CHAPTER 2

Assessment and the IEP Process

Well, that's the news from Lake Wobegon, where all the women are strong, all the men are good looking, and all the children are above average.

—Garrison Keillor

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

2.1 Describe uses of assessment information

2.2 Explain eligibility to special education services

2.3 Describe response-to-intervention (RTI)

2.4 Explain the comprehensive evaluation

2.5 Describe the individualized education program (IEP)

2.6 Describe how to obtain assessment information

2.7 Explain testing and accountability

2.8 List examples of tests

2.9 Describe test-taking strategies in the general education classroom

Part II, "The Assessment-Teaching Process," includes the three chapters that highlight the interrelated elements of the assessment-teaching process: assessment (Chapter 2), clinical teaching (Chapter 3), and educational settings (Chapter 4).

When assessment is linked with teaching, it helps teachers understand and teach a struggling student. If attention is paid to only one of these components, it splinters the effort and shortchanges the student. For example, routinely teaching skills or using methods or materials without considering a student's unique problems may be ineffective because such teaching does not address the student's unique needs. Similarly, if assessment only results in selecting a diagnostic label, the procedure does not provide guidelines for aiding the student's learning.

STANDARDS Addressed in This Chapter:

Council for Exceptional Children Initial Level Special Educator Preparation Standards as Approved by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education

CEC Initial Preparation Standard 1: Learner Development and Individual Learning Differences

- 1.0—Beginning special education professionals understand how exceptionalities may interact with development and learning and use this knowledge to provide meaningful and challenging learning experiences for individuals with exceptionalities.
- 1.1—Beginning special education professionals understand how language, culture, and family background influence the learning of individuals with exceptionalities.
- 1.2—Beginning special education professionals use understanding of development and individual differences to respond to the needs of individuals with exceptionalities.

CEC Initial Preparation Standard 4: Assessment

- 4.0—Beginning special education professionals use multiple methods of assessment and data sources in making educational decisions.
- 4.1—Beginning special education professionals select and use technically sound formal and informal assessments that minimize bias.
- 4.2—Beginning special education professionals use knowledge of measurement principles and practices to interpret assessment results and guide educational decisions for individuals with exceptionalities.
- 4.3—Beginning special education professionals in collaboration with colleagues and families use multiple types of assessment information in making decisions about individuals with exceptionalities.
- 4.4—Beginning special education professionals engage individuals with exceptionalities to work toward quality learning and performance and provide feedback to guide them.

CEC Initial Preparation Standard 5: Instructional Planning and Strategies

- 5.1—Beginning special education professionals consider an individual's abilities, interests, learning environments, and cultural and linguistic factors in the selection, development, and adaptation of learning experiences for individuals with exceptionalities.

In Chapter 2, "Assessment and the IEP Process," we examine the uses of assessment, look at the RTI approach to eligibility, and review the Comprehensive Evaluation approach to eligibility. We also investigate the influence of the law on the IEP process, review ways to obtain assessment information, and provide examples of assessment measures.

2.1 Uses of Assessment Information

Assessment is the process of collecting information about a student that will be used to form judgments and make decisions concerning that student. Assessment procedures are used to identify the nature of the student's challenges and to plan instruction. To be eligible for special education services, a student must be identified—or *classified*—within a special education category within the law. The more important reason for assessment is to obtain information that can be used to plan ways to help the student learn. Assessment serves several purposes:

1. **Screening.** The screening process is a cursory evaluation that is used to detect pupils who may need a more comprehensive evaluation.
2. **Referral.** The referral process seeks additional assistance from other school personnel. On the basis of observation and classroom performance, the teacher (or others) requests an evaluation of a student.
3. **Classification.** The classification process is used to determine a student's eligibility for services. Students are assessed to judge the need for services and to identify the category of disability and whether the disability has an adverse impact on educational performance.
4. **Instructional planning.** The instructional-planning process develops an educational program for an individual student. The assessment information is used to formulate instructional goals and to develop specific plans for teaching.

5. **Monitoring pupil progress.** It is important to review a student's progress. Several approaches to monitoring can be used, including standardized formal tests, informal measures, and a continuous monitoring procedure.

Did You Get It?

The process of student assessment can be broken up into five parts. Which part refers to determining a prospective student's eligibility to receive disability-related services?

a. classification
b. screening
c. referral
d. planning

2.2 Determining Eligibility for Special Education Services

IDEA-2004 brought about significant changes in the way students are identified for special education services (IDEA, 2004, with regulations of 2006). For identifying students with learning disabilities, the final regulations for the law indicate that states: (1) must not require a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement, (2) must permit the use of a process based on the child's response-to-interventions, and (3) may permit the use of other alternative research-based procedures to determine whether the child has learning disabilities (Regulations for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of IDEA-2004, 2006; Division for Learning Disabilities, 2007).

Two ways that schools can determine eligibility for special education services are (1) the response-to-intervention (RTI) approach, or (2) a comprehensive evaluation of the student with suspected disabilities. In this chapter, we discuss both approaches.

Did You Get It?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) mandates that an individual student _____ demonstrate a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement.

a. must always
b. must usually
c. need not
d. must conditionally

2.3 Response-to-Intervention (RTI)

Response-to-intervention (RTI) is a procedure that is intended to identify students who are having academic difficulties when the problems first become apparent by using response-to-intervention (RTI) (IDEA-2004; Regulations for IDEA-2004, 2006). RTI is a practice to be used with *all* students, including students in general education classes, students who are considered at-risk for school

response-to-intervention (RTI) The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 advocates the procedure of teaching all students with evidence-based instructional materials through general education in order to judge the students response to this intervention. RTI is also identified as a procedure that may be used to assess children with learning disabilities.

failure, and students with suspected disabilities (including students with suspected mild disabilities and learning disabilities). The goal of RTI is to prevent academic failure for all of these students (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012; Division for Learning Disabilities, 2007; Renaissance Learning 2009; Fuchs & Deshler, 2007).

Since 2003 when RTI was still an emerging idea, RTI has become a major force in education reform. It is collated into federal law as a method for evaluation of students with learning disabilities (IDEA, 2004, 2006). It is integrated in the laws of all 50 states in various forms (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012).

2.3a Tiers of Instruction in RTI

Although there are several different versions of RTI, many descriptions of RTI use three tiers (or levels) of intervention (see Figure 2.1). Each tier represents a level of intervention or instruction. Students with differing needs receive more intensive instruction. RTI is most successful as a screening tool for reading and mathematics (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012).

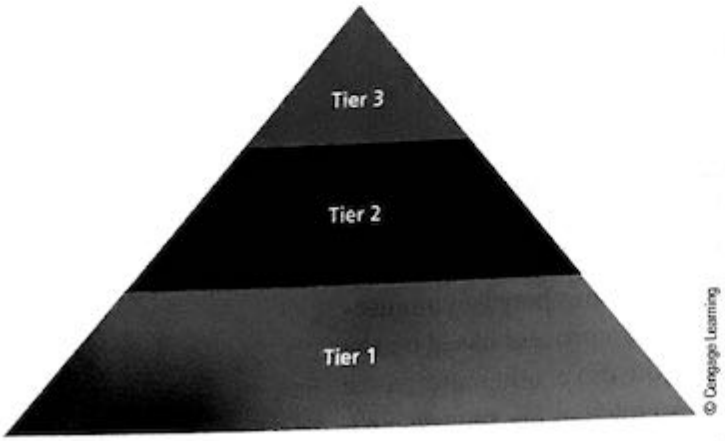


FIGURE **2.1**
A Three-tiered Model of RTI

The RTI model proposes that if a student responds well to the evidence-based interventions, at Tier 1 (first level), the student does not have a disability. However, students who do not respond positively to the RTI instruction at Tier 1 are given more intensive instruction in the next level (Tier 2). If the student still does not respond or learn after intensive intervention at Tier 2, the student receives still more intensive intervention in a smaller group at Tier 3. Finally, students who do not respond positively to interventions at Tier 3 may then be considered for an evaluation for special education (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012, Renaissance Learning, 2009; Division of Learning Disabilities, 2007).

To summarize, RTI targets *all* students. Students in general education classes, students considered to be at-risk for learning failure, including students with suspected learning disabilities, and students with suspected mild disabilities. Students who respond well to the instruction in the RTI procedure at Tiers 1, 2, or 3 are *not* considered eligible for special education services. Students who are *not* learning with the RTI interventions are considered to be "nonresponders" and may be referred for a special education evaluation (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012; Renaissance Learning, 2009; Division for Learning Disabilities, 2007). The three tiers of intervention that are commonly used:

- **Tier 1. High-quality instruction in general education and monitoring of student progress.** It is anticipated that about 80% of students will be served in Tier 1. Students who do not respond adequately to Tier 1 go on to Tier 2.
- **Tier 2. More intensive evidenced-based instruction while progress monitoring continues.** Often support teachers, such as reading specialists, instruct students at Tier 2. It is anticipated that 10–15% of students are in Tier 2. Students who do not respond adequately to Tier 2 go on to Tier 3.
- **Tier 3. Highly intense, evidenced-based interventions taught in small groups or individually, while progress monitoring continues.** Tier 3 is meant to include 5–10% of students. Students who do not respond adequately to Tier 3 may be considered for a comprehensive evaluation

