Introduction

Like its predecessors, this new edition of *What Every Special Educator Must Know* is a collaborative product of the members of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and other professionals in the wider educational community. CEC’s standards and principles represent the expertise and ideas of literally thousands of special educators. This edition, like its predecessors, is based on the premise that professional standards must emanate from the profession itself. Special education is a global profession, not limited to a single state, province, or country. The standards collected in this book provide benchmarks for developing or revising policy and procedures for program accreditation, entry-level and advanced credentialing, professional practice, and continuing professional growth.

The reorganization of CEC’s professional standards as performance-based places CEC at the forefront in education reform with other associations seeking to improve the quality of all teachers who serve children and youth with exceptionalities. CEC’s professional standards have been praised for their reflection of best practice, emphasis on diversity, and for capturing the essence of special education today. The standards presented in this new edition continue to be models in the education field for their rigor, their currency, and their substance.

Essentially, CEC has two sets of standards—professional practice standards and professional preparation standards. Although related to each other, each addresses separate and significant expertise that influence the special education services professionals provide to children and youth with exceptionalities.

**CEC’s Code of Ethics and Standards for Professional Practice**

CEC’s ethical principles and practice standards are intended to inform special education professionals regarding how one should practice in a professionally conscientious manner—as opposed to having the knowledge and skill to practice safely and effectively. Clearly, knowing how to do something is not the same as choosing to do the right thing when working in different settings, with different groups of children and youth, with families, and with other professionals. The ethical principles and professional practice standards answer the question, “How does one practice professionally in an ethical and responsible manner?”

**CEC’s Standards for Professional Preparation**

CEC professional preparation standards define the specialized expertise educators must master for the safe and effective practice of special education. These standards are used to inform preparation programs, accreditation organizations, and credentialing agencies. They answer the question, “What are the essential factors that candidates must demonstrate that they know and are able to do to begin their practice?” The professional preparation standards were revised in 2012 and follow the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) guidelines for program standards. The standards contained in this book are used by special education preparation programs seeking national recognition from CEC through its partnership with CAEP.
CEC’s Standards for the Initial Preparation of Special Education Professionals are designed for candidates in their first special education preparation program (i.e., bachelor’s degree, post-baccalaureate, master’s degree); although a program may be at the graduate level, it is considered initial if it results in the first credential to practice special education (see Figure I.1). The Standards for the Preparation of Advanced Special Education Professionals are designed for candidates who are already special educators and seeking training in a new role—such as an educational diagnostician or a transition specialist, or in special education administration—and may be at the master’s, specialist, or doctoral level.

There can be confusion between the preparation standards and the CEC knowledge and skill specialty sets. The preparation standards are generic, used by all programs regardless of specialty area. They do not delineate the specialized content, issues, vocabulary, interventions, and settings of different specialty areas (e.g., early childhood and early intervention, gifted education, educational diagnostician). This specialized content is outlined in the initial and advanced specialty sets, which capture the professional knowledge base—including empirical research, disciplined inquiry, informed theory, and wisdom of practice—for each specialty area. For example, the Specialty Set for Early Childhood Special Education/Early Intervention focuses on the needs of young children, the service delivery models for infants and toddlers, and so on. The Specialty Set for Learning Disabilities reflects a very different focus. The specialty sets, like the preparation standards, are categorized based on expectations for initial special education program content and advanced program content.

The specialty sets are used to inform the CEC preparation standards: All special education

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**Figure I.1. Standards for Initial and Advanced Special Educator Preparation**

- **Admission restricted to candidates holding a valid teaching credential?**
  - **Yes**
    - Advanced level preparation program
      - Use advanced level preparation standards
  - **No**
    - Use initial level preparation standards
    - Program designed for candidates holding valid special education credential?
      - **Yes**
        - Use advanced level preparation standards
      - **No**
        - Initial level preparation program
preparation programs will use either the initial or advanced preparation standards as informed by the appropriate specialty set to develop curriculum and create performance assessments to demonstrate that the school’s candidates have mastered the standards. For a complete description of what this means and how to use the standards and specialty sets to prepare for CAEP/CEC program review, see Sections 4 and 5.

Notes on the Seventh Edition

For over 85 years, CEC has developed and implemented standards for special educators. The standards presented in this edition continue in this tradition of professional leadership by providing direction to colleges and universities that prepare teachers as well as to states and other credentialing bodies as they develop new licensure frameworks for special educators.

Both the CEC Code of Ethics and the Standards for Professional Practice have been substantively reviewed and completely rewritten since the last edition of What Every Special Educator Must Know was published in 2009. The processes used to make these fundamental changes were collaborative, member-driven, and involved input from all sectors of the CEC membership.

The initial and advanced special education preparation standards—with each comprising seven standards, and containing a total of 28 elements—were approved by CEC and CAEP in 2012; in reorganizing the standards in this way, CEC has joined with other professional associations and maintains alignment with other major standards. The new Field Experiences and Clinical Practice Standard requires that programs provide appropriate practicum experiences to ensure that candidates are prepared for safe and effective practice.

