



DIAMOND PROJECT: MAKING OPTIMAL ACCESSIBILITY DECISIONS FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

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DIAMOND
DATA INFORMED ACCESSIBILITY: MAKING
OPTIMAL NEEDS-BASED DECISIONS

Outline

- Accessibility Paradigm Shift
- Overview of the DIAMOND Project
- Developing a Common Language
- Educator Survey
- Focus Groups
- Interviews

A close-up photograph of a young African American boy with short hair, wearing an orange polo shirt, smiling warmly at the camera. He is seated at a desk in a classroom, with other students visible in the background. The background is slightly blurred, showing desks, chairs, and computer monitors, suggesting a modern educational environment.

Accessibility Paradigm Shift

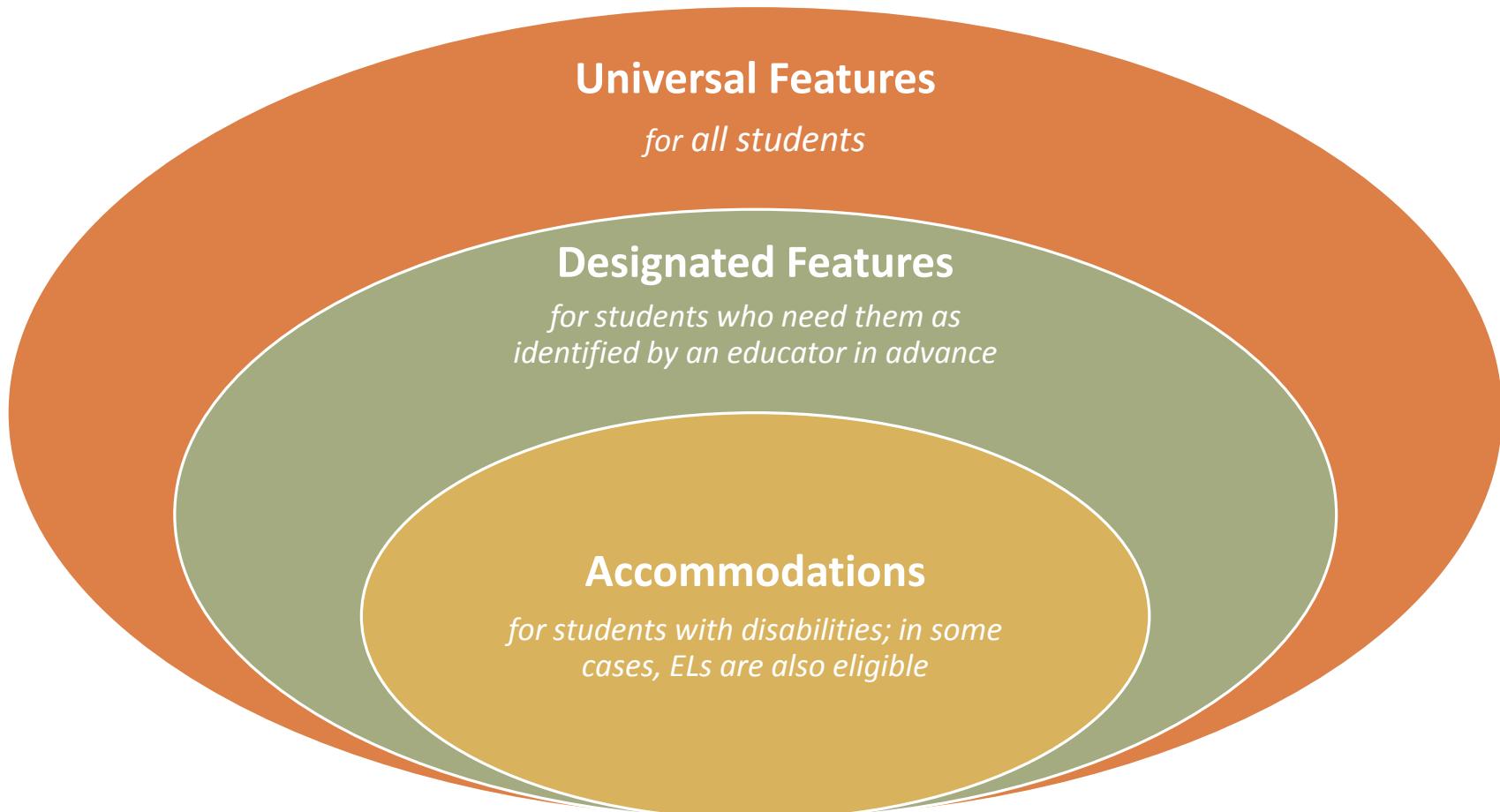
What Do We Mean by Accessibility?

