

Chapter 2

Student Similarities and Differences



Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will have knowledge and skills to:

- 2.1** Articulate how students are similar.
- 2.2** Express how gender differences are manifested in schools.
- 2.3** Explain how cultural diversity and language diversity are manifested in schools.
- 2.4** Identify the impact on students of family structure, religion, and socioeconomic status.
- 2.5** Summarize how learning differences are manifested in schools.
- 2.6** Define students with exceptionalities and how we serve them in schools.

Dear Reader

It's all about the kids . . . schools, teacher preparation, lesson plans, activities, professional development, and so on. Our focus must always be on learners—those children and adolescents who enter our classrooms and live within our care at least 180 days a year. A teacher's entire career is an adventure in observing and interacting with whole—yet still developing—people. Their needs and gifts and challenges keep the classroom fresh and vibrant so long as we positively approach our responsibilities as teachers. What a wonderful profession!

This chapter looks at how students are both similar and different. A quick look tells you that we give differences much more attention than we do similarities. The primary similarity is that kids are kids—regardless of how they may differ from one another, they are first and foremost kids. Once that's established, we need to understand that each learner is a complex composite of multiple factors, many of which we'll explore in this chapter. Every child has learning preferences, life circumstances, a personality, potential, and gifts, and each deserves our best efforts. This is in no way a comprehensive look at student diversity, but it's a good way to begin. Our responses to "And how are the children? Are they all well?" will be more meaningful when we see them as whole people, developing every day.

2.1 How Are Students Similar?

2.1 Articulate how students are similar.

In the time it takes you to read a few pages in this chapter, a whole classroom of students will be born. That's right—statistically, 30 babies are born in the United States every 8 minutes. Your entire future kindergarten class, third-grade class, middle school social studies

class, or high school algebra class may be coming into the world right now. Statistically, we can predict that of these 30 future students, 14 will be considered a racial minority, 8 will be born into poverty, and 9 will be born out of wedlock. Of these 30 children, 17 will have parents who divorce before the students graduate from high school, 5 will serve jail sentences, 5 will be victims of violence, 4 will commit a violent crime before age 16, and almost half will drop out before finishing high school (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). “And how are the children?”

Chances are your classroom won’t mirror the statistics you just read. Classroom populations vary from little cultural or socioeconomic diversity to a challenging and invigorating mix. You might teach in a school with students whose families are financially well off, or one with families that move when the rent comes due. Perhaps you will teach in a stable rural community with conservative values and lifestyles, or in a suburban area that affords a great variety of opportunities and educational options, but where students tend to move often.

The 30 new lives that have begun in this 8-minute time frame may appear to be diverse, but they are actually more similar than they are dissimilar. They are individual beings with unique attributes and a variety of needs. But the most important thing to remember is that they are children, all worthy of our best efforts. Mark Twain said that children are born every day who could change the world. We just don’t know who they are yet.

We begin our look at similarities with a brief discussion of nature and nurture, the two sources of influence that make us who we are. Then, through the views of Abraham Maslow, we look at the needs shared by every human being. We follow with an exploration of physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and character development.

Nature and Nurture

Debate continues on the question of what has the greater influence in determining who we are—nature or nurture. These two concepts are generally presented as oppositional: nature *versus* nurture. **Nature** refers to genetically inherited influences. Not only are certain physical characteristics, such as eye color, skin tone, and adult height, determined by nature, but some aspects of our intelligence and personalities are established genetically as well. **Nurture** refers to the influences of our environment, encompassing everything that cannot be accounted for genetically. For instance, how we are raised, the people we meet, the schools we attend, and our economic status are all part of nurture.

Each child arrives in the world with predispositions, or tendencies, accounted for by nature and over which we have little control. However, teachers do have some influence over nurture that can positively impact what students receive through nature. That’s why we create classroom environments that stimulate growth—physical, cognitive (intellectual), emotional, social, and character. To more fully realize why we need to create these environments, let’s examine the importance and relative priority of human needs that we all share.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Psychologist Abraham Maslow (1908–1970) proposed that all human beings experience the same needs. Figure 2.1 shows his classic **hierarchy of needs**, which is widely accepted as an accurate depiction of the order, from bottom to top, in which needs have to be met for healthy and full human development.

Maslow proposed that basic needs for survival and safety must be met first. Once these needs are satisfied, humans are motivated to move up the pyramid toward higher-order needs. Makes sense, doesn’t it? If students don’t have food and shelter, or if they feel physically threatened, it’s unlikely they will be concerned about understanding the Pythagorean theorem. Providing opportunities and support for needs fulfillment and promoting positive student development will help them ascend Maslow’s pyramid and develop in positive ways.

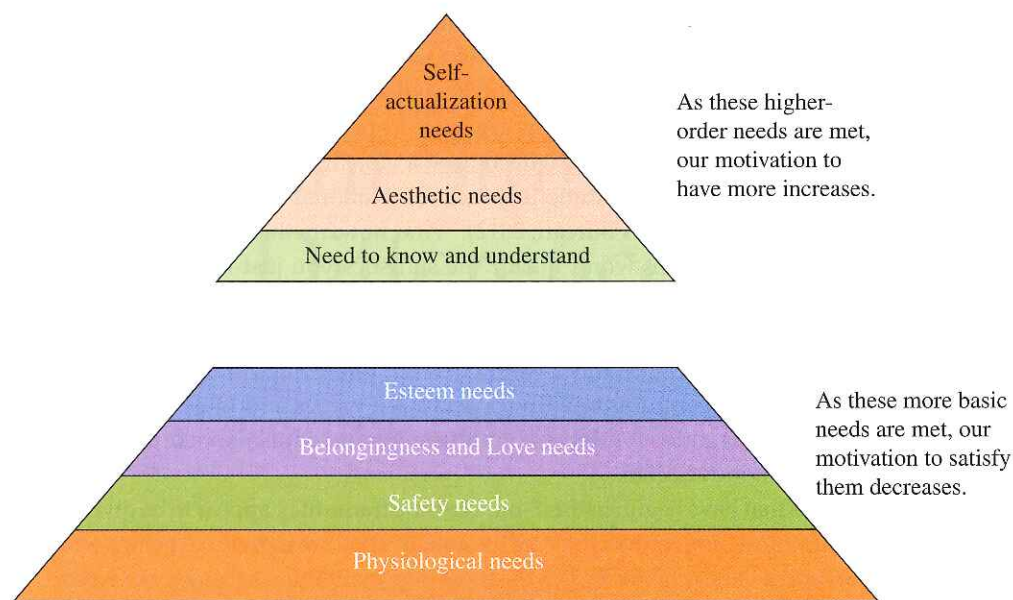


Figure 2.1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Student Development

Most children progress through predictable age-related stages of development. The more we know about these developmental stages, the more empathy and support we can offer. In this section you will meet eight children and adolescents at various stages of development who are students of the eight focus teachers we met in Chapter 1 at four focus schools. Take the time necessary not only to read the brief descriptions of the students but also to look carefully at the photos of these real learners. Consider them as you read about five developmental areas: physical, cognitive (intellectual), emotional, social, and character.

Focus Students: Early Childhood

Dylan Todd

Kindergarten

Summit Primary School, Summit Station, Ohio (student of Brandi Wade)

Dylan is the only child of Brandon and Lisa Todd. Their pride is obvious as they talk about what a delightful little boy he is. When Dylan smiles, everyone smiles. When he giggles, his pure expression of joy is contagious.

We meet Dylan in the middle of his second year of kindergarten. During his first year, Dylan made progress and perhaps could have gone on to first grade. However, in consultation with the school staff, Mom and Dad decided it would benefit Dylan to experience another year of kindergarten, giving him time to mature a bit more socially.

Dylan's teacher, Brandi Wade, says that he has made wonderful progress in learning to read. In terms of the reasoning ability



All Photos: Sara Davis Powell

needed for progress in math, Brandi says Dylan is continually growing and learning.

Sherlonda Francis

Second grade

Summit Primary School, Summit Station, Ohio (student of Renee Ayers)

Sherlonda's personality shines. The challenge is to help her develop academically and find success in school so that high school graduation will be in her future. Renee Ayers, her teacher, is afraid that if Sherlonda doesn't experience grade-level-appropriate academic success soon, her penchant for socializing may actually get in the way of her success.

Sherlonda is doing better in second grade. However, in first grade she had some difficulty paying attention and staying on task. Although this isn't unusual for early childhood students, it was chronic enough to concern the Summit Primary staff. Renee talked extensively with Sherlonda's



All Photos: Sara Davis Powell

first-grade teacher, and they worked together to plan Sherlonda's second-grade experience so she would experience success.

Sherlonda's mom is the sponsor of her church dance group, and her dad is very active in Sherlonda's life, saying his daughter loves to learn new things and figure out how things work. Both parents say they have always read to Sherlonda, and now she is reading to them.

Focus Students: Elementary

Amanda Wiley

Third grade

Rees Elementary School, Spanish Fork, Utah (student of Chris Roberts and Brenda Beyal)

Amanda's mom, president of the Rees Elementary PTA, describes Amanda as "just plain fun." All it takes is 5 minutes of classroom observation to know the description fits. Amanda loves school now, but reading did not come easily for her, and first grade proved to be very challenging. Toward the end of second grade, things began to click for Amanda. Now in third grade, she is an avid reader.

Amanda is crazy about math. Her mom says Amanda doesn't behave like a stereotypical girl. She would rather be involved in rough-and-tumble play than do what most girls want to do. Amanda is the middle of three sisters and doesn't seem to have time for relationships with other girls.

The summer before going to third grade, when Amanda would be in Tim Mendenhall's homeroom, she talked her family into letting her be the caretaker of Rosie, the class pet. As it turns out, the class pet is not a cuddly guinea pig or a cute little rabbit, but a large hairy tarantula.



All Photos: Sara Davis Powell

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT. Physical development involves how our bodies appear and how they function. Patterns of physical development are orderly in that the progression is generally predictable. Body parts mature at rates that make physical development the most obvious of the five areas of development.

Although each child follows a distinct growth curve, the most rapid growth occurs in early childhood, with steady growth through elementary school. In early adolescence there may be an explosive growth rate, leveling off in late adolescence. Girls often experience puberty as much as 2 years earlier than boys, but boys generally grow taller and heavier than girls by late adolescence (McDevitt and Ormrod, 2016).

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT. Cognitive (intellectual) development is considered the primary focus of school. Changes in cognition are just as profound—but often much more subtle—than outward physical changes. Yet, the brain grows faster than any other part of the body. By age 5, the brain has reached approximately 90% of its full size, but the body is only 30% developed (Feldman, 2014).

Jean Piaget (1896–1980) was one of the most renowned cognitive development theorists. Piaget recognized distinct differences in children's and adolescents' responses to questions that directly correlated to their chronological ages. This was the beginning of his research into the four **stages of cognitive development**, encapsulated in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Piaget's model of cognitive development

Sensorimotor intelligence (birth to 2 years of age)

Children primarily learn through their senses as their motor capabilities develop. Children in this stage don't actually "think" conceptually.

Preoperational thought (2–7 years of age)

Children begin to use symbols and their grasp of concepts develops rapidly. They begin to think about things and people outside their observable environment. Their viewpoint is generally limited because they have little ability to see things from different perspectives.

Concrete operations (7–11 years of age)

Children begin to think logically. They understand the concept of conservation, that quantities don't change because they are moved. Through manipulation of concrete objects they understand concepts such as number, space, and causality. They begin to see things from varied perspectives and draw conclusions.

Formal operations (11 years of age and on)

Adolescents progress from concrete thinking to the capability of thinking abstractly. They are able to make predictions, experience metacognition (thinking about thinking), and appreciate and use the structure and subtleties of language.

Based on: McDevitt, T. M., & Ormrod, J. E. (2016). *Child development and education*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Pearson Education.

Although Piaget's work is still held in high esteem, researchers have concluded that he based much of his theory on children's deficits rather than on their strengths. Children may be more capable at younger ages than Piaget believed. Teachers may benefit from knowing about Piaget's stages, but should never use them to limit how and when the intellectual capabilities of students are stretched.

