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Working With Diverse Students

OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss the changing student diversity and demographics.
2. Describe the impact of diverse populations in special education programming.
3. Incorporate effective strategies associated with achievement of diverse students with disabilities.
4. Use the What Works Clearinghouse to identify and provide examples of effective instructional programs.
5. Compare and contrast the cultural context of disabilities associated with diverse populations.
6. Dispel myths associated with teaching diverse students with disabilities.
7. Analyze personal skills and competencies to increase effectiveness in working with diverse students with disabilities.

Special education teachers have responsibility for an increasingly diverse student population. Over- and underrepresentation of certain populations on Individual Education Programs (IEPs) are concerns in many schools. Special education referrals and census data of diverse students including English language learners (ELLs) present a complex and often confusing picture. Cultural background and belief systems impact the view some families have about disabilities.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the changing demographics and cultural influences students bring to the classroom. In addition, the chapter identifies professional and instructional practices known to be effective with diverse students before and during referral, as well as after diagnosis of a disability.

WISDOM OF PRACTICE: THE TECHNICOLOR WORLD OF TRUMAN ARMSTRONG

Of the 16 names on Truman Armstrong's special education caseload, he could barely pronounce 11. Truman read through the list, stopping as he tried to pronounce some of the names, "Anderson, Assad, Carlson, Harris, Juarez, LaPointe, Martinez, Nelson, Nguyen, Thao, Vallejo, Vasquez, Wilson, Xiong, Yusuf, Zupinski." He certainly had not expected such diversity when he returned to his rural hometown to begin his first year of teaching. Thinking back on some of the courses he had taken, Truman remembered that language and opportunity to learn could be misperceived by educators. He wondered if the students really belonged in special education. Truman looked for the students' files. Some of the files were incomplete and others were vague. Thoughts were racing in his mind. "What are the backgrounds of the students? Do they speak English? I don't speak ANY foreign language . . . well, German, maybe, when my grandmother is around! Is there an ELL teacher?" Truman started to make a list of questions and people to talk to.

Like Truman Armstrong, special education teachers face rapidly changing student demographics. Special educators are able to increase their effectiveness and confidence when they use strategies known to be instructionally powerful with diverse students who have special education needs. Student achievement can be enhanced when cultural and linguistic backgrounds are addressed.

IN BRIEF: WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Diversity includes gender, race, culture, language, religion, age, socioeconomic status, geographic location, sexual orientation, and ability or disability. Cultural and linguistic variables can be particularly challenging in special education referrals, assessment, and instruction.

Changing Student Diversity

Student demographics reflect the changes in society as a whole. Demographics vary dramatically by geographic location, but the average classroom of 30 students would typically have 15 Caucasian, 8 African American, 5 Latino/a, 1 Asian/Pacific Islander, 1 Native American, and 1 "other" student. Of those 30 students in the class, 4 would be identified with disabilities, 2 with specific learning disabilities, 1 with cognitive disabilities, and 1 with emotional behavior disorders. Six of the 30 students would be non-English speakers.

Language

Approximately 20 percent of students aged 5–17 speak a home language other than English, and nearly four million students in the United States are ELLs (United States Department of Education, 2006). The following are the most common language groups:

Language	Approximate Percentage
1. Spanish	77.0
2. Vietnamese	2.4
3. Hmong	1.8
4. Korean	1.2
5. Arabic	1.2
6. Haitian Creole	1.1
7. Cantonese	1.0
8. Tagalog	.9
9. Russian	.9
10. Navajo	.9
11. All others	11.8

Race

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) in *The Condition of Education* (2008) identified 43 percent of the student population in the United States as being non-Caucasian, over 10 million nationwide. The increase of culturally and linguistically diverse students reinforces the need for teachers to be knowledgeable of family practices, values, and resources that students with a global history bring to school. This book is designed to support a more inclusive perspective.

