Chapter 46
Supporting Secondary Students with Disabilities in an Inclusive Environment

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is designed to inform and educate secondary (Grades 6–12) pre-service teachers on how to provide content and design assignments for students within the special education continuum. The chapter is divided into 12 sections, one for each IDEA disability category. Each section includes the definition and characteristics of the specific category as well as how it impacts learning. The prevalence of the exceptionality occurring in the secondary classroom is also discussed, thus informing pre-service teacher candidates about which disability categories they are most likely to encounter while teaching. Also included in each section is a discussion and examples of various research-based instructional strategies and assignments as well as resources such as websites or illustrations that can be utilized.

INTRODUCTION

With the introduction of the No Child Left Behind Act and the requirement that all students, regardless of ability, must be taught using the state's curriculum, more and more students with exceptionalities are being placed in the general education classroom, and all teachers, pre-service through veterans, must educate them. For this reason, it is essential that the secondary pre-service teacher be knowledgeable about the different categories of disabilities listed in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) and understand how to develop their instruction and assignments to properly educate students in their classrooms who fall into one or more of the categories. Secondary students with a disability come in all shapes and sizes and have a variety of needs. This chapter will assist the pre-service teacher in being prepared to provide the very best educational experience for these students.

The following main sections of this chapter focus on the 12 IDEA disability categories. Each section includes the definition and characteristics of a specific category as well as how it impacts learning. The

prevalence of the exceptionality occurring in the secondary classroom is also discussed so that pre-service teachers will know which disability categories they are most likely to encounter while teaching. Also included in each section is a discussion and examples of various research-based instructional strategies and assignments as well as resources such as websites or illustrations that can be utilized.

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

Definition

ASD is "a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects educational performance. Characteristics often associated with autism are engaging in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to changes in daily routines or the environment, and unusual responses to sensory experiences" (34 IDEA §300.8 [c] [1], 2004).

Prevalence

Approximately 7% of children receiving special education services are receiving services for autism (Kena et al., 2014). This exceptionality is considered a high-risk disability, meaning a secondary teacher will probably see this type of disability in his or her classroom.

ASD covers a spectrum of disorders. Of these disorders, probably the most prevalent, and the one that will most likely be encountered in the general education classroom, is Asperger's Syndrome. Students with Asperger's tend to have very high IQs and can verbalize. An example of this type of student is the character Dustin Hoffman played in the movie *Rain Man.*

Characteristics

Students who qualify for special educational services under ASD typically have difficulties with social skills, engage in repetitive behaviors, and have communication difficulties. The term "spectrum" is used with this type of disability because it embraces a wide range of students, from students who may be high functioning and will probably be in an inclusive general education classroom to students with severe needs who are non-communicative and engage in repetitive behavior like flapping their hands in front of their face. Teachers will more likely see the former in the classroom as opposed to the latter because severe-needs students require a specialized, trained teacher (Autism Speaks, 2015).

Social Ineptness

Social skills that most people take for granted are a challenge for students with ASD. Something as simple as the general education teacher smiling at the student with ASD can be bewildering because of his or her inability to comprehend facial expressions. Students with ASD may also respond inappropriately to gestures such as extending a hand for a handshake because these students have difficulties understanding and predicting other people's actions (Autism Speaks, 2015). ASD students like routine and predictable situations. If they are taken outside their comfort zone, they may become disruptive and physically ag-

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