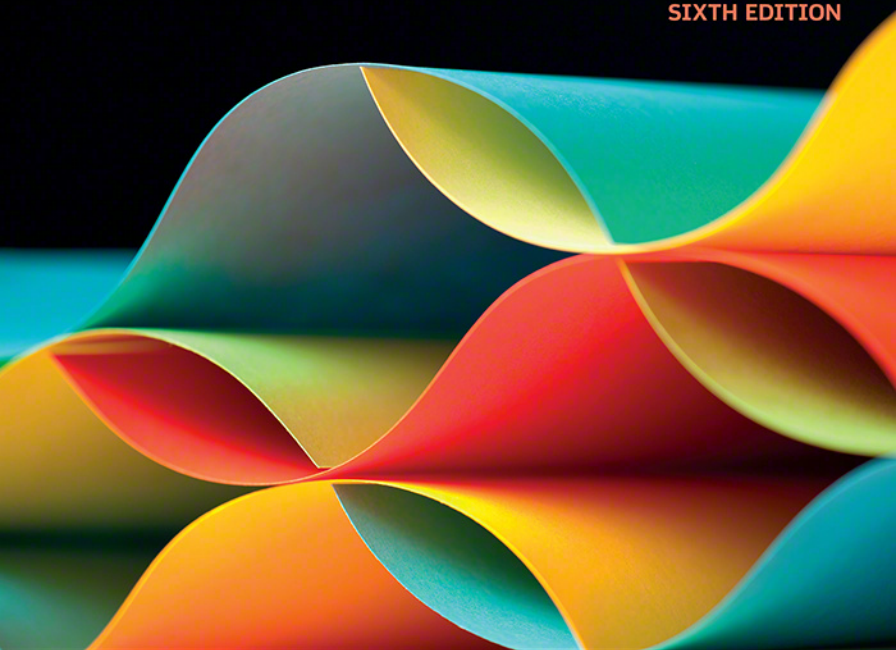# ASSESSMENT IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

A PRACTICAL APPROACH

SIXTH EDITION

Roger A. Pierangelo • George Giuliani

Assessment in Special Education

A Practical Approach

Sixth Edition

Roger Pierangelo
Long Island University

George A. Giuliani
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Pearson

This book is dedicated to my wife, Jackie, and my two children, Jacqueline and Scott, who provide me with the love and purpose for undertaking projects that I hope will enhance the lives of others. Their lovely presence in my life is a blessing. I also dedicate this book to my parents, who provided me with the secure and loving foundation from which to grow; my sister, Carol, who has always made me smile and laugh; and my brother-in-law, George, who has always been a very positive guiding light in my professional journey.

—R. P.

This book is dedicated to my wife, Anita, and our two children, Collin and Brittany, who give me the greatest life imaginable. The long hours and many years it took to finish this book would never have been possible without the support of my loving wife. Her constant encouragement, understanding, and love provided me with the strength I needed to accomplish my goals. I thank her with all my heart. I also dedicate this book to my parents, who have given me so much support and guidance throughout my life. Their words of encouragement and guidance have made my professional journey a very rewarding and successful experience.

—G. G.

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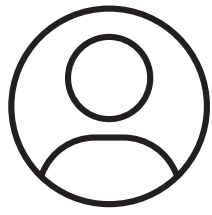
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Dr. Roger Pierangelo was a Professor in the Department of Special Education and Literacy at Long Island University for over 25 years and recently retired. He has been an administrator of special education programs, served for 18 years as a permanent member of Committees on Special Education, has over 30 years of experience in the public school system as a general education classroom teacher and school psychologist, and serves as a consultant to numerous private and public schools, as well as PTA and Special Education PTA groups.

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Dr. Giuliani is the author of multiple books in the field of special education, including two coauthored with Dr. Pierangelo from Pearson Education titled *Transition Services in Special Education: A Practical Approach* and *Learning Disabilities: A Practical Approach to Foundations, Assessment, Diagnosis, and Teaching*.

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Preface

*A*ssessment in Special Education: A Practical Approach, sixth edition, continues to represent a new and unique direction in college textbooks. This book is the result of several years of marketing analysis and experience. The format for this text is based on your needs as a student to have a practical, user-friendly, and clearly comprehensible textbook that will be a valuable resource and reference once you enter the workplace. In our market research with undergraduate and graduate students, we found that

- 91 percent of those interviewed felt that most college texts were very difficult to read
- 87 percent found them difficult to understand
- 74 percent felt that most texts contained irrelevant and useless charts and tables
- 93 percent indicated that they could not see using the book as a practical reference tool after the course was over
- 71 percent felt that the formats were overwhelming
- 98 percent felt that most texts contained too much theory and not enough "practical information"
- 90 percent normally sold back their textbooks at the end of the semester because they had no practical value and would "just sit on a shelf"

In this text, we have tried to provide you with a "real-world story" or process for the area of assessment that has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Many assessment texts we have reviewed have approximately 20 or more chapters that are not connected, but rather offer students fragments of the assessment process but never clearly show the overall process in a straight line—from the beginning to the end. Our goal for this text is to provide you with the practical tools necessary to understand the process of assessment in schools and to learn how to "put the pieces all together."

Graduates of most assessment courses understand what constitutes validity and reliability, a description of the tests most often used in assessment, legal issues, and basic statistical terminology. Our textbook not only covers these areas, but also focuses on the practical application of assessment in schools with discussions of interpreting results, diagnosing a suspected disability, writing a professional report, making recommendations from the data, presenting results to parents, and attending the eligibility committee meetings. From our market research, this is where our book is unique.

Other practical features of this text include the following:

- Content that reflects the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA)
- An overall practical focus to balance out the strong grounding in theory so necessary for understanding exceptionality
- Combined coverage of formal and informal assessment
- Coverage of assessment that spans infancy and preschool age through high school and into adulthood
- Thorough discussion of all the most up-to-date tests used in school systems
- Comprehensive coverage of evaluation procedures for all areas of exceptionality

- Opportunities to take test data and learn their practical application in both writing and recommendations
- Practical approaches to parent–teacher conferences and the sensitivity required in discussing test results with parents
- A step-by-step approach from identification of a high-risk child to appropriate placement
- An emphasis on the application of information to meet the individual, often unique, requirements of students with special needs
- Information about assessment vehicles, both formal and informal, to help you make informed decisions about which technique or tool is best for each student
- Numerous teaching–learning aids
- Samples of actual assessment, evaluation, and procedural forms utilized in school systems

After reading this textbook, you should have a thorough understanding of the assessment process in special education from start to finish. Assessment in special education is a step-by-step approach, and we have given you all the tools necessary to understand what really happens in the assessment process.

New to This Edition

Besides the features addressed in the bulleted list above, *Assessment in Special Education: A Practical Approach*, sixth edition, has many new features. These include:

NEW! All chapters now begin with Learning Outcomes that identify the concepts covered in each major section of the chapter and point out the expectations of accountability for learning those concepts. Learning Outcome quizzes and Application Exercises—key components of the Learning Management System available via the eText—measure your understanding of the learning outcomes and your ability to apply them.

NEW! Chapter 5 on Legal, Ethical, and Professional Issues in Special Education Assessment. In Chapter 5, we introduce you to specific legal, ethical, and professional issues in special education assessment. We describe the rights of parents in the educational decision making of their children and identify how to provide written notice to parents for special needs assessment and obtain parental consent. In Chapter 5, you will identify the procedures for initiating an evaluation for a child with a suspected disability and describe six IDEIA standards that comply with federal guidelines for special education evaluations. By the end of Chapter 5, you will learn how to defend ethical practices that enhance the integrity of test results.

NEW! Chapter 6 on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Special Education Assessment. In Chapter 6, we introduce you to cultural and linguistic diversity in special education and the significance of cultural competence when working with children with special needs and their parents. In Chapter 6, you will identify techniques and actions educators use to prepare for a multicultural assessment and describe factors that influence assessment of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

NEW! Chapter 8 on Required Responsibilities in Screening and Assessment of Students. In Chapter 8, you will learn to identify the purpose of screening assessments and describe the process for using them. We describe the purpose of an initial evaluation, the procedures for getting one underway, and participants in the process. You will also learn about triennial evaluations, the purpose of a triennial evaluation, and who participates in this evaluation.

NEW! Updates on All Test and Evaluation Measures Used in a Comprehensive Evaluation in the Special Education Process. Chapters 11 through 17 provide analyses of the most current, valid, reliable, and popular intelligence, academic achievement, behavioral, perceptual, speech and language, early childhood, hearing, and physical and occupational therapy assessment measures used in the special education process.

NEW! Updates on Eligibility for Special Education and the Requirements for Classification of a Child with a Suspected Disability. Chapters 18 through 22 provide updates on putting everything together and the special education requirements after doing an evaluation for a suspected disability. The latest information of eligibility in special education on all areas of classification and how the assessment process dictates classification are addressed, as well as updated references in all chapters covering the most current research in the field of assessment.

NEW! Updates on Writing a Professional Report. In Chapter 19, you will learn by a step-by-step process all the sections required in putting together a professional report. The chapter will provide practical suggestions and numerous examples as well as a final professional report on a student that can be used as a template. The chapter also provides numerous guidelines for the presentation and format of a professional report.

