

4th Edition

Teaching in Today's Inclusive Classrooms

A Universal Design for Learning Approach

Richard M. Gargiulo • Debbie Metcalf





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Australia • Brazil • Canada • Mexico • Singapore • United Kingdom • United States

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A Universal Design for Learning Approach,
Fourth Edition**

Richard M. Gargiulo and Debbie Metcalf

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This book is dedicated with respect
and admiration to all of the
teachers who strive daily to
make a difference in the lives of
their students.

RMG
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October 2021

About the Authors



Richard M. Gargiulo is professor emeritus of special education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Prior to receiving his Ph.D. in educational psychology from the University of Wisconsin, Richard taught fourth graders as well as young children with intellectual disability in the Milwaukee Public Schools. Upon receiving his doctorate he joined the faculty of Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio, where he taught for over eight years. He was a teacher educator at UAB for over three decades.

A frequent contributor to the professional literature, Richard has authored or coauthored over 100 publications, including twenty textbooks. His previous professional contributions include serving as the first Fulbright Scholar in special education assigned to the former Czechoslovakia; twice elected as president of the Alabama Federation, Council for Exceptional Children; former president of the Division of International Special Education and Services (DISES), Council for Exceptional Children; and former president of the Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities (DADD), Council for Exceptional Children.

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Preface xviii

Part 1 Foundations for Educating All Learners

Chapter 1	Teaching in Today's Inclusive Classrooms: Your Journey Begins	1
Chapter 2	Introducing Universal Design for Learning	31
Chapter 3	Policies, Practices, and Processes for Special Education and Inclusive Education	57
Chapter 4	Diversity in the Classroom: Learners with High Incidence Disabilities	79
Chapter 5	Diversity in the Classroom: Students with Low Incidence Disabilities	117
Chapter 6	Learners with Gifts and Talents, Learners Who Are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, and Other Learners at Risk	146

Part 2 Planning Instruction for All Learners

Chapter 7	Collaboration and Cooperative Teaching: Tools for Teaching All Learners	166
Chapter 8	Designing Learning That Works for All Students	190
Chapter 9	Assessing and Evaluating Learner Progress	226
Chapter 10	Selecting Instructional Strategies for Teaching All Learners	252
Chapter 11	Selecting Behavioral Supports for All Learners	287

Part 3 Implementing Effective Instructional Practices for All Learners

Chapter 12	Assistive Technologies and Innovative Learning Tools	319
Chapter 13	Creating Literacy-Rich Environments for All Learners	344
Chapter 14	Developing an Understanding of Mathematics in All Learners	382
Chapter 15	Teaching Critical Content in Science and Social Studies to All Learners	422
Appendix A	InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards	459
Appendix B	Council for Exceptional Children: Initial Level Special Education Preparation Standards	460
Glossary		462
References		472
Index		491

Part 1 Foundations for Educating All Learners

Chapter 1

Teaching in Today's Inclusive Classrooms: Your Journey Begins 1

Teaching All Learners *Communicating About Individuals with Disabilities* 3

Learners in Today's Classrooms 3

Learners in Need of Special Services 4

By the Numbers: A Quick Look 6

Placement Options for Educating Students with Special Needs 7

Educational Placements 7

A Cascade of Service Delivery Options 8

Inclusionary Practices and Thinking 9

Teacher Voices *The Importance of Inclusionary Classroom Practices* 10

Introducing Universal Design for Learning 10

The Role of the Courts in Special Education 11

Key Judicial Decisions 12

Key Special Education Legislation 12

Educational Reform for Students and Teachers 19

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 19

Common Core State Standards 20

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 21

Every Student Succeeds Act 24

Teaching All Learners *IDEA Highlights: 1975–2004* 25

Civil Rights Legislation 26

Thematic Summary 28

Making Connections for Inclusive Teaching 29

Learning Activities 29

Looking at the Standards 29

Key Concepts and Terms 30

Chapter 2

Introducing Universal Design for Learning 31

The Concept of Universal Design 33

Background in Architecture 33

The Seven Principles of Universal Design 34

Universal Design Applications in Society 34

Implications for Today's Classrooms 35

Teaching All Learners *UDL Strategies for all Classrooms* 35

The Development of Universal Design for Learning 36

Brain-Based Research: Recognition, Strategic, and Affective Systems 36

Cognitive-Social Learning Theories 38

Multiple Intelligences and Learning Preferences 42

Implications for Teaching and Learning 42

Three Essential Qualities of UDL: Representation, Action and Expression, and Engagement 45

Multiple Means of Representation 45

Multiple Means of Action and Expression 47

Multiple Means of Engagement 48

Teacher Voices *Teachers Talk About UDL* 50

UDL and Differentiated Instruction 51

The Benefits of Flexible Options 52

UDL in the Classroom *Feedback from the Field* 54

Thematic Summary 55

Making Connections for Inclusive Teaching 55

Learning Activities 55

Looking at the Standards 56

Key Concepts and Terms 56

Chapter 3

Policies, Practices, and Processes for Special Education and Inclusive Education 57

Identification and Assessment of Individual Differences 58

Referral and Assessment for a Special Education 60

Prereferral 60

Referral 64

Assessment 65

Teaching All Learners <i>Assessment Accommodations</i> 66	Etiology of Speech and Language Impairments 94
Instructional Programming and Appropriate Placement 67	Selected Characteristics of Learners with Speech and Language Impairments 94
The Individualized Education Program 68	UDL and Common Core Standards <i>Incorporating UDL Essential Qualities and Common Core Standards: Speech and Language Impairments</i> 95
Teaching All Learners <i>Elements of a Meaningful IEP</i> 70	Learners with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders 96
Teaching All Learners <i>Suggested Individualized Education Program Meeting Agenda</i> 71	Defining Emotional or Behavioral Disorders 96
Related Services 71	Classifying Learners with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders 98
Section 504 Accommodation Plan 72	How Many Learners Exhibit Emotional or Behavioral Disorders? 98
Who Is Protected by Section 504? 73	Etiology of Emotional or Behavioral Disorders 99
Providing a Free Appropriate Public Education 73	Selected Learning and Behavioral Characteristics of Learners with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders 101
Section 504 Eligibility Determination 73	UDL and Common Core Standards <i>Incorporating UDL Essential Qualities and Common Core Standards: Emotional or Behavioral Disorders</i> 101
Accommodation Plans 74	Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders 102
<i>Thematic Summary</i> 77	Defining Autism Spectrum Disorders 102
<i>Making Connections for Inclusive Teaching</i> 77	How Many Learners Exhibit Autism Spectrum Disorders? 105
<i>Learning Activities</i> 77	Etiology of Autism Spectrum Disorders 105
<i>Looking at the Standards</i> 77	Selected Learning and Behavioral Characteristics of Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders 106
<i>Key Concepts and Terms</i> 78	Learners with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder 106
Chapter 4	UDL and Common Core Standards <i>Incorporating UDL Essential Qualities and Common Core Standards: Autism Spectrum Disorders</i> 107
Diversity in the Classroom: Learners with High Incidence Disabilities 79	Defining Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder 108
Learners with Intellectual Disability 82	How Many Learners Exhibit Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder? 108
Defining Intellectual Disability 82	Etiology of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder 109
Classification of Learners with Intellectual Disability 84	Selected Learning and Behavioral Characteristics of Learners with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder 110
How Many Learners Exhibit Intellectual Disability? 85	UDL and Common Core Standards <i>Incorporating UDL Essential Qualities and Common Core Standards: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder</i> 111
Etiology of Intellectual Disability 86	Summary of Selected Learning and Behavioral Characteristics 112
Selected Learning and Behavioral Characteristics of Learners with Intellectual Disability 86	Today's Students <i>Michael</i> 113
Learners with Learning Disabilities 86	Today's Students <i>Sam</i> 114
Defining Learning Disabilities 87	<i>Thematic Summary</i> 115
How Many Learners Exhibit Learning Disabilities? 90	<i>Making Connections for Inclusive Teaching</i> 115
Etiology of Learning Disabilities 90	<i>Learning Activities</i> 115
Selected Learning and Behavioral Characteristics of Learners with Learning Disabilities 91	<i>Looking at the Standards</i> 116
Learners with Speech and Language Impairments 91	<i>Key Concepts and Terms</i> 116
Defining Speech and Language 92	
Classifying Learners with Speech and Language Impairments: Speech Disorders 92	
Language Disorders 93	
How Many Learners Exhibit Speech and Language Impairments? 93	

