Teaching Students with Exceptionalities

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TEACHING STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES

by

Jacqueline M. Goodman

A Research Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

REGIS UNIVERSITY

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TEACHING STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES

by

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Across the United States, the term “diversity” has taken on a different meaning in elementary school classrooms. The term, which once referred to cultural ethnicity, has become a new classification for students with a wide range of abilities. In a randomly selected classroom, one finds students who learn easily as well as those who require additional assistance. When the classroom teacher has a student with an exceptionality (such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or a second language learner), the range of diversity widens. Unlike their peers, these students may require specialized services or accommodations to enable them to learn.

Statement of the Problem

Each school day, teachers strive to reach and connect with students on an academic level. Whether the teacher reaches that student depends upon whether the educator knows how that child learns. Is the child a visual learner? Does the child prefer hands on instruction? What is the best method to reach the student? Not only is this situation true for the mainstream student but also for the student who is exceptional. Teachers must be knowledgeable about the effective innovative methods and techniques in order to teach students with exceptionalities. To expect a child to conform to a particular method of teaching is not the answer. It is the responsibility of the educator to
accommodate his or her methods to meet the individual needs of the child. With strategies such as those developed by Glass (2001), Mastropieri and Scruggs (1997), Mercer and Mercer (1993), and Winebrenner (2003), educators can implement and expand on these techniques at every opportunity in order to help students with exceptionalities excel and overcome the stumbling blocks that they face each day in mainstream classrooms throughout the U.S.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project will be to develop a handbook for elementary classroom teachers to be used as a reference guide to assist with the teaching and instruction of children with exceptionalities. The author of this handbook will identify best practices which are based on research. These best practices and recommendations can be immediately implemented in the classroom, based on the teacher’s observations of the student’s behaviors and academic progress. The purpose of this handbook is not to replace special education assistance in regard to students with exceptionalities, but would be used as a supplement to teacher expertise and guidance.

Chapter Summary

The ability to effectively instruct a student at the appropriate academic level is the ultimate goal of every educator. Likewise, to reach the child with an exceptionality requires additional effort and understanding on behalf of the classroom teacher. It is this
researcher's desire to broaden the knowledge of her peers, by the provision of an easy to use, comprehensive handbook to aid in the instruction of children with exceptionalities.

In the review of literature (found in Chapter 2), this author will present reading comprehension strategies, provide techniques for teaching second language learners, and examine multicomponent interventions that are effective for the instruction of students with ADHD. The procedures used to develop the teacher handbook will be outlined in Chapter 3, Methods.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As the field of education grows more complex each year, some teachers find it difficult to meet the needs of all learners, specifically, students with exceptionalities. In the teaching of exceptional students, the methods for individualization of instruction are multifaceted and require extensive knowledge in behavioral and academic pedagogy. Of great need it a reference handbook to aid the regular classroom teacher in the instruction of these students.

According to Brophy (1996), there are increasing numbers of school children who present problematic concerns that interfere with their learning. Similarly, Coleman (1996) reported that contemporary educators must find effective solutions to problems that have diverse and complex foundations which are resistant to change. In mainstream classrooms in the United States, many teachers utilize: (a) innovative teaching methods in reading comprehension, (b) developmental strategies for English Language Learners (ELL), and (c) the implementation of multicomponent programs for students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Reading Comprehension

“Reading comprehension is, arguably, the most important academic skill learned in school” [sic] (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997, p. 1). Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkerson (1985, as cited in Mastropieri & Scruggs) defined reading comprehension as a
“process of constructing meaning from written texts, based on a complex coordination of a number of interrelated sources of information” (p.1). Not only can reading comprehension be challenging for the student, but for the teacher as well. There cannot be a mismatch between the student’s needs and the teacher’s preparation.

**Background of Reading Comprehension**

Extensive research has been conducted in the area of reading comprehension as it relates to children with learning disabilities. Mastropieri and Scruggs (1997) cited Mercer and Mercer (1993), who identified the areas of reading comprehension in which “students with learning disabilities typically exhibit substantial deficits in reading comprehension, which may include problems not only in remembering the gist, facts, and details of text material, but also in interpreting and making inferences about the information presented” (p. 197). According to Foorman and Torgesen (2001), “the components of effective reading instructions are the same whether the focus is prevention or intervention: phonemic awareness and phonemic decoding skills, fluency in word recognition and text processing, construction of meaning, vocabulary, spelling, and writing” (p. 203). The necessity of these critical components has been substantiated by applied research on reading and reading growth, (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, as cited in Foorman & Torgesen). Ehri (1998), Share and Stanovich (1995), and Trabasso and Magliano (1996, all cited in Foorman & Torgesen), are in agreement that these critical elements of reading comprehension have been supported by intervention research and are
derived directly from current theories which indicate what students must be familiar with and be capable of accomplishing in order to be good readers.

Mastropieri and Scruggs (1997) provided “a description of the practices that have emerged from the results of the strategy research conducted with students with learning disabilities” (p. 198). In their analysis of the literature, they found positive outcomes for some of the reading comprehension strategies that have been employed. “The strongest outcomes were observed for teacher-led questioning and self-questioning strategies, followed by text-enhanced strategies, and, finally, strategies involving basic skills instruction and reinforcement” (p. 197).

*Effective Reading Instruction*

Over the last 30 years, the criteria for effective classroom instruction has shifted for beginning reading; as noted during the 1960s and 1970s, effectiveness was defined in terms of the main effects of reading methods on student achievement (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). During the 1980s, the focus was “on process-product relationships in classrooms, [during the] mid 1980s to the mid 1990s was the emphasis on teachers’ ‘best practices,’ and more recently there has been a call for evidence-based research” (p. 203). One common thread was found throughout research studies; no single method works for all teachers or for all students. According to Winebrenner (2003),

When planning and teaching comprehension strategies, educators must acknowledge the need for teaching the same concepts in many different ways. If students are not learning the way we teach them, teach them the way they learn. When we keep trying to teach something to a child in a way which he or she has repeatedly failed, discouragement and self blame quickly become a self-fulfilling prophecy. (p. 132)
As stated by Mastropieri and Scruggs (1997), “studies that examined multiple strategies augmented findings from studies that examined single strategies” (p. 14). When systematic strategies were used to increase recall and comprehension from written materials, the reading comprehension of children with learning disabilities (LD) was facilitated.

It can be concluded that student’s reading comprehension can be improved when the following conditions are implemented: (a) teachers ensure that students possess appropriate preskills, [sic] (b) students are presented with systematic instruction and feedback, including guided and independent practice using the procedures, (c) strategies are logically related to learning from text materials, (d) students are informed about the purposes of the strategies and told to attribute their successes and failures to strategy use, (e) training and self-monitoring components, and (f) student’s performance is assessed on criterion-referenced-type measures. (p. 211)

Once these methods are utilized in the classroom, and students become active participants in the learning process, successful reading comprehension is the result.

*Discussion of Reading Instruction*

Extensive research was conducted between 1970-1996 in the area of reading comprehension as it applied to children with LD (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997) and exceptionalities. Mastropieri and Scruggs noted that the findings from each study they conducted contributed to the knowledge base for instructional strategies. They went on to state that it could be argued that:

One’s philosophy dictates a specific instructional approach; however, in examining the literature as a whole, it is more obvious that when researchers systematically implement instructional procedures that appear logically related to specific processes of reading comprehension, positive outcomes are obtained, regardless of orientation or philosophy. (p. 212)
They reported that the findings from all the reading comprehension studies revealed many similarities. The use of teaching strategies that foster comprehension, regardless of the method implemented, facilitated an effect on reading comprehension, and in some cases, these strategies had sizeable, commanding effects.

English Language Learners (ELL)

How a teacher approaches the challenge to meet the needs of all learners may be based on district policy or teaching method. All too often, the teacher bases his or her approach on emotion and personal philosophy. With the ever increasing number of students who are non-English speakers, what is the best approach to meet their individual needs? "Research is beginning to show that approaches are more successful when they enhance and expand a teacher's repertoire of instructional strategies rather than dramatically altering them [sic]" (Perez, 2000, p. 45). How does the regular classroom teacher incorporate effective instructional strategies into the curriculum in order to complement second language learning?

Gersten and Baker (2000) stated, “that in order to improve the quality of educational services, it is critical to shift the focus of discourse away from the broad sociological and political issues towards specific instructional issues” (p. 1). They cited Moll (1988), who argued that researchers need to identify the best practices for teaching ELL students instead of a debate on the issues of which language should be used to teach ELL students. Goldenberg (1994) was quoted by Gersten and Baker, “the language-of-instruction debate has so dominated discussion of how to best serve the needs of language
minority children that other issues, which are equally important, have not been
adequately addressed (personal communication, October 8, 1994)” (p. 1). In addition,
Gersten and Baker cited Figueroga, Fradd, and Correa (1998) who stated there was no
“substantive body of empirical data on actual, well-controlled interventions that improve
the academic abilities of students who are English-language learners (p. 17)” (p. 1).
Educational programs need “to include what students bring with them; educators need to
focus on what students have rather than what they lack” (Ernst-Slavit, Maloney, &

*Background of English Language Learning*

“The wave of immigration that began 20 years ago was the second-largest in
American history” (Gersten & Baker, 2000, p. 1). However, as Yzaguirre (1998, as cited
in Gersten & Baker) stated, “the topic of how to educate this group of students invariably
brings high levels of passion and low levels of rational discourse” (p. 1). Ernst-Slavit et
al. (2002) reported that “census 2000 data indicated that the total number of foreign-born
children enrolled in elementary and secondary schools in United States was 2.6 million”
(p. 117). With this increasing number of second language learners in schools across the
U. S., more and more teachers are being asked to teach students from nonEnglish
backgrounds without training in either teaching English to speakers of other languages
(TESOL) or bilingual education (Gold, 1992, as cited in Perez, 2000).

However, conditions have improved over the past 15 years, due to a widely
disseminated report by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS; August & Hakuta,
1997, as cited in Gersten & Baker, 2000), in which the authors identified instructional approaches for teaching students who are English language learners. When the staff of the NAS published their research synthesis, Gersten and Baker (1997, as cited in Gersten & Baker) were conducting an independent exploratory meta-analysis of experimental and quasi-experimental studies “that met contemporary methodological standards” (p. 2) outlined in The Handbook of Research Synthesis, by Cooper and Hedges (1994, as cited in Gersten & Baker). According to Gersten and Baker, the report from the NAS confirmed their observations in regard to the “paucity of controlled empirical investigations of instructional program and practices” (p. 2).

**Instructional Practices for English Language Learners**

English language students may be very different from other learners in their background, skills, and past experiences (Ernst-Savit et al., 2002). However, “in spite of these differences, ELL students have similar needs. As well as building oral English skills, they also need to acquire reading and writing skills in English, while continuing their learning in the content areas” (p. 117).

**Multivocal Research**

Gersten and Baker (2000) used a multivocal research synthesis (i.e., diverse writings, as well as deliberate analysis of the findings in empirical investigations) in order to “make direct reference to perceptions acquired from a rich mix of informants representing different positions in the system and different perspectives of the phenomenon” (p. 2). Their synthesis of the multivocal research resulted in the surfacing
of “three themes related to a deeper understanding of effective instruction for English-language learners” (p. 7).

In Theme One, Gersten and Baker (2000) reported that an effective English language development program should include: (a) a component designed to instruct students on the use of the conventions of grammar and syntax, (b) a segregation of content area learning from English language learning, and (c) the establishment of clearly defined goals and objectives by the teacher. There were five specific instructional variables identified in Theme Two: “(a) building and using vocabulary as a curricular anchor, (b) using visuals to reinforce concepts and vocabulary, (c) implementing cooperative learning and peer tutoring strategies, (d) using native language strategically, and (e) modulating of cognitive and language demands” (p. 11).

