

# chapter three

## MULTICULTURAL AND BILINGUAL ASPECTS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION



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### LEARNING OUTCOMES

**Learning Outcome 3.1:** Understand the major issues in multicultural education and bilingual education and their implications for special education.

**Learning Outcome 3.2:** Understand the major issues pertaining to disproportionate representation of ethnic minority students in special education.

**Learning Outcome 3.3:** Understand the major issues in assessment as it pertains to culturally diverse populations.

**Learning Outcome 3.4:** Understand the major issues of instruction for culturally diverse populations.

## MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT

# Multicultural and Bilingual Aspects of Special Education

- MYTH** Multicultural education addresses the concerns of ethnic minorities who want their children to learn more about their history and the intellectual, social, and artistic contributions of their ancestors.
- FACT** This is a partial truth. In fact, multicultural education seeks to help the children of all ethnic groups appreciate their own and others' cultural heritages—plus our common American culture that sustains multiculturalism.
- MYTH** Implementing multicultural education is a relatively simple matter of including information about all cultures in the curriculum and teaching respect for them.
- FACT** Educators and others are struggling with how to construct a satisfactory multicultural curriculum and create multicultural instructional methods. Nearly every aspect of the task is controversial: which cultures to include, how much attention to give to each, and what and how to teach about them.
- MYTH** Multiculturalism includes only the special features and contributions of clearly defined ethnic groups.
- FACT** Ethnicity is typically the focal point of discussions of multiculturalism, but ethnicity is sometimes a point of controversy if it is defined too broadly (for example, by lumping all Asians, all Africans, or all Europeans together). Besides ethnic groups, other groups and individuals—such as people identified by gender, sexual orientation, religion, and disability—need consideration in a multicultural curriculum.
- MYTH** Disproportionate representation of ethnic minorities in special education is no longer a problem.
- FACT** Some ethnic minorities are still underrepresented or overrepresented in certain special education categories. For example, African American students, especially males, are overrepresented in programs for students with emotional disturbance and underrepresented in programs for gifted and talented students.
- MYTH** It's not possible to assess minority students because assessments are biased.
- FACT** Some assessments, especially those that are standardized, are culturally biased. But testing accommodations can reduce this bias, and response to intervention (RTI) is a promising method for culturally unbiased identification.
- MYTH** If students speak English, their teachers do not need to be concerned about bilingual education.
- FACT** Conversational English is not the same as the more formal and sometimes technical language used in academic curriculum and classroom instruction. Educators must make sure that students understand the language that is used in teaching, not just informal conversation.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What are some of the major issues concerning multiculturalism?
- How does multiculturalism play out in the United States?
- What are some of the important concepts about cultural diversity for education?
- What are some of the important issues concerning multicultural and bilingual special education?
- What are some of the important aspects of assessment in multicultural and bilingual special education?
- What are some of the major instructional issues concerning multicultural and bilingual special education?

**M**any nations and regions are splintered into factions, clans, tribes, and gangs. In some cases, this splintering has been accompanied by extreme cruelty of individuals or groups toward others. Differences—especially those of national origin, religion, ethnic origin, color, custom, sexual orientation, gender identity, social class, and disability—are too often the basis for viciousness. Prejudice remains a central problem of humankind. In this first quarter of the 21st century, slavery is still practiced in some nations of the world. Terrorists kill, maim, and threaten, and acts of war do the same. Not so long ago, systematic efforts were made in a supposedly highly “civilized” society to exterminate people with disabilities, and we would be wise to learn the lessons history can teach us about our personal and collective capacity for brutality. We refer here to the Eugenics Movement of the first few decades of the 20th century, in which sterilization of people with intellectual disabilities was relatively common. The most infamous case was that of Carrie Buck, who had been raped and whose sterilization purportedly to prevent her from bearing a child with disabilities was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Buck v. Bell*. (For more information see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carrie\\_Buck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carrie_Buck)).

In contrast to such deplorable discrimination, a mark of a truly civilized society is its acceptance and celebration of diversity. Few of us would actually want to live in a world without diversity. It's common to dwell on the problems associated with cultural differences. However, a world void of diversity would be dull and uneventful. Multiculturalism is an intricate component of the human experience and a significant force in the advancement of societies. Cultural diversity has sparked periods of advancement and change throughout history. The adventures of Marco Polo in China brought about changes in Italian culture and eventually the entire European continent. Similarly, when African slaves in America encountered European music, they blended it with their African music to create spirituals, and out of the spirituals grew other musical genres such as gospel, blues, jazz, and rock and roll. History provides countless examples of cultures learning from each other, as well as, unfortunately, countless examples of people of one culture devaluing individuals from another.

All cultures and ethnic groups of the world can take pride in much of their heritage, but all also bear a burden of indignity because at some time they have engaged in the ruthless treatment or literal enslavement of others. Sometimes this treatment has extended to minority members of their own larger group whose differences have been viewed as undesirable or intolerable.

In virtually every nation, society, religion, ethnic group, tribe, or clan, discrimination exists against those who are different. It's therefore critically important that we learn to accept the principle that those who differ from us are equals as human beings. Furthermore, all educators need to understand the purpose of **multicultural education**, which is for educational institutions and curricula to provide equal educational opportunities

to students regardless of their gender, social class, ethnicity, race, disability, or other cultural identity. It also seeks to socialize students to a multicultural norm: acceptance of and respect for those whose culture differs from one's own and knowledge of our shared history. Schools play a central role in multicultural education.

Multiculturalism also involves the specter of collective versus individual pride and guilt in behavior. Is the entire group of people that comprise a culture justified in taking pride in the fact that one of their group has accomplished something notable? Is an entire group of people—perhaps a nation—guilty for the acts of some of its members? Clearly, the assignment of collective guilt is a convenient, time-honored way of perpetuating discrimination, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and other acts of violence. Collective pride can blind people to the faults of members of a group and create a false sense of worthiness.

