

Assessing Students with Special Needs

Effie P. Kritikos | James A. McLoughlin | Rena B. Lewis

EIGHTH EDITION



ASSESSING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Eighth Edition

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*In honor of our parents
Kathleen and Peter McLoughlin
Margaret and Willard Bisbopp
Aglaia and Tom Papoutsis*

*And with love to our spouses
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PREFACE

Assessment is at the center of all good teaching, and this book is designed to provide a clear, comprehensive guide to the assessment of students with mild disabilities. This book will give you an understanding of the assessment process as well as the practical skills needed to assess students with special needs successfully so that you can teach them well. To structure the process, we offer an assessment question model, and we have developed the idea of the Individualized Assessment Plan (IAP). Our basis for the assessment questions and suggested procedures is a combination of best professional practices and legal mandates. This approach allows you sufficient flexibility to explore the areas and types of assessment in which you are particularly interested. In accordance with our belief that educators need useful information, we maintain a strong educational orientation toward assessment.

THE EIGHTH EDITION

This is the eighth edition of *Assessing Students with Special Needs*, and it reflects many changes in professional thought and practice in both special education and general education. Among the topics new to or enhanced in this edition are updated research and assessment tools in each chapter. This already successful book in previous editions builds on a quality book from the last edition and takes it to a new level.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

- Learning objectives are introduced at the beginning of each chapter and summarized at the end of every chapter.
- Breakpoint practices allow students to check their understanding.
- Diversity is addressed in each chapter as related to chapter context.
- Digital videos also are new and include examples of concepts discussed in each chapter.
- Adaptive behavior skills and intellectual performance have been separated into different chapters.
- In addition, oral language and English-language learners have been separated into chapters in order to take a deeper dive into content areas. These in-depth areas of content allow for more detail than competing books.
- Assessments and research articles have been updated. In addition, examples have been added and figures renewed. Legal information has also been updated.

The strengths of this book include the comprehensive nature of the chapter content. This edition presents reviews of dozens of tests, research articles, figures, tables, and legislation in each chapter. This feature allows students to be up to date with current practices and responsibilities. Breakpoint practices allow for formative assessment of future teachers' learning at several points within the chapter. An in-depth authentic case study allows for application of the chapter material. These assessment-to-instruction learning materials allow students to practice learned concepts before entering the classroom. In addition, several short videos are provided to reinforce material throughout the chapters. Multimodal methodology allows for tapping into student learning styles for optimum learning. These features enrich the textbook and provide superior, robust chapters as compared to textbooks by the competition.

Part I, Introduction to Special Education Assessment, includes information on the purposes of assessment, laws and regulations governing assessment, the team approach to assessment, the organization of the assessment process using the Assessment Question Model, and the steps in assessment. Embracing parents and families as a focal point in the assessment process is new to Part I and provides a framework for this text.

Part II, Skills for Special Educators, contains chapters on selecting the tools for assessment, administration, and scoring of standardized tests, and design and use of informal assessment techniques and procedures. All chapters have been updated and revised to increase coverage of techniques for evaluating student progress in classroom instruction.

Part III, Assessment for Special Education Eligibility, centers on the areas most relevant to eligibility assessment: intellectual performance, adaptive behavior, learning disabilities, and classroom behavior and behavioral disorders. In this update, adaptive behavior assessment has its own chapter dedicated to this assessment area.

Part IV, Assessment of Academic Skills, focuses on the assessment of academic, English-language learners, reading, mathematics, writing, and oral language. In this edition, diversity is highlighted in the entire text, with a separate chapter concentrating on English-language learners.

Part V, Important Considerations, provides information on the topics of assessment during the early childhood years and assessment for transition education planning.