- 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



A photograph of a young Black man with short, dark hair, smiling broadly at the camera. He is wearing a teal t-shirt and has a grey backpack strap over his right shoulder. He is holding a white folder or piece of paper in his left hand. In the background, there are other students blurred out, suggesting a school hallway setting.

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)

Need for Project

“Sue found the features that were available to her unhelpful and confusing to try and use and chose not to use them. Therefore, Sue scored at a kindergarten level on all subject areas, despite being quite advanced and skilled at math and science.”

Purpose

- *DIAMOND stands for Data Informed Accessibility – Making Optimal Needs-based Decisions.*
- *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 USDE 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

A young girl with dark hair, wearing a bright blue top and a black backpack, is smiling at the camera. She is in the foreground, slightly to the left. In the background, three other children are visible but out of focus: a boy in a yellow shirt, a girl in a teal shirt, and another girl in a blue shirt. They appear to be in an outdoor setting with a stone wall.

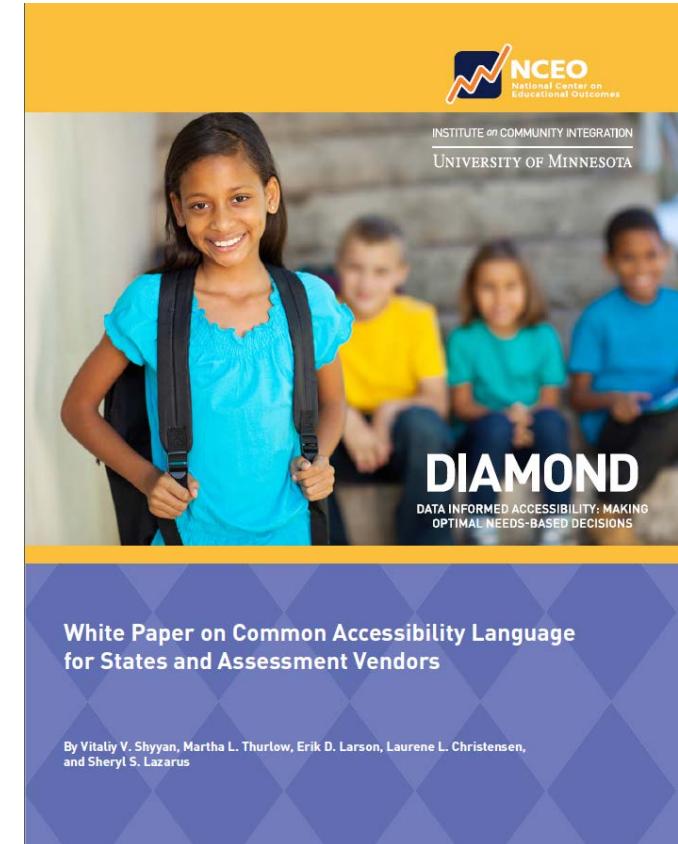
Developing a Common Language

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

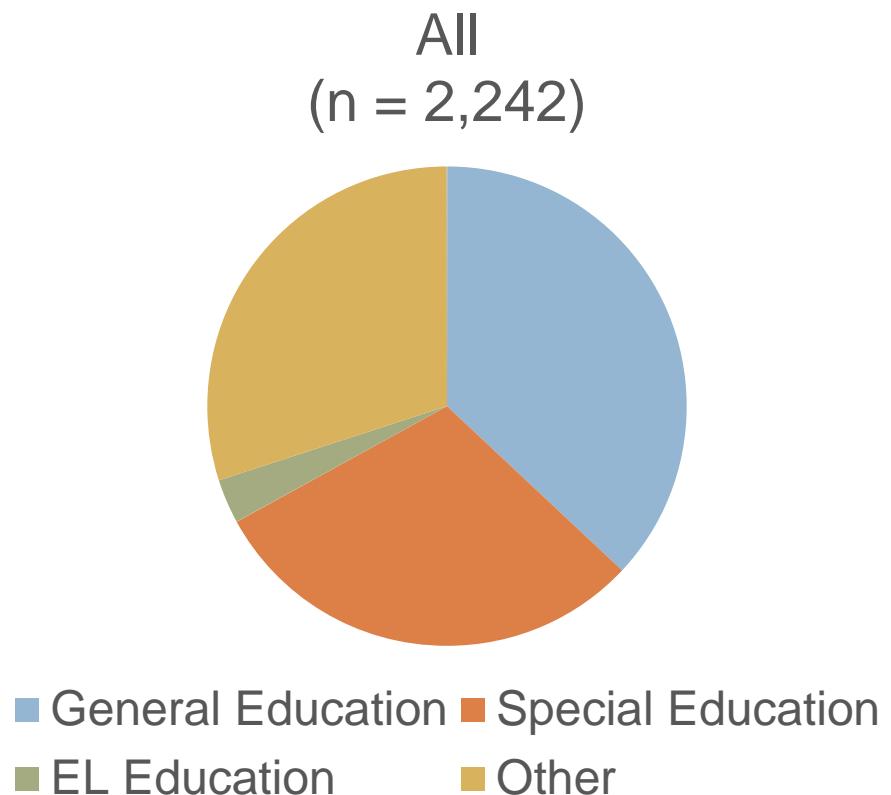


A close-up photograph of a person's hands at a desk. One hand is on a laptop keyboard, and the other is holding a black pen, writing in a spiral-bound notebook. A blue folder or book is partially visible in the foreground.

