

Teaching Children and Adolescents with Special Needs

SECOND EDITION



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*To Larry R. Olson,
To the memory of Virginia F. Cox,
and
To our students, who inspired the writing of this text:
Those we have worked with in the past, those we are
currently teaching, and those still to come.*

Preface

This second edition of *Teaching Children and Adolescents with Special Needs* is based on a personal philosophy that has evolved from the literature in special and regular education and from our professional experiences. The teacher effectiveness research in both special and regular education provides many exemplary teaching practices that we include in this text. Our professional experiences include teaching both elementary and secondary students in regular and special education settings, supervising student teachers, training preservice and inservice teachers, and participating as learners in professional development activities involving effective teaching practices.

The basic philosophy that keeps us actively involved in the profession after more than 20 years is that as teachers, we *can* make a difference in the lives of our students. When the preservice and inservice teachers we work with express concern about not affecting the lives of each of their students to the degree they wish, we remind them of the following story of a young boy walking along the beach. To paraphrase:

That morning the tide had brought in thousands of starfish and scattered them on the hot, dry, sandy beach. A little boy was walking along the beach, tossing starfish back into the cool, blue water. As he was doing this, an older man approached him. The older man looked at what the young boy was doing and said, “Why are you doing that? Don’t you see it’s impossible? Look at the

thousands of starfish. You can’t possibly make a difference.” The young boy slowly looked up at the man, picked up another starfish and threw it back into the water, saying, “It makes a difference to this one.” (author unknown)

We hope you continue to find ideas and suggestions in this second edition to make a difference in your students’ lives. You have the power to make a difference, for you have chosen to teach.

Features of the Text

We continue to use an informal, personal tone in writing this second edition. Additionally, we structure and organize the text to include recommendations of teacher effectiveness research, including the following effective teaching practices.

Advance Organizers and Checkpoints

We begin each chapter with an advance organizer by providing an outline that highlights the key topics within the chapter. Throughout each chapter, we include several checkpoints so that you can monitor your progress as you read. These checkpoints take the form of “Important Points” sections found in the text of each chapter.

Active Involvement

We provide opportunities for you to become actively involved by placing activity sections in each of the chapters. They are interspersed throughout the text to give you ample practice. Remember the Chinese proverb: “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.”

Visual Aids

We include tables, figures, diagrams, and illustrations throughout the text. We hope you use them to clarify concepts and to increase your interest.

Noteworthy Changes

As a result of feedback from reviewers and input from users of the first edition, we have made considerable changes in this edition. Our field is constantly evolving, so we have updated information in all of the chapters and reorganized to enhance clarity. We have included new information, such as a discussion of the instructional paradigms that influence special education practices, the national education reform movement, and the issue of inclusion. We expanded information on curriculum-based measurement. We have provided more examples from the special education literature as it relates to portfolio assessment, whole language/literacy instruction, the unit approach, and transition. We include more examples of practical applications in our discussions of collaboration, study skills, instructional strategies, material adaptations, and transition activities. The chapter dealing with computers and technology has been updated to include information concerning CD-ROMs and videodiscs along with other technical innovations.

Our second edition is a text that contains practical, research-based teaching strategies, relates to everyday occurrences in the schools, and describes motivating experience-based activities. We hope our ideas and suggestions,

like the efforts of the little boy with the starfish, make a difference to you and your students.

Acknowledgments

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We also offer our thanks to Dianne Mathews, who revised Chapter 12, “Computers and Technology for Teaching and Learning,” and to Patricia Patton, who wrote Chapter 13, “Transition Skills: Career Education and Related Social Skills.” To Ann Davis, and to all the Merrill/Prentice Hall staff, we express our gratitude for making our dream a reality.

A special thanks goes to Larry Olson, whose patience with and support of a part-time wife during this process is deeply appreciated. Gratitude and appreciation are given to Chris Platt for his advice, support, and concern during the completion of the text and to the late Virginia Cox, who shared so many valuable suggestions with her daughter.

Without the input of our students at the University of Central Florida and the support and encouragement of our families and friends, we would not have had an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of students with special needs. We are deeply grateful for these many contributions.

We are indebted to Andrew Beigel, D’Youville College; Greg Conderman, University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire; Ann Cranston-Gingras, University of South Florida; Jean Faieta, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania; and Robert Ristow, St. Ambrosia University, who reviewed our manuscript.

