chapter two

CURRENT PRACTICES FOR MEETING THE NEEDS OF EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS

Jim West/Alamy Stock Photo

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning Outcome 2.1: Understand how students are evaluated and identified for special education services, including the use of Response to Intervention (RTI).

Learning Outcome 2.2: Understand the intent of special education law as it pertains to individualized education programs (IEPs), individualized family service plans (IFSPs), and transition plans for adolescents with disabilities.

Learning Outcome 2.3: Learn the various placement options and how they relate to least restrictive environment (LRE), inclusion of students with disabilities, and implementing inclusive teaching practices.

Learning Outcome 2.4: Understand the roles of general and special educators in providing exceptional learners an individualized education program.

Learning Outcome 2.5: Learn about integration of people with disabilities into society, including self-determination, universal design, and use of technology.

Learning Outcome 2.6: Become aware of the impact of standards-based reform on special education.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How are students with exceptionalities evaluated and identified for special education services in school settings?
- How is the intent of special education law implemented in individualized education for students with disabilities?
- What are the various placement options for exceptional learners?
- What are some ways that teachers implement inclusionary practices?
- What are the current practices in collaboration between general and special educators?
- What are the roles of general and special educators in providing exceptional learners an individualized education program?
- What are the trends and issues in universal design?
- What are the current strategies in the use of technologies?
- What impact do standards-based reform and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have on special education?
- What are our concluding thoughts about providing services to exceptional learners?

Special education has a rich history of controversy and change. Controversy and change make teaching and studying disabilities challenging and exciting. The history of special education, described briefly in Chapter 1, is replete with unexpected twists and turns. Many developments in the past have had unanticipated consequences, and many of today's events and conditions will have consequences that we don't foresee.

Dramatic changes have occurred during the first two decades of the 21st century, and more changes will undoubtedly follow. One critically important issue in special education today is the identification of students for special education services, particularly in the area of specific learning disabilities. The long-term debate over methods of identification has resulted in response to intervention (RTI), an approach to identifying students with learning disabilities, which has captured the attention of researchers and practitioners alike. The movement toward multicultural special education—the subject of Chapter 3—has also been in the forefront of the special education field. In this chapter we explore the major trends in providing services to exceptional learners as well as the significant issues in responding to the needs of individuals with disabilities.

EVALUATION AND IDENTIFICATION OF EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS

Although the landscape of special education has changed dramatically since the passage of PL 94-142: The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, one issue has remained constant. In 1975, the intent of the original law was the same as the intent today: to ensure that all children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) (Yell, Crockett, Shriner & Rozalski, 2017). To provide students with disabilities the appropriate educational services in the setting that maximizes their potential (the least restrictive environment), schools must employ effective practices in identifying exceptional learners. A longstanding debate continues on how to best identify students who are exceptional learners. Regardless of the specific method of identification, the federal law requires that specific steps be followed in the process.

FOCUS ON

IDEA Requirements for Special Education Identification

Child Find. This is a requirement for states to identify and evaluate all children who may have a disability. It is each state's obligation to have a reasonable plan to locate children in the state even if they do not attend public schools (e.g., private schools, homeless, home-schooled). Once identified using "child find" strategies, the child is referred for special education evaluation.

Referral. School personnel, most likely the general education teacher, or a parent may make the referral or request for evaluation. The parents must give consent (verbal or written) before a child is evaluated.

Evaluation. Within 60 days of parental consent, the district must provide a full evaluation of the child in the areas of concern. Under IDEA, consent for evaluation does not mean consent for placement. The results of the evaluation help to determine the student's eligibility for special education and related services.

Eligibility Determination. To determine whether a student is eligible for services, a multidisciplinary team meets to determine (a) if the student has a disability, and (b) if as a result of the disability he or she needs special education or related services. If parents disagree with the decision, they may seek an outside evaluation.

Prereferral Interventions and Multidisciplinary Teams

The determination of eligibility for special education services has lifelong implications for students with disabilities. Consider the consequences for a student who is not provided appropriate, thoughtful interventions before a full evaluation is conducted. For an example, visit http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KrapFXnZIDE.

Prereferral interventions developed by a **multidisciplinary team** may help prevent an inaccurate placement in special education. The purpose of prereferral interventions is to ensure that students receive evidence-based instruction before they are evaluated for special education. Typically, when a teacher observes that a child is struggling in school, a multidisciplinary team (e.g., the student's parents or guardian, a special education teacher, the student's general education teacher, counselor, administrators, school psychologist) is convened to identify alternative, evidence-based educational strategies for the student before making a referral for special education evaluation. The team reviews the information about the student and develops a plan for prereferral interventions that are implemented before a formal evaluation is conducted. If the student continues to struggle, he is referred for a full evaluation to determine eligibility for special education.

Although some variation of a prereferral process has been followed in schools for many years, since the passage of IDEA 2004, many states have followed a more systematic method of prereferral called response to intervention (RTI), particularly for identifying students with learning disabilities. Distinctions of RTI from earlier prereferral processes include universal screening, evidence-based interventions, multiple tiers of intervention that are increasingly more intense, frequent progress monitoring, and fidelity of implementation (Mellard & Johnson, 2008; Zirkel, 2011).

Response to Intervention

In the most recent reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Congress included an additional option for determining eligibility for special education in the case of suspected learning disabilities that forces varying levels of support in general education before referral to special education. The regulations state: "in determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, states may rely on a process that determines whether the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation." In practice, this concept has been termed **response to intervention (RTI)**.

WHAT IS RTI? Response to intervention refers to a student's change (or lack of change) in academic performance or behavior as a result of instruction (Duhon, Messmer, Atkins, Greguson, & Olinger, 2009; Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young, 2003; O'Connor, Sanchez, & Kim, 2017). In an RTI identification model, a student must first receive quality instruction in the general education classroom before being given a formal evaluation for special education services. Teachers gather data to determine whether the student is benefiting from that instruction. Only after educators determine that a student is nonresponsive to quality, research-based instruction by a general educator would a formal evaluation to special education occur.

RTI is usually associated with learning disabilities and academic learning. However, it has implications for students with any disability and is not confined to academic learning, but can be applied to social behavior as well (Cheney, Flower, & Templeton, 2008; Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, & Lathrop, 2007; Kauffman, 2014). Practitioners have applied various RTI approaches for students with disabilities, including emotional and behavioral disorders, intellectual disabilities, autism, and giftedness.

MULTITIERED MODEL FOR IDENTIFICATION The RTI approach is based on a multitiered model of prevention. No model is universally accepted; however, RTI typically provides for three progressively more intensive tiers of instruction for students who are experiencing difficulties (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2012; Mercer, Mercer, & Pullen, 2011). Generally, Tier 1 includes universal screening to identify students who may be at risk of academic failure; implementation of quality, research-based instruction; and weekly monitoring of student progress (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Stecker, 2010; Silberglitt, Parker, & Muyskens, 2016). The teacher monitors the student's progress in the curriculum and in relation to peers and provides differentiated instruction. If the student's achievement improves, no other action is taken. If the student's performance doesn't improve, the student moves to Tier 2. In Tier 2, the student usually receives small-group instruction by a teacher or highly trained assistant three to four times per week with a research-validated program in the areas of difficulty (e.g., reading or writing). Tier 2 interventions should take place for approximately 6 to 8 weeks. If the student's performance doesn't improve at this level, a multidisciplinary team is convened to determine whether a student has a disability and therefore qualifies for Tier 3, which is special education. Tier 3 includes more intensive intervention provided by a special educator in an appropriate placement to be determined by the student's individualized education program (discussed later in this chapter). Figure 2.1 illustrates how instruction and possible placement in special education is facilitated in an RTI framework.

