# Chapter 5 Learning Disabilities

# High-Incidence Disabilities

- What are High Incidence Disabilities? What are *the* High Incidence Disabilities?
- Are they all included under Special Education Legislation?
- How do they impact school performance?
- 10 Minutes for this task.

# High-Incidence Disabilities

- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech and Language Disorders
- Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Emotional and Behavior Disabilities
- Mental Disabilities

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# IDEA Definition of Learning Disabilities (LD)

- A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language
- May manifest itself in an imperfect ability to:
  - Listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do math
- Does not include learning problems that are the result of other disabilities or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage

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# The NICLD Definition of LD

- A general term that refers to a group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or math abilities
- Problems with self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may coexist but do not themselves constitute a learning disability
- Although learning disabilities may occur with other handicapping conditions or with extrinsic influences they are not the result of those influences

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# Operationalizing the Definition

Most states require three criteria be met to receive services:

- Discrepancy between intelligence and achievement
  - An "unexpected" difference between general ability and achievement
- Exclusion criterion
  - LD can occur with other disabilities but the learning problems must not be "primarily the result" of the other disability or other condition (e.g., low SES)
- A need for special education services
  - The student shows specific and severe learning problems

## Characteristics

- Students with LD experience one or more of the following difficulties:
  - Reading problems 90% of all children identified
  - Deficits in written language Perform lower across most written expression tasks
  - Underachievement in math 50% have math IEP goals
  - Poor social skills 75% have social skills deficits
  - Behavioral problems
- Defining Characteristic
  - Specific and significant achievement deficits in the presence of adequate overall intelligence

# Prevalence

- LD is by far the largest of all special education categories
  - 51% of all children with disabilities receive services under the LD category
  - 5 out of every 100 students in the U.S. is diagnosed with LD
  - Males with LD outnumber females by 3-to-1
  - The number of children identified is growing

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# **Educational Approaches**

#### **Explicit instruction**

- Provide a sufficient range of examples to illustrate a concept
- Provide models of proficient performance
- Have students explain how and why they make decisions
- Provide frequent, positive feedback for student performance
- Provide adequate practice opportunities

#### Content enhancements

- Guided notes
- Graphic organizers and visual displays
- Mnemonics

#### Learning strategies

 Students use task-specific strategies to guide themselves successfully through a learning task or problem

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# **Educational Placement Alternatives**

# • Regular classroom

- During the 99–00 school year, 45% of students with LD were educated in regular classrooms
- Some school districts employ a collaborative teaching model to support the full inclusion of students with LD

#### Consultant teacher

 Provides support to regular classroom teachers who work directly with students with learning disabilities

#### Resource room

 A resource room is a specially staffed and equipped classroom where students with LD come for one or several periods during the school day to receive individualized instruction

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## **Current Issues and Future Trends**

- The discussion and debate over what constitutes a true learning disability are likely to continue
- Most professionals and advocates for students with LD do not support full inclusion
- Students with LD possess positive attributes and interests that teachers should identify and try to strengthen

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# **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder**

- Definition
  - Two types
    - Inattention
    - Hyperactivity-Impulsivity
- DSM-IV Classification
  - ADHD, Predominantly Inattentive Type
  - ADHD, Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Type
  - ADHD, Combined Type

# **Inattention Refers To:**

- Consistent (over 6 months) and highly inappropriate levels of at least six of the following:
  - Failing to pay close attention to details and making careless mistakes that are inconsistent with child's developmental level
  - Failing to sustain attention to tasks and/or play activities

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# **Inattention Refers To (continued)**

- Failing to listen, even when spoken to directly
- Failing to complete tasks
- Having difficulty with organization
- Resisting to work on tasks that require sustained attention
- Losing materials and objects
- Becoming easily distracted
- Being forgetful

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# **Hyperactivity Refers To**

- Consistent (over 6 months) and highly inappropriate levels of at least six of the following:
  - Hyperactivity
    - Fidgeting or squirming
    - Having a difficult time remaining and seated in class
    - Running or climbing excessively when it's not appropriate
    - Having difficulty playing quietly
    - Acting a though he/she is "driven by a motor"
    - Talking too much

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# **Impulsivity Refers To**

- Consistent (over 6 months) and highly inappropriate levels of at least six of the following:
  - Blurting out answers
  - Difficulty waiting for their turn
  - Interrupting others or butting into activities

Onset of inattention and/or hyperactivity should be present before age 7 and in two or more separate settings.

# **Core Characteristics of ADHD**

- Poor sustained attention or vigilance
- Impulsive or poor delay of gratification
- Hyperactivity or poorly regulated activity
- Diminished rule-governed behavior
- Increased variability of task performance

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# **Instructional Guidelines and Accommodations for ADHD**

- Positive attitudes towards mainstreaming and inclusion of students with ADHD
- Ability to collaborate as a member of an interdisciplinary team
- Knowledge of behavior-management procedures
- Personal characteristics

# **Educational Interventions**

- Use novelty in instruction and directions
- Maintain a schedule
- Prepare students for transitions and provide support in completing transitions
- Emphasize time limits

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# **Educational Interventions**

- Provide organizational assistance
- Provide rewards consistently and often
- Be brief and clear
- Arrange the environment to facilitate attention
- Provide optimal stimulation
- Allow for movement and postures other than sitting

# **Educational Interventions**

- Keep homework assignments separate from unfinished school work
- Use homework as practice for materials that have already been taught
- Identify the minimum amount to demonstrate learning
- Provide timelines for tasks associates with long-term assignments

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# **Medication as Treatment**

- Stimulant medication
  - Ritalin
  - Dexadrine
  - Adderall
  - Cylert
  - Concerta
- Medication is only one aspect of a treatment plan