

# Understanding the Historical Context

## Voices From the Field

"I went into teaching because I wanted my own class—why should I have to collaborate with *my* kids included in someone else's class? I have a special education credential—give me a special ed class, please, and quit treating me like a glorified assistant!"

*Katia G., special education teacher*

"I have to say, I don't really get the whole inclusion thing. The extra workload that is created by having students with disabilities in my class makes it harder for me to give the other kids the time they need. It just seems unfair to me and the other kids in the class."

*Rebecca S., general education teacher*

## THE BIG PICTURE



No doubt in the course of your career you have heard many comments like these. What are the benefits of collaborative programs? If a teacher has a teaching credential of her own, why should she be forced to teach with someone else, or to share students across placements? What is the point of this whole move toward more collaborative and inclusive schools, anyway?

We understand the uncertainty, so in this first chapter we think it's imperative to tell you a little bit about the history of special education in America and how we came to the place in which we find ourselves today. We are going to take you on a brief trip back in time to examine

how individuals with disabilities have been treated and, most specifically, educated. This is important, because without a historical perspective, you—like Katia and Rebecca in our *Voices From the Field*—may not realize why it is that collaboration, inclusion, and differentiation are so truly critical in today’s schools.

We are lighthearted authors, and this is a pretty lighthearted book, but unfortunately the story of special education isn’t particularly pretty. We ask you to bear with us in Chapter 1 as we take you on a journey that isn’t always pleasant, but which is, we believe, very, very important. (We promise that after this we’ll kick back, crack open some snacks, and have some laughs as we explore how to make your collaborative schools more effective!) In the meantime, put on your comfy traveling clothes and brace yourself for one heck of a ride.

In this chapter we do the following:

- Look at the history of special education and examine some of the important laws and issues that have shaped the educational programs we have today.
- Discuss how those laws and issues impact our classrooms and what we need to do to address them.
- Consider the other ways that our classrooms have changed and how collaboration can help us meet the needs of a wide variety of learners, including students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, kids with identified and unidentified special learning needs, and students who are gifted.



Let's Get STARTED!

## **A LOOK AT THE HISTORY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION: WHAT'S CHANGED OVER THE YEARS?**

People with disabilities have always been treated differently. For the most part, we think it’s fair to say that they have been treated poorly. For years, individuals with identifiable disabilities such as physical impairments, cerebral palsy, intellectual disabilities (previously referred to as mental retardation), blindness, and so on were either kept at home with no access to education or institutionalized with very limited education. The education that *was* provided at those institutions was generally limited to a particular skill or task (for example, putting wicks in candles, creating crafts).

As compulsory education laws began to be enforced in the early 1900s, however, students with disabilities began to show up in public schools, and administrators and teachers wondered how to handle this influx of students who had challenging special needs. Anderson (1917) pondered in a book titled *Education of Defectives in the Public Schools* whether “defective” children should be allowed in public schools at all or whether they should be trained in other settings.

Also around this time, methods of identifying disabilities were becoming more specific, so more students with special needs were being documented in the public school system. The emphasis on rigid control in the general education classroom led to segregated classes for many of these students, who were considered unmanageable, “incurable, backward and otherwise defective.” (Osgood, 2008, p. 43). Classes identified as being for “feebleminded,” “backward,” or “subnormal” children began to spring up in major cities such as New York and Chicago. Separate classrooms and schools were also created for students who were blind, deaf or deaf-mute (called “deaf and dumb”), students with physical disabilities (labeled “crippled”), or those with cognitive impairments (known as “mentally retarded”). Some children, particularly those with severe physical and/or cognitive disabilities, ended up in mental institutions, hospitals, or asylums—out of sight and out of mind. The outlook for children with disabilities who couldn’t conform to the rigid expectations of public schools was dim; they were hustled off to isolated locations where they were often denied the opportunity to learn even basic academic and social skills and where their troublesome cognitive or physical differences could be ignored by the general public.

What about those children with what we today call “invisible disabilities”? Labels like *learning disability*, *autism*, *Asperger syndrome*, *Tourette syndrome*, *obsessive compulsive disorder*, *oppositional defiant disorder*, and *emotional disturbance* didn’t exist at the time. These students often dropped out, were kicked out, were ignored, or were simply known as the “weird” kids in school. Ask your parents or grandparents what happened to students in their classes who simply did not fit in. Were their specific educational or behavioral needs addressed? That really depended on the individual teacher. There were certainly no laws in place to ensure that they received additional support.

