
Engaging Students in the Inclusive Classroom

Research and Theoretical Underpinning

THE BLUEBERRY STORY: THE TEACHER GIVES THE BUSINESSMAN A LESSON

“If I ran my business the way you people operate your schools, I wouldn’t be in business very long!”

I stood before an auditorium filled with outraged teachers who were becoming angrier by the minute. My speech had entirely consumed their precious 90 minutes of inservice. Their initial icy glares had turned to restless agitation. You could cut the hostility with a knife.

I represented a group of business people dedicated to improving public schools. I was an executive at an ice cream company that became famous in the middle 1980s when *People Magazine* chose our blueberry as the “Best Ice Cream in America.”

I was convinced of two things. First, public schools needed to change; they were archaic selecting and sorting mechanisms designed for the industrial age and out of step with the needs of our emerging “knowledge society.” Second, educators were a major part of the problem: they resisted change, hunkered down in their feathered nests, protected by tenure and shielded by a bureaucratic monopoly. They needed to look to business. We knew how to produce quality. Zero defects! TQM! Continuous improvement!

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In retrospect, the speech was perfectly balanced—equal parts ignorance and arrogance.

As soon as I finished, a woman's hand shot up. She appeared polite, pleasant—she was, in fact, a razor-edged, veteran, high school English teacher who had been waiting to unload.

She began quietly, "We are told, sir, that you manage a company that makes good ice cream."

I smugly replied, "Best ice cream in America, Ma'am."

"How nice," she said. "Is it rich and smooth?"

"Sixteen percent butterfat," I crowed.

"Premium ingredients?" she inquired.

"Super-premium! Nothing but triple A." I was on a roll. I never saw the next line coming.

"Mr. Vollmer," she said, leaning forward with a wicked eyebrow raised to the sky, "when you are standing on your receiving dock and you see inferior shipments of blueberries arrive, what do you do?"

In the silence of that room, I could hear the trap snap. . . . I was dead meat, but I wasn't going to lie.

"I send them back."

"That's right!" she barked, "and we can never send back our blueberries. We take them big, small, rich, poor, gifted, exceptional, abused, frightened, confident, homeless, rude, and brilliant. We take them with ADHD, junior rheumatoid arthritis, and English as their second language. We take them all! Every one! And that, Mr. Vollmer, is why it's not a business. It's school!"

In an explosion, all 290 teachers, principals, bus drivers, aides, custodians, and secretaries jumped to their feet and yelled, "Yeah! Blueberries! Blueberries!"

And so began my long transformation.

Since then, I have visited hundreds of schools. I have learned that a school is not a business. Schools are unable to control the quality of their raw material, they are dependent upon the vagaries of politics for a reliable revenue stream, and they are constantly mauled by a howling horde of disparate, competing customer groups that would send the best CEO screaming into the night.

None of this negates the need for change. We must change what, when, and how we teach to give all children maximum opportunity to thrive in a post-industrial society. But educators cannot do this alone; these changes can occur only with the understanding, trust, permission, and active support of the surrounding community. For the most important thing I have learned is that schools reflect the attitudes, beliefs, and health of the communities they serve, and therefore, to improve public education means more than changing our schools, it means changing America.

Copyright 2002, by Jamie Robert Vollmer. Jamie Robert Vollmer, a businessman and attorney, now works as a motivational speaker and consultant to increase community support for public schools. He can be reached at Jamie@jamievollmer.com.

This true story speaks to the very heart of education: It is our job; our responsibility; and our ethical, moral, and professional obligation to educate every one of the children who come through our doors. Teachers work to maximize the potential in every child. How to best accomplish this is the issue.

Inclusion, differentiated instruction, learning styles, learning modalities, multiple intelligences, and blueberries! Different concepts related to a common goal. Diverse students are included in our classrooms, and teachers need a variety of methods and strategies to support students' strengths and address their needs. Inclusion teachers need to be equipped with the expertise and strategies to motivate students and enhance student performance and learning outcomes.

