NINTH EDITION

Teaching Students with SPECIAL NEEDS IN General Education Classrooms

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TEACHING STUDENTS with SPECIAL NEEDS in

GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

NINTH EDITION

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DEDICATION

"To Kendall Hope Lewis, the newest member of our family. Welcome to this world, Starshine. May your life be long, joyful, and faithful to your middle name."

— Rena B. Lewis

"To Annie, our family lab for reminding me daily about the importance of play in one's life."

— John J. Wheeler

"To my parents, Judy and Tracy, for your continued love and support; and to Ezra and Zavin for reminding me of the important things in life."

— Stacy L. Carter

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Rena B. Lewis earned her Ph.D. at the University of Arizona, with a major in special education and minors in psychology and systems engineering. She began in special education as a teacher of children with intellectual disabilities, although the majority of her work has been with students with learning disabilities. She served as Professor of Special Education at San Diego State University until her appointment as Associate Dean for Faculty Development and Research in the College of Education. Dr. Lewis held the Associate Dean position until her recent retirement.

A frequent contributor to the professional literature, Dr. Lewis is interested in instructional adaptations for students with special needs, classroom assessment techniques, and ways to use classroom technologies to improve literacy instruction. In addition to this book, she is co-author with Dr. James A. McLoughlin of *Assessing Students with Special Needs*, Seventh Edition. She was honored with an award by the International Reading Association for her report on research implications for teaching reading to students with learning disabilities. Her most recent research interests center around literacy interventions for highly gifted children from linguistically diverse families.

Dr. John J. Wheeler began his career in special education many years ago as a teacher. He currently serves as the Director of the Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Learning and Development at East Tennessee State University and is a Professor of Special Education. He earned his Ph.D. in Special Education from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale in 1989. Since that time he has established himself as a university educator, applied researcher, and college-level administrator. His teaching and research interests have centered on the design of instructional and behavioral supports for children with autism and their families and on building capacity in schools located in underserved areas. He has numerous research publications and has co-authored with the late Dr. David Dean Richey the text *Behavior Management*: *Principles and Practices of Positive Behavior Supports*, now in its third edition, and *Methods of Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Evidence-Based Practices*, with Michael Mayton and Stacy L. Carter, also published by Pearson.

Dr. Stacy L. Carter earned a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology with an emphasis in School Psychology from Mississippi State University. He is currently an Associate Professor in the Special Education Program at Texas Tech University, where he coordinates the Graduate Certificate Program in Applied Behavior Analysis. Dr. Carter has worked with numerous school districts in several different states and developed support programs for students with a wide variety of different diagnoses. His current research focuses on the development and evaluation of behavior intervention programs for individuals with developmental disabilities and autism. He has published numerous peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and a scholarly reference book titled *The Social Validity Manual: A Guide to Subjective Evaluation of Behavior Interventions*.

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PREFACE

The needs of today's learners are as diverse as our students. General education teachers are now tasked with enabling a wide range of students—from English language learners to students with learning disabilities to those with visual or hearing impairments—to succeed and thrive in the inclusive classroom.

This book is about teaching and addressing the educational needs of *all* students. It is designed to prepare the professional educator to effectively teach the widely diverse range of students found in the general education classroom. It provides information about several groups of students with special needs, including those with disabilities, students who are gifted and talented, culturally diverse learners, and those who are English learners. In addition, it presents practical strategies for modifying instruction to meet the learning needs of all students in general education classrooms.

Teaching Students with Special Needs in General Education Classrooms, Ninth Edition, provides the knowledge, strategies, and instructional techniques that teachers need to address the complex and often perplexing diversity that lies behind the classroom door. All students, particularly those with special learning needs, deserve special care and special teaching. This reader-friendly, categorically organized text takes a case-based approach to contextualize the laws, organize the information, and teach the methods educators need to know to provide effective instruction to all children. Among new areas of focus in this edition are the important topics of response to intervention (RTI), Universal Design for Learning, classroom assessment techniques, and the needs of English learners. The most tech-savvy text of its kind, this comprehensive new REVEL edition continues to break new ground in preparing general educators for the challenges and opportunities of the inclusive classroom. It focuses first on the creation of inclusive classrooms, second on skills for the general education teacher, and finally on effective strategies for teaching students with disabilities and other types of special needs.