Thankfully, in the late 1950s and 1960s, many things in American society began to evolve. The landmark case of *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954 began to change the face of the American educational system. *Brown vs. Board of Education* demanded for the first time that schools become integrated racially—it established that *separate* education was not the same as *equal* education for students of color. Gradually, that concept also began to be applied to education for children with disabilities.

President John F. Kennedy, whose sister Rosemary was born with a cognitive disability, was a major champion of education for kids with disabilities. When Rosemary was young, the family ignored the advice of doctors and kept her at home rather than sending her away to live in an institution, as was the common practice at that time. As she aged into her 20s, she began to experience violent outbursts, resulting in her family deciding to try an experimental medical procedure recommended by her doctors. In 1941, Rosemary Kennedy underwent a lobotomy; sadly, it left her uncommunicative and unable to care for herself. She spent the rest of her life institutionalized and separated from her family.

Likely as a result of this experience, President Kennedy took a personal interest in what happened to children with disabilities in our nation’s schools. In the early years of his presidency, he pushed through legislation that formed a Division of Handicapped Children and Youth in the Office of Education. This legislation began to focus the federal government’s attention on the problem of educating students with disabling conditions. In a presidential statement in October 1961, Kennedy expressed his concern about the issues:

The manner in which our Nation cares for its citizens and conserves its manpower resources is more than an index to its concern for the less fortunate. It is a key to its

#### Want more info?

Check out *The History of Special Education: A Struggle for Equality in American Public Schools*, by Robert Osgood (2008).



future. Both wisdom and humanity dictate a deep interest in the physically handicapped, the mentally ill, and the mentally retarded. Yet, although we have made considerable progress in the treatment of physical handicaps, although we have attacked on a broad front the problems of mental illness, although we have made great strides in the battle against disease, we as a nation have for too long postponed an intensive search for solutions to the problems of the mentally retarded. That failure should be corrected. (Kennedy, 1961, p. 1)

Although President Kennedy's personal crusade was cut short by his untimely death, over the next decade Presidents Johnson and Nixon both continued his focus on this important cause.

In 1966, two photojournalists, Burton Blatt and Fred Kaplan, shone a brilliant light on the plight of individuals with disabilities, and this time it was too vivid to be ignored. Blatt and Kaplan (1966) published a photographic exposé titled *Christmas in Purgatory: A Photographic Essay on Mental Retardation*, that for the first time made the appalling conditions in residential facilities apparent. The journalists snuck hidden cameras into five institutions for the cognitively disabled, documenting conditions of filth and squalor. Children were warehoused in rows of desolate cribs, with little or no human interaction. Adults were kept naked and soiled in empty rooms with no stimulation of any kind. People with disabilities were housed in conditions that today would be considered unfit for an animal. As they described it in the introduction to their book, "There is a hell on earth, and in America there is a special inferno. . . . Although our pictures could not begin to capture the total and overwhelming horror we saw, smelled, and felt, they represent a side of America that has rarely been shown to the general public, and is little understood by most of us" (Blatt & Kaplan, 1974, p. iv). America as a whole, and education professionals in specific, could no longer afford to ignore the crisis of individuals with disabilities in our country.

At the same time, other organizations and individuals were beginning to raise their voices in support of more thoughtful and humane treatment of people with disabilities. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the National Association for Retarded Children (later renamed the National Association for Retarded Citizens and more recently renamed simply The Arc) began to advocate for change in the educational system, while the Disability Rights Movement pushed for comprehensive change in educational, work, and public settings. The efforts of all these organizations helped bring the plight of kids with disabilities into the public consciousness, and gradually they began to step out of the shadows.

## **A NEW ERA: HOW CAN WE EDUCATE ALL OUR STUDENTS?**

In 1975, about 75 years after students with disabilities first began to attend public school, President Ford signed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA or PL 94-142), finally guaranteeing educational rights for students with special needs. This landmark legislation recognized the injustice that existed when children with disabilities were excluded from typical school experiences. It mandated equitable education as a civil right and required that the educational rights of children with disabilities be protected by law. Although it was just the beginning, PL 94-142 required school districts to take a good, hard look at how they were providing services to students with disabilities, and it forced them to drag their most shameful practices out into the open.

One of the most important elements of PL 94-142 was that it identified 11 types of handicapping conditions that were to be protected by law. Those eligibilities (plus *Autism* and *Traumatic Brain Injury*, which were added when PL 94-142 became the Individuals with Disabilities Act in 1990) can be seen *In a Nutshell* on page 6. (Please note, current language recommends the use of the word *disability* in lieu of *handicap*.) PL 94-142 also identified six key cornerstones on which the education of students with disabilities still rests today. We've summarized five of these here. (Don't worry; the sixth is coming!)