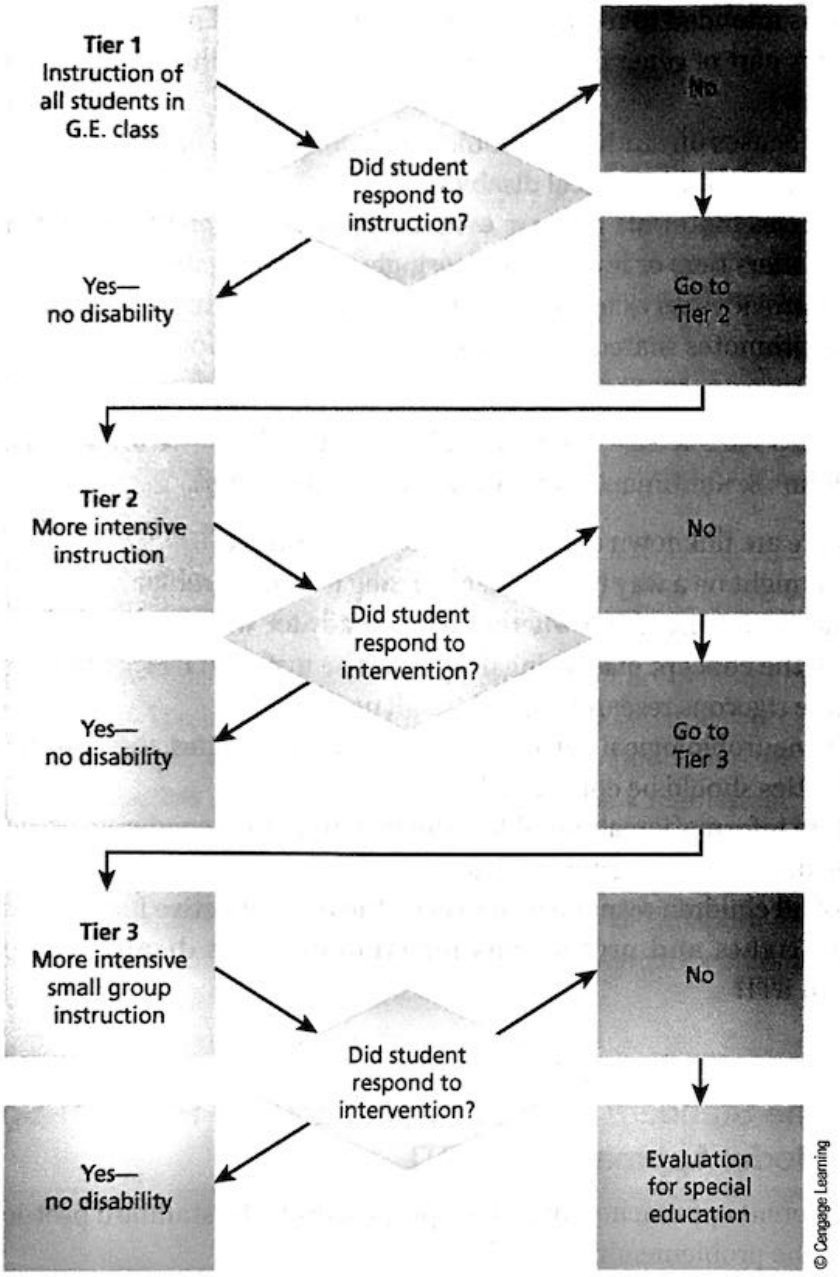


FIGURE **2.2**
A Decision Flow Chart for the Three Tiers of RTI

(Renaissance Learning 2009; Division for Learning Disabilities, 2007; Denton, 2006; Bradley, Danielson, & Doolittle, 2005). A decision flow chart of the three tiers of RTI is shown in Figure 2.2.

- **It must be noted that at any time in this process when a student has a disability or is suspected of having a disability, the school district cannot use RTI to delay or deny an evaluation for eligibility under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.** (Memo to State Directors of Special Education from Melody Musgrove, Director of Office of Special Education Programs, United States Department of Education, January 21, 2011.)

2.3b Benefits and Concerns About RTI

Benefits of RTI The benefits of RTI include the following (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012; Renaissance Learning, 2009; Division of Learning Disabilities, 2007).

- RTI focuses on earlier identification and prevention of disabilities, thereby reducing the number of students referred to special education.

- RTI is intended to reduce the over-identification of minority students.
- RTI is part of general education and the responsibility of general education teachers.
- RTI focuses on student outcomes and increased accountability. It includes all suspected categorical disabilities.
- RTI uses materials that are evidenced based or scientific research based and offers tiers or levels of increasingly intensive instruction.
- RTI provides services to students without using categorical labels.
- RTI promotes shared responsibility and collaboration.

Concerns About RTI Concerns about RTI include the following (Denton, 2012; Johns & Kauffman, 2009; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2009).

- There are unknown costs of fully implementing RTI.
- RTI might be a way to delay recognizing a child's problem.
- Questions arise about whether RTI is ready for wide-scale adoption.
- Will the concept of learning disabilities be lost with RTI?
- More rigorous research on RTI is still needed.
- The neurobiological correlates of learning disabilities and related mild disabilities should be considered.
- More information about older students and other academic areas of learning besides reading are needed.
- Not all children respond well to even the most effective interventions.
- Are rights and protections for students with disabilities provided with RTI?

2.3c The Standard Protocol Model and the Problem-Solving Model Approaches to RTI

Two different approaches for RTI are proposed: (1) the standard protocol model and (2) the problem-solving model.

- In the standard protocol model to RTI, specific approaches and instructional programs are developed and implemented using prescribed procedures for academic or behavioral problems at each stage of instruction. At each level of intervention, instruction is standardized, meaning that consistent instructional methods are implemented for a specific length of time. The procedures for teaching and assessing the performance and growth of the students who responded poorly to general class instruction are the same for all students in the small group (Division for Learning Disabilities, 2007).

problem-solving model to RTI
Focuses on individualized intervention for one student.

- In the problem-solving model to RTI, each student's failure to respond to intervention is given an individually tailored plan for the next level of instruction or support. It is essentially a case-by-case approach to addressing individual students' unique needs. The problem-solving model relies on teacher assistance teams or instructional support teams already established in most schools. (Division for Learning Disabilities, 2007)

An example of the RTI procedure is shown in Student Stories 2.1, "Lucy and the RTI Process."

Lucy is 6 years old and in the first grade at The Pine School. The Pine School is using the response-to-intervention procedure with students. Lucy received Tier 1 RTI instruction in her general education class but did not respond well to this intervention. Her general education first grade teacher said that Lucy had difficulty recognizing sounds and did poorly with beginning reading lessons. Progress monitoring also showed that Lucy was not learning through the Tier 1 intervention. Lucy is now in Tier 2, which provides more intensive instruction and is taught by the reading specialist at The Pine School. Lucy is responding positively to Tier 2 instruction and she is not being considered for a special education evaluation.

REFLECTIVE QUESTION

1. How did the RTI procedure indicate that Lucy does not have a disability?

2.3d Progress Monitoring

progress monitoring
Assessment procedures to measure the student's academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction.

Progress monitoring is used to determine whether students are making appropriate gains in learning in the instructional program. It is an assessment procedure to measure a student's academic performance and to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress monitoring is typically done on a regular and frequent schedule. The teacher measures the student's academic performance on a regular basis (weekly or monthly) and charts the academic performance (Division of Learning Disabilities, 2007; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Council for Exceptional Children, 2004). For more information, visit the website for the National Center on Student Progress Monitoring at *http://www.studentprogress.org.*

Many progress-monitoring programs are prepackaged, and many enable teachers to use computers to produce the graphs and charts that they need to see how individual students are progressing. Figure 2.3 shows a

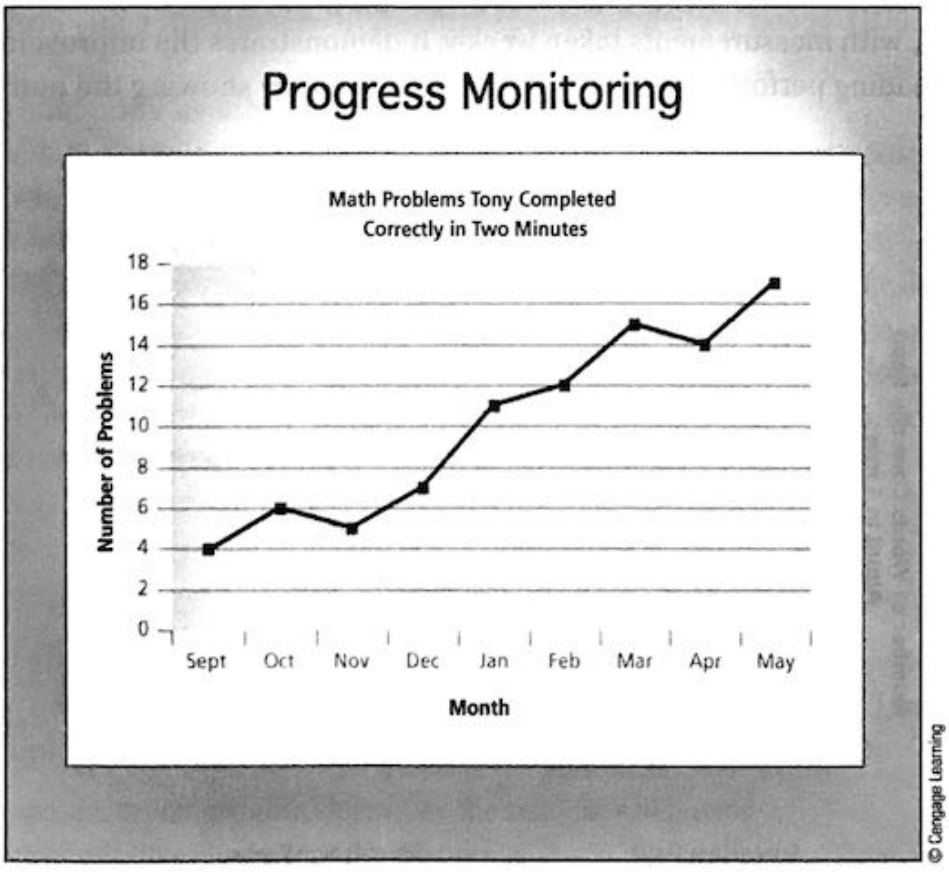


FIGURE **2.3**
Progress Monitoring

progress-monitoring chart for mathematics for Tony, grade 2. It shows how many math problems Tony completed correctly during 2-minute mathematics measurements over a 10-month period.

A useful software program for conducting curriculum-based measurement and progress monitoring in several different academic areas is AIMS-web, which measures reading, early literacy, early numeracy, mathematics, spelling, and written expression. It also provides for monitoring in the behavioral areas. The website for AIMSweb is *http://www.aimsweb.com*.

2.3e Curriculum-Based Measurement

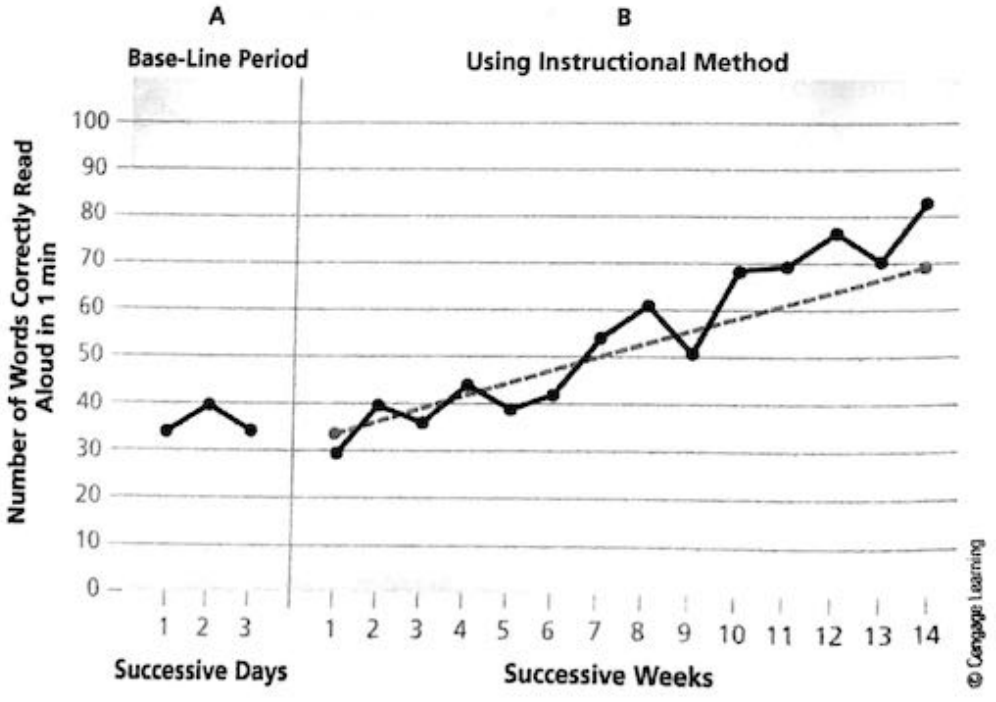
curriculum-based measurement (CBM)
Assessment designed to measure student performance on the student's curriculum activities and materials. The student's performance on an academic task is repeatedly measured and charted to assess changes in learning performance.

