

ASSESSMENT IN SPECIAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

SALVIA | YSSELDYKE | WITMER

THIRTEENTH EDITION



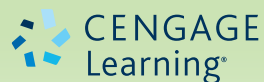
ASSESSMENT IN SPECIAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

THIRTEENTH EDITION

JOHN SALVIA
The Pennsylvania
State University

JAMES E. YSSELDYKE
University of
Minnesota

SARA WITMER
Michigan State
University



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***Assessment in Special and Inclusive
Education, Thirteenth Edition***

John Salvia, James E. Ysseldyke,
and Sara Witmer

Product Director: Marta Lee-Perriard
Product Manager: Cheri-Ann Nakamaru
Content Developer: Kassi Radomski
Product Assistant: Stephen Lagos
Content Project Manager: Samen Iqbal
Art Director: Andrei Pasternak
Manufacturing Planner: Doug Bertke
Production Service: Lori Hazzard,
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PREFACE

As indicated by the title of the thirteenth edition, *Assessment in Special and Inclusive Education*, we continue to be concerned about assessing the performance and progress of students with disabilities, regardless of whether their education occurs in general or special education settings. We are also concerned with assessment that occurs in classrooms to identify and address the needs of students requiring additional academic and social–emotional support. Educational assessment has undergone substantial change since the first publication of *Assessment in Special and Inclusive Education* in 1978. Improvement and expansion in assessment tools and strategies are certainly evident. New models and technologies for assessment in school settings have emerged in an attempt to more efficiently address the increasingly diverse needs of students today. Federal laws and regulations related to school assessment practices have been revised in attempts to promote improvements in student outcomes, and they are in the midst of revision as we complete this most recent edition.

Throughout these changes, we have remained committed to assessment approaches that promote data-based decision making, and we believe many concepts and ideas that were presented in the original edition are still essential for our readers to understand and know how to apply. Philosophical differences continue to divide the assessment community. Disputes continue over the value of standardized and nonstandardized test administration, objective and subjective scoring, generalizable and nongeneralizable measurement, interpersonal and intrapersonal comparisons, and so forth. In the midst of these differences, we believe students and society are best served by the objective, reliable, and valid assessment of student abilities and skills and by meaningful links between assessment results and intervention.

Our position is based on several conclusions. First, the IDEA requires objective assessment, largely because it usually leads to better decision making. Second, we are encouraged by the substantial improvement in assessment devices and practices over the past 30-plus years. Third, although some alternatives are merely unproven, other innovative approaches to assessment—especially those that celebrate subjectivity—have severe shortcomings that have been understood since the early 1900s. Fortunately, much of the initial enthusiasm for those approaches has waned. Fourth, we believe it is unwise to abandon effective procedures without substantial evidence that the proposed alternatives really are better. Too often, we learned that an educational innovation was ineffective after it had already failed far too many students.

Our focus is on assessment that matters; assessment that will bring important changes that enhance the lives of the students served. By equipping our readers with knowledge and understanding of key assessment concepts and principles that can be readily applied in school settings, we believe they will be prepared to engage in work that will indeed improve the academic and social–emotional outcomes of the students they serve.

AUDIENCE FOR THIS BOOK

Assessment in Special and Inclusive Education, Thirteenth Edition, is intended for a first course in assessment taken by those whose careers require understanding and informed use of assessment data. The primary audience is made up of those who are or will be teachers in special education at the elementary or secondary level. The secondary audience is the large support system for special educators: school psychologists, child development specialists, counselors, educational administrators, nurses,

reading specialists, social workers, speech and language specialists, and specialists in therapeutic recreation. Additionally, in today's reform climate, many classroom teachers enroll in the assessment course as part of their own professional development. In writing for those who are taking their first course in assessment, we have assumed no prior knowledge of measurement and statistical concepts.

PURPOSE

Students with disabilities have the right to an appropriate evaluation and to an appropriate education in the least restrictive educational environment. Those who assess have a tremendous responsibility; assessment results are used to make decisions that directly and significantly affect students' lives. Those who assess are responsible for knowing the devices and procedures they use and for understanding the limitations of those devices and procedures. Decisions about a student's eligibility for special education and related services must be based on accurate and reliable information; decisions about how and where to educate students with disabilities must be based on accurate and reliable data. Best practices in assessment can help support the learning and development of not just those with disabilities, but all students needing a variety of different levels of support, and so we intend for many of the concepts presented to facilitate best practices for all students, and not just those with disabilities.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

The thirteenth edition continues to offer straightforward and clear coverage of basic assessment concepts, evenhanded evaluations of standardized tests in each domain, and illustrations of applications to the decision-making process. All chapters have been updated, several have been revised substantially, and a few have been eliminated to allow for a clear focus on assessment that matters for promoting academic and social-emotional outcomes.