The very best teachers share ideas, pool their resources, and are always looking for another creative way to structure a lesson or to motivate a reluctant learner. It is impossible for any one person to possess the knowledge, ability, and creativity to meet the needs of every child in the classroom, but each of us continues to strive toward this goal. Teachers consistently seek out methods that will positively affect student growth. This book is one such resource that will build your repertoire of strategies to support and engage students of varying needs and ages in the inclusion elementary school classroom. Please take this journey with us.

INCLUSION: DEFINITION AND RESEARCH

Inclusion is the term used to describe the education of students with disabilities in general education settings (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000). Inclusion is based on the philosophy that all students with a disability have a right to be educated in the general education setting with appropriate support and services to enable them to succeed. Accountability no longer lies with the special educator alone (Smith, Palloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 2006). Inclusion recognizes that all students are learners who benefit from a meaningful, challenging, and appropriate curriculum and differentiated instruction techniques that address their unique strengths and needs (Salend, 2005). Inclusion education is the collaborative effort of general educators, parents, related-service providers, and all school community members who share a role in the successful education of students with special needs.

Salend (2005) and Smith et al. (2006) summarize the advantages of inclusion: Research indicates that at the elementary school level, students with disabilities who are included in general education curricula can benefit socially and academically without facing the stigma of segregated or pull-out classrooms. Standards for behavior and instruction are higher, and students with classifications have more opportunity to reach higher standards and become independent learners.

Studies also indicate that students without disabilities can benefit from inclusive settings. Findings reveal academic performance is equal or superior to comparative groups of students educated in a noninclusive setting, and students with severe disabilities do not significantly limit or interrupt instructional time for nondisabled peers in inclusive settings. Friendships and awareness of diversity are also benefits of the inclusive classroom for individuals without disabilities.

STUDENTS IN THE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM: WHO ARE WE TEACHING?

The inclusive classroom includes students with and without disabilities. Diverse student learners are identified, and the characteristics of learners are considered in the planning and instructional process. Students with special education

classifications, served under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), include children with the following classifications: autism, communication disorders, deaf-blindness, hearing impairments, other health impairments, emotional disabilities, specific learning disabilities, cognitive impairments, traumatic brain injuries, and visual impairments. Other instances of classroom diversity not associated with disabilities but important in the inclusive academic and social learning experience are cultural and linguistic diversity, such as English Language Learners; at-risk students, such as students with sociocultural disadvantages and limited experiences; gifted and talented students; and students who exhibit specific skills or abilities substantially above others of their age and grade level. Even without a classification, “average” students come to the classroom with unique abilities, needs, and interests. Blueberries *all* of them; none turned away!

HELPING TEACHERS MEET THE INCLUSION CHALLENGE

Although general education teachers typically support the concept of inclusive education, they often find themselves unsupported and ill-equipped to provide effective instruction and support for diverse students in the inclusive classroom (Bender, 2008; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000). Teachers are often “hungry” for strategies to support students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Bender, 2008). Even when teachers have a positive attitude toward inclusion, knowledge of how to adapt instruction, and the desire to make instructional changes, they still do not significantly alter their traditional whole group instructional approaches (Friend & Bursuck, 2002). As co-teaching becomes more common in the inclusive classroom, two teachers have even more opportunity to provide “unique and high-involvement instructional strategies to engage all students in ways that are not possible when only one teacher is present” (p. 110). Such creative options will enhance learning for all students, not just those with disabilities (Friend, 2010).

Active learning is a viable option that can accommodate diverse student needs in the inclusive classroom, meeting student and curricula challenges (Udvari-Solner & Kluth, 2008). Brain-based learning and motivational research support such strategies because they provide opportunities to engage students in the learning process. Active learning strategies can be instrumental in the teacher’s quest to create positive learning experiences and outcomes.

This book provides an opportunity for teachers to explore a multitude of active learning strategies that will support students academically and socially in inclusive settings.

WHAT IS ACTIVE LEARNING?

To clarify our terms, we have developed our own working definition of active learning:

Active learning is the intentional opportunity for students to engage in the learning process. It connects learners to the content through movement, reflection, or discussion, making students the center of the learning

process as they take the initiative to learn. It can be behavioral and/or cognitive, supporting a variety of instructional objectives from recall through synthesis.

