students acquiring knowledge and skills in a decontextualized manner; special education instructions refer to learning and the application of and feedback on learning, but not to content or content understanding. In contrast, in the elementary literacy rubrics, general education instructions focus on content understanding, comprehension, application, and the integration of learned literacy skills, and embedding them in meaning-based contexts.

Next, the special education rubrics are concerned with individual learning decontextualized from the group; little attention is paid to students' place in an interactive learning environment/community with their peers. That is, the group setting, and the fact that most students identified as having disabilities experience schooling in a group setting, is not emphasized as an important context within the special education rubrics. Specifically, in the general education rubrics, teachers are explicitly asked to focus on interactions among students as a strategy to enhance their individual learning. Relatedly, the relationship between encouraging students' varied perspectives and creating a strong sense of respect among students is identified as a concern for general education, but not for special education. Finally, the general education rubrics often refer to content learning and subject-specific pedagogy and include a dedicated rubric for subject-specific pedagogy. The special education rubrics do not include a subject-specific pedagogy rubric, including instead a rubric on supporting teaching and learning.

These differences suggest a distinction between the roles of general and special education teachers regarding whether learning is to be contextualized, both in terms of content and in terms of the students' classroom experiences. As a result, they bring into question the role of content knowledge in the assessment of the practice of novice special education teachers—which in turn has implications for the practice of collaboration. For example, how do general and special education teachers plan and interact around the academic curriculum? Is instructional responsibility for the academic curriculum apportioned in ways that decontextualize or contextualize it? Finally, the special education rubrics refer to learning that is *developmentally appropriate* to individuals. The general education rubrics refer both to individuals and groups, especially with regard to the analysis of teaching effectiveness.

Table 2
Affordances and Constraints in Instruction Requirements and Rubrics

Themes	Special education	General education
Contextualization of curriculum	"Candidate provides a positive learning environment that *balances support needs relative to the lesson objectives*" (Instruction Rubric 6). "Candidate uses *explicit individualized motivational and engagement strategies* to create active engagement in developing the desired knowledge and skills of each focus learner" (Instruction Rubric 7). "Candidate prompts each focus learner to evaluate his/her own learning in a developmentally appropriate manner" (Instruction Rubric 8).	"*Candidate facilitates interactions among students* so they can evaluate their own abilities to apply the essential strategy in meaningful reading or writing contexts" (Instruction Rubric 8). "Candidate explicitly teaches students *when to apply the strategy in meaningful contexts*" (Instruction Rubric 9).
Individual and collective learning	"Candidate provides a learning environment that balances learning challenge with support needs relative to the lesson objectives, *with opportunities for self- determination*" (Instruction Rubric 6). "Candidate proposes changes that address each focus learner's needs related to the lesson objectives" (Instruction Rubric 10).	"Candidate proposes changes *that address individual and collective learning needs* related to the central focus" (Instruction Rubric 10). "Candidate provides a challenging learning environment that provides opportunities to express varied perspectives and promotes mutual respect among students" (Instruction Rubric 6).
Student perspectives	"How does the learning environment demonstrate respect for and rapport with each focus learner, enhance self-determination, and support engagement in learning?" (Instruction guidelines, "What to Think About").	"What kinds of learning environments do you want to develop in order to establish respect and rapport, and to support students' engagement in learning?" (Instruction, "What to Think About").

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Table 2 (continued)
Affordances and Constraints in Instruction Requirements and Rubrics

Themes	Special education	General education
		"Candidate provides a challenging learning environment that promotes mutual respect among students" (Instruction Rubric 6).
Subject-specific pedagogy	"Explain how you elicited and responded to each focus learner's performance to promote application of learning" (instruction, "What Do I Need to Write: Deepening Learning During Instruction?").	"Explain how you elicited student responses *to promote thinking and apply the literacy strategy using requisite skills to* ***comprehend or compose text***" (instruction, "What Do I Need to Write: Deepening Learning During Instruction?").
	"Describe opportunities provided to each focus learning to apply feedback to improve performance" (instruction, "What Do I Need to Write: Deepening Learning During Instruction?").	"Explain how you and the students supported students to apply the literacy strategy in a meaning based context" (instruction, "What Do I Need to Write: Deepening Learning During Instruction?").
		"Students are engaged in learning tasks that integrate their understandings of requisite skills and the essential literacy strategy for comprehending or composing text" (Instruction Rubric 7).