Educator Survey

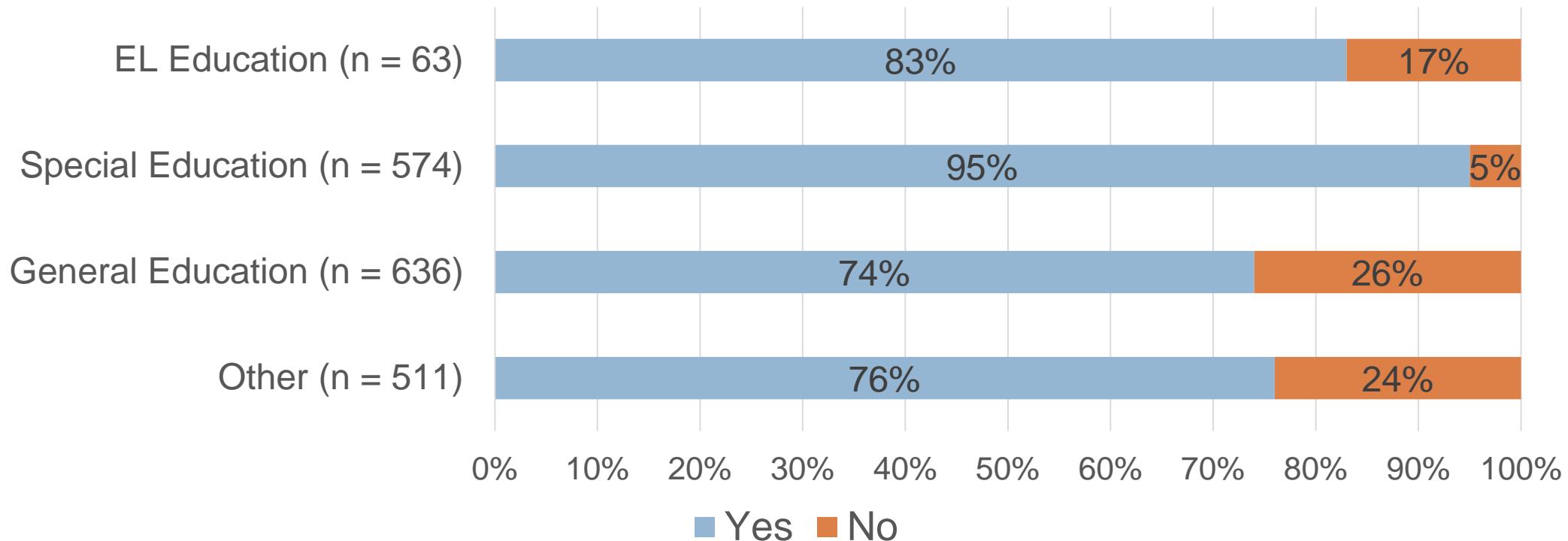
Participants

- 2,250 participants from nine states
- Rural, suburban, and urban schools well represented
- Elementary, middle, and high schools well represented