1. *Nondiscriminatory evaluation.* As methods of detecting disabilities became more standardized, more and more students of color began to be identified as having cognitive disabilities. Investigation revealed that standardized measures of IQ were often biased against students from diverse cultural backgrounds, resulting in the overidentification of these minority students. This section of the law states that testing for special education must be free from bias, and it must avoid the overidentification or underidentification of children due to culture, race, or language.

2. *Free and appropriate public education.* This segment of the law moves beyond the idea that students have a right to an education, and it ensures that the education they receive is also appropriate to their individual needs. The principle of free and appropriate public education (FAPE) guarantees that public schools provide every child with disabilities a meaningful education, designed to meet each child's unique needs and to prepare that child for future employment and independent living. This free education must include appropriate preschool, elementary, and secondary options.

3. *Procedural due process.* In order to assure that families of children with disabilities were not pushed around by their local schools, and to provide them with legal protection if they didn't agree with decisions that the school personnel made, two provisions were included. The first was that individuals involved in special education proceedings have the right to appeal school district decisions in a court of law.

4. *Parent participation.* The second provision in support of parental protection was that special education decisions cannot be made without the participation or consent of a child's parents or legal guardians.

5. *Individualized Education Program (IEP).* The fifth key element of PL 94-142 guaranteed that each child with a disability would have an educational program specifically tailored to his needs. An IEP must be developed for each student identified with a disability. The plan must be developed by a collaborative team, and it must outline specific academic goals and objectives for the child, as well as how and when that child will meet those objectives. IEP team members should include an administrator or administrative designee, a special education teacher, parents, a school psychologist, the student (when appropriate), and other designated instructional service providers when appropriate. (General education teachers were always encouraged to attend, but they were not added as mandatory participants to the IEP team until IDEA was reauthorized for the second time in 1997.) Social, behavioral, and transition goals should also be recommended, according to the needs of the child. The IEP must include a statement of the student's current levels of functioning, the educational services that will be provided, and the duration of those services. It must also specify the percentage of time a student will spend in general education, and it must be reevaluated and rewritten annually. (See *In a Nutshell* on pages 7–8 for specifics about how the provisions changed when the law was reauthorized.) We go into detail about the IEP team in subsequent chapters.



## In a Nutshell



### *The 13 Eligibility Categories for Disability Under IDEA*

<i>Category</i>	<i>Description</i>
Autism (not originally identified in PL 94-142 but added in 1990 by IDEA)	A developmental disability that significantly affects children's verbal and nonverbal communication skills, social interactions, and educational performance. It is generally evident before age three. Consider a "spectrum disorder," which includes Asperger syndrome.
Deaf-Blindness	Simultaneous hearing and visual impairments that cause significant communication and learning deficits. These needs cannot be accommodated in programs designed specifically for children who are solely deaf or blind.
Deafness	A hearing impairment of such significant severity that it affects a child's ability to process linguistic information through auditory means and negatively affects the child's educational performance.
Emotional Disturbance	A child who exhibits an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; has the inability to sustain interpersonal relationships; exhibits inappropriate behaviors and feelings; or has a pervasive mood of unhappiness. These behaviors must be exhibited over time in a variety of settings. Includes schizophrenia.
Hearing Impairment	An impairment in hearing (stable or fluctuating) that adversely affects a child's educational performance and isn't covered under the definition of deafness.
Mental Retardation	A developmental disorder that includes subaverage general intellectual functioning along with deficits in adaptive behavior that adversely affect a child's educational attainment. (This is more often referred to currently as a <i>cognitive or intellectual impairment</i> .)
Multiple Disabilities	Concomitant impairments, the combination of which causes such severe educational impairment that it cannot be accommodated in programs designed for a single disability. Does not include deaf-blindness.
Orthopedic Impairment	Any severe orthopedic impairment that impedes a child's educational attainment.
Other Health Impairment	Includes children with limited strength, vitality, or alertness that is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder, etc., which adversely affects a child's educational performance.
Specific Learning Disability	A disorder in one of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using spoken or written language. Results in impaired ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, and/or do math. Includes terms such as <i>perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia</i> .
Speech or Language Impairment	A communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, and/or a language or voice impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
Traumatic Brain Injury (not originally identified in PL 94-142 but added in 1990 by IDEA)	An acquired injury to the brain resulting in total or partial dysfunction that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
Visual Impairment	Total or partial blindness that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's education performance.