## THE UNITED STATES AND MULTICULTURALISM

Effective multicultural education promotes pride in students' own cultures and understanding and appreciation of different cultures among all students; it also ensures equal educational opportunities for all students, regardless of cultural background. America is an increasingly diverse country. Our desire should be to build a diverse society in which the personal freedom and pride of all cultural groups and respect for others' cultural heritage are the norm—a society in which fear, hate, and abuse are eliminated and in which guilt or accomplishment is not determined by association. Working toward this ideal demands a multicultural perspective, one from which we can simultaneously accomplish two tasks. First, we must renew our efforts to achieve social justice and take specific steps to understand and appreciate one another's cultures. Second, in doing so, we must pledge our first loyalty to common cultural values that make diversity a strength rather than a fatal flaw. We seek a commitment to our common humanity and to democratic ideals that bind people together for the common good and give all of them freedom for the rightful honoring of their heritage.

Since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, educators have become increasingly aware of the extent to which differences among cultural and ethnic groups affect children's schooling. Gradually, educators and others are coming to understand that the cultural diversity of the United States and the world demands multicultural education. Progress in constructing multicultural education has been slow, however, in part because of the way in which all cultural groups tend to view themselves as the standard against which others should be judged.

Education that takes full advantage of the cultural diversity in our schools and the larger world requires much critical analysis and planning. It can be very difficult for all cultural or ethnic groups to find common satisfaction in any specific curriculum, even if they are all seeking what they consider the multicultural ideal. Moreover, some argue that the more important goal is finding the common American culture and ensuring that our children have a common cultural literacy (Ravitch, 2003).

Even the metaphors that we use for dealing with cultural diversity and cultural unity are points of controversy. The United States has often been called a "cultural melting pot," but some now reject the notion of total melding or amalgamation; they reject the metaphor of an alloy in which metals are dissolved in each other and fused into a new substance. Instead, they use the metaphor of a "cultural salad bowl." Those who reject the alloy or melting pot metaphor want each identifiable group to be recognized as separate, distinct, and legitimate in its own right. To them, a salad is a better description because each ingredient (lettuce, tomatoes, onions, pine nuts, etc.) has its own distinct flavor; but when you mix the ingredients together, the salad takes on a taste of its own.

The solution is not as simple as becoming sensitized to differences. Too often, Eurocentrism is met with Europhobia, Afrocentrism with Afrophobia, homocentrism with homophobia, sensitivity to difference with hypersensitivity about being different. Nor is



### MyLab Education

#### Video Example 3.1

In this video, Dr. Madeline Milian answers the question of how teachers can inject multiculturalism into their general curriculum.

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the solution to become “blind” to difference. Perhaps the solution includes both engendering sensitivity to differences and building confidence that one’s own differences won’t be threatened by others. The solution might also require helping students learn how to view themselves and others from different perspectives.

Interestingly, as of the writing of this text, the United States’ policies on immigration are being hotly contested. At this point, President Trump’s administration is attempting to limit the number of immigrants, especially those from Mexico and Latin America as well as several countries with majority Muslim populations. However, some Congress members and Governors are opposed to severe restrictions. And thus far, the Courts have stopped the travel ban. It is possible that eventually the U.S. Supreme Court will rule on its legality (Gerstein, 2017).

Multicultural education is challenging, but we are optimistic about it because it’s an opportunity to face our nation’s shared problems squarely and to extract the best human qualities from each cultural heritage. It provides the opportunity to develop an appreciation of our individual and shared cultural treasures and to engender acceptance, if not love, of all differences that are not destructive of the human spirit. The best antidote for cultural insularity is inclusiveness. Adherence to truly American values of multiculturalism overcomes insularity.

Multiculturalism is now a specialized field of study and research in education, and its full exploration is far beyond the scope of this chapter. Of particular concern to special educators is how exceptionalities are related to cultural diversity and the way in which special education fits within the broader general education context in a multicultural society. Cultural diversity presents particular challenges for special educators in three areas: assessment of abilities and disabilities, instruction, and socialization. Before discussing each of these challenges, we summarize some of the major concepts about education and cultural diversity that set the context for multicultural and bilingual special education.



**MyLab Education**  
Video Example 3.2

In this video, Dr. Irma Olmedo provides advice on how to address biases that can exist in the classroom.



**MyLab Education**  
Video Example 3.3

And in this video, Dr. Madeline Milian offers three things teachers should keep in mind when teaching English Language Learners (ELLs).

**MyLab Education Self-Check 3.1**

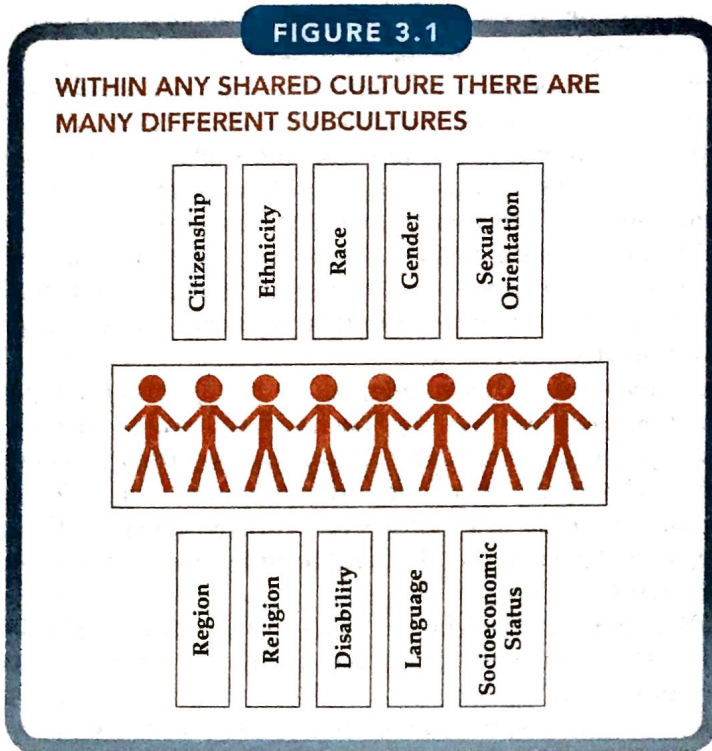
## EDUCATION AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The term *culture* has many definitions, although most include the following elements:

1. Values and typical behavior
2. Languages or dialects
3. Nonverbal communication
4. Awareness of one’s cultural identity
5. Worldviews or general perspectives

These elements can together make up a national or shared culture. Within the larger culture are many **subcultures** that share the common characteristics of the larger culture. Subcultures needn’t be small, and may, in fact, be the majority group in a given region, state, organization, or other group. European Americans are a subculture in the United States of America, although they have to date been the majority of Americans. But, of course, European Americans can be described as subcultures when designated by their region or nation of origin, as well as by other categories.