One progress-monitoring procedure is curriculum-based measurement (CBM). Curriculum-based measurement is a procedure designed to test what a student actually does in the student's school or classroom curriculum. The assessment requires that the student actively perform some task through frequent and repeated measures.

Curriculum-based measurement (CBM) is described as a procedure for assessing the growth of basic skills (Deno, 2003). First, the teacher determines the area of the curriculum or the goal for the student in the student's IEP. Then, the student's progress is measured through frequent, systematic, and repeated measures of that learning task. Performance results are graphed or charted so that the student's progress is clearly observable to both the teacher and the student. CBM performance samples are 1 to 3 minutes long, and they are charted to display the student's performance changes over successive time periods, such as days or weeks.

In Figure 2.4, CBM is used to monitor growth in reading through frequent measurements of the number of words the student reads aloud during 1-minute reading samples, which are the base-line period over three successive days, as shown in the left side of the figure. The right side of Figure 2.4 shows the progress achieved after a targeting instructional program is used for 14 successive weeks, with measurements taken weekly. It demonstrates the improvement in oral reading performance over the 14-week period by showing the number of

FIGURE **2.4**
A Curriculum-based Measurement Chart Monitoring an Individual Student's Progress



words read correctly in successive 1-minute reading samples. The dashed line shows the IEP goal, which is reading 65 words per minute within 14 weeks (Deno, 2003). CBM can be used to measure many academic areas: spelling, writing, mathematics, and reading (Spinelli, 2006; Bender, 2004).

Did You Get It?

Responsiveness-to-intervention (RTI) is an assessment strategy used to identify _____ students who are experiencing learning-related difficulties as early as possible.

a. disabled
b. special-needs
c. "lagging"
d. any-and-all

2.4 The Comprehensive Evaluation

comprehensive evaluation
Entails collecting information about an individual student that can be used to form judgments and make critical decisions about the student and to plan appropriate instruction.

The comprehensive evaluation is another way to determine a student's eligibility for special education services. A comprehensive evaluation entails collecting information about an individual student that can be used to form judgments and make critical decisions about the student and to plan appropriate instruction. Comprehensive evaluations are used by the schools in the process of preparing for an individualized education program (IEP) for a student (Hallahan & Cohen, 2008; Salvia, Ysseldyke, & Bolt, 2007). The RTI process cannot be used to delay-deny an evaluation for eligibility under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, January 21, 2011).

The comprehensive evaluation of students with suspected disabilities has been used since the passage of the first special education law in 1975. Many other professionals use comprehensive evaluations, as well: psychologists, physicians, and other health professionals.

The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the right of students with suspected disabilities to have a comprehensive evaluation. In the case *Forest Grove School District v. T.A. (08-305),* decided on June 22, 2009, the Supreme Court ruled that under IDEA-2004, a student has the right to a timely and appropriate evaluation to make certain that decisions about eligibility to special education are correct. In this case, the Supreme Court determined that the parent should receive reimbursement for the tuition at a private school because, in part, the school district did not provide a comprehensive evaluation for the student (Cohen, 2009; Wright & Wright, 2009).

2.4a Information Obtained in a Comprehensive Evaluation

Several kinds of information would be included in a comprehensive evaluation for a student with suspected learning disabilities (Division for Learning Disabilities, 2007):

- Observational data that describes the student's behavior
- Educationally relevant medical findings

- Data to exclude visual, hearing, or motor disability; mental retardation, emotional disturbance, cultural factors, environmental, or economic disadvantage; or limited English proficiency
- Data from standardized measures and qualitative analysis of the student's ability to listen think, speak, read, write, spell, and do mathematics
- Summary of the student's strengths and weaknesses and the basis for determination of a Specific Learning Disability if found
- Recommendations based on the data that inform individualized instruction, state necessary accommodations or modifications, and identify behavioral and learning supports needed
- Review of RTI information, if used
- A comparison of a student's intellectual ability (potential for learning) and the student's actual achievement

For students with suspected mild or moderate disabilities, a comprehensive evaluation provides evaluation data that would indicate reduced ability levels, significant attention problems, sensory impairments, or behavior disorders (Division for Learning Disabilities, 2007).

2.4b The Discrepancy Between Intellectual Ability and Academic Achievement

One of the most controversial issues in the comprehensive evaluation of students with suspected learning disabilities is the evidence of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and the student's actual achievement. As noted earlier, the final Regulations for the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (2006) permits (but does not require) schools to use evidence of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement as one criterion for determining if the child has learning disabilities. Actually, the discrepancy factor is but one component that is considered in the comprehensive evaluation of a child.

Discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability has been a component in the comprehensive evaluation. Briefly it is based on the concept that the student has the intellectual potential for learning but is not meeting this potential in his or her academic performance (Hallahan, 2007; Hallahan & Cohen, 2008).

The discrepancy means that the student's achievement (what the student has actually learned) is compared to the student's intellectual ability (what the student is potentially capable of learning). A student's intellectual ability is often measured with an IQ score, and IQ tests have been under severe criticism.

It is important to keep in mind that cognitive tests or tests of intellectual ability provide much more than a single score of intelligence. It is also necessary for teachers to know the student's strengths and affinities, as well as areas that are difficult for the student, and to recognize that each student has a "different kind of mind" (Scherer, 2006).

discrepancy score
A mathematical calculation for quantifying the discrepancy between the student's current achievement and his or her potential.

A discrepancy score is a mathematical calculation for quantifying the discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability (or potential for learning). There are several different formulas for calculating a discrepancy score, and these formulas are explained on the Student Website. Discrepancy should be seen as a critical marker with specific learning disabilities seen as a category that is based on underachievement; not based solely on low achievement. Discrepancy is a reliable criterion (Batsche, Kavale, & Kovaleski, 2009).

Concerns About the Discrepancy Factor The concerns about the aptitude–achievement discrepancy factor include:

- **Quantitative and qualitative information should be combined.** Many parents and teachers are concerned about the use of quantitative discrepancy scores for making decisions about their child and contend that there is no substitute for clinical judgment and actual experience (Chalfant, 1989; Mastropieri, 1987).
- **Using an IQ score for measuring an individual's potential may not be useful.** IQ tests do not necessarily measure intelligence. Moreover, an IQ score can be adversely affected by the student's culture or native language. In addition, the student could have a lower IQ score because of the nature of the disability itself (Stuebing et al., 2009; Fletcher et al., 2004).
- **Children who are poor achievers often have similar learning characteristics, whether they have high IQ scores or low IQ scores.** Research shows there are many similarities between two poor readers regardless of their IQ scores (Stuebing et al., 2009; Fletcher et al., 2004).
- **Discrepancy formulas vary from state to state.** States and school districts differ in their discrepancy formulas for identifying learning disabilities. Thus, a child could be identified as having a learning disability in one state but may be denied services after moving to another state.

An example of the use of the discrepancy model is shown in Student Stories 2.2, "Ozzie: Using the Discrepancy Construct."

STUDENT STORIES 2.2

Ozzie: Using the Discrepancy Construct

Ozzie is 8 years old and in the third grade at The Lincoln School. The Lincoln School evaluates students suspected of having learning disabilities with standardized norm-referenced testing, which includes the discrepancy model. Ozzie is having much difficulty in reading and mathematics, and the general education classroom teacher called upon the prereferral intervention team to suggest methods of instruction for Ozzie. The teacher tried using these methods, but they were not successful with Ozzie. Ozzie's parents and his teacher are concerned about Ozzie's lack of progress, and a referral for a special education evaluation is made. A multidisciplinary evaluation team gives several kinds of tests, including a test of cognitive abilities and a test of reading achievement. As a part of the IEP (individualized education program), the team finds that Ozzie has a discrepancy between his intellectual ability and achievement. The IEP team determines that Ozzie has a learning disability.

REFLECTIVE QUESTION

1. How was the discrepancy procedure used in the evaluation of Ozzie?

Did You Get It?

The justices in the Supreme Court case *Forest Grove School District v. T.A.* (2009) ruled that under the principles of IDEA-2004, a student has the right to a comprehensive evaluation to determine eligibility, an evaluation that is both appropriate and "_____."

a. fair
b. timely
c. objective
d. sensitive

2.5 The Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Stages of the IEP

IDEA-2004 offers all students with disabilities a *free, appropriate public education (FAPE),* This means that special education and related services are provided at public expense and meet the standards of the state education agency. The education includes appropriate preschool, elementary school, or secondary school instruction and provides conformity with the individualized education program (IEP).

individualized education program (IEP)
The written plan for the education of an individual student with a disability that impacts educational performance. The plan must meet requirements specified in the rules and regulations of IDEA.

A major provision of the special education law is the requirement that each public school child who receives special education and related services must have an individualized education program (IEP) (IDEA-2004). The IEP is a written statement for each child with a disability. Each IEP is designed for one student and should be a truly *individualized* document. The IEP creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students (when appropriate) to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities. The IEP is the cornerstone of a quality education for each child with a disability.

procedural safeguards
Regulations in federal law that are designed to protect the rights of students with learning disabilities and their parents.

Procedural safeguards are provided in federal law, and they are designed to protect the rights of children and parents. The term parents' rights is used in IDEA-2004 as a procedural safeguard to protect the rights of parents and families. Parents' rights have been considerably expanded through the series of special education laws, and these rights are summarized in Table 2.1.

parents' rights
Used in IDEA-2004 for procedural safeguards to protect the rights of parents.

The IEP follows a sequence of stages. As shown in Figure 2.5, there are three broad stages: *referral, assessment,* and *instruction.* Each of these stages is subdivided, making six stages in all. These six stages meet the legislative mandates of the IEP.

