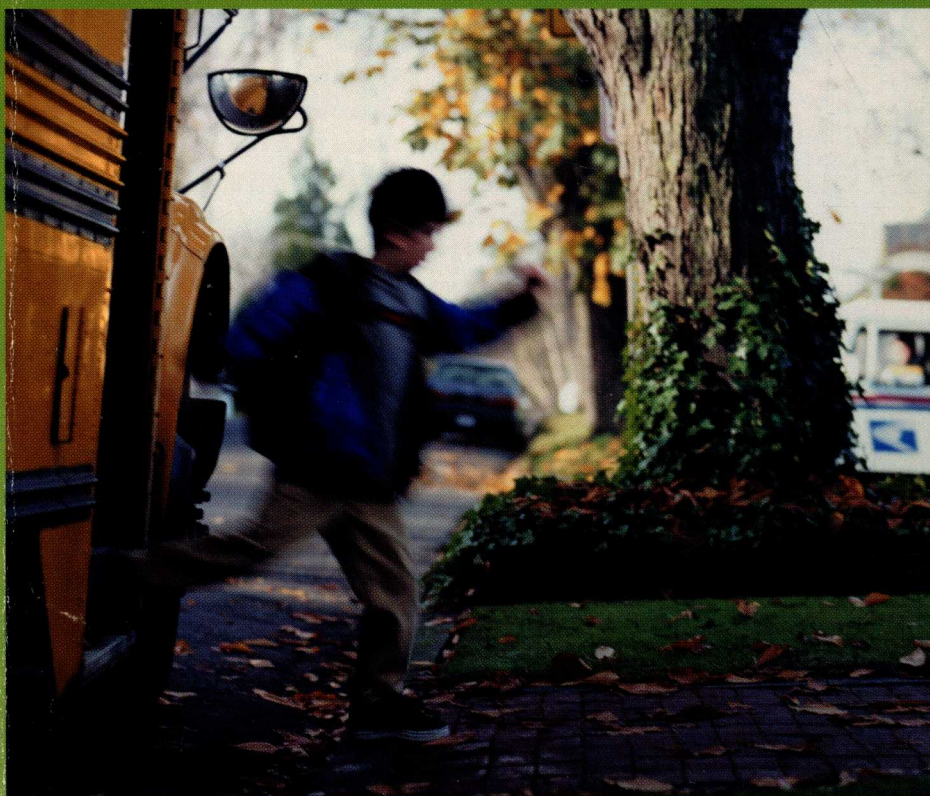


# TAKING SIDES



## Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in **Special Education**

MaryAnn Byrnes



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Clashing Views on Controversial  
**Issues in Special Education**

Selected, Edited, and with Introductions by

**MaryAnn Byrnes**

*University of Massachusetts-Boston*

**McGraw-Hill/Dushkin**  
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## Preface

**S**pecial education is full of questions, emotions, and opinions. Public responsibility for the education of children with disabilities is a relatively new endeavor that is still forging its identity and boundaries. Sometimes it seems that just as one set of issues is resolved, such as the creation of a range of services in public schools, a host of new challenges arises to take its place. Other issues, such as appropriate funding and inclusion, seem to defy resolution, despite long and thoughtful deliberation. Through *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in Special Education*, I invite you to consider some of the currently active issues in this volatile field.

A few basic principles guided the choice of selections for this book. Each reading needed to represent a widely held point of view on the question at hand. Other opinions surely exist, but the ones presented needed to be broadly held. Each had to employ solid reasoning; its position could not be easily refuted because of faulty logic. Finally, each selection, along with references for additional study, needed to be interesting to read. If an article did not captivate my attention, I did not want to include it.

*Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in Special Education* has two major goals. First, to introduce key questions in special education so that readers can learn about the field from authors who have thought long and carefully about educational policy and practice. Second, to stimulate thinking and discussion so that readers can explore possibilities and debate the consequences of positions and actions. I hope you will find yourselves engaged and enlivened by the discussions these topics stimulate. Most of all, I trust that your thinking will contribute to constructive solutions to puzzles that demand careful thinking and care about all children.

