

Exceptionality

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*Exceptionality refers to students with disabilities and gifted students eligible for services under IDEA, 1990, or the 1988 Gifted & Talented Students Education (P.L. 100-297) Gifted & Talented Act.

*IDEA defines a student w/ a disability as one who meets one of the following classifications areas:

- specific learning disabilities
- speech or language impairments
- mental retardation
- serious emotional disturbance
- autism
- hearing impairments
- multiple disabilities
- orthopedic impairments
- other health impairments,
- visual impairments
- deaf-blindness, traumatic brain injury gifted and talented
- Gifted & talented students exhibit high-performance capability in intellectual, creative, specific academic, and leadership areas.
- Gifted in the performing and visual arts and require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school to develop such capabilities.
- IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), because of its specificity, is a more powerful piece of legislation than P.L. 100-297.
- IDEA mandates that all students that meet the definitions are entitled to a free, appropriate public education regardless of the nature and severity of the disability.

*Each student has an IEP based on a multifactored assessment of his or her strengths and weaknesses.

*You do need to know that P.L. 100-297 does not mandate specific services for gifted and talented students.

*Programs depend more on the legislation and allocations made by individual states and the types of programs developed by school districts.

Key Issues and Concerns

*Many people have questioned the system that these laws have created.

*IDEA requires that students be assessed using multiple standardized or criterion-referenced assessments.

*Further, a team of individuals must determine whether the child is eligible for services.

*As you know, once a child has been diagnosed or assessed that he/she has a disability, the child is automatically stigmatized or labeled.

*It is important that the reliability and validity of the assessments used to determine eligibility be scrutinized.

*There is a lengthy process involved in referral, assessment, and program determinations.

*Prior to enactment of IDEA, there were many students not receiving an appropriate education under this law.

*Some students were not being educated at all under the law.

*Another serious is the disproportionate number of minority students in special education.

*For example, data from the U.S. Dept. of Education (1998) show that approximately 17% of the school is African American. Yet, African Americans make up the following percentages of students in the following special education categories:

- mental retardation (31%)
- emotionally disturbed 25%
- learning disabled (17%)

*Based on this information, Black students are two and a half times more likely to be identified as having mild mental retardation.

*Black students are one and a half times more likely to have behavioral disorder when compared to their peers.

*As we already know, the achievement of African-American and Hispanic students falls behind that of their peers.

*These authors state that this must be placed in the context of the relatively low-income levels of many of these students and the higher incidence of disabilities associated w/ poverty because of poor health care and environmental factors.

*Asian students underrepresented in special education.

*Asian-Pacific Islanders are underrepresented in the categories of learning disabilities, mental retardation & emotional disturbance.

*Hispanic students are underrepresented in the categories of mental retardation and emotional disturbance.

*Data on underrepresentation and overrepresentation.

*U.S. Office of Special Education Programs and the U.S. Office for Civil Rights are concerned that students may be underserved, receive inappropriate services, or be misclassified and placement in special education may be a form of discrimination.

*Students who are gifted also face problem situations.

*Approximately 2/3 of the states is mandating either identification of services for students who are gifted.

- *Individual school districts determine an identification system for students who are gifted.
 - *Such assessments may include IQ tests; standardized achievement test scores; teacher-, parent-, peer-, and self-nomination, and evaluation of students' work or performance.
 - *Researchers are concerned that assessments do not always take into account the effects of language, culture, and socioeconomic status.
 - *That means that the reliability and validity of the assessment instruments are questioned.
 - *Presently, African-Americans, Hispanics, Hawaiians, and Native American students are underrepresented in gifted education.
 - *This whole issue of exceptionality is in question by some individuals.
 - *Some individuals question whether such a concept should exist at all.
 - *Some view exceptionality as a social construct based on a determination by dominant members of society of what is normal or acceptable behavior.
 - *It has been suggested that rather than view the individual as abnormal, it is argued that society can change its physical, financial, governmental, and educational structures to accommodate the needs of all within the society.
 - *Would you say that is where we are today?
 - *The inclusion controversy has been around for years.
- Lipsky & Gardner defined inclusion as the “provision of services to students with disabilities, including those with severe impairments, in general education classes, with the necessary support services and supplementary aids (for the child and teacher) both to assure the child’s success—academic, behavioral and social—and to prepare the child to participate as a full and contributing member of the society.”
- *Now, inclusive schools are to espouse a philosophy that everyone belongs and is accepted by peers and other members of the school community (Stainback, Stainback, & Stefanich, 1996).
 - *IDEA mandates that students be placed in the least restrictive environment w/ proper supplementary aids and services.
 - *States must assure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are educated w/ children who do not have disabilities, and that removal from the general education classroom occur only when the disability is so severe that the curriculum and instruction of the general classroom cannot be adapted to achieve satisfactory results.
 - *What about parents who have sued? What has been the ruling by the courts?
 - *Rulings in the overwhelming number of cases in which parents have sued school districts to keep children with more severe disabilities in the general education classrooms have been settled in favor of the family.
 - *Research findings on inclusive schooling are mixed.

