

## **Key Assessment Terms for the Students With Disabilities Exam**

**Assessment:** An evaluation process that includes observing, collecting, recording, and interpreting information to answer questions and make legal and instructional decisions about students.

**Assessment Approach:** A term used to describe the way information is collected for making an educational decision.

**IDEA 2004:** A federal law that focuses on the education of children and youth with disabilities. IDEA mandates specific requirements relating to the assessment process that teachers and test examiners must know and understand.

**RTI:** Response to Intervention: approach to the diagnosis of Learning Disabilities that holds considerable promise. In the RTI model, a student with academic delays is given one or more research-validated interventions. The student's academic progress is monitored frequently to see if those interventions are sufficient to help the student to catch up with his or her peers. It is a tiered system, moving up the three tiers as progress is made

**IEP Team:** A multidisciplinary team consisting of the parents, school personnel, and, when possible, the student, that has the responsibility to make decisions regarding assessment procedures as defined by IDEA. This team may be known as the special services team or any other team as defined by state regulation.

**Accommodations:** Changes to the education program and assessment procedures and materials that do not substantially alter the instructional level, the content of the curriculum, or the assessment criteria.

**Modifications:** Changes or adaptations made to the educational program or assessment that alter the level, content, and or assessment criteria.

**Individualized education program (IEP):** IDEA mandates that all students with disabilities ages 3 through 21 have an individualized education program (IEP). This written plan specifies the special education and the related services that must be provided.

**Alternative assessments:** Assessments that allow students with persistent academic problems and students with severe or significant disabilities who are working toward modified or alternative achievement standards to participate in general large-scale assessments.

**Developmental delay:** A delay in on rot more of the following areas of development: physical, including fine and gross motor; cognitive; communication; social or emotional; or adaptive development. The term is used to identify infants and toddlers so that they can receive early intervention services without being labeled for a specific disability.

IDEA states that, at the discretion of an individual state, the term developmental delay may be used with children ages 3 through 9 so that young children can receive special educational services without being labeled for a specific disability category.

**IFSP:** A plan that is meant as a guide from birth to three years old. IFSP have outcomes that provide goals or changes that a parent wants their child to work towards in areas of development including eating, dressing and socialization. Another important aspect of IFSP's are services and supports needed to meet the goal of the outcome. An IFSP will be updated every six months and requires the signature of a doctor.

**Transition Service:** Services that help students move from school to work and adult life. They should reflect the student's own goals for his future. Transition Services are coordinated in a outcome oriented way to promote movement between educational facilities, employment, community participation, and independent living.

**Due Process:** When the parents of a student with disabilities and the educational agency disagree about the child's eligibility, placement, program needs or related services, either side can request a due process hearing. At the hearing, both sides present evidence by calling witnesses and submitting any reports and evaluations that support their position. An independent hearing officer, hired by the state, decides whose witnesses and documents are correct and what program is appropriate.

**Informed Consent:** Procedure to ensure that a parent has been fully informed of all information related to the proposed activity of services, understands and agrees in writing to carry out the activity for which consent is sought, may be revoked and does not apply to activity that has already occurred. Informed consent is required for evaluation, reevaluation and initial delivery of special education services.

**No Child Left Behind:** The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110), commonly known as NCLB, is a United States federal law signed on January 8, 2002 that reauthorizes a number of federal programs aiming to improve the performance of U.S primary and secondary schools by increasing the standards of accountability for states, school districts and schools, as well as providing parents more flexibility in choosing which schools their children will attend

**Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP):** NCLB requires schools to produce a "report card" stating how all children performed on district-wide tests broken down by low-income status, disability, English Language proficiency, migrant status, race, ethnicity and gender. Each state has standards regarding AYP. Schools not making AYP are labeled as "needing improvement", "needing corrective action", or "needing restructuring." This label must be made public to parents. (pg. 14)

**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):** no educational agency can release student information without written consent from the student's parents. The consent must specify which records may be released, the reasons for the release and to whom to release them. A copy of all released records should be sent to the parents as well. (pg. 15)

**Screening:** The first step in assessing students is determining if they might have a disability and referring them for further assessment. The approach depends on the age of the student. (pg. 22)

**Child Find:** Child Find helps get children under the age of 6 into the assessment process. It directs parents to screening in the community that is open to infants, toddlers and preschoolers that is free of charge. (pg. 25)

**Student Assistance Team (SAT):** The SAT is usually comprised of regular classroom teachers and special educators. This team helps those involved address questions about a child's behavior, academic work, or general discipline concerns including making accommodations to instruction or assessment.