Rather than looking at their deficiencies, noted Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) advocated determining children's intellectual abilities and then providing opportunities for intellectual growth. He proposed that a child's cognitive development increases through exposure to new information and that learning takes place within the individual's **zone of proximal development**. This zone is the level at which a child can almost, but not completely, grasp a concept or perform a task successfully. As learning takes place, the zone widens. This theory is akin to **scaffolding**, a concept widely accepted within education that takes its name from the construction term for

temporary supports placed around a structure to allow work to be completed. Vygotsky viewed learning scaffolding as the support given to children to help them move through progressive levels of learning.

Additionally, Vygotsky believed that children's learning is shaped by the culture and society around them. The more interactions, the greater the learning, as a child moves forward within an ever-expanding zone of proximal development (Feldman, 2014).

Focus student Dylan Todd repeated kindergarten, a situation his teachers and parents decided was best. Dylan's cognitive development was not the reason for repeating the grade level, but rather his social development.

Video Example 2.2 shows Dylan's progress as a kindergarten student and what his parents have to say.

Video Example 2.1: Dylan's Interview



EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT. Human experiences are given meaning through emotions. Both our emotions and our responses to them become more complicated with time. Children and adolescents experience a wide array of emotions, including happiness, anxiety, anger, fear, sadness, shame, and pride. For young adolescents, all these emotions—and more—may be experienced in one class period. Teachers need to be able to identify emotions as well as know how and when to respond to them.

Daniel Goleman (2011) proposes that a person's **emotional intelligence quotient (EQ)** may be the best indicator of future success in life. An emotional intelligence quotient involves a set of skills that accompany the expression, evaluation, and regulation of emotions. A high-level emotional intelligence quotient indicates an ability to understand others' as well as one's own feelings, respond appropriately to them, and, in general, get along.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. Learning to get along with others is a process that begins when young children sit next to each other in **parallel play**, agreeably sharing the same space but not communicating. When children begin to share toys and verbally communicate, they are engaged in **associative play**. Progressing to **cooperative play**, children actively coordinate ways to keep the interaction going. When you think about it, these stages of socialization describe how people relate to others regardless of age. Relating to others and thinking about them (and ourselves) is called **social cognition**. Whether we are simply coexisting (parallel play), communicating when necessary (associative play), or actively engaging with others (cooperative play), we are social creatures.

Relationships matter to us; adolescents are, at times, consumed with them. Relationships are part of America's youth culture, much of which revolves around groups that inevitably form as adolescents search for their identities. It's quite easy to see which youth subcultures appear to fit most easily into the traditional school setting—generally it's the "cool kids," the "jocks," and the "preppies." Other students may exhibit different developmental patterns and be labeled "nerds," "stoners," "loners," "goths," "indies," and so on. The names may change, but the subgroups live on. As teachers, our challenge is to connect with all our students and let them know we care about them, regardless of

their social affiliations. Helping students develop positive and productive relationships within society is a major aspect of what teachers do.

Application Exercise 2.1: Sherlonda and Her Parents' Interviews



CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT. A discussion of character, or moral, development can easily become value laden, depending on particular religious or ethical beliefs. Even so, certain character traits are considered positive by almost everyone, including honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, and citizenship.

Many packaged programs are available for schools and teachers to use to help students think through moral issues. School districts will often purchase programs with glossy posters and prepared lessons in hopes teachers will use the materials since they don't have to use their time to actually create anything. These programs are seldom effective or long-term (Weissbourd, 2012). However, when a school faculty determines to make an impact on student character development through modeling and emphasis throughout the curriculum, students often benefit.

Character education is one of the nonacademic pieces that are often the key to success in school and in life. To talk about character education in ambiguous ways will likely have no effect on students. However, when we attach traits with definitions and examples, character education may take on a practical slant that will actually be good for students. The Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) charter school network of public schools emphasizes seven character strengths: grit, zest, optimism, self-control, gratitude, social intelligence, and curiosity (Kamenetz, 2015). These strengths and others can be talked about each day, in any classroom, and by every teacher.

The phrase **moral compass** refers to a person's ability to judge what is right and wrong and act accordingly. Building a secure, honest, positive, and empathetic moral compass is what character education is about. Helping students develop a moral compass appears to be nonexistent in many school environments (Barnwell, 2016). With increasing pressure to concentrate on content knowledge and skills, some teachers feel that they don't have time to emphasize character development. However, please understand that it's *unavoidable*. We teach who we are; students learn *us*. Every day we impact students' character development by the way we treat others and handle dilemmas. With awareness of our powerful influence and responsibility, we will infuse our curriculum with elements of a moral compass through our example and purposeful discussions of life-affirming philosophy.

Noted developmental psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg contends that people pass through **stages of moral reasoning**, as illustrated in Figure 2.3. Kohlberg's stages are based primarily on observations of males in Western culture and have been criticized for not being more universal or sensitive to gender differences. Even so, carefully considering the stages and thinking about the overall developmental stages of our students will help us understand some of their attitudes and actions.

Information about how people develop in all five of the major areas abounds. A brief summary of generalizations of development within early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school levels is shown in Table 2.1.

Figure 2.3 Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning

- Stage 1: A rule is a rule, and people obey rules to avoid punishment.
 Stage 2: Rules are followed or disobeyed based on rewards.
 Stage 3: People obey rules because it's what others expect of them.
 Stage 4: Society's rules are what's right, and people conform to expectations.
 Stage 5: People follow rules out of obligation to what is agreed-upon behavior in their society. Laws and rules can be changed if society sees a compelling need.
 Stage 6: People follow rules that agree with universal ethics. If a law doesn't, they feel free to disobey it.

Based on: Adapted from Kohlberg, L. (1984). *The psychology of moral development: Essays on moral development*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Table 2.1 Developmental characteristics by level

	Early Childhood	Elementary	Middle	High
PHYSICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dramatic changes in appearance and abilities Boundless energy Rapid brain growth Healthiest time of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination increases Dexterity improves Steady growth Significant differences in size among children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Onset of puberty Sudden growth spurts may change appearance Specialized gross and fine motor skills develop Some risk-taking behaviors exhibited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual/reproductive maturity reached Girls complete growth spurt; boys continue to grow High level of physical risk-taking activities exhibited
COGNITIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Piaget's preoperational stage Very intense brain activity Increased ability to speak with coherence, understand organization and patterns, and learn prerequisites for reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Piaget's concrete operational stage Increased ability to think logically, apply learning strategies, view multiple perspectives, decode phonetically, and read aloud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning of Piaget's formal operational stage Often self-absorbed Increased ability to reason, solve complex problems, and use varied learning strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity for adultlike thought Increased ability to reason abstractly, make decisions with more realism, and discern which learning strategies are effective
EMOTIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-concept develops and is influenced by family and society Self-conscious emotions such as guilt and pride develop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-concept becomes more complex and differentiated Coping skills develop Emotional ties beyond family develop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be emotionally volatile Drop in self-esteem Strong emotional ties with friends develop Frequent mood changes Begins to establish a sense of identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of being invulnerable May be prone to depression Seeks independence and a sense of control Sense of identity develops
SOCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships with adults centered on direction, care, and protection First friendships are developed Types of play change from individual to cooperative Becomes aware of other people's feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasingly concerned with making and keeping friends Becoming more assertive Groups are generally same-gender Capable of empathy Awareness of social conventions and rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflicts with parents and other adults likely Peers become more influential than adults Popularity, or lack of it, becomes very important Awareness develops of sexuality and gender-related relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identity crisis may lead to social dysfunction Mixed-gender groups Conformity with others decreases Desire for self-reliance Often overwhelmed with demands of relationships
CHARACTER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rules are rigid Begins to understand intentionality Aggression declines as language develops Beginning awareness that actions may cause others harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rules come from shared knowledge Increased awareness of others' problems Experiences guilt and shame over moral wrongdoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong sense of fairness Desire to help those less fortunate May value social approval over moral conviction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands the need for rules to promote society Increased concern about fulfilling duty to benefit others

Based on: Feldman (2014); Gallahue and Ozmun (2012); Goleman (2011); McDevitt and Ormrod (2016); Powell (2015).



Check Your Understanding 2.1

2.2 How Are Gender Differences Manifested in Schools?

2.2 Express how gender differences are manifested in schools.

It's common in U.S. households for girls to be encouraged to engage in what are considered gender-appropriate activities, such as playing with dolls and cooking on make-believe stoves; boys are encouraged to play with cars and throw balls. Household chores are often assigned by gender, with girls asked to wash dishes and boys asked to cut the grass. Boys and girls sense very quickly that there are expectations based on gender. **Gender stereotyping** occurs when perceived gender differences are assumed for all people, as in assuming that the play and chores just described are always appropriate for one gender or the other. **Generalizations** about gender differences appropriately begin with phrases such as *tend to*. These two words indicate generalizing, as opposed to stereotyping. **Gender bias** is the favoring of one gender over the other in specific circumstances.

The federal government recognized gender bias in schools in 1972 when Congress passed **Title IX of the Education Amendments Act**, which states, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to **discrimination** under, any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Title IX has helped correct inequitable treatment of males and females in schools, most notably in athletic programs involving teams.

Social Aspects of Gender

During early childhood, children are friends with whoever is convenient at day care, in preschool, or in the neighborhood. During the elementary school years, children begin choosing friends of the same gender who have similar interests. With the advent of puberty, friends of the opposite gender begin to be included, and this trend continues through high school.

Boys tend to base their play on activities, whereas girls tend to base their play on talking. In group play, boys tend to play in more adventurous ways, such as acting out battles and physically challenging each other, whereas girls tend to take on roles that are calm, such as playing house or school. Research shows that boys tend to be more aggressive than girls, at least in physical ways. Boys most often show what researchers call **instrumental aggression**, or aggression based on attempting to meet a specific goal, such as grabbing a toy or establishing dominance in an activity. Girls may be as aggressive, but usually in more subtle ways—ways that are more emotional than physical. This type of aggression is known as **relational aggression** and may include name-calling, gossiping, or saying mean things just to be hurtful.

Achievement and Gender

In general, researchers have found that boys tend to set higher goals than girls and attribute their achievement to ability. When they fail, they tend to attribute their failure to lack of effort. In contrast, when girls meet their goals, they tend to attribute their success to effort. When they fail, they tend to attribute their failure to lack of ability (Vermeer, Boekaerts, and Seegers, 2000). This generalization, illustrated in Table 2.2, is significant for teachers to understand. It indicates that one gender may view failure as the result of lack of effort, which is easily corrected. The other gender may view failure as the result of a lack of ability, which is not easily corrected.

Until recently, it was generally held that boys scored higher than girls in almost every area tested. In the last 20 years, however, the academic gender gap has been closing. Society's expectations have also changed. With girls excelling in sports and boys in the arts, for example, it is evident that gender doesn't predict talent or aptitude, physical or cognitive (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2015).

Despite the closing of the gender gap in classrooms, some teachers, consciously or subconsciously, call on boys more often than girls, allow boys to call out answers while scolding girls for doing so, give boys more encouragement to attempt difficult tasks, or generally have higher expectations for boys than for girls. This subtle discrimination is almost always unintentional, but it nevertheless has an effect on classroom participation.

Table 2.2 Boys' and girls' perceived reasons for success and failure

Perceived Reason for	Boys	Girls
Success	High ability	High effort
Failure	Low effort	Low ability

Based on: Vermeer, H. J., Boekaerts, M., & Seegers, G. (2000). Motivational and gender differences: Sixth-grade students' mathematical problem-solving behavior. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92, 308–315.

Sexual Diversity

It's important to understand the terminology used to describe variations of sexual diversity. **Sexual orientation** is the sex to which a person is romantically attracted. People who are **heterosexual** are attracted to people of the opposite sex. They are commonly referred to as **straight**. People who are **homosexual** are attracted to people of the same sex. They are commonly referred to as **gay**. Females who are gay are often referred to as **lesbian**. People who are **bisexual** have romantic attractions to both males and females. Most estimates of the percentage of Americans who are gay or lesbian hover around 10%. It is reasonable to assume that these estimates apply to the U.S. student population as well. In the recent past, these seven definitions were enough to describe people's sexual preferences. Enough, that is, when the topic was taboo in polite conversation. Today, however, we know so much more about the complex topic of sexuality, a topic that is part of our everyday lives (American Psychological Association, 2016b [APA]).

