OXFORD

Third Edition

Special Education in Canada

Alan Edmunds | Gail Edmunds

Special Education in Canada

Third Edition

Special Education in Canada

Alan Edmunds | Gail Edmunds

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of
Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries.

Published in Canada by
Oxford University Press
8 Sampson Mews, Suite 204,
Don Mills, Ontario M3C 0H5 Canada

www.oupcanada.com

Second Edition published in 2014

Original edition published in 2008 by McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Edmunds, Alan Louis, 1956–, author
Special education in Canada / Alan Edmunds, Gail Edmunds. — Third edition.

Includes bibliographical references and index.
Issued in print and electronic formats.
ISBN 978–0–19–902665–4 (softcover).—ISBN 978–0–19–902668–5 (PDF)

1. Special education—Canada—Textbooks. 2. Special education—Canada—Case
studies. 3. Textbooks. I. Edmunds, Gail, 1956–, author II. Title.

LC3984.E35 2018 371.90971 C2017-906478-9
C2017-906479-7

Cover image: Gunther Kleinert / EyeEm/Getty Images
Cover and interior design: Laurie McGregor

Oxford University Press is committed to our environment.
Wherever possible, our books are printed on paper which comes from
responsible sources.

Printed and bound in Canada

1 2 3 4 — 21 20 19 18

This book is dedicated to Gail Annette Edmunds.
A loving mother and wife, gifted scholar, and
exemplary researcher. Hands together, forever.

Brief Contents

Contents

Preface

Welcome to the third edition of *Special Education in Canada*. This book tells the stories of nine Canadian students who have experienced specialized forms of education. We feature these real-life case studies because they contextualize the educational realities that are faced by students, their teachers, and their families. We have also included other professionals' perspectives on these stories to provide a uniquely insightful dimension not found in many other texts.

You will find our detailed pedagogical rationale for the book in Chapter 1. As this text will be used by teachers of teachers and by aspiring teachers, we felt strongly that its pedagogy could not be separated from its content. Please consult the From the Publisher section for a preview of the unique pedagogical support found within *Special Education in Canada*.

The Structure of the Text

Chapters 2–4 provide an introduction to the domain of special education and lay out the guiding principles that govern our discussion of (a) its historical and current perspectives; (b) its identification, assessment, and IEP process; and (c) the creation and maintenance of exemplary teaching and learning environments.

Each of the next eight chapters (5–12) contains a story about a student who was identified under a category of exceptionality. These categories include learning disability, behavioural disorder, gifted and talented, autism, intellectual disability, and multiple disabilities. Two new chapters were added to this second edition of the text: Chapter 10 presents the stories of two students who have sensory impairments (hearing and vision) while Chapter 12 introduces the story of an at-risk student.

The last chapter (13) in the text builds on the previous 12 by encouraging beginning educators to continue learning about special education as they are exposed to special stories in their own classrooms.

Acknowledgements

Obviously, we could not have written this text without the amazing contributions of the students and their families. We came to realize that telling and retelling such an intimate family story is not as easy as it seems. While they remain anonymous, they know who they are and we are deeply grateful.

We would also like to thank the reviewers, who offered helpful feedback on the manuscript in various stages of development:

Elina Birmingham, Simon Fraser University
Deanna Friesen, Bishop's University

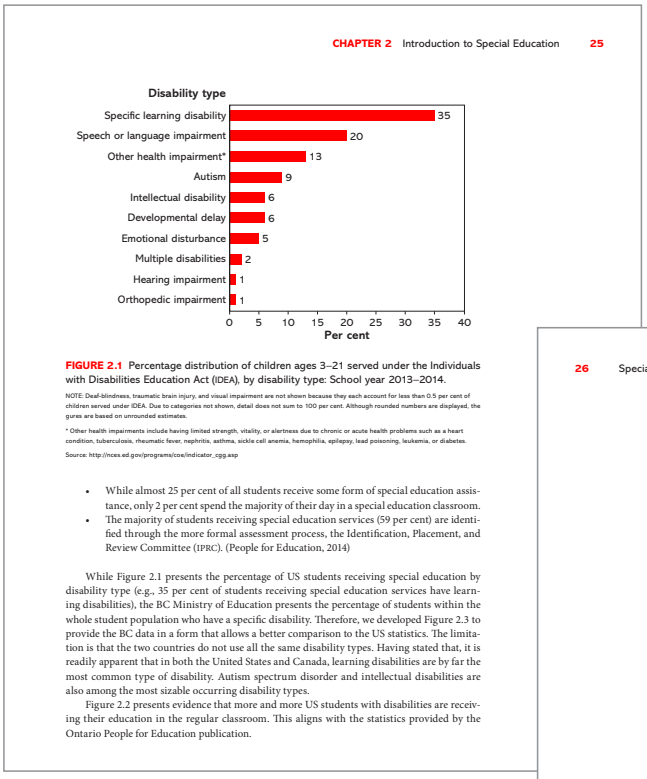
Joseph Goulet, University of Winnipeg
Randy Hill, Brock University
Elizabeth Jordan, University of British Columbia
Amy Thomas, University of Alberta
Gaby van der Giessen, Laurentian University

Last, but certainly not least, a sincere thanks to the Oxford Press family who helped us throughout this exciting process. In particular, thank you to Stephen Kotowych who got us started and to Amy Gordon and Leanne Rancourt who provided much support from start to finish.

From the Publisher

New to This Edition

The third edition of ***Special Education in Canada*** builds on the strengths of the second edition to enhance the learning experience for students and instructors.



CHAPTER 2 Introduction to Special Education 25

FIGURE 2.1 Percentage distribution of children ages 3–21 served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), by disability type: School year 2013–2014.

NOTE: Deaf-blindness, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment are not shown because they each account for less than 0.5 per cent of children served under IDEA. Due to categories not shown, detail does not sum to 100 per cent. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the gures are based on unrounded estimates.

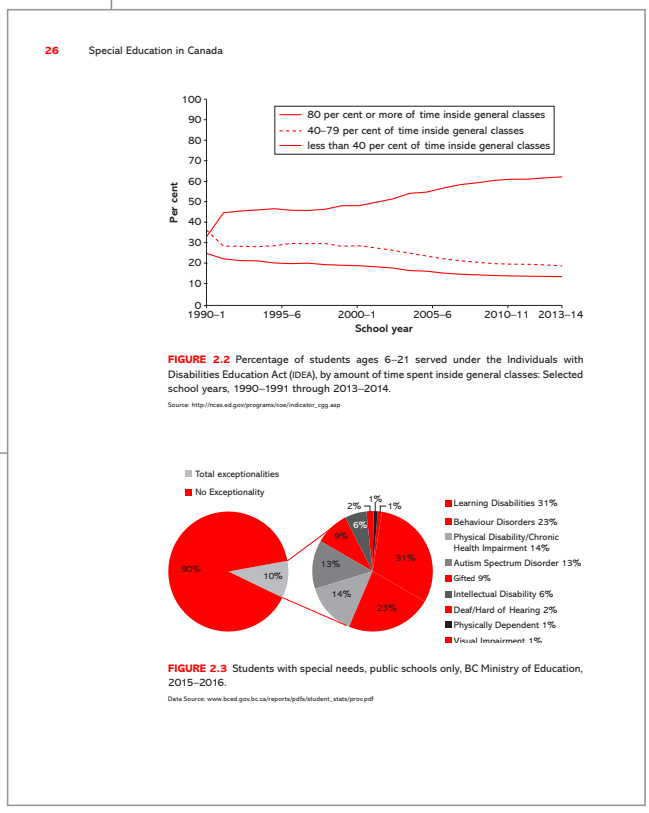
* Other health impairments include having limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems such as a heart condition, tuberculosis, rheumatic fever, nephritis, asthma, sickle cell anemia, hemophilia, epilepsy, lead poisoning, leukemia, or diabetes.

Source: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgg.asp

- While almost 25 per cent of all students receive some form of special education assistance, only 2 per cent spend the majority of their day in a special education classroom.
- The majority of students receiving special education services (59 per cent) are identified through the more formal assessment process, the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC). (People for Education, 2014)

While Figure 2.1 presents the percentage of US students receiving special education by disability type (e.g., 35 per cent of students receiving special education services have learning disabilities), the BC Ministry of Education presents the percentage of students within the whole student population who have a specific disability. Therefore, we developed Figure 2.3 to provide the BC data in a form that allows a better comparison to the US statistics. The limitation is that the two countries do not use all the same disability types. Having stated that, it is readily apparent that in both the United States and Canada, learning disabilities are by far the most common type of disability. Autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disabilities are also among the most sizable occurring disability types.

Figure 2.2 presents evidence that more and more US students with disabilities are receiving their education in the regular classroom. This aligns with the statistics provided by the Ontario People for Education publication.



26 Special Education in Canada

FIGURE 2.2 Percentage of students ages 6–21 served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), by amount of time spent inside general classes: Selected school years, 1990–1991 through 2013–2014.

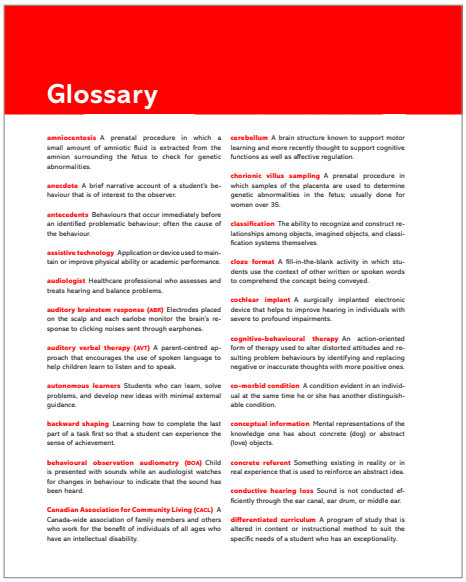
Source: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgg.asp

FIGURE 2.3 Students with special needs, public schools only, BC Ministry of Education, 2015–2016.

Data Source: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reports/pdfs/student_stats/provs.pdf

Updated Research and Statistics

Research and statistics have been updated throughout to present the most up-to-date information on teaching students with exceptionalities in Canada.



Glossary

amniocentesis A prenatal procedure in which a small amount of amniotic fluid is extracted from the amnion surrounding the fetus to check for genetic abnormalities.

anecdote A brief narrative account of a student's behaviour that is of interest to the observer.

antecedents Behaviours that occur immediately before an identified problematic behaviour; often the cause of the behaviour.

assistive technology Application or device used to maintain or improve physical ability or academic performance.

audiologist Healthcare professional who assesses and treats hearing and balance problems.

auditory brainstem response (ABR) Electrodes placed on the scalp and each earlobe monitor the brain's response to clicking noises sent through earphones.

auditory verbal therapy (AVT) A parent-centred approach that encourages the use of spoken language to help children learn to listen and to speak.

autonomous learners Students who can learn, solve problems, and develop new ideas with minimal external guidance.

backward shaping Learning how to complete the last part of a task first so that a student can experience the sense of achievement.

behavioural observation audiometry (BOA) Child is presented with sounds while an audiologist watches for changes in behaviour to indicate that the sound has been heard.

Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) A Canada-wide association of family members and others who work for the benefit of individuals of all ages who have an intellectual disability.

cerebellum A brain structure known to support motor learning and more recently thought to support cognitive functions as well as affective regulation.

chorionic villus sampling A prenatal procedure in which samples of the placenta are used to determine genetic abnormalities in the fetus; usually done for women over 35.

classification The ability to recognize and construct relationships among objects, imagined objects, and classification systems themselves.

cloze format A fill-in-the-blank activity in which students use the context of other written or spoken words to comprehend the concept being conveyed.

cochlear implant A surgically implanted electronic device that helps to improve hearing in individuals with severe to profound impairments.

cognitive-behavioural therapy An action-oriented form of therapy used to alter distorted attitudes and resulting problem behaviours by identifying and replacing negative or inaccurate thoughts with more positive ones.

co-morbid condition A condition evident in an individual at the same time he or she has another distinguishable condition.

conceptual information Mental representations of the knowledge one has about concrete (dog) or abstract (love) objects.

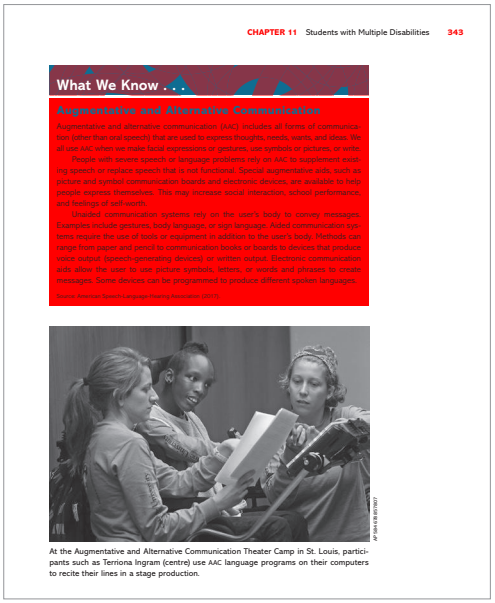
concrete referent Something existing in reality or in real experience that is used to reinforce an abstract idea.

conductive hearing loss Sound is not conducted efficiently through the ear canal, ear drum, or middle ear.

differentiated curriculum A program of study that is altered in content or instructional method to suit the specific needs of a student who has an exceptionality.

New End-of-Book Glossary

A compiled list of key terms and definitions at the end of the book provides additional study support for students. Key terms are also still defined in the margins throughout.



What We Know . . .

Augmentative and Alternative Communication

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) includes all forms of communication (other than oral speech) that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas. We all use AAC when we make facial expressions or gestures, use symbols or pictures, or write.

People with severe speech or language problems rely on AAC to supplement existing speech or replace speech that is not functional. Special augmentative aids, such as picture and symbol communication boards and electronic devices, are available to help people express themselves. This may increase social interaction, school performance, and feelings of self-worth.

Unaided communication systems rely on the user's body to convey messages. Examples include gestures, body language, or sign language. Aided communication systems require the use of tools or equipment in addition to the user's body. Methods can range from paper and pencil to communication books or boards to devices that produce voice output (speech-generating devices) or written output. Electronic communication aids allow the user to use picture symbols, letters, or words and phrases to create messages. Some devices can be programmed to produce different spoken languages.