This book includes 18 issues that address areas of active debate in the field of special education. I have grouped the issues into three parts. Part 1, *Special Education and Society*, introduces questions of social policy and practice. Part 2, *Inclusion*, highlights varied perspectives on this controversial philosophy. And Part 3, *Issues About Disabilities*, presents critical considerations about specific disabilities and therapies.

Each issue is framed as a question and begins with an *introduction*, which is designed to set the stage for discussion. Two readings presenting contrasting points of view come next. Each issue closes with a *postscript*, which summarizes the expressed points of view, suggests other points of view, and provides additional readings on the topic at hand. The introductions and postscripts also feature series of questions to stimulate your thinking as you weigh the topic at hand and its relationship to schools. Each question represents challenges to be resolved in the policy and practice of educating children with disabilities.

To expand your thinking, you may want to reference the *On the Internet* pages that precede each section. These contain a sampling of Internet site ad-



dresses (URLs) that present varied points of view as well as links to related sites and bibliographies for further study.

The YES and NO positions on every issue express strongly held opinions. You may agree or disagree with the authors, or you may find that your own view lies somewhere in between. You will likely identify additional perspectives as you study the issues more thoroughly. You will certainly find connections between issues. Perhaps class discussions will lead you to formulate a new and completely different response to issue questions. Doubtless, as you continue in your professional and personal life, your ideas will change and develop. What is critical as you read this book is to reflect on positions, options, and emotions so that you can decide what you think and use your opinion to guide your actions and decisions.

**A word to the instructor** An *Instructor's Manual with Test Questions* (multiple-choice and essay) is available through McGraw-Hill/Dushkin for the instructor using *Taking Sides* in the classroom. Also available is *Using Taking Sides in the Classroom*, a general guidebook that presents strategies for and examples of using the pro-con method in classroom settings. Faculty members using this text also have access to an online version of *Using Taking Sides in the Classroom* and a correspondence service, located at <http://www.dushkin.com/usingsides/>.

*Taking Sides: Clashing View on Controversial Issues in Special Education* is only one title in the Taking Sides series. The table of contents for any of the other titles can be found at the Taking Sides Web site at <http://www.dushkin.com/takingsides/>.

**Acknowledgements** So long as I have been in education, spirited debate about "the right thing to do" has been part of life. The reflection and critical thinking of these discussions have deepened my understanding of special education, introduced new perspectives, and resulted in more than a few changed opinions. I am very grateful for the assistance—individually and collectively—of many people. First, and most important, I thank the children, educators, and parents who taught me that almost anything is possible—not always easy, but possible; Prudence King, who introduced me to Taking Sides and who always works for consensus; Gary Siperstein, Suzanne Recane, Kym Meyer, Robert Hoffmeister, and Sarah Poissant, who introduced me to issues I had barely begun to consider; Karley Bailie, Cathy Cummins, Vanessa Hargrove, and Linee Scerra (graduate assistants extraordinaire), who explored, investigated, and debated with me; Ted Knight, David Brackley, Rose Gleich, and all the other McGraw-Hill/Dushkin magicians whose guidance and assistance were invaluable; and, of course, my husband, Joe, whose encouragement, optimism, and ability to weigh all sides of an issue make everything easier.

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# Introduction

MaryAnn Byrnes

*I introduce... a bill... to insure equal opportunities for the handicapped by prohibiting needless discrimination in programs receiving federal financial assistance. ... The time has come when we can no longer tolerate the invisibility of the handicapped in America. ... These people have the right to live, to work to the best of their ability—to know the dignity to which every human being is entitled. But too often we keep children whom we regard as ‘different’ or a ‘disturbing influence’ out of our schools and community altogether. ... Where is the cost-effectiveness in consigning them to... ‘terminal’ care in an institution?*

— Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minnesota), January 20, 1972, on introducing to Congress a bill mandating education for children with disabilities (as quoted in “Back to School on Civil Rights,” National Council on Disability, 2000)

*Unfortunately, this bill promises more than the federal government can deliver, and its good intentions could be thwarted by the many unwise provisions it contains. ... Even the strongest supporters of this measure know as well as I that they are falsely raising the expectations of the groups affected by claiming authorization levels which are excessive and unrealistic. ... [This bill also contains a] vast array of detailed complex and costly administrative requirements which would unnecessarily assert federal control over traditional state and local government functions.*

— President Gerald Ford, November 29, 1975, upon signing federal legislation to mandate education for children with disabilities (as quoted in *Congress and the Nation*, IV)

Special education was born of controversy. Controversy about who belongs in schools and how far schools need to stretch to meet student needs. The debate continues.