TABLE 2.1

Rights and Procedural Safeguards for Parents and Families

1. Parents must *consent in writing* to several phases of the IEP process: (1) to having their child evaluated; (2) to the IEP, including plans and placement as set forth in the written IEP; and (3) to the 3-year reevaluation plan.
2. The assessment must be conducted in the student's language and form most likely to yield accurate information on what the child knows or can achieve academically, developmentally, and functionally. The findings must be reported in the parents' native language.
3. The school or local education agency (LEA) must ensure that tests are not *racially or culturally discriminatory.*
4. Parents have the *right to see all information* that is collected and used in making decisions. Parents can request an explanation of all evaluation procedures, tests, records, and reports.
5. Parents have the *right to mediation* at no cost. Mediation is voluntary; it is defined as a process of resolving disputes between the school district and the parents of a child with a disability in a nonadversarial fashion.
6. An additional dispute resolution process called a "resolution session" can be convened.
7. Parents and students have the *right to an impartial, due process hearing* if they disagree with the IEP decision or if the voluntary mediation is unsatisfactory. There are certain provisions to have the school pay attorneys' fees if the parents prevail in a lawsuit.
8. The *confidentiality* of the student's reports and records is protected under the law.

mediation
A process of resolving disputes between the parent and the school in a nonadversarial fashion.

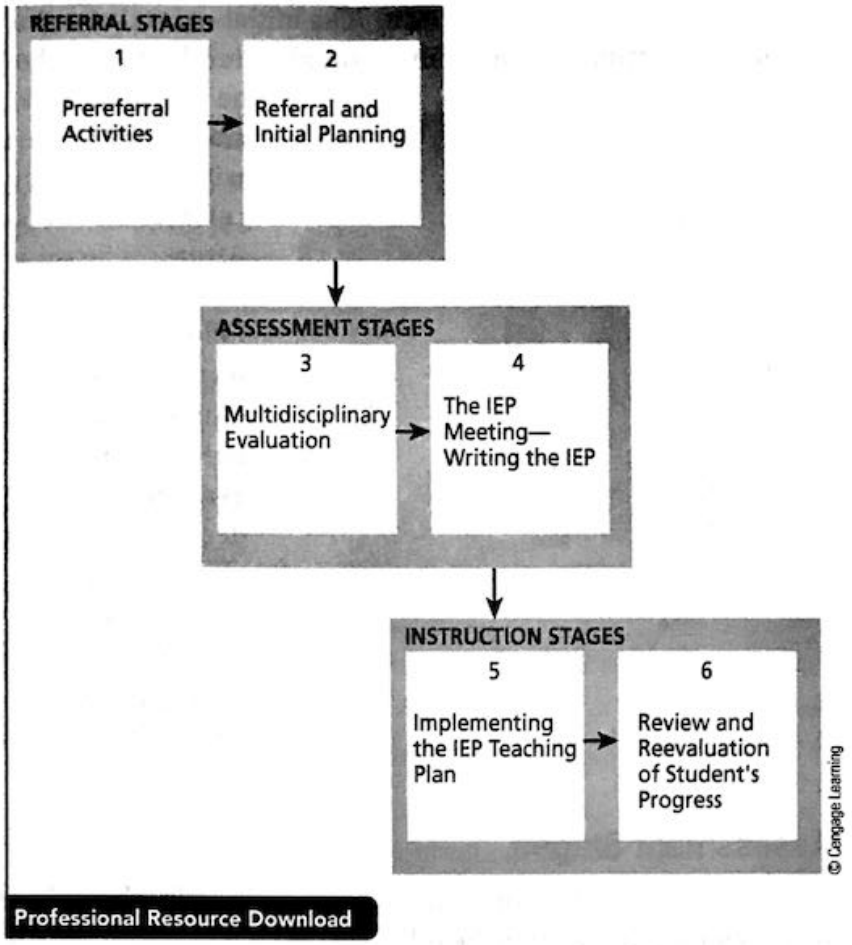


FIGURE **2.5**
Stages of the IEP Process

2.5a Referral Stages

The referral stages begin the IEP process and involve two components: the prereferral activities and the referral activities.

referral stages
The initial stages of the IEP process. They include the prereferral activities and the referral activities.

Stage 1: Prereferral Activities An instructional support team (or a teacher-assistance team) develops prereferral activities for a student who is encountering difficulties in the general education classroom to be used by the general education classroom teachers. Before referring a student for a special education evaluation, teachers use these interventions with the child. If the interventions are successful, the student does not need to be referred for an evaluation. Most school districts now require evidence that a prereferral process has occurred before a referral is initiated. (Some have identified RTI as a prereferral process.)

instructional support team
A teacher-assistance team that develops prereferral activities for a student before a referral is made.

prereferral activities
Preventive procedures taken prior to referral for special education evaluation and intended to help regular teachers work more successfully with the child in the regular classroom.

The instructional support team is a peer group of colleagues to help the classroom teacher analyze the student's academic and/or behavioral problems and recommends interventions and accommodations for the classroom. The classroom teacher then initiates the suggested methods to help the student. The prereferral stage is important because the decision to refer a student for a multidisciplinary evaluation has serious consequences. Once a student is referred, the probability is high that the student will be declared eligible for services (Salvia, Ysseldyke, & Bolt, 2007). The instructional support team responds to the teacher's prereferral request, using the general steps listed in Teaching Tips 2.1, "Tasks of the Prereferral Instructional Support Team" (Chalfant & Pysh, 1993; Clark, 2000; Spinelli, 2006).

referral
The initial request to consider a student for a special education evaluation.

Stage 2: Referral and Initial Planning The initial referral of a student for special education evaluation can come through several sources: the parent, the teacher, other professionals who have contact with the student, or a self-referral by the student. After a referral is made, school personnel must follow it up. Parents must be notified of the school's concern and must give written permission for an evaluation. In addition, decisions must be made about the general kinds of evaluation data needed and the people who will be responsible for gathering this information.

Courtesy of Elizabeth Crews Photography

A collaboration team considers a student's strengths and weaknesses and explores possible interventions for that student.

2.5b Assessment Stages

assessment stages
This is the stage during which tests are given (multidisciplinary evaluation) and decisions are made (the case conference or IEP meeting).

The assessment stages are the core of the process and involve the tasks of evaluation and developing and writing the IEP.

Stage 3: Multidisciplinary Evaluation At this stage, specialists representing various disciplines obtain pertinent information by assessing academic performance and behavior in areas related to the suspected disability. For example, specialists for the multidisciplinary evaluation might include a school psychologist, school social worker, school nurse, speech and language pathologist, learning disabilities specialist, or reading specialist.

multidisciplinary evaluation
The assessment process in which specialists from several disciplines evaluate a child and coordinate their findings.

The law (IDEA-2004) outlines the procedures for gathering information for the evaluation. Several features of the law regulate the evaluation. The tests must be appropriate, validated for the purpose used, and as free as possible from cultural or racial bias. Evaluation materials must be administered in the student's native language. The evaluation team must represent several disciplines and must include at least one teacher or specialist in the area of the suspected disability. The specialists on the multidisciplinary evaluation team administer tests and obtain other evaluation data.

Stage 4: The IEP Meeting—Writing the IEP After the multidisciplinary evaluation has been conducted, the information is gathered, and the parents are contacted for the IEP meeting. It is at this meeting that the eligibility for special education is determined and the IEP is written.

IEP meeting
A meeting attended by parents, school staff, and sometimes the student to make decisions about the individualized education plan (IEP).

The Participants at the IEP Meeting According to IDEA-2004, the participants on the IEP team must include the following:

1. The parents of the child with a disability
2. Not less than one regular education teacher of such child (if the child is, or may be, participating in the regular education/special education environment)

3. Not less than one special education teacher, or where appropriate, not less than one special education provider of such child
4. A representative of the school or school district who
   a. Is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities
   b. Is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum
   c. Is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the school or school district
5. An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, who may be one of the other members of the team
6. At the discretion of the parent or the agency, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel as appropriate
7. Whenever appropriate, the child with a disability

Contents of the Child's IEP The contents of the IEP must include these components (IDEA-2004):

1. A statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance
   a. How the disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum
   b. For preschool children, how the disability affects the child's participation in appropriate activities
   c. For children with disabilities who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards, a description of benchmarks or short-term objectives
2. A statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals designed to
   a. Meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability, in order to enable the child to be involved in and make progress on the general education curriculum
   b. Meet each of the child's other education needs that result from the child's disability
3. A description of how the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals will be measured and when the periodic reports on the progress the child is making toward meeting the annual goals (such as through the use of quarterly or other periodic reports, concurrent with the issuance of report cards) will be provided
4. A statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided for the child. The special

TEACHING TIPS 2.1

Tasks of the Prereferral Instructional Support Team

The following steps describe one model of the prereferral process:

1. A general education classroom teacher who notes a child with a problem in learning requests help from a school collaboration team for a student of concern.
2. The prereferral instructional support team follows up this request by exploring with the classroom teacher some possible interventions for the child.
3. The classroom teacher then tries the suggested interventions in the general education classroom.
4. If further decisions are needed, a member of the collaboration team observes the student in the classroom and then consults further with the classroom teacher.
5. If the student's problem persists, the teacher makes a formal referral for a special education evaluation.
6. A response-to-intervention procedure can be used to provide scientific research-based interventions.

Professional Resource Download

education outlined must include the delivery of specialized instruction based on the individualized needs of the child and be determined by the evaluation information.

5. An explanation of the extent to which the student will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular class and in regular class activities
6. A statement of individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child on state and district-wide assessments
7. The projected date for the beginning of the services and modifications, and the anticipated frequency, location, and duration of those services and modifications
8. Appropriate transition assessments and services, beginning no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child is 16, and updated annually (transition is described in more detail in Chapter 9, "Adolescents and Adults With Learning Disabilities and Related Mild Disabilities").

Related Services In addition to determining the necessary special education services, the IEP team also determines the need for related services that may be required to enable a child with a disability to benefit from special education. Related services may include transportation and developmental, corrective, and other supportive services. Such assistance may include speech-language specialists and auditory services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy (including therapeutic recreation), social work services, counseling services (including rehabilitation counseling), orientation and mobility services, and medical services for diagnostic and evaluation purposes.

2.5c Instruction Stages

instruction stages
This stage is part of the IEP process and includes implementing a teaching plan, and reviewing and reevaluating the student's progress.

The instruction stages occur after the written document (the IEP) has been completed, and they involve the teaching and monitoring of the student's progress.

Stage 5: Implementing the IEP Teaching Plan This is the teaching portion of the assessment-teaching process. It occurs after the IEP document has been written. During this stage, the student is taught in the agreed upon setting and receives specialized instruction designed to help the student reach the goals set forth in the IEP. This stage involves implementing the IEP plan through teaching (see Chapter 3, "Clinical Teaching," and Chapter 4, "Educational Settings and the Role of the Family").