**Referral:** A process in which questions and concerns about a student are raised and referred to the IEP team. The referral may come from a teacher, parent, or the student. Referral represents Step 2 of the assessment process.

**Determining Eligibility:** A process used to determine if a student meets the eligibility criteria for services according to federal and state definitions. Determining eligibility represents Step 3 of the assessment process.

**Program Planning:** The process of determining the student's current level of functioning and planning the instructional program. Program planning is Step 4 of the assessment process.

**Monitoring Individual Progress:** A process used to determine if the student is making progress by examining the student's work, accomplishments, and achievements. Monitoring individual progress represents Step 5 of the assessment process.

**Program Evaluation:** A process used to assess (1) the progress the student has made in the individualized education program and (2) the overall quality of the school program. Evaluating the program represents Step 6 in the assessment process.

**Assistive technology:** Term that includes assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices and the process used in selecting, locating, and using them. AT promotes greater independence for people with disabilities by enabling them to perform tasks that they were formally unable to accomplish, or had great difficulty accomplishing, by providing enhancements to or changed methods of interacting with the technology needed to accomplish such tasks.

**Assistive technology service:** Any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.

**Assessment Strategies:** Methods that instructors have traditionally used to judge classroom performance (e.g. essay and objective testing) as well as approaches that

reflect more recent attention to assessment-driven teaching-learning processes. These include student portfolios, rubrics, exams, presentations, individual and group projects, essays, questioning, etc.

**Universal Design:** An approach to the design of all products and environments to be as usable as possible by as many people as possible regardless of age, ability, or situation.

**Validity:** The extent to which a test measures what it says it measures.

**Content Validity:** The extent to which the test items reflect the content they are designed to cover.

**Norm-referenced Test:** A test that compares a student's test performance with that of similar students who have taken the same test.

**Criterion-related Validity:** The extent that test scores obtained on one test or another measure are related to scores obtained on another test or another outcome.

**Concurrent Validity:** The extent to which two different tests administered at or about the same time correlate with each other.

**Predictive Validity:** The standard for forecasting a student performance or behavior from a test score.

**Construct Validity:** The extent to which a test measures a particular construct or concept.

**Consequential Validity:** The extent to which an assessment instrument promotes the intended consequences.

**Out-of-level Testing:** Students in one grade level are assessed with tests that are designed for students in another grade level.

**Language Dominance:** An individual's preferred language.

**Language Proficiency:** An individual's preferred level of expertise in a language.

**Standardized Test:** a test in which a test manual prescribes administration, scoring and interpretation procedures that the test examiner must strictly follow.

**Standardized Sample:** a subgroup of a large group that is representative of the large group.

**Population:** the larger group from which the sample of individuals is selected and to which individual comparisons are made regarding test performance

**Norm-reference Test:** a test that compares a student's performance with that of a sample of similar students who have taken the same test.

**Criterion-Reference Test:** measures a student's performance with respect to a well defined domain such as reading or mathematics instead of comparing students to a norm group.

**Nominal Scale:** represents the lowest level of measurement. Nominal scales are naming scales where each value on the scale is a name and does not have any innate or inherent value.

**Ordinal Scale:** orders items on a continuum, for example it might order students according to class rank.

**Interval Scale:** Similar to an ordinal scale but with several advantages including the distance between items is equal allowing interval scales to be added, subtracted, multiplied or divided.

**Ratio Scale:** has all the characteristics of ordinal and interval scales and in addition has an absolute zero.

**Frequency Distribution:** organizes test scores according to how often they occur.

**Normal Curve:** most scores fall in the middle and fewer scores at the ends of the distribution, giving a symmetrical bell shaped curve.

**Skewed distribution:** When the majority of scores appear at one end of the curve. Positively skewed means a lot of low scores. Negatively skewed means a lot of high scores.

**Mean:** The average. Most commonly used measure of central tendency. Add all scores and divide by the number of scores

**Median:** The point on the scale where 50% of the scores are both above and below. Used when most scores cluster together

**Mode:** The score that occurs most frequently. There can be more than one mode.

**Standard Deviation:** Tells the degree to which various scores deviate from the mean. Useful when comparing several sets of scores.

**Raw Score:** Number of items a student answers correctly without adjustment for guessing

**Percentage Score:** Percent of test items a student answers correctly. Does not take into account the difficulty of a test

**Derived Score:** Families of scores that allow us to compare test scores.

**Developmental Score:** Age and grade equivalences. Reflect the average performance at age and grade levels.

**Interpolation:** Process of estimating the scores of students within the ages and grades of the norming sample

**Extrapolation:** Process of estimating the performance of students outside the ages and grades of the norming sample

**Developmental Quotient:** An estimate of the rate of development.

**Percentile Rank:** The point in a distribution at or below which the scores of a given percentage of students fall.

**Standard Score:** Raw scores that have been transformed so that they have the same mean and the same standard deviation.

