INTRODUCTION

The Case Study Approach

The purpose of this book is to present a sampling of case studies that contain realistic problems for teacher-education students to solve. This particular format was chosen because it provides the learner with the opportunity to *apply* information as opposed to merely memorizing it. Historically, case studies have played an important role in the training of many professions and have begun to attract increasing attention in the field of education as a means of bringing the role of theory closer to practice (Shulman, 1992). Over three decades ago, the significance of the case study approach was highlighted in the report *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (Carnegie Task Force, 1989), which recommended that this teaching method be used as the major focus of instruction for teacher-education programs. Goodlad (1990) also supported this recommendation when he suggested that teacher preparation could not be accomplished with "lecture-type courses and with the conventional reading list" (p. 293). There has been a marked increase in the use of case instruction since these recommendations were offered. The use of case studies in teacher preparation programs now enjoys considerable popularity and has led to widespread adoption, particularly by those in special education (Anderson, Reid, Block, & Baker, 2000; Goor & Santos, 2002; Lengyel & Vernon-Dotson, 2010; McNaughton, Hall, & Maccini, 2001). As Andrews (2002) noted, the increasing accumulation of evidence in favor of case-based instruction suggests that most teacher educators are not asking whether cases will be used, but rather *how* they will be used.

One of the major benefits of the case method of teaching is that it engenders critical thinking skills, the absence of which has been a controversial topic in higher education since current research has revealed that institutions of higher learning may not be performing commensurate with the public's expectations. In Arum and Roksa's (2011) landmark study, *Academically Adrift*, it was concluded that insufficient writing, complex reasoning, and critical thinking requirements have resulted in low or nonexistent academic achievement gains for a large portion of college and university students. Thus, institutions of higher education have recently focused attention on the importance of critical thinking skills in the curriculum. In her review of the literature, Popil (2011) noted that the case method of teaching facilitates active learning, promotes problem solving, and fosters the development of critical thinking skills. This conclusion was based on studies, such as those of Mayo (2004), who found that undergraduate students who were exposed to case-based instruction outperformed students who were taught under the same conditions without the benefit of cases. Perhaps one of the reasons that case teaching is powerful may be connected to learner activity. It is virtually impossible to be detached from learning if the task at hand is case problem solving. It is a student-centered approach that features a highly interactive, analytic search for a constructive solution to a particular problem (Foran, 2001). From a pedagogical perspective, case teaching is an engaging strategy that emphasizes analysis, evaluation, conceptualization, and discussion (Kunselman & Johnson, 2004). As Foran (2001) discovered, class participation "soars" as students listen to the ideas their classmates have presented and then persuasively provide their own ideas and support these with their convictions.

The case study format has the distinct advantage of providing the student with the opportunity to better understand the perspectives of others and to make educational decisions based upon a framework of this understanding (Merseth, 1992). Teacher-education students sometimes find it difficult to understand the feelings and attitudes of administrators, parents, and teachers of other specialty areas unless they assume those particular roles and attempt to advocate for a position other than the one they might necessarily take as teachers. Although videotapes and guest speakers are quite helpful in this case, case studies potentially offer richer opportunities to develop reflection and critical thinking skills among preservice teachers (Tillman, 1995). Another tremendous advantage of

using the case study format is the resulting increase in student motivation to spend time on material that is authentic and professionally relevant (Prince & Felder, 2006).

Shulman (1992) described four different categories of cases: case reports, case materials, case studies, and teaching cases. *Case reports* refer to firsthand accounts of experiences, whereas *case materials* refer to raw data used for interpretation of a particular problem. *Case Studies for Inclusive Schools* uses *case studies,* third-person descriptions of a situation, and *teaching cases,* accounts of a particular situation that present a dilemma requiring a solution. Herreid's (2007) definition of case studies as "stories with an educational message" (p. xiv) that anchor learning to context is the best description of the pedagogical approach used in this casebook. These cases are kept as brief as possible so that the learner has the opportunity to complete a greater number and can benefit from a wider variety of problem-solving situations. As Grossman (1992) suggested, consideration must be given to supplying enough detail to provide the context of the problem at hand, but the restraints of class time for discussion must also be kept in mind.

The Topic of Inclusion

The term *inclusion* means different things to different people, although most would agree that it generally refers to the idea of educating learners *with* disabilities in educational settings designed to serve the needs of learners *without* disabilities. Beyond that point, there is considerable disagreement as to exactly what inclusion *does* and *should* mean. Depending upon one's perspective, either the inclusion movement has promoted the dignity of individuals with disabilities through increased socialization experiences, or it is responsible for demoralizing general education teachers who are not provided the needed support to work with exceptional students and whose classrooms are fast becoming the new "dumping grounds" for special education. Segregation of individuals with disabilities is a recommendation that would find little, if any, support today; however, the determination of the extent of integration is another matter. Whereas in the past, opposition to inclusion may have largely been concerned with the concept itself, today this debate involves the inadequate implementation of inclusive practices (Mitchell, 2008; Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000).