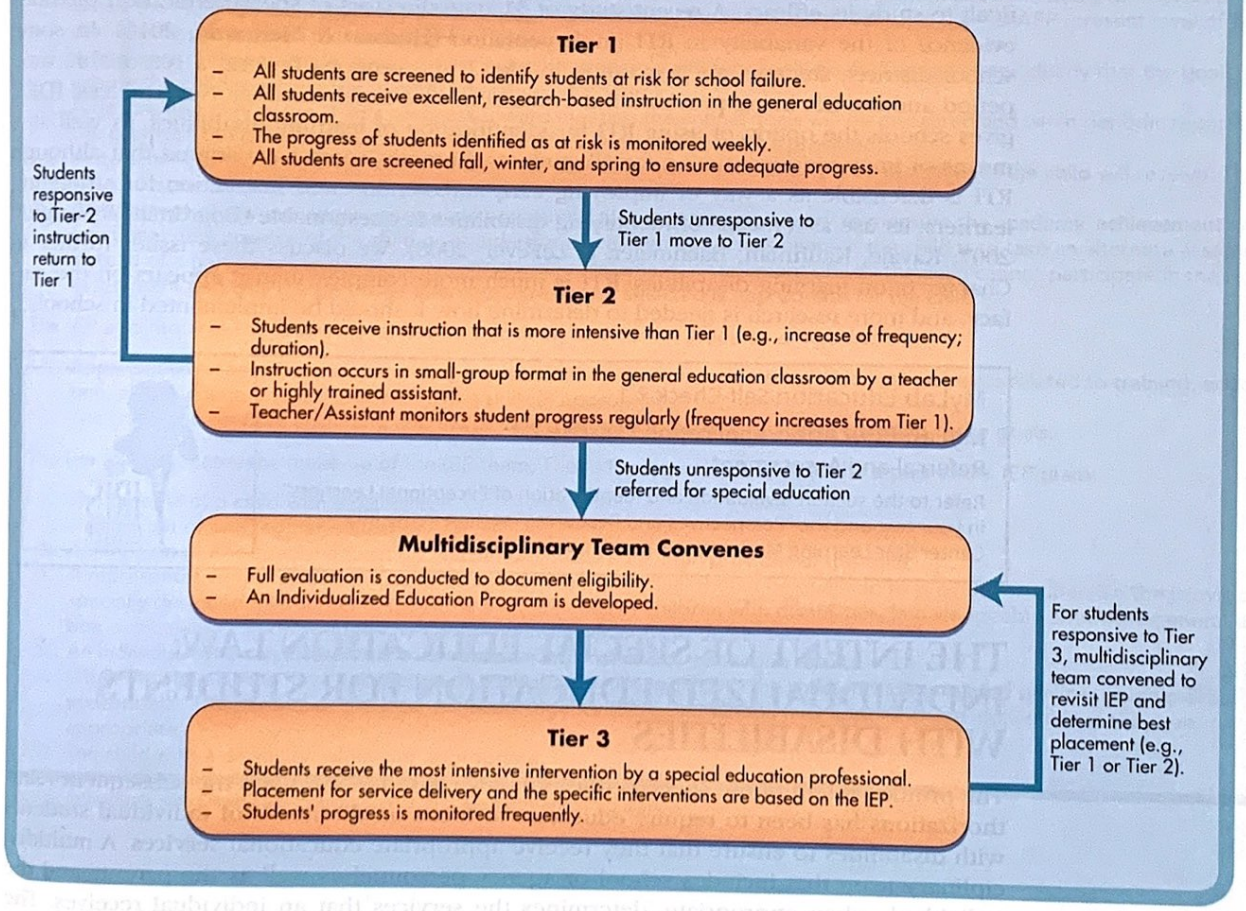
ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN AN RTI MODEL The basic purposes of assessment in an RTI model are to identify students who may be at increased risk of school failure and to collect data to determine the effectiveness of instruction so that appropriate instructional decisions can be made (Mercer et al., 2011). The two most common forms of assessment in an RTI process are screening and progress monitoring.

Teachers or school psychologists use **screening instruments** to identify those students who may be at increased risk of school failure. Screening instruments are typically administered to an entire group of students and may be given to a large number of students in a short period of time. School personnel use results of the screening administrations to identify students for whom additional progress monitoring and Tier 2 instruction are required.

Progress monitoring assessments are frequent, quick-and-easy measures that teachers administer at regular intervals and that provide information on whether a student is learning as expected. The purpose of administering progress-monitoring instruments is to determine whether current instructional practices are appropriate for individual students and to identify instructional needs. One common form of progress monitoring is **curriculum-based measurement (CBM)**. CBM involves students' responses to their usual instructional materials; it entails direct and frequent samples of performance from the students' curriculum. CBM measures are commonly used as a way to determine students'

FIGURE 2.1

THREE-TIERED RESPONSE-TO-INTERVENTION MODEL



responsiveness to RTI; however, the ways in which teachers use these data differ (Burns, Silberglitt, Christ, Gibbons, & Coolong-Chaffin, 2016; Fuchs et al., 2007). We discuss CBM in more detail throughout the text as it relates to the assessment and instruction of students with various exceptionalities.

SUPPORT FOR RTI IDENTIFICATION MODELS Advocates of an RTI identification model claim that it will reduce the number of students referred to special education. The argument is that as a result of high-quality instruction provided at every level, RTI helps to determine whether a student truly has a disability or has just been subjected to poor or missing instruction (see Boardman & Vaughn, 2007). Another benefit of RTI is the implementation of **early intervening services**. In the 2004 IDEA reauthorization, along with the addition of RTI, the law provides for states to use up to 15% of special education funding for early intervening services. These funds may be used "to develop and implement coordinated, early intervening services, which may include interagency financing structures, for students in kindergarten through grade 12 (with a particular emphasis on students in kindergarten through grade three) who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in a general education environment" (34 CFR 300.226(a)) (20 U.S.C. 1413(f)(1)).

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE RTI IDENTIFICATION MODELS? Unfortunately, little research evidence is available to determine whether RTI is effective. Only a few school districts in the country have used it on a wide scale and few large-scale systematic studies have been conducted (see Hughes & Dexter, 2011). Furthermore, the variability in RTI models makes it difficult to study its efficacy. A recent study of 31 state directors of special education provides evidence of the variability in RTI implementation (Hudson & McKenzie, 2016). In some school districts, students are remaining in Tier-2 interventions beyond a reasonable time period and are not being provided full evaluations in a timely manner. Nevertheless, IDEA gives schools the option of using RTI for identification of learning disabilities, as well as a means of improving instruction for all students. Recently, some have argued that although RTI is defensible as a way of improving early intervention and instruction for struggling learners, its use as a means of identifying disabilities is questionable (Boardman & Vaughn, 2007; Kavale, Kauffman, Bachmeier, & LeFever, 2008). We discuss these issues further in Chapter 6, on learning disabilities. RTI is much more complex than it appears on the surface, and more research is needed to determine how it should be implemented in schools.

MyLab Education Self-Check 2.1

MyLab Education Application Exercise 2.1:
Referral and Assessment

Refer to the section "Evaluation and Identification of Exceptional Learners" in your text and the "Perspectives and Resources" section in the IRIS Center Star Learning Module to respond to a few questions.

THE INTENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION LAW: INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The primary intent of the special education law passed in 1975 and the subsequent reauthorizations has been to require educators to focus on the needs of individual students with disabilities to ensure that they receive appropriate educational services. A multidisciplinary team that includes school or agency personnel as well as the parents and the individual, when appropriate, determines the services that an individual receives. The individualized education program (IEP) is the primary aspect of this focus; it spells out how a school plans to meet an exceptional student's needs. In addition to the IEP, the individualized family service plan (IFSP) for young children and the transition plan for adolescents are important aspects of providing appropriate individualized services to children and youth with disabilities. Reauthorizations of PL 94–142 have maintained the concepts of FAPE, LRE, and IEP, but have also moved toward students with disabilities having more opportunity to learn with their nondisabled peers.

Individualized Education Programs

The **individualized education program (IEP)** is the legal document that describes the educational services a student receives. IEPs vary greatly in format and detail from one child to another and from one school district to another. Table 2.1 provides a summary of the legal requirements of the IEP. Today, most schools, states, and districts have an online IEP management system. In addition, states typically have sample IEP documents that cover the federal and state guidelines. Check your state's department of education website for resources specific to your state.

MyLab Education
Video Example 2.1
This video shows two teachers discussing the advantages of IDEA's focus on access to general education settings and curriculum.

Federal and state regulations don't specify exactly how much detail must be included in an IEP, only that it must be a written statement developed in a meeting of a representative of the local school district, the teacher, the parents or guardian, and (whenever appropriate) the child, and that it must include certain elements. The IEP that is written in most schools contains much information related to the technical requirements of IDEA in addition to the heart of the plan: its instructional components.

TABLE 2.1 • **Legal requirements of the Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004, the required contents of an IEP include the following:

1. A statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance. On many IEP forms, this is called the PLOP (present level of performance). In some cases the PLOP is now listed as the PLAAFP (present level of academic achievement and functional performance).
2. A statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals. The law states clearly that the goals should enable the child to access the general education curriculum.
3. A description of how the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals will be measured and when periodic reports on the progress the child is making toward meeting the annual goals will be provided.
4. A statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services the child will receive. The services must be based on peer-reviewed research.
5. A statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child on standardized achievement assessments. If the child is to take an alternate assessment instead of a particular regular state or districtwide assessment, a statement of why the child cannot participate in the regular assessment and why the particular alternate assessment selected is appropriate for the child.