OVERALL CHANGES

Throughout the revision process, our primary goal was to focus on essential assessment concepts, principles, and practices necessary for serving students in school settings. The development and availability of assessment tools, particularly for the purpose of systematic monitoring of student progress, have increased dramatically in recent years, and websites now provide information to facilitate our readers' own reviews of these tools. Therefore, instead of providing numerous detailed reviews of available instruments, we decided to focus our efforts on effectively communicating the key characteristics readers should look for when evaluating the multitude of options available. We have further focused this edition on basic information necessary for generalists (as opposed to specialists) who are seeking to use assessment to improve academic and social-emotional functioning of school-age students. As such, we have reduced coverage of topics that are not closely aligned with this purpose. In order to better facilitate our readers' ability to access the content offered, all available content is present directly in the book rather than in both the book and a separate website. Furthermore, instead of including a separate chapter on technology, we have incorporated discussion of new technologies within the chapters with which they most closely align. Finally, we know that many school systems are moving toward use of models involving a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), and we therefore considered it necessary to provide more background for readers on these models for assessment and intervention. In doing so, we revised the associated chapters to focus on basic assessment concepts and principles that are important to understand when applying these models, define important keywords that are increasingly being used in the application of these models, and provide examples of

how these models are applied in schools. Overall, our goal is to provide readers with a comprehensive textbook that provides easy access to the assessment concepts and ideas necessary to facilitate the academic and social–emotional competence of all students in schools today.

NEW FEATURES

In addition to important content revisions, we have incorporated several new pedagogical features across chapters.

- At the beginning of each chapter, we now display professional standards and specific learning objectives. Each learning objective is linked directly to a major chapter heading, and to associated comprehension questions at the end of the chapter.
- Keywords are bolded, with definitions included in the narrative.
- Each scenario is explicitly referenced to basic concepts and ideas presented in the chapter.
- Advanced content, previously located on the book’s CourseMate website, which is for students in upper-level or graduate courses, is uniquely formatted to convey that it is advanced material.

MAJOR CHAPTER REVISIONS

Although all chapters that were maintained for the thirteenth edition have been updated, major updates were made in the following chapters:

- **Chapter 1: Assessment in Social and Educational Contexts**
Revised to provide a brief introduction to basic assessment concepts and themes that are elaborated on in later chapters.
- **Chapter 5: Technical Requirements**
Advanced content that was previously displayed only on the CourseMate website is now incorporated within this chapter, and it is formatted to indicate that it represents advanced information.
- **Chapter 10: Monitoring Student Progress Toward Instructional Goals**
Instead of providing reviews of specific progress monitoring tools, we highlight key features that are important to look for when evaluating the associated tools.
- **Chapter 12: Response to Intervention (RTI) and a Multi-Tiered System of Supports**
New keywords that correspond to the evolving application of these models in schools are defined, and an additional scenario is provided to describe how these models are applied within school settings.
- **Chapter 19: Using Measures of Social and Emotional Behavior**
To ensure readers have information on assessing adaptive behavior, content on this topic has been incorporated into the chapter.
- **Chapter 22: Making Decisions About Participation in Accountability Programs**
This chapter has been revised to focus on information essential for those making decisions about how individual students should participate in large-scale assessment used for accountability purposes, rather than focusing on information that is important primarily for policymaking at the state level.
- Technological advancements in assessment, previously located in one chapter (23), are now embedded within existing chapters with related content.

- In addition, we deleted chapters that were deemed either particularly specialized, focused on nonobjective assessment practices, or not well aligned with our focus on promoting academic and social–emotional outcomes. More specifically, we have deleted content on the assessment of sensory acuity and oral language (Chapters 14 and 20), portfolio assessment (Chapter 25), perceptual-motor assessment (Chapter 16), and assessment of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers (Chapter 19).

REVISED TESTS

Several tests that are very commonly used to assess students with disabilities have been released with new editions. Reviews of the following recently updated tests are included in corresponding chapters of the book:

- Woodcock–Johnson Tests of Achievement and Cognitive Abilities–Fourth Edition (WJ-COG-4; WJ-ACH-4)
- Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children–Fifth Edition (WISC-V)
- Oral and Written Language Scales–Second Edition (OWLS-2)
- Behavior Assessment System for Children–Third Edition (BASC-3)
- Gray Oral Reading Test–Fifth Edition (GORT-5)
- Diagnostic Achievement Battery–Fourth Edition (DAB-4)

ORGANIZATION

Part 1, “Overview and Basic Considerations,” places testing in the broader context of assessment.

