



RENTAL EDITION

TEACHING STUDENTS

Who are Exceptional, Diverse, and At Risk
in the General Educational Classroom



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EIGHTH EDITION



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Learning Objectives

Special Education and Inclusive Schooling

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- 1.1** Identify the laws, key provisions, and guidelines that govern special education and explain how these laws influence educational practices for individuals with disabilities.
- 1.2** Describe the responsibilities you have as a classroom teacher for students with special needs and the types of practices and adaptations you need to implement.
- 1.3** Discuss No Child Left Behind and its influence on testing accommodations for students with disabilities and the expanded laws regarding IDEIA, including early education and transition, then consider the instructional implications of implementing inclusion and other services provided in the continuum of services for students with disabilities.

INTERVIEW: ELIZABETH DILLER

Elizabeth Diller is a fifth-grade teacher at Cory Elementary School in an urban city in Texas. Elizabeth is an unusual teacher in that she has worked as both a special education teacher and a general education teacher. For the past two years, she has served as the lead teacher in a fifth-grade team. What she likes about her job is that she blends her expertise in special education with her new knowledge as a general education curriculum specialist. She assists the other fifth-grade teachers in developing instructional practices and using progress monitoring to inform instruction for all of the fifth-grade students, including those with identified disabilities. She also works with the response-to-intervention (RTI) team to screen and monitor the progress of students who are at risk for reading and math problems. Elizabeth says, "This is the perfect blend of leading classroom teachers to make appropriate adaptations for students with disabilities in their classrooms and having an opportunity to put the practices in place in my own classroom."

Elizabeth has been very successful at keeping students with disabilities in general education classrooms. She also has been a cheerleader for the RTI model of preventing academic and behavioral difficulties and identifying students for special education in their school. Here is some of her advice for general education teachers working in RTI schools:

- Don't worry if you do not know everything about students with disabilities. Be willing to ask questions and to allow others to help. Many instructional practices that are effective with most students are also effective with students with disabilities.
- Remember that a couple of minutes of focused instructional support that provides additional opportunities for students with disabilities to practice can be very helpful. You don't need to wait until you have 20 minutes or more; three to five minutes throughout the day of individual guidance, feedback, and support make a big difference.
- Use ongoing progress-monitoring measures in reading and math to inform your instructional decision making.
- Ask the special education teacher, an experienced general education teacher, or the school psychologist to observe students with disabilities in your class. Ask them for advice to improve your instruction.
- Consider ways to improve your behavioral supports so that students are engaged and participating in the learning environment.
- Communicate frequently with parents and other professionals. My class publishes a newsletter every other week that is posted on our class website. If parents like, we print the newsletter and send it home. I also send home weekly notes to parents of students with disabilities to inform them of their child's progress. I frequently meet with other professionals such as the school psychologist and special education teachers to assure that I am providing appropriate instructional and behavioral supports.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

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Think and Apply

Elizabeth further reflects, “Ever since I was little, I wanted to be a teacher. When I imagined myself as a teacher, I thought about helping students who needed me the most. I really feel most like a teacher when students who have difficulty learning make progress. I like that my classroom includes students with a range of abilities. We all learn what we can do well and what we need help with, and we always know that there are classmates there to support us.”

Introduction

Elizabeth’s account reflects the views of this book. We recognize that teachers make a difference; that we must teach purposefully to empower all of our students to learn; that even small steps matter; and that if we set ambitious goals, provide research-based instruction, and monitor students’ progress, we can ensure success for all learners in our classroom. The aim of this book is to offer you the knowledge, tools, and strategies that will empower you as a classroom teacher to skillfully, confidently, and successfully promote learning for all your students. This book takes a cross-categorical approach—that is, accommodations for exceptional learners are discussed in terms of their shared needs rather than in terms of their identification as members of a disability category. This helps you make instructional and behavioral decisions that benefit the majority of students with special needs.

The basic knowledge you need includes an understanding of the laws and procedures that govern special education and inclusion. This is where we begin.

EARLY AND RECENT FOUNDATIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Learning Objective 1.1 Identify the laws, key provisions, and guidelines that govern special education and explain how these laws influence educational practices for individuals with disabilities.

Before the 1950s, many students with disabilities were excluded from attending public schools. Although children with more **severe disabilities** were forced either to stay home or to be institutionalized, students with mild or moderate learning problems often dropped out of school long before graduating (Pardini, 2002). Interestingly, students with disabilities continue to have a dropout rate that is twice as large as their peers without disabilities (Chapman et al., 2011) and who demonstrated twice the chronic absentee rate (Cortiella & Boundy, 2018). It may be difficult for you to imagine, but as recently as 1958, court cases ruled in favor of excluding students with disabilities from a public school education. In *Department of Public Welfare v. Haas* in 1958, the Supreme Court of Illinois maintained that the state’s compulsory education laws did not require a “free public education for the ‘feebleminded’ or to children who were ‘mentally deficient’ and who, because of their limited intelligence were unable to reap the benefits of a good education” (Yell, 1998, p. 55). Eventually, however, the tide turned in favor of advocating for the education of all students.

Early Influences

Exclusion of students with disabilities from public education would not last forever. A landmark education case paved the way for future legislation that would protect the rights of individuals with disabilities to attend and benefit from public education. In *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that school segregation by race was not constitutional, even if resources were allotted equally. This was the first time the federal government had advocated for students who experienced inequality and prejudice at school, and it set the path for future legislation for individuals with disabilities. See Figure 1.1 for more examples of court cases that have influenced the education of individuals with disabilities.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) passed in 1965 initiated the role of the federal government in protecting and providing for students from low-income backgrounds so that they would have equal access to the public education system. For example, one of the ESEA provisions established the free and reduced lunch system because children whose basic needs are not met (e.g., being hungry) are not able to benefit fully from instructional programs that are provided. A critical component of the ESEA for individuals with disabilities was the grant program that encouraged states to create and improve programs for students with disabilities. This program was later revised in 1970 as the Education of the Handicapped Act (P.L. 91-230) and continued support for state-run programs for individuals with disabilities, although it did not provide any specific guidelines for how to develop these programs or what they should look like.

FIGURE 1.1 Influential court cases

- 1971—*Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*. Challenged the constitutionality of excluding individuals with mental retardation from public education and training. The state was not allowed to “deny to any mentally retarded child access to a free public program of education and training.”
- 1972—*Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia*. Another case in which handicapped children had been excluded from public schools. Similar to the *PARC* case, this suit required the state to provide “adequate alternative education services” as well as “prior hearing and periodic review of the child’s status, progress, and the adequacy of any educational alternative” (348 F. Supp., at 878). In both the *PARC* and *Mills* cases, the courts required schools to describe the curricula, objectives, teacher qualifications, and supplemental services that were needed, areas that would later be influential during the drafting of P.L. 94-142.
- 1982—*Board of Education of Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley*. Clarified the definition of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Amy Rowley was a deaf fifth grader who used an FM hearing aid that amplified words spoken by her teacher. She was a better than the average student in her class and communicated well with her peers. Although she may not have been achieving maximally and might have benefited from an interpreter, the court ruled that P.L. 94-142 requires states to provide sufficient, but not the best possible, support for students to benefit from a public education at a level typical of that of nondisabled peers.
- 1988—*Honig v. Doe*. Benefited individuals with emotional and/or behavior disorders who have academic and social problems. Ruled that schools could not expel children for behaviors related to their disability.
- 1999—*Cedar Rapids v. Garret F. Garret*. Garret was paralyzed from the neck down in an accident when he was age 4, but his mental capacities were unaffected. He required nursing services to attend his regular classes, and the court ruled that under IDEA students must be provided with the supplemental services they need to attend school at no extra cost to the parents.
- 2007—*Winkelman v. Parma City School District*. The Supreme Court decided that parents may pursue IDEA claims on their behalf independent of their child’s rights.
- 2017—*Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*

Endrew F. was diagnosed with autism and attention deficit disorder and attended public schools until fourth grade. Parents were dissatisfied with his progress and so withdrew him from public school and placed him in a private school where he made impressive gains. Parents wanted him to return to public schools and met with school officials who provided an IEP that looked similar to one before he left to go to private school. Parents requested tuition reimbursement to return him to private school. Supreme Court rules that for the school to meet FAPE, district must offer an IEP reasonably calculated to enable progress.

The Endrew F. ruling from the Supreme Court clarifies for schools that they must provide challenging and measurable instructional and/or behavioral goals, use progress monitoring systems to ensure these goals are met, and adapt instruction to document progress.

For many students with disabilities, the initial goal of special education was to ensure that they were provided an opportunity to attend school and profit from education. Not until the passage of P.L. 94-142 in 1975 were schools required to ensure that all children, regardless of their disability, receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). For students with learning disabilities, most of whom were already provided education within the general education system, their special needs would now be identified and they would be provided with a special education.

Initially, defining and providing a special education for students with disabilities were challenges for educators. Little was known about what an effective educational program for students with disabilities should look like. Many classroom teachers perceived that they did not have the knowledge or skills to provide these students with an appropriate education. We have made extraordinary progress in the last few decades and yet we continue to realize that many students with disabilities are not accessing the quality education they need (Vaughn et al., 2014).

Recent Influences

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Obama in December 2015 as a commitment to equal opportunity for all students. ESSA replaces the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) that was enacted in 2002. ESSA includes many of the components of NCLB but provides additional opportunities for schools when students are not making adequate progress. Both are bi-partisan bills with a focus on improving educational outcomes for all students including students who have traditionally demonstrated low performance in academic areas. ESSA shifts the accountability of students from the federal government to state and local control where progress is monitored and sanctions determined. NCLB was enacted to provide a framework “on how to improve the performance of America’s elementary and secondary schools while at the same time ensuring that no child is trapped in a failing school” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002b, p. 1). NCLB covers a wide range of areas, from improving teacher quality and supporting instruction for English learners (ELs) to efforts to keep schools safe and drug free. Following are the three areas of education that have been affected by NCLB:

- *Increased accountability.* In perhaps the cornerstone of NCLB legislation, students are required to take statewide assessments (e.g., tests) that are aligned with curriculum **accountability standards** (e.g., state-identified grade-level learning expectations in key curriculum areas such as reading and math). Furthermore, school districts are expected to make **adequate yearly progress (AYP)** in the areas that are tested. Adequate yearly progress is the amount of gain the school district negotiates with the state that it will make for students who are behind. It is the way the school district can determine whether it is closing the gap between students’ current performance and their expected performance at that grade level. Unique to this legislation is the distinction that all students should be included *and* make adequate yearly progress in these high-stakes assessments, regardless of disability, socioeconomic status, language background, and race or ethnicity. Schools that fail to make adequate progress toward proficiency goals are subject to improvement and restructuring efforts as needed to assist them in meeting state standards. Students with disabilities and special education teachers are influenced by this increased accountability, as most students with disabilities will conform to these increased high expectations for performance on outcome assessments.
- *School choice.* Parents whose children attend schools that do not meet state accountability standards are given the opportunity to send their children to schools with higher performance records. Furthermore, there is more flexibility in how **Title I funds** (special funds allotted to schools with a large proportion of low-income families) are used, as well as support for **charter schools** (schools that develop proposals to use state funds but have independence from the local school district) that provide parents with additional educational options for their children. Critics of school

choice raise the concern that charter schools might exclude students with special needs or allow all students to attend without providing the necessary services and resources that would help them succeed (Howe & Welner, 2002).

- *Greater flexibility for states, school districts, and schools.* A goal of NCLB is to provide states with greater flexibility in how they choose to use federal education funds (including providing a variety of state grant options in areas such as teacher quality, educational technology, and reading) as long as they demonstrate high standards of accountability.

Since it has been more than a decade since NCLB was passed into legislation, it is very likely that a revised version of NCLB will appear in the near future. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan provided a press release on the NCLB revision process (press@ed.gov; April 16, 2015) stating that he thought the following ideas were critical:

- Expand access to high-quality preschool
- Invest in innovation and scaling what works
- Assist all students in succeeding (including those with disabilities)
- Provide communities with the information they need to know if students are falling behind in school

How will the pandemic influence the reauthorization and implementation of ESSA? Though no one knows for sure, it is estimated that as many as 3 million students “went missing” during the pandemic. This means that their schools were unable to locate these students and to provide them with educational opportunities. It is also expected that the pandemic will delay the reauthorization of ESSA as state and districts apply for waivers to some of the ESSA regulations. Although it was expected that ESSA would be authorized sometime after 2019, it is unlikely to occur before 2022 or later.

IDEIA and the Vocational Rehabilitation Act

Legislation for individuals with disabilities has provided them with education, employment, housing, and other rights that they previously were denied because of their disabilities. You can imagine how important the following two landmark pieces of legislation have been. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), P.L. (Public Law) 94-142, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Act, P.L. 93-112, have significantly improved the opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

P.L. 94-142, originally referred to as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, was enacted in 1975, later reauthorized and expanded as the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** in 1990, and most recently ended by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) in 2004 (with regulations published in August 2006 for school age youngsters) and in 2011 for babies and toddlers. We do not expect significant changes in the law before 2022 at the earliest. This legislation was designed to ensure that all children with disabilities receive an appropriate education through special education and related services. Figure 1.2 provides a summary of the history of laws governing special education.

Provisions and Guidelines for Implementing IDEIA

To ensure that the provisions of this legislation are adhered to, teachers must understand the basic premises that are at its foundation. The following primary provisions and guidelines characterize what schools and teachers must know and do (Turnbull et al., 2008):

- *Zero reject/free, appropriate public education.* No child with disabilities can be excluded from education. This is commonly referred to as **zero reject**. Mandatory legislation provides that all children with disabilities be given a **free, appropriate public education**. Before IDEIA, school officials who felt that they were not equipped to address the special needs of particular students would not accept such students into their schools.

FIGURE 1.2 History of the federal laws for the education of learners who are exceptional

1965	<p>Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (Public Law 89-10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports many initiatives that help low-income families access high-quality education programs • Includes provisions for free and reduced lunches and additional teachers in disadvantaged communities • Applies to children who need additional support to benefit from public school education programs
1973	<p>Vocational Rehabilitation Act (VRA) (Public Law 93-112, Section 504)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines <i>handicapped person</i> • Defines <i>appropriate education</i> • Prohibits discrimination against students with disabilities in federally funded programs
1974	<p>Educational Amendments Act (Public Law 93-380)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants federal funds to states for programming for exceptional learners • Provides the first federal funding of state programs for students who are gifted and talented • Grants students and families the right of due process in special education placement
1975	<p>Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) (Public Law 94-142, Part B)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Known as the Mainstreaming Law • Requires states to provide a free and appropriate public education for children with disabilities (ages 5 to 18) • Requires individualized education programs (IEPs) • First defined <i>least restrictive environment</i>
1986	<p>Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments (Public Law 99-457)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires states to extend free and appropriate education to children with disabilities (ages 3 to 5) • Establishes early intervention programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities (ages birth to 2 years)
1990	<p>Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (Public Law 101-336)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in the private sector • Protects equal opportunity to employment and public services, accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications • Defines <i>disability</i> to include people with AIDS
1990	<p>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Public Law 101-476)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renames and replaces P.L. 94-142 (EAHCA) • Establishes "people-first" language for referring to people with disabilities • Extends special education services to include social work, assistive technology, and rehabilitation services • Extends provisions for due process and confidentiality for students and parents • Adds two new categories of disability: autism and traumatic brain injury • Requires states to provide bilingual education programs for students with disabilities • Requires states to educate students with disabilities for transition to employment, and to provide transition services • Requires the development of individualized transition programs for students with disabilities by the time they reach the age of 16
1997	<p>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Public Law 105-17)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires that all students with disabilities continue to receive services, even if they have been expelled from school • Allows states to extend their use of the developmental delay category for students through age 9 • Requires schools to assume greater responsibility for ensuring that students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum • Allows special education staff who are working in mainstream classrooms to assist general education students when needed • Requires a general education teacher to be a member of the IEP team • Requires students with disabilities to take part in statewide and districtwide assessments • Requires states to offer mediation as a voluntary option to parents and educators to resolve differences • Requires a proactive behavior management plan to be included in the student's IEP if a student with disabilities has behavior problems • Limits the conditions under which attorneys can collect fees under IDEA
2004	<p>Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) (Public Law 108-446)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows districts to use a response-to-intervention (RTI) model for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, and no longer requires that a child have a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability to qualify (RTI is described in more detail later in this chapter) • Increases federal funds to provide early intervention services to students who do not need special education or related services • Eliminates use of short-term objectives in an IEP except for students who do not take statewide achievement assessments • Raises standards for special education licensure • Adopts policies designed to prevent the disproportionate representation of students in special education by race and ethnicity

- *Child Find.* States are required to identify and track the number of students with disabilities and to plan for their educational needs. This is commonly called **Child Find**.
- *Age.* The law defines the ages that individuals with disabilities must be educated. IDEA provides for special programs and services for all students with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 21. Infants and toddlers with developmental delays (birth to 2 years of age) are also eligible to receive early intervention services.
- *Nondiscriminatory evaluation.* A **nondiscriminatory evaluation**—an evaluation that does not discriminate on the basis of language, culture, and student background—must be provided for each individual identified for special education.
- *Individualized education program.* An **individualized education program (IEP)**—a plan developed to meet the special learning needs of each student with disabilities—must be written, implemented, and reviewed.
- *Least restrictive environment.* IDEA defines the educational settings in which students are placed. The **least restrictive environment** is the setting most like that of students without disabilities that also meets each child's educational needs. Inherent in the least restrictive environment is the notion of continuum of services. **Continuum of services** means that a full range of service options for students with disabilities will be provided by the school system. These service options include self-contained classrooms, resource rooms, and homebound and general education programs.
- *Due process.* **Due process** not only ensures that everyone with a stake in the student's educational success has a voice, but also addresses written notification to parents for referral and testing for special education, parental consent, and guidelines for appeals and record keeping. IDEA guarantees the right to an impartial hearing if appropriate procedures outlined by IDEA are not followed and parents or schools believe that programs do not meet the student's educational needs.
- *Confidentiality of records.* IDEA requires **confidentiality of records**. All records and documents regarding students with disabilities must remain both confidential and accessible to parents.
- *Advocacy.* IDEA requires **advocacy** for students without guardians. Advocates are assigned for individuals with disabilities who lack known parents or guardians.
- *Noncompliance.* IDEA requires that states mandate consequences for **noncompliance** with the law.
- *Parent participation.* **Parent participation** and shared decision making must be included in all aspects of identification and evaluation of students with disabilities.

Teachers may wonder what some of the guidelines are that pertain to all educational settings. The following guidelines were developed by the U.S. Department of Education after the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) was passed to provide this information to school personnel. Critical guidelines include:

- Using **person-first language**. In other words, do not define a child by his or her disability. For example, say "students with learning disabilities" rather than "learning-disabled students" or "students with autism" rather than "autistic students."
- Requiring that **transition services** be included in the individualized education programs of all students by at least age 16. Transition services refers to providing activities on behalf of the student with the disability that promote an outcome-oriented process of supports from school to postsecondary activities that include further schooling, vocational training, and integrated employment.
- Providing for states, as well as school districts, to be sued if they violate the IDEA.
- Including two new special education categories: traumatic brain injury and autism.
- Adding assistive technology as a support service.
- Promoting the involvement of students with disabilities in the general education curriculum.

- Requiring greater accountability for results so that students with disabilities are part of the accountability system.
- Requiring that the IEP not only describe the extent to which a student will be integrated, but also detail the aids and accommodations the student will receive within the general education classroom.
- Allowing states and local districts to use “developmental delay” eligibility criteria through age 9 instead of one of the specific disability categories so that students will not be classified too early.
- Providing further flexibility by allowing IDEIA-funded staff who work with students with disabilities in general education classrooms to work with others who need their help as well.
- Requiring states to include students with disabilities in assessments, and to provide appropriate modifications and develop alternative assessments for the small number of students who cannot participate in regular assessments.

In addition to these provisions and guidelines, the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) maps out key features of the IDEIA that shape how the provisions and guidelines are implemented:

- *Evidence-Based Practice:* One of the significant requirements when Congress reauthorized IDEA in 2004 was the stipulation that students with disabilities receive services based on knowledge and practice from research—to the extent possible. Students with disabilities are vulnerable to receiving risky practices. Establishing research as the baseline for decision making for individuals with disabilities is a valuable guide.
- *Discipline:* The IDEIA allows schools to remove students with disabilities for serious bodily injury and adds new authority to consider discipline on a case-by-case basis.
- *Response to Intervention:* Schools must permit the use of alternative research-based procedures for determining whether a student has a severe learning disability and must not require use of a severe discrepancy.
- *Early Intervention Services:* Schools may provide academic and behavioral support for students not currently identified as special education students. They may use not more than 15% of the amount of special education money the local education agency (LEA) receives.
- *Evaluations and Individualized Education Programs:* Not all personnel need to be present in IEP meetings if the parents and school agree in writing. However, parents and key educators not present must be informed of any changes to the IEP.
- *Monitoring:* Emphasis is on improving educational results and functional outcomes for each student.
- *Highly Qualified Teachers:* Special education teachers must obtain state certification or pass the state special education teacher-licensing exam.
- *Private Schools:* Students have no individual rights to services and service plans; rather, an IEP is developed for individuals with disabilities.

What do classroom teachers and parents need to know about referral and identification for special education?

Follow the 10-step sequence for a quick rundown on what you and your students’ parents need to know about referral and identification for special education:

- Step 1. Teachers, parents, or other stakeholders (e.g., physicians) consider that the individual may be in need of possible special education and refer the child for evaluation. The evaluation must be completed within 60 days after parental permission is obtained.
- Step 2. A full and individual evaluation is provided.

- Step 3. Eligibility for special education is decided by a group of qualified professionals and the parents.
- Step 4. The student is found eligible for services.
- Step 5. The IEP meeting is scheduled, including parents and all qualified personnel.
- Step 6. IEP meeting is held to inform the IEP and IEP is written.
- Step 7. Services aligning with IEP are provided.
- Step 8. Ongoing progress is measured and reported to parents. Specified adjustments in instruction to enhance learning and behavior outcomes are recommended.
- Step 9. IEP is reviewed annually or more frequently if needed.
- Step 10. Reevaluation occurs to assure progress and further determine services.

Provisions of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act

The **Vocational Rehabilitation Act** (P.L. 93-112) prevents any private organization that uses federal funds, or any local or state organization, from discriminating against persons with disabilities solely on the basis of the disability. This law made a significant difference in the provision of equal opportunities and services for individuals with disabilities because agencies that accept state or federal monies must comply with the law. It prohibits discrimination not only in public education, but also in the employment of persons with disabilities and in social and health services. Because of this law, many individuals with disabilities now have greater access to opportunities in the workplace, community services, and colleges and universities.

Take, for example, the case of Kathy Carter. "Access to facilities has opened up the world for me and Kathy," said Amy Carter, Kathy's mother.

Since Kathy's mobility is limited to scooting around or the use of a wheelchair, there were many places we could not go. The movie theater closest to our house has a show upstairs where they often show children's movies. I either have to go with another adult who can help me get Kathy up the stairs or we can't go at all. I must say, I've noticed a big difference recently. The new shopping mall near our house is completely wheelchair accessible.

Continuum of Educational Services: Concept of Least Restrictive Environment

According to the IDEIA (P.L. 108-446), a continuum of educational services must be available for students with disabilities. This **continuum of educational services** means that students with disabilities must have a range of service options available to meet their individual needs from the full-time general education classroom to a special day school or residential facility to full-time inclusion in general education. In other words, the type of service provided to the student with a disability is not predetermined based on the services the district chooses to provide, but rather a full range of services (i.e., more to less inclusive) are considered and the most appropriate service that is the least restrictive is the service provided to the target student. Figure 1.3 shows the continuum of services in terms of the major placement alternatives.

Consideration for **educational placement** is dynamic and ongoing. Students' placements are continually reevaluated for opportunities to move to less restrictive environments. Fundamental to the law is the notion that students cannot be educated in more segregated settings simply because it is easier to do so. The principle behind the least restrictive environment is that students are best served in the settings (most like those of their nondisabled peers) in which they can learn, ideally moving to less and less restrictive settings. A checklist for determining the least restrictive environment is provided in Figure 1.4.

FIGURE 1.3 Continuum of educational services for students with disabilities

Level I General education classroom with consultation from specialists:

Student functions academically and socially in full-time general education classroom. Specialists provide consultation to the classroom teacher and support to individual students as needed. Typically services are provided within the general education classroom though students may be “pulled-out” for necessary services, e.g., speech therapy.

Level II General education classroom; cooperative teaching or co-teaching:

Special education teacher and classroom teacher co-plan and co-teach for part of the school day. The co-teaching from the special education teacher may include small groups of students with and without disabilities. For the entire school day, the student is included in general education classroom, where support services are provided.

Level III Part-time placement in special education classroom:

Student is placed in the general education classroom for part of the school day and in the special education classroom, usually the resource room, for a specified amount of time each day. For example, the student may receive intensive special education services to support their academic disabilities in math and reading in the special education setting and most of their academic and behavioral supports in the general education setting.

Level IV Full-time special education classroom in a general education school:

Student is educated in a special education classroom housed in a general education school. This arrangement—of being educated in the special education classroom so students have contact with general education peers only during nonacademic periods—may include part-time involvement with general education students for activities such as physical education, music, art, and lunch.

Level V Special school:

Student is provided special education services in a special education school typically serving only students with disabilities. Special schools often offer educators and parents a full spectrum of services in one location though many parents and educators reserve this level of isolated education for students with only the most intensive needs.

Level VI Residential school, treatment center, or homebound instruction:

Student is provided special education services at home, or resides in a school or treatment center in which special education is provided. Residential schools for the deaf provide students in the deaf community an opportunity to learn and socialize largely within the deaf community.

The majority of students with disabilities receive services in the general education classroom, with support services provided as necessary. For some students with disabilities, however, students' needs are best met in other settings. The decision must be made on a student-by-student basis, with any level on the continuum potentially serving as the least restrictive environment for a target student. For example, many parents of children who are deaf prefer that they be educated in settings with other children who are deaf so that their children have opportunities to learn the culture and language of deafness.

Part-time placement in special education

Some students whose educational and social needs cannot be met solely within the general education classroom receive special education and related services (e.g., counseling, speech and language therapy, occupational or physical therapy, instruction, and so on) from specialists in settings outside the classroom that better meet their needs. Related services may be provided individually or in small or large groups. For example, many speech and language specialists identify small group language therapy in a setting outside of the classroom as more effective.

A common educational placement designed to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities outside the general education classroom is the **special education resource room**. The resource-room model provides specialized, individualized, and intensive instruction to meet students' needs. Reading, writing, and math are the three

FIGURE 1.4 A checklist for determining the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

- ✓ School personnel use ongoing data collected throughout the referral and placement process to determine the least restrictive environment.
- ✓ School personnel document procedures and practices used to maintain the student in the general education classroom.
- ✓ School personnel document the research-based practices, aids, services, and interventions used within the general education classroom.
- ✓ School personnel document the mechanisms used to accommodate the student in the general education classroom.
- ✓ School personnel provide an analysis of the social and academic benefits likely to occur from placement in a special education setting.
- ✓ School personnel document the negative behavioral and/or academic outcomes to other students if the student with disabilities is maintained in the general education classroom.
- ✓ School personnel assure that the student has maximum opportunity to interact successfully with students without disabilities throughout the day.
- ✓ School personnel determine whether the continuum of services is available to provide educational support to the student.

academic areas most frequently addressed by the special education teacher in the resource room. Students can work with the special education teacher, typically with a small number of other students, for as little as a few hours a week in an elementary school or one period a day in a secondary setting. Depending on their needs, students may work nearly full-time in a resource setting. The resource room can also provide support for students with significant emotional and/or behavior disorders. Working in a calmer, supportive environment for a period or more a day provides them with the release they need to maintain appropriate behavior in the general education classroom.

Some resource rooms are designed to meet the needs of students identified as having a particular kind of disability—learning disabilities, for example. Other resource rooms are designed to meet the needs of students with varying exceptionalities. The term *varying exceptionalities* refers to the placement of students who represent a range of disability categories (e.g., students with emotional disorders, learning disabilities, and/or physical impairments, and students who are gifted). An example of the use of a resource room within a response to intervention (RTI) model is when students with significant reading disabilities are provided a 50-minute daily treatment in the resource room setting.

Full-time placement in special education

The educational and social needs of some students cannot be met through part-time placement in the general education classroom. These students may be placed in a special education classroom located in a general education school. Students placed in full-time special education classrooms often attend elective classes (such as physical education, music, art, and vocational education) with their peers without disabilities. If there are no full-time special education classrooms in the home school, students may be transported to schools outside their neighborhood. Many educators and parents, believing that the relocation of students to another school interferes with the students' social and personal adjustment, discourage such placements. Students who are placed full-time in special education classes should be closely monitored so that they can be placed as quickly as possible in the general education classroom.

Special school or residential settings

When the problems of students with disabilities are so severe and complex that adequate education cannot be provided in general education classrooms, students may be placed in special schools. These schools may be part of the school system, or the system may

contract with private schools that specialize in programs for students with significant special needs. One advantage of special schools is that the total enrollment is usually small, with technical services and individual attention more easily provided. One disadvantage to the school system is cost: Special schools are expensive, and transportation also can be expensive. Disadvantages for students are that travel to and from the school can be time consuming and that they have limited opportunities to interact during the school day with children who do not have disabilities.

Homebound instruction

Students with health or physical problems that prevent them from attending school regularly and students who have been expelled from school may receive homebound instruction. The primary role of a **homebound teacher** is to provide direct instruction and to coordinate instructional programs between the school and the home. Although students with disabilities sometimes receive long-term homebound instruction, it usually is a short-term remedy until the student is able to return to school. Mariel Simpson explains:

Over the past eight years my son Jalena, who has spina bifida, has been operated on six times. After each of these operations, he needed to stay at home for eight to 12 weeks to recover. I felt very fortunate to have the homebound teacher come to my home to work with Jalena so that he would not get too far behind in his schoolwork.

In addition to defining the continuum of services, special education laws also identify the types of related services to which students with disabilities are entitled. These **related services** include speech therapy, audiology, interpreting services, psychological services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, early identification and assessment, counseling (including rehabilitation counseling), medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes, school health services, transportation, social work services, and recreation, including therapeutic recreation. Orientation (including aid in traveling to, from, and around school) and mobility services are also included.

The Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Teachers are required by law to develop an **individualized education program (IEP)** for each student with special educational needs. The purpose of an IEP is to provide an appropriate education that meets the specialized needs of each student with disabilities. IEPs are developed and implemented by the **multidisciplinary team (MDT)**. What is the multidisciplinary team (MDT) and what purposes does it serve? The MDT determines whether the student has a disability and is eligible for special education services. If the MDT determines the student qualifies for special education, the team then develops the IEP, which provides the foundation for establishing the educational program for the student. The MDT includes a representative of the local education agency, the classroom teacher, the special education teacher, parents or guardians, a person who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, and, when appropriate, the student. Depending on the student's needs, the MDT also includes professionals from related services (such as social workers, **speech and language pathologists**, psychologists, and occupational therapists) and may include other professionals, such as doctors.

Each IEP must include the following information:

- The student's present levels of educational performance, including how the disability affects the student's involvement in the general curriculum.
- Measurable annual goals, including short-term objectives for students who take alternate assessments, enabling the child to participate in the general education curricula and meet other education needs resulting from the disability.
- Special education and related services to be provided to the student and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided for the student not only to attain annual goals and be involved in the general education curriculum, but also to participate in extracurricular and other

nonacademic activities. Related services is often one of the more challenging areas for the team to consider. In particular, if the student has excessive health needs and these needs require the attention of a physician, then the IEP does not require that the school provide them. However, any medical services that are required during the school day that do not require the attention of a physician are the responsibility of the school.

- An explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate with students without disabilities in the general education class and in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities.
- Individual modifications in the administration of statewide or districtwide assessments or an explanation of why those assessments are inappropriate for the student and what alternative methods will be used to assess the student. Figure 1.5 provides a sample of test accommodations that are relatively easy to implement.
- The Individualized Education Program (IEP) provides the opportunity to specify the related services the student with disabilities requires for a successful education.
- Projected date for the beginning of services and modifications and their anticipated frequency, location, and duration.
- How the student's progress toward annual goals will be measured.
- What method will be used to inform parents (as often as the parents of nondisabled students) of their child's progress toward annual goals and whether that progress is sufficient to enable their child to achieve the goals by the end of the school year.
- Transition services described under the applicable components of the student's IEP that focus on the appropriate course of study. At age 16, the needed transition services, including, when appropriate, a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages, must be specified.

What about older students with significant emotional or behavior disorders? These students provide several challenges for teachers and educators related to the implementation of an IEP. Consider that their parents are interested in being involved in the development of goals and may provide significant information about how to manage behavior. Research suggests that even with older students, when families are engaged in the IEP process providing goals and expectations, students and parents benefit (Carlson et al., 2020).

FIGURE 1.5 Test accommodations

- Extended testing time
- Additional rest breaks
- Writer/recorder of answers
- Reader
- Sign language interpreter (for spoken directions only)
- Selectable background and foreground colors
- Alternative test formats: audio recording, Braille, large print
- Large-print answer sheet
- Audio recording
- Audio recording with large-print figure supplement
- Audio recording with raised-line (tactile) figure supplement
- Student takes test in an alternative setting that is quiet
- A familiar person provides the assessment
- Equipment and/or materials are adjusted to meet students' needs

The role of the IEP for planning and assessment

The IEP is a method for planning and assessment that reflects the judgment and input of the school system, specialists, teachers, parents, and students themselves. The IEP is a safeguard not only for students but also for families and school systems. An example of an IEP is presented in Figure 1.6.