Chapter 5 Diversity in the Classroom: Students with Low Incidence Disabilities 117

Learners with Hearing Impairments 118

- Defining Hearing Impairments 119
- Classification of Learners with Hearing Impairments 120
- How Many Learners Exhibit Hearing Impairments? 122
- Etiology of Hearing Impairments 122
- Selected Learning and Behavioral Characteristics of Learners with Hearing Impairments 123

UDL and Common Core Standards *Incorporating UDL Essential Qualities and Common Core Standards: Hearing Impairment* 124

Learners with Visual Impairments 125

- Defining Visual Impairments 125
- Classification of Learners with Visual Impairments 126
- How Many Learners Exhibit Visual Impairments? 127
- Etiology of Visual Impairments 127
- Selected Learning and Behavioral Characteristics of Learners with Visual Impairments 128

UDL and Common Core Standards *Incorporating UDL Essential Qualities and Common Core Standard: Visual Impairment* 129

Learners with Deaf-Blindness 130

- Defining Deaf-Blindness 130

Teaching All Learners *Orientation and Mobility Tips for General Educators* 130

- How Many Learners Exhibit Deaf-Blindness? 131
- Etiology of Deaf-Blindness 131
- Selected Learning and Behavioral Characteristics of Learners with Deaf-Blindness 132

Learners with Physical Disabilities, Health Disabilities, or Traumatic Brain Injury 133

- Defining Physical Disabilities, Health Disabilities, and Traumatic Brain Injury 134
- Conditions Associated with Physical and Health Disabilities 135

Physical Disabilities 135

- Multiple Disabilities 137
- Traumatic Brain Injury 137
- Orthopedic Impairments 135

Health Disabilities 138

- Other Health Impairments 138

Teaching All Learners *Steps for Teachers to Take When a Tonic-Clonic Seizure Occurs* 139

- How Many Learners Exhibit Physical Disabilities, Health Disabilities, or Traumatic Brain Injury? 140
- Etiology of Physical Disabilities, Health Disabilities, and Traumatic Brain Injury 140
- Selected Learning and Behavioral Characteristics of Learners with Physical

- Disabilities, Health Disabilities, or Traumatic Brain Injury 140

- Students with Traumatic Brain Injury 141

Teaching All Learners *Recommended Classroom Adaptations for Students with Physical or Health Disabilities* 142

Teaching All Learners *Instructional Recommendations for Students with Traumatic Brain Injury* 143

UDL and Common Core Standards *Incorporating UDL Essential Qualities and Common Core Standards: Physical Disabilities* 143

Summary of Selected Learning and Behavioral Characteristics 144

- Thematic Summary* 144
- Making Connections for Inclusive Teaching* 144
- Learning Activities* 144
- Looking at the Standards* 145
- Key Concepts and Terms* 145

Chapter 6

Learners with Gifts and Talents, Learners Who Are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, and Other Learners at Risk 146

Learners with Gifts and Talents 147

- Defining Giftedness 148
- How Many Learners Exhibit Gifts and Talents? 148
- Etiology of Giftedness 149
- Selected Learning and Behavioral Characteristics of Learners with Gifts and Talents 149

Learners Who Are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse 150

- Terminology of Cultural Differences 151
- Bilingual Education: Concepts and Characteristics 152
- Cultural and Linguistic Diversity and Special Education 153

Teaching All Learners *Instructional Options for Students Who Are Bilingual: Approach and Strategies* 154

Learners at Risk for Success in School 155

- Defining at Risk 155
- Family Poverty 156
- Homelessness 157
- Child Abuse and Neglect 159

Summary of Selected Learning and Behavioral Characteristics 162

- Today's Students** *Maria* 163
- Thematic Summary* 163
- Making Connections for Inclusive Teaching* 164
- Learning Activities* 164
- Looking at the Standards* 164
- Key Concepts and Terms* 165

Part 2 Planning Instruction for All Learners

Chapter 7

Collaboration and Cooperative Teaching: Tools for Teaching All Learners 166

Collaboration 167

Collaboration Between General and Special Educators 168

Collaborating with Paraprofessionals 169

Collaborating with Parents/Families 171

Teaching All Learners *It Takes a Village* 173

Teaching All Learners *Recommendations for Building Culturally Competent Relationships* 176

Collaborative Consultation 176

Teaming Models 179

Multidisciplinary Teams 179

Interdisciplinary Teams 179

Transdisciplinary Teams 180

Cooperative Teaching 180

Cooperative Teaching Options 182

Research Support 183

Suggestions for Building Successful Cooperative Teaching Arrangements 184

Teacher Voices *One Teacher's View of Collaboration and Inclusion* 186

Thematic Summary 187

Making Connections for Inclusive Teaching 188

Learning Activities 188

Looking at the Standards 188

Key Concepts and Terms 189

Chapter 8

Designing Learning That Works for All Students 190

Four Components of Universally Designed Curriculum 192

Goals 192

Materials and Resources 199

Methods 201

Assessment 203

The UDL Lesson Plan 204

Designing Physical Learning Environments 206

Physical Environment Considerations 207

ACCESS to the Physical Learning Environment 207

Teacher Voices *Creating the Right Learning Environment* 209

Designing Social Learning Environments 212

ACCESS to the Social Environment 212

Teaching All Learners *Creating Caring School Communities Using Social Skills Instruction* 217

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and UDL 219

Using Adaptations to Support Universally Designed Learning Environments 219

Accommodations 220

Modifications 220

Collaboration in Planning Universally Designed Learning Environments 221

Collaborative Planning and Teaching 222

Collaborative Problem-Solving 223

Thematic Summary 224

Making Connections for Inclusive Teaching 224

Learning Activities 224

Looking at the Standards 225

Key Concepts and Terms 225

Chapter 9

Assessing and Evaluating Learner Progress 226

Types and Purposes of Classroom Assessment 227

Large-Scale Assessments 228

Alternate Assessments 228

Ongoing Assessment 230

UDL in the Classroom *Alternative Assessments* 230

Effective Classroom Assessment Approaches 231

Approaches to Initial Assessment That Increase Learner Engagement 231

Review of School Records 231

Formal and Informal Assessments 231

Inventories 232

Working Collaboratively 236

Interpreting Standardized Tests 237

Interpreting Behavior Rating Scales 237

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports 238

Planning and Organizing Assessments 238

Planning for Ongoing Assessment 238

Formative Assessments 238

- Summative Assessments 239
- Informative Assessments 239
- Organizational Systems for Assessments 240

