Preface

If a continuum of placement options is not available to individual students with learning disabilities the intent of IDEA is not being met. . . . A range of programs, personnel, and placement options must be available to permit selection based on individual student needs. – Council of Exceptional Children (1995)

OVERVIEW

Although the above passage was written almost 20 years ago, the sentiments are still applicable in today’s special education world. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) requires any school or school district that serves students who qualify for special educational services in one of the 13 eligibility categories included in the mandate to educate those students in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Though there is currently a huge push among some professionals within the field of special education to have all students with exceptionalities fully included (i.e., to have all services, including academic, speech, occupational, physical, etc., conducted in the general education classroom), IDEA (2004) continues to require that schools offer a continuum of services to choose from when initial placement for special education services is being considered.

Although service delivery models have been around for many years in a variety of industries, educational service delivery models for special education students are relatively new to the field. When special education services were initiated back in the mid-1950s, the service delivery model was the same for all categories: a self-contained classroom. Students who qualified for special education services during this time period were bused and educated separately from their age- and grade-level peers. These students may have seen their school-age colleagues at lunchtime, but chances were the two groups of children, disabled and nondisabled, did not cross paths.

In the mid-1970s, special education services changed drastically. Parents became enraged and demanded to have their special education children educated alongside their classroom peers. As a result, mainstreaming students with exceptionalities into elective classes like physical education, art, and music became the norm. However, parents wanted even more for their children with special needs. This led to the creation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004), which included more positive revisions for students with exceptionalities. Now these students must be educated alongside their age- and grade-level peers using a service delivery model that best fits each student’s educational needs.
There is a range of service delivery models under IDEA, from the least restrictive environment (i.e., the general education classroom with or without supplemental services from the special education teacher or a speech or occupational therapist) to the most restrictive environment (i.e., a juvenile detention center or a specialized school in a hospital), along with a variety of different service delivery models in between these two extremes. Regardless of where a student with an exceptionality is on the spectrum of services, the student must receive those services according to his or her academic and emotional needs.

**TOPIC FITS**

As was previously mentioned, there are some within the field of special education who feel that every student with a special need should be educated with his or her age- and grade-level peers, thus eliminating the need for the special education service delivery model as it currently stands. In contrast, other professionals in the field feel that students with special needs should be educated in a learning environment that best fits their learning style, and hence, the current service delivery model needs to stay intact. Although IDEA does not provide any detail on what constitutes a least restrictive environment, schools and school districts are required to follow the law if they want to continue receiving federal monies to support their special education programs. In order to do this, schools have developed their own range of service delivery models that they will continue to follow until told to do otherwise.

The controversy over least restrictive environment is one that has been debated in the court systems for years, and it will undoubtedly continue to be discussed due to the varied interpretation of its meaning. Through various court cases, some ground rules have been established to determine whether a school or school district is in alignment with the law or if it has blatantly disregarded IDEA. Knowledge of these rules will assist school district administrators in ensuring that they are providing the best possible service delivery model for their students with special needs as required by the IDEA legislature.

Due to federal mandate requirements to meet annual yearly progress, as outlined in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2002), along with the Common Core State Standards that most states are following, schools and districts are looking for ways to ensure that every student is educated to his or her fullest potential. In order to do this, schools have had to initiate a service delivery model to assist students who do not qualify for special education services but who are struggling nevertheless. One such service delivery model that is not directly linked to special education is Response To Intervention (RTI). The RTI service delivery model involves differentiated instruction at several tiers (typically three or four, depending on the model), and once a student has progressed through each of the tiers without success, he or she is then evaluated for special education services and, if warranted, placed in the special education service delivery model. These two-service delivery models work in tandem to ensure all students are receiving the education they deserve.

**TARGET AUDIENCE**

The realm of special education encompasses a wide variety of people; hence, a vast audience will be interested in this book. For example, teachers who work directly with students with exceptionalities on a daily basis teaching academics, social skills, and self-advocacy will be interested, particularly if they have a student who has experienced several different parts of the special education service delivery
model and they simply do not know where to place the student next. This book can serve as a guide to assist in making such a decision.

In addition, school administrators need to understand that under IDEA every child who qualifies for services must be placed somewhere within the special education service delivery model to avoid the risk of a lawsuit. This book can serve as a guide to assist superintendents or principals in looking at the variety of service delivery models under the special education realm and can provide guidance as to the cost of each program.

There are also parents who may not be familiar with the field of special education, and this book can educate them on the different types of placements within the special education service delivery model so that they can decide where they feel their child would benefit the most academically and socially.