FIGURE 1.6 Sample IEP

Individualized Education Program			
I. Demographic Information			
Last	First	M.I.	Date
Smith	John	E.	May 12, 2014
Student I.D.	Address	Home Phone	Work Phone
2211100	23 Lakeview St. Collier, MN 32346	(459)555-5555	(459)555-5000
Date of Birth	Grade Level	Home School	Program Eligibility
03-02-04	5	Lakeview Elementary	Learning Disabilities
Reason for Conference:	<input type="checkbox"/> Staffing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Review	
II. Conference			
Parent Notification			
Attempt #1:	Attempt #2:	Attempt #3:	
Letter: 3-02-10	Phone call: 3-13-10	Notice sent home with student: 3-22-10	
Parent Response:	Will attend as per phone call on 3-13-10		
III. Present Levels of Educational Performance			
John is a 5th grade student whose disability inhibits his ability to read required material. John can read 35/100 in two minutes from a 4.0 grade level paragraph and 45/100 in two minutes from a 3.0 grade level paragraph. John can answer 8/10 literal questions and 4/10 inference questions from a 4.0 grade level passage read to him.			
IV. Annual Goals and Short-Term Benchmarks			
1. John will increase reading fluency to the 4.0 grade level.			
John will read orally a passage at the 4.0 grade level in 2 minutes with 50 or more words correct.			
John will use correct intonation and prosody when reading orally a passage at the 4.0 grade level 50% of the time.			
2. John will improve the percentage of accuracy when responding to literal and inferential questions.			
John will answer literal questions from a 4.0 grade level passage read to him with 75% accuracy.			
John will answer inferential questions from a 4.0 grade level passage read to him with 90–100% accuracy.			
Describe the extent to which the student will not participate in general education settings and explain why the student cannot be placed in general education settings.			
John will not participate in general education settings for language arts, science, and social studies instruction. John requires close supervision when completing tasks, high levels of assistance, and intensive, systematic instruction.			
V. Related Services			
Type of Service, Aid or Modification	Location		Time per day/week
Assistive Technology:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Adaptive PE:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Audiology Services:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Counseling:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Interpreter:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Medical Services:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Occupational Therapy:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Orientation/Mobility:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Physical Therapy:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Psychological Services:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Special Transportation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Speech/Lang. Therapy:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
	Self-contained class, 30 min./wk		(continued)

FIGURE 1.6 Sample IEP (Continued)

VI. Assessment Participation		
Will the student participate in state and district assessments: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
If yes, what accommodations or modifications will be provided?		
<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Flexible Setting	<input type="checkbox"/> Flexible Presentation
<input type="checkbox"/> Flexible Responding	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Flexible Scheduling	
If no, indicate why state and district assessments are inappropriate:		
VII. Transition Planning/Statement		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Under 14: Transition planning not needed.		
<input type="checkbox"/> 14–15 years old: Statement of transition services needed that focuses on student's course of study.		
<input type="checkbox"/> 16 years old: Outcome statement that describes a direction and plan for the student's post-high school years from the perspective of student, parent, and team members.		
VIII. Scheduled Report to Parents/Guardians		
John's parents will be informed of progress toward his annual goals via parent/teacher conferences and interim report cards (4 times per year). Parents will be notified of goals that have been met and the rate of progress toward meeting all of the annual goals.		
IX. Initiation/Duration Dates		
Special education and related services will initiate <u>September 2014</u> , through <u>June 2015</u> (MM/YY) (MM/YY)		
IX. Persons Attending Conference		
Signature	Position	Date
<u>Mary Smith</u>	<u>Parent</u>	<u>May 12, 2014</u>
<u>Jonathan Smith</u>	<u>Parent</u>	<u>MAY 12, 2014</u>
<u>Laura Jones</u>	<u>Special Education Teacher</u>	<u>May 12, 2014</u>
<u>Rafael Gonzalez</u>	<u>General Education Teacher</u>	<u>May 12, 2014</u>
<u>Larry Buck</u>	<u>IEA Representative</u>	<u>May 12, 2014</u>
<u>Harrison Washington</u>	<u>School Psychologist</u>	<u>May 12, 2014</u>
<u>John Smith</u>	<u>Student</u>	<u>May 12, 2014</u>

IEPs are intended to serve as planning guides for the student with special needs, not as mere paperwork. IEPs provide guidelines for educators for the daily education of the individual. Because the writing and updating of the IEP can be time consuming and tedious, there are a number of commercial software programs available to help simplify the task, enabling the IEP to be discussed, agreed on, and printed all in one meeting. See the Tech Tips "IEP Resources" for a list of some of these programs.

Unfortunately, classroom teachers at the middle and secondary levels often do not participate in the IEP process and do not know which students in their classrooms have been identified as having special needs (Schumm & Vaughn, 1992), despite findings that when classroom teachers participate in IEP meetings, parents perceive the

TECH TIPS

IEP Resources

The most useful IEP software programs allow teachers to select from skill sequences and author long-term and short-term objectives, freely customizing skills and objectives to meet individual needs. Often school systems or special education units adopt one particular system. You may find that to be the case in your school district. Some programs are installed on individual computers, whereas others are web-based programs. Web-based systems are especially useful because you can access the data from any online computer while maintaining security by the

use of a password. It is also easier to move students' records along as they move from teacher to teacher and school to school.

Following is a list of IEP management software products and their producers, along with their primary web addresses:

SpedAssist IEP Management Solutions, by SPEDASSIST™ (<http://www.spedassist.com>) They provide an IEP management writing software making IEPs available to multiple sources (e.g., teacher, principal, special education teacher).

Introducing EmbraceSuite <http://www.embraceeducation.com> They provide IEP development software that helps educators develop IEPs utilizing built-in features. They also provide software to facilitate the development of writing 504 plans and MTSS documentation.

IEP Writer <http://www.iepwriter.com> Provides a web-based platform that allows professionals and parents to contribute to IEP plan.

meetings as more beneficial (Martin et al., 2004). Carl Turner, a middle school teacher, put it this way:

I know that Mike has an IEP and I read it at the beginning of the year, but I haven't really used it in my planning. There may be other students who have learning disabilities in my class, but I won't know until the special education teacher tells me.

IEP meeting attendees

Persons who are *required by law* to attend the IEP meeting include:

- A representative of the local education agency (LEA) who is knowledgeable about the special education program, the general curriculum, and the availability of the resources of the LEA.
- A school representative other than the teacher, such as a person designated by the school system.
- Parents or guardians, to ensure that they are informed and involved in the student's placement and progress.
- The student, when appropriate (involving students in the planning of their educational goals is often appropriate, particularly at upper elementary grades and secondary grades).
- The student's general and/or special education teacher (the teacher is involved in identifying realistic and appropriate educational goals for the student).
- An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, e.g., school psychologist.
- Others who the parents or school believe can help develop the IEP (as mentioned earlier, this may include representatives from a range of related services and professions, such as medicine, physical therapy, speech and language therapists, and psychology).

IDEIA currently allows one of the required individuals to be excused from attending an IEP meeting or to provide input in writing with the written consent of the parent. The intent of the IEP development and implementation is met when the key stakeholders at the school ensure that parents attend IEP meetings, making every reasonable attempt to contact parents and accommodate their schedules. This includes scheduling meetings at times that are convenient for parents, giving ample advance notice of the meeting, securing mutual agreement for the time and place of the meeting, meeting through phone calls or home visits if parents cannot attend, and providing a copy of the IEP to parents on request. If parent involvement cannot be obtained, the school should document all attempts to involve parents, including correspondence and a log of phone calls and visits.



Pearson eTextbook
Video Example 1.1

The members of an IEP team introduce themselves at the beginning of the IEP meeting for Jack, age 3. His mother is present in addition to a number of specialists. Why is each person present at this meeting, and what is the purpose of an IEP meeting?

Some school districts have a placement specialist who takes responsibility for managing the placement and program development of students with IEPs. In other schools, the special education teacher or school psychologist may take this responsibility. Many parents have found meetings over video platforms such as Zoom as effective alternatives to meeting in a face-to-face setting. However, consider ways to support the cultural and linguistic needs of the parents when arranging for these meetings.

The role of the general education teacher in the IEP process varies because each school district handles IEP meetings a little differently. As the classroom teacher, however, you will be an important resource, as you will be providing information about the student's performance in your class and implementing many of the academic and behavioral practices. You will also want to be familiar with all accommodations for instruction and assessment.

Participation in the IEP process is not just for elementary teachers. Secondary teachers benefit from participating in the IEP process especially since the IEP at the secondary level frequently provides limited guidance for instructional and curriculum adjustments (Bray & Russell, 2018).

Why are so many people involved in the development and monitoring of the IEP? Each person is at the meeting because he or she has knowledge and experience that can assist in designing the best educational program for the student. Not everyone knows the same things, so each person's contribution is unique and necessary. For example, the school psychologist often provides expertise on diagnostic test results and interpretation. You, however, are the expert on the curriculum for your content areas and grade levels. Your responsibility is to ensure that the goals that are designed to be implemented in your classroom reflect appropriate content, skills, and curriculum for students in your class. Everyone's knowledge of the student is useful to establish high, realistic behavioral and academic goals.

How can IEP meetings provide meaningful involvement for parents of children with disabilities? The purpose of including parents in the IEP meeting is to provide them with an opportunity to provide meaningful information to key educational stakeholders to positively influence the type and quality of their child's educational experience. Unfortunately, there are often unintentional negative consequences for parents attending the IEP meeting (Zeitlin & Curcic, 2014). As Zeitlin and Curcic summarize, many parents perceive the IEP meeting as depersonalized meetings where many decisions have been made prior to their involvement. They think there is too much focus on the paperwork and compliance and too little emphasis on genuine communication and understanding. Many parents also find the IEP meeting to be an emotional event, and for some the focus is on the deficits of their child and a tool to label them rather than a tool to help them improve. What can schools do to improve the process for parents?

- Use language that is understood by all participants including the parents. When professional language that is unfamiliar is used, be sure to explain it so the parents understand.
- Provide opportunities for the parents to engage, give their views, express questions, and provide feedback.
- Allow parents and (when appropriate) students to establish goals and objectives.
- In addition to the IEP document, provide a one- to two-page summary sheet of the key decisions made.
- Check with the parents to assure that they understand decisions made and how they will influence their child's education.

Determining appropriate accommodations and modifications

During the IEP conference, parents and professionals work together to identify appropriate accommodations and modifications that will assist the student in learning skills in class. It is important that general education teachers are included in the decisions regarding accommodations and modifications because they will take part in implementing them when students with disabilities are in the general education classroom. For example, if the IEP team decides that a student needs a highlighted textbook in science, someone must be available to do the highlighting or the accommodation cannot be carried out. Classroom teachers may be considered critical implementers of these accommodations and modifications and thus essential members of determining goals and objectives related to the curriculum



Pearson eTextbook
Video Example 1.2

During a discovery lesson in science, the general education teacher distributes several seeds to each student and instructs students to open the seeds and discover what's inside. Most of the students have small handheld magnifying glasses, but Jeffrey (a student with a vision impairment) has an accommodation—a special magnifier. How would Jeffrey's learning be affected if he did not have the accommodation?

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 1.1

Developing IEP Plans with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Families

1. Ask families to reflect on their educational goals for their child. Listen and ask follow-up questions.
2. Ask families to reflect on their goals for the types of educational experiences they desire for their child. Listen and ask follow-up questions.
3. Ask questions that allow you to better understand the family's language and culture.
4. Use opportunities throughout the IEP meeting to make sense of what is going on by restating what professionals are saying in language that is readily understood.
5. Determine whether there are ways in which the child seems to learn better and participate more actively in learning.
6. Families will know when you are sincerely interested in what they know, how they imagine success for their child, and how you might work collaboratively to build a successful learning environment.

Rossetti et al. (2017). Developing collaborative partnerships with culturally and linguistically diverse families during the IEP process. *Teaching exceptional children*, 49(5), 328–338.

(Pugach et al., 2020). Furthermore, effective communication systems must be in place so that all teachers and support personnel who will work with the student are aware of the accommodations and modifications that will be implemented (Cease-Cook et al., 2013).

Student involvement

By law, students need to attend the IEP meetings only if appropriate. In practice, too often students with disabilities do not attend these meetings, even when the students are in secondary-level settings. However, involving students in this decision-making process helps them develop a commitment to learning and a sense of responsibility and control over the decisions made regarding their learning, and may improve their likelihood of being employed after high school (Wehmeyer, 2015). Students can learn how to participate in their IEP meetings and identify learning needs when teachers assist them prior to the meeting through coaching and “mock” IEP meetings (Neale & Test, 2010).

Why do many students not attend the conference? When middle grade students with learning disabilities and their parents were interviewed, two major reasons were evident (Van Reusen & Bos, 1990). First, parents often are not aware that students can attend. Second, even when students are invited to attend, they choose not to because they feel that they do not know what to say or do, and they are afraid that the major topic of discussion will be “how bad they are doing.” Assistive technology can be a mechanism for including students with disabilities in the IEP process (Biegun et al., 2020). As a classroom teacher, what might you do to engage students in the IEP meetings and the development of the goals and objectives for their educational plan?

A variety of methods can be used to increase the engagement of individuals with disabilities and their families in IEP planning. This is often called *person-centered planning*, or PCP. As the name suggests, PCP involves more than completing an IEP document that addresses a set of issues established by the school or district. The focus in PCP is on developing a more complete understanding of the individual with a disability and his or her family so that his or her specific needs and issues can be addressed (Keyes & Owens-Johnson, 2003). PCP can also facilitate vocational goal setting and engaging the student in how they want to achieve post-secondary goals (Blaskowitz et al., 2019). Even with thoughtful and inclusive planning, communication challenges may require facilitation. When this occurs, consider the following practices aimed at facilitating highly effective problem solving at IEP meetings (Mueller, 2009):

- Use a *neutral facilitator* who can listen and interpret fairly the messages from all participants.
- Establish the *agenda*, allowing everyone to contribute.
- Allow everyone *adequate time* to discuss their issues.
- Summarize *goals* and *solutions*.
- Provide a comfortable and *relaxed setting*.

FIGURE 1.7 | PLAN—An educational planning strategy

Purpose: The I PLAN strategy gives students the knowledge and skills to actively participate in their IEP or transition-planning conferences.

Students: The strategy is most effective with upper elementary, secondary, or postsecondary students who will be participating in an IEP or other educational planning meeting.

Group size: Small-group or large-group instruction.

Duration: Five to six hours of instruction.

Description of strategy: The I PLAN strategy is taught in five steps. The first step is completed before the target conference (e.g., IEP meeting), and the remaining steps are practiced first and then implemented during the meeting.

The acronym I PLAN represents the first letter of each phase of the planning strategy (inventory, provide, listen, ask, and name):

1. *Inventory* your learning strengths, weaknesses, goals, interests, and choices for learning.
2. *Provide* your inventory information.
3. *Listen* and respond.
4. *Ask* questions.
5. *Name* your goals.

Instruction: Teachers focus on gaining commitment from students and encouraging them to actively participate both in learning the I PLAN strategy and in using their new knowledge and skills during the target meeting.

Source: Sharon R. Vaughn, Candace S. Bos, *Strategies for Teaching Students with Learning and Behavior Problems*, 9th ed., © 2016. Reprinted and electronically reproduced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

- Agree that issues that are brought up but are not on the agenda will be “*parked*” on the side and revisited at the end of the meeting.
- Promote participation and *equity* among all voices at the meeting.

Teaching students how to participate in a meaningful way can increase their participation in IEP meetings (Kelly et al., 2011; Mason et al., 2004; Myers & Eisenman, 2005). Thus, a component that often accompanies PCP is teaching students ways to become more actively engaged in their own educational planning. Van Reusen and his colleagues developed a self-advocacy strategy (I PLAN) designed to inform students and prepare them to participate in educational-planning or transition-planning conferences (Deshler & Schumaker, 2006; Pound & Cuevas, 2019; Van Reusen et al., 1994). Teachers can teach students this strategy in about five to six hours over a one- to two-week period. Findings show that secondary school students with learning disabilities who learn this strategy provide more information during IEP conferences than do students who are only told about the IEP conference but not taught the strategy. Figure 1.7 describes this strategy and how to teach it.

Focus on self-determination

Teaching students skills related to self-determination helps them become part of the decision-making process in developing their IEP or transition plans from school to work. Someone who is self-determined is actively involved in making decisions, knows what he or she wants out of life, and is able to influence decisions about his or her life. Students with disabilities are able to identify the knowledge they would like to acquire, the academic and social skills they value, and the activities and experiences they would like to have. Although most parents recognize the value of decision making with even very young children, students with disabilities—particularly those with significant cognitive impairments—have often been treated as though they are unable to have a causal role in their own lives (Shogren et al., 2013; Shogren et al., 2019; Wehmeyer & Zhao, 2020). Marks (2008) argues that the reason self-determination is important for students with disabilities is the same as for other traditionally underrepresented groups—to prevent oppression. Although teachers and parents can play an important role in facilitating support for self-determination skills for individuals with disabilities, paraprofessionals also play an important role, as many of them have extensive contact with individuals with severe cognitive impairments in general education classrooms (Lane et al., 2012).

In a review of two decades of research, Test and his colleagues (2004) established that instruction in the following self-determination skills leads to positive outcomes for students with a wide range of disabilities:

- Decision making
- Self-advocacy
- Goal setting/attainment

- Problem solving
- Self-regulation
- Participation in IEP meetings
- Self-awareness

Students with disabilities who have positive self-determination are more likely to benefit from school and post-school opportunities. It is particularly important that students with disabilities are provided supports for developing their self-determination since they display lower levels of self-determination than their peers. Furthermore, when students with disabilities are provided appropriate interventions focused on positive self-determination, school-related outcomes are quite positive (Wehmeyer, 2015; Wehmeyer & Zhao, 2020). Consider the following as you prepare your students to serve as self-advocates: (a) role-play their participation in meetings; (b) help them learn to problem solve; (c) provide them with information about their disability and their rights; (d) encourage them to have a mentor; (e) assist them in communicating their needs, wants, strengths, and weaknesses; and (f) encourage them to communicate effectively with all key educators about their educational needs.

The IEP Process

Most school districts have developed their own format and procedures for writing IEPs. All members of the team contribute to the IEP, which should include everyone's ideas about the students' educational goals and objectives—including in most cases the students' views. The person who most frequently incorporates what the team agrees on and writes the IEP is the special education teacher.

The IEP is central to FAPE and provides for a direct and ongoing role for all of the child's teachers. Educators may want to consider the following ways in which an IEP might violate the legal requirements of FAPE.

1. Parental involvement is passively or inadequately engaged.
2. The multidisciplinary team uses predetermined practices for making decisions for the student without parental input.
3. The IEP is written without parental participation.
4. Developing goals (academic or behavioral) that are not challenging or ambitious.
5. Monitoring goals and making appropriate educational and behavioral changes.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Learning Objective 1.2 Describe the responsibilities you have as a classroom teacher for students with special needs and the types of practices and adaptations you need to implement.

General education teachers often express concerns about the extent to which they need to know and understand the law as it pertains to individuals with disabilities. Leila MacArthur put it this way:

As a classroom teacher, I'm concerned about all of the children in my classroom. I want to do as good a job as I can, but I also realize that I cannot know everything about every difficulty, learning and behavioral, that the children in my classroom will manifest. I know that I need to know who to contact when I have questions. But I suppose what is of the most interest to me is exactly what I'm responsible for and what I need to know so that I can successfully implement education programs for the students with special needs. Probably my biggest questions center on the law and what I need to do.

When asked what questions she had, Leila provided the following list:

- *Who is responsible for the IEP?* The multidisciplinary team is responsible for developing the IEP; the person who is principally responsible for the IEP, however, is the special education teacher. The general education teacher and the parent might be responsible

for particular goals described in the IEP. Be sure to ask questions about how you can assure that the goals and the objectives are reflected in your instructional practices. Designing ways to monitor students' progress that align with the IEP are needed.

- *Can I be held responsible if a student in my class does not accomplish all of the objectives in the IEP?* The IEP is not a contract but rather an agreement by which the teacher undertakes the optimum educational procedures to help ensure that the student meets the IEP objectives. Teachers cannot be held responsible for students' lack of progress on IEP goals unless it can be proved that teachers have not made efforts to fulfill their responsibilities.
- *What if I was unable to attend the meeting at which the child's IEP was developed?* Obtain a copy of the student's IEP from the special education teacher or meet with the special education teacher to identify the IEP goals for which you are responsible.
- *What should I do if I feel a student is not making adequate progress on their IEP?* Collect appropriate data through progress monitoring, representative work samples, or behavioral observations. Communicate your findings to other members of the multidisciplinary team. Regular meetings with the special education teacher and other professionals who are providing services to the student will ensure that the student's progress is monitored. Most importantly, make sure that the treatment practices you are using are evidence-based and adjust them to meet the individual needs of the student. Also, meetings that involve parents or guardians will help you explain a student's progress and find ways to enhance his or her performance.

The IDEIA is a law aimed at enhancing the quality and equity of education for all students. The law requires reasonable expectations of teachers. Your role is to help students fulfill the goals in the IEP and to provide an appropriate education for all students (see Tips for Teachers 1.2).

Although knowledge of the law is important, you should also be aware of the resources available to you when you have questions and need further information. Many people in your school and district can help you. Experienced teachers report that their best resources are the special education teachers in their building, other teachers, the school psychologist, and the principal.

Octavio Gonzalez, a ninth-grade English teacher, has three students with disabilities in two of his five sections of English. These students receive support services during the school day from the special education teacher, and Octavio meets occasionally with the

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 1.2

How Can You Meet Your Special Education Responsibilities?

- Ask the special education teacher what reports are relevant to successful instruction of students with disabilities in your class; then read these reports.
- Ask appropriate professionals such as the special education teacher for suggestions for enhancing the learning of students with disabilities in your classroom.
- Ask appropriate professionals such as the special education teacher to co-teach your class or demonstrate lessons that show how his or her suggestions can be implemented.
- Attend relevant meetings related to the students with disabilities for whom you have responsibilities and use these meetings to communicate about students' progress and needs.
- Reexamine IEPs quarterly and check that you monitor the progress of students with disabilities in your classroom.
- Keep a folder of relevant work samples to document progress for each student with disabilities for whom you have responsibilities.
- Maintain parent contact through occasional phone calls and written notes.
- Meet regularly with the special education teacher. If he or she does not already work in your classroom, extend an invitation to come in and help you instruct students with special needs.
- If you are concerned about a student's progress, don't hesitate to inform all key personnel, including the appropriate administrator and special education teacher, as well as the student and parent(s).

How do classroom teachers participate in the IEP process? What are three ways the teachers participate in the referral and planning process for students with special needs?



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special education teacher to plan and get suggestions for accommodating their needs in his English class. Octavio comments:

At first I was nervous about having students with disabilities in my class. One of the students has a learning disability, one student has serious motor problems and is in a wheelchair, and the third student has vision problems. Now I have to say that the adaptations I make to meet their special learning needs actually help all of the students in my class. I think that I am a better teacher because I think about accommodations now.

An eighth-grade teacher, Lin Chang, put it this way:

At first I was worried that it would be all my responsibility. But after meeting with the special education teacher, I realized that we would work together and I would have additional resources if I needed them. Furthermore, I think more about keeping in touch with the parents so that they are always informed of progress. Doing all of this communication on the telephone is not always possible, so I send a lot of notes home.

Monitoring the progress of students included in general education sometimes becomes the sole responsibility of the special education teacher, but this is not an effective procedure. Students with disabilities are more likely to benefit from collaboration between the special and general education teachers, with both teachers collecting academic and behavioral progress monitoring measures to determine students' needs. Our studies with middle and high school teachers reveal that obtaining access to students' IEPs and psychological reports (to be used to guide teacher planning for students with disabilities) may be difficult (Vaughn & Schumm, 1994). Teachers reveal that their best sources of information are parents, former teachers, or the students themselves (Schumm & Vaughn, 1992). Thus, middle and high school teachers need to consider adaptations that provide for the special learning needs of students with disabilities and also enhance instruction for all their students. It is also important to consider ways to transition older students with disabilities to work settings. The IEP can be an excellent tool for facilitating instructional decision making (Brooke & McDonough, 2008).

Remember, a few minutes of one-on-one purposeful teaching is an effective way to assess progress and provide directed instruction. Recognize that "stressing out" over effective instructional practices for your students will not improve your instruction or their outcomes. Stress is a debilitating factor negatively influencing instructional outcomes (Wong et al., 2017). Instead, focus on what you can do to realistically and appropriately include and support learning objectives for students with disabilities.

We have found several accommodations general education teachers can make that not only assist students with disabilities in the general education classroom, but also enhance instruction for all students. These approaches, described in detail later in this book, are summarized in Tips for Teachers 1.3.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 1.3

Adaptations for Students with Disabilities

- Treat all students with respect. Through your treatment of all students and your encouragement, assist all students in recognizing the assets of students with special needs.
- Consider ways to assure that students with special needs are in your classroom for key times, including instructional times, class bonding times, and other relevant periods where being part of the class is important. Coordinate your schedule with specialists who work with students in or out of your classroom (e.g., students don't leave or enter class in the middle of a lesson; specialists are in your classroom at times when they can be the most effective).
- Adapt effective classroom management strategies for students with special needs so that they are productively integrated into the classroom behavior routines but also have the specialized behavior supports that they require (e.g., time-out, point systems).
- Students with disabilities benefit from tangible manipulatives that are student centered and allow them to make associations between the learning and the manipulative (e.g., picture) (Finnerty et al., 2019).
- Provide opportunities both socially and academically to be encouraging and positive with students, including looking for opportunities to recognize success academically and for good behavior. We all think that we are exceedingly positive but observations from classroom teaching suggest that teachers provide fewer positive statements each day than they think they do.
- Establish personal relationships with students (e.g., get to know students as individuals; determine student interests and strengths). Even for students with low communication skills, observe what they do and then use pictures to communicate questions about their interests.
- Communicate frequently with included students (e.g., plan frequent short, one-on-one conferences and discuss potential modifications with students).
- Communicate with professionals and parents of included students (e.g., exchange notes and talk informally with parents; encourage parents to provide support for students' education).
- Establish expectations for all students and develop mechanisms for making these expectations known to students with clear steps for achieving them.
- Make adaptations for students when developing individualized educational plans. As you design instruction, assignments, or practice routines, consider ways to assure that students with disabilities can fully and meaningfully participate.
- Structure assignments and instructional opportunities to reduce frustration and provide access to learning. Even for students with significant disabilities, consider what aspects of the instructional goals they can access.
- Teach test-taking skills, note-taking skills, and other practices that facilitate effective learning.
- Adapt instructional materials (e.g., different textbooks, supplemental workbooks).
- Use computers to enhance learning (e.g., as a tool for writing, as a tool for practicing skills).
- Monitor students' understanding by asking them to repeat or demonstrate directions or key ideas.
- Monitor students' understanding of concepts presented in class (e.g., attend to, comment on, and reinforce understanding of vocabulary, abstract ideas, key words, time sequences, and content organization).
- Provide one-on-one instruction through 60-second lessons and brief "check-ins" to assure students with disabilities are learning and getting appropriate feedback.
- Pair students with a classmate (e.g., to provide support with assignments, to provide models for behavior and academics, and for social support).
- Adjust grouping practices to involve students with disabilities successfully. For example, engage students in small-group activities with both mixed-ability grouping (different achievement levels) as well as same-ability groupings to target engagement and learning.
- Involve all students in whole-class activities providing opportunities to respond and participate.
- Provide extra time (e.g., schedule extra time for skill reinforcement and extra practice).
- Adapt pacing of instruction (e.g., break down materials into smaller segments; use step-by-step approaches).
- Design procedures for monitoring students' progress that engage students in keeping and recording progress. This can be done through a student's folder or progress chart.
- Provide students with ongoing feedback about their academic and social progress. This feedback can be (a) immediate and aligned with the activity, (b) ongoing in terms of periodic mini-meetings regarding progress (two to three minutes), and (c) less frequent longer meetings to discuss academic and behavioral performance.
- Adapt assessments (e.g., use oral testing; give more time for tests; modify administration procedures; reduce the number of items; reduce the difficulty of items).
- Consider grading criteria and how they may need to be adapted for students with special needs.

Participating in the Referral and Planning Process

The May 2021 updated data announced by the U.S. Department of Education revealed that 45 years after the U.S. Congress enacted the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975, the status of educating individuals with disabilities had altered considerably. The report identified several ways in which students with disabilities are receiving improved services, including:

- Increasing the number of young children with disabilities receiving high-quality interventions, with the number of young children under 5 increasing by more than 35%.
- Increasing the percentage of students educated in their neighborhood schools to 95%, thus assuring that the vast majority of students with disabilities attend schools where others in their neighborhood go to school near their homes.
- Increasing from 60% in 2009 to 65% in 2019 the percentage of students who spent 80% or more of their instructional time in the general education classroom.
- Significantly increasing the number of students with disabilities graduating from high school and reducing the percentage of students with disabilities dropping out of high school.
- Doubling the percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in postsecondary programs and increasing the percentage of young adults with disabilities who are employed.

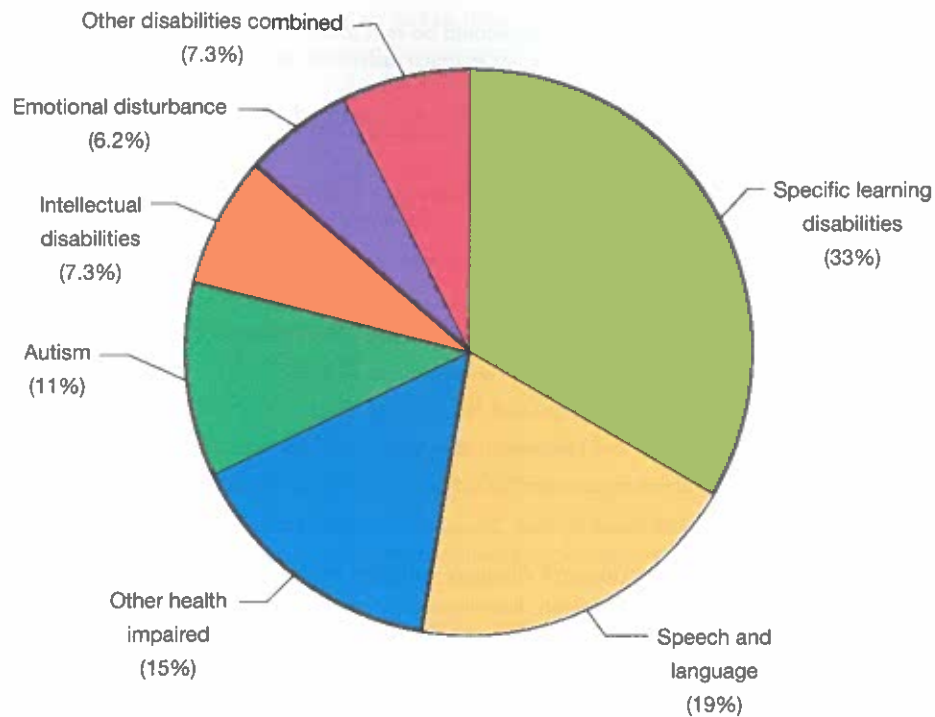
Approximately 14% of the school-age population receives special education services. These are students whose educational and social-emotional needs we do not expect can be met through traditional instructional procedures alone. Interestingly, of all of the students identified with disabilities, 33% are identified with specific learning disabilities, 19% with speech and language disorders, and 11% with autism.

The term **disabilities** refers to conditions that include cognitive challenges, hearing impairments, vision impairments, speech and language impairments, learning disabilities, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, deafness and blindness, and multiple disabilities. The classification of students into categories of disability is controversial. Many people believe that labels are necessary because they provide a common understanding of each student's needs and help to identify appropriate special education services. Others believe that the labels conjure up negative stereotypes, harm students' self-concepts, and cause confusion because each category subsumes many different defining characteristics. Regardless, labels and categories can be used in ways that are helpful as well as harmful. You need to consider how to think of the person first rather than the type of disability. Figure 1.8 shows the system of federal categories and the percentage (by category) of students who are provided with special education.

Students are identified as having special needs through a system of referrals. Students who have obvious disabilities (such as significant hearing, visual, or physical impairments or significant mental retardation) are usually referred and identified before age 5. For these children, the disabilities are often apparent to parents and pediatricians, and intervention begins early in the child's life. Classroom teachers or parents often identify students as having possible disabilities after they begin school.

The prereferral process

Response to intervention (RTI) has influenced the prereferral process. RTI refers to providing a validated (based on research) intervention to students in the instructional or behavioral area of need before determining whether a student qualifies for special education services. A student's progress is monitored, and based on this progress additional intervention is provided before the student might be referred for special education. Prior to RTI, classroom teachers initiate referrals for assessment and appropriate intervention services. It is important to note that parents and teachers can still initiate referrals for assessment and appropriate services without going through the RTI process. It may be

FIGURE 1.8 System of federal categories and percentage of students served (ages 6–21)

Source: "Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2019. This report is available on the Department's website at: <http://www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep>.

that a student's academic and/or behavioral needs are so significant that participation in RTI is unnecessary. Also, many parents remark that they have very little knowledge of the RTI process and what supports are provided to their children (Wingate et al., 2018).

Many schools have established school-based **prereferral assistance teams (PATs)** to facilitate assessment and identification of students with special needs. The PAT is a group of teachers and other key educators such as a school psychologist or reading specialist from the same school who meet regularly to discuss the specific progress of students whom other teachers in the school have brought to their attention. This school-based problem-solving team is designed to help teachers by making classroom accommodations that maximize opportunities for students to succeed in the general education classroom or by identifying a treatment intervention to determine how the student responds. The idea is to determine whether this student needs additional instruction or has a special need. The model provides a forum in which classroom teachers can be part of the problem-solving process to ensure that all students in their classes receive appropriate services and that adequate information is available to determine whether students have a special need. Increasingly, students' responses to traditionally successful interventions are used as a data source to determine whether students have a special need. Research documents the value of having parents involved in this prereferral process, with overall improved quality of prereferral meetings and improved outcomes for students when parents are involved in the meetings and in providing interventions (Chen & Gregory, 2011).

Figure 1.9 provides an example of a form that can be used to assist with prereferral.