NEW! Chapter 20 on Preparation and Presentation of Test Results. In Chapter 20, you will learn the practical preparation and presentation of test results to the Child Study Team, Eligibility Committee, and parents. The chapter will provide step-by-step checklists for preparation and professional presentation at the Annual Review, Triennial Review, and Eligibility Committee for test results of an initial evaluation for special education.

Key Content Updates by Chapter

Chapter 1 Incorporated new and updated information on defining and understanding the purpose of assessment, landmark court cases, and federal legislation pertaining to special education and individuals with disabilities. Added information of basic principles about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and the steps involved in the assessment process in special education.

Chapter 2 Added information on the importance of norm-referenced tests, standardization, and concerns surrounding standardized testing. Expanded explanations on the various informal measures of assessment and key issues surrounding testing considerations and the limitations of various kinds of testing.

Chapter 3 Updated examples on basic statistical terminology including scales of measurement, measures of central tendency, frequency, and range. Added information on the importance of the normal curve and how it can be used in the assessment process for decision making.

Chapter 4 Updated examples explaining the importance of scaled scores and standard scores and how they are used in reporting information during the assessment process. Added information on terminology used in reporting scores in assessment, including percentiles, stanines, T-scores, z-scores, age equivalents, and grade equivalents.

Chapter 5 Provides new information on specific legal, ethical, and professional issues in special education assessment. We describe the rights of parents in decision making about their children's education and identify how to provide written notice to parents for special needs assessment and obtain parental consent. Chapter 5 shows you how to identify the procedures for initiating an evaluation for a child with a suspected disability and describes six IDEIA standards to comply with federal guidelines for special education evaluations. By the end of Chapter 5, you will learn how to defend ethical practices that enhance the integrity of test results.

Chapter 6 Introduces you to cultural and linguistic diversity in special education and the significance of cultural competence when working with children with special needs and their parents. Chapter 6 discusses techniques and actions educators use to prepare for a multicultural assessment and describe factors that influence assessment of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Chapter 7 Added information on the purpose and importance of RTI, core principles of RTI, and the evaluation process to determine eligibility. Current references have been updated on identifying issues surrounding learning disabilities and RTI, the multi-tiered delivery of services for RTI, and quality indicators to ensure fidelity of implementation.

Chapter 8 Introduces you to the purpose of screening assessments and describes the process for using them. Chapter 8 discusses the purpose of an initial evaluation, details the procedures for getting one underway, identifies who might participate in an initial evaluation, and explains the purpose of a triennial evaluation and who participates in this evaluation.

Chapter 9 Added information on the purpose and importance of the child study team and their initiation of a pre-referral process. Chapter 9 describes the sources of student information that inform child study team meetings and provides pre-referral strategies used most often in school systems.

Chapter 10 Added information on the purpose of the Multidisciplinary Team and the membership of it. Chapter 10 explains how a formal referral may be made for an evaluation and possible special education services for a child with a suspected disability and describes what happens next. Provides updated information on important principles of parental participation in the assessment process, including the important points of parent intakes and confidentiality.

Chapter 11 Provides descriptions of the latest and most current types of reading, writing, math, spelling, and comprehensive academic achievement tests. Chapter 11 includes new information on specific names of tests associated with academic achievement skills, including reading, writing, math, spelling, and comprehensive tests.

Chapter 12 Provides the latest and most current measures of intelligence when evaluating a child for a suspected disability and distinguishes among the differences for each test. Chapter 12 explains the importance of intelligence testing, its purpose, the meaning of IQ scores. Added information on the advantages and disadvantages of IQ testing, along with the controversy surrounding it.

Chapter 13 Provides the latest and most current measures of assessment regarding social and emotional development. Chapter 13 describes the purposes and processes for using observation and interviews to assess student behavior. Added information on the purpose of a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and behavioral intervention plan (BIP) and how they are used for students with behavioral concerns.

Chapter 14 Provides the latest and most current measures of perceptual abilities when evaluating a child for a suspected disability and distinguishes among the differences for each test. Chapter 14 describes the learning process, the importance and purpose of perceptual evaluations in this process, and the relationship between visual perception and reading performance. Updated information on the relationship between auditory perception problems and speech and language development and the symptoms that may reflect these problems as well as the assessment measures that identify auditory perception problems.

Chapter 15 Provides the latest and most current assessment measures of speech and language when evaluating a child for a suspected disability and distinguishes among the differences for each test. Chapter 15 describes the difference between speech and language, the impact that speech and language disorders have on students, and the different types of speech and language disorders.

Chapter 16 Provides possible causes of hearing impairment, levels of hearing loss, and the latest and most current assessment measures that can be used to evaluate a child with a suspected hearing loss. Chapter 16 includes new information on the various services and evaluations physical and occupational therapists conduct to assist a child with disabilities.

Chapter 17 Provides the latest and most current assessment measures of early intervention and preschool students. Added information on the importance of the IFSP and the various required parts under the federal law, IDEIA. Chapter 17 updates the goals and challenges of preschool assessments and the six standards of assessment materials used with young children, distinguishes the differences among various assessment measures employed for early intervention and early childhood evaluations.

Chapter 18 Updated the importance of eligibility requirements under the federal law and why special educators need to know them. Chapter 18 includes new sections distinguishing between high prevalence and low prevalence disabilities and the steps involved in eligibility criteria.

Chapter 19 Added a detailed step-by-step process for completing all the sections required in putting together a professional report. Chapter 19 provides practical suggestions, numerous examples, a final professional report on a student that can be used as a template, and guidelines for the presentation and format of a professional report.

Chapter 20 This new chapter provides practical preparation and presentation of test results to the Child Study Team, Eligibility Committee, and parents. Chapter 20 gives step-by-step checklists for preparation and professional presentation at the Eligibility Committee, Annual Review, and Triennial Review meetings.

Chapter 21 Updated the importance of the Eligibility Committee in special education, the members of the team making decisions, and information that the Eligibility Committee must have prior to meetings and the rationale for why everything is needed. Chapter 21 includes information on the various educational placement options under IDEIA and placement decisions regarding annual or triennial reviews for students with disabilities and potential declassification.

Chapter 22 Updated the required components and the purpose of an IEP as mandated under federal law (IDEIA). Chapter 22 includes new information on constructing a sample IEP, the requirements in each section, explanations of each section of an IEP, and the rationale for what it is mandated.

Organization of the Text

The organization of a text can make a text more accessible for readers by sequencing chapters to improve comprehension of concepts. For this edition, we have clustered chapters into four distinct parts.

Part 1 Foundational Concepts in Special Education Assessment. We sequence the first six chapters in Part 1 to focus on basic foundational concepts of IDEIA, federal legislation, scales of measurement and their application, and the testing considerations

and limitations for identifying diverse students who may be eligible for special education services or not.

Part 2 Identification of High-Risk Children. Part 2 includes four chapters that begin with learning about Response to Intervention and the use of RTI strategies which preclude referral and then shares how to refer students who should be considered for special education eligibility. Procedures for moving forward on referrals and testing are then discussed.

Part 3 Assessment Measures Used in a Comprehensive Evaluation. Part 3, Chapters 11-17, cover a large variety of content area measurements to fit special education classifications including IQ tests, hearing and eye tests, speech and language tests, physical and occupational therapy assessments and so on. Each of these chapters identify and describe multiple test instruments and distinguish their purpose and value.

Part 4 Putting it All Together: Special Education Requirements. The last 5 chapters of the text, Chapters 18-22 comprise Part 4 and the processes, procedures, and forms special education teachers use once a child has been referred for eligibility. It takes the reader from understanding the responsibilities of a Child Study Team to special educators working with general educators and specialists to complete an IEP.

Pearson eText, Learning Management System (LMS)-Compatible Assessment Bank, and Other Instructor Resources

Pearson eText

The Pearson eText is a simple-to-use, mobile-optimized, personalized reading experience. It allows you to easily highlight, take notes, and review key vocabulary all in one place—even when offline. Seamlessly integrated videos and other rich media will engage you and give you access to the help you need, when you need it. To gain access or to sign in to your Pearson eText, visit: https://www.pearson.com/pearson-etext. Features include:

- **Video Examples** Each chapter includes Video Examples that illustrate principles or concepts aligned pedagogically with the chapter. Most of the video examples are YouTube videos carefully chosen because they deliver more in-depth understandings of IDEIA or provide details of various assessment instruments such as the WIAT-IV. Other videos help you better understand specific special educator responsibilities such as how to perform a functional behavioral assessment or how to distinguish speech and language disorders.
- **Interactive Glossary** All key terms in the eText are bolded and provide instant access to full glossary definitions, allowing you to quickly build your professional vocabulary as you are reading.

LMS-Compatible Assessment Bank

With this new edition, all assessment types—quizzes and application exercises— are included in LMS-compatible banks for the following learning management systems: Blackboard (9780137545827), Canvas (9780137545834), D2L (9780137545858), and Moodle (9780137545872). These packaged files allow maximum flexibility to instructors when it comes to importing, assigning, and grading. Assessment types include:

- **Learning Outcome Quizzes** Each chapter learning outcome is the focus of a Learning Outcome Quiz that is available for instructors to assign through their Learning Management System. Learning outcomes identify chapter

content that is most important for learners and serve as the organizational framework for each chapter. The higher order, multiple-choice questions in each quiz will measure your understanding of chapter content, guide the expectations for your learning, and inform the accountability and the applications of your new knowledge. Each multiple-choice question includes feedback for the correct answer and for each distractor to help steer your learning.