When was the first time you saw someone with a disability? Think hard about your school experience. What do you remember? Compare your recollections with those of someone one generation older—and one younger. The differences will be startling.

Chances are you remember The Room. Usually it was in the basement of the school. Hardly anyone went into The Room. Hardly anyone came out. The kids in The Room never seemed to be part of recess or plays or lunch or gym. The teachers were invisible, too. Sometimes the windows of The Room

were covered with paper. Usually the shades were drawn. Kids in your class whispered about The Room, but no one really knew what happened “in there.”

Likely, the students who went to school in The Room were older, bigger, and not as smart as most of the other kids in the school. They had few books to learn from and rarely studied any but the most basic academic tasks. No one really knew what happened to the kids in The Room once they left elementary school. There never seemed to be a Room at high school. Hard as it is to believe, those who made it to the inside of The Room may have been the lucky ones.

Less than 30 years ago, if you were the parent of a child with a disability, your local school had the option to tell you that your child was not welcome—that there was no place in the school for your child. The choices were few—you could teach your child at home (or just have him spend his days there); you could try to find a space in a kind school run by dedicated religious people; or you could have your child “put away” in a faceless institution for life. Try looking at Burton Blatt and Fred Kaplan’s *Christmas in Purgatory: A Photographic Essay on Mental Retardation* (Human Policy Press, 1974) for a view of some of the worst options.

I remember The Room in the elementary schools I attended, but I never knew much about its students. I remember the Catholic school for girls with Down syndrome where I volunteered as a Girl Scout. The residents learned cooking and sewing while I was getting ready for high school and college. I never saw the girls outside the school and do not know what they did when they grew into adults.

I also remember the boys who sat in the back row of my classes and tried to avoid the teachers’ attention. The teachers hoped that these boys would just be quiet and behave. The boys dropped out of school as soon as they could.

Many years later, in the early 1970s, I moved from being a fourth grade teacher to a special education teacher because I was intrigued with unlocking the puzzles that made learning so hard for some of my students. One of my early jobs was as a teacher in an updated version of The Room. It was my first experience in a small district. The day before school began, all the teachers and their students were listed in the local newspaper, along with the bus routes. I eagerly looked for my name, but instead of Mrs. Byrnes, I read “Emotionally Disturbed Classroom.” For the entire time I worked at that school, I was the “emotionally disturbed teacher.”

Times had changed a little since I attended school. My classroom was on the main floor, next door to the third grade; we had academic books to use; and we had lunch and recess with everyone else. But we were still different. Each day, my students and I needed to leave our room from 11:30 to 1:30 so that it could be used by the gym teacher while the gym was being turned into the cafeteria. Since there were only 10 of us, it seemed to be an easy solution to have us without a classroom space. No one seemed to care where we went or what we did during that time. Plenty of people were surprised to see us camp out in the library tackling “real” school work.

In contrast, I think about the schools of today. Children with learning problems that might be significant enough to be disabilities are the focus



of concentrated attention. Trained professionals and researchers strive to understand disabilities and to address them with specific teaching methods and approaches. Parents and teachers actively consider ways to adapt instruction. Program options seem limitless. Many children with disabilities now grow into adults who hold jobs and contribute to society instead of spending their lives in isolation at home, in institutions, or on the streets.

Despite this progress, I still know schools in which students with disabilities are separated into sections of the school where no one else ever goes. There are still districts where no one thinks to include students with disabilities when counting up the number of new math books that need to be ordered. And once formal schooling ends, there are still many young adults who sit at home without jobs because there is no guaranteed support.