This edition also features new tests and assessment procedures, many of which are revised versions of measures described in earlier editions. Approximately 50 new published measures are included. Among the new instruments discussed are:

- *Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Achievement*
- *Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement—Third Edition*
- *TerraNova SUPERA*
- *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children—Fifth Edition*
- *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children—Fifth Edition (Spanish)*
- *Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Cognitive Abilities*
- *Diagnostic Adaptive Behavior Scale*
- *Gray Oral Reading Tests—Fifth Edition*
- *Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests—Third Edition*
- *Analytical Reading Inventory—Tenth Edition*
- *Test of Word Reading Efficiency*
- *Informal Reading Inventory—Eighth Edition*
- *Oral and Written Language Scales-II*
- *Test of Early Written Language—3*
- *Test of Written Spelling—5*

- *Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey—Revised Normative Update*
- *BRIGANCE® Diagnostic Inventory of Early Development—III*
- *BRIGANCE® Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills—II*
- *BRIGANCE® Transition Skills Inventory*

FEATURES

Our goal in this book is to provide you with a foundation for understanding the assessment process and with the skills necessary for carrying out meaningful assessments. The chief strength of this text remains its balanced coverage of formal eligibility assessment and the assessment practices that teachers carry out in classrooms. Critiques of the strengths and weaknesses of formal tests and informal procedures help you to select the tools that will supply the information you need.

We have chosen to speak about popular assessment procedures as well as less well-known, but distinctive, measures. On the one hand, popular instruments are discussed in some depth, not necessarily because they are always the best techniques, but because they reflect current practice. On the other hand, information about less well-known tests and techniques is provided to acquaint you with promising procedures. With this comprehensive coverage, you will find out not only what is currently being done (and how well) but also what needs to be changed and how to do that.

In addition, we provide the connection between gathering assessment information and using it to make decisions. There are regular reminders to consider assessment data in relation to the classroom setting and suggestions for making sense out of all the information gathered. This process is described in the context of a team approach to educational assessment but with particular emphasis on the role of the special education teacher.

To make our book a more practical classroom resource, we have included several useful *Assessment in Action* student profiles, sample test profiles, checklists, and illustrations. Also, information boxes throughout the chapters summarize the important characteristics of tests discussed in depth. We have tried to give you a feel for the procedures you will use in assessment and to critique and relate them to one another so that you can better understand how to use them. Each chapter begins with a brief topical outline of its contents and ends with a summary of the important points in the chapter.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS FOR STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS

Online Instructor's Manual with Test Questions
0134254600/9780134254609

Each chapter of the Online Instructor's Manual with Test Questions contains the following: chapter overview, chapter outline, glossary terms, class discussion questions, resources, and suggested activities. In addition, the manual contains test questions (multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and essay) as well as a set of instructional aids that can be used in teaching an assessment course to prospective special educators.

Online PowerPoint Presentations
0134254708/9780134254708

The lecture presentations (in PowerPoint) prepared for the eighth edition highlight the key concepts and content of each chapter.

Instructor Resource Center

To access both the online Instructor's Manual with Test Questions and the Online PowerPoint Presentations, go to www.pearsonhighered.com, click on the Instructor's Support button, and then go to the Download Supplements section. Here you will be able to log in or complete a one-time registration for a user name and password. The Instructor Resource Center opens the door to a variety of print and media resources in downloadable, digital format. As a registered faculty member, you can log in directly to premium online products and download resource files directly to your computer.

AUTHORS AND CONTRIBUTORS FOR THE EIGHTH EDITION

Revisions for the eighth edition were completed primarily by Rena B. Lewis, one of the co-authors of the first four editions and primary author of the fifth and sixth. The contributions of James A. McLoughlin to previous editions continue to add to the strength of this book.

Three contributors also participated in the development of the seventh edition, and we thank them for their willingness to share their perspectives and expertise. They are Eleanor W. Lynch, author of Chapter 3, Including Parents and Families in the Assessment Process; Laura J. Hall, author of Chapter 16, Early Childhood Assessment; and Bonnie R. Kraemer, author of Chapter 17, Assessment for Transition Education and Planning.

