

CHAPTER 1

Assessment in Social and Educational Contexts

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Determine individual difference in skills, abilities, and behaviors and how these differences can require different levels of support to succeed in school.
2. Ascertain why assessment is important in school and society.
3. Explain why assessment is important in special and inclusive education.
4. Articulate key themes that are important to understand for engaging in best practices in assessment.
5. Discuss that significant improvements in assessment have happened and continue to happen.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

1. Individual Students Need Different Levels of Support to Succeed
2. The Importance of Assessment in Schools and Society
 - Concerns of Students, Their Families, and Teachers
 - Concerns of the General Public
 - Concerns of Certification Boards
3. Why Learn About Assessment in Special and Inclusive Education?
4. Important Assessment Concepts to Understand

Level vs. Rate of Progress

Different Decisions Often Require Different Data

Different Methods May Be Needed for Different Students Different Skills Often Require

Different Methods

Only Present Behavior Is Observed

High- and Low-Inference Decision Making

Accuracy in Collecting, Scoring, Interpreting, and Communicating Assessment Information

Fairness Is Paramount

Assessment that Matters

Assessment Practices Are Dynamic

5. Significant Improvements in Assessment Have Happened and Continue to Happen

OVERVIEW

6. Schools are required to provide all students with knowledge and skills corresponding to national common core content and/or specific state standards. This task is complicated by the diversity of students when they enter school and as they progress. Students and classrooms are diverse in many ways: culturally, ethnically, and linguistically. Additionally, students enter school with differing knowledge and skills and progress through the curriculum at different rates. As a result, schools must provide different types and levels of support to help diverse groups of students succeed. School personnel need to collect assessment information to make decisions, including what types of support a student needs, how instruction should be delivered, and to what extent is

instruction working. These are important considerations for students with disabilities in special education as well as students with and without disabilities in inclusive education settings.

7. School personnel may utilize differentiated instruction and assessment to ensure that the content and approaches match students' needs and they are effective. Assessment is the process of collecting information for the purposes of specifying/verifying problems and making decisions about students. Both general and special education teachers use differentiated instruction and assessment, ideally in collaboration with each other, to ensure the needs of students with and without disabilities are met. Many districts and schools are using Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) as part of this process.
8. Assessment is an activity that impacts everyone in a school, from teachers who are assessed for certification purposes to students who may qualify for special education services. Assessment can have both desired and undesired consequences, and therefore, people may react strongly when assessments are used to make decisions about educational opportunities or to compare an individual to other individuals. Assessment is not the same as testing; testing is just one of the methods of gathering assessment data, but test scores are often used to make a variety of important decisions. As a result, students, their families, and teachers as well as the general public and certification boards are concerned about test results, how tests are used, and the proper training of those who administer tests.
9. Educational professionals must assess and understand the results of assessments that they and others administer. This has become more complex as federal laws regulate the assessments for and in special education and our student population is increasingly diverse. Through this book, individuals will learn knowledge and skills for selecting and using assessments methods that can improve decision making schools. This includes the knowledge that different decisions require different data, different methods may be needed for different students, different skills require different assessment methods. All assessments are samples of behavior and have varying levels of technical adequacy (the extent to which an assessment is reliable and valid). Therefore, assessments should be interpreted within the behavior sample they target and with attention paid to their technical adequacy. Additionally, assessment is dynamic. Assessment practices are constantly changing based on changing laws, eligibility criteria, technology, and student populations. Significant improvements in assessment have happened and will continue to happen in the future.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

The following key terms and concepts are the most important in Chapter 1. You should be able to define and explain each of them.

<i>Term/Concept</i>	<i>Primary Points in Definition/Explanation</i>
assessment	Process of collecting information; data collection for the purpose of specifying and verifying problems, and making decisions about students
competency-based assessment	Collecting data about very specific knowledge and skills using authentic or simulated situations in which the knowledge and skills can be demonstrated; being utilized in some states as part of teacher or psychologist certification to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and skills to correctly administer, score, and interpret tests
differentiated instruction	Process of matching content and instructional approach to individual students' learning needs to improve teaching effectiveness
inclusive education	Education of people with and without disabilities in the same classes or school environments to facilitate learning of all students
special education	A set of unique educational services and supports provided to students with disabilities who meet particular disability criteria
testing	Exposing a person to a set of tasks or questions to obtain a score; one of several methods for collecting information as a part of an assessment
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