

# **TExES Special Education EC-12 (SPED 186)**

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- These slides overview information for each domain within the EC-12 (SPED 186) Exam. This test is designed to assess whether an examinee has the requisite knowledge and skills that an entry-level educator in this field in Texas public schools must possess.





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# SPED 196

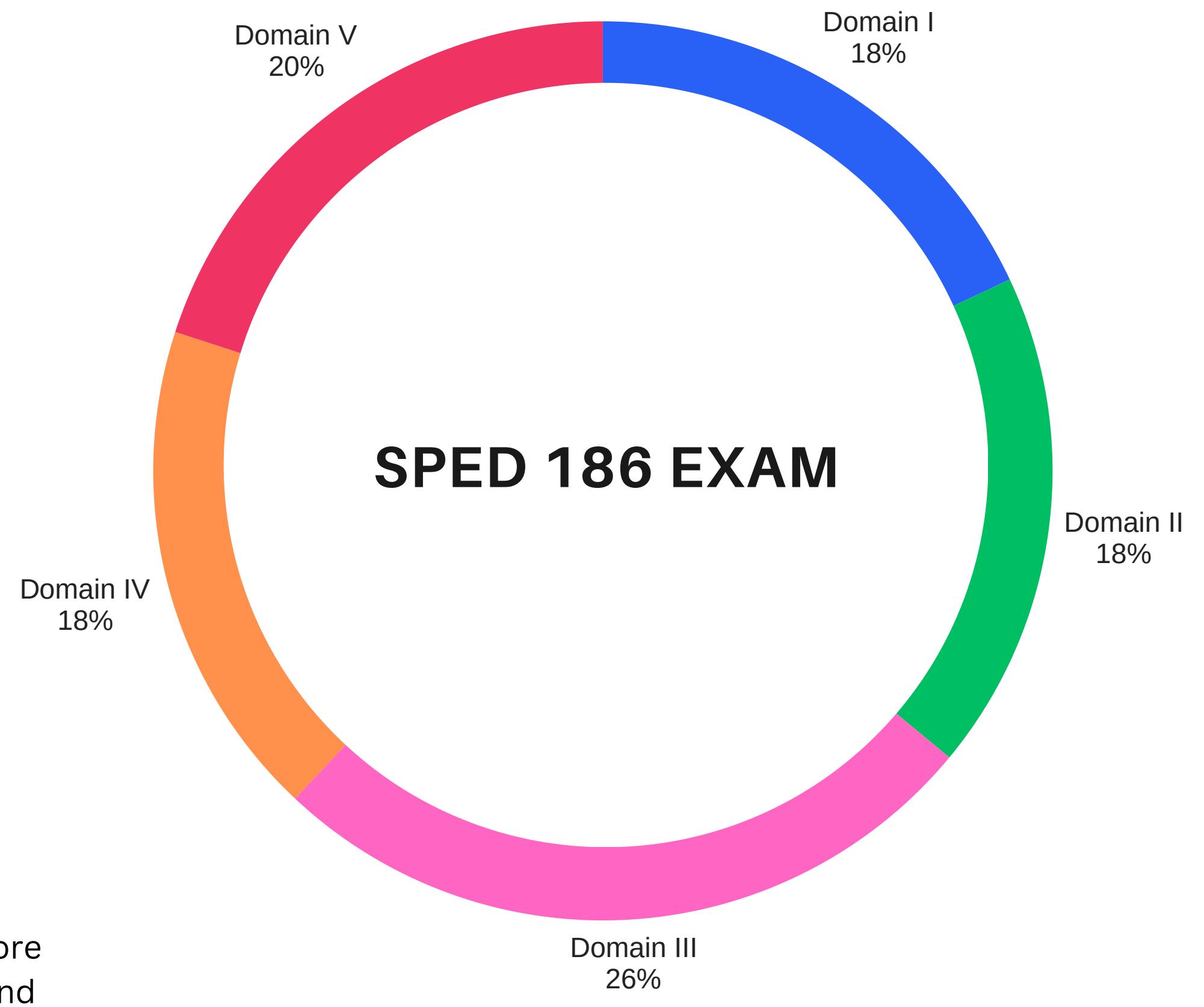
## Test Overview

01. Domains I-V

02. 5 hours

03. 90 selected-response  
questions and 1  
constructed-  
response question

- I Legal and Ethical Guidelines and Knowledge of Learners**
- II Assessment and Program Planning**
- III Curricular Knowledge and Instructional Practices**
- IV Professional Collaboration and Responsibilities**
- V Analysis and Response**



## Special Education EC-12 Exam

Each section is made up of a number of competencies. Explore each section to learn the breakdown of the competencies and understand the type of questions in that section.



