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Foreword

58,000,000!

What does 58,000,000 have to do with your preparation to be an amazing, highly qualified educator in today's diverse classroom?

No, it is not how many students there are. No, it is not how many jobs are available. No, it is not the number of pages you will need to read. Rather, it is the number of hits I got this morning when I Googled "teaching in the field of special education." Yes—58,000,000 hits! How can you possibly be on top of such a colossal amount of knowledge?

It has been suggested that trying to get a question answered these days is likened to trying to get a sip of water from a torrential fire hydrant. Picture yourself trying to do just that! What is your imagined result? Are you able to quench your thirst or are you knocked to the ground?

Wendy Murawski and Kathy Scott have come to the rescue in saving you from drowning in the 58,000,000 online resources! As editors of *What Really Works With Exceptional Learners*, they have selected highly knowledgeable experts to write chapters organized into the following four domains:

- What really works with content
- What really works with instruction
- What really works with special populations
- What really works beyond the classroom

The 19 chapters that comprise these four domains all have a common research-based format including:

- Overview of key concepts
- Priority dos and don'ts related to professional practice
- Most significant websites and apps
- Supplemental resources and references

The organization and content provide for you a map of the field's key knowledge. This map enables you to gain a *breadth* of teacher competency that is rare in terms of current textbooks. Once you grasp the special

Introduction

This book is called *What Really Works With Exceptional Learners*, but when you think about it, what students *aren't* exceptional, or special, learners at some point in their lives? Which one of us has not struggled with content or pedagogy or even just sitting, focusing, being organized, or listening . . . especially before our coffee in the morning? It would be lovely if we could have a book that addressed *all* our special needs and gave us the perfect answer to all questions. Unfortunately, there are simply too many needs to address them all and this book is not an encyclopedia. (For those of you who do not know what an encyclopedia is, it was a paper version of the Internet before the Internet was created.) So we have limited our focus in this book to special learners with identified disabilities, those who are English language learners, and those who are gifted or twice exceptional. That is plenty to tackle in one book, don't you agree?

It is amazing to us when we hear teachers say, "I wasn't taught how to deal with that type of student." We wish we knew who "*that type*" of kid was! Every student we have worked with has been unique, different, special. However, we do know that there are techniques that teachers can try to help improve the learning or behavior or social skills of students. We also know that labels have been created to help us categorize and make sense of the special needs that some students have. We definitely capitalize on those labels through the chapters of this book. But we implore you to read this text, not as a guide to specific categories of students, but as a reference manual for numerous strategies to try for *any* child.

As with our first two texts of this series, we selected authors we knew are not only content experts but who also are practitioners. We wanted people who knew the research base, but also who really knew kids and what works with students! We asked them to write *to* the reader (that's you!), not *at* the reader. We asked for practical strategies and bulleted lists, not ivory tower, theoretical, or esoteric information. The research provided for each chapter will help you recognize how important it is that the things you do in school are evidence-based, and will be given to you in a way that respects that you are a busy educator with a lot to process. We know that you will find this book accessible and helpful. We hope you will share the strategies you learn with your colleagues, as you hear them venting in the teachers' lounge or crying in the parking lot after school.

Getting Past “I Hate Math!”

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THE RUB: MATHEMATICS AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Wait, what? A student with a disability who doesn't like math? Say it isn't so! But yes, we all know this far too well. We also know that responding to “Why do I ever have to know how to write a geometry proof” with “Because it'll be on the test” simply isn't a good strategy. What can we do, and why has there been such a push for problem-based mathematics?

Improving student outcomes through effective academic instruction has always been key. The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 provided an even bigger push to do so (NCLB, 2002). The consensus was that to better prepare students for postsecondary success, greater

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Creating a Cadre of Capable Readers

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READING: FAIRY TALES OR FAILURE?

As a young girl, my earliest memories of reading are only that I loved it. When I was 6 years old, I remember begging my mother to take me to the local bookstore, where I would gather up as many books as I could convince her to buy, pouring over the fairy tales and adventures as soon as we got home, and within hours announcing to my then irritated mother that I needed more books right now! Sadly, this is not the experience of many children in the United States, particularly those with disabilities. Unlike my younger self, too many children do not smoothly enter the exciting world of adventures made accessible by their proficient reading. Rather, many struggle to read unfamiliar words, fail to understand the meaning of long passages, or recoil with anxiety when asked to read aloud from a textbook.

As a nation, we have prioritized improving educational outcomes for all children. Just look at the efforts from the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) and its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (2001), to the Common Core State Standards. We know that reading serves as the foundation for the rest of formal education and is necessary for full access to the