The IEP also requires the following related-to-transition services for students at age 16:

1. Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and independent living skills (if appropriate).
2. The transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals.

The law also stipulates the make-up of the IEP team. The following individuals must be a part of the IEP team:

1. The parents of a child with a disability.
2. A minimum of one regular education teacher.
3. A minimum of one special education teacher or special education provider of the child.
4. A representative of the local educational agency. This individual should be qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities, knowledgeable about the general education curriculum, and knowledgeable about the availability of resources.
5. An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results.
6. Other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel as appropriate. The parents or the local education agency (LEA, i.e., school) may appoint these individuals as they see appropriate.
7. The child with a disability, whenever appropriate.

Source: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, U.S. Department of Education.

Although the federal and state regulations do not specify how much detail should be included in the IEP, a recent court case, *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*, was heard before the U.S. Supreme Court (introduced in Chapter 1) that sheds light on the expectations of the IEP. The school district argued that a student need only make minimal progress toward IEP goals; however, in a rare but unanimous decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Endrew F. and his family, stating that special education should offer more than minimum progress. Although it is unclear at this time how the court case will affect regulations and implementation of IDEA, this ruling is a "win" for students with disabilities.

When writing an IEP, the team should develop a document that is clear, useful, and legally defensible. The relationships among IEP components must be clear and explicit in order to maintain the focus of the individualized program—special, individually tailored instruction to meet unique needs. The process of writing an IEP and the document itself are perhaps the most important features of compliance with the spirit and letter of IDEA. Bateman and Linden (2006) summarize this compliance; when the IEP is prepared as intended by the law:

- The student's needs have been carefully assessed.
- A team of professionals and the parents have worked together to design a program of education to best meet the student's needs.
- Goals and objectives are stated clearly so that progress in reaching them can be evaluated.

Although compliance with the law is critical, what is of more importance is that the decisions that are made regarding the child's IEP determine his ultimate outcomes.

Video Example from YouTube

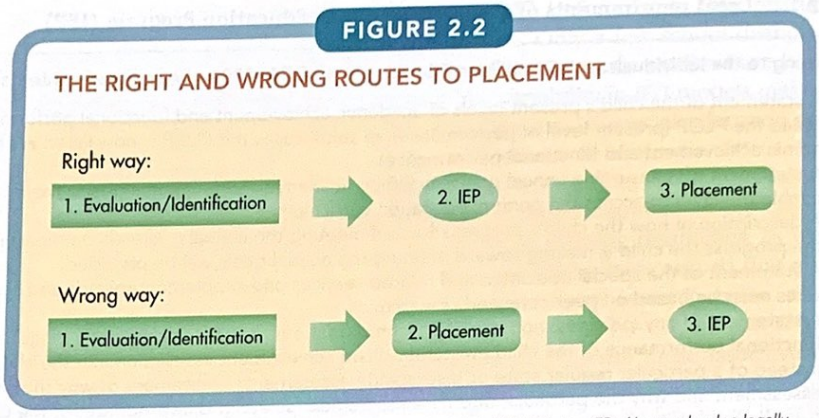
MyLab Education
Video Example 2.2

IEP decisions determine ultimate outcomes. Consider this mom's perspective in the slideshow she prepared for her son's IEP meeting.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8G-R5arIR7w

FIGURE 2.2

THE RIGHT AND WRONG ROUTES TO PLACEMENT



Source: Adapted with permission from Bateman, B. D., & Linden, M. A. (2006). *Better IEPs: How to develop legally correct and educationally useful programs* (4th ed.). Verona, WI: Attainment.

A major problem is that the IEP is often written at the wrong time and for the wrong reason (Bateman & Linden, 2006). As Figure 2.2 illustrates, the legal IEP is written after evaluation and identification of the student's disabilities and before a placement decision is made: Educators first determine what the student needs and then make a decision about placement in the least restrictive environment in which the needed services can be provided. Too often, we see the educationally wrong (and illegal) practice of basing the IEP on an available placement; that is, a student's IEP is written after available placements and services have been considered.

Another common error in writing the IEP is a reliance on state standards. A "standards-based" IEP is one that focuses on outcomes based on state standards rather than on individual student needs (Bateman, 2017). Clearly, state standards and access to the general education curriculum are important; however, a student's *individualized* education program should be based on outcomes appropriate for the child and not on dictated state standards. Drawing once again from the decision in the *Endrew F.* court case, Justice John G. Roberts wrote the following regarding access to general education curriculum and the IEP:

> A child's IEP need not aim for grade-level advancement if that is not a reasonable prospect. But that child's educational program must be appropriately ambitious in light of his circumstances, just as advancement from grade to grade is appropriately ambitious for most children in the regular classroom. The goals may differ, but every child should have the chance to meet challenging objectives (p. 3).

Individualized Family Service Plan

Federal laws now require that a variety of early intervention services be available to all infants and toddlers who are identified as having disabilities. Such services include special education instruction, physical therapy, speech and language therapy, and medical diagnostic services. As with school-age children with disabilities, a legal document, the **individualized family service plan (IFSP)**, describes the services that the child will receive. An IFSP is similar to an IEP for older children, but it broadens the focus to include the family as well as the child. In fact, federal regulations stipulate that the family must be involved in the development of the IFSP. Table 2.2 describes the legal requirements of an IFSP. As Noonan and McCormick (2006) note, an IFSP may be written for children up to 6 years of age, but usually an IFSP is written for infants and children up to 3 years of age, with the IEP being more common for children age 3 years and older.

Transition Plans for Adolescents with Disabilities

Most students complete high school and find jobs, enter a vocational training program, or go to college without experiencing major adjustment difficulties. We know that dropout and unemployment rates are far too high for all youths, especially in economically

TABLE 2.2 • **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirements for the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)**

An IFSP must include:

1. A statement of the child's present level of development in these areas: physical (including vision, hearing, and health status), cognitive, communication, psychosocial, and adaptive behavior.
2. A statement of family strengths, resources, concerns, and priorities related to the child's development.
3. A statement of the major outcomes expected to be achieved for the child and family.
4. A statement of the frequency, intensity, and method of delivering the early intervention services necessary to produce desired outcomes for the child and family.
5. A statement of the natural environments where services will be provided or a statement explaining why services will not be provided in natural environments.
6. Projected dates for the initiation of services and anticipated duration of services.
7. The name of a service coordinator responsible for implementation of the IFSP and coordination with other agencies/professionals.
8. Steps to be implemented to ensure successful transition (a transition plan) to preschool services provided by the public schools.
9. Written consent from the parents or legal guardian.

depressed communities, but the outlook for students with disabilities is perhaps even worse. We must view published figures on dropout rates with caution because there are many different ways of defining the term and computing the statistics. Studies strongly suggest, however, that a higher percentage of students with disabilities, compared to students without disabilities, have difficulty in making the transition from adolescence to adulthood and from school to work. As a result, many individuals with disabilities do not achieve postsecondary degrees, are unemployed or underemployed, and have lower quality of life outcomes (Avellone & Taylor, 2017; Inge, 2017; Scanlon, 2017). Thus, transition to adulthood—which includes employment, postsecondary education, independent living, and community engagement—is an ongoing issue of great importance.

Federal laws, including IDEA, require attention to **transition plans** for older students, and these must be incorporated in students' IEPs. Transition services include a coordinated set of outcome-oriented activities that promote movement from school to postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including **supported employment**), continuing adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.

IDEA requires that each student's IEP contain a statement of needed transition services, when the student is 16 years of age and annually thereafter. (For students for whom it is appropriate or who are deemed at risk of failure, the transition statement must be included in the IEP at a younger age.) In addition, the IEP must include a statement of the linkages and/or responsibilities of each participating agency before the student leaves the school setting.

MyLab Education Self-Check 2.2

MyLab Education Application Exercise 2.2: IEP Components

For this exercise, you will use your text to review IEP components and compare those to an actual IEP that has been developed for a student.

PROVIDING SPECIAL EDUCATION: PLACEMENT ISSUES FOR EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS

Several administrative plans are available for the education of exceptional learners, ranging from a few special provisions made by the student's general education teacher to 24-hour residential care in a special facility. Administrative plans for education vary according to the degree of physical integration—the extent to which exceptional and nondisabled students are taught in the same place by the same teachers.