- EL teachers under-represented



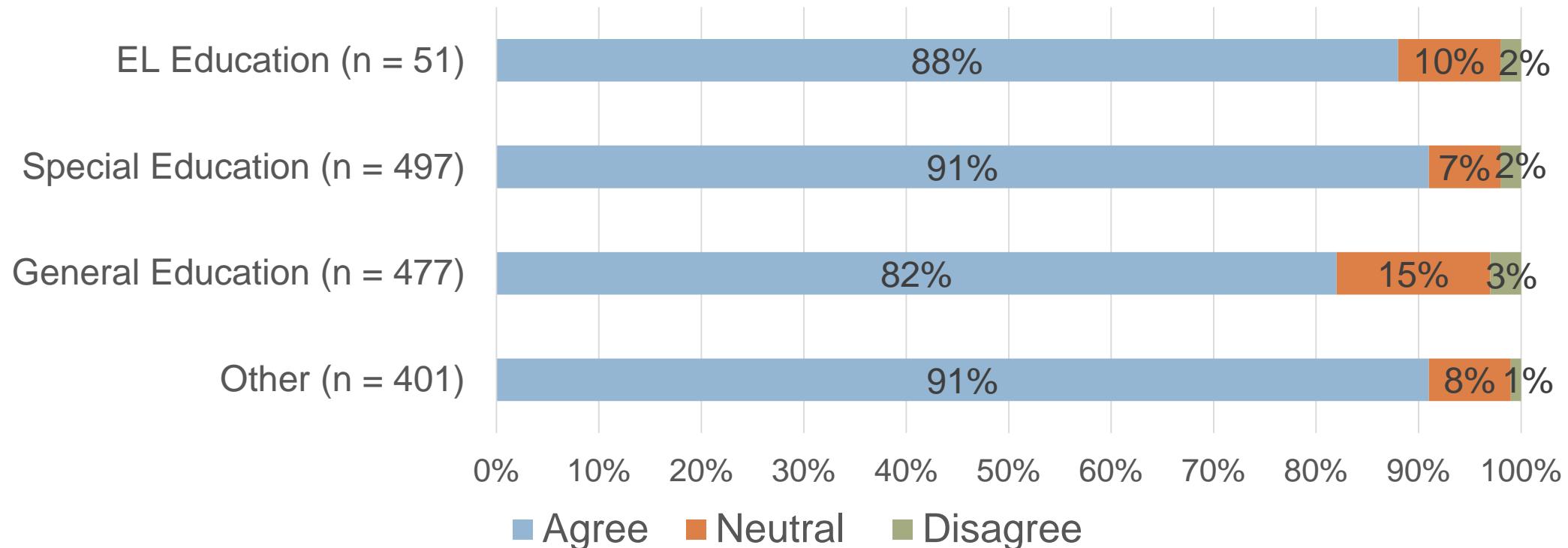
Involvement in Decision Making

Have you contributed to making decisions about a student's designated features or accommodations in the past three years?



