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How and Why to Write for the Journal of Case Learning and Exceptional Learners

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EDITORS' GUIDE

HOW AND WHY TO WRITE FOR THE *JOURNAL OF CASE LEARNING AND EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS*

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The *Journal of Case Learning and Exceptional Learners (JCLEL)* is an open-access, double-blind, peer-reviewed online journal that publishes case studies, case study learning research, and resources. *JCLEL* was founded in response to a need for case studies that included students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and extensive support needs (ESN) that special education teacher educators could use to help prepare preservice special education teachers. With this in mind, *JCLEL* publishes articles that include in-depth knowledge about cases that focus on students with IDD and ESN. Articles published in *JCLEL* are easily accessible and can be used, immediately, by those that prepare special and general education teachers.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF *JCLEL*

In 2017, the founding editors met during the Teacher Education Division (TED) annual conference - Professional Development Committee planning meeting. During this meeting and in conversation with other colleagues in special education, the group determined there was a need for case studies that focused on students with IDD and ESN that those who prepare special education teachers can use to prepare special education teachers. This conversation inspired a 5-year effort to advance the field of special education teacher preparation by responding to a specific need by creating open-access resources for professionals.

To begin this process, Kang et al. (2022) conducted a document analysis of available resources (e.g., books, online resources, databases) to examine case studies of students with IDD and moderate to severe extensive support needs (M-ESN). In this review, the authors defined documents as physical evidence (e.g., literature and other available resources; see O'Leary, 2014) that were easily accessible. Each document was coded for the absence or inclusion of 22 criteria: (a) citations/location of the article, (b) format of the case study (narrative, IEP, video), (c) topic, focus, and setting, (d) gender, (e) disability, (f) family background information, (g) school background information, (h) student dreams or aspirations, (i) academic strengths, (j) functional/behavioral

strengths, (k) areas of academic need, (l) areas of functional/behavioral need, (m) personal preferences, (n) family priorities, (o) cultural and linguistic diversity, (p) evaluation results, (q) raw data, (r) IEP goals and objectives, (s) antiquated language, (t) curriculum based matrix, (u) daily schedule, and (v) accommodations. Also, we included anecdotal notes, as needed, for further discussion. Additionally, the authors used case study categories derived from Chabon and Cohn (2011) to code for the following: (a) conceptual knowledge, (b) a short introductory paragraph establishing a challenge to consider, (c) evaluative findings, (d) a description of the course of treatment, (e) further recommendations, and (f) references. After an exhaustive review, 14 documents met the inclusion criteria and were included in this analysis. The results of this initial review confirmed a need to develop more case studies that include students with IDD and M-ESN and a need for uniformity in the design of the case studies (e.g., a quality framework for development). The result of the effort — *JCLEL*.

DEVELOPING *JCLEL*: A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THREE UNIVERSITIES

JCLEL is supported by Georgia Southern University, Illinois State University, and Appalachian State University. The journal is housed on the Digital Commons platform of Georgia Southern University — "an open-access digital repository that collects, archives, and disseminates the intellectual and creative output of the University's faculty, staff, students, and community partners. Digital Commons hosts contributions from across the campus and the community, including campus documents and publications, faculty and student research, conferences, journals, research data, news, and more" (https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu).
With this support, *JCLEL* articles are free to access, download, and share by anyone. Authors may publish with *JCLEL* for free; universities do not require a subscription to access the journal. As a result, *JCLEL* now provides the means for special education professionals to use case studies for the

development of preservice special education teachers.

Currently, *JCLEL* is preserved using Controlled Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe (CLOCKSS; https://clockss.org/). CLOCKSS is a "collaboration of the world's leading academic publishers and research libraries, CLOCKSS provides a sustainable dark archive to ensure the long-term survival of digital scholarly content (CLOCKSS, 2022). Additionally, articles receive Digital Objective Identifiers (DOIs) through Crossref.org. Additional means of Digital Archiving will occur when the journal matures and the readership increases to meet the requirements for indexing in other databases (e.g., ERIC).