## In a Nutshell

### Key Elements of EAHCA and IDEA



<i>Six Key Elements of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) Public Law 94-142 (1975)</i>	
Nondiscriminatory evaluation	Students must be evaluated using assessments that do not discriminate based on culture, race, language, etc.
Due process	Parents have the right to examine all records, to receive written notification of proposed changes to a child's program, and to have an impartial hearing to mediate disagreements.
Free and appropriate public education (FAPE)	All children, regardless of the severity of their disability, must be provided with a no-cost education that meets their individual needs.
Parental participation	Parents must be full participants in all decisions regarding their child's education.
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	Every child with a disability must have an individualized plan that documents his or her educational program, including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present levels of performance</li> <li>• Individualized goals and objectives</li> <li>• Outline of educational services</li> <li>• Degree to which child will participate in general education</li> <li>• Plans for services and duration of services</li> <li>• An annual reevaluation</li> </ul>
Least restrictive environment (LRE)	Children with disabilities will be educated to the maximum extent possible with their typical peers. States must provide a continuum of placement options.
<i>Other Important Features of PL 94-142</i>	
Child find	School districts have an obligation to go out and try to locate students with disabilities and make sure that they are provided an education.
Early childhood	Schools must provide an education to preschoolers with disabilities.
Zero reject	All children, no matter their disability, have the right to an education, and public schools have an obligation to provide that education, without exception.

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<i>Major Changes in 1990; Reauthorized to Become IDEA</i>	
Change in name	The name of the law was changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); became PL 101-476.
Individual Transition Plan (ITP)	All students with disabilities, beginning no later than age 16, must have an individualized transition plan in place to provide for the transition from school to life.
Added identifications	Autism and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) were added to the list of eligibility categories for IDEA.
<i>Major Changes in IDEA; Reauthorized in 1997</i>	
Behavior	Students with disabilities who experience minor infractions of school rules can be disciplined in ways similar to typical peers.
General education	IEPs must now specifically state how a child will be involved and progress in general education.
Transition planning	The age for transition planning was changed from 16 to 14.
IEP team	General educators were added to the IEP team.
Assistive technology	The IEP team must consider and address a child's needs for assistive technology.
Assessments	Students with disabilities must participate in statewide standardized assessments or be given an alternate assessment.
<i>Major Changes in IDEA; Reauthorized in 2004</i>	
Change in name	The name of the law was changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA); most still refer to it as IDEA.
Highly qualified teachers	Language from NCLB was added, requiring highly qualified teachers in special education classrooms.
IEP	A pilot study to examine the option of three-year IEPs was created.
Response to Intervention (RTI)	States were granted permission to use Response to Intervention as a method to identify students with learning disabilities, instead of the discrepancy model previously used.

Why, you might be asking yourself, did we only summarize five of the six cornerstones of IDEA? Because the last one is the whopper, the Big Kahuna, particularly for those of us collaborating to teach students with disabilities. The sixth principle of PL 94-142 is the principle of least restrictive environment (LRE), and it was LRE that brought about the beginning of the inclusion movement.

LRE specifies the following crucial concept: *Children with disabilities must be educated in a setting as close to the typical classroom as possible.* In other words, the target destination for kids with disabilities is no longer a segregated classroom or site or a filthy institution with minimal care and even less curriculum; it is the typical classroom in your neighborhood school. LRE requires us to give access to general education to *all* children, no matter how severe their disabilities, and to provide the accommodations and modifications a student needs to be successful in a typical general education class. (See Chapter 2 to learn more about how LRE impacts deaf students.) The principle of LRE assumes that with the right supports, the vast majority of students can succeed and flourish in general education. LRE was the beginning of a new world for kids with disabilities and the beginning of a new paradigm for education in our nation's schools.

As you can see, the supporters of PL 94-142 were determined to bring kids with disabilities out of the dismal conditions that were documented in the 1950s and 1960s and make them a part of the community of school children in our public schools. Happily, the foundational concepts of PL 94-142 have survived for more than 30 years, and they have been strengthened as it has been reauthorized, first as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; PL 101-476, 1990 & 1997), and later as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA; PL 108-446, 2004). Thanks to the tenets laid down for us in IDEA, we no longer make assumptions about a child's ability just by his looks, his IQ, or even his ability to communicate orally. As a society, we have begun to acknowledge the amazing potential of kids who were previously isolated and ignored. We are discovering how to reexamine our prejudices, raise our expectations, and provide more opportunities for all. (See *In a Nutshell* on page 10.)