Terms Used in This Book

The following terms are used in this book as defined here:

- **Acceleration** practices include grade-based acceleration that shortens the number of years an individual is in the PK–12 system and subject-based acceleration that bring advanced content and skills earlier than expected for age or grade level (Rogers, 2002).

- **Credential and credentialing** are used throughout to include certificates, licensure, endorsements, and so on that agencies and jurisdictions use to recognize special education professionals for practice.

- **Differentiated assessment** implies that as students experience differences in their learning, they should experience differences in their assessment.

- **Differentiated instruction** is structuring a lesson in multiple ways so that each student is challenged at an appropriate level. Differentiated instruction may include such features as learner centeredness; planned assignments and lessons based on pre-assessment; and flexible grouping, materials, resources, and pacing (Tomlinson & Hockett, 2008).

- **Diversity** is differences among groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2008; NCATE, 2010)

- **Culture** and its derivatives are used to mean the sum of a group’s socially transmitted behavior patterns, thoughts and experiences, and its perceptions, values, and assumptions about living that influence behavior and how those emerge with interactions and communications with other cultures.

- **General education curricula or curriculum** means the academic content of the general education curricula including mathematics, reading, English/language arts, science, social studies, and the arts.

- **Individualize** is used as synonymous with terms such as personalize, customize, adaptive, and differentiated.

- **Individuals with exceptionalities** include individuals with sensory, physical, emotional, social, cognitive differences, developmental delays, and gifts and talents; individuals whose needs differ so as to require personalized special education services in addition to or in tandem with educational services available through general education programs and other human service delivery systems.
• **Instructional strategies** include interventions used in general and specialized curricula.

• **Special education services** are personalized (i.e., individualized) services that appropriately credentialed special educators provide directly or indirectly to individuals with exceptionalities.

• **Specialized curricula or curriculum** means the content of specialized interventions or sets of interventions including but not limited to academic, strategic, communicative, social, emotional, and independence curricula.

• **Technical adequacy** refers to the psychometric properties of an assessment instrument. Instruments with technical adequacy demonstrate validity for the identified purpose, reliability in providing consistent results, and minimize bias, and have been normed on a population matching the census data (Johnsen, 2008).

**Stakeholder Audiences**

The seventh edition of *What Every Special Educator Must Know* has been designed to provide information for a variety of stakeholder audiences:

**Teacher candidates.** This edition introduces candidates to the recently revised CEC Ethical Principles and Professional Practice Standards. This volume also includes the 2012 preparation standards and specialty sets that are the foundation of professional preparation and which have influenced individual states’ development of professional credentials. On the CEC web site, candidates in teacher preparation programs can find a tool to help them measure their progress in developing their professional competence.

**Practicing professional special educators.** This new edition of *What Every Special Educator Must Know* includes not only the recently revised CEC ethical principles and professional practice standards and the 2012 preparation standards but also guidance for using the standards to create a professional development plan for continuing professional growth. In addition, there are Specialty Sets for a variety of advanced roles that special educators can consider as they seek professional advancement. The CEC web site’s Standards page provides guidance and tools for using the CEC standards to create professional development plans and advocate for the resources to implement them.

**Teacher preparation program administrators and faculty.** The preparation standards should guide the development of a school or college of education’s candidate performance assessment system. The specialty sets, which include information about and resources for seeking national recognition of programs through CAEP and CEC or through CEC alone, are particularly useful in developing curriculum for and assessing special educator preparation programs. The preparation standards and specialty sets are posted and regularly updated on the CEC web site’s Standards page, where teacher educators will also find information and strategies for use with teacher candidates to help them become familiar with the standards.

**State directors of education, credentialing organizations, and policy makers.** The preparation standards and specialty sets provide guidance to align credential standards to the profession’s recommendations. A chart designed to help compare state standards and CEC standards is available on the CEC web site’s Standards page.

**School administrators, families, and general educators.** The ethics, professional practice standards, and the knowledge and skills delineated in this book are those that the special education profession uses to define itself and to judge professional excellence. The Preparation Standards provide assurance that special educators are prepared for safe and effective practice. It is intended that this publication will help school administrators, families, and general educators to understand the knowledge and skills that special educators bring to their collaborative educational endeavor.

**Resources for CEC Program Recognition**

Because CEC is continually updating and adding to its resources for programs seeking national recognition through CAEP and CEC, these are available on the CEC web site (www.cec.sped.org) rather than in this publication. The following is a partial list of resources available on the CEC web site:

• FAQ: Perhaps the most helpful resource for both program reviewers and developers is the CEC Program Recognition FAQ; a collection of the most frequently asked questions by both reviewers and developers.
• PowerPoint presentations from recent program developer workshops
• Examples of assessments that meet the CEC standards
• Model program report sections
• Examples of how to effectively report data
• Charts that show the alignment of the CEC standards with edTPA and with Praxis
• Resources for program reviewers

To access these resources, go to the Standards page of the CEC web site, and click on Preparation Program Recognition.

CEC also offers multiple program report developer technical supports, including:
• Individualized telephone support
• Individualized on-site technical support
• Group on-site technical support
• Group webinar support
• Full-day preconvention workshops at CEC-TED and the CEC national convention

For more information, see the contact information on the CEC web site’s Standards page.