Currently, individuals who may need special education come to the school's attention because (a) a teacher or parent expresses concerns about the academic or behavioral functioning of the student, (b) a schoolwide screening test suggests possible learning or behavior problems, or (c) students at risk for problems have been provided interventions and haven't responded adequately to the intervention. Whether your school is using a more traditional approach to referral for special education identification or an MTSS model, recommended practice is that students are provided research-based instructional

FIGURE 1.9 Prereferral for special education services

Directions: Please complete all sections of this form. The form should be sent to the Teacher Assistance Team. Complete and provide specific information that will assist the team in providing as much assistance as possible. Use behavioral descriptions whenever possible.

Teacher _____

Grade/Class _____

Date _____

Student _____

Age _____

1. Describe what you would like the student to be able to do that he or she does not presently do.
2. Describe what the student does (strengths) and what he or she does not do (difficulties).
3. Describe what you have done to help the student cope with his or her problem.
4. Provide background information and/or previous assessment data relevant to the problem.
5. Describe how you have designed instruction to consider the cultural and linguistic needs of the student.

intervention and adequate progress monitoring to adjust instruction prior to referral for special education. Sometimes the classroom teacher or educational specialist provides the instructional and behavioral support students need.

Prereferral teams work toward the following goals:

- Providing suggestions to the classroom teacher.
- Identifying a secondary intervention that is associated with improved outcomes for most students.
- Implementing reasonable accommodations and modifications to meet students' academic and behavioral needs, document their results, and problem-solve alternative interventions.
- Assisting the teacher or parent with the referral process if necessary.

Although prereferral strategies take different forms in different school districts (Jimerson et al., 2007; Turner, 2019), most school districts use one of the following models:

- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) or Response-to-intervention (RTI) model
- Special-education-teacher-as-consultant model
- Problem-solving model

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) or Response-to-Intervention (RTI) model

Individuals with academic or behavior disabilities have typically been identified based on practices that involve referral by the classroom teacher or parent followed by a complete battery of assessments designed to identify whether the student qualifies as learning disabled. There has been considerable concern about the appropriate use of IQ tests for all students, particularly for students of color, and the extent to which the traditionally used IQ-achievement discrepancy is an appropriate practice for identification for special education (Fletcher et al., 2011; Jimerson et al., 2007; Stuebing et al., 2012). In reaction to these concerns, a significant change in special education law about how students with disabilities are identified was made in IDEIA 2004. The law stipulates that a student with a learning disability may qualify for special education services if he or she has participated in but does not respond adequately to a scientific research-based intervention (for example, in reading or math). Recently, many states have referred to multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) rather than response to intervention (RTI) to emphasize that students are provided evidence-based instruction at the general education classroom level initially (Tier 1) and multiple tiers of support, e.g., interventions, prior to referral for special education.

What is IQ-achievement discrepancy, and what concerns are there about using it for identification? IQ-achievement discrepancy has been the common practice by

which the IQ and standardized achievement scores of students referred for learning disabilities are used to establish whether a learning disability exists. A significant discrepancy (higher IQ scores than achievement scores on one or more relevant outcomes) occurs when an individual performs lower than would be expected based on his or her IQ, in one or more areas. Although the presence of an IQ discrepancy was considered a strong indicator of learning disabilities in the past, today there are several concerns about this practice:

- The discrepancy is difficult to determine with young children and may unnecessarily postpone identification until second grade or later.
- Many young children (ages 5 to 7) benefit greatly from prevention programs, particularly in reading.
- Formal IQ and achievement tests are expensive to administer and interpret, and the money may be better used to provide instruction.
- IQ tests provide little information on how to improve or alter instruction.

The most frequently suggested alternative to the IQ–discrepancy approach to identifying students with learning disabilities is the use of RTI. Using this approach:

- Students who respond adequately to the intervention and are able to make appropriate progress in the classroom are considered high responders to the intervention and are unlikely to require special education.
- Students whose response to the intervention is adequate but who continue to make less-than-adequate instructional gains in the general education classroom may qualify for special education.
- Students who make little progress when they are provided with research-based instructional methods are very likely to require special education.

The implementation of an MTSS or RTI approach is relatively new, and therefore questions regarding who will provide the interventions and the extent to which validated instructional practices exist in fields other than reading still need to be addressed. Nevertheless, this approach appears to be a path for identification of learning disabilities that will soon be used by more and more school districts (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012; Grigorenko et al., 2020; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). See Figure 1.10.

Consultant model

The special education teacher as a consultant is a traditional prereferral intervention model. Classroom teachers who have students with learning and behavioral difficulties and other disabilities in their classrooms frequently look to the special education teacher for advice and support. Teachers might ask the special education teacher to observe students in the classroom and in other settings to provide initial suggestions for assistance. The idea is that the special education teachers can provide instructional and behavioral supports and observe students' response, helping the classroom teacher and parents determine whether referral to special education might be warranted.

In a second consultant model, the special education teacher works part-time in general education classrooms to assist teachers with students who have been identified as requiring special education but whose needs generally can be met in the general education classroom. The special education teacher also assists teachers in implementing practices to enhance academic and social outcomes for students at risk for referral to special education. In this model, the special education teacher assumes instructional responsibility for selected students or a group of students and/or provides suggestions to the general education teacher to improve outcomes for students (Solis et al., 2012).

Problem-solving model

This model provides initial strategies and support for classroom teachers before referring a student for assessment for special education services. Schools may benefit in several ways by using a problem-solving team:

- Classroom teachers have considerable knowledge and talent and can help one another meet the needs of targeted students.



**Pearson eTextbook
Video Example 1.3**

A specialist contrasts the IQ-achievement discrepancy model and the response-to-intervention (RTI) model for identifying students with learning disabilities. For the child, what are the advantages of a multi-tiered system of identification (such as RTI)?

FIGURE 1.10 Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

What does MTSS look like in schools? Following is an example of MTSS in practice. Though MTSS models can include multiple tiers of instruction, the three-tier model is the most prevalent designed to provide a safety net for struggling readers.

- *It is January of Patrick's kindergarten year, and although most of his classmates have learned all the letter names and most of the letter sounds, Patrick is having difficulty. He identifies a few letter names and letter sounds but does not always remember them.*
- *It is April of second grade, and Mara, who has struggled since first grade with most reading-related tasks, seems to be falling further and further behind. She has difficulty decoding new words, and winter benchmark assessments show she is reading about 35 words a minute, whereas average readers are reading about 90 to 95 words a minute.*

The three-tier reading model meets the instructional needs of young readers, including those who are slow starters in kindergarten, like Patrick, and those who continue to struggle in the early elementary grades, like Mara. It is a prevention model designed to catch students early, before they fall behind, by providing the supports they need throughout the first four years of school. The model consists of three tiers, or levels, of intervention.

MTSS Tier 1: Core Reading Instruction in the General Education Classroom

Tier 1 consists of three components: (1) core classroom reading instruction provided to all students that is based on evidence-based research, (2) benchmark testing at three times during a year (fall, winter, spring) to determine instructional needs, and (3) ongoing professional development so that teachers are equipped to provide quality reading instruction to their students. In Tier 1 the classroom teacher provides the instruction. Students are at various levels of development in critical early reading skills. Some students are able to acquire the necessary skills through the standard instruction given by the teacher, whereas others require more intensive instruction in specific skill areas. Using flexible grouping and targeting specific skills, classroom teachers are often able to meet the needs of most of the students they teach.

MTSS Tier 2: Supplemental Intervention

For some students, focused instruction in the general education classroom setting is not enough. To get back on track, these students require supplemental intervention in addition to the time allotted for core instruction. Tier 2 meets the needs of these students by giving them an additional 30 minutes or so of small-group instruction four to five times a week. The goal is to support and reinforce skills being taught by the classroom teacher. At this level of intervention, progress monitoring is used (approximately twice a month) to ensure adequate progress is being made on target skills. Tier 2 instruction may be provided by the classroom teacher, a specialized reading or math teacher, or another teacher trained in Tier 2 evidence-based practices.

MTSS Tier 3: Intensive Intervention

A small percentage of students who receive supplemental reading instruction (Tier 2) continue to have difficulty acquiring necessary reading skills. Additionally, some of the students initially respond well to Tier 2 instruction but later fall behind again and require another set of Tier 2-type interventions. Students who have received multiple sets of Tier 2-type interventions may require intervention that is more explicit, more intensive, and specifically designed to meet their individual needs. For these students, they may require more time, e.g. two 30-minute sessions of specialized small-group instruction or they may require more customized instruction that is designed to meet their specific learning needs. The special education teacher or another specialist trained in Tier 3 intervention methods may provide the instruction.

Movement through the tiers is a dynamic process, with students entering and exiting each level of instruction as needed. Students with significant instructional needs do not need to wait and pass through Tier 2 in order to access more intensive interventions in Tier 3. Once a student acquires the target skills, he or she may no longer require supplemental instruction. The key components of the MTSS model are (1) the use of effective instruction, designed to meet the needs of students at each level, and (2) assessment procedures that measure current skills and growth over time and that are used to provide new instruction to individual students. In contrast to previous academic or behavioral interventions, the MTSS model provides a system that is responsive to students' changing needs.

Source: Based on *3-Tier Reading Model: Reducing Reading Difficulties for Kindergarten through Third Grade Students*, by the University of Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts, 2008, Austin: Texas Education Agency; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2014.

- Classroom teachers can and do help many students with disabilities. Every effort should be made to meet students' needs in the classroom before referral for special education.
- Teachers who work together can solve more problems more effectively than teachers who work alone.
- Teachers can increase their skills and knowledge through solving the academic and social problems of students.

Members of the problem-solving team can include school psychologists, reading specialists, speech and language specialists, and other teachers with experience in effectively teaching students with academic or behavior problems.

During a problem-solving meeting, team members (using the guidelines in Tips for Teachers 1.4) participate in a problem-solving process that lasts approximately 30 minutes.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 1.4

Problem-Solving Guidelines for Team Meetings

- Present and review summary information about students from your prereferral form or notes.
- Identify the primary concern and describe interventions you and other teachers have tried.
- Consider whether the instruction provided has adequately responded to the cultural and linguistic background of the student.
- Brainstorm and evaluate ideas for potentially solving the problem.
- Select a goal to address the problem and identify objectives and procedures for solving it.
- Discuss suggestions with all designated teachers and further refine your classroom intervention plan.
- Select an intervention or set of instructional or behavioral procedures and assure that they can be appropriately implemented.
- Develop a means of measuring the success of the intervention plan.
- Establish a date and time for a 15-minute follow-up meeting to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan.

Adapting Instruction

In addition to participating in planning, prereferral, and referral procedures, classroom teachers must adapt curriculum and instruction to accommodate students' special needs (see Figure 1.11 for models for adapting instruction).

"What does it mean to adapt instruction for students with disabilities?" asked Anna Schmidt, a 10th-grade social studies teacher. "I have certain objectives I need to meet for all of my students. Does this mean I alter these objectives?" Anna's questions are relevant to issues related to effective interventions. Classroom teachers can greatly help their students with special needs by making adaptations that positively affect learning for all students in the classroom.

Many of the adaptations you make for students with disabilities will enhance learning for all students in your classroom. For example, Maria Arguelles, an eighth-grade teacher, develops an outline of her lectures. She projects this outline on a screen, pointing out her location in the outline as she presents key information. This procedure not only helps students with disabilities who have difficulty organizing information, taking notes, and identifying key ideas, but also enhances learning for all the students in her classroom.

Looking for students' strengths and ways to say "good job" also promotes learning for all students. Jane Gordon, a fourth-grade teacher, was a pro at this. She realized that motivation is the key to success, particularly for the students with disabilities in her classroom, and she put considerable effort into knowing the strengths and interests of each student and recognizing those strengths and interests whenever possible.



**Pearson eTextbook
Video Example 1.4**

A high school science teacher describes ways he has learned to adapt instruction for Kevin, a student with a learning disability. How do general education teachers know what to do to adapt instruction effectively for students who have special needs?

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT, EXPANDING IDEA, TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS, AND INCLUSION

Learning Objective 1.3 Discuss No Child Left Behind and its influence on testing accommodations for students with disabilities and the expanded laws regarding IDEA, including early education and transition, then consider the instructional implications of implementing inclusion and other services provided in the continuum of services for students with disabilities.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requires that at least 95% of students with disabilities participate in the statewide assessments that are used as standard measures of yearly progress for school-age children. However, in 2011, flexibility in NCLB was offered as a voluntary opportunity for state and local leaders to submit proposals for how they might be able to alter these requirements in exchange for rigorous state-level proposals.

FIGURE 1.11 Models for adapting instruction

A three-year project involving nine elementary and middle schools in integrating students with moderate or severe disabilities into general education classrooms yielded guidelines for change at three phases: planning, implementation, and sustainability (Burnstein et al., 2004).

Planning

Participants reported that the most essential features of planning for change are:

- **Change process.** Implement a plan for the change process that includes (a) building a commitment to change with teachers, administrators, and parents; (b) planning for change; and (c) providing support for change.
- **Staff development.** Opportunities to learn about inclusive practices provided motivation and preparation for change and gave participants the tools to meet the needs of students in inclusive settings.
- **Collaborative activities.** Collaborative planning and teaching allowed special education and general education teachers to benefit from the unique expertise that was brought by each group and to create a collaborative environment where meeting the special needs of students became a priority for all teachers.
- **Commitment to change.** Changing practices involved active participation of both administrators and teachers in activities such as making available (administrators) and using (teachers) funds for planning time, staff development, and site visits.

Implementation

Inclusion looked different from school to school and was determined by a variety of factors, including the following:

- **Range of program options.** There was great variation in the types of inclusive practices that occurred in schools. Some served all students with disabilities in general education classrooms and others offered a range of service options. The teachers, administrators, and parents at specific school sites determined how changes were implemented.
- **School-site decision making.** Although participants were satisfied with the changes that occurred, the inclusion models implemented looked very different from school to school. This reflects the site-level decision making that was made to address the specific needs of each school.
- **Support services.** Teachers, administrators, and parents required training in effective teaching practices and collaboration as well as resources such as materials and extra staff to effectively implement inclusive practices.

Long-Term Change

Suggestions for sustaining change were as follows:

- **Leadership at the district level.** Administrators must be committed to supporting long-term change and establishing systems to continue implementation.
- **Teacher satisfaction.** Teachers who see the benefits of the inclusion model for students and faculty in general and special education are likely to sustain the new practices.
- **Ongoing support.** The school district must maintain sufficient resources for ongoing staff development, collaborative planning, and classroom support.
- **Monitor workload.** Teachers were more likely to continue inclusive practices when they were not overloaded with too many students or too many responsibilities in the inclusion model.

Testing Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Because NCLB requires annual yearly progress for students, the issues relating to testing accommodations are significant. Testing accommodations are designed to provide changes in testing to prevent a student's disability from interfering with determining his or her skills. According to the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD, 2004), the inclusion of students with disabilities in statewide assessments should "lead to informed teaching, improved learning, and the acquisition of needed literacy skills, learning strategies, and social skills that allow students with learning disabilities to access the general education curriculum" (pp. 67–68). The hope is that by including students in all parts of the statewide assessment process (e.g., curriculum alignment, test preparation, assessments, and public reporting of scores), teachers and schools will raise expectations and the quality of instruction for low-achieving students will increase performance in essential knowledge and skills (Thurlow & Kopriva, 2015; Ysseldyke et al., 2004).

Raising expectations for low-achieving students and increasing their participation in statewide assessments can yield positive results when students are given (a) appropriate and individualized accommodations and (b) improved instruction in the content that will be covered on the test. In these situations, students with disabilities gain greater access to the general curriculum and can do well on assessments (Ysseldyke et al., 2004) (see Tips for Teachers 1.5).

Rogers and colleagues (2019) provide an analysis of findings from studies of the effects of testing accommodations on students with disabilities revealing mixed results for specific accommodations. Furthermore, students did not perform better when tested

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 1.5

Types of Accommodations Used to Facilitate Student Participation

What types of accommodations can be used to facilitate participation and success of students with disabilities? According to Salend (2008), accommodations can be organized into five categories:

1. Presentation mode—for example, clarifying and simplifying language, fewer items on a page
2. Response mode—for example, extra space on the page, lined or graph paper
3. Timing and scheduling—for example, shorter segments, more time
4. Setting accommodations—for example, individual administration, familiar setting
5. Linguistic accommodations—for example, respond in best language, provide context clues

Source: "Determining Appropriate Testing Accommodations," by J. S. Salend, 2008, *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 40(4), 4–22.

in a separate area and frequently tested better in the group setting. The most prevalent of all accommodations for testing was extended time and this accommodation was also not consistently associated with better performance.

Remember that each test has accommodations that are allowed as well as those that invalidate results. For example, it may not be acceptable to read out loud a passage that measures reading comprehension, but it may be okay to read out loud math questions. Also, some states allow reading aloud of specific parts of the test, for example, proper nouns or test questions, but not other parts of the test. Recommendations for considering accommodations on high-stakes assessments include the following (Cormier et al., 2010; Cortiella & Boundy, 2018; Thurlow & Kopriva, 2015):

- *Setting.* Is the student distracted by or distracting to other students? Is the student able to focus in a quiet classroom with 25 to 30 other children? Will alternative delivery or response forms be embarrassing to the student or disruptive to other students?
- *Administration.* Does the child need an alternate form of test (e.g., large print for a student with a vision impairment)? Does the student need the directions or questions read out loud?
- *Timing.* Does the student require extra time? Does the student need frequent breaks to maintain attention? Does the student perform better at certain times of the day than at others? Should the order of the test sections be alternated to improve motivation or decrease anxiety (e.g., allowing the student to choose the order of the test sections)?
- *Computer-based testing.* The majority of studies reveal that students perform comparably on computer-based assessments and paper/pencil assessments, suggesting that computer-based assessments are an appropriate alternative for students with disabilities who prefer or require this accommodation.
- *Response.* Should the student respond orally rather than in writing? Does the student need assistance in recording answers (e.g., tracking answers from a test booklet to correctly bubbling responses on the answer sheet)?
- *Use of language or American Sign Language.* For students who are deaf and hard of hearing (SDHH) consider bridging the gap between a student's linguistic background and the language of the assessment by using American Sign Language (ASL) to present test items.
- *English learners (ELs) with disabilities.* There is limited research on the types of accommodations that are effective for students with disabilities who are ELs (Albedi, 2014; Trainor et al., 2019). Suggestions include: (a) linguistically modified tests, (b) native language or bilingual test booklets, and/or (c) computer-based testing.
- *Universal design.* As universal design for learning is applied to accommodations for testing, the principle is one of providing multiple means of presentation, expression, and engagement (Thurlow & Kopriva, 2015).

Classroom teachers should be aware of the test accommodations that are in place for each student and, as much as possible, should implement similar accommodations during test-preparation activities and for classroom-based assessments (see also Figure 1.5 on test accommodations). For example, a student who will be given breaks during the statewide assessment should also be allowed to take breaks during practice sessions or when taking long classroom-based assessments.

Expanding the Impact of the IDEIA

With the amendments, the impact of the IDEIA has expanded to include (a) services for infants, toddlers, and young children from birth to age five and (b) transition planning and services for adolescents as they move from high school to postsecondary education, adult life, and the world of work.

Transition from early childhood to school

Part C of the IDEIA, or early intervention services, is a state-operated program established in 1986 to serve infants and toddlers (under age 3) and their families. Children who exhibit at least one of the following criteria and who need assistance are served:

- Diagnosed conditions (e.g., deafness)
- Development delays (e.g., not reaching developmental milestones for talking or walking)
- Children who are at risk but who do not currently exhibit a disability or delay (e.g., physical abuse, homelessness)

Early intervention services are comprehensive services that incorporate goals in education, health care, and social services. The emphasis for early intervention services is on supporting family members accessing resources and managing the care and environment of the infant or toddler with special needs. The important role the IEP plays in program planning for school-age students with disabilities is taken on, for children from birth to 3 years of age, by the **individualized family service plan (IFSP)**. As the name suggests, however, the IFSP broadens the focus to include not only the child but also the family members and their needs in supporting a young child with disabilities.

An IFSP must be designed to meet the needs of the child *and* the family. This plan should provide a coordinated array of services that may be provided directly to the child (e.g., speech therapy or occupational therapy) or may be provided to the family to assist the child (e.g., parent training, counseling, or case management). The following services are included:

- Screening and assessment
- Psychological assessment and intervention
- Occupational and physical therapy
- Speech, language, and audiology services
- Family involvement, training, and home visits
- Specialized instruction for parents and the target youngster
- Case management
- Health services that may be needed to allow the child to benefit from the intervention service

The IFSP is a family-oriented approach to designing an effective management plan for the youngster with disabilities. The IFSP must be developed by a multidisciplinary team and should include:

- A description of the child's level of functioning across the developmental areas: physical, cognitive, communicative, social or emotional, and adaptive.
- An assessment of the family, including a description of the family's strengths and needs as they relate to enhancing the development of the child with disabilities.

- A description of the major goals or outcomes expected for the child with disabilities and the family (as they relate to providing opportunities for the child).
- Procedures for measuring progress, including timelines, objectives, and evaluation procedures.
- A description of natural environments in which the early intervention services will be provided.
- A description of the early intervention services needed to provide appropriate help for the child and family.
- Specifically, when the specialized intervention will begin and how long it will last.
- An appointed case manager.
- A specific transition plan from the birth-to-3 program into the preschool program.

If you are a kindergarten teacher, you probably will have the opportunity to teach young children who, having received early intervention services, are making the transition from preschool to your classroom. It is important to remember that for families and children with disabilities, these transitions are among the most significant times in their lives, filled with uncertainty and concern.

As a teacher, you can help parents of children with special needs by recognizing that their fears and concerns are expected and realistic and by providing information about your classroom and the school to help alleviate their concerns. You can also help to facilitate transition from preschool to kindergarten by doing the following:

- Attending the IEP or IFSP meeting before transition so that you are aware of the child's strengths, the goals planned, and the techniques and strategies that have been successful. You can meet the child's parents and current teachers, ask questions, and determine how this child's goals fit with goals for your other students.
- Meeting with the child's parents before the transition to learn about their goals for their child, the child's strengths and needs, and strategies they have found that help their child succeed in preschool.
- Setting up a regular means of communication with the child's parents and former teachers, particularly for the first several months. Invariably, questions will arise that can be answered easily by the parents and those who have been working with the child. Do not hesitate to use these resources.

Section B of the IDEIA provides special education or related services to children in the range of 3 to 5 or 6 years old. At this stage, there is no longer any provision for children who are at risk, and children must exhibit a disability to receive services. However, the term *preschool child with a disability* is often used to avoid labelling very young children:

(B) The term "child with a disability" for a child age 3 through 9 may, at the discretion of the State and the local education agency, include a child

- i. experiencing developmental delays, as defined by the State and as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures, in one or more of the following areas: physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, or adaptive development; and
- ii. who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services. (Sec. 602[3]; 34CFR 300.7)

Preschool children who qualify are provided with a free and appropriate education that is outlined in an individualized education program. Note that the IEP focuses on educational needs, whereas the IFSP does not. The 2004 revisions to the IDEA provide some flexibility for families; for example, children may continue to be served in an infant/toddler program with an IFSP (with educational goals added) after age 3 or move on to a designated preschool program.

What resources are available to parents who may want to know more about their young children with difficulties or disabilities? Consider the Center for Parent Information and Resources (www.parentcenterhub.org) as a resource for addressing such topics as: what is early intervention, who's eligible, what is a developmental delay, how can I learn more about an IFSP, and who pays for the services.

Transition from school to work and other post-school activities

The 2004 amendments to the IDEA mandate transition planning and transition services for students from 16 years of age to age 21. In the IDEIA, transition services are defined as:

a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability, designed within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. (H.R. 1350, 602[34])

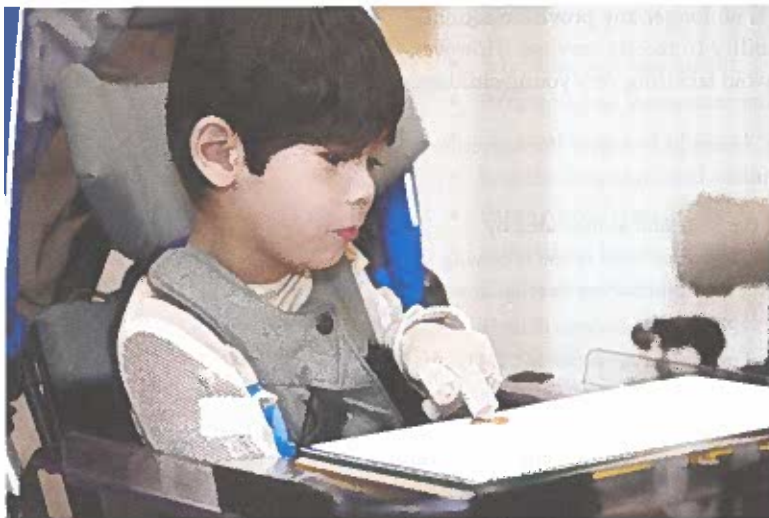
The law also notes that these activities should be based on the student's strengths, preferences, and interests. The activities include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other adult-living objectives and, when appropriate, vocational evaluation, rehabilitation counseling, and the acquisition of daily living skills.

This emphasis on transition planning and services came in response to the growing concern about the number of students with disabilities who were unemployed or underemployed as adults and the limited emphasis on vocational education and adult living in many secondary programs for students with disabilities. A consistent finding is that workers with disabilities are twice as likely as workers without disabilities to be in contingent and part-time jobs. A study conducted by Schur (2003) reports that the primary explanation is health problems of individuals with disabilities that make traditional full-time jobs difficult or impossible for them to hold. Even though part-time jobs pay less, individuals with disabilities would not be able to work if it

were not for these positions. Transition services for students with disabilities are even more important under the No Child Left Behind Act because the graduation rate is one of the criteria to determine if schools and districts meet performance criteria.

Individualized transition plan (ITP)

A key component of these transition services is the **individualized transition plan (ITP)** incorporated into the IEP. This transition plan includes the designation of "appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills" and should also state the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching his or her goals, as indicated by H.R. 1350 and IDEIA 2004. An ITP addresses the student's preferences, interests, and needs; develops a plan 5 to 7 years prior to graduation; and



Why was IDEIA expanded to include eligibility for transition planning for individuals with disabilities from birth to age 21? In what transition activities might this student be involved when he is in high school?

encourages coordinated efforts between agencies, service providers, and vocational and rehabilitation services.

Specific goals for transition, followed by a list of classes and activities that would provide opportunities for students to meet these goals, are written into the IEP. Sample goals follow:

- By the end of the semester, Jason will develop the skills to complete job applications successfully (taught in career exploration class and by completing job applications with the job developer).
- By the end of the school year, Nancy will develop positive work habits (e.g., arriving on time, interacting with coworkers) (taught in career exploration class and during work experiences supported by the job developer).
- Within the next three years, Maria will develop computer skills in word processing, databases, and spreadsheets to the degree that she can effectively use them on a job (taught in computer classes and during work experiences supported by the job developer).
- Before the end of this school year, Jose will develop a monthly budget of expenses that reflects a realistic independent living arrangement, including rent, food, clothing, and other expenses, which will be reviewed by his parents and special education teachers.

Although students with disabilities are underrepresented in postsecondary education settings, students who continue on in school have greater access to employment opportunities and are more likely to get a job and earn a higher salary than those without a postsecondary education (Johnson et al., 2005). High school teachers, specialists, counselors, and families can prepare students who plan to go on to college in the following ways (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition [NCSET], 2004; Torgerson et al., 2004; Wood et al., 2004):

- Encourage students to actively participate in IEP meetings and in the development of the individual transition plan. As with the IEP, including students in the transition planning can be an effective way to ensure a successful transition plan (Biegun, 2020).
- Help students understand the nature of their disability and how it influences learning.
- Teach strategies for developing self-determination and advocacy.
- Support students in transition activities such as education planning and work-study to prepare for college.
- Help students and families find postsecondary settings that are supportive to students with special needs.
- Ensure that students take the courses and have the skills required for enrollment in college.

With the increased emphasis on transition, vocational education, and work experience opportunities during high school for students with disabilities, many districts have special education personnel who work in this area. Mary Hinson, a job developer at Catalina High School, is one such person. She comments on her job and the difference it makes in helping students:

I believe that the work I do as a job developer makes the difference for many students with disabilities and lets them leave high school already employed and adjusted to the world of work. What I do is work with the students, their teachers, and parents to plan a program that allows them to develop job and independent living skills, take relevant course work both at the high school and at the community college, and have relevant work experiences. A big part of my job is developing partnerships with businesses that will provide initial training and "the first job" for students with disabilities.

Increasingly, students with disabilities are considering college as a post secondary experience. Think College (Thinkcollege.org) provides a website identifying the more than 240 colleges that provide opportunities for students with disabilities. In many of these colleges, universal design for learning (UDL) is implemented (Rose & Meyer 2002). UDL provides a framework for helping educators identify the planning and instructional accommodations to consider to make learning accessible for all students.

Clearly, Mary has a different role from that of a typical special education teacher. If you teach in high school, you will want to take the time to find out about transition services and the job developers or persons in charge of transition planning and services. Knowing about a student's transition goals will help you tailor your accommodations so that they are relevant for the student's long-term career goals. For example, if a student with a learning disability is planning to enter the field of drafting, then emphasizing measuring skills in basic math classes and computer-assisted design in computer classes may be particularly beneficial for this student.

The philosophy of this book is that classroom teachers can help their students with disabilities by teaching “on purpose,” that is, by being mindful and proactive in using opportunities to make a difference in these students' classroom experiences. See the 60-Second Lesson to learn more about how to incorporate this philosophy into your teaching.

60-SECOND LESSON

TEACHING ON PURPOSE

Contrary to common belief, purposively teaching students with special needs does not need to take a great deal of time. You can make a difference in only a minute. For example, think about having one or two 60-second lessons with each of your students with special needs every day. How is Darnell progressing on a given IEP objective? What directed feedback can you provide to Marlene to help her achieve her goals? To reflect the value of short, targeted lessons in classroom practice, a feature called “60-Second Lesson” provides an example in most chapters of this book.

A national evaluation of transition experiences of students with disabilities has revealed just how necessary it is to teach on purpose to support the academic and behavioral needs of all students (Lipscomb et al., 2017).

- Youth with intellectual disability and emotional disturbance are the most socioeconomically disadvantaged and also most likely to attend lower-performing schools. Parents report that 72% of youth with intellectual disability live in low-income households.
- Youth with autism and speech or language impairments are less socioeconomically disadvantaged than youth with an IEP overall and less likely to attend a lower-performing school.
- Youth with autism, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, and orthopedic impairments are most likely to have difficulty with daily living without help.
- Youth with emotional disturbance are suspended (65%), expelled (19%), and arrested (17%) at more than twice the rate of other youth with an IEP.
- Youth identified with autism, intellectual disability and multiple disabilities are half as likely as other youth with an IEP to have a paid job.

This evaluation demonstrates clearly that students with disabilities will require extensive supports to successfully transition from school to beneficial post secondary opportunities.

As you consider transition services for students with disabilities, think about how to appropriately plan and provide services for the increasingly large number of students who are dually identified—that is they are identified as both English learners and students with disabilities. Research demonstrates that students who are dually identified as EL and with disabilities may take a less active role in their transition planning and require more supports to engage in the process (Wu et al., 2021).

Inclusion

How does inclusion relate to the continuum of services? **Inclusion**, the active intent of including students with disabilities in the general education classroom, is not required by law, but is often a means for providing an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. The essential element of inclusion is shared responsibility on the part of all educators in the school for the student with disabilities.

The effectiveness of inclusion has been the subject of extensive discussion in the field of special education (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Kauffman, 2020; Stiefel et al., 2018; Zigmond et al., 2009). On the basis of available evidence, many factors may influence the effectiveness of inclusion (e.g., the type and severity of disability, and services provided in inclusive settings). Thus, it is important to decide the placement of each student individually on the continuum of services based on his or her unique needs and to determine whether the student's special needs are adequately met.

As we think about inclusion, it is important to consider that research suggests that the perceived benefits of inclusion vary considerably for students identified with serious emotional disturbance than for other disabilities groups (Stiefel et al., 2018). Students with serious emotional disturbance have low feelings of inclusion from peers and teachers regardless of the amount of time they are placed in general education. In this large-scale study in New York City, there were virtually no differences between feelings of inclusion for students with disabilities who were primarily in exclusive settings (minimal time in the general education classroom) compared with students in more inclusive settings (considerable time in the general education classroom). Perhaps an important lesson from this large-scale study is that educators have opportunities to facilitate the acceptance and inclusion of all students with disabilities regardless of the amount of time the students spend in general education settings.

In practice, the terms *mainstreaming* and *inclusion* can be used interchangeably. They can have very different meanings, however. **Mainstreaming** refers to the participation of students with disabilities in general education classrooms to the extent that is appropriate to meet their needs. Inclusion refers to the education of students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers, with special education supports and services being provided as necessary. Advocates of **full inclusion** believe that all students with disabilities should be educated in the general education classroom all the time (Kirby, 2017; Stainback & Stainback, 1992). **Pull-out services** (e.g., special education resource-room models) are not options for full-inclusion advocates because students with disabilities are not educated entirely in the same setting (i.e., the general education classroom) as students without disabilities. A meta-analysis examining research studies on inclusion models indicates that inclusive settings can be effective for some, although not all, students with disabilities (Zigmond, 2003). For example, Salend & Duhaney (2007) reported that students with severe disabilities who were educated in inclusive settings demonstrated increases in skills acquired, time on task, and exposure to more extensive academic content than those educated in other settings. Also, students in inclusive settings had more friends, greater social acceptance, and higher self-concepts. Justice (2014) reported that for young students with disabilities language outcomes were affected by the language development of peers in their classroom. Of course, for many, the access to fully inclusive classrooms provides opportunities for academic and social growth for all learners (Florian, 2013).

Also, students in inclusive settings had more friends, greater social acceptance, and higher self-concepts. Justice (2014) reported that for young students with disabilities language outcomes were affected by the language development of peers in their classroom. Of course, for many, the access to fully inclusive classrooms provides opportunities for academic and social growth for all learners (Florian, 2013).