“The final major theme that emerged from the multivocal synthesis is simply that confusion abounds concerning the role of oral language in academic instruction” (Gersten & Baker, 2000, p. 14). Lopez-Reyna (1996), Perez (1994), and Ruiz (1995, all cited in Gersten & Baker) noted rare student oral activity in the classroom. Speech emergence should be a gradual process, and the teacher should encourage comments and feedback, and should use frequent comprehension checks and effective questioning techniques, such as open-ended questions.

*Language Experience*

Perez (2000) suggested “three basic steps in adapting the language experience approach for teaching second language learners” (p. 45). The first step involves the
discussion of student life experiences as it is related to the text. What does the student already know about what he or she is about to read? As the reading progresses, the teacher should interject questions about the text, and how it is related to the student.

The second step involved “transcribing important ideas from text discussions into written language” (Perez, 2000, p. 46). During this step, a student recorder transcribes key points on paper or chalkboard with the use of the actual language of students. Upon conclusion, class members organize key points into a logical sequence and ask questions such as, “What new things did you learn? or, how can you use what you have learned?” (p. 46).

“The third step in adapting the language experience approach in teaching second language learners involves follow-up activities that require students to review or reflect on what they learned from the text reading selection” (Perez, 2000, p. 3). One method that Perez suggested was “sketch to stretch” (p.3). The student is instructed to draw a picture to illustrate what the text meant to him or her. Upon completion of the drawing, students share their pictures while they verbally explain the sketch. In this way, the student explores the meaning of text through pictures.

Discussion of English Language Learners

“Language develops best in a variety of settings that promote talk and interaction” (Ernst-Slavit et al., 2002, p. 119). In addition, they stated that:

Schools should demonstrate appreciation and respect for cultural diversity. Providing equal opportunities for all students depends on the degree to which classroom teachers are able to institute classroom practices and develop curriculum that responds to the diversity represented in their classrooms.
Implementation of these practices is dependent upon supportive school staff and programs, district guidelines, and state language policies that recognize diversity as an asset and not a handicap. (p. 119)

How a teacher promotes and fosters cultural awareness in his or her classroom will aid in the academic and personal growth of all students.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) has gone through a series of name changes since it was first documented in 1845 (Glass, 2001). “However, during the early years the children, who displayed the behaviors that are now commonly known as ADHD, were often viewed as the troublemaking, lazy or disobedient children” (p. 1). With the growing number of students, who are diagnosed as ADHD, educators should strive to learn all they can about the nature of the disorder and how it influences students’ learning. Many students are treated with pharmacology “because they can improve the neural substrate of behavioral inhibition and the use of stimulant drugs in ADHD has been found to promote attentiveness and interpersonal interactions with teachers, parents, and peers” (Miranda, Presentación, & Soriano, 2002, p. 546). However, the limitation to the use of pharmacology is the lack of substantial long term academic gain.

Background of ADHD

Students who are diagnosed with ADHD display many characteristics that make sustained attention problematic (Welton, 1999, as cited in Reis, 2002). Reis cited Accardo, Blondis, Stein, and Whitman (2000), and stated that:
Some of these characteristics include but are not limited to: (1) often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork; (2) often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork; (3) often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly; (4) often has difficulty organizing tasks and activities; and (5) often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort, such as schoolwork or homework. (p. 175)

The main characteristics of ADHD are inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. What can educators do to reduce distractors and capture the attention of students with ADHD?

**Multicomponent Interventions**

According to Miranda at al. (2002), the use of pharmacotherapy for the treatment of ADHD highlights the need for the “augmentation of psychosocial and psychoeducational treatments” (p. 546). Miranda et al. quoted Pelham and Gnagy (1999), who stated that “simply medicating children without teaching them the skills they need to improve their behavior and performance, is not likely to improve the children's long-term prognosis (p. 226)” (p. 546). Miranda et al. reported that the introduction of intervention skills is best done in the natural setting of a classroom where students spend a notable amount of time.

The classroom is a setting that requires a high degree of planning, coordinating, control, and evaluation, of procedures, for instance, in following the rules, interacting adequately with peers and adults, actively participating in the teaching and learning process, and avoiding interruption of teaching and classmates’ activities. Consequently, the classroom is an important and appropriate setting in which to introduce interventions that will support the personal, social, and scholastic development of students with ADHD. (p. 547)

Swanson (1992, as cited in Miranda et al.) addressed ADHD from a multicomponent approach. Composed of several intervention programs, the multicomponent treatment
model was “designed in such a way that it will improve a range of child's behaviors” (Miranda et al., p. 547).

Miranda et al. (2002) found that, in addition to the improved use of behavior modification strategies, teachers needed information regarding instructional strategies for effectively teaching students with ADHD. The authors cited Reid, Vasa, Maag, and Wright (1994) and stated that “because the empirical data suggest that lack of training is the barrier most frequently indicated by elementary school teachers in the process of working with ADHD students” (p. 547).

The multicomponent program is comprised of three approaches: (a) behavior modification techniques, (b) cognitive behavior techniques, and (c) instructional management techniques (Miranda et al., 2002). The focus of behavior modification instruction is on how to increase desired behaviors with strategies such as positive reinforcement, token systems, and instruction in how to manage undesirable behaviors, including the use of: (a) extinction, (b) timeout, and (c) response cost. Cognitive behavioral techniques include training educators how to “stimulate [the] self-control of students with ADHD (i.e., teach them how to manage their behavior in an independent way) and training in the “use of self-instruction and reinforced self-evaluation techniques that may be applied to the whole class” (p. 549).

Instructional management techniques includes training the use of intervention strategies followed by an analysis of the principles that explain the effectiveness of the procedures used with students with ADHD. Miranda et al. (2002) “considered that if
[the] teachers were aware of the benefits of these techniques, they would actively involve themselves in their application in the classroom” (p. 550).

Overall, the “results from the multicomponent approach were impressive and suggest that the set of techniques applied by the teachers in a classroom helped to correct the self-regulatory deficits of the children with ADHD” (Miranda et al., 2002, p. 550). It is important to note the positive effects reported by the teachers. A reduction in hyperactive/impulsive behaviors and an improvement in self-control in the ADHD experimental group were identified by teachers, thus, the success of the intervention techniques were supported.

**Teaching Children with ADHD**

“Like fingerprints, each child had his or her own individual learning style regardless of the group to which that individual belonged” (Brand, Dunn, & Greb, 2002, p. 268). Educational approaches for different students should be based on the individual learning style strengths of that student, not on the special category to which he or she may have been classified.

There are numerous instructional strategies recommended by researchers for classroom teachers to implement in the regular classroom to teach children with ADD/ADHD. The initial step is to evaluate the student’s individual needs and strengths (U.S. Office of Special Education, 2004). By assessment of the “unique educational needs and strengths of the child with ADHD in the class,” the educator can then work with a “multidisciplinary team and the child's parents” (p. 3) to develop a learning style that
meets both behavioral and academic needs of the student. Thus, the learning style inventory can be utilized to determine a student’s strengths and enable individualized instruction to build on his or her existing abilities.

Another sound strategy, provided by Reis (2002), is to introduce the student to effective behavioral intervention strategies to control his or her behavior, which is most effective when verbal reinforcement of appropriate behavior is administered by the teacher. “The most common form of verbal reinforcement is praise given to a student when he or she begins and completes an activity or exhibits a particular desired behavior” (U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services/Office of Special Education Programs, n.d., p. 14). According to Reis, the use of positive reinforcement increases student achievement while it decreases negative behaviors; also, it fosters self-esteem and self-worth with the establishment of a classroom where the student knows his or her efforts will be recognized.

The method provides a bridging from previously taught material to new concepts which allows students with ADHD the time to “incorporate new information into their pre-existing knowledgebase and to use it as a springboard for additional abstractions and generalizations” (Reis, 2002, p. 176). This provides students with numerous opportunities to look for connections between what they already have learned and what they are currently studying.

There are numerous strategies and practices that educators and researchers deem essential for utilization in classrooms with students who have ADHD, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 4. However, strategies and instructional practices will be of
little value without the commitment from the educator to be informed about ADD/ADHD, and its effects on behavior and learning. Consultation with experts, reading specialists, special education teachers, and speech and language consultants may be helpful and needed (Hogan, 1997). “The parents of kids who been diagnosed with ADHD can be your best resource” (Weaver, 1994, p. 43). Hogan recommended, “Tap all of these valuable resources; do not overlook cumulative records and Individual Education Plans on file” (p. 158). Also, the use of “positive teaching strategies and non-traditional teaching methods are known to improve the chance of academic success for students who display the behaviors associated with ADHD; therefore, information on these various accommodations should be distributed to every teacher, public or private, at every grade level” (Glass, 2001, p. 4).

Chapter Summary

The instructional methods that are used to teach children with exceptionalities are varied. The decision about which to implement in the classroom is determined by the classroom teacher’s personal observations of the student and the student’s learning needs. In this chapter, the author focused on two exceptionalities, second language learners and students with ADHD, and one large facet of the educational curriculum, reading comprehension, to research the best practices in methods used to teach children with exceptionalities. Diversity is here to stay. “The school must deal with the learner as presented. The label does not dictate the educational needs of the learner” (Weaver & Landers, 1998, p. 5).
Chapter 3

METHOD

The purpose of this project will be to provide elementary teachers with an informational handbook to reference while teaching children with exceptionalities in the regular classroom. The best practices and strategies presented are based on both experimental and field based research studies and offer potential solutions that can be implemented immediately based on the classroom teacher’s observations of the student’s academic and behavioral indicators.

During her completion of the requirements for teacher certification, this author became intrigued by the challenges associated with the integration of students with exceptionalities into the elementary classroom. A question came to mind repetitively. How does the regular classroom teacher meet the needs of the majority of students and, also, meet the unique needs of children with exceptionalities? While some research in this area has been conducted, practical applications such as classroom instructional strategies and methods to aid in the academic achievement of students who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, or who are mentally challenged are not readily available.

Procedure

“The U.S. government’s No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) legislation emphasizes the use of scientifically validated learning resources” (Cradler, Cradler, &
Clarke, 2003, p. 50). A comprehensive literature review was conducted and studies that
offered evidence that was formally tested, had researched based findings, and provided
proof of reason based practice that converged with a research based consensus in the
scientific literature (Stanovich & Stanovich, 2003) were utilized. Additional field-based
solutions were reviewed as well and considered in an effort to provide a balanced and
practical guide. In Chapter 4, this author will describe the criteria used in the research of
strategies and instructional tools for incorporation into the handbook.

Handbook Design

The handbook will be divided into subject areas by exceptionality. Specific
exceptionalities include, but are not limited to: (a) attention deficit disorder (ADD), (b)
ADHD, (c) autism, (d) gifted and talented, (e) emotionally challenged, (f) hearing
impaired, (g) learning disabled, (h) mentally challenged, (i) physically challenged, (j)
second language learners, (k) speech/communication disorders, and (l) the visually
impaired. Each subject area will contain a definition of the exceptionality, to include: (a)
emotional and behavioral characteristics, (b) deficit areas with recommended classroom
strategies, and (c) recommended methods to improve academic achievement and
behavior management. Additionally, reports on current research initiatives will be
provided.
Chapter Summary

An extensive literature review was conducted in the area of instructional strategies and methods for teaching children with exceptionalities. Research was reviewed according to source credibility and study results. The relevant findings will be presented in handbook format in Chapter 4, with a final discussion of these recommendations in Chapter 5.
Chapter 4

APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECT

In order to assist the regular classroom teacher with instruction of students with exceptionalities, this handbook was designed to be used as a quick reference tool alongside guidance from special education resources.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

As a newcomer to the teaching profession, I was in constant search for material to assist instruction in regard to children with exceptionalities. I found that there were numerous textbooks about the various exceptionalities, but I was unable to maintain a library behind my desk to house all these resources. I then decided to pursue a handbook for my research project, designed to support the regular classroom teacher with simple, easy to implement strategies.