Recording Assessments 240

- Curriculum-Based Measurement 240
- Data-Based Individualization 240
- Rubrics 242

Applying Universal Design for Learning Principles 242

- High-Tech and Low-Tech Materials 243
- Computerized Assessments and Electronic Device Applications 243
- Multiple Means of Representation in Assessment 243

- Teacher Voices** *Multiple Means of Assessment* 244
- Multiple Means of Engagement in Assessment 248

Thematic Summary 250

Making Connections for Inclusive Teaching 250

Learning Activities 250

Looking at the Standards 251

Key Concepts and Terms 251

Chapter 10

Selecting Instructional Strategies for Teaching All Learners 252

Considering Stages of Learning in Strategy Selection 254

- Entry Level/Acquisition Stages 255
- Proficiency 255
- Maintenance 255
- Generalization 256
- Application 256

Using Curricular Design Principles in Strategy Selection 257

- Begin with Big Ideas 257
- Activate Prior Knowledge 258
- Integrate Learning Goals 259

UDL and Common Core Standards *Authentic, Project-Based Learning* 261

- Use Conspicuous Strategies 262

Teacher Voices *UDL Inspired Instructional Approaches* 263

- Apply Mediated Scaffolding 266

Teaching All Learners *Using Task Analysis in Your Classroom* 268

- Provide Purposeful and Cumulative Review 271

Tier Talk *Multi-Tiered Systems of Support at a Glance—Differentiation of General Strategy Selection* 274

Considering Specific Learning Domains in General Strategy Selection 275

- Cognitive/Generalization 275
- Giftedness 276
- Language/Speech 276
- Memory 277
- Study Skills, Organization, and Test-Taking 277
- Attention Disorders/Hyperactivity/Impulsivity 278
- Social/Emotional/Motivational Challenges 278
- Physical/Motor/Sensory Challenges 281

Using Classroom Web Sites and Other Web Tools 283

Thematic Summary 284

Making Connections for Inclusive Teaching 284

Learning Activities 285

Looking at the Standards 285

Key Concepts and Terms 286

Chapter 11

Selecting Behavioral Supports for All Learners 287

Establish Learning Goals: Big Ideas for Behavioral Support 288

- Teacher Expectations and Challenging Behaviors 289

Students with Exceptionalities and Other Diverse Learners 289

- Multiple Meanings of Challenging Behavior 291
- Using Positive Behavior Interventions and Support 292

Assessment of Behavior 293

Teacher Voices *Positive Behavior Intervention and Support* 294

- Targeting the Behavior 294
- Tracking the Behavior 295
- Recording Behavior 295
- Analyzing Behavior 299

Methods, Materials, and Resources that Promote Positive Behavior for All Learners 300

- Understanding Terminology 300
- Increasing Appropriate Behavior 301
- Decreasing Inappropriate Behavior 303
- Teaching New Behavior 305
- Maintenance and Generalization 309
- Peers and School Personnel 309

UDL in the Classroom *The MotivAider®* 310

Teaching All Learners *Collaborating with Special Educators to Support Students with Challenging Behavior in Inclusive Classrooms* 311

Collaborating with Parents 311
Culturally Diverse Families 313
Summary—Putting It All Together 314
Tier Talk *Multi-Tiered Systems of Support at a Glance—
Strategies and Interventions* 315

Thematic Summary 316
Making Connections for Inclusive Teaching 316
Learning Activities 317
Looking at the Standards 317
Key Concepts and Terms 318

Part 3 Implementing Effective Instructional Practices for All Learners

Chapter 12

Assistive Technologies and Innovative Learning Tools 319

Technology in the 21st Century Classroom 320

History of Technology for People with Disabilities 322

Definition of Assistive Technology 322

Examples of Assistive Technology 323

UDL in the Classroom *Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Tools* 326

Assistive Technology: Key to Accessing the General Education Curriculum 329

Accessible Educational Materials 330

Learner Needs and Preferences 330

Differentiated Instruction, Learning Menus, and Assistive Technology 331

Teacher Voices *One Classroom Teacher's Thoughts on Assistive Technology* 332

Function over Disability 332

Obtaining Assistive Technology for the Classroom 332

Whose Responsibility Is It? 333

The AT Evaluation 333

Selecting Assistive Technology: The SETT Framework 333

Student 333

Environment 333

Task 334

Tools 334

Other Assistive Technology Planning Tools 335

Active Learning Through Innovative Technology 336

Social Software Tools 336

Visual and Media Literacy Tools 337

Teaching All Learners *Interactive Whiteboard Tips* 338

Opportunities Through Technology 341

Thematic Summary 342

Making Connections for Inclusive Teaching 342

Learning Activities 342

Looking at the Standards 343

Key Concepts and Terms 343

Chapter 13

Creating Literacy-Rich Environments for All Learners 344

Goals: Literacy Instruction Big Ideas 347

Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Word Recognition 348

Fluency with Text 349

Vocabulary 349

Teaching All Learners *UDL and Differentiated Instruction* 350

Teacher Voices *UDL Inspired Strategies for Literacy Instruction* 351

Comprehension 351

Writing/Spelling/Handwriting 352

Literacy Assessment 352

Formal Assessments 352

Reading and Writing Questionnaires 353

Informal Assessments 354

Ongoing Assessments 356

Methods, Materials, and Resources That Promote Literacy for All Learners 356

Fostering Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Word Recognition 356

Increasing Fluency with Text 357

Developing Vocabulary 359

Building Comprehension 362

Assisting with Writing/Spelling /Handwriting 364

UDL in the Classroom *Connecting with Tablet Computers and Smartpens* 367

UDL Applications for Reading in the Content Areas 368

- Modify the Reading Requirement 368
- Modify the Reading Level of the Text 369
- Adapt the Format of the Text/Print Material 371
- Adapt the Presentation of the Text 371

Possible Barriers and Solutions to Literacy Achievement 372

- Vision 372
- Hearing 372
- Social/Emotional 373
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder 373
- Motivation 373

UDL Lesson Planning with Differentiated Instruction for Literacy 374

Tier Talk *Multi-Tiered Systems of Support at a Glance—Literacy Strategies/Interventions* 377

Fostering Literacy Collaboration 379

- Thematic Summary* 380
- Making Connections for Inclusive Teaching* 380
- Learning Activities* 380
- Looking at the Standards* 381
- Key Concepts and Terms* 381

Chapter 14**Developing an Understanding of Mathematics in All Learners 382**

Teacher Voices *Math in an Inclusive Fourth Grade Classroom* 384

Establish Learning Goals: Big Ideas in Mathematics Instruction 385

- Problem-Solving 385
- Mathematic Communication 386
- Numbers and Operations 387
- Algebra 388
- Geometry and Spatial Sense 388
- Measurement 388
- Data Analysis and Probability 389