# Legal and Ethical Guidelines

# Domain I Competencies

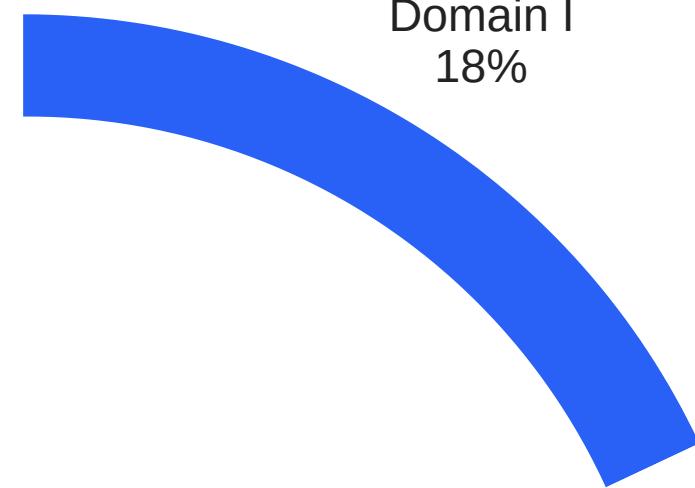
1.

LEGAL AND ETHICAL  
GUIDELINES

2.

KNOWLEDGE OF LEARNERS

**DOMAIN I**  
2 Competencies

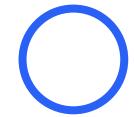


## Legal and Ethical Guidelines

This domain covers the foundational understanding of language systems, English language structure, and the theories and processes of first and second language acquisition.

# Legal and Ethical Guidelines

Apply knowledge of applicable state and federal laws and procedures that pertain to special education services.



## Overview of Competency 1



- **Knowledge of key laws and regulations:** Understanding major state guidelines (Texas Administrative Code, ARD committee guidelines) and federal legislation (ESSA, IDEA, Section 504, ADA) that affect special education services, plus relevant court cases
- **Eligibility and Child Find:** Knowledge of IDEA eligibility categories and the special education teacher's role in identifying students who may need services
- **IEPs and IFSPs:** Understanding components and procedures for developing, implementing, and amending Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) in collaboration with ARD committees and ECI teams
- **Compliance and implementation:** Ensuring least restrictive environment (LRE) compliance, maintaining confidential documentation, and understanding that all school staff must fully implement IEPs
- **Transition planning and graduation:** Knowledge of transition planning requirements (beginning at age 14), transfer of rights at age of majority, and graduation options for students receiving special education services

# Legal and Ethical Guidelines

## Sample Question for Competency 1

A 15-year-old student with a learning disability is currently receiving special education services under an IEP. The student's parents recently divorced, and the mother has been awarded sole custody. The father contacts the special education teacher requesting a copy of the student's IEP and recent progress reports. The mother has not provided consent for the father to receive this information. What is the special education teacher's most appropriate course of action?

- A.** Provide the father with the requested documents, as both biological parents retain educational rights under IDEA regardless of custody arrangements unless parental rights have been legally terminated.
- B.** Deny the father's request and explain that only the custodial parent has the right to access the student's educational records under FERPA when sole custody has been awarded.
- C.** Provide the father with general progress information verbally but withhold the written IEP and progress reports until receiving guidance from the campus administrator.
- D.** Schedule an ARD committee meeting with both parents present to discuss the student's progress, as this allows information sharing without violating

# Legal and Ethical Guidelines

**Answer: A**



Under FERPA and IDEA, both parents retain full educational rights and access to their child's educational records unless there is a court order specifically terminating parental rights or restricting access to educational records. Custody arrangements (sole vs. joint) do not automatically eliminate a non-custodial parent's right to access educational information. The special education teacher must provide the records unless presented with legal documentation that specifically prohibits such access.



# Knowledge of Learners

Apply knowledge of understanding how to address each student's developmental, communication, and learning needs.

## Overview of Competency 2

- **Impact of disabilities on development:** Understanding how disabilities affect developmental milestones, executive functioning, social skills, and learning processes across multiple domains
- **Multiple influences on learning:** Recognizing biological, physical, emotional, psychological, social, environmental, and linguistic factors that affect students' strengths and needs, including students with additional identifiers (gifted/talented, English learners, highly mobile, at-risk)
- **Stress, trauma, and mental health:** Differentiating factors contributing to stress and trauma from learning disabilities, understanding protective factors and resilience, and recognizing how these impact learning, behavior, motivation, and development
- **Brain development:** Applying knowledge of brain development from birth through early adulthood and its impact on decision-making, problem-solving, impulse control, executive functioning, and interpersonal relationships
- **Continuum of support needs:** Understanding how to address diverse student needs across the full continuum of instructional options, from one-on-one high support to collaborative teaching models

# Knowledge of Learners

O

## Sample Question for Competency 2

O

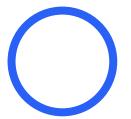
A special education teacher is working with a 16-year-old student who has been diagnosed with ADHD and recently experienced the sudden death of a parent. Over the past month, the student has shown increased difficulty with tasks requiring sustained attention, significant deterioration in previously mastered organizational skills, and withdrawal from peer interactions. The student's IEP team is considering whether these changes indicate a need for additional evaluation for a learning disability. What should be the teacher's primary consideration when analyzing this situation?