- **Application Exercises** Each chapter provides opportunities to apply what you have learned through Application Exercises. These exercises are usually short-answer format and ask you to utilize the knowledge you have learned to constructively respond to case-based scenarios or IRIS modules. These exercises are meant to allow you practice determining what assessment or what practice to use to assess a student with a potential disability or serve a parent of a child with a disability. A model response written by an expert is provided to help guide your learning.

- **Chapter Tests** Suggested test items are provided for each chapter and include questions in multiple choice and short answer/essay formats.

Instructor's Manual (9780137545766)

The Instructor's Manual is provided as a Word document and includes resources to assist professors in planning their course.

PowerPoint® Slides (9780137545933)

PowerPoint® slides are provided for each chapter and highlight key concepts and summarize the content of the text to make it more meaningful for students.

Note: All instructor resources—LMS-compatible assessment bank, instructor's manual, and PowerPoint slides are available for download at www.pearsonhighered .com. Use one of the following methods:

- From the main page, use the search function to look up the lead author, or the title. Select the desired search result, then access the "Resources" tab to view and download all available resources.

- From the main page, use the search function to look up the ISBN (provided above) of the specific instructor resource you would like to download. When the product page loads, access the "Downloadable Resources" tab.

Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1
Introduction to Assessment

⌄ Learning Outcomes

1.1 Define and understand the purpose of assessment.

1.2 Distinguish the various landmark court cases and federal legislation pertaining to special education and individuals with disabilities.

1.3 Describe basic principles about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA).

1.4 Identify the steps involved in the assessment process in special education.

Denise is in serious danger of failing fourth grade again. She appears to have difficulty following directions, completing assignments on time, progressing in reading and spelling, and interacting with her peers. Her teacher believes that Denise may have a learning disability and has made a referral to the district's Committee on Special Education.

- Roberta has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair. She has recently moved into the community and enrolled in the local high school. Her parents are concerned that Roberta is not developing the mobility and daily living skills that she needs now and in the future. They request that the new school system evaluate Roberta to identify her special needs.

- Juan has become severely withdrawn in the last year. His grades have been declining steadily, he is starting to skip school, and when the teacher calls on him in class, he responds rudely or not at all. The teacher is worried that Juan may have an emotional disorder. She makes a referral to the special education department.

Although these children are different from each other in many ways, they may also share something in common. Each may be a student who has a disability that will require special education services in the school setting. Before decisions may be made about what those special education services will be, each child requires an evaluation conducted by specially trained educational personnel, which may include a school psychologist, a speech–language pathologist, special education and regular education teachers, social workers, and, when appropriate, medical personnel. This is true for any child suspected of having a disability.

Definition and Purpose of Assessment

Learning Outcome 1.1   Define and understand the purpose of assessment.

Definition of Assessment

Assessment in **special education** is a process that involves collecting information about a student for the purpose of making decisions. It involves gathering information about a student's strengths and needs in all areas of concern. Assessment includes many formal and informal methods of evaluating student progress and behavior. Clearly, gathering information about a student using a variety of techniques and information sources should shed considerable light on strengths and needs, the nature of a suspected disability and its effect on educational performance, and realistic and appropriate instructional goals and objectives.

The professionals involved in special education in today's schools play a very critical role in the overall education of students with all types of disabilities. A comprehensive assessment completed by school professionals may address any aspect of a student's educational functioning (Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2017). The special educators' position is unique, in that they can play many different roles in the educational environment. Whatever their role, special educators encounter a variety of situations that require practical decisions and relevant suggestions. No matter which type of professional you become in the field of special education, it is always necessary to fully understand the assessment process and to be able to clearly communicate vital information to professionals, parents, and students.

The importance of assessment should never be underestimated. In special education, you will work with many professionals from different fields. You are part of a team, often referred to as a **multidisciplinary team**, that tries to determine whether a disability is present in a student. The team's role is crucial because it helps determine the extent and direction of a child's personal journey through the special education experience. Consequently, the skills needed to offer a child the most global, accurate, and practical evaluation should be fully understood. The development of these skills should include a good working knowledge of the following components of the assessment process in order to determine the presence of a suspected disability:

- **Collection**. The process of tracing and gathering information from the many sources of background information on a child, such as school records, observation, parent intakes, and teacher reports
- **Analysis**. The processing and understanding of patterns in a child's educational, social, developmental, environmental, medical, and emotional history
- **Evaluation**. The determination of a child's strengths and limitations in specific areas, including academic, intellectual, psychological, emotional, perceptual, language, cognitive, and medical development
- **Determination**. The process of deciding whether the presence of a suspected disability exists using knowledge of the criteria that constitute each category
- **Recommendation**. The professional suggestions and proposals concerning educational placement and program that need to be made to the school, teachers, and parents

Purpose of Assessment

Assessment takes place when students experience difficulty meeting the demands of the general education curriculum and are referred for consideration for special education services. As will be discussed in great detail throughout this book, after

a referral for a suspected disability of a child has been made and written parental or guardian permission has been granted, an individual multidisciplinary and comprehensive assessment is conducted. This means that formal tests, observations, and numerous assessments will be given. The results help to determine if special education is needed and whether factors unrelated to disabilities might be affecting a child's school performance.

Assessment should be an active, ongoing process that has a clearly specified purpose. Assessment results provide information useful for determining or modifying a child's program, if necessary. The decisions that use assessment information are varied and complex, and they occur in and out of classrooms. Assessment plays a critical role in the determination of six important decisions:

- **Evaluation decisions**. Information collected in the assessment process can provide detailed information of a student's strengths, challenges, and overall progress.
- **Diagnostic decisions**. Information collected in the assessment process can provide detailed information of the specific nature of the student's problems or disability.
- **Eligibility and diagnosis**. Information collected in the assessment process can provide detailed information on whether a child is eligible for special education services.
- **IEP development decisions**. Information collected in the assessment process can provide detailed information so that an individualized education program (IEP) may be developed.
- **Educational placement decisions**. Information collected in the assessment process can provide detailed information so that appropriate decisions may be made about the child's educational placement.
- **Instructional planning decisions**. Information collected in the assessment process is critical in planning instruction appropriate to the child's social, academic, and physical, needs and related supports.

Landmark Court Cases and Federal Legislation Pertaining to Special Education and Individuals with Disabilities

Learning Outcome 1.2   Distinguish the various landmark court cases and federal legislation pertaining to special education and individuals with disabilities.

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas

Over the years, special education has been restructured and transformed by legislation. If we examine the history of special education and services for children with disabilities after World War II in the United States, the picture becomes clear as to why our nation needed a federal special education law (Giuliani, 2012).

Children with disabilities were, for the most part, unprotected and not given much of a chance in education. In 1948, only 12 percent of all children with disabilities received some form of special education (which also means that 88 percent of children with disabilities received virtually nothing in terms of an appropriate education).

By the early 1950s, things were not much better for students with disabilities. During this time, state law either permitted or explicitly required the exclusion of

those individuals with cognitive or physical disabilities. Many states that did educate such children provided separate facilities that isolated them from their peers. Special education services and programs were available in some school districts, but often, undesirable results occurred. For example, students in special classes were very often considered unable to perform academic tasks. Consequently, students with disabilities went to special schools or classes that focused on learning manual skills, such as weaving and bead stringing. So, although special education programs existed, it is clear that discrimination was still as strong as ever for those with disabilities in schools.

Legislation and court cases to prevent discrimination in education first came to notice in 1954 with the famous case ***Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*** (347 U.S. 483, 1954). *Brown* was not a special education case, but it played a significant role in the development of special education laws to come.

For much of the ninety years preceding the *Brown* case, race relations in the United States had been dominated by racial segregation. This policy had been endorsed in 1896 by the U.S. Supreme Court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In *Plessy*, the Court held that that as long as the separate facilities for the separate races were "equal," the segregation did not violate the **Fourteenth Amendment** of the U.S. Constitution ("no state shall … deny to any person … the equal protection of the laws."). The concept of "separate but equal" was challenged in *Brown* as being unconstitutional.

On May 17, 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren read the decision of the unanimous Court: "*We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does … .*" "*We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.*"

The Supreme Court struck down the "separate but equal" doctrine of *Plessy* for public education, ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, and required the desegregation of schools across America.

The Court in *Brown* stated that segregation based on unalterable characteristics with the result being inequitable opportunities could not be upheld in the United States and demanded that such segregation end with *all deliberate speed.*

Brown set the precedent for future discrimination cases in education. People with disabilities were recognized as another group whose rights had been violated because of arbitrary discrimination. For children, the discrimination occurred when they were denied access to schools because of their disabilities.

Using *Brown* as their legal precedent, parents of students with disabilities claimed that their children's segregation and exclusion from school violated their opportunity for an equal education under the **Fourteenth Amendment** of the U.S. Constitution—The Equal Protection Clause. If *Brown* could not segregate by race, then schools should not be able to segregate or otherwise discriminate by ability and disability.

1960s

During the early 1960s, a national concern arose regarding the rights of the individual, especially the rights of persons who had previously been discriminated against by the government. In fact, the rights of people with disabilities became a significant part of the larger social issue at the time. In the 1960s, parents began to become advocates for better educational opportunities for their children with disabilities. Parents started to speak out about how segregated special schools and classes were not the most appropriate educational setting for many students with disabilities. Consequently, some parents began to take legal action against their respective school districts when they felt their children's rights were being violated.