Subcultures include all of the various subcategories of people that one might name, including distinctions made on the basis of political party, ethnic identity, gender, sexual orientation, age, and disability. Subcultures may have unique values, behavior, languages or dialect, nonverbal communication, awareness, identity, and views. Some subcultures are voluntary (e.g., religion, political party), and some are involuntary (e.g., skin color,



gender). Figure 3.1 illustrates that an individual might identify with the larger, general culture and also belong to many different subcultures. The variety of subcultures to which a person belongs affects his or her behavior. The larger, general culture in the United States consists of certain overarching values, symbols, and ideas, such as justice, equality, and human dignity. Within the United States, subcultures might share these common values but differ in many other ways.

The number of subcultures represented in U.S. schools has increased in recent decades because of the variety of immigrants from other countries. The number has also increased, however, because of greater recognition of and sensitivity to subcultures, such as those represented by disability, age, religion, and so on. Sexual orientation, in particular, which once was a topic that was either purposely or inadvertently ignored, has become germane to the discussion of subcultures. Many students, including many with educational exceptionalities, experience serious difficulties with what some have called the “invisible” culture of gay and lesbian youth.

Students who are “straight” might struggle with their own prejudices against homosexuals, which are all too often fostered by both their peers and adults and sometimes given justification by identification with a religious or political subculture. Gay and lesbian students are often harassed and abused verbally and physically in school and may suffer from serious depression or other psychological disorders as a result; even the appearance or assumption of being gay can lead to abuse (see Associated Press, 2004; Bell, 2004). Gay students need to be able to be themselves without fear of harassment or discrimination. Consider also that a student might be both gay or lesbian and gifted, physically disabled, intellectually disabled, or have another educational exceptionality.

Students from some subcultures in U.S. society do extremely well in school, but others don't. The factors accounting for the school performance of subcultures are complex, and social scientists are still searching for the attitudes, beliefs, traditions, and opportunities that foster the success of specific cultural groups. Although considerable evidence indicates that various ethnic minority communities have a positive influence on students' achievement and school behavior, we offer a couple of cautions. First, we need to guard against stereotypes—assumptions that one's cultural identity is sufficient to explain academic achievement or economic success. Second, the fact that some minority

communities may have a strong influence on school success doesn't relieve schools of the obligation to provide a multicultural education. All students need to feel that they and their cultural heritage are included in the mainstream of American culture and schooling.

The general purposes of multicultural education are to promote pride in the positive aspects of one's own cultural heritage, encourage understanding of cultures that differ from one's own, foster positive attitudes toward cultural diversity, and ensure equal educational opportunities for all students. These purposes cannot be accomplished unless students develop an understanding and appreciation of their own cultural heritage, as well as an awareness and acceptance of cultures different from their own.

On the surface, teaching about cultures and engendering an acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity appear to be simple. However, two questions immediately complicate things: (1) Which cultures shall we include? and (2) What and how shall we teach about them? The first question demands that we consider all the cultures that might be represented in the school and the difficulties inherent in including them all. In some urban school districts with large numbers of immigrant children, there may be more than 20 different languages spoken in students' homes within that district. Answering the second question is also problematic because it's often difficult to know what to teach and how. Some cultural groups find the traditions, ceremonies, values, holidays, and various characteristics of other cultures unacceptable or even offensive. That is, when it comes to what and how to teach about other cultures, the stage may be set for conflict. Treating all cultures with equal attention and respect can present substantial challenges.

Given the multiplicity of subcultures, each wanting—if not demanding—its precise and fair inclusion in the curriculum, it isn't surprising that educators sometimes feel caught in a spiral of factionalism and feuding. Additional questions about cultural values inevitably must be addressed: Which cultural values and characteristics should we embrace? Which, if any, should we shun? Would we, if we could, fully sustain some cultures, alter some significantly, and eliminate others? Consider, for example, cultures in which women are treated poorly and cultures that tolerate slavery. To what extent does every culture have a right to perpetuate itself? How should we respond to some members of the Deaf culture, for example, who reject the prevention of deafness or procedures and devices that enable children who are deaf to hear, preferring deafness to hearing and wishing to sustain the Deaf culture deliberately (see Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005; Mundy, 2002)?

Depending on how we define culture, the values of our own cultural heritage, and our role in multicultural education, we might find ourselves embroiled in serious cultural conflicts. No wonder that some describe the late 20th and early 21st centuries as an era of "culture wars." To deal effectively with the multicultural challenge, we must focus on the challenges that are most pertinent to special education.

### MyLab Education Self-Check 3.2

## MULTICULTURAL AND BILINGUAL SPECIAL EDUCATION

The subcultures that are of particular importance for special education are ethnic groups and exceptionality groups. Banks and Banks (2013) note that an *ethnic group* has a common historic origin and a shared identity, heritage, and tradition. It has value orientations, behavioral patterns, and often political and economic interests that differ from those of other groups in the larger society. An ethnic group may be a majority or a minority of people in a given country or region. We define an **exceptionality group** as a group sharing a set of specific abilities or disabilities that are especially valued or that require special accommodation within a given subculture. Thus, a person may be identified as exceptional in one ethnic group (or other subculture defined by gender, social class, religion, etc.) but not in another.

