PLANNING FOR SUCCESSFULLY INCLUDING AND ACCOMMODATING YOUR STUDENTS IN ASSESSMENTS

YI-CHEN WU, LINDA GOLDSTONE, AND MARTHA THURLOW

FEBRUARY 2, 2018
Outline

• Project Supporting Work
• Accessibility Paradigm Shift
• Teacher Focus Groups
• Analysis of State Data on Accommodations
Overview of the DIAMOND Project
Need for Project

- Sometimes educators make decisions about accessibility features and accommodations based on:
  - Feasibility (e.g., selecting only supports that are readily available)
  - Placement information (e.g., selecting the same supports for all below-level readers)
  - Demographic information (e.g., selecting the same supports for all English learners)
Purpose

• The DIAMOND Project aims to improve the validity of assessment results and interpretations for students with documented needs by developing guidelines for educators to make informed decisions about accessibility features and accommodations.
Partners

• Funded by a US Department of Education Enhanced Assessment Instruments Grant

• Collaboration between the National Center on Educational Outcomes and the departments of education of nine states

- Alabama
- Connecticut
- Maryland
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Ohio
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin
- U.S. Virgin Islands
Research Activities

1. Facilitating online focus groups with teachers
2. Conducting teacher interviews and student demonstrations
3. Analyzing state assessment data
4. Hosting a forum with national experts to develop guidelines
5. Creating a training module and supplemental materials
6. Piloting and revising the professional development materials
Accessibility Paradigm Shift
What Do We Mean by Accessibility?

• Accessibility means providing students with tools or supports that level the playing field

• Some examples:
  ◦ ASL video for a deaf student
  ◦ Extended time for an English learner
  ◦ Answer masking for a student with ADHD
  ◦ Separate setting for struggling student
Accessibility Paradigm Shift

- Started without requirements in law
- The federal government funded consortia of states to develop a general assessment, alternate assessment, and English language proficiency (ELP) assessment
- These consortia used principles of universal design and opened up the concept of accessibility
Tiers of Accessibility

Universal Features
for all students

Designated Features
for students who need them as identified by an educator in advance

Accommodations
for students with disabilities; in some cases, ELs are also eligible
Has this accommodations paradigm shift occurred in your state?
Developing a Common Language
Accessibility Features and Accommodations

- More than 50 distinct accessibility features and accommodations have been identified.
- These supports often have different names.
- For example, one support that allows students to cross out answers that seem incorrect is called *strikethrough*, *eliminate answer choices*, and *answer choice eliminator* on different tests.
White Paper

- Describes inconsistencies in accessibility language
- Advocates for consistent language and implementation
- Input obtained from more than 80 educators, policymakers, and test vendors in 2016
- Available in English and Spanish
Forum on Common Language for States and Assessment Vendors

- Highlighted *White Paper* on common accessibility language
- Provided demonstrations by three vendors
- Led discussions of 80 participants, focused on:
  - Students with IEPs and 504 plans
  - English learners
  - General education students
Purpose

• Teachers’ experiences with accessibility features and accommodations
  ◦ Classroom
  ◦ Assessments

• Qualitative method
Participation

- 46 teachers in six online focus groups
- Special education, general education, and EL/bilingual education
- Rural, suburban, and urban districts
- Elementary > middle; high school teachers
Theme 1: Decision Making

- General education < special education; EL/bilingual teachers
- Varied teams: IEP; non-IEP; non-team
- Assessments > instruction, formative assessments
- Process?
Theme 2: Data

• Variety of types
• Teacher input across disciplines
• Monitoring
• Process – Collecting, documenting, disseminating?
Theme 3: Constraints

- Knowledge
- Choices – online; math
- Practice opportunities
- Inclusion – teacher responsibility?
- IEP: request process; class vs. assessments, student ability
- EL: options; provision discontinued
- Inconsistency – different assessments
Implications for Next Steps

• Guidelines
  ◦ Definitions – precise, clear
  ◦ Decision making – team-based process
  ◦ Data - identify, document, disseminate
  ◦ Implementation - varied assessments, classroom activities
  ◦ Resources - computers, staff
  ◦ Practice opportunities – teachers, students
Your Thoughts