That's the good news.

The bad news is that there are still major obstacles to overcome. There are still biases that remain, and many individuals with disabilities still do not have full access to the same education as their peers. We have some teachers who do not want to work with "those kids," and there are parents who treat their own children as though they are incapable of real learning. We still have many children who are relegated to decrepit bungalows at the back of the campus and classes taught in former closets. We have kids with disabilities failing out or dropping out of school at a much higher rate than their nondisabled peers and ending up on welfare or state support. We have kids (in real life and in the media) calling each other "retards" and children who feel isolated and stigmatized by the special services they're receiving. We have students of color and second language learners being overidentified for special education services due to testing bias and lack of cultural understanding. Although we've come a long way, it's clear we still have a lot of work to do. Our society is resistant to change.

But we're optimists, so let's go back to the good news. In addition to the changes that have already occurred educationally for students, we also have many teachers who are embracing

#### Key Term

*Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)*—A special education placement that meets a child's needs and is as close to general education as possible.



#### Key Term

*IDEA—Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*—Was later renamed but is still commonly called IDEA. Guarantees the rights of students with disabilities in public schools.





## In a Nutshell



### Major Laws/Court Cases Impacting Special Education

<i>Law/Court Case</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Impact</i>
Brown vs. Board of Education	1954	Stated that “separate is not equal.” Abolished educational discrimination by race. Acted as the foundation for the argument against segregation by disability.
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act	1973	Established rights for individuals who have a disability or are treated or seen as having a disability. Still used in schools today for students who don’t qualify for special education but need individualized services.
Public Law 94-142: Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA or EHA)	1975	First major law establishing special education. Legalized concepts of free and appropriate public education (FAPE), individualized education programs (IEPs), child find, and least restrictive environment (LRE).
Public Law 99-457: Handicapped Infants and Toddlers Program	1986	Created a new provision that covered children with disabilities from birth through age two. Created statewide, comprehensive, coordinated services for infants and toddlers with disabilities.
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	1990	Prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, transportation, hotels, governmental agencies, and communications. Also established the guidelines for telephone relay services for deaf individuals.
Public Law 101-476: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); now PL 108-446: Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA)	1990, 1997, 2004	Emphasizes rights in special education. Added Autism and TBI as disability categories. More focus on LRE. If a child with a disability is not in a general education setting, the IEP team is required to explain why.
Jacob Javits Act	1993	Defines gifted/talented. No federal funding support to schools through this Act.
No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)	2001	General education law establishing, among other things, that children have the right to highly qualified content teachers and to equal accountability and standards. This law led to higher expectations for special education and inclusion in standardized assessment for most kids with special needs.

change and who recognize the need for collaboration. These teachers are asking for more training to work with this diverse population and for help in working with each other. Parents are supporting the move to inclusive education and are working with schools to ensure that their children have more access to typical educational and social opportunities. School professionals in districts across the nation are taking a hard look at which students are sent to nonpublic schools, which are educated in self-contained settings, and which students can be successful with support in a general education class. The numbers of students with disabilities in general education classes is rising each year. However, placement alone is not an indicator of success; the real success comes when students are actually having their needs met in their classes and are given the opportunity to develop all their skills and talents to their maximum potential so that they can take their rightful place in society alongside their peers. PL 94-142 and IDEA created the foundation that made this possible.

## **MAKING SENSE OF THE LAW: HOW DOES IT IMPACT OUR CLASSROOMS?**

Thank you for joining us on our quick trip through the history of special education. We hope that now you have an understanding of the powerful momentum that led to the creation of more collaborative and inclusive schools. This isn't just another crazy educational trend, any more than the equal rights of individuals of different races is a trend. It came about as the result of pervasive and long-standing inequity and discrimination in our society. But many questions still remain: How does this movement for more collaborative programs impact our classrooms? We know that IDEA mandates that kids with disabilities be given the opportunity to get their education in a conventional classroom alongside their typically developing peers, but we also know that it isn't always easy! Students who have severe cognitive or physical needs often require special accommodations such as assistive technology devices and adaptive equipment that may be beyond the expertise of most general education teachers. Kids with more common special needs, such as learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder (ADD), may need supports or adaptations to the curriculum in order to be successful. Others need instruction that is planned in such a way that it engages them using a variety of modalities and gives them choices in how to express their knowledge. Seriously, what's a teacher to do?!