ORGANIZATION OF THE NINTH EDITION

The first four chapters discuss the purposes of and rationale for inclusion, describe collaboration and the team approach, identify the major characteristics of students with special needs, and explore the various types of diversity found in today's inclusive classrooms. Many text features support the fundamental concepts presented in these initial chapters, and provide background for the chapters that follow.

Part II addresses the skills needed by the educator, with emphasis on those of particular importance for teachers in general education classrooms. Strategies are provided for achieving four basic instructional goals for learners with special needs: arranging the learning environment, modifying instruction, encouraging positive classroom behavior, and promoting social acceptance. Also, information is presented on identifying and intervening with behavioral and academic challenges using RTI. Special features found throughout the text provide coverage of practical teaching strategies and techniques.

In Part III of the text, teaching strategies are suggested for a variety of different types of special students. This section provides methods for teaching students with learning disabilities, speech or language disorders, emotional and behavioral disorders, autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disabilities, physical and health impairments including attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and visual and hearing impairments.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

The ninth edition has been revised and reorganized into 15 total chapters with updated references from the most currently available information. The text is divided into three major areas: Introduction to Inclusive Classrooms, Skills for the General Education Teacher, and Strategies for Teaching Students with Disabilities. Each chapter has been organized to focus on understanding, integrating, and applying the crucial concepts of each section, which will

lead to better and more effective practices in the inclusive classroom. Other changes to this edition include:

- **NEW! Student Stories** at the beginning of each chapter include a short introductory story featuring relevant information about the student's learning strengths, needs and methods for modifying instruction.
- **An Integrated Approach to Students Who Are English Language Learners and those students who are Gifted and Talented,** who often require classroom and instructional adaptations to accommodate their own diverse set of needs.
- **NEW! Chapter 2: Collaboration and the Team Approach** focuses on the importance of partnering with parents and families to achieve educational goals.
- **NEW! Chapter 8: Monitoring Student Performance Using Response to Intervention** is focused exclusively on using RTI to prevent and intervene with academic and behavioral difficulties in the classroom.
- **Chapter 12: Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder** now reflects the new diagnostic criteria recently published in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed., DSM-5®, American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

This new REVEL edition provides you with greater flexibility in the delivery of material with access to additional learning resources, including:

- **NEW! Embedded Videos** with footage from real classrooms. In these videos, students will listen to experts, watch footage of diverse classrooms, and listen to and watch effective teachers talk about and practice strategies that promote learning.
- **Inclusion Tips for Teachers** takes an in-depth look at how real teachers use inclusive strategies in their classrooms.
- **NEW! Interactive Modules** with guided lessons on important topics that allow you to apply what you've learned.
- **NEW! Section Quizzes,** "Check Your Understanding," align with learning outcomes and appear at the end of each section in the REVEL edition. Using multiple-choice questions, the quizzes allow readers to test their knowledge of the concepts, research, strategies, and practices discussed in each section.

Support Materials for Instructors

The following resources are available for instructors to download on **www.pearsonhighered.com/educators**. Instructors enter the author or title of this book, select this particular edition of the book, and then click on the "Resources" tab to log in and download textbook supplements.

- **Instructor's Resource Manual and Test Bank**

  The **Instructor's Resource Manual and Test Bank** includes an overview of chapter content and related instructional activities for the college classroom and for field practice as well as a robust collection of chapter-by-chapter test items.

- **PowerPoint™ Slides**

  The **PowerPoint™ slides** include key concept summarizations. They are designed to help students understand, organize, and reinforce core concepts and theories.

- **TestGen**

  TestGen is a powerful test generator that instructors install on a computer and use in conjunction with the TestGen testbank file for the text. You install TestGen on your personal computer (Windows or Macintosh) and create your own tests for classroom testing and for other specialized delivery options, such as over a local area network or on the Web. A test bank, which is also called a Test Item File (TIF), typically contains a large set of test items organized by chapter and ready for use in creating a test based on the associated textbook material. Assessments may be created for both print and testing online.

*Please note that eText enhancements are only available in the Pearson eText and are not available in third-party eTexts such as Kindle®.

CONTRIBUTORS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Revisions for this ninth edition were completed by John J. Wheeler and Stacy L. Carter. The contributions of Rena B. Lewis and Donald H. Doorlag to previous editions add to the strength of this book.