The standards-based reforms of the 1990s brought new inclusion issues and challenges to the forefront (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2009). Concerns regarding accountability for the educational achievement of students with disabilities overshadowed placement issues. Standards-based reformers in large measure interpreted special education in itself to be an insufficient curriculum; these policymakers determined that all students' achievement must address the general education curriculum. Furthermore, it was mandated that students with disabilities must demonstrate this curricular knowledge in general education assessments even though there is strong objection that this is not appropriate for all learners with special needs, particularly those who have more severe disabilities (Ayres, Douglas, Lowery, & Sievers, 2011; Hornby, 2011). The demands of these new curricular stipulations have resulted in a huge shift of focus in regard to inclusion. Discussions regarding least restrictive environment have been modified to focus on questions regarding curricular issues within the varied environments. Concerns over accessing the general education curriculum have moved to the forefront of discussion (Pugach & Warger, 2001; Voltz & Fore, 2006), whereas concerns regarding social acceptance have taken a back seat (Sailor, Stow, Turnbull, & Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2007).

As educators have moved forward to meet the curriculum accessibility challenges imposed by the standards-based reform movement, they have increasingly relied on technology in the inclusive classroom. Almost three decades ago, the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) was funded with the mission of developing and applying technology in a manner that would expand learning opportunities for students with disabilities (Rose & Meyer, 2002). Although CAST's work originally was devoted to developing technologies that would assist students with disabilities in accessing print media, more recently CAST's efforts have shifted in the direction of using technology in creative ways to transform the nature of the curriculum itself. The standards-based movement and ensuing accountability challenges of inclusive education were influential forces in reshaping CAST's mission

and subsequent conceptualization of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The central premise of UDL is that curricula should offer alternatives that enhance accessibility for students with different learning styles and disabilities in widely varied settings (Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, 2005). UDL offers an instructional lifeline to teachers who are struggling to meet a variety of different learning needs in the inclusive classroom. Similar to the ramps and elevators that are used for alleviating architectural barriers, UDL offers solutions for instructional barriers in the classroom imposed by disabilities and/ or the environment. Many of these instructional barriers can be removed or accommodated through the use of assistive devices. Although the concept of UDL encompasses more than technological innovations, this revision of *Case Studies for Inclusive Schools* specifically addresses the application of technology for solution of instructional problems. Instructors using this book are encouraged to refer their students to Rose and Meyer's (2002) book *Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age,* which is available in full text at the CAST Web site at http://www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent/ideas/ tes/. In addition to this resource, the CAST Web site offers a wealth of other support for providing assistance to meet the needs of diverse learners in today's classroom.

It is the intention of this book to provide students with an overview of school problems related to inclusion from which they can acquire a better understanding of the multitude of issues that fall under this broad heading. It is *not* the purpose of *Case Studies for Inclusive Schools* to impress upon students that inclusion problems can be unilaterally resolved by promoting one particular viewpoint of integration. The case studies that were included in this book will hopefully lead students to the understanding that there can be no single recommendation for an educational placement, remedial program, or assistive device that would be optimal for all children and adolescents with disabilities. Each learner with a disability will have different needs; these needs must be addressed from the perspective of individuality rather than from the notion that there is one answer that is equally suited to all.

Organization of the Book

The third edition of *Case Studies for Inclusive Schools* uses the traditional categorical approach to describing disabilities as originally delineated in the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (P.L. 94-142) and modified in the subsequent reauthorizations (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 [IDEA], IDEA 1997, and IDEIA 2004). Although the classification of individuals on the basis of special education category appears to be an artificial conceptualization that engenders stereotypical notions of disabilities, it can also promote better communication regarding the nature of the disability for the provision of services. Unarguably, most special educators believe in the value of focusing on the needs of students with disabilities instead of the labels, yet in some cases there is value for the sake of communication in using a categorical system.

Collaborative Problem-Solving Emphasis

Throughout the case studies included in this book, there is often stress associated with the challenges of problem solving. Teacher-education students who are using this book must understand that disagreements and misunderstandings are to be anticipated as part of school culture. However, students should also understand that these differences can be minimized when individuals work together to generate solutions for problems in school settings. It is *not* the intention of this book to cast blame on certain individuals for holding viewpoints that are inconsistent with the goals of inclusion or to criticize those individuals for their viewpoints. On a prima facie level, certain attitudes may appear to be discriminatory, but often they are based more on ignorance than on any prejudicial feeling or any conscious desire to exclude individuals from the mainstream of the community. A careful examination of these attitudes within a problem-solving perspective often facilitates new understanding and acceptance of a different point of view.

