

FOCUS on Research

Newsletter of the



In This Issue

- Policy and Advocacy: Updates and Resources
- Meet the Incoming Vice President
- CEC-DR Diversity Spotlight
- To Touch the Skies: A Tribute to Lynn S. Fuchs
- The Enduring Contributions of H. Rutherford "Rud" Turnbull III to Special Education Research and Policy

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President's Message

Navigating our Current Context Together

Michelle M. Cumming, PhD, *St. Francis Xavier University*

After service as president-elect over the past year, I am honored to step into the role of president for CEC's Division for Research (DR) in the upcoming academic year. CEC-DR is devoted to the advancement of research related to the education of individuals with disabilities and/or who are gifted. The goals of CEC-DR include partnership with practitioners in designing, conducting, and interpreting research in special education to inform practice and policy. As president, I am deeply committed to this mission, especially in light of the recent and ongoing federal actions targeting services for students, families, and vulnerable populations.

A few months ago, on behalf of CEC-DR, Past-President Jessica Toste and I put forward a response to federal actions targeting education, such as attacks on the Department of Education and its offices. Our response continues to be relevant in the upcoming year, and I am deeply committed to the goals we outlined.

Research is the backbone of progress in special education. It allows us to identify effective practices, challenge inequities, and advocate for evidence-based policies that improve the lives of students with disabilities, their families, and the professionals who serve them. Ongoing federal actions threaten to both censor and defund research, fundamentally limiting our ability

to acknowledge, understand, and address the real challenges within our education system. These restrictions not only limit academic freedom but also weaken our ability to effectively advocate for the needs of students with disabilities, families and caregivers, professionals, and communities. As special education researchers, we are part of a strong, innovative, and dedicated community—one built on scientific inquiry and forceful advocacy that rejects the historical exclusion and marginalization of individuals with disabilities. Now is the time to reaffirm our commitment to this mission, ensuring that research remains a powerful tool for progress.

The future of our field depends on cultivating the next generation of leaders. Policies that restrict academic freedom, limit funding, and devalue expertise create a challenging landscape for early career scholars, doctoral students, and emerging researchers. Now more than ever, we must underscore our support for rigorous, quality, and impactful work in how we support rising scholars.

Listening to and advocating alongside individuals with disabilities must be central to our efforts. While research is central to DR's mission, we cannot operate in isolation. The lives and livelihoods of those we

(continues on page 3)

Policy and Advocacy: Updates and Resources



Kristabel Stark
University of Vermont



Stephen Ciullo
Texas State University

There is an overwhelming amount of federal policy change these days that influences special education. Over the past few months, the DR Policy Committee has been a signatory on many letters advocating for the protection of educational research funding, particularly research to improve the outcomes of students who have disabilities.

If you're wondering how to stay updated and engaged, we wanted to share a few helpful resources! First, if you visit [Sustaining Education Research](#), you can sign up for a newsletter called the "Nightly Pulse." This newsletter provides frequent updates about federal changes as well as the impact of policy changes on the education research community. Second, we encourage you to visit [TED Policy LinkTree](#). This is a collection of resources compiled by the Teacher Education Division (TED) policy committee. Within this website, there is a link to [CEC's Legislative Action Center](#). We encourage you to follow both the [CEC Policy Insider](#) and the [CEC Washington Update](#) for timely policy updates as well.

Please reach out to kristabel.stark@uvm.edu or ciullo@txstate.edu if you would like to be directly involved in the DR Policy Committee, or have ideas for actions our committee can take! We look forward to hearing from you. ■

Meet the Incoming Vice President



Amber Ray, PhD
Vice President, CEC Division
for Research
University of Illinois Urbana-
Champaign

I am an associate professor in the department of special education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. I began my career as a high school special education teacher and literacy specialist. My research interests include writing interventions to help students with learning disabilities succeed. My research focuses on strategy and self-regulation approaches to instruction and methods of professional development for teachers and school leaders on effective literacy instruction. I have been a member of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and Division for Research (DR) since 2014 and chaired the Knowledge Utilization Committee from 2022–2025. I also have been a conference proposal reviewer for CEC and was a member of the CEC-DR Doctoral Student Scholars in the 2015–2016 academic year. I am looking forward to serving as the vice president of CEC-DR because I am passionate about high-quality special education research to support students, teachers, schools, and communities. I believe CEC-DR is a place where special education researchers can come together to advance the field of special education through innovation, research, and collaboration. Finally, I want to continue to help CEC-DR thrive! ■

CEC-DR Diversity Committee Spotlight



Federico Waitoller, PhD
University of Illinois
Diversity Committee Chair

Check out the last few episodes of *DiveIn*!