Before continuing our discussion, consider that most major medical organizations agree that homosexuality is not a disorder or an illness, and not a choice. These organizations include the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Children and adolescents who are **gender nonconforming** are those who identify with a gender different from their physically evident sex at birth. They may have interests that are more common with the other gender: Boys, for instance, may play with dolls, want to grow their hair long, and wear typically more feminine clothes; girls may play with trucks, ask to have very short hair, and insist on boylike clothes. These statements admittedly contain stereotypes; just because a girl wants to play with trucks and have very short hair does not necessarily imply gender nonconformity. However, when these preferences persist throughout childhood, accompanied by insistence on not "feeling like a boy" or not "feeling like a girl," the child may go through adolescence and then, in adulthood, live as a **transgender** person—a person who lives as his or her self-identified gender rather than the gender that conforms to his or her anatomy at birth. Research also shows that many nonconforming gender children grow up to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual (APA, 2016b).

HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERNS. LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning) individuals are more likely to experience anxiety and depression so severe that 30% of homosexual youth and 50% of transgender youth attempt suicide before the age of 20 (Youth Suicide Prevention Program, 2011). In fact, LGBTQ students in grades 7 through 12 are twice as likely to attempt suicide as their heterosexual peers. Violence, including bullying, physical assault, and victimization, is more likely to be directed at LGBTQ students than heterosexual youth. A national study found that 60% of LGBTQ students are more likely than non-LGBTQ students to feel unsafe, primarily because of

their sexual diversity. They are also more likely to experience substance abuse (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014).

DISCRIMINATION. Discrimination toward those who identify as LGBTQ has become more public in recent years. Only about one third of the states have anti-discrimination laws to protect people based on sexual orientation. Even fewer have laws that protect transgender teens and adults who face discrimination in most aspects of their lives (GLAD, 2016). A 2011 report titled *Injustice at Every Turn* (Grant, Mottet, and Tanis, 2011) surveyed over 6,000 transgender people and found that they regularly experience discrimination in employment, housing, healthcare, and more. People in the LGBTQ community who have lower socioeconomic status and who belong to minority racial groups suffer even more discrimination than white people with secure socioeconomic status. Because of widespread and very vocal discrimination, in May 2016, the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice officially advised public schools to permit transgender students to use the bathrooms and locker rooms that align with their gender identity (APA, 2016b).

A person's sexual orientation usually becomes evident in late childhood or early adolescence, whereas gender identity differences may be evident in early childhood. Both are often the subject of moral debate and scientific exploration. Regardless of a teacher's belief system, sexual orientation and gender identity must have nothing to do with how we care for and teach children and adolescents.

The two places that we like to think of as safe and supportive—home and school—are often the very places where the most hurtful slurs and overt rejection of LGBTQ students occur. Although acceptance of sexuality differences remains elusive in some communities, others are stepping up and openly expressing support for students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, or who are questioning their sexuality. One such community is Springfield, Illinois, as we see in this chapter's *The Opinion Page* feature.

GENDER DIVERSITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS. It is undeniable that girls and boys are different in some ways, whether the differences stem from nature, from nurture, or from the inevitable combination. With awareness, we can diminish gender-biased behaviors and attitudes in our schools. The most important contribution we can make toward alleviating gender bias in our classrooms is to treat our students as individuals, realizing that each is unique. In modeling this behavior, we will help promote it among our students.

For all students to thrive in school, they need to feel safe and supported. Our goal in creating **gender equity**, the fair and balanced treatment of boys and girls, including those with sexual diversity, is to provide learning environments where all students are free from limitations that might accompany gender stereotyping of what they can or should accomplish. Addressing the following questions will help foster gender equity in the classroom:

- Do I use examples of males and females in all roles and occupations?
- Do I encourage girls as well as boys to explore science and math?
- Do I encourage boys as well as girls to read for pleasure and to participate in poetry writing and drama?
- Am I careful to include historical contributions of both males and females?
- Do I have a way of assuring that I call on boys and girls in equal numbers during class discussions?
- Do I encourage respect for all students and prohibit bullying, harassment, and homophobic behavior?
- Do I use the gender-specific pronoun that aligns with the gender identity of the student?

The Opinion Page

This Opinion Editorial appeared in the State Journal-Register, Springfield, Illinois, on August 9, 2012.

New SHS Student Alliance a Great Idea

by staff writer

For a lot of men, hurling gay epithets or having them tossed at you was an unfortunate rite of passage in junior high and high school. As our culture becomes more sensitive to sexual orientation and bullying in general, such incidents hopefully will be fewer and further between regardless of your gender.

But adults telling teenagers how they ought to treat each other can only go so far toward solving the problem. They are far more likely to respond to their peers' attitudes and behaviors. That's why it was heartening to hear about the effort to form a gay-straight student alliance at Springfield High School.

Madisen Morhet, a 15-year-old SHS student, was surprised at the vitriol of the name-calling when she arrived there as a freshman, particularly the kind directed at openly gay teens or those perceived to be. Morhet decided, along with her friend Emily Abate, to circulate petitions to start a club aimed at providing a support system for those being bullied because of their sexual orientation. "I don't think it's fair for students to come to learn and have to be treated that way," Morhet said.

She got 342 signatures from students and teachers, and principal Mike Grossen will review the petition once he receives it. He should seriously consider the idea. We also commend the Springfield School Board for adding *sexual orientation* to language in its policy manual to protect gay students and staff from discrimination. Board president Susan White said the lack of protection for people based on their sexual orientation was not intentional and had "just been left out." Board vice president Bill Looby asked that it be included. "Clearly, it's something that

at least should be addressed in terms of discrimination language and in sending a message that we are tolerant," he said.

Regardless of your moral views regarding someone's sexual orientation, the time has long passed in our country where it is acceptable to pick on, make fun of, or discriminate against someone because of the gender they are attracted to. The change in policy at the district is long overdue and should be made in other school districts' policy manuals if it already hasn't.

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This Opinion Page piece approves the formation of a student support group for those whose sexual orientation differs and commends the school board's recognition and condemnation of bullying aimed at students who are questioning or expressing their sexual orientation. Write a well-developed paragraph in response to each of the following questions:

1. Do you agree with the writer's statement that teenagers are more likely to respond to their peers than to adults? If so, what might adults do in schools to provide support for student efforts to right wrongs?
2. Madisen Morhet's reason for circulating the petition lets us know that there's a real problem at SHS. With 342 signatures of those who agree with the formation of a gay-straight alliance, how might these "bystanders," who hear the cruelty but have not stepped up to try to stop it, now express their disapproval of bullying?
3. What statement will the principal make if he approves the formation of this alliance? If he does not approve, how might Morhet and other students proceed to change the culture of Springfield High with regard to acceptance of different sexual orientations?

Point of Reflection 2.1

When you consider generalizations for how boys and girls respond to success and failure, which of the four cells in Table 2.2 ring true for you and why?



Check Your Understanding 2.2

2.3 How Are Cultural and Language Diversity Manifested in Schools?

2.3 Explain how cultural diversity and language diversity are manifested in schools.

Classrooms that were once populated with white students, black students, and perhaps a few students with other cultural identities are now filled with students of many races and

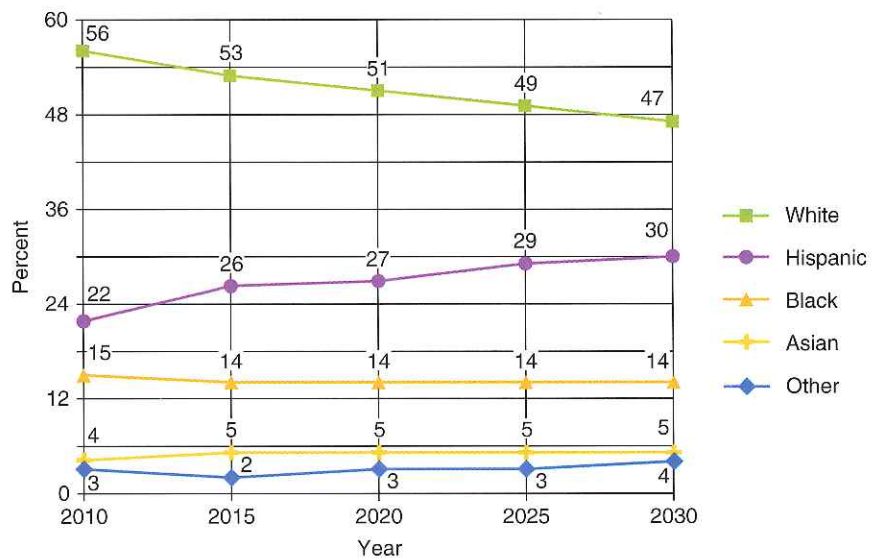


Figure 2.4 Projections of U.S. population, ages 5–19

Based on: US Census Bureau Data

ethnicities. Along with this diversity come more and more students whose first language is not English. Figure 2.4, representing more than 63 million children and adolescents in 2010, shows projections for the changing student population ages 5 to 19. Note the trend of white students comprising diminishing percentages while the black student percentage remains relatively stable and the Hispanic percentage steadily increases. Also increasing are Asian students, found in the 2010 census to have the most rapidly increasing percentage of growth, although still relatively small in total population.

Teachers in the United States are overwhelmingly white; only about 5% are black, and only 5% are Hispanic, Asian, and other races combined. Add this information to the fact that by 2025 less than half of children and adolescents in the United States will be white, and you can see that appreciating, acknowledging, and altering our curriculum and instruction to be responsive to the students in our classrooms will be increasingly challenging. Knowing our students well is imperative.

Cultural Diversity

A widely accepted definition states that **culture** is a “dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, world views, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our own lives as well as the lives of others” (Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba, 1991, p. 3). Culture, and the complex combination of elements that compose it, should have a prominent place in any discussion of American education. (Geneva Gay 2000) tells us that “culture is at the heart of all we do in the name of education” (p. 8).

Gollnick and Chinn (2013) contend that culture has three primary characteristics. First, culture is *learned*. The language, the ways we behave, the social rules, the expectations, the roles—all these aspects of a culture are learned from family and others who influence our daily lives. The second primary characteristic of culture is that it is sustained and strengthened because it is *shared*. To learn how to “be” in a culture requires mentors, those who share the culture and, in doing so, perpetuate the culture. Third, a culture is *adaptive* to its environment. The culture of a large group of people changes, or adapts, over time in response to many variables.

The characteristics that apply to cultures of groups also apply to cultures of individuals. Each individual has a cultural identity.

CULTURAL IDENTITY. The interactions of many factors—including language, religion, gender, socioeconomic status, age, values, beliefs, race, and ethnicity—form

a person's **cultural identity**. This identity is adapted throughout a person's life in response to his or her experiences.

The words *race*, *ethnicity*, and *culture* are often used interchangeably, but they do not have the same meaning. As teachers, we need to understand the meanings of the terms to better navigate the complexities of our students' lives. Although the color of our skin (race) and the country of our origin (ethnicity) may contribute strongly to our cultural identity, neither encompasses the total concept of culture. Let's consider race and ethnicity separately.

RACIAL COMPONENT OF CULTURE. The word **race**, when applied to a group of people, simply categorizes them according to the physical characteristics they have at birth, such as skin color and facial features. Characterization by race is a social, political, economic, and psychological reality (Henze, Mukhopadhyay, and Moses, 2014). Some researchers say there are actually as few as three races, whereas others claim there are more than 300. Not a very precise way to categorize people, is it?

The federal government uses race to categorize people in the United States. For census taking, five races are designated: White, Hispanic, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaskan native. Most Americans still refer to races other than White as **minorities**. Because race is based solely on physical characteristics, what box would a person check whose mother is Chinese and father is Cuban? According to the 2010 census, over 8 million people indicated they were multiracial by marking more than one of the five races listed.

In Figure 2.4 we saw graphically how children and adolescents ages 5 to 19 comprise the U.S. population, and may in the future. Now, in Table 2.3, you can see the relative percentages of students of specific races in our public schools by region, along with predictions for U.S. K–12 students in 2020 and 2025.