**Deviation IQ Score:** A standard score with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15 or 16.

**Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE):** A standard score with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 21.06.

**Stanines:** A type of standard score that has a mean of 5 and a standard deviation of 2; a distribution of scores can be divided into 9 stanines.

**Basal Level:** The point below which the examiner assumes that the student could obtain all correct responses and at which the examiner begins testing.

**Ceiling Level:** The point above which the examiner assumes that the student would obtain all incorrect responses if the testing were to continue and the point at which the examiner stops testing.

**True Score:** The score an individual would obtain on a test if there were no measurement errors.

**Standard Error of Measurement (SEM):** The amount of error associated with individual test scores, test items, item samples, and test times.

**Confidence Interval:** The range within which the true score can be found; frequently called the band of error or the confidence level.

**Chronological Age:** The number of years a person has lived, used especially in psychometrics as a standard against which certain variables, such as behavior and intelligence, are measured.

**RTI:** Response to Intervention: approach to the diagnosis of Learning Disabilities that holds considerable promise. In the RTI model, a student with academic delays is given one or more research-validated interventions. The student's academic progress is monitored frequently to see if those interventions are sufficient to help the student to catch up with his or her peers. It is a tiered system, moving up the three tiers as progress is made.

**Performance based assessment:** the student should produce evidence of accomplishment of curriculum goals which can be maintained for later use as a collection of evidence to demonstrate achievement, and perhaps also the teacher's efforts to educate the child.

**Portfolio:** Portfolios are collections of student work representing a selection of performance. Portfolios in classrooms today are derived from the visual and performing arts tradition in which they serve to showcase artists' accomplishments and personally favored works. A portfolio may be a folder containing a student's best pieces and the student's evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the pieces. It may also contain one or more works-in-progress that illustrate the creation of a product, such as an essay, evolving through various stages of conception, drafting, and revision

**Authentic assessment:** includes a task for students to perform and a rubric by which their performance on the task will be evaluated based upon a rubric.

**Exhibition:** showcases a sampling of projects, writing assignments, and other work by the student

**Rubric:** is a scoring tool for subjective assessments. It is a set of criteria and standards linked to learning objectives that is used to assess a student's performance on a paper, project, essay, or other assignment. Rubrics allow for standardised evaluation according to specified criteria, making grading simpler and more transparent.

**Analytic scoring:** an approach to scoring or rating that considers various parts or aspects of the attribute or performance being assessed, for use in profiling strengths and weaknesses or in obtaining an overall summary. Scores may be recorded as a check mark for presence or absence of an attribute, marked on a numerical or descriptive rating scale, or put in the form of a brief comment

**Holistic scoring:** the assignment of a single score that reflects an overall impression of performance on a measure. Scores are defined by prescribed descriptors of levels of performance, or scoring rubrics

**Benchmarks:** Standard in education which the students should reach by a given point in the year. Example, by the winter of third grade, students should be able to add and subtract two digit by two digit numbers.

**Anchor papers:** concrete examples that illustrate the intent of the scoring guides. They serve as a reference point or "anchor" to ensure that scorers interpret and apply the scoring guides consistently.

**Consequential validity:** an appraisal of the value implications of score interpretation as a basis for action as well as the actual and potential consequences of test use, especially in regard to sources of invalidity related to issues of bias, fairness, and distributive justice. It measures how valid a test is in regards to biases within the test itself.

**Observation:** Systematic process of gathering information by looking at a student and his or her environment

**Anecdotal Record:** Brief narrative description of an event that the observer thought was important. It is recorded after the event has occurred

**Running Record:** Description of events written as they occur (This is different than the reading record, this is a running record of behavior)

**Event Recording:** An observer records a behavior each time it occurs in a given period

**Interval recording:** A recoding of specific events or behaviors during a pre-specified time interval.

**Category recording:** A system of recording behaviors by discrete groupings.

**Duration Recording:** A measure of the length of time a specific event or behavior persists. Effective because the length of time is more useful than just whether or not it occurred. You must set precise definitions for the beginning and end.

**Percentage Duration Rate:** Percentage of observation time that the behavior or event occurs. Useful for creating IEP goals.

**Intensity recording:** A measure of the degree of a behavior defined as low, medium, or high. Subjective and unreliable. Should begin by differentiating the levels.

**Latency Recording:** A measure of the amount of time between a behavior or event (or even a request to begin the behavior) and the beginning of the pre-specified or target behavior. Can be difficult to measure. Carefully define the stimulus behavior, beginning of target behavior, and the end of target behavior.

