# Special Education: Core Knowledge and Mild to Moderate Applications (0543/5543)

## Test at a Glance

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<th>Test Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Test Code</td>
<td>0543 5543</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>2 hours 2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Questions</td>
<td>90 multiple-choice questions; 3 integrated constructed-response questions</td>
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<td>Format</td>
<td>Multiple choice: 75% of total score Integrated constructed response: 25% of total score</td>
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### Content Categories

| I. Development and Characteristics of Learners | 17 | 14% |
| II. Planning and the Learning Environment | 20 | 17% |
| III. Instruction | 20 | 17% |
| IV. Assessment | 17 | 14% |
| V. Foundations and Professional Responsibilities | 16 | 13% |
| VI. Integrated Constructed Response Questions | 3 | 25% |

## About This Test

The Special Education: Core Knowledge and Mild to Moderate Applications test is designed for examinees who plan to teach students with mild to moderate disabilities at any grade level from preschool through grade 12. Its focus is on five major content areas: Development and Characteristics of Learners, Planning and the Learning Environment, Instruction, Assessment, and Foundations and Professional Responsibilities. The 90 multiple-choice questions assess the knowledge and understanding of principles and practices related to special education and mild to moderate applications. The three constructed-response questions are integrated ones that assess an examinee’s knowledge of students with mild to moderate disabilities as related to instruction and assessment, learning environment and classroom management, and collaboration. Some of the questions on this test may not count toward your score.
Topics Covered
A summary of the topics covered in each category is provided below.

I. Development and Characteristics of Learners (Approximately 14%)
   • Human development and behavior
   • Theoretical approaches to student learning and motivation
   • Basic characteristics and defining factors for each of the major disability categories
   • Impact of disabilities on individuals, families, and society across the life span
   • Impact of language, cultural, and gender differences on the identification process
   • Co-occurring conditions
   • How family systems contribute to the development of individuals with disabilities
   • Environmental and societal influences on student development and achievement

II. Planning and the Learning Environment (Approximately 17%)
   • Characteristics of good lesson plans
   • Basic elements of effective lesson plans
   • Learning objectives that are measurable and appropriately challenging
   • Means of providing access to the curriculum
   • Organizing the learning environment
   • Understands how to manage student behavior
   • Design and maintenance of a safe and supportive classroom environment that promotes student achievement

III. Instruction (Approximately 17%)
   • Instructional strategies/techniques that are appropriate, considering students’ ages and abilities
   • Instructional strategies for ensuring individual academic success in one-to-one, small group, and large group settings
   • Instructional strategies that facilitate maintenance and generalization of concepts
   • Selection and implementation of research-based interventions for individual students
   • Selection and implementation of supplementary and/or functional curriculum
   • Options for assistive technology
   • Instructional strategies/techniques that support transition goals
   • Preventive strategies and intervention strategies for at-risk learners

IV. Assessment (Approximately 14%)
   • Evidence-based assessments that are effective and appropriate
   • Defines and uses various assessments
   • Interprets assessment results
   • Understands and uses the results of assessments

V. Foundations and Professional Responsibilities (Approximately 13%)
   • Federal definitions
   • Federal requirements for the pre-referral, referral, and identification
   • Federal safeguards of the rights of stakeholders
   • Components of a legally defensible individualized education program
   • Major legislation
   • Roles and responsibilities of the special education teacher
   • Roles and responsibilities of other professionals who deliver special education services
   • Strengths and limitations of various collaborative approaches
   • Communication with stakeholders
   • Potential bias issues that may impact teaching and interactions with students and their families

VI. Integrated Constructed Response Questions (25%)
   • Instruction and Assessment
   • Learning environment and classroom management
   • Collaboration
This test is available via paper delivery or computer delivery; other than the delivery method, there is no difference between the tests. The test content is the same for both test codes.

To illustrate what the computer-delivered test looks like, the following sample question shows an actual screen used in a computer-delivered test.

Here is the same sample question as it would appear on a paper-delivered test:

Which of the following is the capital of the United States?

(A) New York, NY  
(B) Washington, DC  
(C) Chicago, IL  
(D) Los Angeles, CA

For the purposes of this guide, sample questions are provided as they would appear in a paper-delivered test.
Sample Test Questions

The sample questions that follow illustrate the kinds of questions on 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 statements below is followed by four suggested answers or completions. Select the one that is best in each case.