Note. Emphasis in quotations is added.

Assessment

Table 3 presents excerpts from the Elementary Literacy and Special Education versions of the edTPA that extend several of the themes identified in the analysis of the tasks, performance requirements, and language of the Planning and Instruction sections of the tool. Consistent with the Planning and Instruction sections, in the assessment section, special education preservice teachers are directed to attend only to the needs of specific individual children; general education teacher candidates are prompted to assess learning outcomes both for individuals (specifically including those with IEPs and 504 Plans) and to consider the class group as a larger unit of analysis. General education assessment rubrics explicitly call for consideration of both qualitative and quantitative data on student learning and

Table 3

Affordances and Constraints in Assessment Requirements and Rubrics

Theme	Special education	General education
Individual and collective learning	"Use the baseline data, the daily assessment records, learner self-reflection, and, if different from the daily assessment record, the final assessment, to *analyze EACH focus learner's progress* toward reaching the lesson objectives for his/her two learning targets. Address focus learner(s)' strengths and continuing needs in your analysis" (assessment guidelines).	"Select 3 work samples to illustrate your analysis that represent the patterns of learning (i.e., what *individuals or groups generally understood and what a number of students were still struggling to understand*)" (assessment guidelines). *"Provide a graphic (table or chart) or narrative summary of student learning for your whole class"* (assessment commentary guidelines). "Based on your analysis of student learning presented in prompts 1c–e, *describe next steps for instruction to impact student learning: for the whole class, for the 3 focus students and other individuals/groups with specific needs*" (assessment commentary guidelines).
Data sources for assessment of student learning	"Use the baseline data, the daily assessment records, learner self-reflection, and, if different from the daily assessment record, the final assessment, to analyze *EACH focus learner's progress* toward reaching the lesson objectives for his/her two learning targets" (assessment guidelines).	"Analysis uses specific evidence from work samples to *demonstrate the connections between quantitative and qualitative patterns of student learning for individuals or groups*" (assessment rubrics).
Collaboration	No reference is made to assessing student performance in the general education classroom.	"*At least one of the students must have* ***specific learning needs, for example,*** *a student with an IEP*, an English language learner, a struggling reader or writer, an underperforming student or a student with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or a gifted student needing greater support or challenge" (Assessment guidelines).
Maintenance and generalization of acquired skills	"Candidate describes how s/he will guide each focus learner to use feedback to *generalize and maintain, or self-direct use of skills, use of knowledge or future learning*" (assessment rubrics).	"Candidate guides focus students *to generalize feedback beyond the current work sample*" (Assessment rubrics).

Note. Emphasis in quotations is added.

additionally prompt the candidate to consider the relationship between these data sources. The concept of generalization is again emphasized in the special education guidelines for assessment of student learning outcomes and is also identified as a concern for assessment in the general education guidelines. The special education rubrics do not reference the general education classroom as a context for assessing generalization of student learning outcomes. Therefore neither the special education nor the general education rubric prompts candidates to engage in any kind of collaboration in the assessment of student learning outcomes.

Student-Voice

In addition to the three major tasks on the edTPA, namely, planning, instruction, and assessment, the edTPA for the state of Washington includes a fourth set of rubrics on student-voice. Although these rubrics are particular to Washington (the handbooks and prescribed assessment procedures are otherwise identical for all states using the edTPA), their presence raises additional issues regarding the relationship between the communities of general and special education.

