

chapter

1

The Foundation for Educating Students with Special Needs

LEARNING Objectives

After you read this chapter, you will be able to

1. Explain key terms and concepts that describe special education.
2. Trace the historical events that have shaped contemporary special education services.
3. Outline the laws that govern current practices for educating students with disabilities.
4. Analyze your beliefs related to inclusive practices, taking into account contemporary knowledge and expectations about effective instruction and educational access, as well as parent perspectives.
5. Describe the categories of disabilities addressed in federal law.
6. Explain special needs other than disability that your students may have.



THOMAS is one of those students who makes his presence known very quickly. He announced on the first day in his seventh-grade social studies class that the color of the walls was *xantho* (yellow). For several days later that fall, he came to school wearing only socks on his feet, because, as his mother explained, he had completely outgrown his old shoes but would not wear new, better-fitting ones because he said they “had knots in the toes.” In all his classes, Thomas tends to keep to himself, and when group projects are assigned, he has difficulty knowing how to talk to his classmates about anything except the subjects he enjoys—French words commonly used in the English language and Alfred Hitchcock movies. When Thomas began elementary school, he was enrolled in a special education class for students with autism. However, most of his classmates had significant intellectual disabilities, and the teacher and Thomas’s parents quickly realized that he needed to be challenged academically in a way that could not happen in that class. Since second grade, he has spent most of his time in general education classrooms. In some situations, a special education teacher worked in his classroom with the general education teacher, or a paraprofessional was present to assist the teacher and all the students. Now such support generally is not necessary. Thomas meets with his special education teacher, Ms. Meyer, once each day with several other students who have learning and behavior disabilities to learn strategies related to their schoolwork, and he receives social skills instruction from a counselor. If an issue arises in a general education class, Ms. Meyer problem solves with the teacher to address it. Thomas would like to be a linguist when he grows up.

What is autism? Why is it so important for Thomas to access the same curriculum as his peers? What provisions in current laws ensure that Thomas has the right to be educated in general education as much as possible?

PATRICIA is a fourth-grade student who was identified as having an intellectual disability (sometimes called mental retardation) when she was in the first grade. The cause of her disability cannot be pinpointed nor does it have a specific name, but there is a high likelihood that it was at least partly the result of her mother’s drinking and drug use during pregnancy. Patricia already has lived in six foster homes because her mother was unable to take care of her and gave up custody. Happily, her current foster family has decided to adopt Patricia, a time-consuming process that should be completed before the end of this school year. In school, Patricia receives highly specialized instruction in language arts

and math in a special education resource class, but she is a member of a general education class for science and social studies as well as for art, music, library/media, physical education, and technology skills classes. Spending time in both special education and general education settings was determined by a team to be the best option for Patricia, but Ms. Schwarz, her general education teacher, worries that the other students do not have enough interactions with Patricia to really get to know and value her and that Patricia’s learning is actually made more difficult because she comes and goes from the classroom. Ms. Schwarz favors reducing the amount of time Patricia spends in the special education classroom. Ms. Ramos, the special educator, agrees; this topic will be addressed at a meeting to be held soon.

How likely are you to teach a student like Patricia? What is an intellectual disability? What factors have led teachers to advocate for educating students like Patricia in typical classrooms for all or much of the school day instead of in special education classrooms?

AARON has a learning disability that was identified when he was in second grade. He also takes medication for attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Now in eleventh grade, Aaron is continuing to learn how to compensate for the academic difficulties he experiences. Although he is a bright and personable young man, he reads at about a seventh-grade level, and his writing is much like that of a student in second grade. He doesn’t like to talk about his learning disabilities (LD); he doesn’t want other students to make fun of him or treat him differently because he has LD. He is even more sensitive when asked to talk about why he takes medication. Even though his doctor has cautioned him to take the medication exactly as prescribed, he sometimes secretly skips taking it to see if he can get along without it. In his U.S. history class, Aaron is most successful on tests when he answers questions orally; he understands the concepts even if he sometimes cannot write down his thoughts. Because he doesn’t like to be singled out, however, he sometimes refuses to take tests or get additional assistance during study period, so his grades are lower than they could be. Aaron is an excellent athlete, and on the basketball court, he feels equal to his friends. However, his parents are concerned that his interest in sports is distracting him from schoolwork.

How often will you meet students like Aaron? What is a learning disability? What types of supports and services do Aaron and other students with LD need to succeed in school?



To check your comprehension on the content covered in chapter 1, go to the Book Resources in the MyEducationLab for your course, select your text, and complete the Study Plan. Here you will be able to take a chapter quiz, receive feedback on your answers, and then access review, practice, and enrichment activities to enhance your understanding of chapter content.

Students like Thomas, Patricia, and Aaron are not unusual. They are among the 6.1 million school-age students in the United States who have disabilities that make them eligible for special education (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). But their disabilities do not tell you who they are: They are children or young adults and students first. Like all students, they have positive characteristics and negative ones, they have great days and not-so-great days, and they have likes and dislikes about school and learning. As a teacher, you probably will instruct students like Thomas, Patricia, and Aaron along with other students with disabilities or other special needs.

The purpose of this book is to help you understand these students and learn strategies for addressing their needs. Ultimately, you can be the teacher who makes a profound positive difference in a student's life. With the knowledge and skills you learn for teaching learners with exceptional needs, you will be prepared for both the challenges and the rewards of helping them achieve their potential.

What Key Concepts Guide Special Education?

As you begin your study of special education and think about your responsibility for teaching students like Thomas, Patricia, and Aaron, it is important that you understand that the field is guided by a number of critical concepts, some based directly on federal laws and the courts' interpretation of those laws and some based on a combination of research and recommended practices. What these key concepts illustrate clearly is the centrality of your role in the education of students with disabilities.

Special Education Services

When teachers refer to students with *disabilities*, they mean students who are eligible to receive special education services according to federal and state guidelines. **Special education** is the **specially designed instruction** provided by the school district or other local education agency that meets the unique needs of students identified as disabled according to federal and state eligibility criteria. Special education is a set of services that may include instruction in a general education or special education classroom, education in the community for students who need to learn life and work skills, and specialized assistance in areas such as physical education and vocational preparation.

Students with disabilities also may receive **related services**, that is, assistance required to enable students to benefit from special education. Examples of related services include speech/language therapy, transportation to and from school in a specialized van or school bus, and physical therapy. Additionally, students with disabilities are entitled to **supplementary aids and services**. This means they must receive, as needed, supports such as preferential seating, access to computer technology, and instructional adjustments (for example, more time to complete tests, simplified assignments) that enable them to be educated with their peers who do not have disabilities. All special education, related services, and supplementary aids and services are provided to students by public schools at no cost to parents.

You may encounter one additional set of terms related to students' services. Students with disabilities are entitled to receive accommodations and modifications related to their instruction. **Accommodations** are changes in *how* the student learns key curriculum. For example, a student may be assigned fewer math problems because he takes longer than other students to complete each one. Another student may respond to an essay question on a history test by writing bullet points instead of paragraphs, because it reduces the writing task and the goal is to determine what she has learned about history. In each case, the curriculum has remained the same. **Modifications** refer to *what* the student learns and usually implies that some curriculum is removed. For example, a student with a significant intellectual disability may not learn all the vocabulary in a science unit, focusing instead on words that he is likely to encounter in day-to-day life. As you might surmise, many students with

www.resources

<http://www.seriweb.com>

Special Education Resources on the Internet (SERI) provides links to thousands of disability-related websites, grouped by topic, from those on inclusion in schools to those on specific disabilities such as autism, learning disabilities, and behavior disorders.

disabilities need accommodations, but only those with significant intellectual disabilities usually require modifications.

Least Restrictive Environment

As you read this textbook and complete the activities designed for your course, you will learn many important facts and skills related to working with students with disabilities. However, one of the most important concepts for you to understand as a general educator is **least restrictive environment (LRE)**, a provision in the federal law that has governed special education for nearly four decades. The LRE provision guarantees a student's right to be educated in the setting most like that for peers without disabilities in which the student can be successful with appropriate supports provided (Palley, 2006). For most students, the least restrictive environment is full-time or nearly full-time participation in a general education classroom (Schwarz, 2007). In fact, in 2004–2005, approximately 51.9 percent of all school-age students with disabilities received 79 percent or more of their education in general education classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). This is true for Thomas, Patricia, and Aaron, who were introduced at the beginning of this chapter. Thomas and Patricia also receive instruction in a special education classroom each day. Aaron, who can succeed in social studies class when he gives test answers aloud, may leave his classroom for that purpose only. His LRE is a general education classroom; the test procedure is a supplementary service.

For some students—for example, some who have emotional or behavioral disabilities or autism—being in a general education classroom nearly all day may be academically and emotionally inappropriate. For these students, the LRE may be a general education classroom for part of the day and a special education classroom, sometimes called a *resource room*, for the remainder of the day. Yet other students' LRE may be a special education setting for most of the day, sometimes referred to as a *self-contained class*. Students with significant behavior problems and students who require intensive supports may be educated in this way. Finally, just a few students with disabilities attend separate or residential schools or learn in a home or hospital setting. These very restrictive options usually are necessary only for students with the most significant or complex disabilities.

Identifying an LRE other than a general education setting is a serious decision that usually is made by a team of professionals and a student's parents only after

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Some students are overrepresented in special education: Indian/Alaska Native students are 1.52 times more likely than all other students to receive special education services, and African-American students are 1.47 times more likely (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).



In inclusive schools, all students are welcomed members of their learning communities.

intensive supports have been provided in the general education classroom without success. These supports can include alternative materials or curriculum, assistance from a paraprofessional (that is, a teaching assistant) or a special education teacher, adaptive equipment such as a computer, or consultative assistance from a psychologist or counselor. However, a few students' needs are so great that a setting outside general education is the only one considered. Chapter 2 presents more detail about the range of LRE settings considered for students with disabilities. Here, the points to remember are these: The LRE for most students with disabilities is general education, and you, as a professional educator, have a crucial role to play in these students' education.

www.resources

<http://www.disability.gov>
Managed by the U.S. Department of Labor, this website is a comprehensive set of resources related to disabilities across the lifespan and includes links to resources available in each state.

Inclusive Practices

Over the past two decades, the entire structure of special education services has undergone significant change (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Stecker, 2010). Although federal law continues to stipulate that a range of settings must be made available to meet the needs of students with disabilities, many professionals now seriously question the assumption that students who need more intensive services should routinely receive them in a restrictive setting such as a special education classroom. The concept of inclusive practices, while not directly addressed in federal special education law, implies that students are more alike than different and that all students are welcomed members of their learning communities (for example, Connor & Ferri, 2007; Downing & Eichinger, 2003; Fitch, 2003; Valle & Conner, 2011). In the past, many students with disabilities were only temporary guests in general education classrooms, and few efforts were made to provide assistance so they could be successfully educated with their nondisabled peers (for example, Artiles, Harris-Murri, & Rostenberg, 2006).