THE IMPACT OF DIVERSE POPULATIONS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

In 2004, the *Descriptive Study of Services to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students and LEP Students with Disabilities* (Zehler, Fleishman, Hopstock, Stephenson,

Pendzick, et al., 2004) reported approximately 357,325 ELLs (or 9.2 percent of the student population) were provided special education services. This was the first national estimate of ELLs served under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Child Count data from the United States Department of Education (2006) indicated that the number of ELLs who are on IEPs may be as high as 20 percent of the total special education population.

Disproportionate Representation

Disproportionate representation, high dropout rates, and the achievement gap for minority and culturally and linguistically diverse students remain concerns for special educators. Disability areas where Hispanic, Black, and Native American students are overrepresented include specific learning disabilities, cognitive impairment, and emotional behavioral disorders (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Duany & Pittman, 1990, Harry & Klingner, 2005; Zehr, 2004). Among native races in the United States, American Indian and Alaska Native populations have been reported as having some of the highest percentage of disabilities—22 percent, according to the 2000 Federal Census (Ogunwole, 2002). As many as 12.2 percent of African Americans are reported to have the most severe disabilities, in comparison with Asian/Pacific Islanders, the lowest reporting group, with 4.9 percent reporting severe disabilities (Kraus, Stoddard, & Gilmartin, 1996).

Teacher Attitude

In a 2002 study, Carlson, Brauen, Klein, Schroll, and Willig found that special education teachers self-reported feeling least skillful in working with ELL students with disabilities. Critical obstacles to culturally responsive teaching include negative teacher attitudes and expectations for students of color, and confusing disability with diversity (Gay, 2002). According to some researchers, there is an urgent need to refine the theoretical framework and methodologies used in preservice teacher education programs in order to better prepare general and special educators to work with diverse students and study the impact of multicultural students (Trent & Artiles, 1998).

Teacher Preparation

Preparation of special education teachers to meet the needs of ELLs is an area gaining attention in order to ensure effective assessment and instruction. Many programs that proliferated with the help of federal funds in the 1980s have been restructured or eliminated. Currently, fewer than 15 bilingual special education programs exist in the United States (Paneque & Barbeta, 2006). Although special education professional standards require knowledge and skill in language development, communicating with ELL students, and distinguishing between language difference and language disability,

the competencies of teachers are just beginning to catch up to the needs of a growing student population.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Special education teachers have a responsibility to be aware of and sensitive to the needs of diverse learners as well as to provide them with an appropriate education.

Special Education Teacher Competencies When Working With ELL Students

The following competencies have been identified as necessary when working with ELL special education students (Baca and Amato, 1989):

1. Desire to work with culturally and linguistically exceptional children
2. Ability to work effectively with parents of ELL students
3. Ability to develop an appropriate IEP
4. Knowledge and sensitivity toward the language and culture of the group served
5. Ability to teach English as a second language
6. Ability to conduct nonbiased assessment with culturally and linguistically exceptional students
7. Ability to use appropriate methods and materials when working with ELLs

Other knowledge and skills that special educators find helpful to work successfully with ELL special education students include the following:

1. Awareness of the scope of multicultural issues, including those that are medical, economic, religious, social, and political
2. Knowledge of the stages of language development and use
3. Willingness to collaborate
4. Skill in identifying and utilizing school and community resources for culturally and linguistically diverse students with special needs
5. Knowledge of the impact of the physical environment
6. Ability to identify stress factors
7. Fluency in a second language

Given the number of languages spoken in schools, it may be rare to speak the student's native language or be from the same culture, however, sensitivity is important.

Culturally responsive special education is advocated by Geneva Gay as a comprehensive endeavor that will positively impact diagnosing students' needs, curriculum content, counseling and guidance, instructional strategies, and performance assessment (Gay, 2002). Gay calls for a mix of "tough love" and unequivocal caring that translates into an emotionally safe and supportive place where the standard of achievement is challenging but set within reasonable and reachable levels. Multiple opportunities should be provided so students can be successful. Creative and imaginative methods, including the use of technology, are critical for engaging students who might be considered hard to teach. In order to eliminate bias, reduce stereotypes, and increase the chances of a more desirable living and learning climate, Gay promotes engaging students in activities that incorporate social justice and service learning.