Silberman (1996) addresses the question of what makes learning active. He explains, “When learning is active, students do most of the work. They use their brains, study ideas, solve problems, and apply what they learn. Active learning is fast-paced, fun, supportive, and personally engaging” (p. ix). Often students are out of their seats, moving about, and thinking aloud. Active learning engages and motivates students while enhancing understanding and performance (Guillaume, Yopp, & Yopp, 2007; Silberman, 1996, 2006; Udvari-Solner & Kluth, 2008; Zmuda, 2008). It is important to make learning active because to learn something well, a student needs to hear it, see it, ask questions about it, and discuss it with others. Above all, students need to do it (Silberman, 1996).

Research studies report that many active learning strategies are equally effective for mastering content when compared to the lecture format; what is significant is that active learning strategies are superior to lectures for student achievement in thinking and writing.

Cognitive research also supports the premise that student learning styles are best addressed with multiple instructional methodologies (Bonwell & Eisen, 1991). Bonwell and Eisen, educators who popularized the term *active learning*, describe its general characteristics as follows:

- Students are involved in more than listening.
- Instruction emphasizes the development of students’ skill rather than just transmitting information.
- Students develop higher-order thinking skills (analysis, synthesis, evaluation).
- Students are engaged in activities (e.g., reading, discussing, writing).
- Students explore their own attitudes and values.

Pedagogy that includes interactive teaching strategies leads to education for sustainable learning (Corney & Reid, 2007). Teachers who embrace experiential learning can use active or hands-on experiences as methods to recognize desirable outcomes and endorse student-centered instructional approaches (Fenwick, 2001). Research has confirmed that student-centered, hands-on experiences improve construction of knowledge, comprehension, and the retention of content information.

Active learning strategies can support all levels of objectives in Bloom’s taxonomy, from knowledge and translation to evaluation and synthesis. Active learning is particularly important for application, which is necessary for learning to transfer from short-term to long-term memory and be easily retrievable. Jarolimek and Foster (1981) describe the “activity mode” of teaching as a set of strategies that involves students in learning by doing things that are meaningful and related to the topic of study. Techniques include role playing, constructing, interpreting, preparing exhibits, processing, group work, and games. Active learning may also apply to inquiry modes of learning, which include such techniques as drawing conclusions, asking questions, and stating hypotheses (J. Wood, 2009). The strategies shared in *this* book are designed to actively engage students in their own learning. Alone they are activities, but once the activity is connected to specific learning and behavioral objectives, they become strategies to support learners and

achievement outcomes. This active learning concept relates directly to the Native American proverb, “I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand” (J. Wood, 2009).

BRAIN-BASED LEARNING

Brain imaging devices can now give researchers a look inside the brain and determine which areas are involved as it carries out certain tasks. Some of these discoveries are valuable for diagnosing medical problems, while others have implications for what educators do in schools and classrooms. (Sousa, 2007)

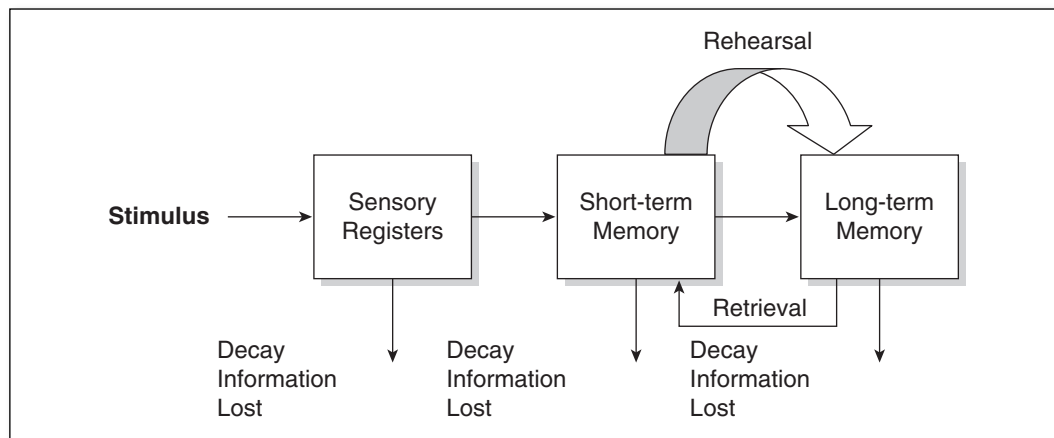
William Bender (2002) lists 10 tactics for a brain-compatible classroom, based on the accumulated research in this area, including the following:

- structure frequent student responses,
- pair physical movement to learning tasks,
- use visual stimuli for increasing novelty in the learning task,
- give students choices, and
- use students to teach each other. (p. 26)

Clearly, using active learning strategies that involve children directly in their own learning is compatible with what we are learning about brain function. These strategies can help to differentiate instruction and support students with and without disabilities in the classroom (Bender, 2008). Many of these strategies involve movement, which can cause the brain to release dopamine and noradrenalin, neurotransmitters that help learners feel better, increase energy levels, and assist their brain to store and retrieve information (Jensen, 2000).

INFORMATION PROCESSING

Figure 1.1 Information Processing Model



Source: Swanson (1987).

Information processing refers to how people learn new content. The information processing model, Figure 1.1, “is an attempt to describe how sensory input is perceived, transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, retrieved, and used” (Swanson, 1987). The stimulus is perceived by sensory registers and transferred to short-term memory. At this point, there is rehearsal of new content in order for it to be transferred to long-term memory, from which it can be retrieved (Sliva, 2004). Simply stated, learners have to do something with new information to keep it in short-term memory or transfer it to long-term memory in a meaningful way, so that it can be retrieved as needed.

Think about a junk drawer you may have in your house. (Doesn’t everybody have at least one in the kitchen where keys, pens, and all kinds of small objects are jumbled together?) Compare this to your silverware drawer, where each item has a place. In which drawer is it easier to find what you need quickly? Organization facilitates retrieval. In the same way, new information needs to be held in short-term memory, or transferred from short-term memory to long-term memory, in an organized manner so that the student can find and retrieve this information easily.

If information is to be learned, it will either be transferred to and stored in long-term memory, or a strategy will be utilized to keep the information in short-term memory. Unless a strategy is used to remember this information, it will be lost in about 15 seconds. Some strategies that can be utilized to keep this information active in short-term memory are to rehearse the information, chunk it, elaborate on it, or create visual images of it. Information is then transferred from short-term memory to long-term memory where it is stored until needed. (Sliva, 2004, p. 16)

Rehearsing the information refers to going over it more than once. *Chunking* it refers to dividing the information into smaller pieces or sections and studying each section. We can also chunk information in sections that relate to one another. When we *elaborate on* new content, we describe it in more depth, often relating it to prior knowledge. *Creating a visual image* of new content can include pictures, symbols, or diagrams to help us remember.

The important point is that in order to fully learn new information, we have to become involved with the learning process, utilizing one or more strategies to promote understanding and keep the material in short-term memory or facilitate meaningful storage in long-term memory. Information processing generally takes place both unconsciously and automatically. As learners, we are not always cognizant of how and when the procedure takes place (Sliva, 2004). As educators, it is important for us to be aware of this process and of how we can design instruction that encourages successful information processing. Including active learning strategies in instructional design is one way to accomplish this.

CONNECTIONS TO DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

Differentiated instruction provides multiple opportunities to support diverse students in inclusive settings. It requires teachers to identify the strengths and needs of their students and possess a repertoire of strategies to support students

with and without disabilities. It challenges teachers to study and think about the learning process as they find avenues to engage and motivate diverse students. It takes into account individuals' needs, readiness, interests, and learning profiles. It focuses on instruction that appeals to and engages each student (King-Shaver & Hunter, 2003).

Interest refers to curiosity and passion for a specific topic, while *learning profile* refers to a student's intelligence preferences, gender, and learning style (Tomlinson, 1999). Teachers must be ready to engage students in instruction using different learning modalities (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or tactile), appealing to interests and degrees of complexity. Differentiated instruction focuses on the content, product, and process of learning (Tomlinson, 1999).