At the collegiate level, this book can serve as a good resource in an educational administration class or a class for students who want to become special education teachers. In both courses, the need to learn about and understand the service delivery models used within the field of special education is crucial. Without this knowledge, educators run the risk of not following the IDEA mandates, and a possible lawsuit could ensue.

Therapists, physical, speech, or occupational, can also benefit from this book, as having knowledge about the various service delivery models within the realm of special education can allow these supplemental service personnel to provide their services within an already-established placement in the model as opposed to providing their own separate program. Having knowledge of the various options within the special education delivery model can assist a therapist in making relevant decisions.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Chapter 1 begins by discussing the history of special education. Historically, children who were different, whether physically or intellectually, were ignored and/or placed in an institution. It was not until the 1950s and the Brown v. Board of Education court case that parents started to realize that their special needs children should be educated in a school just like any other child. Unfortunately, it took another 25 years before the nation recognized that not only should students with exceptionalities be educated with their peers in the same school building but they should also be educated alongside them in the same classroom. Parents’ constant demands that their exceptional children be educated like any other child resulted in changes to the federal education laws and led to a range of programs designed to educate students with special needs.

Chapter 1 also reviews the continuum of programs that developed into a service delivery model for special education students. The options of this model start with the least restrictive environment, which occurs in the general education classroom and involves services provided by both the general and special education teachers, and continue until the student with special needs is in the most restrictive placement, which is a specialty program, perhaps in a hospital or juvenile detention center. In between these two extremes are programs such as self-contained classrooms, where a student is educated by a special education teacher for all the content subjects like math, English, social studies, and science but is mainstreamed into the general population for elective classes like art, music, and physical education, as well as lunch. Another program between these two outliers is inclusion, where the student with exceptionalities is in the general education classroom for part of the school day and in a resource room
for extra assistance in English and math the other part of the day. This chapter discusses the variety of models at the various age and grade levels.

Chapter 2 focuses on the IDEA, which states clearly that students with exceptionalities will be afforded an education without cost to themselves or their family. Education in the United States is a privilege and, as such, is paid for by property taxes that school districts collect from community members. However, educating a child with special needs can cost double or even triple the cost to educate a nondisabled child. Hence, when the federal government put IDEA into place, one intention was to ensure that the parents of students with exceptionalities did not have to pay additional funds for their children to be educated in a public school setting. The federal government also stated in IDEA that it would be willing to provide to the states 40% of the cost to educate these children and that the states would have to devise a way to fund the other 60% of expenses. (McCann, 2014). Unfortunately, from 1995 through 2012, the federal government has only funded between 10% and 25% of the promised monies (United States Department of Education, 2012). Hence, the primary responsibility for funding the education of special education students has fallen to the individual states.

Since each state is a single entity, it can determine how it wants to distribute the monies from both the federal government and from property taxes to the individual school districts to fund the education of that district’s students with exceptionalities. Some states use a funding formula of a flat grant, others use a pupil weight, and still others use a resource base. All of these methods are discussed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 centers on the topic of least restrictive environment. IDEA requires that all students with an identified disability must be educated in the least restrictive environment. Although this is the mandate set forth in the legislation, IDEA does not explain or provide direction on how this requirement is to be implemented. As a consequence of this limited guidance, there have been many court cases and litigations, and the United States Court of Appeals has devised four tests to determine whether a student with exceptionalities’ LRE has been violated. The test assigned to the court case depends on the part of the country in which the school in question is located. The court cases used to design the tests are discussed in this chapter.

A comparison of three continuums of service—the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), the 504 Plan, and the Response to Intervention Model—is also included in this chapter. Each service delivery model is explained and then compared to its counterparts in reference to purpose, protection, services, service delivery requirements, funding, evaluation processes, procedural safeguards, due process, and placement decisions. All of the service delivery models have a continuum of services starting with the least restrictive environment, but each has added some extra components to make it uniquely its own.

Chapter 4 focuses on creating a vision statement that supports a service delivery model within the field of special education. Any type of organization, whether business or education, must have a plan or vision in place so that stakeholders who are participating in the program have a clear understanding of where they are headed or what goals they want to accomplish. Without this clear vision, chaos will occur.

Within the field of special education, the need for this clear path has never been as essential as it is now, due to the changes that have occurred within the past 25 years. No longer are students with exceptionalities educated in an isolated corner in the basement of a school building; they are now being taught alongside their age- and grade-level peers. Because of this change in thinking, the vision of special education must also evolve.

This chapter discusses the importance of establishing a vision that all the stakeholders (parents, teachers, administrators, students, and community members) can agree on and are willing to implement so that all students with special needs will be educated according to their IEP. In addition, this chapter
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offers a checklist that school leaders can use to analyze their current vision statement in order to see if changes need to be made or if the statement is currently in alignment with their special education service delivery model. There are also examples of vision statements of special education programs from across the United States that can assist school administrators and stakeholders in devising their own vision statement for their special education service delivery model.