Many educators now find that all or most supports for students with disabilities can be provided effectively in general education classrooms when teachers are prepared to work with such students and related concerns are addressed (Dukes & Lamar-Dukes, 2009; McLeskey & Waldron, 2007a). They further maintain that if students cannot meet traditional academic expectations, the expectations should be changed, not the setting. These educators reject the assumption that the setting dictates the type and intensity of services, and they support instead inclusive practices (Roach & Salisbury, 2006).

The concept of **inclusive practices** is founded on the belief or philosophy that students with disabilities should be fully integrated into their school learning communities, usually in general education classrooms, and that their instruction should be based on their abilities, not their disabilities. Inclusive practices have three dimensions:

1. *Physical integration*: Placing students in the same classroom as nondisabled peers should be a strong priority, and removing them from that setting should be done only when absolutely necessary.
2. *Social integration*: Relationships should be nurtured between students with disabilities and their classmates and peers as well as adults.
3. *Instructional integration*: Most students should be taught in the same curriculum used for students without disabilities and helped to succeed by adjusting how teaching and learning are designed (that is, with accommodations) and measured. For some students with significant intellectual disabilities, instructional integration means anchoring instruction in the standard general curriculum but appropriately adjusting expectations (that is, making modifications).

Ultimately, the concept of inclusive practices as used in this book means that all learners are welcomed full members at their schools and in their classrooms and that they are seen as the responsibility of all educators (Frattura & Capper, 2006; Skilton-Sylvester & Slesaransky-Poe, 2009). It further implies that educators' strong preference is for these students to be educated with their peers without disabilities.

We also would like to note that we prefer the phrase *inclusive practices* to the term *inclusion* because the latter can imply that there is a single model or program

that can serve all students' needs, while the former more accurately conveys that inclusiveness is made up of many strategies and options. Later in this chapter, we address in more detail how inclusive practices increasingly form the basis for contemporary education practices.

One more term should be mentioned in this discussion of how students with disabilities receive services. When the LRE concept became part of special education laws during the 1970s, the LRE for most students with disabilities was a part-time or full-time special education class. When such students were permitted to participate in general education, it was called mainstreaming. **Mainstreaming** involves placing students with disabilities in general education settings only when they can meet traditional academic expectations with minimal assistance or when those expectations are not relevant (for example, participation only in recess or school assemblies for access to social interactions with peers). In most locales, *mainstreaming* now is considered a dated term and has been replaced with the phrase *inclusion* or *inclusive practices*. However, as you participate in field experiences and speak to experienced educators, you may find that in some schools, the vocabulary of inclusion is used, but the practices implemented seem more like mainstreaming. That is, teachers may say that their school is inclusive but then explain that students like Aaron, featured in the beginning of the chapter, need to be in separate classes because of their below-grade reading levels. This practice is actually mainstreaming.

Finally, you also may find that teachers in your locale use words such as *LRE*, *mainstreaming*, and *inclusion* interchangeably, or they might have yet different terms to describe special education services. They may refer to *integrated classes* or *collaborative classes* when describing the general education classes in which students with disabilities participate. To assist you with the vocabulary of special education programs and instructional approaches, a glossary is provided at the back of this textbook. Keep in mind, though, that knowing the terms used in special education is not nearly as important as learning about your students, developing skills for addressing their needs, and celebrating your role in enabling them to achieve success.

How Did Today's Special Education Services Come to Exist?

Special education as it exists today has been influenced by a number of different factors. Although people with disabilities have been identified and treated for centuries, special education grew rapidly only in the twentieth century (Kode, 2002; Winzer, 1993). As special education has evolved, it has been shaped by federal law, the civil rights movement and related court cases, and changing social and political beliefs. Figure 1.1 illustrates some factors that have influenced the evolution of special education.

The Development of Education for Students with Disabilities

When compulsory public education began near the turn of the twentieth century, almost no school programs existed for students with disabilities (Kode, 2002; Scheerenberger, 1983). Students with disabilities that were relatively mild—that is, learning or behavior problems or minor physical impairments—were educated along with other students because their needs were not considered extraordinary. Many children with significant intellectual or physical disabilities did not attend school at all, and others were educated by private agencies or lived in institutions. In fact, for the first half of the twentieth century, many states explicitly legislated permission for school districts to prohibit some students with disabilities from attending (Yell, Rogers, & Rogers, 1998).

However, as compulsory education became widespread during the 1920s and 1930s, the number of special classes in public schools grew. Schools were expected

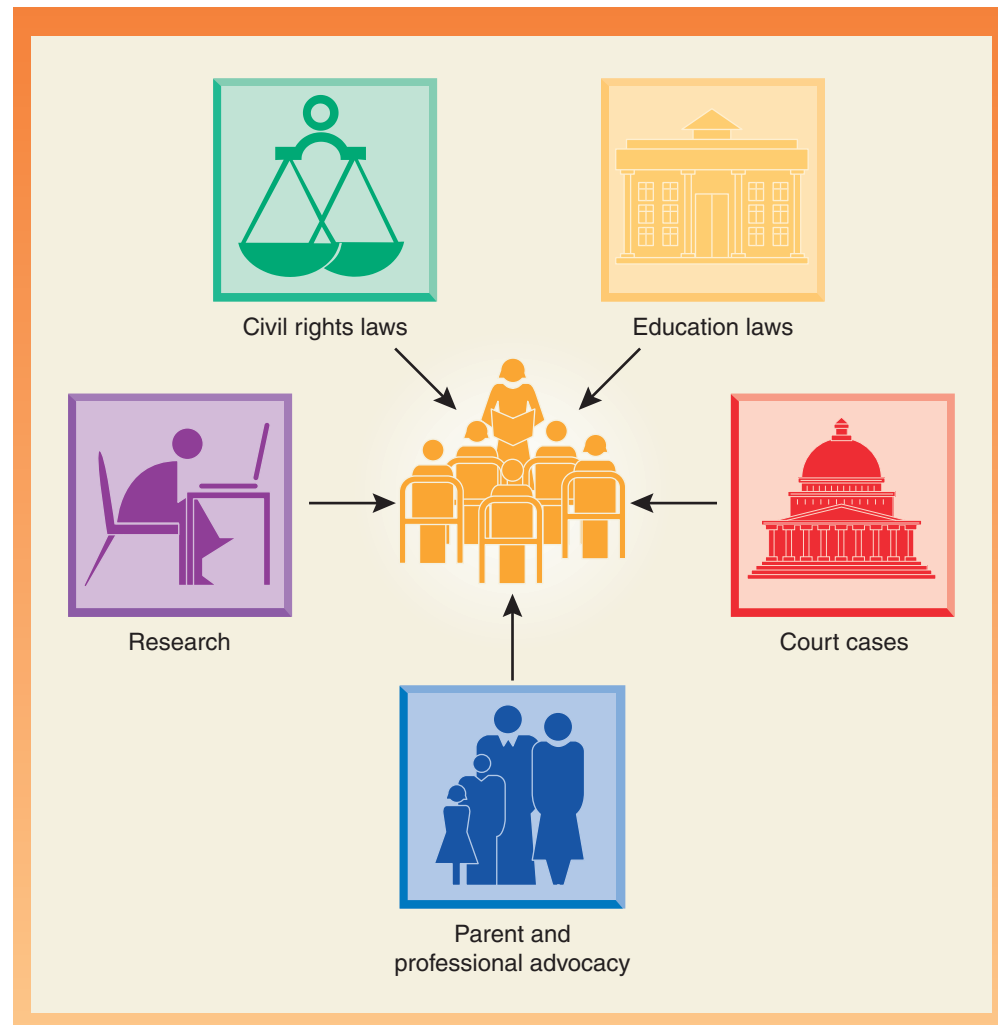
fyi

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), founded in 1922 by Elizabeth Farrell, is a professional organization for teachers, administrators, parents, and other advocates for the rights of students with disabilities (<http://www.cec.sped.org>).

www.resources

<http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/%2Croot%2Cdynamic%2CVideoClips%2C>

At Building the Legacy: IDEA 2004 you can learn more detail about the requirements of federal special education law through a series of brief video clips.

FIGURE 1.1 Influences on Current Special Education Practices

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As you prepare to be an educator, you will learn about the importance of developing *cultural competence*. Doing so involves valuing diversity, assessing your own views of diversity, being aware of the dynamics of intercultural interactions, developing cultural knowledge, and adjusting your teaching and other professional activities based on that knowledge (King, Sims, & Osher, 2007).

to be like efficient assembly lines, with each class of students moving from grade to grade and eventually graduating from high school as productive citizens prepared to enter the workforce (Patton, Payne, & Beirne-Smith, 1986; Scheerenberger, 1983). Special classes were developed as a place for students who could not keep up with their classmates. Because many students with disabilities still were not in school, most of the students sent to special classes probably had mild or moderate learning or intellectual disabilities. Educators at the time believed that such students would learn better in a protected setting and that the efficiency of the overall educational system would be preserved (Bennett, 1932; Pertsch, 1936).

By the 1950s, special education programs were available in many school districts, but some undesirable outcomes were becoming apparent. For example, students in special classes often were considered incapable of learning academic skills. They spent their school time practicing what were called “manual skills” such as weaving and bead stringing. Researchers began questioning this practice and conducted studies to explore the efficacy of special education. When they compared students with disabilities who were in special education classes to similar students who had remained in general education, they found the latter group often had learned more than the former (Blatt, 1958; Goldstein, Moss, & Jordan, 1965). Parents at this time also became active advocates for better educational opportunities for their children (Blatt, 1987). By the late 1960s, many authorities in the field agreed

that segregated special classes were not the most appropriate educational setting for many students with disabilities (Blatt, 1958; Christopolos & Renz, 1969; Dunn, 1968; Hobbs, 1975; Lilly, 1971).

The Impact of the Civil Rights Movement on Special Education

During the 1950s and 1960s, another force began contributing to the development of new approaches for special education. The civil rights movement, although initially focused on the rights of African Americans, expanded and began to influence thinking about people with disabilities (Chaffin, 1975; Fleischer & Zames, 2001). In the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it was unlawful under the Fourteenth Amendment to discriminate arbitrarily against any group of people. The Court then applied this concept to the education of children, ruling that the state-mandated separate education for African American students could not be an equal education. This court decision introduced the concept of *integration* into public education, the notion that the only way to protect students' constitutional right to equal opportunity was to ensure that diverse student groups learned together. Soon people with disabilities were recognized as another group whose rights often had been violated because of arbitrary discrimination. For children, the discrimination occurred when they were denied access to schools because of their disabilities. Beginning in the late 1960s and continuing through today, parents and others have used the court system to ensure that the civil and educational rights of children with disabilities are preserved (Blanchett, Brantlinger, & Shealey, 2005; Rueda, Klingner, Sager, & Velasco, 2008). Figure 1.2 summarizes several influential court cases that have helped shape special education concepts and services.