"The apparent differences in how children learn should be used as a basis for planning instruction" (Tomlinson, 1999). When choosing activities that will engage and include students, purposeful and flexible grouping is always a consideration. Visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile approaches may meet the students' preferred learning modalities or support a multisensory approach. Many of the active learning strategies support students at different functioning levels and allow students to contribute their perspective in a number of ways: in written and oral communication, in groups, or individually. Choosing a strategy to support learners well means that teachers have already identified the abilities and profiles of their students and have considered content and presentation. It often means encouraging students to understand multiple viewpoints and share reflections. Each child is different, and the strategies in this book are designed to help educators develop their repertoire of strategies in order to meet specific student needs effectively. Although many of the strategies are movement and cooperation based (such as Ball Toss, Spider Web, and Jigsaw), others are individual and reflective (such as Exit Cards and Information Rings; see Chapter 4). Teachers are invited to adapt and modify strategies to support the differentiated needs of learners.

SUPPORTING STATE STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS

At a time when teachers feel overburdened and overpressured by new initiatives, standards, high-stakes assessments, and increased student needs in the classroom, the last thing a teacher needs to do is try yet another idea! However, it can be "Active learning to the rescue!" as opposed to "Please! No more extra work!" Active learning strategies *support* objectives, standards, and assessments rather than *add* to them. Standards-driven instruction can be effectively aligned with differentiation and active learning to create learning experiences that make physical, emotional, and reflective connections to objectives that impact student growth and goal attainment (Gregory & Kuzmich, 2004). Active learning supports the instructional process and product of the classroom by building a community of learners who are cooperative, interactive, and brain compatible. These concepts are aligned with the research that supports standards (Benson, 2009). Standards should support the globalization of learning as teachers are committed to "big ideas"

rather than textbook chapters and guides. Lesson choice and design should become clearer with a standards focus (Perna & Davis, 2007).

Although each state has its own academic standards, they typically include goals such as comprehension, writing proficiency, numeric operations and applications, inquiry, analysis, historical perspective, problem solving, comparing, making real-life connections, and so on. Standards set high expectations for students while keeping teachers focused on critical thinking in the learning process. Active learning strategies specifically support standards as well as academic and behavioral objectives. For example, strategies such as Venn Hoops help students compare and contrast concepts. The Paper Pass and Think, Pair, Share can be used to add to, synthesize, and make connections to different concepts (see Chapter 4).

Assessments are designed to measure what students know and what they need to learn in relation to the standards. Grades no longer evaluate what students know. Now educators and politicians are looking at what students know in comparison to others. This does not mean that learning cannot be motivating and meaningful, but it needs to be focused, with deliberate practices to support diverse learners (Benson, 2009; Perna & Davis, 2007). Teachers need to make connections between standards and student achievement, tailoring instruction to provide opportunities to reflect and apply knowledge to real-world contexts. A clear, standards-based curriculum allows for review and application without redundancy, all of which are key components of active learning (Perna & Davis, 2007).

State assessment or high-stakes testing used for promotion, rating, or placement typically brings on undue stress that can be passed from administrator to teacher to student. Families and entire communities can feel anxious and tense until the tests are over. Some teachers feel compelled to teach to the test, and you may hear comments like, “We can finally teach” after assessments are administered. Certainly, state-wide testing is meant to evaluate student performance, *not* to replace instruction, but accountability and competition in the field of education sometimes cause educators to think otherwise. Although assessments, like standards, differ between states and even districts, many of the concepts are the same. Two of the objectives that assessments typically test are

1. Basic skills including reading, writing, and mathematics
2. Subject area content knowledge

Active learning strategies can help teachers meet these two key assessment objectives. They support teachers in their effort to teach, review, and reinforce. For example, basic skills and content knowledge can be reviewed using Ball Toss, Puzzle Pieces, Two Truths and a Lie, Exit Cards, Classroom Box Bingo, Information Rings, and Line Up (see Chapter 4).