Stage 6: Review and Reevaluation of the Student's Progress This stage calls for the review and reevaluation of the IEP plan in terms of the student's progress. The IEP must include explanations that show how this evaluation will be accomplished, who will conduct the evaluation, and what assessment instruments and criteria will be used. IDEA-2004 requires that the child's parents be informed of their child's progress toward reaching annual goals as frequently as parents of nondisabled children are informed. One way to do this is to send the parents a progress report that accompanies the student's report card.

2.5d Evaluating Students With Learning Disabilities and Related Disabilities

Federal law describes a number of dimensions to be considered in the process of evaluating students with learning disabilities and related disabilities (IDEA, 2004).

Observing the Student in the Classroom A classroom observation of the student is required to provide information about the student's behavior in school and the ways in which that behavior affects academic performance.

Recognizing the Student's Strengths and Clusters of Characteristics Students with learning disabilities and related disabilities have many strengths, and it is important to recognize and encourage these strengths. For example, some children will do well in math or computer applications, yet they may have difficulty with reading skills. Some children have strong social skills and acquire many friends, others do well in artistic and creative endeavors, and some children excel at physical activities and sports. It is important to recognize the child's strengths and to use those recognized strengths when determining the child's teaching plan.

It is also helpful to look for clusters of characteristics in evaluating a student. For example, a student with a severe handwriting problem may also have difficulty with other fine-motor skills. Likewise, a student with a reading problem may also have an underlying oral language disorder. A student who does poorly in oral expression may have a history of delayed speech, speech-motor difficulties that affect articulation, and difficulty with remembering words.

Considering the Concerns of Parents and Families IDEA-2004 emphasizes strengthening the role of parents and ensuring that families have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their child at home and at school. The law recognizes the key role that parents have in their child's education.

Setting Annual Goals The IEP must include a statement of measurable annual goals in academic and functional areas, if necessary, the annual goals are general estimates of what the student will achieve in one year. These goals should represent the student's most essential needs and priorities for each subject area and should address the specific deficit areas of the student. For example, an annual goal in mathematics could be that the student learns to multiply and divide at a specific level. Goals should be based on (1) how the disability impacts learning and (2) deficit areas in the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP).

annual goals
General estimates of what the student will achieve in one year. These goals should represent the most essential needs of the student. Annual goals are part of the written individualized education program.

To remember how to write goals and present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, remember the mnemonic **MOO**:

M—Measurable
O—Observable
O—objective

When Writing a Goal, It Is Critical that It Be Written in Measurable, Observable, and Objective Terms so that You Are Able to See Whether the Student Has Gained Meaningful Benefit Here are a few examples of

goals that utilize MOO and are based on present levels of academic achievement and functional performance that also utilize MOO:

- **PLAAFP**—Erica currently can execute a one-step direction with no more than 5 words given by an adult 3 out of 5 times.
- **Goal**—Given a one-step direction with no more than 7 words, Erica will be able to execute the direction 4 out of 5 times.
- **PLAAFP**—Jamar can currently read with comprehension at the second grade level.
- **Goal**—Jamar will be able to read 3 one-paragraph passages and answer 3 who, what, or when questions about what was read at the third grade level with 70% accuracy.
- **PLAAFP**—Rafael currently knows his 2s multiplication facts and can do 5 one-digit problems involving his 2s multiplication facts with 95% accuracy.
- **Goal**—Given the 3s multiplication facts, Rafael will be able to complete 5 one-digit problems involving his 3s multiplication facts with 95% accuracy.

Once the Goals are Completed, Then the Specialized Instruction Required to Meet Those Goals Can Be Planned As an example, Erika may need to be taught to repeat the direction immediately after she hears it. She may need to be taught to make herself a note. She may need to be taught how to zero in on key words in the direction. Erika has an auditory memory problem so she will need to be taught to follow the directions taking into account that she has trouble remembering what she hears.

- **In Education CourseMate, you will find an activity designed to assist you in determining whether PLAAFP and goals are written in MOO terms.** Also on the website you will find a sample IEP completed.

When Developing Statements of PLAAFP and Goals Remember That It Is Critical That a Stranger Be Able To Understand the Specific Needs of the Student Many of the students with whom we work may be mobile and may also change teachers. Another teacher should be able to pick up the IEP of the student and be able to know exactly where the student is functioning.

Determining Educational Settings and Services What specific special education and related services are needed, including the specialized instruction that is required to individually meet the student's needs? How will the special education teacher provide the specialized instruction? To what extent will the student attend general education classes? What accommodations will be made within the general education classroom? These decisions are related to the educational setting in which the student receives instruction (see Chapter 4, "Educational Settings and the Role of the Family"). In addition, decisions must be made about the extent to which the student will be placed in the least restrictive environment (i.e., with students who do not have disabilities). In IDEA-2004, the general curriculum is presented to be the appropriate beginning point for planning an IEP for a student, and the general education curriculum is the preferred course of study for all students.

Monitoring Progress How will the student's progress be monitored and measured? It is necessary to determine whether annual goals are being met. What measurement instruments will be used? Who will be responsible for administering them? Also, any accommodations that will be needed for the statewide

TABLE 2.2

Sample Format for IEP Annual Goal in Mathematics

Instructional Area: Mathematics
Annual Goal: Student will learn multiplication and division computation skills
Meeting the Annual Goal

Progress Reports to Parents	Tests, Materials, and Evaluation Procedures to Be Used	Criteria of Successful Performance	Evaluation Schedule	Educational Accommodations
1. Student will add numbers involving 2 renamings	Student will compute 20 addition problems requiring 2 renamings	85% accuracy	End of first grading period	Student will participate in statewide assessment in mathematics
2. Student will subtract numbers involving 2 renamings	Student will compute 20 subtraction problems requiring 2 renamings	85% accuracy	End of second grading period	• Allow double time for math assessment • Permit student to use a calculator during the math test
3. Student will multiply and divide through products of 81	Student will compute a fact sheet containing 20 multiplication and division facts and products through 81 within a specified time	65% accuracy	End of third grading period	
4. Student will multiply 2-digit numbers by 1-digit numbers	Appropriate mastery test will be included in mathematics text	75% accuracy	End of fourth grading period	
5. Student will divide numbers by 2-digit divisors	Appropriate mastery test will be included in mathematics text	75% accuracy	End of fifth grading period	

tests must be included in the IEP. A sample format for evaluating annual goals appears in Table 2.2.

The website of the National Center on Student Progress Monitoring offers information on progress monitoring: *http://www.studentprogress.org.*

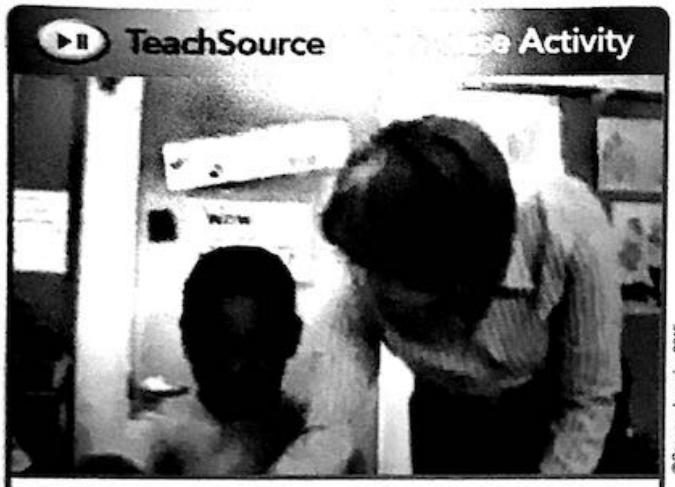
2.5e Special Factors to Consider in the IEP

A number of special factors must be considered in the evaluation of students with learning disabilities and related mild disabilities. Federal law requires a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and positive behavioral intervention and support for children with behavioral challenges. When behavior interferes with learning, a functional behavioral assessment must be conducted in order to develop a behavior intervention plan. This subject is addressed in detail in Chapter 6, "Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Challenges." We address two other special factors here: **English-language learners** and **assistive and instructional technology.**

functional behavioral assessment (FBA)
Evaluating a child's behavior problems by analyzing the behavioral unit and the specific purpose of the behavior.

English-language learners (ELL)
Students who speak a language other than English and have a limited proficiency with English.

English-Language Learners Society is becoming more responsive to the growing needs of an increasingly diverse population. English-language learners (ELL) (students with limited English proficiency) comprise the



Watch the TeachSource Video Case entitled "Assessment in the Middle Grades: Measurement of Student Learning." In this video, the math teacher, Mr. Somers, demonstrates how teaching and assessment are linked.

QUESTIONS

1. How does Mr. Somers use individualized teaching and group teaching to prepare students for the standardized math test?
2. How does Mr. Somers use tests to gauge his own teaching as well as student learning?

fastest growing population in our nation. In the largest school districts in the United States, English-language learners make up almost one-half of the children entering school at the kindergarten level. IDEA requires that if the child has limited proficiency in English, the IEP team must consider the child's language needs as they relate to the child's IEP.

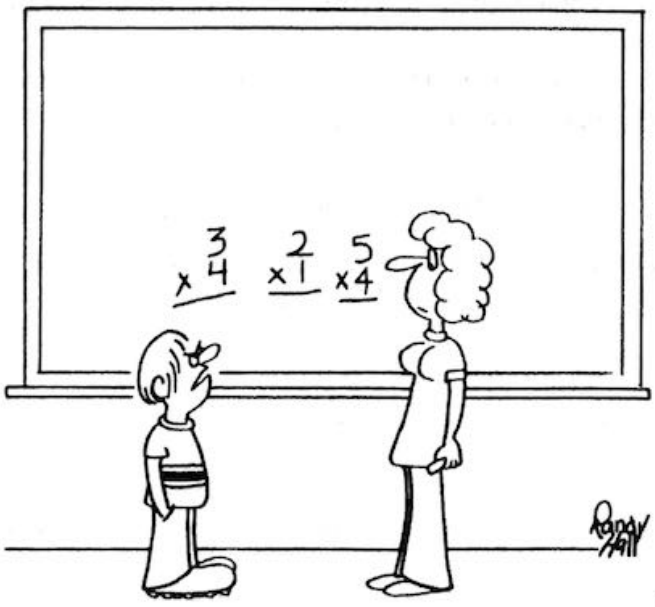
Assistive and Instructional Technology IDEA-2004 requires that the IEP team must consider whether the child needs assistive technology devices or services. Assistive technology is defined as any technology that enables an individual with a disability to compensate for specific deficits. It includes low- and high-tech equipment. Instructional technology refers to software and programs used in teaching.

- The term *assistive technology* refers to equipment or products designed to help the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. For example, a speech-recognition system that allows a person to operate a computer by dictating or speaking into it is such a device.
- The term *assistive technology services* refers to any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. For example, teaching a child who has a disability in writing the needed keyboarding skills for word processing would be an assistive technology service.

assistive technology
Any technology that enables an individual with a disability to compensate for specific deficits. It includes low-tech or high-tech equipment.

instructional technology
Use of technology, such as computers, for teaching.