- A.** The sudden decline in executive functioning skills strongly suggests an underlying learning disability that was previously masked by compensatory strategies, warranting immediate referral for a comprehensive psychoeducational evaluation.
- B.** The behavioral changes are consistent with the normal progression of ADHD symptoms in adolescence as academic demands increase, and the team should focus on adjusting existing accommodations rather than pursuing new evaluations.
- C.** The recent trauma may be manifesting in ways that temporarily mirror or exacerbate symptoms of executive dysfunction, and the team should distinguish between grief-related responses and indicators of an additional disability before determining appropriate interventions.
- D.** The student's withdrawal from peers and difficulty with attention indicate possible depression co-occurring with ADHD, requiring an immediate psychiatric evaluation before the IEP team can make any determinations about learning disabilities.

2

# Knowledge of Learners

**Answer: C**



Trauma and grief can significantly impact executive functioning, attention, and social engagement in ways that mirror learning disabilities. Before determining that additional evaluation is needed, the teacher must recognize that the student's recent trauma is a critical factor that may be causing or intensifying these symptoms. The team should provide trauma-informed supports and monitor the student's response before concluding that a new disability has emerged.

# Domain II



# Assessment & Program Planning

## Domain II Competencies

3.

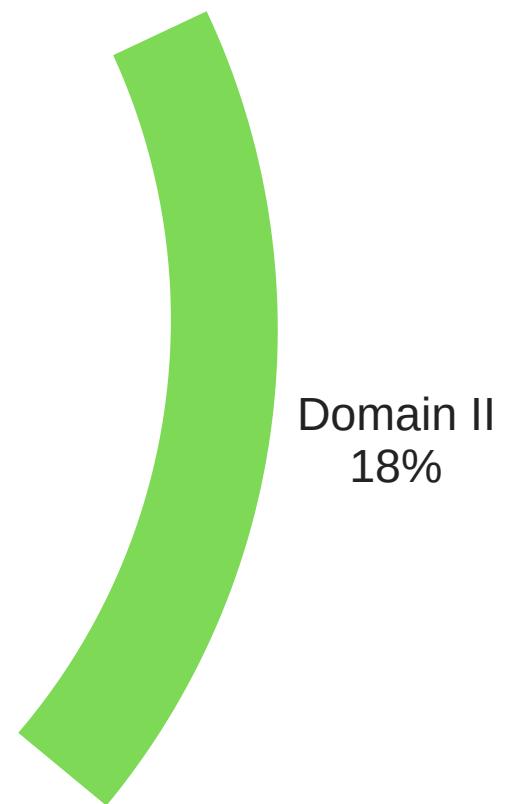
DATA-DRIVEN DECISION  
MAKING

4.

DEVELOP, IMPLEMENT, AND  
MONITOR

### DOMAIN II

2 Competencies



## Assessment and Program Planning

This section has 5 competencies. Review the following slides to understand each competency on the test.

# Data-Driven Decision Making

Apply knowledge of the evaluation and assessment process and of appropriate assessment strategies to inform instructional design and to support students.

## Overview of Competency 3

- **Assessment knowledge:** Understanding various assessment types (formative, summative, screening, diagnostic) and their purposes for informing IEP development and instruction
- **Administration and interpretation:** Administering and interpreting multiple assessments to determine student progress on IEP goals, TEKS mastery, and transition needs
- **Collaboration for validity:** Seeking expert guidance from specialists (ESL, SLPs, behavior specialists) to ensure appropriate and valid assessments for diverse learners
- **Accommodations and student agency:** Implementing assessment accommodations/modifications per ARD decisions and supporting students in using their own data for self-monitoring and self-advocacy

# Data-Driven Decision Making

## Sample Question for Competency 3

A 4th-grade student's CBM data shows 45 WCPM with minimal growth over eight weeks (IEP goal: 65 WCPM). Recent assessments show strong phonics skills but weak comprehension (15th percentile). What is the most appropriate next step?

