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building maintenance, safety, books, special programs, and teacher salaries than their wealthier counterparts. Lawsuits have been filed in 45 states to address this resource inequity. Studies suggest that successful lawsuits have had a large impact in decreasing the inequity between rich and poor districts (Semuels, 2016).

For example, a legislative council in Oregon has developed the Quality Education Model (QEM). The QEM uses research-based information to determine the best education practices with regard to appropriate class size, adequate professional development for teachers and instruction time for students, and appropriate access to computers and other learning supports. Schools can calculate the cost of implementing these practices on the basis of their enrollment and circumstances. QEM requires state-funding levels for schools to be based on the amount a school needs to achieve its goals, not on local property tax receipts or some other arbitrary method. It requires schools to be accountable for how they spend funds and whether they achieve their goals for student learning. Since the states that are moving away from property tax financing have not had enough time to fully develop and implement new funding methods, it remains to be seen whether the QEM and other similar models will achieve equitable funding.

School social workers act as consultants on school policy matters, such as discipline, cultural sensitivity, and child abuse and neglect (NASW, 2010). They consult with school boards, community members, and parent groups. School social workers trained in conflict resolution strategies can act as a mediators in conflicts between parents and schools or in conflicts among students.

The funding for school social work services comes from multiple sources, including federal, state, and local governments, private donations, and grants. Most of the federal and state funds are tied to providing free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for children with disabilities. As a result, more than half of all school social workers exclusively serve students with disabilities, particularly students with developmental disabilities. The challenging economic situation that many states faced during the 2008 recession resulted in cutting school social work positions (Tucker, 2010). This places at-risk students in an ever more precarious position.

Working with Students at Risk 10.3

CASE EXAMPLE

David is eight years old. He has Down syndrome and is in a special education class 20 miles away from his home. The bus ride takes 45 minutes each way, and he is exhausted when he gets home from school. David is isolated from the other neighborhood children because he doesn't attend school with them, so he has no friends to play with. The special education class has been moved from school to school in the last three years. Each time, David has had to orient himself to new surroundings. The school district keeps pushing the special education classes out of the local schools to make room for more regular classes.

CASE EXAMPLE

Luis is 10 years old. At least three times a week, he is in after-school detention for fighting or causing trouble. He is failing math and reading. The teachers are challenged because Luis is very bright but won't cooperate and do his work. His parents say he has no behavioral problems at home. Luis's father thinks he is lazy; his mother disagrees. Luis has just been diagnosed with a learning disability.

Jamika is six years old. She, her mother, and her two-year-old sister have been staying at the Salvation Army Homeless Shelter for the last two months. They will have to leave in another four weeks because of length-of-stay restrictions. Jamika's family previously lived in the other shelter in town, and now there are no more shelters to turn to. Jamika hasn't been to school in five months. She doesn't have suitable clothes, and she doesn't have transportation to the school, which is on the other side of town.



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David, Luis, and Jamika are part of an ever-increasing group of schoolchildren who are at risk because they are not receiving an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. Students who have physical, developmental, or learning disabilities and students who are living in poverty or are homeless are more likely to have negative school experiences, develop emotional or behavioral problems, and never reach their full learning potential (Vandekamp, 2013). Research suggests that receiving social work services at school reduced a variety of risk factors that hinder students' chances of success in school (Newsome, Anderson-Butcher, Fink, Hall, & Huffer, 2008).

Developmental disabilities, as defined by the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 1990, are attributable to mental or physical impairments (or a combination) that are manifested before age 22. The impairment is likely to continue indefinitely and result in substantial limitations in major life activities such as self-care, mobility, economic self-sufficiency, and the capacity for independent living (CDC, 2014). David's social isolation is common among school-age children who have Down syndrome. Advocates and family members who work to make the educational system more inclusive for children like David often encounter negative attitudes from school officials, as well as a plethora of local school policies that make inclusion the exception, not the rule. The laws and national public policies that can be used to protect David's interests are reviewed in the next section.

Diagnosis of autism, another type of developmental disability, has increased more than 10-fold in the past decade. Currently, autism may affect as many as one in 68 children, up from 1 in 150 children as reported in 2007 (National Autism Association, 2017). There is a great deal of debate about the