The importance of effective strategies and research-based instructional methods and programs should not be underestimated. Practices selected because they are appropriate for the learner will reinforce student achievement when used consistently.

Effective Strategies and Student Achievement for Diverse Learners

The Institute of Education Sciences established by the United States Department of Education hosts the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), found at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>. The WWC lists and rates scientifically based instructional practices. The Web site is a helpful resource that special education teachers can access when making decisions about what methods are valid and reliable for diverse special education students.

For English language learners, peer tutoring pairs and response groups were two practices that received the highest rating of effectiveness for English language development (WWC, 2008). The rating is based on "positive effects" and "strong evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence." In other words, these are practices that should be used. Peer tutoring pairs involves one student tutoring the other, who needs the additional support to reinforce learning. Response groups typically involve four or five students working together and sharing responsibility to complete a task. Both tutoring pairs and response groups emphasize the use of peer interaction and discussion to complete a task.

Other researchers have added to the field of ELL special education best practices. In their study, *Educator Perceptions of Standards-Based Instruction for English Language Learners With Disabilities*, Thurlow, Albus, Shyyan, Liu, and Barerra (2004) noted strategies that have been found to support reading, math, and science achievement. Listed opposite are 12 strategies special educators have rated as highly effective in reading, math, and science.

WHAT WORKS? AN ACTIVITY

Read through the list of 12 strategies below. Select the five strategies you believe are most successful for reading. Then select five for math and five for science. Identify only five strategies (no more, no less) for each of the three content areas. Some of the strategies may have more than one letter. On the line in front of the strategy, write R for reading, M for math, and S for science. The answers will be provided later in the chapter.

- _____ 1. Cooperative Learning
Students work as a team to accomplish a task
- _____ 2. Curriculum-Based Probes
Student performance of skills that are timed and then charted to reflect growth
- _____ 3. Direct Teaching of Vocabulary
Specific vocabulary instruction using a variety of activities that hold attention
- _____ 4. Explicit Timing
Timing of seatwork to increase proficiency
- _____ 5. Graphic Organizers
Visual display of information to structure concepts and ideas
- _____ 6. Peer Tutoring
Pairing students, with one trained to tutor the other
- _____ 7. Preassessment Organization Strategies
Use of specific practices designed to reinforce student's recall of content
- _____ 8. Reciprocal Peer Tutoring
Pairing students who then select a team goal and tutor each other
- _____ 9. Specific Informal Assessments
Use of a variety of methods including questioning for retention
- _____ 10. Teacher Think-Alouds
Explicit steps are modeled out loud in order to develop steps in problem solving processes
- _____ 11. Using Short Segments to Teach Vocabulary
Short time segments are used to teach vocabulary through listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- _____ 12. Using Response Cards During Instruction
Students write brief answers to teacher questions and hold them up so teacher can review answers

A number of these practices are incorporated in programs that have also been researched and found valuable for student achievement. As with any instructional strategy or educational program, the age, background, and needs of the student must be taken into consideration.

Highly Effective Reading Programs

According to the WWC, the following programs and methods had positive effects on reading achievement:

1. *Bilingual Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (BCIRC) **

BCIRC is a bilingual program that uses cooperative groups during instruction that focus on reading, writing, and speaking. Instructional practices are not watered down but develop social, academic, and communication skills consistent with the developmental level of students. See www.cal.org/resources/digest/cooperation.html.

2. *Enhanced Proactive Reading*

This is intensive, explicit, and focused reading instruction conducted in small groups at the elementary grade level. The elements of reading include phonological awareness, phonics, comprehension, reading fluency, and vocabulary. See www.readingrockets.org/article/28881.

3. *Instructional Conversations and Literature Logs **

The goal of Instructional Conversations is to help English language learners develop reading comprehension ability along with English language proficiency. Instructional Conversations are small-group discussions. Acting as facilitators, teachers engage English language learners in discussions about stories, key concepts, and related personal experiences, which allows them to appreciate and build on each other's experiences, knowledge, and understanding. Literature Logs require English language learners to write in a log in response to writing prompts or questions related to sections of stories. These responses are then shared in small groups or with a partner. See http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/english_lang/icell/.