The three student-voice rubrics in the elementary literacy assessment are focused on (a) "Eliciting Student Understanding of Learning Targets," (b) "Supporting Student Use of Resources to Learn and Monitor Their Own Progress," and (c) "Reflecting on Student-Voice Evidence to Improve Instruction." As illustrated in these rubrics, the student-voice portion of the edTPA is primarily concerned with student agency. The first rubric is meant to focus candidate performance on engaging students in both understanding the purpose of their learning and, at the highest level of candidate performance, working collaboratively with students in identifying and reflecting on learning targets. In addition, the student-voice rubrics address students' monitoring of their own progress toward their learning, with the highest level of performance being that of having students collaboratively participate in the identification of tools and resources that will help foster their progress. Finally, these rubrics are meant to assure that candidates use the evidence accumulated through an enacted commitment to student-voice as part of their own reflective professional practice to improve instruction. Compared to the rubrics for planning, instruction, and assessment, the student-voice rubrics demonstrate a greater degree of similarity across the assessments for elementary literacy and special education. The primary difference is in the way these rubrics refer to children and youths. In the elementary literacy rubrics, the term "student" is used throughout. In the special education rubrics, the term "focus learner" is used throughout. In Level 3 of the rubric "Eliciting Student Understanding of Learning Targets," teachers are to allow focus learners to communicate learning targets not only in their own words but also in their preferred communication mode.

The overall similarity of these two sets of rubrics in relationship to student-voice suggests a commitment to purposefully engaging students in their own

learning—in terms of identifying what is important as a learning task, of assuring student participation in monitoring, and of fostering teachers' use of student-voice as a means of focusing and improving their instruction. The focus on student-voice is also consistent with the language of student self-determination that appears in earlier rubrics in the special education assessments.

Discussion

Our goal in this analysis is to illuminate some of the ways in which contemporary teacher preparation policy tools may contribute to the reproduction of practices that divide general and special education. Our analysis is specifically focused on how one dominant quality assessment instrument, the edTPA, reflects historical tensions between the fields and invites (in fact, requires) new teachers to take up practices that are likely to continue to divide the fields. Drawing on sociocultural theories of learning, which illuminate some of the social processes by which cultural practices are reproduced (Vygotsky, 1978), as well as cultural–historical activity theory, helps us "see" some of the ways in which both disciplinary communities and formal organizations may operate to constrain opportunities for collaboration (Edwards, 2012; Engestrom, 1987). Using these frameworks, our analysis of the versions of the edTPA developed for assessing the teaching practices of special and general education teacher candidates reveals several thematic differences between the tools and practices of the communities they represent. In the following sections, we comment on the significance of these differences as both affordances and constraints for collaboration between general and special educators. We then identify some points of possible convergence as well as the implications of this analysis for achieving some of the goals of IDEA.

Individual and Collective Perspective on Learning

One of the most robust differences we observed between the edTPA protocols for general and special education has to do with ways in which each frames the issues of learning in relationship to individuals and groups. The tools for analysis of teaching practice in the special education edTPA consistently treat matters of learning as if they were only about specific individual students. This is, of course, consistent with the history of the field of special education, including the political, theoretical, and ideological contexts in which it developed as a field of practice (Sarason & Doris, 1979). In contrast, the edTPA protocols for general education direct candidates' attention, in all phases of the instructional process, not only to the needs of individuals but also to the constraints and affordances of the classroom as a collective. For example, in the planning rubrics, the edTPA for elementary literacy requires that "planned supports are tied to learning targets and the central focus with attention to the characteristics of the class as a whole." Assessment

protocols in the general education edTPA further require that analyses of learning outcomes be undertaken both for individual "focus students" and for the classroom as a whole. It is important to note that these considerations about the classroom as a collective are not conceptualized simply as a constraint on the teacher's time and ability to provide individualized instruction but also as a *resource* for learning. For example, rubrics for evaluating instruction require that the "candidate facilitates interactions among students so they can evaluate their own abilities to apply the essential strategy in meaningful reading or writing contexts." Managing opportunities and constraints related to the dynamics of individual and group learning in the classroom is one of the most salient challenges of a teacher's work and is perhaps nowhere more salient than with respect to students who have disabilities. The fact that this issue is largely ignored in the special education version of the edTPA appears, at minimum, to be a missed opportunity to insure that special education teachers are prepared to understand and engage these challenges in their work within the general education classroom.