We sincerely thank Ann Castel Davis for inviting us to serve as co-authors in the revision of this text and are most grateful for the opportunity. Thanks are also due to our development editor, Hope Madden, and to the reviewers: Linda Smetana, California State University East Bay; Antonio Causarano, Alfred University; Dr. Terri Collins, University of North Carolina Wilmington; Kathryn L. McCord, Ed.D., Alvernia University. Third, we offer special thanks to colleagues at Pearson and others such as Saraswathi Muralidhar, from Lumina Datamatics Ltd., and Vignesh Sadasivam, from Integra Software Services, who all helped to create this new and revised edition. Finally we would like to thank our families for their love and support as we worked diligently in the creation of this book.

John J. Wheeler and Stacy L. Carter

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PART I

INTRODUCTION TO INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

Chapter 1 Promoting Success for All Students

Chapter 2 Collaboration and the Team Approach

Chapter 3 Students with Disabilities and Other Types of Special Needs

Chapter 4 Diversity in Today's Classrooms

WavebreakmediaMicro/Fotolia

chapter 1

PROMOTING SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS

Students' Stories

Ruby

Ruby is 8 years old and loves playing outdoors, especially rollerblading and riding her bike. She also enjoys pizza and going to the movies. She and her two best friends, Stella and Evelyn, walk to their neighborhood school together each morning. They are all in Ms. McGill's second-grade class. Ruby is enjoying school this year, but last year was very hard for her. Ruby is a student with special needs. In first grade Ruby had a difficult time reading. This year she works with the special education resource teacher for 30 minutes each day, and she is beginning to make progress. In her second-grade class she does well in math and handwriting, and she can keep up with her classmates in spelling. Ruby is successfully included.

Alejandro

Alejandro is a highly ambitious high school student who is hoping to get a scholarship to attend a prestigious university upon graduation. Alejandro has been identified as being intellectually gifted, and wants to pursue a dual degree in physics and engineering in college with the ultimate goal of becoming an astronaut. This year he's taking advanced courses in English and calculus as well as biology and history. Alejandro has a physical impairment and moves around with the use of an electric wheelchair. Alejandro travels to school using a specialized bus to accommodate his wheelchair, and while at school he attends an adapted physical education class. Alejandro writes and types slowly, so he sometimes needs extra time to complete tests and assignments. His grades in all his classes are excellent, and he has many friends. Alejandro is successfully included.

Looking Ahead

Later in the chapter we will take a look at portions of the individualized education programs (IEPs) for Ruby and Alejandro. Until then, think about the questions that follow.

- What do you think is Ruby's best subject in school?
- What types of assistance do you think Ruby might need to succeed in the general education classroom?
- From what you know now, what are Alejandro's greatest strengths?
- If Alejandro were one of your students, what types of classroom adaptations do you think might be helpful?

Behind each classroom door lies a world of diversity. In a typical class of students, there is a wide range of abilities. Some students learn easily; others require more assistance. Their dispositions, their learning styles, their life experiences will vary, and it's important to understand and recognize each student as a person first, an individual with unique abilities, gifts and yes, sometimes challenges.

When students with special needs are members of a general education class, the range of diversity expands. Students with disabilities or those who are gifted and talented and or culturally and linguistically diverse are often indistinguishable from their peers. However, their learning needs may be more substantial than that of many of their peers. Like all students, all should be valued in their own right, for their individual personalities, preferences, skills, and needs. Each student, no matter his or her range of abilities and or learning challenges, provides a teacher with an opportunity to facilitate learning for that student.

This book is for teachers who wish to learn more about students with special needs. It is also about good teaching practices. All students, particularly those with special learning needs, deserve access to teachers committed to the success of all students. This book provides teachers with the skills needed to better address the needs and well-being of all students within the general education classroom. As a teacher you will be presented with some significant challenges but also opportunities to make a substantial impact on your students. Your role as a teacher in the lives of children is pivotal to their success. Embark on your professional development journey committed to learning all you can to enhance the lives and learning of all your students, and in turn your life will be enriched.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After you have completed this chapter you should know and be able to:

- Explain what an inclusive classroom is and how educators accommodate instruction for students with special needs.
- Discuss the special needs of students who require adaptations in the general education classroom.
- Outline the changes in special education and inclusion from the earliest schools to current educational thinking.
- Summarize the benefits of inclusion.