President John F. Kennedy also raised public awareness of individuals with mental and physical disabilities. President Kennedy, whose sister Rosemary was born with a cognitive disability, was a major champion of education for kids with disabilities. In initiating a Presidential Panel, President Kennedy expressed his concern about the issues:

> *The manner in which our Nation cares for its citizens and conserves its manpower resources is more than an index to its concern for the less fortunate. It is a key to its future. Both wisdom and humanity dictate a deep interest in the physically handicapped, the mentally ill, and the mentally retarded. Yet, although we have made considerable progress in the treatment of physical handicaps, although we have attacked on a broad front the problems of mental illness, although we have made great strides in the battle against disease, we as a nation have for too long postponed an intensive search for solutions to the problems of the mentally retarded. That failure should be corrected.*

The Early 1970s

In the early 1970s, two significant court cases paved the way toward future federal legislation protecting the rights of children with disabilities and their parents:

- *PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*
- *Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia*

In *PARC*, the Court ruled that schools may not exclude students who have been classified with mental retardation. Also, the Court mandated that all students must be provided with a free appropriate public education (*PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 343 F. Supp. 279, E.D. PA, 1972). Both of these holdings would play a fundamental role in the enactment of future federal special education laws.

Mills involved the practice of suspending, expelling, and excluding "exceptional children" from the D.C. public schools. In *Mills*, the Court held that: "*No child eligible for a publicly supported education in the District of Columbia public schools shall be excluded from a regular public school assignment. . . . The District of Columbia shall provide to each child of school age a free and suitable publicly supported education regardless of the degree of the child's mental, physical or emotional disability or impairment*" (*Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia*, 348 Supp. 866, CD. DC 1972).

Mills set forth future guidelines for federal legislation by rejecting the District's argument that funds were insufficient to educate students with disabilities. The court in *Mills* mandated that students with disabilities receive special education services regardless of the school district's financial capability, stating that: "*Insufficient resources may not be the basis for exclusion*" (*Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia*, 348 Supp. 866, CD. DC 1972).

PARC and *Mills* set the stage for enactment of federal laws to protect the rights of children with disabilities and their parents. As a result of these cases and other historical court cases at the time, federal legislation for all individuals with disabilities began to develop in the early 1970s.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. 701 *et seq*, is a civil rights law that made discrimination against individuals illegal for any institutions receiving federal funding or grants. All public elementary and secondary schools and most postsecondary institutions receive federal subsidies and grants and therefore must comply with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973** ensures students of equal opportunity to all school activities. The law prohibits discrimination against students with disabilities in federally funded programs: "*Individuals with disabilities cannot be excluded from participation in, denied benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.*"

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Video Example 1.3

How did *PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* play a significant role in the design of future federal special education legislation? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtFmp3XduaQ

Because of the victories that were being won for students with disabilities in the 1960s and early 1970s, as well as the enactment of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, parents and student advocates began to lobby Congress for federal laws and money that would ensure students with disabilities got an education that would meet their needs. Years of exclusion, segregation, and denial of basic educational opportunities to students with disabilities and their families set an imperative for a civil rights law guaranteeing these students access to the education system.

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act

In 1975, a Congressional investigation revealed that:

- Over 4 million children with disabilities in the United States were not receiving appropriate educational services
- Because of the lack of adequate services in the public school system, families were often forced to find services outside the public school system, often at a great distance from their homes at their own expense

Congress determined that it is in the national interest that the federal government assist state and local efforts to provide programs to meet the educational needs of children with disabilities. Congress recognized the necessity of special education for children with disabilities and was concerned about the widespread discrimination.

On November 29, 1975, President Gerald Ford signed into law the **Education for All Handicapped Children Act** (EHA), Public Law 94-142.

The passage of Public Law 94-142 was the end result of many years of litigation and state legislation to protect and promote the civil rights of all students with disabilities. This federal law required states to provide a free appropriate public education for students with disabilities no matter how serious the disability. P.L. 94-142 was the first law to clearly define the rights of students with disabilities. Some of the key provisions of P.L. 94-142:

- Defined the rights of students with disabilities to free appropriate public education (FAPE)
- Required the school systems to include the parents and guardians when meeting about the student or making decisions about their education
- Mandated an individualized education program (IEP) for every student with a disability (The IEP must include short- and long-term goals for the student, as well as ensure that the necessary services and products are available to the student.)
- Required that students be educated in the **least restrictive environment** (LRE)
- Ensured that students with disabilities be given nondiscriminatory tests (tests that take into consideration the **native language** of the student and the effects of the disability)
- Required **due process** procedures to be in place (to protect families and students)

In 1986, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was amended by Public Law 99-457, the **Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments.** (The act of amending and renewing a law is known as **reauthorization**.) These amendments, which are also known as the Early Intervention Amendments to Public Law 94-142, extended FAPE to all students aged 3 to 5 by October 1991 in all states that wanted to participate (all 50 wanted to and did, even states that did not have public schooling for students at those ages). Provisions were also included to help states develop early intervention programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities; this part of the legislation became known as the Part H Program. (*Note:* In 1997, the section of the law that applies to infants and toddlers changed to Part C.)

1990 through Today: IDEA and IDEIA

In 1990, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was once again reauthorized by Public Law 101-476. Most obvious was the legislation's change of name to IDEA—The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. IDEA continued to uphold the provisions set forth in P.L. 94-142. Notice IDEA changed the terms in the previous law as follows:

- from "children" to "individuals"
- from "handicapped" to "with disabilities"

IDEA reaffirmed P.L. 94-142's requirements of a free appropriate public education through an individualized education program with related services and due process procedures. This act also supported the amendments to P.L. 94-142 that expanded the entitlement in all states to ages 3 to 21, designated assistive technology as a related service in IEPs, strengthened the law's commitment to greater inclusion in community schools (least restrictive placement), provided funding for infant and toddler early intervention programs, and required that by age 16 every student have explicitly written in their IEP a plan for transition to employment or postsecondary education.

The newest amendments of IDEA were the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (P.L. 105-17). These amendments restructured IDEA into four parts: Part A addressed general provisions; Part B covered assistance for education of all students with disabilities; Part C covered infants and toddlers with disabilities; and Part D addressed national activities to improve the education of students with disabilities.

On December 3, 2004, the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act** (IDEIA) was enacted into law as Public Law 108-446. The statute, as passed by Congress and signed by President George W. Bush, reauthorized and made significant changes to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. It is now Public Law 108-446 and can be found in 20 U.S.C. 1400-1482.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA)

Learning Outcome 1.3   **Describe basic principles about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. (IDEIA).**

Overview of IDEIA

IDEIA is an acronym for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, our nation's special education law. Originally passed in 1975 under the title Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), IDEIA is the U.S. federal law that governs how states must provide special education to children with disabilities. IDEIA requires school districts to provide a "free appropriate public education" (FAPE) to eligible children with disabilities [34 C.F.R. 300.8; 20 U.S.C. 1401(3); 1401(30)]. A FAPE means that special education and related services are to be provided as described in an individualized education program (IEP) and under public supervision to a child at no cost to the parents [34 C.F.R. 300.17; 20 U.S.C. 1401(9)].

The law has been amended and renewed several times, a process called *reauthorization*. Today, IDEIA is Public Law 108-446 and is often referred to as IDEA 2004 or simply IDEIA. Throughout this book, we will be using "IDEIA" to represent the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act.

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Video Example 1.4

In the video, titled "*Celebrating 35 Years of IDEA*," the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is remembered as the legislative foundation for all services that students with disabilities receive in schools today. At the 35th anniversary of its passage, this video takes a look back to what the conditions were like before IDEA, and how its passage has changed the educational landscape for students with disabilities today. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_1xAanUhbY

Purpose of IDEIA

IDEIA states that its purposes are:

- To ensure that all students with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living
- To ensure that the rights of students with disabilities and their parents or guardians are protected
- To assist states, localities, educational service agencies, and federal agencies to provide for the education of all students with disabilities
- To assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate students with disabilities [34 C.F.R. 300.1; 20 U.S.C. 1400(d)].

Understanding IDEIA Citations

Parent vs parent/guardian is used throughout this book to align with the definition of IDEIA. Link to https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/a/300.30 for the full definition.

Throughout this textbook, you will see citations for IDEIA. If you want to read IDEIA, you can find it in one of two places, the U.S. Code (U.S.C.) and the Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.):

1. U.S. Code (U.S.C.): The U.S. Code (U.S.C.) has 50 subject classifications called "Titles." For example, Title 17 is Copyright; Title 26 is the Internal Revenue Code; Title 42 is about Public Health and Welfare. Title 20 represents the laws in Education. When you see "20 U.S.C.," you know it's an education law. In each Title, laws are indexed and assigned Section Numbers. IDEIA is cited as 20 U.S.C. 1400–1482. So, any time you see 20 U.S.C. with index numbers that follow that are between 1400 and 1482, you know it's a special education law (IDEIA). For example, the definition of Special Education in the U.S. Code is 20 U.S.C. 1401(29).

2. Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.): You can also find IDEIA in the Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.). Volume 34 of the C.F.R. is the section on Education. Part 300 is the information on IDEIA. The special education regulations are published in Volume 34, Part 300 of the Code of Federal Regulations. The legal citation is 34 C.F.R. 300. For example, the definition of Special Education in the C.F.R. can be found in 34 C.F.R. 300.39(b)(3).