WHY WRITE FOR *JCLEL*

The foundation for the creation of *JCLEL* is based on the literature. Results of Kang et al. (2022) not only indicated a need for additional case studies focusing on this population, but also a need for timely documents that professionals could actually access. Although case study books (e.g., Boyle & Danforth, 2000; Torres & Barber, 2017; Weishaar, 2006), vignettes (e.g., see Browder et al., 2020), and peer-reviewed journals (e.g., *Teaching Exceptional Children*) exist in the area of special education, these resources required a subscription, lacked detail, or did not include students with IDD or M-ESN. Thus, *JCLEL* fills a niche.

JCLEL accepts manuscripts from special education faculty and staff, doctoral students, and related service providers regardless of program size, job description, or research expectations. *JCLEL* provides an outlet for manuscripts that have been deemed unpublishable because of unfavorable outcomes (i.e., the intervention was unsuccessful) or research design (e.g., did not meet quality indicators) but still contain unique information about the participants or intervention that should be shared within the field. By publishing in *JCLEL*, all professionals responsible for preparing future special education teachers contribute to the available knowledge base that can be used in the development of special education teachers.

TYPES OF ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN *JCLEL*

Scholarly journals exist because they provide a means for academic professionals to disseminate information. Davis (2014) noted that journals and publications are at the center of career advancement and evaluation, with the number of publications weighing heavily on faculty tenure and promotion. With such high stakes, having explicit information about publication criteria aids contributing authors in selecting the correct outlet and how to format their work. Additionally, such guidelines provide readers with clear expectations about what the journal will contain. In the following section, we provide an overview of the types of articles published in *JCLEL*.

WHAT IS PUBLISHED?

CASE STUDIES FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES

Articles published in *JCLEL* will range from 15-20 pages in length, which include title, abstract, figures, tables, and references. Authors have the option of adding additional appendices, with the total number of pages not exceeding 30. Articles in *JCLEL* are considered case studies that can be used for case learning in special education teacher preparation coursework. The key to a successful publication in *JCLEL* lies in the author's rich description of the case using the key components identified in Kang et al. (2022).

To provide consistency in formatting, *JCLEL* articles follow a similar structure: title, abstract, positionality statement, background information, findings, reflection questions, and references. Additionally, case studies published in *JCLEL* fit within the following categories: Observation-based Case Study, Intervention-Based Case Study, Multimedia Case Study, Literature Review, and Unique Approaches/challenges. See Table 1 for definitions of each type of case study and the components that need to be included.

JCLEL AUDIENCE

The editorship of *JCLEL* aims to provide case studies that can be used directly for special education teacher preparation; therefore, the journal is appropriate for special education faculty and other professionals that prepare preservice teacher candidates to teach special education for students with ESN or IDD. Given this focus, published manuscripts should be written with enough detail for use during classroom instruction, assignments, and discussions. Manuscripts written for *JCLEL* should be written in professional language that can be understood by a wide range of professionals in the field, including students.

WHAT IS NOT PUBLISHED?

The editorship of *JCLEL* will not accept manuscripts that include qualitative or quantitative research (e.g., single-case design, group design, mixed methods, or case study research). Manuscripts published in the traditional research format will not be accepted (i.e., manuscripts that present methods and results). Finally, manuscripts lacking detailed information related to the case (e.g., student, family), are not considered.

HOW TO PREPARE A SUCCESSFUL MANUSCRIPT FOR *JCLEL*

Manuscripts submitted to *JCLEL* should follow the guidelines outlined in the American Psychological Association (APA) 7th education publication manual. Within this text, explicit guidelines are provided for authors. Authors should use pseudonyms for all individuals included in the case and authors will also be required to acknowledge that they have permission to publish information provided in the case. Specific guidelines for *JCLEL* can be found on the *JCLEL* website under author guidelines (https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/jclel/policies.html). Additional guidelines for *JCLEL* are discussed below and can be seen in Table 2.

