

Education of Exceptional Students: Core Content Knowledge (0353)

Test at a Glance

Test Name	Education of Exceptional Students: Core Content Knowledge		
Test Code	0353		
Time	1 hour		
Number of Questions	60		
Format	Multiple-choice questions		
	Content Categories	Approximate Number of Questions	Approximate Percentage of Examination
	I. Understanding Exceptionalities	15-18	25-30%
	II. Legal and Societal Issues	9-12	15-20%
	III. Delivery of Services to Students with Disabilities	30-36	50-60%

About this test

The Education of Exceptional Students: Core Content Knowledge test is designed for examinees who plan to teach in a special education program at any grade level from preschool through grade 12. The 60 multiple-choice questions assess the examinee's knowledge of the basic principles of special education, focusing on three major content areas: Understanding Exceptionalities, Legal and Societal Issues, and Delivery of Services to Students with Disabilities. Questions may address disabilities of any degree varying from mild to profound, but extensive knowledge of individual specialty areas, such as education of students with low vision or hearing loss, is not required.

Education of Exceptional Students: Core Content Knowledge (0353)

Topics Covered

Descriptions of each of the content areas covered by the test are provided below. For each content area, the approximate percentage of examination questions pertaining to that area is shown. Not every sub-topic in a given content area appears on any one form of the test, but every form of the test contains questions on a broad range of sub-topics.

Familiarity with the definitions set forth in IDEA '97 (the 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) is assumed.

I. Understanding Exceptionalities (25-30%)

- Human development and behavior as related to students with disabilities, including
 - Social and emotional development and behavior
 - language development and behavior
 - cognition
 - physical development, including motor and sensory

- Characteristics of students with disabilities, including the influence of
 - cognitive factors
 - affective and social-adaptive factors, including cultural, linguistic, gender, and socioeconomic factors
 - genetic, medical, motor, sensory, and chronological-age factors
- Basic concepts in special education, including
 - definitions of all major categories and specific disabilities, including attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), as well as the incidence and prevalence of various types of disabilities
 - the causation and prevention of disability
 - the nature of behaviors, including frequency, duration, intensity, and degrees of severity
 - the classification of students with disabilities (classifications as represented in the 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education

- Act [IDEA '97]; labeling of students; ADHD; the implications of the classification process for the persons classified, etc.)
- the influence of level of severity and presence of multiple exceptionalities on students with disabilities
- The influence of (an) exceptional condition(s) throughout an individual's life span

II. Legal and Societal Issues (15%-20%)

- Federal laws and legal issues related to special education, including
 - Public Law 94-142
 - Public Law 105-17 (IDEA '97)
 - Section 504
 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
 - Important legal issues, such as those raised by the following cases: Rowley re: program appropriateness, Tatro re: related services, Honig re: discipline, Oberti re: inclusion

- The school's connections with the families, prospective and actual employers, and communities of students with disabilities, for example
 - teacher advocacy for students and families, developing student self-advocacy
 - parent partnerships and roles
 - public attitudes toward individuals with disabilities
 - cultural and community influences on public attitudes toward individuals with disabilities
 - interagency agreements
 - cooperative nature of the transition planning process
- Historical movements/trends affecting the connections between special education and the larger society, for example
 - deinstitutionalization and community-based placements
 - inclusion
 - application of technology
 - transition
 - advocacy
 - accountability and meeting educational standards

III. Delivery of Services to Students with Disabilities (50%-60%)

- Background knowledge, including
 - conceptual approaches underlying service delivery to students with disabilities, including cognitive, constructivist, psychodynamic, behavioral, sociological, ecological, therapeutic (speech/language, physical, and occupational and medical approaches
 - placement and program issues such as early intervention; least restrictive environment; inclusion; role of individualized education program (IEP) team; due process guidelines; categorical, non-categorical, and cross-categorical programs; continuum of educational and related services; related services and their integration into the classroom, including roles of other professionals; accommodations, including access to assistive technology; transition of students into and