It's interesting to note that the West has the smallest percentage of white people and black people, yet the largest percentage of Hispanics and Asians. The Midwest has the largest population of white people, whereas the South has the largest percentage of black people. No region has as much as 10% Asian/Pacific Islander and no region has more than 2% Native American/Alaskan. When it comes to predictions, notice that the black, Asian, and Native American populations tend to stay stable, while the white population shows a downward trend and the Hispanic population shows a definite

TABLE 2.3 Enrollment and percentage distribution of enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity and region: 2013 and U.S. predictions for 2020, 2025

Region	Enrollment in Thousands													
	Total		White		Black		Hispanic		Asian/Pacific Islander		American Indian/Alaskan Native		Two or More Races	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
U.S.	50,045	100	25,160	50	7,805	16	12,452	25	2,593	5	523	1	1,511	3
U.S. Prediction for 2020	50,477	100	23,882	47	7,756	15	14,142	28	2,892	6	463	1	1,638	3
U.S. Prediction for 2025	51,420	100	23,465	46	7,863	15	14,677	29	3,139	6	439	1	1,863	4
Northeast	7,961	100	4,593	58	1,158	15	1,492	19	533	0.7	28	.3	1,582	2
Midwest	10,573	100	7,111	67	1,464	14	1,212	12	341	3	87	0.8	358	3
South	19,299	100	8,722	45	4,561	24	4,671	24	614	3	185	1	546	3
West	12,212	100	4,733	39	623	5	5,077	42	1,105	9	224	2	49	4

Based on: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary and Secondary Education," 1995-96 through 2013-14; and National Elementary and Secondary Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity Projection Model, 1972 through 2025.

increasing trend. In 2013, about half the students in public K–12 schools were white, and half were minority. In 2025, 46% of the students are predicted to be white, with the rest minority. Although no one race will have as many students as the white race, if the pattern continues, by 2040 the Hispanic population may be about the same or more than the white population in U.S. public schools.

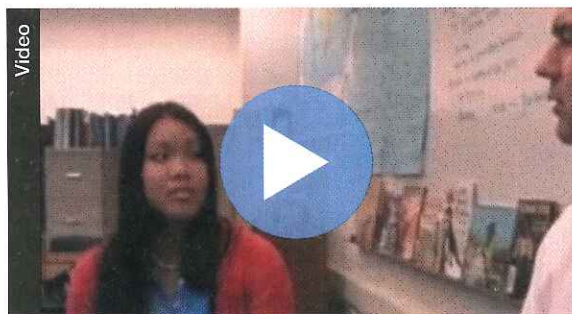
ETHNIC COMPONENT OF CULTURE. This text will use the word **ethnicity** to mean simply an individual's country of origin (Gollnick and Chinn, 2013). Even if families are two, three, or more generations removed from their ancestral country, they may still strongly identify with both the country and the people who share their ethnicity. The category of ethnicity often reveals much more about your students than race. Knowing that a student is Hispanic (race) doesn't necessarily tell you much, but knowing that the child is of Cuban, Chilean, or Mexican heritage may be much more revealing and much more personalized.

CULTURAL PLURALISM. Often the United States is referred to as a *melting pot*, a metaphor that conjures up visions of a big caldron into which all Americans jump, are warmed to the melting point, and stirred with a big spoon that blends us together until we lose unique and characteristic traits. This pretty much describes **assimilation**, the process of bringing persons of all races and ethnicities into the mainstream by having them behave in ways that align with the dominant culture. Some assimilation is inevitable, and even productive, but the notion that to be successful we all must look, think, and act in similar ways is unhealthy in a nation that values individualism and human rights.

Cultural pluralism involves the recognition that the United States is populated by a rich variety of people of varying races and ethnicities—and thus cultures—all with the potential to positively contribute to our common goal of a productive, free society. So what would a school that purposefully promotes cultural pluralism look like? Such a school would teach a curriculum that includes the history and contributions of a variety of cultures; would encourage the expression of cultural traditions in the school setting; would work toward closing achievement gaps that exist among racial, ethnic, and cultural groups; and would assure that no student is excluded from participation in school activities based on race, ethnicity, or any other aspect of culture.

The teachers at Roosevelt High School try to create an environment that promotes cultural pluralism by working to close the achievement gap by getting to know their students and how they learn best. Craig Cleveland talks personally with his students as we see in his conversation with Khammany.

Application Exercise 2.2: Khammany's Interview with Craig Cleveland



CULTURAL DIVERSITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS. Three broad concepts have implications for effective teaching and learning with regard to cultural diversity.

Global Awareness and 21st-Century Skills. One of the themes of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) is global awareness, not just for inclusion in what we teach students but as a vital component for teachers themselves. **Global awareness** involves understanding the environmental, societal, cultural, political, and economic concepts and issues that affect our world. We must know what's happening on our planet and understand—as well as respect—the fact that there are many worldviews and perspectives among people (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2014). Not being globally aware is a disservice to our students.

Multicultural Education. The response of many U.S. educators to the fast-paced growth of diversity is **multicultural education**, an approach that celebrates diversity and promotes equitable educational opportunities. James Banks (2004), an expert in the field, states that multicultural education has several goals, including

- The creation of equal opportunities for students of all cultures
- The development of knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function successfully in a diverse society
- The promotion of communication and interaction among groups that work for the common good

Unfortunately, many teachers make inadequate attempts to include multicultural education simply by observing February as Black History Month or including a social studies unit on Native Americans. Chances are these lessons have little impact on the day-to-day lives of students.

Some people actually oppose any attempt to address cultural diversity, fearing that multicultural education will divert attention from more important curriculum or weaken the sense of continuity and tradition in a school. According to Banks (2004), those who promote the inclusion of multicultural education neither approve of shallow inclusion of concepts nor intend for it to in any way weaken U.S. schools.

Cultural Responsiveness. To make multicultural education a reality in the classroom requires culturally responsive teaching. A **culturally responsive** teacher is sensitive to diversity and regularly asks questions such as these:

- Do I know the culture of each of my students beyond his or her obvious race and ethnicity?
- In what ways might I help my students see their similarities as clearly as their differences?
- How can I help validate the cultures represented in my classroom?
- How can I promote communication among all students?
- How can I assure equal opportunities for learning for all students?

Language Diversity

We have looked at race and ethnicity as major contributors to our cultural identity. These two factors are largely based on nature and can't be changed. Our language, however, is rooted in nurture and can be changed. **Language** is our primary means of communication; through it, we transmit knowledge. Assimilation in terms of language, with all students becoming proficient in English, has benefits because most

public school classrooms are conducted in English. Few would argue with the notion that communicating proficiently in English is a major factor for academic success in the United States. Lack of English proficiency may be a major barrier to accessing the benefits or services available and understanding and exercising rights and responsibilities. Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons was added in 2004 to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prevent discrimination and to encourage resource development to help students and others become proficient in English. The dilemma, however, is how to ensure this for all students.

Some immigrants are already English proficient, but for most, English is not their first language. Some immigrant students arrive in the United States with strong records of academic achievement in their native languages, but many do not. Some students may have mastered conversational English in that they can speak and understand it, but they lack the ability to use English to keep up with grade-level coursework. School settings require **Standard English**, a composite of the language spoken by educated middle-class people in the United States. There are two forms of Standard English: one that's spoken in our everyday lives, and a more formal version that is written and considered grammatically correct.

But even within the English language there are variations. In the United States there are at least 11 regional **dialects**, or deviations from standard language rules used by identifiable groups of people. You may have been the brunt of jokes when you traveled outside your region, or you may have poked fun at someone in your college dorm who spoke with a regional dialect unlike your own. Black English, sometimes referred to as **Ebonics**, is one of the best known and most controversial dialects in the United States. In most school settings, Black English, along with Hawaiian Pidgin and Appalachian English, are associated with lower levels of both intelligence and social class (Gollnick and Chinn, 2013).

ENGLISH LEARNERS. Students with limited English proficiency may speak and understand some English but not enough to be successful without additional assistance in classes taught in English. Students who are not proficient English speakers are referred to as **English learners (ELs)** or **English language learners (ELLs)**. The five most frequently spoken non-English languages in the United States are Spanish, French, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Tagalog, a language spoken by many Filipinos (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

We serve English learners through TESOL, ESOL, ESL, ENL, SEI, and any number of bilingual education program configurations whose acronyms seem to multiply on a regular basis. Confused? If your answer is "yes," you are more than justified. The dilemma faced by students who do not speak English well enough to learn at adequate levels in a timely fashion in U.S. schools is both recent and rapidly growing. While organizations such as Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) continue to research effective ways to best serve this population, most teachers are not specifically prepared to do so. In addition, the vocabulary pertaining to this situation hasn't solidified, often with overlapping and indistinct definitions.

Whether in the mall or filling out a job application, the value of fluency in English is obvious to students who are learning English. Children in immigrant families often believe that continuing to speak their native language will hurt them in school settings, where often language is the most obvious characteristic that sets them apart. Another phrase used to refer to students whose native language is other than English, regardless of their current level of English proficiency, is **language minority students**. Hector,

an EL student in Chris Roberts's class, has the responsibility to help family members learn English.

Video Example 2.2 shows you more about Hector and his family.

Video Example 2.2: Hector's and His Mom's Interview



As Craig Cleveland looks around his classroom at Roosevelt High School in Fresno, California, while his second-period U.S. History students are making their way to their seats, he sees 32 adolescents—7 sophomores, 21 juniors, and 4 seniors. The class includes 6 native English speakers, 15 native Spanish speakers, and 11 students who are Hmong and speak various dialects of Chinese, mirroring the ethnic mix at Roosevelt High School. Although Craig is fluent in Spanish and that's very helpful, many of his students designated as ELs are Asian. Besides their cultural and ethnicity diversity, all 32 students qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Craig knows that students from low-income families struggle more to achieve academically. When measured by standardized tests with "basic" as average, over half are considered "below basic" or "far below basic" in both English language arts and math. In addition, 19 of the 32 have impairments of some kind that are recognized by the school and require special accommodations by teachers. Craig's challenge today is to pique every student's interest in the question, "Is separate ever really equal?" To do this, Craig must find ways to define the issues, present background information, make it relevant to his heterogeneous class, and then facilitate an activity that engages every student.

The students in Craig's class are alike in many ways: They are all adolescents, most are from low-income homes in the same geographic area, and they have all gone through similar developmental stages to become 15-, 16-, 17-, and 18-year-olds. They also have many differences: Some are male, and some are female; some were born in the United States, whereas others are recent immigrants; some are Catholic, some are Protestant, and some are Buddhist. When viewed as a group, Craig's students are a wonderful but challenging example of diversity in many American classrooms. To meet this challenge head on, Craig involves all his students by

- Giving them as many curricular and instructional choices as possible
- Having them talk to each other in their native languages about class content
- Using role-play to reinforce concepts
- Reading picture books that make concepts more transparent
- Using written materials in students' native languages when available

Video Example 2.3 shows Craig using instructional methods specifically designed for English learners.

Video Example 2.3: Craig's Diverse Classes



You don't have to be in an urban area to have English learners in your classroom. One of our focus schools, Summit Primary, in Summit Station, Ohio, has gone from a mostly white, all English-speaking school to one with the 17 languages listed in Figure 2.5. Summit Station, considered rural just a decade or so ago, is now more like a suburb of the urban city of Columbus.

SERVICES ADDRESSING ENGLISH LEARNERS. Regardless of the method used to address the needs of English learners, teachers can't limit services to language alone. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2013) states that the services should include:

- Teaching students about their new school, community, and country
- Teaching students to inquire about ways to contribute to their new school, community, and country
- Helping students collaborate with people from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives
- Encouraging students to advocate for themselves and their families

The acronyms mentioned earlier indicate the variety of ways we attempt to meet the needs of English language learners. Let's look briefly at three approaches to delivering EL services to students: bilingual education, English as a second language (ESL), and structured English immersion (SEI).

BILINGUAL EDUCATION. One of the primary responses of public education to the needs of English language learners is **bilingual education**, the delivery of instruction in two languages. Attempts are made to preserve native language abilities as students acquire skills in English. Perhaps the greatest barrier to bilingual education programs is the lack of teachers who speak both English and another language fluently. In addition

Figure 2.5 Native languages at Summit Primary School, Ohio

English	Russian	French
Somali	Macedonian	Creole
Ohomo	Serbo-Croatian	Korean
Bosnian/Albanian	Spanish	Japanese
Sierra Leone/Creole	German	Tagalog/Filipino
Chinese/Cantonese	Croatian	

to speaking two languages fluently, however, teachers in bilingual programs must also be qualified to teach math, science, social studies, reading, writing, and other subjects. Our focus teacher Angelica Reynosa at Roosevelt High School fits this description.