At issue is the extent to which a continuum of services is maintained. Earlier in this chapter, the range of educational options for students with disabilities (e.g., the self-contained special education classroom, homebound instruction, and resource room) was presented. This is the continuum of services that advocates of inclusion want to maintain. Advocates of full inclusion are concerned, however, that maintaining a continuum of



Pearson eTextbook
Video Example 1.5

The general education teacher in this inclusion setting provides extra prompts for Daniel, a student with disabilities. Daniel is pulled out for special education services but participates in general education as much as possible. Based on research studies about the positive effects of inclusion, how is Daniel likely to benefit from his participation in this inclusion classroom?

FIGURE 1.12 Guidelines for responsible inclusion

Responsible Inclusion	Irresponsible Inclusion
The student comes first. The priority is the extent to which the student makes academic and/or social progress.	The place comes first. The priority is the place in which the student's education occurs.
Adequate resources are considered and provided for in inclusive classrooms. Both personnel and materials are required to develop and maintain effective inclusive classrooms.	Resources are not considered before the establishment of inclusion. Inclusion is established with little consideration for the necessary personnel and physical resources.
A continuum of services is maintained. A range of education programs is available to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities.	Full inclusion is the only service-delivery model. All students are placed in general education classrooms, regardless of their needs.
The service-delivery model is evaluated on an ongoing basis. The success of the service-delivery model is evaluated with consideration for the extent to which it meets the student's academic and social needs.	The service-delivery model is not evaluated on an ongoing basis. When problems occur, personnel are blamed rather than the model being evaluated.
There is ongoing professional development.	Professional development is not part of the model.
The curricula and instruction meet the needs of all students.	Curricula and instruction that meet the needs of all students are not considered.
Services provided to students are flexible.	Services are defined and not readily altered.
Teaching assistants provide in-class support that includes pairs and small groups of students.	Teaching assistants support the student with a disability only.
Instructional practices and behavioral approaches are recognized as good practice.	Considerable variation in quality of practices is observed.
Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provides a framework for making learning accessible	Universal Design for Learning is not utilized.

Sources: "Responsible Inclusion for Students with Learning Disabilities," by S. Vaughn & J. S. Schumm, 1995, *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 28(5), 267; and "Inclusive school placements and surplus/deficit in performance for students with intellectual disabilities: Is there a connection?" by N. L. Waldron & J. McLeskey, 2010, *Lifespan and Disability*, XIII(1), 29-42.

services will prevent real integration of students with disabilities. The concern is that if the option for separation or pull-out from the regular classroom is available, educators will too easily choose it. Debate continues over the extent to which full inclusion should be required for all students with disabilities. We recognize that the central issue is the extent to which the academic and social progress of students with disabilities is monitored and adjustments provided if progress is not adequate. Figure 1.12 summarizes guidelines for responsible inclusion.

Accessing Information about Students

How do you learn everything you need to know about your students with disabilities? One of the most difficult aspects of working with students with disabilities is figuring out just what they need and what you need to do to help them be successful while they are in your classroom. The first step is accessing information about your students. At a minimum, teachers should have information about the student's educational and social-emotional needs and about the modifications and accommodations that are required for this student. Although it is important to participate in the IEP process and to read each student's IEP, it is also useful to have information that is easily accessible to you in your classroom.

One way to keep track of the needs of your students is to have a *program outline* for each student with disabilities that provides a quick overview of your students. Sometimes a special education teacher will make a program outline for each student, or you can create one yourself by looking at the IEP, assessment information from the schools, progress

monitoring data, and reports provided by previous teachers. The focus of the outline is to provide a one- to two-page document that has the critical information you need to assure you are meeting the student's needs. Consider the following:

- Descriptive information about the student including disability and contact information for parent.
- Description of current and previous special education services.
- Description of instructional adaptations that are recommended.
- Assessment data related to academic performance.
- Assessment data related to social-emotional development.
- Types of reinforcers and supports that are effective.
- Instructional goals and objectives.
- Students' likes and dislikes.

Items contained in the program outline are information on the disability, strengths and needs, IEP objectives, medical or other needs, grading accommodations, instructional modifications, and contact information. A second piece of useful information is an accommodation checklist (see Figure 1.13).

FIGURE 1.13 Accommodation Checklist

Accommodation	Subject Area/Course
1. Highlighted texts	
2. Taped texts	
3. Simplified texts	
4. Manipulatives	
5. Note-taking assistance	
6. Access to study aid (e.g., number chart, map, dictionary)	
7. Peer buddy	
8. Peer tutor	
9. Assignment notebook	
10. Extended time on assignments	
11. Shortened assignments	
12. Alternate presentation format	
13. Small-group instruction	
14. Repeat directions	
15. Increased verbal response	
16. Check for understanding	
17. Frequent breaks	
18. Preferential seating	
19. Assistive technology (list technology)	
20. Calculator	
21. Study guides	
22. Extended time on tests	
23. Tests in special education classroom	
24. Oral tests	
25. Alternative tests	
26. Read-aloud tests	
27. Other _____	

Usually part of the IEP, the checklist should be referenced during planning to ensure that you are providing the student with necessary support and access to the curriculum during your lessons.

Inclusion Issues

As previously mentioned, not everyone agrees on every aspect of the education of students with disabilities. Most educational professionals do support the access to a continuum of services for students with disabilities with an aim towards assuring students are in the general education classroom with their peers as much as possible. One issue that has aroused controversy is the view that all students with disabilities need to be educated in an inclusive setting—typically referred to as full inclusion. The argument is that students with disabilities need to be educated in the most normalized environment available and that extensive experience with persons without disabilities is essential to the social and academic growth of students with disabilities. The extent to which these experiences can be provided, while not abolishing required special education support services, should serve as the guiding principle (Fuchs et al., 2011).

The arguments presented in Figure 1.14 are really not for or against inclusion.

All advocates believe that students with disabilities should be educated in general education settings to the extent possible. Actually, an examination of data from reports to Congress regarding placement practices for students with learning disabilities revealed that such students are educated in increasingly less restrictive settings (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). However, the data do not provide insight into how schools have provided appropriate accommodations and support services to these students placed in less restrictive settings. Of concern is the extent to which specialized support services aimed at meeting the learning and behavior needs of students with disabilities should be available.

Cortina Fernandez, a fourth-grade teacher, describes the strategy she uses successfully to incorporate students with disabilities into her general education classroom:

First, I work very closely with the special education teacher. Before a student is placed into my classroom, I find out as much as I can about what the student likes, what they can do, what their academic strengths are, what they enjoy doing outside of school, and what they can teach me and other students in the classroom.

Second, I find out what they need to know, where they are in terms of their academic progress, and what skills they need to learn, both academically and socially. I get this information from the student's IEP, from the previous teacher, usually the special education



**Pearson eTextbook
Video Example 1.6**

In their dialogue, two experts discuss why full inclusion in the general education classroom is not the best placement for some children with disabilities. Explain the statement when the specialist in this discussion says, "I like to think of the least restrictive environment as the most enabling environment." What does she mean? To what extent do you agree? Explain.

FIGURE 1.14 Arguments for full inclusion and maintenance of the continuum of services

ARGUMENTS FOR FULL INCLUSION

- Students with disabilities should be educated in general education classes all the time.
- Students with disabilities should not be pulled out of the general education classroom to receive specialized education.
- Benefits of placing students with disabilities in specialized classes, for either their academic or social growth, have not been adequately demonstrated.
- Comprehensive, professional development that prepares teachers to meet the educational and social needs of all students is required.
- All students with disabilities have the right to education in the most normalized setting—the general education classroom.

ARGUMENTS FOR MAINTAINING CONTINUUM OF SERVICES

- Students with disabilities should be educated in general education classes to the extent that this meets their educational and behavioral needs.
- Some students with disabilities need to have their educational needs met outside of the general education classroom for part or all of the school day. A continuum of services to meet the needs of students with disabilities is required.
- Benefits and pitfalls of full-inclusion models for all students with disabilities have not been empirically documented.
- General education teachers are inadequately prepared to meet the specialized needs of all students with disabilities.
- Inclusion is a philosophy, not a place. Students have the right to receive the appropriate educational services to fulfill their learning needs at the most suitable site.

teacher, and, if possible, by interviewing the student and the parent before the student is placed into my classroom.

Third, I work with all of the students in my classroom to assure that every child is a member of our community. Our learning community provides support and assistance for every other member and provides social support as well. This ongoing philosophy maintains a classroom environment in which all children are accepted, an essential ingredient to the success for mainstreaming of students with disabilities. I also make the success of every student in the class the responsibility of every other student. While I'm the teacher in the classroom and take that responsibility seriously, our learning community is one in which each child teaches each other. Thus, it's important to find out what everyone knows and what everyone needs to know so we can all work together. I also closely monitor the progress of every student in my classroom, particularly students with disabilities. I frequently check in with them, make sure they know what they're doing, and assure that they are making expected progress.

Fourth, communication is essential to the successful mainstreaming of students with disabilities. This communication occurs between myself and all the specialists, myself and the parent, as well as myself and other students in my class. However, I do not feel the communication is solely a one-way street. I hold the special education teacher and other specialists responsible for communicating with me, as well as encourage the parents to talk to me as frequently as they feel necessary. In addition, communication is part of the responsibility of students. They need to inform me about what they are doing well and where they need help. I encourage this communication by being open and receptive when they want to talk to me. Successful mainstreaming is more than just what I do as a classroom teacher. It's how I think and how I convey this to all the students and teachers in my school.

1 SUMMARY

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA; which incorporates and extends P.L. 94-142) and the Vocational Rehabilitation Act (P.L. 93-112) are the two primary laws that have increased the opportunities and services available to individuals with disabilities. The IDEIA and the Vocational Rehabilitation Act changed the way students with special needs are educated. Among the provisions of the IDEIA is the concept of educational settings providing a continuum of services placing students in the least restrictive environment, meaning that students are best served in settings most similar to those of their peers without disabilities in which they can learn (ideally, moving to less and less restrictive settings). The individualized education program (IEP) is developed and implemented by the multidisciplinary team, the goal being the appropriate education of all students.
- Among the responsibilities of the classroom teacher are participating in the referral and planning process for students with special needs as well as working with other professionals such as those who participate on the teacher assistance team. Also important is understanding how to make adaptations to instruction to meet the needs of students with special needs.
- The IDEIA has been expanded to include services for young children (birth to age 5) and to incorporate transition planning and services for students in secondary schools. Inclusive education models include mainstreaming and full inclusion to promote appropriate placement of students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

THINK AND APPLY

1. Now that you have read Chapter 1, review Elizabeth's account of her experience at the beginning of this chapter. If you could talk with Elizabeth directly, what questions would you ask her? List any questions or concerns you currently have about teaching students with disabilities. Then, after you read each chapter, consult your list again and check off any questions that you can answer satisfactorily. File your personal inquiries in your teaching portfolio and record your answers as you progress through the book.
2. Sit in on an IEP meeting. Who were the participants? What roles did each participant play? If the professionals attending the IEP meeting asked you for advice as to how to better include parents, what would you offer? Based on the roles of the participants, what role do you see yourself playing?
3. Interview one or more teachers who have students with disabilities in their classrooms. Ask these teachers to identify any key practices they implement that they believe make a difference. Ask also what they wish they knew more about and what they will do to learn more. What resources do they find most helpful?



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2

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS): Developing Equity for All Learners

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- 2.1** Provide a rationale for the importance of implementing a response to intervention (RTI) or multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) model in schools and describe the issues that led to their development.
- 2.2** Describe an RTI or MTSS model, including the components and implementation practices and how they can be implemented to assure equity for all learners.
- 2.3** Provide a rationale for screening and progress monitoring, including how these practices influence decision making about interventions.
- 2.4** Discuss the approaches to implementing interventions for students within an RTI or MTSS model and consider issues such as culturally and linguistically diverse students, the role of parents, and the role of the classroom teacher.

5. *Evaluate the plan.* After 10 weeks, the problem-solving team determined that Thomas was making very good progress, and the team attributed it to the additional instruction he was receiving. They projected that after about 10 more weeks of supplemental intervention he would be caught up with his classmates. The team agreed that both the adjustments to the Tier 1–classroom instruction and the intervention (Tier 2) were effective.

This approach maximizes problem-solving opportunities by allowing teams to be flexible. Mrs. Denton appreciated that her professional expertise was valued but realized that it took considerable time to attend meetings with other professionals and design effective interventions for the students in her class who were behind in reading and math. Ms. Chung appreciated the contributions of the problem-solving team and its recommendation to involve the school psychologist. Together, she felt that they had come up with a successful intervention for Thomas.

Differences Between the Standard Protocol and Problem-Solving Models

Ms. Tackett, Mrs. Denton, and Ms. Chung all taught at schools that were implementing RTI models, yet Ms. Tackett was implementing a standard protocol intervention and Mrs. Denton and Ms. Chung were implementing a problem-solving intervention for the students in their classes requiring interventions. Research suggests that both of the models can be effective, and in fact, most sites implement a hybrid in which aspects of each model are used (Tackett, 2009).

The fundamental difference between the standard treatment protocol and the problem-solving model is the extent to which decision-making teams engage in analyzing individual student data before selecting and implementing interventions (Burns & Gibbons, 2013; Christ et al., 2005). With a standard treatment protocol, there is little examination of the reasons for a child's struggles. The rationale is that for secondary interventions, there is considerable evidence about what interventions are effective, and the best strategy is to implement an effective intervention. In contrast, the problem-solving model is more flexible. The emphasis is on individualized, targeted interventions based on an analysis of the learning context, environmental conditions, and instructional variables as well as on a student's progress-monitoring and other assessment data (Spear-Swerling, 2015; Tilly et al., 1999; http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/rti01_overview/chalcycle.htm.)

Decision-Making Teams (MTSS Leadership Teams and MTSS Coaching)

How is the MTSS model implemented within schools? Who takes the leadership role for directing MTSS? The answers to these questions vary by school and district. It is common to have a team of professionals who work together to guide the MTSS process at the school level. Campus leadership teams might have one or more committees, and membership might be flexible, depending on the expertise needed. Some schools have committees that focus on each aspect of the MTSS model: Assessment, Instruction, Intervention, and Professional Development. They provide input into the design of the campus MTSS model, and use student data to progress monitor and evaluate its implementation. You may be asked to be a committee member to provide insights into curriculum expectations and suggestions for what interventions might be effective with students, or you may be asked only to attend meetings that are relevant to students you teach. It is likely that you will be asked to conduct screening measures of reading and math and to use progress-monitoring measures to determine at-risk students' ongoing progress.

Campus leadership teams comprise members with relevant expertise. Ideally teams may have an expert in the targeted area of concern (e.g., reading, mathematics, behavior); one in administering and interpreting results of screening measures; and, for students receiving special education services, a team member with expertise in learning disabilities.



Pearson eTextbook Video Example 2.5

Rocky River Elementary School uses a three-tiered RTI system to identify students who have learning disabilities. Ms. Conley describes the grade-level RTI meetings and the school-wide RTI team. In this system, who makes decisions about a child's placement in Tier 3?

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 2.3

How Campus Leadership Team Members Facilitate MTSS

Members of the decision-making team facilitate the MTSS process in several ways, including:

- Reviewing progress-monitoring data of students in interventions and for grade levels and the school as a whole.
- Observing classroom lessons to ensure that research-based instruction is occurring.
- Providing professional development to teachers and other key educators.
- Assisting with data collection and monitoring.
- Facilitating instructional decision making.
- Providing material and human resources to implement the MTSS process.
- Organizing intervention groups and monitoring their effectiveness.
- Interpreting screening, progress monitoring, and other assessment data.
- Communicating with key stakeholders to be sure instructional and behavioral plans across treatments are aligned.

The overall purpose of the leadership team is to ensure that the MTSS model in the school is implemented effectively and that all students who need additional support are identified early, provided appropriate interventions, and monitored over time. See Tips for Teachers 2.3 for more about how team members facilitate the MTSS process.

Mr. Chan works in an elementary school in California. He describes how his campus leadership team works:

When the majority of a class is progressing and about 20% or fewer of the students differ from their peers in rate of progress, then the role of the team is to determine which Tier 2 interventions to implement with students who are slower to respond. When students who are receiving Tier 2 interventions continue to experience difficulty, the decision-making team convenes to determine which steps to take next. The team might decide to try different Tier 2 interventions, or perhaps more intensive Tier 3 interventions. The team might decide to initiate a more comprehensive evaluation for possible special education identification.

Mr. Chan's experience is similar to that of other teachers who are in schools using an MTSS framework. It is important to clarify when due process requirements are applied. For screening and interventions provided to students in the general education program, parent permission is not needed. However, parents must be informed if their child is receiving intervention, and kept informed of their child's progress. They have the right to request an evaluation for special education at any time. When students are suspected of having a disability, due process safeguards apply and parents must provide permission for an evaluation to take place.

Considering the knowledge, skills, and leadership needed to effectively implement MTSS, how can the necessary talent required at each school and district be developed? One way to develop this talent is to engage personnel in ongoing coaching from local experts (Freeman et al., 2017). Coaches can work directly with teachers or with school-level teams to facilitate their acquisition of the necessary skills to collect, use, and interpret data and to make meaningful decisions to influence instruction.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING MTSS

Learning Objective 2.4 Discuss the approaches to implementing interventions for students within an RTI or MTSS model and consider issues such as culturally and linguistically diverse students, the role of parents, and the role of the classroom teacher.

One of the important contributions of using a multi-tiered system in which students are provided primary (Tier 1), secondary (Tier 2), and tertiary (Tier 3) interventions is that

it is possible to quickly identify when students are falling behind and provide additional intervention that is targeted to meet their needs. Fortunately, the majority of students respond well when provided additional intervention (Tier 2). However, since the goal of MTSS is to identify early students who need academic or behavioral supports, consideration for whether the intervention selected adequately addresses the diverse needs of students is a necessary consideration.

Responders and Nonresponders to Intervention

We refer to students who respond well to intervention as **responders** or **high responders**. These students may need additional intervention in the future but are generally able to maintain grade-level performance or near-grade-level performance with occasional Tier 2 intervention. An example of a good response is when the gap narrows between a student's rate and level of progress and that of her or his peers. In other words, the student seems to be catching up.

On the other hand, students who make minimal or no gains after being taught with high-quality, validated interventions are considered to be inadequately responding to intervention; in other words, they may be referred to as **nonresponders**, but technically they are low responders or inadequate responders because it is exceedingly uncommon that students have no response to an intervention. For these students, the gap keeps growing between them and their peers; these students may need more intensive long-term interventions, and if they continue to demonstrate low response, may benefit from referral and placement in special education. See Tips for Teachers 2.4 for some guidelines regarding what RTI can and cannot do.

Identifying inadequate responders

Students who respond inadequately to an intervention do not make expected progress even when instructed with a research-based approach. However, teachers must realize that not all students learn in the same way. They need to understand that although one student may respond well to a given research-based intervention, another student may not. Research can only help us make educated guesses about which instructional practices are most likely to benefit the greatest number of children. But even in the best research studies, some students might actually respond better to an alternative approach. Therefore, when a child does not seem to be responding to an instructional method, it is important to try a different approach. RTI researcher Amanda VanDerHayden defines nonresponders as

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 2.4

What Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Can and Cannot Do

- MTSS neither creates nor remedies all learning difficulties and behavior problems. However, models such as MTSS provide a safety net for students who might end up in special education simply because they have not been provided adequate instruction or appropriate interventions prior to being referred for special education services.
- MTSS is a dynamic model that allows students to move between levels of interventions depending on results of ongoing progress-monitoring and benchmark assessments. Thus, students are not "placed" in Tier 2 for multiple years without extensive consideration of their progress and how instruction might be modified to better meet their educational needs.
- The key to MTSS models is to provide effective instruction early to ensure that students are provided with the resources and support they need to become proficient learners.
- Classroom academic and behavioral supports (Tier 1) is an essential feature of an effective MTSS approach.
- Successful implementation of MTSS requires all teachers to provide research-based instruction to ensure that students who are not adequately progressing need specialized instruction.
- Consider providing students the level of intensity of instruction they require rather than waiting for them to "pass through" successive tiers of instruction. In other words, if students have extensive needs, move them quickly into more intensive interventions.
- Develop guidelines for students in grades four to eight that provide more intensive interventions quickly. Older students who have been provided MTSS-type models in early elementary grades and are continuing to demonstrate significant problems benefit from more intensive interventions immediately.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 2.5

Identifying Why Children Do Not Respond to Instruction

Before concluding that a student is responding inadequately to an intervention and needs more intensive services, consider the following:

- Consider changing an instructional approach—even when it has been effective with many other students. It may need to be modified and more customized to the learning needs of the student in order to have positive results.
- The level of instruction might not be a good match for the child.
- The environment might not be conducive to learning.
- The teacher may not be aligning instruction well or engaging the student.
- The student may have social, emotional, or home issues interfering with learning.
- The intervention may not be delivered with fidelity.
- Consider whether the persistent difficulty experienced by the child can be improved by changing the curriculum, setting, teacher, or reinforcers.

“students for whom we have not yet found the right intervention” (personal communication, February 2006). (See Tips for Teachers 2.5 for help in identifying why children may not respond adequately to instruction.)

Figure 2.3 provides guidelines for implementing effective Tier 3 interventions.

FIGURE 2.3 Guidelines for implementing effective intensive interventions

- **Assure students have been provided research-based Tier 1 instruction.** Students who have been provided inadequate classroom instruction will require only intensive types of instruction like those in Tier 3 if they are multiple grade levels behind. Otherwise, supporting Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction are the first steps.
- **Assure students have been provided with a research-based Tier 2 intervention.** Students requiring intensive interventions should either: (a) demonstrate significant learning needs that were not adequately addressed through Tiers 1 and 2, or (b) demonstrate significant learning problems that would benefit from more intensive intervention.
- **Use diagnostic and progress-monitoring data to determine students’ instructional needs.** Students who are provided intensive interventions have previously received other interventions as well as progress-monitoring measures and assessments. Use this information to design and modify research-based approaches that are aligned with their instructional needs.
- **Provide opportunities to transfer skills to new information and settings.** We often recognize that students are successful at performing math or reading skills in the intervention setting but do not transfer these skills to other settings such as the classroom or to other tasks (e.g., different text types). Deliberately building transfer activities into intervention instruction and supporting transfer of these skills to other tasks and settings is an essential feature of implementing intensive interventions.
- **Use diagnostic measures to supplement information on students’ needs.** When appropriate, use diagnostic measures to further determine students’ learning needs and assist in designing the most effective instruction.
- **Provide daily, targeted instruction that is explicit, systematic, and with ample opportunities for students to demonstrate what they are learning with quality feedback.** Students in intensive interventions require very systematic and well-targeted instruction taking advantage of every opportunity for students to learn.
- **Provide very intensive instruction through small group size or one-on-one instruction.** Students who require intensive instruction will require learning groups that are very small so that they can have instruction specifically matched to their learning needs with increased opportunities for corrective feedback and practice to automaticity.
- **Provide intervention for as much supplemental time as possible.** Students with significant learning needs are unlikely to catch up with interventions provided for only 20 to 30 minutes a day.
- **If possible, provide additional and extended instructional sessions.** This may mean that some students are provided intensive interventions more than once per day, and for some students, before- or after-school interventions are required.
- **Vary the intervention practices to maximize effective outcomes.** Interventions may need to be varied to include more or less phonics instruction, the type of phonics instruction, more or less emphasis on narrative and information texts, and variation in levels of text encountered.
- **Students in grade three or higher with very low academic scores in reading or math relative to grade-level expectations may be better served if placed immediately in intensive interventions.** The rationale is that if students are in the upper elementary and secondary grades and are significantly behind, it may not be appropriate for them to be placed in less intensive interventions.
- **Communicate frequently with parents and other key stakeholders.** Parents and other key stakeholders will want to know the progress of students with significant problems and practices that they can implement to provide additional support.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 2.6

Determining Whether a Research-Based Intervention Was Implemented Appropriately

To determine whether a research-based intervention is implemented appropriately:

- Examine the program to determine whether it has been validated with students like those in the class.
- Determine whether instruction is at an appropriate level for students (e.g., reading level of materials is appropriate for the target student).
- Identify whether the key components in the intervention program (e.g., phonemic awareness, fluency) align with the key components of instruction needed by the student.
- Establish whether teachers are sufficiently differentiating instruction to meet diverse student needs.

Implementing Interventions

Teachers vary a great deal in how they apply different instructional approaches. How well a teacher implements a practice affects how well students learn (Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2006; Spear-Swerling, 2015). This commonsense finding has important implications for anyone implementing RTI. How can you determine whether a research-based program was implemented well? Observing the teacher or interventionist is necessary to determine whether a program is well implemented and appropriate for students. A student may not be responding well to the program, but it may not necessarily be because the program is not appropriate for the student; it could be that the teacher may not be using it effectively. Maybe the teacher is struggling with classroom management and needs assistance in this area before being able to focus more on instruction. In any case, it is important to explore what can be done to improve instruction (see Tips for Teachers 2.6).

Classroom observations are a valuable part of every MTSS model (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2012; Vellutino et al., 2007). Vellutino and colleagues (2007) note that, "Intervention at this level is based on the assumption that many if not most struggling readers will be able to profit from relevant modifications in classroom literacy instruction, despite the fact that they were (apparently) less well equipped than their normally achieving classmates to compensate for inadequacies in reading instruction" (p. 186). This recognition that many students struggle when their instruction is inadequate is an important one, with significant implications for culturally and linguistically diverse students who often are educated in high-poverty, high-needs schools in which teachers are sometimes not as qualified as those in more affluent schools (Harry & Klingner, 2006, 2014).

MTSS for Students Who Are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

MTSS has the potential to improve outcomes for students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and to more accurately determine which of these students need special education services (Harry & Klingner, 2014; Klingner & Edwards, 2006). MTSS practices that are responsive to the cultural and linguistic needs of students can assist teachers in determining whether students' progress is related to what they are being taught, their background experiences, or how they are being instructed. The success of MTSS depends on the quality of the team involved. Without sufficient knowledge about cultural and linguistic diversity, for example, educators implementing MTSS may presume that a child who does not make progress at a certain pace must have a disability rather than recognizing that the child may need additional time and support while learning English. Educators may also equate cultural differences with cultural deficits, which may influence their interpretations of their diverse students' behaviors (Klingner & Solano-Flores, 2007).

Although the process of learning to read in a child's second language is similar to learning to read in his or her first language, there also are important differences of



**Pearson eTextbook
Video Example 2.6**

A high school teacher coaches English learners to interpret key words found in examples of written instructions they have received from other teachers in their various classes. How might these interpretation skills help English learners and affect their placement in an RTI system?

which teachers may not be aware. Second language acquisition, best practices for English learners (ELs), and cultural variations should be considered when assessing student progress, designing interventions, and interpreting English language learners' responses to interventions.

MTSS approaches that respond to the cultural and linguistic diversity of students focus on understanding external or environmental factors that affect their opportunity to learn in addition to personal factors. For MTSS to be most effective, team members must have expertise in cultural and linguistic diversity and be knowledgeable about interventions that have been effective with culturally and linguistically diverse students with different needs.

In implementing MTSS approaches with ELs, a significant challenge is determining students' knowledge and skills in their first language and then understanding their performance in their second language (English). For example, there are subgroups of students whose literacy knowledge and skills in their first language (e.g., Spanish) are adequate, but whose literacy skills in their second language (e.g., English) are low. These students have demonstrated the capacity to acquire reading skills and now require instruction so they can apply those skills to the acquisition of English literacy. Other students may have low literacy in both their first language and English because they have not received adequate instruction in either language. Still another group of students, the smallest group, demonstrates low literacy skills in both their first language and English even after receiving adequate instruction. For more on using MTSS approaches with ELs, see *Tips for Teachers 2.7*.

When students demonstrate reading or math difficulties, providing small-group intensive interventions that target their instructional needs and then monitoring their progress ensures that instruction is modified to meet the needs of students.

Tips for Teachers 2.7A Creating Culturally Responsive Classrooms (<https://elitetexas.org>; Used with permission from Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk; The University of Texas at Austin).

The third graders in Mrs. Arbenz's class are into their third week of the thematic unit "Birds Around the World." The class has a number of students who are struggling with decoding and comprehending the third grade basal readers her school district requires her to use as part of the reading curriculum, so Mrs. Arbenz has included a number of activities and additional nature books and magazines to scaffold (provide guided support) students' motivation and literacy skills. Students have participated in several activities including bird watching, examining bird feathers, and making bird feeders. Mrs. Arbenz teaches using several literacy strategies: identifying new vocabulary and key words, activating prior knowledge, questioning, and summarizing. In today's lesson on graphic organization, Mrs. Arbenz stands at the front of the room holding up index cards with bird names and pictures of habitats that represent the different categories of birds (e.g. wetlands, arctic, desert, etc.). William and Maki are sitting in the back row and cannot see the pictures, but they try to follow along based on what is being said. Fernando raises his hand to comment on the birds of San Juan, where he is from, and Mrs. Arbenz reminds him that they are talking about birds, not cities.

As you consider this scenario, reflect on your observations in your own classes and those of other teachers. Consider the following:

1. How do the rules and routines of classroom participation, conversation, and interaction affect (both positively and negatively) opportunities to learn?
2. Does the teacher use students' unique preferences, identities, and backgrounds to create and support opportunities to learn? If yes, how so?
3. How do issues related to the larger educational system (e.g., standardized curricula, class size, etc.) impact opportunities for *your* own educational experiences?



What can this teacher do to determine whether this child is one of the under-identified children with a learning disability or whether the language barrier is hindering this child's learning?

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 2.7

Using Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) with English Learners (ELs)

To help determine how you can best provide instruction to your ELs, consider the following questions:

- *What skills must educators have to effectively implement MTSS for ELs?* Having professional development provided to all educational stakeholders enhances knowledge and skills; however, a team of educators with knowledge is likely to be even more valuable. For example, a problem-solving team with knowledge and experience working with ELs can be a resource to facilitate decision making and to design instructional supports. The more the team knows about the development of oral language, early literacy, students' home language, contextual considerations, and the cultural backgrounds of students, the more likely the team will make appropriate decisions about interpreting screening and assessment results and in designing appropriate interventions.
- *How is screening implemented with ELs?* ELs can be screened on the same early reading indicators as native English language speakers, including phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and word and text reading. Universal screenings must be conducted using native language and/or English measures that have demonstrated high validity and reliability. Provide instructional support to ELs with low performance in reading areas even when oral language skills in English are low. Interventions should simultaneously address development of language and literacy skills in English.
- *How is progress monitoring effectively implemented with ELs?* Monitor the progress of ELs as frequently as you monitor the progress of all other students—a minimum of three times per year for students at grade level or above and three to six times per year for students at risk for reading problems. Consider students' accents and pronunciations when scoring English measures and provide appropriate interpretations when words are mispronounced. Do not penalize students for dialect features. Consider that students may be acquiring word meaning while acquiring word reading, and thus oral reading fluency may proceed at an expected rate early (while students are focusing on word reading) and then proceed at a lower-than-expected rate later when students are focusing more on word meaning.
- *How is primary instruction (Tier 1) provided to ELs?* Set high but reasonable instructional expectations that provide ongoing instructional support to ensure that these expectations are met. The core reading program for ELs should include consideration of the foundational skills such as phonemic awareness and phonics early in the reading process, with continued emphasis on vocabulary and concept building throughout the instructional process. Reading words accurately and with prosody, as well as reading for meaning and learning, are emphasized through listening comprehension early and then later through reading comprehension. Scaffold language and opportunities to respond. Scaffolding language includes paraphrasing key words, providing opportunities to extend answers, supporting language by using familiar synonyms (e.g., "that is also like . . .") and familiar antonyms (e.g., "that is also different from . . ."), teaching idioms, reframing students' responses, confirming aspects of the answer that are correct, and providing language supports to further explain aspects that require refinement.
- *How are secondary (Tier 2) and tertiary (Tier 3) interventions effectively implemented for ELs?* Provide intensive reading interventions to ELs demonstrating low reading skills immediately when needed. These interventions can be effectively implemented as early as first grade, as well as for more mature readers with reading difficulties. You do not need to wait for English oral language to improve before providing reading interventions. Maximize opportunities for vocabulary and language development during reading intervention. Use appropriate practices for building oracy skills and vocabulary development as well as reading skills.

Sources: Based on *Response to Intervention in Reading for English Language Learners*, by Sharon Vaughn and Alba Ortiz. The complete document is available on the NCLD website at www.nclld.org; and Baker, S., Lesaux, N., Jayanthi, M., Dimino, J., Proctor, C. P., Morris, J., . . . & Newman-Gonchar, R. (2014). *Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School. IES Practice Guide. NCEE 2014-4012. What Works Clearinghouse.*

4. How do the rules and routines of classroom participation, conversation, and interaction affect opportunities to learn?
5. Does the teacher use students' unique preferences and identities to create and support opportunities to learn?

Reflections

1. Using an assets-based approach when working with students and families. List three things you already do and three things you plan to do:
Things we do:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Next steps:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

2. Considering the cultural and linguistic assets of families and their children as we proceed through the MTSS process.

Things we do:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Next steps:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Working with Families

For very good reasons, family involvement has been a required part of identifying and monitoring students with disabilities since the earliest version of the IDEA. Family involvement is required for all aspects of identifying students with disabilities—regardless of the model used. If schools are using MTSS models, families must be informed of and involved in the process. As mentioned earlier, families can request a formal evaluation for a disability at any time. A family should also be notified early in the MTSS process that their child seems to be having academic and/or behavioral challenges and that the school plans to try specific interventions to help.

There are several ways school can inform families about their child's participation in the MTSS process at least by Tier 2.

- Describing the MTSS process in a written document that is provided to families in the home language.
- Providing families with a description of the intervention plan for their child that provides the amount of time, group size, who is providing the intervention, and a clear description of the focus of the intervention.
- Obtaining families' consent when their children are participating in extensive interventions, while not necessary, provides a good way to communicate with parents.
- Providing families with regular updates about their child's progress.
- If students are responding inadequately to treatments that are typically successful, work with families to determine if there are issues regarding home circumstances that might need to be considered when interpreting student's response.