Has the promise of special education been met or exceeded? Has society done too much or not enough? Despite what feels like progress, arguments about special education continue. Many of them are included in this book.

As you consider the issues ahead, think about the people with disabilities you first remember. How would their lives have been changed by today's special education? What could be done to help them be more productive citizens? How have the dreams of Hubert Humphrey and the cautions of Gerald Ford been realized?

## Recent History and Legal Foundations

The history of special education in American public schools is short and defined by legislation. Private or religious schools have long offered specialized options for students who are blind or deaf or who have mental retardation. Until the last quarter of the twentieth century, public options were largely limited to residential institutions and a few "Opportunity Classes" in public schools.

Following the civil rights struggles of the 1960s came the realization that another significant segment of children in the United States—those with disabilities—were not being afforded a quality education. Although a few states instituted their own policies and regulations regarding the education of children with disabilities, districts could still refuse to enroll children with disabilities.

Successful court cases in individual states establishing the right of children with disabilities to be educated led to the 1975 passage of federal Public Law 94-142, which requires every public school district to deliver a free and appropriate education to all children with disabilities. Renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in its 1990 and 1997 reauthorizations, the regulations connected to these laws form the foundation of special education for every state that receives funds from IDEA. In addition, individual states have constructed local legislation to clarify federal language or to extend commitments beyond the federal standard.

Even if districts chose not to seek federal funds and thereby sidestep IDEA regulations, the education of students with disabilities would be covered by other legislation. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a civil rights statute prohibiting organizations that receive federal funds from discriminating against any individual based on a disability that substantially limits a major life

activity. Reasonable accommodations must be implemented so that individuals with disabilities have equal access to the activities of such organizations. Curb cuts, lowered water fountains, and signs in Braille all came to be in response to Section 504. Since all school districts receive federal funds, Section 504 forbids the exclusion of students with disabilities, although it does not address education with the detail of IDEA.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which was passed in 1990, expands the protections of Section 504 to the private sector. The ADA forbids businesses, governmental agencies, and public accommodations (other than churches or private clubs) from discriminating against any individual who has a disability that substantially limits a major life activity. The ADA carries the same responsibility for accommodations as Section 504 and impacts the practices of almost every employer. One of the most recently decided ADA cases established the right of golfer Casey Martin to use a cart as an accommodation during PGA Tour events so that his physical condition does not prevent him from competing.

Many people say that the elements of these laws are vague and undefined. Terms are interpreted differently across the states, and businesses struggle with the range of accommodations and the meaning of "reasonable." Clarity is often achieved through the resolution of legal challenges, some of which have reached the Supreme Court. Because of the continually changing natures of disabilities and society, a single court decision can radically alter the obligations of an employer.

The ground shifts for schools as well. For example, as you proceed through the readings in this book, you will encounter the debate between "least restrictive environment" and "free appropriate public education." Each term is critical to the development of a school's special education program, but each is also fluid in meaning. Federal law does not provide solid definitions that can be used with precision. Schools do their best to apply these terms to individual children with widely varying needs. As with businesses and the ADA, court cases about individual children continue to define what is "restrictive" and what is "appropriate."

## Essential Terms and Concepts

Special education has its own unique vocabulary and terms, just as any other field. Being familiar with the concepts discussed below will increase your understanding of the issues ahead.

*Disabilities.* All federal laws refer to the following list of disabilities: autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, developmental delay, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, mental retardation, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment. Autism and traumatic brain injury are recent additions to the list because their occurrence has increased. State laws frequently amplify the federal definitions of each disability with particular diagnostic criteria, satisfied through the administration of appropriate assessment

tools in the child's dominant language. It is important to note that this list of disabilities does not include children who need instructional assistance solely because of language differences, cultural differences, or lack of instruction. In order for a child to be eligible for special education, the school's educational team must determine that a disability exists.

