1 Meeting the Educational Challenges of the Twenty-First Century

Figure 1.0 Agree/Disagree Chart

Check if you agree or disagree with these statements *before* you read the chapter and again after you read it.	**Before**		**After**	
	Agree	*Disagree*	*Agree*	*Disagree*
1. The No Child Left Behind law has improved education in the United States.				
2. The term *learning disabled* (LD) is used to label more than half the students in special education programs.				
3. The number of non-English speaking students enrolled in U.S. schools will be 40% by 2030.				
4. Almost one-half of all public high school students in America fail to graduate.				
5. Among U.S. youth ages 15 to 19, suicide is responsible for more deaths than any disease.				
6. Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) is just a myth.				

Teachers in the twenty-first century are faced with a variety of issues and challenges that go beyond day-to-day classroom instruction. Many teachers are unsure how to address these challenges and how to best meet the needs of specific learners in the context of larger issues. The sections of the book address each of these issues through the use of scenarios and problem-solving activities that are designed to help teachers select appropriate methods to address problems with specific students. It is important, however, that educators first review the background of the issues that form the context for problems. Educators need to know the "big picture" and the legal and historical frames of reference for the challenges that affect them and their students.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law is the newest version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The original law provided funding to school districts to help low-income students. The law proposes to close achievement gaps and aims for 100 percent student proficiency by the year 2014. Today, NCLB holds Title I schools that receive federal money accountable by requiring them to meet proficiency targets on standardized assessments. The number of tests that states administer annually is expected to rise to 68 million. Guilfoyle (2006) states,

> These tests carry consequences for the schools and districts that administer them. Schools that fail to bring enough of their students to proficiency face escalating requirements, such as having to offer public school choice or provide supplemental education services. If the school is considered "in need of improvement" for five consecutive years, it risks being restructured or taken over by the state. (p. 8)

The NCLB law is complex because it regulates 14,000 school districts in 50 states through 588 regulations. Standardized testing is the linchpin of the law, and the task of assessing each student's reading and math skills requires 45 million students be tested annually, with another 11 million tests being introduced to meet the new science testing requirements (Scherer, 2006, p. 7).

The tremendous pressure to raise test scores has caused controversy among educators. Many feel multiple measures are needed to assess students' deep understanding of curriculum and ability to use higher-order problem-solving skills and thinking skills. Critics feel the curriculum has been narrowed and teachers tend to "teach to the tests" at the expense of teaching a rich curriculum to meet the differentiated needs of the students.

Scherer (2006) states,

> Despite the fact that different states use different tests and thus determine proficiency differently, despite the fact that the testing industry is scrambling to produce valid tests, and despite the fact that designing learning around test taking is no one's vision of best practice, testing has become a way of life in classrooms. (p. 7)

CHILDREN OF POVERTY

Poverty-level students often come from diverse backgrounds where English is not spoken in the family and the culture is dramatically different from that of American public education.

According to Barr and Parrett (2003), many children from these homes suffer from inadequate nutrition and the compromised mental and physical health that is associated with the complex problems of poverty. In addition, poverty-level children often grow up with significant deficiencies in communication skills, which impair their ability to read, write, and spell. Bracey found that parents employed in professional occupations talked to their children using almost 2,200 words an hour; blue-collar parents spoke about 1,300 words per hour; and parents on welfare spoke only 600 words to their children per hour. The children who lack exposure to communication skills arrive at school less prepared than their more advantaged peers (Bracey as cited in Barr and Parrett, 2003, p. 96).

In addition, children living in poverty do not have the rich experiences, such as books in their homes, private lessons, opportunities to travel, and organized sports activities, that enrich the lives of middle-class children. Moreover, these children often are assigned to the most ineffective teachers in the schools. Research by Sanders and Rivers as cited in Barr and Parrott (2003) reported that if a student has an ineffective teacher during the elementary years, it will take that student two years to recover academically. However, if a student has *two* ineffective teachers during the elementary years, the student may never catch up (p. 99).

Strategies to Help Students of Poverty

Many schools are helping children of poverty achieve academic success. The Education Trust has identified more than 4,500 high-poverty and/or high-minority schools throughout the United States where students are scoring in the upper 30 percent of their respective states in reading, math, or both. This evidence suggests that students from distressed communities can achieve high levels of academic performance (Jerald as cited in Barr & Parrett, 2003, p. 29). Schools that establish before- and afterschool programs; provide intensive instruction to poor students; develop summer programs and year-round schools; provide nutritional meals, books, and educational stimuli on a year-round basis; and offer preschool programs and full-day kindergarten are making a difference. "Schools and teachers can make the difference for poverty-level children. Understanding these students and their lives must become a priority of every public school in America" (Barr & Parrett, p. 101).

INCLUSION

For many years, students with behavior, learning, and physical disabilities have been classified as special education students and placed in separate classrooms or schools. A report of the National Academy of Sciences in 1982, however, found the classification and placement of children in special education to be

ineffective and discriminatory. The panel recommended that children be given noninclusive or extra-class placement for special services "only if (a) they can be accurately classified, and only if (b) noninclusion demonstrates superior results" (as cited in Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1994/1995, p. 33).

Labeling Learners

The report by the National Academy of Sciences in 1982 prompted the early research on the inclusion, or integration, of children with disabilities into regular classrooms.

Many categories of children are in need of special education. One problem some researchers, teachers, and parents have is that they feel these programs contribute to severe disconnection and disjointedness in schools. Usually eight or nine varieties of special-needs programs are offered in a school or district, and children in the programs are labeled according to the special places they go and the so-called disabilities they possess. Wang, Reynolds, and Walberg (1994/1995) describe the two largest categories of children in special education as those who are learning disabled (LD) and those who are mentally retarded (MR). The MR category is for students who score low on IQ tests and, therefore, are not expected to do well in school. The LD category is for the surprises—those students who have high enough IQs to do well but are not achieving in basic subjects such as reading. Many specialists think that children with learning disabilities have underlying perceptual or neurological problems, even though these problems have not been diagnosed as such. Students are labeled E/BD or ED if they are emotionally/behaviorally disordered and emotionally disordered, respectively; DCD if they are developmentally/cognitively disordered; OHI if they have other health impairments; and ODD if they have an oppositional defiant disorder (Wang, et al., 1994/1995).