The IEP should describe the nature of the child's disability and the required assistive technology devices and services.



"I'm not *an underachiever. You're an overexpecter."*

Randy Hall

Did You Get It?

The individualized education program (IEP) guaranteed by IDEA-2004 is an individualized plan with what goal for a student who has demonstrated a disability?

a. Guarantee a successful outcome.
b. Provide the student with the resources needed for success.
c. Provide a multidisciplinary and comprehensive team of staff and support personnel with the framework to work together to achieve success.
d. Create an opportunity for the student to be reintroduced into a setting that does not specifically cater to students with disabilities.

2.6 Obtaining Assessment Information

Assessment information can be gathered from several sources: (1) the case history or interview; (2) observation; (3) standardized norm-referenced tests; (4) curriculum-based measurement and progress monitoring; (5) alternate assessment; and (6) informal measures. Often, several kinds of information are compiled at one time or one assessment procedure may lead to another. For example, observation of a student may suggest that a specific test should also be used. Or the detection of speech misarticulation accompanied by the student's frequent misunderstandings of the examiner's conversation could suggest an auditory difficulty and lead to a decision to administer a test of auditory acuity or auditory discrimination.

2.6a Case History

case history
A compilation of the student's background, development, and other information. Case-history information is usually obtained from parents and from the student's school and medical histories. Often this information is obtained by interview.

Information obtained through a case history contributes clues and insights about the student's background and development. During an interview, parents share information about the child's prenatal history, birth conditions, neonatal development, the age of developmental milestones (sitting, walking, toilet training, and talking), the child's health history (including illnesses and accidents), and learning problems of other members of the family. The student's school history can be obtained from parents, school records, and school personnel (e.g., teachers, nurses, and guidance counselors).

Interviewers must try to establish a feeling of mutual trust, taking care not to ask questions that might alarm parents or make them defensive by indicating disapproval of their actions. Further, interviewers should convey a spirit of cooperation, acceptance, and empathy while maintaining a degree of professional objectivity to guard against excessive emotional involvement and consequent ineffectiveness.

Skillful interviewers are able to obtain much useful information during the case history interview, gathering information in a smooth, conversational manner. Case history information and impressions are integrated with knowledge obtained through clinical observation, traditional tests, and alternative assessment measures. Table 2.3 illustrates the kind of information obtained through the case history interview.

adaptive behavior scales
A rating scale of information provided by an informant who knows the child (such as the parent). It is usually obtained during an interview with the parent and provides information about the student's self-help skills, communication skills, daily living skills, socialization, and motor skills.

Many case-history interview forms are available. Some forms are quite lengthy and extensive, procuring information in many domains. Adaptive behavior scales that question the extent to which individuals adapt themselves

TABLE 2.3

Case History Information

Identifying Information
Student: Name, address, telephone, date of birth, school, grade
Parents: Father's name and occupation, mother's name and occupation
Family: Siblings' names and ages, others in the home
Clinic: Date of interview, referral agency, name of examiner
Birth History
Pregnancy: Length, condition of mother, unusual factors
Birth conditions: Mature or premature, duration of labor, weight, unusual circumstances
Conditions following birth: Normal, needing special care
Physical and Developmental Data
Health history: Accidents, high fevers, other illnesses
Present health: Habits of eating and sleeping, energy and activity level
Developmental history: Age of sitting, walking, first words, first sentences, language difficulties, motor difficulties
Social and Personal Factors
Friends
Sibling relationships
Hobbies, interests, recreational activities
Home and parental attitudes
Acceptance of responsibilities
Attitude toward learning problem
Educational Factors
School experiences: Skipped or repeated grades, moving, change of teachers
Preschool education: Kindergarten, nursery school
Special help previously received
Teachers' reports
Student's attitude toward school

to the expectations of nature and society are often used. An informant (usually the mother) provides the information during an interview. We list here some commonly used adaptive behavior scales.

- **Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales.** These scales assess the domains of communication, daily living skills, socialization, and motor functions for ages birth to 19 (American Guidance Services, *http://ags.personalassessments.com*).
- **Hawthorne Adaptive Behavior Scales.** This inventory is used to interview an informant, and it yields information about self-help skills, communication skills, social skills, academic skills, and occupational skills for ages 6 to 9 (Hawthorne Educational Services, *http://www.hes-inc.com*).

2.6b Observation

According to Yogi Berra, "Sometimes you can observe a lot just by watching." Observation of the student is a required part of the assessment of a student, and the information that it produces can make a valuable contribution. Many attributes of the student may be inadequately identified through testing or case study interviews, but the skillful observer can often detect important characteristics and behaviors of the child in the classroom setting.

Observation of student behavior can corroborate findings of other assessment measures. For example, a skillful observer can note whether the student is attending to the lesson or is engaged in other activities. Observation is also useful for shedding light on a student's general personal adjustment. How does the student react to situations and people? What is the student's attitude toward the learning problem? Motor coordination can be appraised by observing the student's movements and gait. Can the student hop, skip, or throw and catch a ball? How does the student attack a writing task? Is there a contortion of the body while writing? How does the student hold a pencil?

observation
Careful watching of a student's behavior, usually in the classroom setting.

Must the student expend an inordinate effort in trying to make the handwriting presentable?

Language is readily assessed through observation. Is there evidence of articulation problems or infantile speech patterns? Does the student have difficulty finding words? Does the student possess an adequate vocabulary? Does the student speak easily, haltingly, or perhaps excessively? Does the student use complete sentences or single words and short, partial phrases? Are there misarticulations (e.g., *aminal* or *psghetti)?* What is the student's primary or native language and facility with English?

Games and toys offer activities for making observations of the student and also serve as a way to build rapport. Can the student zip a zipper, tie a shoelace, button clothing, or lock a padlock?

Observations of everyday classroom behavior can provide much information. For example, while reading, how does the student react to an unknown word? Does the student stop and look to the teacher for help, look at the initial consonant and then take a wild guess, attempt to break the word into syllables, or try to infer the word from the context?

2.6c Standardized Norm-Referenced Tests

norm-referenced tests
Standardized tests that compare a child's performance to that of other children of the same age.

Standardized norm-referenced tests are frequently used in our schools. In developing a norm-referenced test, test publishers give the test questions to a large number of children of the same age. This group is called the *norm-referenced group* because the test norms are based on their performance. When a student's achievement on a standardized test is analyzed, the scores of an individual student are compared with the scores of students of comparable age or grade in the norm-referenced group.

formal standardized tests
Commercially prepared tests that have been used with and standardized on large groups of students. Manuals that accompany the tests provide derived scores on student performance, such as grade scores, age scores, percentiles, and standard scores.

Formal standardized tests are statistically designed so that one-half of the student scores will be below the mean (average), and one-half will be above the average. Of course, communities want all of their children to score above average. Standardized tests require strict procedures in administration, scoring, and interpretation. Standardized tests

- are usually available in more than one form so that a student can be tested more than once without being able to obtain a higher score due to practice.
- are accompanied by manuals that (a) give directions for administration, scoring, and interpretation; (b) provide information about grade norms, age norms, percentile ranks, or some other form of scaled scores; and (c) provide information on validity (the degree to which the test measures what it is supposed to measure). Manuals also show reliability (consistency or similarity of performance). A reliability coefficient of 0.90 indicates that if the test were given to the student again, it is 90% likely that the student would obtain a score in the same range.

Teachers should know the techniques of using and interpreting tests. Frequently, the value of a test may not be so much in the final test score as in the measurement of a particular subtest performance, the profile of all the subtest scores, or the clinical observations of the student during the test. The evaluator who has had extensive experience with a test may find that some parts used alone yield the necessary information.

The integrity of formal tests is judged on (1) *standardization*—on what group was the test standardized? (2) *reliability*—are the test results consistent? and (3) *validity*—does the test measure what it claims to measure? Norm-referenced tests can be useful in the assessment process. It is important to know the limitations of a test and to use its information in proper perspective. A single score provides only a small part of the information, so teachers should not overgeneralize the implications of a specific test. If multiple sources of data are used in the assessment, test scores can provide a rich harvest of leads for assessment and teaching.

Some commonly used standardized tests are described in this chapter and in Chapter 11, "Spoken Language Difficulties: Listening and Speaking;" Chapter 12, "Reading Difficulties;" Chapter 13, "Written Language: Written Expression, Spelling, and Handwriting;" and Chapter 14, "Mathematics Difficulties."

Standardized testing is criticized for a number of reasons: (1) It does not provide enough information about the students; (2) the tests may not assess what students are learning in class; (3) the tests may be biased against culturally diverse populations; and (4) the pressure for students to attain high test scores may sway teachers to use class time to prepare students for taking the tests.

2.6d Informal Assessment Measures

Disenchantment with standardized testing led educators to turn to informal assessment procedures. Interest in informal assessment is growing because it evaluates the student in the natural setting, uses the school curriculum, and capitalizes on what the student actually does in the classroom. Informal assessment approaches encourage students to produce, construct, demonstrate, or perform a response.

informal assessment measures
Ways of evaluating performance that are not formal standardized tests. These can include teacher-made tests, diagnostic teaching, commercial nonstandardized tests, curriculum-based assessment, and so on.

Informal assessment measures are useful and practical assessment procedures that measure student achievement on the ordinary materials and activities they are currently working with in the classroom. A major advantage of using classroom materials for informal tests is that the assessment is as close as possible to the expected behaviors. Informal tests also give teachers freedom in administration and interpretation. For example, a teacher can encourage the student during the assessment or give the student more time to complete the test. Such adjustments put students at ease and help ensure that they will put forth their best effort. Informal assessment measures can also be given more frequently than formal tests, and they can be administered over a period of time rather than in a single session. In addition, informal assessment measures can use a variety of materials and procedures, they can be given during regular instruction periods, and they are less expensive than formal tests.

In this section, we present several informal measures for teachers to use: (1) portfolio assessment, (2) informal graded word-recognition tests, (3) informal arithmetic tests, and (4) criterion-referenced tests. Some informal tests are also provided in other pertinent chapters, such as the informal reading inventory (see Chapter 12, "Reading Difficulties"), informal motor tests (where is new

location of motor tests), and tests of phonological awareness (see Chapter 11, "Spoken Language Difficulties: Listening and Speaking").

portfolio assessment
A method of evaluating student progress by analyzing samples of the student's classroom work.

Portfolio Assessment In portfolio assessment, multiple samples of a student's actual classroom work are collected over an extended period of time. This portfolio is used to evaluate the student's current achievement level and progress over time. Portfolio assessment is often used to measure reading and writing progress. Samples of student work can be used to determine achievement and progress in all academic areas.

