

FOCUS *on* EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

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Editorial: Celebrating Stan Love and the Pioneering Spirit of Special Education Research

June 1, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

This publication serves as a relaunch of *Focus on Exceptional Children*. We are proud to introduce an article that not only reflects cutting-edge research in special education by Dr. Joan McLaughlin but also celebrates the remarkable contributions of Stan Love from Love Publishing Company who started the journal and his family kindly continues to support the publication to make an impact on the field. Stan's dedication to the field has been instrumental in bringing forth the voices and stories that shape our understanding of exceptional children, and this article reflects his vision. As the journal's incoming Editor, I was excited to take on this role in my new position at the University of Kansas. I had the privilege of being on the *Focus on Exceptional Children* Editorial Board as a junior faculty under the tutelage of Stan Love. His passion for creating a journal that provided the best ideas in the field in a timely fashion and was open source demonstrated his visionary leadership in our field in 1969.

I am excited to have an editorial board in celebration of Stan's contributions that reflects the diversity of thinking across research and teaching at both the higher education and school-based levels in special education. We, as an editorial team, are excited to kick off the first issue under this board with an article by a legendary leader in our field, Dr. Joan McLaughlin. We look forward to future articles being published in *Focus on Exceptional Children* and to continuing the legacy of Stan Love in making an impact on the field. We look forward to hearing your ideas for future timely topics in special education.

This current article is based on a lecture at the University of Kansas as part of The Edward L. Meyen Distinguished Lecture Series. It refers to the inaugural Meyen Lecture by Dr. Grover J. (Russ) Whitehurst, the first Director of IES. Dr. Whitehurst's vision set a new standard for educational research and rigor, advocating for an apolitical approach to research that has since become a hallmark of IES. His insights, particularly on the Federal government's role in advancing science, remain as relevant today as they were 15 years ago.

The National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER), a cornerstone of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), embodies a mission that resonates deeply with the journal's ethos. Since its inception in 2006, NCSER has been a beacon of progress, supporting rigorous research that expands our knowledge of the diverse needs of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. This commitment to excellence has been pivotal in transforming special education research and practice, ensuring that services under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) are not just provided but are continuously improved upon.

As Dr. McLaughlin in this article reflects upon the progress made and the journey ahead, it is clear that the work of NCSER is invaluable to the field. Their efforts ensure that the field of special education research is not only about meeting immediate needs but also about setting the stage for future generations to thrive. Much like Stan Love did when he conceptualized and launched *Focus on Exceptional Children* in 1969.

In this spirit of celebration and reflection, we invite our readers to delve into the rich content of this article written by Dr. Joan McLaughlin, who served as the NCSER Commission from 2013 to 2022 and shares the legacy of this government organization. Her reflections truly honor the legacy of Stan Love and the ongoing mission of NCSER as we continue to champion the cause of exceptional children and the transformative power of education research.

This editorial serves as an introduction to the article. It highlights the significance of the journal as a platform that recognizes the vital contributions of individuals like Stan Love and institutions like NCSER. It emphasizes the importance of rigorous research in special education and its impact on improving services for individuals with disabilities. The editorial also acknowledges the historical context of educational research funding and the need for continued support and recognition of its value in our field. We hope you will share and reference this publication in your scholarship and subscribe to FOEC as we provide future content to impact the field of special education.



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