I feel that I provided a simplistic, usable, and comprehensive handbook for the regular classroom teacher to have on his or her desk, for easy reference and quick implementation. While researching strategies and techniques, I found straightforward practices designed to complement all types of classroom environments, not problematical, costly, and complicated methods which would hinder or discourage the educator from trying new approaches.

In order to objectively evaluate the project, a questionnaire was designed and disseminated to ten of my colleagues. The questionnaire concentrated on questions such as availability of resources in the classroom, when teaching children with exceptionalities. The following questions were on the survey:

1) Have you taught student(s) that fit into the exceptionalities categories listed?
2) Do you feel the information provided will prove beneficial in the classroom?
3) How helpful do you feel this handbook will be in regular classroom?
4) Do you feel this handbook would be simple to use?

5) Do you feel the layout of the information was adequate for the material covered?

6) Did your school or district provide a similar resource to you upon employment? If “yes,” how useful was the resource that was provided?

7) What learning’s did you find particularly interesting?

8) What would you like to see added to the handbook?

9) What do you feel are the immediate advantages of this handbook?

The final question solicited comments from the respondents about the handbook. The responses brought positive feedback and excellent suggestions for additional material.

Feedback

All respondents had experience instructing children with exceptionalities and felt the handbook would prove beneficial in the classroom. Concerning the support, ease of use, and layout of the handbook, each respondent was “very satisfied” with the handbook’s ability to meet the needs of the consumer.

Of the ten respondents, three educators mentioned the availability of a similar resource in their particular school district, however, one commented how the source was “not easy to follow and find what was useful to my situation,” and another stated she did “not feel it was useful.” A respondent mentioned that she was told there was a handbook available, but was unable to locate the guide. “We have trainings on various methods of teaching children with autism at eh early childhood levels which are very helpful but the handbook would help have something tangible for all of the other categories.” The
feedback received on this question alone tells me that I had embarked on a practical endeavor that would be advantageous to the classroom teacher.

Interestingly enough, several respondents commented on the subject area of ADHD and autism as learnings they found particularly interesting. “I found it interesting that there are so many small and different changes you can make to a students learning environment with ADHD that are simple and easy to do.” “ADHD students and rhetorical questions—it is understandable that use of rhetorical questions could be a hindrance in the classroom for a student with ADHD.” Additionally, comments on the simple tips and interesting statistics and facts were mentioned by three educators. “I think the handbook did a good job of explaining techniques that are easy for teachers to utilize in the classroom.”

Recommendations for additions to the handbooks were extremely useful and provided an insight to what educators are concerned about and would like further information--classroom behaviors and the inclusion of additional exceptionalities. One respondent would like to see “speech and language delays, especially more severe ones. It might help teachers (to) know how to accommodate for them in the classroom and not just rely on the ‘speech teacher’.” An area for “behavior modifications for specific behavior issues” was mentioned by the assistant principal. The final recommendation was made to add a section on noncompliant behaviors. The remaining respondents felt the handbook was complete or did not require any further additions.

The final question solicited opinions on the immediate advantages of the handbook. Responses varied from easy to reference to easily accessible. “The
immediate advantages of this handbook are the ready-made interventions for a variety of students and situations. The teacher does not have to research interventions, they are already at her fingertips.” “The handbook takes a lot of the mystery out of teaching students with special needs. It is a quick and easy reference guide with excellent ideas and suggestions.” “How nicely it was written, it was easy to find information. It had excellent ideas to implement into the classroom from instructional delivery to environmental strategies within the classroom.”

Summary

The past four years has been an exploration into the educational field, which opened my mind into various areas of teaching. I have conducted numerous topics of research in various areas of education, all of which I found thoroughly fascinating and intriguing. I recognized the need for guidance on how to effectively instruct children with exceptionalities when my first class included eight ELL students, two students diagnosed with ADHD, a student with a physical disability and a trainable mental handicap, and a student with a significant identifiable emotional disability (SIED). Frequent collaboration with the special education consultants, as well as the ELL department occurred on a daily basis.

The ability to effectively instruct a student at the appropriate academic level is the ultimate goal of every educator. Likewise, to reach the child with an exceptionality requires additional effort and understanding on behalf of the classroom teacher. It was this researcher's desire to broaden the knowledge of her peers, by the provision of an easy
to use, comprehensive handbook to aid in the instruction of children with exceptionalities.
REFERENCES


U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services/Office of Special Education Programs. (n.d.). *Organizational and study skills useful for academic instruction of children with ADHD.* Retrieved June 20, 2005, from http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index


APPENDIX A

Questionnaire
Research Project
Regis University
School for Professional Studies

Problem statement: This survey will solicit opinions, thoughts, and recommendations on the handbook, Teaching Children with Exceptionalities: A Handbook for the Regular Classroom Teacher.

Thank you for completing the survey. Please be honest and candid. This survey is being conducted from a graduate student prospective. It is in no way associated with the Colorado Board of Education or Regis University. The comments you provide will be used to complete an academic assignment and will not be disclosed to any other party other than the student’s instructor.

1. Have you taught student(s) that fit into the exceptionalities categories listed? Yes No

2. Do you feel the information provided will prove beneficial in the classroom? Yes No

3. How helpful do you feel this handbook will be in the regular classroom?

   Very Dissatisfied Not Satisfied Neutral Satisfied Very Satisfied

   1  2  3  4  5

4. Do you feel this handbook would be simple to use?

   1  2  3  4  5

5. Do you feel the layout of the information was adequate for the material covered?

   1  2  3  4  5

6. Did your school or district provide a similar resource to you upon employment? Yes No

   If “yes,” how useful was the resource that was provided?

   Comment: I was informed by other teachers that we had a handbook. I do not feel it was useful.

7. What learnings did you find particularly interesting?

   Comment: I found it interesting that there are so many small and different changes you can make to a students learning environment with ADHD that are simple and easy to do. Jacque did an excellent job of giving all sorts strategies that will help drive instruction for these students.

8. What would you like to see added to the handbook?

   Comment: none

9. What do you feel are the immediate advantages of this handbook? (For example, exposure to various teaching strategies, etc.,)

   How nicely it was written, it was easy to find information. It had excellent ideas to implement into the classroom from instructional delivery to environmental strategies within the classroom.

10. Please make any further comments if you wish
Problem statement: This survey will solicit opinions, thoughts, and recommendations on the handbook, Teaching Children with Exceptionalities: A Handbook for the Regular Classroom Teacher.

Thank you for completing the survey. Please be honest and candid. This survey is being conducted from a graduate student prospective. It is in no way associated with the Colorado Board of Education or Regis University. The comments you provide will be used to complete an academic assignment and will not be disclosed to any other party other than the student’s instructor.

1. Have you taught student(s) that fit into the exceptionalities categories listed?  Yes  No

2. Do you feel the information provided will prove beneficial in the classroom?  Yes  No

3. How helpful do you feel this handbook will be in the regular classroom?  1  2  3  4  5

4. Do you feel this handbook would be simple to use?  1  2  3  4  5

5. Do you feel the layout of the information was adequate for the material covered?  1  2  3  4  5

6. Did your school or district provide a similar resource to you upon employment?  Yes  No
   If “yes,” how useful was the resource that was provided?
   Comment:

7. What learnings did you find particularly interesting?
   Comment: ADHD students and rhetorical questions. It is understandable that use of rhetorical questions could be a hindrance in the classroom for a student with ADHD.

8. What would you like to see added to the handbook?
   Comment: N/A

9. What do you feel are the immediate advantages of this handbook? (For example, exposure to various teaching strategies, etc.)
   This handbook would be especially helpful to a new teacher. All teachers would benefit from this handbook as a professional reference.

10. Please make any further comments you wish to add about the handbook.
    I found the information helpful and teacher friendly.
Research Project  
Regis University  
School for Professional Studies

**Respondent category:**  
- X Classroom Teacher  
- ELL  
- SPED  
- Other

**Problem statement:** This survey will solicit opinions, thoughts, and recommendations on the handbook, Teaching Children with Exceptionalities: A Handbook for the Regular Classroom Teacher.

Thank you for completing the survey. Please be honest and candid. This survey is being conducted from a graduate student prospective. It is in no way associated with the Colorado Board of Education or Regis University. The comments you provide will be used to complete an academic assignment and will not be disclosed to any other party other than the student’s instructor.

1. Have you taught student(s) that fit into the exceptionalities categories listed?  
   - Yes  
   - No

2. Do you feel the information provided will prove beneficial in the classroom?  
   - Yes  
   - No

3. How helpful do you feel this handbook will be in the regular classroom?  
   - Very Dissatisfied  
   - Not Satisfied  
   - Neutral  
   - Satisfied  
   - Very Satisfied

4. Do you feel this handbook would be simple to use?  
   - 1  
   - 2  
   - 3  
   - 4  
   - 5

5. Do you feel the layout of the information was adequate for the material covered?  
   - 1  
   - 2  
   - 3  
   - 4  
   - 5

6. Did your school or district provide a similar resource to you upon employment?  
   - Yes  
   - No
   
   **If “yes,” how useful was the resource that was provided?**

   **Comment:** Upon employment in the district, I was informed there was a similar source, but inquiries proved unsuccessful.

7. What learnings did you find particularly interesting?  
   **Comment:** What I found interesting was ease of implementation of various strategies and techniques  
   As an ELL teacher, I am always searching for strategies and resources to implement.

8. What would you like to see added to the handbook?  
   **Comment:** Speech and language exceptionalities.

9. What do you feel are the immediate advantages of this handbook? (For example, exposure to various teaching strategies, etc.,)  
   **Comment:** Whenever you come across a resource that assists in the learning and academic growth of a student, there is an immediate advantage. The teaching strategies listed will not only assist children with exceptionalities, but all students.

10. Please make any further comments you wish to add about the handbook.  
   I liked the format and layout of the information.
Research Project
Regis University
School for Professional Studies

Respondent category:
- X Classroom Teacher
- ELL
- SPED
- Other

Problem statement: This survey will solicit opinions, thoughts, and recommendations on the handbook, Teaching Children with Exceptionalities: A Handbook for the Regular Classroom Teacher.

Thank you for completing the survey. Please be honest and candid. This survey is being conducted from a graduate student prospective. It is in no way associated with the Colorado Board of Education or Regis University. The comments you provide will be used to complete an academic assignment and will not be disclosed to any other party other than the student’s instructor.

1. Have you taught student(s) that fit into the exceptionalities categories listed?  Yes No

2. Do you feel the information provided will prove beneficial in the classroom? Yes No

3. How helpful do you feel this handbook will be in the regular classroom? 1 2 3 4 5

4. Do you feel this handbook would be simple to use? 1 2 3 4 5

5. Do you feel the layout of the information was adequate for the material covered? 1 2 3 4 5

6. Did your school or district provide a similar resource to you upon employment?  Yes No
   If “yes,” how useful was the resource that was provided?
   Comment: We have trainings on various methods of teaching children with autism at the early childhood levels which are very helpful but the handbook would help have something tangible for all of the other categories.

7. What learnings did you find particularly interesting?
   Comment: All of the areas had very interesting statistics and facts.

8. What would you like to see added to the handbook?
   Comment: Speech/Language delays. Especially more severe ones. It might help teachers know how to accommodate for them in the classroom and not just rely on their “speech teacher”.

9. What do you feel are the immediate advantages of this handbook? (For example, exposure to various teaching strategies, etc.) Having the information and teaching strategies right in the classroom.