- In Chapter 1, “Assessment in Social and Educational Contexts,” we describe the challenge of addressing the needs of diverse students in schools today, and introduce basic concepts and principles that will be covered in greater depth later in the book.
- In Chapter 2, “Assessment and Decision Making in Schools,” we describe the four main methods for collecting assessment information, and the main types of decisions made in school settings for which assessment is necessary.
- In Chapter 3, “Laws, Ethical Codes, and Professional Standards That Impact Assessment,” we discuss the ways assessment practices are regulated and mandated by legislation and litigation, and various ethical principles that may be used to guide assessment practices.
- In Chapter 4, “What Test Scores Mean,” we describe the commonly used ways to quantify test performance and provide interpretative data.
- In Chapter 5, “Technical Requirements,” we explain the basic measurement concepts of reliability and validity, and incorporate advanced content related to these concepts for those who want to know more.
- In Chapter 6, “Cultural and Linguistic Considerations,” we discuss various cultural and linguistic factors that need to be considered when collecting and interpreting assessment information, related legal requirements, and suggested guidelines for assessment practices.
- In Chapter 7, “Using Test Adaptations and Accommodations,” we explain the need for some students to have changes made in how various tests are

administered, and provide associated guidance for making accommodation decisions during eligibility and accountability testing.

Part 2, “Assessment in Classrooms,” provides readers with fundamental knowledge necessary to conduct assessments in the classroom, and information about new technologies that can facilitate efficient collection and summarization of data for use in making decisions in the classroom.

- Chapter 8, “Teacher-Made Tests of Achievement,” provides a systematic overview of tests that teachers can create to measure students’ learning and progress in the curriculum.
- Chapter 9, “Assessing Behavior Through Observation,” explains the major concepts in conducting systematic observations of student behavior.
- Chapter 10, “Monitoring Student Progress Toward Instructional Goals,” describes concepts, ideas, and strategies that can be used to measure student academic progress.
- Chapter 11, “Managing Classroom Assessment,” is devoted to helping educators plan assessment programs that are efficient and effective in the use of both teacher and student time.
- Chapter 12, “Response to Intervention (RTI) and a Multi-Tiered System of Supports,” provides information on how assessment information can inform decisions made within these innovative models, and guidance for ensuring that appropriate practices are put into place when applying these models,

In Part 3, “Assessment Using Formal Measures,” we provide information about the abilities and skills most commonly tested in the schools.

- Part 3 begins with Chapter 13, “How to Evaluate a Test.” This chapter is a primer on what to look for when considering the use of a commercially produced test.
- The next six chapters in Part 3 provide an overview of various domains that are assessed in schools using formal measures, and reviews of the most frequently used measures: Chapter 14, “Assessment of Academic Achievement with Multiple-Skill Devices”; Chapter 15, “Using Diagnostic Reading Measures”; Chapter 16, “Using Diagnostic Mathematics Measures”; Chapter 17, “Using Measures of Written Language”; Chapter 18, “Using Measures of Intelligence”; Chapter 19, “Using Measures of Social and Emotional Behavior.”

In Part 4, “Using Assessment Results to Make Educational Decisions,” we discuss the most important decisions educators make on behalf of students with disabilities.

- In Chapter 20, “Making Instructional Decisions,” we discuss the decisions that are made prior to a student’s referral for special education and those that are made in special education settings.
- In Chapter 21, “Making Special Education Eligibility Decisions,” we discuss the role of multidisciplinary teams and the process for determining a student’s eligibility for special education and related services. In a new section we describe approaches using information on a student’s Response to Intervention in making eligibility decisions.
- In Chapter 22, “Making Decisions About Participation in Accountability Programs,” we explain the legal requirements for states and districts to meet the standards of No Child Left Behind and IDEA, and important considerations in making decisions about how a student participates in the accountability program.

- In Chapter 23, “Collaborative Team Decision Making,” we provide an overview of communicating with school teams about assessment and decision making, and include information about the characteristics of effective school teams, strategies for effectively communicating assessment information to parents and students, and the rules concerning data collection and record keeping.

ONLINE RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTORS

ONLINE INSTRUCTOR’S MANUAL WITH TEST BANK

An online instructor’s manual accompanies this book. It contains information to assist the instructor in designing the course, including sample syllabi, discussion questions, teaching and learning activities, field experiences, learning objectives, and additional online resources. For assessment support, the updated test bank includes true–false, multiple-choice, matching, short-answer, and essay questions for each chapter.

POWERPOINT LECTURE SLIDES

These vibrant Microsoft PowerPoint lecture slides for each chapter assist you with your lecture by providing concept coverage using images, figures, and tables directly from the textbook.

COGNERO

Cengage Learning testing, powered by Cognero, is a flexible online system that allows you to author, edit, and manage test bank content from multiple Cengage Learning solutions; create multiple test versions in an instant; and deliver tests from your learning management system, your classroom, or wherever you want.