## Ethnicity and Exceptionality

Multicultural *special education* must focus on *two primary objectives that exceed the general purposes of multicultural education*:

1. Ensure that ethnicity is not mistaken for exceptionality/disability.
2. Increase understanding of the subculture of exceptionality/disability and its relationship to other cultures.

**ETHNICITY VERSUS EXCEPTIONALITY** Ethnicity and exceptionality are distinctly different concepts. However, ethnicity can be mistaken for exceptionality when one's own ethnic group is viewed as setting the standard for all others. For example, patterns of eye contact, physical contact, use of language, and ways of responding to people in positions of authority vary greatly among ethnic groups. Members of each ethnic group must realize that what they perceive as deviant or unacceptable in their own group might be normal and adaptive in another ethnic group. That is, we must not mistakenly conclude that students have a disability or are gifted just because they are different.

It's undeniable that students from three ethnic minority groups are disproportionately identified for special education: American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and African American (Oswald, Coutinho, Best, & Singh, 1999). Probably because of the regrettable history of slavery in the United States, as well as the greater numbers of African Americans among minorities, most of the attention regarding disproportionality has focused on African Americans. For example, looking at Table 3.1,

**TABLE 3.1 • Risk ratio for students 6 to 21 years of age within racial/ethnic groups by disability category**

DISABILITY	AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	ASIAN	BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	HISPANIC/LATINO	NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER	WHITE	TWO OR MORE RACES
All disabilities	1.68	0.47	1.41	1.01	1.59	0.90	0.87
Autism	0.94	1.11	0.99	0.79	1.32	1.16	0.97
Deaf-blindness	2.31	0.81	0.76	1.04	3.40	1.10	0.79
Developmental delay	4.09	0.41	1.68	0.69	2.35	0.91	1.24
Emotional disturbance	1.68	0.18	2.08	0.61	1.30	0.96	1.19
Hearing impairments	1.35	1.17	1.03	1.35	2.71	0.76	0.77
Intellectual disabilities	1.58	0.50	2.22	0.94	1.64	0.70	0.71
Multiple disabilities	1.90	0.63	1.36	0.73	1.94	1.11	0.72
Orthopedic impairments	1.01	0.88	0.86	1.21	1.50	0.97	0.76
Other health impairments	1.39	0.28	1.38	0.63	1.38	1.28	0.97
Specific learning disabilities	1.96	0.31	1.51	1.31	1.88	0.73	0.76
Speech or language impairments	1.40	0.69	1.02	1.08	1.09	0.99	0.90
Traumatic brain injury	1.70	0.51	1.09	0.71	1.59	1.29	0.90
Visual impairments	1.51	0.92	1.12	0.97	1.78	0.98	0.80

NOTE: Risk ratio compares the proportion of a particular racial/ethnic group served under *IDEA* to the proportion served among the other racial/ethnic groups combined. For example, if racial/ethnic group X has a risk ratio of 2 for receipt of special education services, then the proportion of students from that group receiving services is twice as great as that for all the other racial/ethnic groups combined. (USDOE, 2016) 38th Annual Report to Congress

## FOCUS ON

## What Causes Disproportionate Representation of African American Students in Special Education?

For decades, the overrepresentation of African Americans in special education has typically been blamed on (a) bias in tests used and/or (b) prejudice in teachers toward Black students (see Dunn, 1968, and Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Simmons, Feggins-Azziz, & Chung, 2005). After all, we know that some of the tests used to identify students with disabilities are culturally biased. And we know that some professionals lack an understanding of other cultures.

However, at the same time that these biases may exist, we also know that Black children are more likely to attend schools that are underfunded and understaffed. And we know that poverty puts children at risk for having disabilities and that some ethnic minorities (e.g., African Americans, Latinos/Hispanics, Native Americans) have higher rates of poverty. So, what is the reason that puts minority students at risk for being identified as disabled and placed in special education? Is it biased professionals and tests, or factors related to poverty?

As it turns out, it appears that both teacher and test bias and poverty are at play in causing the overrepresentation of African American students in special education. As we noted above, the prevailing view was that bias alone made minority students vulnerable to inappropriate placement in special education. However, relatively recently a team of researchers has vigorously challenged that point of view.

Paul Morgan and colleagues have analyzed the best available national data and concluded that poverty, not discrimination, is the major reason minority students are more likely to be identified for special education (Morgan et al., 2015). The statistics Morgan et al. have used are complex, but in essence, their analyses account for child, family, and school factors associated with minority populations that are likely causes of disabilities, such as

1. having a very low birth weight,
2. experiencing fewer interactions with health professionals who would recognize abnormal child development,
3. lacking in nutrition,
4. being raised in poverty,
5. lacking exposure to high levels of language interactions with adults,
6. having parents who are reluctant to have their child "stigmatized" with a special education label, and
7. attending poorly funded schools that are prone to avoid identifying students for special education because of the stress it puts on poorly trained staff.

When the prevalence of identification for special education is analyzed, taking into account the above child, family, and school factors, Morgan et al. conclude that, although they are disproportionately represented in special education, African American students are actually *underidentified* with respect to how many should be identified for special education.

As conscientious practitioners, policymakers, and researchers, we must assume that the problem of disproportionality in special education can be improved, if not solved. Important civil rights are at stake. On the one hand, children with disabilities have a right to appropriate education regardless of their ethnicity, even if their ethnic group is statistically overrepresented in special education. On the other hand, children also have a right to freedom from discrimination and segregation. The disproportional placement of ethnic minority students in special education strongly suggests that in some cases, students are misidentified and wrongly placed (and stigmatized and segregated) in special education, whereas in other cases, ethnic minority students' disabilities are ignored (and the students are therefore denied appropriate education) (Kauffman & Landrum, 2009).

we see that Black students are 1.41 times more likely to be identified for special education compared to the general population. In other words, almost half-again as many Black students compared to all students are in special education.