Classifications Under IDEIA

IDEIA lists separate categories of disabilities under which children may be eligible for special education and related services. Children are eligible to receive special education services and supports if they meet the **eligibility** requirements for at least one **disability** listed in IDEIA and it is determined that they are in need of special education services (Giuliani, 2012). IDEIA requires public schools to provide special education and related services to eligible students. To be protected under the law, a child's school performance must be "adversely affected" by a disability in one of the 13 categories listed below (Lee, 2021).

The definitions of the 13 classifications of disabilities under IDEIA are [34 C.F.R. 300.8(c)1-13]:

Autism. A developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age 3, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. The term does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected because the child has an emotional disturbance.

Deaf–Blindness. Concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational problems that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

Deafness. A hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, and that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Developmental Delay. For children ages 3 through 9, a state and local education agency (LEA) may choose to include as an eligible "child with a disability" a child who is experiencing developmental delays in one or more of the following areas:

- physical development
- cognitive development
- communication development
- social or emotional development
- adaptive development

It must also be determined that, because of the developmental delays, the child needs special education and related services. Developmental delays are defined by the state and must be measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures.

Emotional Disturbance. A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors
- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers
- Inappropriate types of behaviors or feelings under normal circumstances
- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems

The term includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.

Hearing Impairment. An impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness in this section.

Intellectual Disability. Significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's performance.

Multiple Disabilities. Concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability–orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes such severe educational problems that the problems cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf–blindness.

Orthopedic Impairment. A severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by congenital anomaly (e.g., clubfoot, absence of some member), impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).

Other Health Impairment. Having limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems, such as a heart condition, tuberculosis, rheumatic fever,

nephritis, asthma, sickle cell anemia, hemophilia, epilepsy, lead poisoning, leukemia, or diabetes, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Specific Learning Disability. A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term includes conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia; it does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; of intellectual disabilities; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. Under IDEIA 2004, when determining whether a child has a specific disability, a local education agency shall not be required to take into consideration whether a child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability.

Speech or Language Impairment. A communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Traumatic Brain Injury. An acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment or both, and that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

Visual Impairment. An impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial and total sight blindness.

Prevalence of Children Receiving Special Education Services Under IDEIA

According to the latest data on **prevalence** of students in special education from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) database (2021) and the National Center for Education Statistics (2020), more than 7 million U.S. children between 6 and 21 years of age receive special education services (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Prevalence refers to the percentage of a population or number of individuals having a particular exceptionality (Hallahan et al., 2019) broken down by classification (in alphabetical order) in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1

- Autism 11.0%
- Deaf–Blindness 0.1%
- Developmental Delay 7.0%
- Emotional Disturbance 5.0%
- Hearing Impairments and Deafness 1.0%
- Intellectual Disabilities 6.0%
- Multiple Disabilities 2.0%
- Orthopedic Impairments 1.0%
- Other Health Impairments 15%
- **Specific** Learning Disabilities 33.0%
- Speech & Language Impairments 19%
- Traumatic Brain Injury 0.4%
- Visual Impairment 0.4%

Today, the number of children served under IDEIA represent approximately 14.0 percent of all children in school.

Overview of the Assessment Process

Learning Outcome 1.4   **Identify the steps involved in the assessment process in special education.**

The process of identifying, evaluating, determining eligibility, and educational placement of children in special education is a step-by-step process. IDEIA mandates that certain procedural steps occur to ensure that students with disabilities are afforded the right to a free appropriate public education, as well as have substantive and procedural due process rights (Center for Parent Information and Resources, 2019). All of these steps will be addressed in much more detail in the upcoming chapters. Following is the step-by-step process for assessment.

The Step-by-Step Process

Step 1. Identification of Children

Generally, the two ways in which children are identified as possibly needing special education and related services are: *Child Find* (which operates in each state) and by referral of a parent or school personnel.

CHILD FIND   IDEIA mandates that all states identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities in the state who need special education and related services. To do so, states conduct what are known as Child Find activities. When a child is identified by Child Find as possibly having a disability and as needing special education, parents may be asked for permission to evaluate their child. Parents can also call the Child Find office and ask that their child be evaluated.

REFERRAL OR REQUEST FOR EVALUATION   A school professional may ask that a child be evaluated to see if they have a disability. Parents may also contact the child's teacher or other school professional to ask that their child be evaluated. Parental consent is needed before a child may be evaluated. Under the federal IDEIA regulations, evaluation needs to be completed within 60 days after the parent gives consent. However, if a State's IDEIA regulations give a different timeline for completion of the evaluation, the State's timeline is applied.

Step 2. Full and Individual Evaluation of the Child by a Multidisciplinary Team

A comprehensive evaluation done by a multidisciplinary team is an essential early step in the special education process for a child. It's intended to answer these questions:

- Does the child have a disability that requires the provision of special education and related services?
- What are the child's specific educational needs?
- What special education services and related services, then, are appropriate for addressing those needs?

By law, the initial evaluation of the child must be "full and individual"—which is to say, focused on that child and that child alone. The evaluation must assess the child in all areas related to the child's suspected disability.

The evaluation results will be used to decide the child's eligibility for special education and related services and to make decisions about an appropriate educational program for the child.

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Video Example 1.5

Under IDEIA, parents have been afforded very specific legal rights when it comes to the free appropriate public education of their children. What are the rights of parents in the special education process and what is the special education process? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XncgzTGEzZY

If the parents disagree with the evaluation, they have the right to take their child for an **Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)** and can ask that the school system pay for this IEE (see Appendix A).

Step 3. Determination of Eligibility for Special Education

Once the comprehensive assessment of the child is completed, an **Eligibility Committee** meeting is formed, in some states referred to as the **Committee on Special Education (CSE)**, where professionals and the parents look at the child's evaluation results. Together, a determination is made as to whether the child meets the criteria for a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEIA. If the parents do not agree with the eligibility decision, they may ask for a hearing to challenge the decision.

If the child is found to be a child with a disability (as defined by IDEIA), they are eligible for special education and related services.

Step 4. Scheduling an IEP Meeting

A team of school professionals and the parents must meet to write an individualized education program (IEP) for the child within 30 calendar days after a child is determined eligible. The school system schedules and conducts the IEP meeting. School staff must:

- Contact the participants, including the parents
- Notify parents early enough to make sure they have an opportunity to attend
- Schedule the meeting at a time and place agreeable to parents and the school
- Inform the parents of the purpose, time, and location of the meeting
- Inform the parents who will be attending
- Notify the parents that they may invite people with knowledge or special expertise about the child to the meeting

Step 5. Holding the IEP Meeting and Then Writing the IEP

The IEP team gathers to talk about the child's needs and write the student's **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**. Parents and the student (when appropriate) are full participating members of the team. If the child's placement (meaning, where the child will receive his or her special education and related services) is decided by a different group, the parents must be part of that group as well.

Before the school system may provide special education and related services to the child for the first time, the parents must give consent. The child begins to receive services as soon as possible after the IEP is written and this consent is given.

If the parents do not agree with the IEP and placement, they may discuss their concerns with other members of the IEP team and try to work out an agreement. If they still disagree, parents can ask for mediation, or the school may offer mediation. Parents may file a state complaint with the state education agency or a due process complaint, which is the first step in requesting a due process hearing, at which time mediation must be available.

Step 6. Providing Special Education and Related Services to the Student

The school makes sure that the child's IEP is carried out as it was written. Parents are given a copy of the IEP. Each of the child's teachers and service providers has access to the IEP and knows his or her specific responsibilities for carrying out the IEP. This includes the accommodations, modifications, and supports that must be provided to the child, in keeping with the IEP.

Step 7. Progress Monitoring

The child's progress toward the annual goals is measured, as stated in the IEP. His or her parents are regularly informed of their child's progress and whether that progress is enough for the child to achieve the goals by the end of the year. These progress reports must be given to parents at least as often as they are informed of their nondisabled children's progress.

Step 8. IEP Is Reviewed (Annual Review)

The child's IEP is reviewed by the IEP team at least once a year, or more often if the parents or school ask for a review. This is known as the **annual review**. If necessary, the IEP is revised. Parents, as team members, must be invited to participate in these meetings. Parents can make suggestions for changes, can agree or disagree with the IEP, and agree or disagree with the placement.

If parents do not agree with the IEP and placement, they may discuss their concerns with other members of the IEP team and try to work out an agreement. There are several options, including additional testing, an independent evaluation, or asking for mediation or a due process hearing. They may also file a complaint with the state education agency.

Step 9. Child Is Reevaluated (Triennial Review)

At least every 3 years a child receiving special education and related services must be reevaluated. This evaluation is often referred to as a **triennial review**. Its purpose is to find out if the child continues to be a child with a disability, as defined by IDEIA, and to determine the child's educational needs. However, the child must be reevaluated more often if conditions warrant or if the child's parent or teacher asks for a new evaluation.

Conclusion

Assessment is a complex process that needs to be conducted by a multidisciplinary team of trained professionals and involves both formal and informal methods of collecting information about the student. Although the team may choose to administer a series of tests to the student, by law assessment must involve much more than standardized tests. Interviews of all key participants in the student's education and observations of student behaviors in the classroom or in other sites should be included as well. To develop a comprehensive picture of the student and to develop practical intervention strategies to address that student's special needs, the team must ask questions and use assessment techniques that will help them determine the factors that are facilitating—and interfering with—the child's learning.