10. Please make any further comments you wish to add about the handbook.
    I liked the ease of use, quick reference format.
Problem statement: This survey will solicit opinions, thoughts, and recommendations on the handbook, Teaching Children with Exceptionalities: A Handbook for the Regular Classroom Teacher.

Thank you for completing the survey. Please be honest and candid. This survey is being conducted from a graduate student prospective. It is in no way associated with the Colorado Board of Education or Regis University. The comments you provide will be used to complete an academic assignment and will not be disclosed to any other party other than the student’s instructor.

1. Have you taught student(s) that fit into the exceptionalities categories listed? Yes No

2. Do you feel the information provided will prove beneficial in the classroom? Yes No

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Not Satisfied</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. How helpful do you feel this handbook will be in the regular classroom? 1 2 3 4 5

4. Do you feel this handbook would be simple to use? 1 2 3 4 5

5. Do you feel the layout of the information was adequate for the material covered? 1 2 3 4 5

6. Did your school or district provide a similar resource to you upon employment? Yes No

   If “yes,” how useful was the resource that was provided?

Comment: This would be a great tool for new teachers as well as seasoned teachers in the classroom. This is a great source to keep on hand and refer to often.

7. What learnings did you find particularly interesting? Comment: The comprehensive interventions for ADD students as well as for ELL.

8. What would you like to see added to the handbook? Comment: A section on noncompliant behaviors.

9. What do you feel are the immediate advantages of this handbook? (For example, exposure to various teaching strategies, etc..)

   The immediate advantages of this handbook are the ready-made interventions for a variety of students and situations. The teacher does not need to research interventions, they are already at her fingertips.

10. Please make any further comments you wish to add about the handbook. This was a very well thought out handbook with the flavor of a devoted and experienced teacher.
Research Project
Regis University
School for Professional Studies

Respondent category:

X Classroom Teacher
____ ELL
____ SPED
____ Other

Problem statement: This survey will solicit opinions, thoughts, and recommendations on the handbook, Teaching Children with Exceptionalities: A Handbook for the Regular Classroom Teacher.

Thank you for completing the survey. Please be honest and candid. This survey is being conducted from a graduate student prospective. It is in no way associated with the Colorado Board of Education or Regis University. The comments you provide will be used to complete an academic assignment and will not be disclosed to any other party other than the student’s instructor.

1. Have you taught student(s) that fit into the exceptionalities categories listed? Yes No

2. Do you feel the information provided will prove beneficial in the classroom? Yes No

3. How helpful do you feel this handbook will be in the regular classroom? 1 2 3 4 5

4. Do you feel this handbook would be simple to use? 1 2 3 4 5

5. Do you feel the layout of the information was adequate for the material covered? 1 2 3 4 5

6. Did your school or district provide a similar resource to you upon employment? Yes No

   If “yes,” how useful was the resource that was provided?

   Comment: Surprisingly, no, the district does not provide a similar resource.

7. What learnings did you find particularly interesting?

   Comment: The strategies listed for students with ADHD and autism.

8. What would you like to see added to the handbook?

   Comment: A section on behavior/classroom management.

9. What do you feel are the immediate advantages of this handbook? (For example, exposure to various teaching strategies, etc.,) Jacque created an easy-to-use source that any teacher (classroom or other) would love to have in his or her classroom. Great suggestions and strategies to implement.

10. Please make any further comments you wish to add about the handbook.

    This handbook is a terrific resource for a new or veteran teachers. Great.
Problem statement: This survey will solicit opinions, thoughts, and recommendations on the handbook, Teaching Children with Exceptionalities: A Handbook for the Regular Classroom Teacher.

Thank you for completing the survey. Please be honest and candid. This survey is being conducted from a graduate student prospective. It is in no way associated with the Colorado Board of Education or Regis University. The comments you provide will be used to complete an academic assignment and will not be disclosed to any other party other than the student’s instructor.

1. Have you taught student(s) that fit into the exceptionalities categories listed? [ ] Yes [ ] No

2. Do you feel the information provided would prove beneficial in the classroom? [ ] Yes [ ] No

3. How helpful do you feel this handbook will be in the regular classroom? [ ] Very Dissatisfied [ ] Not Satisfied [ ] Neutral [ ] Satisfied [ ] Very Satisfied

4. Do you feel this handbook would be simple to use? [ ] Very Dissatisfied [ ] Not Satisfied [ ] Neutral [ ] Satisfied [ ] Very Satisfied

5. Do you feel the layout of the information was adequate for the material covered? [ ] Very Dissatisfied [ ] Not Satisfied [ ] Neutral [ ] Satisfied [ ] Very Satisfied

6. Did your school or district provide a similar resource to you upon employment? [ ] Yes [ ] No
   If “yes,” how useful was the resource that was provided?
   Comment: N/A - just became employed - don't know yet

7. What learning’s did you find particularly interesting?
   Comment: I think the handbook did a good job of explaining techniques that are easy for teachers to utilize in the classroom.

8. What areas would you like to see added to the handbook?
   Comment: None, I thought the handbook was very comprehensive and if a teacher needs further assistance the handbook helps with that as well.

9. What do you feel are the immediate advantages of this handbook? (For example, exposure to various teaching strategies, etc.)
   The handbook takes a lot of the mystery out of teaching students with special needs. It is a quick and easy reference guide with excellent ideas and suggestions.

10. Please make any further comments you wish to add about the handbook.
    I would like to have one for my classroom.
Problem statement: This survey will solicit opinions, thoughts, and recommendations on the handbook, Teaching Children with Exceptionalities: A Handbook for the Regular Classroom Teacher.

Thank you for completing the survey. Please be honest and candid. This survey is being conducted from a graduate student prospective. It is in no way associated with the Colorado Board of Education or Regis University. The comments you provide will be used to complete an academic assignment and will not be disclosed to any other party other than the student’s instructor.

1. Have you taught student(s) that fit into the exceptionalities categories listed?  Yes No

2. Do you feel the information provided would prove beneficial in the classroom? Yes No

3. How helpful do you feel this handbook will be in the regular classroom?  Very Dissatisfied Not Satisfied Neutral Satisfied Very Satisfied

4. Do you feel this handbook would be simple to use?  Very Dissatisfied Not Satisfied Neutral Satisfied Very Satisfied

5. Do you feel the layout of the information was adequate for the material covered?  Very Dissatisfied Not Satisfied Neutral Satisfied Very Satisfied

6. Did your school or district provide a similar resource to you upon employment? Yes No

   If “yes,” how useful was the resource that was provided?

   Comment:

7. What learning’s did you find particularly interesting?

   Comment: The sections on ADHD and autism. The population of my classroom consisted of both of these disorders, and I have not been adequately trained to deal with these types of children.

8. What areas would you like to see added to the handbook?

   Comment: This handbook was all-inclusive in that it provided me with different strategies to use to help my students. I also found that the section on ELL was helpful in that ELL make up about 75% of my classroom community.

9. What do you feel are the immediate advantages of this handbook? (For example, exposure to various teaching strategies, etc.)

   Comment: The handbook was presented in a manner that it was easy to reference to a specific section and presented teaching strategies I had not been exposed to. These strategies will be very helpful in lesson planning.

10. Please make any further comments you wish to add about the handbook.

    The handbook was professionally presented and user friendly. It is a great addition to any teaching curriculum.
Problem statement: This survey will solicit opinions, thoughts, and recommendations on the handbook, Teaching Children with Exceptionalities: A Handbook for the Regular Classroom Teacher.

Thank you for completing the survey. Please be honest and candid. This survey is being conducted from a graduate student prospective. It is in no way associated with the Colorado Board of Education or Regis University. The comments you provide will be used to complete an academic assignment and will not be disclosed to any other party other than the student’s instructor.

1. Have you taught student(s) that fit into the exceptionalities categories listed?  
   - [ ] Yes  
   - [ ] No

2. Do you feel the information provided will prove beneficial in the classroom?  
   - [ ] Yes  
   - [ ] No

3. How helpful do you feel this handbook will be in the regular classroom?  
   - [ ] Very Dissatisfied  
   - [ ] Not Satisfied  
   - [ ] Neutral Satisfied  
   - [ ] Satisfied

4. Do you feel this handbook would be simple to use?  
   - [ ] Very Dissatisfied  
   - [ ] Not Satisfied  
   - [ ] Neutral Satisfied  
   - [ ] Satisfied

5. Do you feel the layout of the information was adequate for the material covered?  
   - [ ] Very Dissatisfied  
   - [ ] Not Satisfied  
   - [ ] Neutral Satisfied  
   - [ ] Satisfied

6. Did your school or district provide a similar resource to you upon employment?  
   - [ ] Yes  
   - [ ] No

   If “yes,” how useful was the resource that was provided?

   Comment: Not easy to follow and find what was useful to my situation.

7. What learnings did you find particularly interesting?

   Comment: The specifics for ADHD

8. What would you like to see added to the handbook?

   Comment: I thought it was compact.

9. What do you feel are the immediate advantages of this handbook? (For example, exposure to various teaching strategies, etc.,)

   I can find ideas quicker - the layout is good
   It is all to the point and informative

10. Please make any further comments you wish to add about the handbook.

    Very helpful!
Problem statement: This survey will solicit opinions, thoughts, and recommendations on the handbook, Teaching Children with Exceptionalities: A Handbook for the Regular Classroom Teacher.

Thank you for completing the survey. Please be honest and candid. This survey is being conducted from a graduate student prospective. It is in no way associated with the Colorado Board of Education or Regis University. The comments you provide will be used to complete an academic assignment and will not be disclosed to any other party other than the student’s instructor.

1. Have you taught student(s) that fit into the exceptionalities categories listed?  
   Yes  No

2. Do you feel the information provided will prove beneficial in the classroom?  
   Yes  No

3. How helpful do you feel this handbook will be in the regular classroom?  
   1  2  3  4  5

4. Do you feel this handbook would be simple to use?  
   1  2  3  4  5

5. Do you feel the layout of the information was adequate for the material covered?  
   1  2  3  4  5

6. Did your school or district provide a similar resource to you upon employment?  
   Yes  No
   If “yes,” how useful was the resource that was provided?

Comment: Simple tips to use daily

7. What learning’s did you find particularly interesting?
   Comment:

8. What would you like to see added to the handbook?
   Comment: Behavior modifications for specific behavior issues

9. What do you feel are the immediate advantages of this handbook? (For example, exposure to various teaching strategies, etc.)  
   Easy to get to get to/ read

10. Please make any further comments you wish to add about the handbook.
Teaching Children with Exceptionalities
A Handbook for the Regular Classroom Teacher
Preface

This handbook is designed for use by the regular classroom teacher to assist with classroom modifications, instructional strategies, and accommodations when teaching students with exceptionalities, specifically, students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, English language learners, emotionally challenged, gifted and talented, hearing impaired, and visually impaired.

I selected these modifications, strategies, and accommodations based on their simplistic implementation and practicality in a diverse student population.
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Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Overview

What is ADHD?

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a “neurobehavioral disorder characterized by pervasive inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity and resulting in significant functional impairment. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates 4.4 million youth ages 4-17 have been diagnosed with ADHD by a healthcare professional, and as of 2003, 2.5 million youth ages 4-17 are currently receiving medication treatment for the disorder. In 2003, 7.8% of school-aged children were reported to have an ADHD diagnosis by their parent. ADHD is one of the most common neurobehavioral disorders of childhood and can persist through adolescence and into adulthood. Currently the causes are unknown.

A person with ADHD has a chronic level of inattention, impulsive hyperactivity, or both, such that daily functioning is compromised. The symptoms of the disorder must be present at levels that are higher than expected for a person's developmental stage and must interfere with the person's ability to function in different settings (e.g., in school and at home). A person with ADHD may struggle in important areas of life, such as peer and family relationships, and school or work performance.”