Believe it or not, there's a miraculous answer that we've decided to unveil for you here, that can make all these unmanageable demands seem manageable again. This incredible discovery is convenient, inexpensive, and it can be implemented by even first-year teachers. Are you ready? Wait for it . . .

**Collaboration!**

"Oh please!!" We can hear you saying it even as we write it. "Collaboration can solve all those issues? Give me a break!"

We believe it can and it will. Sure, you may not have the expertise to adapt that seventh-grade novel for the student with the third-grade reading level, but there's someone in your school who does. You might not know how to operate an Eco language device, but there are people across the campus or around the corner who have the skills you need. You may not know how to engage that kindergartener who is already reading at the sixth-grade level, but there are experts out there who have the answers. It's all about learning to reach out and work together.

So seriously, how do these laws impact our classrooms? They require us to break out of the stereotypical paradigm of the teacher as the king/queen of the classroom, laboring away behind closed doors with nary another adult in sight. They compel us to reach across the hallway to our colleagues and ask for help. They demand that we let go of the vision of ourselves as the all-knowing experts and work as a *team* to educate our learners. All of our learners. Simply put, they *require* us to collaborate.

Throughout this book we will be teaching you how to plan and adapt instruction for students with special needs, whether you are a special educator, general educator, administrator, or other professional. Our goal is to give you more of the expertise you need to provide for the wide range of learners you can find in any classroom today. Even more important, we will be teaching you how to collaborate to fill in the gaps. There is no book in the world that can teach you everything required to service all kids—teachers spend their whole careers trying to acquire that expertise—but what we can teach you is how to work with others to get the information you need when you need it. Rick Lavoie, a special education guru and the author of the classic video *F.A.T. City* (Lavoie, 2004), said it best: “We have been doing closed-book teaching in an open-book world.” In other words, it's no longer about knowing everything or being the ultimate expert; it's about knowing where to *access* the information you need to get the job accomplished.

So consider this your open-book introduction to the world of collaborative education, where we work together to share what we know and where the *real* expertise involves knowing how to get the information you need to be successful with the diversity of learners in our schools today. Welcome to the world of collaborative schools!

## **RESPECTING DIVERSITY: HOW HAVE OUR SCHOOLS EVOLVED?**

Speaking of diversity . . . all you have to do is look at the kids in any public school and it is clear that schools have become diverse. Even if you look beyond the crazy hairdos and wild clothes, the diversity is obvious. We have students of many different races, cultures, abilities, genders, and preferences included in our classrooms. But how are we doing addressing their *learning* differences?

Why do we mention this? Because collaboration goes well beyond students with disabilities! Think about it. Have you ever worked with a child who had no special education eligibility at all but you thought, “Hmmm . . . something is going on here”? We have a lot of learning differences in our classrooms that need to be addressed, and only a small percentage of them have anything to do with special education. Collaborating only to work with kids with identified disabilities will do a disservice to all the kids—and the teachers too. What if others would benefit from the information? We need to teach based on our students' needs, not on their labels.

### In Practice

Ms. Jenkins is a general ed math teacher in an urban high school. When she first started teaching, the policy for dealing with kids who didn't learn, behave, or fit in was to refer them for special ed. Her new principal is actively against this action and wants teachers to collaborate with other school specialists.

Skeptical of this new regime change, Ms. Jenkins decided to investigate how many people would need to get involved to make this work. She contacted a special ed teacher for strategies in dealing with Eric, a student with major behavioral issues; she asked the ELL teacher for help with Ramon, a student who recently immigrated from Mexico; she called on the GATE teacher to provide enrichment activities for Emma, Zoe, and Quinn, who were working at advanced levels; she talked to the school psychologist about Ben, who was too shy to participate, Barb, who seemed depressed and anxious, and Darren, who was teased for being gay. Each time Ms. Jenkins spoke with one of these colleagues, they provided her with strategies and ideas that helped not only the target student but also other students in her classes. Although it took a fair amount of time, in the end Ms. Jenkins was convinced—the collaboration worked. With the help of her colleagues, she was meeting the needs of her diverse classroom better than ever before.

There are many ways to look at educational diversity. We are fans of anything that gets teachers thinking about individual students' learning and then collaborating with other professionals to address that diversity in the classroom.