It is also important that assessment be an ongoing process. As you will see as you read through this book, the process begins even before the student is referred for formal evaluation; his or her teacher or parent may have noticed that some aspect of the student's performance or behavior is below expectations and, so, requests an official assessment. After eligibility has been established and the IEP developed for the student, assessment should continue, through teacher-made tests, through ongoing behavioral assessment, or through other methods. This allows teachers and parents to monitor the student's progress toward the goals and objectives stated in his or her IEP. Thus, assessment should not end when the eligibility decision is made or the IEP is developed; it has continuing value in contributing to the daily, weekly, and monthly instructional decision making that accompanies the provision of special education and related services.

A thorough and comprehensive assessment can greatly enhance a child's educational experience. The assessment process has many steps and needs to be appropriately done. Furthermore, no one individual makes all of the decisions for a child's classification; it is done by a multidisciplinary team. As future special educators, it is your professional responsibility to understand the laws, steps, and various assessment measures and procedures used in the special education process so that when you enter the school systems, you can have a significant and positive impact on all those with whom you are involved in special education.

Chapter 2
Methods of Assessment and Testing Considerations

⌄ Learning Outcomes

2.1 Recognize the importance of norm-referenced tests, standardization, and concerns surrounding standardized testing.

2.2 Describe the various informal measures of assessment.

2.3 Identify issues surrounding testing considerations and describe the limitations of various kinds of testing.

The ways that children and adolescents can be evaluated for special education vary from individual to individual. The assessment method needs to be determined on a case-by-case basis. However, to obtain the most valid and accurate picture of a student's strengths and weaknesses, a comprehensive measure of assessment involves using both formal and informal methods of assessment.

There are two general categories of assessments: formal and informal. Formal and informal are not technical psychometric terms; therefore, there are no uniformly accepted definitions. **Formal assessments** have data that support the conclusions made from the test. We usually refer to these types of tests as *standardized measures* (Weaver, 2021). They assume a single set of expectations for all students and come with prescribed criteria for scoring and interpretation. Formal assessments are formal ways of finding out how much a student has learned or improved during the instructional period. These include exams, diagnostic tests, achievement tests, screening and intelligence tests, and others. All formal assessments have standardized methods of administering the tests. The data are mathematically computed and summarized. Scores such as percentiles, stanines, or standard scores are mostly commonly given from this type of assessment (see Chapter 4).

Informal assessments can judge and evaluate students' performance and skill levels without making use of standardized tests and scoring patterns. There are no standardized tools to measure or evaluate the performances in these assessment tools. The best examples of informal assessments are projects, experiments, and presentations given by students in classrooms and other platforms. Unlike standardized tests, they are not intended to provide a comparison to a broader group beyond the students in the local project nor are they intended to predict future performance. Informal assessments are not data driven but rather content and performance driven. For example, running records are informal assessments because they indicate how well a student is reading a specific book. Scores such as 10 correct out of 15, percent of words read correctly, and most rubric scores are given from this type of assessment (Weaver, 2021).

This is not to say that informal assessment is casual or lacking in rigor. Informal assessment requires a clear understanding of the levels of ability the students bring with

them. Only then may assessment activities be selected that students can attempt reasonably. Informal assessment seeks to identify the strengths and needs of individual students without regard to grade or age norms.

Formal Assessments

Learning Outcome 2.1 Recognize the importance of norm-referenced tests, standardization, and concerns surrounding standardized testing.

Norm-Referenced Tests

Norm-referenced tests (NRT) allow us to compare a student's skills to those of others in their age group. Norm-referenced tests are developed by creating the test items and then administering the test to a group of students that will be used as the basis of comparison (Logsdon, 2020). Scores on norm-referenced tests are not interpreted according to an absolute standard or criterion (e.g., 16 out of 20 correct) but rather according to how the student's performance compares with that of a particular group of individuals. For this comparison to be meaningful, a valid comparison group—called a **norm group**—must be defined. A norm group can be any group we wish to make comparisons against and refers to the sample of test-takers who are representative of the population for whom the test is intended (DiMaria, 2020). A norm group is a large number of children who are representative of all the children in that age group. Such a group can be obtained by selecting a group of children who have the characteristics of children across the United States—that is, a certain percentage must be from each gender, from various ethnic backgrounds, from each geographic area, and from each socioeconomic group.

By having all types of children take the test, the test publisher can provide information about how various types of children perform on the test. (This information— the types of students comprising the norm group and how each type performed on the test—is generally given in the manuals that accompany the test.)

Thus, before making assumptions about a child's abilities based on test results, it is important to know something about the group to which the child is being compared—particularly whether the student is being compared to children who are similar in ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and so on. The more unlike the child in the norm group is, the less valuable the results of testing will generally be. This is an area in which standardized testing has fallen under considerable criticism. Often, test administrators do not use the norm-group information appropriately, or there may not be children in the norm group similar to the child being tested. Furthermore, many tests were originally developed some time ago, and the norm groups reported in the test manual are not similar at all to the children being tested today.

Norm-referenced tests include basal and ceiling levels, which are used to prevent the examiner from having to administer all of the items with each test. A **basal** is the "starting point." It represents the level of mastery of a task below which the student would correctly answer all items on a test. All of the items prior to the basal are not given to the student. These items are considered already correct. For example, on an IQ test, the examiner may start with question 24 because of the age of the child. That is the basal. Here, the student starts with credit given for the first 23 questions. A basal is established because it is presumed that the test-taker would have answered all the easier questions at 100% accuracy. Basals are used to minimize the amount of time spent testing and to prevent testing fatigue. In some cases, the basal is established by beginning with the first question in the subtest (Hand in Hand, 2021).

Once the basal is determined, the examiner will administer all items until the student reaches a ceiling. The **ceiling** is the point at which the student has reached the predetermined number of errors, and therefore, testing is stopped because it is

assumed that the student will continue to get the answers wrong. The ceiling is the "ending point." It represents the level of mastery of a task above which the student would incorrectly answer all future items on a test. For individually administered tests, the ceiling refers to the point during administration after which all other items will no longer be answered correctly (considered too difficult), and it results in the examiner stopping the administration of the test (Joint Committee on the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing of the AERA, APA, and NCME, 2014). For example, if a child got numbers 25 to 34 wrong on a spelling test and the ceiling is 10 incorrect in a row, this means that the examiner would stop administering spelling words to the child because the ceiling has been reached.

INTENDED PURPOSES OF NORM-REFERENCED TESTS When you see scores in the paper that report a school's scores as a percentage—"the ABC school ranked at the 37th percentile"—or when you see your child's score reported that way— "Coryn scored at the 23rd percentile"—the test is usually a norm-referenced test. Norm-referenced tests are designed to "rank order" test takers—that is, to compare students' scores. A commercial norm-referenced test does not compare all the students who take the test in a given year. Instead, test makers select a sample from the target student population (say, ninth graders). The test is "normed" on this sample, which is supposed to fairly represent the entire target population (all ninth graders in the nation). Students' scores are then reported in relation to the scores of this norming group. To make comparing easier, test makers create exams in which the results end up looking at least somewhat like a bell-shaped curve (the normal curve; see Chapter 3). Test makers create the test so that most students will score near the middle, and only a few will score low (the left side of the curve) or high (the right side of the curve).

An important reason for using norm-referenced tests is to classify students. NRTs are designed to highlight achievement differences between and among students to produce a dependable rank order of students across a continuum of achievement from high achievers to low achievers. These types of tests are also used to help teachers select students for different ability level reading or mathematics instructional groups.

Tests are normed using a national sample of students. Because norming a test is such an elaborate and expensive process, the norms are typically used by test publishers for 7 years. All students who take the test during that 7-year period have their scores compared to the original norm group.

Ultimately, a primary purpose of a norm-referenced test is designed to rank and compare students with one another. This is done by comparing their score to those of a group of selected test-takers (usually the same grade level and age). These scores are generally displayed as a percentile ranking or percentage (Lynch, 2021).

Standardized Testing

STANDARDIZATION All norm-referenced tests include standardized procedures. Standardized tests have carefully designed procedures, questions, and administration instructions. Often achievement tests are used to measure the performance of large numbers of individuals in order to collect information about individual children or adults, or to assess the success of schoolwide educational programs. **Standardization** refers to structuring test materials, administration procedures, scoring methods, and techniques for interpreting results. **Standardized tests** have detailed procedures for administration, timing, scoring, and interpretation procedures that must be followed precisely to obtain valid and reliable results. When developing standardized tests, the test creators administer the test to large groups of children (subjects) across age groups. They evaluate individual items and they also compare scores across age groups, across geographic areas, sometimes even across racial or socioeconomic groups. This information is used to create the norms that will be used to evaluate individual students' performance on the same items (Webster, 2015).

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Video Example 2.1

What are formal and informal assessments, why are they important, and what are the differences between the two?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_WDfT46nijA&t=54s

CONCERNS WITH STANDARDIZED TESTING Criticisms of standardized tests seem to have grown in proportion to the frequency with which, and the purposes for which, they are used (Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2017). Districts now administer such tests at every grade level, define the success or failure of programs in terms of test scores, and even link teacher and administrator salaries and job security to student performance on standardized tests.