Application Exercise 2.3: Angelica's lesson



ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE. English as a second language (ESL) programs may also be called **English as a new language (ENL)** programs. Students receive individualized assistance once or twice a week for about an hour or so each session. Unlike bilingual education, ESL/ENL services are delivered only in English. With ESL/ENL, little or no emphasis is placed on preserving native language or culture, and ESL/ENL teachers do not need to speak another language. ESL/ENL programs are far less expensive than bilingual programs for school districts to implement if they have limited numbers of students to serve.

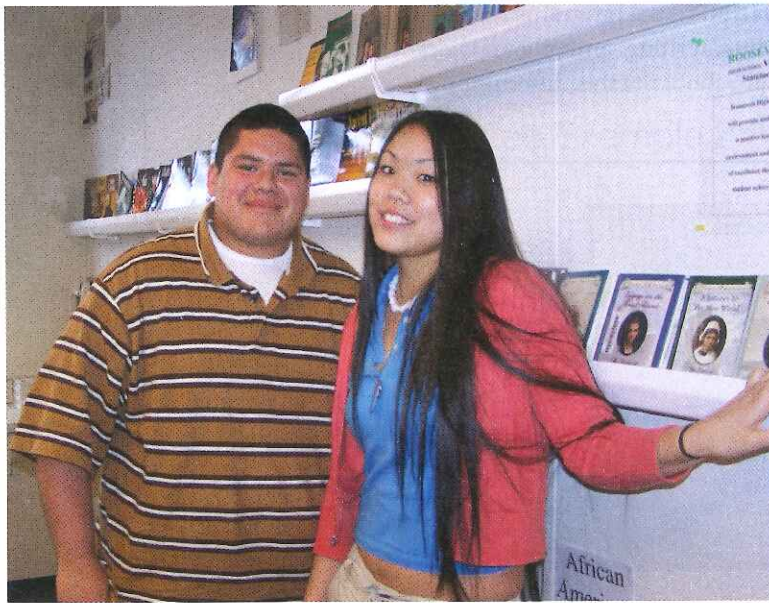
STRUCTURED ENGLISH IMMERSION. In response to observations that teachers may be teaching *in* English, but possibly not *teaching* English itself, **structured English immersion (SEI)** was developed. This approach includes significant amounts of the school day dedicated to the explicit teaching of the English language, including other content to support instruction, but not as the primary focus. In SEI, students and teachers speak, read, and write in English. Teachers treat English as a foreign language and apply instructional methods used by teachers of foreign languages. Students are expected to transition out of SEI programs on a specified timetable with the skills necessary to be successful in English-only classes. Structured English immersion may be the logical solution, or partial solution, to helping groups of students who speak many different languages become proficient in English.

Some states, such as California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, have laws requiring the development of SEI programs to replace many of the existing bilingual programs.

Figure 2.6 Structured English immersion sample schedule

Emphasis/Activity	Time Allotted
Pronunciation and listening skills	20 minutes
Vocabulary	30 minutes
Verb tense instruction	20 minutes
Sentence structure	20 minutes
Integrated grammar skills application	20 minutes
English reading and writing	60 minutes
Math (specially designed academic instruction in English)	40 minutes
Science, social science, P.E.	40 minutes

Based on: Clark, C. (2009). The case for structured English immersion. *Educational Leadership*, 66(7), 45.



Sara Davis Powell

Khammany from Laos and Guillermo from Mexico are part of the rich fabric of diversity at Roosevelt High School in Fresno, California.

States and districts are creating SEI programs, given their student populations and resources available. Figure 2.6 is a sample schedule for students in an elementary SEI program. Notice that 40 minutes is allotted to math, with all other subjects taught in a total of 40 minutes.

LANGUAGE DIVERSITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS. Language diversity presents a major challenge for educators in the United States. As we welcome increasing numbers of English language learners to U.S. schools, both teaching and learning are affected. Here are some questions to keep in mind as you consider teaching in a language-diverse classroom:

- How can I make my classroom an academically, emotionally, and socially safe place for students who are English learners?
- How can I include the cultures of the English learners who are in my classroom?
- What resources will I need to communicate subject-area concepts to all students?
- How will I communicate with families who are English learners?
- What community services might benefit my English learners and their families?

The influx of diverse cultures with varied languages can be a source of richness for the United States rather than a phenomenon that is feared or avoided. Striking a balance between preserving native cultures and helping students adjust to life in a basically English-speaking environment is a worthy goal. Focus student Hugo Martinez struggles to master English.

Video Example 2.4 focuses on teacher Angelica Reynosa and is followed by an interview with Hugo's parents.

Video Example 2.4: Hugo's Interview



Check Your Understanding 2.3

2.4 What Is the Impact on Students of Family Structure, Religion, and Socioeconomic Status?

2.4 Identify the impact on students of family structure, religion, and socioeconomic status.

Students come to school wrapped in influences of family, religion, and socioeconomic status. They are whole people with complex factors that impact their attitudes toward, and achievement in, school. The more we understand about these influences, the better able we are to meet student needs.

Family Diversity

The 1970s, *The Brady Bunch* television situation comedy introduced many Americans to the concept of the blended family. Today, blended families come in a variety of configurations. Many students live with people other than their biological parents. With the divorce rate over 50%, single-parent homes have increased more than 300% since 1980. In 2014, 34% of K–12 students lived in single-parent homes, with Mississippi at 45% and Utah at 19% representing the range of state percentages. Children living in single-parent homes have a poverty rate of 36% compared to children in two-parent homes that have a poverty rate of 8%, making the children of single parents more than four times as likely to struggle economically (National Kids Count Program, 2015).

The increasing mobility of U.S. families also adds to the instability of students' home lives. Consider, for example, the influx of both documented (legal) immigrant families and undocumented (illegal) immigrant families. These families may move two to four times a year, with children changing schools, enrolling and withdrawing from the same school multiple times, or simply not going to school. Not only is all this mobility potentially harmful for students, but it can also wreak havoc on classroom teaching and learning.

FAMILY DIVERSITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS. Knowing with whom our students live can give teachers insight into behavior and achievement patterns. Ideally, families are our partners in educating children and adolescents. If this is going to be a reality in classrooms, our tactics for gaining and maintaining family support must be sensitive and flexible. Here are some questions to consider for your classroom:

- How can I restructure volunteer opportunities to include evenings and weekends?
- Are options available for child care that might lead to greater parental participation?
- Can the school provide easily accessible transportation to boost family involvement?
- Can I be more inclusive by practicing simple tactics such as addressing correspondence with "Dear family" rather than "Dear parents"?

Religious Diversity

Religion and faith have considerable daily influence on many of our lives. Over 230 million people, or about 77% of people in the United States, affiliate with a religious group. The rest say they have no affiliation, including atheists (3%) and agnostics (4%). Of those who say they have a religious affiliation, over 92% align with Christianity (Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, and more). About 2% are Jewish and about 1% align with each of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, with the remaining

aligned with lesser-known religious faiths and belief systems (Pew Forum, 2016). Freedom to practice a religion, or not, is central to our common political, social, and cultural heritage of the United States.

Private schools are often established to cater to and promote a particular religion. Public schools are open to all, and are obligated to serve all. Although separation of church and state is the official stance, religion has considerable influence on what we do in schools. Most of the issues teachers face in terms of religious diversity can be dealt with positively simply through awareness.

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS. Our responses to religious diversity must be within legal bounds and delivered with sensitivity. Here are some questions classroom teachers should consider concerning religious diversity:

- How do I make sure tolerance is modeled in my classroom?
- How can I guard against being offensive to students of varying faiths?
- How should holidays be observed?
- How can I best respond to the community in which I live and teach?

The last question will be very important to you. Although singing “Jesus Loves Me” at nap time in a kindergarten in the South might be not only tolerated, but encouraged, singing the same song in a kindergarten in suburban Denver might be seen as offensive and grounds for dismissal.

Socioeconomic Diversity

One in five U.S. school-age children lived in poverty in 2016 (National Kids Count Program, 2015). This means almost 16 million students are part of an area of diversity that not only transcends differences in gender, culture, language, family, and religion but also has widespread impact on success in school. Although **socioeconomic status (SES)** involves more than income level, the major determinant of SES is how much money a family makes. The gap between the haves and the have-nots is wider in the United States than in most other industrialized nations. We might call this a **privilege gap**. The government has determined the maximum pretax income a family may have to be considered living in poverty. Table 2.4 provides an overview of the poverty threshold levels for single- and two-parent incomes with one to five children.

Using the table, notice that a family of four—two parents and two children—that earns less than \$24,036 a year is considered to be in poverty. A commonly used measure of a school’s socioeconomic status is the percentage of students who qualify for free meals. A student is entitled to free meals if the family’s income is below 130 percent of the annual income poverty-level guideline. So the two children in our example family of four would still qualify if the family makes less than 130% of \$24,036, or \$31,246. Students with family incomes below 185 percent of the annual income poverty level guideline are eligible for a reduced-price lunch. Again using our example family, that’s \$42,200. The National School Lunch Program provided over 31 million students with free or reduced-price lunches at a cost of over \$11 billion in the 2011–12 school year (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2013).

Table 2.4 Maximum income to be designated in poverty, 2015

Adults	Children in Home				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	\$16,337	\$19,096	\$24,120	\$27,853	\$31,078
2	\$19,078	\$24,036	\$28,286	\$31,670	\$35,473

Based on: U.S. Census Bureau, Poverty Thresholds for 2016.

CHALLENGES OF LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS. The federal government acknowledges there are unique challenges in teaching students living in low-income settings. Title I funding, which is additional money given to public schools when more than 40% of the students qualify for free or reduced-price meals, is the government's attempt to make school experiences more equitable (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). These funds are intended to help educators better meet the needs of students in low-income settings who often are students with histories of low achievement.

Following are some important findings published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation as part of the *Kids Count Data Book* (2016). We will delve more deeply into the concept of socioeconomic status in Chapter 9.

- Nationally, 21 percent of children (15 million) lived in families with incomes below the poverty line in 2015.
- The rate of child poverty for 2015 ranged from a low of 11 percent in New Hampshire, to a high of 31 percent in Mississippi.
- The child poverty rate among African Americans was 36 percent, among Hispanics was 31 percent, and among non-Hispanic whites was 12 percent in 2015.

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS DIVERSITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS. The devastation of living in poverty is deeper than most teachers will ever completely understand. Even so, we have the privilege of interacting with children and adolescents who desperately need our care and support. We are ideally positioned to make meaningful differences in their lives. Can we solve their issue of poverty? Of course not. Can we impact their day-to-day lives in school and their futures? Absolutely yes.

Here are some questions to ask yourself. They are applicable to all children and adolescents, but answering them in positive ways will have a more profound effect on students living in poverty. The questions all begin with "Do I" because taking care of vulnerable children and students is a very personal responsibility.

- Do I expose my students to the wider world outside the school, including community resources and activities, local and regional attractions, and the many wonders of our country and the world through actual experiences and virtual means?
- Do I listen carefully to my students and guide them to available resources and services for assistance when needed?
- Do I provide books, magazines, and technology opportunities during the school day so everyone has access?
- Do I understand that students may behave in class according to the "rules" they live during nonschool hours and do my best to help them develop acceptable behavior to keep them in school, able to function within school norms?
- Do I have a supply of basic materials for my students to use without embarrassment?

Point of Reflection 2.2

How has your own socioeconomic status affected your school experiences? Were you aware of socioeconomic differences among your classmates? Did this affect how you viewed your own circumstances or the circumstances of other students?



Check Your Understanding 2.4

2.5 How Are Learning Differences Manifested in Schools?

2.5 Summarize how learning differences are manifested in schools.

The revered **intelligence quotient (IQ)** affixes a number to intelligence that—in one single freeze-frame—labels us for life. Scores on IQ tests may provide useful information, but they are no longer considered the final answer in determining a child's intellectual capacity. Most educators have moved beyond the notion that intelligence is a fixed attribute. Researchers now believe that **intelligence**—a capacity for knowing and learning—can change and is manifested in various ways, as illustrated in Figure 2.7. Too often, however, a single number or a single test determines a student's class placement and learning expectations.