*In other words, research findings on inclusive schooling have generally concluded that the effect of inclusion on the academic and social performance of students w/ disabilities is mixed.

*When inclusion is properly implemented, the majority of studies yield positive results in a variety of areas.

*Studies on the academic performance of students w/ disabilities show varied results.

*Research studies show that students w/ mild disabilities can show positive achievement gains in the general education classroom.

*There continues to be strong reservations by teachers, researchers, & professional organizations about the suitability of providing services in the regular classroom, including for students w/ learning disabilities, students w/ severe disabilities, and students who are gifted and talented.

Creating Inclusive Schools for Students with Disabilities

*Regardless of how one feels about exceptionalities, school districts must implement school programs that are satisfactory to stakeholders that are involved.

*The stakeholders are students, parents, and teachers.

*Parents, for the most part, have been supportive of the inclusion movement.

*Why have parents been supportive of the inclusion movement?

*Parents have been supportive because of greater acceptance by peers and elevated self-esteem that their children experience.

*What about parents who oppose inclusion?

*Parents who oppose inclusion are concerned about the level of individual attention available in the classroom.

Parents who have initially been opposed to inclusion change their attitudes; they see positive results by the end of the school year, especially if teachers are able to differentiate instruction.

The introduction of inclusion met with a great deal of opposition.

*Many general education teachers were skeptical about having students w/ disabilities in the classroom.

*The general education teachers felt they were unprepared to respond to the range of students in the classroom.

*The general education teachers had been used to planning for the whole class; they relied primarily on large-group instruction.

*The general education teachers saw adaptation as more desirable than feasible.

*Most research indicates that having students w/ disabilities in the classroom increased the teacher's ownership and involvement w/ the students and willingness to try it again.

- *Teachers who believe they have received adequate training, resources, time for collaboration, and administrative support are genuinely positive about inclusion.
 - *For teachers, the question becomes one of differentiating the curriculum and instruction in a manner that is both effective and feasible, given time and resources available.
 - *Diversity must become the new norm, especially in the current climate of “leave no child behind.
 - *It stands to reason that if leave no child is left behind, you leave no school behind.
 - *We have discussed the changing demographics—racial, economic, linguistic.
 - *Since diversity must be the new norm, classrooms will become less homogeneous.
- Thus, teachers will need to work more collaboratively w/ teams of professionals to plan and implement appropriate programs.
- *Students are better served when they work collaboratively in groups or pairs.
 - *Diversity warrants flexible school structures—alternative scheduling, multiage classrooms, or schools within schools.
 - *We have talked about student differences in learning style and cognition—such necessitates differentiation of approach.
 - *We have already discussed that teachers must be able to modify instruction in terms of interest level, amount of content, complexity, performance criteria, material used, & level of assistance.
 - *What about the gifted and talented?
 - *Frequently the gifted are stuck in the inflexible age-grade classrooms of most public schools.
 - *Schools must provide intellectual access for gifted students to the full range of the curriculum.
 - *What are some of the issues in the education of students who are gifted and talented.
 - *Schools have been under attack for failing to identify, include, and appropriately serve an expanding list of students.
 - *Many gifted programs have been havens for upper-middle-class Caucasian students.
 - *Some would suggest that this may be a subtle form of racial and ethnic discrimination.
 - *It has already been noted that many students of color are underrepresented in programs for gifted learners (U.S. Department of Education, 1993).
 - *Asian students are overrepresented
 - *African American, Hispanic/Latino/a, and Native Americans are underrepresented.
 - *Not all inequities relate to race or language.
 - *Girls still have not been equally represented in advanced mathematics classes.

*Low-socioeconomic status also is a factor in the exclusion of children from programs for the gifted.

*What are some of the causes of underrepresentation?

*There are multiple reasons for these discrepancies: limiting definitions of giftedness, assessment measure and techniques that not culturally sensitive, inadequate preparation of teachers in issues and practices appropriate for the multicultural school population, and negative stereotypes and inaccurate perceptions of the abilities of children of color.

*There has been a paradigm shift in gifted education.

*This shift views intelligence as having multiple forms and as being developmental and process-oriented, rather than stable and unchangeable.

*There remains a need to develop and implement inexpensive, valid, and reliable measure of the abilities found in a variety of cultural and linguistic groups.

*There continues to be a reliance on IQ scores and teacher nomination—such precludes the classification of many students.

*There continues to be a need for improved identification procedures to facilitate identifying children from culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

*Children from culturally and linguistically diverse groups have not always been successful in programs, because their behavior did not fit the teacher's beliefs about giftedness or the behavior of the child.

