Introduction

The purpose of this book is to evidence through explanation and ensuing examples that IEP instruction and assessment for students with mild disabilities can transcend every level in the cognitive domain in every subject matter area, as well as in the daily living skills and employability training areas. Moreover, this vertical progression is highly relevant to educators because it illustrates that there is no reason to confine such instruction and assessment to lower-level thought processes. Nevertheless, the purpose of the book is not to articulate the unified development of IEP instruction per se, but rather to explain and exemplify the design and assessment of IEP instruction for students with mild disabilities throughout the entire cognitive domain in the four major content areas and in the areas of daily living skills and employability training. As a result, this book will provide educators with the expertise to design and assess IEP instruction for students with mild disabilities that will equip them to achieve their full potential.

This is the third book of a trilogy preceded by Badgett and Christmann’s Designing Elementary Instruction and Assessment: Using the Cognitive Domain , and Designing Middle and High School Instruction and Assessment: Using the Cognitive Domain . This book, Designing and Assessing IEP Instruction and Assessment for Students with Mild Disabilities , was written in response to an extensive but informal survey disclosing a broad latitude of enthusiasts for such a book. These enthusiasts include special education and inclusionary teachers, undergraduate and graduate professors of education, and public school administrators, as well as parents of children with IEPs who are interested in their children’s engaging in higher-order thinking skills in the major content areas and in the daily living skills and employability training areas. A secondary group of enthusiasts is former students with IEPs, one of whom recently mentioned that he felt cheated because his IEPs were “dumbed down.”

The following annotated table of contents presents a succinct synopsis of each chapter.

Chapter 1, Deconstructing the Standards, provides an easy-to-follow, general-to-specific model that modifies national and CEC Standards, selects long-term examples, and then offers short-term examples that are commensurate with the
original standards. This process is demonstrated in the four major content areas, as well as in the areas of daily living skills and employability training.

Chapter 2, Writing Hierarchical Long-Term and Short-Term IEP Objectives, does not articulate the unified process of IEP development, but instead employs precise examples and insuring explanations to portray how measurable IEP objectives for students with mild disabilities can serve as conduits for simple-to-complex thought processes in each of the four major content areas, as well as in daily living skills and employability training curricula for these students.

Chapter 3, Writing True-False and Completion Items and Matching Exercises, presents the strengths and weaknesses of each item, in addition to the do’s and don’ts of their construction. Moreover, via commensurate examples and accompanying explanations, these three tests are shown to be effective tools of measurement across the IEP major content, daily living skills, and employability training curricula for students with mild disabilities.

Chapter 4, Writing Multiple-Choice Items, highlights the power and versatility of this test measuring the different levels of convergent thinking for students with mild disabilities. (By convergent thinking, we mean thinking that leads to conventionally accepted best outcomes.) Hence, multiple-choice items are suitable for measuring performance at the Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, and Analysis levels of the cognitive domain within the four major content areas, and also the daily living skills and employability training areas for students with mild disabilities.

Chapter 5, Writing Short-Answer and Essay Items, thoroughly explains the strengths and weaknesses of these two items, along with their value as instruments of measurement across the entire curriculum for students with mild disabilities. In this explanation, the chapter also clarifies some of the misconceptions about these terms.

Chapter 6, Performance-Based Assessment, exemplifies how this type of assessment is solely capable of measuring certain areas of pupil performance that exceed the capabilities of paper-and-pencil tests. However, the chapter also points out the weaknesses of performance-based assessment. Nevertheless, the chapter categorizes the different types of performance-based assessment, scoring methods, and its adaptability to the major content, daily living skills, and employability training areas for students with mild disabilities.

Chapter 7, Portfolios, explains the traditional types of portfolio entries, and then adds how to categorize student entries according to cognitive levels (Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation). Such categorization not only illuminates student strengths and weaknesses, which enhances teaching strategies, but also demonstrates how this is a valuable asset in both student and parent conferences.

At the beginning of each chapter, we furnish you with easy-to-follow diagrams that show where we are, where we have been, and where we are going. To provide you with firsthand involvement with our method, each chapter ends with a section called Professional Development Activities. These activities further your expertise in the design of your personal instruction and assessment practices. They can also be a part of virtually any in-service session.

Many thanks to Marie Ellis, our research associate, for the warmth, competence, and patience she displayed throughout the entire writing and assemblage of this book. You're much appreciated, Marie!