

# SPECIAL EDUCATION

Advancing Values

**Edited by** Festus E. Obiakor  
and Jeffrey P. Bakken

ADVANCES IN  
SPECIAL EDUCATION

**VOLUME 38**

# SPECIAL EDUCATION

# ADVANCES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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ADVANCES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION VOLUME 38

# **SPECIAL EDUCATION: ADVANCING VALUES**

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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## PREFACE

In all works and professions of life, change is an inevitable consequence; however, it can have a good or bad consequence. When it is good, it can lead to progressive actions; but, when it is bad, it can lead to retrogressive actions. *Special Education: Advancing Values* is a change-oriented book that values the creation and advantages of special education while also doing an evaluative exploration of special education. It is a book that cumulatively reaffirms the authenticity of special education as an important educational phenomenon that is now intertwined with our changing society, and to a large measure reiterates that any society that fails to value people with special needs fails itself in our progressive and civilized world.

Historically, individuals with disabilities were unvalued, undervalued, disadvantaged, and demeaned by their homes, schools, communities, and governments. Visibly, their experiences were loaded with all kinds of vulnerabilities at all levels. However, as people got more enlightened, educated, focused, and dedicated, the society advanced; and as it advanced, rooms began to be created for advocacies, litigations, and protective laws that remediated the plights of persons with disabilities. *Special Education: Advancing Values* authenticates these facts and presents real ideas, real problems, real solutions, and real future perspectives that could help transform the field of special education in good and multiple ways.

This book reiterates the fact that special education is blessed with authentic hard-fought advocacies, litigations, and laws that are inextricably tied to fundamental human rights and human valuing (e.g., *Brown vs the School Board of Topeka*, Kansas Case of 1954 and Public Law 94-142 of 1975 that has been reauthorized and amended several times for good). For example, the fundamental ingredients of Public Law 94-142 have continued to be the major pillars of special education, and they include (a) free and appropriate public education (FAPE), (b) referral and identification of student, (c) parental involvement, (d) multidisciplinary team, (e) nondiscriminatory assessment, (f) due process rights, (g) procedural safeguards, and (h) Individualized Education Program (IEP). While these pillars do not necessarily reflect the concrete order of services provided to learners with special needs, they at least, reveal the multidimensionality of services that they are obligated to receive despite their assigned categories of exceptionality (e.g., learning disability, emotional and behavioral disability, intellectual disabilities, deaf/hard of hearing, visual impairments, students with extensive support needs, traumatic brain injury, and physical and other health impairments). Interestingly, these categories are the central foci of the chapters in this book. And, for the functionality of special education to be futuristically

entrenched, parental voices, voices of people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds, and futuristic voices must be heard and considered – fortunately, chapters on these topics are included in this book. Clearly, to a large measure, this transformational book brings to the forefront, “what was,” “what is,” and “what will be” in special education.

*Special Education: Advancing Values* is a book that is aimed at helping us as researchers, scholars, and educators in the field of special education to positively and intentionally engage in professional reflections. In more ways than one, this book has exposed what special is all about, the values and benefits of special education, the pitfalls that have hampered special education, and what we can do to advance the values of special education. As authors, we believe such reflections have value-added benefits that could develop our students, transform our schools and communities, and advance our future in general and special education and other related fields.

Finally, *Special Education: Advancing Values* is a worth-while book that has historical implications. For sure, it would not have been successful without the supports of our colleagues and well-wishers. In addition, we thank the staff of Emerald Publishing for their commitment throughout this book project. To our families, we especially thank you for lovingly hanging in there with us during this venture.

*Festus E. Obiakor*  
*Jeffrey P. Bakken*  
Series Editors

# CHAPTER 1

## SPECIAL EDUCATION: ADVANCING VALUES

Jeffrey P. Bakken and Christie Nelson

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### ABSTRACT

*Intrinsic values to the field of special education include advocacy, inclusivity, individuality, and empiricism. From early days of providing custodial care in segregated settings, special education has evolved into a program that seeks to educate students with a wide range of learning needs in inclusive settings and identify a robust research base that informs its policies and practices. Important concepts such as inclusion and continuum of services have not only been valuable in conceptualizing and in providing intervention for students with disabilities but have also been valuable in advancing the field. Research in special education and students with disabilities has been instrumental in moving the field forward. In the future, special education will continue to be valuable in supporting students whose learning and survival needs deviate from the norm in meaningful ways by delivering responsive evidence-based instruction.*

