

Chapter 2

The Assessment Process

OVERVIEW

Educational assessments are performed to gather data in order to make important educational decisions. This chapter describes the legal and instructional decisions typically considered in serving students with disabilities, particularly as these decisions relate to the types of data needed and the strategies used. The assessment process is a systematic step-by-step procedure beginning with the identification of a potential problem and attempts to remedy that problem through prereferral interventions in the student's classroom. If these attempts are not successful, the student is referred for special education assessment. Before the assessment begins, the assessment team develops an individualized assessment plan based on important assessment questions for each stage of the assessment process. When assessment results become available, the team reports and discusses them with the student's parents. Then, parents and professionals make decisions about educational and other needs and whether special education services are indicated. The student's progress in the program is monitored and the program evaluated at least once each year.

OUTLINE

- I. Special Education Assessment: Making Two Types of Decisions
 - A. Legal decisions
 1. Determination of eligibility
 2. Reevaluation of eligibility
 3. Two major eligibility criteria
 - a. The student is determined to have a disability.
 - b. The disability has an adverse effect on the student's educational performance.
 4. Each disability category is defined by federal laws and state regulations
 5. Legal decisions about mild disabilities require the contributions of several team members
 6. Most states require the assessment of general intellectual performance, educational performance, and performance related to the specific disability
 7. Eligibility decisions rely heavily on norm-referenced tests
 8. Informal assessment procedures help confirm the results of norm-referenced tests

B. Instructional decisions

1. Preparation of IEP

- a. Establish current levels of performance in important skill areas
- b. Establish annual goals and short term objectives of the program
- c. Select appropriate services and curricular modification
- d. Agree on suitable evaluation plan

2. Throughout the school year

- a. Frequent, ongoing data collection to make decisions about instructional methods, curricular content, and overall effectiveness using formal and informal tests

II. Steps in the Assessment Process

A. Identification and Referral

1. Screening and teacher identification of students with school problems

- a. Child find activities conducted by state education agencies, school districts, and other educational agencies
- b. Prereferral by teachers or other members of the community

2. Prereferral strategies

- a. Minor issues may be resolved by simple adaptations in the general classroom
- b. Identify sources outside of special education, which may assist the student such as peer tutoring
- c. Pre-referral information informs the special education team

3. Referral to Special Education and Parent Notification

- a. Parents are informed in writing of the referral, provided with a copy of their rights, and asked to provide written consent to assess for the determination of eligibility
- b. A parent or surrogate parent may represent the student

B. Determination of Eligibility

1. Design of the Individualized Assessment Plan (IAP)
 - a. Reflects reason for referral
 - b. Concentrates primarily on educational concerns: student's skills and abilities, general education curriculum causing difficulty and the learning environment
 - c. May consider physical, social, and cultural characteristics of the student
 - d. Developed by assessment questions which progress from general to specific
 - e. Formal and informal procedures are included
 - f. A team of qualified professionals, including the student's parent(s), assessed gathers assessment information for the determination of eligibility
 - g. Assessment information needs to be gathered to determine eligibility and conduct program planning
2. Parental permission for assessment
 - a. Written notice of assessment must be given to parents in their native language
 - b. Written permission for assessment to determine eligibility is required
3. Administration, scoring, and interpretation of assessment procedures
 - a. Formal tests must be administered by trained professionals
 - b. Informal tests governed by good practice
4. Reporting results
 - a. Parents must have assessment results reported to them
 - b. Parents have access to all school records and must be informed of this right
 - c. Parents must be given information on how to obtain an independent educational evaluation
5. Decisions about eligibility
 - a. Assessment results are compared to criteria for eligibility for special education services
 - b. A disability may or may not be identified