Assessment of Mathematics 389

- Formal Assessment 390
- Informal Assessment 390

Methods, Materials, and Resources That Promote Mathematics for All Learners 393

Teaching All Learners *Concrete-Representational-Abstract* 394

- Problem-Solving 396
- Communication of Mathematic Ideas 397
- Numbers and Operations 401
- Algebra 405

UDL in the Classroom *Graphic Organizers for Mathematics* 408

- Geometry and Spatial Sense 409
- Measurement 410
- Data Analysis and Probability 412

Universal Design for Learning Lesson Planning with Differentiated Instruction for Mathematics 414

Tier Talk *Multi-Tiered Systems of Support at a Glance—Mathematics Strategies and Intervention* 417

Fostering Collaboration in Mathematics Instruction 418

- Thematic Summary* 420
- Making Connections for Inclusive Teaching* 420
- Learning Activities* 420
- Looking at the Standards* 421
- Key Concepts and Terms* 421

Chapter 15**Teaching Critical Content in Science and Social Studies to All Learners 422****Challenges for Diverse Learners in Science and Social Studies 424**

Teacher Voices *An Interdisciplinary Unit Planned with UDL Principles in Mind* 425

Learning Goals 426

- Big Ideas in Science 426
- Big Ideas in Social Studies 428
- Interdisciplinary Unit Planning 429
- Differentiating for Complexity 431

Science and Social Studies Content Area Assessment 431

- Using Rubrics 432
- Applying UDL to Science and Social Studies Assessments 433

Methods, Tools, Materials, and Resources for Science and Social Studies Instruction 435

- Multiple Means of Representation 438
- Working with Vocabulary and Readability 439
- Multiple Means of Action and Expression 442
- Multiple Means of Engagement 446

UDL in the Classroom *Using VoiceThread in UDL Classrooms* 448

Academic, Social, and Physical Adaptations 449

- The Academic and Social Environment 449
- The Physical Environment 449

Teaching All Learners *Teaching in the Science Content Area* 450

UDL Lesson Planning with Differentiated Instruction for the Content Areas	452
Collaboration in Science and Social Studies Instruction	454
Co-teaching	454
Building Community Support	455
Tier Talk <i>Multi-Tiered Systems of Support at a Glance—Differentiation of Science/Social Studies</i>	455
<i>Thematic Summary</i>	457
<i>Making Connections for Inclusive Teaching</i>	457
<i>Learning Activities</i>	457
<i>Looking at the Standards</i>	458
<i>Key Concepts and Terms</i>	458
Appendix A	InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards 459
Appendix B	Council for Exceptional Children: Initial Level Special Education Preparation Standards 460
Glossary	462
References	472
Index	491

TEACHER VOICES

- The Importance of Inclusionary Classroom Practices 10
Teachers Talk About UDL 50
One Teacher's View of Collaboration and Inclusion 186
Creating the Right Learning Environment 209
Multiple Means of Assessment 244
UDL Inspired Instructional Approaches 263
- Positive Behavior Intervention and Support 294
One Classroom Teacher's Thoughts on Assistive Technology 332
UDL Inspired Strategies for Literacy Instruction 351
Math in an Inclusive Fourth Grade Classroom 384
An Interdisciplinary Unit Planned with UDL Principles in Mind 425

TEACHING ALL LEARNERS

- Communicating About Individuals with Disabilities 3
IDEA Highlights: 1975–2004 25
UDL Strategies for All Classrooms 35
Assessment Accommodations 66
Elements of a Meaningful IEP 70
Suggested Individualized Education Program Meeting Agenda 71
Orientation and Mobility Tips for General Educators 130
Steps for Teachers to Take When a Tonic-Clonic Seizure Occurs 139
Recommended Classroom Adaptations for Students with Physical or Health Disabilities 142
Instructional Recommendations for Students with Traumatic Brain Injury 143
Instructional Options for Students Who Are Bilingual: Approach and Strategies 154
- It Takes a Village 173
Recommendations for Building Culturally Competent Relationships 176
Creating Caring School Communities Using Social Skills Instruction 217
Using Task Analysis in Your Classroom 268
Collaborating with Special Educators to Support Students with Challenging Behavior in Inclusive Classrooms 311
Interactive Whiteboard Tips 338
UDL and Differentiated Instruction 350
Concrete-Representational-Abstract 394
Teaching in the Science Content Area 450

TODAY'S STUDENTS

- Michael 113
Sam 114
- Maria 163

UDL IN THE CLASSROOM

- Feedback from the Field 54
Alternate Assessments 230
Authentic, Project-Based Learning 261
The MotivAider® 310
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Tools 326
- Connecting with Tablet Computers and Smartpens 367
Graphic Organizers for Mathematics 408
Using VoiceThread in UDL Classrooms 448

TIER TALK

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support at a Glance—
Differentiation of General Strategy Selection 274

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support at a Glance—
Strategies and Interventions 315

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support at a Glance—
Literacy Strategies and Interventions 377

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support at a Glance—
Mathematics Strategies and Interventions 417

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support at a Glance—
Differentiation of Science/Social Studies 455

Letter to Our Readers

Dear Readers

You are about to embark upon an important and exciting journey—how to reach and teach all different members of your classroom community. We hope this text will serve as a road map for each one of you as you search for effective ways to instruct, engage, manage, and challenge a wide range of learners in your classroom to meet rigorous goals. Students in today’s K–12 schools have grown up with technology and access to abundant information. They will be entering a highly competitive global workforce. How can we adjust our teaching practices in order to help each student reach their maximum potential in the midst of this change? Our goal for this book is just that.

There are many excellent books available on the topic of inclusive teaching. Two things, however, make our text different from most others. First, our application of a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework is applied throughout most of the text. Even though UDL evolved as a concept out of special education, general educators are also realizing that “one size does not fit all” in today’s diverse classrooms. To meet the demands of the 21st century learner, we must change how we teach. The UDL framework provides an effective way to design learning plans that have accessible goals, assessment, evidence-based strategies, and materials. Technology tools are infused throughout with the knowledge that they can increase access, flexibility, motivation, and our ability to compete globally. Technology can no longer be a barrier in this digital age—we offer many free or low-budget suggestions on ways to integrate technology in every classroom, in addition to “high tech” ideas. UDL is also compatible with differentiated instruction, collaborative teaching, positive behavior intervention and supports, and more.

The second way our text differs from others is that we have modeled collaborative writing by combining the efforts of a university professor and a K–12 public school teacher. We felt it was important to blend the higher education and K–12 perspectives as we wrote to capture the best work each of us had to offer. In our busy lives, sometimes the researchers and practitioners don’t always have time to connect. This text collaboration gave us a way to communicate frequently about topics we are both so passionate about. It also served as a way to double check our own understandings of this ever-changing educational world.

We are deeply indebted to the researchers at CAST (Center for Applied Special Technology) for the pioneering work they have done on UDL. It is our hope that our interpretations and applications help to move this conceptual framework forward. With continuing research and on-going teacher training in methodology, technology, and collaboration, our schools truly will become places that are exciting to students—places that both teachers and students can’t wait to go when they wake up every morning!

