Law & Disorder is a journal dedicated to publishing articles written by undergraduate students about disabilities and laws. Issue five of the journal begins with a perennially important question: When is special education necessary? This issue ends with a highly heated and often misunderstood question of where the best place to render special education services is. The answers to these questions are deceptively simple, but the authors of the eight articles in Issue 5 know the difficulty of answering these seemingly obvious questions.

The first set of four articles revolves around the question of identification. Roberts launches Issue five by seeking an answer to the ever-lingering concern faced by general educators about how to best educate students with disabilities. General educators often have limited knowledge about disabilities and the process of making a referral for evaluation. They may not be aware of the wide spectrum of socioeconomic backgrounds that students come from, and therefore may be ill-informed about how low socioeconomic status students have not had the exposure to academic experiences that higher SES students enjoy. This lack of experience puts these students at an academic disadvantage. The answer to Robert’s question is important because of the danger of confusing disability with cultural difference. Delaney, Radke, and Zimmerle ask a controversial question few teachers will admit to answering for themselves. When students in elementary and secondary school experience academic difficulties, are they lazy, or is there a possibility of a learning disability? In the face of what is invisible, as learning disabilities often are, teachers wrongfully, but understandably, assume that the child who appears without a disability is simply not trying hard enough or is giving up. The authors explore the answer to this question through a hypothetical child constructed from behaviors typically seen in children of elementary school age who struggle in school because of a learning disability. Schumacher shifts from questions to direct guidelines about the process of identifying students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). She describes students with the ADHD diagnosis and provides guidance in the identification process within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Less directly, but similarly convincing and important to educators, Timberlake uses literature on psychopathy, a diagnosis reserved for the most extreme and severe cases
of adults with behavioral disorders, to connect markers of maladaptive behavior in children. Her goal, in arguing for early identification of behavioral disorders in children displaying callous-unemotional traits, is to identify early to prevent the development of psychopathy as adults.

The second set of articles provides recommendations for how to teach students with disabilities. Thompson and Anderson offer a cognitive behavioral approach for general education teachers to use in their classrooms, pointing out that the approach has been shown to be particularly effective at building pro-social skills in learners with high functioning autism. Fries, a music major in the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University, looks more holistically at students and points out that general education teachers are required by special education law to include students with disabilities in the music classroom. He notes a connection between music, creativity, and depression and offers suggestions for modifications in the music classroom to teach students with depression through music. Pasyk reminds educators that learners with visual impairments do not see the world through the same lens. She offers concrete teaching advice such as aural and tactile strategies to mitigate the challenges that this population of students with disabilities encounter in the general education classroom. Eller, Fisher, Gilchrist, Rozman, and Shockney, all receiving a license in both general and special education, close the issue with the most vexing question in special education: Where should students with disabilities be educated? Their question is less argumentative and more informative, as they provide a summary of the literature indicating positive learning outcomes for students with learning disabilities and behavioral disorders along with a list of options for educators to consider as they teach these students. Through the research performed by the authors of these eight articles, some of the questions of identification and special education services will be answered. Issue five contains great detail of what it is like to search for answers in these important, but somewhat difficult, processes.

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