

# Teaching Exceptional Students In Your Classroom



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# **TEACHING EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS IN YOUR CLASSROOM**

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# Preface

**“I** have special education students in my classroom. What I need to know is what to do to help these students, rather than why they are exceptional. To be blunt, I know the child has a problem, now what do I *do* about it?”

“Now they are putting special education students with behavior problems in my class. It seems that because they think I can handle these students, they put more in my classes. Where do I draw the line?”

“One of my students had a seizure this morning. It scared the other students—and me. After things calmed down, we talked about it, and I think everyone learned a great deal. However, it irritates me that nobody told us what to do when a seizure occurs. If the school nurse had not been in school, I probably would have called an ambulance.” ■

These are just a few of the concerns voiced by regular education teachers working to meet the needs of special education students in their classrooms. Often, a regular educator’s training in special education consists of a single course, “An Introduction to Special Education,” that emphasizes just the characteristics of persons with exceptionalities. Public Law 94-142: The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 mandated the integration of exceptional students into regular education. Since then, the demands on regular educators have increased, but the content of special education course work has remained essentially unchanged. Typical “intro” courses do not generally provide the practical skills, knowledge, and techniques that educators need to respond effectively to special students in their classrooms.

This book is about *teaching* special learners. It is written for pre-service and in-service regular educators who are required by state certification standards to complete such a course, who have been advised that taking such a course is a “good idea” in view of the increasing numbers of special learners being placed in regular classrooms, or who are simply concerned about their ability to work effectively with special education students in their classrooms. This book offers more than clinical descriptions of the characteristics of special education stu-



dents; it provides practical, research-based information on the *education* of special learners in regular classrooms.

Part I is an introduction to the special education student in the regular classroom. This section is based on the premise that good teaching is good teaching, whether students are “regular” or “special.” In Chapter 1, the teacher is reminded that *all* children have special needs, and in every classroom there will be both identified and nonidentified special students. Problems common to all special education students are reviewed. Chapter 2 discusses the services and placement options that should be available to special education students. Chapter 3 reviews the rights and responsibilities of teachers and the rights and responsibilities of exceptional students and their parents. The regular educator’s role as a fully participating member of the special education team is emphasized.

Part II is an exceptionality-by-exceptionality discussion of special education students in the regular classroom. This section assumes that you already know how to teach, and that the information most essential to you is what makes teaching exceptional students different from teaching regular students. The content of this section was developed through a needs-assessment survey of elementary and secondary regular education teachers. These teachers told us the information they perceived to be most important to effective interaction with special education students. Their daily needs and concerns are the basis of this section. The exceptional students discussed in Part II include the mentally retarded, learning disabled, and behaviorally disordered. In addition, chapters on students with communicative disorders and hearing and visual impairments are included. Information is provided on students with physical and health concerns, as well as students who are gifted and talented, abused or neglected, and those who have other special needs.

Part III focuses on special education students in two important, but often overlooked, settings: the family and the secondary school. This section recognizes that each student’s functioning is determined by interrelated contexts including the student’s personal skills, his or her interactions with teachers and parents, interactions in the school, home, and neighborhood, and, finally, interactions in society.

To facilitate learning, we have included many instructional features. Realistic *vignettes* open each chapter and set the stage for the material to follow. Special education terms are highlighted in a *Key Words* list at the beginning of each chapter, italicized as they occur in the chapter, and defined in a glossary. *Chapter Objectives* act as advance organizers and provide the structure of each chapter. Finally, each chapter concludes with *Summary Points*, *Study Questions* and *Application Activities* to help you apply what you have learned. Photos, figures, and tables, interspersed throughout the book, also provide detailed information and summarize topics.

## Acknowledgements

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# **Part I**

## **Introduction**

# Chapter 1