**Keywords:** Special education; advancing values; appropriate individualized services; critical values; least restrictive environment

### HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

For thousands of years, individuals with unique physical and mental needs have been targets of discrimination across cultures on virtually every continent. These individuals experienced isolation, exclusion, and even death. In the United States, the history of special education has been influenced by changing societal and philosophical beliefs about the extent to which individuals with differing abilities and exceptional needs should be feared, segregated, categorized, and educated

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(Salend & Duhaney, 2011). This history has also involved a discourse of a progressive attitude not acknowledging the equality of all persons evolving from early negative preconceptions (Conrad, 2020).

Beginning in the 13th century, individuals with exceptionalities were categorized as subhuman, totally and permanently unable to engage in rational thought and as a result, could be treated charitably but not equitably (Conrad, 2020; Rossa, 2017). Continuing through the 1700s, these individuals were ignored, isolated, subjected to inhumane treatments, and at times put to death (Rossa, 2017; Salend & Duhaney, 2011). In the late 1700s, asylums were built, and although some institutions viewed their purpose as providing vocational and educational programs, many just provided medical and custodial care and served as a vehicle to control individuals who were perceived as deviants who should be removed from public spaces (Conrad, 2020; Salend & Duhaney, 2011). A turning point came in 1801 when Jean Marc Gaspard Itard's work with Victor, the Wild Boy of Aveyron, was published. Itard developed a system for educating children with severe intellectual disabilities that (a) believed every child should be educated to the greatest extent possible and (b) consisted of carefully sequenced individualized instruction within a structured environment, immediate reward for correct performance, and tutoring in functional skills (Conrad, 2020; Cook & Schirmer, 2003; Salend & Duhaney, 2011). As it appears, Itard's work is commonly viewed as the genesis of modern special education.

The term special education seems to have been first used by Alexander Graham Bell in 1884 at an International Education Association meeting (Salend & Duhaney, 2011), and the first record of a class for students with exceptionalities occurred in New York City public schools in 1899 (Wehmeyer, 2022). Hundreds of school districts across the United States had created public school special education programs in the 1920s; however, almost all the students were housed in separate classrooms or buildings (Wehmeyer, 2022). By the late 1950s and early 1960s, laws were passed to provide financial support to colleges and universities for training teachers and researchers to provide educational services to children with special needs. Despite these laws and funds, many children remained unserved or underserved because most states gave school districts free reign to deny enrollment to students they deemed uneducable (Martin et al., 1996; Salend & Duhaney, 2011).

Between the early 1970s and 1990s, several important pieces of legislation were passed (e.g., the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Education for All Handicapped Children Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], and Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA]), giving parents equal protection and due process rights related to their children's education. The Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 established the provision of grants for services at the state level and put more responsibility upon the federal government to conduct research and provide training to support individuals with disabilities. In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act set forth a mandate for any public school accepting federal funding to (a) provide equal access to education, (b) evaluate students with special needs, and (c) provide an equitable educational plan including parental involvement. Signed into law in 1990, IDEA revamped

the previous law and provided students with exceptionalities a Free Appropriate Public Education comparable to their nonexceptional peers. The ADA was also signed into law in 1990 to extend the protection of civil rights and prohibit discrimination based on disability. In 2004, a major reauthorization and revision of IDEA was enacted to align more closely with the No Child Left Behind Act to include early intervention, enhanced training for special education teachers, and required schools to use research based interventions. Noteworthy outcomes of these laws were that (a) schools could no longer discriminate on the basis of disability, (b) students were afforded individualized education programs (IEPs), (c) parents had the ability to discuss changes in the education plans before they occurred, (d) parents had the right to appeal decisions made by the school district, and (e) children would be served in the least restrictive environment (LRE), meaning that specific services and programs were to be provided in a general education classroom to the greatest extent possible (Cook & Schirmer, 2003; Martin et al., 1996; Salend & Duhaney, 2011). Also, during this time, special education moved from being a separate system to being integrated within general education (Salend & Duhaney, 2011), and new questions arose regarding the technical aspects of instruction in the areas of assessment, curriculum development, and classroom management (Cook & Schirmer, 2003).