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John Salvia • Jim Ysseldyke • Sara Witmer

CHAPTER

1



ASSESSMENT IN SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS CHAPTER

- CEC** **CEC Initial Preparation Standards**
 - 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.
 - Standard 4: Assessment**
 - 4.0 Beginning special education professionals use multiple methods of assessment and data-sources in making educational decisions.
- CEC** **CEC Advanced Preparation Standards**
 - Standard 1: Assessment**
 - 1.0 Special education specialists use valid and reliable assessment practices to minimize bias.
- Ψ** **National Association of School Psychologists Domains**
 - 1 Data-Based Decision Making and Accountability
 - 8 Diversity in Development and Learning

Education is intended to provide *all* students with the skills and competencies they need to enhance their lives and the lives of their fellow citizens. School personnel are expected to provide all students with a predetermined set of competencies, usually those specified in national common core content standards or in specific state education standards. This function would be extremely difficult even if all students entered school with the same abilities and competencies and even if all students learned in the same way and at the same rate. However, they do not. For example, it is the first day of school at Stevenson Elementary, and several students show up for kindergarten:

- Kim is dropped off at the front door. He speaks no English and the school staff had no idea he was coming.
- Marshall comes knowing how to read, print, add, and subtract.
- Joyce is afraid to come to school and cries incessantly when her mother tries to leave.
- Kamryn and her mother arrive with a folder that includes all of her preschool records, her immunization and medical records, and reports from the two psychologists she has been seeing since age 2.
- Mike doesn't show up. The school has his name on a list, his completed registration records, and notes from a social worker indicating that he is eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

Not only do students not begin school with the same skills and abilities, they make progress through the curriculum at different rates and have different instructional needs. For example, midway through the first grade, Sally has picked up all she has been taught with no additional help. She just “gets it.” Bill needs instruction specifically targeted to help him overcome his deficiencies in letter–sound correspondence; he sees a tutor twice a week. Joe needs so much help that he receives intensive special education services.

Students attending schools today are a much more diverse group than in the past. Today's classrooms are multicultural and multilingual. Students demonstrate a significant range of academic skills; for example, in some large urban environments 75 percent of sixth graders are reading more than two years below grade level, and there is as much as a 10-year range in skill level in math in a sixth-grade classroom. More than 6.5 million children and youth with disabilities (approximately 13 percent of the school-age population) receive special education and related services. Most of these children and youth are attending schools in their own neighborhoods in classes with their peers—this was not always the case in the past—and fewer students with disabilities receive special education services in separate buildings or separate classes.

The focus of this book is on students in both special and inclusive education. **Special education** is a set of unique educational services and supports provided to students with disabilities who meet particular disability criteria; these may include services provided in separate settings or services provided in settings comprising both students with and without disabilities. **Inclusive education** refers to educational approaches that facilitate learning of all students, including those with and without disabilities, within the same environment.

1-1 Individual Students Need Different Levels of Support to Succeed

We as teachers and related services personnel are faced with providing education matched to the needs of students with few skills and those with highly developed skills in the same class. No matter what level of skills they bring with them and no matter how motivated students are to learn, it is our job to enhance their competence

and to build the capacity of schools together with families, community agencies, churches, and other factors that influence students' development to meet their needs. In a larger social context, the assessor or a case coordinator must take into account these multiple influences as he or she assesses students and develops supports to meet individual student needs. For example, the tutoring Rosa is receiving at the local Hispanic community center could actually be interfering rather than helping. Or we may find that a really effective way to help Mohammed is to work with the local Somali neighborhood organization that provides students with homework help. As citizens and members of a variety of communities, we are also interested in the capacity of systems to support students in these ways, and we can enhance our effectiveness by taking into account these multiple perspectives and systems. To discuss all these influences is beyond the scope of this text, yet we will be taking many such factors into consideration as we talk about appropriate assessment and decision making in school and community settings.

Schools must provide multiple levels of support to enable each student to be successful in attaining the common core standards as required by state and federal regulations. School personnel must decide who gets what kinds of support and the level of instructional intensity needed by a student, how instruction will be delivered, and the extent to which instruction is working. **Differentiated instruction** is a process that involves matching the content and instructional approach to individual students' learning needs in order to accelerate the learning of all students. Within one first-grade class, some students may not have mastered single-digit addition and subtraction, whereas other students may have mastered this skill and may be ready to learn the strategies of carrying and borrowing associated with double-digit addition and subtraction. Some students may need the teacher to provide 10 examples of carrying within a double-digit additional problem and other students may need just two examples. Only with appropriate and ongoing assessment can one ensure that the content and instructional approaches selected truly match students' needs, and that they are effective. **Assessment** is the process of collecting information (data) for the purpose of making decisions for or about individuals. Knowledge and application of best practices in assessment can help a teacher provide differentiated instruction that optimizes student learning. Read the chapter scenario and associated questions to think more carefully about how a teacher may need to use information to guide the instruction that she will provide to a variety of students in her classroom.