Beyond the Hype: AI, Disability, and Equity in Education

In this episode, we tackle a pressing and timely issue: the growing role of AI in education. With Mary Rice, Joaquin Arguello, and Richard Carter Jr., I explore AI technologies' potential benefits and hidden risks. Can AI help address long-standing inequities faced by students with disabilities and other marginalized learners—or could it deepen existing disparities? We examine questions of transparency, standardization, and the evolving relationship between AI, teachers, and students. Beyond critique, we also imagine what AI could be: a tool for transforming schools into more equitable, just, and inclusive learning spaces. [Click here](#) to listen.

Updates on the Becerra Case, The Department of Education, and the Big Beautiful? Bill

In this episode of *DiveIn*, we provide crucial updates on key issues affecting special education. With special guest and CEC policy analyst Kuna Tavalin, we give an update

on the State of Texas vs. Becerra case, which challenges Section 504 as unconstitutional. Additionally, we discuss the unstable situation within the Department of Education, with staff reductions and ongoing court battles creating a strain on special education services. Finally, we unpack two debates taking place in Congress that have implications for the education of students with disabilities: the “Big Beautiful? Bill” and the budget proposal from the Trump administration. [Click here](#) to listen.

DiveIn Miniseries: Learning to Live Together Part 1

In this episode, I sit down with Naomi N. Shelton and Jennifer Coco to unpack the complex realities facing students with disabilities (SWDs) in the charter school sector. We explore the persistent patterns of exclusion that keep SWDs on the margins—and, more importantly, spotlight the powerful efforts underway to disrupt these inequities. Our conversation highlights community-rooted charter schools led by Black, Brown, and Indigenous educators and leaders, revealing the transformative potential of these models to redefine charter schools.

We also examine the shifting political landscape, discussing how recent policies and the Trump administration's influence could reshape the capacity of charter schools to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Finally, we take a critical look at the growing movement for religious charter schools and the risks they pose for equitable, accessible education. [Click here](#) to listen.

Please share widely! You can find *DiveIn* at <https://divein.alitu.com/1?order=newest>. ■



President's Message (continued from page 1)

aim to serve through our research are being harmed. We have a responsibility to use our voices, platforms, and privilege to challenge injustices, push for change, and stand in solidarity with those most vulnerable as a wide range of programs, policies, and protections continue to be targeted.

In the upcoming year, I am deeply committed to working with the DR Executive Board in navigating the current educational landscape as we continue to advance DR's mission and goals. You, as members, are pivotal in shaping the direction of DR's work. Thus, I ask that you reach out to share your insights with me and the DR Executive Board. Also, if you are wanting to get more

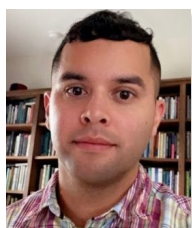
involved in DR, we have several committees that would welcome new members!

Again, I am honored to have the opportunity to serve as president of CEC-DR and do not take on this role lightly. I look forward to working alongside the other members of our incoming presidential line: Amber Ray, vice president (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign); Jason Chow, president-elect (Vanderbilt University); and Jessica Toste, past president (University of Texas at Austin). It is through work with the Executive Board and members like you that DR's mission can be realized—improving the lives of individuals with disabilities, their families, and educational professionals via quality and impactful research! ■

To Touch the Skies: A Tribute to Lynn S. Fuchs



Pamela M. Seethaler
Vanderbilt University



Daniel Espinas
George Mason University

*We never know how high we are
Till we are called to rise;
And then, if we are true to plan,
Our statures touch the skies—*

—Emily Dickinson, 1830–1886

Lynn Fuchs was called to rise. In late fall 1971, Lynn Shteir was a senior at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland; she shared an apartment with friends in a largely working class Black neighborhood. Beginning one Saturday morning (while other college seniors slept in, went to football games, or sorted laundry), Lynn, her recently graduated friend Doug Fuchs, and several classmates from Hopkins majoring in chemistry, physics, or engineering assembled an eclectic collection of instructional materials and began an informal “Saturday School” for neighborhood children. The following summer, Lynn and Doug secured funding to continue the program and moved the “Saturday School” out of

Lynn’s apartment to a nearby church. Lynn had found her calling.