Beginning with the least specialized environment, the general education teacher who is aware of the individual needs of students and is skilled at meeting them may be able to acquire appropriate materials, equipment, and/or instructional methods. This level might not require the direct services of specialists; the expertise of the general education teacher might meet the students' needs. Some students with disabilities can be accommodated without special education.

Alternatively, the general education teacher might need to *consult* with a special educator or other professional (e.g., the school psychologist) in addition to acquiring the special materials, equipment, or methods. The special educator might train or coach the general education teacher, refer the teacher to other resources, or demonstrate the use of materials, equipment, or methods. Alternatively, the general and special educators might *co-teach*, with each providing instruction and the special educator emphasizing instruction of the exceptional student(s).

A *resource teacher* provides services for students and teachers in a single school. The students served are enrolled in the general education classroom and work with the specially trained teacher for a length of time and at a frequency determined by the nature and severity of their particular problems. The resource teacher continually assesses the needs of the students and their teachers and usually works with students individually or in small groups in a special *resource room*, where special materials and equipment are available. Typically, the resource teacher also serves as a consultant to the classroom teacher, advising on how to instruct and manage the student in the classroom and perhaps demonstrating instructional techniques. The flexibility of the plan and the fact that the student remains with nondisabled peers most of the time have traditionally made this a particularly attractive and popular alternative.

One of the most visible—and, in recent years, controversial—service alternatives is the special *self-contained class*. Such a class typically enrolls 15 or fewer exceptional students with particular characteristics or needs. The teacher ordinarily has been trained as a special educator and provides all or most of the instruction, assisted by a paraeducator. The students assigned to such classes usually spend most or all of the school day separated from their nondisabled peers. Often, students with disabilities are included with nondisabled students during part of the day (perhaps for physical education, music, or some other activity in which they can participate well).

Special *day schools* provide an all-day special placement for exceptional learners who need this level of specialization or dedication to their needs. The day school usually is organized for a specific category of exceptional students and may contain special equipment necessary for their care and education. These students return to their homes during nonschool hours.

Hospital or *homebound instruction* is most often required by students who have physical disabilities, although it's sometimes an option for those with emotional or behavioral disorders or other disabilities when no alternative is readily available. Typically, the youngster is confined to the hospital or the home for a relatively short time, and the hospital or homebound teacher maintains contact with the general classroom teacher.

In a *residential school*, exceptional students receive 24-hour care away from home, often at a distance from their communities. This is the highest level of specialization or dedication on the continuum of alternative placements required by IDEA. These students might make periodic visits home or return each weekend, but during the week, they are residents of the institution, where they receive academic instruction in addition to management of their daily living environment.

Figure 2.3 illustrates the idea of variation in the separation of children from their general education classrooms and peers. It also illustrates the increasing specialization of environments. The degree to which education is "special" is a continuum. That is, education can be "sort of" special or very, very specialized.

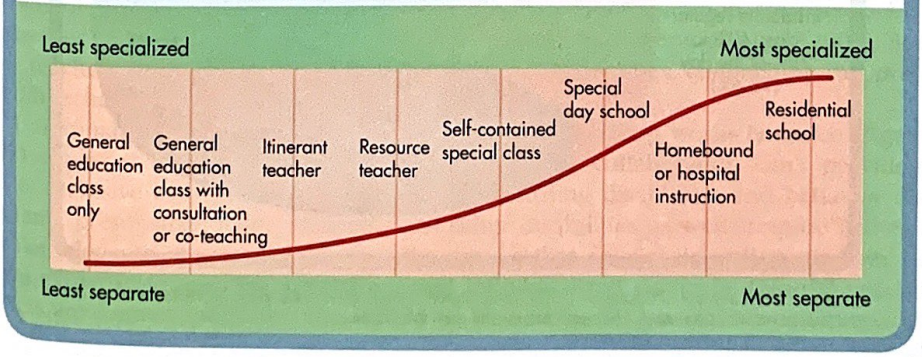
Least Restrictive Environment

As we noted in Chapter 1, special education law requires placement of the student in the **least restrictive environment (LRE)**, which usually means that the student should be separated from nondisabled classmates and from home, family, and community as little as possible (see Yell, Crockett, Shriner, & Rozalski, 2017). That is, the student's life should be as normal as possible, and the intervention should be consistent with individual needs and not interfere with individual freedom any more than is absolutely necessary. For example, students should not be placed in special classes if they can be served adequately by resource teachers, and they should not be placed in a residential school if a special class will serve their needs just as well.

MyLab Education
Video Example 2.3
This video captures how one school defines and implements the least restrictive environment (LRE) at an IEP meeting.

FIGURE 2.3

CONTINUUM OF PLACEMENT OPTIONS SHOWING HYPOTHETICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEGREE OF SEPARATENESS FROM GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM PEERS AND DEGREE OF SPECIALNESS OF EDUCATION



MyLab Education
Video Example 2.4
Authors Jim Kauffman and Paige Pullen discuss some of the misconceptions that surround the Least Restrictive Environment.

Although placement of exceptional students in the LRE is laudable, the definition of *least restrictive* is not as simple as it seems. Years ago, Cruickshank (1977), a pioneer in special education, pointed out that greater restriction of the physical environment does not necessarily mean greater restriction of psychological freedom or human potential (see also Bateman, 2007; Crockett & Kauffman, 1999, 2001). In fact, it is conceivable that some students could be more restricted in the long run in a general education class where they are rejected by others and fail to learn necessary skills than in a special class or day school where they learn happily and well (Gliona, Gonzales, & Jacobson, 2005; Kauffman, Bantz, & McCullough, 2002; Warnock, 2005).

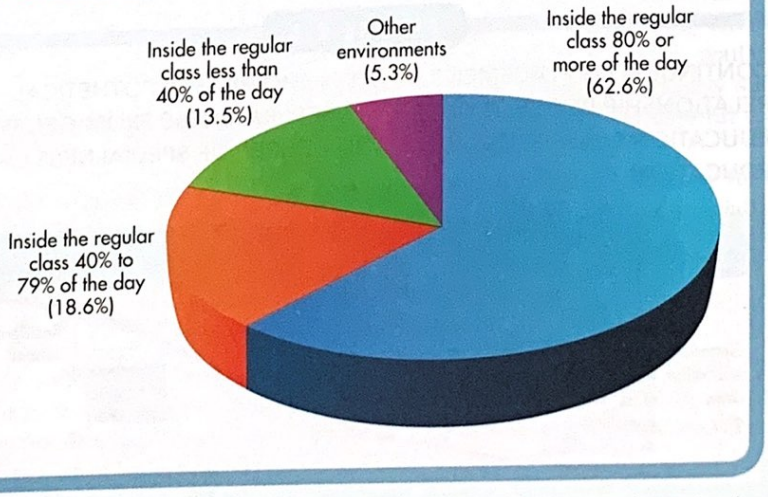
It is important to keep our ultimate goals for the students in mind and to avoid letting the term *least restrictive* become a hollow slogan that results in shortchanging them in their education (Crockett & Kauffman, 1999, 2001; Huefner, 2006; Kauffman, 1995; Kauffman, McGee, & Brigham, 2004). Mercer and colleagues suggest that the *least restrictive environment* may be better termed the *most enabling environment* (Mercer et al., 2011). In the accompanying video, Drs. Kauffman and Pullen discuss what LRE really means.

Since the late 1980s, data have shown a steady trend toward placing more students with disabilities in general education classes and a corresponding trend toward placing fewer students with disabilities in resource rooms, separate classes, and separate facilities (U.S. Department of Education, 1995, 2005, 2009). Considerable variation exists in the placement of students with disabilities from state to state and among school systems within a given state. However, most exceptional students are now educated in general education classes. Nationwide, about 63% of exceptional children and youths are now served primarily in general education classes. Relatively few students with disabilities are placed outside of regular schools. Figure 2.4 shows the approximate percentage of students served in each type of placement as of 2014 (the most current data available as this text goes to press—release of federal data is always two or three years delayed) (U.S. Department of Education (2016).

Because children younger than 6 are usually only identified if they have relatively obvious or severe disabilities, they are less likely to receive education in general education classes and more often attend separate schools than do school-age children. Older

FIGURE 2.4

APPROXIMATE PERCENTAGES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN VARIOUS PLACEMENT OPTIONS



Source: U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Thirty-eighth annual report to Congress on implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. Washington, DC: Author.

teenagers and young adults more often attend special classes, separate schools, and other environments such as homebound instruction than do students in elementary and high schools because work-related educational programs for older teens with disabilities are frequently offered outside of the campuses of general education high schools.