Differentiated instruction is something that all teachers, including both general and special education teachers, strive to incorporate for all of their students, regardless of whether or not the students have disabilities and require special education services. When teaching students who have disabilities that require special education services, general educators and special educators work together to determine how to best match academic instruction to any given student's needs. Students eligible for special education services may receive some or all of their instruction in a separate setting. However, regardless of where a student with a disability is taught, it is important for general and special education teachers to work together to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate plans for differentiating instruction to ensure the student has adequate access to the general curriculum. General educators tend to be most familiar with the general curriculum, and therefore are able to articulate what the content of instruction should be. Special educators tend to be most familiar with the unique needs of students with disabilities, and can therefore help identify potential barriers to accessing the general curriculum and propose ways to reduce those barriers. Beyond the school setting, there are often additional sources of support, including community centers, faith-based organizations, and mental health providers that school teams may communicate with to help address the unique needs of students, both those with and without disabilities. The use of assessment tools and strategies can go a long way in helping teachers decide what supports are necessary.

Although differentiated instruction is often applied at the classroom level, there are often procedures used at the school level to facilitate differentiated instruction. In the past decade, many districts and schools have begun using Multi-Tiered System of

SCENARIO IN ASSESSMENT

MRS. JOHNSON | Mrs. Johnson's fourth-grade class is a heterogeneous group, and includes the following: four students who are receiving enrichment for one hour per week, two students who receive speech therapy for 30 minutes twice a week, two students with learning disabilities who receive itinerant (special education) services daily, 12 students who are functioning at grade level in all academic areas, and six students who are functioning below average in one or more academic areas. She also has two students whose educational records have yet to arrive from out-of-state.

Mrs. Johnson intends to spend the first week of school in a review of academic content and assessment of each student's prior knowledge so that she can differentiate her instruction. She will meet with the following specialists who will be providing pull-out services to her students: the itinerant special education teacher,

to begin coordinating the instructional support that her two students with learning disabilities receive; the speech therapist, to schedule times when the two students needing therapy will be removed from her class; and the enrichment teacher, to schedule times when the four gifted students will be seen for enrichment activities that will also be part of her curriculum. It looks like another busy year in her fourth-grade class.

This scenario highlights the wide range of students that a teacher may have in class. These students are likely to have very different instructional needs. Additional information about these students' skills and prior learning experiences may help inform this teacher's instructional decision making so that student learning is optimized. What additional information do you think might be helpful to collect, in order to inform instructional decision making?

Supports (MTSS) models to more effectively match the content, method, and intensity of instruction to individual students' needs. Those students who are particularly low in certain skills and not progressing at an expected rate are identified for more intensive instruction and intervention. The goal of using these models is to ensure that resources are allocated in such a way that all students receive the support they need to be successful. Students' instructional needs are identified and their progress is monitored so that instruction can be adapted when necessary. As with differentiated instruction at the classroom level, assessment can play a very important role within MTSS models. MTSS and the role of assessment within MTSS models are further explained in Chapter 12.

1-2 The Importance of Assessment in Schools and Society

The end goal of assessment is improved educational outcomes for students. This is where teachers, school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, administrators, and other school personnel get their rewards: seeing students become more competent over time. School personnel tell us this is exciting work.

Assessment touches everyone's life. It especially affects the lives of people who work with children and youth, and who work in schools. Test scores, in particular, are now used to make a variety of important decisions. Here are just a few examples of the ways in which test scores affect people's lives:

- You learn that, as part of the state certification process, you must take tests that assess your knowledge of teaching practices, learning, and child development.
- Mr. and Mrs. Johnson receive a call from their daughter Morgan's third-grade teacher, who says he is concerned about her performance on a reading test. He would like to refer Morgan for further testing to determine whether she has a learning disability.
- Mr. and Mrs. Erffmeyer tell you that their son is not eligible for special education services because he scored "too high" on an intelligence test.
- In response to publication of test results showing that U.S. students rank low in comparison to students in other industrialized nations, the U.S. Secretary of Education issues a call for more rigorous educational standards for all students and for increased federal aid.
- The superintendent of schools in a large urban district learns that only 40 percent of the students in her school district passed the state graduation test.

- Your local school district asks for volunteers to serve on a task force to design a measure of technological literacy to use as a test with students.