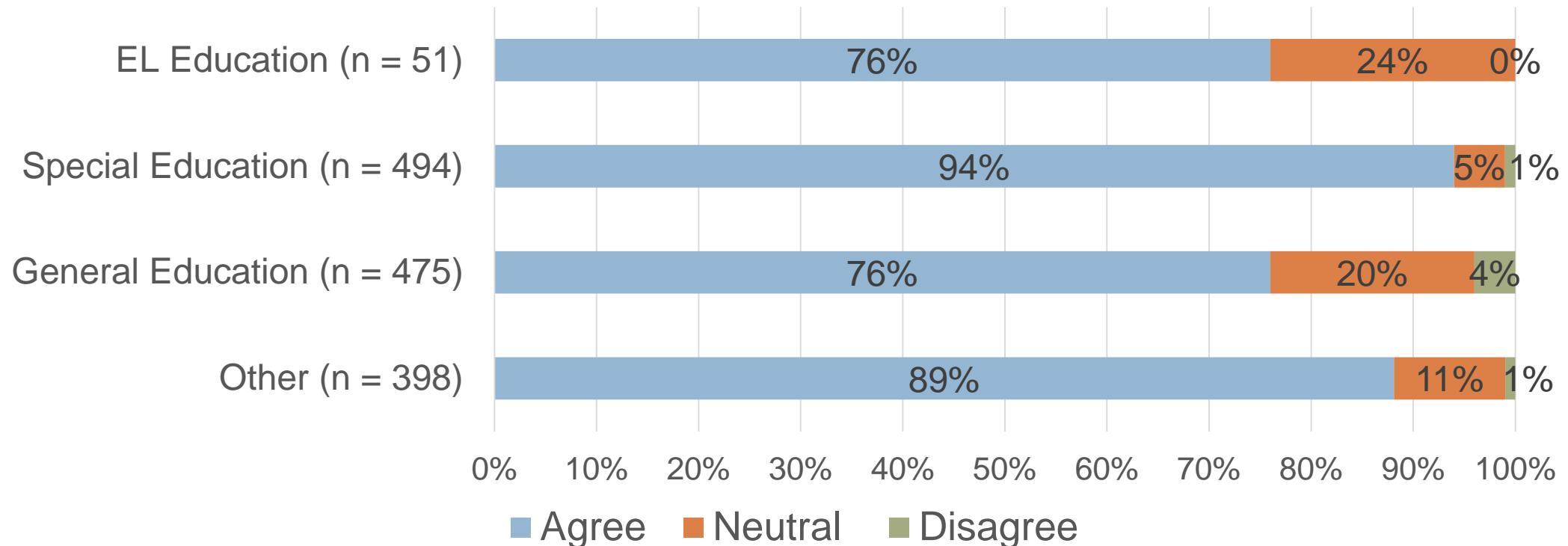
Confidence about Positive Impact

Accessibility features and accommodations have a positive impact on the education of those who use them