Several major studies in the 1980s, however, showed that classifying children accurately is difficult and that classification systems for placing students in special programs are seriously flawed. Although the term *learning disabled* was relatively new in 1975, by the year 2000 it was used to label more than half of the students in special education programs. Two or three times as many African American students as White students are labeled retarded or behaviorally disturbed. Research by Spear-Swerling and Sternberg (1998) suggested that one system of identifying learning disabled students was flawed. The IQ/Achievement Discrepancy Operation shows that students with learning disabilities are seen as having low achievement relative to what would be expected based on their IQ scores. "Children with learning disabilities in reading unquestionably need instructional help—but they do not appear to need qualitatively different kind of remedial program than do other poor readers" (p. 398). Spear-Swerling and Sternberg believe that just because students need additional help in special learning areas doesn't always mean they need to be labeled with a learning disability.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Since the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) was introduced in 1975 in Public Law 94–142, supporters have been trying to help educators implement the concepts of LRE into classrooms. The work of Falvey (1995); Stainback and

Stainback (1992); Thousand, Villa, and Nevin (1994); and others has helped the least restrictive environment mandate become a leading force in the development of "mainstreaming" or "integration" of students with disabilities into part-time or full-time enrollment in general education settings. Current programs of mainstreaming and integration have "rejected the segregation and isolation of people with disabilities" (Villa & Thousand, 1995, p. 5). In the past, mainstreaming often required students with disabilities to achieve a predetermined criteria (readiness model) before they could participate in general education. According to Villa and Thousand (1995); McIntosh, Vaughn, Schumm, Haager, and Lee (1993); and Baker and Zigmond (1990), mainstreaming and integration became a disaster in need of a major overhaul. These researchers and others felt that mainstreaming failed an enormous number of students because the students were provided inadequate support when they entered general education classrooms. In addition, many regular education teachers were not prepared to vary their instructional and assessment practices to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. As a result, students with special needs suffered, while teachers became increasingly frustrated by the demands placed upon them. Regular education teachers were often left without the training they needed or the teacher aides promised to help implement the program.

Regular Education Initiative (REI)

The U.S. Department of Education issued the Regular Education Initiative (REI) in 1986 to eliminate many "pull out" programs. The REI encourages special educators to work in close partnerships with general educators to develop strategies to educate special education students in general education classrooms. Often, special education teachers partner with regular education teachers to present lessons to the whole class. These co-teachers share their strategies for educating all students in understanding the content lessons. Inclusion is a commitment by educators and staff members to ensure that all students receive the quality education to which they are entitled and the belief that in most cases, quality education can be obtained in the regular education classroom with support from special education teachers (Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1994/1995). In addition, the Individual Education Plan (IEP) is no longer the sole responsibility of special education teachers. According to Sigford (2006), each student who has an IEP will have a case manager who has the responsibility of writing the IEP with the help of a team which consists of administrators, regular education teachers, and parents who review the assessment data. Even though special education teachers help design the program and monitor its implementation, they are not the only ones responsible for its delivery. Others may be involved in delivering the program, depending on the disability and its severity.

The research that examined the effects of inclusive versus noninclusive educational practices demonstrated a small to moderate beneficial effect of inclusive education on the academic and social outcomes of students with special needs. According to Baker, Wang, and Walberg (1994/1995), "*academic outcomes* are learning measures generated by standardized achievement tests, whereas *social outcomes* are obtained by self, peer, teacher, and observer ratings of special needs students' success in relating with others in the classroom" (p. 34). Students with special needs need to attain both academic and social

success in the school setting. As schools are challenged with the need to serve an increasingly diverse student population, educators must decide how to implement inclusive education to benefit all children, especially those with special needs. Moreover, they need to measure the effectiveness of their efforts by authentic assessments to evaluate improvement in socialization skills—not just by standardized tests to measure academic growth.

Response to Intervention (RTI)

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and the 2004 Reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) prompted Response to Intervention (RTI) that was introduced in 2006. RTI is a new feature for IDEA that is a multi-step approach to providing instructions and interventions to struggling students. Teachers monitor the progress students make at each intervention level and use the assessment results to decide whether or not students need additional instruction or intervention in the general education classes or if they need referral to special education services (Council for Exceptional Children Web site). In RTI all educators will become involved in implementing programs to demonstrate how students respond on an individual basis to various behavioral and academic interventions based on monitoring and frequent assessments. Both general educators and special educators are required to apply research-proven educational interventions, monitor student progress daily or weekly, and plan tiers of additional interventions for students who are not progressing adequately.

Bender and Shores (2007) strongly support this renewed emphasis on monitoring students' response to educational interventions. They say,

> Within the next two or three years, education will change rather dramatically, because of the implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) procedures across the nation. Teachers in both general and special education classes will find their jobs transformed as we move into a research-proven instructional method that will benefit many children who are challenged by the academic content. In fact, all students will benefit from implementation of this procedure, as teachers become more fluent in truly individualized progress monitoring and instruction (p. vii).

One of the reasons RTI has gained momentum as an approach to LD eligibility determination over the past decade is because of the dissatisfaction with the discrepancy procedure that documents a disability by demonstrating a large difference between a child's cognitive level (using IQ scores) and his or her achievement. Since the late 1990s, many policymakers and researchers such as Spear-Swerling and Sternberg (1998) cited previously have indicated the discrepancy procedures result in over-identification of students with learning disabilities, and thus, that the procedure seemed to be somewhat inexact in documenting exactly who manifested a learning disability and who did not (Bender and Shores, 2007).

From the original studies, two distinct RTI models emerged: the problem-solving model and the standard protocol model. The problem-solving approach involves the implementation of interventions designed for individual student needs. The problem-solving model has been replicated and refined in several

school systems, including Minneapolis Public Schools and the Heartland Area Educational Agency in Iowa. The Minneapolis Public Schools began their formal implementation of the problem-solving model in 1992 (Marston, Muyskens, Lau, & Canter) as cited in Bender and Shores (2007).

Problem-Solving RTI Model

The problem-solving model is a sequential pattern of steps divided into three tiers or stages. According to Bender and Shores (2007), they are as follows:

> *Stage 1. Classroom Interventions:* This stage is implemented by classroom teachers in the general education classrooms. Teachers identify students who are experiencing difficulties, implement instructional strategies or modifications based on individual students' needs and begin to monitor the student's progress. Teachers gather information regarding strengths and specific weaknesses, previous strategies attempted and outcomes, any available screening data, student health, and other information from parents. If the teacher determines the intervention is not successful, the student is referred to Stage 2.
>
> *Stage 2. Problem-Solving Team Interventions:* Student information is reviewed by a multidisciplinary team, which may include school psychologists, general education and special education teachers, reading specialists, and school administrators. The team considers whether other risk factors (language, poverty, cultural factors) are attributing to or causing the student's lack of progress. Interventions are reviewed and adjusted to more specifically address students' needs. Teachers continue to monitor progress and adjust instruction. If teachers determine the student is not sufficiently responding to instruction, the student is referred to Stage 3.
>
> *Stage 3. Special Education Referral and Initiation of Due Process Procedures:* The school district obtains parental consent and begins evaluation procedures for the student. The evaluation consists of a review of all information available on the student from Stages 1 and 2, including data on the student's response to interventions, direct observation, and the formulation of a means of obtaining cognitive, achievement, and adaptive behavior functioning. The team utilizes all available information to determine eligibility while considering the possible impact of risk factors such as culture, language, and socioeconomic status (Marston, et al., 2003 as cited in Bender and Shores, 2007, p. 9).