In practical terms, education reform laws marked the beginning of a new era in which individuals with exceptionalities were not simply placed out of sight but legislated for in ways that honored their status as bearers of human rights (Conrad, 2020). This afforded them the opportunity to receive meaningful and beneficial educational services. From 1976–1977 through 2021–2022, the number of students aged 3–21 years old served in federally supported special education programs rose from 3,694,000 to 7,259,000 across all disabilities in the US. In other words, the number of children served as a percent of total enrollment went from 8.3% to 14.7% from 1976 to 2022 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). In recent years, there has been an uptick in the number of students receiving special education services. For example, students who are diagnosed on the autism spectrum or with an attention deficit disorder and those with socially constructed disabilities (i.e., emotionally disturbed and learning disabled) make up the majority of students being served in special education (Salend & Duhaney, 2011).

From early days of providing custodial care in segregated settings, special education has evolved into a program that seeks to educate students with a wide range of needs (Salend & Duhaney, 2011). According to Conrad (2020), if the field is to progress ethically through the 21st century, educators and researchers must identify and address deeply entrenched prejudicial attitudes inherited from history that are still present in public policy. In other words, the current over-representation of certain ethnic groups in special education settings has been problematic. Because it is likely that there will always be individuals with exceptionalities whose learning needs deviate from the norm in meaningful ways, special education has become very valuable in meeting these needs by delivering appropriate instruction (Cook & Schirmer, 2003). To a large measure, these are valuable plans to educate and maximize the potential of all learners who belong

to all categories of exceptionalities as required by IDEA, namely: autism spectrum disorder, deaf-blindness, deafness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment, including blindness.

## **IMPORTANT CONCEPTS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Some important concepts have been instrumental in conceptualizing and in providing services for students with disabilities. These concepts are a continuum of services, inclusion, and supportive environments. They all have been important in advancing the field.

### *Continuum of Services*

The continuum of services identifies different service delivery models which provide specially designed instruction to students with disabilities (Rix et al., 2013). Federal law requires that (a) students be placed in the LRE that meets their needs and (b) that school districts provide a continuum, or range, of placement options that ensures appropriate exposure to the curriculum as well as maximum interaction with nondisabled peers. Services range from self-contained classrooms to the general education classroom as well as services such as consultant teachers and integrated co-teaching services which are directly designed to support the student in his/her general education class. As per IDEA, school districts must offer a continuum of options, called the continuum of alternative placements (e.g., instruction in the general education classroom, self-contained classroom, and instruction in hospitals; IDEA, 2004, Regulations 34 CFR § 300.115) to support a student's unique academic and functional needs. These include the provision of supplementary aids and services (e.g., professional development for general education teachers, use of paraeducators, providing assistive technology, instruction in a resource room) provided in conformity with the general or regular class placement (Yell et al., 2020). Inclusion is one of the placement options in the continuum of services that has received a great deal of attention when considering the best possible educational environment for students with disabilities. On the whole, providing the continuum of services demonstrates professional and legal values of special education.

### *Inclusion*

In their National Study of Inclusive Education, the National Center in Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (NCERI, 1995) defined inclusion as providing to all students, regardless of disability, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with supplementary aids and support services as needed, in age-appropriate general education classes in their neighborhood schools (Francisco et al., 2020). The goal of inclusion is to prepare all students for productive lives as full members of society (National Center on Restructuring and

Inclusion, 1995). The term “inclusion” was used globally in special education for the first time in the Salamanca Statement in 1994, where it was specifically stated that the integration of children with disabilities could be possible through inclusive schools (Rodriguez & Gil, 2014). Earlier, Lipsky and Gartner (1999) argued that inclusion is not just another reform but instead a response to the need to educate a diverse group of learners and provide them with similar opportunities and quality education with their mainstream peers. The problem is that training is needed in order to allow this environment to be effective for teachers and students. Inclusion requires collaboration and openness to new ideas. And it is not something that can be implemented hastily since as many people need to be involved for successful implementation. See Table 1.1 for components of inclusion. To a large extent, they show the benefits and values of special education and its fundamental ingredients.

