CONTENTS

SECTION 3: SUPPORTS FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES

INTRODUCTION

To our English learner students, and all culturally and linguistically diverse learners in our schools, their families, and the teachers who serve them.

The US Migration Policy Institute (Park, O'Toole, & Katsiaficas, 2017) indicates that 1 of 10 students in public schools are identified as English learners, and approximately 85% of the youngest of these (pre-K to fifth grade) are native born. A recent study also showed that over 90% of English learner programs still show disparate outcomes for English learners, particularly those with disabilities (Foxen & Mather, 2016). As increasing numbers of schools and classrooms include English learners, increasing numbers of educators are expected to understand second-language acquisition and teach literacy and academic content in languages new to students. In addition, practitioners must consider an added layer: problem solving for those who may have disabilities, a group already established to be at risk in countless studies. At the end of the 2015 school year, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that English learners with documented disabilities make up 13.8% of the total EL population in our nation's K–12 schools (NCES, 2017). These facts, together, suggest that it is increasingly important for educators to be familiar with the needs of English learners, as they include a growing portion of our students; that English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and other specialized programs may be necessary but not sufficient to meet the needs of this growing group of students; and that all educators must rise to the challenge of addressing the double risk factors of language learning and disability that may impact these students.

These seeming challenges also present extraordinary opportunities to school personnel and to the entire educational system; in making needed changes to support English learners, all of us have the opportunity to reevaluate practice and improve our day-to-day work with diverse learners. At the same time, these efforts to improve daily practice are urgent, as achievement and opportunity gaps continue to affect scores of English learners, particularly those who are already at risk

in terms of academics or behavior. Our children come to school with a wealth of information that stems from family, culture, and language. They come with beautiful curiosity and a desire to belong, learn, and succeed. It is our collective responsibility, working within an ecological framework, to support the whole child, academically and socioemotionally. Doing so effectively will allow us to change the trajectories of our English learners who have specific learning needs.

This book grew out of the urgency surrounding those trajectories; English learners with disabilities often have tremendous potential but remain underserved in our schools, as demonstrated by national data. Some core theories undergird our work: Carol Dweck's (2007) examination of growth mindset, theories of equity and cultural responsiveness, the whole-child framework, and the Universal Design for Learning approach. These theories are not specific to ESOL or the field of second-language acquisition in general; rather, our emphasis in this book is developmental, and our goal is to situate the cultural and linguistic needs of English learners within the whole-child, developmental perspective essential to special education.

In our discussions of this topic, over several years of collaboration, on this and other projects, we returned again and again to the core belief that effective supports for English learners with disabilities begin long before the point of identification and individual education program (IEP) development. In fact, effective supports and services for English learners with disabilities cannot exist outside a school structure dedicated to the success of all learners, at every tier of instruction. It may seem counterintuitive for a book addressing programming and supports for English learners with disabilities to spend the first five chapters addressing topics such as developmental assets and universally designed instruction. In today's schools, though, much of our service delivery for students with disabilities occurs—as it should—informally (through response-to-intervention approaches), inclusively (in general education settings), and collaboratively (with the involvement of multiple professionals in varied roles). Specialized interventions and programming are often the culminating steps in a process of inclusive, linguistically responsive instruction that should begin with the first encounter between a student's family and the school system. We further believe—and evidence has shown—that specialized interventions and programming have a much higher likelihood of success when they occur in conjunction with strong problem-solving processes at all levels, inclusive approaches to education, and a commitment to appropriate special education identification. For that reason, our final few chapters provide in-depth discussion of topics traditionally associated with "special education": formal assessment, family involvement in decision-making, and individualized education planning. These chapters are preceded in the book, as they must be in practice, by extensive discussion of strengths-based and deficit-based mindsets (so that we do not mistakenly assume children's differences are disabilities), collaborative problem solving (so that we ensure all professionals with appropriate expertise are involved in supporting any given child), and universal supports for curriculum access (so that English learners with disabilities can thrive, when possible, in general education classrooms as they access the general education curriculum).

This book is designed to be practitioner-friendly and easy to read. Each chapter includes real-life vignettes, discussion of key concepts, practical approaches and strategies, and reflection or discussion questions. There is also a companion website rich with resources: www.tesol.org/exceptionalneeds. We hope these resources will deepen and improve practices, offering teachers and school leaders a set of classroom-ready tools and ideas relevant to their English learners who may have disabilities.

Section 1 covers foundational background knowledge related to English learners. In chapter 1, we present a strengths-based approach to English learners, an alternative to the popular and insidious deficit-based methods of considering these students and their abilities. Chapter 2, by June Lucas Zillich, Patricia Rice Doran, and Amy Noggle, describes some of the needs this unique group of students may bring to school, highlighting the opportunities these needs, and students' abilities, can present for schools and teachers. In chapter 3, Noggle and Gregory Knollman present an overview of policies that affect English learners, policies that affect children with disabilities, and how these laws often intersect in day-to-day practice.

Section 2 describes the structures present in responsive, culturally sustaining schools and classrooms. Chapter 4, by Rice Doran and Danielle Turner, describes ecological frameworks and discusses their importance for English learners in particular; in chapter 5, Heather Wayson Wilson identifies and discusses key elements of responsive problem-solving protocols and intrastaff collaboration, a key practice for supporting English learners with and without disabilities. And in chapter 6, Rice Doran and Noggle review the fundamentals of UDL and its importance in foundational classroom instruction for English learners.

Section 3 addresses targeted and intensive supports for English learners with (or at risk for) disabilities and presents strategies and recommended practices for assessment, identification, and IEP development for this important group of students. In chapter 7, Rice Doran describes targeted supports and response-to-intervention practices for English learners with academic or behavioral needs. Chapters 8 and 9, both by Noggle and Rice Doran, describe recommended assessment and identification practices for English learners who may have high-incidence disabilities and those with low-incidence disabilities, respectively. Finally, in chapter 10, Rice Doran and Knollman review considerations for intensive supports and service delivery for students following identification and IEP development. This chapter ends our book—but we hope that, along with the preceding chapters, it serves as a beginning point for readers in reflecting on, and continuously improving, their services and supports for English learners with and without disabilities.

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