**Rating Scale:** A measure that helps answer questions about the learning environment or about one or more students.

**Descriptors:** Written descriptions used in a rating scale or in a rubric to explain and provide more detail about each of the levels of achievement.

**Errors of omission-**leaving out information that is helpful or important to understanding a student better.

**Errors of commission-** including information that did not actually occur. This happens when an observer must rely on memory rather than notes to record information at a later time.

**Errors of transmission-** when behaviors are recorded in a improper sequence. Recording the time you observed a particular behavior can reduce this type of error.

**Observer drift-** when the observer shifts away from the original objectives of the observation. This can be avoided by periodically checking the established purpose and criteria of the observation.

**Conferencing-** A process conducted by 2 or more individuals for the purpose of sharing information, concerns and ideas regarding common issues.

**Collaborating-** A process that involves a commitment to work cooperatively with others to address common interests and issues.

**Hypothesis generation-** A process used in interpreting the results of testing that provides an explanation of a students performance and behavior based on the collected assessment data.

**Examiner bias-** Personal or professional perspectives that can interfere with the interpretation of assessment results.

**Predetermined Expectation:** Bias held by an examiner or educator that interferes with an accurate assessment.

**Reactivity:** The adjustments that individuals make in behaviors during an observation.

**Checklist:** A list of characteristics or behaviors arranged in a consistent manner that allows the evaluator to record the presence or absence of individual characteristics, events, or behaviors.

**Questionnaire:** A set of questions designed to gather information.

**Achievement Testing:** Required assessments that measure students on what they know and are able to do in mathematics, reading, science, social studies and writing, with administration to students

**Curriculum Based Assessment:** measurement that uses direct observation and recording of a student's performance in the local curriculum as a basis for gathering information to make instructional decisions

**Criterion referenced test:** A test in which questions are written according to specific predetermined criteria. A student knows what your standards are for passing and only competes against him or herself while completing the test.

**Probe:** asking the same student a series of questions, when his or her initial response is inadequate. The procedure is used when the student is suspected of possessing the necessary background knowledge for handling the question, but does not produce the full or correct answer.

**Error analysis:** Finding one common or multiple common errors on an assessment and re-teaching the topic using different methods of instruction in order to aide in students' understanding

**Literacy:** reading and writing at a level adequate for communication, or at a level that lets one understand and communicate ideas in a literate society, so as to take part in that society.

**Communicate:** To give or interchange thoughts, feelings, information, or the like, by writing, speaking, etc. Communication involves active listening and responding to both verbal and non-verbal communication.

**Speech:** The production of oral language for the purpose of expression.

**Shaping:** A term that refers to reinforcing successive approximations of the target or goal behavior. In reference to the development of language, the verbal response is reinforced as the sound or word being produced more and more closely approximates the sound or word in language.

**Expansion:** A restatement of the student's verbal language that adds words or more complex phrases.

**Speech Disorder:** A speech disorder refers to a difficulty in articulation, such as the way words are pronounced; the fluency of speech, including rate and rhythm; and the pitch, volume, and quality of the voice.

**Language Disorder:** A difficulty or inability in decoding or encoding the set of symbols used in language or an inability to effectively use inner language.

**Literacy** – being able to read, write, think and communicate. Emphasized in the early grades. Reading and writing are reciprocal and linked.

**Phonemic Awareness** – the skill of recognizing, separating, blending and manipulating phonemes (smallest unit of sound that has meaning). Effective in improving reading

**Phonics** – knowing how specific spoken sounds relate to particular written letters.

**Reading Fluency** – reading letters, sounds, words and text passages quickly, automatically, accurately and smoothly. Allows readers to understand and interpret what is read.

**Syntax** – the flow of language and knowledge of rules for connecting words into meaningful sentences and simple sentences into complex ones.

**Reading Comprehension** – being able to obtain meaning from a text, understand what is read, connect information within the context of a text and relate what is being read to what is already known. Students are able to read for knowledge and information.

**Language** – the use of symbols to communicate thoughts, feelings, ideas and information.

**Graphemes:** The written equivalent of a phoneme.

**Morphology:** The study of the single units of letters that represent a unit of meaning.

**Morpheme:** The single unit of letters that comprise a unit of meaning. A morpheme may be a whole word, prefix, or a suffix.

**Mean Length of Utterance (MLU):** The average number of individual units of meaning that the student expresses using phrases or sentences during the observation period. MLU can be used to assess amount of spoken language.