Sometimes students do not make enough progress in an intervention. The teacher knows this from checking the student's progress; however, parents may wonder about *their* student's progress—particularly when it is inadequate. When this happens, it would be helpful to inform parents and to communicate how you are adjusting instruction. If the student is still not meeting goals, it may be useful to ask other teachers for ideas to solve the problem. Then if the student continues to struggle with learning, a school team may meet to figure out what is needed and meet with the parents to keep them informed. Several states have developed documents for parents to assist them in understanding RTI. See Tips for Teachers 2.8 for suggestions for parents when regarding MTSS implementation.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 2.8

How to Explain to Parents About Effectiveness of MTSS

Here is some information teachers may provide to parents about the effectiveness of MTSS:

1. At any time, you have the right to request an evaluation for special education for your child if you think your child has a disability or would benefit from a special education. This is different from being at-risk. Your child does not have to wait until intervention is over. To do this, give a written request for the evaluation to the school. The school must respond to your request.
2. The school will begin the evaluation process. Your rights will be explained, and you will give written consent. Your child can continue to receive intervention.
3. You will be asked to give permission for your child to be evaluated for special education.
4. After your child is evaluated, you and the school team will meet. The team may look at information from the evaluation.
5. You and the team will look at other information, too, such as what interventions were provided to your child and how they responded. Together, you will decide whether your child needs special education. MTSS information also helps you and the team plan your child's instruction.

Role of Teachers in an MTSS Model

At a professional development session designed to improve teachers' knowledge of the MTSS model at Sunset Elementary School, Mrs. Jacobs, a 20-year veteran teacher who had taught all grades from second through fifth, said, "I think I understand the basic principles of the RTI model, but I just don't understand what I'm supposed to do to facilitate implementation. What is my role?" Amanda VanDerHeyden (2009) indicates that teachers and other school personnel need to establish procedures to accomplish the following:

- Identify students who need intervention. This is typically done using a schoolwide screening in which students who fail the screening at their grade level are considered at risk and provided secondary or tertiary intervention.
- Provide evidence-based interventions that effectively improve learning for the vast majority of students receiving the intervention. In many schools, the Tier 2-type intervention may be provided by the classroom teacher. This may occur in small groups or individually. In many schools, intervention for each grade level is scheduled at the same time so teachers can form groups of students with similar needs across classrooms. Sometimes teachers coordinate their Tier 2 instruction by working cooperatively with teachers in their same grade to provide intervention to a small group of students while the other teacher provides a large-class activity.
- Monitor the effects of the intervention to ensure that it positively influences learning. If the classroom teacher is providing the intervention, and if students in Tier 2 intervention are not making adequate progress, the teacher should consult with others, such as the special education teacher or school psychologist.
- Make decisions, in consultation with other key professionals, about the need for more or less intensive intervention so that monitoring students' progress through the tiers is possible.
- Meet regularly with interested stakeholders such as parents, other teachers, and school psychologists to facilitate successful interventions and identification of students who need special services.

Ms. Nigel is impressed with how the MTSS model is working in her school. "I really like the way we screen students early to determine who needs additional support. I also like the fact that we have decided as a school which programs we will use for interventions depending upon the reading or math needs of students. However, the part that is so difficult for us is determining who and how students will be provided with the interventions they need. We never have enough teachers." How can you decide

who provides interventions in your school? The teacher plays the most important roles in implementing an MTSS model; the classroom teacher is responsible for implementing a research-based instructional program and is typically involved in screening students for academic or behavior problems as well. Because the primary focus of the MTSS model is early identification of students who need additional assistance, the teacher is a critical link in ensuring that this happens. What if the classroom teacher has several students who require Tier 2 or secondary intervention and one or more students who require Tier 3 or more intensive interventions? Who provides these interventions? Effective school leaders know that it is critical for the most knowledgeable and effective teachers to provide intervention to the students with the greatest needs. Schools have different ways in which they provide interventions. In some schools, classroom teachers provide the Tier 2 interventions, while a specialist provides Tier 3. For example, in a school that has multiple teachers at each grade level, one of the teachers might provide the Tier 2 intervention while her students are participating in social studies or science with the remaining grade-level teachers. In other schools, well-trained and supervised teaching assistants provide the secondary intervention.

Once a student has been identified as needing additional assistance, the special education teacher may provide support for the implementation of interventions. The special education teacher plays several important roles in an MTSS model. These include:

- Collaborating with general education teachers and providing consultation services.
- Providing professional development on and modeling implementation of research-based strategies.
- Helping to identify children with disabilities.
- Interpreting students' progress to determine if they are benefitting adequately from interventions or require more intensive interventions.
- Designing more intensive interventions that are aligned with the previous progress of students and their current needs.
- Communicating with families and key educational stakeholders to assure that participating students have programs that are aligned with classroom instruction.
- Working with other professionals such as the school psychologist and speech and language therapist to manage the MTSS process for students with disabilities.
- Providing intensive interventions to Tier 3 students.
- Helping students requiring the most intensive interventions access the general education curriculum.

Special educators may work with struggling students who have not been labeled as having disabilities. In some ways these are similar to the roles special education teachers assumed in the past, and in other ways they are quite different. These shifting roles will require some fundamental changes in the way general education and special education personnel do their work (Burns et al., 2007; Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012). For example, it may be that special educators support instruction for students in Tier 3, some of whom have not been referred or identified for special education but have similar needs to students receiving a special education.

Collaborating and consulting

As with most effective school-based models, teachers in an MTSS model collaborate with other professionals (e.g., English language development teacher, reading specialist, special education teacher, speech and language specialist) to provide students who have instructional or special needs with a seamless set of services. Special education teachers may still spend part of their day co-teaching or meeting with general education teachers as part of a collaborative consultation model. The purpose of these efforts is to make sure students

with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum and can participate in the general education program to the extent possible as written in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Another way that teachers collaborate is by serving on MTSS problem-solving or data-monitoring teams that consider progress-monitoring results and other data and make decisions about teacher and student needs. Teachers provide their expertise when planning interventions or assessments. They are most likely the team members with the greatest expertise about learning difficulties and can offer insights about individual cases.

See Tips for Teachers 2.9 for an example of how Maria conducts intensive interventions with her reading class.

Using MTSS Data to Identify Students with Learning Disabilities

As you recall from the beginning of the chapter, one of the reasons Congress recommended using an MTSS approach is that there was considerable concern about the validity of traditional practices for identifying students with learning disabilities (e.g., IQ–achievement discrepancy). For this reason, you are likely to work in a school or district that uses data from screening, progress monitoring, and other records related to students' progress in primary and secondary interventions to influence decision making about identifying students with learning disabilities.

Accrue data during progress monitoring

How might this work? There is no uniform procedure used in all states or school districts; however, many educational agencies are using data they accrue during progress monitoring of students in interventions to facilitate referral and decision making about whether

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 2.9

Using Intensive Interventions

Maria is teaching a 30-minute lesson to a group of second and third-grade students who are all reading at an upper-first- or a second-grade level. Progress-monitoring data indicate that all four students need to build their word study skills.

- During their first activity, the teacher asks students to review a previously taught word study component—words that end in “ide” or “ike.” She asks students to take one minute to write all of the words they can think of that have the ide or ike rime, or, in other words, are in the same word families. Maria lets them know when time is up, and they count up all of the words they have listed. The student with the most words reads them aloud, while other students check their lists to see if they have written down any words not stated by the first student; if so, they then read these aloud. This is a quick warm-up activity that also serves as a review of previously learned material.
- Next Maria introduces two-syllable words that have an open, vowel-silent e pattern: be-side, a-like, lo-cate, fe-male, e-rase, do-nate, re-tire, ro-tate, pro-vide, and mi-grate. The last two are “challenge” words because they include blends. Before the lesson began, Maria had written the words on the whiteboard at the front of the classroom, each with a hyphen between syllables. Each student also has a list of the words at his or her desk, one row with the hyphens in each word and another without them. Maria directs students to count how many syllables they see in each word.
- Next she has them mark vowels and consonants. She asks the students what they notice about the first syllable in each word, and then what they notice about the second syllable in each word (i.e., that all have the vowel-silent e pattern). She points out that they have learned the syllables before, and probably recognize most of them. She asks them to look for syllables they know.
- Then together the students read the words. Maria explains and demonstrates what the words mean. For example, for the word *erase*, she erases a word on the board, and for *retire*, she reminds the students that one of their previous teachers has retired. Students practice reading the words, first with the entire group, and then taking turns with a partner.
- Maria then asks students to look at the story they are reading today. She reminds them of key words previously introduced that they will see in the story. She also asks them to look at the title and the key words and pictures and to make predictions about what they will read or learn. She continues with the lesson, providing students opportunities to read silently and aloud and to ask and answer questions about what they are reading.



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3

Communicating and Collaborating with Other Professionals and Families

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- 3.1** Describe skills necessary to communicate effectively with professional colleagues and families.
- 3.2** Identify different models that can be implemented to collaborate with other professionals and the conditions necessary for collaboration to succeed.
- 3.3** Discuss ways to foster positive home–school connections through homework, conferences, and other forms of communication.

INTERVIEW: MARIA MARQUEZ-STERLING

Maria Marquez-Sterling was born in Cuba and immigrated to the United States when she was about four years old. Her family first lived in Chicago. There Maria learned to speak English while attending a Catholic elementary school. Her fluency in Spanish diminished until her family moved to Miami. There Maria became immersed in the Latin community while attending public high school and Florida International University.

After graduating from her teacher education program, Maria taught kindergarten for two years in one school. She was then invited to transfer to a new school in suburban Miami, Jane S. Roberts Elementary School—and was there for over 20 years. The student population was predominately Latin with roots not only in Cuba, but also throughout Central and South America.

First, she taught self-contained classes in the primary grades. Eventually, she was asked to teach in an Extended Foreign Language program. It was her first experience with co-teaching. Maria taught mathematics, science, and Spanish-English Language Arts. Her co-teacher was assigned English Language Arts. Together they developed the program format, co-planned, and collaborated in working with family members.

As Maria explained, “Eventually I worked with three different co-teachers. Each had her own strengths and styles—it was fabulous having the opportunity to work together. By the time my last colleague came around, the program was well organized. Together we were known as ‘The Dream Team’. It was a fabulous professional experience—smooth sailing all the way.”

Then her career took a turn. Maria’s husband took a job in St. Petersburg and they decided to move their family to the west coast of Florida. It was a major transition in terms of moving away from their close-knit extended family in Miami and with respect to a different cultural environment in their new community.

Maria accepted a position as a kindergarten teacher in a school with a “failing school” designation. The school administrator was recruited from an “A” school in another district. The hope was that he could raise high stakes test scores. Consequently, his primary focus was test scores and less emphasis on developing a cohesive school environment. Rumors about dismantling the school persisted from before Maria was assigned to teach there, but there was little information about how or when a shutdown would occur.

As a veteran teacher with excellent classroom management skills, Maria felt she was ready for anything. She soon learned that she had more to learn. While she was confident in her classroom management routines, she was less assured about how to handle more extreme behaviors. Maria felt it was not about her students, it was about her skill set. “I did my best to let my students know that I cared and wanted them to succeed. However, I decided to take another assignment.”

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Interview: Maria Marquez-Sterling Critical Communication Skills

- Acceptance
- Listening
- Questioning
- Staying Focused

Collaborating with Other Professionals

- Collaboration
- Collaboration Models
- Consultation
- Teaming
- Co-Planning
- Co-Teaching
- Co-Assessment/Co-Grading
- Collaborating with Paraeducators
- Collaboration Issues and Dilemmas

Working with Families

- Family Collaboration
- Family Adjustment
- Homework
- Planned and Unplanned Conferences
- School-to-Home Communication

Summary

Think and Apply

Maria now teaches in a highly diverse school with a completely different school climate. The principal is focused on fostering a positive learning community. She provides teachers with ongoing professional development in culturally sensitive approaches to student conduct and deescalating inappropriate or disruptive behaviors. In addition, she instituted a mentor program where she has teachers give her an index card with the name of a student who needs some TLC for one reason or another. The child is then assigned a teacher or staff mentor to have one-on-one conversations during lunch or at other appropriate times. The result has been the development of a caring, safe environment where faculty, staff, and students work together.

Another novel experience for Maria was having Evan, a child with Down syndrome, as a student in her class. Evan was assigned a full-time paraeducator to assist with both academic and functional support. The majority of Evan's time was spent in Maria's classroom where he participated in circle time and centers. Evan was affable, gentle, and his classmates loved him. However, because of his verbal communication level, his fellow students treated him like a baby – they didn't understand. When Evan was pulled out for sessions with his speech therapist or special education teacher Maria explained to the classmates that Evan is not a baby – he is a kindergartener who learns in his own way. Evan ended up spending a second year in Maria's class. He provided Maria with the opportunity to collaborate with family members, paraeducators, and other specialists in ways that broadened her perspective about working with children with disabilities. As Maria reflects:

Moving out of my comfort zone in Miami has been an enriching experience. One of my colleagues told me that I was like a duck. From the top of the water, I appeared to be sailing along smoothly. If you look below the surface, I'm paddling like crazy to stay afloat. That may be true, but I have learned that as educators we do not have to go it alone. Collaboration with administrators, fellow teachers, and staff is vitally important in expanding our professional toolbox and in boosting morale. Collaboration with family members is vital. I've learned that if you can convince them that you truly have their child's best interest in mind, you can work together to foster student success.

Introduction

As a classroom teacher, your primary responsibility is to instruct your students. However, planning and instruction are only part of your job. Increasingly teachers are required to work with other professionals and families and therefore need skills to communicate and collaborate effectively. The increasing diversity in our classrooms, including English learners, students with disabilities, and students who are gifted, requires collaboration with other professionals and the families of students. As the interview with Maria Marquez-Sterling exemplifies, teamwork is particularly important when solving tough situations regarding student academics and behavior. Working collaboratively can enhance student progress as well as professional

satisfaction. This chapter begins with general suggestions for effective communication. The chapter continues with pointers for collaborating with other professionals and then with guidelines and practices for working with the families of your students.

CRITICAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Learning Objective 3.1 Describe skills necessary to communicate effectively with professional colleagues and families.

Whether you are an elementary or a secondary school teacher, you can expect to have encounters with many adults in the educational community of your school and school district. You will regularly work with administrators, the special education teacher, and other teachers at your school (Kampwirth & Powers, 2015; Murawski & Hughes, 2009, 2021). You might also interface with a variety of other professionals, including the school counselor, psychologist, nurse, Title I teacher, English as a second language (ESL) teacher, teacher of gifted students, and/or a paraeducator. You might have students in your class who need specialized services from the speech and language teacher or the occupational or physical therapist. In addition, you will also have interactions with family members of the students in your class.

Federal, state, and local school improvement goals continue to challenge many school professionals and require key stakeholders in educational units to join forces to meet accountability mandates. Some states also adopt benchmarks or specific student behaviors that indicate they have mastered a particular standard. An **educational standard** “is a statement that depicts what students should know and be able to do as a result of teaching and learning” (Conley, 2005, p. 5). Standards are intended to bring coherence and comprehensiveness to curricula and serve as curricular frameworks.

You may live in one of the states that have adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; www.corestandards.org). The CCSS are the result of a collaborative effort among states to develop uniform standards to have shared expectations for student performance, improved curricular focus, greater efficiency in development of materials and teacher preparation, and improved quality of assessments (Porter et al., 2011; Shanahan, 2015). The intent of the CCSS is to offer rigor and depth to the curriculum to better prepare students in the United States for college and careers for the future.

Whether your state standards incorporate CCSS or not, you will work with colleagues to plan and implement curriculum to facilitate student mastery of your state-designated learning goals for each grade level and/or subject area. Collaboration among professionals and the family members of children has been increasingly emphasized and encouraged since the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) and the advent of RTI. Consequently, teachers are working jointly with other professionals and students’ family members in largely unprecedented ways. As Friend (2020) points out, collaboration among professionals and with families is mandated or implied in legislation pertaining to assessment, individualized education program (IEP) participation, placement, transition, development of behavior support plans, and mediation.

Successful collaboration among adults in the school community requires regular, ongoing communication, and a spirit of equity and mutual respect. In your position as a general education teacher, you will often take the lead in initiating such communication. Occasionally communication will take place face-to-face, other times by phone, through written communication, or, increasingly, through electronic means (Thompson et al., 2015; VanValkenburgh et al., 2021). Regardless of the mechanism, when teachers communicate effectively with other professionals and families with seemingly little effort, it is largely because they have developed the skills to do so. The following sections describe basic principles for communicating with your colleagues and also with the families of the students you teach. In addition, “The 7 Cs of Communication: Communication Skills Training” video provides general pointers for effective communication.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 3.1

Facilitating Effective Communication and Acceptance

Lucia Corzo, a third-grade teacher, has been working with student families and professional colleagues for 12 years. Despite the frustrations and disappointments, she encounters occasionally when communicating with key stakeholders, Lucia has learned that the benefits of learning from the perspective of others outweigh any negative aspects. When communicating one-to-one or in small groups, Lucia keeps a few general guidelines for effective communication that help her express acceptance and respect.

- Demonstrate respect for the diverse languages and cultures.
- Introduce the family member to the education team in a way that sets the tone for acceptance.
- Give all parties an opportunity to speak and be heard.
- Even when you are busy, take the time to let a family member and colleagues know that you value them and that you are simply unable to meet with them at *this* time.
- Avoid giving advice unless it is requested. This does not mean that you can never give suggestions; however, suggestions should be given with the expectation that the person may or may not choose to implement them.
- Avoid providing false reassurances. Reassurances may make them and you feel better in the short run but are harmful in the long run. When things do not work out as you predicted, everyone can become disappointed and potentially lose trust.
- Ask specific questions. Unfocused questions make a consistent, purposeful conversation difficult to conduct.
- Avoid changing topics too often; you must monitor the topic and direct others to return to it.
- Avoid interrupting others or being interrupted. Interruptions disturb conversation and make effective collaboration difficult.
- Avoid using clichés. A cliché as a response to a problem situation makes the other person feel as though you are trivializing the problem.
- Avoid sarcasm. Sarcastic remarks can be easily misinterpreted and potentially insulting.
- Respond to colleagues and family members in ways that attend to both the content of their message and their feelings.
- Avoid jumping too quickly to a solution. Listening carefully and fully to the message will help you get at the root of the problem.



Pearson eTextbook
Video Example 3.1

A general education teacher conferences with the mother of a child who receives speech therapy, occupational therapy, and other services. What specific communication skills does the teacher demonstrate that promote successful collaboration with this mother?

Acceptance

As the educational workforce and student demographics of our schools become more diverse, understanding and accepting personal perspectives becomes even more pertinent (Gerzel-Short et al., 2019; Harry, 2008, 2011). Whether you are communicating with your colleagues or with the families of the students you teach, conveying an attitude of acceptance is vital. Your fellow professionals can provide insights based on their specialized training. Family members can provide valuable information that will enable you to better understand and teach their child. Tips for Teachers 3.1 provides suggestions for facilitating effective communication and acceptance.

Listening

Your willingness to genuinely listen is important to being able to learn and to work effectively with others. **Effective listening** is more than waiting politely for someone to finish before you speak. You must hear the message the other person is sending and ask questions to clarify that you truly understand what others are saying. Effective listening involves the following elements:

- *Listening for the real content in the message.* The **real content** in the message is the main idea or the key information the person wants to convey.
- *Listening for the feelings in the message.* As you listen, consider what the message conveys about the person's feelings about the issue.
- *Restating content and reflecting feelings.* After the person has talked for a while, consider all that has been said. Then either ask a question to clarify what you know or restate the main idea to verify that what you heard is correct.
- *Allowing the speaker to confirm or correct your perception.* Give the speaker a chance to correct any misunderstanding you may have or to say more.

Figure 3.1 provides an example of a special education teacher listening effectively to a parent.

FIGURE 3.1 Effective listening: An example

Anna Martinez is the mother of Michael, a student with spina bifida and learning problems who has been placed full-time in a fifth-grade classroom. Michael's special education teacher, Joyce, works with him in the general education classroom for part of the school day. Anna made an appointment to meet with Joyce about her son's progress. Their conversation models effective listening.

Anna: (parent) I'm worried about Michael in this new program. I liked it better last year when I knew he was being pulled out of class and getting the help he needed. He seems to have a lot more work, and he complains about homework.

Joyce: (teacher) Let me see if I understand the problem. First, you are concerned about his progress in this new program, and second, Michael seems to have too much work. Is this right? Is there anything else you are concerned about?

Anna: Well, I can't help him with the work because I don't read English that well. He needs help when he comes home, and it can't be from me.

Joyce: The homework he is getting is too hard for him, and there isn't someone to help him at home.

Anna: That's right. He's going to flunk if he does not do his work, yet I can't help him with it, and we are both very worried about it.

Joyce: What if I met with Michael at the end of every day to ensure that he knows how to do his homework by himself? I could also meet with him in the morning before school to make sure he completes it and to help with what he doesn't know. How does that sound?

Anna: I would like to try that. That sounds good.

Joyce: Now let's get back to his placement this year. You indicated some concern about his being in the fifth-grade class all day.

Anna: No, it was really the homework in the class. If we solve that, it will be okay.

Joyce: Well, let's give this plan a try.

Questioning

Questions are an important part of the communication process and have multiple purposes. Questions can be used not only to teach, to establish relationships, to inquire, and to investigate, but also to bully or intimidate. Questions can be closed or open (Stockall, 2014). A **closed question** solicits a direct response and may be appropriate when obtaining factual information quickly. However, questions that solicit a quick response or a simple "yes" or "no" should be used sparingly. An **open question** allows a full range of responses (often beginning with "How," "What," or "Tell me about," for example) and discourages short "yes" or "no" answers. Following are several examples of open-ended questions:

- How do you explain the change in your son's behavior?
- What suggestions do you have about how I might help Mark get a better grade in social studies?
- Tell me your opinion about ways I might adjust my math instruction for Juan.
- How does what I've said about Tanika relate to her behavior at home?
- What do you suggest?
- How would you describe Gilbert's behavior?

Figure 3.2 provides an example of effective questioning. The teacher's questions give the parent a chance to consider the relationship between her child's behavior and what was occurring at home. This parent is also able to identify a change in the household that might be related to her child's poor performance. The parent and teacher collaborated to identify a possible solution and ultimately both felt better about their working relationship.

Staying Focused

Finding time to communicate with families and colleagues is often difficult. Therefore, it is important to use the time efficiently and effectively. Staying focused in your communication and keeping others focused is an important skill that contributes to successful collaboration. If you are meeting with an individual or a small group, having an agenda or checklist of items to discuss or accomplish can be helpful. Also, make an effort to limit distractions and interruptions in order to devote full attention to your exchange with others.

FIGURE 3.2 Effective questioning: An example

Antoinette Spinelli, a seventh-grade science teacher, was concerned about Naomi, who was not paying attention in class, seemed sleepy and uninterested, and was not completing assignments. She called Naomi's mother, explained the behavior, and let Naomi's mother give her point of view.

Antoinette (teacher): Naomi has not been paying attention in class and has generally seemed tired and disinterested. What do you think might be happening?

Tracey (parent): Well, I don't know. Maybe she just isn't that interested in science. I don't know why.

Antoinette: Well, the reason I'm concerned is that in the last few weeks Naomi has had more trouble focusing on her work and does not complete assignments as quickly as she has in the past. I wonder if you might be able to help me understand.

Tracey: Maybe it's because there have been so many people in the house the last few weeks. My family is visiting, and they were supposed to stay only one week and now they are starting on their third week. We really don't have room for all of them, so Naomi's had to give up her room. Maybe I need to make sure she is sleeping well enough.

When talking with coworkers, it is tempting to steer the conversation to personal matters, situations of concern at the school, or even gossip. One thing you can do when someone has difficulty keeping to the topic is redirecting the individual, saying, for example, "Go back to talking about Katelyn. You were providing some suggestions for note-taking skills that might be helpful to her." Another thing you can do is remind him or her of the purpose of the meeting (for instance, "Jackie, let's stick to talking about our plans for content-area reading instruction").

When speaking with family members, some have so many problems of their own that they want to spend their time with you discussing their issues (including such personal problems as financial or marital difficulties) rather than the student's. When this occurs, a good strategy is to have ready a referral list for specialized assistance. It is your responsibility to remind family members that you cannot assist them with *these* problems and to suggest others (such as the school counselor) who can.

COLLABORATING WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS

Learning Objective 3.2 Identify different models that can be implemented to collaborate with other professionals and the conditions necessary for collaboration to succeed.

Collaboration among education professionals is occurring in schools across the nation (Murawski & Lochner, 2010; Solis et al., 2012). Greater collaboration (particularly among general and special education teachers) has grown out of increased awareness that students with disabilities are more likely to succeed if they receive targeted support services in the general education classroom. When professionals work in partnership and bring their expertise to the table, greater coherence results in planning and implementing academic and social goals for students. This section begins with an overview of collaboration with other professionals and continues with more detailed descriptions of various models designed to provide optimal learning opportunities for all students. In addition, specific suggestions for functioning with paraeducators are discussed.

Collaboration

Collaboration describes the interaction that is occurring when two or more people are working together as equal partners in activities, such as problem solving, student placement, instructional planning, and co-teaching (Friend & Bursuck, 2019). Collaboration is an umbrella term that includes a variety of models of interaction among professionals and other key stakeholders (Murawski & Hughes, 2009). The goal of collaboration is to achieve

FIGURE 3.3 Benefits and challenges of consultation and collaboration models**BENEFITS**

- Students are served in the classroom.
- Learning for all students is enhanced through spillover effects.
- The social stigma of exceptionality is reduced.
- Teachers gain new knowledge and skills.
- Teachers develop a more integrated curriculum and instructional variety.
- Teachers share both the burdens and rewards of working with students with disabilities.
- The importance of labels and categories of disability decreases.
- Models work at all grade levels.

CHALLENGES

- Teachers need greater communication and problem-solving skills.
- Special educators' caseloads need to remain realistic.
- Expectations of results need to remain realistic.
- Results need to be evaluated for effectiveness.
- Students need continued access to the continuum of services.
- Adequate funding, administrative support, and flexible scheduling need to be maintained.

a dialogue among all persons who can provide support for the educational, behavioral, and social needs of students. For students with disabilities, the goal of collaboration models is to ensure that included students remain in the general education classroom while continuing to receive the accommodations they need for academic and social success.

Collaborating with other professionals can be rewarding and provides an opportunity to learn from people who have different training and experiences. It can also be demanding. In identifying myths and misunderstandings about professional collaboration, Friend (2005b) pointed out that collaboration does not come naturally to everyone. The professional preparation of teachers focuses primarily on working with students. Working with adults can be new territory—and can take skill, practice, and patience. Figure 3.3 outlines potential benefits of and challenges to collaboration.

Research on collaboration

With increased interest in including students with disabilities in general education classrooms full-time, there has also been movement toward working in cooperative ways using a variety of models. Research on collaboration has focused primarily on student and teacher perceptions of co-teaching models (Hang & Rabren, 2008; Solis et al., 2012). Investigations of student (Dieker, 2001; Embury & Kroeger, 2012; King-Sears et al., 2014) and teacher (Cramer & Nevin, 2006; Kohler-Evans, 2006) perceptions of co-teaching indicate general favorability. However, research among both students and teachers underscored the importance of having clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each teacher. Students are often confused about why two teachers are in the classroom. Moreover, co-teachers can become frustrated if their role is reduced to something less than a full instructional partner (Embury & Kroeger, 2012; Keefe et al., 2004). Research also indicates that a primary concern among teachers is lack of planning time (Alnasser, 2021; Solis et al., 2012).

There is a rich body of literature and practical resources related to collaboration. However, research data documenting the effectiveness of collaborative approaches for meeting the academic needs of students with disabilities is growing, but mixed (King-Sears et al., 2021; Scruggs et al., 2007; Sweigart & Landrum, 2015; Van Garderen et al., 2012). Research is particularly sparse at the secondary level (Magiera et al., 2005; Nierengarten, 2013). Similarly, research on the efficacy of collaboration in RTI efforts is limited (Martinez & Young, 2011; Murawski & Hughes, 2009; Perry, 2012). Therefore, it is recommended that teachers and administrators take a close look at their collaborative models through observation and self-reflection and make adjustments as needed (Murawski & Dieker, 2008; Murawski & Lochner, 2011).



Pearson eTextbook Video Example 3.2

A special education teacher and a general education teacher describe their collaborative approach to co-planning and co-teaching. In what ways do children benefit from the collaboration of professionals who provide services for them?

Resources needed for collaboration

School administrators play a critical role in successful collaboration (Friend, 2020; Walker et al., 2020). Clearly, administrators have complex responsibilities in terms of academic outcomes, student behavior, school safety, family and community relations, and personnel recruitment and evaluation. Administrators serve as members of the IEP team, provide leadership in staffing (e.g., pairing co-teachers, assigning paraprofessionals), organize professional development opportunities, and overall set the atmosphere for a collaborative school culture.

Administrators can facilitate successful collaboration by providing an orientation session that sets expectations for implementation of the collaborative model in the school and answers basic questions about roles and responsibilities. For example, at the secondary level, when contact is to be made with a family member for a meeting with the collaboration team, who makes the contact and sets the agenda for the meeting? The orientation can also cover what paperwork is required and how it should be completed and submitted.

What can classroom teachers do to work with administrators to foster successful collaboration efforts? Regular, ongoing communication is the first step (J. D. Walker et al., 2020). Discover your administrator's preferred time, place, and avenue (e.g., email, face-to-face meeting) for communication (Adams, 2012; Rea, 2005). Communicate early long-term and short-term plans for implementation of a collaborative model as well as possible resources needed (Rea, 2005). Stay on the lookout for professional articles and workshops to hone your collaboration skills and share with your administrator (Rea, 2005). Keep a running record of topics related to implementation of a collaboration model, rank order the topics in terms of most relevant, and discuss one or two during a meeting with your administrator (Friend, 2020). Discover appropriate times and processes for requesting resources for meeting the IEP goals for individual students (e.g., assistive technology, space for individual assessment and instruction) and for differentiating assessment and instruction (e.g., paraprofessionals, resource teachers). Finally, engage in self-evaluation—share with your administrator success in collaborative initiatives and set goals for areas for improvement in the future.

As research on teacher perceptions of collaboration indicates, time is the most precious and necessary resource for effective collaboration. Unless time is built into teachers' and other professionals' schedules and workloads, collaboration simply cannot occur regularly. Also, if the special education teacher is going to work collaboratively with the social studies teacher, for example, both need to have a planning period at the same time. Although teachers can be resourceful in finding time to collaborate, administrative support is crucial. Here are ways some schools have resolved the challenge:

- Administrators designate a common time for collaborating professionals (e.g., all fourth-grade teachers who are members of the same team).
- School boards pay professionals for one extra time period each week that is used for collaboration or for meeting with families.
- School districts provide early dismissal for students one day a week so that team members have a common planning time.
- Teachers schedule brief, but focused planning periods with one another as necessary.
- Administrators designate meeting rooms or other conference space for meetings among colleagues.
- Administrators provide workshops for faculty in how to run purposeful and results-oriented meetings.
- Administrators provide resources and professional development in web-based collaborationware tools to facilitate conferencing and collaboration on tasks such as planning and curriculum development (Charles & Dickens, 2012).

Collaboration Models

When Alexis Bourg began her 15-week student teaching assignment at Hancock Elementary School, her supervising teacher, Renee Ward, began introducing her to multiple specialists (e.g., special education teacher, speech therapist, school psychologist).

Alexis soon found out that the nature and dynamics of the interaction with these specialists varied considerably. As a classroom teacher, your link to Peer **collaboration** model with other professionals is likely to take many forms. Different ways in which general education teachers might work collaboratively include consultation, **teaming**, co-planning, co-teaching, and co-assessing/co-grading.

Consultation

For any professional, understanding the limits of personal expertise is imperative, and knowing when and how to solicit advice from colleagues with specialized training is important. From time to time, you may feel the need to get input from a school counselor, psychologist, social worker, reading coach, or other specialist as you try to best serve the needs of students in your classroom. If so, follow the procedures at your school for requesting support to address your concerns (Knackendoffel et al., 2018).

Consultation is an interactive process that enables people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems. For example, a special education teacher might consult with you about how to develop a behavior management plan for a child with a behavior disorder who is included in your classroom. Another instance might be a reading coach who consults with you regarding research-based interventions for a struggling reader in your classroom.

Consultation may be provided for an individual teacher, special education/general education teams, or other groups of teachers. Whatever the configuration of participants, the overall goal of consultation is to tap a consultant's professional expertise to assist a consultee or group of consultees in their efforts to resolve a particular problem or situation. Figure 3.4 is a worksheet that can be used to guide the problem-solving process.

Friend (2020) identifies the following characteristics of consultation:

- *Triadic and indirect relationship.* Typically, consultation involves an expert (the consultant) and family member(s), teachers, and/or administrators (the consultee) in resolving a problem related to a particular student or group of students (the client). This triadic arrangement is indirect in that the client is not directly involved in consultation conversations and interactions.

FIGURE 3.4 Consultation problem-solving worksheet

Collaborative Team Member Name and Position: _____

Team Member's Responsibilities Include: _____

Target Student's Name: _____

Problem Behavior Student Is Exhibiting: _____

Potential Interventions and Consequences Include: _____

Implemented Intervention: _____

Procedures Include: _____

Team Members Involved and Their Responsibilities: _____

Summary Evaluation of the Intervention: _____

Future Interventions/Objectives: _____

- *Voluntariness.* Consultation should involve the voluntary participation of both the consultant and the consultee. Typically, consultation is initiated with a request from the consultee (Friend & Bursuck, 2019).
- *Expert and directional relationship.* The role of the consultant is to provide expertise and guidance in solving a classroom- or student-based problem.
- *Problem-solving process with steps or stages.* There are a number of models of consultation, mainly stemming from school psychology literature. Usually, models have steps or stages, although the stages are not always followed in a rigid manner.
- *Shared but differentiated responsibilities and accountability.* The responsibility of the consultant is to work with the consultee through the problem-solving process. Although a consultant may be available to provide support during implementation of an intervention, this is not always the case. The consultee has implementation responsibility if the consultee chooses to implement the intervention totally, partially, or at all.