Use of the Book

Case Studies for Inclusive Schools was originally intended to be used as a supplementary text for introductory courses in special education in classroom settings. It has also become an excellent supplementary text for online special education courses and school district in-services. This book was written to be used in several different ways: (a) in small-group activities during class time, (b) as individual activities to be completed before or after class for the purpose of discussion, (c) for evaluation of course content knowledge, (d) for individual written assignments for online courses, and (e) for discussion topics for online courses. It should be noted that the case study activities cannot be satisfactorily completed without referring to other resources, such as the course text or Internet Web sites. Students must understand that case solutions should be based on opinion that has a legitimate foundation. For example, it would not be sufficient for a student to recommend a certain solution for a child in question merely because of the student's feelings concerning the issue. The student would need to make the recommendation based on specific information in the book or other literature. Given that understanding, varying solutions should be encouraged and received in a manner that promotes diversity in problem solving. The following explanation provides recommendations for case study uses.

Matrix

The matrix of cases (at the end of this Introduction), organized by level of intervention, is provided as a quick reference for selecting cases according to topical issues and levels of licensure (i.e., early childhood, elementary, and secondary education).

Small-Group Activities

When this book is used for small-group activities during class, it is recommended that the first portion of the class be devoted to the case study content (e.g., learning disabilities). The second portion of the class should then focus on the case study problem-solving activity to provide further understanding of difficulties encountered by children and adolescents with these disabilities. It is also suggested that the small groups be formed according to the level of teacher preparation—that is, early childhood, elementary, or high school—in order to make the activity more relevant to the students. Most introductory special education classes are designed for all preparation levels. Use of this case study book allows students the opportunity to better understand issues that are related to developmental and educational levels. The problems that accompany inclusion at the kindergarten level are vastly different from those confronted at the 10th-grade level.

There are two types of case study activities that can be accomplished in small-group settings. The first type of activity is *role playing,* in which the group members are asked to assume various roles and then reach a solution for the problem described in the case study. This kind of activity should produce a lively discussion that culminates in a resolution agreed upon by all participants. Students are then asked to summarize in writing the results of this problem-solving effort so they can refer to it later for study purposes. After the small-group activity, it is helpful for the entire class to listen to these summaries so they can be exposed to the different types of resolutions generated by the individual groups. In the current edition of *Case Studies for Inclusive Schools*, there are six role-playing activities. For instructors who would like to have their students engage in more role playing, practically all cases in the book would lend themselves to this purpose.

The second type of small-group activity is the *group case analysis,* which requires the students to answer questions about the problems presented in the case study. In order for this case analysis to be effective, the group must discuss each question and attempt to reach a consensus of opinion with regard to the issues at hand. It is not as effective for the individuals to answer each question on their own and then discuss the answers when everyone has finished. The group as a whole must work through the questions in a collaborative manner, which is not unlike the process that occurs

in the schools. If agreement cannot be reached after this process, then the group should *agree to disagree* and move on to the next question. This group case analysis is also very effective in online discussion forums.

Individual Activities

Although there are definite advantages to group problem solving, one disadvantage concerns class time. There is usually not sufficient class time to cover the number of cases necessary to give students an appropriate overview of the complexity of problems that can occur in school settings. For this reason, it is recommended that students be assigned various case studies to complete outside of class. The individual case analysis is also recommended when this book is used as a resource for online courses. The completed work can then be discussed in class, or it can be submitted to be evaluated by the instructor. Although there are some knowledge-level questions included in these case analyses, for most of the questions that are raised there are no right or wrong answers. Students can demonstrate their ability to apply course content by adequately supporting their opinions with facts, such as legal precedents and recommendations from literature focusing on particular topics. When these arguments are clearly presented in a logical and thoughtful manner, students should receive a passing grade for the case work.

Questions

Questions have been revised to reflect the current trends in the public schools today. Curriculum accessibility, increased use of assistive technology, response to intervention, the growing need for transition services at all levels, and evaluation issues of both students and teachers have been addressed in these questions. Although social issues continue to be important for encouraging acceptance of individuals with disabilities, students in teacher education need to understand that meeting curricular benchmarks and documenting student achievement gains will likely be the predominant focus for the duration of this decade.

There are five questions per case, even though there are many more issues in each that could be explored. For those instructors who find that the five questions do not provide adequate coverage of topics, a sixth question, denoted as *create a question*, can be added to the assignment. Instructors can develop an additional question that is deemed relevant to the instruction of a unit, or the instructor can ask the students to develop and answer a sixth question that pertains to a case issue that the student chooses to explore in greater depth. This create-a-question feature should be viewed as optional.

Create-a-Question Examples

1. Explain how to adapt a fifth-grade science lesson to meet the needs of this student.

2. Write 4 long-term goals for this student's IEP.

3. Identify 4 Web sites that could be used to meet the needs of this student, and explain why each would be helpful.

4. Identify 4 goals that should be included in this student's transition plan.

5. How could Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies be implemented to enhance the achievement of this student?