Inclusion in Schools

Educators often use the term *inclusion* to describe teaching students with disabilities in the same environment as their age peers who don't have disabilities. Inclusion is now an issue in education worldwide (e.g., Anastasiou & Keller, 2017; Simpson & Kauffman, 2007; Warnock, 2005). Regardless of one's views, the controversy about the relationship between special and general education has made teachers more aware of the problems of deciding just which students should be taught specific curricula, which students should receive special attention or services, and where and by whom these services should be provided (Crockett & Kauffman, 1999, 2001; Kauffman & Hallahan, 1997, 2005b; Kauffman, Mock, Tankersley, & Landrum, 2008; Mock & Kauffman, 2005; Zigmond & Kloo, 2017).

Implementing Inclusive Teaching Practices

Whether or not one supports the concept of full inclusion, the fact is that most educators favor some degree of integration of students with disabilities with nondisabled students. Schools generally use four methods to help students with disabilities participate in the general education classroom:

1. Collaborative consultation
2. Co-teaching and other team arrangements
3. Curricula and instructional strategies
4. Accommodations and adaptations

The current trend is toward a variety of collaborative arrangements. All are intended to increase the cooperation between general and special education for the benefit of students with disabilities.

COLLABORATIVE CONSULTATION Once the IEP team has determined that a student in fact has a disability, the student may receive special education services within the general education classroom through **collaborative consultation**. In collaborative consultation, the special education teacher or psychologist acts as an expert who provides advice to the general education teacher. The special educator might suggest changes to instruction or additional supports, such as behavior plans or school–home notes.

CO-TEACHING Sometimes referred to as **cooperative** (or *collaborative*) **teaching**, co-teaching takes mutuality and reciprocity in collaborative consultation one step further (see Cook, McDuffie-Landrum, Oshita, & Cook, 2017; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007; Walsh & Jones, 2004). **Co-teaching** between general and special educators means "two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space" (Cook & Friend, 1998, p. 454).

Schools use many forms of co-teaching, but the most common appears to be for one teacher to instruct and the other to assist in some way (Scruggs et al., 2007). Sometimes, teachers find it very effective and workable. Other times, co-teaching can present incredible challenges to teachers and to students.

Unfortunately, research on how to ensure that co-teaching works is scarce. Zigmond (2007) argues that the popular co-teaching model of collaboration can't provide the kind of intensive instruction that students with learning disabilities and behavior disorders (and, presumably, many students with other disabilities as well) require if they are to make adequate progress. Moreover, she argues that special education teachers need special expertise in teaching specialized and individualized curricula. General education teachers are content specialists and should be trained by the "special education coach" to

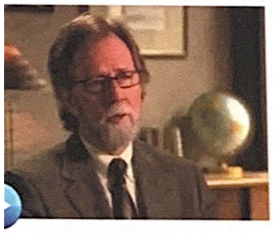
MyLab Education
Video Example 2.5
Effective collaboration among general educators, special educators, and other professionals is a key ingredient in the successful participation of students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

address a wider range of instructional needs than they otherwise would have, but they can't take the place of special education teachers (Zigmond & Kloo, 2017).

Although there are no pat answers to the questions about how special and general education should work together to ensure that every student receives an appropriate education, it's clear that the relationship must be one of cooperation and collaboration. Despite their differing roles, general and special educators should not function on independent or mutually exclusive educational tracks. In Chapters 5 through 15, a special feature called "How Can I Help Students with … in the General Education Classroom" addresses specific issues of inclusion for each disability area.

CURRICULA AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES In addition to teacher cooperation, specific curricula and instructional strategies can help students with disabilities succeed in the general education classroom. **Cooperative learning** is an instructional strategy that many proponents of inclusion believe is an effective way to integrate students with disabilities into groups of nondisabled peers. In cooperative learning, students work together in heterogeneous small groups to solve problems or practice responses.

Another research-based instructional strategy to enhance the integration of students with disabilities is **peer-mediated instruction** (Fuchs et al., 2001; Gardner et al., 2001; Maheady, Harper, & Mallette, 2001; see also Fulk & King, 2001, and the websites they list). Peer-mediated instruction may refer to **peer tutoring**, the use of **peer confederates** in managing behavior problems, or any other arrangement in which teachers deliberately recruit and train peers to help teach an academic or social skill to a classmate (Falk & Wehby, 2001).



MyLab Education
Video Example 2.6
Watch as Dr. Tom Smith explains what is meant by providing accommodations for students. This video also captures school personnel as they struggle to determine the proper role of extended time as an accommodation for special education students in the general education classroom.

When the whole class is involved, the strategy is referred to as **classwide peer tutoring (CWPT)**; all students in the general education classroom routinely engage in peer tutoring for particular subject matter, such as reading or math (Greenwood, Arrega-Mayer, Utley, Gavin, & Terry, 2001; Kourea, Cartledge, & Musti-Rao, 2007). CWPT doesn't mean that the teacher provides no instruction. On the contrary, teachers must provide instruction in how to do peer tutoring and in the content of the tutoring sessions. Peers tutor each other to provide drill and practice of skills they already have.

Partial participation, another instructional strategy, entails having students with disabilities participate, on a reduced basis, in virtually all activities experienced by all students in the general education classroom. It questions the assumption that including students with severe intellectual or physical limitations is a waste of time because they cannot benefit from the activities in the same way as nondisabled students. Whether partial participation actually achieves these goals to the benefit of students is an open question.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS AND ADAPTATIONS Instruction may be modified for learners with disabilities. **Modifications** usually take the form of amended materials or assignments and differ from changes in curricula or instructional strategies. **Accommodations** include changes in instruction that don't significantly change the content or conceptual difficulty level of the curriculum. Alternatively, **adaptations** generally involve more significant modifications of instruction than accommodations (Miller, 2002).

MyLab Education
Video Example 2.7
In this video, Dr. Delores Gaunty-Porter discusses the role of teachers in determining methods for assessing students with disabilities, providing appropriate modifications and/or accommodations.

Tiered assignments (Tomlinson, 2001) are an example of adaptations, wherein teachers provide choices of varying difficulty for assignments on a single topic. For example, when studying a novel, some students might write paragraphs that identify and describe the characters; others might write paragraphs or papers that analyze the traits of each character, using examples.

MyLab Education Self-Check 2.3

MyLab Education Application Exercise 2.3: The Continuum of Placement Options
Explain what you think the likely placement for Marty and Mwajabu would be.

TEACHERS' ROLES IN PROVIDING SPECIAL EDUCATION

We have noted that most students in public schools who have been identified as exceptional are placed in general education classrooms for at least part of the school day. Furthermore, there is good reason to believe that a large number of public school students who have not been identified as having disabilities or giftedness share many of the characteristics of those who are exceptional. Thus, while all teachers must be prepared to deal with exceptional students, it's unreasonable to expect all teachers to teach all exceptional students (Imray & Colley, 2017; Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005a; Mock & Kauffman, 2002; Zigmond, 2007; Zigmond & Kloo, 2017).

The roles of general and special education teachers are not always clear in a given case. Sometimes, uncertainty about the division of responsibility can be extremely stressful; teachers may feel uneasy because it's not clear whose job it is to make special adaptations for a pupil or just what they are expected to do in cooperating with other teachers.

Relationship Between General and Special Education

During the 1980s, radical reformers began recommending that special education be eliminated as a separate, identifiable part of education—calling for a single, unified educational system in which all students are viewed as unique, special, and entitled to the same quality of education. Although many of the suggested reforms have great appeal and some could produce benefits for exceptional students, the basis for integration of special and general education and the ultimate consequences this might bring have been questioned (e.g., Bateman, 2007; Crockett & Kauffman, 1999, 2001; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Hockenbury, Kauffman, & Hallahan, 1999–2000; Imray & Colley, 2017; Kauffman, 1995, 1999–2000; Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005b; Martin, 1995; Mock & Kauffman, 2002, 2005; Warnock, 2005; Zigmond, 2007; Zigmond & Kloo, 2017).

These questions have no ready answers. Regardless of where one draws the line separating students who are considered to be at risk from students with disabilities, the line is arbitrary and leads to doubts about some students. In other words, no entirely clear distinction exists between *at risk* and *disability* because educational achievement and social competence can vary from a little to a lot, and no sudden, dramatic break exists in students' level of attainment (Boardman & Vaughn, 2007; Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005a; Kauffman & Konold, 2007).

MyLab Education
Video Example 2.8
Drs. Pullen and Kauffman discuss the challenges of meeting the needs of all children in the general education classroom.