INCLUSION IN TODAY'S CLASSROOMS

Many different terms have been used to describe the practice of educating students with special needs in the general education classroom. **Students with special needs** are those who require instructional adaptations in order to learn successfully. This book considers several types of students with special needs: students with disabilities, those who are gifted and talented, and those who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Also falling into this category are students who are at risk for school failure. Because of physical, cognitive, or emotional disabilities, some children and adolescents receive special education services in addition to (or, in some cases, in place of) services provided by the general educational program. Other students may not be offered special programs in their schools, but their special learning needs soon become apparent to the general education teacher.

Inclusion has many meanings. Learn more about the many meanings of inclusion in this short video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_qgW9FWEgQ

In the 1970s and 1980s, most professionals called the approach to educating students with special needs *mainstreaming*. In the 1990s, the terms *full inclusion* and *inclusion* became more popular. These terms differ somewhat in meaning, and it is important to understand those differences.

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming refers to the inclusion of students with special needs in the general educational process. Students are considered mainstreamed if they spend any part of the school day with general education class peers. In a typical mainstreaming program, students with special needs in general education classrooms participate in instructional and social activities side by side with their classmates. Often they receive additional instruction and support from a special educator such as a resource teacher. That instruction may take place within the general education classroom or outside of it in a setting such as a resource room.

Integration of students with special needs into the mainstream of education differs according to the needs of the individual. It is characterized by the meaningful interaction of special and typical students in social activities and/or classroom instruction. Mainstreaming has been defined in many ways. Mainstreaming focuses on the placement of students with special needs in the general education classroom for a designated period of time specific to the academic and social needs of the student. This may be geared to instruction in a particular academic content area, or in other instructional areas such as music or physical education, and or nonacademic periods such as lunch. These opportunities foster the academic and social integration of students with special needs.

Full Inclusion

Full inclusion—the current term used for *mainstreaming*—was introduced by professionals interested in students with severe disabilities. The full inclusion movement calls for reform of practices that exclude and segregate individuals with disabilities (Obiakor, Harris, Mutua, Rotatori, & Algozzine, 2012). Advocates of full inclusion maintain that the general education classroom is the most appropriate full-time placement for all students with disabilities—not only those with mild learning and behavior problems, but also those with more severe disabilities. In the purest form of this model, students do not leave the mainstream or general classroom to receive special services; instead, support is provided within the general classroom setting.

In the past, many special education professionals disagreed with the assumption that full inclusion is the only appropriate placement for students with disabilities (e.g., Kavale & Mostert, 2003). Many now believe that a range of educational options referred to as the placement continuum, should be available so that educational programs can be tailored to the specific needs and development of the child (Council for Exceptional Children, 2010).

As discussed later in this chapter, this position is consistent with current federal laws and their requirements for placement of students with disabilities in the "1least restrictive environment."

Inclusion

Inclusion is the term most often used today to describe the placement of students with special needs in general education. *Inclusion* is a more contemporary term than *mainstreaming,* but, unfortunately, its meaning is imprecise. Sometimes *inclusion* is used as shorthand for *full inclusion;* at other times, it is a synonym for *mainstreaming.* It is important to determine what each speaker or writer means by the term *inclusion,* because there are basic philosophical differences between the approaches of full inclusion and mainstreaming.