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Note: Every effort has been made to provide accurate and current Internet information in this book. However, the Internet and information posted on it are constantly changing, so it is inevitable that some of the Internet addresses listed in this textbook will change.

1



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Special Education Assessment

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- Define assessment
- Provide examples of how assessments in the present differ from assessments in the past.
- List the three major purposes of assessment.
- Discuss proper assessment procedures (outlined by IDEA or another organization).
- Compare and contrast the difference between IEPs and 504 plans for general and special education assessment.
- Name members of the collaboration team involved in special education assessment.
- Explain the major components and framework of special education assessment.

KEY TERMS

assessment	formal assessment
individualized education program (IEP)	standardized tests
individual transition plan (ITP)	norm-referenced tests
individual family service plan (IFSP)	informal assessment
prereferral strategies	mild disabilities

Assessment* is the process of gathering information for the purpose of making a decision. Everyone engages in assessment. As human beings, we all gather information, sift and weigh that information, and make decisions based on our judgments and conclusions. When we wake up in the morning, we look outdoors to assess the weather. When we meet friends, loved ones, or acquaintances, we study their demeanor to assess their moods. Before we make a purchase, we weigh the merits of various products. Before we enter the voting booth, we investigate the worthiness of political candidates. And, as teachers, we assess our students.

Educational assessment is an integral part of the instructional process. Teachers observe their students as they enter the classroom, take their seats, and begin (or do not promptly begin) to work. Teachers ask questions and evaluate students' answers. They monitor students' behavior in the classroom and in the other environments of the school.

Sometimes assessment is more structured and systematic. Teachers give quizzes and exams. They assign a written paper or project, and they evaluate the results. Teachers also take part in the school-, district-, and/or statewide administration of standardized tests to evaluate students' progress in mastering the curriculum.

Although assessment is an important skill for all teachers, it is particularly important for special educators—teachers who serve students with disabilities. General education is designed to serve typical learners; special education, in contrast, is designed to meet the individual needs of students with school performance difficulties. The instructional plans for students with disabilities must be highly individualized, which means that special education teachers require precise information about their students' educational strengths and needs. Special education assessment is at the core of this process.

WHAT IS ASSESSMENT?

Special education assessment is the assessment of students to determine strengths and needs. In addition, it is used to determine student eligibility for services, strategies to support students and families, and progress with respect to goals. It can be defined as the systematic process of gathering educationally relevant information to make legal

*Words appearing in **boldface** in the text are defined in the Glossary.

and instructional decisions about the provision of special services. There are many important aspects to this definition. First, assessment is an ongoing process, not a one-time event. Assessments take place when students experience difficulty meeting the demands of the general education curriculum and are referred for consideration for special education services. Once students are found eligible for special education services, assessment continues in the special education classroom and other school environments where the special education teacher and others gather information related to the everyday concerns of instruction.

Second, special education assessment is systematic. In the early stages of the assessment process, an interdisciplinary team meets to plan strategies for the collection of useful information. Professionals—such as special educators, psychologists, and speech-language clinicians—work together to ensure that sufficient information is gathered to answer important questions. Classroom assessment of students with disabilities is also systematic. Teachers regularly monitor students' progress toward important instructional goals and, when necessary, modify instructional strategies.

Third, special education assessment focuses on the collection of educationally relevant information. School performance is a major concern, and teachers and other professionals evaluate students' progress in all pertinent areas of the school curriculum. In addition to academic achievement, professionals are interested in students' language, social, and behavioral skills. Students' learning abilities and strategies for learning are concerns, as are the characteristics of the learning environments in which students are asked to participate. All of these factors contribute to a better understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses and the types of support they may require to succeed in school.

Fourth, special education assessment is purposeful. Information is collected in order to make important decisions about schooling for students with special needs. Those decisions concern issues such as determining whether students meet legal criteria for special education services, selecting the most appropriate program and placement for students, setting instructional goals, choosing instructional methods and

materials, and monitoring student progress and the effectiveness of instructional approaches.