Section 504 One of the outcomes of the civil rights movement was legislation designed to prevent discrimination against individuals with disabilities, whether children in schools or adults in the workforce. **Section 504** of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a civil rights law that prevents discrimination against all individuals with disabilities in programs that receive federal funds, as do all public schools. For children of school age, Section 504 ensures equal opportunity for participation in the full range of school activities (Walker, 2006; Zirkel, 2009a). Through Section 504, some students not eligible for services through special education may be entitled to receive specific types of assistance to help them succeed in school.

For example, Sondra is a student with a severe attention problem. She cannot follow a lesson for more than a few minutes at a time; she is distracted by every noise in the hallway and every car that goes by her classroom window. Her teacher describes her as a student who “acts first and thinks later.” Sondra does not have a disability as established in special education law, but she does need extra assistance and is considered disabled according to Section 504 because her significant attention problem negatively affects her ability to function in school. The professionals at her school are required to create and carry out a plan to help Sondra access education. Special education teachers may assist because they know techniques that will help Sondra, but Sondra does not receive special education services, and responsibility for the plan lies with the principal and teachers. Some of the other students who might receive assistance through Section 504 include those with health problems such as asthma and extreme allergies and those with physical disabilities who do not need special education (Zirkel, 2009b). More detail on Section 504 is presented in Chapter 8.



The civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s strongly contributed to the recognition of the rights of individuals with disabilities.

RESEARCH NOTE

In a qualitative study, Lindstrom, Doren, Metheny, Johnson, and Zane (2007) found that positive family relationships, involvement, advocacy, career aspirations, and career-related activities led to better employment for young adults with learning disabilities.

FIGURE 1.2 Court Cases Affecting Special Education

Since 1954, hundreds of legal decisions have clarified the rights of students with disabilities and the responsibilities of schools for educating them. The following cases have had a significant impact on special education.

Brown v. Board of Education (347 U.S. 483) (1954)

- U.S. Supreme Court case
- School segregation denies students equal educational opportunity
- Although referring primarily to racial segregation, this decision has since become the cornerstone for ensuring equal rights for students with disabilities

Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (343 F. Supp. 279) (1972)

- U.S. District Court of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania decision
- Schools may not refuse to educate students with mental retardation
- A free public education must be provided to *all* students

Larry P. v. Wilson Riles (793 F.2d 969) (1986)

- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California decision
- Intelligence (IQ) tests cannot be used to determine whether African-American students have mental retardation because of the tests' racial and cultural bias
- In 1986, the ruling was expanded to include IQ testing of these students for any disability

Board of Education of Hendrick School District v. Rowley (632 F. 2d 945) (1982)

- U.S. Supreme Court decision
- Special education services must provide an appropriate education; the law does not require optimum services
- Parent request for an interpreter for their daughter with a hearing loss, who was achieving at an average level, was denied

Daniel R. R. v. State Board of Education (874 F.2d 1036) (1989)

- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit decision
- Appropriate placement for students with disabilities depends on whether (1) a student can be satisfactorily educated in the general education setting with supplementary supports provided and (2) the student is mainstreamed to

the maximum extent appropriate in cases in which the general education setting is not successful

- For Daniel, a student with Down syndrome, the school district did not violate his rights when he was moved from general education after an unsuccessful attempt to include him

Oberti v. Board of Education of Clementon School District (995 F.2d 204) (1993)

- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit decision
- School districts must make available a full range of supports and services in the general education setting to accommodate students with disabilities, including the student with Down syndrome involved in the suit
- Just because a student learns differently from other students does not necessarily warrant that student's exclusion from general education

Doe v. Withers (20 IDELR 422, 426–427) (1993)

- West Virginia Circuit Court decision
- Michael Withers, a high school history teacher, refused to make oral testing accommodations needed by Douglas Doe, a student with learning disabilities, resulting in a failing grade and athletic ineligibility
- The family was awarded \$5,000 in compensatory damages and \$30,000 in punitive damages, illustrating general education teachers' very real responsibility to make a good faith effort to provide required accommodations for students with disabilities

Schaffer v. Weast (126 S. Ct. 528) (2005)

- U.S. Supreme Court decision
- The burden of proof in any disagreement about a student's individualized education plan lies with the party bringing suit—in this case, the Schaffer family
- Until this case, it typically had been assumed that a school district had to prove that its position in a suit was correct, even if the district had not filed the suit

Winkelman v. Parma City School District (2007 U.S. LEXIS 5902; 75 U.S.L.W. 4329) (2007)

- U.S. Supreme Court decision
- Parents of children with disabilities (in this case, the Winkelmans) have rights through IDEA and thus are entitled to represent themselves (and hence their children) in court
- Parents are not obligated to hire an attorney to represent them in court

Sources: Adapted from "Reflections on the 25th Anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act," by A. Katsiyannis, M. L. Yell, and R. Bradley, 2001, *Remedial and Special Education*, 22, pp. 324–334; "Medical Services: The Disrupted Related Service," by L. Bartlett, 2000, *Journal of Special Education*, 33, pp. 215–223; *Legal Issues in Special Educations*, by A. G. Osborne, 1996, Boston: Allyn & Bacon; "Adequate Access or Equal Treatment: Looking beyond the IDEA to Section 504 in a Post-Schaffer Public School," by C. J. Walker, 2006, *Stanford Law Review*, 58, pp. 1563–1622; and *Winkelman v. Parma City School District*, 2007, U.S. LEXIS 5902, 75 U.S.L.W. 4329.

Americans with Disabilities Act In July 1990, President George H. W. Bush signed into law the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. This civil rights law was based on the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, but it further extended the rights of individuals with disabilities. This law, amended and updated through the **Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (ADAA)** in 2008, is the most significant disability legislation ever passed (National Council on Disability, 2006; Zirkel, 2009b). It protects all individuals with disabilities from discrimination, and it requires most employers to make reasonable accommodations for them. Although ADA does not deal directly with the education of students with disabilities, it does clarify the civil rights of all individuals with disabilities and thus has an impact on special education. This law also ensures that transportation, buildings, the workplace, and many places open to the public are accessible to people with disabilities. If you are a teacher with a disability, you might be influenced by ADA in the same way that it affects you in other situations. For example, if your school is not accessible to wheelchairs and undergoes renovation, then ramps, elevators, and wide entries with automatic doors probably will have to be installed. If you have a disability, this law also protects you from discrimination when you look for a teaching position.

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Guiberson (2009) found that Hispanic students are underrepresented in certain disability categories (e.g., intellectual and emotional/behavioral disabilities) and overrepresented in others (learning disability and speech-language impairment).

The Legislative Basis for Contemporary Special Education

Influenced by researchers' growing doubts about the effectiveness of special education classes and by civil rights court cases, many states by the early 1970s had begun to address special education issues by passing laws to guarantee that students with disabilities would receive an appropriate education. Federal law soon mirrored this trend and continues to do so today (Valle & Conner, 2011). You can review the original core principles of and key subsequent additions to federal special education law in Figure 1.3.

The First Federal Special Education Legislation In 1975, Congress passed **Public Law (P.L.) 94-142**, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHCA), thereby setting federal guidelines for special education and laying the foundation on which current special education practice rests. It took into account many of the early court decisions that established the civil rights of students with disabilities, and it mandated the concept of least restrictive environment (LRE). This law also specifically described categories of disabilities that make students eligible to receive special education and clarified the related services to which students might be entitled. In addition, it established procedures for identifying a student as needing special education and outlined the rights of parents who disapprove of the educational services offered to their children.

Revisions and Refinements to Special Education Legislation Since 1975, P.L. 94-142 has been reauthorized several times. As each reconsideration of the law has occurred, its core principles have been upheld. At the same time, the law has been extended and its provisions clarified. For example, in 1990 the name of the law was changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to reflect more contemporary person-first language. In addition, the term *handicapped* was removed from the law and the preferred term *disability* was substituted. This law also added significantly to the provisions for children from birth to age 5 with disabilities who had first been included in the law in 1986. It also bolstered provisions for supporting students with disabilities preparing to transition from school to work, postsecondary education, and other postschool options. One other important 1990 change in this law was the addition of two new categories of disability: autism and traumatic brain injury (TBI).

IDEA was revised again in 1997. Perhaps most important for general education teachers, this law recognized that most students with disabilities spend all or

FIGURE 1.3 Provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA)

Core Principles

- *Free appropriate public education (FAPE).* Students with disabilities are entitled to attend public schools and receive the educational services they need. This education is provided at no cost to parents.
- *Least restrictive environment (LRE).* Students with disabilities must be educated in the least restrictive environment in which they can succeed with appropriate supports provided. For most students, this environment is the general education classroom.
- *Individualized education.* The instructional services and other assistance for a student with disabilities must be tailored to meet his needs according to a prepared individualized education program (IEP) that is reviewed and updated annually. IEPs are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.
- *Nondiscriminatory evaluation.* Students must be assessed using instruments that do not discriminate on the basis of race, culture, or disability. In considering eligibility for special education services, a student must be assessed by a multidisciplinary team in her native language using tests that are relevant to the area of concern. Eligibility cannot be decided on the basis of only one test.
- *Due process.* If a disagreement occurs concerning a student's eligibility for special education placement or services, whether raised by parents or the school district, no changes can be made until the issue has been resolved by an impartial hearing and, if necessary, the appropriate court, a procedure referred to as *due process*.
- *Zero reject—child find.* No student may be excluded from public education because of a disability. Further, each state must take action to locate children who may be entitled to special education services.

Additional Major Provisions

- *Transition services.* Transition services that prepare students for leaving school (for higher education, vocational training, or a job) must be addressed in IEPs for students beginning at age 16. Transition plans must include strategies to improve academic and functional achievement to foster student success and must be based on student strengths. These plans must be updated annually and be written to include measurable goals for the postsecondary years.
- *General education teacher roles and responsibilities.* At least one general education teacher must participate as a member of the team that writes a student's IEP, unless school professionals and parents agree for some reason that this would not be beneficial to the student. In addition, the IEP must directly address student participation in general education and justify any placement that is not in general education.
- *Highly qualified special education teachers.* Special education teachers who teach core academic subjects must obtain two types of credentials. First, they must have a special education teaching credential. In addition, in secondary schools, unless special education teachers work only with students with significant intellectual disabilities, they must be documented as being highly qualified in every core subject area in which they

teach. However, in most states, if they work in general education classrooms, ensuring that students with disabilities receive their needed supports there, they are not obligated to have the highly qualified status in those core academic areas. Elementary special educators usually are considered highly qualified to teach core subject areas at that level.

