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## The Journey Behind and the Road Ahead

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## EDITORS' NOTE

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# THE JOURNEY BEHIND AND THE ROAD AHEAD

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CO-EDITORS IN CHIEF: KATHRYN HAUGHNEY, JEONGAE KANG, & AFTYNNE CHEEK

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### WELCOME TO A WHOLE NEW ENDEAVOR

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The co-editors of the *Journal of Case Learning and Exceptional Learners (JCLEL)* wish to welcome our readership to a new pursuit in the field of Special Education and the teaching of children with diagnosed disabilities and learning needs. Beginning with this issue, we endeavor to support the learning of all students by closely examining the needs of students who learn differently through case learning. Put another way; we aim to learn more from the individuals we serve by studying their lived experiences, reflecting on current best practices for describing learners' experiences, and challenging one another to grasp the full breadth and depth of the students who may walk through our classroom doors.

### HOW DID WE ARRIVE HERE?

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The origins of *JCLEL* began with a small group of collaborators in the Teacher Education Division of CEC. As members of the Professional Development Committee, the group hosted open talks with TED members to reveal urgent needs in

special education teacher preparation. The need for case studies, particularly those describing students with the most significant needs, was shared. The group decided that a literature review was warranted to describe the need fully. Throughout the COVID 19 pandemic, three collaborators continued to pursue this search resulting in compelling findings and implications. They produced not only details on the need for case studies describing students with moderate to extensive support needs (M-ESN) but also some potential solutions.

### WHAT NEEDS EXIST?

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The need for freely available case studies in special education, specifically for students with M-ESN, is both lacking and concerning. Although EPPs are required to provide special education teacher candidates with a variety of experiences in different classrooms, some teacher candidates may only interact with students with moderate to extensive support needs during their culminating clinical experience (i.e., student teaching) and some do not get the opportunity to visit more than

one classroom. Teacher candidates who have rarely worked with students who display challenging behaviors and extensive support needs may lead to ill-equipped and reluctant early-career special education teachers (Weiss et al., 2018).

Kang et al. (2022) conducted a document analysis of the resources available to support case learning on students with an intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) and M-ESN. In the qualitative document analysis authors sought to identify cases, examine the component features, discuss the prevalence of cases and their component features, and highlight existing resources. Cases were evaluated for common elements and compared to the essential elements described by Chabon & Cohn (2011). Although the included documents were not evaluated for quality, results the study indicated how the available resources and findings added to the current case learning opportunities by reviewing the components/features of available cases. Additionally, findings of the case study revealed that for students with M-ESN and IDD, case learning lacks diverse representation, consistent elements, depth of description, student voices, and raw data. This research served as a snapshot of available resources, as the findings also showed how access to web-based resources were likely to change over time.

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### A SOLUTION REVEALED

In addition to these findings, the authors discovered several reliable resources for case learning. Some of these examples include thorough treatments of individual experiences (e.g., Hostyn & Maes, 2013), permanent repositories for case learning (e.g., NTACTION, n.d.), and excellent examples of consistent elements applied to a narrow area of focus (e.g., transition and employment case studies [Storey, 2019]), but consumed individually, none could provide a combination of these features for a complete picture of the diversity of learning experiences we experience in classrooms. During the search, a journal in the field of psychology presented a potential solution - a periodical-style publication with the primary aim of disseminating

individual case descriptions with consistency, variety, and quality. Creating a journal for case learning for exceptional learners would meet many needs identified by Kang et al. (2022). A journal could set standards for common case study elements and quality standards for the depth and design of case descriptions. It would allow for diversity and individualized expression while remaining responsive to prevailing changes in how [dis]ability sub-communities choose to represent themselves and their experiences. But for a journal to truly meet the needs of case learning in special education and beyond, it must be a widely available and freely accessible work repository. When the authors discovered an avenue to meet all these requirements through Digital Commons at Georgia Southern University (<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/>), the result was the launch of the *Journal of Case Learning and Exceptional Learners*.

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### THE FIRST ISSUE

The articles of this first issue are designed to be examples of several submission types accepted for publication by this journal. While not fully representative of exemplars, the included submissions should serve as a guide for future manuscript development. Cheek and Kang describe how to publish in *JCLEL* with descriptions of the process, each type of submission, and the standards for manuscripts and authors to follow. Haughney and Kang present another initial issue demonstration on how to edit for *JCLEL*. This example includes information for review board members.

Haughney and Wakeman is an example of an observation-based case study. The focus of this case study is to share the story of a fictional student (a compilation of previous experiences and individuals from the authors' past spheres) and the results of a psychological evaluation conducted in response to teacher driven inquiry. Although assessments were conducted, this submission is categorized based on measurements that describe the student's state at the time of assessment and not a response to intervention: submissions of this

type are considered observation based. This example demonstrates a crafted case study describing the potential experience of a student and family based on a deidentified compilation of author experiences.

Kelley, Clark, and Fisher collaborated on an example of an intervention-based case study. The focus of this study is a detailed experience of a student participant of an inclusive postsecondary education program as she responds to an intervention. This example captures the aim of the journal to disseminate stories of student interventions that include team problem-solving to provide effective individualized student supports.

Future issues will provide examples of a Unique Approaches / Challenges submission to the journal. This submission type can take different forms, but examples can be identified by their effort to introduce a challenge or approach that impacts case learning or case study development. Unique Approach / Challenge submissions are an opportunity for individuals inside and outside academia to propose new topics or directions that inform or shape the conversations *JCLEL* has with its readership.

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### A FINAL NOTE

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The editors of this journal would like to thank our readers for being the inspiration, focus, driving force, and careful critics of this effort. As most academic journals are accountable first and foremost to their relevant academic research and creative activity communities to meet the highest standards, we are accountable first and foremost to the individuals that we hope to represent if we aim to provide high-quality case learning opportunities in the field of special education. We sincerely hope you will consider yourself part of this effort and plan to submit a case study (multimedia or text-based, observation or intervention-based), literature review, or description of unique approaches and challenges to the journal with the start of open calls for submission in 2024.

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