


Chapter 9

Dual Licensure Programs: Special Education Meets Academic Content Areas

Pam Epler

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5655-369X>
Youngstown State University, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces the reader to the undergraduate inclusive educator preparation programs, the dual licensure. Dual licensure requires that the teacher candidate is educated in both a content area and special education. It discusses the work currently conducted in this field as well as the advantages and disadvantages of having an undergraduate or graduate student earning two teaching licenses. The chapter includes colleges and universities who currently have a dual licensure program and ends with a case study of a university who recently devise a dual teaching license program for Grades 7 – 12 in Adolescent and Young Adults Integrated English Language Arts or Adolescent and Young Adults Integrated Social Studies and Special Education.

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, special education pre-service teacher education programs were developed and taught as stand-alone programs which rarely interacted with their general education pre-service teacher education counterparts. College or university undergraduate teacher preparation programs separated the training of the content areas want to be educators from special education want to be educators. If one wanted to be an educator one had to decide to teach either students with exceptionalities

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or those who were not disabled. The two teaching areas rarely met. According to Blanton, et al. (2017) “In today’s schools, however, where students with disabilities are included and educated in general education classrooms in an increasingly routine fashion, such a policy raises questions about whether an initial, stand-alone license is sufficient for special education teachers in inclusive contexts” (p. 78). One reason for this insufficiency is that special education teachers were not taught academic content but were taught ways to differentiate the content and provide accommodations to students who qualified for services under the Individual’s with Disabilities’ Education Act or IDEA and general education teachers, during their undergraduate pre-service teacher training programs, were not taught the necessary skills to work with students who have identified special needs but instead were taught academic content (Sobel, et al, 2007). Both have been trained to focus on the pupil population in which they would teach; the special educator has little if any content knowledge and the general educator has little if any strategies to aid a student who does not learn in the *traditional* manner.

However, in 1974 the federal government passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA which said that students with an identified disability must be educated in the least restrictive environment with their grade level peers. To support this law, in 1982 there was a landmark Supreme court case, *Hendrick Hudson School District v. Rowley* (458 US 176), which said that most students with an identified disability had to be educated in the general education classroom and were to be taught by two teachers... a general education and a special education teacher. Then in 2004 IDEA (P.L. 108- 446, 2004), was amended and the merger of special education and general education was viewed as benefiting all children in the classroom (Cyr, et al 2012; Sobel, et al, 2007) which has led to changing roles for both general and special education teachers (Blanton, et al, 2017). It was soon realized that despite having two teachers in a classroom, there are many students who were sitting in the general education classroom who do not fall into the disability categories, who are not learning in the manner they are being taught and who needed assistance when it comes to understanding the material. Even though there was a general education and a special education educator in the inclusion classroom, there was no one addressing the needs of the students who fell in between these two groups of disabled and non-disabled. This question was pondered and debated by individuals both at the college and university level as well as state licensure personnel. As a result of these discussions, dual licensure programs were developed by colleges and universities in their teacher preparation programs where both pre-service teachers would be versed and earn state teaching licenses in both special education pedagogy and an academic content area. This change in licensure is not meant to only have one certified teacher in an inclusion classroom: quite the opposite. It is to ensure that all children are

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