- A. Request a comprehensive diagnostic reading assessment from a reading specialist to identify specific comprehension deficits.
- B. Modify the IEP goal to 50 WCPM to reflect a more realistic target based on current progress.
- C. Analyze existing data to adjust instruction, focusing on connecting decoding to fluency and comprehension, then continue progress monitoring.
- D. Recommend intensive one-on-one intervention using a different fluency program before the next ARD meeting.

# Data-Driven Decision Making

Answer: C

The teacher has sufficient data showing the issue is connecting decoding to fluency/comprehension, not phonics. Option C appropriately uses existing assessment data to adjust instruction before seeking additional assessments (A), lowering expectations (B), or making major program changes (D).

# Data-Driven Decision Making

Apply knowledge of contributing to, monitoring, and reporting on individualized programming for students.

## Overview of Competency 4

- **IEP implementation:** Creating and implementing IEPs with fidelity, including progress monitoring and reporting results to students and families
- **Data-driven IEP development:** Using assessment data to write measurable goals, PLAAFP statements, accommodations/modifications, and determine appropriate LRE placement
- **ARD preparation:** Preparing for and facilitating ARD meetings, including collecting data, interpreting results, and supporting students in leading discussions about their progress
- **Transition and coordination:** Creating transition activities for postsecondary readiness and coordinating with staff/service providers to deliver appropriate supports

# Data-Driven Decision Making

## Sample Question for Competency 4



At an annual ARD for a 10th-grade student with autism, data shows progress on two of three IEP goals. The social communication goal shows the student uses targeted phrases in structured settings with prompts but rarely generalizes to peer interactions. Parents express concern the goal isn't helping build genuine friendships. What should be the teacher's primary focus when preparing?

- A.** Propose continuing the current goal with increased intensity, as data shows skill acquisition in structured settings.
- B.** Gather data across settings, prepare visual progress representations, and develop alternative goals addressing generalization and family priorities.
- C.** Recommend adding speech-language therapy, as minimal gains suggest need for specialized expertise.
- D.** Prepare documentation of intervention fidelity and explain that social skill generalization takes years for students with autism.



# Data-Driven Decision Making

## Answer: B

Option B demonstrates comprehensive ARD preparation using multi-setting data, visual representations, and collaborative goal development that addresses both data and family input. Options A and D ignore family concerns and lack of generalization, while C adds services without addressing whether the goal itself needs redesign.



# Domain III

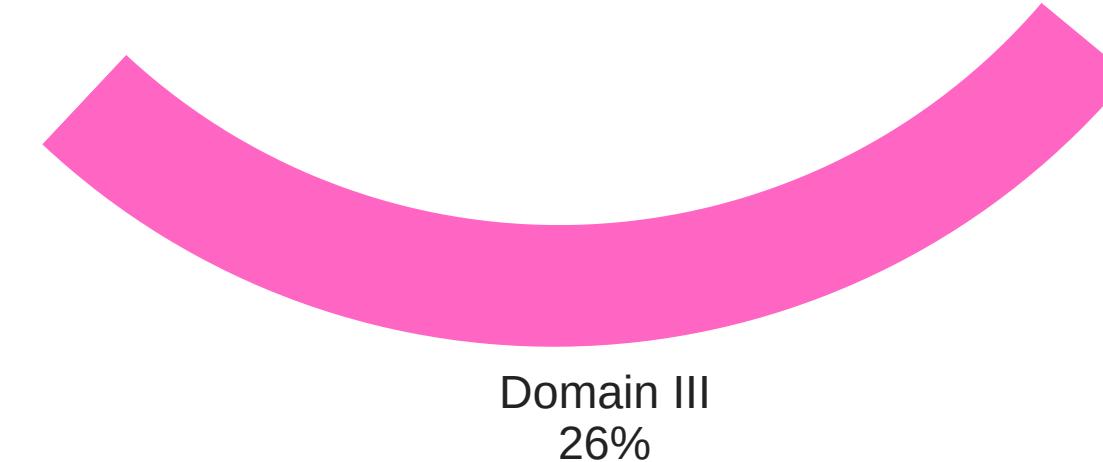


# Curricular Knowledge and Instructional Practice

## Domain III Competencies

- 5.** CONTENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
- 6.** EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION
- 7.** SOCIAL, BEHAVIORAL, AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH

**DOMAIN III**  
3 Competencies



## Curricular Knowledge and Instructional Practices

This section has 3 competencies. Review the following slides to understand each competency on the test.

# Content & Instructional Strategies

Apply knowledge of implementing curriculum through relevant and appropriate content and specialized instructional strategies to guide and support students' learning and development.