The “Saturday School” in Baltimore was the start of Lynn’s dedication to education as a field of study. In 1972 she graduated from Johns Hopkins University with a BA in liberal arts, then went on to earn an MS in 1973 in elementary education from the University of Pennsylvania, and an EdS in 1977 and PhD in 1981, both in educational psychology from the University of Minnesota. She was an assistant professor at Wheelock College before arriving in the mid-eighties at Peabody College of Vanderbilt University, rising steadily in academic rank and title as the years passed. In 2003, Lynn earned the title of Nicholas Hobbs Professor of Special Education and Human Development. In 2015, she became the Dunn Family Professor of Psychoeducational Assessment followed by the Alexander Heard Distinguished Service Professor in 2019. She earned the titles of Dunn Family Endowed Professor of Psychoeducational Assessment, Emerita, and Research Professor in the Department of Special Education and the Department of Psychology and Human Development in 2023. Lynn remained at Vanderbilt for the majority of her career (even as she added the role of Institute Fellow at the American Institutes for Research in Washington, D.C., in more recent years), setting the gold standard, along with Doug (her now husband and research partner), for rigorous scientific research and development of assessment and intervention for students with learning disabilities and their teachers.

For over forty years, Lynn worked tirelessly to improve education outcomes for students with read-

(continues on page 5)

A Tribute to Lynn S. Fuchs (continued from page 4)

ing and math difficulties. Innovative and carefully conducted research that contributed to practical and theoretical knowledge of learning disability identification and treatment was her calling and she answered that call with aplomb. Lynn was unquestionably a giant in the field. For many of us, we imagined that her intellect, knowledge base, experience, and novel ideas put her so far above the rest of us that she could simply reach out a hand and touch the sky. Yet, Lynn's work did not exist in a vacuum. She stood on the shoulders of her doctoral studies advisor, Dr. Stanley L. Deno, and her colleagues at the University of Minnesota, where she initially helped to develop and study curriculum-based measurement as a form of educational progress monitoring, and by the side of her equally gifted research partner, Dr. Douglas Fuchs, with whom she created the Fuchs Research Group, an enterprise that allows for the worldwide dissemination of their scientifically validated treatments—not to mention the hundreds of colleagues and students from around the world with whom she has partnered. Lynn was generous in her mentorship and in her sharing of ideas; she invited collaboration and embraced inclusion, whether with senior research faculty or brand-new doctoral students (including the 28 she mentored at Vanderbilt). Her generosity of spirit is a recurring theme across her 40+ years of scholarship.

The driving force for the corpus of work conducted by Lynn and her colleagues was to advance education outcomes for children who had (or were at risk for developing) pervasive reading and mathematics difficulties. To accomplish this, two research trajectories developed, separate but connected: assessment and intervention. It was not sufficient to identify which students were falling behind academically without providing appropriate academic intervention; likewise, intervention had to be provided judiciously only to the students who most required it. Relying on Stan Deno's "test-teach-test" format, Lynn and colleagues thus began many years of research that centered on the intersection of assessment and intervention. Working with hundreds of educators and data from thousands of students, while scientifically evaluating the efficacy of specific reading and math interventions, eventually led to the premise of a treatment-oriented approach to identifying students with potential risk of learning disability: the response-to-intervention (RTI) approach to identification. This alternative to the

traditional "IQ-achievement discrepancy" approach allowed students who were struggling to learn (i.e., in a classroom environment in which most peers were thriving) to receive targeted intervention sooner and with precision. RTI—which later broadened into Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and incorporated Data-Based Individualization (DBI)—has shaped both policy and practice and is now considered the standard in special education intervention.

