

The Essential

**SPECIAL
EDUCATION
GUIDE**

for the

Regular Education Teacher

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edward Burns received a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1971, and is currently Professor Emeritus at the State University of New York, Binghamton, New York. His areas of specialty include special education and psychoeducational assessment, assistive technology, the interpretation and compliance of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act amendments, and educational statistics. He has written numerous articles in such journals as *Educational Technology*, *Journal of School Psychology*, *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Journal of Special Education* and the *American Journal of Mental Deficiency*. He is also the author of 11 books including *IEP-2005 Writing and Implementing Individualized Education Programs* (Thomas, 2006), *The Special Education Consultant Teacher* (Thomas, 2004), and *A Handbook for Supplementary Aids and Services* (Thomas, 2003). He is currently involved in issues relating to IDEA compliance and the overrepresentation of minorities in special education.

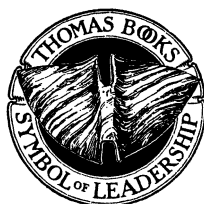
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By

EDWARD BURNS, PH.D.

*Professor Emeritus
State University of New York
at Binghamton
Binghamton, New York*



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PREFACE

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 has placed a renewed emphasis on the importance of the regular classroom, the regular classroom teacher and the general curriculum as a primary focus of special education. Every individualized education program requires goals “to meet the child’s needs that result from the child’s disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the **general education curriculum.**” In order to achieve these goals supports for school personnel must be provided so that children with disabilities **can be involved in, and make progress in, the curriculum** and participate in nonacademic activities.

Special education is not, and has never been, conceptualized as a place where children are placed in order to provide services in a separate location. The presumed placement for every child is the regular classroom; and the goal for every child with a disability is to enable regular classroom participation to the maximum extent possible.

The purpose of this book is to provide a guide for achieving this fundamental goal: to enable children with disabilities to participate in the regular classroom and the general curriculum to the maximum extent appropriate. The role of the classroom teacher in the determination of classroom needs and curriculum involvement to maximize regular classroom participation is essential. Indeed, the goal is to decrease the need for special education, and to increase the ability of every child with a disability to function as independently as possible in the regular classroom. This cannot be achieved without the participation of the regular classroom teacher in the identification of real classroom needs, in the planning of individualized education programs, and in the inclusion of children with disabilities in all aspects of the general curriculum.

This book contains over 100 topics that deal with real issues and concerns regarding the regular classroom, the classroom teacher and the special education process. These concerns range from requirements for referring a child for an individual evaluation, the participation of classroom teachers in IEP meetings, inclusion and mainstreaming, and various legal requirements relating to the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act amendments, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the No Child Left Behind act. In addition, a variety of additional topics are discussed that have a direct bearing on the regular classroom teacher’s involvement in the education of children with disabilities such as classroom-based assessment, school discipline, IEP responsibilities, classroom accommodations, aide training and supervision, and how

to advocate for all necessary classroom supplementary supports and services. The ultimate purpose of this book is to provide real information, based on current law and regulations, that will benefit the classroom teacher and enable the successful participation of children with disabilities in the regular classroom and general curriculum.

E.B.

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Part I

High Expectations

Research and experience has shown that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by high expectations, and ensuring their access to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom, to the maximum extent possible.¹

1. A SERVICE AND NOT A PLACE

High expectations and access to the general curriculum will allow children with disabilities to meet developmental goals and, to the maximum extent possible, the challenging expectations that have been established for all children.²

When Congress approved the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) amendments in 2004 the law (Public Law 108-446) was introduced by several findings concerning the importance of regular classroom participation, appropriate services, independence, and high expectations.³ All educators should be guided by the phrase that **special education is a service, not a place**. The meaning of this is that the needs of children with disabilities are best met by providing appropriate services, having high expectations for all children, and using the general curriculum and the regular education classroom as the benchmark for educational success and participation. The needs of children with disabilities are not best met by assuming that a placement in a restrictive environment, in and of itself, is in any way “appropriate.” The following are several Congressional findings that characterize the philosophy of IDEA and the emphasis on the general curriculum and regular classroom participation:⁴

Regular classroom participation: Before the enactment of IDEA in 1975, the educational needs of millions of children with disabilities were not being fully met because children did not receive appropriate services, were excluded from regular classroom participation, children were not identified, and many parents were forced to seek help outside of the school system.

Improving educational results: Since the enactment of IDEA the law has been successful in ensuring children with disabilities have access to a free appropriate public education and in improving educational results for children with disabilities.

Low expectations: The implementation of special education has been impeded by low expectations and an insufficient focus on research showing proven methods for teaching and learning for children with disabilities.

Special education is a service: Coordinating the law other agencies and school improvement efforts to ensure that such children benefit from