Special education assessment extends beyond the school years because infants, preschoolers, and young adults with disabilities are served by special education. In the preschool years, assessment focuses on development in important skill areas such as language, cognition, social-emotional behavior, and sensory and motor skills. In young adulthood, the concern is successful transition from the world of school into the world of work, higher education, careers, and other areas of adult life.

The term *assessment* is sometimes confused with two other terms: *testing* and *diagnosis*. Tests are one type of assessment technique, and, as such, they are one of the many strategies used to gather information about students with special needs. Assessment is much broader; it is the entire data collection process and the decisions that result from that process. Testing is only one of the activities that takes place in assessment, just as the use of textbooks or any other instructional tool is only one small part of the teaching process.

Diagnosis is a term borrowed from the medical profession. In a medical context, the cause of a condition is identified or diagnosed so that appropriate treatment can be offered. The diagnosis typically results in a label such as "autism," and that label is linked to treatment. In contrast, educational assessment is not designed to establish causes, assign labels to students, or determine educational treatments based on labels. When students are identified as having disabilities, that designation is given only to document eligibility for special services. Furthermore, special instructional programs are developed for individual students based on their strengths and weaknesses in school learning, not on labels for global syndromes or conditions. In other words, special educators would conclude from an assessment that a student has needs in the area of reading, rather than labeling the student with dyslexia.

ASSESSMENT PAST AND PRESENT

Educational assessment practices for students with disabilities have been shaped by a variety of disciplines, forces, and trends. Changes in education,

psychology, and medicine, and in the beliefs that society holds regarding the educational process continue to influence how schools gather assessment information to make decisions about the students they serve.

While the measurement of personality and other psychological factors was a topic of study in the late 1800s, the work of Alfred Binet (1857–1911) and others led to the major development of assessment techniques in the early 1900s. Assessments were created to meet a variety of needs, including the screening of students in public schools and the evaluation of military personnel and potential employees. These early efforts became the prototypes for many current group and individual tests in psychology and education.

Controversy over the nature of intelligence has affected the assessment practices used with students with disabilities. One debate centers on whether intelligence is one entity or whether it is made up of a set of factors. Some tests attempt to address a variety of factors that comprise intelligence; these factors are then analyzed to identify individual strengths and weaknesses within the global set of abilities that make up intellectual performance.

Another cause for discussion is the question of whether intelligence is modifiable. Most professionals consider intelligence a product of the interaction between people and their environment and, therefore, subject to change. Educational assessment of students with disabilities now incorporates procedures that analyze the environment as well as the person's abilities.

The field of medicine has had a profound effect on the development of educational assessment procedures. Many of the pioneers in special education were physicians who identified and described children with various types of disabilities and began the search for the causes and treatments of those disabilities. Some of these searches were successful, such as the development of vaccines to prevent diseases like polio. Others continue today in areas such as gene therapy and the use of sophisticated medical technologies to study the brain functioning of persons with dyslexia and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorders.

For many years, educators were hampered by the use of a medical model in the assessment of

students with disabilities. Students were diagnosed with a condition (e.g., intellectual disabilities or learning disabilities) and an educational treatment was prescribed based upon knowledge about that condition rather than the characteristics of the individual student. In some cases, the condition was assumed to be permanent; in others (most notably, learning disabilities), educators sought to cure the disability through educational remediation. Considerable progress has been made toward developing an assessment model that is more relevant to educational concerns. While identification of a specific disability is still part of current practice, the focus in assessment is the study of the individual student, his or her strengths and weaknesses, and the ways in which the instructional environment can be adapted to address the student's educational needs.

