

Chapter 2

Teaching Students With Specific Learning Disabilities in the General Education Classroom

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ABSTRACT

In many college teacher preparation programs across the United States, students who want to become a general education teacher are required to take a course focused on teaching students who have disabilities. Typically, that course provides an overview of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the characteristics of each of the 13 categories of disabilities. That course does not present various strategies a general education classroom teacher can use to educate these students, despite the fact that more and more disabled students are being educated in a general education classroom environment. Thus, this chapter provides resources and research-based reading, math, language arts, and social skills strategies general education teachers can utilize when educating a student with a specific learning disability in their classrooms. The resources presented in this chapter are not meant to take the place of special education teachers but to supplement practices for when they are not available.

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INTRODUCTION

With the push for full inclusion of all students who qualify for special education services in general education classrooms, teachers will encounter many diverse students with a variety of disabilities. Some will simply need accommodations, while others will require a paraprofessional to work with them one-on-one in order to benefit from the general education classroom environment. The type of student with a disability that the general education teacher will encounter most frequently will be one who is classified under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) as having a specific learning disability (SLD), or simply a learning disability (LD). A student who is identified with an SLD has difficulty processing spoken or written language either auditorily or visually. These types of disabilities cause academic difficulties with listening, thinking, reading, writing, spelling, and mathematical calculations. The formal IDEA definition of SLD states that a student qualifies for this type of disability if three specific standards are met (IDEA, 2004, §300.309):

1. The student does not make sufficient progress and exhibits a pattern of weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both and does not achieve adequately for his or her age or meet state-approved grade-level standards in one or more of the following areas, when provided with learning experiences and scientific, research-based instruction:
 - a. Oral expression.
 - b. Listening comprehension.
 - c. Written expression.
 - d. Basic reading skills.
 - e. Reading fluency skills.
 - f. Reading comprehension.
 - g. Mathematics calculation.
 - h. Mathematics problem solving.
2. Using appropriate assessments relative to age, state-approved grade-level standards, or intellectual development, it is determined that the findings of the testing data are not primarily the result of any of the following:
 - a. A visual, hearing, or motor disability.
 - b. Mental retardation.
 - c. Emotional disturbance.
 - d. Cultural factors.
 - e. Environmental or economic disadvantage.
 - f. Limited English proficiency.

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