Throughout her career and with Doug by her side, Lynn painstakingly developed and validated countless instructional programs in literacy and mathematics, taking on the charge of understanding what works and for whom. These carefully developed and proven programs are now widely used across the United States and throughout the world. Lynn and Doug's research on assessment and intervention—studying areas such as educational progress monitoring, peer-assisted learning strategies, dynamic assessment, data-based individualization, reading comprehension, reading decoding, early numeracy, word-problem solving, fraction understanding, and working memory—has carefully established an evidence base for developing, evaluating, and implementing interventions for children with learning disabilities. Most importantly, their work has palpably changed the developmental trajectories of myriad students with academic difficulties. Lynn's research studies were theory-driven, carefully implemented, documented meticulously and with high levels of fidelity, and always with the students' best interest in mind. Lynn took her work so seriously because of how important it was (and still is). Accordingly, she led by setting high standards for herself and the teams she assembled to help with implementation. Always the teacher, she empowered those collaborating with her to contribute authentically, and to learn from her and from the process.

Lynn was a prolific writer, having authored and co-authored more than 430 peer-reviewed journal articles and 90 book chapters. She also co-authored the authoritative book on learning disabilities and co-edited numerous journal special issues, helping to steer the field of learning disabilities and education for decades. Many of her articles are cited hundreds and even thousands of times and stand as classics on substantive and methodological grounds. Asked once at a doctoral seminar for advice on how to succeed as an academic, she replied

(continues on page 6)

A Tribute to Lynn S. Fuchs (continued from page 5)

simply that you must love writing. She indeed relished in the craft, once remarking that hers was the best job in the world, in part because it allowed her to write all day long—or night. Many times, a student or colleague would wake up to an email from Lynn timestamped 3:00 am with a document, perhaps 30 pages or more, submitted to her only several hours earlier for feedback. Invariably, the reader would find detailed and thoughtful recommendations, and generous doses of support and encouragement. On top of that, over her career, Lynn was awarded more than 80 grants (with Doug and other colleagues) to support her wide and varied program of research. In 2009, *Forbes* named Lynn one of 14 “revolutionary educators;” she was ranked 95th nationally and 155th in the world among the Ranking of Top 1000 Scientists in psychology. Lynn was among the most productive and highest cited researchers in the social sciences.

Lynn was lauded for her scholarship by colleagues, professional organizations, and even the federal government. To list all of the accolades bestowed upon Lynn for her trailblazing and innovative work in the field of special education would take more space than this document allows. To share a few examples, Vanderbilt University awarded Lynn the Joe B. Wyatt Distinguished University Professor Award in 2002; this was followed in subsequent years by additional university awards for her scholarship. Additionally, professional organizations such as the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) have presented her with some of their highest honors: for example, the Distinguished Contributions to Research in Education Award (2014) from AERA, as well as the Kauffman-Hallahan Distinguished Researcher Award (2013) and the Jeanette Fleischner Career Leadership Award (2024), both from CEC. Further, Lynn’s expertise and leadership in the field has been recognized by the federal government. She was appointed to serve key roles with the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Institute of Health, and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. In 2015, she was even invited to the White House, for a special commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. As a final mention, Lynn, along with Doug, were honored with

the prestigious Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in PreK–12 Education for exceptional work in support of students with learning disabilities. These awards were not given lightly, they are the organizations’ highest acknowledgement of outstanding service to the field, and Lynn deserved them unequivocally.

In addition to the recognition for her research, Lynn was an exceptional teacher. Whether scripting explicit instruction for tutors to use when remediating math difficulties for first grade students, explaining to doctoral students how to conduct logistical regression analyses, or collaborating with colleagues on research activities, she was always calm, clear, and concise. She took great pains to make sure that her “student” understood the “lesson” she was teaching, regardless of the time or effort that entailed. This was important to Lynn. When once described by a former graduate student as a “great teacher,” she noted with delight that it was the highest compliment she could receive.