**Table 1.1.** Components of Inclusion.

- 
- Knowledge of curriculum, differential instruction, and ongoing planning in order to be effective.
  - Equitable co-teaching (i.e., shared teaching and planning responsibilities).
  - Curricular adaptations, differential instruction strategies, and innovative approaches to learning in order for all students to benefit from instruction.
  - Students benefitting from this mutual respect.
  - Fosters an “us” mentality (i.e., we are all in this together – general and special education teachers and students).
  - Students having the same opportunities in the classroom.
  - Teachers and parents being on the same team and working together to educate the child with and without disabilities.
  - Families being valued for their expertise on their children.
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*Source:* The Cascade Counselor. (n.d.). Advocating for students with amplified needs. <https://www.thecascadecounselor.com/special-education-services>. Accessed on 10 August 2023.

### *Supportive Environments*

One of the key constructs in special education and supportive laws is supportive environments (i.e., the LRE; McGovern, 2015). There are many educational environments for students with and without disabilities (see Fig. 1.1). In all environments, students need supports. Supportive environments include school supports (e.g., general and special education teachers, parental supports, community supports, and government supports).

## **RESEARCH IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Whatever we do in special education is research and evidence-based. Over the years, research in special education has been very important in advancing the field. Research involves the willingness to know and the willingness to put into practice what we know. Research has helped to document strengths and

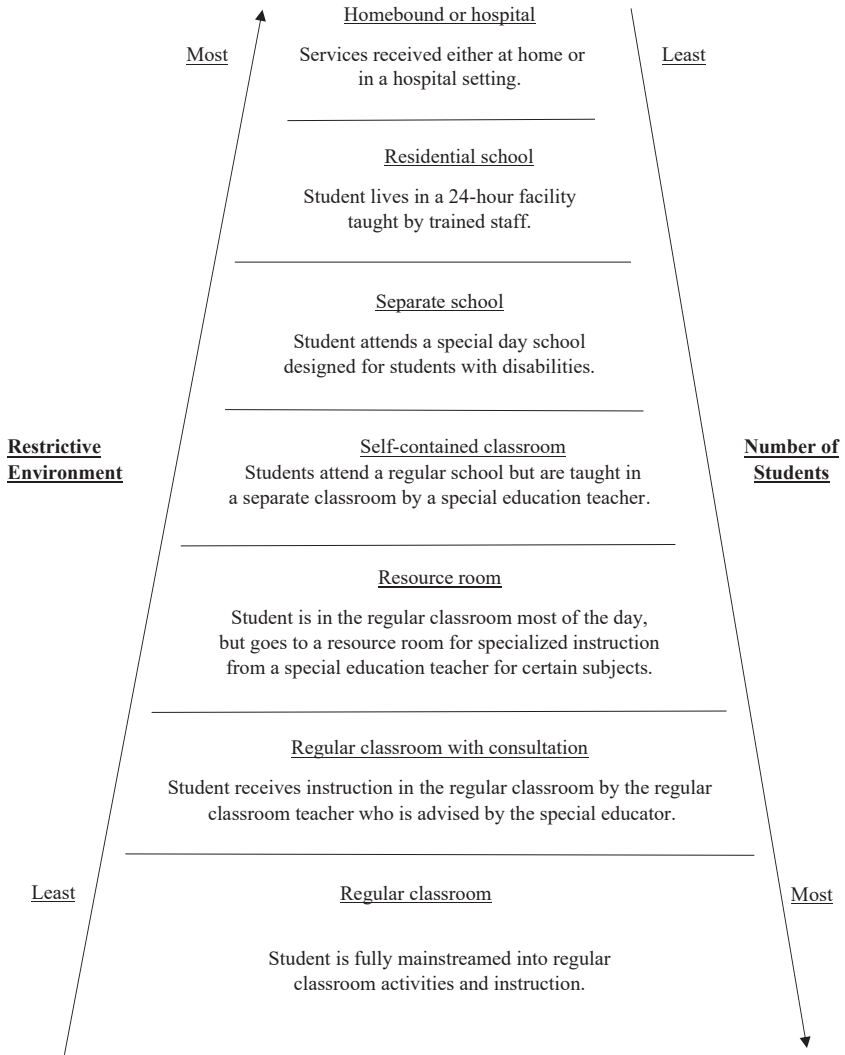


Fig. 1.1. Least Restrictive Environment. Source: Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education. (2022, October). Least restrictive environment (LRE) continuum. [https://www.michigan.gov/mde/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/specialeducation/iep/LRE\\_Continuum.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/specialeducation/iep/LRE_Continuum.pdf).

deficiencies of students with disabilities. With research, we investigate the impact and effectiveness of strategies for those in controlled settings. Below are discussions about characteristic and intervention research.

