



Luana Greulich

## Adventist Education and Students With Disabilities

Educating students with disabilities is still relatively new in the United States. Mandatory education of students with disabilities did not occur until the inception of the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) in 1975, which included Public Law 94-142 requiring “free and appropriate education” for students with disabilities.<sup>1</sup> IDEA was revised in 2004 to call for more inclusive education for students with disabilities in the educational setting.<sup>2</sup> As a result, more U.S. public school students with disabilities are being educated in the regular classroom than in self-contained or resource rooms, shifting the responsibility of educating students with disabilities to the classroom teacher with support from a special-education teacher.<sup>3</sup>

Although laws regulating the education of students with disabilities in the United States do not apply to all private educational institutions, this does not mean that students in private institutions cannot receive services. These services vary depending upon the agreement between the local school system and the private institution.

So how does this uneven access to resources affect students with disabilities attending Adventist schools? There is no simple answer since the diversity of the Adventist educational system also includes significant variation in the services provided to students with disabilities. The Adventist educational system in the U.S. consists of numerous small, rural one-teacher multigrade schools as well as larger schools with multiple teachers. In other countries, our schools may have up to 80 students in one class with one teacher. Some of the larger Adventist schools may employ a special-education teacher, while other schools may access resources provided by the local public school system, or there may be no special-education services provided. In 2001, James Tucker addressed the need for special education to become a viable part of the Adventist educational system. Little has changed, confirming Tucker’s conclusion that although this topic has been researched and debated for many years, there are still no consistent outcomes within our educational system. However, one problem cannot be ignored: In the Adventist system and public school system, teachers need more training to successfully assist

students with disabilities.<sup>4</sup> Many Adventist educators confirm that they are *already* serving students with disabilities in their classrooms, and recognize that they need more guidance and training. Some of our universities and conference educational departments are presently providing training through resources, classes, and programs to help educators learn how to assist students with disabilities.

One resource for Adventist educators is this special issue on teaching students with disabilities. The articles address the most common disabilities as well as the areas in which students with disabilities struggle the most. The authors were chosen because of their expertise and currently serve in a variety of roles: education researchers, college professors specializing in counseling and education, and professionals who serve students with disabilities (student-services personnel, education administrators, and school psychologists). This issue provides information, strategies, and resources to assist Adventist educators in working with students with disabilities. The topics in this issue are as follows: “Why Adventist Education Should Be Special” (Austin C. Archer), “Understanding Autistic Children in the Classroom” (Sheryl Gregory and Donna Jeffery), “Handling Common Emotionally Based Behavior Problems” (Ronald D. Coffen), “Special-needs Children and Mental Health” (Nancy Carbonell), “Effective Early Reading Instruction” (Stephanie Al Otaiba), “Response to Intervention for Math” (Matthew K. Burns), and “Accommodating Students With Disabilities at the College Level” (Carletta Witzel, Luana Greulich, and James R. Jeffery). Although this issue cannot cover everything related to working with students with disabilities, it provides a good starting point. Further information can be obtained by consulting the “Sources for Additional Information” in some of the articles, reading materials that the authors have published elsewhere, and by conducting topic searches.

The field of special education is constantly changing and evolving. Since 2004, there have been significant changes that affect society such as a dramatic increase in the number of children diagnosed with autism,<sup>5</sup> a movement toward inclusive education in secular school systems, and in the United States, the implementation of the Com-



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encing academic difficulties. Her areas of research interest include disability law and academic support.



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**James Jeffery, Ph.D.,** served as the Dean of the School of Education at Andrews University from 2003–2015 and recently retired. His

background in education includes being a high school principal, a school superintendent, department chair, and professor of leadership and educational administration. Dr. Jeffery's research interests are in school governance and leadership, and online teaching and learning.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Cynthia G. Simpson and Vicky G. Spencer, *College Success for Students With Learning Disabilities* (Waco, Texas: Prufrock Press, 2009), p. 112.

3. Chris Wise Tiedemann, *College Success—for Students With Physical Disabilities* (Waco, Texas: Prufrock Press, Inc., 2012), p. 129.

4. Christy Oslund, *Supporting College and University Students With Invisible Disabilities: A Guide for Faculty and Staff Working With Students With Autism, AD/HD, Language Processing Disorders, Anxiety, and Mental Illness* (London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2014), p. 28.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

7. Norman Coombs, *Making Online Teaching Accessible: Inclusive Course Design for Students With Disabilities* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), p. 24.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

9. Jane E. Jarrow, "When Faculty Are Too Accommodating!" Social Security Administration: [http://www.janejarrow.com/public\\_library/inverse-material/factooacc.html](http://www.janejarrow.com/public_library/inverse-material/factooacc.html).

10. Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1913), p. 229.

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mon Core State Standards. As guest editor for this issue, I would like to call for more topics in special education in publications like THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION.

Our goal for this issue is to help teachers learn about resources they can successfully use in their classrooms to assist students with disabilities. Our teachers need more resources to help them ensure that every student enrolled in our schools not only obtains a good spiritual foundation, but also a strong academic foundation. May the words of Jesus in Luke 9:48 resonate as we strive to meet this need: "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great" (ESV).<sup>6</sup>

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research in the surrounding public school systems. The JAE editorial staff express heartfelt appreciation for the many hours Dr. Greulich devoted to selecting topics, obtaining peer reviewers, providing input on article content, as well as her prompt responses to the editor's questions during the planning and production of this issue.

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5. National Center for Education Statistics, *ibid.*; Autism Society, Facts and Statistics, <http://www.autism-society.org/what-is/facts-and-statistics/>.

6. Scripture quotations marked ESV are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.