4. *Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS)*

PALS has been developed for use from preschool through high school. The focus of literacy instruction changes depending on the level of the student, but can include letter-sound correspondence, partner reading, prediction, and so on. It is a structured peer coaching approach in which student pairs work on skills that are causing problems. See <http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/pals/faqs/> or

www.cec.sped.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=5445.

5. *Read Well*

This program includes systematic instruction in decoding and paired reading with a teacher. Skills are scaffolded to increase confidence and independence. See

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/english_lang/read_well/info.asp.

6. *Success for All*

Success for All is a comprehensive reading program that emphasizes systematic phonics, cooperative learning, tutoring for struggling students, family support programs, and other elements. See http://www.successforall.org/_images/pdfs/research_ELL.htm.

7. *Vocabulary Improvement Program for English Language Learners and Their Classmates (VIP)* *

This is targeted vocabulary instruction aligned with weekly reading in upper elementary grades. See http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/WWC_VIP_101906.pdf.

* The asterisk denotes programs that were also noted for potentially positive effects in English language development and had no overriding contrary evidence.

Highly Effective Content Programs

According to the National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRESt, 2002), effective content resources for teachers have also been identified through the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) & IDEA Local Implementation by Local Administrators Partnership (ILIAD) Project. Two examples are:

1. Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), designed to teach college-prep English to low-achieving racial and ethnic minorities, embraces strong elements of communal identity, cooperative learning, and reciprocal responsibilities.
2. Math Workshop Program Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP) for Native Hawaiian children.

Both of the above programs were found to increase achievement of students when used consistently.

Lives and destinies of people from different cultures, social groups, and backgrounds are often connected by common concerns and dreams. Teachers who take the approach that all students can benefit by helping each other learn to the best of their ability are more likely to develop socially responsible learners. In addition to increased academic performance, students who are part of a cooperative learning community develop stronger feelings of worth, greater satisfaction with school, and more positive relationships across ethnic groups.

Discovering the Cultural Context of Disabilities

Working with diverse students includes being aware and respectful of practices and traditions associated with the culture's primary social or religious beliefs. Both the teacher's world view and the effects of acculturation on a student's family are important factors in honoring culture. Culturally responsive teaching provides opportunity to assess personal knowledge and skills.

Diverse populations may view physical or emotional disabilities in ways that may be very different from your background or experience. Learning disabilities or cognitive disabilities may not be part of the culture. Some common understandings identified by Lynch and Hanson (1999) are noted below. However, to avoid stereotypes it is important to research specific beliefs of the populations with whom you work.

Native American and First Nations People

Disability may be seen by some indigenous populations as the result of either natural or supernatural causes. Spiritual or tribal healers may be asked to conduct ceremonies to restore the balance of nature or ward off evil spirits to protect individuals or families from further harm. Prenatal care may be limited due to certain remote locations of residence. Child-rearing practices are strongly interdependent. Death is seen as part of life's journey.

Asian Populations

Certain Asian populations may see disability as the divine punishment for sins or moral transgressions by parents or ancestors. Throughout pregnancy there are taboos that if not followed are thought to result in disabilities. Generally, severe disabilities, developmental, physical, or sensory impairments, and serious emotional disturbances are viewed with considerable stigma. Lucky charms, spiritual exorcisms, and rituals performed by shamans may be used by families. Family embarrassment or shame, as well as a lack of experience with service providers, may cloak the family's reluctance to seek help. There may be belief that the child will outgrow the condition and be able to fulfill family obligations in order to give the family a good name. Candid discussions of death or serious illness may tempt fate.

Middle Eastern and North African

Arabic people of Islamic tradition typically emphasize good health, personal hygiene, and healthy diets. Some wear amulets for protection or will burn incense to keep the evil eye away from the sick. Muslims are typically a male-dominated society and tend to rely on families, relatives, close friends, or elders for advice, support, and help. They may recommend safe, simple home remedies. In Arab countries, patients are often told only the good news about their disease. In severe cases, the doctors generally tell a family member. Muslims believe recovery from illness has to do with seeking professional treatment and submission to God's will. Death is a destiny decided by God. Some Arabs are reluctant to disclose detailed information about themselves and their families to strangers. Mental illness is considered taboo, and it is rare for such information to be shared with relatives or friends, and it is even more rare to seek professional help.