The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-IV, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR) estimates that 3%-7% of children suffer from ADHD. Some studies have estimated higher rates in community samples. ADHD is diagnosed approximately three times more often in boys than in girls.

Three types of ADHD have been established according to which symptoms are strongest in the individual. These types and their characteristics are described below:

1. **Predominantly Inattentive Type:** It is hard for the individual to organize or finish a task, to pay attention to details, or to follow instructions or conversations. The person is easily distracted or forgets details of daily routines.

2. **Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Type:** The person fidgets and talks a lot. It is hard to sit still for long (e.g., for a meal or while doing homework). Smaller children may run, jump or climb constantly. The individual feels restless and has trouble with impulsivity. Someone who is impulsive may interrupt others a lot, grab things from people, or speak at inappropriate times. It is hard for the person to wait their turn or listen to directions. A person with impulsiveness may have more accidents and injuries than others.

3. **Combined Type:** Symptoms of the above two types are equally predominant in the person.

---

1 www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd
As many as half of those diagnosed with ADHD, also have other mental disorders. These co-morbidities of ADHD (other disorders that occur along with ADHD) can make it harder to diagnose and treat ADHD. They may also present further challenges to the individual with ADHD.

Used by mental health professionals, the DSM-IV-TR provides criteria for diagnosing ADHD. This diagnostic standard helps ensure that people are appropriately diagnosed and treated for ADHD. Using the same standard across communities will help determine the public health impact of ADHD.

Treating ADHD can be done through medical or behavioral therapies, or a combination of the two.”

**Strategies for successful instruction of children with ADHD**

Teachers who are successful in educating children with ADHD use a three-pronged strategy. They begin by identifying the unique needs of the child. For example, the teacher determines how, when, and why the child is inattentive, impulsive, and hyperactive. The teacher then selects different educational practices associated with academic instruction, behavioral interventions, and classroom accommodations that are appropriate to meet that child’s needs. Finally, the teacher combines these practices into an individualized educational program (IEP) or other individualized plan and integrates this program with educational activities provided to other children in the class. The three-pronged strategy, in summary, is as follows:

- **Evaluate the child’s individual needs and strengths.**
  Assess the unique educational needs and strengths of a child with ADHD in the class. Working with a multidisciplinary team and the child’s parents, consider both academic and behavioral needs, using formal diagnostic assessments and informal classroom observations. Assessments, such as learning style inventories, can be used to determine children’s strengths and enable instruction to build on their existing abilities. The settings and contexts in which challenging behaviors occur should be considered in the evaluation.

- **Select appropriate instructional practices.**
  Determine which instructional practices will meet the academic and behavioral needs identified for the child. Select practices that fit the content, are age appropriate, and gain the attention of the child.

- **For children receiving special education services, integrate appropriate practices within an IEP.**
  In consultation with other educators and parents, an IEP should be created to reflect annual goals and the special education-related services, along with supplementary aids and services necessary for attaining those goals. Plan how to integrate the educational activities provided to other children in your class with those selected for the child with ADHD.2

---

• Decrease the sources of distractions within the classroom and, at the same time, make learning materials and activities more powerful so they will attract and sustain student’s attention
  o Visual aids
  o Maintain eye contact
  o Provided regular feedback

• Provide student two desks
  o One work area that is located within the classroom community, for large group and small group instruction, and a second work area secluded without visual and if possible, limited auditory distractions, for times when the student needs solitude

• Preferred seating
  o Locate the student near the teacher, to allow for monitoring and reinforcement of on-task behavior.
  o Locate the student near a peer role model, allowing for cooperative learning

• Pointers
  o Teach the child to use a pointer to help visually track written words on a page. For example, provide the child with a bookmark to help him or her follow along when students are taking turns reading aloud.

• Egg timers
  o Note for the children the time at which the lesson is starting and the time at which it will conclude. Set a timer to indicate to children how much time remains in the lesson and place the timer at the front of the classroom; the children can check the timer to see how much time remains. Interim prompts can be used as well. For instance, children can monitor their own progress during a 30-minute lesson if the timer is set for 10 minutes three times.

• Classroom lights
  o Turning the classroom lights on and off prompts children that the noise level in the room is too high and they should be quiet. This practice can also be used to signal that it is time to begin preparing for the next lesson.

• Music
  o Play music on a tape recorder or chords on a piano to prompt children that they are too noisy. In addition, playing different types of music on a tape recorder communicates to children what level of activity is appropriate for a particular lesson. For example, play quiet classical music for quiet activities done independently and jazz for active group activities.

• Proper use of furniture
  o The desk and chair used by children with ADHD need to be the right size; if they are not, the child will be more inclined to squirm and fidget. A general rule of thumb is that a child should be able to put his or her elbows on the surface of the desk and have his or her chin fit comfortably in the palm of the hand.
• **State rules, expectations, and consequences clearly**
  o Well-define procedures for performing tasks; clearly communicate expectations for student behavior; provide ongoing positive and corrective feedback, and fair/consistent treatment of students.
  o Provide an orderly and organized classroom where common routines and rules are posted and reviewed as needed.
  o Teachers need to tell children why they are being praised (e.g., "I can tell you worked hard on those math problems. You have six out of ten correct. Good job. I will help you with the others.") Vary the statements given. Praise given in the same manner will lose its value.
  o Avoid rhetorical questions and sarcasm (e.g., “Why did you do that?”). Create an environment in which all children, including students with ADHD feel safe and valued.³

• **Focus on praise rather than punishment**
  o Negative feedback may temporarily change behavior, but will not permanently change attitude.

• **Selectively ignore inappropriate behavior**
  o When behavior is unintentional or is not expected to be repeated, simply ignore it, especially behaviors that are solely meant to attract attention or to disrupt instruction.

• **Remove nuisance items**
  o Rubber bands or small toys should be removed from the classroom. Provide the student the opportunity to remove the item themselves, if student does not accommodate, then teacher intervention will be highly effective.

• **Provide calming manipulatives**
  o While some toys and other objects can be distracting for both the students with ADHD and peers in the classroom, some children can benefit from having access to objects that can be manipulated quietly (balloons filled with flour).

• **Activity reinforcement**
  o Students receive activity reinforcement when they are encouraged to perform a less desirable behavior before a preferred one.

• **Hurdle helping**
  o Teachers can offer encouragement, support, and assistance to prevent students from becoming frustrated with an assignment. This help can take many forms, from enlisting a peer for support to supplying additional materials or information.

• **Allow for “escape valve” outlets**
  o Permitting students with ADHD to leave class for a moment, perhaps on an errand (such as returning a book to the library), can be an effective means of settling them down and allowing them to return to the room ready to concentrate.

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• **Increase the structure of the classroom learning environment**
  - Reading comprehension
    - Explain purpose of reading and what to look for in passages (3-5)
    - Use peer tutors and volunteers for sight word drill
    - Provide high interest low vocabulary reading materials to aid in the practice of silent reading
    - Utilize computer software
    - Tape texts or stories
    - SQ3R-survey, question, read, recite, and review
  
• **Clear and concrete rules, expectations, and consequences have to be communicated, and sometimes explicitly taught to these children**
  - Student performance should be monitored daily to sustain motivation and active involvement\(^3\)

• **Establish an orderly, predictable environment**
  - Variety, novelty, and stimulation in educational programs enhance learning
    - Have students put away extraneous objects reducing unnecessary stimuli in the environment
    - Reduce potential distracters, such as limit seating near windows and fans, have study carrels available\(^3\)
  
• **Checklists** are available for modifying instruction to address the special learning needs of students with ADHD:
  - Maintain student involvement in group lessons (e.g., keep objectives clear, teach students cognitive strategies such as "think aloud," deliver the lesson at a brisk pace, prompt for student answers after wait time, model enthusiasm, use meaningful materials, break up presentations with opportunities for students to respond).
  - Maintain student involvement in seatwork (e.g., break up long assignments into shorter segments, allow extra time for completing assignments, and reduce the number of practice items).\(^3\)
  - Help students engage in learning tasks (e.g., use "to do" lists and checklists, highlight written directions with larger type or color coding, teach students how to use graphic organizers).

• **Writing**
  - **Tape Recorders**
    - Ask the student to dictate writing assignments into a tape recorder, as an alternative to writing them.
  - **Dictate writing assignments**
    - Have the teacher or another student write down a story told be a child with ADHD.
• **Lesson Introduction**
  - *Provide an advance organizer*
    - Prepare students for the day’s lesson by quickly summarizing the order of various activities planned. Explain, for example, that a review of the previous lesson will be followed by new information and that both group and independent work will be expected.
  - *Review previous lessons*
    - Review information about previous lessons on this topic. For example, remind children that yesterday’s lesson focused on learning how to regroup in subtraction. Review several problems before describing the current lesson.
  - *Set learning expectations*
    - State what students are expected to learn during the lesson. For example, explain to students that a language arts lesson will involve reading a story about Paul Bunyan and identifying new vocabulary words in the story.
  - *Set behavioral expectations*
    - Describe how students are expected to behave during the lesson. For example, tell children that they may talk quietly to their neighbors as they do their seatwork or they may raise their hands to get your attention.
  - *State needed materials*
    - Identify all materials that the children will need during the lesson, rather than leaving them to figure out on their own the materials required. For example, specify that children need their journals and pencils for journal writing or their crayons, scissors, and colored paper for an art project.
  - *Explain additional resources*
    - Tell students how to obtain help in mastering the lesson. For example, refer children to a particular page in the textbook for guidance on completing a worksheet.
  - *Simplify instructions, choices, and scheduling*
    - The simpler the expectations communicated to an ADHD student, the more likely it is that he or she will comprehend and complete them in a timely and productive manner.²

• **Conducting the lesson**
  - *Be predictable*
    - Structure and consistency are very important for children with ADHD; many do not deal well with change. Minimal rules and minimal choices are best for these children. They need to understand clearly what is expected of them, as well as the consequences for not adhering to expectation.
Support the student’s participation in the classroom
- Provide students with ADHD with private, discreet cues to stay on task and advance warning that they will be called upon shortly. Avoid bringing attention to differences between ADHD students and their classmates. At all times, avoid the use of sarcasm and criticism.

Use audiovisual materials
- Use a variety of audiovisual materials to present academic lessons. For example, use an overhead projector to demonstrate how to solve an addition problem requiring regrouping. The students can work on the problem at their desks while you manipulate counters on the screen.

Check student performance
- Question individual students to assess their mastery of the lesson. For example, you can ask students doing seatwork, (i.e., lessons completed by students at their desks in the classroom) to demonstrate how they arrived at the answer to a problem, or you can ask individual students to state, in their own words, how the main character felt at the end of the story.

Ask probing questions
- Probe for the correct answer after allowing a child sufficient time to work out the answer to a question. Count at least 15 seconds before giving the answer or calling on another student. Ask follow-up questions that give children an opportunity to demonstrate what they know.

Perform ongoing student evaluation
- Identify students who need additional assistance. Watch for signs of lack of comprehension, such as daydreaming or visual or verbal indications of frustration. Provide these children with extra explanations, or ask another student to serve as a peer tutor for the lesson.

Help students correct their own mistakes
- Describe how students can identify and correct their own mistakes. For example, remind students that they should check their calculations in math problems and reiterate how they can check their calculations; remind students of particularly difficult spelling rules and how students can watch out for easy-to-make errors.

Help students focus
- Remind students to keep working and to focus on their assigned task. For example, you can provide follow-up directions or assign learning partners. These practices can be directed at individual children or at the entire class.

Follow-up directions
- Effective teachers of children with ADHD also guide them with follow-up directions.
• **Oral directions.** After giving directions to the class as a whole, provide additional oral directions for a child with ADHD. For example, ask the child if he or she understood the directions and repeat the directions together.