Curriculum Perspectives

A second thematic difference between versions of the edTPA developed for general and special educators has to do with differences in their underlying stances about curriculum content as a focus for planning, instruction, and assessment. The edTPA for elementary literacy directs candidates' attention to the Common Core State Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2015) as a context for instructional planning. The elementary tool also includes a specific rubric related to *subject-specific pedagogy* (Shulman, 1987). These curriculum concepts and related resources are absent from the special education version of the edTPA. Conversely, the special education instrument includes reference to issues of generalization and maintenance of acquired skills throughout the tasks for planning, instruction, and assessment—a focus relatively underemphasized in the general education instrument. One index to the underlying differences in theoretical orientations to learning we think is particularly significant is that the word "meaning" appears throughout the task guidelines and evaluation rubrics for general education and not at all in those for special education. We argue that these differences are not trivial but rather represent substantive historically problematic disconnections in the curriculum priorities within general and special education, especially in light of the widespread implementation and related instructional demands of the Common Core State Standards.

The absence of serious attention to the general education curriculum within the special education version of the edTPA appears particularly problematic with respect to the needs of students with high incidence disabilities (and is certainly not irrelevant to the needs of many students with low incidence disabilities as well). Indeed, special educators' knowledge of the curriculum and instructional practices

of the general education classroom seems to us to be critical to their ability to effectively prepare students for participation in the general classroom and accessing the general education curriculum. Most fundamentally, the absence of reference to the general education classroom as one likely context for assessing the generalization of student learning outcomes seems to us to be a missed opportunity to make a more explicit commitment to engaging the goals of IDEA with respect not only to accessing the general education curriculum but also to supporting learning that takes advantage of deep and meaningful learning in that curriculum.

Collaboration

It is significant to us that professional collaboration is not identified as a consideration in the planning, instruction, and assessment tasks and evaluation rubrics in *either* the special education or general education versions of the edTPA. General education candidates are required to take the IEPs or 504 Plans for students in their classrooms into account in planning instruction—but nowhere in either tool is there any mention, much less any requirement, that teachers in either professional community take the expertise of the other into account when planning instruction for students with identified special education needs. The absence of systematic attention to the academic and social contexts of the general education classroom seems particularly problematic for candidates in special education, insofar as one of the most significant ideological commitments of IDEA is ensuring access to and participation in the general education curriculum.

Opportunities for Convergence

The substantial differences in these two assessments illustrate the durability of the divide between general and special education as well as the challenges that teacher educators face in developing a shared practice for meeting the needs of students who have disabilities. These differences dominated our comparative analysis. However, we also identified some specific commonalities that may hold potential for building stronger connections across these two historically separated communities. In this sense, in addition to the challenges posed by the differences we have identified, the edTPA may simultaneously represent an opportunity to forge greater common ground across general and special education. The potential for such common ground includes the affordances of this tool for building (a) a common and concrete language of practice and (b) a common framework for program evaluation.

There are places in both of the edTPA handbooks we analyzed that illustrate some elements of common concepts and languages of practice. For example, both assessments refer relatively similarly to (a) the importance of planning for and assessing the language demands of a learning task (Rubrics 4 and 14); (b) monitoring student learning during the course of the lesson (Rubric 5); (c) creating and maintaining a respectful learning environment (Rubric 6); (d) attending to students' cultural and

community assets (Rubric 7); (e) looking to research and theory to justify changes in teaching (Rubric 10 and 15); (f) seeking patterns in student learning (Rubric 11); (g) an appreciation for students being able to generalize feedback beyond immediate learning task (Rubric 13); and (h) drawing on student-voice as teachers reflect on and work to improve their instruction (Rubrics 16–18, state of Washington only). Teacher educators could use these areas of common language/common concern as a departure point for engaging in dialogue about the degree to which these practices are defined similarly across general and special education, as well as the relationship between these performances and other performances assessed by the edTPA in which less commonality exists. Teacher educators might also discuss the inconsistencies in the ways similar language is used across the two assessments.

