EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN
Who Are Identified As Exceptional?

- 6.5 million children in the U.S.
- Categories include:
  - Learning disabled
  - Communication disorders
  - Mental retardation
  - Behavior disorders
  - Physically impaired
  - Gifted and talented
- Numbers have increased 30% in the last decade
Learning Disabilities

- Approximately 10% of total population in U.S. is identified as learning disabled
- Represents 46% of children receiving special services
- Children have difficulty learning despite having average or above average intelligence
- Must be a discrepancy between intelligence and achievement
Learning Disabilities

- Difficulties may be with:
  - Processing
  - Language
  - Reading and writing
  - Mathematical understanding

- Causes may be genetic or environmental
  - Family history
  - Exposure to teratogens
  - Birthing difficulties
  - Prematurity
Communication Disorders

■ 18% of children receiving services

■ Difficulties with
  ◆ Expressive language
  ◆ Language comprehension
  ◆ Speech
  ◆ Social interactions
Mental Retardation

- 10% of children receiving services
- Causes may be genetic or environmental

- Four levels of severity, based on IQ scores
  - **Mild** - 85% of identified population; IQ of 50-70, academic skills up to 6th grade - concrete operational
  - **Moderate** - 10% of identified population; IQ of 35-55, academic skills up to 2nd grade - preoperational
Mental Retardation

- **Severe** - 3-4% of identified population; IQ of 20-40, can perform simple tasks - sensori-motor

- **Profound** - 1-2% of identified population; IQ below 20, requires a highly structured environment - sensori-motor
ADD & ADHD

- 3-5% of total population
- Diagnosed 6x more in boys than girls
- Contributing factors
  - Family history
  - Teratogens
  - Single parenthood
  - Parenting style
  - Level of social support
Diagnosing ADHD

- Children under 7 years old have these observable behaviors in several settings, for longer than 6 months:
  - **Inattention**: easily distracted, makes careless mistakes, forgetful
  - **Hyperactivity**: fidgety, talks excessively, difficulty sitting still
  - **Impulsivity**: difficulty awaiting turn, interrupts, doesn’t consider consequences of actions
Emotional & Behavioral Disorders

- 1-2% of total population
- **External behaviors**: conduct and defiance
- **Internal behaviors**: anxiety and depression
- Contributing factors:
  - Biological - temperament, neurological abnormalities, family history
  - Environmental - parenting strategies, peer and school influences
Autism Spectrum

- Range of symptoms:
  - Communication: delays, impaired conversation, lack of symbolic play
  - Social interaction: poor eye contact, lack of social give and take
  - Behavior: repetitive motor movements, adherence to routines

- Incidence: 1 in 175 children. Boys 4x more likely than girls. Increase in last 2 decades.
Gifted and Talented

- Exceptional intellectual strengths
- IQ over 130
- Divergent thinking
- Related to both genetic and environmental influences
- Not federally mandated, but many states fund GATE programs
## Ethnic Disparities: Who’s Receiving Special Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>% of Total Population</th>
<th>% of Total Gifted Pop</th>
<th>% Identified Special Ed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasians</td>
<td>60.3 %</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-Americans</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-Americans</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American-Indian</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1975 - Education of All Handicapped Children Act protected the rights and met the needs of children with disabilities and their families.

Before 1975, there was a disproportionate number of minority children in special education, labeled and forgotten.

In 1970, only 20% of children with disabilities were being educated in public schools.
Education of All Handicapped Children Act

- Mandated that all students with identified disabilities (ages 5 - 21) were entitled to a free, appropriate public education in the least restricted environment.


- 2004 - Updated IDEA to include alignment with No Child Left Behind.
IDEA

- Free and appropriate public education
- Due process rights for parents
- Individual evaluation
- Identification and services to all children
- Provision for related services
- Individualized education plan
- Least restrictive environment
Least Restrictive Environment

- Mandated that student be placed with non-disabled peers as much as possible, mainstreamed into the school culture:
  - RSP - less than 50% of the day
  - SDC - more than 50% of the day
- Student can receive their education exclusively in the general education classroom, fully included.
- 3/4 of special needs children spend some part of the day in a general ed classroom
Due Process Rights for Parents

- Informed consent when child is referred for testing
- Parents included in Individual Educational Plan (IEP)
- Advocate and translator offered to parents
- IEP is updated annually
- Schools must offer services recommended in IEP
Federal Support for IDEA

- Government is mandated to pay 40% of services, but pays only 20%
- Results in shortfall of $10.6 billion
- Average cost to educate exceptional child is $17,000, more than 2x the cost of regular education student
Teacher’s Process for Identification of Students

- Assess and observe student
- Modify the instruction and environment
  - E.g. tape the readings, use study carrels, partner with a classmate, implement behavior plan, use computer
- Consult with parents and resources on faculty
- Request student study team
- Recommend testing by psychologist
Working with Parents

Be aware of parents’
- feelings of concern, guilt, embarrassment,
- child-rearing practices and family roles
- views on disability, medicine, sickness
- family structure and home culture
- perceptions of schools and teachers