**Semantics:** The study of word meanings.

**Syntax:** A system of rules that dictates how words are combined into meaningful phrases and sentences.

**Pragmatics-** The study of the use of language in social situations.

**Language Probe-** A diagnostic technique which instruction is modified to elicit specific information about a students receptive or expressive language.

**Language Samples-** A recording of a students oral language that yields information regarding vocabulary, syntax, semantics, articulation and the ability to use language in functional ways.

**AAC-Augmentative or Alternate Communication System-** A method or device used by a person with a communication disability in order to communicate.

**Stimulus:** Something external that influences an activity. The stimulus can be either positive or negative

**Positive Reinforcer:** An increase in the likelihood of a behavior due to the addition of a reinforcer after a behavior. This could be a positive comment after something good has been done or an external reward.

**Negative Reinforcer:** An increase in the likelihood of a behavior when the consequence is the removal of an aversive stimulus. This usually refers to negative comments to a student or yelling.

**Antecedents:** A word, phrase, or clause referred to by another expression which follows it. For example, in the following construction, the boy is the antecedent of who. The boy who pitched the game is worn out.

**Consequences:** What happens following the act of something being done. For example, the consequence for not doing homework is that the student will lose recess. The consequence is the effect.

**Task Analysis:** Task analysis is used most often with those who have problems mastering complex behaviors (e.g., individuals with autism, people who are mentally retarded or mentally ill, young children). It is for instructional design is a process of analyzing and articulating the kind of learning that you expect the learners to know how to perform

**Target behavior:** A behavior that is acquired or eliminated by manipulating the antecedents and consequences.

**Critical Period:** An interval of time in which the child is most responsive. If the individual has little or no opportunity to develop the skill or behavior during the period, the individual may have difficulty doing so later.

**Functional Behavioral Assessment:** A systematic process of gathering information that identifies the cause of and interventions for addressing problem behaviors.

**Scatter Plot:** A type of interval recording for that the observer used to record single behaviors or a series of behaviors during the observation period.

**Triangulation:** Conclusions about a student's performance that are based on multiple sources of information.

**Evaluation:** the process of establishing a value judgment based in the collection of actual data.

**Stake Holders-** Individuals who are interested in the results of an evaluation.

**Internal Evaluator**- A person such as a teacher or an administrator employed by the school who is trained in research design measurement and evaluation and who conducts and completes an evaluation.

**External Evaluator**- a person with a background in research design, measurement and evaluation who is hired specifically for the purpose of completing an evaluation.

**Formative Evaluation**- an evaluation that is on going during the period of program implementation.

**Summative Evaluation**- an evaluation that is completed at the end of a cycle or program year.

**Quantitative Data**- Information that can be a number or a score.

**Qualitative data**- Information that is descriptive rather than numeric.

**Focus groups**- Small gatherings of individuals from similar constituencies or from different backgrounds who respond to specific questions or provide feedback to the group facilitator. Focus groups can be used to evaluate the overall effectiveness of a school program.

**Family**- A unit of two or more individuals who may or may not be related but who have extended commitments to each other.

**Family-centered philosophy**- An approach to working with families that emphasizes the importance of enabling family members to mobilize their own resources in order to promote child and family functioning.

**Early childhood team**- A team that consists of the parents, the family service coordinator, and the representatives of various disciplines who assess and implement early intervention services. The team makes decisions regarding eligibility and services for children birth through age 2 and, in some states, for children ages 3 to 5.

**Developmental domains**- Areas associated with the young child's general development. These areas include; physical, cognitive, communication, social, emotional, and adaptive development.

**Young children**- Children ages birth through age 8.

**False Negative**: The type of error that is made when a student is not referred by the screening but should have been.

**False Positive**: The type of error that is made when a student is referred by the screening but should not have been.

**Transition:** Moving from one system of services to another.

**Transition services:** A coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome oriented process that promotes movement from school to post school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation.

**Curriculum based vocational assessment:** A type of curriculum based assessment used in planning and developing vocational educational opportunities for students with disabilities.

**Language Disorder:** this refers to difficulty or inability in decoding or encoding the set of symbols use din language or an inability to effectively use inner language.

**Curriculum- based measurement:** the teacher selects a brief story starter or topic sentence and asks the student to write it out in three minutes. The teacher then scores writing on 1) number of words written correctly, 2) words spelled correctly, 3) number of letter written correctly or 4) number of correct word sequences.

**Expressive language:** The ability to use language to communicate information, thoughts, feelings and ideas.

**Receptive language:** a students understanding of spoken language such as word meaning.

**Inner language:** language used during thinking, planning, and other mental processes.

**Phonemes:** the smallest unit of sound that has meaning in a language.