• **Written directions.** Provide follow-up directions in writing. For example, write the page number for an assignment on the chalkboard and remind the child to look at the chalkboard if he or she forgets the assignment.

  o **Lower Noise level**
    ▪ Monitor the noise level in the classroom, and provide corrective feedback, as needed. If the noise level exceeds the level appropriate for the type of lesson, remind all students—or individual students—about the behavioral rules stated at the beginning of the lesson.

  o **Divide work into smaller units**
    ▪ Break down assignments into smaller, less complex tasks. For example, allow students to complete five math problems before presenting them with the remaining five problems.

  o **Highlight key points**
    ▪ Highlight key words in the instructions on worksheets to help the child with ADHD focus on the directions. Prepare the worksheet before the lesson begins, or underline key words as you and the child read the directions together. When reading, show children how to identify and highlight a key sentence, or have them write it on a separate piece of paper, before asking for a summary of the entire book. In math, show children how to underline the important facts and operations: in “Mary has two apples, and John has three,” underline “two,” and “three.”

  o **Eliminate or reduce frequency of timed tests**
    ▪ Tests that are timed may not allow children with ADHD to demonstrate what they truly know due to their potential preoccupation with elapsed time. Allow students with ADHD more time to complete quizzes and tests in order to eliminate “test anxiety,” and provide them with other opportunities, methods, or test formats to demonstrate their knowledge.

  o **Use cooperative learning strategies**
    ▪ Have students work together in small groups to maximize their own and each other’s learning. Use strategies such as Think-Pair-Share, where teachers ask students to think about a topic, pair with a partner to discuss it, and share ideas with the group. (Slavin, 2002)

  o **Use assistive technology**
    ▪ All students, and those with ADHD in particular, can benefit from the use of technology (such as computers and projector screens), which makes instruction more visual and allows students to participate actively.
- **Self monitoring**
  - Teachers can help students who have difficulty getting and staying on task. Student can become engaged in and complete academic tasks using a self-monitoring procedure.
  - Self-monitoring is a strategy in which students record some element of their own behavior so they can modify that behavior. This strategy is based on the notion that children can stay on task if they are cued to perform the simple steps and are systematically reinforced for performing the steps. Cues are verbal or nonverbal prompts or signals that trigger specific behaviors. This strategy enables children who have the academic prerequisites to complete the task to monitor themselves as they progress through the assignment.
  - The self-monitoring strategy may consist of, for example, teacher cues, a student checklist, and a systematic reinforcement chart. “Am I listening to my teacher? Do I know what to do? Am I finished with my work?”
  - The teacher assists the students who have difficulty staying on-task by giving them verbal and visual cues that correspond to the questions on the checklist. The children monitor their progress and are rewarded with stickers and positive notes to take home when they complete their work.

- **Peer Tutoring**
  - Peer tutoring is an instructional strategy in which students work in pairs as tutor and tutee, or in teams on which team members take turns acting as teacher or tutor for the rest of the group.
  - The goals of peer tutoring are to improve academic learning, develop cooperative work habits, and increase positive social interaction among students.
  - Peer tutoring takes place when one student who has learned the material helps another student who is working toward mastery. The tutor can be the same age or older than the tutee. In both situations, however, the students must be accepted by and show respect for one another. Often, students need to be instructed in appropriate social skills that will make the tutoring more enjoyable and productive.
  - Peer tutors are trained in basic instructional procedures and techniques for providing reinforcement and corrective feedback. They also need training in identifying when to ask the teacher for help.
  - The teacher must develop procedures for selecting and matching tutors and tutees and then supervise the tutoring sessions. The teacher essentially orchestrates the peer-tutoring program, plans the instruction, and demonstrates the tutoring routine for the student teams. The tutor then works with the learner, providing assistance and feedback.
• Hand gestures
  o Hand gestures are more vivid, dynamic, visual, concrete and less abstract than speech. Information provided by a teacher to a student through the gesture modality depicts more characteristics of an object or action than speech alone.\(^4\)
  o Develop cues or signals with student that can used to redirect attention
  o Should be specific to the individual child, the task, or situation.
  o Various levels of cueing may be needed. For instance, after teaching a specific skill, behavior, or technique, the teacher may need to provide explicit cues to indicate the appropriate time and place for the skill or behavior. Cueing can be faded gradually by reducing (i.e., fewer cues), changing (e.g., visual and auditory cues to visual cues only), or replacing cues (e.g., external to internal cues). When the behavior becomes automatic, external cues no longer should be necessary. Finally, especially for younger children, teachers may need to define the workspace in the classroom.\(^4\)

- **Handwriting**
  - **Individual chalkboards**
    - Ask the child to practice copying and erasing the target words on a small, individual chalkboard. Two children can be paired to practice their target words together.
  - **Quiet places for handwriting**
    - Provide the child with a special “quiet place” (e.g., a table outside the classroom) to complete his or her handwriting assignments.
  - **Spacing words on a page**
    - Have the child use a finger to measure the space to leave between each word in a written assignment.
  - **Special writing paper**
    - Ask the child to use special paper with vertical lines to learn to space letters and words on a page.
  - **Structured programs for handwriting**
    - Teach handwriting skills through a **structured program**, such as Jan Olsen’s Handwriting Without Tears program (Olsen, 2003).²
- **Mathematics**
  - **Color coding arithmetic symbols**
    - Color code basic arithmetic symbols, such as +, −, and =, to provide visual cues for children when they are computing whole numbers.
  - **Board games for basic computation**
    - Ask the child to play board games to practice adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing whole numbers.
  - **Computer games for basic computation**
    - Schedule computer time for the child to drill and practice basic computations, using appropriate games.
  - **“Magic minute” drills**
    - Have students perform a quick (60-second) drill every day to practice basic computation of math facts, and have children track their own performance.²
- **Spelling**
  - **Movement activities**
    - Combine movement activities with spelling lessons (e.g. jump rope while spelling words out loud).
  - **Word banks**
    - Use 3” x 5” index cards of frequently misspelled words sorted alphabetically.²
• **Language Arts and Reading Comprehension.** To help children with ADHD who are poor readers improve their reading comprehension skills, try the following instructional practices:
  
  o **Silent reading time.** Establish a fixed time each day for silent reading (e.g., D.E.A.R.: Drop Everything and Read and Sustained Silent Reading [Manzo & Zehr, 1998 and Holt & O’Tuel, 1989]).
  
  o **Follow-along reading.** Ask the child to read a story silently while listening to other students or the teacher read the story aloud to the entire class.
  
  o **Partner reading activities.** Pair the child with ADHD with another student partner who is a strong reader. The partners take turns reading orally and listening to each other.
  
  o **Storyboards.** Ask the child to make storyboards that illustrate the sequence of main events in a story.
  
  o **Storytelling.** Schedule storytelling sessions where the child can retell a story that he or she has read recently.
  
  o **Playacting.** Schedule playacting sessions where the child can role-play different characters in a favorite story.
  
  o **Word bank.** Keep a word bank or dictionary of new or “hard-to-read” sight-vocabulary words.
  
  o **Board games for reading comprehension.** Play board games that provide practice with target reading comprehension skills or sight-vocabulary words.
  
  o **Computer games for reading comprehension.** Schedule computer time for the child to have drill-and-practice with sight vocabulary words.
  
  o **Recorded books.** These materials, available from many libraries, can stimulate interest in traditional reading and can be used to reinforce and complement reading lessons.
Autism

Overview

What is Autism?

Autism is a severely handicapping disorder which begins at birth or within the first 2 ½ years of life. For many years autism occurred in about 5 children per 10,000 live births. However, since the early 1990’s, the rate of autism has increased enormously throughout the world, so that figures as high as 60 per 10,000 are being reported. The reasons for the increase are being debated, but the most likely cause appears to be the over vaccinations of infants.

Most autistic children are perfectly normal in appearance, but spend their time engaged in puzzling and disturbing behaviors, which are markedly different from those of normal children. They may stare into space for hours, throw uncontrollable tantrums, show no interest in people (including their parents) and pursue strange, repetitive activities with no apparent purpose. They have been described as living in a world of their own. Some autistic individuals are remarkably gifted in certain areas such as music or mathematics, as depicted in the film Rain Man. All need help.

What is the Cause? The causes of autism are poorly understood, although it is clear that autism is a biological brain disorder. The Autism Research Institute, a San Diego-based nonprofit organization for research and information on autism and related disorders, is investigating various possible causal factors.

What is the Outlook? In recent years there has been a marked increase in the percentage of children who have been able to attend school with normal children, and to live more or less independently in community settings. However, the majority of autistic persons remain severely handicapped in their ability to communicate and socialize with other people.

What is the difference between Asperger’s Syndrome and Autism?

Asperger syndrome is usually considered a subtype of high-functioning autism. Most of the individuals with Asperger syndrome are described as “social but awkward.” That is, they want to have friends, but they do not have the social skills to begin and/or maintain a friendship. While high-functioning autistic individuals may also be “social but awkward,” they are typically less interested in having friends. In addition, high-functioning autistic individuals are often delayed in developing speech/language. Those with Asperger syndrome tend not to have speech/language delays, but their speech is usually described as peculiar, such as being stilted and perseverating on unusual topics.
Long-Term Prognosis

Today, most adults with autism are either living at home with their parents or living in a group home. Some higher-functioning people live in a supported-living situation, with modest assistance, a very few are able to live independently. Some are able to work, either in volunteer work, sheltered workshops, or private employment, but many do not. Adults with PDD/NOS and Asperger’s generally are more likely to live independently, and they are more likely to work. Unfortunately, they often have difficulty finding and then maintaining a job. The major reason for chronic unemployment is not a lack of job skills, but rather due to their limited social skills. Thus, it is important to encourage appropriate social skills early on, so they are able to live and work independently as much as possible.

Some of the most successful people on the autism spectrum who have good jobs have developed expertise in a specialized skill that people often value. If a person becomes skilled at something, this can help make up for some difficulties with social skills. Good fields for higher functioning people on the spectrum are architectural drafting, computer programming, language translator, special educator, librarian and scientist. It is likely that some brilliant scientists and musicians have a mild form of Asperger’s Syndrome (Ledgin, 2002). The individuals who are most successful often have mentor teachers either in high school, college or at a place of employment. Mentors can help channel interests into careers. Untreated sensory oversensitivity can severely limit a person’s ability to tolerate a workplace environment. Eliminating fluorescent lights will often help, but untreated sound sensitivity has caused some individuals on the spectrum to quit good jobs because ringing telephones hurt their ears. Sensory sensitivities can be reduced by auditory integration training, diets, Irlen lenses, conventional psychiatric medications and vitamin supplementation. Magnesium often helps hypersensitive hearing.

It should also be pointed out that the educational, therapeautical, and biomedical options available today are much better than in past decades, and they should be much better in the future. However, it is often up to parents to find those services, determine which are the most appropriate for their child, and ensure that they are properly implemented. Parents are a child’s most powerful advocates and teachers. With the right mix of interventions, most children with autism will be able to improve. As we learn more, children with autism will have a better chance to lead happy and fulfilling lives.  