Note: In this test, the following special education terminology will appear:

• Individualized Education Program may be referred to as an IEP;
• Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder may be referred to as ADHD;
• The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act may be referred to as IDEA;
• A multidisciplinary team or Child Study Team may be referred to as an IEP team;
• A teacher assistant, teacher aide, or paraeducator may be referred to as a paraprofessional;
• The No Child Left Behind Act may be referred to as NCLB;
• A biological parent, legal guardian, surrogate, natural, adoptive, or foster parent may be referred to as a parent.

1. Sharmaine is a second-grade student who has been found eligible for special education under the classification of intellectual disability. She receives daily mathematics instruction in a resource room. Her special education teacher wants to introduce Sharmaine to the addition of single digit numbers. Which of the following strategies would be the best activity to use?

   (A) Make a ten
   (B) Skip counting
   (C) Counting backward
   (D) Front-end addition

2. The least restrictive environment (LRE), as defined in IDEA, requires that students with a disability be

   (A) educated with nondisabled peers only for elective courses
   (B) educated with nondisabled peers to the greatest extent possible
   (C) educated in a special school so that there is no interaction with nondisabled peers
   (D) educated with the most assistance, whether or not it be in the same environment as with nondisabled peers

3. Toni is a seventh-grade student classified with a specific learning disability (SLD). Her science teacher states that she is an active participant in class, completes homework on time, but her reading comprehension is below grade level. A chapter test is planned for next week. Which of the following assessment accommodations would be most appropriate for Toni’s individualized education program (IEP)?

   (A) Allowing the use of a dictionary to check spelling
   (B) Reading the test aloud to her
   (C) Administering the test to her in a separate room
   (D) Providing her frequent breaks during testing

4. Trish is a sixth-grade student who is diagnosed with autism. She has difficulty maintaining eye contact and makes impulsive comments during lessons. Which of the following behavioral strategies would best help Trish?

   (A) Assigning Trish a peer buddy to help her keep on task
   (B) Providing Trish a visual menu of appropriate behaviors
   (C) Seating Trish next to the window so she can look outside
   (D) Giving Trish high-interest, low-reading-level assignments
5. Isaac is a fourth-grade student who has been classified with a mild cognitive impairment. He struggles to complete assignments independently, requires redirection to keep on task, and needs to be constantly reminded of the classroom rules. Which of the following is required before a behavior intervention plan (BIP) can be developed?
   (A) Hiring a paraprofessional to work with Isaac
   (B) Conducting a functional behavioral assessment
   (C) Assigning homework less frequently
   (D) Applying the current behavior reward system

6. Under IDEA, which of the following age-groups are qualified to receive early-intervention services?
   (A) 0–3 years
   (B) 3–4 years
   (C) 5–6 years
   (D) 7–8 years

7. Which of the following rewards would be most appropriate for fifth-grade students who have demonstrated appropriate classroom behavior?
   (A) Giving them ice-cream sandwiches as an afternoon treat
   (B) Assigning no homework for an entire week
   (C) Excusing them from the next chapter test
   (D) Providing extra computer time

8. Which co-teaching model is demonstrated when the lead and support teachers each deliver a lesson to separate groups of students?
   (A) Complementary teaching
   (B) Alternative teaching
   (C) Parallel teaching
   (D) Shared teaching

9. Which of the following is a required component of an individualized education program (IEP)?
   (A) Functional behavior assessment
   (B) Behavior intervention plan
   (C) Daily class schedule
   (D) Annual goals

10. Jerrie is a 10-year-old girl who scores within the average range for her age on both intelligence tests and achievement tests but has difficulty completing tasks in school due to a lack of focus and impulsive behaviors. These symptoms are most consistent with a diagnosis of
    (A) oppositional defiant disorder (ODD)
    (B) traumatic brain injury (TBI)
    (C) attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
    (D) specific learning disability (SLD)

11. Seating students in a semicircle is most beneficial in which of the following ways?
    (A) Students can easily work in small groups.
    (B) The teacher can easily monitor each student.
    (C) Students can leave the classroom quickly.
    (D) The desks fit better in the classroom.