In the United States, almost everyone goes to school. And it seems like everyone has an opinion about testing. **Testing** is administering a predetermined set of questions or tasks, for which predetermined types of behavioral responses are sought, to an individual or group of individuals in order to obtain a score. It is important to realize that there are many assessment methods apart from testing. Furthermore, best practices in assessment, as opposed to testing, involve more than just administration of a test to obtain a score. Considerations such as the types of decisions for which a particular test score is truly helpful, and the conditions under which the test score can be deemed valid must be taken into account when using tests. However, it remains the case that testing is often the “go to” method for making important decisions that affect people’s lives.

The procedures for gathering data and conducting assessments are matters that are rightfully of great concern to the general public—both individuals who are directly affected by the assessments (such as parents, students, and classroom teachers) and individuals who are indirectly affected (for example, taxpayers and elected officials). These matters are also of great concern to individuals and agencies that license or certify assessors to work in the schools. Finally, these matters are of great concern to the assessment community. For convenience, the concerns of these groups are discussed separately; however, the reader should recognize that many of the concerns overlap and are not the exclusive domain of one group or another.

1-2a CONCERNS OF STUDENTS, THEIR FAMILIES, AND TEACHERS

People react strongly when test scores are used to make interpersonal comparisons in which they or those they love look inferior. We expect parents to react strongly when test scores are used to make decisions about their children’s life opportunities—for example, whether their child could enter college, pass a class, be promoted to the next grade, receive special education, or be placed in a program for gifted and talented students. Parents never want to hear that their children are not succeeding or that their children’s prospects for adult life are limited. Students do not want to hear that they are different or not doing as well as their peers; they certainly do not want to be called handicapped or disabled. Poor student performance also affects teachers. Some teachers deny that student achievement really is inadequate; they opine that tests measure trivial knowledge (not the important things they teach), decontextualize knowledge, make it fragmented and artificial, and so on. Other teachers accept their students’ failures as a fact of life (these teachers burn out). The good teachers work harder (for example, by learning instructional techniques that actually work and individualize instruction).

Unwanted outcomes of assessment often lead to questions about the kinds of tests used, the skills or behaviors they measure, and their technical adequacy. Decisions about special and remedial education have consequences. Some consequences are desired, such as extra services for students who are entitled to special education. Other consequences are unwanted, such as denial of special education services or diminished self-esteem resulting from a disability label.

1-2b CONCERNS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Entire communities are keenly interested when test scores from their schools are reported and compared with scores from schools in other communities. Districts with “good” test scores are desirable, and real estate prices reflect the fact that parents want to live in those districts. This is especially true for parents of students who have disabilities. Good special education programs are a magnet for many such parents. Read the upcoming Scenario in Assessment and associated questions to think about how school district test scores may influence communities.

Often, test results are used to make high-stakes decisions that may have a direct and significant effect on the continued funding or even closing of schools and school

systems, modifying state curricula, and salary negotiations. Finally, individuals who take tests outside of the schools are also affected. We take a test to earn the privilege of a driver's license. We usually have to take tests to gain admission to college. When test results restrict access to privileges, those denied access often view the tests as undemocratic, elitist, or simply unfair.

1-2c CONCERNS OF CERTIFICATION BOARDS

Certification and licensure boards establish standards to ensure that assessors are appropriately qualified to conduct assessments. Test administration, scoring, and interpretation require different degrees of training and expertise, depending on the kind of test being administered. All states certify teachers and psychologists who work in the schools; all states require formal training, and some require competency testing. Although most teachers can readily administer or learn to administer group intelligence and achievement tests as well as classroom assessments of achievement, a person must have considerable training to score and interpret most individual intelligence and personality tests. **Competency-based assessment** refers to assessment of very specific knowledge and skills using authentic or simulated situations in which the knowledge and skill can be demonstrated. This assessment approach is being used more frequently to ensure that those administering and using tests to make important decisions truly have the necessary testing skills and knowledge. When pupils are tested, we should be able to assume that the person doing the testing has adequate training to conduct the testing correctly (that is, establish rapport, administer the test correctly, score the test, and accurately interpret the test).

The joint committee of three professional associations that developed a set of standards for test construction and use has addressed the importance of testing:

Educational and psychological testing are among the most important contributions of cognitive and behavioral sciences to our society, providing fundamental and significant sources of information about individuals and groups. Not all tests are well developed, nor are all testing practices wise or beneficial, but there is extensive evidence documenting the usefulness of well-constructed, well-interpreted tests. Well-constructed tests that are valid for their intended purposes have the potential to provide substantial benefits for test takers and test users. Their proper use can result in better decisions about individuals and programs than would result without their use and can also provide a route to broader and more equitable access to education and employment.

SCENARIO IN ASSESSMENT

MICHAEL | Businessman Sam has just been promoted and transferred to a different state. He and his wife, Virginia, and their three children are house hunting. Their son Michael is a student with autism; one of the family's primary considerations in selecting a new home is the school district's programs for students with autism.