African American students are most at risk for identification as having a high-incidence disability, which are arguably the most reliant on clinical judgment for identification. For example, they are 2.08, 2.22, and 1.51 times more likely than the general population to be identified as emotionally disturbed, intellectually disabled, or learning disabled, respectively. The cause of this is controversial, to say the least. See Focus on "What Causes Disproportionate Representation . . . .?"

## ASSESSMENT ISSUES IN MULTICULTURAL AND BILINGUAL SPECIAL EDUCATION

*Assessment* is a process of collecting information about individuals or groups for the purpose of making decisions. In education, assessment ordinarily refers to testing, interviewing, and observing students. Assessment serves various purposes, including



**MyLab Education**  
Video Example 3.4

In this video, Dr. Paige Pullen discusses the challenges of ensuring that bilingual children's scores on tests are true measures of a student's ability and not due to language or cultural differences.



**MyLab Education**  
Video Example 3.5

And in this video, Dr. Madeline Milian also discusses the challenges of determining whether an English language learner has a learning disability.

screening (quick measurement to determine who may need further assessment and possible intervention), diagnosis (measurement to identify specific problems), identification for special education services, progress monitoring (frequent measurement to help guide instruction), and evaluating outcomes (measurement to determine the effectiveness of educational programming). Clearly, assessment often results in important decisions about people's lives; therefore, great concern for accuracy, justice, and fairness in educational assessments is widespread in the United States.

Unfortunately, the accuracy of many educational assessments, especially those involving special education, is open to question (McDonnell, McLaughlin, & Morison, 1997; Utley & Obiakor, 2001a). Particularly when ethnic subcultures are involved, traditional assessment practices have frequently violated the U.S. ideals of fairness and equal opportunity regardless of ethnic origin, gender, or disability. That is, the assessment practices of educators and psychologists have frequently come under attack as being biased, resulting in misrepresentation of the abilities and disabilities of ethnic minorities and exceptional students, which may then result in classification and overrepresentation in special education rather than improved educational programming (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2005; MacSwan & Rolstad, 2006).

Educators should be aware of the potential cultural biases in assessment procedures as they evaluate their students' progress toward annual goals and short-term objectives. As we discussed in Chapter 2, assessment practices have increased in the age of standards-based accountability. More students with disabilities are being included in state- and district-wide achievement tests. However, informal assessments of students' progress have also increased.

Fortunately, methods to monitor students' response to interventions have become more common as a result of legislation (e.g., IDEA, NCLB, ESSA). The increase in informal measures to assess student progress is particularly beneficial to students from diverse populations; progress monitoring assessments are typically less biased than traditional standardized tests. For example, curriculum-based measurement (CBM), which entails direct and frequent samples of performance from the curriculum in which students are being instructed, is more useful for teachers than traditional testing and decreases the likelihood of cultural bias.

Standardized tests are often implemented to document students' achievement of annual goals, as well as for issues of accountability. These tests may be biased because many of the test items draw on specific experiences that students from different subcultures may not have had. For example, tests may be biased in favor of the likely experiences of European American, middle-class students or may be couched in language that is unfamiliar to members of a certain subculture (Singh, Baker, Winton, & Lewis, 2000). Testing accommodations are provided to students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency for the purpose of assessing student knowledge on an equal basis with students without disabilities and for whom English is a first language. Accommodations should not give an advantage to students but should provide students an equal opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills.

Testing accommodations for English language learners should reduce the language barriers that may interfere with assessment results (Albus, Thurlow, Liu, & Bielinski, 2005). The most common accommodations include administration modifications (e.g., extended time and small-group and individual administration) and the use of a bilingual dictionary. Other accommodations include translation of tests to the student's native language and bilingual versions of tests, but these are not as common (Abedi, Hofstetter, & Lord, 2004). Unfortunately, empirical evidence isn't available on the efficacy of these accommodations. A study on the efficacy of using an English dictionary during testing did not demonstrate an advantage for students using this accommodation (Albus et al., 2005).

## Response to Intervention in Multicultural and Bilingual Special Education

The problems in assessing students are numerous and complex, and no simple solutions exist (Thurlow, Nelson, Teelucksingh, & Draper, 2001; Utley & Obiakor, 2001a). Many of the problems are centered on traditional standardized testing approaches to assessment that

have serious limitations: (1) They don't take cultural diversity into account, (2) they focus on deficits in the individual alone, and (3) they don't provide information useful in teaching.

Schools are using response to intervention (RTI), which we introduced in Chapter 2, more widely to identify students with disabilities. RTI practices may have distinct advantages for students who are culturally and linguistically diverse; however, the research that supports its use as an effective method of identification is based on monolingual students. Furthermore, the effective interventions on which RTI is based, particularly for identifying students with reading disability, have been validated only with monolingual, English-speaking students (Linan-Thompson, Vaughn, Prater, & Cirino, 2006).

Although educators have concerns about the current evidence base for using RTI with culturally and linguistically diverse learners, there are sensible reasons for thinking it is appropriate. Because RTI models are supposed to rely on quality instruction before identification, they may prevent students from falling behind and thus being identified for special education (Klingner & Edwards, 2006). In addition, RTI relies more heavily on curriculum-based measurement and less on standardized tests, which may contain cultural bias. Like other areas of assessment and instruction, more research is needed to determine whether RTI methods are appropriate for use with English language learners and other minority populations.

### **Issues in the Identification of Special Gifts and Talents**

Finally, we note that fair and accurate assessment is an issue in identifying special gifts and talents as well as disabilities. Too often, the extraordinary abilities of students of color or other ethnic difference and students with disabilities are overlooked because of bias or ignorance on the part of those responsible for assessment. Alternative methods for identifying students for gifted and talented programs are being investigated. In one study (Pierce et al., 2007), an alternative identification procedure resulted in an increased representation of Hispanic and English language learners in a gifted program. In Chapter 1, we emphasized the importance of identifying the abilities as well as the disabilities of students. To that, we add the importance of being aware of culturally relevant gifts and talents and recognizing and valuing the abilities of minority students.

