

Lecture 2

Book: Exceptional Children – An Introduction to Special Education

Chapter 2: Planning and Providing Special Education Services

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Summary:

The Process of Special Education

- **Pre-referral Process**- A child who may need special education comes to the school's attention because (a) a teacher or parents reports concern about differences in learning, behavior or development or (b) the results of a screening test suggest a possible disability. Before referring the child for formal testing and evaluation for special education, most schools initiate a pre-referral intervention process. It is usually conducted by an early intervening assistance team which helps teachers devise and implement interventions for students with special needs. Early intervening teams consist of school principal or designated administrator, school nurse, guidance counselor, several classroom teachers and one or more special education teachers.
- **Evaluation and eligibility determination**- To be eligible for special education, a child must have a disability and need specially designed instruction. IDEA requires that all children suspected of having a disability receive a nondiscriminatory multi factored evaluation (MFE). Either the school or the parents can request that a child be evaluated for special education. The parents must be notified of the school's intent to test their child and they must give their consent to the evaluation. Within 60 days of receiving parental consent for evaluation, the school district must complete the evaluation to determine whether the child has a disability and identify the educational needs of the child. The MFE is conducted by a school based multidisciplinary evaluation team sometimes called a student study team.
- **Program Planning**- If the evaluation team determines that a child has a disability that is adversely affecting his or her educational performance, an individualized education program (IEP) is formed. The IEP team determines the 'what' (learning goals and objectives), 'how' (specialized instruction and related service), 'who' (teachers and related service providers) and 'when' (frequency of specialized instruction and related services) of a child's education program.
- **Placement**- After the IEP team determines the child's educational needs and the special education and related services necessary to meet those needs, the team then determines an

educational setting in which the child can receive an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

- **Ongoing progress monitoring, annual review and reevaluation-** It is very important to monitor the ongoing progress of a student. Direct and frequent measurement of student performance provides the most meaningful information about student progress and the effectiveness of the instruction. Furthermore, all aspects of the IEP such as annual goals and outcomes, delivery of specially designed instruction and related services, appropriateness of placement must be thoroughly reviewed periodically, at least annually. In addition to this, for some students, the specially designed instruction and related services they receive may alleviate a problem or accommodate an impairment. Thus, atleast once every 3 years, the school must conduct an MFE of each child with a disability to determine if he/she still needs special education. If the IEP team decides that a disability is no longer present or that the child's education is no longer adversely affected by the disability, the student is declassified, and special education discontinues.

Collaboration and Teaming- Collaboration has become a common and necessary practice in special education. Teachers are able to diagnose and solve learning and behavior problems in the classroom when they work together. Teachers can collaborate through three way i.e. coordination, consultation and teaming.

- Coordination is the simplest form of collaboration which requires only ongoing communication and cooperation to ensure that services are provided in a timely and systematic fashion.
- In consultation, team members provide information and expertise to one another. Consultation is mostly unidirectional, with the expert providing assistance and advice to the novice.
- **Teaming can be done in three ways** , (a) **Multidisciplinary teams**: it is composed of professionals from different disciplines who work independently of one another (b) **Interdisciplinary teams**: although each professional usually conducts discipline specific assessments, the interdisciplinary team meets to share information and develop intervention plans. (c) **Trans-disciplinary teams**: members of a trans-disciplinary team seek to provide services in a uniform and integrated fashion by conducting joint assessment, sharing information and expertise across discipline boundaries, and selecting goals and interventions that are discipline-free.

Individualized Education Program

IDEA requires that educators develop and implement an IEP for each student with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 21. An IEP gives information to parents and

teachers about the child's needs and realistic goals and gives them an opportunity to be creative to meet them. **Each IEP must include the following seven components:**

- A statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance.
- A statement of measurable annual goals.
- A description of how the child's progress towards achieving the annual goal will be measured and when periodic reports on the progress of the child will be provided.
- A statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided for the child.
- An explanation of the extent to which the child will not participate with non disabled children in the regular class.
- A statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child on state and district wide assessments. If the IEP team determines that the child shall take an alternate assessment on a particular state or district wide assessment of student achievement, a statement of why (a) the child cannot participate in the regular assessment and (b) the particular assessment selected is appropriate for the child.
- The project date for the beginning of the services and modifications as well as the anticipated frequency, location and duration of those services and modifications.

IEP's for students 18 and older must include information on how the child's transition from school to adult life will be supported (including appropriate measurable post secondary goals, the transition services (like courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals and beginning no later than 1 year before the child reaches the age of majority under State law.)

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): The LRE is the setting closest to the general education classroom that also meets the child's special educational needs. The LRE is a relative concept as the LRE for one child might be inappropriate for another child with the same disability. The IEP team must determine the LRE after it has designed a program of special education and related services to meet the child's unique needs.

Inclusive Education: Inclusive education means integrating children with disabilities into the academic and social activities of regular schools and general education classes. Stainback and Stainback (1996) described it as "a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school

community in the course of having his or her educational needs met.” Inclusion includes full time placement of students with disabilities in the general classroom or any degree of integration into the mainstream.