Bender, W. N., & Shores, C. (2007). *Response to intervention: A practical guide for every teacher*. Thousand Oaks, CA: A Joint Publication from the Council for Exceptional Children and Corwin Press. Used with permission.

Standard Protocol Model

The Standard Protocol RTI Model "utilizes a set of standard research-based interventions usually implemented in two, three, or four tiers or levels. In contrast to the problem-solving model, the interventions occur in a natural progression from tier to tier, and are similar for all students experiencing the same learning problems rather than being specifically designed for each individual student" (Bender and Shores, 2007, p. 12). The standard treatment protocol

involves exposing a child to a variety of research-based educational interventions and using data points to monitor progress to see how she responds. After well-documented instructional interventions, the student would be expected to achieve academic growth. In the absence of academic growth in the new RTI procedures, it could be assumed that the student has a learning disability (Fuchs & Fuchs, and Marston as cited in Bender and Shores (2007).

The final IDEA regulations were released in August 2006 and it is expected that many states will incorporate some form of RTI into their policies and procedures. The emphasis on monitoring students' response to educational interventions has been proven to be among the best instructional practices available to reform education and to impact all teachers and all students.

> Although RTI has received recent interest as one way to document eligibility for students suspected of having a learning disability, there are many other applications of RTI including using the RTI process to curb inappropriate behavior. . . . As we move into this new emphasis, we should focus on the benefits of RTI for all children in our classes. RTI is, in effect, one of the best instructional practices we can implement for our students. Implementation of RTI will enhance learning across the board in our classes, and ultimately benefit all of the students whom we serve. (Bender & Shores, 2007, p. viii)

Classroom Management

Despite the controversy over diagnosing and labeling students, most teachers agree that they are challenged by disruptions caused by any students. They also agree that classroom disruptions often increase when students with special needs are integrated into their classrooms—sometimes without the support systems or assistants required. According to Rivera and Smith (1997), "Students with special needs are often more disruptive than students with no special needs. Students who have special needs may disturb the learning environment for themselves and their peers. They follow the classroom and school rules less frequently" (p. 9). It is evident that disruptive students spend a great deal of time not learning. Research in the 1970s concentrated on reducing disruptive classroom behaviors to improve students' academic achievement. Even when disruptions declined, however, achievement did *not* improve. Disruptive students, therefore, often have requirements beyond behavioral needs that must be met for them to achieve academically.

Current research focuses on discovering if students who improve their learning and achieve academic success also improve their behavior, rather than the other way around. The link between meaningful and motivating instruction and classroom management has never been stronger. If students are either bored or frustrated with the academic materials presented to them, they act out. One important study by Center, Deitz, and Kaufman, as cited in Rivera and Smith (1997), found a dramatic correlation between task difficulty and inappropriate behavior. When teachers simply adjusted curricular demands to make sure the material was neither too difficult nor too easy, most student disruptions were eliminated. It is important, therefore, for teachers to achieve a sense of flow (Csikzentmihalyi, 1990) in their classrooms so students feel challenged in their

work as opposed to feeling either overwhelmed or bored. If teachers know what causes behavior problems, they can work to reduce them in their classrooms. Rivera and Smith (1997) cite six reasons why behavior problems sometimes occur:

1. Students are either bored or frustrated with academic materials.
2. Students see no relevance for tasks or activities and are not motivated.
3. Students may not understand when certain behaviors are permissible and when they are not.
4. Teachers may send inconsistent messages about their expectations or consequences for not meeting the expectations.
5. Students are experiencing family problems and suffer emotionally from their dysfunctional family.
6. Teachers lack awareness of what is happening in the classroom at all times.

Adapted with permission from Rivera, D. P., and Smith, D. D. (1997). *Teaching students with learning and behavior problems,* 3rd ed., pp. 191–192. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

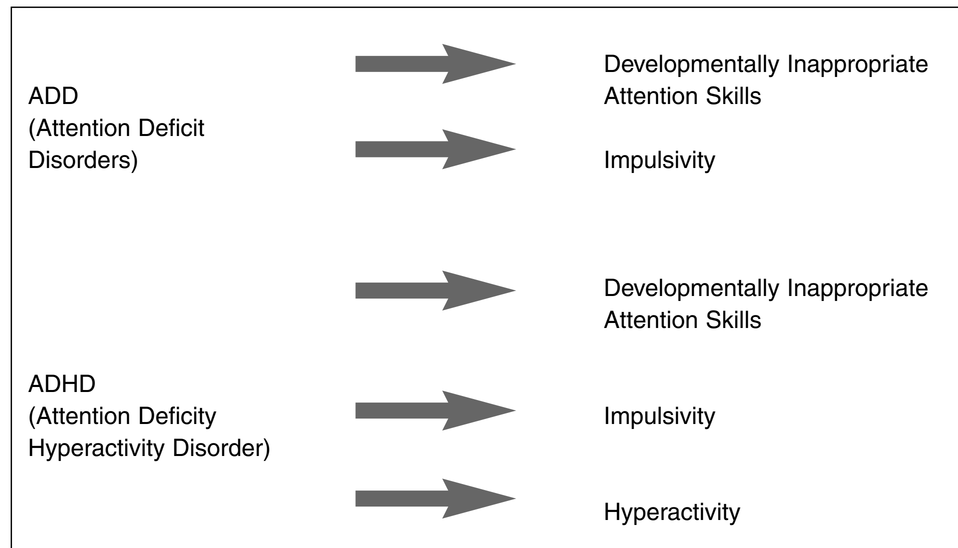
The challenge for teachers is to develop proactive strategies to adjust or revise their curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices to motivate all students to learn. In addition, it is crucial for teachers to develop appropriate interventions to prevent or at least manage disruptions so improved learning can occur for all students, regardless of their classifications or labels. Teachers also must make sure that the disruptions of a few do not ruin the learning environment for all.

ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDERS

Attention deficit disorder (ADD) constitutes a chronic neurobiological condition characterized by developmentally inappropriate attention skills and impulsivity. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is also characterized by inappropriate attention skills and impulsivity as well as symptoms of hyperactivity. At home, children with these disorders may not be able to accommodate routines and manifest this by breaking toys during play and resisting going to bed. At school, such children may be extremely restless and easily distracted. They often have trouble completing work in class because they miss valuable information due to their underdeveloped attention capacity. "They speak aloud, out of turn, and find themselves in trouble for their behavior. Their inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity can also be detrimental to their social lives, hampering their ability to make and keep friends" (Lerner, Lowenthal, & Lerner, 1995, p. 5).

According to Thompson (1996), ADHD has been described as the display of inattention, impulsivity, and overactivity with developmentally inappropriate frequency. To be considered symptoms of ADHD, these behaviors must initially have been exhibited in early childhood (prior to age seven) and displayed across a variety of settings. (See Figure 1.1, which summarizes the characteristics of these disorders.)

Figure 1.1 Characteristics of ADD and ADHD



Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003) described ADHD as one of the severe problems facing students. They noted that 3 to 7 percent of school-age children, mostly males, experience ADHD disorder (American Psychiatric Association as cited in Marzano et al., p. 46) and approximately 50 percent of the 1.6 million elementary school-aged children with ADHD also have learning disorders (National Centers for Disease Control as cited in Marzano et al., p. 46). To meet the diagnostic criteria of the American Psychiatric Association, the child must have been creating disturbances for at least six months, during which time at least eight of the behaviors in Figure 1.2 must have been exhibited.

In addition, many students who do not have the clinical diagnosis of ADD/ADHD exhibit many of its behavioral symptoms. Healy, as cited in Cummings (2000), has evidence that kids' brains really have changed because they have been exposed to flickering electronic fields during their formative years instead of the three-dimensional experiences necessary for normal wiring. "Their learning habits have been shaped by fast-paced media that reduce attention, listening, and problem-solving skills as they habituate the brain to rapid-fire visual input" (p. 40). Shapiro, as cited in Cummings (2000), says that most five-year-olds have watched between 4,000 and 5,000 hours of TV by the time they reach first grade—the equivalent of four years of college (p. 124). That's valuable time wasted that should be spent socializing with other children and exploring an enriched environment. Shapiro believes that "television may be the single greatest deterrent to developing social and emotional skills" (as cited in Cummings, p. 124).

In addition to medications, multiple strategies and interventions are needed to help students with both ADD and ADHD. Recently the American Medical Association expressed concern about the increasing number of preschool students who are on medications. The members of this organization question

Figure 1.2 Diagnostic Criteria for ADHD

The student

1. often fidgets with hands or squirms in seat (though in adolescents, this symptom may be limited to subjective feelings of restlessness);
2. has difficulty remaining seated when required to do so;
3. is easily distracted by extraneous stimuli;
4. has difficulty waiting for turns in games or group situations;
5. often blurts out answers to questions before the questions have been completed;
6. has difficulty (not due to oppositional behavior or failure of comprehension) following through on instructions from others;
7. has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities;
8. often shifts from one uncompleted activity to another;
9. has difficulty playing quietly;
10. often talks excessively;
11. often interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g., butts into other children's games);
12. often does not seem to listen to what is being said to him or her;
13. often loses things necessary for tasks or activities at school or at home (e.g., toys, pencils, books, assignments); or
14. often engages in physically dangerous activities without considering possible consequences (e.g., runs into the street without looking) but not for the purpose of thrill seeking.

Reprinted with permission of *Phi Delta Kappan,* from "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: A Parent's Perspective," by Anna M. Thompson, February 1996. *Phi Delta Kappan,* p. 434.

the use of drugs to medicate the behavior of young children. Parents and teachers need to explore behavior management, time management, and organizational training techniques to help students follow classroom rules, stay on task, and practice appropriate social skills with other students rather than relying on medications. The simplest instructions and rules may require practice, repetition, and reinforcement to make them part of a student's routine. In addition to establishing organizational techniques and routines, teachers also need to provide motivational instruction and interactive learning strategies to keep the attention of all their students.

The Case Against Attention Deficit Disorders

A section on Attention Deficit Disorders would not be complete without a discussion of the controversy over the disorders. Thomas Armstrong, among others, is troubled by the speed at which both the public and the professional community have embraced this disorder over the past 20 years, thanks in part to best-selling books, the support of mainstream psychiatry, general medicine, and government approval. He says that the paradigm suggests that ADD and ADHD are "disorders that are said to be biological in origin, affecting from 3 to 5 percent of all children in North America" (1999, p. vi). Armstrong, however, has questioned whether ADD and ADHD are biological disorders, how the symptoms are assessed, the effectiveness of treating the disorders with medications and behavior modifications, and whether or not children will continue to have ADD/ADHD throughout their lives. Armstrong agrees that school children manifest symptoms of hyperactivity, distractibility, and impulsivity. But he disagrees with the claim that these kinds of behaviors represent the chief manifestations of something called ADD/ADHD because he believes these behaviors are among the most global and widespread types of behaviors seen in childhood and adolescence.

> One can observe them in virtually all children during certain parts of their lives [especially in the early years and during adolescence], and under certain types of conditions at other stages of life that involve stress, boredom, excitement, and the like. A child can be hyperactive, distractible, or impulsive because she is depressed, anxious, allergic to milk, highly creative, bored with schoolwork, unable to read, or temperamentally difficult, among a host of other factors. (pp. 8–9)

Armstrong wonders how society can label children as ADD or ADHD based upon the combination of three kinds of behavior—hyperactivity, distractibility, and impulsivity.

Cummings (2000) believes that teachers need to change their approach by changing the environment because some of today's students cannot fit into the traditional classroom structure. If ADD/ADHD students are not allowed out of their seats without asking permission, cannot speak without being called upon,

and are expected to follow complex directions the first time they are given, they are set up for failure.

> When the ADD/ADHD child doesn't comply with these demands, he's broken the classic rules and is often given the negative consequences. As a result, too high a proportion of these children fail or become underachievers. Frankly, the modifications that help special-needs children create a better learning community for all children. (p. 125)

According to Smelter, Rasch, Fleming, Nazos, and Baranowski (1996), parents often feel relieved when their children are diagnosed with ADD or ADHD because it absolves them of guilt associated with not being able to "control" the behavior of their children. They can then use Ritalin or some other drug to cure the dysfunction without carefully examining other family, medical, or sociological issues that could be affecting the child. The reality could be that the student hates school; therefore, the student's attention wanders. The student's different behavior could be that child's own choice. As Smelter et al. conclude, "We must, therefore, be somewhat skeptical about ADD-classified children, who, when removed from the classroom setting, magically lose their ADD symptoms" (p. 432).