## **INSTRUCTION IN MULTICULTURAL AND BILINGUAL SPECIAL EDUCATION**

A major objective of multicultural education is ensuring that all students are instructed in ways that don't penalize them because of their cultural differences and that, in fact, capitalize on their cultural heritage (see Council for Exceptional Children, 2000). The methods that are used to achieve this objective are among the most controversial topics in education today. All advocates of multicultural education are concerned with the problem of finding instructional methods that help to equalize educational opportunity and achievement for all cultural groups—that is, methods that break down the inequities and discrimination that have been part of the U.S. public education system and that IDEA seeks to eliminate. Yet considerable debate continues over the question of what instructional methods are most effective in achieving this goal.

If students' differences are ignored, then students will probably receive instruction not suited to their needs. They will likely fail to learn many skills, which will in turn deny them power and opportunity in the larger culture. For example, if we ignore non-English-speaking students' language and cultural heritage and prohibit them from using their native language, they may have great difficulty in school.

However, the solution to this problem is not necessarily recognition of students' differences, because instruction that is geared to individual students' subculture might teach only skills that are valued by the subculture. Because the larger or more general culture doesn't value these skills, the students' difference will be perpetuated. For example, if non-English-speaking students are taught in their native language and are not required to learn English, then their progress in the English-speaking society will be slowed.

In considering instruction in multicultural and bilingual special education, we discuss two general areas: (1) effective teaching for all, and (2) improving instruction for language minority students.

### MyLab Education Self-Check 3.3

#### MyLab Education Application Exercise 3.1:

#### Making Assessment Culturally Relevant

A teacher talks about what she has learned from teaching students who are culturally or linguistically different (CLD). Another teacher demonstrates the use of program monitoring with computer software



## Effective Teaching for All

**INSTRUCTIONAL ISSUES** Clearly, the problem of instruction in multicultural education isn't easily resolved. Most authorities now agree, however, that accepting and fostering cultural diversity must not be used as an excuse for not teaching students the skills they need to survive and prosper in the larger context of American culture.

Many educators call for instructional practices that are culturally sensitive or culturally responsive, meaning attuned to the particular cultural characteristics of learners (e.g., McIntyre, 2007; Shealey & Callins, 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). The assumption underlying many assertions about culturally sensitive or culturally responsive instruction is that students with different cultural backgrounds need to be taught differently, that certain aspects of cultural heritage determine to a significant extent how students learn best. We might also hypothesize that certain methods of instruction are equally effective for all students in a culturally diverse group (see Council for Exceptional Children, 2000; Kauffman, Conroy, Gardner, & Oswald, 2008; Tyler, Yzquierdo, Lopez-Reyna, & Flippin, 2004). That is, some instructional approaches (e.g., direct instruction, cooperative learning, **classwide peer tutoring (CWPT)**, and cross-age grouping) allow teachers to provide culturally sensitive instruction to all members of a diverse group at once.

Sensitivity to individuals, regardless of their culture, and effective instruction are essential elements of multicultural education worthy of the name. If one assumes that culturally responsive teaching means helping students of color to learn to the greatest extent possible, then the above-mentioned scientifically valid methods might be the answer. Rather than seeking effective methods *specific* to *specific* ethnic groups, perhaps educators should focus on ensuring that minorities *have access to effective instruction validated with students regardless of ethnicity*.

In other words, in addition to creating an atmosphere of acceptance of cultural differences, teachers should be using instructional practices that have proven effective for students from a variety of backgrounds. Generally, researchers have found that effective instruction for students who are struggling or who have been identified for special education rests on the concept of *individualization* (Pullen & Hallahan, 2015). And this individualization is achieved through ensuring that each student has instruction that is explicit, systematic, intensive, and frequent; that provides an appropriate level of pacing, corrective feedback, and reinforcement; and that is often delivered in small groups.

Finally, a viable multicultural curriculum can't be created and simply handed out to teachers (Banks & Banks, 2013). Teachers must be committed to the endeavor because their values, perspectives, and teaching styles will affect what is taught and how. The effective implementation of a multicultural curriculum requires teaching strategies that are involvement oriented, interactive, personalized, and cooperative.

**DISCIPLINARY ISSUES** One of the most difficult tasks of teaching is socializing students through classroom discipline—that is, through the management of classroom behavior. Managing classroom behavior presents a serious challenge for nearly all teachers and a particularly difficult challenge for most special education teachers (see Evertson & Weinstein,

## FOCUS ON

### Teaching Tolerance and Appreciation of Differences

Effective teaching practices demonstrate sensitivity to each individual student's cultural heritage, sense of self, view of the world, and acquired knowledge and skills. Teaching about various cultures, individual differences, and the construction of knowledge should permeate and transform the curriculum (Banks & Banks, 2013). Teaching tolerance and appreciation of individual differences is a critical part of a curriculum sensitive to cultural differences.

By *tolerance*, we don't mean merely toleration of others who are seen as undesirable. Our definition entails appreciating and valuing—the opposite of rejection, denigration, or toleration of a necessary evil. As the publication, *Teaching Tolerance* (<http://www.tolerance.org>), views tolerance, it means working for equity and fair treatment, seeing those who are different in culture as equal. Tolerance and appreciation of difference is not, of course, limited to ethnic, regional, sexual orientation, or language differences but includes differences of all types, including disabilities.

Noted historian Ronald Takaki (1994), interviewed for an article in *Teaching Tolerance*, recalls that his grandparents were Japanese immigrant plantation laborers in Hawaii. Nobel laure-

ate and author Elie Wiesel (2004), writing in the Sunday magazine *Parade*, recalls his rescue from a concentration camp. Both suggest that the American promise of equality and fairness can become a reality only if we free ourselves from a legacy of racism and prejudice. We can do so by acknowledging the reality of our past and learning more about ourselves and our heritage.