*Federal definition of a child who is eligible for special education.* According to IDEA, this is a child with a disability who is not making effective progress in school because of that disability and who requires specially designed instruction or related services in order to make progress in school. Federal legislation applies to individuals from birth to either the receipt of a high school diploma or age 22. In most states, public schools are charged with educational responsibility beginning on a child's third birthday.

*Individual education program (IEP).* IDEA requires each child's educational team, including parents, to meet at least annually to formulate this agreement, which describes the education of a child with a disability. The IEP outlines the impact of the student's disability, current educational status, necessary accommodations, the nature and amount of services to be provided to the child, and the goals and objectives that are the targets for each year. Services cannot be delivered—nor can they be ended—without a parent-approved IEP. Parents who disagree with evaluations or services have the right to seek redress through an administrative hearing or a legal suit. All educators are bound to abide by the terms of an approved IEP.

*Related services.* These supportive, noneducational services permit a child with a disability to participate in special education. Related services can include, but are not limited to, transportation, various therapies, mobility instruction, social work, and medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes.

*Free appropriate public education (FAPE).* This cornerstone of IDEA guarantees that special education and related services are provided at no cost to parents. The word *appropriate*, which has never been clearly defined, is the source of much controversy and litigation.

*Least restrictive environment (LRE).* Another key element of IDEA, this phrase refers to each school's responsibility to ensure that "to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities... are educated with children who are nondisabled; and that... removal from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily" (IDEA, Section 300.550). Here, too, different interpretations of many undefined terms can lead to disagreement and litigation.

*Continuum of services.* Special education services take many forms and happen in many places. Inside the classroom, these can range from consulting with a

teacher on the format of a test to team teaching a special educator and an English teacher. Outside the general education classroom, specialized instruction might be delivered to small groups of children with disabilities. A few children are taught in separate classes or schools (day, residential, or hospital) that enroll children with disabilities only. The entire spectrum of options, the continuum of services, must be considered when designing individualized special education programs.

*Inclusion.* This term may be one of the first that comes to mind when special education is mentioned. Surprisingly, the word *inclusion* does not appear in any federal legislation. Its meaning differs across states, across districts, and even within schools, and it can change from year to year. Defining and applying this term has resulted in dedication as well as confusion, frustration as well as opportunity, creativity as well as litigation. The common element in all definitions involves increasing the participation of children with disabilities in general education classes.

## Differing Orientations

Underlying the controversies in *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in Special Education* are three separate perspectives, each of which affects the way in which people envision a solid special education program. Although disagreements cannot always be reduced to one of these, it is likely that people who support differing sides of an issue question will also be on opposite sides of the following dynamics.

### Medical or Educational Model?

The medical model of special education views disabilities as conditions that can be improved, remedied, remediated, or perhaps prevented. Medical model adherents seek a specific treatment or therapy to address the physical, psychological, or cognitive issues that result in school problems. Those who follow an educational model aim to address the impact of a disability on school performance directly. Proponents focus on improving educational success by teaching individual skills or employing particular strategies that sidestep the areas of difficulty. Is it wiser to deliver occupational therapy to increase the handwriting skills of a child with cerebral palsy or to teach the child how to use voice-activated software to enable his or her words to become print?

### Special Need or Disability?

The federal list of disabilities does not mention children who need instructional assistance solely due to language differences, cultural differences, poverty, or lack of instruction. Neither does it include students who are gifted and talented. Yet children in each of these groups may not have their needs met in a standard classroom without extra attention. In addition, almost everyone can remember struggling with learning at one point in life. Despite these hurdles, special education does not help children who are covered by any of these descriptions

unless those children also have disabilities. Special education is about the education of children who have disabilities rather than those who struggle. This delineation causes controversy. If we know children whose lives put them at risk for failure, should we wait until that failure occurs before we give them help, or should we expand special education to include them? If we expand special education by including these children, are we helping them or burdening them with a stigmatizing label?