To say that Lynn Fuchs (along with her husband and research partner, Doug Fuchs) made significant and far-reaching contributions to the field of education, both nationally and internationally, concerning the diagnosis and treatment for students with learning disabilities is a gross understatement. She was simply brilliant. Moreover, Lynn was thoughtful, generous, kind, funny, and unassuming. She was immensely proud of her grandson, she enjoyed all adventures with Doug (at work, at home, or abroad), she could consume an entire bowl of homemade black-bean salsa and chips in one sitting, and she was fascinated by the television show, “Say Yes to the Dress.” Despite her myriad and impressive professional accomplishments, Lynn was humble. She never sought recognition or praise for her work; changing the academic trajectories of students with learning disabilities for the better was always her “reason why.” In fact, if you went to Lynn’s office at Vanderbilt, you would see dozens of pages of children’s math work taped to her office door, showing evidence of the growth these students made as a result of her interventions, well before you noticed the plaques and awards on her bookshelves.

Lynn’s passing is a profound loss to all of us: her family, her friends and colleagues, and the education and research communities around the world. If you knew her, you’d agree that the world is a better place because she was in it. Lynn’s stature, truly, touched the skies. ■

The Enduring Contributions of H. Rutherford “Rud” Turnbull III to Special Education Research and Policy



Jennifer A. Kurth, PhD
University of Kansas

H. Rutherford “Rud” Turnbull III was a towering figure whose profound contributions transformed the landscape of disability policy and special education in the United States and beyond. His career, spanning decades, was marked by an exceptional blend of rigorous legal scholarship, innovative academic leadership, and deeply personal advocacy. This uniquely positioned him as a transformative force, earning him recognition, alongside his wife Ann, as one of 36 individuals who changed the course of history in the 20th century in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities, an honor bestowed by a consortium of seven family and professional associations.

The foundation of Rud’s unwavering dedication to disability advocacy was profoundly personal. The birth of his son, Jay Turnbull (1967–2009), who lived with complex disabilities, served as the primary catalyst for his professional endeavors. This profound love and commitment to Jay’s well-being became the driving force behind Rud’s tireless efforts to secure rights, dignity, and opportunities for all individuals with disabilities. The University of Kansas Archives notably houses his professional correspondence, much of which details the services he and Ann developed for Jay and other families, underscoring the seamless integration of his personal life with his professional mission. This powerful combination of intellectual prowess and lived experience allowed him to advocate not merely from a posi-

tion of authority, but from a place of deep understanding and personal commitment. The synthesis of his rigorous legal and academic training with his empathetic, lived experience as a parent of a child with significant disabilities provided an invaluable lens, transforming abstract legal principles into urgent human rights issues. This unique blend allowed him to develop solutions that were not only legally and theoretically sound but also deeply human-centered and practically effective, solidifying his reputation as a “lion for special education” and a true giant in the field.

Formative Years and the Genesis of a Legal Advocate

Rud’s formidable career was built upon a robust educational foundation and early professional experiences that honed his legal acumen. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from Johns Hopkins University in 1959, followed by an LL.B./J.D. from the University of Maryland Law School in 1964, where he distinguished himself as Editor-in-Chief of the Maryland Law Review. He further advanced his legal expertise by obtaining an LL.M. from Harvard Law School in 1969.

His early professional life provided him with a strong grounding in legal practice and judicial processes. He served as a Law Clerk to Chief Judge Emory H. Niles of the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City from 1959 to 1960, and later to Chief Judge Roszel C. Thomsen of the U.S. District Court, Maryland, from 1962 to 1963. Following these clerkships, he gained experience as an associate at Piper and Marbury from 1964 to 1967 and with J. Elmer Weisheit, Jr. from 1967 to 1968. These

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H. Rutherford "Rud" Turnbull III (continued from page 7)

roles provided him with invaluable insights into the legal system, preparing him for his subsequent impactful work in public law and policy.

The trajectory of Rud's career underwent a profound reorientation with the birth of his son, Jay, in 1967. This personal event served as the pivotal catalyst that propelled him directly into the realm of disability advocacy. His legal expertise, previously applied in general practice, was now directed with intense purpose towards the specific challenges and injustices faced by individuals with disabilities and their families. This personal experience transformed his legal acumen into a powerful tool for social change, making his subsequent policy contributions uniquely informed by real-world needs. The book "The Exceptional Life of Jay Turnbull: Disability and Dignity in America 1967–2009" stands as a poignant testament to Jay's influence and the family's journey, further solidifying the deeply personal roots of Rud's professional mission.