TABLE 1.

DEFINITIONS, TYPES, AND COMPONENTS OF INCLUDED CASE STUDIES FOR JCLEL

Type of Case Study	Definition	Components
Observation-Based Case Study	The purpose of an observation-based case study is to help readers make data-based informed intervention decisions. Therefore, the observation-based case studies do not include interventions implemented or applicable to the case students. Instead, the case study must provide comprehensive student background information and data that help readers better understand the case student. Given the purpose of this type of case study, at the end of the case study, authors will need to include reflection questions that help readers make data-informed decisions (e.g., IEP goals and interventions).	• Theoretical- and/or research-based introduction • Conceptual knowledge - case demographic information (e.g., age/grade, gender) • Background information - case history related to family information (family priority, cultural/ linguistic/diversity considerations), school information, and case academic and functional & behavioral strengths & weaknesses • Evaluation findings - evaluation results, raw assessment data (e.g., observation, psychometric formal assessment, informal classroom assessment) • Reflection questions
Intervention-Based Case Study	The purpose of intervention-based case studies is to show how the research was conducted and how it applied to the case student, sharing the data and making explicit connections to the research. Comprehensive background information and details of the intervention used for the case students in the classroom should be shared. The interventional case studies require comprehensive information on student background and specific intervention that shows the association between student learning profile (background information), evaluation findings, and goals and interventions. In other words, intervention-based case studies need to showcase or connect to research with carefully formulated research questions and are informed by the existing literature and a prior appreciation of a gap in the field of special education. Experimenting approach that provides a more informed appreciation of how and why interventions succeeded or failed.	• Theoretical and Research Basis introduction • Case Introduction - case demographic information (e.g., age/ grade, gender) • Background information - family information (family priority, cultural/ linguistic/diversity considerations), school information, case academic and functional & behavioral strengths & weakness • Evaluation findings - evaluation results, raw assessment data (e.g., observation, psychometric formal assessment, informal classroom assessment) • Goals and interventions (e.g., IEP goals & objectives, curriculum matrix, daily schedule, accommodations, and/or post-secondary goals/transition plan) • Discussion/ Implication of the case study • Recommendations to teacher educators and teachers
Multimedia Case Study	This type of case study will follow specific guidelines for each type of case study but will be submitted in a multimedia format.	• Follow specific guidelines for each type of case study (see the content requirements of observation-based case studies or intervention-based case studies above). • Submission needs to be a high-quality multimedia product, following accessibility requirements.
Literature Review	This review paper provides a comprehensive summary of case studies on the targeting population of *JCLEL*. Systematic reviews of available case studies may highlight student background and other related	• Includes traditional manuscript format, including introduction, literature review, method, result, findings, discussion, and conclusion.

	information. Non-systematic narratives may be considered if they contribute to the gap in the field.	
Unique Approaches/Challenges	The purpose of this shorter practice-based case study is to share novel practices working for our targeting student populations via case study formats. These manuscripts are expected to provide specific EBP information that could be replicable in classroom settings.	• Traditional practitioner journal elements.

Note: All information can be found on the *JCLEL* website at https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/jclel/policies.html#AUT

TABLE 2.