## **Regular or Special Responsibilities?**

Thirty years ago, millions of children with disabilities were excluded from school. Federal laws mandated their education, which initially occurred mostly in specialized locations by specialized teachers. Seeing these students grow, teachers and parents began to seek out special education services. In many districts, special education ceased being a stigma and became a desired and protected resource, particularly when budget stress increased class sizes. As the number of children receiving services increased, resistance rose to the expansion and costs of special education and to its separation from the overall school curriculum. This backlash resulted in tighter definitions that restricted services to those who are truly disabled and increased expectations that classroom teachers would assume responsibility for a wider range of children. Has the aura surrounding special education deluded people into thinking that there is a special magic to this part of education, or will legislators, teachers, and parents be frustrated by the limits to which one teacher's attention can stretch?

## **Understanding Controversy**

Precisely because the issues surrounding special education are so powerful and the stakes for children are so high, it is vital that we engage actively in their resolution. To achieve this end, it is essential to recognize differences and collaborate to find common ground.

## **Disagreements About Applying the Law**

Parents and teachers must come to agreement about the best way to meet the needs of a child with a disability. Honorable people may be equally committed to the goal of a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment but differ on the definition and application of these terms. Although few people would argue about the meaning of *free*, some parents and teachers prefer focused instruction in small groups of children with similar learning needs, while other parents and educators feel that the letter and spirit of the law can only be met when all children (regardless of individual need) are taught within the general education classroom all day. Two children may be very similar but have dramatically different special education programs because the preferences and reasoning of their educational teams differ dramatically. Since each child is unique and can only experience one option at a time, it is impossible to know which choice will lead to the best outcome. In fact, the "best" option may change as the child grows and develops.



Sometimes the differing interpretations of parents and teachers can result in heated arguments. The keys to coming to a consensus in this difference (as with all others) are listening, learning, and being open to new information and different perspectives. Equally important is evaluating each source of information and each course of action in a measured, careful way, even if it differs dramatically from what you feel is right. Often, putting yourself in the other person's place helps. Ask yourself, What would I do if this were my child? What would I do if I were the teacher?

As with most issues regarding children, the best solution is achieved when the adults involved put their attitudes, emotions, and pride aside to understand what the other person wants and why he or she wants it.

## Disagreements About Interpreting Facts and Figures

While some of the issues in *Taking Sides* address decision making about individual children, others require the interpretation of objective facts. Analyzing these controversies requires a different approach.

For example, educators and legislators often argue about the significant increase in special education numbers and costs. While this is a debate that deserves examination, it is also one that highlights the importance of evaluating information carefully. The meaning of seemingly objective facts can change depending on the context that is used for interpretation.

Consider the following statement: "Student enrollment in special education programs increased from 3.6 million in 1976–77 to 6 million in 1996–97. During that same time, the total student population increased by only 4.4%" (Center for Special Education Finance [CSEF], *Resource*, Winter, 1999–2000).

*A truly alarming increase.* What a terrible situation! Truly, this is a system running amok. The number of children in special education has doubled while the number of children in schools has barely increased at all. There must be a way to slow this trend. At this rate there will not be any money to buy new books to meet new standards. Perhaps the law is poorly written. Perhaps districts are not evaluated closely enough. Perhaps parents are too unreasonable and administrators too ready to provide any service requested.

*Or is it?* Additional information might change the interpretation. The cited enrollment statistics begin with 1976, the first year after federal law mandated a free appropriate public education for all children with disabilities. In 1973 the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee documented "more than seven million deaf, blind, retarded, speech-impaired, emotionally disturbed or otherwise handicapped children in the United States... only 40 per cent were receiving an adequate education, and many were not in school at all" (*Congress and the Nation*, IV, 1973).

Millions of children with disabilities were not *in* school in 1976, so their addition to the rolls made a big bump. Many children were in institutions, which declined in size and scope as school doors opened. Many children became identified as having disabilities and entered the special education count—do the statistics subtract them from the "total student population"?

Searching out background information about statistics or seemingly objective facts can change your interpretation of their meaning and, with it, your position on the issue. Bringing to light the assumptions made by others may do the same.