Chapter 5 presents spending options for service delivery models. IDEA includes a provision that all children with an identified disability must be educated in Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). This means that despite the cost to educate a student with an exceptionality, the parents of that child do not have to pay any more fees than the parent of a nondisabled child does. For example, if the school requires a materials fee at the beginning of the school year, then all parents, whether they have a child with a disability or not, must pay that fee, and the fee must be uniform. If the cost to educate a nondisabled child is $7,000 while the cost to educate a student with special needs is $10,000, the parent of the disabled child does not have to pay the difference.

It should also be noted that simply because the parent of a student with an exceptionality is not paying for his or her child’s education per se, it does not mean that the parent has carte blanche and the school is required to provide the student with the best-of-the-best services. If the school is providing services to meet the child’s needs according to his or her IEP, then the school is meeting the federal mandate, and the parent is responsible for paying additional costs for extra services.

Due to budget cuts and the constant rise of costs to educate students with special needs, schools have had to be creative in developing ways to bring in additional funding. This chapter discusses ways to do this to support both the general and special educational programs.

Developing assurances for service delivery models is the focus of Chapter 6. The Council of Exceptional Children (CEC) is a worldwide organization that advocates for children and adults with exceptionalities. One of the CEC’s many responsibilities is to ensure that the educational programs that instruct students with special needs are of high quality and meet the students’ needs according to their IEPs. In order to accomplish this goal, evaluation methods of the service delivery models must be in place. The assessment needs to occur frequently and should be conducted by both stakeholders close to the program and people who are not connected to the program in any way.

This chapter includes a sample of a quality assurance model evaluation, which covers topics such as academic performance and behavior management, operations, instruction, related services, and transition (from preschool, to elementary school, to high school, to college, to employment). This model is simply a guide and can be adapted to fit any special education service delivery model.

Along with using the quality assurance model evaluation tool, stakeholders who are evaluating a program should also look at the principles that the CEC established for each professional working with students with exceptionalities. These include para-professionals, teachers, parents, case managers, non-educational support, etc. These principles should be considered during the program evaluation to ensure that these professionals are providing the best services they can to the students with special needs.

Chapter 7 concentrates on the IDEA disability category of specific learning disabilities. About 5% of the total K-12 school-aged population in the United States has a diagnosis of a specific learning disability, thus making this disability the most common one among the 13 IDEA categories. Depending on the severity of the disability, most students with this exceptionality are educated alongside their age- and grade-level peers and are pulled out of the general education classroom environment and placed in a resource room for areas in which they struggle the most.
This chapter presents two case studies, one in an elementary classroom and the other in a middle school classroom, that utilize a full-inclusion team/collaboration service delivery model. In this situation, the general and special education teachers co-teach the subject matter and assist all students, disabled or not, and both teachers are responsible for each child’s academic success. In this scenario, it impossible to tell just by observing the classroom which children have an exceptionality and which do not; this is something that should occur in every inclusion classroom in the country.

Chapter 8 focuses on the IDEA disability category of emotional disturbance and presents two case studies of students with a designated emotional disturbance disability. These students are placed in resource room or self-contained classroom models.

In one of the case studies, the teacher, who is licensed in special education, starts the school year by having the special needs students come to him for their English, language arts, and math classes, as well as any time there is a behavioral issue. As the year progresses, the teacher slowly integrates his students into the general education classroom by giving them support via behavioral plans and organizers that assist them in remembering homework and other important dates. This teacher also handpicks the teachers he feels will be sensitive to his students’ needs, which helps promote student success.

The other classroom reviewed in the case study also has students with an emotional disturbance disability, but it includes students with a variety of other disabilities as well. These students start the year in a self-contained classroom and are slowly integrated with other disabled and nondisabled students.

Chapter 9 focuses on the IDEA disability category of autism spectrum disability. Autism is a disability that is becoming more prevalent within the field of special education. Currently, one out of every 88 children born in the United States has some form of autism spectrum disorder. This type of disability runs on a spectrum of students having little or no verbal skills and low cognitive abilities to students having poor social skills but typically being intelligent and well versed when speaking.

Students diagnosed with an autism spectrum disability may be educated with their age- and grade-level peers or in a self-contained classroom, depending on their academic and cognitive abilities. Regardless of where they spend the majority of their day, they must have a behavior intervention plan that will assist them in learning proper social skills. Unfortunately, many times these students will emulate the inappropriate behavior they witness in the general education classroom, so it is essential that they participate in a social skills class and that they be monitored via a behavior plan to ensure that they are proficient in social etiquette.