- within special education placements; community-based training; post-school transitions
- integrating best practices from multidisciplinary research and professional literature into the educational setting
- Curriculum and instruction and their implementation across the continuum of educational placements, including
 - the individualized family service plan (IFSP)/ individualized education program (IEP) process
 - instructional development and implementation, for example: instructional activities, curricular materials and resources, working with classroom and support personnel, tutoring options
 - teaching strategies and methods, for example: modification of materials and equipment, learning centers, facilitated groups, study skills groups, self-management, cooperative learning, diagnostic-prescriptive

Education of Exceptional Students: Core Content Knowledge (0353)

method, modeling, skill drill, guided practice, concept generalization, learning strategy instruction, and Direct Instruction

- instructional format and components, for example: small and large group instruction, facilitated group strategies, functional academics, general academics with focus on special education, ESL and limited English proficiency, language and literacy acquisition, self-care and daily living skills, pre-vocational and vocational skills
- career development and transition issues as related to curriculum design and implementation for students with disabilities according to the criteria of ultimate functioning
- technology for teaching and learning in special education settings, for example: integrating assistive

technology into the classroom; computer-assisted instruction; augmentative and alternative communication; adaptive access for microcomputers; positioning and power mobility for students with physical disabilities; accessing and using information technology; use of productivity tools; technology for sensory disabilities; and voice-activated, speech-synthesis, speech-recognition, and word-prediction software

- Assessment, including
 - use of assessment for screening, diagnosis, placement, and the making of instructional decisions, for example: how to select and conduct nondiscriminatory and appropriate assessments; how to interpret standardized and specialized assessment results; how to effectively use evaluation results in individualized family service plan (IFSP)/individualized

education program (IEP) development; how to prepare written reports and communicate findings

- procedures and test materials, both formal and informal, typically used for pre-referral, screening, referral, classification, placement, and ongoing program monitoring
- how to select, construct, conduct, and modify nondiscriminatory, developmentally and chronologically age-appropriate informal assessments, including teacher-made tests, curriculum-based assessment, and alternatives to norm-referenced testing (including observations, anecdotal records, error analysis, miscue analysis, self-evaluation questionnaires and interviews, journals and learning logs, portfolio assessment)

- Structuring and managing the learning environment, including
 - structuring the learning environment, for example: the physical-social environment for learning (expectations, rules, consequences, consistency, attitudes, lighting, acoustic characteristics, seating, access, safety provisions, and strategies for positive interactions); transitions between lessons and activities; grouping of students; integration of related services (occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language therapy)
 - classroom management techniques, for example: behavioral analysis (identification and definition of antecedents, target behavior, and consequent events); behavioral interventions; functional analysis; data-gathering procedures (such as anecdotal data, frequency methods, and interval methods); self-management strategies and reinforcement; cognitive-behavioral interventions; social skills training
 - ethical considerations inherent in behavior management
- Professional roles, including
 - specific roles and responsibilities of teachers, for example: teacher as a collaborator with other teachers, teacher educators, parents, community groups, and outside agencies; teacher as a multidisciplinary team member; maintaining effective and efficient documentation; selecting appropriate environments and services for students; critical evaluation and use of professional literature and organizations; reflecting on one's own teaching; teacher's role in a variety of teaching settings (self-contained classroom, resource room, itinerant, co-teacher in inclusion setting, etc.); and maintaining student confidentiality
 - influence of teacher attitudes, values and behaviors on the learning of exceptional students
 - communicating with parents, guardians and appropriate community collaborators, for example: directing parents and guardians to parent-educators or to other groups and resources; writing reports directly to parents; meeting with parents to discuss student concerns, progress, and IEP's; encouraging parent participation; reciprocal communication and training with other service providers

The sample questions that follow illustrate the kinds of questions in the test. They are not, however, representative of the entire scope of the test in either content or difficulty. Answers with explanations follow the questions.

Directions: Each of the questions or incomplete statements below is followed by four suggested answers or completions. Select the one that is best in each case.

Note: In the sample questions and answers, the 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act will be referred to as IDEA '97. An individualized education program will be referred to as an IEP.