Best regards,

Richard and Debbie

Why This Book?

Federal legislation along with legal mandates have resulted in a growing number of students with a broad range of educational needs seeking services in general education classrooms. Because of this growing national trend, general educators are confronted with creating learning environments that are responsive to the needs of all learners. Success in this endeavor calls for, among other factors, a well prepared teacher workforce. Regrettably, some general educators may feel inadequately prepared to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population of learners—a group that often includes not only pupils with disabilities, but also individuals who are gifted or talented, those at risk for success in school, and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In addition to a changing clientele, teachers are continually encountering demands for greater accountability for the performance of all learners. Consequently, increased attention is being focused on what students are being taught, as well as how they are being instructed.

Our Goals and Approach

Our purpose in writing this book is to provide general educators (as well as special educators) with practical, evidence-based teaching and learning strategies that form an overall framework for effective instruction and classroom management appropriate to the realities and challenges of schools in the 21st century. We have chosen to adopt a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach to accomplish this task. Unlike other books, *Teaching in Today's Inclusive Classrooms* focuses on best practices appropriate to teaching all children in general education classrooms from the start. Our book embraces an instructional philosophy of “Teachers teach students, not disability labels,” and “If a child doesn't learn the way we teach, then we better teach the way the child learns.” We believe that a UDL perspective best reflects our beliefs. Simply stated, our aim is to offer pre-service educators and other professionals currently working in our schools a foundation for creating effective co-teaching (collaborative) situations by examining such critical variables as teaming, common planning, and a shared responsibility for instruction and assessment. The fourth edition of *Teaching in Today's Inclusive Classrooms* considers the integration of teaching skills, instructional content, technology tools, and the individuals (for example, teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents) needed to successfully sustain learning environments that meet the needs of every pupil.

Text Organization

The six chapters of Part I: Foundations for Educating All Learners lay the groundwork for understanding the challenges and opportunities that educators face in today's classrooms. This section of the book addresses historical and contemporary perspectives on teaching, an introduction to universal design for learning, and educational policies and procedures affecting today's learners. Additionally, Part I provides descriptions of students with high and low incidence disabilities, learners with gifts and talents, pupils who are culturally or linguistically diverse, and individuals considered to be at risk for success in school. Collectively, these chapters secure a solid foundation for Parts II and III of the book.

Part II: Planning Instruction for All Learners, consisting of five chapters, introduces the reader to the concept of collaboration and cooperative teaching. The Universal Design for Learning framework is then applied to collaborative classroom planning. This design addresses academic, physical, and social needs that can be addressed “up front” to maximize access to the curriculum for all students. UDL principles are applied to assessment, instructional strategy selections, behavioral supports, and environmental design. Lesson planning models, differentiated instruction strategies, and an ACCESS mnemonic are included to help teachers see how the principles of UDL can be integrated into their curricular plan from the start.

The four chapters of Part III: Implementing Effective Instructional Practices for All Learners begin with a closer look at assistive technologies and innovative learning tools for 21st century learners. This is followed by Universal Design for Learning applications that promote literacy skill development and enhance overall content area instruction in K–12 classrooms. Applications and examples in language arts, mathematics, and science and social studies are included. An integrated unit plan, sample lesson plans, and many evidence-based strategies and interventions are included. These examples show how individual interests, strengths and needs can be used as a guide to differentiate and maximize instructional time. The three principles of UDL are highlighted consistently throughout the text to show how they can positively impact goal setting, planning, assessment, and implementation of effective instruction that can potentially meet the needs of all learners. The interventions highlighted in these chapters will also benefit the schools implementing multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) that include both RTI and PBIS initiatives.

Text Features

Helpful student learning features found in the fourth edition of *Teaching in Today’s Inclusive Classrooms* include:

- **Today’s Students**—The text includes three in-depth student case studies presented within Chapters 4, 5, and 6. These case studies profile three different diverse learners and their specific strengths and challenges.
- **Case Reflections**—These marginal mini-boxes encourage readers to reflect back on the three case studies and apply what they have learned within the chapters to the case studies.
- **Teacher Voices**—We are excited to offer more practical ideas, suggestions, and instructional commentary provided by award-winning classroom teachers.
- **Teaching All Learners**—Boxes have been updated to present a wide selection of evidence-based instructional tips, strategies, and practical information.
- **UDL and Common Core State Standards**—These features, found in the high- and low-incidence chapters, offer ways to consider UDL applications in lesson planning.
- **Tier Talk**—This feature, located in Chapters 10, 11, 13, 14, and 15, suggest current thinking about strategies and interventions for applying multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS).
- **UDL in the Classroom**—This box series highlights what the research says about UDL and its implications for classroom applications.
- **Web Resources**—Each chapter provides a list of helpful web sites appropriate to the topics addressed in individual chapters.
- All chapter content is aligned with InTASC (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium) and Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Initial Level Special Educator Preparation Standards. A common core state standards discussion is also provided.

- Sample UDL/differentiated instruction lesson plans are included within the text.
- Examples of current assistive technology tools and tips are integrated throughout the text.
- The most current information on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism spectrum disorders (including DSM-5 material).
- Each chapter concludes with a bulleted Thematic Summary, student activities and exercises, Looking at the Standards feature, along with key terms with accompanying text page numbers.

Accompanying Teaching and Learning Resources

Additional instructor and student resources for this product are available online. Instructor assets include an Instructor's Manual, Solution and Answer Guide, Transition Guide, PowerPoint slides, and a test bank powered by Cognero®. Sign up or sign in at www.cengage.com to search for and access this product and its online resources.

Online Instructor's Manual

An online Instructor's Manual accompanies this book. It contains information to assist the instructor in designing the course, including discussion questions, teaching and learning activities, learning objectives, and additional online resources. Additional online resources and assessments include:

PowerPoint Lecture Slides

These vibrant Microsoft PowerPoint lecture slides for each chapter assist you with your lecture by providing concept coverage using images, figures, and tables directly from the textbook.

Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero

Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero is a flexible online system that allows you to author, edit, and manage test bank content from multiple Cengage Learning solutions, create multiple test versions in an instant, and deliver tests from your LMS, your classroom, or wherever you want.

Acknowledgments

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Teaching in Today's Inclusive Classrooms

Your Journey Begins



Ariel Skelley/Photodisc/
Getty Images

Learning Outcomes

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- Identify the various types of learners in today's classrooms.
- Describe placement options for educating students with special needs.
- Explain the concept of universal design for learning (UDL).
- Describe the role of the courts in the special education.
- Explain the effects of educational reform on students and teachers.

Chapter Outline

Learners in Today's Classrooms

Learners in Need of Special Services
By the Numbers: A Quick Look

Placement Options for Educating Students with Special Needs

Educational Placements
A Cascade of Service Delivery Options
Inclusionary Practices and Thinking

Introducing Universal Design for Learning

The Role of the Courts in Special Education

Key Judicial Decisions
Key Special Education Legislation

Educational Reform for Students and Teachers

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001
Common Core State Standards
Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004
Every Student Succeeds Act
Civil Rights Legislation

Each and every one of us is a unique human being. Some of our differences are obvious—for example, the length and color of our hair or whether we are considered to be tall or short. These, and other features, contribute to making us distinct and interesting individuals. Some aspects of our individuality, however, are not easily recognizable, for instance, our ability to solve quadratic equations or throw a football in a perfect spiral. Of course, some characteristics are more important than others. Most people would attach greater significance to intellectual abilities than eye color. Luckily, the recognition and appreciation of individual difference is one of the cornerstones of contemporary society.