- C. Program planning
 - 1. Design of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
 - a. Team approach is used in making decisions
 - b. Parents are encouraged to participate fully in the development of the IEP
 - 2. Basic features of the IEP
 - a. Present levels of educational achievement and functional performance
 - b. Annual goals and short-term objectives
 - c. Type of special education program and/or related service
 - d. Extent to which student will not participate with students without disabilities in general education settings
 - e. Procedures for participation in state- and district-wide assessments
 - f. Strategies for measuring progress and informing parents
 - g. Transition services (as appropriate)
 - h. Special factors such as behavioral needs or assistive technology devices
 - 3. The least restrictive environment (LRE) must be identified
 - 4. Parental agreement to the IEP
 - a. Parents must sign the IEP to grant permission for placement
 - b. If parents disagree, they are entitled to mediation and/or an impartial due process hearing
- D. Program implementation and monitoring
 - 1. IEP implementation and ongoing progress monitoring
 - a. Implemented the IEP as soon as possible
 - b. All persons delivering services must have a copy of the IEP
 - c. Generally informal assessments are used to monitor progress
 - d. District-wide assessments can be administered as given in general education, or with modifications or alternative assessments can be given as described in the IEP

2. Annual review of the IEP
 - a. Formal or informal assessments are used to report progress for the purpose of continuing, modifying, or discontinuing the program
 - b. IDEA 2004 authorizes a feasibility study of multiyear IEP's in a limited number of states
3. Periodic reevaluation of eligibility
 - a. Required at least every 3 years

KEY TERMS

individualized education program (IEP)
due process

individualized assessment plan (IAP)
least restrictive environment (LRE)

curriculum-based assessments
curriculum-based measurement (CBM)
response to intervention (RTI)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Define least restrictive environment and discuss this concept as it relates to the models of delivery for special services.
2. Discuss the various steps of the assessment process and relevance of parental participation in each step.
3. Discuss the eight basic components of the IEP and give examples of each.
4. Discuss ways in which due process procedures safeguard the rights of students with disabilities.
5. Discuss the importance of prereferral strategies and how implementation and duration of modifications affect the number and types of referrals to special education.

ACTIVITIES

1. Interview a member of the local school district's assessment team regarding Individualized Assessment Plans and their use in the district. If possible, obtain a copy of the guidelines they use to develop an assessment plan.
2. Provide a case study of a child including the assessment plan and the results. Develop the IEP in class.
3. Write the state department and obtain information about the process of appointing surrogate parents. If possible, interview a surrogate parent.
4. Contact at least 2 local school districts and get copies of all forms used in the assessment process. Compare the similarities and differences across forms used in the various districts.

STUDY GUIDE REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Special education assessment provides information for two types of decision: _____ decisions and _____ decisions.
2. Informal assessment procedure are preferred for _____ decisions, and formal procedures are preferred for _____ decisions.
3. Place these steps in the assessment process in order. Write '1' before the step that occurs first, '2' before the step that occurs second, and so on.

____ Parental permission for assessment

____ Eligibility

____ Screening

____ Annual review of the IEP

____ Referral

____ Design of the IEP

____ Design of the IAP

____ Prereferral intervention

____ Reevaluation of eligibility

____ Parental approval of the IEP

4. IAP stands for _____.
5. The three areas of functioning that are assessed when mild disabilities are suspected are general intellectual performance, _____ performance, and index of the _____.
6. Decide whether each of the following statements about the rights of parents is true or false.

____ Parents must be notified in writing when their child has been referred for special education assessment.

____ Parents must give their consent for special education assessment.

____ Parents can examine only those portions of their child's school records that are not confidential.

____ Parents who disagree with a decision of the school can request an impartial due process hearing.

____ Parents must be informed of the results of eligibility decisions.

____ Parents must obtain a judge's order before they can obtain an independent educational evaluation of their child.

7. If a student's parents are not available, a surrogate parent can be appointed to represent the student's interest. (True or False)
8. Give three examples of Prereferral Intervention strategies.
9. According to federal law, only formal assessment procedures can be listed on the IAP. (True or False)
10. Districts have the right to bar students with disabilities from participation in state- or district-wide assessments of student achievement. (True or False)
11. The IEP team contains the same members as the team responsible for eligibility determination. (True or False)
12. Match the IEP requirements in Column A with the examples in Column B.