For example, in the general education edTPA, attention to community and cultural assets appears as part of the justification for planning as well as in the instruction rubrics, but it only appears in the instruction rubrics for the special education edTPA. In other places, differences in language belie commitments to conceptually related outcomes. The value of student agency as envisioned in the student-voice rubrics, for example, could be explored in relation to ideas about self-determination, which appear multiple times in the special education rubrics.

The overall requirement for a common format and approach to assessment in teacher education as represented by the edTPA holds considerable potential for building collaboration in the context of program evaluation and improvement initiatives. As general and special education candidates prepare for meeting these requirements, teacher educators across both communities may find it easier to talk about the dynamics of their programs and fruitfully share what they are learning about how to prepare candidates with a high-quality novice practice that best captures the performances the edTPA represents.

Mixed Messages in Federal and State Special Education Policy

The cultural and organizational challenges to interdisciplinary collaboration and cooperation between general and special education are perennial and obdurate, but they are by no means unique. Similar difficulties are readily observed in other human service fields as well as in business contexts (Engestrom, 2001; Farrell, 2000; Wenger, 1998; Zwarenstein & Reeves, 2006). What may be unique to the relationship between special and general education, however, is the extent to which policies and practices in teacher preparation that *drive the fields apart* are in tension with the goals of federal special education policy—which are explicit in their commitment to *bringing the fields together*.

In his seminal work on the politics of the "examination," Michel Foucault (1975/1979) used the term *dividing practices* to draw attention to the ways in which institutionally sanctioned assessment practices often reify distinctions between individuals in ways that serve institutional interests. One of Foucault's most tren-

chant observations had to do with the ways in which institutionalized assessment policies (and the tools used to enact them) become "fossilized," in the sense that they become so deeply entrenched in histories of cultural and institutional practice that it becomes difficult to see their effects. We wish to underscore the idea that the "dividing practices" we have located in these tools are not consciously created as barriers between the fields but rather represent more unconscious reproductions of historical divisions between them. Indeed, the power of Foucault's idea about dividing practices lies largely in the way he shows how our assumptions about the natural order of things are shaped by unconscious internalization of ideologies and related institutional practices. From this perspective, the tensions we have identified between the special education and general education versions of the edTPA may be understood simultaneously as a reflection of the de facto separation of the fields, as part of the unconscious process by which that separation is reproduced, and as a missed opportunity to use these valuable new performance assessment tools to bring the fields into a more productive and collaborative relationship.

We want to be clear that we are not arguing against distinct assessments for general and special education candidates. Indeed, differentiated expertise has been identified as important for solving complex problems (Edwards, 2012), and certainly improving the education of students who have disabilities can reliably be counted as a complex educational problem. Nor are we arguing that all differences between the handbooks are inherently problematic. Rather, our argument is that these differences warrant critical examination in the context of the specific problem we have identified, that is, the ongoing struggle to build more collaborative relations between general and special education. Viewed through the lens of activity theory, standardized performance assessments such as the edTPA function as tools that inevitably focus and constrain the way teacher candidates view and define their work. The substantive, if unintended, consequence of this is that the tools may also reify the contours of professional community and diminish the opportunity to build a stronger base of common knowledge between general and special education.

The goals of IDEA fundamentally suggest that there ought not to be two separate educational systems but rather one system within which students with and without disabilities are served. We believe that achieving these goals can more reasonably be expected if we use this moment in the evolving history of teacher education to create better alignment between the policies, practices, and tools that are used to prepare new teachers in general and special education. If the default, unvoiced position reflected in new tools for practice contributes to reproduction of historical tensions between the fields—as we believe we have shown in our present analysis—we will miss a significant opportunity to build a stronger base of common language and common knowledge between the fields (Edwards, 2012). Strategically working toward improved alignment in language and practice can expand understanding between teacher educators in general and special education

as we jointly prepare new teachers for the responsibility of educating students who have disabilities within general education classrooms.

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