Other fields have also contributed to the assessment practices in special education. Tests of perception allow the study of how information is processed through vision, hearing, and other senses. Psychoeducational test batteries combine the analysis of psychological and educational factors. Applications of behavioral psychology have resulted in the use of several systems for behavioral observations of students in their school environments, including a special interest in the curriculum and the instructional tasks with which students interact. Other forms of informal assessment, like interviewing, have been borrowed and adapted from fields such as anthropology and sociology.

With the end of World War II and the baby boom in the 1950s, services for students with disabilities grew tremendously, with a subsequent growth in assessment procedures, particularly tests. Tests designed for administration to individual students were developed in all academic areas—and in language, social skills, and vocational skills—with the help of commercial publishers. In addition, special educators and other professionals created informal procedures directly related to classroom needs. Criterion-referenced testing played a major role in linking assessment and instructional programming.

Unfortunately, many misuses and abuses of assessment procedures accompanied this growth. Invalid and unreliable measures were used,

sometimes administered by untrained individuals. Some assessments were too narrow; some discriminated on the basis of the student's language, cultural background, or gender. Results were used inappropriately, with students erroneously labeled with a disability. The rights of students with disabilities and of their parents to due process under law were violated (Birnbaum, 2006).

In 1975, the passage of PL 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, exerted a strong, positive influence on the content and procedures used in the assessment of students with disabilities. The **individualized education program (IEP)** required a statement of (1) the child's current level of educational performance; (2) annual goals, including short-term objectives; (3) specific special education and related services to be provided; (4) the degree to which a child was able to participate in the general curriculum; (5) the dates for the beginning of services and the anticipated length the services would be in effect; and (6) appropriate objective criteria and evaluation procedures and schedules for determining how well the short-term objectives were being attained (Murdick, Gartin, & Crabtree, 2002).

In 1990, through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), also known as PL 101-476, transition services were more clearly defined so that services to children between the ages of 18 and 21 could be further described and applied. An **individual transition plan (ITP)** was also required, with discussion involving school-to-adult transition beginning by age 14 and no later than age 16. In addition, the student's IEP was to contain a statement of the transition services needed before the student left school.

In 1991, IDEA or PL 102-119 was reauthorized in order to reauthorize Part H, the section that deals with young children and funding for their services. Federal funds were allocated to help states educate infants, toddlers, preschoolers, children, and youth with disabilities (Murdick et al., 2002). Rather than require an IEP for children between birth and 3 years of age, an **individual family service plan (IFSP)** was required. Professionals were to support the family and the child in determining its needs and deciding how those needs could best be met. The IFSP included information about the child's status, family

information, outcomes, early intervention services, dates, duration of services, service coordinator(s), and transition information (Murdick et al., 2002).



Breakpoint Practice 1.1

Click here to check your understanding of IEP, ITP and IFSP.

The changes introduced in PL 94-142 are maintained and extended throughout the years by new versions such as PL 108-446, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004). First and foremost, this law guarantees that students with disabilities shall receive a free, appropriate, public education in the least restrictive educational environment. In the area of assessment, the law mandates a set of due process procedures to protect students and their parents and detailed guidelines to correct past problems. A team must adequately assess students with disabilities, and an IEP must be developed. In addition, state departments of education must comply with federal requirements to receive funding for special education programming.

IDEA 2004 places special emphasis on assessment of students' involvement with and progress in the general education curriculum. These areas must be addressed in the development of IEPs as well as how students will participate in state and district assessments of school achievement. The IEP team must also consider a range of special factors, including positive behavioral interventions and supports for students with behavioral problems, the language needs of students who are not proficient in English, and any requirements students might have for assistive technology devices and services.

Trends within the fields of education and special education have also influenced the development of assessment techniques and procedures. In the early years of special education, assessment focused solely on students and their deficits. That approach gave way to increased emphasis on the school curriculum and the specific instructional tasks with which students were experiencing difficulty. At present, the approach is more balanced. Both the student and the educational environment are of interest, particularly the ways in which interactions occur between individuals and

school demands. In addition, influences from educational theories such as constructivism have contributed to special educators' perspectives on assessment. In the constructivist view, students construct their own knowledge by building on the prior knowledge they bring with them to the learning situation (Bell, 2010; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Cegelka, 1995a).