Three areas of criticism in regard to standardized tests are content, item format, and item bias. Standardized tests are designed to provide the best match possible to the perceived "typical" curriculum at a specific grade level. However, for programs such as a bilingual education that are built on objectives unique to the needs of their students, many of the items on a standardized test may not measure the objectives or content of that program. Thus a standardized test may have low-content validity (see Chapter 5) for specific bilingual education programs. In such a situation, the test might not be sensitive to actual student progress. Consequently, the program, as measured by this test, would appear to be ineffective.

Standardized achievement tests generally rely heavily on multiple-choice items. This item format allows for greater content coverage as well as objective and efficient scoring. However, the response required by the format is recognition of the correct answer. This type of response does not necessarily match the type of responses students regularly make in the classroom, for example, the production or synthesis of information. If students are not used to responding within the structure imposed by the item format, their test performance may suffer. On the other hand, students may recognize the correct form when it is presented as a discrete item in a test format, but fail to use that form correctly in communication contexts. In this case, a standardized test may make the student appear more proficient than classroom performance would suggest.

Further, some tests have been criticized for including items that are biased against certain kinds of students (e.g., ethnic minority, limited English proficient, under-resourced). The basis for this criticism is that the items reflect the language, culture, and/or learning style of the middle-class majority.

Thus, there are strong arguments in favor of educators considering the use of alternative forms of assessment to supplement standardized test information. These alternate assessments should be timely, not time-consuming, truly representative of the curriculum, and tangibly meaningful to the teacher and student. Techniques of informal assessment have the potential to meet these criteria as well as programmatic requirements for formative and summative evaluations. Validity and reliability are not exclusive properties of formal, norm-referenced tests. Informal techniques are valid if they measure the skills and knowledge imparted by the project; they are reliable if they measure consistently and accurately.

Research suggests that there are many positive and negative aspects to standardized testing (Columbia University, 2013; Forsyth, 2014; Meader, 2015b).

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF STANDARDIZED TESTING Standardized testing provides a number of positive benefits. Standardized tests:

- **Gives teachers guidance.** This helps them determine *what* to teach students and *when* to teach it. The net result is less-wasted instructional time and a simplified means of timeline management.

- **Allow students' progress to be tracked over the years.** When students take the same type of test yearly (adjusted for grade level), it is easy to see if a student is improving, losing ground academically, or staying about the same.

- **Provide an accurate comparison across groups.** (For example, standardized testing makes it easy to see how boys are performing as compared to girls in a particular school or district.) Over the years, great improvements have been made with regard to test bias, which has led to more accurate assessments and comparisons.

- **Hold teachers and schools accountable.** Probably the greatest benefit of standardized testing is that teachers and schools are responsible for teaching students what they are required to know for these standardized tests.

- **Allow students located in various schools, districts, and even states to be compared.** Without standardized testing, this comparison would not be possible. Public school students in the state of Texas are all required to take the same state standardized tests. This means that a student in Amarillo can be compared to a student in Dallas. Being able to accurately compare data is invaluable and is a major reason that the Common Core State Standards have been adopted. These will allow for a more accurate comparison between states.

- **Are typically, accompanied by a set of established standards or instructional framework, which provide teachers with guidance for what and when something needs to be taught.** Without this structure, a third-grade teacher and a sixth-grade teacher could be teaching the same content. Having this guidance also keeps students who move from one school district to another from being behind or ahead in their new school.

- **Are objective in nature.** Classroom grades given by a teacher are at the very least minimally subjective in nature. Standardized tests are most often scored by computers and if not, they are scored by people who do not directly know the student. They are also developed by experts, and each question undergoes an intense process to remove bias.

- **Provide accurate comparisons between subgroups.** These subgroups can include data on ethnicity, socioeconomic status, special needs, and so on. This provides schools with data to develop programs and services directed at improving scores in these subgroups.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF STANDARDIZED TESTING Although there are many positive aspects to standardized testing, there are some concerns and negative aspects reported:

- **Many teachers are (unjustly) accused of teaching to the test.** Most do not do this, but some feel so much pressure for their students to achieve a specific score that they *do* end up teaching to the test, *whether they want to or not*. This can make school drudgery for students and steal teachers' enjoyment of teaching. This practice can hinder a student's overall learning potential. With the stakes getting higher and higher for teachers, this practice will only continue to increase.

- **Some school systems are under great pressure to raise their scores so they have resorted to decreasing (and sometimes doing away with) time spent in recess.** This can have negative impact on children's social, emotional, and academic well-being.

- **Standardized tests can place a huge amount of stress on students and teachers alike.** This can lead to negative health consequences as well as feelings of negativity directed at school and learning in general.

- **Standardized tests have the potential for test bias.** As much as test creators try to eliminate testing bias, it may be impossible to rid tests of it altogether.

- **Standardized testing only evaluates the individual performance of the student instead of the overall growth of that student over the course of the year.** Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) only focuses on whether a student is proficient at the time of testing. This does a disservice to both the teacher who worked hard to help their students grow and the student who worked extremely hard over the course of the year and improved tremendously, but failed to score proficient.

- **Standardized testing can create a lot of stress on both educators and students.** Excellent teachers quit the profession every day because of how much stress is on them to prepare students to perform well on standardized tests.
- **Standardized testing can be wrongfully used as fuel for those with political agendas.** This is a sad reality that occurs far too often across all levels of the political realm.

Informal Assessment

Learning Outcome 2.2   Describe the various informal measures of assessment.

Criterion-Referenced Tests

Many educators and members of the public fail to grasp the distinctions between criterion-referenced and norm-referenced testing. It is common to hear the two types of testing referred to as if they served the same purposes or shared the same characteristics. Much confusion can be eliminated if the basic differences are understood. Whereas norm-referenced tests ascertain the rank of students, **criterion-referenced tests (CRTs)** report how well students are doing relative to a predetermined performance level on a specified set of educational goals or outcomes included in the school, district, or state curriculum. Educators use criterion-referenced tests to determine what specific concepts a child has learned (Logsdon, 2020).

Educators or policy makers may use a CRT to see how well students have learned the knowledge and skills they are expected to have mastered. This information may be used as one piece of information to determine how well the student is learning the desired curriculum and how well the school is teaching that curriculum. State high stakes tests of achievement are criterion-referenced tests that are aligned with the state's standards, measuring whether children actually have mastered the skills that are prescribed for the students' particular grade level (Webster, 2019).

CRTs are scored according to a standard, or **criterion**, that the teacher, school, or test publisher decides represents an acceptable level of mastery. An example of a criterion-referenced test might be a teacher-made spelling test containing 20 words. The teacher has defined an "acceptable level of mastery" as 16 correct (or 80 percent). These tests, sometimes called **content-referenced tests**, are concerned with the mastery of specific, defined skills; the students' performance on the test indicates whether they have mastered those skills. Examples of criterion-referenced questions would be as follows:

- Does Kelly correctly read the word *dinosaur?*
- Does Juanna do fifth-grade math computation problems with 85 percent accuracy?
- Did Yvette get 90 percent of the questions correct on the social studies exam?

Ultimately, criterion-referenced testing, unlike norm-referenced testing, uses an objective standard or achievement level. A student is required to demonstrate ability at a particular level by performing tasks at that degree of difficulty. Scores on criterion-referenced tests indicate what individuals *can* do—not how they have scored in relation to the scores of particular groups of persons, as in norm-referenced tests. Criterion-referenced tests and assessments are designed to measure student performance against a fixed set of predetermined criteria or learning standards—i.e., concise, written descriptions of what students are expected to know and be able to do at a specific stage of their education. In elementary and secondary education, criterion-referenced tests are used to evaluate whether students have learned a specific

body of knowledge or acquired a specific skill set, for example, the curriculum taught in a course, academic program, or content area (Huneycutt, 2019).

Standards-Referenced Tests

A variation of the criterion-referenced test is the **standards-referenced test**, or standards-based assessment. Standards-based assessment is meant to offer a way that teachers can identify the skills that matter most, can evaluate student work fairly, can give feedback to students that is helpful and actionable, and can use data to revise upcoming lessons to meet their students' needs (Gradecam, 2020). Many states and districts have adopted content standards (or "curriculum frameworks") that describe what students should know and be able to do in different subjects at various grade levels. They also have performance standards that define how much of the content standards students should know to reach the "basic," "proficient," or "advanced" level in the subject area. Tests are then based on the standards, and the results are reported in terms of these "levels," which, of course, represent human judgment. In some states, performance standards have been steadily increased, so that students continually have to know more to meet the same level.

Educators often disagree about the quality of a given set of standards. Standards are supposed to cover the important knowledge and skills students should learn—they define the "big picture." State standards should be well written and reasonable. Some state standards have been criticized for including too much, for being too vague, for being ridiculously difficult, for undermining higher-quality local curriculum and instruction, and for taking sides in educational and political controversies. If the standards are flawed or limited, tests based on them will be also. In any event, standards enforced by state tests will have—and are meant to have—a strong impact on local curriculum and instruction.