- *Parent participation.* Parents must be part of the decision-making team for determining eligibility for special education services as well as for determining the appropriate educational placement for their children. Furthermore, schools must report to parents on the progress of their children with disabilities at least as often as they report progress for students without disabilities.
- *Evaluation and eligibility.* School districts generally have 60 days from the time a parent agrees that the child can be evaluated until a decision must be reached about the child's eligibility for special education. Students are not eligible for special education simply because of poor math or reading instruction or because of language differences. For some students, the requirement that a complete reassessment be completed every three years can be modified. That is, for older students already existing information can be used in lieu of repeatedly administering standardized tests.
- *Disproportionate representation.* School districts must take specific steps to ensure that students from minority groups are not overidentified as being eligible for special education services. If disproportionate representation exists, districts must take steps to correct this problem.
- *Assessment of students.* States are required to measure the academic progress of students who have disabilities, either by including them in the standardized assessments other students take or, for students with significant intellectual disabilities, by using an alternate assessment process. Students are entitled to appropriate accommodations during assessment (for example, extended time, large-print materials).
- *Discipline.* As needed, strategies for addressing a student's behavior must be included as part of the IEP. If a student is suspended or placed in an alternative interim placement, a behavior plan must be developed. In some cases (for example, when students bring weapons or drugs to school), schools may place students with disabilities in alternative interim placements for up to 45 days, pending a meeting to determine the next steps. Students must continue to receive special education services during this time.
- *Paraprofessionals.* Paraprofessionals, teaching assistants, and other similar personnel must be trained for their jobs and appropriately supervised.
- *Procedural safeguards.* States must make mediation available to parents as an early and informal strategy for resolving disagreements about the identification of, placement of, or provision of services for students with disabilities. Parents are not obligated to mediate, and mediation may not delay a possible hearing. Unless waived with parent approval, the school district also must convene a dispute resolution session prior to a formal hearing regarding disagreements related to special education.

most of their school time in general education settings, and so it included a provision that the general education teacher usually should be a member of the team that writes the student's educational plan. Another important change occurred regarding assessment. Acknowledging that students with disabilities often were excluded from local and state assessments, the law added a requirement that students with disabilities be assessed like other students, using either the same assessment instrument employed with typical learners or some type of alternative instrument.

Current Special Education Legislation The most recent reauthorization of IDEA, signed into law in 2004 and sometimes called the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act**, mandated yet further refinements in special education. For example, this legislation streamlined some procedures and paperwork, and it also specified that all students with disabilities must participate in all assessment conducted by local school districts with needed supports provided (Hyatt, 2007). The law also established that special education teachers must be **highly qualified** if they teach core academic content to students with disabilities. Yet another provision is this: IDEA now permits school districts to use some of the funds allotted to special education to design strategies for prevention. That is, by providing intensive teaching, behavior interventions, and other supports, it may be possible to prevent some students from needing special education at all.

The element of the current reauthorization of IDEA that may have the most direct impact on general education teachers is called response to intervention (RtI). RtI is a new and alternative way for students to be identified as having a learning disability. Rather than relying just on test scores, RtI permits states to decide to base that decision on whether or not increasingly intensive interventions implemented to address the student's academic problems have a positive impact on learning (Zirkel & Thomas, 2010). If they do, no disability exists. If little or no improvement occurs after research-based strategies and programs are carefully used more frequently and for longer periods of time, the student may be found to have a learning disability. Since its initial development, RtI also has been applied to student behavior problems. The principles on which RtI was developed are outlined in the Instructional Edge, and you will learn more about this concept in Chapter 2 and the rest of this text. For now what is essential for you to remember is that RtI is implemented by general education teachers, reading specialists, and others; it is not a special education service. This means that it is likely you will have a role in an RtI process, and this is so whether you plan a career in elementary, middle, or high school.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) Most recently reauthorized in 2002 and sometimes referred to as the **No Child Left Behind Act** (NCLB), it is the law that has the goal of ensuring that all students, including those who live in poverty, have equal access to a high quality education. Although the law directly addresses only schools whose students live in poverty, it generally mandates higher academic standards and increased accountability for all students, including those with disabilities. These are some of the law's key provisions:

- All students must be assessed to determine their academic progress. Nearly all students with disabilities take the same annual standardized assessments as their peers without disabilities; a few students, those with significant intellectual disabilities, take alternate tests designed to measure their learning.
- Each state must make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward the goal of achievement at grade level for all students by 2014, and the scores of students with disabilities and other special needs (for example, those who live in poverty, those whose native language is not English) are part of this calculation.

www.resources

<http://www.rti4success.org/>
The National Center on Response to Intervention provides a straightforward explanation of RtI, training modules and other resources, and a free monthly newsletter.



INSTRUCTIONAL EDGE

Understanding Response to Intervention (RtI)

Response to intervention (RtI), part of IDEA, has rapidly become central to most schools' efforts to reach struggling learners. General education teachers, literacy and math specialists, administrators, and many other professionals have responsibility for implementing RtI, which is based on these core principles:

- An unwavering belief that all students can learn
- A focus on prevention in the academic, behavioral, and social domains
- Universal screening, that is, checking the academic, behavior, and social functioning of all students to determine which students are at-risk for failure so that interventions can be implemented
- A collaborative problem-solving approach to identifying and effectively addressing student learning, behavior, and social problems, one that includes professionals and parents/families
- Emphasis on implementing interventions with consistency (sometimes called fidelity of implementation)
- Decision making based on student data (rather than impressions or perceptions)
- Evidence-based practices, that is, academic, behavioral, and other supports implemented are only those demonstrated through research to be effective
- Continuous monitoring of student progress during interventions to determine in a timely manner whether those interventions are effective
- Multiple tiers of intervention; that is, increasingly intensive interventions matched to student needs implemented if evidence demonstrates those already in place are not reducing gaps
- If multiple tiers of intervention are not successful, referral for additional assessment and possibly special education services

At the school level, this means that if students with disabilities are not improving enough in terms of achievement, the school is identified as failing to make AYP, and sanctions may be applied.

- Assessments must include reporting individual student scores (not just aggregated scores) so that parents can be informed of their children's achievement.
- All students must be taught core academic subjects by teachers who are highly qualified in the content areas. This provision has helped to ensure that students with disabilities, especially those in middle school and high school, have more access to general education settings and teachers who generally have more extensive knowledge about the core academic subjects than do some special education teachers. This component of NCLB further strengthens the least restrictive environment provision of IDEA.
- Teaching practices and instructional programs, particularly those in reading and math, must be based on rigorous research. That is, they should have a strong basis in studies that demonstrate their positive impact on student learning. Consistent with this provision of the law, you will find as you read this textbook that the strategies presented for improving student achievement are grounded in such research.

www.resources

<http://www.nichcy.org/Pages/Home.aspx>

The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities provides extensive information on disabilities and disability-related issues for families, teachers, and others. The website includes fact sheets and research briefs on specific disabilities as well as special education law. Most pages are available in Spanish as well as English.

Special education has evolved on the basis of many factors. When special education began, essentially no services were offered in public schools. Today comprehensive services in a wide variety of settings are supplied, and both very young children and young adults, as well as students in elementary and secondary schools, benefit from them. As the rights and needs of students with disabilities have been better understood and federal legislation has set higher standards for their education, general education teachers—in traditional core academic areas as well as in the essential related areas such as art, music, and physical education—have become increasingly involved in their education, a trend that surely will continue.

What Factors Influence Inclusive Practices in Today's Schools?

Now that you have learned about the key concepts that guide special education, the development of the field, and the litigation and legislation that have shaped special education services, it is important to return one more time to the topic of inclusion. The purpose of the following discussion is to draw your attention to the complexity of inclusive practices by briefly exploring several factors that have a significant influence on their implementation, including current and likely future legislation and policies; understanding of the concept of inclusive practices; the impact on stakeholders—students, parents, and educators; and resource limits that affect essential matters such as scheduling and staffing.

Legislation and Related Policies

Although the term *inclusion* does not appear in federal laws governing special education, provisions in those laws as well as other education and civil rights legislation you have read about in this chapter provide a strong foundation for inclusive practices (McLaughlin, 2010). This foundation is unlikely to be abandoned as new laws are enacted. For example, IDEA requires that students be educated in the least restrictive environment, and ESEA mandates access to the curriculum for all students. Together, these provisions have led state and local policymakers to stress inclusive practices. Similar comments could be made related to provisions such as the requirement for all students to participate in assessments and to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) and those related to teachers being highly qualified in core content areas. A useful activity is to scan back through all the information presented thus far to identify additional legislative provisions that probably have led to more inclusive practices in schools. This trend is not likely to vanish. Educational reformers maintain their commitment to holding all students, including those with disabilities, to high standards so that they leave school well-prepared for college or a vocation (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Not all the legislative influences are positive, however. For example, the requirements of ESEA have resulted in tremendous pressure for all students to reach achievement goals. In some schools, teachers fear that having students with disabilities in their classes may lower their average class scores. Others note that proposals to link teacher pay to the performance of their students may result in teachers resisting instructing students with disabilities out of concern they may miss out on bonuses and other financial incentives (Gratz, 2009). Concerns such as these should not be the basis for decisions about students' education, but they reflect the rather complicated situation that exists in schools today.

Understanding of Inclusive Practices

Although it is a bit surprising after so many years of discussion, a second influence on inclusive practices concerns its definition. Too often, research on inclusive practices and essays on their relative merits and drawbacks focus almost exclusively on where students are seated, that is, the amount of time they spend in general education classrooms (Friend & Shamberger, 2008; Idol, 2006). As a result, some professionals argue that students with disabilities sometimes need a small group, highly structured environment that is difficult to create in



General education teachers are accountable for the education of all the students in their classrooms, including those with disabilities.



Characteristics of Inclusive Schools

As you learn about your responsibilities as a teacher for students with disabilities, this list of characteristics can help you understand in a real-world way what an inclusive school is like.

- Every person who works in the school is committed to the goal of helping all students achieve their potential; inclusiveness is a school-level belief system.
- The principal is a strong and vocal advocate for all students, adamant that they access the general curriculum with a system of supports around them.
- Professionals and other staff routinely use respectful, person-first language.
- Emphasis is on abilities rather than disabilities.
- Special education and other services are seamless—their benefit to students is maximized and their cost to students is minimized.
- Special education and other services do not exist as separate entities (for example, “we have inclusion, resource, and self-contained programs; speech and ESL are pullout programs”).
- Differentiation is considered the rule, not the exception.
- Assistive technology enhances access to the general curriculum.
- Parents are not just welcomed partners in the schools; their participation and collaboration are actively sought.
- A variety of support services are available to students, including instruction in a separate setting—but only when it is the last choice and only for as long as data indicate it is effective.
- Inclusiveness is communicated in many ways—materials displayed, books and other media available, adult interactions with students and each other, schedules, room assignments, and so on.
- The term *inclusion* is rarely needed because it is such an integral part of the school culture.

the general education classroom, and they conclude that inclusion—sometimes using the phrase *full inclusion*—is not sound educational practice.