Consider the *In Practice* box. Obviously, it is not easy to address the wide variety of needs that occur in the typical general education classroom. To be able to effectively teach all these students is a daunting task. However, when Ms. Jenkins turned to her colleagues and asked for help, the collaboration she experienced enabled her to meet her students' learning needs without going crazy. To be sure, it can take time to collaborate with this many people, but we address that issue later. Consider, however, how helpful it is to know you are not alone in this. Consider, too, how the students in this scenario were "typical" learners. Not one of them had an identified disability or special education label, yet all had issues that were impacting their learning. Without the specialized assistance and collaboration of Ms. Jenkins's colleagues, all of these students might not have reached their potential in math because she was too overwhelmed by their unique learning needs. And whether you're an elementary, middle, or high school teacher, there are specialists in your school or district who are available to help. Of course, it's up to you to reach out to them and to solicit their collaboration.

Before we move into some hints and tips regarding ways to address the various needs in the inclusive classroom, we have one more bit of critical information for you. Just as our philosophy toward individuals with disabilities has evolved over the years, so too has our language involving those individuals. We hope that society has moved far away from considering it socially acceptable to call anyone a "retard," but other than that one, how can you know what terms are considered acceptable these days? Here is the key. Use what is known as *People-first language* (Snow, 2010) and you'll be fine. People-first language considers that each of us is a person first, though some of us may also have disabilities. Instead of talking about the "autistic kid" or the "LD child," you would mention the "kid who has autism" or "the child with a learning disability." Better yet—talk about the kid in the red sweatshirt or the child who cracks you up during PE. Whenever possible, look at these students as who they

are—people. People who happen to have disabilities. As you continue to read this book, we hope you will also pick up on the fact that we staunchly avoid stereotyping kids by their labels whenever possible. You won't get a chapter on working with children with learning disabilities (LD) and one on working with students with emotional/behavioral disabilities (EBD). Instead, you will get strategy after strategy on working collaboratively with other adults to help all students. We like to focus on strengths, rather than deficits. In fact, the remainder of this chapter focuses on starting you off with practical strategies for working with your diverse learners—whoever they may be.

## TAKING DIVERSITY OUT OF THE ABSTRACT

This chapter is focused on starting you on a journey, a journey to a more collaborative and inclusive classroom and school. To start that journey, we took you on a brief trip through time. We had to go back in order to go forward. Now, however, we hope you are ready to recognize the very real situation in which you find yourself. Kids with identified and unidentified special needs will—*without a doubt*—be in your classroom. Rather than bemoaning this fact, now that you know the evolution of inclusive education, we hope you will embrace your diverse classroom and look for ways to address any curricular, behavioral, instructional, or social issues that may occur. As we mentioned, there are lots of strategies that can help you meet the needs of the diverse learners in your classroom. Second language learners, students with special needs, gifted students, students who don't like school—all benefit from specialized teaching strategies that can help them make the best of your classroom. So the rest of this chapter is devoted to some of the hundreds of strategies that can help you provide for the wide variety of learners we know you have in your classroom. However, in order to continue our journey of collaboration to benefit *all* kids, and to avoid falling into the “label trap” of disabilities, we divide these strategies according to learning styles. Although we aren't big believers in matching learning styles to teaching styles—research doesn't support the effectiveness of that approach—we *are* big believers in teaching to all learning styles, so that all types of learners can be accommodated and supported.

Here are some ideas that may help you make your curriculum more accessible to *any* learner.

### Strategies for visual learners



Most learners benefit from visual supports as they learn. These can be as simple as pictures to illustrate the topic at hand or as engaging as videos. Here are some of our favorites:

- Keep it simple! Reduce visual clutter on the page by using a single clean font and minimizing the unnecessary use of colors, bolding, italics, all capital letters, and so forth.
- Enrich your instruction with meaningful videos. Watch them twice—once to get the overview and then once with pauses and discussion of important points. Provide a graphic organizer for students to take notes from the videos.

### Strategies for auditory learners

Auditory learners have the learning style that is best adapted for most classrooms, since most teachers love to talk. Nevertheless, here are some strategies that can help them be even more successful:

- Give them lots of opportunities to share verbally with peers.
- Encourage and teach self-talk.
- Allow students to audiotape or create podcasts or videoblogs of their responses to content questions.

### Strategies for kinesthetic learners

Kinesthetic learners are often the ones who are challenged the most by the traditional classroom. They usually have trouble sitting still, and they don't learn well unless allowed to interact with the materials. This is *not* a disability, and a kinesthetic learner does *not* necessarily have attention deficit disorder (ADD). Here are some strategies that can help students who are kinesthetic:

- Allow them to move around as they learn. Sometimes moving them to the back of the room where they can stand without disrupting other students is helpful.
- Give them a rubber ball to manipulate or a Koosh ball to squeeze while they sit and listen.
- Be okay with students who doodle while listening to a lecture or quietly tap their pen on their leg when you are talking.