A portfolio might contain the following kinds of materials: selected samples of daily work done in the classroom, academic classroom tests (e.g., in spelling or mathematics), checklists of behavior, sample stories, writing drafts at various stages of development, science projects, art samples, a teacher's observational notes, or the results of group projects.

In deciding what samples to collect, the teacher must first consider the goals of the instructional program, and the samples should then reflect these goals. For example, the portfolio might include samples of the objectives in the IEP. Students can be responsible for organizing their own portfolios. Because portfolios serve as mirrors of the process of learning in the classroom, they should be available for student-teacher conferences or for parent conferences (Salend, 1998).

Informal Graded Word-Recognition Test This type of test can be used as a quick method to determine the student's approximate reading level. It is also useful in detecting the student's errors in word analysis. An informal graded word-recognition test can be constructed by selecting words at random from graded basal reader glossaries. Table 2.4 illustrates such a list; the words were selected from several basal reader series and from graded reading vocabulary lists. The informal graded word-recognition test can be given as follows: (1) type the list of words selected for each grade on separate cards; (2) duplicate the entire test on a single sheet; (3) have the pupil read the words from the cards while the examiner marks the errors on the sheet, noting the pupil's method of analyzing and pronouncing difficult words; and (4) have the pupil read from increasingly difficult lists until three words are missed. The level at which the student misses only two words suggests the instructional level at which the pupil is able to read with help. The level at which one word is missed suggests the pupil's independent reading level (i.e., the level at which the pupil can read alone).

The level at which three words are missed suggests a frustration level, and the material is probably too difficult.

Pressmaster/Shutterstock.Com

Alternate and informal assessment measures are useful and practical alternative assessment procedures that test students on the ordinary materials that they are currently working with in the classroom.

Informal Arithmetic Test An informal arithmetic test can be easily devised to point out weaknesses in a student's basic computational skills. The informal survey test illustrated in Figure 2.6 can be used for

TABLE 2.4

Informal Graded Word–Recognition Test

Preprimer	Primer	Grade 1	Grade 2
See	day	about	hungry
Run	from	sang	loud
Me	all	guess	stones
dog	under	catch	trick
At	little	across	chair
come	house	ive	hopped
down	ready	boats	himself
You	came	hard	color
said	your	longer	straight
Boy	blue	hold	leading
Grade 3	**Grade 4**	**Grade 5**	**Grade 6**
arrow	brilliant	career	buoyant
wrist	credit	cultivate	determination
bottom	examine	essential	gauntlet
castle	grammar	grieve	incubator
earned	jingle	jostle	ludicrous
washed	ruby	obscure	offensive
safety	terrify	procession	prophesy
yesterday	wrench	sociable	sanctuary
delight	mayor	triangular	tapestry
happiness	agent	volcano	vague

FIGURE **2.6**
Informal Arithmetic Survey Test: Sixth-Grade Level

ADDITION

300	35			
60	24		234	123
406	6	271	573	324
+ 3	+ 18	+ 389	+ 261	+ 452

SUBTRACTION

765	751	7,054	8,004	90,327
− 342	− 608	− 3,595	− 5,637	−42,827

MULTIPLICATION

37	45	721	483	802
× 10	× 83	× 346	× 208	× 357

DIVISION

$2\overline{)36}$	$12\overline{)36}$	$6\overline{)966}$	$16\overline{)1{,}061}$	$13\overline{)8{,}726}$

sixth-grade students. The difficulty level of the test could be increased or decreased, depending on the grade level being tested. The informal arithmetic test should include several items of each kind so that a simple error will not be mistaken for a more fundamental difficulty.

Criterion-Referenced Tests Criterion-referenced tests *describe* rather than *compare* performance, measuring mastery levels rather than grade levels. In contrast, *norm-referenced tests* (traditional standardized tests) compare the pupil's performance to that of other children of the same age. This difference can be illustrated in a nonacademic area of learning, such as swimming. In criterion-referenced terms, a child would be judged as being able to perform certain tasks, such as putting his or her face in the water, floating, or doing the crawl stroke. In contrast, in norm-referenced terms, the child would be tested and judged to swim as well as an average 9-year-old child.

criterion-referenced tests
Tests that measure the student's abilities in specific skills (rather than tests that compare a student to others in a norm group)

Criterion-referenced tests are useful because they provide a way to show growth. It is often difficult to show that a student has improved in terms of percentiles, stanines, or even grade-level scores, but the teacher can show that the student has learned certain specific skills, in terms of mastery, of criterion-referenced measures.

Did You Get It?

Obtaining information to assess an individual student is a multifaceted and complex endeavor. Which activity is used to most formally and objectively obtain comprehensive background information about the student you are assessing?

a. Process monitoring.
b. An informal question-and-answer session.
c. Grades from all previous institutions.
d. A case history.

2.7 Testing and Accountability

Under the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), each state must develop and implement a statewide assessment system that is aligned to the state standards in reading/language arts, math, and science. Under IDEA-2004, each state must have achievement goals that are measured by statewide tests for all public schools.

Common core standards have been adopted in most states, and the states must administer statewide assessments to measure the progress of students in meeting these standards. Many states have now adopted the common core standards, and statewide testing is being updated so that it is based on those standards.

2.7a Including Students With Disabilities in Testing

IDEA-2004 specifically requires that, as a condition of a state's eligibility for educational funding, children with disabilities must be included in general statewide and districtwide assessment programs. IDEA-2004 also addresses timelines and reporting requirements and mandates that states

- Provide for the participation of children with disabilities in general statewide and district-wide assessments, with appropriate accommodations in administration, if necessary

- Provide for the conducting of alternate assessment of children who cannot participate in the general assessment programs
- Make available and report to the public on results of the assessment of disabled children with the same frequency and in the same detail as they report the assessment results of nondisabled children

This regulation means that children with disabilities must participate in the statewide tests and that any accommodations that are needed for this testing must be included in each student's IEP. Further, reports to parents about the child with disabilities must be made in the same detail and with the same frequency as reports about other children. Thus, if report cards are issued on a quarterly basis for all children, then progress reports must be issued for students with disabilities.

2.7b Accommodations for Testing

accommodations for assessment
Tools such as extended timelines, large print, interpreters, etc., that enable students to access the same assessment but don't change the content that are made in testing students with disabilities.

IDEA-2004 permits *accommodations* in statewide testing for students with disabilities. However, these accommodations for assessment must be written into the student's IEP. Teachers need much support and guidance in planning for and implementing these accommodations. Accommodations cannot jeopardize the integrity of the test. Figure 2.7 provides examples of common assessment accommodations for students with disabilities.

IDEA-2004 requires that states develop guidelines for accommodations that allow students with disabilities the opportunity to participate in state-level assessments. Most states have developed guidelines for accommodations (Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006). Accommodations for students with disabilities serve to level the playing field for these students. A concern about accommodations is whether they invalidate the psychometric qualities of the test. For example, does giving extended time on a test nullify the validity of the test (Johnson, Kimball, & Brown, 2001)? There are several studies on the effects of extended time on the test scores of postsecondary students with learning disabilities. Students with learning disabilities had significantly

FIGURE **2.7**
Examples of Common Assessment Accommodations for Students With Disabilities

TIMING	**SETTING**
• Extend time to complete the test • Allow frequent breaks during testing • Alter time of day that test is administered • Administer test in several sessions over the course of the day • Administer test in several sessions over several days	• Provide a distraction-free environment • Give to small groups • Give in hospital setting • Use a study carrel • Give the test in a separate room • Administer test over several sessions
PRESENTATION	**RESPONSE**
• Modify the test format, use enlarged print, use fewer items on a page • Use audiocassettes • Read test aloud to student • Repeat the direction • Use magnification devices • Use computers to read test	• Use computer for writing tests • Dictate to scribe • Tape record answers • Put answers in booklet instead of answer sheet • Allow students to use a word processor instead of handwriting

better scores after being allowed extended time, whereas students without learning disabilities did not improve their scores by using extended time (Weaver, 2000).

2.7c Alternate Assessments for Students With Significant Cognitive Disabilities

States must develop guidelines for *alternate assessments* based on alternate achievement standards to be used with students with significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to participate in the general state assessment. Alternate assessments refer to another way to measure performance. The alternate assessments should be included in the student's IEP. This type of assessment can be used with 1% of the students with the most significant intellectual disabilities.

alternate assessments
A different test based on alternate achievement standards as determined by the state for no more than 1% of the total population of students. The students must be those with the most significant intellectual disabilities.

Regulations for Alternate Assessments Based on Modified Academic Achievement Standards In April 2007, the U.S. Department of Education issued final regulations concerning the ability of states to create alternate assessments based on modified achievement standards for up to 2% of students with disabilities. The responsibility for the determination of whether the student should take such an assessment is made by the IEP team and that decision is made when the IEP team is reasonably certain that the student will not achieve grade-level proficiency because of the nature of their disability (Regulations, 34 C.F.R. Parts 200 and 300, 2007). The next section describes the regulations for accommodations and alternate assessments.

Alternate Assessments With Modified Academic Achievement Standards This type of assessment is developed by each state and has a less rigorous expectation of mastery of grade-level academic content standards.

STUDENT STORIES 2.3

Accommodations for Statewide Testing

The Oregon Statewide Assessment System (OSAS) measured performance in the area of written-language assessment. These tests did not allow the use of word processors and spell checkers, even for students with learning disabilities who were using these accommodations in their classrooms. Many students with learning disabilities did so poorly on the statewide written-language test that they did not achieve the certificate of mastery. Furthermore, Oregon had not developed alternate assessments for students with learning disabilities, nor was there a fully developed appeals process.

The Oregon legal case involved students with learning disabilities who were denied the certificate of mastery because they had failed the written-language test. The parents of these children filed a class-action lawsuit against the Oregon Department of Education. The settlement of this lawsuit required that appropriate accommodations for students with learning disabilities be developed. Students with disabilities in the area of written language were given the opportunity to use a word processor and a spell checker for the written-language test.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think that the Oregon Department of Education did not want to allow word processors or spell checkers on the written-language test?
2. Do you believe that the use of word processors or spell checkers for students with disabilities would have given students an unfair advantage over other students without disabilities? Justify your answer.

Modified academic achievement standards must be based on a state's grade-level academic content standards for the grade in which the student with disabilities is enrolled. The state's academic content standards are not modified. Such an assessment can be used with another 2% of the students with disabilities (Regulations, 34 C.F.R. Parts 200 and 300, 2007).

In summary, all students will be assessed in the required subject areas in one of these ways:

1. **Regular assessment without accommodations**
2. **Regular assessment with accommodations**
3. **Alternate assessments based on the grade-level academic achievement standards**
4. **Alternate assessments based on modified academic achievement standards**
5. **Alternate assessments based on the alternate academic achievement standards**

Did You Get It?