One challenge that special education continues to face is the development of appropriate procedures to assess culturally and linguistically diverse students who are suspected of having a disability (Benson, 2003; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). Unsolved problems in this area have contributed to overrepresentation of some groups in special education programs and underrepresentation of others (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Losen & Orfield, 2002; Patton, 1998; Sullivan, 2011). This issue is likely to persist as the population of the United States becomes more diverse in the next decades.

The movement to educate students with disabilities in more inclusive settings has created a greater need for both general and special education teachers to have tools to assess these students in multiple environments, including the general education classroom. Educators of students with disabilities are held accountable for ongoing evaluation of learning. They need to monitor student progress frequently, without the necessity of administering standardized tests. Such tests are too costly in terms of both time and money, and their results do not translate directly to classroom interventions. Instead, educators have turned to **curriculum-based assessments**, that is, procedures and techniques that evaluate student growth in relation to the current classroom curriculum. Curriculum-based approaches such as criterion-referenced assessment, curriculum-based measurement, and portfolio assessment produce results that assist in the development of instructional goals, objectives, and procedures.

Major educational reforms in the United States are making profound changes in the assessment and evaluation of all students, including those with disabilities. By the mid-1990s, most states had adopted sets of academic standards and begun to link assessment of educational outcomes

to these standards (American Federation of Teachers, 1996; Olson, 2006). In this evaluation model, results of standards-based assessments are used as the basis for judging student performance, deciding whether schools and teachers are functioning appropriately, and even forcing fundamental changes in teaching methods and the structure of schools.

The standards movement became even more prominent with passage of President George W. Bush's education initiative, "No Child Left Behind." According to Bush (2001), this initiative has four major goals:

- *Increase Accountability for Student Performance:* States, districts, and schools that improve achievement will be rewarded. Failure will be sanctioned. Parents will know how well their child is learning, and that schools will be held accountable for their effectiveness with annual state reading and math assessments in grades 3–8.
- *Focus on What Works:* Federal dollars will be spent on effective, research-based programs and practices. Funds will be targeted to improve schools and enhance teacher quality.
- *Reduce Bureaucracy and Increase Flexibility:* Additional flexibility will be provided to states and school districts, and flexible funding will be increased at the local level.
- *Empower Parents:* Parents will have more information about the quality of their child's school. Students in persistently low-performing schools will be given choice.

As states, districts, and schools face increasing pressure to provide comparative data about the scholastic abilities of American students, the issues surrounding inclusion of students with disabilities in high-stakes testing become a major concern. Federal special education laws require that students with disabilities participate in state and local assessments of academic achievement alongside their general education peers. Although it is important to ensure that students with disabilities are not excluded, at the same time, appropriate test accommodation and modifications as well as alternative measures must be provided to guarantee valid and reliable evaluation.

In summary, special educational assessment today can be described in the following ways:

- Special education assessment, like special education instruction, is individualized. It is tailored to the needs of each student with disabilities.
- Assessment data are used to make decisions about the eligibility of students for special education services and about the types of services that are provided. Thus, decisions are both legal and instructional.
- Assessment focuses on educationally relevant information so that an appropriate IEP can be developed, implemented, and monitored.
- Assessment also focuses on the student's involvement with and progress in the general education curriculum.
- The student is not the only subject of assessment. The learning environment is also evaluated as well as the student's interactions with classroom tasks.
- A variety of procedures are used in assessment. Assessment is not limited to the administration of standardized tests.
- Assessment is characterized by a team approach. Parents and both special and general educators are important members of that team.
- Professionals strive for nonbiased assessment of all students, particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse groups.
- Assessment does not stop when instruction starts. Instructional programs are continuously monitored and evaluated.

PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

Special education assessment has several purposes because it plays a role in each phase of programming for students with disabilities. From the first indication of a learning problem, special education teachers and others gather information to aid in decision making. In general, this information is used to document eligibility for special education services and/or adaptations of the general education curriculum and to plan and monitor the effectiveness of an IEP. The main purposes of

assessment are directly related to the steps in the special education assessment process: identification and referral, determination of eligibility, program planning, and program implementation and evaluation. These steps are described briefly in the paragraphs that follow. A more detailed discussion can be found in Chapter 2.

Identification and Referral

Identification of students who may have disabilities is the first purpose of assessment. Two identification procedures are used: screening and prereferral strategies. Screening is a large-scale data collection activity used to quickly identify those students out of the entire school population who may be in need of further study. For example, most schools administer vision and hearing screening tests at regular intervals throughout the grades. When potential problems are detected, students are referred for a more in-depth evaluation.

Prereferral strategies, in contrast, are aimed at solving the school performance problems of individual students. Prereferral interventions begin when a general education teacher consults with others at the school site about a student experiencing difficulty in school. Information is gathered about the student's performance in areas of concern and about the instructional environment. In most cases, the prereferral team will develop a set of adaptations and modifications in an attempt to meet the student's academic and behavioral needs. These interventions are implemented, and data are collected to determine their effectiveness. If the results suggest a persistent learning problem, the student may be referred for consideration for special education services.

Determination of Eligibility

Second, special education assessment is performed to determine whether a student meets eligibility criteria for special education services. Eligibility is based on two interrelated criteria: the student must have a school performance problem, and that problem must be related to a disability. Each state develops its own eligibility requirements based upon federal laws, and individual districts

may set additional guidelines for assessment. Eligibility assessment is much more thorough than assessment for screening or prereferral. Also, it is individualized; the assessment team determines what types of information it needs to gather for each individual student. Then, students are assessed to determine their present levels of performance in areas related to the suspected disability. Typically, this involves investigation of the student's school skills, intellectual performance, hearing and vision, social and behavioral status, and language abilities. Information is also collected about the student's school history, current classroom performance, and the characteristics of the learning environment. Special attention is paid to the student's progress in the general education curriculum and the types of support needed to maximize the student's probability of success in the general education classroom.

Program Planning

Third, educational assessment data are used to plan the IEP. After the student's educational needs are identified and prioritized, annual goals are developed. The IEP team decides what types of special education and related services the student will receive and what kinds of supplementary aids and services will be needed to maintain the student within the general education classroom, if at all possible. The IEP indicates who will accomplish the goals and objectives, the settings in which services will take place, and the amount of time services will require. The plan also outlines how the student's progress will be monitored and how parents will be informed about their child's progress.

Program Implementation and Evaluation

The fourth reason for assessment is to monitor the student's progress in the educational program. Information is gathered by teachers (and others, as appropriate) about the effects of instruction and other types of interventions. This type of assessment is usually performed at frequent intervals, perhaps weekly or even daily. A variety of procedures are used, although the most common are informal techniques such as observation of student behavior, review of student work, and direct

measurement of performance in skill areas of interest. At this stage in the process, assessment and instruction blend together, with assessment data providing the information needed to guide instructional modifications.



ENHANCEDetext

Video Example 1.1

Classroom lessons are guided by the student's progress in the educational program. Watch this video to see how sorting, counting and graphing are taught and monitored in the classroom.

The final purpose of special education assessment is program evaluation. Federal special education laws require that the IEP of all students with disabilities be reviewed periodically. School staff and parents examine the progress of the student and the results of the program and decide if special education services should be continued as is, modified, or discontinued. In addition, the student's eligibility for special education services is typically reviewed every 3 years. These types of program evaluation are designed to ensure that students with disabilities receive appropriate interventions and that those interventions continue only as long as they are required.

TYPES OF ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

Many types of assessment procedures are available, and they vary along several dimensions, including the amount of professional expertise