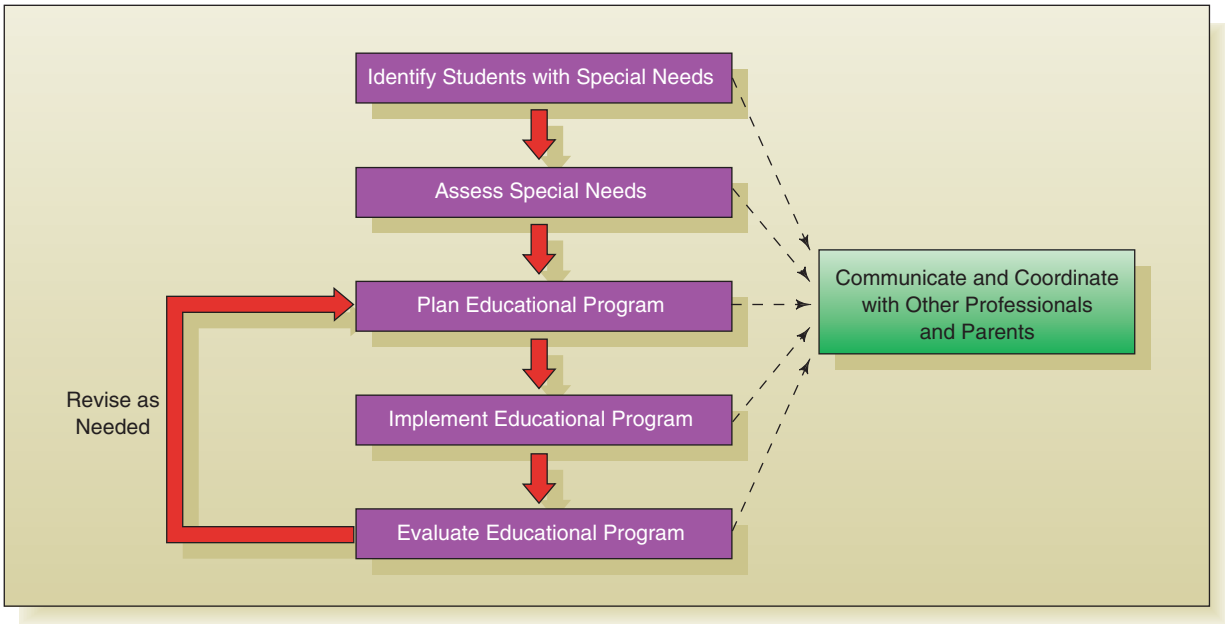
Learn more about the many meanings of the word inclusion by watching this short video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N105TGmMkLk

In this book, we use the term *inclusion* to refer to the meaningful participation of students with disabilities and other special needs in general education classrooms and programs. We believe in *responsible inclusion* (Richey, 2000), which implies that all students should be integrated to the greatest extent possible within the general education setting and that instructional supports should be planned and provided to meet their individual needs. In turn, teachers should be given the necessary supports to fully allow them to be successful in such a process, because without administrative and daily on-the-ground support, it cannot be fully effective.

Including students with special needs in general education programs is not a new idea. In the early days of education in the United States, classrooms served a wide variety of individuals, including some students with disabilities. The one-room schoolhouse with its range of ages and skills is an example. Kirk and Gallagher (1979) described an inclusion program that began in 1913 for students with vision losses. Students spent part of their day in the general classroom and part in a special "sight-saving class."

Today, most students with special needs begin school in general education and receive the majority of their education there. Many never leave the general education classroom. If their learning problems become apparent, some are identified as having a disability and receive special education services. Of these, few are served in special classes and special schools. Those who do attend special classes often join their general class peers for social activities and for instruction in nonacademic subjects such as art, music, and physical education. However, most students with disabilities are educated in general education classes, with part-time special services provided if necessary. In 2010, for example, 95% of this nation's children and youth with disabilities ages 6 to 21 years were served in regular schools, and 60.5% of students with disabilities were educated for 80% or more of the time in the general education classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Consider the stories of Ruby and Alejandro at the start of this chapter. They are students with disabilities who participate fully in general education while receiving special assistance in problem areas. They are examples of successfully included students.

FIGURE 1-1 Chart of Special Education Process



General Education Teachers and Students with Special Needs

General education teachers make several contributions to the success of students with special needs. The general education classroom teacher is often the first professional to identify the special needs of students and to initiate the referral process. This teacher is also a source of valuable information about current school performance when students are assessed for possible special education services. School psychologists often ask general education teachers to provide information about how a student performs academically in the classroom and also about the student's behavior. This type of information can be very valuable toward helping to determine the presence of a disability. General education teachers are part of the inclusion team, and they participate in planning the student's instructional needs and in developing the IEP.

The classroom teacher's most important role is implementation of the student's general education program. This process sometimes requires adaptation of classroom procedures, methods, and/or materials to guarantee success for the student with special needs. Classroom activities should be coordinated with the special services received by the student. Also, communication between parents and professionals is crucial.

In addition, the classroom teacher may help to evaluate the student's progress not only in the general education program, but also in areas served by specialists. Evaluation is a critical step in the educational process because it helps determine program modifications. Figure 1-1 presents the educational process, including the final step of evaluation. This diagram also provides a summary of the general education teacher's roles.