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• **Visual supports**
  o Allows students to make sense of the classroom environment, predict scheduled events, comprehend expectations placed on them, and anticipate changes throughout the day.
  o Visual warning devices that alert the student to the time remaining in a scheduled event or activity\(^7\)

• **Make presentations visual**
  o Most children with autism process 70% of what they learn through visual channels.
  o Pair words with visual stimuli, hand gestures, objects, activities, pictures, and words.
  o Plan stimulus to give the student information about the activity, rather than constant use of verbal means

• **Prepare the child for transitions and schedule changes**
  o Whether the device is a timer or visual schedule, ensure the student is aware that a transition is approaching. Give the transition clue, allow a minute for the student to begin the transition, and then follow up with a verbal prompt. Continue to give verbal prompts and visual cues to transition. Allow **10 minutes** for the student to comply, and then move the student to the designated activity.\(^6\)

• **“Finished Box”**
  o Student places completed assignments in box. Visual cue that work is complete. Allows student to complete task independently\(^6\)

• **Priming**
  o Exposing students with autism and disruptive behaviors to school assignments before their presentation in class would affect academic performance and problem behaviors.\(^7\)
  o Parent or SPED teacher presents task to be presented in class the following day to the student the night or afternoon before
  o Increase in academic responding
  o Builds confidence in task completion\(^7\)

• **Sequencing**
  o Knowing what is going to happen within each environment and within each day, helps eliminate anxiety\(^7\)

• **Routine**
  o Prepare the student for the slightest deviation from the schedule

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• **Desensitization**
  o Slowly increase tolerance to environmental stimuli and stimuli that is frightening or frustrating.\(^7\)
• **Tuning Out**
  o Everyone does this in some fashion; however, some individuals with autism have a unique method of tuning out.
  o Teach coping strategies, or things to do when there is no way out.\(^7\)
• **Strengths and Interests**
  o Expand and utilize strengths. Know the learning style that best suits the student. Build on interests to capture the students’ attention on academics and activities.
• **Adaptations**
  o Participating for a set period of time, using a step-by-step checklist, or using timers to understand duration of lessons
  o Individualization and creativity are necessary when analyzing an activity to determine what adaptations will enable a person with autism to function more independently and successfully.\(^7\)
• **Motivation**
  o Driven by the ability to make choices, one preferred activity over another.
    ▪ Students with autism may have difficulty when given the opportunity to make a decision when there are too many options. This may lead to confusion and fatigue.
    ▪ First, the student must know there is a choice to be made. Next, student must understand a choice is being offered and what the options are. Suggestions:
      • Start with the item in view.
      • Indicate by gestures and verbalizations
      • Be consistent on the vocabulary being used
    ▪ Provide a visual means of making the choice
    ▪ Combine words and gestures and visual materials
    ▪ Last, the choice is made and the student receives the choice, experiences the choice.
• **Social Interaction**
  o Peer tutors and students are excellent teachers of social skills if properly trained in this area
  o Repeated practice of social skills reinforces appropriate social behavior
  o Students with autism must be taught expectations, become assimilated to the environment, feeling secure and relaxed.\(^8\)

Emotionally Challenged

Children with serious emotional disturbances (SED) are often the most difficult for psychologists to treat and for schools to educate and manage. The complex nature of the disorders, coupled with involvement by multiple agencies, creates a challenge for effective intervention. Funding restrictions and questions regarding treatment outcomes have reduced residential or inpatient treatment, whether in the public or private sector. Consequently, schools are the de facto mental health service provider because school systems are mandated to serve children. Children with severe psychological and behavioral disorders often pose challenges to teachers and staff charged with meeting their educational needs. Special education concepts and values guide placement of these children in the least restrictive school environment, as operationalized under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 1990, 1997). The intent of these special education laws and regulations is to ensure that all children receive an appropriate education (Riccio & Hughes, 2001). This requirement compels schools to make every effort to teach a child in as regular a setting as possible and remove children from general education classes only when the nature or severity of disability prevents them from receiving a satisfactory education. School psychologists and clinical child psychologists are increasingly being called on to identify and diagnose children with the most serious emotional problems in the schools, provide counseling, design behavioral management interventions, and consult with families and other community agencies.9

What is a psychiatric disability?

Persons with a “psychiatric disability” have a diagnosable mental illness causing severe disturbances in thinking, feeling, relating, and/or functional behaviors that results in a substantially diminished capacity to cope with daily life demands. A psychiatric disability is a hidden disability; it is rarely apparent to others. However, students with a psychiatric disability may experience symptoms that interfere with their education goal.

A student with a psychiatric disability may have one or more diagnoses under the American Psychiatric Association, to include, depression, bipolar affective disorder, schizophrenia, borderline personality disorder, and anxiety disorders.10

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• **Preferential seating**
  o Especially near the door to allow leaving for breaks
• **Prearranged or frequent breaks**
• **Assigned classmate as a volunteer assistant**
• **Tape recorder use**
• **Early availability of textbooks**
• **Examination accommodations**
  o Exams in alternate format
  o Use of adaptive computer software
  o Extended use of time during tests
  o Exam in separate testing area, quiet, and non-distracting
  o Increased frequency of exams
• **Elaborate**
  o Provide student examples
  o Model the assignment or activity
• **Novelty Approaches to instruction**
  o Pictorial presentation
  o Related visual presentation
• **Attributions/Benefits to Instruction**
  o Comments such as, “his approach might work,” or, “this will help you”
• **Encourage positive peer reporting (Tatting)—selected student**
  o Students are given the chance to earn positive rewards for reporting good behaviors (points, activities)
  o Peers will be instructed on how to pay attention to target other student’s positive behaviors
  o Types of reporting include: sharing with classmates, helping a friend, volunteering, showing good anger control, honesty, trying hard in school, giving others praise
• **Tootling – class wide positive peer reporting**
  o Students are instructed how to monitor the entire class

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• Difference between tattling and tootling—tootling requires the students to write down the behaviors on an index card and submit to the teacher at the end of the day (ONLY reportable behaviors are when classmates help you or another student)\(^\text{12}\)

- **Protective influences against depression**
  - High self-esteem
  - Good coping skills
  - School achievement
  - Involvement in extra-curricular activities
  - Positive relationships with parents, peers, and adults outside the family context

- **Open line of communication**
  - Collaboratively between professionals and family
  - Advocacy—professionals can offer information about existing services, relationships with service providers, identification of important system issues
English Language Learner (ELL)
Overview

What is ELL?

In 2002, there were an estimated 3.7 million English-language learners in U.S. schools. Research has shown that bilingual education, when well implemented, is the most effective way to teach English to speakers of other languages while also teaching core subjects like math, reading, and social studies.

Proficiency in literacy skills in English and the native language of the English language learner (ELL) is a major goal of an effective bilingual education program.

The bilingual program must be an integral part of the school and its academic plan. Faculty and staff should hold themselves accountable for the success of all students.\(^{13}\)

• Establish clearly defined goals
• Cooperative learning and Peer-tutoring
  o Rapidly increases English-language development
  o Small cooperative working groups
• Increase comprehension
  o Use nonverbal clues, such as pictures, objects, demonstrations, gestures.
  o Increase to graphic organizers, hands on learning opportunities, and cooperative or peer tutoring techniques.14
• Increase interaction
  o Cooperative learning, study buddies, project-based learning, and one-to-one teacher/student interaction14
• Use a student’s native language to increase learning
  o First-language support has the most powerful influence on ELL’s long-term academic success.14
• Cooperative learning
  o Students participate in small group instruction, promoting positive interactions.14
• Language experience learning
  o Student describes an experience to the teacher or another student who writes it down verbatim. The story is read back to the student, who will then practice reading the story aloud or silently to himself or herself.
  o Allows for students to bring their personal experiences into the classroom-especially important for culturally diverse students.14
• Dialogue Journaling (Interactive Journals)
  o An approach to engage students in writing. Students write in journals and the teacher writes back regularly, responding to questions, asking questions, and making comments.14
• Academic Scaffolding
  o Model academic language, use hand gestures, demonstrations, and using hands on activities14
• Native Language Support
  o Decorate classroom with culturally diverse objects and items reflecting students language and background
  o Organize entire lessons around cultural content
  o Encourage students to use words from their native language when they cannot find the appropriate word in English
  o Teachers should use the native language of the students as a sign of respect and value for the students native language14
• Accessing Prior Knowledge
  o Ask students what they already know about a subject, capitalizing on life experiences14
  o Discuss student experiences and knowledge on topic

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• **Cultural Studies**
  o Students research and share information on their cultural history
  o Interviewing parents and/or grandparents as well as others who share their culture
  o Appropriate for any grade level, and can incorporate many skills, reading, writing, speaking, giving presentations
  o Show & Tell. Have students bring in an item that is specific to their particular culture. Tell about its uses, where it is from, how it is made.

• **Instructional Delivery**
  o Enunciate clearly, do not raise your voice, add gestures, and point directly to pictures.
  o Write clearly and legibly, avoid cursive writing, if possible
  o Develop and maintain routines
  o Repeat information and review frequently
  o Avoid slang words and idioms
  o Present new information in the context of new information
  o Announce objectives and list step-by-step instructions
  o Present information in a variety of ways
  o Provide frequent summations, emphasizing key words
  o Recognize student success overtly and frequently

• **Communication**
  o Maximize the students exposure to natural communication

• **Visual Aids**
  o Make language meaningful by developing lessons that can be seen, heard, smelled, etc.
  o Use visual aids, arts and crafts
  o Objects, props, and hands-on materials for mathematics

• **Comfortable atmosphere**
  o Learn to pronounce the student’s name correctly
  o Assign a buddy to help the student acclimate to his or her surroundings
  o Seat the child in the middle of the room, towards the front, in order to maximize observation
  o Make a conscious effort to talk with each student, one-on-one each day
  o Not embarrassed by errors
  o Positive feedback
- Incorporate culturally diverse items in the classroom, i.e. books, artifacts

- **Celebrate Diversity**
  - Increase awareness about different cultures

- **Materials are clearly and simply written**
  - Length is manageable
  - Place many pictures along with the text
    - Graphs, charts, visual aids
  - There are many hands on activities
  - Be aware of culturally bias material
  - Consider Pass/No Pass, versus A-F grading scale

- **Repetition**
  - Gives students the opportunity to practice their skills and use language often
  - Adhering to routines, following schedules, and participating in activities
  - Reinforces the students comfort level in the classroom
  - Build language

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Gifted and Talented

Special education for the gifted is not a question of advantage to the individual versus advantage to society. It is a matter of advantage to both. Society has an urgent and accelerated need to develop the abilities and talents of those who promise high contribution. To ignore this obligation and this resource is not only shortsighted but does violence to the basic concept of full educational opportunity for all.

Special educators should vigorously support programs for the gifted and talented as consistent with their concept of the need for special assistance for all children with exceptionalities. Such programs should reflect both the cognitive and noncognitive needs of the gifted and talented.

How is a student identified?

Gifted and talented children are those who are capable of high performance as identified by professionally qualified personnel. The learning needs of these children require different educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their full potential in contribution to self and society.