## Overview of Competency 5

- **Curriculum alignment:** Developing specially designed instruction aligned with Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines, TEKS, and College and Career Readiness Standards for students with varying support needs
- **Differentiation and modification:** Modifying, differentiating, and adapting instructional materials across performance levels and content areas, including vertical alignment strategies
- **Specialized curricula:** Implementing specialized instruction for social skills, life skills, transition, orientation and mobility, independence, and self-advocacy across different educational contexts
- **Postsecondary preparation:** Understanding employment models, career pathways, and providing access to community-based instruction and vocational training

# Content & Instructional Strategies

## Sample Question for Competency 5

A special education teacher is planning instruction for a 9th-grade student with an intellectual disability who is working toward a minimum graduation plan. The student is currently performing at a 4th-grade level in reading and math. Which approach best demonstrates appropriate curriculum planning?

- A. Focus instruction on 4th-grade TEKS content to build foundational skills before introducing grade-level standards.
- B. Provide access to grade-level 9th-grade TEKS through accommodations while also addressing skill gaps with supplemental instruction.
- C. Implement a functional life skills curriculum that replaces academic TEKS with community-based skills aligned to the student's transition goals.
- D. Modify 9th-grade TEKS by reducing complexity to 6th-grade level content to balance rigor with the student's current performance.

# Content & Instructional Strategies

## Answer: B

Students receiving special education services should have access to grade-level TEKS content, even when performing below grade level. Option B appropriately provides access through accommodations while addressing gaps, maintaining high expectations and compliance with LRE requirements.



# Effective Instruction

Apply knowledge of strengths and needs of students to plan appropriate, effective, meaningful, and challenging instruction.

## Overview of Competency 6

- **Accommodations vs. modifications:** Understanding key differences and appropriately implementing IEP accommodations and modifications, including potential impacts on graduation plans
- **Explicit, systematic instruction:** Designing scaffolded, individualized instruction that adapts intensity based on student strengths, needs, and assessment results
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** Applying UDL guidelines to create differentiated, accessible, and challenging content across various instructional settings (co-teaching, self-contained, resource room)
- **Assistive technology integration:** Planning strategic use of low-tech, medium-tech, and high-tech assistive technology based on developmental and learning needs
- **Generalization and transfer:** Promoting skill transfer across content areas, educational settings, and environmental contexts (community, job placement)
- **Student engagement:** Using varied instructional strategies, grouping approaches, and multiple modalities to promote high expectations, active engagement, motivation, and self-advocacy

# Effective Instruction

## Sample Question for Competency 6



A co-teacher is planning a 7th-grade science unit on ecosystems. Three students with learning disabilities in the class have IEPs requiring accommodations but no modifications. How should the teacher best apply UDL principles?

- A.** Create a separate, simplified version of the unit for the three students that covers the same topics at a lower reading level.
- B.** Design multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression that benefit all students, implementing specific IEP accommodations as needed.
- C.** Provide the three students with graphic organizers and extended time while teaching the standard curriculum to the rest of the class.
- D.** Pre-teach vocabulary and key concepts to the three students in a small group before each whole-class lesson.



# Effective Instruction

## Answer: B

UDL principles benefit all learners by providing multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression, not just students with disabilities. Option B applies UDL universally while implementing individual accommodations, whereas other options segregate or lower expectations.



# Social, Behavioral, & Emotional Growth

Apply knowledge of strategies to create effective and safe learning environments, methods to promote students' positive behavior, and supports to develop and measure behavioral interventions.

## Overview of Competency 7



- **Positive learning environments:** Establishing effective procedures, routines, visual supports, and high behavioral expectations with constructive feedback and positive relationships
- **Preventative and responsive practices:** Implementing PBIS, de-escalation strategies, nonviolent crisis intervention, and restorative discipline practices
- **FBA and BIP implementation:** Understanding and implementing functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans, and ABA interventions; monitoring effectiveness through data collection and analysis
- **Trauma-informed support:** Addressing trauma, harassment, and bullying through preventative practices, appropriate reporting, and accessing school and community supports



# Social, Behavioral, & Emotional Growth

## Sample Question for Competency 7

A student with autism has a BIP targeting aggressive behavior during transitions. After four weeks of implementation, data shows the behavior has increased from 2 incidents per week to 5 incidents per week. What should the teacher do first?

- A. Continue the current BIP for at least 6-8 more weeks, as behavioral interventions typically require extended time to show effectiveness.
- B. Request an emergency ARD meeting to remove the student from the general education setting due to safety concerns.
- C. Review the FBA and implementation data to determine if the intervention is being implemented with fidelity and whether the function of behavior was correctly identified.
- D. Add a more restrictive consequence to the BIP, such as loss of preferred activities, to increase motivation for behavior change.

