

Preface to the Second Edition

Much has changed with special education since the first edition of *What Every Principal Needs to Know About Special Education* was published. At the time I finished the first book, the 2004 amendments of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) had yet to be passed, and schools were in the early days of implementing the provisions within the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation pertaining to students with disabilities. In the relatively few years since the publication of the first edition, a number of changes have occurred that I address in this book.

First, I recognize that school leaders everywhere have gained a lot of knowledge about special education over these past few years. The inclusion of students with disabilities as one of the subgroups that schools, school districts, and states are held accountable for under the Adequate Yearly Progress provisions of NCLB means that building administrators and other school leaders had to become aware of who these students are and what they are being taught. Furthermore, the NCLB regulations developed over the past several years provide even more guidance about how these students are to be assessed. This included defining two new subgroups of students with disabilities—those that may be held to alternate achievement standards and those students with disabilities who may be assessed against modified achievement standards.

These new rules have resulted in new procedures for developing Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) and new assessments and reporting requirements. Principals will have to help general and special education teachers and the parents of students with IEPs understand the new procedures and the meaning of assessment results. However, the most important change and one that was just emerging at the time the first edition was published was the recognition that inclusion of students with disabilities in NCLB means far more than participating in state assessments. It is now very clear that every student with a disability is to receive instruction

in the standard-driven curriculum that is the basis for instruction in general education classrooms. This is resulting in a movement to create “standards-based IEPs,” which I also discuss in this book.

With the passage of the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act came other changes. (In this book, I continue to refer to the law as “IDEA” despite the name change). First, there was far greater alignment with NCLB. Congress sent a very clear message that special education was designed to improve student outcomes as indicated by the following quote from the law:

Having a disability in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities.

Individuals with Disabilities Education
Improvement Act of 2004, as amended

The law put even greater emphasis on students having access to general education curriculum, and the model presented in the first edition of this book that addressed special education as a support to a “curriculum continuum” has been updated to reflect new NCLB and IDEA policies.

The 2004 IDEA also made some changes to reduce the inappropriate identification of students with disabilities. These include “Response to Intervention” (RtI) and “Early Intervening Services” (EIS), and they are both discussed in this book. There is also a greater emphasis placed on prevention of behavior problems through requirements that “positive” behavioral supports and interventions be addressed in students’ IEPs, which I discuss again in this edition.

Throughout the book, I include references and definitions to new policies as well as new resources for principals that pertain to important components of special education in the schools. For instance, I discuss new provisions for resolving disputes between parents and schools as well as new requirements for using “scientifically valid” or “evidence-based” practices.

In summary, I believe that the additions and revisions that have been made bring this book up to date with the most current policies as well as special education practice in today’s schools.