Multiple Intelligences Theory

Decades ago, Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner added an *s* to the word *intelligence* and revolutionized how we view the concept. Gardner theorized that intelligence is multidimensional and that our individual brains work in ways that give each of us our own personal intelligences. He called this **multiple intelligences (MI) theory**. The nine designated intelligences proposed by Gardner are not meant as a complete list and there is little research to validate them. Their value lies in the implication that we learn differently. Intelligences can be activated and connected in very individual ways. Figure 2.8 illustrates the nine intelligences.

Learning Preferences

We each have preferences for how we like to learn, or how we perceive we learn best. Until recently, theories persisted that we each have something labeled as a “learning style,” or a way in which we naturally learn best. The most recent research tells us that

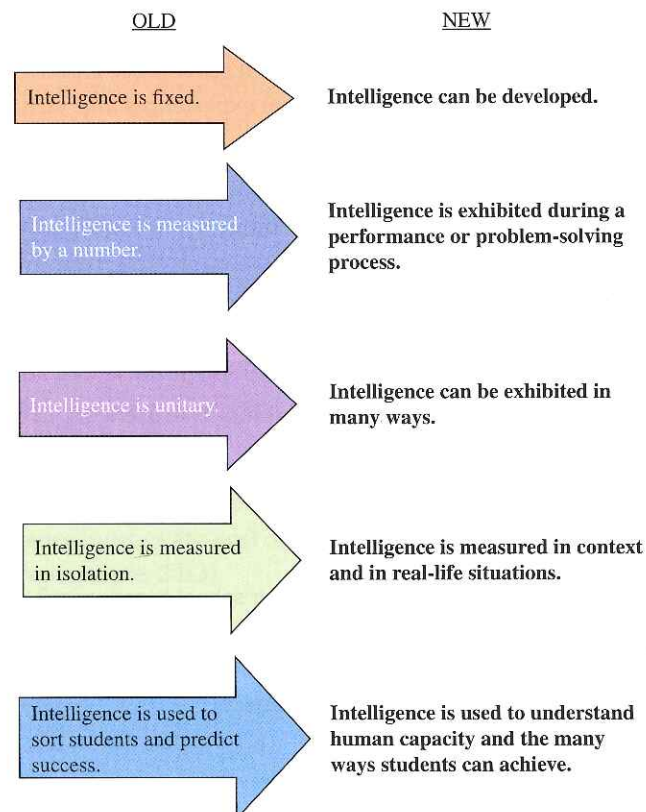


Figure 2.7 How our views of intelligence have changed

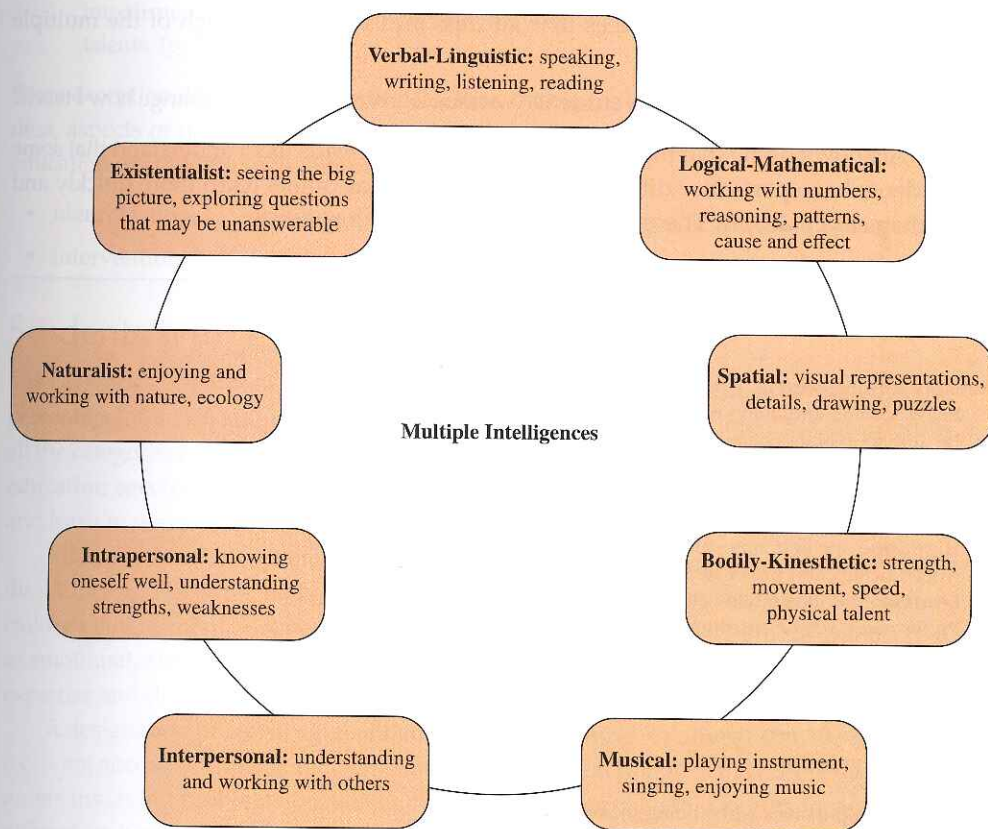


Figure 2.8 Multiple intelligences

even though we might have preferences, learning styles are more a “neuromyth” than fact (Noonoo, 2017). Researchers now believe that there is no credible evidence that teaching to learning styles has merit (Reiner and Willingham, 2014).

This doesn’t mean we ignore what the theory of learning styles was based on, what some refer to as **learning modalities**, or learning preferences. We use all four learning modalities in the process of learning, but each individual may tend to favor one or two over the others. The four modalities are: auditory (hearing), visual (seeing), tactile (touching), and kinesthetic (moving). Traditional classrooms rely most heavily on auditory and visual modalities, such as lectures and demonstrations, especially in the upper grades, whereas active learning techniques such as hands-on manipulatives and group work activate tactile and kinesthetic modalities and may engage some students more effectively. The primary message of the most recent research is that we should include all four modalities regularly in our classroom instruction without the obligation to determine individual learning preferences and tailoring instruction to specific students based on the determination. By varying instructional strategies, we are aligning with **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**, an approach that helps all students learn. The UDL approach promotes the expansion of how students learn, rather than concentrating on their preferences, by including visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic experiences in our lessons. Figure 2.9 helps us understand what hearing, seeing, touching, and moving preferences may look like in classrooms.

DIFFERENCES IN HOW WE LEARN: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS. Incorporating what we know about multiple intelligences and learning styles into our plans for instruction helps meet the learning needs of more students. Here are some questions to keep in mind when considering these challenges:

- Do I view the students in my classroom as a collection of individuals, each with unique ways of being smart?
- Do I continually seek to understand the ways in which my students learn best?

- Do I plan some experiences that address and incorporate each of the multiple intelligences?
- Does my awareness of my students' various learning preference change how I teach?

Acknowledging that there are many ways to learn leads us to understand that some students have particular difficulties learning, whereas others learn more quickly and perhaps more deeply. These are students with exceptionalities.

Figure 2.9 Learning preferences

Auditory learners tend to . . .

- Enjoy reading and being read to.
- Be able to explain concepts and scenarios verbally.
- Like music and hum to themselves.
- Enjoy both talking and listening.

Visual learners tend to . . .

- Have good spelling, note-taking, and organizational skills.
- Notice details and prefer neatness.
- Learn more if illustrations and charts accompany reading.
- Prefer quiet, serene surroundings.

Kinesthetic learners tend to . . .

- Be demonstrative, animated, and outgoing.
- Enjoy physical movement and manipulatives.
- Be willing to try new things.
- Be messy in habits and surroundings.

Tactile learners tend to . . .

- Prefer manipulatives when being introduced to a topic.
- Literally translate events and phenomena.
- Tolerate clutter.
- Be artistic in nature.

Based on: *Introduction to Middle School* (3rd ed., p. 62), by S. D. Powell, 2015. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. Copyright 2015.

Point of Reflection 2.3

With which of Gardner's intelligences do you most closely align? Did your teachers accommodate your particular ways of being smart? Describe how the learning modalities affect how you learn best. How do you think you might strengthen the modality you use least?



Check Your Understanding 2.5

2.6 Who Are Students with Exceptionalities and How Do We Serve Them?

2.6 Define students with exceptionalities and how we serve them in schools.

Learners with abilities or disabilities that set them apart from other learners are often referred to as **students with exceptionalities**. Heward (2013) tells us that exceptional children

differ from the norm (either below or above) to such an extent that they require an individualized program of special education and related services to fully benefit from education Thus, *exceptional children* . . . refers to children with learning and/or behavior problems, children with physical disabilities or sensory

impairments, and children with superior intellectual abilities and/or special talents. (p. 7)

Some exceptionalities are the result of nature; others may be the result of injury or illness, aspects of nurture. Two factors are especially important when we consider the education of students with exceptionalities:

- Identification: Deciding who has what exceptionality and to what degree
- Intervention: Determining how best to meet his or her educational needs

Students with Disabilities

The categories of student exceptionalities considered to be disabilities, along with the percentage of all disabilities that they represent, are shown in Table 2.5. Considering all the categories, about 12% of American students, or almost 6,000,000, receive **special education services**, which are services provided by schools to help students function and learn in ways optimal to the individual.

Many disabilities, especially those that impair daily functioning such as orthopedic disabilities and hearing, sight, and disease-related impairments, are diagnosed before children enter school. However, disabilities that are more subtle, perhaps intellectual or emotional, are often officially identified through a team of educators equipped with expertise and diagnostic tools.

A designation of **learning disabled (LD)**—accounting for almost 40% the students receiving special education services—includes a general category of students with disorders involving problems understanding or using language that results in significant differences between learning potential and achievement (Turnbull, Turnbull, Wehmyer, and Shogren, 2016). Misdiagnosis or the absence of a diagnosis is problematic. Many students develop coping strategies that mask their learning problems for years, and very possibly for life. Students with learning disabilities may

- Have difficulties with word recognition and text comprehension
- Feel overwhelmed by the idea of getting started
- Struggle to organize and use the mechanics of writing
- Have difficulty differentiating numbers or copying shapes
- Have difficulty identifying, using, and monitoring problem-solving strategies (Turnbull et al., 2016)

Table 2.5 Categories of disabilities and percentages of students served, 2013

Disability	Percentage of Total Students Receiving Special Services
Learning disabilities	38.6
Speech or language impairments	19.1
Other health impairments	16.9
Intellectual disability	7.3
Emotional disturbance	6.2
Autism	8.4
Multiple disabilities	2.5
Developmental delay	2.4
Hearing impairments	1.2
Orthopedic impairments	0.9
Visual impairments	0.4
Traumatic brain injury	0.4
Deaf, blindness	< 0.1

Based on: University of New Hampshire. (2015). Annual disability statistics compendium. Retrieved July 22, 2016, from <http://disabilitycompendium.org/statistics/special-education>

Intervention for students with learning disabilities may include time each day with a special education teacher, often referred to as a **resource teacher**, who will help them develop strategies for school success.

Identification of **attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)** may be as problematic as identification of learning disabilities. The American Psychological Association (APA) (2016) defines ADHD as a “behavioral condition that makes focusing on everyday requests and routines challenging. People with ADHD typically have trouble getting organized, staying focused, making realistic plans and thinking before acting. They may be fidgety, noisy and unable to adapt to changing situations. Children with ADHD can be defiant, socially inept or aggressive.”

Students with ADHD demonstrate three defining characteristics: inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. The APA estimates that 3 to 7% of students in an average class have ADHD, which falls within the “Other health impairments” category of Table 2.5. The intervention for students with ADHD may include specific strategies to help modify behavior or medication. These students receive services through special education only if they qualify through impairments other than ADHD (Turnbull et al., 2016).

In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education set new guidelines for services for students diagnosed with ADHD (Resmovits, 2016). They state that students with ADHD and those they suspect may have the ADHD are entitled to a diagnosis and a **504 plan**. This plan is developed by a school to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives accommodations that will ensure her or his academic success and access to the learning environment. A 504 plan is not as elaborate or complex as an individualized educational program that you will read about later, but it is a safeguard for students with disabilities that do not qualify them for special education services.