1. Which of the following is an accurate statement about what IDEA '97 requires for any IEP?
 - (A) It must include a multiyear outline of instructional objectives.
 - (B) It must include a section on assistive devices, regardless of the nature or degree of the student's disability.
 - (C) It must be in effect before special education services or related services are provided.
 - (D) It must not be made available to any school personnel except special education teachers.
2. Michael, a high school student with a learning disability, receives resource-room instruction in English. Michael's parents have requested a conference with the resource-room teacher two months after the start of the school year to discuss his progress in writing. Which of the following would be the most appropriate item for the teacher's agenda for this meeting?
 - (A) Ask the parents to compare Michael's written work with that of another student.
 - (B) Ask the parents to propose new instructional objectives for the written-expression section of Michael's IEP.
 - (C) Offer a comparison of Michael's recent grades on writing assignments with his achievement-test scores from the previous year.
 - (D) Show the parents a folder of Michael's written work, and discuss apparent strengths and weaknesses.
3. As an intervention, response cost is best suited for which of the following purposes?
 - (A) Improving students' understanding of directions
 - (B) Increasing the speed of performance in mathematics
 - (C) Decreasing the incidence of angry outbursts
 - (D) Decreasing excessive competitiveness among students
4. Which of the following is a nondegenerative disorder that affects motor function as a result of brain injury that occurred before, during, or shortly after birth?
 - (A) Multiple sclerosis
 - (B) Cerebral palsy
 - (C) Muscular dystrophy
 - (D) Cystic fibrosis
5. Under the provisions of IDEA '97, an individualized family service plan (IFSP) for a two-year-old child will most probably include
 - (A) a budget for early-intervention services
 - (B) plans for making the transition into preschool
 - (C) techniques for the family to use in introducing academic subjects
 - (D) a recommendation of counseling for the child's siblings
6. In inclusion settings, the most appropriate role for the special education teacher is to
 - (A) co-teach with the general education teacher
 - (B) serve as an instructional assistant to the general education teacher
 - (C) observe the general education teacher at regular intervals and write formal evaluations of the teacher for the principal
 - (D) manage the behavior of the students receiving special education while the general education teacher presents academic content

7. Which of the following statements best defines the ecological perspective on emotional and behavioral disorders?
- (A) Poisons in the physical environment cause emotional and behavioral disorders.
 - (B) Emotional and behavioral disorders involve interactions between the child and the child's social environment.
 - (C) Children with emotional and behavioral disorders need exposure to an ever-broadening social environment.
 - (D) Inclusion settings are less beneficial for students with emotional and behavioral disorders than for students with other types of disabilities.
8. School officials have decided to initiate a preschool screening program to determine which children among a group of four year olds are in need of further assessment. Of the following types of disabilities, which is typically most difficult to identify at this age level?
- (A) Learning disability
 - (B) Autism
 - (C) Low vision
 - (D) Moderate mental retardation
9. Which of the following is the basic rationale for using task analysis in instructing students with disabilities?
- (A) Instruction is delivered in steps that are easily achievable and that promote student success.
 - (B) Students can eventually learn to analyze assigned tasks themselves.
 - (C) Students learn classification skills by identifying similar aspects of different kinds of tasks.
 - (D) Instruction can be delivered effectively to many students at once without need for individualization.
10. Mary is a seventh-grade student who has a learning disability. She attends a large school that groups students by demonstrated ability. Her mathematics achievement score indicates that she has a stanine of 9. Which of the following mathematics classes would most probably be appropriate for Mary?
- (A) Remedial mathematics class
 - (B) Functional mathematics class
 - (C) Standard mathematics class
 - (D) Advanced mathematics class
11. Mustafa is a 5-year-old who has been assessed and found to have a mild expressive language delay. His hearing is normal, and his functioning in all areas other than expressive language is age appropriate. The placement that would be most appropriate for Mustafa is probably
- (A) a self-contained special education class with speech and language services
 - (B) part-time placement in a resource room for mathematics and reading
 - (C) full-time general education placement with speech and language services
 - (D) full-time general education placement with mathematics and reading support
- Directions: The question below differs from the preceding questions in that it contains the word NOT. So that you understand fully the basis that is to be used in selecting the answer, be sure to read the question carefully.
12. IDEA '97 does NOT include specific provisions for students who have been classified as having
- (A) autism
 - (B) language impairments
 - (C) multiple disabilities
 - (D) gifts and talents