When teaching a student with autism spectrum disorder who has social skill deficits, a five-step model should be used. These steps include assessing social functioning, distinguishing between skill acquisition and performance deficit, selecting intervention strategies, implementing interventions, and evaluating and monitoring progress. If these steps are followed, the student should show progress in social skill development.

Chapter 10 examines the IDEA disability category of a speech and language disability. Within the schools of the United States, about 3% of all students have an IEP for speech and/or language difficulties. This statistic is only for students who have an IEP exclusively for this disability. That percent would be higher if it included students whose primary diagnosis was another type of disability under IDEA but who also have speech and language difficulties.

Most students who have a speech and language disability are provided services within the general educational classroom by either a speech-language pathologist or a special and/or general education teacher, depending on their needs. The difficulties can range from reading fluently, to decoding words, to writing correct sentences. Sometimes students with a speech and language disability will be removed
from the general education classroom and taken to a resource room to work on specific skills like diction or articulation. In this case, the speech-language pathologist may have the student continue to practice these skills in the general education classroom, which means the special or general education teacher will have to help monitor the child’s progress. This and other types of examples are discussed in the chapter, all revolving around the consultant service delivery model.

Chapter 11 concentrates on the IDEA disability category of intellectual disability. Students who have an intellectual disability have an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) below 70 (an IQ of 100 is average). In the past, these students were automatically educated in a self-contained classroom and were taught social skills such as grocery shopping, money management, cooking, cleaning, personal hygiene, transportation skills, recreational activities, and social skills. With the inception of NCLB, all of these students except the most severe are required to learn the same state standards as their age- and grade-level peers. Naturally, this has caused controversy in the field of special education.

Regardless of the placement of the ID student, he or she is expected to face challenges associated with social interaction. The only social interactions that students with ID receive in the school setting are from other ID students, the special education teacher, and the paraprofessional. Activities that are associated with this classroom environment lessen the idea of true social interaction with other students. Even though it can be difficult to foster an environment that creates effective communication with others socially, administrators and special education leaders should strive to do so.

Finally, Chapter 12 focuses on the various service delivery models around the world. Some countries’ models, like those of Canada and Finland, are very similar to the United States’ models because those countries believe that all children, whether disabled or not, should be educated within their local neighborhood school and not sent to a separate educational facility or be segregated from the standard educational learning community. However, unlike the United States, both of these countries have their general education teachers provide services for the students with special needs, while the special educator teaches the more moderate to severe students or assumes more of a role of a consultant.

The other countries discussed in this chapter have very different service delivery models. Countries like Germany, China, and Japan do have laws for educating students with exceptionalities, but the laws are not enforced due to political and financial reasons. As a consequence, these students are often educated in separate, specialized educational faculties, often by teachers who have little or no training in special education. Sometimes these teachers, because of social attitudes, do not feel that students with special needs can be educated, so the pupils are often ignored.

Chapter 12 is followed by a brief conclusion that summarizes the material presented in this book.

IMPACT IN THE FIELD

This book not only focuses on the various types of service delivery models and ways to fund related services but also provides examples of how the continuum of services are used in the field through actual case studies. This review of case studies is essential, as there is no uniformity for providing services within special education, particularly from state to state, and even sometimes within a state itself. These case studies can impact the field of special education by demonstrating how the service delivery model is actually used and how it can be emulated in another school or school district. By acquiring this knowledge, educators can begin to create some consistency within the special education field.
In this era of budget cuts, it is important to understand how special education is funded and from where the monies come. The federal government does provide some funding to the states to assist in paying for educating all children, including students with exceptionalities; however, the majority of the funding comes from the state governments. Hence, it is essential to understand the funding process and how it affects special education service delivery models at the school or school district level.

The topic of disproportionality, meaning the over-identifying of minority children for special education services, is not discussed much within the field of special education but has a huge impact on the students we serve. Thus, this book includes a discussion of disproportionality, and it is hoped that the related discussion herein, along with the integration of the RTI service delivery model, will help lead the way in making disproportionality a thing of the past.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which speaks about service delivery models, is due to be reauthorized at any time. However, the last time it was reauthorized, in 2004, the concept of a continuum of a variety of service delivery models did not change. In fact, there was more emphasis placed on educating students with exceptionalities in the least restrictive appropriate environment than on the actual physical placement of the student. In order to do this, we must have “a range of programs, personnel, and placement options,” like the Council for Exceptional Children recommended in 1995. Without this type of service delivery model, students with identified special needs will not receive the education they deserve or the one mandated under IDEA.

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REFERENCES