INCLUSION COMPONENTS FOR JCLEL MANUSCRIPTS - CHABON AND COHN CODING CATEGORIES AND EQUIVALENT CODING ELEMENTS

	Definition of Common Case Study Elements (Chabon & Cohn, 2011)	Equivalent Elements from Identified Case Studies for this Review
Conceptual Knowledge	Information necessary to adequately interpret and problem-solve the case	• Format • Focus, Settings, and Context • Qualifying Disability Category(ies) • Age/Grade • Person-first Language
Background Information	Historical information needed to understand the case (including pertinent facts, significant developments, and recent developments)	• Gender/Identity • Family Information • School Information • Academic Strengths • Academic Needs/Weaknesses • Functional/Behavioral Strengths • Functional/Behavioral Areas of Need/Weaknesses • Student Personal Preferences/Priorities • Family Personal Preferences/Priorities • Cultural or Linguistic Diversity Considerations
Evaluative Findings	Presentation of best data, clinical judgements, and individual case needs	• Evaluation Results • Raw Assessment Data
Goals and Interventions	Details the procedures followed for the current supports, interventions, and responses to interventions	• Daily Schedule • Accommodations in Place • IEP Goals and Objectives • Curriculum Matrix (based on IEP Goals) • Dreams of the Student, Post-secondary Goals/ Transition Plan • Vision of the Family/Community
Further Recommendations	Review the current treatment and develop/rework hypotheses or suggestions for increasing positive outcomes	Included for "Observation-based" case studies; however, not typically included in "intervention-based" case studies as recommendations are developed in the teaching and learning process of case study examination
References	List of sources used within the cases for the interest and aid of the reader	Not typically included, as descriptions of copyrighted material, specific evidence-based interventions, and texts are general

Note. This table is a replication from Kang et al. (2022) and represents the necessary inclusion components for case studies published in *JCLEL*. This table is presented to give authors examples of what can be included under each category. It is not an exhaustive list that is meant to have a one-to-one correspondence between the formatting guidelines for each manuscript type.

ABSTRACT

Abstracts in *JCLEL* should follow APA 7th edition guidelines. Specifically, the abstract should provide a brief summary of the case that will be presented in the case study. Keywords should appear above the abstract so that readers can quickly determine if the case study meets the educational needs of their preservice teachers.

POSITIONALITY STATEMENT

In the positionality statement, authors should clarify their position as authors/researchers in relation to the researched individual(s) included in the case. The aim of the positionality statement is to provide "transparency in how the identities of the authors relate to the research topic and to the identity of the participants and the extent to which those identities are represented in the permanent scientific record" (Roberts et al., 2020, page 11). Additionally, by providing a positionality statement, researchers increase opportunities for diverse representations of researched individuals, decentralize control over individual stories, name inequalities, and reduce inequalities in representation. Finally, the information provided in this statement gives context to local voices, issues, and identities in an effort to sport equity and inclusion for a national audience.

SETTING THE STAGE

When setting the stage for the case, authors should provide a brief introduction or description of key concepts that readers need to know to understand the case. For example, if a case focuses on psychological assessments, authors may provide information about the purpose of psychological assessments and how this case study uses psychological assessment data throughout the case study. See *Tempe Wilson: Observation-based Case Study Example* (Haughney & Wakeman, 2023), for an example of how to set the stage.

Conceptual knowledge should appear under this section when applicable to the case. Conceptual knowledge includes information that is needed to interpret the case. This information should be detailed enough so that readers can place their students within the context of the case. Information in this section may include the format, focus, setting, and context of the case. Disability category, age, grade, and use of person-first language may also be discussed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Background information includes historical information, pertinent facts, or significant developments that are needed to understand the case. The information included in this section should build upon setting the stage and may include information about gender, gender identity, age, race/ethnicity, family demographics, strengths, and areas of weakness.

EVALUATIVE FINDINGS

In this section, authors should present data related to the case. This may include quantitative data (raw data) and/or qualitative data (narratives). Note: Any information provided must be approved by the author's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and their university.

DISCUSSION AND FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Although unique to observation-based case studies, further recommendations may also appear in intervention-based case studies, if needed. Recommendations include a review of current treatments or interventions, discussions, implications, or suggestions that may lead to positive outcomes. Authors must also include reflection questions that help readers make data-based decisions, assist in teacher development, and encourage discussion. See Haughney and Wakeman (2023) and Kelley et al. (2023) for examples of reflection questions.

REFERENCES

Per APA 7th, each manuscript submitted to *JCLEL* should have a list of references, if needed. In

addition, descriptions of copyrighted material, specific evidence-based interventions, and texts are acceptable if they encourage readers' understanding of the case.