Given the range of individual student needs in the classroom, an advantage of consultation is that it provides you with an efficient and effective way to meet those student needs. For example, if you have a student with a hearing impairment, a consultant might help you learn to implement appropriate assistive technology. A special education teacher might consult with you to implement an intervention for a student who has difficulty with phonemic awareness. A reading coach may demonstrate an intensive reading comprehension strategy to address the needs of children who do not meet benchmark standards with typical classroom instruction. An ESL teacher may consult with you about making assessment adaptations for an English learner. In short, consultation can provide you with professional development to help students succeed.

One disadvantage of consultation is that the “directional relationship” can cause rifts. This is particularly true if a teacher feels that the “expert” is there to “fix” a problem or if the consultee is uncomfortable with the unevenness of expertise. However, if teachers develop a mindset for learning and a positive attitude about seeking help to bring the best resources to the student, such disadvantages can be overcome.

Teaming

By definition, teams are groups with definite goals. This includes goals related to the assigned task as well as goals for the functioning of the group (Friend & Bursuck, 2019). In addition, by definition teams are groups consisting of committed members. This involves a commitment to the task at hand as well as a commitment to the educational well-being of students involved. As Beebe and Masterson (experts in the field of small-group communication) maintain, “All teams are small groups, but not all groups operate as a team” (2020, p. 6). What makes an effective team? Effective team efforts necessitate (a) focused leadership, (b) efficient procedures and rules, (c) clear definition of roles, (d) mutual understanding of issues related to accountability and responsibility, (e) active communication (both face-to-face and virtual), and (f) a mechanism for problem solving and conflict resolution (Beebe & Masterson, 2020; Richardson, 2005).

Teams differ in terms of formation (by administrators, by group members) and composition (multidisciplinary, groups of classroom teachers). They also differ in respect to duration (some are permanent, some short-term) and frequency of meetings. Finally, teams differ in terms of the scope of their work (schoolwide programs, focus on groups of children, focus on an individual child).

Your professional preparation as a classroom teacher, knowledge of the general education curriculum, and daily interactions with your students make you a valuable team member. There are a variety of teams in which you may be involved. You may be asked to serve on an RTI leadership team. RTI teams are multidisciplinary groups that review student assessment data, monitor student progress, and make recommendations for evidence-based interventions. Other multidisciplinary teams consisting of school professionals, student families, and sometimes students collaborate to write and monitor students’ IEPs.

Teachers in elementary and secondary settings frequently meet in teams for collaborative planning. For example, at Carver Elementary School the teachers work in grade-level teams to plan standards-based instruction in all subject areas. At Woodlawn Middle School, the special education teacher and the speech and language teacher specialist work in teams with the general education teachers to develop strategies for facilitating the vocabulary and concept learning of target students. Michelle Canner is a high school English teacher who has several students with learning disabilities in her classes. These same students are also in Jonathan Wood's social studies classes and Maria Rodriguez's science classes. The special education teacher and these three teachers established a collaborative team to meet the needs of the target students more effectively.

Co-Planning

Co-planning occurs when one or more professionals share the responsibility for constructing unit and/or lesson plans. Co-planning can occur with or without co-teaching (Mofield, 2020). For example, you might partner with a special education teacher to develop a long-range plan for teaching mathematics to a child with learning disabilities in your class. You may also work with grade-level or subject-area colleagues to develop lesson or unit plans based on specific standards. In **long-range co-planning**, the general education and special education teachers broadly plan their overall goals and desired outcomes for the class and for specific students with disabilities in the class. This co-planning of broad goals occurs quarterly (or more frequently if necessary). This planning fits in with the IEP of each student with disabilities.

In **lesson co-planning**, the general education and special education teachers plan specific lessons and desired outcomes for the week (Schumm, 2006; Schumm et al., 1997). The teachers decide who will take the lead in the lesson, who will ensure that target students' needs are met, and who will provide individual or small-group instruction (Murawski, 2012). Figure 3.5 illustrates a form for daily co-planning.

Finding the time for co-planning is often difficult, but it is critical for success (Mofield, 2020; Murawski, 2012; Solis et al., 2012). Joyce Duryea, an elementary school special education teacher, has a set day and time for co-planning with each of the two general education teachers with whom she is partnered. Meetings take place during the school day while students are in other classes, such as Spanish, art, or music. "We discuss the planning for the following week and how we can best work together," explains Joyce. Once a month, she and the other teachers go over the goals and objectives from the students' IEPs and discuss whether they are meeting goals or whether they need to switch over to another goal if the students have accomplished the one previously established. As Joyce puts it, "We discuss each student's progress in depth."

Pam Stover works with three general education teachers in the mathematics department at a high school. Finding time each day—or sometimes each week—to meet with each teacher is difficult. Pam and her colleagues have decided to use technology to foster communication:

On teacher work days, I have two-hour planning meetings with each math teacher. Fortunately, each teacher has a webpage for students and their families. The webpage outlines curriculum standards and related assignments for each month of the school year. In essence it is a planning calendar for everyone in the loop—students, families, and the two of us. Before each teacher "releases" the webpage, we discuss curricular goals and think through adaptations necessary for students with disabilities included in the classes. The webpage has forced us to do joint planning. In the meantime, we email each other almost daily and focus primarily on any adjustments we need to make to our advance planning based on student progress and interruptions to the schedule that were beyond our control. We use an online grading system. The general education teachers input grades but consult with me about grading adaptations for the students with IEPs.

FIGURE 3.5 Lesson plan form for co-teaching

Subject Area: _____ Grade: _____

*Date(s) _____

*Curriculum Standard		Unit Theme/Topic:				
*Lesson Objective						
Agenda and Procedures	Time Frame	Role of General Education Teacher	Role of Special Education Teacher	Role of Para-Educator		
Instructional Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Discussion • Demonstration • Cooperative learning • Group work • Peer tutoring • Learning or interest centers • Simulation or role play • Learning games • Guided independent study • Other: 		*Evaluation/Assessment <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of final product • Interview with student • Group assessment (critique) • Observation of process (student working) • Self-assessment by student • Teacher generated assignment • Written product • Test/quiz • Other: </td> <td style="vertical-align: top; padding-left: 20px;"> Details: </td> </tr> </table>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of final product • Interview with student • Group assessment (critique) • Observation of process (student working) • Self-assessment by student • Teacher generated assignment • Written product • Test/quiz • Other: 	Details:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of final product • Interview with student • Group assessment (critique) • Observation of process (student working) • Self-assessment by student • Teacher generated assignment • Written product • Test/quiz • Other: 	Details:					
Co-Teaching Model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A: One Lead Teacher; One Teacher "Teaching on Purpose" • B: Two Teachers; Same Content • C: Two Teachers; Different Content • D: Two Teachers; Content May Vary • E: Two Teachers Teaching Together • Other: 		Materials	Modifications or Adaptations			
*Home Learning						
Reflections and Plans for Reteaching						

Co-Teaching

Co-teaching occurs when two teachers work together to coordinate curriculum and instruction and to teach heterogeneous groups of students in the general education classroom setting. Co-teaching partnerships can occur with any combination of general educators with special educators or other specialists (e.g., ESL teachers, gifted education teachers, reading specialists). Co-teaching differs from consultation in that the consultant may provide support with assessment, and planning for meeting individual and group needs, but not participate in direct instruction (Vaughn & Bos, 2020). What is key to the concept of co-teaching is that each partner has a particular area of expertise and uses that specialized knowledge to meet individual student needs and promote learning for all students (Friend et al., 2010).

How might co-teaching actually work in the classroom? For **lesson co-teaching**, two teachers are both in the classroom during the same lesson, and both participate in the instruction (Friend, 2007; Sileo, 2011). In inclusion classrooms the partnership is with a general education teacher and a special education teacher. In some cases, a special educator may work with a single general education teacher; in other cases, the special educator may work with two or more general education teachers (Villa et al., 2008).

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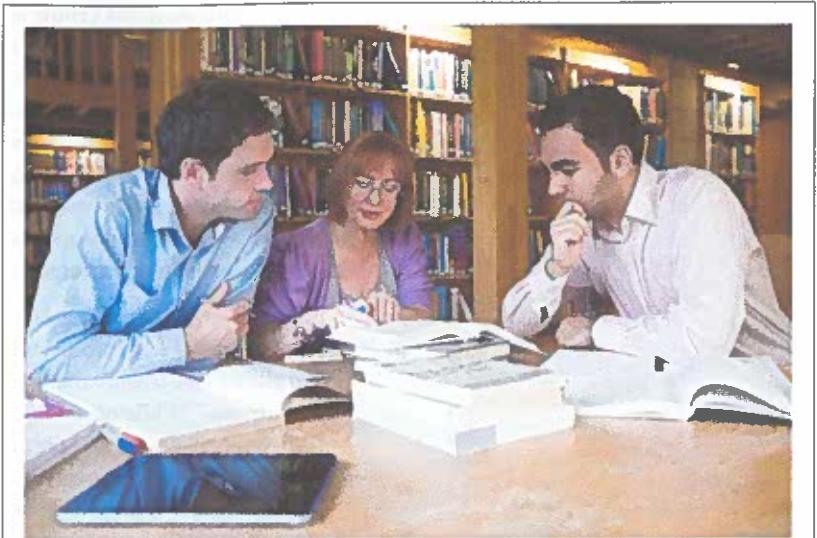
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For example, Martin Fields is a special educator assigned to a high school social studies department. Martin works with five different teachers to co-plan and co-teach. Martin attends weekly departmental meetings to keep on top of curricular, administrative, and student-related issues. In addition, he meets with one teacher each school day either before, during, or after school to co-plan. Martin explains his role this way:

I work in five general education classrooms. At first, some of my colleagues were unwilling to do anything but whole class, undifferentiated instruction. In some cases, I felt like an “assistant” or “teacher aide”—or worse “a fly on the wall.” After our social studies team went through some extensive professional development, we identified ways to organize instruction within each person’s comfort zone. I still have to be flexible enough to work with different classroom management styles and personalities, and that’s OK. But our team members are all starting to see an impact on student learning with two teachers teaching.

Because lessons are co-planned, the specific roles and responsibilities of each teacher are mutually determined ahead of time. Sometimes the general education teacher works with the class as a whole, and the special education teacher adapts assignments for targeted students, accommodating their learning needs or working with small groups of students. At other times, the class is divided into groups, and each teacher works with a different group. Sometimes the special education teacher takes the lead in providing instruction to the class while the general education teacher moves from student to student, conducting individual lessons or conferences. With careful planning, special education teachers might be present only during instructional support. During whole-group lecture time, the special education teacher might not be present. However, the special education teacher may be present for follow-up activities, completion of assignments, or reteaching. The roles of both teachers vary according to the goals of the lessons and the needs of the students.

Research indicates that in some co-teaching classrooms, teachers fall into a pattern of the general education teacher presenting a lesson and the special education teacher “grazing” or circulating around the room checking in on targeted students (Magiera & Zigmond, 2005; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017; Weiss & Lloyd, 2003; Wexler, 2021). In other situations, like that of Martin Fields, the role of the special educator is like



What are the hallmarks of the peer collaboration model? What steps should these teachers follow in planning and problem solving to achieve a successful peer collaboration?

that of a teaching assistant (Harbort et al., 2007; Murawski, 2009). In such cases, the impact of having two professionals in the classroom is diminished. Identifying individual student needs and differentiated instruction are key to effective co-teaching (Cook & McDuffie-Landrum, 2020; Johnson & King-Sears, 2020). The parity of two teachers—each with different training and set of professional tools—is imperative for successful co-teaching. One way to foster parity and to maximize student engagement and learning is to implement a variety of co-teaching models. The models differ in terms of teacher roles, grouping patterns, and/or content presentation (Solis et al., 2012). Descriptions of five models follow with elementary and secondary examples.

1. **Model A—One Lead Teacher; One Teacher “Teaching on Purpose.”** One teacher takes primary responsibility for presenting the overall lesson to the whole class and the second teacher makes observations of student behavior and also “teaches on purpose.” While observing, the second teacher can gather information about student engagement and participation, work habits, and needs for assistance. Teaching on purpose involves monitoring of student understanding through asking targeted questions about key concepts and skills and/or examination of student work. Some teaching on purpose can occur on the spot to resolve misunderstandings—if it does not interfere with the flow of the lesson. The second teacher can also provide one- to five-minute mini-lessons for individual students or small groups of students who need additional help or reinforcement as a follow-up to the lesson. To assure parity among professionals, either the general education or special education teacher can take the lead role.
 - As part of a unit on weather and climate, a class of fifth graders participated in a lesson on weather maps. After the class watched a DVD on different types of weather maps, the lead teacher led a discussion of the viewing. Students were then divided into five groups. Each group was given a different type of weather map (e.g., precipitation, satellite) and asked to develop a summary to describe the purpose of the map, how information was displayed, and how to interpret information from the map. While students were working in groups, the lead teacher was available to answer general questions from the groups when the group leader raised a hand and to reinforce rules for behavior during cooperative learning. The supporting teacher circulated around the room to make sure all students were participating and to clarify misconceptions. In addition, she reinforced the “big idea” of the lesson to targeted students who typically have difficulty with science concepts and connected what they were learning to daily life. At the end of the lesson, the supporting teacher met with a group of five targeted students she believed might need additional support. They met for five minutes to review the key concepts learned.
 - During the course of a lecture and demonstration on how to determine latitude and longitude in a seventh-grade geography class, it became clear to both co-teachers that several students needed some assistance in learning the new concept. This included three students with learning disabilities and one ELL. While most students completed an independent follow-up activity, the special educator met with this small group and provided mnemonic strategies for remembering the difference between latitude and longitude.
2. **Model B—Two Teachers; Same Content.** In this model, both teachers teach the same content to small, mixed-ability groups of students. Sometimes referred to as **parallel teaching** (Friend & Bursuck, 2019), this format works well when complex new information is presented or when students need smaller groups to promote clarifying questions or discussion. After the small-group activity, the whole class can reconvene to recap key ideas from group sessions.
 - In a kindergarten classroom, the children are divided into two groups for a health lesson. Each teacher then conducts a demonstration to a small group of how to brush teeth using a model set of teeth and large toothbrush. Students then generate a list of rules for healthy dental care. The teacher writes the rules

- on sentence strip cards. The two groups then get back together to compare their rules and develop a master list.
- After reading a textbook chapter on the War of 1812, an 11th-grade U.S. history class is randomly divided into two groups. Each group is given a different article for supplemental reading on the topic. Each group then participates in a teacher-led discussion about whether or not the War of 1812 should be considered the second U.S. revolution. After the discussion, the groups present their position and describe how they integrated textbook and supplemental reading material. Finally, students vote pro or con on the issue (by secret ballot).
3. *Model C—Two Teachers; Different Content.* Students are placed in groups based on instructional needs. One group might focus on review and additional practice; a second group might engage in enrichment activities.
- After teaching a lesson on contractions to a group of first graders, a review of student performance on homework revealed that six students were having difficulty with the concept. Thus, one teacher worked with the six students who needed reteaching and guided practice. A second group worked with the other teacher to create a language experience story using contractions. The groups then came together and did a choral reading with the story the second group created.
 - Seventh graders in a math class were studying how to calculate the area of polygons. A pop quiz revealed that about half of the class had mastered the benchmark; the other half needed additional work. Two Internet-based programs were identified to address the needs of each group. One teacher remained in the general education classroom and projected the reteaching lesson on the Smart Board. The second teacher took her group to the computer lab and students worked independently on a web-based set of challenge problems.
4. *Model D—Two Teachers; Content May Vary.* This model includes multiple centers—some with teacher-led activities, some with student-led activities, and some with independent work. The groups may be composed of same- or mixed-ability students depending on the objectives of the lesson. This model includes reading groups and learning centers in which students are engaged in a variety of activities. It is sometimes referred to as **station teaching** (Friend & Bursuck, 2019).
- In a third-grade reading/language arts class, group assignments are made based on interim reading assessments coupled with teacher judgment. Groups vary in number from three to six and are reconfigured after each interim assessment. Students rotate from center to center at regular intervals. Centers include two teacher-led guided reading centers, independent computer work, a writing center, and a word-work/spelling center.
 - In an eighth-grade math class, students are placed into three groups based on a benchmark test in dividing mixed fractions. One group works with the special education teacher to review steps and strategies to solve problems for the entire class period. The general education teacher meets with the other two groups (one at a time) to clarify questions. Students also demonstrate solutions of problems to other members of the group. When not meeting with the teacher, students work independently on word problems using division of mixed fractions.
5. *Model E—Two Teachers Teaching Together.* In this model, teachers divide up the agenda for teaching a lesson to a whole class. Teachers share responsibility for lecturing, demonstrating, modeling note-taking, and providing strategies for learning content. Some teachers comment that this is the most difficult model to implement. Initially, extensive planning is necessary to decide who does what. Eventually, co-teachers can develop a rhythm for teaching together.



**Pearson eTextbook
Video Example 3.3**

A general education teacher and an English language specialist create a plan for co-teaching a math lesson. Each teacher has unique responsibilities in the classroom to ensure that all learners receive the support they need to succeed. What model of co-teaching is represented in this plan?

- A third-grade reading/language arts teacher describes a graphic organizer for narrative writing. Then her special education colleague and she provide a step-by-step demonstration on the Smart Board as they brainstorm together to complete the story map. Students then work in pairs to brainstorm about a narrative story on their own using the graphic organizer.
- Co-teachers in a 10th-grade civics class co-lecture on the Bill of Rights. One teacher presents a set of PowerPoint® slides to introduce each. The other teacher leads a discussion about contemporary implications of each right.

For many teachers, co-teaching was not part of their professional preparation. Therefore, when asked to co-teach, teachers often need to adjust from working solo to working collaboratively on a regular, sometimes daily basis. Some teachers feel out of place in another teacher's classroom and find it difficult to determine how much control to take. Ongoing communication about how best to use the talents and expertise of each partner and explicit delineation of roles and responsibilities are imperative (Brown et al., 2013; Schumm et al., 2001; Sileo, 2011).

One way to evaluate a co-teaching partnership is to elicit feedback from students (Johnson & King-Sears, 2020). Student feedback can target their perceptions of what and how they are learning as well as their ideas about the effectiveness of instructional practices. Such reflection helps students think about their own learning and develop self-monitoring skills. Student feedback can be obtained through a variety of sources: one-on-one interviews, small group interviews, and surveys. Another approach to gain students' feedback is **exit tickets** (see Activities for All Learners). Exit tickets (sometimes called exit slips) are brief, non-graded student responses to specific prompts about the content of a lesson and/or the instructional activities used to teach the content (Fowler et al., 2019). Co-teachers need to work jointly to design, implement, review, and respond to student feedback.

Want to learn more about co-teaching? The three-part series found on YouTube entitled "Successful Co-teaching: Keys to Team Development" includes excellent suggestions and examples.

Co-Assessment/Co-Grading

Co-assessment/co-grading occurs when two or more professionals are actively engaged in assessment data collection (e.g., screening, progress monitoring, diagnosis, etc.), evaluation, grading student performance, determining report card grades, and reporting student assessment outcomes and grades to families. As Murawski and Lochner (2011) point out,

ACTIVITIES FOR ALL LEARNERS

Using Exit Tickets to Elicit Student Feedback

Objective: To gain knowledge of student learning from or perception of co-taught lessons.

Grades: Grades K–12

Teaching Procedures:

- Determine the feedback information you want to obtain from students: understanding of lesson content, reflection about what was difficult to understand, perceptions of instructional strategies, perceptions of co-teaching models.
- Draft the prompts using open-ended questions (no more than two or three).
- Decide on the format of exit tickets (e.g., student drawings, journal, index cards, sticky notes, online [e.g., Google Forms]).
- Administer the exit ticket activity—approximately five minutes—either during or at the end of a lesson.
- Sort student responses to determine individual and group perceptions and needs.
- Decide how to respond to student feedback through reteaching, individual or small group support, changes in instructional practices, or changes to co-teaching patterns.

“Co-teachers should never view students as [a] ‘my kids’ and ‘your kids’ situation. This extends to assessment, evaluation, and grading as well” (p. 176).

For some time co-assessment and co-grading have become more common (Conderman & Hedin, 2012). At the school level, multidisciplinary teams work collaboratively in assessment and evaluation of student performance. At the classroom level, co-teachers are active in all aspects of co-assessing—assessment and evaluation as well as co-grading. Consequently, it is important for professionals to develop **assessment literacy** (Avalos et al., 2009; Popham, 2011, 2014). Assessment literacy involves an understanding of both formal and informal assessments and making instructional decisions based on assessment and student performance data (Lee, 2021; Mokhtari et al., 2008).

In a paper on comprehensive assessment and evaluation, the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2011) makes a case for distinction between the terms. The committee defines **assessment** as “the collection of data through the use of multiple measures, including standardized and informal instruments and procedures” (p. 3). Thus, data are collected using both formal and informal measures yielding qualitative or quantitative data about individual and groups of students. **Evaluation** is described as “the process of integrating, interpreting, and summarizing the comprehensive assessment data” (p. 3). Evaluation can also be referred to as **data-based decision making**.

There are a number of purposes for assessment and evaluation (Schumm & Arguelles, 2006):

- Initial screening for reading groups, instruction, or further assessment
- Diagnosis to determine individual strengths and challenges
- Monitoring to assure academic progress
- Determining appropriate placement in special education services or other student support systems
- Determining student outcomes to make decisions about promotion or graduation
- Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of instructional programs
- Being accountable to key stakeholders at school, district, state, and national levels

How does collaboration with assessment and evaluation occur? The answer varies considerably by state, school district, and school. You will want to ask the following in terms of your role in the assessment and evaluation process:

- What is the process for each phase of assessment and evaluation (e.g., screening, diagnosis, progress monitoring, etc.) in my state, school district, and school?
- What assessment data will I be responsible for collecting?
- Which colleagues and professionals are involved in the assessment and evaluation process, and what are their roles and responsibilities in that process?
- What is the role of families and students in the assessment and evaluation process?

In thinking about co-teaching, grading is an important consideration when students with disabilities are in general education classrooms. Often the special education co-teacher makes adaptations to homework, assignments, and tests. How do these modifications affect the way students are graded? How can teachers align student grades with state standards and student performance on high-stakes tests? To what extent should students' motivation affect their grades? What about their persistence, effort, and strengths? How can these qualities be measured? These issues need to be openly discussed by teachers who have students with disabilities in their classrooms.

Standards-based grading and reporting have been offered as an alternative model for reporting students' strengths and areas in need of improvement (Jung & Guskey, 2007; Marzano, 2009; Munoz & Guskey, 2015). Recognizing the challenge of how best to evaluate and report the performance of students with disabilities in general education, school districts have begun to provide some clarity through the use of standards-based grading (Guskey & Jung, 2009; Iamarino, 2014; Munoz & Guskey, 2015).

Standards-based grading involves an examination of individual curriculum standards; the process, product, and progress learning goals of the individual student; and

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 3.2

Questions to Ponder When Collaborating on Student Grades

When working with a colleague who is co-teaching with you, the following questions about managing student grades should be addressed at the beginning of the year and readdressed as necessary throughout the year:

- What is our classroom policy on grading? How will this be communicated to students? To families?
- When designing an assignment, what criteria will we use to grade the assignment? Who will do the grading?
- How will we evaluate student work when modifications are made?
- Who will record assignments in the standard and/or electronic gradebook?
- How will we determine final grades?
- How will we communicate grades to students? To families? To administrators?

the appropriate accommodations for the student as determined by the IEP. Depending on the situation, grading could occur on grade-level standards with accommodations and/or grading on modified standards. Although a great deal of work remains in the implementation of this practice in terms of logistics and equity, the promise of standards-based grading is that teachers, families, and students are provided specific information about progress and instructional goals.

Grading procedures for students with disabilities are often an IEP item, and grading guidelines are written and agreed on during the development of the IEP. Even when students do their best, their grades are often less than satisfactory. Students with disabilities need grades that reflect more than the extent to which their performance compares with that of other students in the class. They need encouragement and reinforcement for their work and effort and reasonable accommodations in assessment and grading.

As in the case of co-assessment, grading policies differ considerably depending on local requirements. Moreover, local policies can change. School districts across the country have had to modify grading systems due to COVID-19 (Guskey, 2021). Rather than traditional grades, some districts moved to simplified grading (e.g., pass/fail; satisfactory/unsatisfactory). As a result some colleges and universities across the country adapted to these changes in their admission process.

Policies for student grading are not always made clear, so it is important for teachers working together to communicate with one another and with administrators to ensure fair assessment and reporting of student performance (McLoughlin & Lewis, 2008). Tips for Teachers 3.2 provides some questions that need to be considered in thinking about how grading will be managed in co-teaching settings.

Collaborating with Paraeducators

In addition to collaborating with teachers and other specialists in your school, you will also interact with a full range of Education Support Professionals (ESP). These individuals provide critical roles in ensuring the health and well-being of students that contribute to their readiness to learn. The National Education Association (2021) identifies nine ESP career families:

- Clerical services
- Custodial and maintenance services
- Food services
- Health and student services
- Paraeducators
- Security services
- Skilled trades

- Technical services
- Transportation services

Paraeducators are the ESP individuals most likely to work with you with respect to your direct instructional responsibilities. Paraeducators are “individuals who are trained to work with, and alongside, educators in classrooms and other educational settings to support the education of students with and without disabilities in a variety of capacities (e.g., physically, socially, instructionally)” (Giangreco et al., 2008, p. 2). The role of paraeducators became more prominent due largely from mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and IDEIA (Brock & Carter, 2013; Yell, 2016). According to the most recent U.S. Departments of Education data (2020), approximately 459,000 paraeducators work in school settings to provide supports for students with disabilities.

However, the effect of COVID-19 on the numbers of paraeducators is yet to be fully determined (Lieberman, 2022). Some school districts have eliminated positions due to budget cuts, some employees are reluctant to return because of concerns about low pay and working conditions, or lingering concerns about safety conditions. Administrators and classroom teachers have struggled with how best to engage paraeducators in face-to-face, virtual, and hybrid learning. To address these instructional challenges, Michael Giangreco at the University of Vermont Center on Disability and Community Inclusion has set up a website for sharing of resources and ideas (<https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/Center-on-Disability-and-CommunityInclusion/ParaprofessionalPlanningCOVID19.pdf>).

Various terms are used to refer to paraeducators (e.g., paraprofessional, teacher assistant, teacher aide). To recognize the important contributions of support personnel, some advocate the use of the term *paraeducator* (Nevin et al., 2009). However, it is recommended that teachers become familiar with locally accepted terminology (Giangreco et al., 2008) as well as local and state policies regarding paraeducators in the classroom.

This is particularly important in light of evidence indicating the overuse and misuse of paraeducators in the classroom (Giangreco et al., 2012; Giangreco et al., 2013). Research has documented that in many cases paraprofessionals are making educational decisions autonomously and implementing instruction without adequate supervision (Giangreco et al., 2011). To assist teachers and administrators in the best ways to support paraeducators in their important work, resources have been designed to help school-based personnel (including paraeducators) evaluate their current status in terms of paraeducators' roles and responsibilities and set an action plan for improvement (e.g., Fallon et al., 2015; Stewart, 2019; V. L. Walker et al., 2020).

Although No Child Left Behind did mandate requirements for paraeducator credentials, states still vary in terms of credentialing of paraeducators. When a paraeducator is assigned to your class, it is important to learn about your colleague's educational background and experience and to provide guidance and modeling as needed. Ultimately, as the classroom teacher you are responsible for planning instruction. Stockall (2014) maintains that “the basic purpose of collaborating with paraprofessionals is protecting teachers' instructional time” (p. 198). If paraeducators do provide instruction, you are responsible for planning that instruction and monitoring student outcomes as a result of that instruction (Brock & Carter, 2013; Yell, 2016).

Professional resources for paraeducators

Fortunately, a growing body of professional resources is available for the professional preparation of paraeducators as well as the preparation of general and special education teachers for collaborating with these important members of the educational team. The National Education Association (<https://nea.org>), National Resource Center for Paraeducators (<https://nrcpara.org>) and the Paraprofessional Resource and Research Center (<https://paracenter.org>) provide online professional development resources. In addition, the Council for Exceptional Children has guidelines for paraeducator preparation (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015).



**Pearson eTextbook
Video Example 3.4**

A paraeducator works with Jack, a student who requires support in communication and self-help skills, during a group task in a fifth-grade inclusive classroom. The paraeducator's support allows Jack to participate in the group task with his peers and permits the general education teacher to focus on the whole group. What type of collaboration is involved in effective partnerships between general education teachers and paraeducators?

Roles paraeducators can play to support you

A paraeducator assigned to your class can support you by working with individual or small groups of students, providing clerical support, assisting with behavioral issues, and planning family involvement activities. Often paraeducators reside in the same neighborhoods as your students and can serve as a “cultural broker” in helping you to understand and appreciate your students’ home communities (Reuda & Genzuk, 2007). In schools serving students who are English learners, you may be assigned paraeducators to serve as interpreters or cultural brokers with students and their family members.

A range of scenarios may occur in the case of students with disabilities. Depending on the student’s IEP, the paraeducator may have duties related to instruction, behavior, safety, or physical needs (e.g., ambulation, toileting). In some cases, paraeducators may be assigned to a specific child; in other situations, they are assigned to an inclusion classroom consisting of a number of children with disabilities (Friend, 2020). Moreover, the paraeducator may be present in your classroom with or without a special education teacher. Regardless of the scenario, clear articulation about the roles and responsibilities of all adults involved is paramount.

What can you do to assure successful collaboration with paraeducators? Much of what you have read in this chapter about communication and collaboration with other professionals applies with your partnership with paraeducators. In *Tips for Teachers 3.3*, Jamie DeFraites, a first-grade teacher in New Orleans, offers suggestions for successful partnerships with paraeducators.

Collaboration Issues and Dilemmas

At some time, most general education teachers will work with colleagues in consultation, teaming, co-planning, or co-teaching roles. Although research has yielded overall support from key stakeholders for collaborative teaching practices, it has also identified potential pitfalls and areas for improvement (Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2007; Murawski & Dieker, 2008; Rea, 2005). The following sections describe issues and dilemmas that frequently occur. Perhaps by considering these issues now, you will be able to work more effectively in future collaborative situations. *Tips for Teachers 3.4* provides suggestions for collaborating with other professionals that can help you navigate such issues and dilemmas.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 3.3

Working with Paraeducators

Jamie’s multicultural classroom includes eleven Vietnamese children and two Latino students who are English learners. Jamie explains, “I love my class and was actually asked to loop to second grade—so I’ll have the same students next year!”

Jamie is fortunate enough to work with two paraeducators, who join her classroom at different times during the day. One is a native speaker of Vietnamese; the other is a native speaker of Spanish. Here are Jamie’s tips for working with paraeducators:

- Talk with paraeducators individually about personal interests and skills and try to match their duties with their strengths.
- Clarify roles, responsibilities, classroom routines, and expectations for student learning and behavior.
- Thank paraeducators at every opportunity—in the presence of the principal, families, and students.
- Explain instructional strategies to them so that they can do more than grade papers—they can actually interact with children in small groups or individually.
- When assigning tasks, provide as much orientation as possible to make sure the paraeducators can be successful in what they do.
- Talk a great deal about what tasks you and the paraeducators like and dislike doing; all should agree to assume their share of unpleasant jobs.
- Plan a backup—what to do when there is nothing to do.
- Encourage paraeducators to get additional professional training. Let them know about workshops and other opportunities to learn.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 3.4

Collaborating with Other Professionals: It Takes More than Extrasensory Perception (ESP)

When working with other professionals, don't rely on extrasensory perception (ESP) to communicate. Successful collaboration necessitates more than a sixth sense. Based on their conversations with general and special education teachers and classroom observations, Schumm, Hughes, and Arguelles (2000) suggest that it takes ESP-Plus. The "plus" involves initial and ongoing conversations among key players regarding:

E—expectations, engagement, elasticity

- What are our **expectations** of each other? Of students? Of their families?
- How will each of us be **engaged**? What are our roles and responsibilities?
- How can we develop **elasticity** and learn to be flexible in our working with each other and our students?

S—skills, support, structure

- What **skills** do each of us bring to the table? How can we maximize our skills and talents?
- What **support** can we offer each other? What support and resources do we need from administration?
- How will we **structure** our collaborative efforts (e.g., classroom arrangements, planning, meeting times)?

P—professional development, pet peeves, parity

- What **professional development** do we need to enhance our partnership?
- What are each of our **pet peeves** and how can we work to avoid conflict?
- How can we establish **parity** and communicate that we are co-equal partners to administration, students, and families?

Source: Based on "Co-teaching: It takes more than ESP," by J. S. Schumm, M. T. Hughes, & M. E. Arguelles, 2000, in V. Risko & K. Bromley (Eds.), *Collaboration for diverse learners: Viewpoints and practices*, Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Student ownership

When students with disabilities are placed in general education classrooms for all or part of the day, both general education and special education teachers are responsible for their education. It is not uncommon, however, for teachers to claim "ownership" of or responsibility for some students and not others. Effective programs for all students require teacher attitudes that say, "All students are members of the learning community in my classroom, and I welcome them all."

A particular concern regarding student ownership may occur when paraeducators are assigned to a particular student. When the paraeducator remains in close proximity to a student with disabilities, the child's social relationships with the general education teacher and with other students can be stifled (Giangreco & Broer, 2007). Conversations about how best to promote social interactions and student independence should occur in IEP meetings.

Individual versus class focus

Traditionally, general education teachers at all grade levels plan instruction for the class as a whole rather than for individual learning needs (McIntosh et al., 1993; Mora-Harder, 2009; Schumm et al., 1995; Schumm et al., 2000). This approach to planning reflects the need to cover the content for a subject area. Special education teachers, on the other hand, focus on meeting students' individual needs. This difference can lead to conflict. It is important for general–special education partners to discuss these differences and to consider together how to maximize differentiated professional training and skills for the benefit of all students in the classroom (Schumm et al., 2001; Sileo, 2011).