Some believe that special education enrollments have risen due to the creation of “invisible disabilities” invented by those looking for a cause or an excuse for poor performance or any other way to get extra help for their children. Others contend that science is becoming more adept at understanding learning and behavior. In doing so, research identifies real reasons to explain why some students struggle and productive strategies to facilitate learning.

Some maintain that society has become looser and more permissive. Drugs and alcohol are more readily available. Also, children are not supervised the way they used to be and are influenced heavily by exposure to media representations of violent behavior. Others point to statistics on poverty, one-parent homes, three-job parents, and the disintegration of family and community supports to explain the increasing numbers of students who push the limits of courtesy, tolerance, and the law.

Some are proud that medicine is making remarkable strides, sustaining one-pound babies and victims of tragic accidents or chronic illnesses who live to come to school ready to learn. Others are concerned that these miracles of life require extensive support and extraordinary methods that are beyond the scope of schools.

Each point of view puts a different spin on the analysis of enrollment figures in special education. The interpretation you choose to accept depends on the argument you find most compelling. Careful deliberation of all information helps you formulate your own opinion.

## Being Aware of Bias

We all bring to every discussion our own background and inclinations. We cannot help but apply these to the issues in this book. In fact, individual experiences may very well lead to creative options that change the course of a debate. As you begin to tackle your first issue, I offer the following reflections, gathered from students, parents, and colleagues.

*Acknowledge and be mindful of your own experiences.* If you or a family member has encountered special education (or a lack of it), you will have formed strong opinions about its worth. If you have not had direct experience, your community’s media coverage of special education may have shaped your thoughts. Recognize the impact of your experience, and consider its influence as you debate the issues.

*Be cautious of solutions that claim to apply equally to every situation.* Two children with Down syndrome can be as different from each other as two “typical” seventh-grade children. Urban and suburban elementary schools pose very

different sets of possibilities and limitations. Appropriate strategies in kindergarten transfer poorly to 10th grade. Ideas can usually be adapted but rarely be duplicated.

*Think of possibilities rather than limitations.* It is easy to say, "That can't be done," and be constrained by what you have already observed. Creative solutions emerge from asking, "How can it be done?"

*Consider the impact of roles, motivations, and perspectives.* Teachers come to their work because they want to help children grow and learn. Special education professionals believe in their ability to help children conquer the limitations of their disabilities and become productive learners and adults. Parents seek educators who are dedicated to helping children reach their potential. District administrators serve two masters. First, they believe in the power of education and want to clear financial and legal hurdles so that teachers can do their job as well as possible. Second, they understand that they are entrusted with the finite resources of a community and need to be answerable for their decisions in a way that will sustain the confidence of the citizens. Finally, legislators are committed to ensuring equal treatment and benefits for their constituents, whose lives span a wide range of circumstances.

Each of these roles demands responsibility and accountability. The tasks of each role shape opinions and decisions. The outlook of people inhabiting each role can lead to widely different perspectives, powerful arguments, and creative solutions. Consider the background of each of the authors as you evaluate their points of view. What in their backgrounds leads them to their opposite conclusions?

## Final Words

As you read the selections in this book and discuss them with your colleagues, your challenge is to sort through competing arguments and information to form your own opinions about the education of children with disabilities. Perhaps you will have the opportunity to apply your point of view to an issue within your community or school. Perhaps you will discover practices in those schools that will change your opinion on an issue.

Controversies in special education are likely to endure. The topics will change, but there will always be argument about the right thing to do for children who seem to need so much. You might be tempted to search for global answers. You might find yourself frustrated by limited options. Or you might come to a unique solution that works perfectly for your district and your school.

As a special education administrator, especially in the spring, I often woke up in the middle of the night with a seemingly irresolvable problem running and running and running through my brain. Usually, it involved balancing competing views of how to help a child. None of the options seemed totally satisfactory. A wise friend suggested I let go of the feeling that I needed to solve the problem alone and, instead, ask others to discuss together the pros and cons

of each avenue. This suggestion has always served me well as I struggled over issues of doing the right thing for children. I hope the issues in *Taking Sides* keep you thinking at night and that my friend's suggestion helps you come to your own resolutions whenever you think about educating children with disabilities.