Expectations for All Educators

One limitation of all teachers is that they can't accomplish the miracles portrayed in the popular media, even if they are very good at what they do (Moore, 2007). Real teachers can't be as perky, self-sacrificing, idealistic, and influential as those shown in films, and most teachers can't achieve the same results as those who win awards for exceptional performance. Competent teachers can make a significant difference in the lives of the children with whom they work, but the expectations set up by media portrayals—and too often by government or the general public—are unrealistic. Teachers, like those employed in other lines of work, must do the best they can with the resources at their disposal. Striving for excellence is admirable, but recognizing one's real-world limitations, keeping one's duties and accomplishments in perspective, and being happy with the best one can do, even if it's less than perfection, is as important for teachers as it is for students.

Regardless of whether teachers are specifically trained in special education, they may be expected to participate in educating exceptional students in any one of the following ways:

1. *Make maximum effort to accommodate individual students' needs:* Teaching in public schools requires dealing with diverse students in every class. All teachers must participate in the RTI process, making an effort to meet the needs of individuals

who might differ in some way from the average or typical student. RTI requires the implementation of evidence-based instruction that increases in intensity as necessary. Flexibility, adaptation, accommodation, and special attention are expected of every teacher. Special education should be considered necessary only when a teacher's best efforts to meet a student's individual needs aren't successful.

2. *Evaluate academic abilities and disabilities:* Although a psychologist or other special school personnel might administer formal standardized tests in academic areas to a student, adequate evaluation requires the teacher's assessment of the student's performance in the classroom. Teachers must be able to report specifically and precisely how students can and cannot perform in all academic areas for which they are responsible as part of the RTI process.
3. *Refer for evaluation:* By law, all public school systems must make extensive efforts to screen and identify all children and youths of school age who have disabilities. A student shouldn't be referred for special education unless teachers have made extensive and unsuccessful efforts to accommodate the student's needs in general education classes. Before referral, school personnel must document the strategies that have been used to teach and manage the student in general education. Referral is justified only if these strategies have failed. This is typically facilitated through the RTI process.
4. *Participate in eligibility conferences:* Before a student is provided special education, an interdisciplinary team must determine the student's eligibility. Therefore, teachers must be ready to work with other teachers and with professionals from other disciplines (e.g., psychology, medicine, or social work) in determining a student's eligibility for special education.
5. *Participate in writing individualized education programs:* Every student identified with a disability and receiving special education must have a written IEP. Teachers must be ready to participate in a meeting (possibly including the student and/or parents as well as other professionals) to develop the program.
6. *Communicate with parents or guardians:* Educators must consult parents (sometimes surrogate parents) or guardians during the evaluation of the child's eligibility for special education, formulation of the IEP, and reassessment of any special program that may be designed. Teachers must contribute to the school's communication with parents about the child's problems, placement, and progress.
7. *Participate in due process hearings and negotiations:* Parents, guardians, or students with disabilities themselves who are dissatisfied with the school's response to educational needs may request a due process hearing or negotiations regarding appropriate services. Teachers might be called on to offer observations, opinions, or suggestions in such hearings or negotiations.
8. *Collaborate with other professionals in identifying and making maximum use of exceptional students' abilities:* General and special education teachers are expected to share responsibility for educating students with special needs. In addition, teachers might need to collaborate with other professionals, depending on the given student's exceptionality (e.g., psychologists, counselors, physicians, physical therapists).

A high level of professional competence and ethical judgment is required to conform to these expectations. Teaching demands a thorough knowledge of child development and expertise in instruction. Furthermore, teachers are sometimes faced with serious professional and ethical dilemmas in trying to serve the needs of students and their parents, on the one hand, and in attempting to conform to legal or administrative pressures, on the other (Crockett & Kauffman, 1999; Kauffman & Hallahan, 2009). For example, when a teacher observes indications that a student might have a disability, should the teacher refer the student for evaluation and possible placement in special education, knowing that her school offers only inadequate or inappropriate services? Should a teacher who believes strongly that teenage students with mild intellectual disabilities need sex education refrain from giving students any information because sex education isn't part of the prescribed curriculum and is frowned on by the school board?

Expectations for Special Educators

In addition to being competent enough to meet the expectations for all teachers, special education teachers must attain further expertise in the following areas of skill and knowledge:

1. *Instructing students with learning problems, using evidence-based practices:* The majority of students with disabilities have more difficulty learning academic skills than do those without disabilities. This is true for all categories of disabling conditions because sensory impairments, physical disabilities, and intellectual or emotional disabilities all tend to make academic learning more difficult. Often, the difficulty is slight; sometimes it is extreme. Special education teachers must have more than patience and hope, though they do need these qualities; they must also have the technical skill to present academic tasks so that students with disabilities will understand and respond appropriately. Exceptional instruction is the key to improving special education (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005a; Kauffman & Landrum, 2007). Table 2.3 lists eight dimensions of instruction that make special education special, although these dimensions are not unique to special education. That is, they are not dimensions of instruction that *only* special educators know about or use. They are modifications or alterations of instructional processes that all teachers use in some way. What makes special education special is not the instruction alone but instruction that is altered to meet the needs of exceptional learners.
2. *Managing serious behavior problems:* Many students with disabilities have behavior problems in addition to their other exceptionalities. Some, in fact, require special education primarily because of their inappropriate or disruptive behavior. Special education teachers must be able to deal effectively with more than the usual troublesome behavior of students. Besides having understanding and empathy, special education teachers must master techniques to draw out particularly withdrawn students, control those who are hyperaggressive and persistently disruptive, and teach critical social skills. Positive, proactive behavior intervention plans are essential for all students who receive special education and exhibit serious behavior problems,

TABLE 2.3 • **Dimensions of special education that can make it truly special**

DIMENSION OF INSTRUCTION	DEFINITION	ALTERATION OF INSTRUCTION
1. Pace (Rate)	Speed of lesson; speed of introducing new concepts	Made slower or faster to meet student characteristics
2. Intensity	Demandingness; difficulty; complexity	Size of steps in learning, number of trials, frequency of reviews adjusted to fit learner
3. Relentlessness or Persistence	Insistence; tenacity; stick-to-it-iveness	Repeated attempts, using different methods as required
4. Structure	Explicitness, predictability, teacher direction, tolerance, immediacy of consequences	Adjusted (tightened or loosened) to fit individual student
5. Reinforcement	Reward for desired behavior	Increased, made more frequent, immediate, and explicit or tangible as necessary
6. Pupil/Teacher Ratio (Class Size)	Number of students per teacher	Smaller, more individual
7. Curriculum	Content of instruction, purpose of activity	Determined by individual need
8. Monitoring (Assessment)	Keeping track of progress	Daily or near daily checking (testing) of achievement of specific tasks and goals

regardless of their diagnostic label or classification (Kauffman, Pullen, Mostert, & Trent, 2011; Landrum & Kauffman, 2006).

3. *Evaluating technological advances:* Technology is increasingly applied to the problems of teaching exceptional students and improving their daily lives. Special education teachers must be able to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using technology for teaching the exceptional children and youths with whom they work.
4. *Knowing special education law:* For good or ill, special education today involves many details of law. The rights of students with disabilities are spelled out in considerable detail in federal and state legislation. These laws, as well as the rules and regulations that accompany them, are constantly being interpreted by new court decisions. Special education teachers don't need to be lawyers, but they do need to be aware of legal requirements and prohibitions if they are to be adequate advocates for students with disabilities (Bateman, 2007; Huefner, 2006; Yell, 2006).

The knowledge and skills that every special education teacher is expected to master have been detailed by the primary professional organization of special educators, the Council for Exceptional Children (1998). These are general expectations and areas of competence that are required of every special educator; however, special educators have a responsibility to offer not just good instruction but instruction that is highly individualized, intensive, relentless, urgent, and goal directed (Hallahan, 2007; Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005a; Kauffman, Hallahan, Pullen, & Badar, 2018; Kauffman & Landrum, 2007; Pullen & Hallahan, 2015; Zigmond, 2003, 2007). To this end, the special feature "Responsive Instruction: Meeting the Needs of Students," in Chapters 3 to 15, provides information about research-based practices to help make instruction intensive, relentless, and goal directed.

MyLab Education Self-Check 2.4

MyLab Education Application Exercise 2.4: Teachers' Roles in an RTI Framework

Watch a video vignette about Response to Intervention and the roles of the general educator and special educator in meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Then answer the questions that follow.

Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning

Based on the architectural principles of **universal design**, **universal design for learning (UDL)** serves the general purpose of making learning accessible to more students in inclusionary programs. The idea is that with modifications of *representation* (materials), *expression* (methods of communication), and *engagement* (how students respond to curriculum), teachers can include a much wider range of students in typical classroom instruction (CAST, 2011; Spooner, Baker, Harris, Ahlgrim-Delzell, & Browder, 2007).