For Teachers
Click here to learn more about the benefits of inclusion to all students in the general education classroom.

Check your understanding of this section's concepts here.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Most discussions of inclusion concentrate on students with only one type of special need: children and adolescents with disabilities. Students who have a disability that adversely affects their school performance are served by special education, and federal laws uphold their right

to a free, appropriate public education. In this book, however, we've expanded the concept of students with special needs to include three other groups with learning needs significant enough to warrant special consideration. These are (1) students who are gifted and talented (often served by special education, but not protected by the laws for learners with disabilities); (2) students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (including those who are English language learners); and (3) students who are at risk for school failure. The special needs of these students, like those of many students with disabilities, can often be accommodated within the general education classroom.

Students with special needs are a heterogeneous group. They, like all students, may learn quickly and easily or experience challenges that impede their learning. Some may experience challenging behaviors. Some students have sensory or physical impairments. Others may experience speech and or language disorders or may represent diverse cultural backgrounds. Despite their special needs, such students can and do learn, given the pairing of effective teaching and instructional supports aimed at their success in the general education classroom.

IRIS CENTER

The IRIS Center at Vanderbilt University develops training enhancement materials for pre-service and practicing teachers. This module on classroom considerations will help you apply your knowledge about helping students with disabilities to have access to the general education curriculum. http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/agc/#content

Differences Among Special Needs Students

Students with disabilities may have special learning needs because of a cognitive, physical, sensory, language, or emotional disability, as referenced in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004). Attention-deficit disorder (ADD) and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are reflected in the IDEA (2004) as other health impairments.

Some of the terms that describe disabilities in federal laws are replaced or changed in common usage. For example, most special educators prefer *behavioral disorders* to *emotional disturbance*. Also, *orthopedic impairments* are often called *physical impairments*, and *mental retardation* may be referred to as *cognitive* or *intellectual disability*. The term *autism* is often replaced by the term *autism spectrum disorder*.

Students with learning disabilities have adequate general intelligence and are able to succeed in many school tasks. However, because of specific disabilities in areas such as attention, perception, and memory, they experience difficulty in school. They may encounter learning problems in one or more, although usually not all, academic subjects. In contrast, students with intellectual disabilities generally are delayed in most, if not all, academic subject areas. They are characterized by a slower rate of learning and difficulty with reasoning tasks.

Students with behavioral disorders may have adequate academic achievement despite poor classroom behavior, or their behavior problems may interfere with learning. Such students may be disruptive or withdrawn, they may experience difficulty controlling their own behavior, or they may lack the skills necessary for building and maintaining interpersonal relationships with peers and adults.

Jules Selmes/Pearson Education

Communication problems are primary in students with speech and language impairments. A student's speech may be difficult for others to understand, or language development may be delayed. Students with autism spectrum disorder experience difficulty in socialization as well as in communication. With visual and hearing impairments, the disability is sensory. Individuals with visual impairments may be blind or partially sighted; those with hearing impairments may be deaf or hard of hearing. In either case, learning takes place through the senses still available to the student.

Students with physical and health impairments may participate fully in general class activities. However, those with limited physical mobility, such as those who travel by wheelchair, may take a less active role. Some with chronic health problems may have special needs because of prolonged school absences. In general, students with special physical and health needs can progress successfully in general education. For many of these students, physical problems have little effect on their ability to learn.

Two other groups of individuals with disabilities are often members of general education classes: students with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and those with ADD or ADHD. Most students with TBI are members of general education classes when the accident or other trauma that causes the injury to the brain occurs, and most return to that setting after hospitalization and rehabilitation. Students with ADD or ADHD typically remain in the general education setting while receiving assistance for problems in attention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity.

Students Who Are Gifted and Talented

Like learners with disabilities, students who are **gifted and talented** are exceptional. Although they usually do not encounter school failure, their extraordinary abilities require special teaching. Students who are gifted are unusually bright; they may learn quickly and excel in all areas. They may be far ahead of their peers and thus require special attention and instruction. Some students with gifts are creative; others have special abilities in specific areas such as art, music, drama, and leadership. Some students identified as gifted and talented may also be diagnosed with a disability such as autism spectrum disorder or learning disability. These children are often referred to as twice exceptional. Opportunities for expression of creativity and talents and socialization can be provided within the general education classroom.