*How do these priorities stack up against your own?*
State Data Analyses
Rationale

- IDEA 97 required that states report on assessment participation and performance of students with disabilities.
- IDEA 2004 added a requirement that states report on the number of students receiving accommodations on the regular assessment.
- ESSA reaffirmed the importance of ensuring that assessments are accessible.
- ESEA Peer Review Guidance emphasized that states monitor the provision and use of accommodations.
Data Sources

• State level data
  ◦ 2013-14 annual performance report (APR) data
  ◦ 2007-08 through 2013-14 APR data (i.e., IDEA Section 618 Data Products: State Level Data Files)
  ◦ Does the percentage of students receiving accommodations vary across states?
  ◦ Do the percentages vary across grades?

• Student-level data
  ◦ One state’s data to illustrate how data can be used to answer important questions about accommodations.
  ◦ To what extent do individual students consistently receive accommodations over time?
  ◦ Do individual student characteristics affect accommodations received?
1. There are visible differences between the percentage of students with disabilities using accommodations for mathematics and reading assessments in many states.

2. The percentages of students with disabilities using accommodations in math was likely to be equal to or higher than the percentage of students using accommodations in reading assessments across all grades.

Figure 1. Percentage of Grade 8 Students with Disabilities Using Accommodations in 2013-2014 Reading and Mathematics Assessments in Regular States
State Level Analysis—Longitudinal

- Longitudinal APR data for 2007-08 to 2013-14
- Data include only those states without an alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards (AA-MAS) and no field testing data in 2013-14 (N = 19)

1. Differences in accommodations received were found across grades.
2. Lower percentages of students received accommodations in Grade 3 and high school than at other grades on both reading and math assessments.
State Level Analysis—Trends

- Trends across years for 19 states

1. Many of 19 states’ data were relatively stable across years.

2. States varied considerably in the average percentage of students receiving accommodations.
Student Level Data—Consistency

- Patterns of accommodations received for students with 4 years of records who ever received special education services

![Bar chart for Reading Assessments](chart1)

- No accommodations ever: 83.8%
- Accommodations 1 to 3 years: 15.5%
- Accommodations every year: 0.7%

![Bar chart for Math Assessments](chart2)

- No accommodations ever: 63.9%
- Accommodations 1 to 3 years: 33.5%
- Accommodations every year: 2.7%
Student Level Data
—Characteristics on Reading Assessment in 2015-16

Ethnicity

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- American Indian/Alaska Native: 4%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 10%
- Hispanic/Latino: 15%
- Black/African American: 66%
- White: 5%

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES RECEIVING ACCOMMODATIONS

- American Indian/Alaska Native: 5%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 13%
- Hispanic/Latino: 15%
- Black/African American: 62%
- White: 5%
Student Level Data
—Characteristics

% Time in Regular Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Students with Disabilities</th>
<th>Students with Disabilities Receiving Accommodations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Time in Classroom</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>94.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80% or more of the day</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40% through 79% of the day</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 40% of the day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender

- Students with Disabilities: 50% Female, 50% Male
- Students with Disabilities Receiving Accommodations: 50% Female, 50% Male

Free/Reduced Lunch

- Students with Disabilities: 30% Yes, 70% No
- Students with Disabilities Receiving Accommodations: 30% Yes, 70% No
Summary

• Variation in the percentages of students receiving accommodations across states is very large.

• Consistent differences in the percentages of students receiving accommodations across grades are evident – Grade 3 and High School are lowest.
Summary – cont.

• Changes in the percentages of students receiving accommodations across years are inconsistent across states.

• Individual student data highlight the importance of each state examining its data on using accommodations (overall, by content area, by grade).
Implications

- States should examine their data on the percentage of students receiving accommodations in light of their policies on accessibility and accommodations.
- State should explore the characteristics of students receiving accommodations (gender, ethnicity, free/reduced lunch, time in regular education classroom).
Questions or Comments?
For More Information

- Visit the DIAMOND webpage on the NCEO website: https://nceo.info/About/projects/nceoprojects/diamond