The ability to develop concepts to explain and persuade, which writing assessments often require, can be supported by activities such as Barometer, Round Robin, Play Dough Construction, and Walking in Their Shoes (see Chapter 4). Active learning outcomes such as Exit Card information, Paper Pass and Round Robin products, and Job Wanted posters can provide teachers with data on formative and summative objective and standard attainment, thus making

student performance evaluations meaningful and generating information to guide future teaching decisions. At the same time, active learning makes dull, difficult, or repetitive material interesting and engaging.

MOTIVATING LEARNERS WITH ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Consider the fact that in 1926, John Dewey asked, “Why is it, in spite of the fact that teaching by pouring in, learning by passive absorption, are universally condemned, that they are still so entrenched in practice” (p. 46)? It is hard to believe how history continues to repeat itself.

Motivation refers to students’ willingness to engage in lessons and learning activities. For teachers, a major goal of lesson development is to identify motivational strategies that will encourage students to engage in classroom activities that meet specific educational objectives (Brophy, 1997). Engaged students investigate educational content more thoroughly (Zmuda, 2008).

Motivation affects learning. As you read, take a moment to think about your own learning. Recall a situation in which you were highly motivated to learn. Then contrast this experience with a learning situation in which your motivation was low (or maybe nonexistent). What was the difference? Why? How can we use what we know about our own learning experiences to shape our teaching and encourage our students to be active participants in their own learning?

When students report high levels of motivation to learn, four factors are generally present: the opportunity to learn; facilitators who probe for student response; support for student learning through modeling; and scaffolding and evaluation. Strategies that incorporate these factors, such as the strategies in this book, will result in increased student motivation and involvement.

We also acknowledge that increased time, curriculum, and standards constraints have left teachers with little room to devote to process and outcome connections. With the shift in focus from teaching to learning in an era of accountability, it is important to support teachers in their efforts to find motivating strategies that will improve achievement for diverse learners. Uguroglu and Walberg (1979) provide substantial evidence that motivation is consistently and positively related to educational achievement. Research also clearly indicates that active learning engages and motivates diverse students in the learning process *and* has resulted in increased performance outcomes (Carroll & Leander, 2001; Ginsberg, 2005; Rugutt, 2004; Smart & Csapo, 2001; K. Wood, 2008).

Active learning can be an effective and essential instructional component of the inclusive classroom. Students with special needs who are actively involved and engaged tend to learn more and faster. Hands-on interactive learning appeals to the senses and provides a reason to learn, promotes attention to task, and may lessen negative behaviors (Choate, 2004).

The ability to motivate students is fundamental to equity in teaching and learning, and it is a core virtue of educators who successfully differentiate instruction (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000). Awareness of and respect for diversity, such as cultural differences, encourages teachers to invite the experiences, concerns, opinions, and

perspectives of diverse students to be shared and valued in the learning process. Lessons that respect diversity are especially motivating for students from low-socioeconomic communities. Students will be more motivated to learn when their voices and perspectives are shared and valued and connections to personal experience are made. Learners will be more engaged by teachers who help them connect to and respect one another in the learning process (Ginsberg, 2005). Overall, teachers can redesign the teaching and learning environment by providing different learning strategies to different students and finding ways to motivate students to learn as they engage them in the active learning process (Rugutt, 2004).

As we will explain in Chapter 2, active learning strategies are not one-size-fits-all. Each strategy shared in this book must be carefully examined to make sure it can be used to make meaningful connections to student needs, interests, and abilities while clearly connecting to lesson objectives and purpose and appropriate state standards. Although some active learning strategies are cooperative and others are individual in nature, all provide distinct alternatives to lecturing and identify the student as the center of the learning process. Encouraging engagement and motivation ultimately enhances learner outcomes for all students.

ACCESS IS NOT ENOUGH: THE CRITICAL NEED TO ADDRESS DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATIONS

The conception of disabilities has changed dramatically in the past several hundred years in a multitude of ways. Historically, people with pronounced disabilities were, more often than not, beggars walking around with cap in hand, looking for money with which to support themselves. Hence, the term *handicapped*, derived from “cap in hand.” Today, we try to include and value individuals with disabilities in society and in the education process.