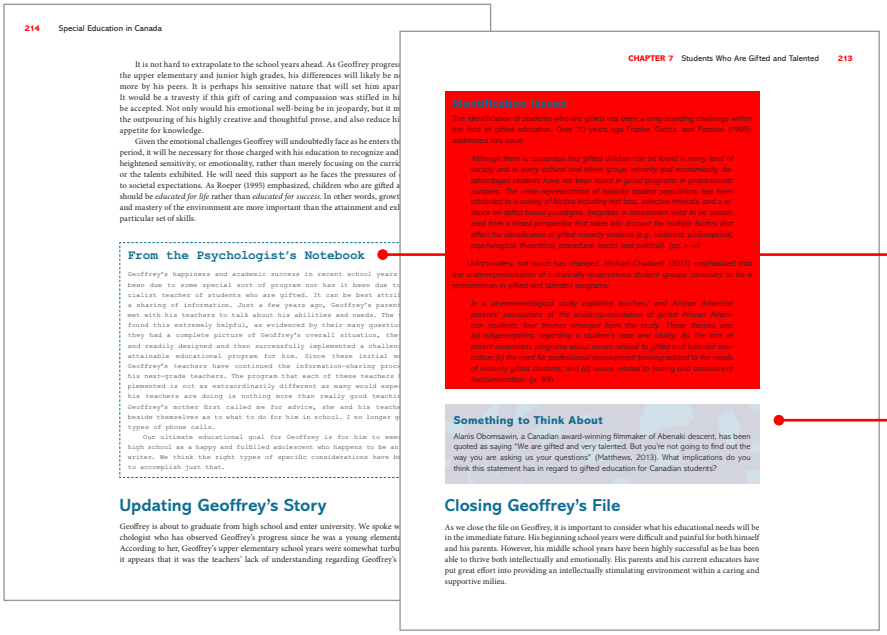
Source: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2007).

At the Augmentative and Alternative Communication Theater Camp in St. Louis, participants such as Terriona Ingram (centre) use AAC language programs on their computers to recite their lines in a stage production.

Revised and Expanded "What We Know" Boxes

"What We Know" boxes have been revised, replaced, and updated throughout, incorporating contemporary understanding of exceptionalities and teaching methods, as well as the most current assistive technological options available.

Dynamic Pedagogical Program



It is not hard to extrapolate to the school years ahead. As Geoffrey progres
the upper elementary and junior high grades, his differences will likely be n
more by his peers. It is perhaps his sensitive nature that will set him apar
It would be a travesty if this gift of caring and compassion was stifled in hi
be accepted. Not only would his emotional well-being be in jeopardy, but it m
the outpouring of his highly creative and thoughtful prose, and also reduce hi
appetite for knowledge.

Given the emotional challenges Geoffrey will undoubtedly face as he enters th
period, it will be necessary for those charged with his education to recognize and
heightened sensitivity, or emotionality, rather than merely focusing on the curri
or the talents exhibited. He will need this support as he faces the pressures of
to societal expectations. As Roeper (1995) emphasized, children who are gifted a
should be *educated for life* rather than *educated for success*. In other words, growt
and mastery of the environment are more important than the attainment and exc
particular set of skills.

From the Psychologist's Notebook

Geoffrey's happiness and academic success in recent school years
been due to some special sort of program nor has it been due to
cialist teacher of students who are gifted. It can be best attri
a sharing of information. Just a few years ago, Geoffrey's parent
met with his teachers to talk about his abilities and needs. The
found this extremely helpful, as evidenced by their many questio
they had a complete picture of Geoffrey's overall situation, the
and readily designed and then successfully implemented a challen
attainable educational program for him. Since these initial m
Geoffrey's teachers have continued the information-sharing proc
his next-grade teachers. The program that each of these teachers
plemented is not as extraordinarily different as many would expe
his teachers are doing is nothing more than really good teachi
Geoffrey's mother first called me for advice, she and his teache
beside themselves as to what to do for him in school. I no longer g
types of phone calls.

Our ultimate educational goal for Geoffrey is for him to eme
high school as a happy and fulfilled adolescent who happens to be an
writer. We think the right types of specific considerations have b
to accomplish just that.

Updating Geoffrey's Story

Geoffrey is about to graduate from high school and enter university. We spoke w
chologist who has observed Geoffrey's progress since he was a young element
According to her, Geoffrey's upper elementary school years were somewhat turbu
it appears that it was the teachers' lack of understanding regarding Geoffrey's

Identification Issues

The identification of students who are gifted has been a long-standing challenge within the field of gifted education. Over 20 years ago Frasier, Garcia, and Passow (1995) addressed this issue:

> *Although there is consensus that gifted children can be found in every level of society and in every cultural and ethnic group, minority and economically disadvantaged students have not been found in gifted programs in proportionate numbers. The under-representation of minority student populations has been attributed to a variety of factors including test bias, selective referrals, and a reliance on deficit-based paradigms. Inequities in assessment need to be considered from a broad perspective that takes into account the multiple factors that affect the identification of gifted minority students (e.g., historical, philosophical, psychological, theoretical, procedural, social, and political).* (pp. v–vi)

Unfortunately, not much has changed. Michael-Chadwell (2011) emphasized that the underrepresentation of historically underserved student groups continues to be a phenomenon in gifted and talented programs:

> *In a phenomenological study exploring teachers' and African American parents' perceptions of the underrepresentation of gifted African American students, four themes emerged from the study. Those themes are: (a) misperceptions regarding a student's race and ability; (b) the lack of parent awareness programs about issues related to gifted and talented education; (c) the need for professional development training related to the needs of minority gifted students; and (d) issues related to testing and assessment instrumentation.* (p. 99)

Something to Think About

Alanis Obomsawin, a Canadian award-winning filmmaker of Abenaki descent, has been quoted as saying "We are gifted and very talented. But you're not going to find out the way you are asking us your questions" (Matthews, 2013). What implications do you think this statement has in regard to gifted education for Canadian students?

Closing Geoffrey's File

As we close the file on Geoffrey, it is important to consider what his educational needs will be in the immediate future. His beginning school years were difficult and painful for both himself and his parents. However, his middle school years have been highly successful as he has been able to thrive both intellectually and emotionally. His parents and his current educators have put great effort into providing an intellectually stimulating environment within a caring and supportive milieu.

The "From the Psychologist's Notebook" feature highlights professional observations and facilitates a deeper understanding of the student case study and the topic under consideration.

"Something to Think About" boxes encourage critical thinking by posing thought-provoking questions.

"What We Know" boxes provide additional information from professional literature and research.

110 Special Education in Canada

Why Is Karl Considered to Have a Learning Disability?

Definition of Learning Disabilities

According to the Council for Exceptional Children (2013), the largest international professional organization dedicated to improving educational outcomes for individuals with special needs, individuals with learning disabilities, or specific learning disorders, as they are called by the American Psychiatric Association (2013) in the DSM-V, generally have average or above-average intelligence yet they often do not achieve at the same academic levels as their peers. While Karl seemed to progress well in the early elementary grades, his parents became concerned during his Grade 3 year when he began having difficulties with spelling, math, and reading.

Karl's difficulties persisted despite significant support at home. Worrying that Karl may fall further behind in the basic skills required to do well in various subjects and failing to be

What We Know . . .

Definition of Learning Disabilities

The following definition was adopted by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) in January 2002 and was re-endorsed in March 2015:

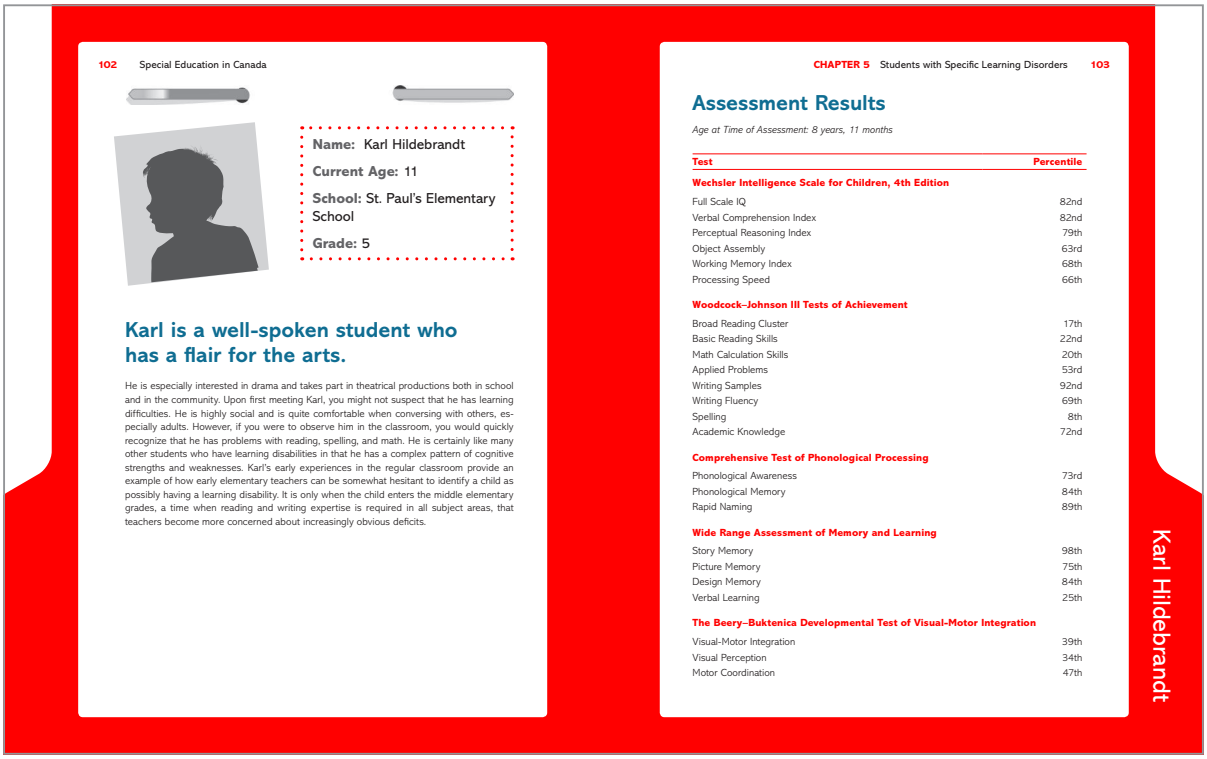
"Learning Disabilities" refer to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or non-verbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency.

Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering, or learning. These include, but are not limited to: language processing, phonological processing, visual spatial processing, processing speed, memory and attention, and executive functions (e.g., planning and decision-making).

Learning disabilities range in severity and may interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following: oral language (e.g., listening, speaking, and understanding); reading (e.g., decoding, phonetic knowledge, word recognition, comprehension), written language (e.g., spelling and written expression), and mathematics (e.g., computation, problem-solving).

Learning disabilities may also involve difficulties with organizational skills, social perception, social interaction, and perspective taking.

Source: Excerpted from Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (2016). Please note that this box represents only a part of the official definition of learning disabilities adopted by LDAC.



102 Special Education in Canada

Name: Karl Hildebrandt

Current Age: 11

School: St. Paul's Elementary School

Grade: 5

Karl is a well-spoken student who has a flair for the arts.

He is especially interested in drama and takes part in theatrical productions both in school and in the community. Upon first meeting Karl, you might not suspect that he has learning difficulties. He is highly social and is quite comfortable when conversing with others, especially adults. However, if you were to observe him in the classroom, you would quickly recognize that he has problems with reading, spelling, and math. He is certainly like many other students who have learning disabilities in that he has a complex pattern of cognitive strengths and weaknesses. Karl's early experiences in the regular classroom provide an example of how early elementary teachers can be somewhat hesitant to identify a child as possibly having a learning disability. It is only when the child enters the middle elementary grades, a time when reading and writing expertise is required in all subject areas, that teachers become more concerned about increasingly obvious deficits.

CHAPTER 5 Students with Specific Learning Disorders 103

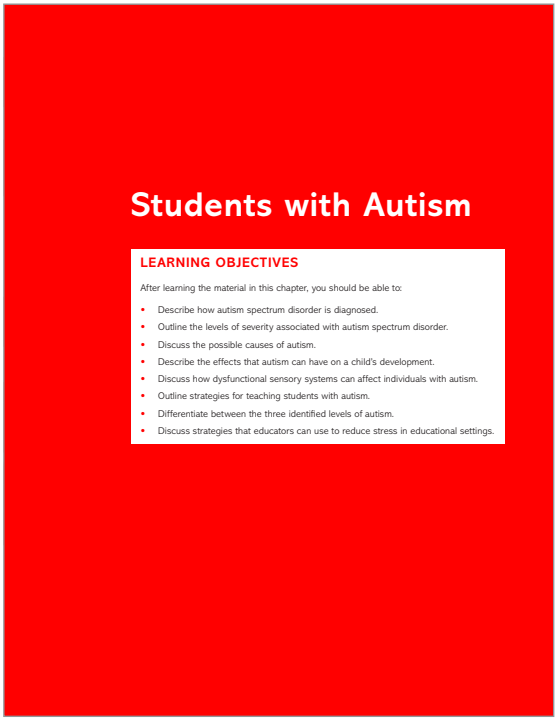
Assessment Results

Age at Time of Assessment: 8 years, 11 months

Test	Percentile
Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, 4th Edition	
Full Scale IQ	82nd
Verbal Comprehension Index	82nd
Perceptual Reasoning Index	79th
Object Assembly	63rd
Working Memory Index	68th
Processing Speed	66th
Woodcock–Johnson III Tests of Achievement	
Broad Reading Cluster	17th
Basic Reading Skills	22nd
Math Calculation Skills	20th
Applied Problems	53rd
Writing Samples	92nd
Writing Fluency	69th
Spelling	8th
Academic Knowledge	72nd
Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing	
Phonological Awareness	73rd
Phonological Memory	84th
Rapid Naming	89th
Wide Range Assessment of Memory and Learning	
Story Memory	98th
Picture Memory	75th
Design Memory	84th
Verbal Learning	25th
The Beery–Buktenica Developmental Test of Visual-Motor Integration	
Visual-Motor Integration	39th
Visual Perception	34th
Motor Coordination	47th

Karl Hildebrandt

Chapter-opening student files in Chapters 5–12 include actual source documents pertaining to the student case study. Documents such as test results, excerpts from IEPS, samples of student writing and artwork, teacher and parent observations, and school reports encourage genuine engagement with each student case study.