Although in some ways being tolerant toward others who are different seems so commonsensical and straightforward (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdmjelOTUns>), something that should hardly need to be taught, history and current-day events tell us that prejudice and bigotry are all too common in humankind. Overcoming prejudice and teaching students to appreciate those who are different from themselves is not easy. Moreover, this is not an area in which research can provide definitive guidelines. Yet proposed methods for how teachers can help students learn both self-esteem and tolerance of difference are promising (Banks & Banks, 2013; Utley & Obiakor, 2001c). For example, some schools focus on incorporating diversity by design or organizing anti-bias clubs that encourage understanding and tolerance of others (e.g., Bennett, 2000; Collins, 2000; Kissinger, 2017; McAfee, 2000).

2006; Kauffman, Mostert, Trent, & Pullen, 2011). Two considerations are critical: the relationship between the teacher's approach to classroom discipline and the parents' child-rearing practices, and the teacher's sensitivity to cultural differences in responses to discipline.

Teachers might have an approach to classroom discipline that they consider effective and humane but that differs from some cultures' accepted child-rearing practices. Educators, like everyone else, are often ethnocentric, believing that their views are right and those of others are wrong based on cultural values. In a given case, they might be right, in that their view is more humane or effective, but they might also be insensitive to the values of students and their families. Teachers must be sensitive to individuals and families; in the case of discipline involving students of culturally diverse backgrounds, the teacher might face delicate decisions about what is best for the child. When do one's own beliefs about the treatment of children demand that a culturally condoned disciplinary practice be confronted as inappropriate or, perhaps, even as abuse or neglect? Answering this question is not easy. Teachers' sensitivity should not allow them to ignore what reliable research tells us about human behavior (Kauffman et al., 2008).

In addition to determining the kind of instruction minority students who are disabled should receive, teachers need to address the important consideration of what can be done to educate *all students* about an understanding and appreciation for *differences of all kinds*. See Focus On "Teaching Tolerance and Appreciation of Differences."

### Improving Instruction for Language-Minority Students

Students for whom English is a second language face the simultaneous demands of learning a new language and mastering traditional subject matter. Those who also have disabilities encounter a third demand of coping with the additional hurdles imposed by their exceptionalities. Bilingual special education is therefore particularly controversial, presenting difficult dilemmas and paradoxes. Moreover, some federal and state policies demand that students who aren't fluent in English must score, on average, the same as



### MyLab Education

#### Video Example 3.6

In this video, teachers of bilingual students emphasize the need to use explicit instruction, which includes having students repeat the words being learned.



### MyLab Education

#### Video Example 3.7

It is notable that CWPT concentrates on academic skills as well as social skills. In this video, Dr. Madeline Milean stresses that English language learners face challenges in two areas: academics and socialization.



### MyLab Education

#### Video Example 3.8

It is important to learn about students' cultures in order to best meet their needs. In this video, the teacher explains what she does prior to lessons to ensure the success of students who are dual language learners.

those who are fluent in English; this has created extraordinary controversy about language learning.

One approach to teaching language-minority students is to emphasize use of their native languages. In this approach, teachers initially provide all academic instruction in each student's native language and teach English as a separate subject. Later, when the students demonstrate adequate fluency in English, they make the transition to instruction in English in all academic subjects.

Another approach is to offer content-area instruction in English from the beginning of the student's schooling but at a level that is "sheltered," or constantly modified to make sure the student understands it. The goal of this approach is to help the student learn English while learning academic subjects as well.

In the first approach—native-language emphasis—students are taught for most of the day in their native languages and later make a transition to English. In the second, **sheltered-English approach**, students receive instruction in English for most of the school day from the beginning of their schooling. The question as to which approach is better for students with disabilities has not been answered, although it's clear that changing from one approach to the other when students change schools creates particular difficulties (Gersten & Baker, 2000). No matter which approach is used, teachers need to be explicit and systematic in their instruction and attentive to the bilingual child's need for practice and repetition in their second language.

Another issue for language-minority instruction is whether an emphasis on the natural uses of language or, alternatively, on skills such as vocabulary and pronunciation is most effective. However, this controversy might be based on a false dichotomy. What students need is an effective balance between skill building and language that is meaningful and relevant to their lives and interests (Gersten & Baker, 2000). Moreover, instruction of language-minority students must be consistent with effective teaching.

**CLASSWIDE PEER TUTORING** Classwide Peer Tutoring (Cwpt) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yf7PbFli9s8>) is a research-validated teaching strategy that may be particularly useful in helping elementary school children who are not proficient to learn English more efficiently (Fulk & King, 2001; Greenwood, Arrega-Mayer, Utley, Gavin, & Terry, 2001). Because, by definition, CWPT necessitates that students *work together*, it offers opportunities for teachers to pair students to maximize appropriate interethnic interaction.

Evidence also suggests that peer tutoring is effective for improving important reading skills (i.e., DIBELS Nonsense Word Fluency and Phonemic Segmentation Fluency; Good & Kaminski, 2002) of Hispanic students (Calhoun, Al Otaiba, Cihak, King, & Avalos, 2007; Calhoun, Al Otaiba, Greenberg, King, & Avalos, 2006) and social interactions (Xu, Gelfer, Sileo, Filler, & Perkins, 2008).

**IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE READING INSTRUCTION** Of all academic skills, reading is critically important. It's a skill that is necessary for school and life success, and reading instruction should be based on the best scientific evidence possible (Reyna, 2004). However, students who are English language learners often have difficulty learning to read (McCardle, McCarthy, & Leos, 2005; Pollard-Durodola, Mathes, Vaughn, Cardenas-Hagan, & Linan-Thompson, 2006; Vaughn, Mathes, Linan-Thompson, & Francis, 2005). Fortunately, federal funding has provided extensive research on teaching reading skills to English language learners (McCardle & Leung, 2006). Researchers have been examining whether methods that are effective with monolingual students at risk for reading disability are also effective for non-English speakers. One important finding of this research program is that comprehensive interventions (i.e., including explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension) produced significant improvements for these students (Linan-Thompson et al., 2006; Vaughn, Cirino, et al., 2006; Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, et al., 2006; Vaughn, Mathes, et al., 2006). Less comprehensive interventions did not produce significant results (Denton, Anthony, Parker, & Hasbrouck, 2004).