Most of us would consider ourselves to be normal or typical (however defined); yet, for millions of school-age children and adolescents, this label does not apply. They have been identified and/or perceived to be “different.” These differences might be the result of behavioral deficiencies, language differences, intellectual abilities, cultural heritage, or sensory impairments, along with a host of other possible reasons. This textbook is about these individuals who compose today’s student population. Although many children are viewed as typical, some pupils may require a special education, others may be at risk for learning difficulties, and still others might be seen as gifted or talented. Our goal is to assist you to in developing an understanding and an appreciation for all the learners you will encounter in your classroom.

Finally, as you begin to read and learn about the children and young adults enrolled in our schools, you will notice we have purposefully adopted a people-first perspective when talking about individuals with disabilities or other special needs. We have deliberately chosen to focus on the person, not the disability or impairment. Thus, instead of describing an adolescent as a “learning disabled student,” we will say a “student with learning disabilities;” rather than an “at risk learner,” we say a “learner who is at risk for success;” and finally, rather than a “gifted child,” we say a “child who is gifted.” This writing style reflects more than just a change in word order; it reflects an attitude and a belief in the value, dignity, and potential found within all of our students. The individuals described in this book are first and foremost people. As educators we need to focus on their assets and abilities—not their limitations or deficits. See the accompanying feature for additional ideas about using people first language.

TEACHING ALL LEARNERS



Communicating About Individuals with Disabilities

As a teacher, you are in a unique position to help shape the attitudes and opinions of your students, their parents, and your colleagues about individuals with disabilities. Please consider the following points when writing about or discussing people with disabilities:

- **Do not focus on a disability** unless it is crucial to a story. Avoid tear-jerking human-interest stories about incurable diseases, congenital impairments, or severe injury. Focus instead on issues that affect the quality of life for those individuals, such as accessible transportation, housing, affordable health care, employment opportunities, and discrimination.
- **Do not portray successful people with disabilities as superhuman.** Even though the public may admire super-achievers, portraying people with disabilities as superstars raises false expectations that all people with disabilities should achieve at this level.
- **Do not sensationalize a disability** by saying “afflicted with,” “crippled with,” “suffers from,” or “victim of.” Instead, say “person who has multiple sclerosis” or “man who had polio.”
- **Put people first**, not their disability. Say “a youngster with autism,” “the teenager who is deaf,” or “people with disabilities.” This puts the focus on the individual, not the particular functional limitation.
- **Emphasize abilities**, not limitations. For example, say “uses a wheelchair” or “walks with crutches,” rather than “is confined to a wheelchair,” “is wheelchair bound,” or “is crippled.” Similarly, do not use emotional descriptors such as “unfortunate” or “pitiful.”

- **Avoid euphemisms** in describing disabilities. Some blind advocates dislike “partially sighted” because it implies avoiding acceptance of blindness. Terms such as “handicapped,” “mentally different,” “physically inconvenienced,” and “physically challenged” are considered condescending. They reinforce the idea that disabilities cannot be dealt with up front.
- **Do not equate disability with illness.** People with disabilities can be healthy, though they may have chronic diseases such as arthritis, heart disease, and diabetes. People who had polio and experienced aftereffects have postpolio syndrome; they are not currently experiencing the active phase of the virus. Also, do not imply disease if a person’s disability resulted from anatomical or physiological damage (for example, a person with spina bifida). Finally, do not refer to people with disabilities as patients unless their relationship with their doctor is under discussion, or if they are referenced in the context of a clinical setting.
- **Show people with disabilities as active participants** in society. Portraying persons with disabilities interacting with nondisabled people in social and work environments helps break down barriers and open lines of communication.

Source: Adapted from *Guidelines: How to Write and Report About People with Disabilities*, Research and Training Center on Independent Living, University of Kansas, Lawrence, n.d.

Learners in Today's Classrooms

If a teacher who retired in the late 1990s were to visit a classroom today, they would be truly astonished by the diversity of students. Our schools are a microcosm of the changing face of American society. A diverse population of learners is no longer the exception; today it is the norm. Over 100 languages are spoken in our schools, and it is not uncommon to find students with disabilities in general education classrooms, or pupils whose cultural beliefs and practices vary significantly in important ways from mainstream American customs. One of the challenges confronting today’s teachers and other professionals is how best to meet the needs of a changing and expanding population of learners. We think this growing diversity is something to be valued and appreciated, an opportunity for students to respect and understand their classmates for their differences. Public education in the United States, in contrast to other nations, is an amazing system. It is purposely designed to provide educational opportunities to all youth. Yet this was not always the case. Exclusionary practices rather than inclusionary policies characterized public education in this country for many decades. Generally speaking, from a historical perspective, publicly funded education was provided only to a rather exclusive group of students—white males

from affluent families. Public schooling was usually unavailable to other children. Females, for instance, did not routinely attend school until the early 1900s. Furthermore, it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, that classes for students with special needs began to appear in public schools (Gargiulo & Bouck, 2021). Greater access to public education for youth viewed as “different” (the poor, those with disabilities, or non-English-speaking children) slowly came about due to the efforts of enlightened educational reformers, to parental advocacy, and to political activism coupled with litigation and federal legislation.

Teachers today are charged with providing effective instruction to a diverse population of learners who bring to the classroom a wide variety of cultures, languages, learning styles, and abilities as well as disabilities. This diversity heightens the need for inclusionary practices coupled with instructional strategies capable of meeting the compelling and oftentimes complex needs of the full range of students attending our schools.

Learners in Need of Special Services

As we stated previously, diversity in our classrooms is the norm rather than the exception. Probably the largest group of diverse learners are **students with disabilities**. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (PL 108-446), commonly called IDEA 2004 (which will be discussed later in this chapter), pupils with disabilities include individuals who exhibit

intellectual disability, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities. (§ 602 (3) (A) (i))

We will talk about individuals with these disabilities in greater detail in later chapters. Table 1.1 provides the federal definitions of these various disability categories.

students with disabilities

Individuals who exhibit intellectual disability, hearing impairment (including deafness), speech or language impairment, visual impairments (including blindness), emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities.

TABLE 1.1 Federal Definitions of Disabilities

Category	Definition
Autism	Autism means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age 3, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. The term does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance as defined below. A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after age 3 could be diagnosed as having autism if the criteria in the preceding paragraph are satisfied.
Deafness	Deafness means a hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
Deaf-blindness	Deaf-blindness means concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

(continued)

TABLE 1.1 Federal Definitions of Disabilities (*continued*)

Category	Definition
Emotional disturbance	Emotional disturbance is defined as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The term means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors B. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers C. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances D. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression E. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems ii. The term includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.
Hearing impairment	Hearing impairment means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness in this section.
Intellectual disability	Intellectual disability means significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
Multiple disabilities	Multiple disabilities means concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability–blindness, intellectual disability–orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness.
Orthopedic impairment	Orthopedic impairment means a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by congenital anomaly (for example, clubfoot, absence of some member, etc.), impairments caused by disease (for example, poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis, etc.), and impairments from other causes (for example, cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).
Other health impairment	Other health impairment means having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and ii. adversely affects a child's educational performance.
Specific learning disability	Specific learning disability is defined as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. General. The term means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. ii. Disorders not included. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of intellectual disability, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.
Speech or language impairment	Speech or language impairment means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
Traumatic brain injury	Traumatic brain injury means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.
Visual impairment	Visual impairment including blindness means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

Source: Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 34 C.F.R. Part 300 § 300.8 (c). August 14, 2006.