Students with Autism

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After learning the material in this chapter, you should be able to:

- Describe how autism spectrum disorder is diagnosed.
- Outline the levels of severity associated with autism spectrum disorder.
- Discuss the possible causes of autism.
- Describe the effects that autism can have on a child's development.
- Discuss how dysfunctional sensory systems can affect individuals with autism.
- Outline strategies for teaching students with autism.
- Differentiate between the three identified levels of autism.
- Discuss strategies that educators can use to reduce stress in educational settings.

Learning objectives set quantifiable goals for each chapter.

44 Special Education in Canada

be acquiring reading skills like all the other Grade 3 students in the class, or a student appears overly aggressive toward her peers when on the playground. A high school guidance counsellor may observe that a student seems particularly anxious during school social activities. These intuitive and educated hunches that something is amiss usually mark the beginning of the assessment process.

Most students who are eventually identified as having exceptional learning and behavioural needs are initially identified through screening assessments. *Screening assessments* are most often classroom activities carried out by teachers or other school personnel to determine which students may be at risk for learning or behavioural difficulties. These assessments may include the use of teacher-made investigative tools used on an individual basis to investigate the educated hunches that parents and teachers have about a student's performance. Teachers frequently rely on observation strategies (e.g., **time sampling**, **frequency sampling**, and **anecdotes**) to gain a better understanding of student behaviour. Assessments may also involve the implementation of commercially available tests that are administered to large groups of students, such as entire classes, entire grades, or sometimes groups of grades.

Regardless of the type of assessment tool used, screening assessments are most often implemented at critical junctures in the school curricula, usually at points where students are expected to engage in more complex and sophisticated thinking and learning or at grades where the curricula or teaching methods change dramatically. The most common critical junctures are (a) upon entry to school to determine school readiness; (b) in Grades 2, 3, and 4, where students make the transition from learning to read to the more complex school activity of reading to learn; (c) at the transition from elementary to junior high (or middle school), where students are taught by several different teachers, where the curricula become more demanding, and where students are expected to be **autonomous learners**; and (d) at the transition from junior high to senior high school, where curricular demands and student products are expected to be more sophisticated and adult-like.

Observations of student behaviour that are recorded at fixed, regular intervals.

Counting how many times a particular behaviour occurs during a designated period of time.

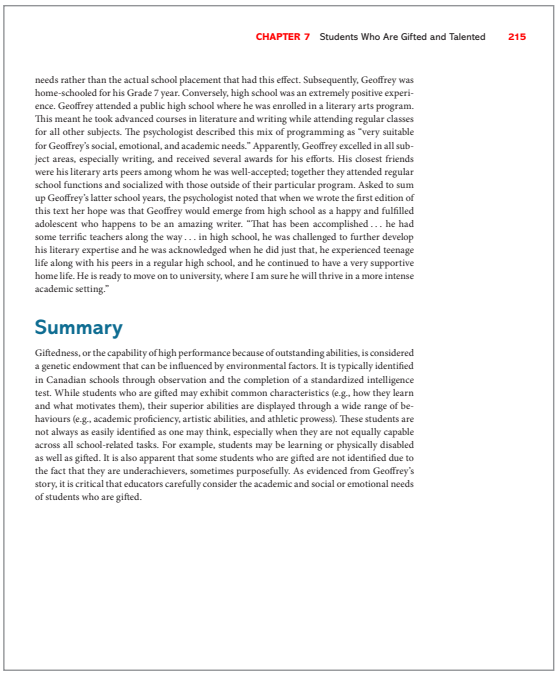
A brief narrative account of a student's behaviour that is of interest to the observer.

Students who can learn, solve problems, and develop new ideas with minimal external guidance.

An example of a screening assessment at a critical education juncture is the completion of a variety of spelling and reading exercises at the beginning of the Grade 3 year to see which children may need special attention when tackling the more demanding language elements of the Grade 3 curricula. When properly implemented and carefully evaluated, the results of these screening activities can be used to identify and eliminate minor problems that can be rectified by proper instruction. There is a vast difference between a student who simply cannot read and a student who cannot read because he or she did not receive adequate instruction. Both of these poor readers may score the same on the screening measure, but their requirements for reading instruction will be quite different. In the first instance, special reading interventions will be required and the teacher may have to enlist the services of the school resource teacher. In the second instance, the teacher will simply do what he or she normally does when teaching reading—keep a watchful eye on the student's progress while being cognizant of the fact that the student has a lot of catching up to do.

Whether activated by a hunch or by a formal screening activity or test, the early identification of learning or behavioural differences is the important first step in a comprehensive assessment process that is typically used to determine whether a student may need special education services. Since Bloom's (1964) seminal work on the positive relationship between stimulating environments and intellectual growth and learning, there has been an abundance of research evidence that has consistently and clearly indicated that the sooner a student's difficulties are identified and the sooner proper educational interventions are

A marginal glossary defines key terms in the margins.



needs rather than the actual school placement that had this effect. Subsequently, Geoffrey was home-schooled for his Grade 7 year. Conversely, high school was an extremely positive experience. Geoffrey attended a public high school where he was enrolled in a literary arts program. This meant he took advanced courses in literature and writing while attending regular classes for all other subjects. The psychologist described this mix of programming as "very suitable for Geoffrey's social, emotional, and academic needs." Apparently, Geoffrey excelled in all subject areas, especially writing, and received several awards for his efforts. His closest friends were his literary arts peers among whom he was well-accepted; together they attended regular school functions and socialized with those outside of their particular program. Asked to sum up Geoffrey's latter school years, the psychologist noted that when we wrote the first edition of this text her hope was that Geoffrey would emerge from high school as a happy and fulfilled adolescent who happens to be an amazing writer. "That has been accomplished . . . he had some terrific teachers along the way . . . in high school, he was challenged to further develop his literary expertise and he was acknowledged when he did just that, he experienced teenage life along with his peers in a regular high school, and he continued to have a very supportive home life. He is ready to move on to university, where I am sure he will thrive in a more intense academic setting."

Summary

Giftedness, or the capability of high performance because of outstanding abilities, is considered a genetic endowment that can be influenced by environmental factors. It is typically identified in Canadian schools through observation and the completion of a standardized intelligence test. While students who are gifted may exhibit common characteristics (e.g., how they learn and what motivates them), their superior abilities are displayed through a wide range of behaviours (e.g., academic proficiency, artistic abilities, and athletic prowess). These students are not always as easily identified as one may think, especially when they are not equally capable across all school-related tasks. For example, students may be learning or physically disabled as well as gifted. It is also apparent that some students who are gifted are not identified due to the fact that they are underachievers, sometimes purposefully. As evidenced from Geoffrey's story, it is critical that educators carefully consider the academic and social or emotional needs of students who are gifted.

Chapter summaries succinctly review key concepts.

Learning More about Students with Learning Disabilities

Academic Journals

Exceptional Children
Journal of Learning Disabilities
Journal of Special Education
Learning Disabilities: A Multidisciplinary Journal
Learning Disabilities Research & Practice
Learning Disability Quarterly

Books

Bender, W. N. (2012). *Differentiating instruction for students with learning disabilities: New best practices for general and special educators* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Dawson, P., & Guare, R. (2012). *Coaching students with executive skills deficit.* New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Lerner, J. W., & Johns, B. (2014). *Learning disabilities and related disabilities* (13th ed.). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.

Wong, B., Graham, L., Hoskyn, M., & Berman, J. (Eds.). (2008). *The ABCs of learning disabilities* (2nd ed.). Burlington, MA: Elsevier Academic Press.

Web Links

LD Online

www.ldonline.org
This site features hundreds of articles on learning disabilities and ADHD as well as monthly columns by noted experts, a comprehensive resource guide, and active forums. Educators will find information on attention-deficit disorder (ADD/ADHD), dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dysnomia, reading difficulties, and speech and related disorders.

LD@School

www.ldatschool.ca
LD@school is the first resource of its kind in Ontario dedicated to serving the needs of educators. It provides educators with information, resources, and research related to teaching students with learning disabilities.

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

www.ldao.ca
Besides providing information about types of learning disabilities and common signs of learning disabilities, this site includes a section devoted to how to help students with learning disabilities in different environments, such as at school and at home.

The "Learning More About" sections offer annotated suggestions for further reading.

Taking It into Your Classroom . . .

Including Students Who Have Specific Learning Disorders

When a student who has a learning disability is first placed in my classroom, I will

- review what I know about learning disabilities and locate resource materials,
- read the student's file,
- consult with the student's previous teachers,
- consult with the student's parents, and
- meet with the school-based team to discuss the student's current school year.
- Other: _____

When I suspect a student in my classroom has a learning disability, I will

- review what I know about learning disabilities and locate resource materials,
- collect information about the student through classroom interventions,
- consult with other school personnel who are familiar with the student,
- consult with the student's parents, and
- meet with the school-based team to present the information I have collected.
- Other: _____

Key points to remember in my daily interactions with a student who has a learning disability:

- The student may have low self-esteem and low self-concept.
- The student may exhibit a discrepancy between ability and performance.
- The student may be impulsive and speak without thinking.
- The student may not be able to interpret body language and tone of voice.
- The student may have difficulty understanding spoken language.
- The student may not react well to change.
- Other: _____

Key points regarding curriculum differentiation for a student who has a learning disability:

- Change, modify, or adapt the curriculum according to the student's IEP.
- Use visual aids to supplement oral and written information.
- Include hands-on activities rather than just having the student listen and observe.
- Use learning aids such as assistive technology to motivate the student.
- Implement any additional supports recommended in the student's IEP.
- Other: _____

Key points regarding evaluation of the progress made by a student who has a learning disability:

- Follow the evaluation plan outlined in the student's IEP.
- Consider the student's current learning expectations to determine his or her progress.
- Observe how the student's behaviour affects his or her learning.
- Recognize the student's strengths.
- Modify existing learning expectations or develop new ones as needed.
- Implement new learning supports as needed.
- Other: _____

The "Taking It into Your Classroom" sections provide a bulleted synopsis of key topics from the chapter with space for personal notes.

Instructor Resources

Special Education in Canada is supported by outstanding ancillary material for the instructor.

Instructor's Manual

- This fully revised resource includes a chapter overview, lecture outline, learning objectives, key terms list, discussion questions, class assignments/activities, suggested further readings, recommended websites, and recommended videos for each chapter.

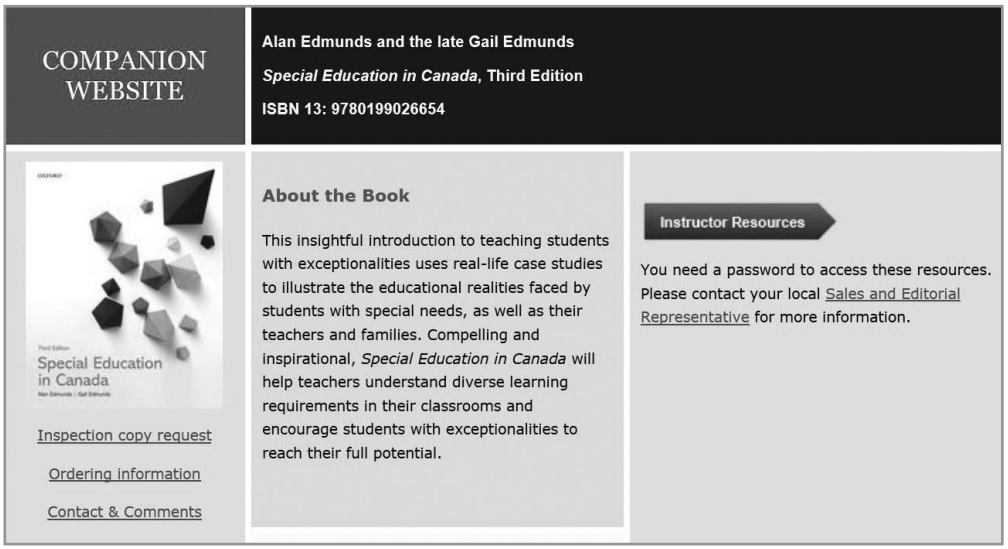
PowerPoint Slides

- PowerPoint slides for each chapter are ideal for use in lecture presentations.

Test Bank

- The test bank contains fully revised multiple-choice, true/false, short-answer, and essay questions, as well as an answer key.
- Details on instructor's supplements are available from your Oxford University Press sales representative or at our website:

www.oupcanada.com/EdmundsSE3e



Meaningful Stories: Meaningful Learning

From the Psychologist's Notebook

We would like to welcome you to the third edition of *Special Education in Canada*. We hope you find it as interesting and educational as we envision it to be. The first edition of our book came about for three reasons: (a) We felt a different kind of special education textbook was needed; (b) the publisher had the foresight and conviction to break away from the traditional textbook mould; and (c) both parties wanted a textbook that made special education come to life. In the second edition of the text, we added two new chapters (students with sensory impairments and at-risk students) in an effort to broaden our coverage of students with exceptionalities. This third edition provides updated information in all chapters, including changes based on feedback from users, to ensure that our book addresses the latest and most important special education issues. Please note that the students' stories remain factual and authentic.

For more than 30 years we have been working with students with exceptionalities, helping their teachers and parents, and conducting research in the areas of educational psychology and special education. As well, we have been involved in the design and development of curricula, instructors' manuals, and assessment tools. Along the way, we have read, examined, and utilized several very good special education textbooks, but we cannot say that any of these books stands out as being different or novel in terms of the presentation of information. Most books of this genre are presented in a similar, if not identical, fashion, and despite excellent and comprehensive information about exceptionalities and teaching methodologies, there still seems to be something missing.