Teaching Strategies

Despite the medical controversy surrounding diagnosis and treatment of Attention Deficit Disorders, the challenge for teachers "is to implement and adopt methods that will help students meet their potential. Teachers must understand the learning characteristics of all their students and possess knowledge about both curricular content and instructional methodology" (Rivera & Smith, 1997, p. 1). Teachers must be familiar with best practices in teaching and learning and be aware of methods and strategies that help all students learn, no matter what their needs are.

According to Collier (1995), some strategies teachers can use to set up the classroom include creating a positive classroom climate, engaging students in bonding activities to help them become more comfortable with each other, establishing rules and expectations, practicing routines, and developing logical consequences if students don't follow rules. In addition, Collier suggests that teachers can teach social skills by modeling appropriate social interactions, giving students time to develop and practice group and social skills, and demonstrating self-control and stress management techniques. Finally, she proposes that teachers plan instruction to meet both standards and the needs of students, use appropriate instructional materials, set the right pace for the class, and challenge and motivate all students.

Teachers can also improve the learning of students with special needs by implementing some of the same strategies they use with regular education students. All students can benefit from a variety of teaching strategies. For example, the strategies in Figure 1.3 could be used with ADD/ADHD students.

Figure 1.3 Strategies to Use With ADD/ADHD Students

- Provide both oral and written instructions.
- Encourage students to use highlighters, sticky notes, and colored pens for note taking.
- Modify assignments by changing their quantity—but not their quality.
- Allow students to stand over their desks, spread out on the floor, and go to stations.
- Allow students to use headphones to block out extraneous noises.
- Provide time cues about when the current activity will end and the next activity will begin.
- Provide agendas with schedules of the day so they know what to expect.
- Provide checklists for assignments that break down skills into manageable chunks.
- Provide opportunities for some choice in assignments or presentation methods.
- Shift activities to allow for movement.

In addition to the strategies mentioned above, teachers also need to use language—the correct rate of speech, appropriate vocabulary, and simple syntax—so that students can understand directions and comprehend concepts. Equally important, teachers should develop a comfortable style of working with and respecting their students. In turn, students should respect and enjoy their teachers.

> Learning does not have to be dull and routine. . . . Teachers need to diversify educational experiences and add occasional elements of fun into the learning environment. This can be accomplished by allowing students to work on interesting topics, solve problems, or use technology as an enhancement to instruction. (Rivera & Smith, 1997, p. 14)

ADD and ADHD students, like all students and adults, want to engage in meaningful activities with their peers and achieve successful academic results. Students also want some choice in what, when, and how they accomplish their goals, and they want to know that what they are doing will be relevant in their lives. Thus, the use of effective instructional strategies and classroom management techniques can help these learners meet their goals and succeed, regardless of the labels attached to them.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL)

The population of the United States has always been multiracial. After analyzing demographic data from the 2000 census, demographer Harold Hodgkinson, as cited in Hill and Flynn (2006), found that almost 9 million U.S. children between the ages of 5 and 17 speak a language other than English at home, and a full 2.6 million of them do not speak English well. If these students do not get special help in preschool and kindergarten, elementary school teachers will be expected to teach proficiency in English along with academic context. Most teachers have not been trained to help

students master content standards at the same time as language-speaking standards. Moreover,

> English Language Learners (ELLs) may once have been viewed as "belonging" to English as a second language (ESL) staff, but now, due to changing laws and policies, the students are in every classroom in the school, making the job of teaching that much more challenging. (Hill & Flynn, p. xii)

In 2003, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, 19 percent of all school-age children were English language learners. Census projections show that the number of non–English speakers enrolling in U.S. schools will be 40 percent by the year 2030 (Pardini, 2006, p. 20). One challenge concerns the quality of education these immigrant students have had in their native countries. Immigrant groups from Africa and Asia continue to grow, and Sigford (2006) describes how

> some have been forced to live in refugee camps, and others are from nomadic cultures where education is about daily survival not about reading and writing. It is one thing to teach literacy skills to someone who is literate in one culture and quite another to teach literacy to someone who is preliterate in their native language. (p. 134)

Limited English Proficient (LEP)

One of the groups targeted by NCLB is the limited English proficient subgroup. The LEP subgroup is expected to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward proficiency. According to NCLB, all English language learners in the subgroup must pass their state's accountability tests by 2014, or the school will be designated as failing and may be subjected to sanctions. Some critics of NCLB believe that if states administer a test to students in a language they don't understand, they probably won't do well on it.

> NCLB contradicts itself on this very point. The law describes a limited proficient student as one "whose difficulties in speaking, reading or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual the ability to meet the State's proficient level of achievement on State assessments." Nevertheless, NCLB mandates that English language learners do just that, and schools are punished if they don't. (Wright, 2006, p. 22)

Recent discussions about the reauthorization of the law have focused on changing some of the regulations pertaining to LEP students.

Strategies to Use With LEP Students

The research on LEP students has some implications for regular education teachers who work with students with limited English proficiency. For example, regular education teachers could use the strategies in Figure 1.4 with LEP students.

Figure 1.4 Strategies to Use With LEP Students

- Pause frequently to check for understanding.
- Use short and simple sentences and speak slowly.
- Learn some key phrases in the student's language.
- Utilize an active, hands-on teaching style rather than a lecture style.
- Repeat key concepts and content pieces in different ways.
- Structure the class to include social and cultural bridges between the non-English-speaking student's home life and school life.
- Utilize cooperative groups for instruction and include a bilingual student who speaks the same language as a partner for non-English-speaking group members.
- Write things down so students can get help with translations.
- Design interactive lessons that target multiple intelligences.
- Assess students' progress using a repertoire of evaluation strategies, such as checklists and rubrics to provide expectations, portfolios to show growth and development, and performances and projects to demonstrate application and transfer. (See Chapter 2.)
- Integrate the minority students into the social structure of the classroom and the school by building a community of learners that will produce positive results for all the students and, ultimately, society.