Alternatively, in many school districts and among some authors (for example, Handler, 2003; McLeskey & Waldron, 2007), inclusive practices are conceptualized as a belief system that emphasizes welcoming all students in a school learning community (Frattura & Capper, 2006). Just as important, inclusiveness is not judged solely on the location of a student’s education. In these schools, factors such as those listed in the Professional Edge are stressed. As you have learned, this broader view is the one taken in this textbook. In highly inclusive schools, professionals and parents realize that instruction sometimes must occur in a separate setting. However, their goal is to return the student to instruction with peers as soon as possible and for as much time as possible. Further, they judge the effectiveness of inclusive practices on a student-by-student basis, monitoring progress and making instructional decisions according to the student’s individual needs and educational program (for example, Brigham, Morocco, Clay, & Zigmond, 2006).

fyi

Although this textbook focuses on special education for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade, young children—those birth to age 5—also may be determined to be eligible for special education services.

Impact on Students, Parents, and Educators

Discussion about the best ways to educate students with disabilities should consider the key stakeholders. That is, consideration must be given to students and their parents and families. In addition, the perspectives of teachers and administrators should be taken into account.

Student Outcomes Any discussion of inclusive practices must consider the effect on student achievement (Yell et al., 2006). That is, if students with disabilities in inclusive settings do not adequately progress in their learning, then inclusion is not in their best interests. At the same time, inclusive practices should not interfere with the achievement of other students. Generally, academic outcomes in inclusive schools have been found to be positive for students (Hang & Rabren, 2009; Idol, 2006). For example, in a statewide study, researchers found that students with disabilities who spent more time in general education passed the eighth-grade assessment at a higher rate than similar students with disabilities who were educated in special education settings. Students educated in general education settings also graduated at a higher rate from high school with a standard diploma (Luster & Durrett, 2003). Another

statewide study found that school districts reporting the greatest achievement gains for students with disabilities focused on educating those students with nondisabled peers so that all had access to the same core curriculum (Silverman, Hazelwood, & Cronin, 2009).

Yet other researchers have found positive effects of inclusive practices on mathematics achievement (Kunsch, Jitendra, & Sood, 2007), language development (Rafferty, Piscitelli, & Boettcher, 2003), problem-solving skills (Agran, Blanchard, Wehmeyer, & Hughes, 2002; Ryndak, Ward, Alper, Storch, & Montgomery (2010), and discipline referrals (Cawley, Hayden, Cade, & Baker-Kroczyński, 2002). Although only a few studies have been reported on the impact of inclusive practices on typical students, they suggest that these students' achievement is not hindered (for example, McDonnell et al., 2003).

Few studies of students' perceptions of inclusive education have been reported, but those available generally indicate that students prefer to receive their education with their peers. For example, Connor (2006) reported on the experience of a student named Michael who was identified as being learning disabled and also lived in poverty. Michael discussed extensively the stigma of being labeled as disabled and receiving services in the special education classroom. He strongly preferred remaining in general education. Wilson and Michaels (2006) surveyed high school students with disabilities and their typical peers in a general education classroom with both a special education and a general education teacher. Both groups of students perceived the class as positive in terms of their access to multiple learning styles and assistance as needed.

Parent Perspectives Parents generally are positive about special education services, and they often prefer that their children be educated with peers in general education classrooms (Leach & Duffy, 2009; Purcell, Turnbull, & Jackson, 2006). They believe that inclusive practices are beneficial for academic achievement, and they also strongly believe that their children learn critical social skills when they spend most or all of the school day with their typical peers (Salend, 2006; Williams & Reisberg, 2003). One parent commented that when her fourth-grade son with autism was integrated into a general education classroom for most of the day, his behavior improved both at school and at home. She also noted that the other students in the class were clearly kind to her son, and she was grateful that they sought him out on the playground and chose him as a lunch partner.

When parents are uneasy about inclusive practices, their concerns usually relate to problems they have experienced or anticipate (for example, Hanline & Daley, 2002). For example, parents of children with physical disabilities have found that many teachers are poorly prepared to work with students with special needs and that these educators have not prepared students to have a classmate with a disability (Pivik, McComas, & Laflamme, 2002). Some parents find that their children seem more comfortable in a special education classroom that has fewer students and more structure (Johnson & Duffett, 2002). For all parents, perceptions of inclusive practices are more positive when they participate in collaborative decision making concerning their children's educational services (Matuszny, Banda, & Coleman, 2007).

Perspectives of Professionals The perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding inclusive practices can be represented along a continuum (for example, DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Pavri & Monda-Amaya, 2001; Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002). In some studies, general education teachers in elementary, middle, and high schools are found to believe strongly in inclusive practices based on high standards for students (King & Youngs, 2003; McLeskey et al., 2001). Teachers who support inclusive practices report making instructional accommodations to facilitate student learning and feeling positive about their work with students with disabilities (for example, Clayton, Burdge, Denham, Kleinert, & Kearns, 2006).

At the same time, some teachers' perceptions of inclusive practices are more ambivalent (for example, Kozik, Cooney, Vinciguerra, Gradel, & Black, 2009; Sze, 2009).

RESEARCH NOTE

Technology can improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Myles, Ferguson, and Hagiwara (2007) found that when they taught an adolescent with Asperger syndrome to use a personal digital assistant (PDA), he was motivated by the use of technology and significantly increased the number of times he independently recorded homework assignments.

RESEARCH NOTE

Ryndak, Ward, Alper, Storch, and Montgomery (2010) compared long-term outcomes for two brothers with intellectual disabilities, one who was educated in self-contained settings and one who received an inclusive education. Outcomes (for example, social behavior, tolerance for change) were more positive for the latter brother.

They recognize the value of inclusive practices but are uncertain about implementation. In one study of mathematics teachers (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006), the educators indicated that they had not learned enough about students with disabilities in their professional preparation programs and were uncertain about students' needs and how to address them. As you think about teaching students with disabilities and other special needs, what knowledge and skills do you anticipate needing? Among the items frequently mentioned are a commitment to inclusive practices and knowledge of effective instructional strategies (Stanovich & Jordan, 2002).

In addition to the views of teachers, principals' support of inclusive practices is essential, because principals are responsible for keeping the vision focused, fostering among staff an understanding of inclusion, and nurturing the development of the skills and practices needed to implement these practices (Horrocks, White, & Roberts, 2008; Salisbury & McGregor, 2002). Generally, principals report positive attitudes toward inclusive practices (for example, Praisner, 2003). Like teachers, though, they express concern that general education teachers may not have the skills to effectively instruct students with disabilities in their classrooms (for example, Oluwole, 2009).

Limited Resources

The most immediate influences on inclusive practices and those often the most daunting challenges to them seldom relate directly to instruction. Instead they often relate to practical matters and other pressures that exist in schools (Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, & Liebert, 2006). These are common concerns:

- *Adequate personnel:* Because inclusive schooling relies so heavily on the strong collaborative relationships among educators, staffing often is a critical issue. First, in many locales the overall size of classes has increased because of budget constraints. This leads to teachers having less time to spend with any individual student, including those with disabilities. Similarly, many special educators' case-loads have increased, and so their time has to be distributed among more students, and the same often can be said for other special service providers such as speech-language pathologists.
- *Scheduling:* The limited number of educators leads directly to problems in scheduling the inclusive programs and services needed by students with disabilities. For example, some students are best educated when their special education teacher joins the general education teacher in the general education and they co-teach, a topic addressed in Chapter 3. If one special educator is providing services to students in four, five, six, or even more classrooms, such partnerships are difficult to arrange. Similarly, in rural areas special education teachers and other service providers may need to travel from school to school, limiting their availability for programs based on inclusive practices. In schools where teacher turnover is high, it is difficult to sustain efforts to support students with disabilities in general education classrooms.
- *Time for shared planning:* The success of inclusive practices ultimately relies on the extent to which general and special education teachers can collaborate to design instructional strategies and discuss student learning and behavior. Nearly every study of inclusive practices includes mention of planning time as a barrier to implementation (Horne & Timmons, 2009; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007).

RESEARCH NOTE

The inclusion of students with disabilities is a focus worldwide. For example, Cardona (2009) found that student teachers in Spain believed in the concept of inclusion but were not confident of their preparation to work with students with disabilities in their classrooms.

Putting the Pieces Together

In some ways, the various positive and negative influences on inclusive practices are like puzzle pieces. In today's schools some of the pieces may be missing and others difficult to fit into place; yet others may be readily addressed and fit easily into the larger picture. Even in your own course, classmates may have a wide range of

opinions about inclusive practices and what is affecting them, and they may come across studies on inclusive practices that present contradictory results. In your field experiences, you are likely to discover that in some schools inclusive practices are the norm, while in others very traditional approaches are still in place. You may find yourself struggling to reconcile all these views.

One way that you can put the puzzle together is to learn to teach in a way that is responsive to a wide range of student needs (Sobel & Taylor, 2006; Zascavage & Winterman, 2009) and to use collaboration with colleagues and parents, as described in the Working Together, as a means for extending your expertise. As you will learn in the chapters that follow, much is known about effective ways to instruct students with disabilities, and many of those strategies will help other students learn as well (for example, Meo, 2008; McGuire, Scott, & Shaw, 2006; Pisha & Stahl, 2005). By welcoming all your students and making these strategies an integral part of your instruction, your pieces of the inclusive practices puzzle will fit right into place.

Finally, as you read about inclusive practices, keep in mind that the results researchers obtain and the viewpoints authors present are influenced by many variables in addition to those just discussed, including the abilities and disabilities, ages, and cultural backgrounds of students; the attitudes, knowledge, and skills of general and special education teachers; the commitment and participation of parents; school administration; policies and procedures; the type of outcomes measured; and even the predisposition of researchers and authors toward particular views of inclusive practices. As you develop your own understanding of inclusive practices, keep all these factors in mind to help you make sense of what you read. In this way, you will learn to be inclusive in your thinking but flexible in your approach to educating students with disabilities.