Of course, students with disabilities (in addition to their typical classmates) are not the only types of youth with special needs found in today's classrooms. Three other groups of learners (to be discussed in Chapter 6) are also common in inclusive classrooms—students who are gifted and talented; culturally and linguistically diverse individuals; and pupils who are at risk for future learning difficulties, school failure, and/or becoming a school dropout. Let us briefly examine each group:

- **Students who are gifted and talented.** Pupils who are gifted and talented are not considered to have a disability but are viewed as exceptional because of their overall intellectual abilities, creativity, leadership abilities, athleticism, and/or talents in the visual and performing arts (Roberts et al., 2018). Even though learning problems are generally not an issue for these students, they do require specialized and effective instruction if their full potential and abilities are to be expressed. We should point out, however, that some of these students might have a disability such as a sensory impairment, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or a learning disability. Interestingly, pupils who are gifted and talented are not included in federal special education legislation (review Table 1.1). Many states, however, have enacted legislation providing for the identification and education of children with special gifts and talents.
- **Students who are culturally and linguistically diverse.** This group of learners generally includes pupils whose values, attitudes, norms, folkways, traditions, and belief systems are in some ways different than those of mainstream American culture. These students may or may not speak English. Regrettably, in too many instances, culturally and linguistically diverse children are thought to be less capable than their classmates. As educators working in increasingly diverse schools, we must model respect for and sensitivity to the cultural and linguistic characteristics represented by our students and their families.
- **Students who are at risk.** Unfortunately, some students encounter life experiences that make them more likely than their classmates to encounter difficulties in school. Although these pupils are often ineligible for special education services, their success in school is often jeopardized by a variety of sociocultural factors. These problems, which are frequently interrelated, may include domestic violence, homelessness, exposure to drug and alcohol abuse, poverty, and child abuse, to mention only a few. It is important to note that exposure to these conditions does not automatically guarantee learning or behavioral problems in school, only that the probability of experiencing difficulties is heightened.

Many of the types of children we have just identified will primarily be educated in the general education classroom. This means that the general educator, often working in conjunction with other school personnel, must develop and implement instructional programs designed to meet the needs of a very heterogeneous group of learners. One of the purposes of this book is to help you successfully meet this challenge.

By the Numbers: A Quick Look

We have argued that the number of students with special needs in our classrooms is growing. Although statistics do not always paint a complete picture, the following information gives a hint of the changing demographics confronting educators and policy makers alike.

- Over 6.3 million students ages 6–21 were receiving a special education during the 2018–2019 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). These pupils represent approximately 12 percent of the public school enrollment in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).
- Educators believe that approximately 3 to 5 percent of the school-age population is gifted or talented. Of course, the number of students identified as gifted or talented depends on the definition of giftedness used by each state (Rimm et al., 2018).
- By the year 2028, students of color are projected to make up over half of all school-age youth (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).
- Approximately 12 million children ages 5–17 speak a language other than English at home (Kids Count Data Center, 2020).

- Over 5 percent of young adults ages 16–24, or 2.1 million individuals, in the United States do not possess a high school diploma (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).
- In 2018 over 17 percent of children under the age of 6 lived in poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 2020).
- More than 673,000 children, or one youngster every 47 seconds, was abused or neglected in 2018 (Children's Defense Fund, 2020).

Placement Options for Educating Students with Special Needs

With such diversity evident in today's classrooms, where are students with special needs typically served? As you will soon see, this is not an easy question to answer. In fact, the response to this inquiry has evolved over several decades. The majority of learners with special needs are being educated in general education classrooms; this includes pupils with special abilities as well as their classmates with disabilities, those children viewed as being at risk for success in school, and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

We have chosen to frame our discussion about where children with special needs are served around individuals receiving a special education. We adopted this tactic for two reasons. First, students with disabilities represent the largest population of learners with special needs. Second, it is because of the advocacy efforts, litigation, and legislation on behalf of students with disabilities that the right to be educated in what is commonly called the **least restrictive environment (LRE)** was secured (Photo 1.1). Educationally speaking, this usually means the general education classroom. It is because of these efforts that many other learners with special needs are now routinely educated in the general education classroom.

The issue of appropriate placement of children with disabilities has generated considerable controversy and debate. In fact, it frequently is a point of contention among educators. Federal legislation mandates that services be provided to students in the least restrictive setting. The idea of least restrictive environment is a relative concept rather than a particular educational setting. It must be determined individually for each pupil. The LRE is based on the student's educational needs, not their disability. We interpret the principle of LRE to mean that students with disabilities should be educated in the setting that most closely approximates the general education classroom and still meets the unique needs of the individual. For a growing number of students, this setting is the general education classroom. The concept of LRE calls for maximum opportunity for meaningful involvement and participation with typical classmates. One of its inherent challenges is the required balancing of maximum integration with the delivery of an education appropriate to the unique needs of the student with disabilities. It is important to remember that the degree of involvement and participation is determined individually for each pupil. No one arrangement is appropriate for each and every child (Gargiulo & Bouck, 2021).

Educational Placements

The federal government acknowledges that children with disabilities are unique learners, thus requiring educational placements that are appropriate to their individual needs. The U.S. Department of Education

least restrictive environment (LRE)

A legal term interpreted to mean that individuals with disabilities are to be educated in environments as close as possible to the general education classroom setting; a concept, not a place.



E.D. Torral/Alamy Stock Photo

PHOTO 1.1 Federal legislation requires that all pupils with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment.

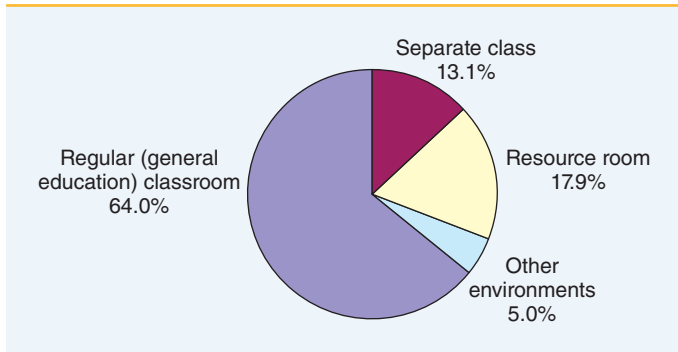


FIGURE 1.1 Percentage of Children with Disabilities Served in Various Educational Settings

Note: Data are for students ages 6–21 enrolled in special education during the 2018–2019 school year. Information based on data from 49 states, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, Bureau of Indian Education schools, and outlying areas. Data for Wisconsin not available. Other environments include separate schools, residential schools, homebound/hospital environments, correctional facilities, and parentally placed in private schools.