The school environment is critical in helping immigrant students succeed. Their initial experiences can be rewarding and positive or traumatic and negative. Pipher, as cited in Sigford (2006), says,

> Schools are often where kids experience their first racism and learn about the socioeconomic split in our country. There is the America of children with violin lessons, hockey tickets, skiing trips, and zoo passes, and there is the America of children in small apartments whose parents work double shifts. (p. 114)

Teaching a diverse population can be a unique, enriching, educational, social, and cultural experience. Educators who are sensitive to the needs of all students, including students with limited English proficiency, provide a nurturing climate where students learn language skills, academic content, and social skills necessary for school and life.

HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS

Researchers working for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation released a report in March of 2006 entitled *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts.* The report describes how the dropout epidemic in the United States disproportionately affects high school students who come from low-income, minority, urban, single-parent families and attend large public high schools in the inner city.

> Nationally, research puts the graduation rate between 68 and 71 percent, which means that almost one-third of all public high school students in America fail to graduate. For minority students (black, Hispanic, or Native American), the rate at which they finish public high school with a regular diploma declines to approximately 50 percent. (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006, p. 1)

Olson (2006) showed that among 2002–2003 graduates nationally, 69.6 of all students in the nation graduated with a regular diploma. According to gender, 65.2 percent of males and 72.7 percent of females graduated with a regular diploma. The rates according to ethnic groups were as follows (Olson, p. 7):

American Indian: 47.4%

Black: 51.6%

Hispanic: 55.6%

White: 76.2%

Asian: 77%

Consequences of Low Graduation Rates

The Silent Epidemic Report states that in today's technological age, when workers need at least a high school diploma to compete in the workforce, the decision to drop out of school is disastrous. "Dropouts are much more likely than their peers who graduate to be unemployed, living in poverty, receiving public assistance, in prison, on death row, unhealthy, divorced, and ultimately single parents with children who drop out from high school themselves" (Bridgeland et al., 2006, p. 2).

In addition, the prevalence of the high school dropout rates impacts communities because of the loss of the earnings and revenues that productive workers would generate. Four out of every 10 young adults (ages 16–24) lacking a high school diploma received some type of government assistance in 2001. Moreover, a dropout is more than eight times as likely to be in jail or prison as a person with at least a high school diploma. Studies show that the lifetime cost of the nation for each youth who drops out of school and later moves into a life of crime and drugs ranges from $1.7 to 2.3 million (Bridgeland et al., 2006, p. 2). When researchers interviewed students for the report, respondents gave several reasons for dropping out of school. The following are the top five reasons dropouts identify as major factors for leaving school:

1. Classes were not interesting. (47%)
2. Missed too much school and could not catch up. (43%)
3. Spent time with people who were not interested in school. (42%)

4. Had too much freedom and not enough rules in my life. (38%)
5. Was failing in school. (35%) (Bridgeland et al., 2006, p. 3)

Barr and Parrett (2003) report that retention in schools is also one of the primary causes of dropping out. In too many schools, students who do not master basic skills quickly or pass the standardized tests required by NCLB are retained and are required simply to repeat everything again, or they are "tracked" into basic classes with low expectations. "Students who are retained and tracked almost never catch up to their age-group peers, and many fail to advance from the slow-learning track" (p. 19).

General Educational Development Certificate (GED)

The General Educational Development Certificate (GED) is not a diploma, nor, some research suggests, is it equivalent to one. The GED is a battery of five tests taken over the course of 7.5 hours, covering mathematics, science, reading, writing, and social studies, which is designed to certify the mastery of high school level knowledge and skills. According to Miller (2006), the GED is available in all 50 states, and test takers must score at least 410 out of a possible 800 on each of the five subject tests, with an overall average of 450 across all subject areas. The GED is designed for adults who did not receive a diploma because they dropped out of school or failed to meet a state's graduation requirements. In 2004, 662,000 people nationwide took the GED tests; the average age of GED candidates was 25, though a full 30 percent of candidates were ages 16 to 18 (American Council on Education as cited in Miller, p. 8).

The American Council on Education (ACE), a Washington-based umbrella group for higher education, coordinates the GED. According to ACE, 62 percent of those who passed the GED in 2004 reported that they took the tests to be able to enroll in two-year and four-year colleges. However, an April 2006 study by Boston-based Jobs for the Future, a nonprofit research and advocacy group, found that "44 percent of dropouts who received a GED later enroll in two- or four-year colleges, but only 10 percent succeed in earning a degree" (Miller, 2006, p. 8). In addition, studies by University of Chicago economist James J. Heckman and colleague Stephen Cameron, as cited in Miller, found in 1993 that GED holders were not significantly more likely than high school dropouts to land a job or earn high wages. In 2005, Heckman and Paul A. LaFontaine, as cited in Miller, re-examined the earlier research and found that GED recipients who did not continue on to college earned the same wages as uncertified high school dropouts, thereby leaving many no better off than they were before taking the tests.

Because 30 percent of GED test takers in 2004 were ages 16 to 18, it is evident that many young people are looking for an alternative to graduating from high school. Even though dropouts may think they can substitute the GED for an official high school diploma and still succeed in careers and college, recent

research is not very encouraging. The GED certificate does not provide the same pathways to earnings or schooling as high school graduation.

> While it [the GED] can provide a valuable second chance for those without a high school diploma who desire to continue their education, research suggests it should not be seen as equivalent to a high school diploma, or as an easy alternative to finishing high school by those considering dropping out. (Miller, 2006, p. 8)

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

The haunting images of school violence at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado; at public schools in Jonesboro in Arkansas, Paducah in Kentucky, and Pearl in Mississippi; and universities such as Virginia Tech, among many, have moved the issue of school safety to the forefront of education. Federal legislation—such as the Gun-Free Schools Act in 1994, which required states to expel weapon-toting students for at least a year, and the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, which stipulated that by 2000, every school "will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning"—emphasizes a safe school environment. Despite legislation, sniper attacks, bombs, revenge killings, Internet conspiracies, murders and suicides, and violence against students and educators continue to traumatize people in their schools and communities.

Barr and Parrett (2003) believe that high-visibility school violence is only the tip of the iceberg. They note that for every dramatic school shooting, there are thousands of other teenager murders or negligent homicides. Each year, between 2,500 and 3,000 teenagers are arrested and charged in the deaths of other teenagers and adults. Between 1985 and 1994, the arrests of 10- to 17-year-old children and youth for homicide, rape, robbery, and assault increased by 70 percent. During the next decade, the number of teenagers in the United States will increase by more than 20 percent, and the majority of them will be poor, minority, and residents of impoverished inner-city neighborhoods (Walsh; Burke; as cited in Barr & Parrett).