Diversity Among Students

Students who are **culturally and linguistically diverse** present a different type of challenge. Although many students from diverse groups do not need special assistance to succeed in general education, some do. The customs, traditions, and values of their culture may set them apart from their peers and hinder their acceptance. Some students may be fluent speakers of English; others may be bilingual, speaking English and another language; still others may be just beginning to acquire English language skills. If communication is difficult, learning problems may result.

Also posing a challenge to the teacher are **students at risk for school failure**. Although these students are not considered to have a disability under the law, their current performance and future welfare are threatened by a host of complex societal challenges, which may include poverty, homelessness, child abuse, and drug and alcohol abuse, among others. Students at risk have very real life problems needs that impact their learning, and these must be addressed in tandem to promote their optimal development and learning.

Students with special needs often come to the attention of their teachers when they require instructional assistance to succeed in school. Their needs, however, are similar to those of their peers, although probably more significant and long-standing. Every class, no matter how homogenous, is composed of students, all unique individuals with their own strengths and challenges, some with learning difficulties, though all with the capacity to learn, provided the level of instruction is paired with the ability of the learner. To learn more about students with special needs, see Figure 1-2 for general characteristics about students with disabilities.

FIGURE 1-2 General Characteristics of Students with Special Needs

- Approximately 13% of the population grades K–12 were identified as having a disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).
- Although students with special needs differ in the extent of instructional adaptation they require, most have mild learning problems. Only a small percentage of students have severe disabilities.
- Many people think of physical problems when they hear the term disability. However, physical, visual, and hearing impairments are the least common types of disabilities. Students with specific learning disabilities make up approximately 36% of the special education population, while students with speech or language impairments account for approximately 21% (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).
- It is usually not possible to tell whether students are special from their physical appearance. Students who are typically developing may be indistinguishable from students who are gifted, students with learning disabilities, and those with speech impairments.
- It is possible for a student to have more than one special need. A young child with an intellectual disability may have poor speech and language skills, a talented adolescent may have a learning disability, and a student who is blind may be gifted.
- Students in special education are spending more time in general education classrooms than ever before. In 2012 more than 60% of special education students spent 80% or more of their school day in a general education class compared to approximately 35% who spent the same amount of time in general education during the 1990–1991 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

As Figure 1-3 details, PL 94–142 expanded the idea of normalization and applied it to school programs by requiring that students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment—that is, alongside their peers without disabilities—whenever feasible. Congress enacted this law in 1975 for several reasons. At that time, about one million children with disabilities had been excluded from the public school system. Also, large numbers of students in general education classes were experiencing failure because their disabilities had not been detected. Congress concluded that less than half the students with disabilities in the United States were receiving appropriate educational services (PL 105–17, 1997). PL 94–142 has been updated several times since its passage in 1975. In 1990, it was given a new name: the IDEA. Revised in 1997 and again in 2004, the most current version is called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. Figure 1-3 describes these and other pieces of federal legislation considered to be landmark civil rights laws for persons with disabilities.

Current Issues and Future Trends

Several important factors influence general education, special education, and their collaboration in the provision of services to students with special needs. One ongoing factor is the shortage of special education teachers available to work with special education students (Sindelar, Brownell & Billingsley, 2010). As Sindelar and colleagues (2010) have indicated, a shortage of qualified special education teachers has existed since the 1970s. As the authors also conclude, the passage of No Child Left Behind in 2001 made the shortage problem basically a non-issue, as the legislation defined *highly qualified* to also include teachers from alternative teacher certification programs and those who have passed difficult content exams in their specific disciplines. This practice in effect has circumvented traditional special education preparation programs

Another fairly recent trend in education involves the utilization of response to intervention (RTI) procedures to assess the needs of students (Hoover & Love, 2011; Parisi, Ihlo, & Glover, 2014). With RTI, students are continually evaluated with very brief assessments to determine their academic progress and then provided with instruction to allow them to succeed. The overall difficulty with these procedures has been implementation within schools. Many teachers are not familiar with how to conduct the brief assessments and overall process of RTI. In addition, RTI can be used as a substitute for identifying students who qualify for special education services, and this has led to increased confusion on how and when teachers should use RTI.