### On the web

For more strategies for teaching visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners go to <http://www.corwin.com/diverseschools>.

#### In Practice

"The first year I was teaching I had a young man named Jeffrey in my room. He was a really great kid, but ACTIVE!! He was a kinesthetic learner, times 10! It was difficult for him to sit down for more than about five minutes, and after a little while his behavior would start to deteriorate as he struggled to keep himself still in his seat. Before long his wiggleness would affect the whole class.

After a couple of months I came up with a strategy that really worked. Every so often I would write a note to the office that said, "Jeffrey needs a break. Please keep him there for about five minutes, then send him back." I would staple the note closed, then ask Jeffrey to race to the office as fast as he could to deliver this very important note. He loved the break and loved feeling important, and the physical exercise would make it possible for him to come back to class and work without problems—a true win-win strategy!"

Sue S., fifth-grade teacher

## THUMBNAILS OF RESOURCES ON THE INTERNET

The following elements can be found on the companion website for *Collaborate, Communicate, and Differentiate!* at <http://www.corwin.com/diverseschools>.

Taking Diversity Out of the Abstract

**Strategies for visual learners**

- Use visual masks where needed to reveal only a small amount of the page to students who are easily visually overwhelmed.
- Use graphic organizers, webs, and charts to present information in a visually accessible fashion.
- Provide lists of diagrams and pictures to support lectures.
- Provide and teach note-taking structures to help students translate verbal information into a written format.
- Use captioned videos whenever possible, and leave the captions on for all learners.
- Teach outlining techniques.
- Allow students to present information in a visual format, such as a timeline, a poster, a map, or other visual media.
- Use color coding to discriminate important facts and patterns.
- Use flashcards for learning facts and skills.

**Strategies for auditory learners**

- Provide books on tape.
- Use melodies and rhythms to teach concepts and skills.
- Allow them to repeat facts and ideas orally.
- Use oral reports to show what they know.
- Give opportunities for group interactions and cooperative learning.
- Record lectures so they can listen to them again.
- Let them study with a friend.
- Allow them to use "whisper phones" (PVC pipe with elbows) that magnify sound and allow for self-talk or pair-talk.

**Strategies for kinesthetic learners**

- Use rhythmic activities to help them memorize and learn new content.
- Use exaggerated movements and facial expressions when you teach.
- Give them an exercise ball to sit on.
- Let them interact with computerized activities.
- Let them type their assignments.
- Whenever possible, give them the opportunity to participate in hands-on activities.
- Provide field trips and real-life experiences.
- Let them show what they know through movement-based activities such as role playing.
- Use activities such as tracing in sand or shaving cream to practice spelling and/or math facts.
- Use maps, globes, and so forth, when teaching history and geography.
- Use manipulatives.
- Use the concrete-representational-abstract teaching sequence in math.
- Use gestures and silent signals instead of words whenever possible, and teach students to do the same.
- Incorporate American Sign Language (ASL) or other basic sign language for letters, numbers, words, and concepts whenever possible.
- Give frequent movement breaks.

Collaborate, Communicate, and Differentiate! Chapter 1 Resource

Diving Deeper

**To learn more about collaboration to support all learners**

Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2009). *Interactives: Collaborator skills for school professionals* (8th ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman.

Harris, K. C. (1998). Collaboration within a multicultural society: Issues for consideration. *Remedial and Special Education, 17*(6), 355-362.

Matuszaki, W. W., & Hughes, C. E. (2009). Response to intervention, collaboration, and co-teaching: A necessary combination for successful systemic change. *Preventing School Failure, 13*(4), 67-77.

Pugh, M. C., & Johnson, L. J. (2006). *Collaborative practitioners: Collaborative schools* (2nd ed.). Denver, CO: Love Publishing.

Rabin, C. (2002, September/October). Schools attuned to learning differences. *Leadership, 32*(3), 12-15.

Thousand, J. S., Villa, R. A., & Nevin, A. I. (2006). The many faces of collaborative planning and teaching. *Theory into Practice, 45*(3), 239-248.

Weiner, L., & Matuszaki, W. W. (2005). Schools attuned: A model for collaborative intervention. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 40*(3), 204-206.

Collaborate, Communicate, and Differentiate! Chapter 1 Resource