



TABLE 1.1 The Advantages and Disadvantages of Labeling Individuals With Special Needs

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Labels serve as a means for funding and administering education programs.• Teacher certification programs and the credentialing process are frequently developed around specific disability categories (e.g., intellectual disabilities, hearing impairment).• Labels allow professionals to communicate efficiently in a meaningful fashion.• Research efforts frequently focus on specific diagnostic categories.• Labels establish an individual's eligibility for services.• Treatments, instruction, and support services are differentially provided on the basis of a label (e.g., sign language for a student who is deaf, an accelerated or enriched curriculum for pupils who are gifted and talented).• Labels heighten the visibility of the unique needs of persons with disabilities.• Labels serve as a basis for counting the number of individuals with disabilities and thus assist governments, schools, agencies, and other organizations in planning for the delivery of needed services.• Advocacy and special interest groups, such as the Autism Society of America or the National Federation of the Blind, typically have an interest in assisting particular groups of citizens with disabling conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Labels can be stigmatizing and may lead to stereotyping.• Labeling has the potential of focusing attention on limitations and what a person cannot do instead of on the individual's capabilities and strengths.• Labels can sometimes be used as an excuse or a reason for delivering ineffective instruction (e.g., "Marvin can't learn his multiplication facts because he is intellectually disabled").• Labels can contribute to a diminished self-concept, lower expectations, and poor self-esteem.• Labels are typically inadequate for instructional purposes; they do not accurately reflect the educational or therapeutic needs of the individual student.• Labeling can lead to reduced opportunities for normalized experiences in school and community life.• A label can give the false impression of the permanence of a disability; some labels evaporate upon leaving the school environment.