Source: U.S. Department of Education. (2021). *Forty-second annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2020* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office), p. 53.

annually monitors the various settings in which pupils with disabilities receive a special education. Figure 1.1 illustrates the percentage of students in the various educational environments currently recognized by the federal government. A description of these educational settings can be found in Table 1.2.

A Cascade of Service Delivery Options

As we have just seen, the federal government recognizes that no one educational setting is appropriate for meeting the needs of all children with disabilities. Effective delivery of a special education requires an array or continuum of placement possibilities customized to the individual requirements of each pupil. The concept of a continuum of educational services has been part of the fabric of American special education for more than five decades. Reynolds (1962) originally described the concept of a range of placement options in 1962. His thinking was later elaborated on and expanded by Deno (1970), who constructed a model

offering a “cascade” or continuum of settings. A traditional view of service delivery options, based upon Deno’s original thinking, is portrayed in Figure 1.2.

In this model, the general education classroom is viewed as the most normalized or typical setting; consequently, the greatest number of students are served in this environment. This placement is often considered the least restrictive option for many learners. Deviation from the general education classroom should occur only when it is educationally necessary for the pupil to receive an appropriate education. Each higher level depicted in Figure 1.2 represents a progressively more restrictive setting. Movement up the hierarchy generally leads to the delivery of more intensive services to children with more severe disabilities, who are fewer in number. However, intensive services and

TABLE 1.2 Definitions of Typical Educational Settings Serving School-Age Students with Disabilities

Regular Class	Students who receive the majority of their education in a regular classroom and receive special education and related services outside the regular classroom for less than 21 percent of the school day. This placement option also includes individuals who are provided with specialized instruction or services within the regular classroom setting.
Resource Room	Students who receive special education and related services outside the regular classroom for at least 21 percent but less than 60 percent of the school day. Students are “pulled out” of the regular classroom and receive specialized instruction or services in a separate classroom for limited periods of time. Services may be individualized or offered in small groups. A common placement option for children with less severe disabilities.
Separate Class	Students who receive special education and related services outside the regular class for more than 60 percent of the school day. Commonly known as a self-contained classroom wherein pupils, usually those with more severe disabilities, receive full-time instruction or, in a modified version, participate in nonacademic aspects of school activities. Classroom is located in regular school building.
Separate School	Students who receive special education and related services in a public or private separate day school for students with disabilities, at public expense, for more than 50 percent of the school day.
Residential Facility	Students who receive a special education in a public or private residential facility, at public expense, 24 hours a day.
Homebound/Hospital	Students placed in and receiving a special education in a hospital or homebound program.

Source: Adapted from U.S. Department of Education. (2000). *Twenty-second Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office), p. II–14.

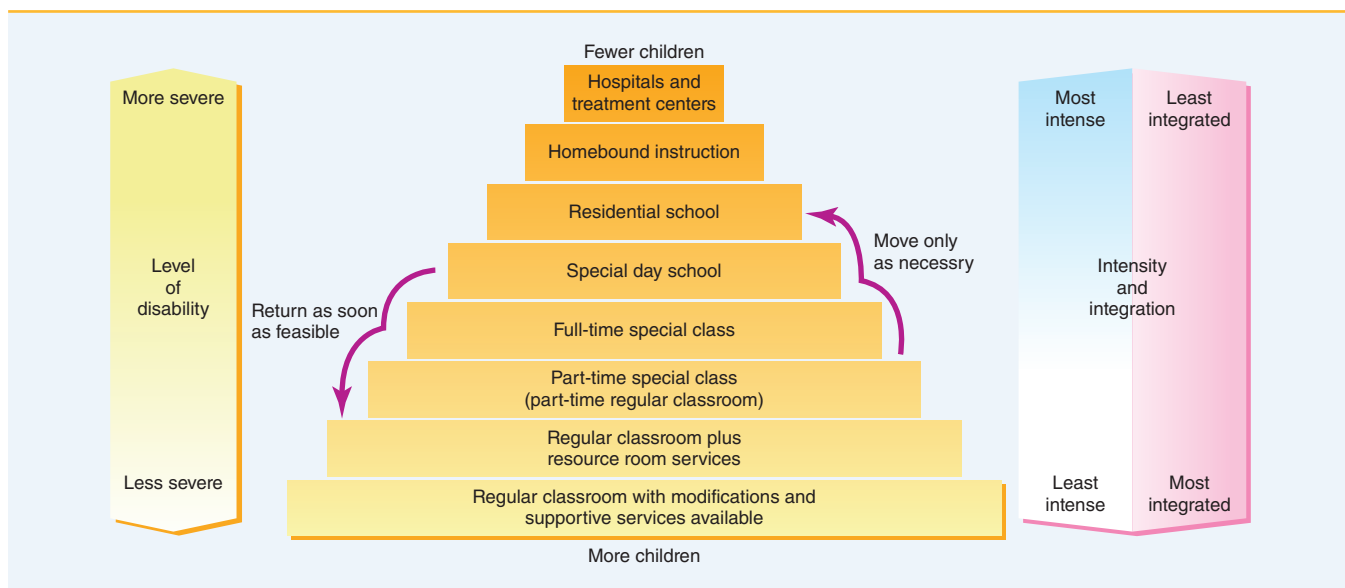


FIGURE 1.2 A Traditional View of Service Delivery Options

Source: Adapted from S. Graves, R. Gargiulo, and L. Sluder, *Young Children: An Introduction to Early Childhood Education* (St. Paul, MN: West, 1996), p. 398.

supports are now being provided in general education classrooms with increasing frequency. Environments at the upper levels are typically considered to be the most restrictive and least normalized.

As originally conceived by Deno (1970), the natural flow of this cascade of service delivery options would be in a downward movement from more restrictive settings to those viewed as least restrictive, such as the general education classroom with or without support services. Contemporary thinking, however, suggests that pupils should begin in the general education classroom and ascend the model, reaching a level that meets their unique needs. A key feature of this model, too often overlooked, is that a particular placement is only temporary; flexibility or freedom of movement is what makes this model work. The settings must be envisioned as fluid rather than rigid. As the needs of the pupil change, so should the environment; this is why there are an array of service delivery possibilities.

Inclusionary Practices and Thinking

In many instances, the general education classroom is becoming the placement of choice for a growing number of learners with special needs. A diverse learning community is no longer the exception but rather the norm. One result of the changing face or composition of our classrooms is the trend toward inclusion. Unfortunately, a clear understanding of this term has proven elusive. We simply see **inclusion** as the movement toward, and the practice of, educating students with disabilities and other learners with exceptionalities in general education classrooms alongside their typical peers with appropriate supports and services provided as necessary. Inclusive education, however, is more than just addressing how the pupil's disability impacts learning. It also must consider the various barriers that often impede or exclude meaningful and effective participation in the classroom. One of the underlying assumptions of inclusion is the belief that all students are part of or belong in the general education classroom. Yet it is important to note that the physical placement of students in a general education classroom is not an end in and of itself but rather a means to an end.

inclusion

The movement toward, and the practice of, educating students with disabilities and other learners with exceptionalities in general education classrooms alongside their typical peers with appropriate supports and services provided as necessary.