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JOSEA Editorial:

What Equity Requires of Special Education Research and Practice

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In this edition of JOSEA, we showcase a growing body of special education scholarship that highlights the reality of how inequitable outcomes persist for students with disabilities. This is not because we lack the evidence-based practices that we know work, but because systems often fail to adopt them in culturally responsive, sustainable, and equitable ways. The research from scholars in this edition highlights instructional, cultural, and family focused domains with the same conclusion- equity cannot be achieved with compliance alone.

Culturally responsive frameworks, underscore that learning environments and relationships play an important role in inclusive learning. In the article by Zapata et al, “EMBRACE-ing Cultural Diversity in Educational Service Delivery: A Framework for Building and Sustaining Equitable Learning Environments,” the authors describe a framework for self-reflection, enhancing instructional practices, and empowering students and the professionals who support them. The EMBRACE framework illustrates how educators’ reflection on culture, identity, and bias is foundational to creating equitable service delivery for students with disabilities from diverse backgrounds. Without this intentional focus, inclusion risks becoming procedural rather than transformative.

Similarly, research on community-based vocational education (CBVE) demonstrates strong links between authentic work experiences and improved postschool outcomes for students with disabilities. The article “Transition Teacher Perspectives of Community-Based Vocation Education for Special Education Students” by Spevack and colleagues shows this evidence as promising. Yet, transition educators consistently report systemic barriers— limited employer engagement, inadequate resources, and insufficient institutional support— that restrict equitable access to these opportunities. These barriers reflect broader disconnects between policy and practice that disproportionately affect students who are already marginalized by disability, race, and socioeconomic status.

In the article “The Use of Video Modeling to Teach Algebraic Equations to Secondary Students with and At-Risk for Disabilities” by McGrath et al, authors show that equity challenges also emerge in access to effective instruction. Studies examining video modeling in secondary mathematics highlight how technology-based, evidence-aligned practices can efficiently support students with disabilities and those at risk for persistent academic difficulties. Despite

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demonstrated effectiveness, such approaches remain underutilized, often framed as optional rather than essential components of inclusive instruction.

Finally, the article by Krishnan, “Disability Stigma Experiences of South Asian Families with Children with Extensive Support Needs,” shares qualitative research on disability stigma and reveals how cultural beliefs and community narratives shape families’ engagement with schools, access to services, and advocacy trajectories. The findings of the author remind the field that inequity is not only structural, but relational, experienced in everyday interactions between families, educators, and institutions.

This issue of JOSEA adds to the extant literature about the inequities faced by students with disabilities and discusses those inequities across several contexts. It is our hope that the articles shared here serve as a springboard for discussion, engagement, and future research.