Public Response to Violence

The immediate response to the increase in acts of school violence is to call for more police protection for schools. Students and teachers have to feel safe; therefore, society's first reaction is to install metal detectors, hire hall monitors, initiate security measures, enforce dress codes, and suspend or expel any student who even jokes about getting revenge, bringing a weapon to school, or hating a teacher.

Research by Elias, Lantieri, Patti, Walberg, and Zins (1999) and others, however, indicates that society is only "responding to the fires instead of building the safety nets over time" (p. 45). One of the reasons people give to explain

the violence in schools is the prevalence of violence in society at large. Society bombards young children with images of violence. Many feel the media suggests that violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflicts and that treating others with disrespect and sarcasm is funny. "The American Psychological Association reports that by the age of 18, the typical child will have seen 16,000 simulated murders and 200,000 acts of violence. Moreover, in most cases, the perpetrators were not punished" (Elias et al., p. 45). The issue of guns and gun control continues to be a concern in society and cannot be separated from the issue of weapons in schools.

Statistics

One of the most recent studies, the 2000 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Statistics, *School Survey on Crime and Safety,* reveals some important facts about violence and crime in schools. The survey is a nationally representative sample of 2,270 regular public elementary, middle, secondary, and combined schools in the United States.

The survey reports the following statistics:

- In 1999–2000, 71 percent of public and elementary and secondary schools experienced at least one violent incident.
- Approximately 1.5 million incidents of theft and violence occurred in about 59,000 public schools that year.
- Schools reported bullying (29 percent) as the serious discipline problem that occurred most frequently, and student acts of disrespect toward teachers were reported as the second most frequent serious discipline problem by 19 percent of schools. (Rosen, 2005, p. 77)

In another study during the 1997–1998 school year, middle schools experienced more problem behavior than other schools. Twenty-one percent of middle schools had one or more incidents of a physical attack or a fight with a weapon, compared to 2 percent of elementary schools and 11 percent of high schools; moreover, 19 percent of middle school students were physically attacked in schools, compared with 10 percent of high school students (Crosse, Burr, Cantor, Hagen, & Hantman as cited in Rosen, 2005, p. 78).

According to a 1999 report by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (as cited in Rosen, 2005, p. 78), the number of street gangs in the United States has doubled since 1995. Also, an estimated 42 percent of youth groups were involved in the street sale of drugs between 1996 and 1997. Unfortunately, schools reflect the communities in which they are located, and the availability of 200 million guns in the United States remains a serious threat to children and youth (Rosen). The executive director of the National School Safety Center noted that an estimated 5,000 teachers are assaulted each month, and one-fifth of them are injured seriously enough to require medical attention (Ward as cited in Marzano et al., 2003).

With all the emphasis on curriculum improvement and the pressure from the NCLB Legislation to raise student achievement, it is imperative for principals and teachers to pay attention to improving school discipline

procedures and practices. Data from research conducted by the Educational Testing Service (Barton & Wenglinsky, 1998) show that school discipline is everybody's problem.

> Schools from east to west; north to south; schools in cities, suburbs, and rural areas; and schools serving students from all racial/ethnic background—all experience problems with student behavior. Moreover, these problems are more than a security and safety problem—they are critical factors in student academic achievement. Without order in our classrooms, teachers can't teach and students can't learn. (p. 5)

Profile of Violence-Prone Youth

At-risk youth often feel that they are outsiders because no one cares for them or cares about them. Often schools don't help students feel as though they belong to a caring community, and at-risk students become isolated or turn to the Internet for their social interaction. They may also turn to causing school disruptions, violence, or suicide, as they feel increasingly alone and alienated and unable to connect with their parents, teachers, or classmates. According to Barr and Parrett (2003),

> these teenagers seem desperate for guidance, and when they do not find it at home or at school, they cling to cliques of other isolated outsiders and, of course, immerse themselves in the brutal world of television, movies, and computer games. Too often, the feelings of being slighted, ignored, bullied, and victimized lead to a growing internal rage. (p. 227)

In the current climate of standardized testing, it is apparent that teachers feel pressured to focus on academics—often at the expense of communication skills and social skills some students desperately need. A national study of youth violence conducted by Washington State Attorney General in 2000, as cited in Barr and Parrett (2003), identifies home life and peer harassment as two major causes of youth violence. Educators may not always be able to control their students' home lives, but administrators can control the school environment and teachers can control the classroom climate. Hopefully their efforts will help reduce the feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and disengagement felt by most violent youth.

A policy information report titled *Order in the Classroom: Violence, Discipline, and Student Achievement* (Barton & Wenglinksy, 1998) confirms the link between order in the classroom and academic achievement. The report shows that the frequency of serious and nonserious offenses is negatively related to academic achievement in all four subject areas studied—mathematics, reading, science, and social studies. The report begins with a warning:

> Recent tragic events have riveted public attention to the behavior of students in the nation's schools. As the nation focuses on improving the academic achievement of its students, we need to remember the caution given by the late Al Shanker, former president of the American Federation of Teachers, Unless you have order and civility, not much learning will go on. (p. 3)

TODAY'S YOUTH

Adolescent Angst

> Jocks, Preps, Punks, Goths, Geeks. They may sit at separate tables in the cafeteria, but they all belong to the same generation. There are now 31 million kids in the 12 to 19 age group, 35 million teens by 2010, a population bulge bigger than even the baby boom at its peak. (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1999, p. 36)

These numbers show that the teenage population is exploding. In addition, the structure of the family is changing. Kids have less access to parents and more access to potentially damaging information from their home computers. The Internet, movies, and television are desensitizing students to violence and catering to children's fantasies about violence. Etzioni (1999) describes three Canadian villages that were prevented from receiving TV signals because of their location. Shortly after these communities started watching TV as a result of cable, crime rose significantly—more than in other Canadian towns. Etzioni states, "To the social scientist, this natural experiment shows that television added something to the causes of crime" (p. 57). The Internet also gives children access to violence—if children are predisposed to violence and aggression, the Internet helps connect them with other people who share their thoughts.

Many teenagers report that they feel overwhelmed by pressures and responsibilities. Many juggle part-time jobs, homework, and social pressures. Half have lived through their parents' divorce. Sixty-three percent are in households where both parents work outside the home, and many babysit younger siblings when they get home from school (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1999, p. 36). Today's teenagers are experiencing more pressures at earlier ages, and often their fears, anger, and frustrations do not disappear when they walk through the doors to school. Students must learn how to handle these pressures without resorting to harming themselves. Federal studies indicate that 1 in 5 high school students have considered suicide and 1 in 10 have actually attempted it (Goldberg as cited in Duke, 2002, p. 30). "At other times, the harm young people bring on themselves is inadvertent, the result of poor judgment or ignorance. Examples of such behavior include experimentation with drugs and risky activities such as driving at high speeds" (Duke, p. 30).