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Video Example 2.3
As you review the video on norm- versus criterion-referenced testing, make sure you are able to explain the differences between both types of tests. Why are they both important to use in assessment? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19FebJhXJMM&t=8s

Ecological Assessment

Ecological assessment involves directly observing and assessing a child in the many environments in which he or she routinely operates. The purpose of conducting such an assessment is to probe how the different environments influence the student and his or her school performance. An ecological assessment is the gathering of observations in various environments to examine whether individuals or entities behave differently depending on their surroundings (American Psychological Association, 2021). Critical questions to ask in an ecological assessment include the following:

- In which environments does the student manifest difficulties?
- Are there instances in which they appear to function appropriately?
- What is expected of the student academically and behaviorally in each type of environment?
- What differences exist in the environments in which the student manifests the greatest and the least difficulty?
- What implications do these differences have for instructional planning?

In an ecological assessment, the child is observed and assessed in different environments to see how they function in these different places. Sometimes students do well in some school environments but have difficulty, in performance and/or behavior, in others. For example, the child may be very well-behaved during art class but acts out inappropriately during math, or they may be calm during classroom time but become agitated in the cafeteria. Often adjusting the environment is the most effective way of making modifications that benefit the student. Maybe they misbehave when the environment is too noisy or stimulating, or maybe the expectations of the staff are different

in one environment to another. Having this kind of information can be very important in making decisions for placement and in accommodating the student's needs

(EduQna.com, 2012). The components of an ecological assessment clearly reveal that it involves numerous aspects of the student's life to get a detailed picture of their situation.

Curriculum-Based Assessment

Direct assessment of academic skills is one alternative that has recently gained in popularity. Although a number of direct assessment models exist, they are similar in that they all suggest that assessment needs to be tied directly to instructional curriculum. **Curriculum-based assessment (CBA)** is assessment based on the curriculum that a child is mastering. It may be the curriculum materials for the grade level the child is in, or it may be adapted to the student's ability or IEP goals. For example, fourth-grade children are mastering long division, but children with disabilities in the same classroom may be mastering single-digit divisors into two or three (Webster, 2015).

Curriculum-based assessment is an evaluation process that makes use of academic content selected directly from the material taught. This is a form of criterion-referenced assessment that connects evaluation with instructional programs by informing teachers of both student progress and learning challenges. A key characteristic of CBA is that it provides a form of direct measurement where teachers are assessing precisely what they teach, which is not always the case with indirect or norm-referenced assessments that do not necessarily reflect the specific material covered in a particular classroom (University of Pittsburgh, 2021).

Curriculum-based assessments provide a direct assessment of a child's skills upon entry into a curriculum; guide development of individual goals, interventions, and accommodations; and allow for continual monitoring of developmental progress (McLean, Wolery, & Bailey, 2004). Curriculum-based assessments should be conducted as an ongoing process of gathering information regarding children's strengths, interests, and emerging abilities related to important skills across all content and developmental areas for the purpose of planning instruction. "Assessment cannot and should not represent a single point in time and ongoing decisions should be continuously made based on data when programming for young children" (Grisham Brown, Hemmeter, & Pretti-Frontczak, 2005, p. 87).

CBA is useful because it:

- Can monitor the child's progress frequently
- Can be closely aligned to performance standards
- Can be sensitive to cultural and linguistic diversity
- Links curriculum and instruction
- Helps the teacher determine what to teach
- Can be administered frequently
- Is sensitive to short-term academic gains
- Assists in the evaluation of student progress and program evaluation
- Can be reliable and valid (Technical Assistance & Training System Communities of Practice, 2009)

Whereas standardized commercial achievement tests measure broad curriculum areas and/or skills, curriculum-based assessment measures specific skills that are presently being taught in the classroom, usually basic skills. Several approaches to CBA have been developed (Hall & Mengel, 2002). Four common characteristics exist across these models:

1. The measurement procedures assess students directly using the materials in which they are being instructed. This involves sampling items from the curriculum.

2. Administration of each measure is generally brief in duration (typically 1–5 minutes).

3. The design is structured such that frequent and repeated measurement is possible.

4. Data are usually displayed graphically to allow monitoring of student performance.

"Tests" of performance in this case come directly from the curriculum. For example, a child may be asked to read from their reading book for one minute. Information about the accuracy and the speed of reading can then be obtained and compared with that of other students in the class, building, or district. CBA is quick and offers specific information about a student's academic knowledge, it allows the teacher to match instruction to a student's current abilities, and it pinpoints areas in which curriculum adaptations or modifications are needed.

CBA also offers information about the accuracy and efficiency (speed) of performance. The latter is often overlooked when assessing a child's performance, but is an important piece of information when designing intervention strategies. CBA is also useful in evaluating short-term academic progress (Wright, 2007).

The use of CBA is a student-centered approach to evaluating and documenting student progress that provides teachers with a valuable tool for planning, delivering, and assessing instruction. The simple, yet ongoing, nature of CBA means that educators can make regular use of assessment procedures in order to continually modify and adapt instructional objectives while individualizing instruction as needed (University of Pittsburgh, 2021).

Curriculum-Based Measurement

Curriculum-based measurement (CBM) is an assessment method that involves timing tasks and then charting performance. CBM is most concerned with fluency. This means that we are looking at the rate at which a student is able to perform a given task. After assessing the speed at which the student performs the task, we then chart performance over time so that we can clearly see on a graph the student's progress (or decline) from the initial performance to the goal point. An example of curriculum-based measurement would be to examine the number of words correctly read from a book in 5 minutes and then continually chart the student's progress over the course of the school year with the goal being set at a predetermined number (e.g., 150 words).

According to McLane (2011), when CBM is used, each child is tested briefly each week. The tests generally last from 1 to 5 minutes. The teacher counts the number of correct and incorrect responses made in the time allotted to find the child's score. For example, in reading, the child may be asked to read aloud for 1 minute. Each child's scores are recorded on a graph and compared to the expected age-level or grade-level performance on the content for that year.

After the scores are entered on the graphs, the teacher decides whether to continue instruction in the same way, or to change it. A change is called for if the child's rate of learning progress is lower than is needed to meet the goal for the year.

The teacher can change instruction in any of several ways. For example, they might increase instructional time, change a teaching technique or way of presenting the material, or change a grouping arrangement (e.g., individual instruction instead of small-group instruction). After the change, parents—and the teacher—can see from the weekly scores on the graph whether the change is helping their child. If it is not, then the teacher can try another change in instruction, and its success will be tracked through the weekly measurements.

CBM is used to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction in the classroom. Based on a student's performance on CBM assessments, you can track the effectiveness of how your teaching impacts student achievement. If a student is making standard growth in

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Video Example 2.4

As you study the content in this video, "Reading Curriculum-Based Measurement," examine the importance of curriculum-based measurement (CBM) and how CBM is important for data-based decision making. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YElGmzHUcF8

relation to their goal, you can make the judgment that the instruction in the classroom is positively impacting that student's performance. If a student is not making growth or growth is variable, there may need to an instructional change to support student growth.

Ultimately, CBM examines general outcome measurements rather than achievement of mastery goals. Mastery goals assume that when a student becomes proficient in a succession of skills, by the end of the year they will be able to apply these mastered skills as a whole. Mastery goals assess one skill at a time in isolation. In contrast, CBM is a general outcome measure that takes multiple skills and assesses their use together (Vanderbilt University, n.d.).

Dynamic Assessment

Dynamic assessment (DA) refers to several different but similar approaches to evaluating student learning. One of the chief characteristics of dynamic assessment is the inclusion of a dialogue or interaction between the examiner and the student. The interaction allows the examiner to draw conclusions about the student's thinking processes (i.e., why they answer a question in a particular way) and their response to a learning situation (i.e., whether, with prompting, feedback, or modeling, the student can produce a correct response and what specific means of instruction produce and maintain positive change in the student's cognitive functioning).

Dynamic assessment is essentially a procedure for simultaneously assessing and promoting development that takes account of an individual's zone of proximal development (ZPD). In brief, the ZPD asserts that what individuals can accomplish with assistance from others is an indication of what they can accomplish independently in the future. As opposed to traditional forms of assessment, DA does not make predictions about the future based on past development. Instead, DA seeks to gain insights into what individuals achieve in the future with support from and interaction with others (Koay, 2021).

Dynamic assessment may be framed as a constructivist approach to assessment. That is, the goal is to determine what students do, can do, and can do with help, and to devote less time and attention to comparing student performance to set standards or to norm-group performance in an attempt to identify deficiencies. In dynamic assessment, the assessment is focused on student learning and performance over time, and comparisons are made between a student's current and past performance. Additionally, dynamic assessment is concerned with learning what a student is able to do when provided supports in the form of prompts, cues, or physical supports, some of which naturally exist in the environment (Bigge & Stump, 1999, p. 182).

Typically, dynamic assessment involves a test–train–retest approach. The emphasis is on the individual's ability to acquire the skills/knowledge being tested after being exposed to instruction (Leaders Project, 2012). The examiner begins by testing the student's ability to perform a task or solve a problem without help. Then, a similar task or problem is given to the student, and the examiner models how the task or problem is solved or gives the student cues to assist his or her performance. In Feuerstein's (1979) model of dynamic assessment, the examiner is encouraged to interact constantly with the student, an interaction that is called *mediation*, which is felt to maximize the probability that the student will solve the problem.

Dynamic assessment is a promising addition to current evaluation techniques. The interactional aspect of dynamic assessment can contribute substantially to developing an understanding of the student's thinking process and problem-solving approaches and skills. Certainly, having detailed information about how a student approaches performing a task and how they respond to various instructional techniques can be highly relevant to instructional planning.