In recent years, one framework for designing instruction to meet the needs of all students in diverse educational settings has garnered attention among policy makers, researchers, and practitioners. This framework, **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**, emerged from the concept of universal design for products and architecture to bring access to individuals with disabilities. One commonly referenced example of universal design is that of curb cuts on sidewalks. The cuts were originally intended for persons using

wheelchairs or walkers. However, the cuts also make life more convenient for folks using strollers or delivery carts. In other words, adaptations can make life easier for individuals with disabilities—but also for others as well.

The idea of universal design principle for education is similar (Hall et al., 2012; Rose & Gravel, 2010). With multiple ways of presenting content and multiple ways for students to demonstrate mastery, the needs of students with a wide range of learning differences can be met. This includes English learners, students with disabilities, students identified as gifted, and struggling learners who do not receive additional services. The promise of UDL is that individual needs can be met within the general classroom setting using a wide range of adaptations—including the use of technology. Adaptations can be planned and implemented in three areas:

- Representation—presenting new skills and concepts in a variety of modes (including visual, auditory, and sensory materials) to accommodate different ways that students take in and comprehend information.
- Action and expression—providing alternate ways for students to access information and to show mastery of skills and concepts to accommodate individual differences in how students navigate in a classroom setting and demonstrate what they have learned.
- Engagement—offering appropriate ways to motivate students and opportunities for students to monitor their own learning to foster interest, independence, and student ownership in learning.

Beverly Morris (a general education teacher) and Ben Thomas (a special education teacher) co-teach in a self-contained fourth grade class. After attending a series of professional development workshops on UDL, they came up with a system for planning built on their individual skill set and interests. After determining the state standard to be taught, they set a time to plan for a lesson or unit. Beverly comes to the meeting prepared with ideas for representation (presentation of material). Ben comes prepared with ideas for action and expression for the class as a whole and for individual students who may need adaptations. Together they weave their ideas and then brainstorm ideas for engagement—how to motivate and foster student independence. Beverly and Ben also negotiate their roles and responsibilities before, during, and after the lesson. They keep a running log to monitor what works, what can be improved, and what can be tossed. As Ben explains, “We now work together not only to improve student learning and motivation—but also to expand our set of professional skills.”

Content versus accommodation

When classroom teachers discuss planning and instruction, one of the most consistent themes is content coverage (Keefe et al., 2004; Kloo & Zigmond, 2008; Schumm et al., 1995). Classroom teachers feel they must cover more content to meet local and state standards and to ensure that students are prepared for the next grade level and for standardized tests. Moreover, state standards lift the bar in terms of expectations for preparing students for college and the global workforce (Phillips & Wong, 2012).

Judy Schloss, a seventh-grade science teacher, admits, “I know that when I complete a science unit, some of the students understand the main concepts and others do not, but I do not have time to reteach. We just move on to new material.” As a result of such moving on, many students, particularly students with learning problems, are introduced to a lot of material but learn little about any of it. As Logan Davlin, a ninth-grade social studies teacher, says, “If teachers waited until all of their students understood everything, we would never be able to finish all of the material.”

The issue of content coverage directly influences the instruction of students with learning needs, particularly now that students with disabilities have greater access to the general education curriculum. You can imagine the difficulty you might have if you felt pressured to cover extensive amounts of content and at the same time felt pulled to meet the needs of individual students who failed to learn the material. To alleviate this

situation, general and special education colleagues can work collaboratively to identify students—both with and without IEPs—who are in need of additional accommodations and/or reteaching to master standards.

Real world versus student's world

Some general education teachers think that treating all students fairly means treating them “the same.” Making adaptations in homework or tests is perceived as providing undue advantage for some students. Furthermore, some general education teachers define their mission as preparing all students for the real world, where, they believe, accommodations and adaptations will not be made. Other general education teachers know that the best way to prepare students for the real world is to give them opportunities to be successful in their present world. Maria Pino, a secondary social studies teacher, explains, “My first responsibility is to help students feel successful in their present world—the world of the classroom. Making accommodations helps them feel that success. I also explain to them that employers are required by law to make reasonable adaptations for individuals with disabilities.”

Successful collaborative teams emphasize the importance of establishing a community of teachers and learners who share and learn together (Hunt et al., 2000). The ability to collaborate successfully requires flexibility, respect for roles and responsibilities, and the ability to maintain a sense of humor (Cook & McDuffie-Landrum, 2020; Schumm et al., 2001; Silio, 2011). Based on their experiences in collaborative classrooms and on their understanding of the literature on collaboration, Keefe et al. (2004) have offered the four “knows” of collaborative teaching: (a) know yourself, (b) know your partner, (c) know your students, and (d) know your “stuff.”

In other words, think about your beliefs, goals, and teaching style in the context of working with a colleague to teach students in your class. This type of communication and cooperation requires time, effort, and commitment. However, the potential outcome of working together has benefits for teachers (e.g., developing mutual support, learning from one another's expertise) and students (e.g., enriched curriculum, scaffolding, reduced student–teacher ratios) (Mofield, 2020; Murawski & Lochner, 2011; Sileo, 2011).

WORKING WITH FAMILIES

Learning Objective 3.3 Discuss ways to foster positive home–school connections through homework, conferences, and other forms of communication.

The children you teach will represent a wide array of family compositions. While there are a number of definitions of “family,” in general a family consists of individuals who are biologically or legally connected and who share a domestic relationship. This may include parents (biological, adopted, or foster), grandparents, stepparents, aunts or uncles, older siblings and stepsiblings, legal guardians, or caretakers. Because of federal, state, and school district policies about the confidentiality of student records and information about student academic and behavioral performance, it is vital that you understand the family members legally entitled to such information. In addition, when reporting information about a student, do so in school-approved formats. For example, do not send test or grade reports via email. When in doubt, check with an administrator about policies and procedures.

- Family units are highly influential in a child's physical, emotional, social, and academic well-being. This is particularly true for exceptional students, whose families serve multiple roles, including those of advocate and information source. Family involvement and collaboration are fundamental to the implementation of IDEA (Turnbull et al., 2020). State and local regulations guide who can legally be involved in determining educational decisions for students. For example, some states include foster parents as decision makers; others do not. Rights for families in

the educational decision-making process include the following (Yell, 2016): They may request an evaluation when they think their child needs potential special education and related services.

- They should be notified and their permission should be obtained before identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child.
- They may request an independent evaluation at public expense when they disagree with the educational evaluation of the school.
- They may request a reevaluation when they think their child's educational placement is no longer appropriate.
- They may request that their child be tested in the primary language.
- They may participate in the development of an IEP or individualized family service plan (IFSP), including placement.
- They may request dispute resolution, mediation and/or a due-process hearing to resolve differences with the school.
- They should be informed about their child's progress at least as often as families of children without disabilities.

Family Collaboration

In addition to legal mandates for family involvement in the education of students with disabilities, two other forces have contributed to increased engagement on the part of family members (Heward et al., 2022). One factor is increased advocacy for children with disabilities both individually and through involvement in family support groups and organizations (Turnbull et al., 2020). Another factor is a growing body of research indicating that family involvement has a positive impact on student academic and social outcomes (Epstein et al., 2019).

Moreover, research in family involvement has underscored the importance of family partnerships. "Family partnerships are relationships in which families and professionals collaborate, capitalizing on each other's judgments and expertise to increase the benefits of education for students as well as the benefits of support for families and professionals" (Turnbull et al., 2020, p. 71). Regularly communicating to families that you truly care about their child, have high and reasonable expectations for their success, and treat all involved as you would like to be treated are as or more important than any program or home-school involvement "technique" that you might implement (Jeynes, 2011). Family partnerships are not exclusive to the elementary and middle school grades. Family engagement at the high school level takes time and planning. However, creative approaches such as use of parent portals and interactive homework assignments are beginning to emerge (Mac Iver et al., 2021a, 2021b).

Culturally and linguistically diverse families

Taken together, these forces have created a climate for positive possibilities with family partnerships (Crosby et al., 2014; Murray & Curran, 2008; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014). Although progress has been made in family involvement due to legal mandates and family advocacy, the ideal and reality of collaboration are far from being aligned, particularly when the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse families are concerned (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Gillanders et al., 2012; Harry, 2008, 2011). Racial and cultural disproportional representation in special education programs is an issue of national concern and challenges educators to consider how to interact with students and their families in just and equitable ways (Cavendish et al., 2018; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Harry & Klingner, 2014). Families can bring a rich set of cultural and personal experiences to the educational process that can and should be heard (Gerzel-Short et al., 2019; Moll, 2010; Protacio & Edwards, 2015). Developing patterns of behavior that tap these talents and resources through commitment to the student, equality of power, and mutual trust and respect is key to successful collaborations (Blue-Banning et al., 2004; Harry, 2011). You as a classroom teacher play a key role in this process.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 3.5

Communicating and Collaborating with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families

1. Establish a welcoming classroom environment that values diversity.
2. Take the opportunity to learn more about the language, culture, and customs of students in your classroom.
3. Include visuals and signing in your classroom that incorporate the primary language and customs of your students.
4. When communicating with families avoid using language that suggests a deficit model of the student and the family.
5. Avoid using professional jargon that may be intimidating or confusing.
6. Use interpreter services and/or cultural brokers to communicate with families in comfortable and appropriate ways.
7. Provide ample opportunities for families to ask questions and express their concerns.
8. Invite families to the classroom to share information and customs about their culture.
9. Work with administrators and other support professionals to link families with available resources related to health, safety, and transition to higher education and careers in the community and support groups.
10. Continue to evaluate your own biases and seek professional development in culturally responsive teaching.

Sources: "Engaging Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families of Children with Disabilities," *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 55(2), 120–126. *Strategies for Teaching Students with Learning and Behavior Problems*, by S. Vaughn & C. S. Bos, 2015, Boston: Pearson.

What can you do so that family members can serve as active, collaborative resources? Perhaps it is most important to recognize that home–school communication is a two-way street. As Hallahan and colleagues (2019) put it, "It's critical to receive information *from* parents as well as to provide information *to* them" (p. 74). Your goal is working collaboratively for student success. Tips for Teachers 3.5 provides suggestions for communicating and collaborating with culturally and linguistically diverse families.

The role of families in the collaboration process

School systems have expended considerable effort to involve families. There are a range of ways that families can become involved in their child's schooling: (1) parenting, (2) communicating, (3) volunteering, (4) home learning, (5) decision making, (6) collaborating with the community, and (7) advocacy for their child's emotional, social, and academic needs (Epstein, 1996; Young et al., 2013). Family members will vary considerably in terms of their motivation and capacity to become involved (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Nonetheless, teachers should be aware of school- and classroom-based ways to foster family involvement and to provide leadership in promoting parent partnerships. Teachers also need to understand what families are expecting from the relationship with their child's school.

To learn more about what family members think about essential components of successful partnerships, Blue-Banning et al. (2004) conducted individual and focus group interviews with 137 family members. Participants included parents representing a wide range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and parents of children with and without disabilities. An analysis of the transcripts of interviews resulted in six indicators of successful partnerships: (a) communication, (b) commitment, (c) equality, (d) skills, (e) trust, and (f) respect. The authors concluded that parents viewed "common sense and ordinary human decency" to be the core of what parents want and expect (p. 183). Family members seemed less interested in elaborate, expensive programs and more interested in access to information and the quality of interactions with school personnel. Response to Intervention (RTI) and the IEP process are two particular points of your communication with families.

How can you collaborate with families in the Response to Intervention (RTI) process? RTI refers to providing a validated (based on research) intervention to students in the instructional or behavioral area of need before determining whether a student qualifies

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 3.6

Ten Questions About RTI You Will Want to Answer for Families

1. Is the school district currently using an RTI process to provide additional support to struggling students? If not, does the district plan to?
2. What screening procedures are used to identify students in need of intervention?
3. What are the interventions and instructional programs being used? What research supports their effectiveness?
4. What process is used to determine the intervention that will be provided?
5. What length of time is allowed for an intervention before determining if the student is making adequate progress?
6. What strategy is being used to monitor student progress? What are the types of data that will be collected and how will student progress be conveyed to families?
7. Is a written intervention plan provided to families as part of the RTI process?
8. Is the teacher or other person responsible for providing the interventions trained in using them?
9. When and how will information about a student's performance and progress be provided?
10. At what point in the RTI process are students who are suspected of having a learning disability referred for formal evaluation?

Source: From *Strategies for teaching students with learning and behavior problems* (p. 139), by S. Vaughn & C. S. Bos, 2015, Boston: Pearson.

for special education services. A student's progress is monitored, and based on this progress additional intervention is provided before the student might be referred for special education. As a general education teacher, you will be actively involved in communicating to families how the process works in your state, district, and school. Tips for Teachers 3.6 provides a list of potential questions you should be prepared to answer regarding RTI. The Meadows Center for Preventing Education Risk (<https://meadowscenter.org>) has letter templates on its website to inform families about RTI.

If a student in your class qualifies for special education services, you may be part of a multidisciplinary IEP team that includes one or more family members. Each member of the team brings a unique set of expertise to the process. Classroom teachers have rich information about student academic, social, and behavioral performance in class. It is important to remember that the proceedings of the IEP meeting and the resulting document are confidential. Therefore, discussing the information with unauthorized individuals in or out of school is inappropriate (Gibb & Taylor, 2022).

Family members know the student better than other members of the team. You can be a source of support for family members by listening carefully to their concerns, valuing their input, and being sensitive to cultural and linguistic differences. Family members can contribute to the planning process for academic and behavioral goals in school and for post-school transition planning. This is referred to as **person-centered planning**.

Another dimension of person-centered planning engaging the student as a member of the IEP team (Howard et al., 2020; Royer, 2017). IDEA requires student participation when appropriate. Working together with family members, your special education colleagues, and other IEP team members you can determine how best to involve student participation. This may range from attendance at meetings to student planning an agenda for and actually running an IEP meeting (Childre & Chambers, 2005; Royer, 2017). Participation in IEP meetings can potentially provide an opportunity for students to develop self-determination and self-advocacy skills (Wehmeyer & Zhao, 2020). General education teachers can serve as an advocate for student participation and work with colleagues to prepare the student for active engagement.

Family Adjustment

Family adjustment to having a family member with disabilities can vary considerably. In addition to concerns about health, safety, and academic achievement, family members can also have issues with denial, guilt, dealing with the public, hurt feelings, and stress (Hallahan et al., 2019). Families of children with disabilities have many roles: caregiver,

provider, teacher, counselor, behavior support specialist, support for siblings without disabilities, marriage partner, information specialist, and advocate (Heward et al., 2022). These issues and roles can affect the family unit and extended family as well. Some families experience turmoil and suffering as a result of having a family member with disabilities, whereas others learn to cope (Seltzer et al., 2001). Hallahan et al. (2019) point out that some families embrace the opportunity to learn about adjustment and equity through the experience of living with an individual with disabilities.

The needs of families of children with disabilities are not static, but evolve and change over time (Turnbull et al., 2015). Moreover, the needs of your students and their families are likely to be highly diverse. Therefore, systematic, constant communication is imperative. In general, the needs of families with disabilities include the following:

1. **Information exchange.** Families need conferences, workshops, classroom information, progress reports, interpretations of their child's academic and social needs, and informal feedback about their child. Families may need information about how to help a sibling cope with the disability of your student. Teachers can rarely provide too much information to parents.
2. **Consumer and advocacy information.** Family advocacy for students with disabilities and their families is a lifelong process that includes self-advocacy as well as advocacy for social, behavioral, academic, legal, and transitional support (Cohen, 2009). How can you help? First, you can listen carefully as family members advocate for the student's needs. Next, you can provide helpful information about local and online advocacy groups.
3. **Counseling, therapy, and consultation.** When family members request information about support groups, counseling, therapy, and other consultation services, what should you do? First, identify the information sources available from your school or school district, and keep them handy in a folder. Second, ask the school counselor or principal what procedures you should follow.
4. **Family-coordinated service programs.** Families need to be able to provide services to and receive services from other families through advisory councils, family-to-family networking, advocacy, and other options (Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2009).

Family is an important force in a student's learning and development. As a classroom teacher, fostering collaboration and communication with families is extremely important (Hallahan et al., 2019). The primary ways that you can facilitate this connection are through homework, conferences, and multiple forms of home-school communication. For online resources you can provide, see the Tech Tips for families of children with disabilities.

TECH TIPS

Helpful Resources for Families of Children with Disabilities

There are a number of online resources that you can provide to alert families of students with disabilities that provide suggestions for how they can best advocate and support their children.

- **Council for Exceptional Children** (www.cec.sped.org), the professional

organization for special educators, has online resources for families.

- **Exceptional Parent Magazine** (www.eparent.com) offers vast online resources for parents of students with disabilities.

- **Parent Teacher Association** (www.pta.org) provides families a voice in advocating for the safety and success of all children.
- **National Education Association** (www.nea.org) provides valuable resources for teachers in their collaborative efforts with families.

Homework

Homework (or *home learning*, as some school systems refer to it) gives involved family members a daily idea of your curriculum and instruction. Homework is defined as, “tasks assigned to students by schoolteachers meant to be carried out during noninstructional time, as an integral part of the learning process” (Kukliansky et al., 2016, p. 229). Teachers assign homework for a number of reasons (Carr, 2013; Cooper, 2007; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001):

- Practice (to help students strengthen skills learned in class)
- Preparation (to prepare for tests)
- Participation (to increase involvement with learning activities)
- Personal development (to build a sense of responsibility, self-reliance)
- Academic habits (study and time-management skills)
- Family–child relations (to increase involvement in home-learning activities)
- Family–teacher communications (to inform parents about curriculum and student progress)
- Peer interactions (to promote student-to-student support and to prepare for collaborative learning activities)
- Policy (to conform to school and district mandates)
- Public relations (to communicate to families what students are learning in school)
- Punishment (however, using homework for punishment is not particularly effective and can be counterproductive [Feldman, 2004])

Homework should not be assigned simply out of routine or “homework for homework’s sake.” It should be purposeful and directly tied to desired student outcomes (Marzano & Pickering, 2007). It is important to communicate to all involved why you think homework is important and what positive outcomes it will have for students. This is particularly essential given the debate in both the professional literature and in the media regarding the validity of homework (Kohn, 2007; Sorrentino, 2013; Suskind, 2013; Watkins & Stevens, 2013).

Start the school year with a written policy statement that begins with a rationale for assigning homework (Cooper, 2001; Protheroe, 2009). Your policy statement should also include a set of expectations: what you expect of the student, what you expect of the family, and what both the family and the student can expect of you. Naturally, your policy should be consistent with the policy of your school or school district. However, whenever possible, involve parents in developing your policy statement. Tips for Teachers 3.7 provides an outline of issues to address in your policy statement.

Family help-giving can be positive or negative (Grinshtain & Harpaz, 2021). Positive help occurs when adults or older siblings assist or guide homework completion, but not actually doing the homework for the student. They can also provide encouragement and help set up a productive time and space for homework completion. Negative help happens when family members become overinvolved, apply undue pressure, or have unrealistic expectations. Working in partnership with families can help you support them in their role and provide resources for home learning activities.

Part of the controversy of homework is that it is often excessive in terms of the time it takes to complete (Bempechat, 2019; Pressman et al., 2015; Suskind, 2012). This is especially true in the case of teachers or administrators who feel the pressure to assure student performance on high stakes tests (Carr, 2013). Researcher Harris Cooper and his colleagues have conducted in-depth examinations of the research on homework (Cooper, 2001; Cooper et al., 2006). In reviewing the literature, Cooper recommends the “10-minute rule,” or “10 minutes per grade level per night” (2001, p. 36). Thus, a first grader would have 10 minutes of homework per night; a sixth grader 60 minutes of homework per night. This rule of thumb may need to be amended for students with disabilities, depending on the needs of the individual student. At the secondary level, research indicates that an hour of homework is sufficient. As Fernandez-Alonso and colleagues explain, “. . . it is not necessary to assign



Pearson eTextbook
Video Example 3.5

A teacher encourages a mother to read at home with her young son, who reads below grade level and struggles with basic reading skills. For children with learning disabilities, why is such family involvement important?

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 3.7

Communicating Homework Policy

What the Family and Student Can Expect of You

- Create homework assignments that are meaningful and provide for independent practice of skills taught in class or enrichment of content covered in class.
- Write homework assignments on the board daily.
- Provide a general homework schedule (e.g., Monday night, math and spelling; Tuesday night, math and composition).
- Inform the family about long-range projects in advance.
- Provide a system for reporting missing or late homework to parents and students.
- Grade homework in a timely fashion and provide feedback to students.

What You Expect of the Student

- Record homework assignments on an assignment sheet or in an assignment notebook.
- Complete homework assignments in a neat and timely manner.

What You Expect of the Family

- Help the student set up a homework center.
- Help the student determine a regular homework schedule.
- Monitor and assist as necessary in the completion of homework.
- Write a note if confused about the assignment.

huge quantities of homework, but it is important that assignment is systematic and regular, with the aim of instilling work habits and promoting autonomous, self-directed learning” (2015, p. 9). See the 60-Second Lesson for a strategy that can help students get organized for homework.

60-SECOND LESSON

HOMEWORK BUDDIES: THINK-PAIR-SHARE

School days can be long for both teachers and students. With so much activity going on, it can be easy for students to forget assignments or forget books or materials they might need to complete homework assignments. This is true for students who are in a self-contained class or in departmentalized classes when students move from room to room.

At the beginning of the school year, assign each student a homework buddy—two students who sit close to each other. Then, at the end of each school day (in self-contained settings) or at the end of the class period (in departmentalized settings), do a think-pair-share (McTighe & Lyman, 1988).

1. Ask students to take out their homework assignment sheet.
2. Have each student think quietly about what the assignment is and what materials they will need to take home to complete the assignment.
3. Encourage the homework buddies to speak to each other to discuss both the assignment and what they will need to take home.
4. After buddies have conferred, ask the whole class if they have questions that they were unable to resolve as a pair.

At first this routine may take more than 60 seconds, but eventually it will occur smoothly. Taking just a minute or two to get organized for homework will go a long way in helping students with disabilities succeed.

In addition to designing homework assignments that are purposeful, efficient in terms of length, and appropriate in terms of complexity, Vatterott (2010) offers two recommendations, ownership and aesthetic appeal. Assignments that foster student ownerships are those that consider student choice, interests, competence, and connection with the subject matter. Assignments that are aesthetically appealing (e.g., include graphics,



Kamira/Shutterstock

What guidance can teachers provide to families so they can help with their child's homework assignments?

visuals, white space) encourage student engagement. The interactive nature of assignments involving technology can also motivate students to complete individual assignments, connect what they are learning to real-world evidence, and also to work with peers in collaborative projects (Roblyer, 2016).

Ongoing communication about the time and effort it takes students to complete assignments at home can be helpful (Bryan & Burstein, 2004; Margolis, 2005). The goal of helping students with homework and providing an academic support system at home is to enable students to develop independent study skills. For this to happen, family members and teachers need to work together. One way you can help is to hold workshops in which families can learn skills for helping with home learning. Often, family members want to help but are not certain how to do so (Hughes et al., 1999; Rodger, 2011). Providing home-based adults with specific strategies that

are aligned with what you are doing in the classroom can improve rates of homework completion and possibly lead to higher academic outcomes (Patall et al., 2008).

Many school districts have implemented student information systems (SISs) with online access for parents (Roblyer, 2016). Immediate access to grades, progress in meeting benchmarks and standards, attendance, and/or schedules can help families stay on top of their child's progress and communicate with the school before it is too late. If you use an SIS, communicate to family members and students your schedule for posting grades so they have reasonable expectations about when information will be provided. If you do not have access to an online system, plan to send home regular progress reports providing information about performance on homework, class assignments, and tests. By taking 30 minutes every other week to complete a progress form, you can eliminate problems that arise when families are uninformed about the student's progress until report cards are issued.

COVID-19 has had an historic impact on family involvement with student learning. Families have had to shift from home learning with teacher developed packets, to remote learning, to hybrid learning, to face-to-face learning with new physical restrictions. While some families and students have made the transitions successfully, others have not (Midcalf & Boatwright, 2020; Soltero-Gonzalez & Gillanders, 2021).

Lucinda Reyes teaches a self-contained third-grade class in a low-income urban neighborhood. Like teachers across the United States and beyond our borders, she has experienced a full range of teaching situations since the beginning of the pandemic. In some cases, she has experienced more communication with families. For a while, she was teaching simultaneously online and in-person. One parent with a child on the autism spectrum, was online all day long with her son. In other cases, Lucinda experienced less communication with families. Children who did not have access to technology simply disappeared for a time. The school did provide laptops, but some families could not afford internet service or cell phones. Even when classes resumed in the building, families were allowed limited access to the school. Thus, face-to-face parent conferences were curtailed.

As Lucinda explains, "When remote teaching first began, I had no training for virtual technology. Younger teachers caught on more quickly. I spent hours watching YouTube trying to figure out what to do and thought of creative ways to reach out to families. I was amazed at how families during our school shut down pulled together to support home learning. Somehow we managed."

Lucinda experienced first-hand the disparity of learning opportunities among her students due to the pandemic. Like many professional organizations, the International

Literacy Association (ILA) provides online resources for administrators and teachers to address instructional equity. The ILA Literacy Research Panel identified five challenges students and their families are facing due to the pandemic: (1) limited or no digital access; (2) transitions to teaching and learning remotely; (3) engaging anxious and disinterested students; (4) focus on culturally responsive teaching; (5) inequitable opportunities to promote student and family relationships. The panel has drafted a Literacy Leadership Brief (ILA, 2020) to offer preliminary suggestions for meeting these challenges. Professional organizations (e.g., Council for Exceptional Children, TESOL International) are valuable sources of practical solutions to meet student and family educational needs as they emerge.

Planned and Unplanned Conferences

Conferences provide a forum for a two-way conversation regarding student progress, goal setting, and problem solving (Hoerr, 2014). They provide you with a great opportunity to develop a partnership with families and gain insights about the children you teach.

Schools vary considerably in terms of how conferences are scheduled. In some schools, entire days are set aside once or twice during the school year for conferences. In other situations, conferences are held only on an as-needed basis. When assigned to a new school, you'll want to find out early on about the expectations for parent-teacher conferences at your school and plan accordingly.

Conferences differ in terms of purpose and composition of participants. Some focus on general academic progress; others focus on a specific academic or behavioral issue. Conferences may occur with a single teacher, co-teachers, or multidisciplinary team. In respect to families, a single parent may attend or additional parents, family members, or family advocates may be present. At times you may want to include the student in the conference; this is particularly true with middle and high school students (Brodie, 2014; Buchino, 2011). If you think including the student is appropriate, talk with the family first so that there are no surprises.

In your role as a general education teacher, you may be responsible for scheduling the conference with all key stakeholders (e.g., colleagues and family members). Figure 3.6 is a sample letter teachers can send to families to confirm a planned meeting.

Determine if your school provides child care and/or translators for individuals who may be in need of such services. Also, if working family members cannot meet during the school day, find out about your school's policy on alternative scheduling for conferences.

Planned conferences require the same amount of attention and care as planning your instructional lessons (Dardig, 2008; *Educational Horizons Magazine*, 2012). There are measures that you can take before, during, and after a conference that will make the most out of the experience.



**Pearson eTextbook
Video Example 3.6**

An occupational therapist and a general education teacher conference with a child's mother about the child's progress with fine motor skills. How might such conferencing promote home-school connections and provide insights for teachers and families?

FIGURE 3.6 Sample note for parent conference

It's a Date

Dear Parent of _____,

Thank you for your response to my request for a meeting about your child. Your appointment has been set for _____ (time) on _____ (day), _____ (date).

I have set aside _____ minutes for our visit. If you will be bringing any guests, please let me know in advance. If this time is no longer convenient, please let me know.

Looking forward to seeing you,

Teacher's Name

Before the Conference. To prepare for a planned conference:

- Review the student's materials, grades, and work progress.
- Meet with and learn the perspectives of other professionals who also work with the student.
- Review the student's folder, portfolio, and previous assessment information.
- Obtain samples of the student's most recent work.
- Make an outline of topics to discuss and prepare a copy for all attendees.
- Organize student assessment results and work samples in order of the outline.
- Create a comfortable setting (no small child chairs) that encourages engagement (a round table works well).

During the Conference. Welcome the family member with warmth and introduce all participating adults to each other. Review your outline and ask the parent if there are other items to discuss. Make notes of key ideas so that participating family member knows you value their input (Hoerr, 2014). Begin and end the discussion by saying something positive about the child (Rose, 2005). During the conference, try not to use technical education language that may intimidate or insult the family (Allen et al., 1993). Make certain that you have communicated any concerns in a straightforward and sensitive manner, and solicit parent reactions and recommendations to address those concerns (Rose, 2005; Shalaway, 2005). At the end of the conference, summarize any decisions that were made and review any action plans. If necessary, set up a target date for follow-up by phone, by email, or in person.

After the Conference. After the conference, follow up with a brief note or email thanking them for their participation and reminders about follow-up steps. Also, organize your files regarding the meeting for your records and, if necessary, for records that need to be submitted to administrators at your school.

What happens when conferences are unplanned? Unplanned interactions with family members can happen at any time (Turnbull et al., 2011). For example, sometimes, at the end of the day, as students line up to go home, you may notice a family member waiting by the door to speak with you. It is not unusual for a family member to approach you during a school's open house or another special event. Often, families who come to school to talk with the teacher do so because they are concerned about something they have seen

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 3.8

Working Toward Effective Conferences

- *Listen until they are finished.* As difficult as it may be to hear the family member out, particularly when the statements they are making are inaccurate, the best way to begin the meeting is to allow them to say everything that is on their minds. Listening does not mean that you agree. Let them finish.
- *Take notes.* Write down key phrases the family member says, summarize key points, and jot down notes of things you want to remember to tell them. While you are doing this, be sure to maintain eye contact and composure.
- *Summarize their major concerns.* Your summary shows not only that you have been listening, but also that you care about what they say.
- *State your position calmly.* After you have listened thoroughly and let the family member know that you understand their key points, state your position calmly and succinctly. If the family member has inaccurate information, now is the time to provide accurate information. Be sure that they understand your point of view.
- *Come to closure.* Getting to closure differs according to the situation. Sometimes, for example, you hear a concern and quickly find a solution. "Oh, Mrs. Garcia, Lucy can stay in during lunch while she is sick. That is no problem. Just be sure she remembers to bring her own lunch." At other times, an issue needs to be negotiated. "Well, Mrs. Garcia, I do not think that Lucy has too much homework. The main reason it takes her so long is that she does not work on her math homework during the time allotted at school. Let's first set up a plan to increase her working on math at school."

or heard. Their source of information might be their own child, who might not have told the story accurately. Avoid the temptation to resolve complex issues in an impromptu meeting. Recognize the importance of the issue and arrange a time to discuss concerns in a more appropriate setting, either by phone or in person. See *Tips for Teachers 3.8* for suggestions that will help you alleviate anxiety.

School-to-Home Communication

Family communication must be a part of your routine as a teacher. Communication with families is important, but it is particularly important with families of students with disabilities. What are some ways to communicate? Written communication, phone calls, computer-mediated communication, and surveys are described in this section.

With respect to written communication, Nagro (2015) recommends that teachers take in account the needs and literacy levels of the target family audience. Factors such as font and print size selection, readability level of text, organizational features, structure and arrangement of presentation, and overall ease of reading should be attended to in creating messages for home. Many templates for notices, calendars, and so forth are now available online.

In the beginning of the year, it is a good idea to send home a note with students that introduces you and provides a means to contact you. You might also want to send home a **letter** or **bulletin** before any long break (one week or more) to share home activities to reinforce learning while they are out of school or to introduce a new unit of study. Remember, families want to receive notification about their child: things that are going well, progress reports, your expectations of their child, materials the child needs, problems (early on), and general ideas of how to help their child learn.

You can communicate in many ways. Consider some of the following:

- “**Good news**” notes can be used to communicate effectively regarding the positive academic and behavioral progress of students.
- **Student-written learning logs** can document key concepts presented and discussed in class.
- **Weekly and monthly calendars** can be used to communicate key information and to record homework assignments. You can fill in events on a calendar and then copy and distribute it to students to take home. A fourth-grade teacher who regularly sends home a weekly calendar reports that it takes her about 10 minutes to create. Alternatively, you and the special education teachers you work with might decide to provide a weekly list of accomplishments.
- **Newsletters** can be written by the teacher or by students. The purpose of a newsletter is to keep families informed about what is happening in the classroom. You can use the newsletters to describe your classroom policies or coming events, elicit support for projects, or provide ideas for enrichment activities and home learning. Newsletters should not target the poor performance or behavior of a particular student. If your newsletter recognizes student accomplishments, be careful not to name certain students repeatedly while never mentioning others.
- **Phone calls** are an important and often effective means of communicating. Make a list each week of several family members you want to contact with positive reports. Allow three to five minutes for each call, and make one call at the end of each day. Be sure to keep a phone log of those contacted by phone during the year.

Computer-mediated communication is another way to touch base (Thompson et al., 2015). Working family members often cannot come to school for meetings during the day, so email communication is a necessary alternative. Using email is great for providing updates and clarifying questions about homework and other activities. Text messaging (or texting) and the use of social media are also being used with greater frequency. Increased use of smartphones has, in many cases, accelerated the frequency of school-home communication. Most schools now have websites that provide information about school policies, major events, and homework tips. Individual **classroom webpages** and teaching blogs

are forums for teachers to communicate information about grading policies, homework and class assignments, major projects (such as a science fair), links to online resources, and field trips (Maloy et al., 2014). You can also use computer-mediated communication to post worksheets for downloading and to publish student writing.

Of course, major concerns and dilemmas should be resolved in face-to-face meetings or by phone. It is also important to communicate your availability and guidelines for using electronic media. Spending your evenings or afternoons answering 30 emails, text messages, or social media messages might not be the best use of your time.

School districts and individual schools have very different policies and procedures for using computer-mediated communication with families. These state and local policies are in place due to issues related to privacy, liability, and ethics (Lytle, 2011). Make certain that you are aware of the policies in your locality. With these state and local policies in mind, find out the most efficient and effective way to communicate with them. Also, be aware that not all families will have access to computers, so other modes of communication need to be made available as well.