The more we thought about it, the more we realized that what these texts lack is the authentic context of the "stories" that education students love to hear when studying special education. From our experience, when we talk about children with exceptionalities and provide examples of their school-related endeavours, students ask lots of questions and seek out additional

Continued

readings or websites. This regularly happens from course to course and from year to year. Unfortunately, the same level and amount of interest does not occur when students are simply assigned textbook readings to discuss in class. This approach often results in the memorization of facts and a failure to recall the information not long afterward. For example, many in education are aware of the Emily Eaton decision in 1997 in which the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the Brant County Board of Education had the right to judiciously place Emily in a specialized classroom, despite the legal protest of her parents (*Eaton v. Brant*, 1997). However, because Emily's story was mostly presented from a legal (factual) perspective and little emphasis was placed on Emily's life situation, few people remember that this 11-year-old girl had cerebral palsy and experienced considerable difficulty when trying to communicate with others. Further, many in education may not even be aware that up until the time the legal issues began, Emily was a member of a regular classroom where she had the full-time support of an educational assistant. We contend that providing more information regarding Emily and her school experiences would have made the details surrounding her situation more memorable and, therefore, more accurately recalled and discussed at a later date.

This keen level of curiosity regarding the lives of students with special needs is not limited to those who are involved in the field of education. We have noticed that when we informally share children's stories with people who are not even remotely connected to our field, their interest is piqued. We have a friend who, even after many years, always asks about Geoffrey (Chapter 7) because he finds "Geoffrey's story" fascinating. We became convinced that if this approach could have such a positive learning effect on a non-educator, it would be invaluable for aspiring and experienced teachers. We know there is something special about compelling stories, so it made sense to write a book about students with exceptionalities that was first and foremost a collection of stories that people would want to read.

But, as educators, we also know that gripping stories do more than merely spark curiosity: They also set the stage for excellent learning by association. The reason stories are so riveting is because individuals immediately identify with the characters and their particular circumstances. This does not readily happen if information is presented without a captivating context. It is likely that every person who reads this book will know of children with exceptionalities, and many will have witnessed or will have heard about the lives of these children. This instant association will enable readers to easily expand upon what they already know about special education.

A Constructivist Approach

While the beginning chapters of this book serve as an introduction to special education issues, the latter chapters present the stories of students with exceptionalities. Each of the student's stories is presented as an in-depth and comprehensive case study. The case study is an effective teaching and learning method that has been around ever since people started sharing educational information, and it has certainly become the instructional method of choice in law,

business, engineering, and medicine. Recently, there has been considerable research evidence that effective teacher preparation programs are using well-developed case studies more often.

Cases addressing educational issues can be developed from portrayals of typical or atypical students or they can be centred on common and recurrent themes or problems that students and teachers encounter in schools every day. The intrinsic learning value of cases is that they allow the reader to vicariously participate in the experiences of the story being told. Jay's (2004) research clearly demonstrated that an instructor's use of different types of cases provides students with a deeper understanding of complex issues. According to Kuntz and Hessler (1998), the most important feature of the case study is that it provides educators with opportunities to have their students (a) employ higher-order thinking skills, (b) generalize learning to actual classrooms, (c) question assumptions about the theories presented, (d) engage in self-analysis, and (e) become aware of and understand the complex nature of teaching.

As you can see, the effects that cases can have on student thinking are consistent with the fundamental tenet of constructivism, which advocates that instead of students passively receiving knowledge from their instructors they should actively and meaningfully construct their own knowledge and understandings (Kantar, 2013; Nath, 2005). Therefore, the cases in this book are not presented simply as information to read and comprehend. They are meant to encourage analysis, discussion, and debate by both instructors and students as they engage in interactive dialogue. Interactive dialogue is an effective social constructivist approach to teaching and learning because it emphasizes the value of the context within which learning strategies and knowledge are mutually constructed. With this emphasis, all students gain a better personal understanding of the topics at hand because their representations are distilled from and compared to what their peers and instructors think and say. Rather than assuming that learning takes place in the minds of individuals, it is better to assume that learning is more efficient and knowledge is better constructed when it is the result of interactions between people.

It is also important to note that the cases in this book are real-life accounts of Canadian children who are operating under real-world circumstances. Learning about the facts of these cases, and then comparing and contrasting them to their own lived experiences, will enable students to experience situated cognition—thinking and learning that becomes located and enhanced by the specific context of each case (King, 2000). Furthermore, the cases in this book will extend students' engagement beyond typical applications of situated cognition because they will be expected to extrapolate and transfer their knowledge and their thinking to the real world—their classrooms. The ultimate goal of this text is to present thought-provoking cases that will stimulate discussion. We want all learners to contribute to their own understanding of students with exceptionalities as they interpret and make meaning of their learning through the cases presented here. We are convinced that these special stories, in the form of comprehensive case studies, will result in enhanced learning.

The Framework of the Text

What Does the Text Include?

In Chapters 1–4, we introduce special education and discuss the identification of students with exceptionalities and their need for exemplary learning environments. Then, in each of Chapters 5–11, we examine a particular exceptionality by focusing on the story of a real child

with that exceptionality. These chapters open with extracts from the student's actual school file followed by details of the student's school life. In Chapter 12 we present the concept of being "at-risk," again using the story of a child who falls into this category. We conclude the book with Chapter 13, where we offer advice to future educators on how they can best ensure they are prepared to assist the students who will become the stories in their classroom.

How Were the Special Stories Chosen?

You may be wondering why we chose to tell the stories of the particular students included in this text; undoubtedly, there are endless fascinating stories to be told. Originally, in the first edition of *Special Education in Canada*, we wanted to focus on the high-incidence categories of exceptionality because these categories represent the vast majority of students with exceptionalities. They include the students most frequently encountered by regular classroom teachers. High-incidence exceptionalities typically include learning disabilities, behavioural disorders, giftedness, and intellectual disabilities. The first edition of this text also provided an introduction to low-incidence exceptionalities—Zachary (Chapter 9) and Monique (Chapter 11). Low-incidence exceptionalities usually refer to the more moderate and more severe disabilities that occur less frequently in the general population, such as autism, hearing and visual impairments, serious health impairments, and multiple disabilities. In the second edition of the text, we added two stories in Chapter 10—the stories of Tyler and Veena—that address hearing and visual impairments. We also added the story of Owen (Chapter 12) as students like him are present in many classrooms. He is best described as an at-risk student who has received special education services throughout his school life.

Other reasons for choosing the particular stories presented in this text included the need to cover a wide range of grade levels (i.e., students who are currently enrolled in the lower elementary grades, middle grades, and secondary grades) and the need to reflect the fact that in the general population there are more boys with exceptionalities than girls. As well, we had to choose the stories of students whose parents were willing to share the details of their children's lives. It is interesting to note that all parents we approached were more than willing to have their children's stories included in this text. They were excited that teachers would have the opportunity to learn from the experiences of real children. As one parent stated, "the problems we faced within the school system have a better chance of being fixed if teachers are able to objectively examine what happened to our child . . . we can all learn by looking back at what worked and what didn't work."

Having obtained permission to write about these children and their families, we respected the need to preserve the confidentiality of all individuals involved. Therefore, names have been changed and, in some instances, slight alterations were made to the children's stories. Nonetheless, in an effort to retain contextual authenticity, we have remained true to each individual's special story as much as professionally possible. We chose to do this because even though these real-life educational stories are less-than-perfect depictions of what "should happen," we, like the parents, are convinced that much can be learned from educational situations, decisions, and actions that are sometimes less than exemplary.

What Do These Special Stories Have to Offer Students and Instructors?

We sincerely believe that our unique and innovative approach will make the topic of students with exceptionalities come alive for both students and instructors. If you are a student, we

want you to be fully engaged in each story while you learn about this exciting domain, and we want you to take away valuable information that will positively affect your teaching for years to come. If you are an instructor, we offer you each story as a starting point for the specific topics you want to teach. We presume you will use modified and adapted perspectives of each story to suit the emphases of your course. Our overall intention is that the themes of the stories will evoke probing questions from students and instructors alike, such as:

- Why did the Supreme Court decide in favour of the school board in the *Eaton* case? (Chapter 1)
- Why did the Cognitive Credit Card learning strategy work for Karl when other strategies did not? (Chapter 5)
- What are the different ways that students can be identified as being gifted and talented? (Chapter 7)
- How can a student with autism cope with all the sensory input that occurs in a regular classroom? (Chapter 9)
- What is it like for a student to have a cochlear implant and suddenly hear many new sounds? (Chapter 10)

Does the Text Only Address the Learning Experiences of Nine Students?

We recognize that not all aspects of an exceptionality apply to any one child regardless of his or her exceptional condition or the life situations he or she experiences. The obvious question for us was, "How will the text portray all of the different aspects of a particular exceptionality if the focus is on one child's story?" We accomplish this in each chapter with *What We Know* boxes. The information contained in these boxes presents aspects of the exceptionality that do not necessarily apply to the story being told. This special feature brings additional professional literature into every chapter, and it expands the coverage of each category of exceptionality. Once readers are aware of the complete picture, they can then have more reasoned and informed discussions about the exceptionality at hand. For example, now that you know that Emily Eaton was a student with a physical disability and struggled considerably with communication, you can readily compare and contrast her traits, characteristics, and school experiences with those of other students with similar conditions. This will undoubtedly help you to understand the broader spectrum of all students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Even though Emily's case is not one of the cases in this book, we present more details of her story below in a *What We Know* box to demonstrate its form and purpose. The details in the box are from Bedgell and Molloy (1995) and the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (2005).

Used with permission from Carol and Clay Eaton.

Emily Eaton, age 22.

What We Know . . .

Emily Eaton's Story

Emily lives in Burford, Ontario. She has cerebral palsy and she is unable to communicate through speech, sign language, or other communication systems. She also has a visual impairment and is mobility impaired, and therefore requires the use of a wheelchair. Although she was identified as an "exceptional student" upon her entry into school, Emily, at her parents' request, was placed in an age-appropriate kindergarten in her neighbourhood school in the public system on a trial basis. As dictated by her high needs, Emily was assigned a full-time educational assistant.

In Emily's Grade 3 year, school personnel concluded that this placement was not in her best interest because of her lack of academic progress and a social environment she had great difficulty managing. Emily's parents refused to allow their daughter to be moved to a segregated class because they strongly believed that her needs could be met in the regular class; that she would be psychologically harmed in a segregated classroom; and that in order to truly be part of her community, Emily needed to go to her neighbourhood school with her peers. Emily's parents were essentially arguing for the concepts that are at the heart of the philosophy of inclusion.

When the Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) determined that Emily should be placed in a special education class, her parents appealed that decision to a Special Education Appeal Board, which confirmed the IPRC decision. The parents appealed again to the Ontario Special Education Tribunal, which also confirmed the decision. The parents then lost in Ontario's Divisional Court, but the Ontario Court of Appeal found in favour of the parents, stating that segregation violated Emily's equality rights under Section 15(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The court held that making distinctions on the basis of disability was discriminatory and that the Ontario Education Act itself violated the Charter in giving school boards the discretion to place children with disabilities in segregated classes against their parents' wishes.

The Brant County School Board appealed this judgment to the Supreme Court of Canada, which set aside the decision of the court of appeal. The Supreme Court ruled that the educators and the tribunal had not violated the equality rights of Emily Eaton; rather they had balanced her educational interests appropriately, taking into account her special needs. The Supreme Court observed that a disability, as a prohibited ground of discrimination, differs from other grounds such as race and gender because of the vastly different circumstances of each individual and that, related to education, inclusion can be either a benefit or a burden depending on whether the child can profit from the advantages that inclusion provides. This meant that educational decisions affecting placement must be based on the child's best educational interests, not on what adults want for their children.

Source: Excerpted from Bedgell & Molloy (1995) and the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (2005).

As you can see, the information presented in the *What We Know* box enhances Emily's story and provides further insight into her case. You are now in a position to discuss and debate the placement of students like Emily in specialized settings versus their placement in the regular classroom. The discussion can be expanded to include an examination of the varying implications each placement scenario has for teachers and how each would affect their curricular choices and instructional methods. As you can see, the opportunities for learning are numerous and there is no doubt they all emanate from the basic story of one child. For your information, most students with exceptionalities are not educated in specialized settings, but that is not the point. The point is that Emily's story, even though only briefly presented here, has grabbed your attention. Imagine what a full-blown story covering several years of schooling will do!

What Other Special Features Does This Text Include?

The *What We Know* boxes are just one component of a consistent framework that systematically supports each of the student's stories. Another special component is *From the Psychologist's Notebook*. These boxes provide a professional's insightful observations about the child and his or her situation. These types of observations are not often found in special education textbooks, yet they have much to offer in terms of facilitating a deeper understanding of the student who has special needs. An example of this type of box is presented below. It refers again to Emily Eaton's story.

From the Psychologist's Notebook

I interviewed Emily Eaton's parents 10 years after the Supreme Court of Canada handed down its landmark decision to find out more about Emily's special story. I met Clayton, Carol, and Emily at their family home in Burford. Emily was to turn 23 in a few weeks. She remains verbally uncommunicative and has limited use of her limbs. However, she uses gestures to indicate her likes and dislikes, and according to her parents she does this quite often and quite clearly.

Both of Emily's parents described having had experience working in the education system. Clayton was once a teacher but, at the time of the interview, he was working for the Ontario Ministry of Education as a resource consultant for students with visual impairments. Carol had previously worked as a school counsellor at W. Ross MacDonald School.

Emily graduated from high school when she was 21. Once out of school, Carol and Clayton designed a program for her that mostly involves participating in social activities and doing everyday things like going to the dentist, getting groceries, and so on. Emily still needs constant supervision and assistance to do most things. She has the services of a personal care worker whose salary is paid by the Ontario government. Her current worker is a young woman who is Emily's age. On the day I visited, the two of them were off to see a movie with other friends.

Continued

At the beginning of the administrative wrangling over Emily's educational placement, the Eatons were confused by the school board's decision to place her in a segregated classroom. For two years previous, Emily was provided a full-time educational assistant (EA) and she was fully included in all regular class activities. By Clayton and Carol's account, all went well for those two years and they were very pleased with Emily's overall schooling experiences. In her Grade 3 year, the school board stipulated that Emily would only have EA support for half a day but provided no reason for this decision other than budgetary restraints. When the Eatons argued that this was contrary to the board's previous decisions, and that Emily's educational needs had not changed enough to warrant such an action, the board stated that if the Eatons wanted full-time support for Emily, she would have to be in a segregated class. This contentious position never changed throughout the legal process.