Working TOGETHER

The Importance of Collaboration for Meeting Student Needs

As you read this textbook and learn about your responsibilities for educating students with disabilities, you will find that *collaboration*—working together with others—is one of the keys to successful inclusive practices. Here are just a few examples of how you will collaborate on behalf of students:

- *Meeting with special education teachers:* You will meet frequently with special education teachers, both formally and informally. A special educator may contact you to see how a student is doing in your class, or you may contact a special educator to ask for new ideas for responding to a student's behavior. You and the special educator may share responsibility for meeting with parents during open houses or parent conferences.
- *Co-teaching:* Depending on local programs and services, you may co-teach with a special education teacher or related services professional such as a speech/language pathologist. In co-teaching, you share teaching responsibilities, with both educators working with all students. This topic is addressed in detail in Chapter 3.
- *Working with paraprofessionals:* If your class includes a student with a significant disability or several students who need support (but not co-teaching), you may collaborate with a paraprofessional. You will guide the work of that individual in your class to ensure that student support is appropriately provided.
- *Meeting on teams:* Various school teams support inclusive practices. Your grade-level or middle or high school department team will likely spend part of its time discussing students with disabilities and problem solving to address their needs. You also may be part of a team that tries to address student learning and behavior problems prior to any consideration of the need for special education. If a student in your class is being assessed to determine whether special education is needed, you will be part of that team. The latter two teams are discussed in Chapter 2.
- *Interacting with parents:* Perhaps the most important part of collaborating on behalf of students with disabilities is working with parents. You may communicate with parents through notes sent home and through e-mail; meet with them occasionally as they express concerns about their children; confer with them at formal team meetings; and work with them as they volunteer at school, help with field trips, and participate in other school activities and initiatives.



A disability label protects a student and gives access to resources, but it does not provide information about a student's abilities and potential.

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Although childhood obesity is not a disability specifically addressed in IDEA, it is becoming a major health concern: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2010), 19.6 percent of children ages 6 to 11 and 18.1 percent of adolescents ages 12 to 19 are obese.

Who Receives Special Education and Other Special Services?

Throughout this chapter, we have used the phrase *students with disabilities*. At this point, we will introduce you to the specific types of disabilities that may entitle students to receive special education services, as well as other special needs that may require specialized assistance. As you read the following definitions, remember that a disability label can only provide general guidelines about a student. Labels are a form of shorthand that professionals use, but no label can accurately describe a student. Your responsibility is to understand your students with disabilities in ways that extend beyond what any label communicates so you can help them reach their potential.

Categories of Disability in Federal Law

When we say that students have disabilities, we are referring to the specific categories of exceptionality prescribed by federal law. Each state has additional laws that clarify special education practices and procedures, and the terms used to refer to disabilities in state laws may differ from those found in federal law. For example, although federal law specifies the label *emotional disturbance* for some students, in some states, the term *behavior disorder* or *behavioral and emotional disability* is used. Similarly, although IDEA uses the term *mental retardation*, some states use the alternative *cognitive disability* or *intellectual disability*. Check with your instructor or your state department of education website for the terms used in your state.

According to IDEA, students with one or more of the following thirteen disabilities that negatively affect their educational performance are eligible for special education services. These disabilities also are summarized in Figure 1.4 on the next page.

Learning Disabilities Students with *learning disabilities (LD)* have dysfunctions in processing information typically found in language-based activities. They have average or above-average intelligence, but they often encounter significant problems learning how to read, write, and compute. They may not see letters and words in the way others do; they may not be able to pick out important features in a picture they are looking at; and they may take longer to process a question or comment directed to them. They also may have difficulty following directions, attending to tasks, organizing assignments, and managing time. Sometimes these students appear to be unmotivated or lazy when in fact they are trying to the best of their ability. Aaron, described at the beginning of this chapter, has one type of learning disability, but many other types also exist, and no single description characterizes all students with LD. Learning disabilities are by far the most common special need: Slightly fewer than half of all students receiving special education services in public schools in 2004–2005 had a learning disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Speech or Language Impairments When a student has extraordinary difficulties communicating with others for reasons other than maturation, a *speech or language impairment* is involved. Students with this disability may have trouble with *articulation*, or the production of speech sounds. They may omit words or mispronounce common words when they speak. They also may experience difficulty in *fluency*, such as a significant stuttering problem. Some students have far-reaching speech or language disorders, in which they have significant problems receiving and producing language. They may communicate through pictures or sign language.

FIGURE 1.4 IDEA Disability Categories

Federal Disability Term ¹	Brief Description ²
Learning disability (LD)	A disorder related to processing information that leads to difficulties in reading, writing, and computing; the most common disability, accounting for almost half of all students receiving special education.
Speech or language impairment (SLI)	A disorder related to accurately producing the sounds of language or meaningfully using language to communicate.
Mental retardation (MR)	Significant limitations in intellectual ability and adaptive behavior; this disability occurs in a range of severity.
Emotional disturbance (ED)	Significant problems in the social-emotional area to a degree that learning is negatively affected.
Autism	A disorder characterized by extraordinary difficulty in social responsiveness; this disability occurs in many different forms and may be mild or significant.
Hearing impairment (HI)	A partial or complete loss of hearing.
Visual impairment (VI)	A partial or complete loss of vision.
Deaf-blindness	A simultaneous significant hearing loss and significant vision loss.
Orthopedic impairment (OI)	A significant physical limitation that impairs the ability to move or complete motor activities.
Traumatic brain injury (TBI)	A medical condition denoting a serious brain injury that occurs as a result of accident or injury; potentially affecting learning, behavior, social skills, and language.
Other health impairment (OHI)	A disease or health disorder so significant that it negatively affects learning; examples include cancer, sickle-cell anemia, and diabetes.
Multiple disabilities	The simultaneous presence of two or more disabilities such that none can be identified as primary; the most common is the combination of intellectual and physical disabilities.
Developmental delay (DD)	A nonspecific disability category that states may choose to use as an alternative to specific disability labels for students up to age 9.

¹The terms used in your state may vary from those specified in federal special education law.
²More complete federal definitions of each category are presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

Some students' primary disability is a speech or language disorder, and they may receive services for this. For other students with disabilities, speech/language services supplement their other educational services. For example, a student with a learning disability also might receive speech/language services, as might a student with autism or traumatic brain injury. In these instances, speech/language services are often considered a related service, as defined earlier in this chapter.

Mental Retardation Students with *mental retardation (MR)* have significant limitations in intellectual ability and adaptive behaviors. They learn at a slower pace than do other students, and they may reach a point at which their learning levels off. Although the federal description of disability categories does not distinguish between students with mild mental retardation and those with more significant intellectual disabilities, many state descriptions do. Most individuals with this disability can lead independent or semi-independent lives as adults and can hold appropriate jobs. Because the term *mental retardation* can be very stigmatizing, the alternative term *intellectual disability* is becoming more common. In this text, the two terms are used interchangeably. Patricia, one of the students you met in the introduction to this chapter, has an intellectual disability.

RESEARCH NOTE

Although many researchers have studied the effects of children with significant disabilities on their families, few have examined the effects of children with learning disabilities. Dyson (2010) found a surprising number of negative effects, including general stress, parent disagreements, and negative reactions from extended family members.

Emotional Disturbance When a student has significant difficulty in the social-emotional domain—serious enough to interfere with the student’s learning—*emotional disturbance (ED)*, also sometimes called an *emotional and behavior disorder (EBD)*, exists. Students with this disability may have difficulty with interpersonal relationships and may respond inappropriately in emotional situations. That is, they may have extraordinary trouble making and keeping friends; they may get extremely angry when peers tease or play jokes on them; and they may repeatedly and significantly show little or inappropriate emotion when it is expected, such as when a family pet dies. Some students with ED are depressed; others are aggressive. Students with ED display these impairments over a long period of time, across different settings, and to a degree significantly different from their peers. Students with emotional disabilities are not just students whose behavior in a classroom is challenging to address; rather, they have chronic and extremely serious emotional or behavioral problems.

Autism Students with *autism*, sometimes referred to as *autism spectrum disorder* because of its many variations, usually lack appropriate social responsiveness from a very early age. They generally avoid physical contact (for example, cuddling and holding), and they may not make eye contact. Problems with social interactions persist as these children grow; they appear unaware of others’ feelings and may not seek interactions with peers or adults. They may have unusual language patterns, speaking without inflection, repeating what others say, or repeating something heard on television over and over. To feel comfortable, they may need highly routinized behavior, such as a formalized procedure for putting on their clothes or eating their meals. Some students with autism have above-average intelligence; others have intellectual disabilities. The causes of autism are not well understood, and the best approaches for working with students with autism are still emerging.

Asperger syndrome, usually considered a type of autism, is receiving increased attention among professionals. Individuals with this disorder usually experience difficulty in social interactions and communication, and they often have a very narrow range of interests. However, with appropriate supports and teacher understanding, students with Asperger syndrome can be highly successful in school. Thomas, one of the students you met at the beginning of the chapter, is identified as having autism, and his characteristics are consistent with having Asperger syndrome. You can learn a little more about autism by reading the Case in Practice in which teachers meet to problem solve regarding another student with this disability.

Hearing Impairments Disabilities that concern inability or limited ability to receive auditory signals are called *hearing impairments (HI)*. When students are *hard of hearing*, they have a significant hearing loss but are able to capitalize on residual hearing by using hearing aids and other amplifying systems. Students who are *deaf* have little or no residual hearing and therefore do not benefit from traditional devices that aid hearing. Some students with hearing loss may be assisted through the use of advanced technology such as a cochlear implant, a small, complex electronic device implanted near the ear that can provide a sense of sound. Depending on the extent of the disability, students with hearing impairments may use sign language, speech reading, or other ways to help them communicate.

Visual Impairments Disabilities that concern the inability or limited ability to receive information visually are called *visual impairments (VI)*. Some students have *partial sight* and can learn successfully using magnification devices and other adaptive materials; students who are *blind* do not use vision as a means of learning and instead rely primarily on touch and hearing. Depending on need, students with visual impairments may use braille, specialized computers, and other aids to assist in learning. In addition, some students with vision loss need specialized training to help them learn to move around successfully in their environment.

www.resources

<http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/school.htm>

The Family Village School website provides a wide variety of information about associations, instructional resources, legal issues, projects, and research related to inclusion.

CASE IN PRACTICE

● Problem Solving in Inclusive Schools: The Classroom Teacher's Role

● At Adams Middle School, staff members are meeting to discuss John, a seventh-grade student who has a formal diagnosis from a pediatric psychologist of pervasive developmental disorder (PDD) and who has many characteristics associated with autism. Ms. Diaz is David's English teacher, and Ms. Horton is the special educator who provides needed support. Mr. Powell, the school psychologist, also is present.

● *Ms. Diaz:* John is a student with many dimensions. He usually does fairly well in class, and his behavior is much less disruptive than it was at the beginning of the school year, but whenever we transition from one activity to another, there is a fairly strong chance that John will refuse to change. If I insist, even using the strategies you've given me, Ms. Horton, John often starts rocking and singing in a loud voice and essentially shutting me out. I've had two calls from other parents who said their children reported that John takes up too much of my time in class. It was difficult to respond because I think that perception is fairly accurate. I hope we can come up with some ideas to improve the whole situation.