12. Justin is a second-grade student who has a classification of mild intellectual disability. What is an advantage of seating him in a cooperative cluster?
    (A) Justin will be able to participate more in classroom discussions.
    (B) Justin will be in closer proximity to the teacher.
    (C) Justin can work with a partner if he has questions.
    (D) Justin can sit near the window.

13. Which of the following activities is the best example of a summative assessment?
    (A) An end of chapter test
    (B) Writing sentences using spelling words
    (C) Completing a homework assignment
    (D) Completing a cloze activity
14. Which of the following is the best example of differentiating instruction?
   (A) Exempting half the class from a homework assignment
   (B) Assigning different students to read certain chapters of a read-aloud book.
   (C) Asking all the boys to make a poster and all the girls to write an essay
   (D) Allowing students to summarize a chapter with a poem, essay, or cartoon

15. Patrick, a third-grade student, has recently been diagnosed with Tourette syndrome. Which of the following symptoms would Patrick most likely exhibit?
   (A) Involuntary movements
   (B) Paralyzed legs
   (C) Loss of visual acuity
   (D) Hearing loss

16. Jamie is a first-grade student with a specific learning disability (SLD) in the area of mathematics. The class is learning to solve addition problems. Which of the following accommodations would most likely be included in his individualized education program (IEP)?
   (A) Permitting Jamie to use a calculator to solve word problems
   (B) Allowing Jamie to answer word problems verbally during tests
   (C) Allowing Jamie to use manipulatives to solve word problems
   (D) Reading problems to Jamie during tests

17. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that early intervention services for infants and toddlers be delivered according to an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). An IFSP and an IEP are similar yet contain important differences. Which of the following is exclusive to the IFSP?
   (A) It includes a statement of the child’s strengths and needs.
   (B) It includes information on family support services, nutrition services, and case management.
   (C) It includes projected dates for the beginning of each service, and where each service will take place.
   (D) It includes a statement of the rights of parents or guardians to accept or decline any special education service or related service without jeopardizing any other service.

18. Which of the following actions will most likely facilitate productive communication between a special education teacher and a student’s parents or guardians at a parent-teacher conference?
   (A) The special education teacher sets the agenda and ensures that the student's parents adhere to the discussion points.
   (B) The special education teacher conducts the conference using education jargon and technical language.
   (C) The special education teacher discusses the student’s academic strengths and offers suggestions for how the student can improve on weaknesses.
   (D) The special education teacher instructs the parents on how to provide guidance to the student in a more consistent manner.
Answers

1. This question tests understanding of instructional strategies. (A) is the correct answer because "make a ten" is a strategy for learning addition facts, which would be developmentally appropriate for Sharmaine. (B) is incorrect because skip counting is a precursor to multiplication, not addition. (C) is incorrect because counting backward is a prerequisite to subtraction. (D) is incorrect because front-end addition is a skill used to estimate when adding large-digit numbers.

2. This question assesses understanding of the term "least-restrictive environment." (B) is the correct answer because IDEA ensures that students are not unnecessarily removed from the general classroom or isolated from nondisabled students of their age. These decisions are made based on a student’s ability to function in the school environment. (A), (C), and (D) do not match the definition of least-restrictive environment.

3. This question assesses the ability to make appropriate accommodations to classroom assessments. (B) is correct because Toni comprehends the material presented in class; thus, reading the test to her would eliminate the struggle to read the questions and allow her to focus on the content of the test. (A) is incorrect because Toni's disability is in the area of reading comprehension and a dictionary would not be an appropriate accommodation. (C) is incorrect because there is no indication that Toni is suffering from test anxiety or another condition that would be alleviated by testing in a separate room. (D) is incorrect because there is no indication that Toni has difficulty concentrating or any another condition that would require frequent breaks.

4. This question tests understanding of the characteristic behaviors of students with autism. This scenario addresses two behaviors—maintaining eye contact and making impulsive comments. (B) is correct because using a visual reminder can increase appropriate behavior. (A) is incorrect because there is no indication that Trish needs help staying on task. (C) is incorrect because being able to look outside would not address the behavioral problems of maintaining eye contact or making impulsive comments. (D) is incorrect because high-interest, low-reading-level assignments are appropriate for a student who is not reading on grade level, and Trish is able to complete grade-level assignments.