Immediately after the Special Education Tribunal's ruling in favour of a segregated placement, Clayton and Carol moved Emily to another local elementary school, one that fell under the Catholic Board. She continued her elementary education there and completed her secondary education at one of the Catholic high schools in nearby Brantford. For all of those years, until she was 21 years old, Emily had a full-time EA and was educated in regular classrooms with her peers. She left the classroom only for specialized interventions in speech, physical therapy, and occupational therapy. Clayton and Carol were extremely pleased with how it all turned out and could not say enough about the kindness and compassion of nearly all of Emily's teachers and classmates in both schools.

When asked why this seemingly obvious solution was not possible in the public system, Clayton and Carol explained how they had often suggested this very solution but were rebuked at every turn. They felt that once the battle lines had been drawn, the board did not want to back off from its original position.

I asked if anyone or any of the ruling bodies involved in the entire case had ever suggested the above educational solution for Emily. They informed me that the Supreme Court ruling was not really about Emily, per se; rather, the decision had more to do with ruling on the legitimacy of the school board policy. Therefore, nobody wanted to get into the details of Emily's specific case and no such suggestions were proposed, except by the Eatons themselves. In a twist of fate, and after all they had been through, their local Catholic school said they would welcome Emily into the regular classroom. It was as simple as going down the road to another school. It could have been as simple as providing her with a full-time EA at her original school.

Carol and Clayton were emphatic that parents of students with exceptionalities need to be vigilant about their child's schooling and not be afraid to advocate on their child's behalf whenever necessary. Despite their long ordeal, they found that constant diplomatic pressure coupled with precise and copious documentation made a significant difference in getting their point across. They also made it clear that, regardless of training or special expertise, teachers who are open-minded about a child's condition, and kind and compassionate in their teaching of that child, make more of a difference than any specialized programs. While they admitted that not all of Emily's teachers were exemplary, the majority were appreciated because of the reasons stated above.

It is difficult to comment on Emily's case because it focused more on policies and responsibilities than on Emily's education in particular. It is heartwarming that all went well for Emily eventually, but I think her parents paid an emotional price along the way. Currently, they are skeptical of what educational policy documents "say" about students with exceptionalities and place much more value on what educators "actually do" to support what is stated. In support of inclusive practices, the Eatons continue to share their experiences in an effort to help other families as well as educators (York University's Daily News, 2013).

Unfortunately, Emily and her parents were victims of their own time. I am convinced that if Emily's situation were to arise today, her case would never be argued beyond the jurisdiction of the governing school board, and it certainly would not make it to the Supreme Court. Educational decision makers, aware of the prevailing research on the best educational practices and policies for students with exceptionalities, would make the appropriate accommodations. There is no question that the overarching objective for the education of all students with exceptionalities should be to actualize their potential by providing exemplary educational opportunities. It is only under the auspices of valid, reliable, and proven special educational practices and policies that this is possible.

Also included in this text are the *Something to Think About* boxes that pose specific questions designed to encourage critical thinking about educational issues that extend beyond each child's respective case. Each of the student's stories concludes with a section entitled *Taking It into Your Classroom*, which presents a synopsis of the important points from the chapter. This box also allows readers to add their own points, or reminders, that they feel will be important to remember when teaching students with exceptionalities.

At the end of each chapter, we have also included some resources you can access. If you are mostly interested in research findings, you should explore the academic journals that are listed. General information, including teaching strategies, can usually be found in the books we have suggested. Both theoretical and practical information can be located through searches on the Internet.

Something to Think About

As you begin to learn about special education, it is important to reflect on your current feelings about the field and the experiences you have had that have led to the formation of these feelings. For example, you may have some negative thoughts about teaching students with exceptionalities that you can trace back to your own school years when you were in classrooms where disruptive students took all of the teacher's time. Perhaps it would be helpful to express your feelings on paper and revisit your writing after you have completed your coursework. It may be the case that more knowledge about the field will alter your feelings about special education. In any event, it is important to recognize the views you bring to your study of this topic.

A Reminder

As you learn about special education through the meaningful stories presented in this text, keep in mind that it was never our intent to provide comprehensive information that would qualify you as an expert once you had read and discussed the material. In the field of special education, there are entire textbooks that cover many of the topics presented in the chapters of this text. It is our intention, therefore, to introduce you to these topics and pique your interest so that you continue to pursue knowledge in this area throughout your teaching career. We hope you come to realize that teaching students with exceptionalities is not as daunting as it is sometimes portrayed. While there are new teaching skills to learn, they are not that different from the skills you use to teach all students.

Introduction to Special Education

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After learning the material in this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define the terms *students with exceptionalities* and *special education*.
- Describe the modern history of special education, including legislation that has affected the direction it has taken.
- Explain how the use of non-stigmatizing professional terminology relates to the field of special education.
- Differentiate between special education in Canada and special education in the United States, including the role that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has played in special education in Canada.
- Define and differentiate between the terms *inclusion*, *integration*, and *mainstreaming,* and discuss why inclusion is considered the better option.
- Differentiate between the *categorical model* and the *non-categorical model* of special education, and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

What Is Special Education?

In every classroom, in every school, on any given day, teachers know they will face groups of students who have different abilities and behaviours. They fully expect that not all students will learn at the same rate, or act and react to their environment in the same manner. Teachers are known to frequently teach lessons while purposefully wandering around their classrooms providing instructional prompts, extra help, or guidance so that each child can better understand the topic. Teachers also seem to intuitively know when a particular look or verbal reminder is necessary to nip potentially problematic behaviour in the bud. As a result of their education and classroom experiences, teachers develop a wide range of teaching and classroom management strategies to accommodate the typical range of student diversity.

However, in these very same classrooms, there will also be students whose learning and behaviours differ considerably from the norm. Without specialized knowledge, teachers will likely lack the educational tools needed to teach and manage these students properly. We refer to this group of children as *students with exceptionalities*—students who exhibit differences in learning and behaviour that significantly affect their educational potential and whose exceptional needs cannot be met by typical approaches to schooling. This group of students is just as varied and diverse as the rest of the school population. For example, their needs may include physical accommodations, behavioural interventions, specialized computers, particular learning strategies, modified curricula, or advanced placement university exams. According to the Council for Exceptional Children (2013), "special education refers to educational services provided to children and youth with exceptionalities; it includes specially designed instruction, supplementary aids and services, related services and early intervention." *Special education*, then, is a particular type of schooling that is constructed and delivered to suit the specific strengths and needs of students with exceptionalities. It is founded on the premise that if their education is properly differentiated, more of these children will reach their full potential.

The Modern History of Special Education

There is ample historical evidence that special types of educational services were provided for individuals with exceptionalities as far back as the eighteenth century. Often, these services were designed as convenient measures to thwart perceived threats to the education of normal students (Taylor & Harrington, 2001). As unpalatable as it may be, we have to remember that the early forms and types of special education were not always designed with the best interests of children with exceptionalities in mind.

It is not commonly known that some Canadian provinces were enacting legislation to ensure the education of students with exceptionalities as far back as 1969 (Goguen, 1993) and earlier. For example, "By 1955, the [British Columbia] provincial government introduced funding for programs for 'handicapped' children as part of the basic grant to school districts" (Siegel, 2000, p. 8). Another example occurred in Alberta where "in 1950, there were 256 identified exceptional students, in 16 classrooms across the province, and there were three categories of student exceptionality that were recognized" (Lupart, 2000, p. 5).

What We Know . . .

Dr. Helen MacMurchy—Inspector of the Feeble-Minded in Ontario

Ellis (2014) wrote about a medical doctor who was appointed "Inspector of the Feeble-Minded" in Ontario in 1906. The following excerpt describes the role Helen MacMurchy played in the history of special education in Canada:

> *In 1910 in Toronto, a pioneering medical doctor, women and children's health expert, and social reformer named Helen MacMurchy played a vital role in getting special education classes for children then called "mentally defective." (While terms such as "mentally defective," "feeble-minded," or "sub-normal" to our ears sound harsh and offensive, they were the only terms that people a century ago had to talk about intellectual disabilities.) MacMurchy believed that people with intellectual disabilities in particular, whom she called feeble-minded or mentally defective, were a menace to other Canadians. Her fears were founded on her firmly held beliefs that the feeble-minded caused social problems, such as pauperism, prostitution, and unemployment, that feeble-mindedness was a hereditary disease, and that feeble-minded people were having more children than the rest of the population. MacMurchy thought that special education classes could help in a bigger effort to control the feeble-minded.*
>
> *MacMurchy wrote that "auxiliary classes" (special education classes) could be used as "clearing houses" for the training schools she wanted the government to build for feeble-minded people. The classes could be used to identify and train feeble-minded children while they waited to be transferred to training schools for the feeble-minded. In the training schools that eugenicists planned, feeble-minded people would be separated from the general population. The managers of the institutions could also monitor the feeble-minded so that they did not have children. (Later, eugenicists would advocate for sterilization to accomplish this aim.) MacMurchy also believed that the training schools, called "farm colonies," would be safe places for people with disabilities, where they would be happy and other people would not take advantage of them. MacMurchy's farm colonies were never built. But between approximately 1910 and 1945, multiple special education classes were opened in the schools of Vancouver, Victoria, Edmonton, Calgary, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Brandon, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Saint John, Halifax, and elsewhere in Canada and the United States as well.*

Source: Ellis (2014). *Special education*. Retrieved from: http://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/encyclopedia/535eee5c7095aa000000025d

However, the modern era of special education really began in the 1960s with the emergence of human rights issues. For example, in Ontario in 1968 the Hall–Dennis Report, *Living and Learning: The Report of the Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives of Education in*

the Schools of Ontario, emphasized "the right of every individual to have equal access to the learning experience best suited to his needs, and the responsibility of every school authority to provide a child centred learning continuum that invites learning by individual discovery and inquiry" (SEAC Learning, 2007). According to SEAC Learning, this report served as a catalyst for dramatic changes in classrooms and in teaching throughout the province.

During the 1960s nearly everyone associated with education rejected the existing practice of housing and educating students who were different in institutional settings. There was a strong movement across North America advocating that all individuals had the right to live, learn, and work with all other individuals. This represented a monumental change in our social consciousness. More and more educators of the day questioned the validity and effectiveness of the non-egalitarian approach that prevailed, and as a result special education came into its own.

Legislation Affecting Special Education

In Canada, education is the jurisdictional responsibility of the 13 individual provinces and territories. This means that each province and territory has its own respective education regulations, policies, and guidelines that govern the education of students with exceptionalities; however, these provisions are not laws per se. The situation is different in the United States, where the Department of Education governs special education by ensuring the implementation of federally mandated laws. It is important to consider these US laws, because they continue to have an effect on special education practices in Canada and around the world.

The passage of the US laws started in the late 1960s, flourished in the 1970s, and carry on today as educational perceptions about best practices continually evolve. It is generally perceived that the ground-breaking legislation for special education across North America occurred in 1975 with the signing of US Public Law 94–142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. The most influential feature of this law was its emphasis on individualized instruction that emerged from a child's **individualized education program** or IEP (see Chapter 3 for full details). Along with individualized programs, PL 94–142 also required that all students with special needs be educated in the *least restrictive environment*—the most appropriate classroom setting for each child's instructional needs. In addition, this landmark law contained provisions for the mandatory identification of students with exceptional needs, the use of non-discriminatory assessment criteria, and child and parental access to due process for dispute settlement. As well, it outlined and defined the 10 specific *categories* under which students could be identified. These mandated features of PL 94–142 had to be implemented for a state to receive supplementary funding for the education of students with special needs. In 1978, PL 95–561, and later the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act of 1988, were enacted to address the educational needs of students who are gifted and talented, thus bringing the number of identifiable categories to 11. However, because PL 94–142 only mandated special education for children aged 6 to 18 years, another law, PL 99–457, was passed in 1986 to provide services for infants (0–3 years) and for preschoolers (3–6 years). This legislation set the stage for early intervention services for young children with special needs. The next major revision of PL 94–142 occurred in 1990 with the introduction of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This legislation added traumatic brain injury and autism to the collection of identifiable categories, thus resulting in the 13 categories that are widely used today. As well, IDEA was the first law to implement a people-first approach, using terms like "children with disabilities" instead of "disabled children." IDEA was further refined in 1997 as PL 105–17 when it made teachers accountable for

A document that describes a student's specialized learning expectations and the educational services that will be implemented to help the student meet these expectations.

student progress relative to the regular curriculum and required that the regular curriculum be the preferred starting point for all student outcome measures. This change put the onus on classroom teachers to directly involve students with exceptionalities in the regular courses of study.

Something to Think About

As well as implementing good teaching methods in a particular way and for particular purposes, special education, like all other professional disciplines, also requires the use of precise and professional terminology. You will note that throughout this book we use non-stigmatizing professional terms that emphasize a "people-first" approach, just as was implemented in the IDEA legislation. We speak of the child first and of his or her disabling condition second. We encourage you to immediately begin using terms like *students with learning disabilities* and *students who are gifted and talented*, rather than *LD students* and *gifted students*. Do you think it makes a difference to use this professionally accepted language? How might it affect both the student and those who work with the student?

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

The US legislation that has had perhaps the most significant impact on special education over the last 20 years is the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, PL 107–110), which existed until 2015. This act was signed into law in January 2002 and established a sweeping set of reforms for the discipline. It was designed to improve the academic success of all students but especially the academic success of those who have exceptional learning and behavioural needs. According to the US Department of Education (2002), the act addressed four basic education reform principles: (a) stronger accountability for results, (b) increased flexibility and local control, (c) expanded options for parents, and (d) an emphasis on proven teaching methods. The NCLB also mandated that teachers be fully qualified, that non–English speaking children receive intensive instruction in English, and that schools be safe and drug free. The most noteworthy implication of NCLB was that schools may be subject to remedial action if students with exceptionalities failed to progress (we interpret this to mean the withholding of special education funding).