*Family involvement is a definite factor in the achievement of gifted students of color.

*Black students from low socioeconomic groups achieve because of parental assertiveness—parents keep track of their child's progress, and perceive themselves as having effective coping mechanisms.

*The Black parents set high and realistic expectations for their children ..., engaged in experiences that promoted achievement, and had positive parent-child relations.

*Parent educational level does not appear to be a predictor of gifted student's academic performance (Ford & Thomas, 1997)

*It is important that there is programming for gifted and talented students.

*Gifted education is still struggling to determine the extent to which gifted learners can thrive in the regular education classroom.

*Academic acceleration is one alternative for precocious youth that been supported in the research literature as positive (Kulik & Kulik, 1984); Van Tassel-Baska, 1991).

*Many educational practitioners appear to be unaware of this research ... and report being opposed to acceleration.

*A final area of concern is a dearth of programming for young students who are gifted and little research on programs that do exist.

*When there are no gifted programs, concerned parents can only request that teachers provide changes in curriculum and approach for their child.

*You need to keep in mind that teachers are not always receptive to parental requests that their gifted child receive curriculum modifications, especially when the child may present challenging social behaviors.

*Children who show precocity even in kindergarten can be encouraged by allowing them to pursue their academic interests, work with one or more other students or projects or alone ...

*There are a number of programs that show promise for gifted students in general education—one program is the Enrichment Triad Model (Beecher, 1995; Buckner, 1997; Renzulli & Reis, 1997), a model that establishes three types of activities in the classroom.

*Type I activities, such as guest speakers, performances, & field trips, are designed to make connections to the regular curriculum.

*All students are involved in creative and problem-solving activities (Type II)

*Then Type III enrichment activities allow students to apply their interests and knowledge by pursuing a self-selected area for independent or group study.

*Several instructional approaches and model programs have been developed for students of color and those from low economic backgrounds who are gifted (Ford & Thomas).

*Some approaches suggest that students experience success when curricula and instruction are designed to be culturally and linguistically compatible (Cummins, 1986; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Tharp, 1989).

*Instruction and projects that can be accomplished using multiple intelligences and concept-based instruction also hold promise for these students (Armstrong, 1994).

*Results from one model have demonstrated that gifted children of color, particularly those who come from low-income backgrounds, flourish when they are involved in mentorship programs and when their family attends family outreach programs (Tomlinson, Callahan, & Lelli, 1997).

*If schools do not rethink their identification procedures and program models, many students will not reach their educational levels.

What are some of the issues in the education of students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder?

*We have discussed students who fall in this category.

*We discussed the assessment and treatment of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD)

*AD/HD is the most commonly diagnosed childhood psychiatric disorder in U.S.

*AD/HD is defined as “a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that is more frequent and severe than is typically observed in individuals at a comparable level of development” (American Psychiatric Association, 1994, p. 78).

*Another thing the symptoms must have been present before at the age of 7, be present in at least two settings, and show clear interference with developmentally appropriate functioning.

*There are three subtypes of AD/HD.

*The predominantly inattentive type describes children who have difficulty paying attention, appear apathetic, seem internally occupied, are socially neglected, may be anxious or depressed, and are often underachievers (Barkley, 1990); Lahey & Carlson, 1991).

*The predominantly hyperactive-impulsive type includes children who often talk excessively, have difficulty sitting still, often challenge boundaries, interrupt and blurt out answers, and can be accident prone (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Leal, 1999). This type is most frequently observed in young children who often challenge parents' child-rearing skills (Aust, 1994)

*Children who are described as having the combined type may be inattentive as well as hyperactive and impulsive.

*As we have discussed, the identification & treatment of children with AD/HD has been particularly controversial.

*Some individuals believe you have far too many children being diagnosed w/ this disability.

*They believe Ritalin is too frequently used.

*Some will argue that the increase usage is due to increased awareness about of the condition.

*The U.S. consumes 80% of the world's supply of Ritalin.

*It is estimated that 3 to 5 percent of the school-aged population has AD/HD, but in some areas of the country, e.g., urban areas, the percentages are much higher (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Leal, 1999).

*Some students w/ AD/HD will be identified as needing special education services under IDEA.

*Many believe that the drug is overprescribed and are concerned about possible side effects, such as insomnia, headaches, irritability, moodiness, nausea, and weight loss.

- Researchers believe that children who take some combination of stimulants or other medications for AD/HD should signs of improvement relatively quickly, or the regimen or diagnosis should be reevaluated (Scholozman & Scholozman, 2000).

*Finally, stimulant medication can improve ability to control motor behavior, increase concentration, improve self-regulation, decrease aggression, and increase the amount and accuracy of work (Swanson et al., 1993; Prater & Pancheri, 1999).

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