Column A

- a. Present levels of educational performance
- b. Annual goals and objectives
- c. Special Education and related services
- d. Supplementary aids, services, modifications, and supports
- e. Strategies for measuring progress

Column B

- ___ Jon will receive assistance from the resource teacher in reading for 30 minutes
3 days a week
- ___ Portfolio assessment of students' work samples and teacher observation
- ___ Yvonne is achieving at grade level in all subjects except mathematics
- ___ Rose will write a complete sentence beginning with a capital letter and ending
with appropriate punctuation
- ___ Louie has significant problems in spelling and written expression
- ___ Increase oral reading skills to the grade 3 level
- ___ Dirk will use books on tape for seventh grade English

- 13. According to the Least Restrictive Environment principle, students with disabilities should be educated with students without disabilities _____.
- 14. When parents and the school disagree over one or more aspects of the IEP, the first step is _____.
- 15. A review of a student's eligibility for special education services must be held _____ years.

ANSWERS TO STUDY GUIDE REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Legal, instructional
2. instructional, legal
3. 5, 6, 1, 9, 3, 7, 4, 2, 10, 8
4. Individualized Assessment Plan
5. educational, disability
6. true, true, false, true, true, false
7. True
8. Conferences with students and parents, review of educational records, changes in the classroom environment, instructional modification, changes in behavior management.
9. false
10. false
11. true
12. c, e, a, b, a, b, d
13. to the maximum extent appropriate
14. mediation
15. 3

Test Items for Chapter 2

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Eligibility for special education services must be re-evaluated every
 - a. two years
 - b. three years
 - c. four years
 - d. year

2. An IEP must be developed
 - a. before meeting with the parents
 - b. within 15 days after placement
 - c. within 30 days after placement
 - d. before the student begins to receive special services

3. Informal assessment procedures are used for all of the following purposes except
 - a. to evaluate the special education program
 - b. to determine general intellectual functioning
 - c. to make instructional decisions
 - d. to collect ongoing data frequently

4. A surrogate parent can be
 - a. assigned by the state to represent the student
 - b. assigned by the school system to represent the student
 - c. an employee of the school district
 - d. assigned to represent the student even if the parents are available

5. Parents of students who have been assessed
 - a. must have results reported to them if the child is eligible for special services
 - b. must have results reported to them if the child is not eligible for special services
 - c. must give permission before the child is placed in special education
 - d. all of the above

6. An impartial due process hearing
 - a. may be requested by the parents but not the school system
 - b. may be requested by the school system but not by the parents
 - c. may be requested by either the parents or the school system
 - d. none of the above

7. An IEP includes all of the following *except* a plan for
 - a. an individualized curriculum
 - b. termination of services
 - c. evaluation of student progress
 - d. implementation of services

8. Placement in the least restrictive environment refers to
 - a. the type of curriculum used in special education

- b. the severity of the disability
 - c. the length of time special services will be needed
 - d. the type of class or classes in which the student is placed
9. The Individual Assessment Plan is concerned with
- a. specific learning tasks
 - b. the student's skills and abilities
 - c. learning environment
 - d. all of the above
10. Determining whether a student is eligible for special education is a(n)
- a. instructional decision
 - b. legal decision
 - c. medical decision
 - d. evaluation decision
11. To document the presence of intellectual disabilities, it is necessary to identify:
- a. low to average intellectual performance
 - b. above average to high average intellectual performance
 - c. very low to low average intellectual performance
 - d. no measure of intellectual performance must be made
12. To establish eligibility for services for students with intellectual disabilities, it is necessary to show a significantly reduced rate of learning as well as
- a. poor school achievement
 - b. impaired adaptive behavior
 - c. perceptual problems
 - d. both a and b
13. An IEP must be written when
- a. a student is found eligible for special education
 - b. a teacher refers a student for special education assessment
 - c. a parent requests an IEP for his or her child
 - d. norm-referenced testing begins
14. When requesting parental permission for assessment for the determination of eligibility
- a. the request must be clearly written in understandable language
 - b. the request must be translated into the parents' native language, if needed
 - c. the educational agency needs to carefully document that they have followed legal procedures
 - d. all of the above are applicable to requesting parental permission for assessment

15. Which step in the assessment process follows design of the IAP?
 - a. Referral
 - b. Parental permission for assessment
 - c. Reporting results
 - d. Deciding eligibility for special education

16. To encourage parents to attend IEP meetings, districts must
 - a. conduct meetings in the parents' home
 - b. provide babysitters
 - c. make interpreters available to parents who do not speak English
 - d. provide transportation to and from the meetings