There was much debate over the NCLB legislation. One of the major criticisms of the original law voiced frequently and strongly by teachers and researchers in special education was that the NCLB assessment requirements did not exempt students with exceptionalities from district-wide or state-wide yearly achievement tests. Measuring the progress of these students against the general curricula went against everything that speaks to the individualized nature of special education and had the potential of undermining their access to programming based on their IEPs. The US Department of Education responded to these concerns by introducing a flexibility option:

> *The newly released proposed regulations for the 2 Per cent Flexibility Option give states and districts more leeway in assessing students with disabilities. States can develop*

> *modified assessments for 2 per cent of their students with disabilities who do not meet grade-level standards despite high quality instruction, including special education services. Though the modified assessments must be aligned with grade-level content standards, they may differ in breadth or depth from the achievement standards for non-disabled students. The proposed regulations make it clear that high expectations will be held for students with disabilities who take modified assessments. The students must have access to grade-level instruction, and the modified standards cannot preclude the students from receiving a regular diploma. Further, the students must be appropriately assessed on modified achievement standards. The IEP team will play a critical role in determining not only which students will take modified assessments, but also the type of modified assessment individual students will take.* (Council for Exceptional Children, 2006)

Other criticisms of NCLB included the lack of funding available under the law and the pressure for educators to focus their teaching solely on the content of the student achievement tests. According to Mertler (2011), educators believed this approach was having a negative impact on instructional and curricular practices, not to mention the stress that came with demands for improved student performance. Educators also worried about the apparent narrowing of the scope of the overall curricula (and accompanying assessments). There was a sense that the increased focus on math and reading was at the expense of other curricular topics (McKenzie, 2003).

Every Student Succeeds Act

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced the NCLB act, was signed by President Obama on 10 December 2015. The president explained that "The goals of No Child Left Behind . . . were the right ones: High standards. Accountability. Closing the achievement gap. But in practice, it often fell short. It didn't always consider the specific needs of each community. It led to too much testing during classroom time. It often forced schools and school districts into cookie-cutter reforms that didn't always produce the kinds of results that we wanted to see" (Korte, 2015).

According to the Council for Exceptional Children (2016), the following are some of the provisions of ESSA that are relevant to children and youth with disabilities and gifts and talents:

General

- Transfers authority for accountability, educator evaluations, and school improvement from the federal government to the states and local districts

Assessments and Accountability

- Maintains annual, state-wide assessments in reading and math in Grades 3 through 8 and once in high school, as well as science tests given three times between Grades 3 and 12
- Repeals adequate yearly progress and replaces it with a state-wide accountability system
- Includes the use of multiple measures in school performance
- Maintains annual reporting of data disaggregated by subgroups of children, including students with disabilities

Associated Press

Pictured here at the signing, President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act into law in December 2015.

- Maintains with some modifications provisions for a cap of 1 per cent of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who can take the alternate assessment aligned to the alternate academic achievements standards
- Helps states to improve low performing schools (bottom 5 per cent of schools)
- Actions to be determined locally, not federally
- Authorizes the use of federal funds for states and local school districts to conduct audits of state and local assessment systems to eliminate assessments that do not contribute to student learning

Gifted and Talented

- Authorizes the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act supporting high-ability learners and learning
- Includes strong provisions for the disaggregation of student achievement data by subgroup at each achievement level on state and local report cards
- Provides options to include the identification of and service to students with gifts and talents in local education agency plans
- Provides options to include professional development plans for gifted and talented educators in Title II

Children with Disabilities

- Ensures access to the general education curriculum
- Ensures access to accommodations on assessments
- Ensures concepts of Universal Design for Learning

- Includes provisions that require local education agencies to provide evidence-based interventions in schools with consistently underperforming subgroups
- Requires states in Title I plans to address how they will improve conditions for learning, including reducing incidents of bullying and harassment in schools, overuse of discipline practices, and use of aversive behavioural interventions

As Canadian teachers, researchers, and policy makers continue to share ideas with their US colleagues, it will be interesting to see which, if any, elements of ESSA find their way into Canadian policies and classrooms.

How Is Special Education in Canada and the United States Similar?

The practice of educating students with exceptionalities in Canada is so similar to the practices implemented in the United States that not many individuals, even educators, would be able to tell the difference between the jurisdictions if they walked into comparable schools or classrooms. This is because the basic practices of special education follow the same conceptual models reported in literature worldwide; these are models that know no political boundaries.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

As stated earlier, there is one major difference between special education in Canada and in the United States—the way in which it is governed. The closest that Canada comes to having a federal law regarding special education is the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 15 of the Charter states that "Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability" [s. 15 (1)]. To date, the Supreme Court of Canada has consistently interpreted Section 15 of the Charter to mean that the best interests of the individual child must be considered when determining a child's educational placement and intervention program. As you will see in the following *What We Know* box, the court has been consistent in that decisions regarding the provision of special education made thus far have been determined on a child-by-child basis. While the *Elwood* case below was not decided at the Supreme Court level (the parties reached an out-of-court settlement), it was the first challenge to segregated educational placements under Section 15 of the Charter. The parents of the child used Charter Sections 15 (equality), 2 (freedom of expression), and 7 (right to life, liberty, and security) to negotiate for their child's placement in the regular classroom. The *Moore* case decision was made more recently at the Supreme Court level some years after the student had completed his education.

Thus, while the Supreme Court of Canada did not render a decision in the *Elwood* case, the Charter shaped educational policy in favour of the best interests of the child (regular classroom), as it did soon after in its decision regarding Emily Eaton (segregated classroom; see Emily's story in Chapter 1). This is a highly significant development for special education because it means that the interpretations of the Charter were not precedent setting, as is usually the case with legal decisions of such magnitude. It is perhaps even more significant because the highest court in our land is adhering to the most fundamental tenet of special education—educational decisions are to be made in the best interests of each and every individual child

who is exceptional. On one hand, this means that not all students with exceptionalities will be included in regular classrooms, but on the other hand, it also means that children will not be excluded from the regular classroom unless their situation warrants it. In terms of the *Moore* case, the Supreme Court determined that the student suffered discrimination in terms of the provision of a general education.

What We Know . . .

Elwood v. The Halifax County-Bedford District School Board

Luke Elwood of Halifax, Nova Scotia, was 9 years old and in a special education class for the "trainable mentally handicapped" until 1986 when his parents enrolled him in a regular class in nearby Lawrencetown for the coming year. The Halifax County-Bedford District School Board asked his parents, Maureen and Rick Elwood, to place him back in his special education class in Halifax. When they refused, the board held a formal meeting where they decided that Luke would continue in his special education placement.

After many legal manoeuvres wherein the parents attempted to keep their child in a regular class and the board attempted to prevent it, an injunction was granted to allow Luke to stay in a regular classroom until the dispute was resolved. The board's basic argument was that if the parents had the right to choose their child's educational placement, the board would be obliged to develop a new and different education program. They had no way of providing an appropriate education for Luke other than in his segregated and specialized classroom. Immediately prior to the deciding court date in June 1997, the board and the parents came to an out-of-court settlement.

The important point here is that the parents used Charter Sections 15 (equality), 2 (freedom of expression), and 7 (right to life, liberty, and security) to (a) secure the injunction while awaiting the court date, and (b) successfully negotiate with the board for their child's placement in the regular classroom. The board was unsuccessful in arguing that education was a provincial matter as defined by statutes and regulations and as directed by educational administrators.

Source: MacKay (1987).

Moore v. British Columbia (Education) (2012 SCC 61)

In November 2012, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in a unanimous decision that the British Columbia Ministry of Education (Board of Education of School District No. 44, North Vancouver) failed to provide the special education supports that Jeffrey Moore needed to get meaningful access to general education. The court determined that according to the Human Rights Code (R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 210, s. 8) and what constitutes meaningful access to education for students with learning disabilities in British Columbia (School Act, S.B.C. 1989, c. 61), the board discriminated against Jeffrey by failing to provide necessary remediation. The court found that Jeffrey's access to the education he

Continued

was entitled to was denied based on four facts: (a) there was no dispute that Jeffrey's dyslexia was a disability, (b) there was equally no question that the adverse educational impact he suffered was related to his disability, (c) Jeffrey undeniably required intensive remediation to have meaningful access to education, and (d) the board did not provide sufficiently intensive remediation for Jeffrey's learning disability. The court determined that Jeffrey's access to general education should have been the same as that available to ***all*** students and that he should have received an education that provided him the opportunity to develop to his full educational potential.

Source: http://scc.lexum.org/decisia-scc-csc/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/12680/1/document.do

Globe and Mail/The Canadian Press

Now a successful plumber, Jeffrey Moore and his family won a major human rights victory in the Supreme Court of Canada on 9 November 2012.

From the Psychologist's Notebook

Jeffrey Moore suffers from severe dyslexia. In his Grade 2 year, a board psychologist recommended that since he could not get the intensive remedial help he needed at his school, he should attend the local Diagnostic Centre to receive the necessary remediation. Despite the fact that the board had classified severe learning disabilities as a high-incidence, low-cost disability, the Diagnostic Centre was closed by the board due to fiscal restraint. Jeffrey entered a private school in his Grade 4 year to get the level and

type of instruction he needed. The remedial instruction he received there was successful, and his reading abilities improved significantly.

Jeffrey's father filed a complaint under Section 8 of the BC Human Rights Code with the BC Human Rights Tribunal against the board and the province on the grounds that Jeffrey had been denied a "service customarily available to the public." The tribunal (and later the Supreme Court of Canada) defined this service as "general education." The tribunal concluded there was discrimination against Jeffrey by the board and the province and ordered remedies against both, including a reimbursement to the family for tuition costs charged by the private school and an award of $10,000 for pain and suffering. The tribunal's decision was first overturned by the reviewing judge of the Supreme Court of British Columbia (2010 BCCA 478), who argued that Jeffrey's situation should be compared to that of other students with exceptionalities, not to the general population of students. Subsequently, a majority in the British Columbia Court of Appeal agreed that Jeffrey ought to be compared to other students with exceptionalities and dismissed the family's appeal. Believing fully in their case, the Moore family appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Supreme Court determined that the purpose of the School Act in British Columbia is to ensure that "all learners . . . develop their individual potential and . . . acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society and a prosperous and sustainable economy." According to the court, adequate special education is therefore not a dispensable luxury; for students with severe learning disabilities, special education is the ramp that provides them access to the statutory commitment to the education of all students made by the province. Therefore, the "service" to which Jeffrey was entitled under Section 8 of the BC Human Rights Code was not special education as argued by the board; rather, it was general education. The court declared that to define special education as the service risked descending into the "separate but equal" approach that had been previously quashed in US litigation. If Jeffrey was only compared to other students with exceptionalities, full consideration could not be given as to whether he had meaningful access to the education to which all students in British Columbia were entitled. This risked perpetuating the very disadvantage and exclusion the Human Rights Code is intended to remedy.

Several statements in the court's decision have major implications for educators across Canada. The court accepted the general agreement among the testifying experts that significant negative long-term consequences are experienced by students when learning disabilities are not remediated. The court also stated that educators have an obligation to provide individualized educational programs for students based on appropriate assessment. The court found that the board failed to assess Jeffrey's learning disability early enough. The court also found that intensive supports were needed to remedy Jeffrey's learning disability and that the remediation he received was far from adequate. The court rejected the board's expert who stated that Jeffrey had received the services he needed at his public school and that the interventions had been of appropriate intensity.

The court noted that the BC School Act (1991) set out minimum spending levels for high-incidence, low-cost and low-incidence, high-cost students.

Continued

This means that once a child is identified as having a severe learning disability, necessary services including early intervention are mandatory, thus establishing the right of all students with learning disabilities to adequate, individualized special education programs and services, including intensive evidence-based interventions for those who need them. The court rejected the board's argument that it was justified in providing no meaningful access to education for Jeffrey because it had no economic choice.

Because the Diagnostic Centre was being closed, Jeffrey's necessary instruction was available only at Kenneth Gordon Maplewood School, a private school specializing in teaching children who have learning disabilities. The court found that the board had not considered any reasonable alternatives for meeting the needs of students with severe learning disabilities before cutting available services such as the Diagnostic Centre. The board admitted in cross-examination that "the sole reason for the closure was financial." The court stated that there was no reason to think that the board's funding cuts necessarily had to affect the support of students with severe learning disabilities.

While the board stated that it contemplated a cascade model of service delivery, whereby a range of placements were available including highly specialized education environments for small numbers of students (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1985, ss. 4.1 and 4.2), the court found that the board's predominant policy of integrating students with exceptionalities into the general classroom whenever possible was the usual practice. The board argued that its educational philosophy of integration, in part, warranted the closure of the Diagnostic Centre. The court rejected this position, stating that it was clear from the evidence provided by all the board's witnesses that they thought the Diagnostic Centre provided a useful service.

The ruling is a clear and unequivocal reconfirmation that a cascade or continuum of specialized educational interventions to meet a range of students' individualized educational needs is not a "luxury"; rather, it is the standard that must be applied. The Supreme Court stated that program decisions must be based on the subjective, child-centred "individual needs" of each student and that equal treatment may be discriminatory if it violates individual rights. The court rejected the board's argument that its integration/inclusion policy and its use of learning assistance to accommodate Jeffrey were valid. The court deemed it discriminatory to expect that Jeffrey could simply be "accommodated" to meaningfully access general education, when what Jeffrey actually needed was to be accommodated to suit the severity of his disability. The court found that the board had no specific plan in place to replace Jeffrey's services. It declared that the board's eventual plan of supporting Jeffrey via learning assistance was, by definition and purpose, ill-suited for the task. The court also made it clear that such mandatory and specific accommodations are not a question of "mere efficiency" and discretionary educational initiatives (e.g., outdoor education, concert band, field trips) cannot be compared with the documented accommodations necessary to make the core curriculum accessible to students with severe learning disabilities.

This ruling counters the view of some individuals that the regular classroom is the universal placement option for all students with exceptionalities. It puts to rest the notion that the one-placement model implied by inclusion is best for all students. The court cited Lieberman (1992), who

pointed out that many advocates (primarily parents) for those with learning disabilities have significant concerns about the wholesale move toward inclusion. Their concerns stem from the fact that they have had to fight long and hard for appropriate services and programs for their children. They recognize that students with learning disabilities do not progress academically without individualized attention to their educational needs.

The court's finding that Jeffrey suffered discrimination and was therefore entitled to a consequential personal remedy has clear broad remedial repercussions for how all boards of education in Canada deal with and educate all students with exceptionalities. The court clearly inferred that if school boards want to avoid similar claims, they will have to ensure they provide a range of services for students with exceptionalities in accordance with related educational policies, and that fiscal expediency is not a defence against inadequate special education services. In a reasonable and justified move, the court did not hold the province liable for any of the costs awarded. It determined that the order for reimbursement and damages should apply only against the board because the board alone made the decisions that led to the discrimination.