For young children in particular, research increasingly points to the importance of an environment in which children have the opportunity to listen to reading, examine books, engage in activities such as saying nursery rhymes, writing, and seeing and talking about printed materials (Hammill, 2004; Peck & Scarpati, 2004). This means encouraging such literacy-related activities in the home, which cannot occur unless the teacher is competent in addressing cultural differences among families.

Reading Rockets, a project of PBS's WETA and funded by the federal government, focuses on providing resources for teaching reading. Going to <http://www.readingrockets.org/> and entering "English Language Learners" in the search box takes you to multiple resources focused on English language learners and reading instruction.

## SOME FINAL THOUGHTS ON MULTICULTURAL SPECIAL EDUCATION

Teaching in a multicultural society demands attention to the multitude of identities that students may have. It also demands awareness that any of these identities may carry the consequence of social rejection, isolation, and alienation. Many children with disabilities are lonely and need to develop friendships (Pavri, 2001). Our task as educators is to promote understanding of cultural differences and acceptance of individuals whose identities differ from one's own. Building pride in one's cultural identity is a particular concern in teaching exceptional students. As we have noted elsewhere, many people in the Deaf community prefer to be called *the Deaf*, which runs contrary to the current use of terms such as *hearing impaired*. Deaf people and blind people have begun to express pride in their identities and cultures and, at the same time, foster multicultural experiences involving other languages and customs (Gallucci, 2000). In fact, for increasing numbers of people with disabilities, labels are to be embraced, not hidden.

People from many segments of society—such as parents of children with disabilities, senior citizens, religious groups, and recovering alcoholics—find that congregating for mutual support and understanding enhances their feelings of self-worth. Educators need to consider the possible value of having students with disabilities congregate for specific purposes.

By trying to avoid labels and insisting that students with disabilities always be placed with those who do not have disabilities, perhaps we risk giving the message that those who have disabilities are less desirable or even are not fit to associate with as peers (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005). Bateman (1994) suggests that "something is terribly and not very subtly insulting about saying a bright learning disabled student ought not attend a special school with other students who have learning disabilities because he needs to be with non-disabled students" (p. 516). In striving for true multicultural awareness, we might learn that it's more productive in the long run to embrace identities associated with exceptionalities, while working to increase tolerance and understanding of differences, than it is to avoid labels or refrain from congregating students with specific characteristics.

Finally, we note that education should not merely socialize students to fit into the existing social order. The goals of multicultural education include teaching students to work for social change, which entails helping students who are members of oppressed minorities become advocates for themselves and other members of their subcultures (Banks & Banks, 2013; Utley & Obiakor, 2001b).

### MyLab Education Self-Check 3.4

#### MyLab Education Application Exercise 3.2: Use of Native Languages and Culturally Relevant Materials

Listen to the podcast interview with Dr. Leonard Baca, watch the video about teaching diverse learners. Then respond to the questions that follow.



## ▼ chapter three SUMMARY

### What are some of the major issues concerning multiculturalism?

- People of every identity take justifiable pride in aspects of their heritage.
- Some people of virtually all, if not all, identities have conducted themselves in ways that could possibly bring shame to their group.
- Collective guilt and collective pride are problems for every group.

### How does multiculturalism play out in the United States?

- The United States is a very diverse society that seeks justice for all.
- Ideally, American culture is one that celebrates diversity within a framework of clearly defined common values.

### What are some of the important concepts about cultural diversity for education?

- American society comprises many subcultures (cultures that are a part, not all, of the larger society), each of which is characterized by:
  - Values and typical behavior
  - Language or dialects
  - Nonverbal communication
  - Awareness of one's cultural identity
  - Worldviews or general perspectives
- Special education must foster achievement in the context of cultural diversity.

### What are some of the important issues concerning multicultural and bilingual special education?

- Differentiating between ethnicity and exceptionality
- Dealing with disproportional representation of students from differing ethnicities
- Identification and classification procedures that result in accurate placement and services for students

### What are some of the important aspects of assessment in multicultural and bilingual special education?

- Assessment that honors the student's cultural heritage and does not penalize the student
- Instruction that uses the students' cultural strengths and that involves teaching tolerance and appreciation of culture, working with families, improving language instruction for language-minority students, improving literacy instruction for language-minority students, and adopting effective teaching practices

### What are some of the major instructional issues in multicultural and bilingual special education?

- Culturally sensitive teaching has been misinterpreted as determining specific teaching strategies for specific ethnic groups versus ensuring that all ethnic groups have access to evidence-based teaching strategies effective for all.
- Teaching tolerance is more than instruction on toleration of others who are different. It entails appreciating and valuing those who are different. Some schools have reported success in instituting anti-bias clubs or adopting a commercially available anti-bias curriculum.



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## ▼ INTERNET RESOURCES

### Pertinent Organizations

- The National Alliance of Black School Educators ([www.nabse.org](http://www.nabse.org)) provides resources for educators who are black.
- The National Association for the Education of African American Children with Learning Disabilities (<http://www.aacld.org>) serves persons with learning disabilities and their families.
- Fiesta Educativa ([www.fiestaeducativa.org](http://www.fiestaeducativa.org)) provides information for Spanish-speaking families that have a child with a disability.
- The National Hispanic Education Coalition.
- The Mexican American Legal Defense Fund ([www.maldef.org](http://www.maldef.org)) focuses on numerous issues related to Hispanics/Latinos, including education. On its website, one can access information about the National Hispanic Education Coalition, an umbrella organization for 25 other organizations devoted to improving education opportunities for Hispanic/Latino students.
- The World Institute on Disability ([www.wid.org](http://www.wid.org)).
- By typing "Hispanic/Latino" into the search box on the World Institute on Disability website ([www.wid.org](http://www.wid.org)), the reader can access information on a variety of topics pertinent to students who are English language learners.