# Social, Behavioral, & Emotional Growth

## Answer: C

When a BIP is ineffective or behavior worsens, the teacher must first evaluate implementation fidelity and whether the function of behavior was correctly identified in the FBA. This allows for data-driven adjustments before continuing an ineffective plan (A), changing placement (B), or adding consequences that may not address the behavior's function (D).



# Domain IV

# Professional Collaboration and Responsibilities



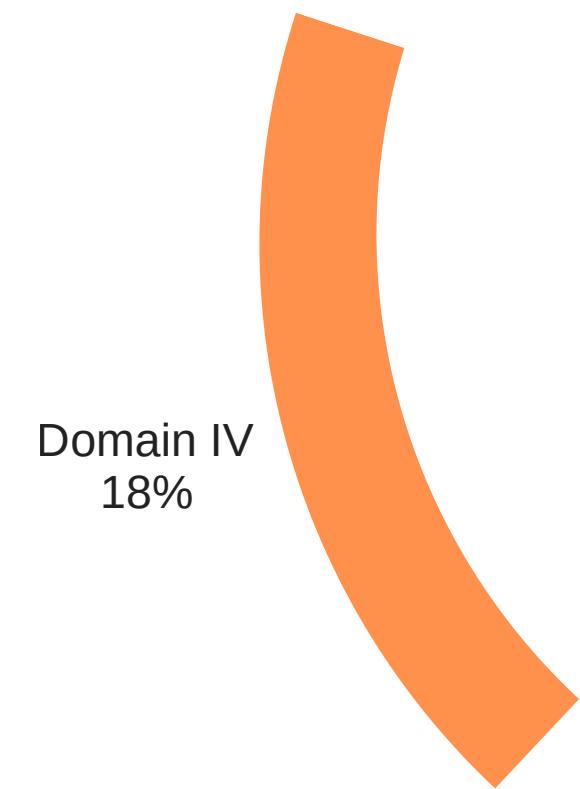
## Domain IV Competencies

8.

CONSULTATION AND  
COLLABORATION

9.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING  
AND RESPONSIBILITIES



**DOMAIN IV**  
2 Competencies

## Professional Collaboration and Responsibilities

This section has 3 competencies. Review the following slides to understand each competency on the test.

# Consultation and Collaboration

Apply knowledge of strategies, approaches, and techniques for effective consultation and collaboration with students, parents/guardians, school personnel, and other professionals to support students' development and learning.

## Overview of Competency 8

- **Collaboration with stakeholders:** Working with parents/guardians, school personnel, and specialists to address students' instructional, emotional, behavioral, and social needs across various situations
- **Supervising paraprofessionals and co-teaching:** Supervising and mentoring paraprofessionals; using various co-teaching strategies and models based on setting and student needs
- **Coordinating services and schedules:** Working with administrators, counselors, and related service providers to build student schedules according to IEP and LRE requirements; implementing transition activities with community resources
- **Multidisciplinary collaboration:** Collaborating with general education teachers and multidisciplinary teams to plan, deliver, adapt, and co-teach instruction; utilizing resources to improve communication with families and community

# Consultation and Collaboration

## Sample Question for Competency 8

A special education teacher is co-teaching in an inclusive 8th-grade English class using a station teaching model. The general education teacher expresses frustration that students with IEPs are not mastering grade-level TEKS at the same rate as their peers and suggests the special education teacher should pull these students out during the co-taught period to provide more intensive, separate instruction. Three of the students' IEPs specify the general education classroom as their LRE for English. What is the most appropriate response?

- A. Agree to pull out the students for part of the period, as the general education teacher's content expertise suggests the current approach isn't meeting student needs and modifications to the schedule don't require ARD approval.
- B. Explain that the students' IEPs require instruction in the general education setting, collaborate with the teacher to analyze student data and adjust co-teaching strategies, and provide additional scaffolding within the inclusive model.
- C. Suggest switching to a parallel teaching model where the special education teacher works with all students with IEPs in a separate group within the same classroom to provide more targeted instruction.
- D. Propose convening ARD meetings to discuss changing the students' LRE to a resource room setting, since the general education teacher believes the inclusive model is not effective for these students.

# Consultation and Collaboration

**Answer: B**



Option B demonstrates appropriate collaboration while maintaining IEP compliance and LRE requirements. The teacher must advocate for inclusive practices, work collaboratively to improve instruction, and not change services without ARD decisions. Option A violates LRE and IEP requirements. Option C still segregates students unnecessarily when the issue is instructional strategy. Option D suggests changing placement based solely on one teacher's frustration rather than data-driven decision-making and prematurely abandons the inclusive model.

# Professional Learning & Responsibilities

Apply knowledge of the professional roles and responsibilities of the early childhood-grade 12 special education teacher.

