
Preface

As a special education resource specialist, I received many questions regarding the various exceptionalities of children. Most questions are about children with physical or mental disabilities. I have found a general lack of understanding and much misinformation about children with special needs. Unfortunately, much of this misinformation gets passed on to others. This, in turn, creates problems for not only children with disabilities, but also others in their ultimate understanding and acceptance of such children.

While teaching at the university level, I found that most students entering my classes were also misinformed about exceptional children. As student teachers, they wanted to better understand such children, but they needed more information about specific disabilities to eradicate their misconceptions. I was motivated to write this book about children with disabilities in the hope of correcting the myths, misunderstandings, and misinformation about young students with special needs. It is only through knowledge that attitudes will change and educators will become less apprehensive about teaching students with disabilities.

The terminology for children with exceptional needs has been in constant change. The Education of the Handicapped Act refers to “handicapped” individuals. More recently, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) used the term *disability* instead of handicap. Regardless of terminology, the challenges and issues faced by those affected are much the same.

The term *exceptional* refers to any child or youth who shows significant discrepancy between ability and achievement and may require specialized services to meet that child’s educational needs (Pierangelo & Jacoby, 1996). The focus of this book is on students with physical disabilities, mental disabilities, or both.

Teachers are often unprepared to work with students with disabilities who are placed in the regular classroom. This book provides information about the nature and characteristics of the disabilities a teacher is likely to encounter, and it suggests practical strategies that educators can use to promote good learning experiences for all students in a regular classroom. The book is intended as a handy reference for a teacher's desk, principal's office, or school library.

Many books have been written about disabilities, and it can be very time consuming to research a specific exceptionality. Because most educators have huge time constraints, the major disabilities in this book are arranged alphabetically from "aphasia" to "visual processing dysfunction." This provides a quick, easy way for educators to access information about a specific disability.

The manifestation of characteristics for any given disability will vary greatly from individual to individual. So, while one student may be significantly impaired by a particular condition, another with the same disability might manifest no evidence of it whatsoever or might have a degree of impairment so slight that the student has no special needs and would not be considered a student with a disability. Clearly, not everyone with a disability discussed in this book requires special education.

WHAT'S NEW IN THIS EDITION

New sections of interest have been added to this edition. Chapter 1 includes a section on IDEA 2004 Reauthorization followed by No Child Left Behind and Postsecondary Transition. Bipolar disorder has been added to Chapter 4. The same format as used with the other disabilities in this section provides a wealth of information about the disorder. The new Resource E compares the similarities and differences between ADHD and bipolar disorder.

Since telephone numbers and addresses are never static, all of the telephone numbers and addresses have been verified or corrected if needed. Additional information has been added to most of the disabilities addressed in this book. More books and Web sites are included for your convenience.