Shaping Policy and Law: The Architect of Disability Rights

Some of Rud's most tangible and enduring contributions lie in his instrumental role as an architect of disability law and policy at both federal and state levels. His work directly shaped landmark legislation, establishing critical protections and frameworks for individuals with disabilities and their families.

Rud played a pivotal role in shaping landmark federal disability legislation. He was the principal draftsman of the 'procedural safeguards' regulations under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These safeguards are fundamental mechanisms that ensure due process and protect the rights of students with disabilities and their families, providing avenues for recourse and accountability within the educational system. His legal background clearly informed his focus, demonstrating a strategic understanding that rights, without accessible and enforceable procedures, can remain theoretical. This precise attention to the practical enforcement of rights reflects a deep commitment to empowering families and individuals. The true effectiveness of rights-based legislation often lies not just in the declaration of rights, but in the design and implementation of robust procedural

mechanisms that enable individuals to assert and protect those rights. Rud's work exemplifies how legal expertise can be leveraged to create practical pathways to justice.

Beyond IDEA, he served as principal staff for the federal Assistive Technology Act and the family support provisions of the Rehabilitation Act. His responsibilities included drafting legislation for the Technology-Related Assistance Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-407) and working on amendments to the Internal Revenue Code (S. 1806) to allow accelerated depreciation for technology for disabled individuals, as well as Medicaid Reform (S. 1673). This broad engagement across disparate policy areas demonstrates a deep understanding that disability is a multifaceted issue intersecting with civil rights, technology, healthcare, and economic policy.

Academic Leadership and Scholarly Contributions

Beyond his direct legislative work, Rud was a towering figure in academia, profoundly influencing special education through his leadership, teaching, and prolific scholarship. A cornerstone of his academic legacy is the Beach Center on Disability (now part of the Kansas University Center on Disability). In 1988, Rud, alongside his wife Ann Turnbull, co-founded and co-directed this internationally recognized center at the University of Kansas, a role they maintained until 2014. The Center's explicit mission was to "conduct research and carry out training and technical assistance to make a significant and sustainable positive difference in the quality of life of people with disabilities and their families." This mission directly echoed his personal motivation stemming from his son Jay and his professional focus on family-centered approaches. Under their leadership, the Beach Center developed crucial measures such as the Family Quality of Life Scale and the Family-Professional Partnerships Scale. These tools demonstrated a commitment to operationalizing his theoretical frameworks and advocacy goals into measurable outcomes and actionable interventions, ensuring his vision translated into practical improvements for families. The Beach Center also extensively evaluated family support policies, including person-directed funding, parent-to-parent models, and family-centered service coordination. For

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H. Rutherford “Rud” Turnbull III (continued from page 8)

over two decades, the Beach Center functioned as a Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Families and Disability, solidifying its sustained, high-level impact beyond individual scholarly output. This highlights Rud’s understanding that to achieve lasting, systemic change, it is crucial to establish and nurture institutional infrastructures that can sustain and amplify research, training, and advocacy efforts, ensuring an enduring, collective impact.

Rud held several distinguished academic positions, primarily at the University of Kansas. He served as a Professor of Special Education and notably as Department Chair from 1980 to 1983. In 2006, he was named the Marianna and Ross Beach Distinguished Professor, becoming emeritus thereafter. His interdisciplinary expertise was formally recognized through his appointment as a Courtesy Professor of Law at the University of Kansas from 1980 to 2008. He also held the Gene A. Budig Distinguished Teaching Professorship from 2005 to 2006 and, in his later career, served as a Research Professor and Faculty Fellow at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

His scholarly contributions extended to the development of influential theoretical frameworks that continue to shape the field. One such framework, co-authored with Matthew J. Stowe, is the “Five Models for Thinking About Disability” (2001). This approach advances five distinct models—Human Capacity, Public Studies, Cultural Studies, Ethical and Philosophical Studies, and Technology Studies—for understanding disability. This framework illustrates how various disciplines and perspectives influence societal and policy responses to disability, helping to clarify the underlying assumptions in policy debates. For instance, it highlights how a “medical” model differs from a “developmental” model in proposing solutions. This framework provides a powerful analytical tool for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners, enabling them to identify underlying assumptions, anticipate inter-professional conflicts, and design more integrated and effective disability policies. It advocates for a truly holistic understanding of disability that transcends disciplinary silos, leading to more comprehensive and equitable outcomes.