## Overview of Competency 9

- **Professional roles and advocacy:** Understanding roles and responsibilities of special education teachers and related service providers; advocating for improved outcomes for students and families
- **Professional growth:** Setting short-term and long-term professional goals based on student learning analysis, self-reflection, and professional standards
- **Addressing barriers:** Understanding and working with stakeholders to address barriers students face from early childhood through postsecondary settings, including graduation requirements and curriculum resources
- **Family participation and advocacy:** Advocating for family and student participation in IEP processes, ARD meetings, transition planning, and graduation decision-making

# Professional Learning & Responsibilities

## Sample Questions for Competency 9

A first-year special education teacher notices that several families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds rarely attend ARD meetings and seem hesitant to participate in IEP decision-making. What action best demonstrates understanding of professional responsibilities?

- A. Recognize that family participation is voluntary and the teacher cannot require attendance.
- B. Request that the district's bilingual specialist attend all future ARD meetings to ensure proper translation services are provided.
- C. Reflect on potential barriers to participation, seek professional development on culturally responsive practices, and collaborate with colleagues to develop strategies for meaningful family engagement.
- D. Simplify the ARD process by making most IEP decisions independently based on assessment data, then sending documents home for parent signature to reduce the burden on families.

# Professional Learning & Responsibilities

## Answer: C

Option C demonstrates key elements of Competency 9: self-reflection, professional learning, advocacy for family participation, and understanding barriers that exist for diverse families. It shows the teacher taking responsibility for improving practice rather than accepting low participation (A), implementing a single solution without addressing root causes (B), or reducing family involvement in violation of IDEA requirements (D).



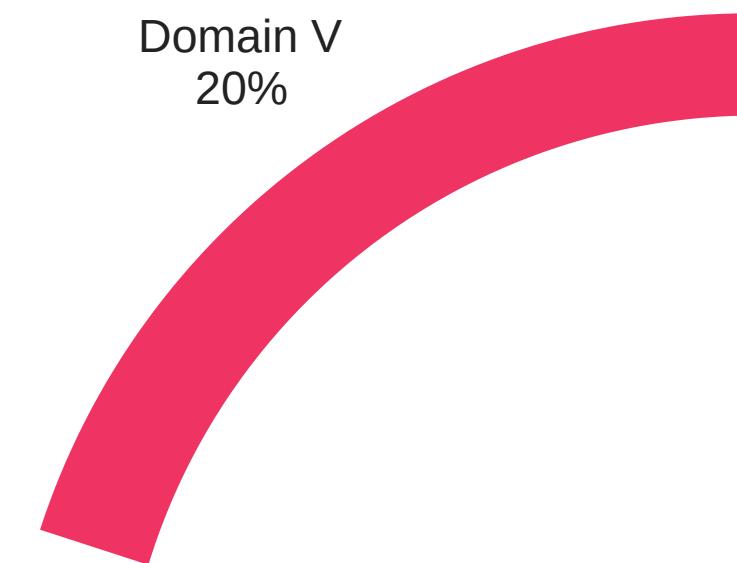
Analysis  
and  
Response



# Domain V Competencies

10.

ANALYSIS & RESPONSE



**DOMAIN V**

1 Competency

## Analysis and Response

This section has 1 competency. Review the following slides to understand each competency on the test.

# Analysis and Response

In a written response, analyze and interpret varying types of data (e.g., qualitative, quantitative) to identify a given student's strengths and needs and design appropriate instruction.

## Overview of Competency 10

- **Analyzing student data:** Analyzing and interpreting varying types of data (qualitative, quantitative) from multiple formal and informal assessments, including progress monitoring, work samples, and observation notes
- **Identifying strengths and needs:** Using comprehensive data analysis to identify a given student's specific strengths and needs
- **Generating recommendations:** Synthesizing all available data to generate appropriate instructional and/or intervention recommendations
- **Implementation and monitoring:** Describing how to implement the recommended instruction/intervention and monitor student progress toward goals

# Analysis and Response

## Sample Question for Competency 10



A 7th-grade student with ADHD has an IEP goal to complete 80% of homework assignments. Progress monitoring data over 5 weeks shows completion rates of 45%, 50%, 40%, 55%, 35%. The student consistently scores above 85% on in-class assessments. Teacher notes indicate the student frequently reports forgetting about assignments and struggles to organize materials. Parent reports indicate similar organizational difficulties at home. What is the most appropriate recommendation?