Education of Exceptional Students: Core Content Knowledge (0353)

Answers

1. The correct answer is (C). According to IDEA '97, an IEP must be in effect before special education and related services are provided to an eligible student. None of the other choices is required. The objectives in an IEP are ordinarily for a single year, so (A) is not correct. (B) is not the correct answer because what IDEA '97 requires is that an IEP include a statement of the services and aids to be provided to the child. For some students with disabilities, this will include assistive devices; but many students with disabilities do not require such devices. Although special education teachers certainly have access to their students' IEP's, IDEA '97 requires that regular education teachers and other service providers who are responsible for implementing a student's IEP have access to it as well; so (D) is not the correct answer.

2. The correct answer is (D). Of the choices given, discussing examples of Michael's work best addresses the purpose of the meeting. Asking parents to compare their child's work with that of another student, as in option (A), is not appropriate. (B) is not correct because this is not an IEP meeting, and because, while the parents have input into their child's IEP, it is not appropriate for the teacher to ask parents to propose objectives. (C) is not correct because the comparison it suggests is unlikely to be informative.

3. The correct answer is (C). Response cost needs to be tied to the occurrence of a specific, observable behavior. Only (C) meets this criterion.

4. The correct answer is (B). None of the other conditions occurs as a result of brain injury.

5. IDEA '97 requires that an IFSP include plans for the transition to preschool, so (B) is the best answer. IFSP's do not include budgets, so (A) is not the correct answer. The techniques and recommendation cited in choices (C) and (D) are optional in an IFSP, but, unlike the transition plan mentioned in (B), they are not required by IDEA '97.

6. The correct answer is (A). In inclusion settings, an appropriate role for the special education teacher is as a co-teacher with the general education teacher. The special education teacher should not be the assistant to the general education teacher, so (B) is not correct. While the special education teacher may observe the general education teacher and offer recommendations on working with classified students, this is done in the role of collaborating professional, not in the role of evaluator; so (C) is not correct. (D) is not correct because, although the special education teacher may have primary responsibility for behavior management with certain special education students, the teachers should share responsibility for both behavior management and academic content.

7. (B) is the correct answer. The ecological perspective emphasizes the importance of interactions between the child and the child's environment in emotional and behavioral disorders. (A) is not correct; the ecological perspective on emotional and behavioral disorders does not refer to the influence of toxins in the physical environment. Neither (C) nor (D) defines this perspective.

8. (A) is the correct answer. Many learning disabilities cannot be diagnosed until the child enters school and must address the demands of academic tasks. (B) is not correct because the behavioral manifestations of autism are apparent by age 4; in fact, the definition of autism specifies appearance of symptoms before age 3. (C) is not correct because low vision can generally be detected by screening tests by age 4. (D) is not correct because the overall developmental delay of moderate mental retardation is usually diagnosable by age 4.

9. (A) is the correct answer. It provides two key justifications for the use of task analysis. (B) is incorrect because, although the skill it describes is a possible benefit of using task analysis, it is not the basic rationale for the use of task analysis. (C) is not correct because the learning of classification skills is not a primary objective of task analysis. (D) is not correct because individualization of instruction is always important in instructing students with disabilities.

10. The correct answer is (D) because Mary's achievement score indicates high mathematical ability; 9 is the highest possible stanine score. On the basis of the information presented, the most appropriate placement is the advanced class. None of the other choices is appropriate to her high mathematical ability. Despite her learning disabilities, it is entirely possible that she could, perhaps with support, undertake an advanced class in an area of strength.

11. The best answer is (C). Since Mustafa's functioning is age appropriate in most respects, it is probable that he could work at the level of the class in a general education setting as long as he is provided with appropriate support services to address his expressive language deficit. There is no clear justification for a full-time special education setting, as in choice (A), as the initial placement for a young child with a very specific expressive language delay and no other disability. There is no evidence that Mustafa needs support for either mathematics or reading, so (B) and (D) are not correct.

12. The correct answer is (D). Although other special education legislation addresses the needs of students who are classified as having gifts and talents, IDEA '97 pertains specifically to children with disabilities, not to those whose classification for special education services is based solely on their gifts and talents.