Preface

The STAR Program is a comprehensive behavioral program for students with autism, based on the research and the authors' hands-on work with students with autism for the last 40 years. Drs. Arick and Krug began working with students with autism in 1972 and developed a program that was used in the schools for more than 20 years. This program used the strategies of discrete trial training, augmentative communication systems, and teaching independence to students with autism and was documented in a research article (Krug et al., 1979) and a book that described this curriculum (Krug, Rosenblum, Almond, & Arick, 1981). This book included an initial version of the Student Learning Profile and the lesson plan forms. In order to document student educational progress over time, Drs. Krug and Arick also developed a comprehensive standardized assessment tool called the *Autism Screening Instrument for Educational Planning* (ASIEP-3; Krug, Arick, & Almond, 1979, 1981, 2008).

In 1997, Dr. Arick, Lauren Loos, and Dr. Ruth Falco began building on this earlier work to develop a comprehensive curriculum for students with autism called the STAR Program (Strategies for Teaching based on Autism Research). The STAR Program uses the research-based methods of discrete trial training, pivotal response training, and functional routines instruction. Recommendations from the book titled *Educating Children with Autism,* written by the National Research Council (2001), were also used in the development of the STAR Program. Based on our work, and the work of many other researchers over the last 30 years, the STAR Program was developed. The program was designed to give teachers the instructional plans and materials needed to implement a research-based program as part of the student's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP) in a public school or other setting.

After initial development, a student outcome study was conducted with more than 122 students who were enrolled in public preschool and school-age programs over a 5-year period. These studies included rural, suburban, and urban schools. The authors provided training in the strategies of discrete trial training, pivotal response training, and functional routines using the prepublication version of the STAR Program, and an independent team of researchers conducted assessments of the students to monitor their progress. The students made significant progress in all areas of instruction. In particular, students made significant progress in the areas of expressive language, receptive language, social interaction skills, academics, and independence on functional routines. A peer-reviewed research article was published in 2003 in the journal *Focus on Autism* that describes the progress of the first cohort of 67 students in the outcome study (Arick, Young, Falco, Loos, Krug, Gense, & Johnson, 2003).

Following the autism outcome study, a series of training sites was developed to train teachers to implement the strategies of discrete trial training, pivotal response training, and functional routines instruction used in the STAR Program. Research data continue to be collected at each of these training sites to document the progress of students. In addition, since its initial publication, hundreds of school districts have implemented the STAR Program with success, and researchers have conducted several national studies. The authors have been directly involved in the development of training sites, on-site consultation, and training of staff. This second edition of the STAR Program includes the latest information and research on

the education of students with autism from the authors' work with school districts around the country and from the latest research studies.

Development of the second edition of the STAR Program was guided by a thorough study of the national research on effective practices identified in the literature. The curriculum content and instructional methods used in the STAR Program are typically described in the literature as effective with students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Chapters 1, 3, and 4 of this manual provide background information and literature support for the program, and Chapter 2 provides the user with steps to begin implementation.