How Do Special Education Practices in Canada Compare to the Practices Implemented Outside of North America?

While special education practices in North America and in countries such as Australia and New Zealand are currently focused on the inclusion of students with exceptionalities in regular classroom settings, this is not the case around the world. As Kohama (2012) pointed out, while inclusion is recognized as an excellent idea, it takes considerable effort to make it happen. She used the example of India where the government "has attempted to create policies that are inclusive for people with disabilities, [but] their implementation efforts have not resulted in an inclusive system of education, nor have they reached their goal of 'education for all' across the country" (p. 3)

In Europe, legislative progress regarding inclusion has been achieved in many countries where segregated special-needs education systems exist. Enculescu (2015) noted, however, that in many EU member states (e.g., Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Hungary, Greece, Lithuania, and Romania) many students with intellectual disabilities are still placed in segregated schools. Meijer (2010) explained that while the trend in Europe is toward more inclusive services, the situation is complicated by the growing pressure for better achievement outcomes and the fact that schools are free to admit students of their choice. Meijer concluded that little progress was made toward inclusion in Europe; in fact, there was a slight increase in segregation.

Impediments to the successful implementation of inclusive education also exist in South Africa. According to the Human Rights Watch (2016):

> *Hundreds of thousands of children are still out of school, but the government has not yet presented accurate data to show how many children with disabilities are out of school. The government continues to prioritize funding for special schools . . . [and]*

> *has not yet adopted a strong focus on inclusive education . . . In 2015 and 2016, caregivers of children and adolescents with disabilities from Orange Farm, a township in Gauteng province, wrote letters telling their experiences of navigating the complex system, tackling discrimination against their children, and the impact on their children when they are not in school.*

In summary, it is quite clear that barriers to inclusive education are not uncommon in many countries outside of North America. While special education services are available on a segregated basis, inclusionary practices, like those evident in Canada, are not as widely implemented.

Prevalence of Students with Exceptionalities

When discussing students with exceptionalities, many aspiring teachers want to know how likely it is they will have these students in their classrooms or how many students fall under the broad definition of "exceptional student." The fact is that the vast majority of classrooms now include students with exceptionalities, and nearly all teachers are required to teach and manage these students on a daily basis.

Exact statistics regarding the inclusion of students with exceptionalities in the regular classroom are difficult to acquire in Canada. Canada does not have a process that parallels the federal function of the US Department of Education which, through its mandated annual report to the US Congress, tracks the number of students with disabilities who receive special education funding and services. Despite the slightly different criteria used in some states, these reports are the most complete and accurate information on how many students in the United States have exceptionalities. It is important to note that students who are identified as gifted and talented are not included in this report as it only deals with students who are considered disabled. The generally accepted percentage of students identified as gifted and talented is 2–5 per cent depending on the jurisdiction and the criteria used. Because of the similarities between Canada and the United States in terms of special education practices, we have extracted some of the pertinent statistics and descriptions from the US National Center for Education Statistics (http://nces.ed.gov) to provide you with a general indication of what teachers might expect in regard to special education (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2).

In the absence of country-wide statistics on Canadian students with exceptionalities, it is useful to consider the statistics of two of the larger jurisdictions (British Columbia and Ontario) to determine how they compare with the US statistics. In 2016, the British Columbia Ministry of Education reported statistics for the 2015–2016 school year in its document *Student Statistics: Public and Independent Schools Combined*. Some of their findings for special education (public schools only) can be seen in Figure 2.3.

In 2014, People for Education produced a report titled *Special Education* detailing the current state of affairs in Ontario. The following statistics were highlighted:

- In publicly funded schools, 17 per cent of elementary students and 22 per cent of secondary school students receive special education assistance—percentages which have increased steadily over the last two decades.

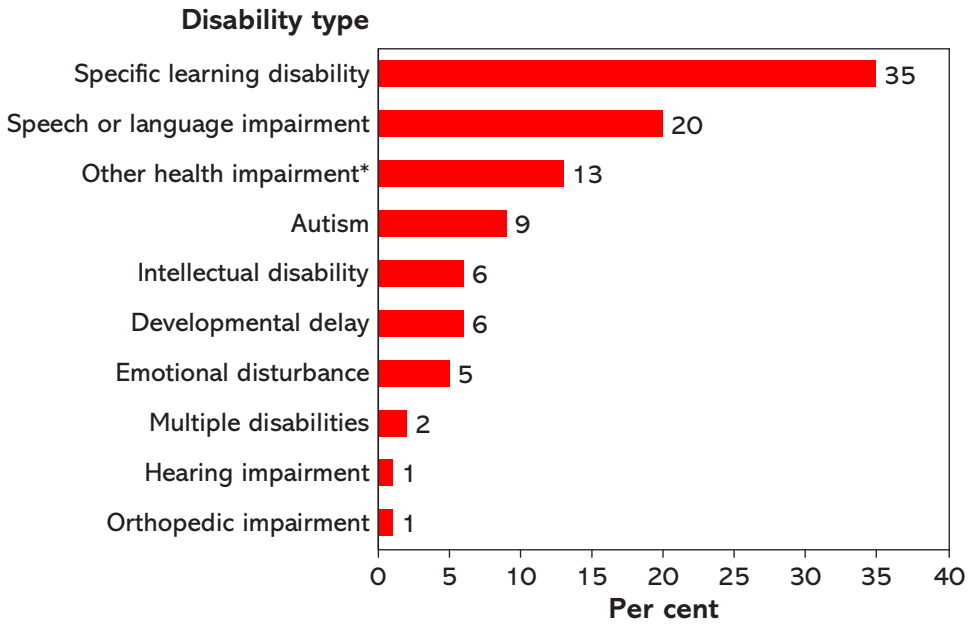


FIGURE 2.1 Percentage distribution of children ages 3–21 served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), by disability type: School year 2013–2014.

NOTE: Deaf-blindness, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment are not shown because they each account for less than 0.5 per cent of children served under IDEA. Due to categories not shown, detail does not sum to 100 per cent. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the gures are based on unrounded estimates.

* Other health impairments include having limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems such as a heart condition, tuberculosis, rheumatic fever, nephritis, asthma, sickle cell anemia, hemophilia, epilepsy, lead poisoning, leukemia, or diabetes.

Source: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgg.asp

- While almost 25 per cent of all students receive some form of special education assistance, only 2 per cent spend the majority of their day in a special education classroom.
- The majority of students receiving special education services (59 per cent) are identified through the more formal assessment process, the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC). (People for Education, 2014)

While Figure 2.1 presents the percentage of US students receiving special education by disability type (e.g., 35 per cent of students receiving special education services have learning disabilities), the BC Ministry of Education presents the percentage of students within the whole student population who have a specific disability. Therefore, we developed Figure 2.3 to provide the BC data in a form that allows a better comparison to the US statistics. The limitation is that the two countries do not use all the same disability types. Having stated that, it is readily apparent that in both the United States and Canada, learning disabilities are by far the most common type of disability. Autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disabilities are also among the most sizable occurring disability types.

Figure 2.2 presents evidence that more and more US students with disabilities are receiving their education in the regular classroom. This aligns with the statistics provided by the Ontario People for Education publication.

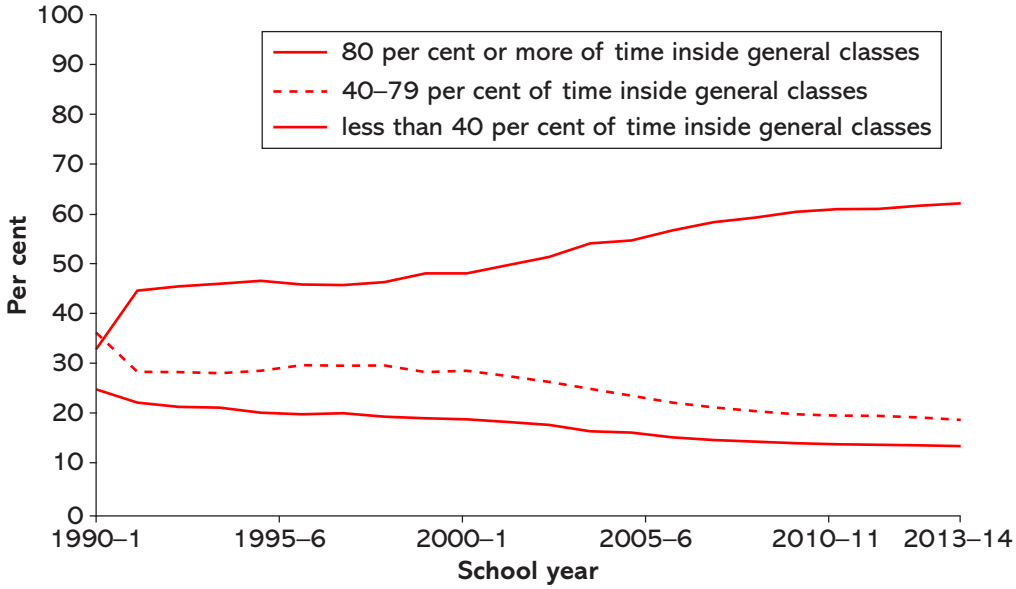


FIGURE 2.2 Percentage of students ages 6–21 served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), by amount of time spent inside general classes: Selected school years, 1990–1991 through 2013–2014.

Source: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgg.asp

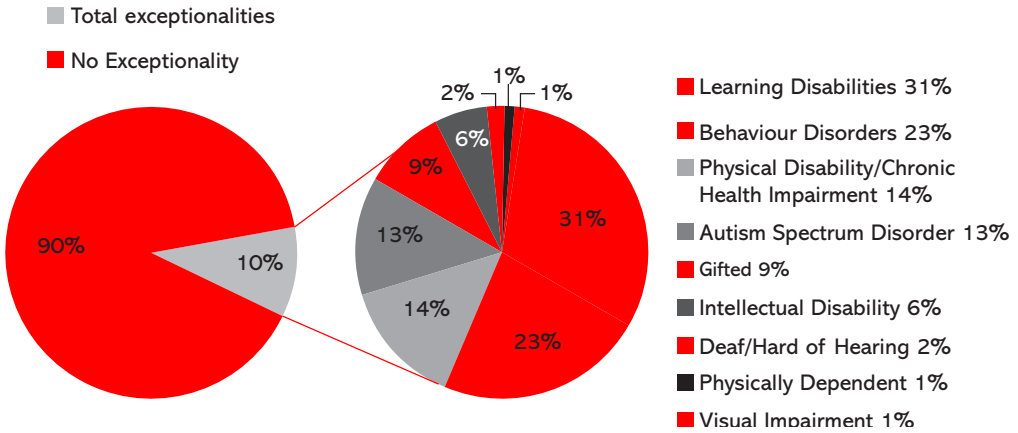


FIGURE 2.3 Students with special needs, public schools only, BC Ministry of Education, 2015–2016.

Data Source: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reports/pdfs/student_stats/prov.pdf

In general then, the BC and Ontario statistics are not unlike those presented by the US Department of Education. Based on this consistency, we can assume that they are fairly representative of what is happening across Canada.

Inclusionary Practices

Until the early to mid-1980s, most special education services in Canada were traditionally provided through specialized programming that was delivered in classrooms and other settings that were wholly or partially separated from the regular classroom. Today, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, because nearly all Canadian provinces and territories have adopted the philosophy of inclusion, most students with exceptionalities receive their specialized programs in regular classroom settings.

It is important to reiterate that inclusion does not necessarily mean that all students with exceptionalities will be in the regular classroom with their age-appropriate peers all the time. Students must still be provided with appropriate educational programming in the most appropriate educational environment possible. Therefore, while it is preferred that the regular classroom be the first placement option for students with exceptionalities (perhaps with instructional methods and curricula that are considerably modified), it would be inappropriate to say that this arrangement is the only alternative. It is essential that educators clearly recognize that to properly meet the specific needs of some students, these students may need specialized assistance through pull-out programs or resource teacher support, or they may require the help of highly specialized teachers in specialized and separate classrooms. To think that the regular classroom is the only option for students with exceptionalities is an abuse of the fundamental tenet of inclusion, which is to provide an appropriate education for all students.

To date, inclusion is the best philosophical approach we have had to direct the education of students with exceptionalities. It is considered better than **integration** or **mainstreaming** because it seeks to change educational systems and classroom environments to suit the needs of the child rather than trying to "fix the child" to suit the system (FSU Center for Prevention & Early Intervention Policy, 2002). Nonetheless, the term *special education* cannot simply be replaced with the term *inclusion*, as has occurred in some Canadian provinces and territories. Inclusion is primarily an overarching philosophy that advocates for the regular classroom as the first placement option for students with exceptionalities, but it does not provide specific definitions as to how that implementation is supposed to take place. Without effective implementation principles, inclusion runs the risk of being perceived as an ivory tower concept that has no credence with educators in everyday classrooms. This has been consistently evidenced in numerous examinations of educators' perceptions of inclusion. These examinations have revealed that educators support the philosophical tenets of inclusion but are concerned about implementation issues (Bennett, 2009; Crawford, 2005; Edmunds, 2003; Edmunds, Halsall, Macmillan, & Edmunds, 2000; King & Edmunds, 2001; Sokal & Sharma, 2014). Therefore, the specifics of implementation still have to come from the effective and proven procedures that have served special education so well for so long.

The process of reintegrating students with exceptionalities back into the regular classroom, if possible.

The selective placement of students with exceptionalities in regular classrooms on a part-time basis where possible (dependent on ability).

What We Know . . .