5. This question addresses understanding and application of a behavior intervention plan (BIP). (B) is the correct answer because under federal law the team must conduct a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) prior to implementation of a behavior intervention plan. (A) is incorrect because paraprofessionals provide academic support, not behavioral intervention. (C) is incorrect because it does not address the behavior problems. (D) is incorrect because it is not a required step to implementing a behavior intervention plan.

6. This question tests knowledge of IDEA. (A) is the correct answer. According to Part C of this law, students qualify for early-intervention services from birth through 2 years of age.

7. This question addresses what kind of reward would be appropriate for fifth-grade students. (D) is the correct answer because computer time is often a motivator for students. (A) is incorrect because many schools do not allow food as a reward. (B) is incorrect because homework is a key part of learning, and although a homework pass for one night might be an appropriate reward, a week without homework is too generous. (C) is incorrect; excusing students from a chapter test is not an appropriate reward.

8. This question tests knowledge of co-teaching models. (C) is the correct answer because in parallel teaching the lead and support teachers each deliver a lesson to a separate group of students. (A) is incorrect because complementary teaching occurs when the lead teacher presents a group lesson to the class and the support teacher assists or pulls a small group for instruction. (B) is incorrect because alternative teaching uses remedial or enrichment lessons delivered to the whole class. (D) is incorrect because shared teaching techniques involve both teachers presenting the lesson simultaneously to the whole class.

9. This question assesses components of an individualized education program (IEP). According to IDEA, annual goals, (D), must be included in an individualized education program. (A) is incorrect because a functional behavior assessment is not a required component, although it may be included if the student requires one, depending on classification. (B) is incorrect because a behavioral intervention plan is a separate document from an IEP. (C) is incorrect because, although a daily class schedule is important, it is not part of the IEP document.
10. This question tests knowledge of the characteristics and defining factors of the disability categories. (C) is the correct answer because the primary symptoms of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are impulsivity and inattention. (A) is incorrect because the primary symptoms are poor peer relationships due to negative, hostile and vindictive ways. (B) is incorrect because this diagnosis is characterized by brain damage, whereas Jerrie scores within the average range of intelligence. (D) is incorrect because the students are not able to choose the presentation of their final product.

11. This question tests understanding of seating arrangements. (B) is the correct answer because the semicircle seating arrangement allows the teacher to see and have easy access to all of the students, in addition to monitoring their progress and behavior. (A) is incorrect because it does not describe a benefit. (C) is incorrect because this seating arrangement does not allow students to leave the room more quickly than any other arrangement. (D) is incorrect because this arrangement does not make the desks fit better in the classroom.

12. This question tests understanding of different types of seating arrangements. (C) is the correct answer because cooperative clusters allow students to work together to complete a task with the teacher facilitating. (A) is not correct because just by sitting him in a cooperative cluster will not increase his chances of participating. (B) is not correct because sitting in a cooperative cluster does not necessarily mean he will be closer to the teacher. (D) is not correct because sitting near a window is likely to be a distraction for a student with mild mental retardation.

13. This question tests knowledge of different types of assessments. (A) is correct because summative assessments are given to test student learning relative to the curriculum and a chapter test assesses knowledge of the entire chapter. (B) is incorrect because writing sentences is not the best activity to use as a summative assessment. (C) is incorrect because homework is a follow-up to classroom instruction. (D) is incorrect because it is an activity related to language arts instruction.

14. This question tests knowledge about differentiated instruction. (D) is correct because differentiated instruction allows students to show their understanding of the assignment using various products. (A) is incorrect because it is not a differentiation strategy. (B) is incorrect because assigning different chapters from the same book does not differentiate instruction. (C) is incorrect because the students are not able to choose the presentation of their final product.

15. This question tests knowledge about the characteristics of a specific neurological disorder, Tourette syndrome. (A) is the correct answer because Tourette syndrome is characterized by repetitive, involuntary movements and vocalizations called tics. (B), (C), and (D) are incorrect because they are not symptoms of Tourette syndrome.

16. This question tests using appropriate accommodations for students. (C) is correct because using manipulatives in mathematics for elementary students gives them concrete ways to solve problems. (A) is incorrect because it is not developmentally appropriate. (B) is incorrect because there is no indication that she cannot write the answer down. (D) is incorrect because there is no indication that she cannot read the number problems.