African

Disability may be considered the work of evil spirits according to some cultural and ethnic populations. Healing rituals may be attempted. Isolating or minimizing involvement through quarantine may be used to avoid contamination of other members of the

community when the cause of disability is misunderstood. In some countries, individuals with disabilities are considered sacred.

Latino, Puerto Rican, and Cuban

Some families may believe disability occurs as the result of evil in society. The power of good and evil is often reinforced by Catholic tradition. Orthodox medical practices in tandem with botanicals and herbal remedies or amulets may be used to ensure health or protection from evil spirits. Fatalistic views associated with disability may hinder the use of effective interventions. Extensive grieving and praying accompanies the knowledge that a disability exists.

Refugees and Victims of Torture

Experiences of immigrant populations from countries where violence has been a fact of life must also be considered. Issues of mental health, physical health, stress, fear, anger, withdrawal, and little or no previous academic opportunity may be areas of concern. As refugees, victims of torture, and other immigrant populations resettle in US communities, teachers can learn lessons from health professionals who have been involved in primary care and treatment of significant disabilities. Four challenges are evident according to Meyer (1996). They are:

1. Differentiation. Different ethnic and racial groups have unique health risks.
2. Communication. With or without an interpreter, communication may be difficult as there may be unwillingness to discuss personal matters (such as pregnancy, sexual activity, drug or alcohol use). Having or using a phone may be an obstacle.
3. Respect. Expressing respect rather than impatience for individual beliefs.
4. Mistrust. As a person in authority you may be mistrusted. Prior homeland experiences may have involved leaders who were responsible for horrible crimes.

Even though there may appear to be similarities between cultural groups, do not presume common beliefs. It is important to do the following:

1. Get to know the family as a unit.
2. Determine what meaning the family gives to illness and disability.
3. Ask a cultural broker what the family prefers.

For additional information, excellent references can be found at:

- Cultural Profiles Project (www.settlement.org/cp/english/) is a site that provides in-depth profiles of countries and peoples of the world including social, political, religious, and health customs
- National Council on Disabilities (NCD) (www.ncd.gov) created a helpful guide: *Understanding Disabilities in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities*

- National Immigration Law Center (www.nilc.org) houses a *Guide to Immigrant Eligibility for Federal Programs* including disabilities services that might be needed by newcomers with disabilities
- United States Center for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) (<http://www.refugees.org/article.aspx?id=2113>) has a downloadable brochure with details and pictures designed to introduce the concept of disabilities and educational practices to recent immigrants

In the study of cultures and disability remember:

1. A *stereotype* is an ending point; no attempt is made to learn whether the individual in question fits the statement.
2. A *generalization* is a beginning point; it indicates common trends, but further information is needed to ascertain whether the statement is appropriate to a particular individual (Galanti, 1991).

Cultural backgrounds of children and their families will provide a context for better understanding of beliefs and perspectives. Family histories and views of disability will unfold as trusting relationships develop.

Myths Associated With Teaching Diverse Students With Disabilities

Working with diverse students provides opportunity to review and revise inaccurate thinking. Table 1.1 describes some of the common myths—and realities—associated with ELL instruction.

Misperceptions

The behaviors of ELLs may be misread by teachers as characteristics associated with disabilities (Ortiz, 2004). Consider the following behaviors, which are often reported in referrals when students are suspected of having specific learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, emotional behavioral disorders, traumatic brain injury, and other behavioral or cognitive disorders:

- **Disorganized:**
ELLs may not comprehend directions or understand how to organize materials or assignments. The students may not have had previous school experience and may lack efficient work habits.
- **Disruptive:**
Behavior such as excessive talking with other ELLs may be the result of frustration or not understanding the expectations.