The area where the family is moving is served by three school districts, one religious school, and one charter school. School district one has three students with autism (one who is about the same age as Michael), and those students are placed in classrooms for students with intellectual disabilities. School district two is more rural and buses all of its elementary students with autism to one classroom, where they are educated and included in activities with nondisabled peers. School district three is the largest and maintains classes for students with varying degrees of autism (i.e., both higher- and lower-functioning students) in several school buildings. The charter school has no students with disabilities. Students

with disabilities in the religious school are fully included and may receive speech, occupational, and physical therapies through school district three. Sam and Virginia contact the local autism support group to see if it has a recommendation about the school systems. The group strongly recommends school district three. Besides having an excellent special education program, it is known to provide strong education for students without disabilities. Annual state testing results show that most students in school district three, including many students with disabilities, meet grade-level expectations. Even though houses cost several thousand dollars more in school district three, Sam and Virginia purchase their new home there.

This scenario provides an example of how important test scores can be to decision making. In this case, school test scores influenced a family's decision about where to live. How have test scores been used to make important decisions that have affected your life?

The improper use of tests, on the other hand, can cause considerable harm to test takers and other parties affected by test-based decisions. (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education, 2014, p. 1).

1-3 Why Learn About Assessment in Special and Inclusive Education?

Educational professionals must assess and understand the results of assessments that they and others administer. Assessment is a critical practice that serves the purpose of matching instruction to the level of students' skills, monitoring student progress, modifying instruction, and working hard to enhance student competence. It is a critical component of teaching, and so it is necessary for teachers to have good skills in assessment and a good understanding of assessment information.

Although assessment can be a scary topic for practicing professionals as well as individuals training to become professionals, learning its different important facets helps people become less apprehensive. Educational assessments always have consequences that are important for students and their families. We can expect that good assessments lead to good decisions—decisions that facilitate a student's progress toward the desired goal (especially long term) of becoming a happy, well-adjusted, independent, productive member of society. Poor assessments can slow, stop, and sometimes reverse progress. The assessment process can also be intimidating because there is so much to know; a student of assessment can easily get lost in the details of measurement theory, legal requirements, teaching implications, and national politics.

Things were much simpler when the first edition of this book was published in 1978. The federal legislation and court cases that governed assessment were minimal. Some states had various legal protections for the assessment of students; others did not. There were fewer tests used with students in special education, and many of them were technically inadequate (that is, they lacked validity for various reasons). Psychologists decided if a student was entitled to special education, and students did not have individualized educational programs (IEPs). Back then, the major problems we addressed were how to choose a technically adequate test, how to use it appropriately, and how to interpret test scores correctly. Although the quality of published tests has increased dramatically throughout the years, there are still poor tests being used.

Things are more complex today. Federal law regulates the assessment of children for and in special education. Educators and psychologists have many more tools at their disposal—some excellent, some not so good. Educators and psychologists must make more difficult decisions than ever before. For example, the law recognizes a greater number of disabilities, and educators need to be able to distinguish important differences among them.

Measurement theory and scoring remain difficult but integral parts of assessment. Failure to understand the basic requirements for valid measurement or the precise meaning of test scores inescapably leads to faulty decision making. Through reading and contemplating the information presented in the chapters that follow, we believe you will gain valuable knowledge and skills for selecting and using assessment methods that can improve decision making in schools, particularly those that relate to meeting the needs of a diverse student population.

1-4 Important Assessment Concepts to Understand

Models, methods, and materials used for assessment are constantly evolving. In the past four decades that we have been writing and updating this book, we have seen schools engage in many different assessment practices, both good and bad. We highlight

here some foundational concepts that we believe are important to understand as you learn more about assessment, with additional information on the chapters in which these concepts are covered in greater depth. A comprehensive understanding of these concepts will help you as you seek to apply assessment knowledge in your school-based practices.

1-4a LEVEL VS. RATE OF PROGRESS

Instructional decision making can be best informed by knowing both (a) a student's *current level* of performance and (b) his or her *rate* of progress, and it is important to understand the difference between the two. Other words that are sometimes used to refer to the same concepts are status and rate of improvement. Suppose that at the end of a week of instruction, Cara correctly spelled 12 out of 20 targeted spelling words, and Callie correctly spelled 20 out of the same 20 targeted spelling words. Although Callie appears to have greater current skill in spelling the targeted set of words, the extent to which she benefited from the instruction that was provided remains unclear. Suppose that at the beginning of the week the teacher collected information to know that Cara spelled only one out of the 20 targeted words correctly and Callie spelled 18 out of the 20 targeted words correctly. Cara therefore learned how to spell at a rate of 11 words per week (i.e., $12 - 1$); Callie learned how to spell at a rate of just two words per week (i.e., $20 - 18$). Cara appears to have a much higher rate of progress, suggesting that the instruction was particularly effective for her; however, she has not yet mastered the set of words. Although Callie has mastered the targeted words, it is questionable whether the instruction was particularly effective for her—she might have learned more had she been given the opportunity. Determination of performance level can be important for making decisions about what to teach, as well as deciding whether a student has mastered a skill. But information on rate of progress is needed to know whether instruction is particularly effective. In this book, you will learn about different instruments and methods for measuring both level and rate of progress. Some tools are primarily developed and used for measuring level, others are developed to allow for measurement of both level and rate of progress. Chapters 8–11 provide more information on how performance level and rate of progress can be measured in classroom settings, and Chapter 12 explains how these are often used as a part of MTSS.