Autism, or **autism spectrum disorder (ASD)**, is a disability that is increasing at an alarming rate. According to the National Institutes of Health (2013), ASD is “a complex developmental disorder that affects how a person behaves, interacts with others, communicates, and learns.” **Asperger syndrome**, once a stand-alone diagnosis, is now one of several subtypes of the single diagnosis of autism. People with autism often have medical problems such as allergies, chronic digestive disorders, limited gross and fine motor skills, seizures, sleep problems, and low pain threshold (Autism Society, 2016).

There are no medical tests for diagnosis of ASD, only observation by parents, educators, psychologists, and doctors. Specially trained individuals perform autism-specific evaluations. Autism spectrum disorder is often diagnosed between the ages of 18 and 24 months, using a series of “red flags” to determine the likelihood of the disorder, including:

- No big smiles or other warm, joyful expressions by age 6 months or thereafter
- No back-and-forth sharing of sounds, smiles, or other facial expressions by age 9 months
- No babbling by age 12 months
- No back-and-forth gestures such as pointing, showing, reaching or waving by age 12 months
- No words by age 16 months
- No meaningful, two-word phrases (not including imitating or repeating) by age 24 months
- Any loss of speech, babbling, or social skills at any age (Autism Speaks, 2016)

If an early diagnosis isn’t made, students begin school where some of the symptoms begin to surface because they are rooted in social issues involving interactions and communication. A school evaluation should be conducted by a multidisciplinary team,

including a classroom teacher and a specialist in the area of the suspected disability. If ASD is suspected, the child will also be screened for health issues, including vision, hearing, communication abilities, motor skills, and social/emotional issues. Diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder should become the basis for an individualized educational program (IEP) for the child.

Legal Support for Students with Disabilities

Until recently, students with disabilities were often isolated in a room at the end of a hallway—out of sight, out of mind—unless they happened to be seen walking as a group or boarding one of those short buses designed to hold that “special” group of kids. Prior to 1975, most students with disabilities, designated as *special education students*, weren’t even in the same facilities as other students; there were no provisions for them to attend public schools. In 1975, the landmark legislation **Public Law 94-142 (PL 94-142)** changed all that.

Today, special education is viewed as a service rather than a place to send children. The **Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142)** opened all public schools to students with disabilities and mandated that students with disabilities be given the opportunity to benefit from special education services at no cost to their families. The law established six governing principles, listed in Figure 2.10, that apply to the education of students with disabilities.

In 1990, PL 94-142 was amended and renamed the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**. Students with autism and traumatic brain injury were added to those entitled to services under PL 94-142. A change in attitude and philosophy became evident in the law when the language changed from “disabled individuals” to “individuals with disabilities.” The person comes first, with the disability secondary. In 2004, IDEA was reauthorized as the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act**. This latest reauthorization is the most comprehensive yet, including all U.S. laws affecting children with disabilities in one statute.

Assistive Technology

The Technology-Related Assistance to Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988 authorized funding for **assistive technology** devices and services. These devices and services reduce the impact of disabilities by helping them communicate, increasing their mobility, and aiding in multiple ways that enhance their capacity to learn. The range of assistive technology includes wheelchairs, voice-activated and touch-screen word

Figure 2.10 Six principles governing the education of students with disabilities

1. **Zero reject:** A rule against excluding any student.
2. **Nondiscriminatory evaluation:** Requires schools to evaluate students fairly to determine if they have a disability and, if so, what kind and how extensive.
3. **Appropriate education:** Requires schools to provide individualized education programs for each student based on evaluation and augmented by related services and supplementary aids and services.
4. **Least restrictive environment:** Requires schools to educate students with disabilities alongside students without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate for the students with disabilities.
5. **Procedural due process:** Provides safeguards for students against schools’ actions, including a right to sue in court.
6. **Parental and student participation:** Requires schools to collaborate with parents and adolescent students in designing and carrying out special education programs.

processors, sound-augmenting devices, and closed-captioned television (Turnbull et al., 2016). Technology is making it possible for students with disabilities to function and learn at levels unimaginable only a decade ago.

Individualized Educational Programs

Serving students with disabilities (ages 3 to 21), regardless of the setting or combination of settings, requires an **individualized educational program (IEP)** as prescribed by Principle 3 of PL 94-142. An IEP is developed by educators, the family, and others as appropriate and involves a detailed plan to reach specific goals. A student's IEP must be revisited annually and the student's progress evaluated. Although IEP formats may vary, the required elements are listed in Figure 2.11.

An important part of an IEP is the designation of where and with whom students with disabilities will spend their school time. Principle 4 of PL 94-142 explicitly states that students with disabilities will be in the **least restrictive environment (LRE)** possible. The LRE is generally a setting with students who do not have disabilities that also meets the educational needs of the students with disabilities. This is often the regular education classroom.

Inclusion

Whether or not you are interested in teaching students with disabilities, you may be doing exactly that in a regular inclusive classroom setting if a student's IEP designates it as the LRE. **Inclusion** means that students with disabilities participate in academic, extracurricular, and other school activities alongside their nondisabled peers (Turnbull et al., 2016). If inclusion is not appropriate, chances are that a student with disabilities is served in a self-contained setting with other students with disabilities for much of the day, served by teachers with specific training to work with students with disabilities.

Simply placing students with disabilities in a regular classroom does not mean inclusive practices are in place or that a rigorous learning environment will be maintained. Teachers still must effectively focus on individualized objectives for every student, facilitate interactions and cooperative learning among students at every learning level, and maintain collaborative relationships with students, parents, and special educators. Given this approach, inclusion can be a healthy and positive experience for students without disabilities as well (Heward, 2013). There is a growing trend toward co-teaching, involving a regular classroom teacher and a special educator in a single classroom.

Inclusion is not embraced by all. Some parents believe their students with disabilities are better served in smaller, special education classrooms where they are more likely to receive one-on-one attention from teachers specifically trained to work with them. Some regular education teachers are wary of having a student with disabilities placed

Figure 2.11 Components of an IEP

An IEP must include a statement of:

1. student's present level of academic achievement and functional level
2. measurable academic and functional annual goals
3. how the student's progress toward meeting the annual goals will be measured
4. special education and related services to be provided to the student
5. extent to which the student will not participate with nondisabled students and the regular classroom
6. accommodations necessary to measure the student's achievement on state assessments
7. date of beginning services
8. postsecondary goals and transition services at age 16

Based on: Turnbull, R., Turnbull, A., Wehmeyer, M., & Shogren, K. A. (2016). *Exceptional lives: Special education in today's schools* (7e). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

in their classrooms, an understandable hesitation if they receive little or no training in meeting the emotional, social, and cognitive needs of the student. Although the **Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)**, which is the professional organization of special education, endorses inclusion, the official stance is support for a continuum of services with inclusion as a desirable goal, but not the only appropriate option for all students with disabilities. Focus student Trista Kutcher benefits from an inclusive environment. Read *Getting to Know Trista* carefully to see all the possibilities she embodies.

Getting to Know Trista

Trista Kutcher is one of our focus students. She is a very special young lady. Her happy life and remarkable accomplishments are evidence of what dedicated parents and sensitive, knowledgeable education professionals can do to help children, even those with disabilities, realize their potential. Trista has Down syndrome.

Trista's mom, ReBecca, teaches eighth-grade English language arts at Cario Middle School in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, and Trista's dad, Joe, teaches math at Wando High School, where Trista is a freshman. Trista has two younger sisters, Suzanna, age 12, and Samantha, age 4. As a member of the 2003 USA Special Olympics gymnastics team, Trista won five medals at the Dublin, Ireland, games. She is a cheerleader at Wando High and is included in many regular education classes. Read this poignant story written by ReBecca, Trista's mom.

We Danced

by ReBecca Kutcher

Joe and I had the perfect life. . . . We dated in high school and married right out of college. Life was grand! We got pregnant and things were sailing along as we *danced* through life. People would often ask, "What do you want—a boy or a girl?" I never said more than my prayer that the baby would be healthy! Joe's response was that we just wished for "10 fingers and 10 toes." Deep down, however, I really wanted a little girl with blond hair and blue eyes who would *dance* in a recital, *dance* on the beach, and *dance* into everyone's heart!

The pregnancy was perfect, as was the delivery. Joe and I held Trista Sue and cooed over her late into the night.

A few hours later the music stopped. The doctors told us our little blond-haired, blue-eyed Trista Sue had Down syndrome. Joe and I no longer felt like *dancing*.

Knowing breastfeeding was important for her in many ways, I wanted to continue her feeding schedule, even though she was still in the hospital. I would wake up



Sara Davis Powell

during the night at 1:00 and 5:00 and travel to the hospital to nurse her. I would waltz around the room with her in my arms. How wonderful those *dances* were . . . just us, loving each other.

I decided I was going to get Trista involved in activities that every "normal" girl does. At age two I took her to Tapios School of Dance and Gymnastics. I asked the owner if Trista could enroll in her tap and ballet classes. She welcomed her with open arms and taught her to dance with grace and poise.

Around this time Trista's sister, Suzanna, was born. How proud she was to be a big sister! Oh, the mischief they could get into together. Eventually, Trista and Suzanna were in a dance recital together, Trista 6 and Suzanna 3. Suzanna was amazed at the lights and people in the audience. She completely forgot her dance. Big sister to the rescue! Trista decided this was unacceptable and took matters into her own hands. Trista marched across the stage, positioned herself behind Suzanna, and proceeded to move her arms and legs for her. The audience roared with laughter while Trista made Suzanna *dance*.

When Trista started school, we decided she should be included in the regular classroom. Speech was definitely a concern and having her with the other kids would be great modeling. Each of her accomplishments was celebrated by kids in the class and by teachers who were initially worried about how they would teach her.

Through elementary and middle school Trista thrived, making friends and showing all of us what she could do, rather than what she couldn't do. In high school she eats, drinks, and sleeps cheering during the fall and, like her gymnastics, loves it dearly. The other girls could not be more accepting and supportive of her.

Along with regular gymnastics competitions, Trista competed in Special Olympics gymnastics. She was the state champion from the age of 8. Being involved provided many opportunities for independence and pride. During the summer of 2002, she received another very important letter. It asked her to be a part of the Special Olympics Team USA for the 2003 World Games. As she opened that letter she beamed from ear to ear. This adventure was one of meeting the governor and the mayor, being featured in a commercial, being on the news and in the newspaper regularly, and having an official day in Mt. Pleasant proclaimed by the mayor as Trista Kutcher Day! Everywhere we went people knew her. Suzanna began to make a joke about all of us being her entourage! Never did we think we would be *dancing in her shadow*! She was leading us on the adventure of a lifetime!



All Photos: Sara Davis Powell

The competition in Ireland was tough but she was ready! She won five medals, two of which were gold! As she stood on the podium, she cried and told me later that she was so proud because "She did it!" After the awards ceremony, the audience flooded the gym floor, joined hands, and *danced the Irish jig*. What a celebration!

The *dance* has been wonderful. The music has played non-stop for 15 years! Our dance began with three people on the floor . . . and ended with a *whole community kicking up its heels!*

Poem Written by Trista's Sister

*Trista—
Famous, idol,
Likes to run, jump, and play,
Annoys me when she says she is right when she is
wrong.
She can do cartwheels—I wish I could.
She wishes she could play basketball like me.
I do not like to go to the same parties as she does
Because then I feel like I have to look after her*

and I cannot have fun.

*It amazes me when she
does flips and is not
scared.*

*It makes me sad when she
says hi to someone
and they do not respond
back to her.*

*I am proud to tell my
friends about all the
gold medals she has.*

*I like when she smiles
and her nose crunches
up . . . it is so cute.*

*She has Down
syndrome.*

She is my sister!

By Suzanna Kutcher

12 years old



All Photos: Sara Davis Powell

Video Example 2.5 presents more stories about Trista, her talents, and her challenges.

Video Example 2.5: Trista



Students Designated as Gifted and Talented

Characteristics of students who are **gifted and talented** include phrases such as

- Evidence of high-performance capabilities
- Intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership ability well beyond average
- Excelling in specific academic fields

Identification of students who are gifted and talented can be objective or quite subjective, depending on the criteria accepted by a particular school district. When IQ is used for identification, the threshold number is 125 to 130, achieved by only about 2 to 3% of the general student population. However, evaluating creativity along with IQ testing allows more students to benefit from gifted and talented services.