Broad search and an early identification system for the identification of gifted and talented children within all sectors of the population should be the hallmark of an adequate educational system. Identification procedures should also reflect individual means of identifying children with general intellectual ability, specific academic abilities, leadership abilities, and abilities in the fine and performing arts. ¹⁷

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• Classroom arrangements
  o Arrange seats, tables, and large pieces of furniture so that children may move under control and with clearly specified direction
  o Eliminate environment distractions

• Less restrictive environment
  o Allow for creativity
  o Few restraints on learning, does not inhibit intellectual or academic growth
  o Value students ideas\(^1^8\)

• Plan and post schedules or classroom and students

• Alternate the length of tasks and activities

• Evolve from individual to group activities
  o This allows for observation of individual strengths and weaknesses\(^1^9\)

• Differentiate curriculum
  o Integrate multiple disciplines into the area of study
  o Allow for in-depth study of self-selected material
  o Develop independent or self-directed study skills
  o Focus on open-ended tasks
  o Develop research skills and tasks
  o Integrate basic skills and higher level thinking skills into the curriculum\(^2^0\)

• When utilizing instructional strategies, consider the following changes:
  o The content of curriculum
  o The processes that engage the student
  o The products of their studies (how students represent what they know)
  o The learning environment\(^2^0\)

• Acceleration
  o Practice of placing students at a higher than normal level of instruction to meet their learning needs\(^2^0\)

• Telescoping
  o Reducing the amount of time a student takes to cover the curriculum
  o Gifted learners do not need as much time to learn and remember the material\(^2^0\)

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\(^1^9\) Instructing for success: Maximizing learning opportunities for all students, (1995). West Virginia Department of Education.
• **Compacting**
  - Designed to streamline the amount of time a student spends on the regular curriculum
  - Allows students to show mastery of certain material, and then move to extended activities and enrichment opportunities
  - Always allow students to pre-test at the beginning of a unit as an assessment. Make rules about when the student must participate in group activities, that have not yet been mastered

• **Independent Study**
  - Opportunity to pursue areas of personal interest
  - Develop skills in creative and critical thinking
  - Keep a portfolio

• **Tiered Assignments**
  - Designed to meet the needs of a group of learners functioning at a range of levels
  - Students work on same content, but are asked different questions and are provided with different activities which are assigned by ability

• **Learning Centers**
  - Physical stations where students are engaged in activities designed to extend their understanding and thinking about a topic

• **Extra credit**
  - Not necessarily EXTRA, but alternate, enriched, or extended learning opportunities

• **Bloom’s Taxonomy (1956)**
  - Design themes, lessons, and units that promote higher level thinking
  - Application
  - Analysis
  - Synthesis
  - Evaluation

• **Creative Thinking**
  - Fluency – the ability to generate many ideas
  - Flexibility – generating a wide range of ideas
  - Originality – unique, unusual responses
  - Elaboration – adding ideas, providing details

• **Promote question-asking abilities**
  - Gather information--who, what, when, where, why, how?
  - What if?
  - What next?
Hearing Impaired

Children with minimal hearing loss are often not identified, and the educational implications of their hearing disability are unrealized. Because children with special learning problems have been shown to have a higher incidence of hearing loss than typical learners (Flexer, Millin, & Brown, 1990), special educators should be particularly aware of this significant issue.

Children with moderate-to-severe levels of hearing loss are generally identified at an early age and provided with instructional modifications. However, children with slight or minimal hearing loss are often not identified, and the educational implications of their hearing disability are unrealized. This occurs in spite of the fact that on any given day, one-fourth to one third of normally achieving kindergarten and first-grade children are not hearing clearly enough to perceive the word–sound discriminations necessary for academic success (Flexer, Richards, Buie, & Brandy, 1994). Because children with special learning problems have been shown to have a higher incidence of hearing loss than typical learners (Flexer et al., 1990), special educators should be particularly aware of this significant issue.

Children with learning disabilities are further at risk because they have been shown to have a higher incidence of attention problems, an aspect of auditory perception, than typical learners (Blake, Field, Foster, Platt, & Wertz, 1991). Auditory attention is a prerequisite for learning. Auditory attention problems, coupled with a decrease in hearing, significantly reduce a student’s learning capacity.21

Determinations must be made on the student’s ability, as compared to his or her hearing peers. Some questions to consider:

- What does this student require in order to communicate?
- What is the student’s proficiency in oral language, and written language?
- What is the student’s ability in manual communication?
- What is the student’s academic ability? And does the student have the capability to compete with hearing peers?
- What other needs does this student have that will affect socialization, academics, and emotional development?
- Can the student effectively communicate with the teacher? With the staff?22

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• Environmental Modifications
  o Reduce or eliminate background noise
  o Adding acoustical treatments to reduce reverberation
  o Use Signal-to-noise ratio-enhancing devices such as a sound field or FM system
    ▪ Assistive listening devices/Speech enhancing devices
    ▪ Do NOT talk over the noise, this diminishes intelligibility
• Environmental Modifications (equipment, furniture)
  o Check ventilation system for excessive noise
  o Add carpet to the floor or covering bottom of chair legs with rubber caps (tennis balls) to reduce sound reverberation
  o Installing small fiberglass panels at various wall locations to break up sound reflections (empty egg cartons can serve as a substitute)
  o Add (or close) window shades or curtains to reduce reverberation because windows are highly noise reflective
    ▪ Hang mobiles or other or other artwork from ceiling to effectively lower the ceiling; reduces noise\(^{23}\)
• Preferential seating, best to accommodate the individual
  o Place student a few rows back from the center of the room. This allows for the student to view the entire room, and if necessary, lip reading will be eased
    ▪ A seating arrangement in the shape of a U or V or half circle would be beneficial; allows student to see teacher and peers
    ▪ Place student away from sources of noise, i.e. computers, pencil sharpeners, doorway to hall, ventilation system\(^{23}\)

\(^{23}\) Alberta Department of Education (1995). Teaching students who are deaf or hard of hearing: Programming for students with special needs
- Gain student’s attention when speaking directly to that student or covering material relevant to that student
- Provide materials in writing when possible, particularly for pre-studying new information
- Review concepts and vocabulary individually in order for student to gain expertise
- Teachers should be sure to have the light in front versus behind them (as when standing in front of a window)\textsuperscript{21}
- **Handle communication breakdowns**
  - Encourage students to inform classmates about hearing loss and related problems\textsuperscript{21}
- **Handle communication breakdowns (cont.)**
  - Provide a comfortable atmosphere to encourage students to provide feedback on communication breakdowns to facilitate hearing
  - Assist students in locating a seat that allows maximum cues (visual auditory, etc) and decreases the chances of “hiding” or distraction
  - Encourage students to request necessary tools or employ strategies (writing, visual cues, etc.)\textsuperscript{21}
- **Teacher communication**
  - Talk distinctly, speak in natural voice
  - Use a slightly slower rate of speech and pause between ideas
  - Face the students
  - Be animate. Use gestures and facial expressions.
  - Be lively. Emphasize important points; use inflections
  - Keep sentences short and relate back to the main idea
  - Provide as many visual supports as possible
  - Rephrase rather than repeat\textsuperscript{21}
- **Post schedule and stick to it. Have an established routine**
- **Instruction Aids**
  - Televisions, bulletin boards, computers, and overhead projectors
  - Sign, finger spelling
  - Pictures, illustrations, artifacts, slides, computer graphics, and films with captions
- **Visual Aids**
  - Larger pictures for younger children
  - Easily recognizable
  - Varied aids…pictures, computer graphics, combined pictures and words
  - Rules chart with visual aids, clip art, etc.
• Transition Time Cards/Daily Schedule
  o Assists student with schedule
  o Serves as an introduction to graphic organization
• Provide student a picture dictionary
  o Helps with understanding word meanings
• Oral Directions
  o Use short sentences, and provide them sequentially
  o Ensure the student is aware of a change in topic or speaker
  o Verify student comprehends instructions, ask questions to student
  o Request choral response from class, this will encourage response from student, instilling class participation, class cohesion
  o Oral presentation should be reinforced through repetition and visual representation
• Buddy System
  o Allows opportunity for student to be assisted without the aid of an adult; establishes bond with peers
  o Promotes independences and builds self-esteem
  o Rotate buddies; this ensures that no one student is responsible for an extended period of time
• Daily Planner
  o Communicate between home and school
  o Work assignments
  o Keep parents up-to-date on progress at school, and vice versa

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Visual Disorders

Speech and language disorders refer to problems in communication and related areas such as oral motor function. These delays and disorders range from simple sound substitutions to the inability to understand or use language or use the oral-motor mechanism for functional speech and feeding. Some causes of speech and language disorders include hearing loss, neurological disorders, brain injury, mental retardation, drug abuse, physical impairments, such as cleft lip or palate, and vocal abuse or misuse. Frequently, however, the cause is unknown.

More than one million of the students served in the public schools’ special education program in the 1999-2000 school year were categorized as having a speech or language impairment. This estimate does not include children who have speech and language secondary to other conditions such as deafness. It is estimated that communication disorders (including speech, language, and hearing disorders) affect one out of every 10 people in the United States.

Speech disorders refer to difficulties producing speech sounds or problems with voice quality. They might be characterized by an interruption in the flow or rhythm of speech, such as stuttering, which is called dysfluency. Speech disorders may be problems with the way sounds are formed, called articulation or phonological disorders, or they may be difficulties with the pitch, volume, or quality of the voice.

A language disorder is impairment in the ability to understand and/or use words in context, both verbally or nonverbally. Some characteristics of language disorders include improper use of words and their meanings, inability to express ideas, inappropriate grammatical patterns, reduced vocabulary, and inability to follow directions.\(^{24}\)

\(^{24}\) National Information Center for Children and Youth Disabilities (2002). Speech and Language Disorders.
• **Preferential seating**
  o Make sure the student is facing you
  o Seat the student where he or she can get maximum information
  o Depending on the students visual impairment, seat the student to the left or right, if the student has a more dominant visual acuity in one eye\(^{25}\)

• **Safety**
  o Keep classroom and hallways clutter free
  o Ensure the student is made aware of any furniture that has been moved or added
  o Highlight the edges of stairways or corners with brightly colored duct tape
  o Close or fully open doors or cabinets
  o Assign a buddy or partner on field trips or in unfamiliar areas
  o Ask the student’s permission before providing physical assistance\(^{25}\)

• **Provide student a tilt-top desk or book stand to hold materials for easier reading**

• **Desk height**
  o Ensure the desk is the proper height if the student requires a Braille writer

• **Lighting**
  o Natural light, artificial lighting, subdued lighting, or a direct source of light—check with an education consultant on which is more appropriate for the situation\(^{25}\)

• **Contrast**
  o Increase contrast between object and background—black and white; black and yellow afford the best contrast

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• Introduction of student
  o Introduce as you would any other student
  o Encourage student to answer questions concerning the visual condition; it may be necessary to teach the student how to describe the condition
• Verbal and Nonverbal Feedback
  o Verbal praise and disapproval or use gestures
• Fair and Balanced Treatment
  o Ensure the student is treated in the same manner as peers
• Provide audio version of material; books on tape, or have an assistant, volunteer, or another student read to the student
• Use a videotape or movie that presents the same material
• Use assistive technology that transfer printed words to speech
• Learning buddy
  o Reads to the student
  o Assists the student when needed
  o Builds camaraderie
• Visual accommodations
  o Books on tape or larger print text
  o Books or other textbook material in Braille
  o Copies of class handouts and materials in embossed print
  o Optical enhancer, magnifier, tape recorder, stylus and slate, and braillewriter
  o Provide oral and visual clues
• Lesson accommodation
  o Student tape records lesson, to be reviewed after instruction
• Talk while you Teach
  o Make an attempt to describe exactly what you are doing
  o Be sure to describe nonverbal messages and introduce beginnings
• Speak naturally
• Hands on activities
  o Encourage the student to look at and touch objects in order to identify and explore
  o Decrease viewing distance between the object and the student
• Chose terminology carefully
  o Avoid using terms such as “here” or “there” when describing the location of an object or activity
• Pre-teach
  o Pre-teach vocabulary and key concepts which relate to the curriculum through verbal communication and concrete experiences--this does not have to be a teacher; peer tutor, volunteer, parent
• Use multi-sensory approach
  o Use real objects to symbolize sounds
• Modify the amount of reading
  o Provide audiocassette tapes of books
• Line markers to track reading or locating the place in text
  o Use typo scope or template over text to locate next line
• Encourage the student to highlight important information in the text
• Allow breaks from visual activity\(^{25}\)
• Size of print
  o Allow student to write in the size that allows him or her to easily read their handwriting
  o Legibility, rather than speed or style
  o Have the student use felt pens, primary pencils, or raised and bold lined paper
  o Use computer to write papers
• Use large print, magnification, or Nemeth code (a mathematical and scientific notation used in Braille)
• Speed
  o Shorten assignment to improve speed
• Make Braille or large print flash cards
• Visual, auditory, and tactical approaches should be used
• Testing accommodations
  o Allow for additional time for completion of tests and assignments
  o Allow the student to complete tests in more than one sitting
  o Reduce the number of questions
  o Provide a scribe
  o Give the examination orally\(^{25}\)