As a result of recent legislation, the critical need to address diverse student populations has become more and more apparent. From 1954 to 1975, landmark legislation tried to protect and include diverse student populations in the educational process. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruled that segregation based on race and other educational factors was unconstitutional. *Hansen v. Hobsen* (1967) ruled that ability grouping or tracking violated due process and equal protection under the constitution. In 1970, *Diana v. State Board of Education* required that children be tested in their primary language. In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94–142) mandated that students with disabilities must receive the most appropriate services and are entitled to receive a free and appropriate public education in the least restricted environment (LRE; Gable & Hendrickson, 2004). The LRE clause of PL 94–142 and the Regular Education Initiative (REI) from the 1980s called for the restructuring of special and general education, supporting the inclusion of at-risk students, culturally diverse students, and students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Gable & Hendrickson, 2004).

Unfortunately, many years later, students with learning differences were still excluded from the general education curriculum. Schools and teachers were not

held accountable for the achievement and performance of students with special needs. In 1997, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) required inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the general education curriculum, holding the general and special education teachers accountable for the achievement of students classified with special needs (Karten, 2005).

Moreover, in 2001, President George W. Bush introduced the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; PL 107–110), which made schools accountable for the performance of many diverse populations, including students with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, students with disabilities, males and females, and students of varying socioeconomic status. Differentiated assessments are selected by specific states and schools, to identify and report the Annual Yearly Progress of the school as well as the disaggregated data from diverse student groups. All student achievement must be recorded in school data, and teachers are expected to implement research-based instructional practices to support quality education for all students. Thus, in an era of inclusion and accountability, access is not enough. Educators are more responsible for quality of instruction and diverse student population performance than ever before.

Legislation and the inclusion movement have not just relocated children from self-contained to inclusive classrooms. The movement has had a serious impact on the roles and responsibilities of teachers. General educators are responsible for the performance of growing numbers of diverse students in their classroom. To ensure the success of students, general and special educators must work collaboratively to combine the knowledge of what to teach with the knowledge of how to teach (Choate, 2004). Educators often appreciate diverse learners in their classrooms but feel they lack the resources and expertise needed to support their learning (Bruneau-Balderrama, 1997; Mastropieri, 2001; Snyder, 1999). Teachers need the skills and experience to meet the specific needs of different students in the classroom so they feel empowered to teach successfully (Cook, 2002; O’Shea, 1999). Rather than dispense knowledge, an educator should guide and facilitate interaction to encourage learners to question and challenge ideas, opinions, and conclusions. Active learning has numerous positive attributes and is independent of age, cross-cultural, easy to acquire, and independent of measures of intelligence (Jensen, 2001).

THE BEGINNING

At the beginning of this chapter, we invited you to take a journey with us. We hope you’re ready. Right now, if you choose to come along, you’ll need a few things:

- An understanding of your inclusive student population (consider classification, age, interest, learning styles, dynamics, ability, strengths and needs, etc.);
- Curriculum—goals and objectives for specific units and lessons—and state standards that inform the curriculum;
- A careful look at the learning environment in your classroom (consider furniture, floor and wall space, etc.);

- A willingness to adapt and be flexible;
- A willingness to reflect;
- Motivation to excite and engage your students with *your own enthusiasm* for teaching and learning; and
- Sun-tan lotion (Okay, wishful thinking on our part).

CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

- Inclusion is the term used to describe the education of students with disabilities in the general education classroom with appropriate supports and services to enable them to succeed.
- Teachers need to be equipped with a repertoire of strategies to support diverse learners in the inclusive classroom.
- Active learning is the intentional engagement of students in the learning process, supporting behavioral and cognitive objectives as well as appropriate state standards. Students are engaged and having fun and, at the same time, are the center of their own learning experience.
- Active learning strategies create an instructional design to support brain-based learning because they can help students increase energy levels, make connections to concepts, motivate students to learn, and support long-term memory.
- Legislation such as IDEA and NCLB continues to increase the number of students with classifications in the inclusive classroom, making special and elementary education teachers accountable for diverse student performance.
- Active learning strategies can support attainment of state standards and successful performance on state assessments.
- Active learning can support teachers in their efforts to differentiate instruction to improve performance of classified and nonclassified students. These strategies can support all learners.