MAKING THINGS USABLE BY MORE PEOPLE Access to the Internet by people with disabilities has significant implications for design. Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act requires that federal agencies ensure equal access by those with and without disabilities to new information technology as well as information and services. Furthermore, IDEA urges educators to consider the use of assistive technology in servicing students with disabilities, to allow a greater diversity of students to be accommodated in typical classrooms (Spooner et al., 2007).

Making things usable by more people goes beyond the Internet. For example, teachers can design materials that increase accessibility for more students by creating them in ways that can be adjusted by the user (e.g., making the print larger, providing captions on videos, or creating PDF files that are in accessible formats). Accessible formatted PDF files can be used with a Brailler for individuals who are blind. Another example of making materials accessible is using a teaching microscope that projects the image on a large display, rather than having students with low vision use a standard microscope. In applying universal design to materials access, a teacher should ask herself, "*How can I make this content accessible to all of my students?*"

MyLab Education
Video Example 2.9
A teaching microscope makes science lab work accessible to students with visual impairments.

DOES UNIVERSAL DESIGN ELIMINATE THE NEED FOR CUSTOM DESIGN? One continuing issue is when to assume that the limits of universal design have been reached and go ahead with production. Inventors and designers may do their best to be "smart from the start" (Pisha & Coyne, 2001), but it is not possible to be certain that no potential user's needs have been overlooked. At some point, someone decides to put a gadget or technology into production under the assumption that the design is as universal as it can be made at that time.

Modifications of instruction used in UDL can make lessons appropriate for a wider range of students than has typically been the case. Thus, teachers must not overlook the possibility that they could be designing lesson plans that are appropriate for a greater variety of students. However, IDEA mandates individualized instruction. One curriculum is not likely to meet the letter or the intent of the law in terms of specialized instruction for students with disabilities. Perhaps the term *universal*, like the term *all*, should not be taken too literally, or it becomes self-defeating. Very likely, the need to "customize" for individuals will always exist. Even in instruction, some special education researchers note that students with disabilities need individualized instruction that is not most appropriate for students without disabilities (e.g., Zigmond, 2007).

Technological advances of all types can have implications for people with disabilities. Devices such as the Livescribe™ Echo® Smartpen allows the user to take notes, synchronized with audio, which can then be transferred to a computer or iPad.® Another new technology is Sonocent note-taking software (see https://www.sonocent.com/en-us/audio-notetaker). In addition to capturing audio, Sonocent allows the student to annotate during the recording and highlight important topics. In addition, the software breaks the recording into phrases and displays them on the screen. This powerful tool can help students with disabilities engage more fully in classroom activities.

Use of New Technologies

As technology becomes ever more sophisticated, the issue of independence will become ever more important. One general guideline might be that if the technology allows people with disabilities to do something they couldn't do without it, then the technology is in their best interest. However, if it allows them to do something new or better but at the same time imposes new limitations, then one might need to rethink the technology's benefits.

Technological advances of all types can have implications for people with disabilities. Advances in three technologies stand out as particularly important: (1) medical treatment, (2) human reproduction, and (3) communication. Some of these advances, particularly those in medical treatment and human reproduction, are highly controversial. The controversy is typically about whether something that *can* be done *should* be done, and it may involve two or three of the technologies we discuss. For example, should **cochlear implantations**, artificial inner ears (discussed further in Chapter 11), be used whenever possible to allow deaf children to hear? This issue involves both medical treatment and communication, and it could involve human reproduction as well. Should disabilities be corrected surgically before birth (in utero), if that is possible? Should the findings of fetal stem cell research be applied to cure or correct physical disabilities if possible? What characteristics of their children should parents be allowed to choose? These are some of the controversial ethical issues that we discuss in later chapters.

THE UPSIDE AND THE DOWNSIDE OF TECHNOLOGY As the pace of technology quickens, so do applications of these technologies to the daily lives of people with disabilities. In many ways, technologies expand the abilities of people with or without disabilities to access information, communicate, travel, and accomplish many other everyday tasks. Technological applications can also allow some people with disabilities to function like those without disabilities.

Some downsides are dependence on technology and the problem of reliability. People tend to rely on whatever technology they use rather than learn how to do things in alternative ways; as a result, they have no idea how to do things the "old-fashioned" way when a gadget malfunctions.

SHOULD WE DO SOMETHING BECAUSE WE CAN? An issue that is likely to become more controversial is whether we *should* do all the things that we *can* with new technologies. The moral and ethical dilemmas created by the availability of means to eliminate limitations such as being unable to hear, see, walk, or communicate—whether they are considered disabilities or not—will increase in years to come. Particularly troubling will be the issue of whether we *should* allow parents to create "designer babies" to any extent that we *can*. For example, should we allow parents to create children with (there are instances of couples who are deaf, for example, wishing to have a child who is also deaf) or without what most people consider disabilities? The ability to select embryos (or create them) with or without certain characteristics (e.g., deafness, dwarfism, diabetes, tendency toward schizophrenia or depression), in addition to presenting ethical dilemmas, raises difficult issues about the definition and meaning of disability (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2009).

MyLab Education Self-Check 2.5

MyLab Education Application Exercise 2.5: Assistive Technology in Action: Meet Elle

Watch a video about assistive technology and answer the questions that follow.

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE

Since the late 20th century, state and federal policymakers have been concerned about what they perceive as a general decline in students' educational achievement and, as a result, have emphasized "standards-based" reforms. These reforms involve setting standards of learning that are measured by standardized tests. The reformers believed that teachers' expectations have been too low and that all students should be held to higher standards (see Finn, Rotherham, & Hokanson, 2001; Hoover & Patton, 2004; Pugach & Warger, 2001; Thurlow, 2000; Thurlow, Nelson, Teelucksingh, & Draper, 2001). The curriculum for students with disabilities has sometimes differed from the curriculum in general education. Failure to teach students with disabilities the same things that are taught in general education has been interpreted to mean that the expectations for these students are lower, resulting in their low achievement and failure to make a successful transition to adult life.

In the early stages of this standards-based reform movement, states began to develop standards of their own and create benchmark tests usually dependent on grade levels. For example, a state might have a certain level of proficiency expected of fourth-grade students, or they might have a high-stakes test students must to pass in order to obtain a high school diploma.

A strong movement, the **Common Core State Standards Initiative (2012)**, called for all states to accept a common set of standards. The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) led the development of the Common Core State Standards, and in 2010 published a document delineating the standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

The **Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** cover English language arts and math for K–12. That is, the standards cover the competencies that students are expected to have at each grade in these areas. At this point, all but a handful of states have signed on to the Common Core Standards Initiative. Also, over a dozen states have formed the **Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)** (www.smarterbalanced.org), which has created online assessments for English and math for grades 3–8 and high school aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

With respect to students with disabilities, the Common Core State Standards Initiative has put forth a statement, "Application to Students with Disabilities." Essentially, the

Initiative promotes the idea that students with disabilities should be held accountable regarding the general education curriculum. However, it notes that these students might need to have instructional supports, engaging students by presenting material in multiple ways and allowing for multiple modes of expression and accommodations, such as changing materials and procedures that do not alter the content of the general education curriculum. The CCSS mentions that students with severe cognitive deficits will need substantial supports and accommodations in order to access certain standards.

Concerns about the CCSS have been raised by several practitioners, researchers, and policymakers in the special education community. Although the Initiative has involved special educators in the development of the standards and the assessments (Thurlow, 2012), some are fearful that the standards will not be in the best interests of many students with disabilities. The standards-based reform movement and the CCSS have brought with them a heavy emphasis on access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities. However, some special educators have questioned whether too much emphasis on the general education curriculum is at the expense of students learning skills such as study skills, daily living skills, and intensive reading instruction (Hoover & Patton, 2004; Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2006; Quenemoen & Thurlow & 2017; Zigmond, 2007). Also, what should be given up in music, art, poetry, physical education, and other areas to ensure progress on standardized tests in core curriculum areas of reading and math?

For many special educators, "the devil is in the details." Numerous questions arise: Should all standards apply to all students, regardless of disability? Under what circumstances are alternative standards appropriate? Under what circumstances should special accommodations be made in assessing progress toward a standard? Answering questions like these requires professional judgment in the individual case, and such judgment is required by law (see Bateman, 2007, 2017; Huefner, 2006; Johns, 2003; Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005a; Yell, 2006). Moreover, expecting all students with disabilities to score the same, on average, as students without disabilities is expecting the impossible (Kauffman, 2004; Kauffman & Konold, 2007; Kauffman & Wiley, 2004).