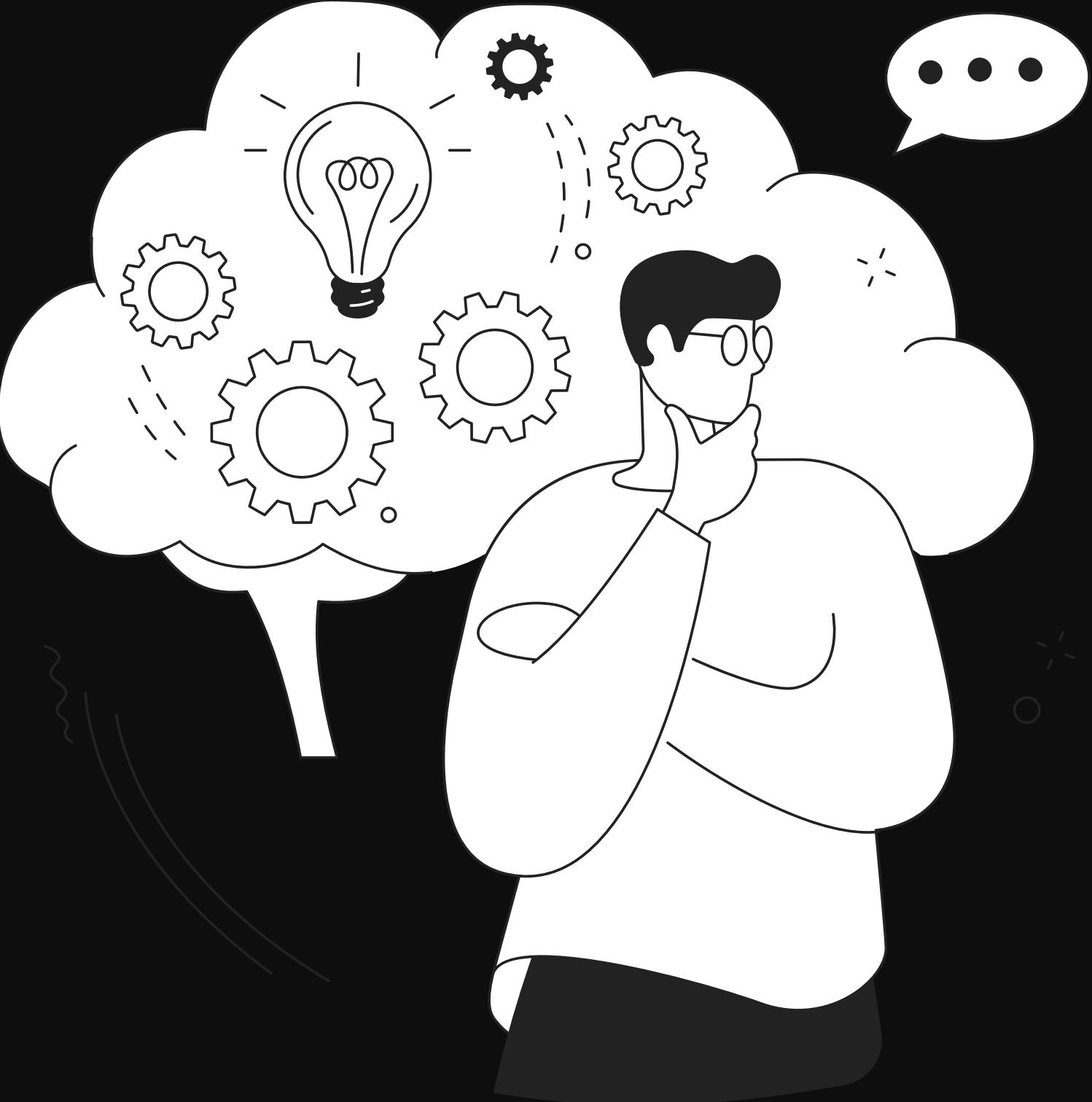
- A. Modify the IEP goal to 50% homework completion to reflect a more realistic target based on the student's demonstrated performance and reduce family stress.
- B. Implement organizational supports such as a structured homework system, assignment checklist, and home-school communication log, while also analyzing whether homework assignments align with in-class instruction.
- C. Recommend the student receive consequences for incomplete homework to increase accountability and motivation, as the high in-class performance indicates the student has the academic skills but lacks effort.
- D. Propose adding a paraprofessional to check the student's backpack daily and help organize materials, since the data shows the student cannot independently manage homework responsibilities.

# Analysis and Response

## Answer: B



The data reveals a pattern of declining homework completion despite strong academic mastery (85%+ on assessments), suggesting the issue is executive functioning (organization, memory) rather than academic ability. Option B addresses the actual need with appropriate supports while also questioning whether homework is necessary given demonstrated mastery. Option A lowers expectations without addressing the problem. Option C misinterprets the data as a motivation issue when it's clearly executive functioning. Option D creates dependency rather than building independence through appropriate scaffolding and accommodations.



# Additional Resources

Breakdown of SPED EC-12 (186) Test

# Thank You