● *Ms. Horton:* I know you also discussed John at your last team meeting. What did his other teachers have to say?

● *Ms. Diaz:* Everyone except Mr. Bryant is experiencing the same problems. Mr. Bryant said that John really likes science and that his behavior problems might not be as pronounced there because John really wants to do the labs. He also said that sometimes he can tell by watching John's facial expression that John is trying very hard to transition between activities without a problem—and that it's very difficult for him.

● *Mr. Powell:* You've mentioned the problem of transitioning between activities as one concern. Before we start addressing that, are there any other problems we should be aware of?

● *Ms. Diaz:* No. Right now, it's the behavior during transitions—and I want to be clear that all of us on the team know John is quite capable of learning what we're teaching, and our data tell us he is making very strong gains academically. We are committed to finding more solutions before the problem becomes more serious.

● *Ms. Horton:* One contribution I can make is to get into your classroom—and also into the classrooms of other teachers on

your team—to gather some additional information. It will help to gather data on the sequence of events in class that seem to prevent or lead to his behavior. For example, I'd like to observe how other students respond when he has a problem during a transition.

Ms. Diaz: That would be helpful, but I hope you can observe him within the next couple of days so we come up with new strategies. There is no time to waste. I've been cuing him as you suggested—it's not working now. I also tried to ignore him, but that made it worse.

Mr. Powell: Maybe we should focus for a minute or two on what is going well for John in your class.

Ms. Diaz: Let's see . . . He's usually fine and makes a good contribution when we're talking about assignments that are very concrete or literal. For example, he knows the nuances of parts of speech better than nearly any of the other students and always knows the answers and wants to share when an objective like that is the focus.

Mr. Powell: Our meeting time is nearly up—the bell is about to ring. Are we all clear on next steps? Ms. Horton, will you be able to observe in Ms. Diaz's class by the end of the week? I know you need answers right away, but I hope we can get a clearer sense of the pattern of John's behavior so we can find the right strategy for addressing it. If we can get in to observe this week, could we meet next Tuesday to try to generate some strategies?

Ms. Diaz: That would be great. Let's work out the details on observing.

REFLECTION

Why was this meeting a positive example of teachers addressing a student problem in an inclusive school? What did they do that has set them up for success? If you were trying to understand John better, what other questions would you ask about him? What would you like others to observe in the classroom in relation to him? In relation to you as the teacher? What do you think will happen at the next meeting? On the basis of this case, how would you describe the role of general education teachers in addressing the challenges of inclusion?

Deaf-Blindness Students who have both significant vision and hearing loss sometimes are eligible for services as *deaf-blind*. These students have extraordinarily unique learning needs, particularly in the domain of communication, and because of the highly specialized services they require. The degree of the vision and hearing loss may vary from moderate to severe and may be accompanied by other disabilities. Students in this category are likely to receive special education services beginning at birth or very soon thereafter.

Orthopedic Impairments Students with *orthopedic impairments (OI)* have physical conditions that seriously impair their ability to move about or complete motor activities. Students who have cerebral palsy are included in this group, as are those with other diseases that affect the skeleton or muscles. Students with physical limitations resulting from accidents also may be orthopedically impaired. Students with orthopedic impairments are difficult to describe as a group because their strengths and needs vary tremendously. For example, some students with this disability are unable to move about without a wheelchair and may need special transportation to get to school and a ramp to enter the school building. Others may lack the fine motor skills needed to write and may require extra time or adapted equipment to complete assignments.

Traumatic Brain Injury Students with *traumatic brain injury (TBI)* have a wide range of characteristics and special needs, including limited strength or alertness, developmental delays, short-term memory problems, hearing or vision losses that may be temporary or permanent, irritability, and sudden mood swings. Their characteristics depend on the specific injuries they experienced, and their needs often change over time. Because TBI is a medical condition that affects education, diagnosis by a physician is required along with assessment of learning and adaptive behavior. Students who experience serious head trauma from automobile accidents, falls, and sports injuries are among those who might be eligible for services as TBI.

Other Health Impairments Some students have a disease or disorder so significant that it affects their ability to learn in school. The category of disability addressing their needs is called *other health impairments (OHI)*. Students who have chronic heart conditions necessitating frequent and prolonged absences from school might be eligible for special education in this category, as might those with severe and chronic asthma. Students with diseases such as acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and sickle cell anemia also may be categorized as having other health impairments, depending on the impact of their illnesses on learning. Some students—but not all—with attention deficit–hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) also receive special education services in this category.

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A *primary disability* is one that most adversely affects a student's educational performance. A *secondary disability* is an additional disability that also affects a student's education but to a lesser degree. For example, a student identified with a learning disability as a primary disability could have an emotional disability as a secondary disability.

Multiple Disabilities The category used when students have two or more disabilities is called *multiple disabilities*. Students in this group often have an intellectual disability as well as a physical disability, but this category also may be used to describe any student with two or more disability types (with the exception of deaf-blindness as noted above). However, this classification is used only when the student's disabilities are so serious and interrelated that none can be identified as a primary disability. Students with multiple disabilities often benefit from *assistive technology*, that is, simple or complex devices that facilitate their learning, as explained in the Technology Notes.

Developmental Delays The category *developmental delays (DD)* is somewhat different than the other disabilities recognized in IDEA. It is an option that states may use for children ages 3 through 9. This category includes youngsters who have significant delays in physical, cognitive, communication, social-emotional, or adaptive development, but it is applied instead of one of the more specific disability categories. This option has two advantages: First, it avoids the use of more stigmatizing labels for young children, and second, it acknowledges the difficulty of determining the nature of a specific disability when children are rapidly growing and changing.

A Cross-Categorical Approach to Special Education

Federal and state education agencies and local school districts use the categories of disability described in the previous section for counting the number of students receiving special education services and allocating money to educate them. When you prepare to teach a student, however, you probably will find that the specific category

TECHNOLOGY NOTES

The Opportunities of Assistive Technology

Whether the students you teach have mild or significant disabilities, they can use technology to help them to communicate, complete assignments, and fully participate in school and community. *Assistive technology*, which students with disabilities are entitled to access, refers to any device (that is, piece of equipment, product, or other item) used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of an individual with a disability. Here are examples of the levels of assistive technology students might use.

NO TECHNOLOGY OR LOW TECHNOLOGY

No technology (no-tech) or *low technology (low-tech)* refers to items that do not include any type of electronics. Examples:

- A rubber pencil grip that enables a student with a disability to better grasp a pencil or pen
- A nonslip placemat on a student's desk that makes it easier for her to pick up items because it stops them from sliding
- A study carrel that helps a student pay closer attention to the schoolwork at hand

MID-TECHNOLOGY

Devices in the *mid-technology (mid-tech)* category use simple electronics. Examples:

- An audio recorder that a student uses to record lectures
- A calculator that assists a student in completing math computations
- A timer that lets a student know it is time to change from one activity to another

HIGH TECHNOLOGY

Items considered *high technology (high-tech)* incorporate more sophisticated, sometimes costly technology. Examples:

- Voice-recognition software that allows a student to use a microphone to dictate information that then appears in print on the computer
- Electronic communication boards on which a student can touch a picture and a prerecorded voice communicates for



Electronic communication boards are an example of high-tech assistive technology that benefits students with communication disorders.

him. For example, a student touches a picture of himself and a voice says “Hello. My name is Danny. What is your name?”

Are you interested in assistive technology? These video clips demonstrate its use:

- http://teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=75646&title=Assistive_Technology_for_Writing_Low_High_Tech_Options
This video demonstrates low-tech options for assisting students with writing tasks.
- http://teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=165020&title=Assistive_Technology
This video shows both a younger and an older student using a communication device called a Dynovox.
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAdEOXD9Tvk>
In this video, Ellen, a college student with significant physical disabilities, demonstrates how she uses switches she touches with her head to control her wheelchair and communication device.

of disability does not guide you in discovering that student's strengths and devising appropriate teaching strategies. Further, students in different categories often benefit from the same instructional adjustments. Therefore, throughout this book, students generally are discussed in terms of only the following two groups:

1. *High-incidence disabilities* are those that are most common, including learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, mild intellectual disabilities, and emotional disturbance. Together these disabilities account for more than 80 percent of the disabilities reported in 2004–2005, the most recent year for which data are available (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).
2. *Low-incidence disabilities* are those that are less common and include all the other categories: moderate to severe intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, hearing impairments, orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, visual impairments, deaf-blindness, autism, traumatic brain injury, and developmental delays.

Consistent with a **cross-categorical approach**, characteristics of students with disabilities are discussed in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7, where more attention is paid to students' learning needs than to their labels. In addition, although some strategies specific to categorical groups are outlined in those chapters (for example, the use of large-print books for students with visual impairments), most of the strategies presented throughout the text can be used effectively with most students. If you adopt a cross-categorical approach in your own thinking about teaching students with disabilities, you will see that many options are available for helping all students succeed.

Other Students with Special Needs

Not all students who have special learning and behavior needs are addressed in special education laws. The instructional strategies you learn in this book also can assist you in teaching many other students who may struggle in school, including those described in the following sections.

Students Who Are Gifted or Talented Students who demonstrate ability far above average in one or several areas—including overall intellectual ability, leadership, specific academic subjects, creativity, athletics, and the visual or performing arts—are considered *gifted* or *talented*. Erin is included in this group; she seems to learn without effort, and she also is eager to learn about almost everything. Evan is considered talented; still in elementary school, he has participated in state and national piano recitals, and his parents have requested that he have access to the music room during recess so he can practice. Students who are gifted or talented are not addressed in federal special education law, but many states have separate laws that provide guidelines for identifying and educating students with special talents. Adequate funds are not always provided to implement these laws, however, and so the availability and scope of services for students with particular talents vary across the country and even within each state.

Students Protected by Section 504 Some students not eligible to receive special education services are entitled to protection through Section 504 and receive specialized assistance because of their functional disabilities, as described previously in this chapter. Among those likely to be included in this group are some students with attention deficit–hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). These students have a medical condition often characterized by an inability to attend to complex tasks for long periods of time, excessive motor activity, and/or impulsivity. The impact of this disorder on students' schoolwork can be significant. Students with ADHD may take medication, such as Ritalin or Strattera, that helps them focus their attention. Many students with learning disabilities or emotional disturbance also have ADHD, but these students receive assistance through IDEA, as do students with ADHD whose disorder is so significant that they are determined to be eligible for special education. Other students who may be protected by Section 504 include those with asthma, severe allergies, or epilepsy.