The Concept of Inclusion in Canadian Jurisdictions

An examination of the provincial and territorial governments' statements of philosophy for special education reveals the importance that is now placed on inclusionary practices. Excerpts from some of these statements of philosophy follow:

Alberta	. . . a way of thinking and acting that demonstrates universal acceptance and promotes a sense of belonging for all learners. Inclusion is not just about learners with special needs. It is an attitude and approach that embraces diversity and learner differences and promotes equal opportunities for all learners in Alberta . . . Source: https://education.alberta.ca/inclusive-education/?searchMode=3
Manitoba	. . . a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship . . . Source: www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/aep/inclusion.html
New Brunswick	. . . the pairing of philosophy and pedagogical practices that allows each student to feel respected, confident and safe so he or she can participate with peers in the common learning environment and learn and develop to his or her full potential . . . **[Inclusion]** promotes social cohesion, belonging, active participation in learning, a complete school experience, and positive interactions with peers and others in the school community . . . Source: http://ie.cacl.flywheelsites.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2013/11/6-322a-new-brunswick-2013-inclusive-education-policy-1.pdf, p. 2
Newfoundland and Labrador	. . . the right of all students to attend school with their peers, and to receive appropriate and quality programming . . . [and] a continuum of supports and services in the most appropriate setting (large group, small group, individualized) respecting the dignity of the child . . . Source: www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/inclusion.html
Northwest Territories	. . . classrooms need to include a diversity of students, and schools must work to support individual learners and their place in the learning community through early intervention and effective research-based strategies. For teachers, sometimes this is described as "teaching the student, not the grade" . . . Source: www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/www.ece.gov.nt.ca/files/024-renewal_framework_en_proof_2.pdf

Nova Scotia	. . . the basic right of all students to receive appropriate and quality educational programming and services in the company of their peers . . . [which] facilitates the membership, participation, and learning of all students in school programs and activities . . . Source: http://studentservices.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/inclusion.pdf
Nunavut	. . . an attitude and a belief, a way of life, and a way of living and working together in schools. In Nunavut, inclusion builds on the Inuit belief that each individual is valuable, belongs and contributes to the group. Inclusion infuses all aspects of school life . . . Source: http://kugluktukhighschool.ca/4inuglugijaittuq-inclusive.pdf, p. 20

It is important to note that the term *inclusion* is often used to refer to a much broader approach to education, not just the education of students with disabilities. Some regions of Canada, like Alberta, use the term to describe an education system that provides all students (no matter their ability, disability, language, cultural background, gender, or age) with the most appropriate learning environments.

It should be noted that when educators use the term *special education*, some incorrectly emphasize the word "special," resulting in special education being construed as something magical and mystical that only a limited number of teachers know how to deliver. We feel that the emphasis needs to be on the word "education" so that special education is seen as nothing more than very good teaching that happens to be applied differently for very special students. With this understanding and emphasis, special education becomes something that many more teachers can expect to deliver effectively.

What We Know . . .

Canadian Teachers' Views of Inclusion

Research on the Canada-wide implementation of inclusive education is scarce. However, there are several insightful publications, dating back to 2003, that present Canadian teachers' views of inclusion.

In 2003, the journal *Exceptionality Education Canada* produced a special edition that focused on the issues surrounding the preparation of Canadian teachers for inclusion. The following research findings were presented:

- Teacher candidates expressed a need for extended, mandatory studies in special education within pre-service teacher education programs. They also emphasized the importance of having opportunities to work with knowledgeable associate or mentor teachers during their practicums and having this mentoring continue once they become practising teachers (Woloshyn, Bennett, & Berrill, 2003).

Continued

- While regular classroom teachers' attitudes toward inclusion were positive, many reported they felt unprepared to teach students with special needs. They stated that they do not have the skills necessary to effectively adapt curricula to meet the needs of these students. They also reported that inclusion has increased their teaching workload considerably. They expressed a desire to have the opportunity to acquire the skills that will allow them to be good teachers in an inclusive setting (Edmunds, 2003).
- For the most part, teachers indicated their support of the educational soundness of a full-inclusion model. Attitudes were most positive at the elementary level. However, teachers did express concerns regarding the effects that inclusion has on their workload. They also reported significant concerns about the relationship between teachers and support staff (Pudlas, 2003).

In 2005, a summit on inclusive education in Canada revealed the following:

- IEPs are burdensome for many teachers, and teachers typically have only limited background in this area. The practical usefulness of IEPs is highly questionable where they do not inform and guide instructional practices, which in many cases they do not.
- There is confusion among teachers and educational assistants about their respective roles and responsibilities. Teachers often leave the prime responsibility for educating students with significant disabilities to teacher assistants. However, assistants should be playing a supplementary, not a lead, role.
- Pre-service and in-service professional development on issues of inclusion is by no means assured; teachers need more and better professional development, incentives for undertaking the professional development, and recognition for having done so (Crawford, 2005).

Unfortunately, Bennett (2009) revealed that teacher concerns regarding inclusion had not dissipated. She remarked, "while there is a demonstrable willingness on the part of teachers to include students with exceptionalities in their classrooms, real concerns remain over lack of training, classroom management issues, general and special education collaboration, as well as a perceived lack of support and resources" (p. 1). Sokal and Sharma (2014) found that teachers who had some training in special education were less concerned than their colleagues about teaching in inclusive classrooms. However, more recently, the New Brunswick Teachers' Association called for a review of the inclusive education policy in that province over concerns of disruptions and violence in the classroom (*CBC News*, 2016). It is clear, then, that teachers continue to struggle with the implementation of inclusion despite their support of the inclusive education concept.

Something to Think About

Imagine that you are a teacher in an inclusive classroom. Two of your students have an intellectual disability and require a slower pace of instruction. On occasion, they can be somewhat disruptive. Several parents approach you with concerns that their children are not getting the best possible educational experiences because of the time and attention paid to these two "special" students. How would you respond to the concerns of these parents?

Approaches to Special Education in Canada

There are two predominant approaches to special education used in Canada—the categorical approach and the non-categorical approach. A description of each, as well as a comparison of the two, follows.

The Categorical Approach

The intent of special education is to modify educational approaches to suit the educational requirements of children with exceptionalities. In our estimation, to properly and professionally accomplish this goal, students' abilities and needs must first be defined and then identified, classified, and categorized. Therefore, the *categorical* approach to special education is the one adhered to in this text as it is a logical and systematized way of identifying and defining the specialized and diverse needs of children. In fact, it is the most widely used and accepted approach because it provides distinct definitions for each of the categories of exceptionality. These definitions allow educators to separate and classify students according to their unique abilities and needs. This approach clearly establishes the full parameters of each category so that educators do not confuse one with the others, even though children in different categories may exhibit similar skills or needs. By paying close attention to the specific criteria that apply to each particular child, effective educational interventions can be designed to suit the child's unique and special situation. Furthermore, by clearly illustrating how one category can apply to a wide variety of children, all of whom are distinctly different, educators will refrain from overgeneralizing the characteristics of a specific category to any one child. As you will see in the case studies presented in this text, each child meets the identifying criteria of their respective category of exceptionality, but not all other students who fit into the same categories are like the children we have written about here.

As well as facilitating the design and implementation of specific programs for specific children, the categorical approach also provides the basis for specialized training for teachers and for consistency across research studies that investigate the effectiveness of special education interventions. In addition, the categorical approach provides a reliable and consistent way of communicating about exceptionalities. Students often must be described as belonging to specialized categories for educational jurisdictions to be eligible for designated funding and services. Furthermore, this approach has had a significant impact on education in Canada as it is through this approach that more students have been identified as having special needs and, consequently, funding for special education has increased (Lupart & Odishaw, 2003).

The Non-Categorical Approach

In contrast, there are others within the discipline of education who prefer a *non-categorical* approach to special education. This approach evolved as a reaction to the perception that the categorical model emphasized a reliance on labelling to guide testing, assessment, and placement. Advocates of the non-categorical approach feel that the defining labels of the categories are pejorative and therefore frequently stigmatize, isolate, and stereotype individuals with learning, behavioural, or physical differences. They also claim that the categories are arbitrary and that the categorical approach has too much of a diagnostic emphasis and not enough of a functional service purpose.

The non-categorical approach examines student performance relative to expectations, identifies instructional needs, and monitors and evaluates progress in response to intervention, thus resulting in a data-based approach to instructional planning rather than reliance on specific labels (National Association of School Psychologists, 2002; Smith, 2010). Some who support the non-categorical perspective suggest that global efforts toward more effective instructional planning, classroom organization, and the adaptation of teaching and assessment procedures are preferred to individualizing education to suit the specific needs of learners with special needs (Hutchinson, 2010).

Comparing the Categorical and Non-Categorical Approaches

This book was written from an overarching categorical perspective for several fundamental reasons. First, teachers need to know the criteria that are used to identify students with exceptionalities and how the identifying criteria vary across categories. In nearly all instances, these criteria provide beneficial insights as to how curricula, teaching methods, and evaluation can be differentiated to suit the specific needs of each child. In addition, knowing these specific criteria allows teachers to readily notice problems they might otherwise not have noticed. If teachers know what a particular child's needs and abilities are, they can easily make numerous and varied changes to their teaching to help that child.

With non-categorical approaches to special education, teachers do not necessarily know the identifying criteria as well as the differences between the criteria for the various exceptionalities. An observed student difficulty could have one of many causes that each responds best to different interventions. Therefore, without a categorical framework, teachers are not in as strong a position to intervene.

Something to Think About

Despite the delivery of similar special education services across the ten provinces and three territories of Canada, there are differences in the processes used to (a) identify students with exceptionalities, (b) assess their needs, and (c) develop suitable individualized programs for them. There are also differences in the descriptors used to describe exceptionality categories. How do you think this might affect a student with an exceptionality who moves from one jurisdiction to another?

It is important to note that the non-categorical approach is primarily premised on two arguments. The first speaks to the perceived injustices that can arise from the potential misuse of the labels associated with special education. In our view, this is a problematic argument with no foreseeable solution because any word can be used pejoratively; avoiding labels does not prevent mean-spiritedness.

The second argument often presented is that the non-categorical approach is more concerned about functional educational services than the placement outcome emphasis attributed to the categorical model. This argument has been rendered moot by the advent

of inclusion, wherein most students with exceptionalities are now educated in the regular classroom.

The current focus of inclusion is on serving students based on their specific educational needs, not based on a special delivery model. There is no doubt that inclusion places more responsibility on all teachers to understand and properly respond to students with exceptionalities. In the final analysis, the categorical approach offers a classification mechanism that can consistently identify a student's educational needs and abilities, thus providing educators with a systematized way of thinking about and evaluating educational interventions.

Let's examine both perspectives in light of the case of a student who has great difficulty reading. Using the categorical approach, this child is referred and assessed and someone—usually a special education specialist or a psychologist—who explains the reasons why the child cannot read as well as he or she needs to in order to complete academic tasks. The assessor then offers suggestions as to how the classroom teacher can adapt or modify teaching methods to suit the child's abilities. For example, the student may have sight word recognition problems, problems decoding, or he or she may struggle so much with reading the words on the page that his or her working memory is unable to process the meaning of the sentences being read (typically called an inability to comprehend). There are several other reasons why individuals do not read well, but the point is that each of them requires a specific type of reading intervention because there is no one general reading intervention that can effectively remediate all of the above problems. This common classroom situation also has significant but different instructional implications if the reading problem is identified when the student is learning to read (up to Grades 3 and 4) as opposed to being identified when the student is expected to read to learn (beyond Grades 3 and 4). More importantly, because the assessment process will have also identified specific learning strengths, the teacher can use these assets to help the student overcome the reading difficulty. In most instances, implementing specific evidence-based reading interventions that suit the diagnosed problem, allowing for some trial and error or slight modifications, will prove beneficial. Note that the categorical approach facilitates the study of specific populations, making the development of evidence-based interventions possible.

In comparison, the non-categorical approach tends to eschew the diagnostic tone of the referral and assessment procedure, preferring to answer the question "How do I adapt my teaching to include these exceptional individuals?" (Hutchinson, 2010). This is an excellent question. Following this approach, however, the teacher knows only that the student cannot read adequately, so he or she is left to try to adapt instruction, sometimes without a clear idea of the nature of the student's specific problem. Without knowing the student's needs and abilities, it will be very difficult for the teacher to effectively facilitate the student's learning in an efficient manner. The teacher runs the risk of frustrating the student by using a trial-and-error approach. It is not uncommon for teachers and special education teachers, who operate under such a mandate, to try something that seems to work one day, yet have it prove extremely ineffective the following day, and not know why.

We believe that the categorical approach advocated here eliminates much of the confusion and frustration that can occur when teaching students with exceptionalities. When educators have expert information regarding students' learning needs, they can efficiently link assessment with intervention. Teachers are quite capable of modifying their curriculum, their teaching, or their classroom environment to facilitate student success.

What We Know . . .

The Use of Categorical and Non-Categorical Approaches in Canada

The following brief quotes excerpted from the government websites of several provinces and territories provide some insight into the approaches taken across Canada in regard to special education:

Province/ Territory	Special Education Approach
Alberta	Every student or ECS child identified with special education needs must have an individualized program plan (IPP) and/or an instructional support plan (ISP) . . . "Individualized Program Plan" means a concise plan of action designed to address students' special education needs, and is based on diagnostic information which provides the basis for intervention strategies . . . Source: https://education.alberta.ca/diverse-learning-needs/special-education-standards/?searchMode=3
British Columbia	The planning process is divided into five phases: 1) identification/assessment; 2) planning; 3) program support/implementation; 4) evaluation; and 5) reporting . . . When extended assessments (e.g., psycho-educational, behavioural, speech and language, orientation and mobility) are requested, the goal is to better understand the student's strengths and needs in order to plan more effectively for that student. Source: www.sd5.bc.ca/programs/StudentServices/Partners%20Hand-book/Documents/4.6%20DEVELOPING%20AN%20IEP%20SPEC.%20ED.%20MANUAL.pdf
Newfoundland and Labrador	The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development uses the term exceptionality to identify patterns of strengths and needs common to groups of students. These strengths and needs may be: cognitive, emotional, behavioural, medical, social, and physical. A student with an exceptionality may access a range of school-based services depending on his or her strengths and needs. Source: www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/safeandcaring/handbook_parents_children_exceptionalities.pdf
Nova Scotia	The descriptors cognitive impairments; emotional/behavioural disorders; learning disabilities; physical disabilities and/or health impairments; speech impairments and/or communication disorders; sensory impairments; multiple disabilities; and giftedness should not be used as labels for individual students. Students' strengths and challenges must be the basis for developing appropriate programming and the descriptors should be used only as necessary for administrative purposes related to funding and data collection. Source: https://studentservices.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/speceng.pdf, p. 18