Table 1.1 Myths and Realities Associated With ELL Instruction

Some Myths:	The Realities:
1. Code switching (using two languages interchangeably when talking) is the sign of a communication disorder.	1. Bilingual students use code switching as a method to clearly express an idea regardless of the language used.
2. Most ELLs are recent immigrants.	2. Data show that 64 percent of ELLs were born in the United States (Flannery, 2009).
3. Learning two languages results in low achievement.	3. Students who learn two languages tend to out-perform monolingual peers.
4. ELLs use native language in class in order to avoid work.	4. ELLs may be attempting to clarify instructions and assignments rather than avoid work.
5. Having an accent indicates a student will need additional service.	5. An accent is an indicator of the point at which a student began to learn a second language.
6. Talking slower to ELLs will improve comprehension.	6. Improved comprehension is the result of using visuals and teaching strategies that are effective with ELLs.
7. Students who do not speak English are found only in large, urban areas.	7. Students who do not speak English are found in many large and small districts throughout the United States.
8. School districts are not obligated to enroll students who are not legal residents of the United States.	8. The federal government mandates that states provide equal public education for undocumented immigrant children (Samway & McKeon, 1999).
9. When ELLs speak their native language in an English-speaking classroom they are likely to be off-task.	9. Such students are about as likely to be off-task as monolingual English speakers (Samway & McKeon, 1999).
10. It is best for ELLs to be pulled out of their regular education classes for English-language instruction.	10. It all depends on the needs of individual students. For some, it may be best that they are not pulled out, whereas pulling others out may best meet the students' educational needs (Samway & McKeon, 1999).

- **Distractible:**

In attempting to make sense of the language being used in the classroom, ELLs may attend to many things as they try to comprehend information. They can appear distracted as they look from page to page, teacher to other students, board to book.

- **Forgetful:**

Limited comprehension due to lack of English proficiency can cause ELLs to “not get” information rather than “forget.”

- **Impulsive:**

Hasty work behaviors or lack of following systematic processes may be the result of failure to understand instructions.

- **Inattentive:**

ELLs may not know when or what to pay attention to in a classroom due to lack of language comprehension.

- **Task Avoidance:**

Slow to begin—ELLs may not know how to start or complete tasks.

Slow to finish—For some ELLs, time is needed to translate from English to native language and back to English in order to complete a task.

Effective teachers take into consideration the needs of ELLs to avoid confusing various behaviors with an inappropriate diagnosis of a disability.

Analyzing Personal Skills and Competencies

It is important to constantly consider areas to improve professional practice. Professional development enhances a teacher’s knowledge and skills. Areas to develop key concepts related to the needs of ELL students with disabilities could include the following:

1. **Clarifying the exclusionary clause:**

Before students are found to have a specific learning disability, other influences must be considered. The disability must not be the result of hearing, vision, or orthopedic impairment, behavior disorders, or cultural, environmental, or linguistic factors.

2. **Defining adequate opportunity to learn:**

Determine ways to ascertain the academic history of students. Has the student had access to education, received instruction comparable to peers, had highly qualified teachers?

3. **Identifying and implementing meaningful prereferral strategies:**

School teams should focus on research-based instructional strategies and data collection to make decisions.

4. Understanding language acquisition as different from communication disorder: Identify the developmental stages involved in learning a second language. Discuss various characteristics of communication disorders with speech language professionals and levels of academic and social language with ELL teachers.

5. Assessing ELLs:

Be aware of the requirements that must be met before a referral to special education is made. This would also include due process procedures and nondiscriminatory assessment.

6. Including interpreters and other specialists during IEP and Child Study Team meetings:

Formulate a plan for working with specialists knowledgeable of the language and culture of students on IEPs.

Legal Considerations for ELLs

Understanding the cultural and family perspective is one step, but being knowledgeable of the laws that pertain to the rights of ELLs is an additional professional responsibility of the special educator. Federal law IDEA addresses the needs of students whose primary language is not English, including those students who may need information presented through sign language or Braille. For ELLs, the use of trained interpreters will be critical in collecting information from the family, acquiring permission for testing, assessing the learner in the native language, and conducting IEP or other meetings to share results and seek permission for placement.

