



Foundations of Special Education

By Dr. Kathleen VanTol

Chapter 2: Special Education Professionals, Services, and Placement

Discussion Questions

1. Why is collaboration so important in special education? What challenges might schools face when multiple professionals work together to support students?
2. The chapter describes paraprofessionals as the “unsung heroes” of many classrooms. Why do you think paraprofessionals play such an important role in supporting students with disabilities?
3. Why is it important that paraprofessionals work under the direction of a licensed teacher? What problems could occur if roles and responsibilities are unclear?
4. How do related service providers such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and school nurses help students participate more fully in school?
5. What does the term “free appropriate public education” (FAPE) mean? Why is the word “appropriate” important in understanding special education services?
6. The Rowley case established that schools are not required to maximize a student’s potential. Do you agree with this interpretation of FAPE? Why or why not?
7. What does “least restrictive environment” (LRE) mean? Why might determining LRE sometimes be difficult?
8. Why is placement in the general education classroom not always automatically considered the least restrictive environment for every student?

9. Why is it important that placement decisions occur after the IEP is developed rather than before?
10. What are some possible benefits of inclusive classrooms for students with and without disabilities?
11. What are some challenges schools and teachers may face when trying to support inclusion effectively?
12. The “zero reject” principle states that all children are entitled to an education regardless of the severity of disability. Why is this principle important?
13. How might schools balance the needs of an individual student with disabilities while also supporting the learning environment of the larger classroom?
14. What role should general education teachers play in supporting students with disabilities and implementing IEP accommodations?
15. After reading this chapter, what do you think are the most important factors schools should consider when designing supports and placement options for students with disabilities?

About the Author

Dr. Kathleen VanTol has over 35 years of experience working in the field of education. She holds a doctorate in special education from Western Michigan University and is a professor of special education at Dordt University. She is also a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and a Board Certified Advocate in Special Education.

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