17. The IEP must include
 - a. annual goals and objectives for the student's program
 - b. estimated costs of providing services to the student
 - c. a schedule for phasing the student back into the general education classroom
 - d. all of the above

18. Each model of service delivery has both pros and cons. However, one main goal is to place the student
 - a. in a special education program
 - b. in a school near to the student's home
 - c. in the least restrictive environment
 - d. with a teacher who volunteers to instruct students with disabilities

19. When parents and the school disagree about a child's placement, hearings are held and the child
 - a. remains in his or her current placement
 - b. is placed in a regular classroom with peers of the same skill level
 - c. is moved to a special school
 - d. is placed in a regular classroom with peers of the same age

20. Assessment involves
 - a. the systematic gathering of information
 - b. design of an IAP to guide the data collection process
 - c. the use of both formal and informal tools
 - d. all of the above

21. A continuum of alternative placements refers to:
 - a. the various settings where services are provided
 - b. the individualized goals for a student
 - c. the resource room
 - d. none of the above

22. The results of assessments collected for the determination of eligibility must inform parents:
 - a. whether or not the student is found eligible
 - b. the cause of the student's identified disability
 - c. the people who will provide services
 - d. a and b

23. Instructional decisions include all of the following except:
 - a. development of an IEP
 - b. evaluation of student progress toward annual goals
 - c. determination of eligibility
 - d. revision of the IEP

24. An IAP is:
 - a. an individualized assessment plan
 - b. required by federal law
 - c. good professional practice
 - d. a and c

25. If a student does not progress as expected:
 - a. the parent may request a meeting to revise the IEP
 - b. the IEP can not be changed until the following year
 - c. the student can request a meeting to revise the IEP
 - d. the principal must request a meeting to revise the IEP

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Define the principle of least restrictive environment and provide 3 examples of alternative placements for students with disabilities.

2. Identify the main phases in assessment and the steps that make up each phase.
 1. According to IDEA, who must be included in the IEP team?

 4. Describe what can occur if students fail to meet the goals identified in the IEP.

 5. Give two examples of due process rights of students and/or their parents.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Based on the two major eligibility criteria for qualification for special education services, why might a student NOT qualify for special education services?
2. What is the purpose of the preferral intervention stage and how might this prevent the unnecessary referrals of student for special education?
3. Although not legally required, the IAP is considered good professional practice. Describe the IAP and the benefits of the creation of this plan.
4. How can schools encourage parents to attend and participate in IEP meetings?
5. Why is the assessment process described as a cycle and what are the components of the assessment process?

Answer Key for Test Items for Chapter 2

Answers to Multiple Choice Questions for Chapter 2

1. B
2. D
3. B
4. A
5. D
6. C
7. B
8. D
9. D
10. B
11. C
12. D
13. A
14. D
15. B
16. C
17. A
18. C
19. A
20. D
21. A
22. A
23. C

24. D

25. A

Answers to Short Answer Questions for Chapter 2

1. Least restrictive environment is defined as the following: to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children without disabilities. Examples of alternative placements include the following: regular class placement, resource rooms and itinerant instruction, special classes, special schools, home instruction, instruction in hospitals and other institutions.
2. Phase 1: Identification and referral
Steps in phase 1: screening and teacher identification, prereferral strategies, referral and notification of parents
Phase 2: Determination of eligibility
Steps in phase 2: design of the IAP, parental permission for assessment, administration, scoring, and interpretation of assessment procedures, reporting results, and decisions about eligibility
Phase 3: Program planning
Steps in phase 3: design of the IEP, parental agreement to the IEP
Phase 4: Program implementation and evaluation
Steps in phase 4: implementation of the IEP, ongoing monitoring of student progress, annual review of the IEP, and periodic reevaluation of eligibility
3. Students parents, general education and special education teachers, representative of the educational agency, an individual to interpret assessment results, others with special expertise or knowledge of student, and the student, if appropriate.
4. Parents have the right to ask that the IEP be revised. In this revision, parents may ask for a change in the types of services proved to their child, an increase in the amount of services, or other aspects of the IEP.
5. Examples include: parental permission before assessment, right to mediation and an impartial due process hearing.