17. This question tests knowledge about early intervention for infants and toddlers. (B) is correct because in addition to the services provided in Part B of IDEA, the IFSP also includes information about family support services, nutrition services, and case management. (A), (C), and (D) are incorrect because they refer to information that is included in both the IFSP and the IEP.

18. This question tests knowledge about parent-teacher communication. (C) is correct because if the teacher discusses the student’s positive qualities first, the parents will be more willing to discuss difficulties and challenges. (A) is incorrect because there should be a conversational exchange between the teacher and the parents. (B) is incorrect because the use of jargon and technical language could intimidate parents, which would not foster trust and a good rapport. (D) is incorrect because pointing out inconsistencies in parenting could be seen as judgmental and might provoke anger and hostility.
Sample Test Question

This section presents a sample question and sample responses along with the standards used in scoring the responses. When you read these sample responses, keep in mind that they will be less polished than if they would have been developed at home, edited, and carefully presented. The examinee does not know what questions they will be asked and must decide, on the spot, how to respond. The scores of these questions take these circumstances into account when scoring the responses.

Scorers will assign scores based on the following scoring guide:

**SCORING GUIDE**

3  The response demonstrates a thorough understanding of the aspects of special education relevant to the question.
   A response in this category
   • Appropriately addresses all parts of the question
   • Shows a thorough understanding of any stimulus material presented
   • Exhibits a strong knowledge of students, subject matter, pedagogy, and/or facts relevant to the question
   • Provides strong explanations that are supported by details

2  The response demonstrates a basic or general understanding of the aspects of special education relevant to the question.
   A response in this category
   • Appropriately addresses all or most parts of the question
   • Shows a general understanding of any stimulus material presented
   • Exhibits a basic knowledge of students, subject matter, pedagogy, and/or facts relevant to the question
   • Provides basic explanations that are somewhat supported by details

1  The response demonstrates a weak or limited understanding of the aspects of special education relevant to the question.
   A response in this category
   • Appropriately addresses some parts of the question
   • Shows a weak understanding of any stimulus material presented
   • Exhibits a weak knowledge of students, subject matter, pedagogy, and/or facts relevant to the question
   • Provides weak explanations that are not well supported by details

0  The response demonstrates little or no understanding of the aspects of special education relevant to the question.
   A response in this category
   • Fails to address appropriately any parts of the question or simply restates the prompt
   • Shows no understanding of any stimulus material presented
   • Exhibits no knowledge or has serious misconceptions of students, subject matter, pedagogy, and/or facts relevant to the question
Sample Response That Received a Score of 3:

Types of Data
1. anecdotal info concerning social interactions
2. writing sample
3. reading evaluation- IRI to determine reading level

Explanation of value
1. Catherine is not socializing appropriately in the classroom. Anecdotal info must be collected to evaluate Catherine's behavior in a variety of situations such as the playground, cafeteria, and physical education. A checklist could be used to measure Catherine's behavior in these situations. Field notes could also be gathered and used to discuss Catherine's behavior.

2. Writing samples should be analyzed to see patterns in Catherine's spelling errors- i.e. does she need help with CVCe words, CVC words, etc. An analysis of the writing samples would also show Catherine's use of fragments vs. complete sentences.

3. Catherine may be uncomfortable in class because of a low reading level. An informal Reading Inventory could be used to determine Catherine's reading level. The IRI could also show problems with decoding that could be related to Catherine's poor spelling ability.
Sample Response That Received a Score of 2:

Types of Data

1. informal reading sample
2. spelling test
3. checklist of social behaviors

Explanation of value

1. Catherine is not able to read grade level materials, but by doing a reading sample it can be determined why she cannot.
2. A spelling test will check her level and type of errors.
3. A behavioral checklist will record Catherine’s social interactions with classmates which will be helpful as part of the referral.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 1:

Types of data

writing sample
running records

Explanation of value

It is important to collect a writing sample b/c it allows the teacher to examine growth in a child’s writing and the child’s strengths and weaknesses. It is also helpful in making a referral to an occupational therapist. It is also the teacher to examine if common errors and repeating

Sample Response That Received a Score of 0:

Collect data to bring to meeting

When you collect data you can show parents their child’s progress so they can make the appropriate placement decisions.