Which piece of legislation mandated that individual states propose, develop, and implement statewide assessment measures to ensure adherence to state standards in a broad range of academic subjects, ranging from reading to science?

a. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
b. No Child Left Behind Act (2001)
c. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
d. Educational Assessment Act of 2010

2.8 Examples of Tests

In this section, we provide examples of some of the assessment tests.

2.8a Tests of Intelligence and Cognitive Abilities

Intelligence tests and tests of cognitive abilities provide information about the student's aptitude for learning and specific cognitive attributions. Certain intelligence tests are administered by psychologists; others may be given by teachers with appropriate training. Commonly used individual cognitive or intelligence tests that are typically administered by psychologists are:

- **The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, 4th edition (WISC-IV)** provides four index scores—Verbal Comprehension, Perceptual Reasoning, Working Memory, Processing Speed—with 16 subtests of mental ability. Harcourt Brace & Co.
- **The Stanford-Binet** has 15 subtests grouped into four areas—Fluid Reasoning, Knowledge, Quantitative Reasoning, Visual-Spatial Processing, Working Memory. Riverside Publishing
- **Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children II (K-ABC)** offers a nonverbal composite and a mental processing/fluid-crystallized index, plus individual scale scores. Western Psychological Services

Table 2.5 lists some tests of cognitive ability that can be given by teachers with appropriate training.

TABLE 2.5

Tests of Cognitive Ability That Can Be Given by Teachers With Training

- Tests of Cognitive Ability of the Woodcock-Johnson III. Tests of Cognitive Abilities Riverside Publications
- The Slosson Intelligence Test—Revised is a relatively short screening test. Slosson Educational Publications
- The Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude—4 (DTLA-4) are intended for use with children ages 6 to 17. Pro-Ed
- The Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude—Primary—2 are intended for younger children, ages 3 to 12. Pro-Ed
- The McCarthy Scales of Children's Abilities are designed to assess young children, ages 2.5 to 8.5. Harcourt Assessment
- The Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities—Third Edition (ITPA-3) was one of the first tests of mental processes designed expressly to analyze subskills of mental function. Pro-Ed
- The Goodenough-Harris Drawing Test estimates intellectual maturity through an analysis of a child's drawing of a person. Harcourt Assessment

Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery III The Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery III, Complete Battery (WJ-III) Normative update provides a conormed set of tests for measuring general intellectual ability, specific cognitive abilities, scholastic aptitude, oral language, and academic achievement. It can be used on subjects from age 2 to 90+ and for grade K through graduate school. The WJ-III consists of two assessment instruments: (1) tests of cognitive abilities and (2) tests of achievement. The WJ-III can be administered by teachers with appropriate training. The WJ-III Cognitive Performance Clusters are shown in Table 2.6.

The Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery III—Tests of Achievement is a battery consisting of 22 achievement tests that can be combined to form score clusters. The clusters include (1) oral expression, (2) listening comprehension, (3) basic reading skills, (4) reading comprehension, (5) phoneme/grapheme knowledge, (6) math calculation, (7) math reasoning, and (8) written expression.

The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, 4th edition (WISC-IV) The WISC-IV is probably the most common intelligence test used to measure intelligence. The WISC-IV has four factors of intelligence: (1) verbal comprehension, (2) perceptual reasoning, (3) working memory, and (4) processing speed.

1. **Verbal comprehension.** Ability to use and understand language
2. **Perceptual reasoning.** Ability with nonverbal and perceptual skills
3. **Working memory.** Ability to hold information in short-term memory
4. **Processing speed.** Ability to work quickly

2.8b Commonly Used Achievement Tests

General test batteries measure performance in academic skills in reading, arithmetic, spelling, and grammar. Table 2.7 lists the commonly used standardized achievement tests.

TABLE 2.6

The WJ-III Cognitive Performance Clusters

The WJ-III Cognitive Performance Clusters

The WJ-III cognitive tests include certain clusters representing broad categories of cognitive abilities that are casually related to cognitive performance. The clusters are the result of a combination of tests. They include the following:

- Verbal ability—Standard scale
- Verbal ability—Extended scale
- Comprehension/knowledge
- Long-term retrieval
- Visual-spatial thinking

Other Clinically Useful Clusters

- Phonemic awareness
- Working memory

TABLE 2.7

Commonly Used Achievement Tests

Test	Areas Tested	Type	Publisher
Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement	Oral language, reading, writing, math	Individual, norm-referenced	Riverside Publishing
Peabody Individual Achievement Test-Revised	General Information, reading recognition, reading comprehension, written expression, mathematics, spelling	Individual, norm-referenced	American Guidance Services
Kaufman Test of Individual Achievement II	Reading, math, written language, oral language	Individual, norm-referenced	American Guidance Service
Brigance Diagnostic Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills	Listening, reading, writing, math	Individual, criterion-referenced	Curriculum Associates
Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised	Reading	Individual, standardized	American Guidance Services
Key Math Diagnostic Arithmetic Test, Revised	Math	Individual, standardized	American Guidance Services

Did You Get It?

The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, 4th edition (WISC-IV), is recognized as the most commonly used test for assessing and measuring intelligence. Which category of memory is not one of the four categories of intelligence the test measures?

a. working memory
b. mathematical manipulation
c. verbal comprehension
d. processing speed

2.9 Test-Taking Strategies in the General Education Classroom

The general education teacher, with the collaboration of the special education teacher, is responsible for administering the state's standard performance tests to all students in the inclusion class. Including Students in General Education 2.1, "Test-Taking Strategies in the General Education Classroom," offers some strategies to help students to prepare for and take these tests (Spinelli, 2002). Websites with useful information on test-taking strategies are *http://www.charliefrench.com/test_tips.htm* and *http://www.testtakingtips.com.*

Including Students in GENERAL EDUCATION 2.1

Test-Taking Strategies in the General Education Classroom

- Prepare students for test taking by suggesting that they get enough rest and nourishment before taking the test.
- Provide students with opportunities to practice working under standardized conditions in simulated situations.
- Give students practice in filling in the appropriate circle with quick, dark strokes inside the circle or bubble. Most standardized tests require students to record their responses by filling in circles on separate answer sheets.
- Separate answer sheets from the test. Instruct students to mark answers on the test booklet and then have the students practice transferring their marked responses to the answer sheet.
- Instruct students to eliminate any answers that they know are incorrect. Provide students practice in eliminating wrong answers and discuss why they are wrong.
- Explain to students that guessing at an answer is usually better than leaving the question blank.
- Teach students to use their time efficiently by not wasting time on items they do not know. Students should have practice in monitoring their time as they take the test.
- Encourage students to request accommodations, as appropriate for their disabilities, such as extended time, assistive technology, and testing in smaller groups.
- Look for accommodations for testing that are written in the student's IEP.

Professional Resource Download

I Have a Kid Who...

COURTNEY, *a Student in an RTI School Program*

Courtney is 6 years 3 months old and is in first grade at the Washington Elementary School. She is having much difficulty with phonological awareness of language sounds, and she does not recognize rhyming words. Washington School uses the response-to-intervention (RTI) model for teaching students who are considered to be at risk. Courtney's scores were very low on a September screening test on phonemic awareness and she was identified as a student who was at risk for school failure. She received instruction in her first-grade general education class in a Tier 1 intervention program using scientifically based materials. Courtney's performance was monitored for eight weeks under Tier 1 instruction, with a curriculum-based measurement (CBM) assessment given each week. At the end of eight weeks of intervention in Tier 1, the curriculum-based assessment measures showed that Courtney's scores were below the criterion for a positive response. Courtney was then placed into a Tier 2 intervention program. In Tier 2, she received more intensive instruction delivered by a reading teacher, using scientifically based materials. She received intervention in the Tier 2 group for 30 minutes daily. The reading teacher and the first grade classroom teacher also worked collaboratively on techniques that were effective for Courtney. At the end of the Tier 2 instruction, progress monitoring showed that Courtney's scores had increased substantially and that she was making good progress in her reading skills. Progress-monitoring scores showed that Courtney was responsive to the Tier 2 instruction. Because Courtney responded positively to the Tier 2 intervention, she was not identified as a child with a disability. Courtney's progress will be monitored closely by the first-grade classroom teacher and the reading teacher for the remainder of first grade.

QUESTIONS

1. How did Courtney respond to the Tier 1 instruction?
2. How did Courtney response to the Tier 2 instruction?

Did You Get It?

There are many strategies that can help a child to perform as well as possible and motivate the child's efforts toward a successful outcome. Which strategy is not a recognized intervention strategy?

a. providing practice sessions and simulations on test-taking processes
b. educating the student on the importance of proper rest before the testing
c. teaching time-management and efficiency-boosting skills
d. counseling the child on the implications and ramifications of subpar performance

Chapter Summary

- Describe uses of assessment information
- Explain eligibility for special education services
- Describe response-to-intervention (RTI)
- Compare the comprehensive evaluation
- Describe the Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Explain stages of the IEP
- Describe how to obtain assessment information
- Explain testing and accountability
- Describe test-taking strategies

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Describe the 6 stages of the individualized education program (IEP) process. What is the purpose of each stage?
2. The Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA-2004) requires that important procedural safeguards be used with students with learning disabilities and students with related mild disabilities. Discuss 4 parents' rights or procedural safeguards.
3. IDEA-2004 specifies the participants for the IEP meeting. Name and describe the role of each of the participants.
4. Write 4 goals utilizing MOO.
5. What are the 5 ways to obtain data for an evaluation of a student with learning disabilities? Give examples of information that might be obtained by using each method.
6. Compare and contrast standardized norm-referenced tests with informal or alternate assessment measures.
7. Describe several accommodations that can be made for testing students with disabilities.
8. What is response-to-intervention (RTI)?

Key Terms

accommodations for assessment (p. 64)
adaptive behavior scales (p. 57)
alternate assessments (p. 65)
annual goals (p. 53)
assessment (p. 000)
assessment stages (p. 50)
assistive technology (p. 56)
case history (p. 57)
criterion-referenced tests (p. 62)
comprehensive evaluation (p. 45)
curriculum-based measurement (CBM) (p. 44)
discrepancy score (p. 46)
English-language learners (ELL) (p. 55)
formal standardized tests (p. 59)
functional behavioral assessment (p. 55)
IEP meeting (p. 50)
individualized education program (IEP) (p. 48)
informal assessment measures (p. 60)
instruction stages (p. 52)
instructional support team (p. 49)
instructional technology (p. 56)
mediation (p. 48)
multidisciplinary evaluation (p. 50)
norm-referenced tests (p. 59)
observation (p. 58)
parents' rights (p. 48)
portfolio assessment (p. 61)
prereferral activities (p. 49)
problem-solving model to RTI (p. 42)
procedural safeguards (p. 48)
progress monitoring (p. 43)
referral (p. 50)
referral stages (p. 49)
response-to-intervention (RTI) (p. 39)