When working with an interpreter it is important to remember the following:

1. Schedule meetings only after checking with the interpreter first.
2. Brief the interpreter prior to the meeting.
3. Discuss if the interpreter will use simultaneous or delayed interpretation.
4. Provide summaries rather than complex explanations.
5. Avoid jargon. Bring pictures, graphs, and visuals to share.
6. Provide the interpreter with documents to use as references during the meeting.
7. Speak to the parents, not the interpreter, during the meeting.
8. Trust the interpreter. Many special education terms do not exist in other languages. The interpreter may be providing a longer explanation by describing the disability or services in a way the family understands.

9. Trained interpreters are aware of their role in verbatim translation and confidentiality. They relate information and don't give opinions or recommendations.
10. Debrief with the interpreter after the meeting to ensure the family has understood.

Many districts and most states have translated IEPs and other special education documents into a number of different languages. The forms are typically located on the Web sites. The translated Parents' Rights statement, IEP, and other official forms necessary to sign should be readily available at meetings to provide parents with copies of formal documents in their native language.

As schools become more aware of the needs of ELLs with disabilities, administrators and staff will begin to prioritize their professional development needs. Being proactive and positive creates an environment where all students and their families feel like welcome members of a learning community.

Effective Strategies: What Works? Answers to the Activity

Remember the activity earlier in this chapter? Below are the correct answers. How did you do? The top five highly rated strategies in these content disciplines are as follows:

Reading:

1. Preassessment organization strategies
2. Graphic Organizers
3. Cooperative Learning
4. Direct Teaching of Vocabulary
5. Specific Informal Assessments

Math:

1. Curriculum-Based Probes
2. Reciprocal Peer Tutoring
3. Graphic Organizers
4. Explicit Timing
5. Teacher Think-Alouds

Science:

1. Curriculum-Based Probes
2. Graphic Organizers
3. Peer Tutoring

4. Using Short Segments to Teach Vocabulary
5. Using Response Cards During Instruction

Note that graphic organizers are listed as an effective instructional practice across all three content areas. The following common principles are also associated with the practices:

- The practices promote efficient use of time with routines and expectations identified.
- The practices utilize teacher modeling.
- The practices encourage student engagement in the learning process.
- There is documentation of effectiveness.

Pedagogy, in addition to curriculum, must be of high quality since it activates the curriculum. Multiple and varied culturally informed techniques that utilize various teaching and learning styles need to be a part of the teaching repertoire.

SUMMARY

It is important to be aware of the diversity in schools in order to select the instructional strategies that are consistent with student achievement. Students with unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds may come with traditions and academic needs unlike any others you may have experienced. In addition to information obtained from an interpreter, individual research to learn more about social, political, religious, and family customs will help eliminate stereotypes and assist in determining student needs. Professional development can support staff in addressing legal requirements, discovering and using effective pedagogy and curriculum, and dealing with the realities associated with educating an ELL student with disabilities.

SELF-ASSESSMENT AND REFLECTION

After reading Chapter 1, please reflect on your knowledge and skill.

Self-Assessment Items

Respond to the following by answering Yes, Somewhat, or No.

I am able to:

- _____ 1. Recognize changing student diversity and demographics;
- _____ 2. Describe the impact of diverse populations in special education programming;

- _____ 3. Incorporate effective strategies associated with achievement of diverse students with disabilities;
- _____ 4. Use the What Works Clearinghouse to identify and provide examples of effective instructional programs;
- _____ 5. Compare and contrast the cultural context of disabilities associated with diverse populations;
- _____ 6. Address myths associated with teaching diverse students with disabilities;
- _____ 7. Analyze personal skills and competencies to increase effectiveness in working with diverse students with disabilities.

Reflection

1. Which of the self-assessment items do you feel fully competent in?
2. Which of the self-assessment items do you feel need some more work, emphasis, or study time?
3. Identify two specific actions that you can take to enrich and strengthen your instructional effectiveness.