



# Chapter 1

## “Walking the Talk” in Special Educator Preparation for Neurodiversity

**Serra De Arment**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7752-7108>  
Virginia Commonwealth University, USA

**Taryn Goodwin Traylor**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5907-9874>  
Virginia Commonwealth University, USA

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter presents a model for the preparation of special education teachers for supporting the learning and development of neurodiverse children and youth as well as neurodiverse future special educators. The model is anchored by three inclusive learning frameworks that are as important for teacher educators to implement in preparation programs as they are for teacher candidates to learn as emerging special education professionals: universal design for learning, person centered planning and adaptive expertise. This call for teacher educators to “walk the talk” of inclusive teaching provides research evidence and practical examples for implementation across coursework and fieldwork experiences for teacher candidates. Interdisciplinary applications of the model for enhancing the preparation of professionals in other fields for meeting the needs of neurodiverse individuals are also discussed.*

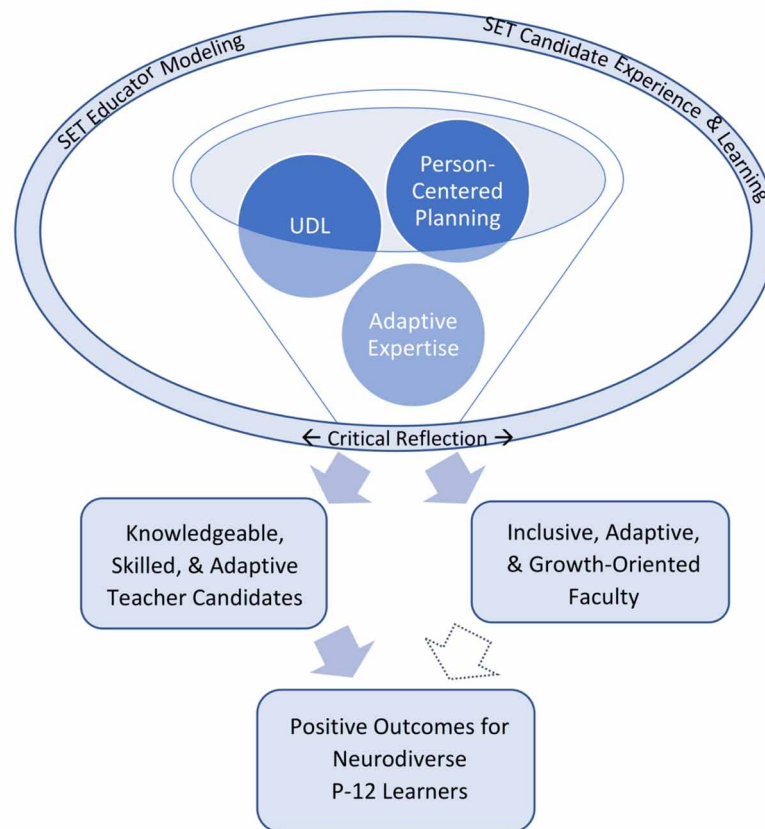
### INTRODUCTION

In special education teacher (SET) preparation, SET educator faculty run the risk of being solely focused on preparing teacher candidates with the knowledge and skills for working with P-12 students with disabilities over simultaneously attending to the learning and accessibility needs of diverse SET candidates themselves. For many college students in special education teacher preparation programs, neurodiversity is relevant as a context for their future special education practice and as a lived experi-

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-0163-0.ch001

ence, whether diagnosed or undiagnosed. In this chapter, we propose that intentional and transparent SET educator modeling of inclusive teaching practices and SET educator-SET candidate shared critical reflection on those practices can be transformative for the learning and growth of teacher candidates and faculty alike. When SET educators give equal attention to (1) teaching SET candidates to be inclusive and impactful professionals and (2) their embodiment of those same inclusive and impactful practices in higher education, there is intentionality in “walking the talk” of special education teaching practices. This dual focus not only supports neurodiverse SET candidates, it also fosters the opportunity for collective critical reflection among faculty and teacher candidates for mutual benefit and growth. In turn, SET faculty and SET teacher candidates enhance the potential for positive impact on the learning and outcomes of neurodiverse children and youth.

*Figure 1. A model for inclusive practices in special educator preparation for positive outcomes for neurodiverse p-12 learners*



As illustrated in Figure 1, in this chapter we highlight a structure for SET educator modeling and SET candidates’ direct experiences of three key frameworks for preparation for working with neurodiverse P-12 learners: universal design for learning, person-centered planning, and adaptive expertise. SET educator modeling and SET candidate lived experiences within these frameworks can occur across coursework

22 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:  
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/walking-the-talk-in-special-educator-preparation-for-neurodiversity/335210](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/walking-the-talk-in-special-educator-preparation-for-neurodiversity/335210)

## Related Content

---

### Turkish Academicians' Doctoral Processes: Pre-, While, and Post- Impressions

Selahattin Turan, Yeim Özer Özkan and Metin Özkan (2021). *Navigating Post-Doctoral Career Placement, Research, and Professionalism* (pp. 251-267).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/turkish-academicians-doctoral-processes/275888](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/turkish-academicians-doctoral-processes/275888)

### Reading and Writing Strategies: Tools for Active Engagement in the College Classroom

Tanya Sturtz and Darrell Hucks (2014). *Literacy Enrichment and Technology Integration in Pre-Service Teacher Education* (pp. 220-232).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/reading-and-writing-strategies/91909](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/reading-and-writing-strategies/91909)

### Driving Equity in Action Through a Socially and Culturally Situated Pedagogy: Culturally Relevant Teaching and Learning as a Form of Equity Toward Student Engagement

Jose W. Lalas and Heidi L. Strikwerda (2020). *Overcoming Current Challenges in the P-12 Teaching Profession* (pp. 291-315).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/driving-equity-in-action-through-a-socially-and-culturally-situated-pedagogy/242197](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/driving-equity-in-action-through-a-socially-and-culturally-situated-pedagogy/242197)

### Working With Immigrant Children and Families: Preparing Early Childhood Education Leadership for Culturally Responsive Teaching

Hae Min Yu (2020). *Professional and Ethical Consideration for Early Childhood Leaders* (pp. 305-326).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/working-with-immigrant-children-and-families/256298](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/working-with-immigrant-children-and-families/256298)

### An Exploration of Career Adaptation of Teachers: A Comparison Between Public and Private School Teachers

Mehmet Hilmi Koç (2019). *Vocational Identity and Career Construction in Education* (pp. 141-159).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/an-exploration-of-career-adaptation-of-teachers/219387](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/an-exploration-of-career-adaptation-of-teachers/219387)