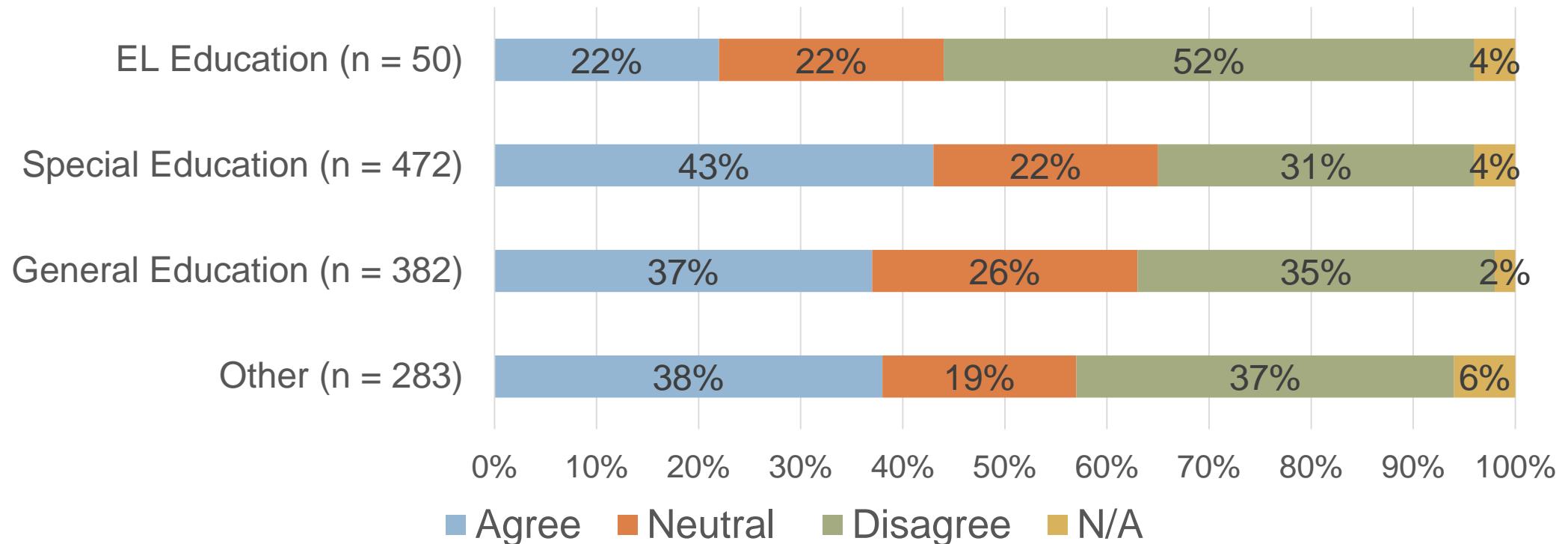
Implementation during Instruction

Implementing accessibility features and accommodations during instruction is a worthwhile use of my time



Training

I received helpful training on accessibility features and accommodations during my undergraduate or graduate study



Supports Used Most Often

ALL EDUCATORS

1. Separate setting
2. Extended time
3. Human reader
4. Student reads test aloud
5. Paper-and-pencil test
6. Answer masking
7. Multiplication table
8. Special calculator
9. General masking
10. Scribe

EL TEACHERS

1. Extended time
2. Native language translation of directions
3. Separate setting
4. Bilingual dictionary
5. Human reader
6. Student reads test aloud
7. Paper-and-pencil test
8. Answer masking
9. Unlimited replays
10. Test-level zoom

Your Thoughts

*Are these results consistent with
your experiences?*



Focus Groups

Participation

- 46 teachers in six focus groups
- Rural, suburban, and urban districts represented
- More elementary than middle or high school teachers
- Nine of 46 participants were EL/bilingual education teachers

Overview of Results

- Regardless of years of experience, general education teachers are less involved in decisions about accessibility features and accommodations
- IEP teams are still the main way of choosing accessibility features and accommodations
- For students who do not have an IEP, decision making falls to:
 - Other types of teams (e.g., assessment team, problem solving team)
 - Specific teachers (e.g., special education teacher, EL teacher)
 - Non-teachers (e.g., school psychologist, testing coordinator)

Overview of Results

- EL and special education teachers often serve as resources for other educators as they make decisions about accessibility features and accommodations
- Teachers use results from summative and formative tests, classroom performance, and multi-tiered interventions as data for choosing accessibility features and accommodations

Implications for Next Steps

- Participants want clear definitions of accessibility features and accommodations
- Participants want professional development for all teachers
- Participants want clear guidelines on how to make accessibility features and accommodations decisions

Your Thoughts

*How do these priorities stack up
against your own?*

A photograph of two young women looking at a tablet screen. The woman on the left is wearing a pink shirt and has her mouth open as if speaking. The woman on the right is wearing a yellow shirt and is smiling. They are both looking down at a white tablet device. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a classroom or library setting.