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Part I

FOUNDATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION

- 1 Teaching Students with Special Needs
- 2 Beginning-of-the-Year Planning
- 3 Informal Assessment for Initial Planning
- 4 Informal Assessment for Monitoring Student Progress and Intervention Effectiveness
- 5 Instructional Materials
- 6 Collaborative Consultation and Communication'

Chapter 1

Teaching Students with Special Needs



KEY TOPICS

Student Characteristics

Cultural Diversity

Competition

Individual Autonomy and Independence

Timeliness

Achievement Orientation

Future Orientation

Informal Classroom Atmosphere

Individual Differences

Effective Teaching Strategies

Reductionist Paradigm

Social Constructivist Paradigm

Combining Paradigms for Effective

Instructional Practice

Continuum of Services

National Education Reform

The Regular Education Initiative

Inclusion

Professional Commitment

What We Believe

The field of special education will grow and change in the 21st century, as schools are restructured to meet the mandate of Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994). Issues such as student characteristics, cultural diversity, effective teaching strategies, and education reform are being addressed and refined as we move into a new century. The needs and characteristics of children and adolescents with learning and behavior problems are varied.

Being knowledgeable about student characteristics means that you know your students' academic levels, can identify the skills they bring with them to the learning situation, and understand their cultural backgrounds. Children and adolescents with special needs often exhibit problems with academic and social skills that make it difficult for them to meet the demands of school, home, and community. For optimum learning to occur, it is important that you use

effective teaching strategies based on sound research. You must also be aware of the service delivery options that are available for students with special needs. Finally, you need to understand the federal government's education reform strategy, Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994), and the current emphasis on inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education settings.

Student Characteristics

Students with special needs often have problems in academic areas, social interactions, motivation, and transition to adult roles. In many school districts, such students are referred to as having learning disabilities (specific learning disabilities), mental disabilities (mental handicaps, mental retardation, educable mental handicaps), or emotional disabilities (emotional disturbance, behavior disorders). Even though educational practice frequently categorizes children and adolescents into these three distinct groups, researchers document many similarities in the characteristics of these groups. Wilson, Cone, Bradley, and Reese (1986) found similarities in IQ scores, perceptual-motor performance, and achievement levels of students with learning disabilities and those with emotional disturbances. These researchers also found similarities in the classroom behaviors of students with learning disabilities and those with mental disabilities. On the *Stanford Achievement Test*, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1986) found no differences between the academic performance of 619 primary-aged students with learning disabilities and 863 with behavior disorders. Gajar (1977) analyzed intellectual achievement and behavioral data for 155 students who had learning disabilities, 122 who had emotional disabilities, and 121 who had mental disabilities and found that all three groups performed similarly on reading and math assessments. Thus, it appears that there are more similarities than differences among these groups of students.

We group these students together in this text because we feel many of the techniques we share are effective for students with learning disabilities, behavior disorders, or mental disabilities. These students are often categorized as students with mild disabilities. Characteristics which students with special needs may display include:

- *Inadequate academic achievement.* Often, such students are two or more years behind their grade-level peers in reading, mathematics, spelling, written expression, and/or oral language skills.
- *Inappropriate school behaviors.* Many times, they are physically or verbally aggressive. They are frequently easily frustrated or unable to cope with the demands of the school environment. Other signs of inappropriate school behavior include noncompliance with teacher directions and instructions and lack of teacher-pleasing behaviors, such as being prepared for class, maintaining eye contact, and raising hands for teacher recognition.
- *Poor attending behaviors.* Students with special needs often have trouble following teacher directions and instructions. They seem to have difficulty attending to the relevant information in a message and are frequently unable to concentrate on an assignment or task.
- *Poor memory.* Being unable to remember information from one week to the next or one day to the next is another characteristic common to many students with special needs. These students frequently have problems remembering spelling words, basic math facts, and two or more directions.
- *Inadequate organizational skills.* Students who have special needs may have problems organizing their materials to prepare for an exam or to write a report. Frequently, their desks are cluttered and their materials are lost or misplaced.
- *Poor self-concept.* For many students with special needs, school is not a comfortable, rewarding place. Instead, it is a place where they often fail to meet the standards for success.