Students at Risk Often, the general term *at risk* refers to students whose characteristics, environment, or experiences make them more likely than others to fail in school (and they also may have disabilities). Students whose primary language is not English—sometimes referred to as *English-language learners (ELLs)*—sometimes are considered at risk, and they may need assistance in school learning. They may attend bilingual education programs or classes for English as a second language (ESL) to have opportunities to learn English while also learning the standard curriculum, or they may receive assistance in their general education classrooms. Some ELLs also have disabilities; when this is the case, both English-language instruction and special education are provided. The checklist presented in the Professional Edge is a tool you can use to analyze your readiness to work with students and families from diverse backgrounds, including those who are English language learners.

dimensions of DIVERSITY

Diversity has many faces. It includes ethnic, cultural, economic, linguistic, religious, ability, gender, and racial differences among the students you may teach.

PROFESSIONAL EDGE

Promoting Cultural Competence: A Self-Assessment



Cultural competence refers to your understanding of and responses to diversity. Here is an excerpt from a tool designed to help professionals reflect on their awareness of a variety of factors that contribute to cultural competence. You can find the complete self-assessment checklist at <http://nccc.georgetown.edu/documents/ChecklistCSHN.pdf>.

DIRECTIONS: Please select A, B, or C for each item listed below

A = Things I do frequently, or statement applies to me to a great deal.

B = Things I do occasionally, or statement applies to me to a moderate degree

C = Things I do rarely or never, or statement applies to me to a minimal degree or not at all

- For children who speak languages or dialects other than English, I attempt to learn and use key words in their language so that I am better able to communicate with them during assessment, treatment, or other interventions.
- I use visual aids, gestures, and physical prompts in my interactions with children who have limited English proficiency.
- When interacting with parents who have limited English proficiency, I always keep in mind that:
 - Limitation in English proficiency is in no way a reflection of their level of intellectual functioning.
 - Their limited ability to speak the language of the dominant culture has no bearing on their ability to communicate effectively in their language of origin.
 - They may or may not be literate neither in their language of origin or English.
- I use alternative formats and varied approaches to communicate and share information with children and/or their family members who experience disability.
- I avoid imposing values that may conflict or be inconsistent with those of cultures or ethnic groups other than my own.
- I recognize and accept that individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds may desire varying degrees of acculturation into the dominant culture.
- I accept and respect that male-female roles in families may vary significantly among different cultures (e.g., who makes major decisions for the family, play and social interactions expected of male and female children).
- I recognize and understand that beliefs and concepts of emotional well-being vary significantly from culture to culture.
- I accept that religion and other beliefs may influence how families respond to illnesses, disease, disability and death.
- I recognize and accept that folk and religious beliefs may influence a family's reaction and approach to a child born with a disability or later diagnosed with a physical/emotional disability or special health care needs.
- I understand that traditional approaches to disciplining children are influenced by culture.
- I understand that families from different cultures will have different expectations of their children for acquiring toileting, dressing, feeding, and other self-help skills.
- I accept and respect that customs and beliefs about food, its value, preparation, and use are different from culture to culture.

NOTE: This checklist is intended to heighten the awareness and sensitivity of personnel to the importance of cultural diversity and cultural competence in human service settings. There is no answer key with correct responses. However, if you frequently responded "C," you may not necessarily demonstrate values and engage in practices that promote a culturally diverse and culturally competent service delivery system for children with disabilities or special health care needs and their families.

Checklist excerpts are included with express permission from the National Center for Cultural Competence.

Source: Goode, T. D. (2009). *Promoting cultural diversity and cultural competency: Self-assessment checklist for personnel providing services and supports to children with disabilities & special health needs and their families*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development. Retrieved October 23, 2010, from <http://nccc.georgetown.edu/documents/ChecklistCSHN.pdf>.

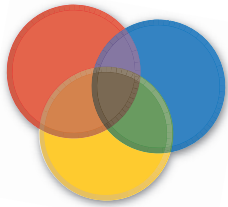
A second group of at-risk students includes *slow learners* whose educational progress is below average but who do not have a disability. These students are learning to the best of their ability, but they often cannot keep pace with the instruction in most general education classrooms without assistance. They are sometimes described as "falling between the cracks" of the educational system because while most professionals agree they need special assistance, they are not eligible for special education. They are likely to access and benefit from response to intervention (RtI) services described earlier in this chapter.

Other students who might be considered at risk include those who are homeless; those who live in poverty or move frequently; those who are born to mothers abusing drugs or alcohol or who abuse drugs or alcohol themselves; and those who are victims of physical or psychological abuse. Students in these groups are at risk for school failure because of the environment or circumstances in which they live.

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Using *person-first language* is a way to ensure that you focus on students and not their labels. For example, say "students with disabilities" instead of "disabled students" and "my student who has autism" instead of "my autistic student."

You may find it challenging to find effective strategies to reach your students who have special needs but who do not have disabilities according to special education law. However, current trends in education can help you. First, you can access response to intervention procedures, explained more fully in Chapter 2, for research-based interventions for your struggling learners. In addition, as students with disabilities spend increasing amounts of time in general education classes, special education teachers and other special services providers often informally assist teachers in planning and adapting educational activities for them. Thus, other students with special needs often benefit from the trend toward inclusive education for students with disabilities.



WRAPPING IT UP

BACK TO THE CASES

This section provides opportunities for you to apply the knowledge gained in this chapter to the cases described at the beginning of this chapter. The questions and activities that follow demonstrate how the concepts you have learned about connect to the everyday activities of all teachers.

THOMAS, as you may remember from the beginning of the chapter, is a student with autism. If you believe that being a member of a general education classroom has been successful for Thomas, explain what factors led you to that conclusion and how they may contribute to success for other students with disabilities. If you believe Thomas would be more successful learning in a special education setting, explain what factors led you to that conclusion and how they may prevent success for other students with disabilities.

PATRICIA, the elementary student with an intellectual disability, receives some of her education in general education and some in a special education setting. Why might this be a preferred option for some students? What could be the drawbacks to this approach for Patricia, her classmates, and her teachers? Which of the laws and court cases you learned about in this chapter led to the educational options Patricia has?

AARON, as you may recall, is troubled by his learning disability. Several of the assistive technologies mentioned in the Technology Notes on page 25 could provide support for Aaron's problems with attention and written tests. Select at least two technologies that you would recommend to Aaron. Remembering that Aaron does not want to stand out or be treated differently, what would you say to him to help him accept these assistive supports?

SUMMARY

- *Special education* refers to the specialized instruction received by the millions of students in the United States who have disabilities and is guided by the concept of the least restrictive environment (LRE).
- Current special education practices have evolved from a combination of historical factors, including the inception of compulsory public education early in the twentieth century, research questioning instructional practices for students with disabilities, the civil rights movement and related court cases, and a series of federal civil rights and education laws, including Section 504, P.L. 94-142, ADA, IDEA, and ESEA/NCLB.
- Inclusive practices today have been shaped by the historical, legislative, and litigative dimensions of special education. Although the primary goal of inclusion is to improve student outcomes by ensuring their rights, its implementation can be complicated by uncertainty about its meaning; professional understanding, attitude, and skill; and practical dilemmas related to funding and other resources.
- Federal law identifies 13 categories of disability that may entitle students to special education services: learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, mental retardation (increasingly called *intellectual disabilities*), emotional disturbance, autism, hearing impairments, visual impairments, deaf-blindness, orthopedic impairments, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, multiple disabilities, and developmental delays.
- Many students have special needs not addressed through special education, including those who are gifted or talented; who have ADHD; who are at risk, including English-language learners and slow learners; and whose life situations comprise high risk for school failure. Students with disabilities also may have these special needs.
- Central to twenty-first-century education is the understanding that nearly all public school teachers are responsible for instructing students with disabilities and other special needs.

APPLICATIONS IN TEACHING PRACTICE

UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPORARY SPECIAL EDUCATION

It is a new school year—your first as a teacher in the Danville School District. You are excited about your new job but worried about following the district curriculum and making sure your students succeed on high-stakes tests. Then you learn that you will be responsible for the following students, and you find that you need all the skills for reaching diverse groups of students that you learned in your professional preparation program:

- Cassie is a bright student who has a visual impairment. To read, she uses a computer that greatly magnifies the materials. She also needs to work in bright light, and she gets fatigued from the effort required to use what little vision she has.
- Ramon is identified as having a learning disability. His reading ability is significantly below grade level. He also seems disorganized. He often forgets to bring materials and assignments to school, and he frequently asks for help immediately after directions for an assignment have been given.
- Tory lives in a foster home. He was removed from his mother's care because of several incidents of abuse. Tory is an angry child. He often refuses to work, he sometimes loses his temper and throws a book or crumples a paper, and he misses school frequently.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the possible strengths that Cassie, Ramon, and Tory might bring to your classroom? How can you emphasize their possible strengths instead of their difficulties? What is the rationale for assigning these students to a general education classroom like

yours? How do the provisions of IDEA and ESEA affect these students' educational rights and responsibilities? What are appropriate goals you as a teacher should have as you begin to instruct them? Discuss with your classmates how Cassie, Ramon, and Tory's special needs might be demonstrated in an elementary school, middle school, or high school classroom.

2. What are some of the benefits and opportunities of educating these students in your classroom? What positive outcomes should you expect? How can you ensure these positive outcomes?
3. What are some of the risks and concerns related to educating these students in your classroom? What types of systemic supports could prevent or significantly reduce these risks and concerns? How might your own beliefs be either a benefit or a risk for these students?
4. If you spoke with the parents of Cassie, Ramon, and Tory, what might you expect them to say? What unique views might each student's parents have? How might their views be influenced by their family cultures and experiences? What could you do to encourage parent participation for your students?
5. What are your concerns and questions when you think about your responsibilities for educating students with disabilities and other special needs in your classroom—whether in the elementary grades, middle school, or high school? In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to your students' education? What types of support might you need? If you write your responses to these questions, keep them with your text and use them as a basis for discussion as you learn more in later chapters.



Go to Topic 1: Inclusive Practices and Topic 2: Law, in the MyEducationLab (<http://www.myeducationlab.com>) for your course, where you can:

- Find learning outcomes for Inclusive Practices and Law along with the national standards that connect to these outcomes.
- Complete Assignments and Activities that can help you more deeply understand the chapter content.
- Apply and practice your understanding of the core teaching skills identified in the chapter with the Building Teaching Skills and Dispositions learning units.
- Examine challenging situations and cases presented in the IRIS Center Resources. (optional)
- Access video clips of CCSSO National Teachers of the Year award winners responding to the question, “Why Do I Teach?” in the Teacher Talk section. (optional)
- Check your comprehension on the content covered in the chapter by going to the Study Plan in the Book Resources for your text. Here you will be able to take a chapter quiz, receive feedback on your answers, and then access Review, Practice, and Enrichment activities to enhance your understanding of chapter content. (optional.)