Still another way to foster communication is through **interviews** and **surveys**. Asking family members about their level of satisfaction with programs, curriculum, and services can give family members a voice, put key issues on the table, and lead to program improvement. Inclusion teams can conduct brief interviews or surveys to tap the concerns of family members and to use data to generate possible solutions and to identify necessary resources for program improvement (Salend & Duhaney, 2002).

3 SUMMARY

- Successful collaboration among adults in the school community requires regular, ongoing communication and a spirit of equity and mutual respect. Developing communication skills, such as (a) acceptance, (b) effective listening, (c) appropriate questioning, and (d) maintaining focus, can facilitate effective and productive interactions in one-on-one and group settings.
- Greater collaboration among professionals has grown out of increased awareness that students with disabilities are more likely to succeed if they get targeted support services in the general education classroom. Different ways in which general education teachers might work with other professionals include (a) consultation, (b) teaming, (c) co-planning, (d) co-teaching, and (e) co-assessment/co-grading. For any collaboration model to be effective, several criteria must be in place, including (a) time to co-plan, (b) knowledge of the procedures involved in a particular model, and (c) a meeting location.
- Implementation of clear and consistent lines of communication with family members of students is vital for student success in school. A well-developed homework policy statement can set the stage for productive home-learning routines. Planned and unplanned conferences provide forums for family partnerships in setting goals, resolving problems, and monitoring student academic and social progress. In addition, regular exchanges using a variety of formats (e.g., letters, newsletters, phone calls, computer-mediated communication, and surveys) can build positive home-school connections.

THINK AND APPLY

1. Have you ever had a conversation during which you did not feel connected? Think about what the other person(s) did and what you did. Using the principles of effective listening identified in this chapter, make a checklist of things you should consider during a conversation (a) with family members and (b) with other professionals.
2. This chapter's Collaboration Issues and Dilemmas section lists four issues you might need to consider if you are involved in collaboration with another professional. Write your current feelings about each issue (student ownership, individual versus class focus, content versus accommodation, and real world versus student's world).

What knowledge and experiences might support your perspectives? What knowledge and experiences might cause you to change your views?

3. Write a homework policy statement for an elementary or secondary classroom. Include in your statement the roles and responsibilities of the teacher, students, and families.
4. HLP01 Collaborate with Professionals to Increase Student Success. This chapter's Collaboration and Dilemmas section lists four issues you might need to consider if you are involved with another professional. Write your current feelings about each one (student ownership, individual versus class focus, content versus accommodation, real world versus student's world). Identify what knowledge might support your perspective or change your views. (See Chapter 1 for a description of all of the high leverage practices).
5. HLP02 Organize and Facilitate Effective Meetings with Professionals and Families. Home-school communication is important for all students, but particularly so for families of students with disabilities. Roleplay a group conference with your classmates with each playing the role of a family member, special education teacher, and general education teacher. (See Chapter 1 for a description of all of the high leverage practices).



Willie B. Thomas/Getty images

12 Differentiating Instruction and Assessment for All Learners

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- 12.1** Describe the standards-based reform movement and the challenges presented to teachers.
- 12.2** Identify several ways differentiated instruction can be implemented in classrooms.
- 12.3** List approaches you can use to assess the strengths and weaknesses of your textbook and differentiate reading assignments for students with reading difficulties.
- 12.4** Explain ways to differentiate assessment to meet the needs of all learners.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 12.1

Making Standards-Based Instruction Work for You

1. **Select**—choose the standard you want to address.
2. **Adopt or Adapt**:
 - **Adopt**—use the standard as is to serve as the framework for your planning.
 - **Adapt**—adapt the standard to meet the needs of your students (e.g., teach one part of the standard, plan for adaptations for students with diverse needs).
3. **Invent**—use multiple resources to create innovative ways to address the standard in terms of lessons, assignments, and student assessment.
4. **Assess**—evaluate your approach to inform future planning.

Source: Information from *Connecting Standards and Assessment Through Literacy* by M. Conley, 2005, Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

direct instruction in reading, study skills, and daily living skills—skills that are often not addressed when standards-based content is predominant (Hallahan et al., 2019). States have developed policies for instruction of students with disabilities and students who are English learners. In addition, states have developed **alternate academic standards** for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Alternate academic assessments are aligned with these standards. Nonetheless, to meet this challenge classroom teachers and special educators in co-teaching partnerships need to collaborate consistently with a problem-solving mindset (Haager & Vaughn, 2013; Van Boxtel, 2017). Moreover, classroom teachers need to hone their skills in differentiating instruction to address a wide range of student learning needs (Cramer et al., 2021).

Implementation of State Standards

Tricia Ruf teaches mathematics and science at Lusher Charter School in New Orleans. Lusher is a K–12 school with an emphasis on art-based education. The school also has a strong environmental curriculum as well. Given that Lusher is a public school, teachers are responsible for teaching state standards and following a pacing guide for teaching and assessing curricular benchmarks. Tricia and her colleagues face the challenge of connecting state standards with the art-based school theme. How does Tricia do it?

Tricia explains that she plans collaboratively with other teachers at her grade level. They share resources and, at times, go “round robin” with labs and center activities. In other words, children go from teacher to teacher and experience as many as five labs during the math/science block. The teachers start their planning by determining what standard needs to be taught (such as arrays in multiplication) and then brainstorm and scour resources to link them to art or environmental themes. In the case of arrays, they came up with using the artwork of Andy Warhol. They used soup cans to demonstrate a mathematical array (for example, using 24 cans for an 8×3 array). The culminating project was that students created their own Andy Warhol–like array using pop-culture artifacts. Tips for Teachers 12.1 provides additional suggestions for how to make standards-based instruction work for you.

In addition, you will want to communicate the standards clearly to your students so that they will know what you expect them to learn. Marzano (2012a) recommends that teachers have students express what they are expected to learn in their own words.



Pearson eTextbook Video Example 12.2

Middle school language arts teacher Dani Ramsey introduces the state standard at the beginning of a lesson about biopoems. Why are teachers advised to communicate to students the state standard or standards the lesson addresses?

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION

Learning Objective 12.2 Identify several ways differentiated instruction can be implemented in classrooms.

Classrooms have students with a wide range of needs and abilities. The focus on inclusion of students with disabilities and students identified as gifted and talented in the general

education classroom, as well as increased cultural and linguistic diversity, have exacerbated the need to address the needs of a wide range of students.

In addition to issues related to individual student differences, there are a host of issues that can impact student success, including:

- Students' interests influence their content-area learning.
- Students' cultural backgrounds and prior knowledge influence their success learning a new content area.
- Foundation skills in reading, writing, and mathematics affect their access to deeper learning.
- The pace of instruction is too fast for some students and too slow for others.
- The level of conceptual complexity and density in some content areas is overwhelming for some students.
- Textbooks in content-area classes can be dull and encyclopedic.
- Content-area classes require both regular homework and assignments and long-term projects.
- Taking tests is a required component of many content-area classes.

One means to plan for individual student needs is differentiated instruction (DI). This section provides answers to questions teachers typically pose about DI:

- What is DI?
- How can I differentiate assignments and homework to meet the learning needs of all of my students?
- How can I plan for DI?
- How can I accommodate students who are gifted and talented?
- How can differentiated instruction still meet the ambitious goals of state standards?
- How does DI relate to response to intervention?

What Is Differentiated Instruction?

The call for DI has come from a number of fields, including reading, special education, gifted education, teaching English as a second language, and multiple intelligences (Schumm & Avalos, 2009; Tomlinson, 2014). Consequently, a number of definitions for DI have evolved and teachers often have misconceptions about what it is and what it entails. After an analysis of multiple definitions in the academic literature, Schumm and Avalos (2009) offered the following, "Differentiated instruction is a concept that embodies both a philosophy of addressing individual needs of students in heterogeneous classrooms and the instructional approaches embedded within and supportive of that philosophy" (Schumm & Avalos, p. 146). The goal of DI is for teachers to, "adjust their curriculum and instruction to maximize the learning of all students" (IRIS, 2010, p. 1). Characteristics of DI include that it:

- Aligns instructional practices to diagnosed academic needs and interests of the learner.
- Is based on formal and informal student assessment.
- Is not a single strategy.
- As a whole is not evidence-based, but draws on a wide variety of practices (some evidence-based [e.g., flexible grouping], some not).

Can be implemented not only in the general education classroom, but also in advanced placement classes, resource rooms, or pull-out settings

Components of Differentiated Instruction

Carol Tomlinson (2008, 2014), an expert in DI, identifies key elements for teachers to consider in planning for DI: content, process, products, and learning environment.

1. **Content.** What curriculum standards or benchmarks need to be taught? How can I sequence the components of the standard or benchmark in a way that is developmentally appropriate for each of my students?
2. **Process.** What activities and learning experiences will I plan to help each student master the standard or benchmark?
3. **Products.** What products will students provide that will demonstrate their mastery of the standard or benchmark?
4. **Learning environment.** How can I organize a flexible classroom environment to activate learning and student engagement? How can I create an environment that is safe and sensitive to students' language, culture, and home settings?

Another way of thinking about DI is that it involves curriculum enhancement and curriculum modification (Alquraini et al., 2012). **Curriculum enhancement** involves no changes to the curriculum, and instead involves instructional strategies that make learning accessible for a wide range of students. For example, preteaching vocabulary and using graphic organizers are examples of curriculum enhancers.

Curriculum modification is more complex and is targeted to the individual needs of students. It includes both accommodation and adaptation. **Accommodation** involves no changes in curriculum requirements for students, but may involve modifications to how the material is presented and what is required of the student. For example, a student with learning disabilities might listen to an audio recorded version of a science textbook rather than completing the reading assignment. The student would take the same test as his or her peers, but in an oral format. **Adaptations** go one step further in that curriculum requirements might be altered. For instance, if students are working on a three-point essay in language arts class, a student with identified difficulties in writing may be assigned a paragraph writing activity. Accommodations and adaptations are more time consuming for teachers, but are critical for providing students with the support they need to succeed (Koga & Hall, 2004).

A **learning contract** is one mechanism for organizing DI. Learning contracts are particularly helpful when planning long-term assignments and research projects. With a learning contract, you identify target standards or objectives and then negotiate with students about the pathways and products they will produce to determine mastery.

Differentiated Instructing Using Flexible Grouping

As you implement DI in your classroom, you will want to plan for a variety of grouping patterns. Group size and membership should be flexible, with formats that change according to the goals of the lesson as well as your students' characteristics. **Multiple grouping formats** refer to a variety of grouping patterns.

Some schools group students by achievement level and others form mixed-ability classrooms. Quite often the decision of how to organize classes is a school or district decision. Even in "same-ability" classes, however, you will quickly note that students in your class have a range of differences to which you need to attend.

Two basic variables determine grouping patterns:

1. They can be categorized by group size: whole class, small group, pairs, and single student.
2. Group composition may be **homogeneous grouping** (students at similar skill levels) or **heterogeneous grouping** (students at a wide range of skill levels).

Depending on the purpose of the learning activity, you can branch beyond these two basic variables



Pearson eTextbook Video Example 12.3

Middle school language arts teacher Dani Ramsey explains how she differentiates learning activities to ensure that students at varying academic levels acquire the skills they need to meet the state standards. According to differentiated instruction (DI) expert Carol Tomlinson, what components of instruction might teachers differentiate?



What might be some advantages of working in cooperative learning groups? What can teachers do to ensure that all group members get the most out of their group activity?

and group students by interest, skills to be learned, or prior knowledge of a topic. To mix things up a bit, you may give students time to create their own small groups for activities, such as discussing with classmates the books they read independently over the weekend.

For multiple grouping structures to be successful, careful planning is essential. The temptation becomes not to group at all, but instead to fall into the pattern of whole-class teaching followed by individual practice. As you think about a lesson, keep grouping in mind by asking yourself the following questions:

- What is the best grouping structure for teaching this lesson (e.g., small group, pairs, individual learning opportunities)?
- What is the best group size for follow-up activities (e.g., small groups of three to five, larger groups of six to eight)?
- What is the best composition of learners for each group with respect to student academic ability and work habits?
- What materials are needed for each group?
- Will the groups be teacher-led, student-led, or cooperative?
- What room arrangement is necessary for the grouping plan?
- When students move from one group to another, how can I ensure a quick and smooth transition?
- What issues related to students' behavior and social needs should I consider?

If you decide to have your students work cooperatively in small groups or in pairs, students may need explicit instruction in how to work together. In **cooperative learning groups**, students work together toward a common goal, usually to help one another learn academic material (Slavin, 2011; Vaca et al., 2011). Working collaboratively, students must learn such lessons as how to give and receive help, how to listen and respond to the ideas of others, and how to complete a task as a team. Fundamental to the cooperative group is that all students participate and benefit—not that one or two students do all of the work. Teachers cannot assume that students (even in secondary settings) automatically know how to work in groups (Vaca et al., 2011). Most of the time, these skills need to be taught explicitly and practiced, just like skills in any other academic area. In addition, teachers should assess both group and individual participation and products.

Like most aspects of DI instruction, student group work has been challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic. Remote and hybrid learning and social distancing have presented teachers with unprecedented challenges to addressing individual interests and needs (Klein, 2020). While technology has offered some solutions for grouping (e.g., Zoom, Google Classroom), availability of such resources and professional development for teachers has been mixed (Bushweller, 2020). Teachers across the United States have worked tirelessly to provide for individual student needs as they listen and learn from students, family members, guardians and caregivers.

Using Learning Stations to Differentiate Instruction

Learning stations or learning centers can be helpful in facilitating DI at both elementary and secondary levels (Prevatte, 2007). Mykel Warren uses what she calls literacy stations during her reading/language arts block for her fourth graders. While Mykel works with one of her five guided reading groups, the other four groups work at computer, writing, skill practice, or vocabulary stations.

Hector Ruiz teaches eighth-grade mathematics. In the block scheduling at his middle school, he sees each section of students for two hours every other day. The first hour is typically devoted to whole-class activities. During the second hour, students work in learning stations to practice previously taught curricular objectives, work in collaborative learning groups to solve math word problems, work on the computer with lessons based on individual needs, or work with Hector for reteaching of challenging new material. One center that students particularly like is the “Everyday Math” center, where Hector plans



Pearson eTextbook Video Example 12.4

Ashley Lyons implements flexible grouping in her inclusion second-grade classroom to differentiate reading instruction on the basis of students' learning needs. What tools does Ms. Lyons use to determine grouping patterns or group composition?

activities aligned with current instructional objectives and their application to relevant activities in students' lives.

Both Mykel and Hector recognize that in addition to providing students with opportunities for practice, exploration, and creativity, learning stations also help students learn how to work independently and cooperatively with their peers (Ediger, 2011). Both agree that the key to success of learning stations is to set clear expectations for student behavior and academic products are set. In addition, students need to feel they understand and can carry out the directions for working in the station. For more complex activities, Mykel and Hector recommend that teachers do a mini-demonstration before students go to the station.

The possibilities for learning stations are vast. General or special education teachers, paraeducators, volunteers, or students can lead stations. Stations can involve a wide range of technology applications. Stations can be routine (such as completing reading comprehension practice books) or can be topical (related to a specific objective being taught or reviewed). Stations can have set products to demonstrate student work or provide students with choices about how they will demonstrate their learning. Online resources for planning learning stations are readily available. For example, several websites such as Florida Center for Reading Research (www.FCRR.org) and The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk (www.meadowscenter.org) provide teacher-developed learning center activities for elementary and secondary grades. Nonetheless, planning for efficient and effective learning stations takes time—and creativity. Tips for Teachers 12.2 provides a checklist for planning your learning stations.

Differentiating instruction is not easy. Stetson and colleagues (2007) followed a group of 48 teachers as they implemented DI for a year. Teachers reported that the benefits of DI in terms of student learning far outweighed the negative aspects. For teachers who have never experienced or seen DI firsthand, implementation can be tough. In addition, planning time can be an impediment. For those new to DI, Hall et al. (2011) recommend that you start out slowly, plan collaboratively, and seek out resources. Also, when you implement DI, survey your students about the types of differentiated learning experiences that help them learn and that they prefer (Kanevksy, 2011).

How Can I Differentiate Assignments and Homework?

Students' success or failure is often based on their performance on assignments and homework. But what about students with learning and behavior problems? Should they have the same assignments and tests as everyone else? What if a student cannot read? What if a student cannot work under timed conditions? What if a student has problems with attention and task completion?

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 12.2

Checklist for Learning Stations

Aligns with previously learned material so students can practice or extend learning.

Provides a meaningful connection so students know why they are working in the learning station.

Provides a task that can be modified to address a range of learners so all students can participate.

The task can be completed during the designated work time—ranging from 15 to 20 minutes for primary students and 20 to 40 minutes for older learners.

Provides feedback or correction so students quickly know how successful they were with their task.

Provides adaptations for students who may have difficulty with the task.

Teacher surveys, interviews, and classroom observations indicate that teachers of all grade levels (elementary through high school) do not often make individual adaptations to homework, assignments, and tests (Ness, 2008; Schumm & Vaughn, 1991, 1992; Schumm et al., 1995). Constructing individual assignments and tests may not be feasible on a day-to-day basis and may not even be necessary.

Few topics in education generate as much heated discussion as homework (Vatterott, 2011). Whereas some argue that homework can be beneficial for all students in terms of reinforcing what was learned in school and in developing personal responsibility as a student (Marzano & Pickering, 2007), others maintain that research evidence for homework (other than for secondary students) simply does not exist (Kohn, 2007). What is the evidence in favor of homework? At the middle and high school level, the amount of homework assigned is related to achievement, but this relationship is not significant at the elementary level (Cooper et al., 2006). However, there may be other attributes resulting from homework such as persistence, organization, and self-regulation.

It is likely that the school you work in will have a homework policy and it will be important to understand how this policy relates to individuals with disabilities so you can communicate that policy to students and their families. But there is more you can do to make assignments clear and comprehensible. Decades of research indicate that homework assignments for students with disabilities should be brief, focused on reinforcement of old material rather than new material, monitored carefully, and supported through parental involvement (Cooper, 2007; Cooper & Nye, 1994; Lynch et al., 2009).

In no cases should homework involve practicing skills that were not addressed in class. This can only result in frustration for family members, students, and ultimately you. In their article entitled, “High Quality Homework,” Frey and Fisher (2011) list four primary purposes for homework. Keeping these purposes in mind will facilitate success for all students.

1. Developing fluency with skills and concepts already learned
2. Applying what they have learned to new situations
3. Reviewing previously learned skills and concepts
4. Extending what they know through research and other project-based activities

Class assignments and homework can be adapted for special learners so that they can experience success without undue attention being brought to their learning difficulties. The key to success is to make assignments appropriate in content, length, time required to complete, and skill level needed to accomplish the task (Warger, 2011). It is also important that students know how and where to get help when they get stuck.

Technology can be a tremendous asset in planning and implementing differentiated homework and assignments. The International Society for Technology in Education (www.iste.org) provides resources for teachers as they use technology to plan for individual needs. This includes an encyclopedic publication of educational technology strategies for inclusive education (Bugaj et al., 2021).

How Can I Plan for Differentiated Instruction?

Planning for the success of all students in your class involves careful consideration of the needs of individuals as well as those of the class as a whole. In most cases, teachers have a single lesson or unit plan and make adaptations, often on the spot to make learning accessible for individual students. The unfortunate consequence of “on-the-fly” adjustments is that adaptations become incidental, inconsistent, and (for students with disabilities) not representative of what is mandated on their individualized education programs (IEPs).

Numerous systems have been recommended for planning for DI (see Table 12.1). A discussion of two such systems, the Planning Pyramid and Universal Design for Learning follows.

Table 12.1 • Planning Systems for Differentiating Instruction

	SOURCE	DESCRIPTION	BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS
Planning Pyramid	Schumm et al., 1994; Schumm & Avalos, 2009	A three-tiered framework for planning instructional units and lessons for diverse learners. Key concepts are identified and appropriate assignments and adaptations are incorporated.	Serves as a tool to integrate learning for all students and as a way for special and general education teachers to coordinate planning and instruction.
Universal Design for Learning	CAST, 2020	A system for identifying appropriate goals, materials, methods, and assessments for all students.	Assignments and assessments are at an appropriate level of challenge. Exceptional students are viewed as participants, not outliers.
Curriculum Mapping	Jacobs & Johnson, 2009	A calendar-based system used to gather data about content, skill instruction, and assessment within and across grade levels in a school.	Specialists have a clear picture of what is going to be taught and when. Assists in planning of appropriate accommodations.
Concept Anchoring Routine	Deshler et al., 2001	A series of instructional methods to help students master key concepts in the general education curriculum.	Helps students to connect new information with prior knowledge.

Sources: *The UDL Guidelines*, CAST, retrieved from <https://www.udlguidelines.cast.org>; "Making learning easier: Connecting new knowledge to things students already know," by D. Deshler et al., 2001, *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 33(4), 82–86. *The curriculum mapping planner: Templates, tools, and resources*, by H. H. Jacobs & A. Johnson, 2009, Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; "Responsible differentiated instruction for the adolescent learner: Promises, pitfalls, and possibilities," by J. S. Schumm & M. A. Avalos, 2009, in W. Blanton & K. Wood (Eds.), *Promoting literacy with adolescent learners*, New York: Guilford; and "Planning pyramid: A structure for planning for diverse student needs during content area instruction," by J. S. Schumm et al., 1994, *The Reading Teacher*, 47(8), 608–62.

FIGURE 12.1 Planning pyramid for a unit on Latin American countries

Planning pyramid

The planning pyramid, an excellent tool for co-planning in the general education classroom, is a structure for a way of thinking about planning instruction to enhance learning for all students. Schumm et al. (1997) reported that when teachers use the planning pyramid together, they develop a common mindset about what all students will learn (see Figure 12.1). They also can identify potential trouble spots as well as accommodations for students who may need them. Ruth Rogge, a special education teacher, adapted the planning pyramid for her weekly meetings with general education teachers (see Figure 12.2).

The pyramid is designed to help teachers identify what needs to be taught and, based on student needs, how to teach it. Tips for Teachers 12.3 provides procedures for

FIGURE 12.2 Planning pyramid weekly lesson plan form

Week of: _____

General Educator: _____ Special Educator: _____

Overall Objective/State Standard: _____

Pyramid	Co-Teaching Model
	Monday _____
	Tuesday _____
	Wednesday _____
	Thursday _____
	Friday _____

	General Educator Duties	Special Educator Duties
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		

Materials/In-Class Assignments

Monday _____

Tuesday _____

Wednesday _____

Thursday _____

Friday _____

Evaluation: _____

Homework Assignments

Monday _____

Tuesday _____

Wednesday _____

Thursday _____

Friday _____

using the planning pyramid. To be effective, you will need to take into consideration the degrees of learning—what and how much do you expect all, most, or some of your students to learn? Consider, for example, sixth-grade teacher Sara Hood, who used the planning pyramid to plan a 2½-week unit on Latin American countries for her middle school students. Sara has two students with learning disabilities in her class. One student, Carlos,

TIPS FOR TEACHERS 12.3

Procedures for the Planning Pyramid

The primary component of the planning pyramid, *degrees of learning*, makes up the body of the pyramid and will help you and your co-teacher examine the content to be taught and decide how you will differentiate instruction for all learners.

- Step 1:** Examine your state or district curriculum guides or textbooks to identify key standards or objectives to be taught.
- Step 2:** Decide what will go in the base of the pyramid: the information that is essential for all students to learn. This section is guided by the question, "What do we want *all* students to learn?"
- Step 3:** Decide what will go in the middle part of the pyramid: the information that is next in importance. This section is guided by the question, "What do we want *most* students to learn?"
- Step 4:** Decide what you will put at the top of the pyramid: the information that will enhance basic concepts and facts about the topic or subject. This type of information will be acquired only by a few students who have an added interest in and a desire to learn more about the subject.
- Step 5:** Identify what grouping patterns would facilitate learning and what accommodations are necessary for individual learners.
- Step 6:** Discuss the roles and responsibilities of you and your co-teacher before, during, and after the lesson.

Source: Schumm et al., 1994, in *The Reading Teacher*, 47(8), 608–62, International Reading Association.

has difficulty with decoding; another, Miriam, struggles with reading comprehension. Her state-adopted textbook is very difficult for these students, and her planning needs to include accommodations to help both students learn content. To prepare for the lesson, Sara examined the whole unit in the textbook and chose the fundamental ideas she wanted students to learn. The bottom of the pyramid listed topics that all groups would research and on which all students would be tested. The middle and top of the pyramid listed student-selected material.

One major concern Sara had in planning was finding activities that would keep her middle school students involved in learning and provide Carlos and Miriam the support they needed. To address these concerns, she planned to divide the classes into mixed-ability cooperative learning groups, each of which would select a country and present what they learned to the rest of the class. Sara provided the students with a checklist with her expectations for the cooperative learning groups' oral presentations in class. In the cooperative learning groups, material was read aloud to facilitate access to the information for Carlos. Also, groups worked together to identify key information, thus assisting Miriam with comprehension.

In addition to using cooperative learning groups to facilitate DI, Sara also planned to include differentiated assessment. In his IEP, Carlos is allowed to have tests administered orally. Thus, Sara's special education colleague administered his unit exam orally to Carlos. Miriam's IEP calls for extended time in taking tests, and the special educator facilitated that as well. Both Carlos and Miriam participated in their groups' oral presentations.

Planning is a critical component for successful DI in the general education classroom. The planning pyramid can serve as a structure for such planning—not only for students with learning and behavior problems, but also for students who are identified as gifted and talented.

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework for curricular and learning environment design that eliminates barriers and makes learning accessible to all. UDL is based on the concept of Universal Design in architecture (e.g., curb cuts, wider doorways, to accommodate individuals using wheelchairs) (Tobin & Behling, 2018). The developers of UDL, CAST (an acronym from the original name, Center for Applied Special Technology), began its work in 1984 with a focus on technological tools to enhance

learning (Rose et al., 2002). Recognizing the variability of learner needs, the CAST team eventually developed guidelines to provide a framework for designing differentiated assignments and homework (CAST, 2020; Meyer et al., 2014). Emphasis is on providing multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement.

Emy Lozano is a ninth-grade world geography teacher at a large urban school in Florida. She co-teaches with a special educator, Eric LeBoeuf, in her fifth period inclusion class. Together they attended a professional development series on UDL. As Emy put it, “At first planning with UDL was hard—really hard. Eventually, as we became more in tune with the needs of our students, we were able to begin to develop a rhythm in planning.

They have had long discussions about the individual needs of the students in their class, have identified potential barriers for individual students as well as ways to address those barriers. In planning a unit of study, they first identify the learning goals and then brainstorm how they will implement UDL guidelines using the following questions:

Multiple means of engagement refers to various ways to trigger interest, effort, and self-regulation—it is the “why” of learning.

- How will we provide options for recruiting interest—a reason why to learn?
- How will we foster effort and persistence?
- How will we promote self-regulation?

Multiple means of representation refers to options for student learning through various types of perception (visual, auditory, haptic), language and symbols, and modes of comprehension—it is the “what” of learning.

- What ways will we display information and provide visual and auditory alternatives if needed?
- What ways will we provide options for language and symbols with sensitivity to the needs of English learners?
- What ways will we promote comprehension?

Multiple means of action and expression means providing different ways to demonstrate learning and support in developing independent **executive learning** strategies such as goal setting—it is the “how” of learning.

- How can we use a variety of methods and technologies to promote action?
- How can we provide options for expression and communication?
- How can we promote executive learning through goal-setting, personal planning, and self-monitoring?

Emy and Eric continue to identify evidence-based practices they can use to address these questions. For example, the colleagues teach self-monitoring skills to promote student executive learning (Cook et al., 2017). In thinking about planning based on UDL principles, Salend and Whittaker (2017) recommend that teachers take time to evaluate the efficacy of the UDL solutions they have selected. Thus, Emy and Eric keep a log of what works and what changes they might make to better subsequent lessons. Figure 12.3 is a template Emy and Eric use for lesson planning. In addition to general state standards, the template also addresses the alternate academic achievement standards for students with disabilities (Access Points) and English learners.

While CAST promotes the implementation of evidence-based practices within the UDL framework, research on UDL as a whole remains complex (Edyburn, 2010, 2021; King-Sears, 2020; Rao et al., 2020). This is due in large part to the wide array of ways practitioners and researchers interpret and operationalize UDL (King-Sears, 2020). The recent development of research criteria for UDL for learning about models of implementation and associated student outcomes (Rao et al., 2020).

UDL has been utilized in a full spectrum of content areas and grade levels (early childhood through college). It has also been used to address a wide range of diverse student populations including students with disabilities (e.g., Edyburn, 2021; Cook & Rao, 2018;

FIGURE 12.3 Universal Design for Learning lesson plan template

Instructor:	Subject(s) and Grade Level:	Unit Topic:	Lesson Topic:	Date(s)
LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE				
Vision-Setting 1. VISION-SETTING	CONTENT OBJECTIVES Statement of main academic focus: "After this lesson, students will be able to _____."		STANDARDS	
			ACCESS POINTS	
	LANGUAGE OBJECTIVES Statement of main language learning/development goals; includes literacy development:		EL STANDARDS	
	MATERIALS		TECHNOLOGY/SUPPORTS	
	INCLUSION (MODELS OF SUPPORT): How will students with disabilities and English Learners be supported in learning lesson content? ⇨			
	KEY VOCABULARY What terms (Tier 2 and 3 words) are critical to understanding the lesson? ⇨ In the appropriate Lesson Sequence section(s), describe how these terms will be introduced, taught, and practiced. ⇨			
	Class composition; Target Student			
Before	A. Motivation <i>Provide rationale for selection of multiple means of engagement.</i> Consider: How you will engage students and capture their interest. ⇨ How you will link and build background knowledge. ⇨ How you will communicate <i>connections</i> to previous lessons. ⇨		Grouping	
During	B. Lesson Procedure/Presentation of Content <i>Provide rationale for multiple means of representation.</i> Focus on objectives and standards, content, strategies, interaction, feedback. ⇨ Consider: How you will scaffold student learning. ⇨ How critical thinking skills will be fostered. ⇨ How you will address misunderstandings. ⇨ How you will clearly state and model behavioral/measurable expectations. ⇨		Grouping	Formative Evaluation
	C. Application, Guided Practice, and/or Independent Learning <i>Provide rationale for selection of multiple means of engagement and expression.</i> Consider: How students will have the opportunity to apply new learning. ⇨ How you will ensure that students have multiple opportunities to practice. ⇨		Grouping	Formative Evaluation
	D. Assessment (formative and/or summative) <i>Provide rationale for multiple means of expression.</i> Based on B, C, and D above, explain how you will assess student learning/performance. ⇨ Consider: How/when you will monitor performance to check for understanding & assess learning outcomes. ⇨ What criteria you will apply (how will students be graded or evaluated). ⇨ How you will provide opportunities for remediation and extension. ⇨		Grouping	Formative & Summative Evaluation
3. REFLECTION On a scale of 1–10 (10 being outstanding), how would you rate your lesson? _____ ⇨ What aspects of the lesson were especially valuable and why? ⇨ What would you do differently if you taught this lesson again? Why? ⇨				

Murawski & Scott, 2019; Rao et al., 2017), students identified as gifted and talented (Hughes, 2019), and English learners (Rao & Torres, 2017). UDL does hold the promise of making learning more accessible for a wide range of students in the general education classroom. As Jung (2021) points out implementing UDL principles up front many lessen the need for adaptations afterward. However, it is important to keep in mind that IDEA does require attention to individual needs as designated on a student's IEP (Hallahan et al., 2019). Thus, individual accommodations provided by the general education teacher in partnership with special education colleagues and other specialists remains crucial to student success.

In addition to the CAST website (<https://www.cast.org>), two university-based projects also provide valuable resources. The Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, & Technology (DO-IT) website at University of Washington (<https://washington.edu/doiit>) provides many resources and tutorials to help teachers implement UDL. The IRIS Center at Vanderbilt University's website (<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu>) also provides resources for UDL implementation.

How Can I Accommodate Students Who Are Gifted and Talented?

Consider the following quotation:

Of all the students you are teaching in a given class, which group do you think will probably learn the least this year? It may surprise you to find that in a class that has a range of abilities (and which class doesn't?), it is the most able, rather than the least able, who will learn less new material than any other group. (Winebrenner & Espeland, 2000, p. 1)

How can this occur?

Think about Rick, a 10th-grade student who knows all the vocabulary for an English test at the beginning of the week. He gets a grade of 100% on the test, but has he learned anything?

Think about Mina, a sixth-grade student who is a voracious reader and is particularly interested in astronomy. She skims the chapter in her general science textbook, quickly gets its gist, and realizes that the content is basic and boring. The class lecture does not go beyond answering the end-of-chapter questions. Mina does not have the opportunity to share what she really knows and “tunes out” during class discussion. She gets a grade of 70% on a chapter test because she simply doesn't care about “proving” what she knows.

Think about Caroline, an eighth-grade student who has known all about the eight parts of speech since third grade. Even if she had forgotten the eight parts of speech in third grade, it wouldn't have mattered because they were also taught in fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. She gets a grade of 100% on a grammar unit test, but has she learned anything?

Think about Thaddeus. Thaddeus loves to draw and does so constantly at home and at school. Unfortunately, he would rather draw than do anything else, and his teacher frequently reprimands him for “doodling” rather than completing assignments.

You've got the picture. Frequently, students who are gifted or talented and other high-achieving students already know the material being covered in the general curriculum. Can you imagine spending seven hours a day, five days a week, school year after school year, reviewing information you already know? Can you imagine having genuine artistic talent and not having the opportunity to develop that talent or to share it with others? Can you imagine repeated drilling on standards that you have already mastered (Rakow, 2012; Viadero, 2007)?

Teacher, family, or guardian referrals are the most typical pathways to identification of students for gifted and talented programs. Different states emphasize different aspects of giftedness: intellectual exceptionality, high achievement, talent in the performing, musical, or visual arts, creativity, leadership, and/or motivation (McClain & Pfeiffer, 2012). As a classroom teacher your input is vital, so it is important for you to be aware of state and district guidelines for criteria for referral.