Services for students who are gifted and talented vary significantly and include pull-out programs with students working on projects or an accelerated curriculum. In-school options such as grade skipping, concurrent enrollment in two levels of schooling, curriculum compacting (faster pace), and advanced placement courses (rigorous high school courses with possible college credit for completion) enhance the opportunities of students designated as gifted and talented. There are also specifically designed magnet schools for them.

When students who are gifted and talented are in regular classrooms—and most are—we can better meet their needs by

- Being flexible
- Accepting unusual ideas and encouraging alternative solutions to problems
- Not being intimidated by the intellectual and creative capabilities of students who have IQs that exceed our own
- Differentiating instruction often

STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS. The most important aspect of teaching students with exceptionalities is to recognize that each student is an individual with learning potential, strengths, and limitations. Seeing and seeking a student's strengths before, or concurrently with, acknowledging limitations helps us embrace possibilities for each individual child, whether in an inclusive classroom or in a special education setting.

Including students with exceptionalities in the classroom is beneficial to all students because instruction is delivered in a variety of ways to engage diverse learners. To do so successfully, teachers need support and time for planning, as well as an appropriate curriculum, materials, and resources. Ongoing professional development is essential. During your field experiences, look closely for evidence of inclusion. Ask teachers to help you understand more about students with exceptionalities.

Here are some questions teachers of inclusive classrooms need to ask themselves:

- Do I take the time to get to know each student as an individual?
- Do I look for the strengths and abilities of all my students?
- Is cooperative learning used frequently in my classroom?
- Do I continually diagnose the progress of my students and adjust my instruction appropriately?

All students, those with exceptionalities and those without a diagnosis or designation, need to understand the inherent dangers of the exponentially increasing array of social media tools. When thinking about using social media in the classroom, we, as teachers, must recognize our responsibility to help students become wise consumers of technology, understanding the need for vigilance to stay safe in cyberspace. This chapter's *SocialMedia* feature addresses safety concerns.

Social Media

Cybercitizenship is a recently coined term referring to the responsibilities of those who use social media. A recent survey by the National Cyber Security Alliance (2016) showed that over 90% of the adults in K–12 schools believe educators

should teach students how to be safe and ethical cybercitizens. In 2012, the federal government passed the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), a bill designed to make more transparent the operations of websites that cater

to children. But, as with so many societal issues, legislating safety must be accompanied by both common sense and vigilance. Immature self-regulation and vulnerability to peer pressure may put children and adolescents at risk when using social media.

The immediacy and instant gratification of social media, coupled with the vulnerability of children and adolescents, make safety hazards likely and teacher involvement absolutely necessary. Many lists of safety/ethics rules have been written by private organizations, nonprofit groups, school districts, and even the FBI. When examined side-by-side, they all include basically the same advice. Here is a summary of the most common tips for helping students stay safe as they use the Internet.

1. Always abide by school and home guidelines for when and how to use the Internet.
2. Treat people that you don't know on the Internet as strangers. Get to know your "online friends" just as you get to know all your other friends.
3. Do not give out any personal information related to your family, friends, or yourself such as passwords, addresses, and phone numbers.
4. Always tell an adult if you see something online that you know is wrong or that makes you feel uncomfortable. Never respond to such messages.
5. Never send out your picture without your parents' permission.
6. Don't respond when offered something such as gifts or money.
7. Don't ever accept a gift or an offer that involves having someone visit your house.
8. Never agree to meet someone you've met online in person unless you discuss it with your parents and an adult goes with you.
9. Never respond to provocative, rude, obscene, or threatening messages.
10. Always check with parents before downloading or installing software or doing anything that may jeopardize anyone's privacy.



Check Your Understanding 2.6

Concluding Thoughts

Now that we have looked at how students are similar and how they are different, perhaps the concept that all students can learn seems elusive to you. How, indeed, do we make "all children can learn" a reality given the circumstances that pervade some children's lives?

Understanding the uniqueness of each human being calls for an absolute commitment to individuality. Thomas Jefferson expressed the thought that there is nothing so unequal as the equal treatment of unequals. All children are equal in terms of their right to fulfill their own promise, but certainly children are unequal in the many ways we have discussed. The spirit of inclusion draws them all in; the unwavering determination to meet their needs requires attention and action based on each individual.

Yes, all children can learn. This statement is logically followed by these complex questions:

What can they learn?

When can they learn it?

In what ways will they learn it best?

As always, "And how are the children?" should be the center of our focus.

After reading the Chapter in Review, consider Craig Cleveland's concerns about his new student teacher's lack of experience with diverse student populations in this chapter's Developing Professional Competence.

Chapter in Review

How are students similar?

- As human beings, we are more similar than dissimilar.
- Nature (genetics) influences the human traits with which we are born.
- Nurture (environment) influences who we are through every aspect of our lives that nature does not determine.
- Human beings share the same basic hierarchy of needs.
- We all experience physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and character development.

How are gender differences manifested?

- Anatomical differences between males and females determine sex, whereas gender is the sense of being male or female.
- Gender determines many of the choices we make and the expectations others have for us.
- Perceived reasons for success and failure differ for males and females.
- Sexual diversity includes heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, gender non-conformity, and transgender status, as well as those who are questioning.
- Homosexuality is often the basis of discrimination.

How are cultural and language diversity manifested in schools?

- Race, although a social, political, economic, and psychological reality, is based solely on physical characteristics.
- Racism is a form of prejudice stemming from a belief that one race is superior to another.
- Ethnicity refers to a person's country of origin.
- Culture has many components and is learned, shared, and adaptive.
- Cultural identity relies on many factors such as race, ethnicity, language, gender, religion, income level, values, and beliefs.
- Multiculturalism involves beliefs concerning the value of looking at the world through the eyes of people who are different from us.
- To be most effective, multicultural education needs to permeate all areas of schooling.
- Language is an aspect of cultural identity that can be augmented and enhanced.
- Bilingual education involves instruction delivered in two languages.
- English as a second language (ESL), also known as English as a new language (ENL), is a pull-out program assisting English learners in English only.
- Structured English immersion (SEI) includes significant amounts of the school day dedicated to the explicit teaching of the English language, with other content secondary.

What is the impact on students of family structure, religion, and socioeconomic status?

- Blended families and family structures other than two biological parents and children are becoming more prevalent.
- The increasing mobility of American families potentially harms students and wreaks havoc on classrooms.

- Religion and faith have considerable influence on lifestyles and choices.
- The religious beliefs of families and communities influence decisions that relate to school issues.
- The gap between the haves and have-nots is wider in the United States than in most other nations.
- Low-income settings often contribute to lower achievement.

How are learning differences manifested in schools?

- There are many different ways to be smart and to exhibit intelligence.
- We all have learning preferences and modality predisposition.

Who are students with exceptionalities and how do we serve them?

- Students with exceptionalities include those with disabilities and those considered gifted and talented.
- A designation of learning disabled accounts for almost 40% of students receiving special services.
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism spectrum disorder are both diagnoses that are rapidly increasing and in need of continuing research.
- Autism, or autism spectrum disorder, is a complex developmental disorder that affects how a person behaves, interacts with others, communicates, and learns.
- The concept of least restrictive environment means that students with disabilities are to be placed in the highest-functioning setting possible, usually the regular education classroom.
- An individualized educational program (IEP) is a plan for a student's journey through public education based on needs and services to meet those needs.
- Inclusion in schools means that students with disabilities participate in academic, extracurricular, and other school activities alongside their nondisabled peers.
- Students considered gifted and talented are most likely to be included in the regular education classroom and pulled out for special classes for brief periods of time.

Developing Professional Competence

Thoughtfully reading this scenario and responding to the items that follow it will help you prepare for licensure exams.



Sara Davis Powell

In this chapter we learned about one of Craig Cleveland's classes. Craig's student teacher this semester, Jenny Langley, grew up in the suburbs of Fresno, California, and attends Fresno State. Jenny never attended a Title I school and her PreK–12 school experiences were ideal by most standards, complete with advanced placement classes, a stable group of friends, and extracurricular activities that rounded out her high school years. In a conversation several weeks before her student teaching semester began, Craig discovered that Jenny's peer group had little diversity—although Jenny told him she had lots of experience with diversity because she was in the International Baccalaureate program and she knew two exchange students, one from Japan and one from Russia. Craig smiled to himself as she talked about her open-minded approach with those who are different from herself, knowing she was about to begin one of the most turbulent experiences of her young life.

Now it's time for you to respond to three short essay items involving the scenario. In your responses, be sure to address all the dilemmas and questions posed in each item. These items are followed by five multiple-choice questions. As you consider your responses, think about how these standards may apply.

National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, Proposition 1: Accomplished teachers recognize that in a multicultural nation students bring to schools a plethora of abilities and attitudes and aptitudes that are valued differently by the community, the school, and the family.

InTASC Standard #1: Learner Development

The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.

This standard emphasizes the importance of providing challenging learning experiences that match individual learner needs from a variety of developmental perspectives, including physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and linguistic considerations.

InTASC Standard #2: Learning Differences

The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.

This standard emphasizes the need to create inclusive environments, recognizing students as individuals with learning and cultural differences and maintaining appropriately high standards for each.

1. Jenny is walking into a world that is foreign to her. Explain two reasons why she may be apprehensive or even fearful.
2. As a suburbanite from a middle-income family, Jenny is now experiencing adolescents who live in poverty. What characteristics might the students display that will require Jenny to adjust her attitudes and expectations to meet their needs effectively?
3. Given what we know about the students at Roosevelt High School, which of the three methods for serving their language needs (bilingual education, ESL, SEI) would you recommend, and why?

Application Exercise 2.4: Developing Professional Competence

4. Guillermo is a really good-hearted young man with acceptable English skills and a desire to help other people. Before and after class, Jenny might be able to best learn more about students with limited English proficiency if she:
 - a. Asks Guillermo to help her talk more easily with students whose primary language is Spanish.
 - b. Stays close to Guillermo and listen to his casual conversations in both English and Spanish.
 - c. Talks with Guillermo about what he knows about students who are English language learners.
 - d. Watches Guillermo's easy demeanor with other students and tries to develop the same persona.

5. Craig Cleveland explains Khammany's situation to Jenny by telling her about Khammany, her mom, and her younger brother moving into a project apartment with only two rooms and the difficulties they face since her dad died last year. Khammany, one of our focus students, has to work at least 30 hours a week to help support the family. Which of the following benefits of longer blocks of class time will Craig probably say is most important to Khammany?
 - a. During the 100-minute class, Khammany has more time to concentrate on history.
 - b. The longer blocks afford more time for a variety of participation activities.
 - c. The block allows for time to begin homework assignments with Craig available to assist.
 - d. Khammany can earn eight credits per year.
6. Remember Craig's diverse group of students? Which is the *least* important reason that longer blocks of class time benefit English language learners?
 - a. They get to spend more concentrated time on one subject with one teacher.
 - b. There is more time to fully develop a concept, using a variety of communication methods.
 - c. There are fewer subjects to learn at a time.
 - d. Fewer passing periods limit opportunities to be involved in turf issues among diverse groups of students.
7. What do you think will be the best way for Jenny to begin to acclimate to her student teaching situation?
 - a. Study the culture of the students she will encounter at Roosevelt High School.
 - b. Spend at least 5 days simply shadowing Craig.
 - c. Jump in and begin working with students.
 - d. Spend the month before student teaching brushing up on her Spanish language skills from taking 2 years of Spanish in high school.
8. Jenny has started her 16-week student teaching experience with enthusiasm based on the fact that she had 2 years of Spanish in high school. Which reason most likely causes her enthusiasm to quickly dim?
 - a. She can read and write in Spanish to a moderate degree, but conversational Spanish is another story.
 - b. There aren't many written resources in Craig's classroom that are in Spanish.
 - c. Most of the students with limited English proficiency are Hmong.
 - d. Craig's class is not designated as a bilingual class.

Application Exercise 2.5: Developing Professional Competence

Flash Cards 2.1

Shared Writing 2.1: Diversity Challenges