Another significant contribution is the “Quality of Life Framework for Special Education Outcomes,” proposed by Turnbull et al. in 2003. This framework fundamentally shifts the focus of special education outcomes beyond mere academic achievement. It posits that academic goals are a means to achieve the four overarching goals declared by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. The core idea is that education’s ultimate goal should be to enhance the overall quality of life for people with disabilities, guiding both curriculum and assessment measures.

Rud was an exceptionally prolific author, partnering with Ann on seminal articles, and leaving behind a vast body of scholarly work. He published over 300 peer-reviewed articles and chapters, and more than 36 books throughout his career. He notably co-authored *Exceptional Lives: Special Education in Today’s Schools*, a textbook that consistently emphasized inclusion, family involvement, and partnerships in special education and which remains in wide use in teacher preparation programs. Another significant co-authored work is *Families and Professionals: Trusting Partnerships in General and Special Education*, which delves into the crucial dynamics of family-professional collaboration. His book *Free Appropriate Public Education: The Law and Children with Disabilities* provided a comprehensive legal analysis of schools’ responsibilities under IDEA.

Legacy and Enduring Impact on Special Education

Rud’s profound contributions earned him widespread recognition as a transformative figure, leaving an indelible mark on special education research and policy. His influence is not merely historical but continues to resonate deeply within contemporary practices and advocacy efforts. He tirelessly advocated for inclusive education and community integration, with his groundbreaking work informing key legislation, ensuring that the rights and dignity of individuals with disabilities were protected across educational and social institutions. His advocacy efforts extended to critical legislative moments,

(continues on page 10)

H. Rutherford "Rud" Turnbull III (continued from page 7)

such as his work related to the unsuccessful attempt to reauthorize IDEA in 1995, for which he received a distinguished public service award.

Beyond his direct contributions, Rud's legacy is profoundly marked by his role as a mentor. He guided hundreds of graduate students and trained excellent researchers who would follow him throughout his career. Former students recall his warm, forward-thinking mentorship and credit him with shaping their understanding of disability, family, inclusion, leadership, and scholarship. With one of the final cohorts of doctoral students Rud mentored, the "Justice Junkies" were formed. Rud delighted in the "Justice Junkies," creating coffee mugs and outings around Lawrence, Kansas, to discuss special education, dignity, and justice. This profound commitment to mentorship extended to his colleagues at the University of Kansas, whom he supported and encouraged throughout their careers. Rud's legacy is therefore dynamic and ongoing, influencing the field far beyond his lifetime through the individuals and organizations he shaped. As such, Rud was so much more than a lion for special education; he was and remains a valued friend, colleague, and mentor to all who were lucky enough to work with him and know him.

Conclusion: A Lasting Vision for Dignity and Opportunity

Rud Turnbull stands as an unparalleled figure in special education, whose contributions span legal architecture, academic leadership, and deeply personal advocacy. He was instrumental in drafting foundational federal legislation, with an emphasis on family-centered practices and enhancing the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families that continue to guide research, policy, and service delivery. His analytical frameworks for understanding disability from multiple perspectives remain valuable tools for navigating complex policy debates. Perhaps most enduring is his spirit of unwavering advocacy, encapsulated in his call to "Raise Hell" against any efforts to undermine the rights and opportunities of people with disabilities. This serves as a powerful reminder that the fight for dignity and full participation is an ongoing endeavor, requiring continuous vigilance and commitment. Rud's life and work provide an enduring blueprint for how to achieve profound, lasting change through a potent blend of legal expertise, academic rigor, and deeply personal conviction. ■



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