- *Inadequate social skills.* Such students often cannot maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships, are less socially accepted by peers, and demonstrate impaired communication (pragmatic language) skills. The lack of social skills precludes adequate adjustment not only to the demands of the school environment, but also to the postschool environment. Students with special needs are frequently less accepted and less successful in the world of work due to lack of social skills.

Cultural Diversity

Within the population of students with special needs are subgroups of students who are not members of the Anglo-American culture. These students are from Native-American, Asian, Hispanic, African-American, or other cultures. The U.S. Bureau of the Census predicts that in the year 2010, children of color will represent the majority of the school population in the states of Florida, New York, and Texas.

Students from these groups are disproportionately represented in special education classes. Statistical figures published in 1994 by The Council for Exceptional Children depicted the projected racial/ethnic breakdown of students receiving special education. The data revealed that minority students comprised 32% of the total school age population, 47% of the population of students with mental disabilities, 29% of the population of students with emotional disabilities, and 30% of the population of students with learning disabilities. African-American males are the most overrepresented in classes for students with behavior disorders and mental retardation (Chinn & Hughes, 1988).

Although students in public schools are from various cultures, the school culture frequently reflects Anglo-American values (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1986). These values, which are often at odds with those of other cultures, include a belief in competition, individual autonomy and independence, an achievement orientation, a

future orientation, timeliness, and an informal classroom atmosphere (Briganti, 1989; Grossman, 1990; McGill & Pearce, 1982; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1986).

Competition

School culture tends to promote competition over cooperation (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1986). However, the Hispanic culture emphasizes working together for the good of the group (Briganti, 1989; Grossman, 1990) and values cooperation over competition (Castaneda, 1976; Grossman, 1990). In the Native American culture, the needs of the family and the tribe are given priority over the needs of individuals (Johnson, 1987). The African-American culture also tends to be social, and it endorses working with others (Gitter, Black, & Mostofsky, 1972; Hillard, 1980; Shade, 1979).

For many of these students, cooperative learning and peer tutoring are effective strategies (see Chapter 11). These strategies capitalize on students' learning and working with others.

Individual Autonomy and Independence

Anglo-American families tend to promote adult-like behaviors early in their children (Chinn & Plata, 1987). In a study of maternal care, Oberg, Muret-Wagstaff, Moore, and Cummings (1983) found that mothers of Caucasian children prodded their children more often toward a goal or accomplishment and showed more disappointment when their children failed to reach their expectations than did mothers from other racial groups.

The Hispanic culture expects children to be dependent on parents and to seek their approval (Briganti, 1989). For example, parents continue to help children dress and tie their shoes for a longer period of time than do parents in the Anglo-American culture (Briganti, 1989). Likewise, the Asian culture does not rush children into becoming adults (Chinn & Plata, 1987). Until the preschool years, when children

are given more responsibility for their behavior, Asian parents are more tolerant and permissive than are parents in Western cultures (S. Chan, 1987). In the African-American culture, many children are taught to seek approval, guidance, and feedback from others (Grossman, 1990; Hale, 1981). Children who were raised in this manner may find it difficult to form their own opinions and may require assistance to function independently (Grossman, 1984; 1990).

Initially, therefore, you may wish to include alternative choices rather than free choices in the curriculum. For example, at the beginning of the school year, Ms. Simons lets students select from three options for free-time activities. By the middle of the school year, she no longer provides options. Instead, students make their own choices for free-time activities.

Timeliness

In the school culture, students are expected to be on time, to complete assignments on time, and to take timed exams. However, many minority cultures view timeliness not as essential, but as secondary to relationships and performance (Briganti, 1989; Zirpoli & Melloy, 1993). Realizing these differences, Mr. Sams keeps encouraging students to meet important deadlines by listing the days remaining on the board every morning. He also makes certain to include the appropriate number of items on a timed test so that all students finish the exam within the allotted time.

Achievement Orientation

In the school culture, high achievement is an emphasized goal (Grossman, 1990). Although the Asian-American culture places a high value on educational achievement (Chan & Kitano, 1987; Kitano, 1987), this is not the rule of many of the other non-Anglo-American cultures. The Hispanic culture endorses the goal of developing a child's personality rather than the highest potential to achieve (Briganti, 1989). Moreover, many Hispanics are taught that it is