Loneliness and Depression

University of Chicago sociologist Barbara Schneider studied 7,000 teenagers for five years in the 1990s and found that the issue that troubles adolescents more than anything else is loneliness. She found that the teenagers in her study spent an average of 3.5 hours alone every day. "Teenagers may claim they want privacy, but they also crave and need attention—and they're not getting it" (Schneider as cited in Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1999, p. 38).

Loneliness creates an emotional vacuum that is often filled by peers. When teens are isolated from parents and teachers, they become more vulnerable to emotional problems. They also become more easily influenced by a peer group because they want desperately to "fit in." Sometimes, teachers contribute to the students' feelings of loneliness and isolation by belittling students or even worse, ignoring them altogether.

Tony Wagner (1999) describes how many high school teachers, in particular, use sarcasm and ridicule to show how clever they are and to keep students submissive and compliant. He suggests that a solution might be to move to smaller school units and have the same teacher stay with students for several years in an attempt to overcome the problem of disconnection. When students feel disconnected from their family, teachers, or peers, they sometimes resort to "fight" by disrupting their class or school or "flight" by withdrawing mentally, emotionally, and sometimes physically from school and daily life.

Rejection and Alienation

Feeling rejected by peer groups and ignored by parents can cause confusion and hurt in teenagers, which in turn can develop into hate and violence. Reports alleging that Columbine High School gunmen Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold hated jocks, because jocks taunted them and called them "rejects" and "inbreds" and pushed them up against lockers in the halls, demonstrate how strong revenge can become in a desperate attempt to get attention and respect. Students who feel alienated and disconnected from peer groups either withdraw in "flight" or retaliate in "fight."

A 17-year-old Columbine High School junior framed the problem clearly: "I mean, it was just like it must be at every other high school in America. You know, kids can be really mean to each other, really cruel" (Wagner, 1999, p. 48). The mass killings at Virginia Tech by a student who rarely talked or socialized with other students indicate how desperate young people can become when they feel they do not get the attention and respect they so desperately seek.

The gulf between young people and adults has reached alarming proportions, causing teenagers to become alienated from their families and teachers as well as peers. The same students who resent parents as authority figures can transfer that dislike to teachers and principals, bosses at work, and fellow students whom they perceive as the "goodie-goodie" kids trying to please and impress adults. At the center of this gulf is the family under pressure. Parents are too stressed, schools are too impersonal, and the community is too disorganized to fulfill that most basic human need of children—to belong. Estranged from family, friends, school, or productive work, children are sown with the seeds of discouragement.

Alienated young people are assigned a multitude of labels, most of them unfriendly. They are described as aggressive or anxious, as attention disordered or affectionless, as unmotivated or unteachable, as drug abusers or dropouts. Most terms label and sort students or follow the pattern of blaming the victim. The catch phrase *zero tolerance* is popular because expulsion is felt to be the best

punishment for offenders. Violence needs to be addressed to ensure school safety, but as Goodlad (as cited in Brendtro & Long, 1995) states:

> If we cease trying to teach difficult students, we shift the responsibility for their enculturation elsewhere—and there is no elsewhere. Excluding violent students from an education is no more moral than forcing the most critical patients from an emergency room. These students need to belong *somewhere.* (p. 112)

Brain Dysfunction

The importance of the early development of the brain has been a subject of intense interest because of the series of students involved in school shootings around the country. The debate over nature versus nurture has surfaced as researchers search for the biological roots of violence. Begley (1999) states that a child's brain is more malleable than an adult's. She believes that the young brain is extra vulnerable to hurt in the first years of life.

> A child who suffers repeated 'hits' of stress—abuse, neglect, terror—experiences physical changes in his brain. . . . The incessant flood of stress chemicals tends to reset the brain's system of fight or flight hormones, putting them on hair-trigger alert. (p. 32)

Begley believes that as a result of these early traumatic experiences, kids may show impulsive aggression to anyone who "disses" them, gets up at a cafeteria table when they sit down, or embarrasses or humiliates them in front of peers.

One early warning sign of potential violent behavior is the infliction of extreme cruelty upon animals. Kip Kinkel, the 15-year-old who killed his parents and then shot 24 schoolmates in Springfield, Oregon, in 1998, had a history of abuse to animals. Luke Woodham, who killed three schoolmates and wounded seven at his high school in Pearl, Mississippi, in 1997, "had previously beaten his dog with a club, wrapped it in a bag and set it on fire" (Begley, 1999, p. 33).

Scans of the brain of one 16-year-old assailant who assaulted another student showed several abnormalities. They reflected some combination of early childhood head injuries, depression, and exposure to violence. Lesions in the frontal lobe can induce apathy and distort both judgment and emotion. Such abnormalities and factors are often found in violent students.

Risky Student Behavior

Educators have always realized that students' behavior is affected by emotional events such as the death of a parent, family divorce, the breakup of a teen romance, or the taunts of a bully. These traumatic events may cause many students to be at risk of failing in school, dropping out, or turning violent (Barr & Parrett, 2003). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has coordinated surveys to monitor the risky behaviors among the young that cause the most significant health risks. Results of the 2000 survey related to alcohol,

drugs, sexual activity, tobacco, safety, and nutrition dramatized the many risky behaviors of teenagers today and the alarming percentage of youth involved in these behaviors. For example, 47 percent of students surveyed drank alcohol on one or more days during the preceding month; 13 percent drove a vehicle after drinking alcohol; and 31 percent rode with a driver who had been drinking (Kann et al., National Center for Disease Control Surveillance Summaries, as cited in Barr & Parrott, 2003).

Growing up is a "risky business" in the United States, and at-risk youth are present in all socioeconomic groupings of adolescents. But as Barr and Parrett (2003) note,

> Schools need to establish expectations that all students will become connected to a caring adult at school. When schools place a priority on educators and staff developing positive relationships with all students, negative behavior, and dropout rates can rapidly diminish. (p. 41)

SUMMARY

This chapter highlights some of the issues facing educators today, but it cannot possibly address all of the problems and concerns. It is evident that teachers in the twenty-first century must know more than their subject area content to meet the needs of the diverse students they teach. It is also evident that classroom management problems cannot be attributed to "students' just not behaving" after examining all the potential reasons why children might feel and act the way they do. The challenges presented by students require a repertoire of problem-solving strategies to address multiple causes.