Assessment Issues in the Age of Accountability

The intent of the IDEA is to improve the instruction and outcomes of students with disabilities. Consequently, students with disabilities, with some exceptions, are included in the assessments of educational progress demanded of all students. Although assessment has always been an important factor in special education, it has taken the spotlight in the era of standards-based reform. NCLB required that the average scores of various subgroups of students be reported and that all groups, including students with disabilities, show progress. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed into law by President Obama in 2015, which replaced NCLB, also requires that students with disabilities participate in these assessments. The assessments in which students with disabilities are expected to participate in order for these comparisons to be made are considered outcome measures.

OUTCOME MEASURES Outcome measures differ from the screening and progress monitoring measures described earlier in the context of RTI. Educators use screening and progress measures to identify students who may be at risk for disability and to provide ongoing data to assist in program planning; they typically administer these measures in group settings. Outcome measures compare a student's performance with that of other students, or compare a state's or district's performance with that of other states or districts.

TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS Some students with disabilities who are included in standardized measures of achievement are entitled to receive testing accommodations. Testing accommodations are procedures that ensure equitable assessment access for students with disabilities (Thurlow, 2010). Although testing accommodation may involve altering the administration procedure or format of a test, the construct that is being measured does not change (Lazarus, Thurlow, Lail, & Christensen, 2009).

Accommodations for evaluation procedures might involve altering the setting, the presentation format, or the response format. The nature of the accommodation is based on the specific need of the student. Setting or scheduling accommodations alter the situation or time of the assessment, such as small-group administration and extended time. Presentation accommodations alter the way the assessment is presented to the student, such as having problems and directions read aloud. Response accommodations alter the way in which the student answers questions on the assessment, such as oral or typed responses.

Can We Solve the Dilemma of Standards and Disability?

Some consider it cruel to both students and teachers to require all students with disabilities, and those for whom the tests are inappropriate for other reasons, to take state exams (Kauffman, 2002, 2004; Kauffman & Konold, 2007; Kauffman & Wiley, 2004). However, testing to determine outcomes is necessary if we want to know whether programs for students with disabilities are "working" (Kauffman & Konold, 2007). Standardized tests have a legitimate place in assessing outcomes, and demonizing the tests themselves is not helpful. However, it's important to understand that "testing is useful only if you make the right comparisons for the right reasons" (Kauffman, 2002, p. 240). When it comes to special education, it's wrong to compare outcomes for students with disabilities to outcomes for students without disabilities. The right comparisons are contrasting students with disabilities who receive special education (or any given treatment) to those who don't receive it, or comparing students with disabilities before and after they receive special education (Kauffman, 2004; Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005a).

MyLab Education Self-Check 2.6

MyLab Education Application Exercise 2.6: Testing Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Each state has its own policies related to accommodations. Read an information brief from the National Center on Educational Outcomes, noting the policies for your state, then answer the accompanying questions.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS REGARDING SPECIAL EDUCATION

It is understandable to feel overwhelmed by the controversial nature of special education; a number of unanswered questions face our field. It seems that just as we find what we think are the right answers to a certain set of questions about how to educate students with disabilities, more challenging questions emerge.

It would be easy to view this inability to reach definitive conclusions as indicative of a field in chaos. We disagree. This constant state of questioning is a sign of health and vigor, an indication that special education is based on scientific understanding, not on philosophy or mere speculation. Far from seeking and providing final answers, science thrives on the unknown and on controversy. True, there are rules for inquiry: Science is all about examining the most reliable information (see Kauffman & Sasso, 2006a, 2006b; Mostert, Kavale, & Kauffman, 2008; Sasso, 2001, 2007).

The controversial nature of special education makes it exciting and challenging. We would be worried (and we believe people with disabilities and their families would be worried, too) if professionals in special education were suddenly in complete agreement on all important issues in the field. We should constantly strive to find better ways to provide education and related services for people with disabilities based on the best evidence we can obtain (Lloyd & Hallahan, 2007). In this endeavor, differences of opinion are inevitable.

▼ chapter two SUMMARY

How are students with exceptionalities evaluated and identified for special education services in school settings?

- Prereferral teams have a long history in the special education identification process.
- *Response to intervention* refers to students' response to scientific, research-based instruction.
- Although response to intervention has been suggested as a means of identifying students with learning disabilities, some question its usefulness as an identification tool.

How is the intent of special education law implemented in individualized education for students with disabilities?

- The primary concern of the law (IDEA) is that every child with a disability be given a free appropriate public education (FAPE).
- The IEP is an attempt to make certain an individualized program has been written for each child with a disability and that:
  - The student's needs have been carefully assessed.
  - A team of professionals and the parents have worked together to design a program of education to best meet the student's needs.
  - Goals and objectives are stated clearly so that progress in reaching them can be evaluated.
- The IEPs of students with disabilities must, by law, incorporate transition plans at a minimum by age 16.
- Early intervention is mandated by law; a cornerstone of early intervention is the individualized family service plan (IFSP).

What are the various placement options for exceptional learners?

- Special education may range from a few special provisions made by the student's general education teacher to 24-hour residential care in a special facility.
- Different placement options include the following, including combinations:
  - General education placement with the teacher making accommodations
  - General education with consultation with a special education teacher or co-teaching
  - Itinerant services from a specialist
  - Resource room services
  - Special self-contained class
  - Special day school
  - Hospital or homebound instruction
  - Residential school
- Federal law (IDEA) calls for placement in the least restrictive environment (LRE) that is compatible with the student's needs.

Jim West/Alamy Stock Photo

What are some ways that teachers implement inclusionary practices?

- Collaborative consultation
- Co-teaching and other team arrangements
- Curricula and instructional strategies
- Accommodations and adaptations

What are the current practices in collaboration between general and special educators?

- *Collaboration* with general education means that special educators and general educators work together in arrangements such as prereferral teams, consultation, and co-teaching.
- Some educators question the effectiveness of popular forms of collaboration such as co-teaching and recommend that special education teachers be involved either in training general education teachers to accommodate a wider range of students or in actually teaching students with disabilities.

What are the roles of general and special educators in providing exceptional learners an individualized education program?

- All educators are expected to:
  - Make maximum effort to accommodate individual students' needs.
  - Refer students who need evaluation.
  - Participate in eligibility conferences.
  - Participate in writing individualized education programs.
  - Communicate with parents and guardians.
  - Participate in due process hearings and negotiations.
  - Collaborate with other professionals in identifying and making maximum use of exceptional students' abilities.
- Special educators are expected to:
  - Instruct students with learning problems, using evidence-based practices.
  - Manage serious behavior problems.
  - Evaluate technological advances.
  - Know special education law.

What are the trends and issues in universal design?

- *Universal design* refers to the principle that a device or program should be workable for as many potential users as possible.
- Although devices and programs may be designed for a wide variety of users, few can be made usable by literally all, and custom designs will probably always be necessary for some users.

What are the current strategies in the use of technologies?

- The major technologies that are controversial for people with disabilities involve medical advances, human reproduction, and communication.
- There is controversy about whether we *should* do something just because we *can*.

What impact do standards-based reform and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have on special education?

- Students with disabilities are expected to participate in the CCSS.
- Proponents of participation suggest that special education has not been held accountable for students' progress.
- The CCSS states that students with disabilities should b held accountable regarding the general education cu riculum, but some will need instructional supports an accommodations.
- Some educators argue that some students with disabilitie should not be expected to live up to the same standard as their nondisabled peers and that too much emphasis o the general education curriculum is at the expense of stu dents learning skills such as study skills, daily living skills and intensive reading instruction.

What are our concluding thoughts about current practices in special education?

- We believe controversy indicates that the field of special education is alive and well.
- We should constantly strive to make special education better

▼ INTERNET RESOURCES

Pertinent Organizations

- The United States Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/index.html) provides many links to resources and programs for exceptional children and their teachers.
- The major professional organization for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers in special education, with about 40,000 members, is the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) (http://www.cec.sped.org). CEC is made up of 17 divisions, each covering a different aspect of special education; for example, the Division for Learning Disabilities (http://teachingld.org), Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities (http://daddcec.org), Council of Administrators of Special Education (http://www.casecec.org), Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners (http://www.ddelcec.org).
- CEC provides numerous member benefits: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QA4wwlyXT74&feature=c4-overview&playnext=1&list=TLZcuAELOx3Ss.
- National Association of Special Education Teachers (http:// www.naset.org) focuses on providing resources for special education teachers.