1-4b DIFFERENT DECISIONS OFTEN REQUIRE DIFFERENT DATA

Decisions made within school settings vary considerably in terms of the consequences or stakes attached. In some cases, decisions may have relatively minor implications for student learning. For instance, a high school teacher may want information to decide whether to focus more instructional time during a particular class period on the causes of the Civil War, or whether it would be better to move on to teaching about the various battles in the war. In this case, the teacher might quickly develop a very brief measure to find out whether the majority of the class knows several identified causes of the war. In other cases, a decision may have major implications for students. For example, determining whether a student has a disability and qualifies for special education services can have very important implications for the student's future. Such a decision should be informed by data that are collected carefully over time and that have strong evidence of reliability (i.e., they measure consistently) and validity (i.e., they measure what they propose to measure). Although data with strong technical characteristics (i.e., reliability and validity) are desirable, they are not always necessary. In some cases reliance on a high standard for reliability and validity may prolong decision making that needs to be made more quickly to be effective. It is therefore important to consider the stakes of the decision being made to know how technically adequate the assessment tools should be. Chapters 4, 5, and 13 provide information on technical characteristics that should be considered when deciding which assessment tools to use. The chapters within Part 2 of the book

(Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12) discuss assessment methods and tools that are typically used to make decisions about teaching and learning within the classroom for a variety of students. The chapters within Part 3 of the book (Chapters 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19) describe assessment tools that are typically used in decision making for students who may ultimately need more substantial resources than what are available in many classrooms, including those students needing special education services. Chapters 20, 21, 22, and 23 describe assessment processes that are used when making different types of decisions.

1-4c DIFFERENT METHODS MAY BE NEEDED FOR DIFFERENT STUDENTS

Test developers typically try to make their tests accessible to a wide range of individuals. However, characteristics of how the test is administered, how those being tested are expected to provide their responses, and characteristics of the norm group to whom students are compared may influence the extent to which a given test is appropriate for a particular student. For example, some tests that are intended to measure math skills are written in a way that students ultimately need to have vision and competent reading skills to understand the test items. Such a test may not accurately measure the math skills of a student who is blind or has a reading disability. Students who do not have proficiency with the English language or who are from particularly unique cultures may not have the prerequisite language and cultural knowledge to demonstrate their cognitive abilities on tests that have been developed and normed in the mainstream culture. In such cases, one must be careful to either identify and use tests that are more appropriate for students with the given characteristics, consider accommodations that might be made to allow the test to be more appropriate for the given student, or use alternative methods of assessment. Chapters 6 and 7 discuss important considerations for the assessment of two unique groups of students: those who are English language learners and those who have disabilities. Chapter 22 highlights important considerations for effectively including student with disabilities in accountability assessment programs.

1-4d DIFFERENT SKILLS OFTEN REQUIRE DIFFERENT METHODS

In Chapter 2, you will learn about the four primary methods used for collecting data on students' academic and social emotional skills: record review, interview, observation, and testing. Because testing can be done in a particularly objective manner, it is often a preferred method for collecting data on students. However, some skills that we want to measure are highly context-dependent, meaning that students may only show them under particular conditions or in particular settings. Attempts to create "tests" for these skills may therefore be difficult, so it can be helpful to rely more heavily on interviews with individuals who observe the student's use of skills in different settings, as well as on observations conducted in different settings. For example, it would be hard to develop a test of anger management skills. Authentic opportunities to collect data on such skills happen in the moment; administering a predetermined set of tasks or questions at a particular time to find out about a student's anger management skills will not likely provide useful information. Instead, one might rely more heavily on a teacher's or parent's report of the student's skills in this area, which represents their use of the skills in authentic situations. Chapters 14–19 discuss various methods and measures that are used for specific academic and social-emotional skills.

1-4e ONLY PRESENT BEHAVIOR IS OBSERVED

When students take tests we only observe what they do. We never observe what they can do. If a student spells half of the words correctly on a spelling test, we know that she spelled half of the words correctly. We do not know that she *can* only spell half of the words correctly or that she will do so in the future. Any statement about