Interviews

Purpose

- Gain a deeper understanding of how teachers use accessibility features and accommodations with their students
- Interview teachers who represent different professional roles, school levels, and school locations
- Interview about 60 teachers from eight states

Next Step

- From the teachers interviewed by phone, we will select six per state for in-person interviews
- These teachers will arrange for us to meet with a student to see how he or she uses a particular accessibility feature or accommodation
- Unique opportunity to examine teachers and students' perspectives on accessibility features and accommodations

Your Thoughts

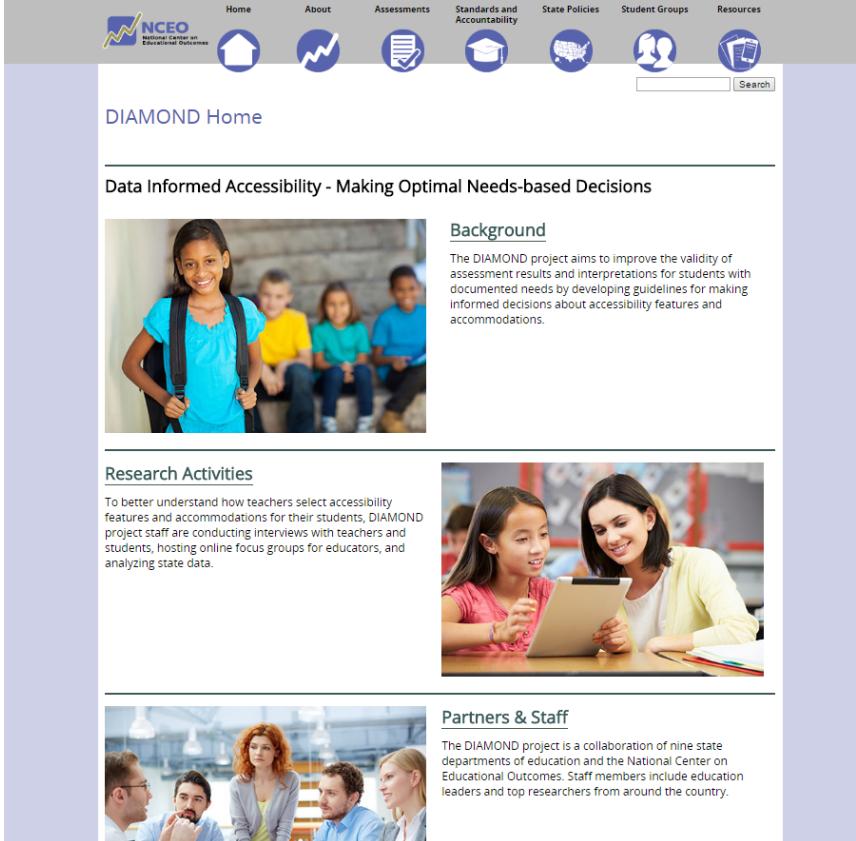
What suggestions do you have for the interviews and student demonstrations?

Questions or Comments?



For More Information

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



The screenshot shows the DIAMOND project page on the NCEO website. The top navigation bar includes links for Home, About, Assessments, Standards and Accountability, State Policies, Student Groups, and Resources, along with a search bar. The main content area features a heading "Data Informed Accessibility - Making Optimal Needs-based Decisions". Below this is a section titled "Background" with a photo of a smiling girl and text about the project's goal to improve assessment validity. Another section titled "Research Activities" shows two women working together with a tablet. The bottom section, "Partners & Staff", shows four people in a meeting. The overall design is clean with blue and white colors.