APPENDICES

Authors may provide additional materials (e.g., evaluation results, lesson materials, templates) at the end of the manuscript as supplemental materials or appendices. Note: these additional materials are included within the total page count for the manuscript. See the *JCLEL* website for specific page numbers related to the type of manuscript submission.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

JCLEL values the importance of recognizing and celebrating individual differences within the field of special education. The editorial board recommends the use of person-first language (i.e., individual with a developmental disability) when describing students in the case; however, within the disability community, disability-first language is accepted (e.g., Autistic individual). Unless the case is written from the voice of the person with the disability or a discussion about the use of disability-first language is included in the manuscript, authors should use person-first language. Manuscripts that use antiquated language (e.g., mental retardation, handicapped) will not be published. Finally, gender-specific pronouns (he/him or she/her) are accepted if they relate directly to the student in the case (e.g., focus student in the case uses "he/him" pronouns); however, gender-neutral pronouns are acceptable (e.g., focus student in the cause uses "they/them" pronouns).

FORMATTING GUIDELINES AND SUBMISSION

All manuscripts should adhere to APA 7th edition publication guidelines. Manuscripts should be double-spaced, typed in 12-point Times New Roman, and have 1-inch margins. Manuscripts should be typed in Microsoft Word and submitted as a Word document. Authors should use formatting features in Word to ensure their paper is formatted correctly (e.g., page breaks, hanging indent feature, alignment tools). Finally, tables and figures should be inserted with the text and can be double-spaced or single-spaced.

SUBMISSION PROCESS AND REVIEW

To begin the submission process, authors will create a Digital Commons login by visiting the home page of *JCLEL*'s website and clicking on (https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/jclel/) "my account." When on the "my account" page, authors will be prompted to register as new users or log in as existing users. Once authors have logged in, they will have the option to submit a new manuscript. The manuscript should be uploaded and submitted by the submitting author; additional authors can be added during the submission process if needed.

Once the article has been submitted to *JCLEL*, the editorial team screens the manuscript for aim, scope, and formatting requirements and decides whether the manuscript should move forward for peer review. After the initial screening, the editorial team assigns an associate editor, and the manuscript is sent to at least two peer reviewers who can evaluate the manuscript based on the submission criteria, clarity, and contribution to the field. If the editorial team decides the manuscript does not meet the requirements or is not appropriate for publication in *JCLEL*, it will be returned to the submitting author.

The editorial team strives to maintain a 90-day turnaround time for the peer-review process. Once submitted, peer reviewers have up to 60 days to review the manuscript. Then the associate editor will review their feedback and make the final decision of (1) Reject; (2) Reject, Revise and Resubmit, or (3) Accept. It is rare that manuscripts are accepted without at least one round of major or minor revisions. Authors will be notified of the decision via email, and it is the submitting author's responsibility to share the decision with co-authors.

PUBLICATION TIMELINE FOR *JCLEL*

During the publication phase of the manuscript, the accepted article goes through copyediting and formatting to fit *JCLEL*'s online publication layout and style. Since *JCLEL* is published twice a year, articles may be published much later than the acceptance date and until published, articles are considered ("accepted"). During this time, authors may be given time to review the manuscript ("proof stage") prior to publication ("in press"). Once the article is published and available on *JCLEL*'s website, it is considered "published."

Again, *JCLEL* is an open-access journal; therefore, articles are free to download and share without copyright restrictions. Articles can be downloaded in PDF format and shared with colleagues, students, and other professionals.

CONCLUSION

The publication and peer-review process can be challenging yet so rewarding. By publishing in *JCLEL*, authors not only contribute to the special education knowledge base, but they may also impact the field as a whole. Manuscripts in *JCLEL* apply to practitioners, higher education professors and instructors, and other professionals within the field. Although a relatively new avenue for knowledge dissemination, the success of the journal directly relates to the quality of submissions (see Markelz & Ridden, 2022). We hope this article provides some insight for prospective authors as they consider publishing in *JCLEL*.

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