### *Characteristics Research*

Characteristics research was used to investigate students with disabilities to document deficiencies of this specific population. The goal was to document and differentiate the learning behavior of students with disabilities as compared to their peers who did not have a disability. For example, [Bos and Filip \(1984\)](#) investigated the comprehension monitoring skills of students with learning disabilities compared to average seventh-grade students. Students were required to read expository passages with text inconsistencies under a standard condition and a cued condition (i.e., where students were cued to look for text inconsistencies). Results indicated that the students without the disabilities spontaneously activated comprehension monitoring strategies in which they figured out there were text inconsistencies regardless of the condition. Students with learning disabilities, however, only activated these strategies when they were cued to do so. This study supported the fact that students with learning disabilities were inactive learners. This study was very important to the field as it showed that this population would not activate strategies to be successful. This means that they need different strategies in different areas to be successful. This study and others like it paved the way for the need and the importance of research on interventions for students with disabilities. Clearly, using results to teach and learn has been important in special education.

### *Intervention Research*

Intervention research was used to focus on teaching students with disabilities interventions with the understanding that students do not implement them on their own when needed. This research tried to answer the question: what would be the outcome if interventions were implemented with students with disabilities? [Scruggs and Laufenberg \(1986\)](#) investigated the use of mnemonic strategies with students who had mental retardation. They wanted to know if mnemonic strategies could be implemented with this population to help them learn. They reviewed several applications of mnemonic strategies with students with mental retardation by using mnemonic pictures (pictures and words) to teach native language vocabulary, numbered or ordered information, and digit series. Results indicated that mnemonic strategies have a great potential in enhancing the learning of individuals with disabilities. This research was important because it showed that students with disabilities could be taught interventions to improve their learning on academic material. This research and other intervention research paved the way for other researchers to investigate the use and implementation of other strategies with other students with disabilities (see [Bakken et al., 1997](#); [Mastropieri et al., 1992](#)). Clearly, intervention research has critical value for learners with disabilities.

## **FUTURE PERSPECTIVES**

Based on the aforementioned details, special education has values that deserve to be advanced. Some important concepts have been instrumental in conceptualizing and in providing services for students with disabilities. These concepts are a

continuum of services, inclusion, and supportive environments. They all have been important in advancing the field. Whatever we do in special education is research and evidence-based. Over the years, research in special education has been very important in advancing the field. Research involves the willingness to know and the willingness to put into practice what we know. Research has helped to document strengths and deficiencies of students with disabilities. With research, we investigate the impact and effectiveness of strategies for those in controlled settings.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter reiterates that special education is an important educational phenomenon that has fundamental values. While historically people with special needs have been unfairly treated, they now have protective values. In this modern era, parents, teachers, and policymakers have made valuable efforts. Special education has uplifted human rights and afforded individuals the opportunity to receive meaningful and beneficial educational services. Special education has enhanced inclusivity. Through inclusion, all students, regardless of disability, are provided equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, supplementary aids, and ancillary support in age-appropriate general education classes in their own neighborhood schools to prepare them for productive lives as integral members of society. Special education also values individuality. IDEA law requires a full range of placement options to be available to meet a student's needs. By recognizing individual needs and strengths and providing students with a continuum of placements, inclusion is safeguarded through the IEP and by considering the LRE. Lastly, as evidenced by the progression of research over time, we see that special education values empiricism. Special education has done so much good; however, it has been viewed as a negative label. Special education has led to misassessment, miscategorization, disproportionate placement, and misinstruction. In other words, it has been misused by poorly trained teachers and professionals. Special education deserves to be valued.

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