Unique Considerations for Monitoring Accommodations on the Alternate Assessment

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Considering Students Who Participate in Alternate Assessments

Students who take the alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) are very heterogeneous with diverse accessibility needs.

Characteristics of Students

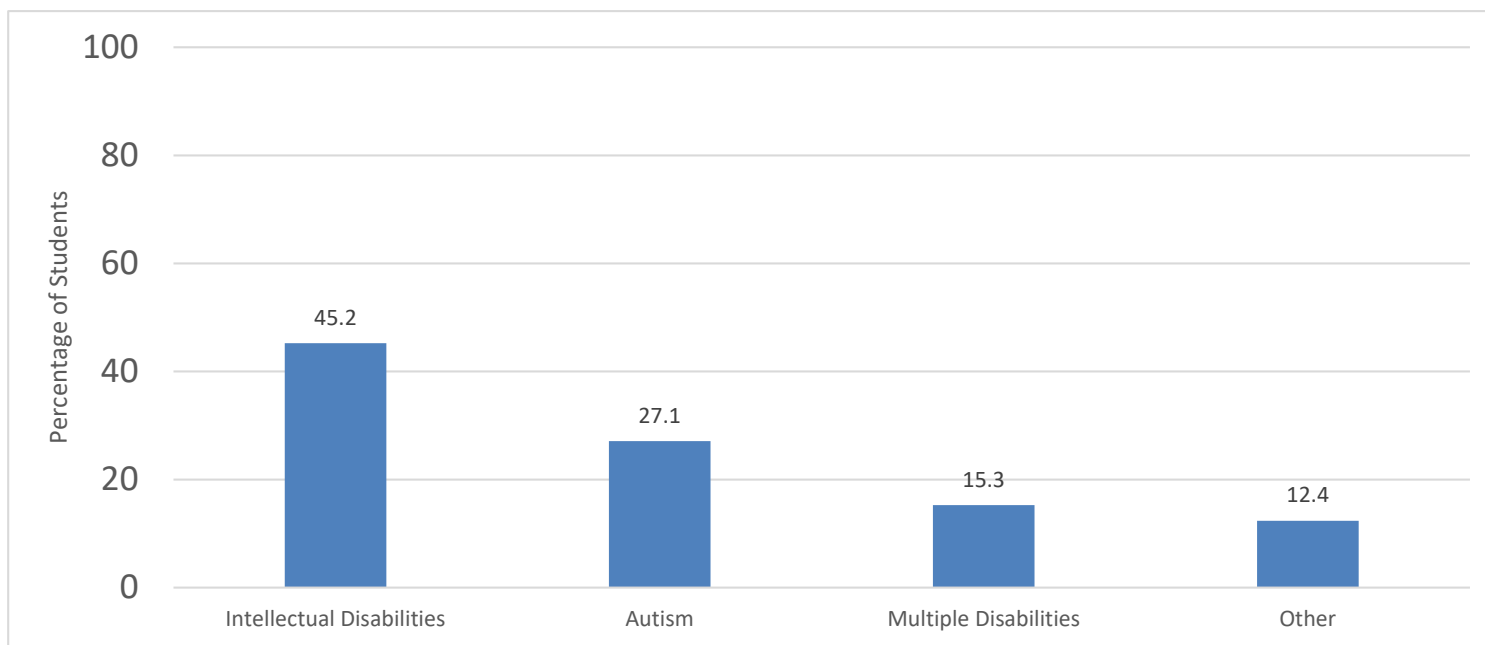Categories of Disabilities of Students Participating in the AA-AAAS

Figure includes data from 15 states (see Thurlow et al., 2016)

Characteristics of Students – cont.

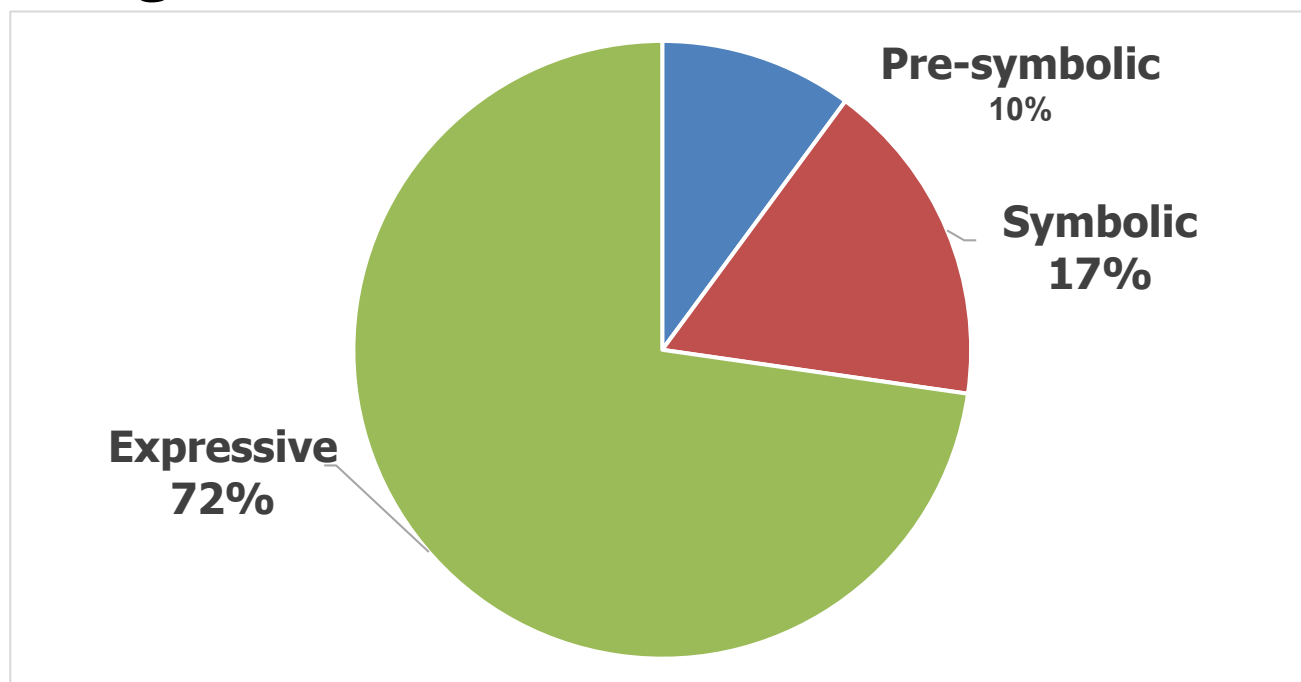Expressive Communication Skills of Students Participating in the AA-AAAS

Figure includes data from 7 states (see Kearns et al., 2011)

Characteristics of Students – cont.

Receptive Communication Skills of Students Participating in the AA-AAAS
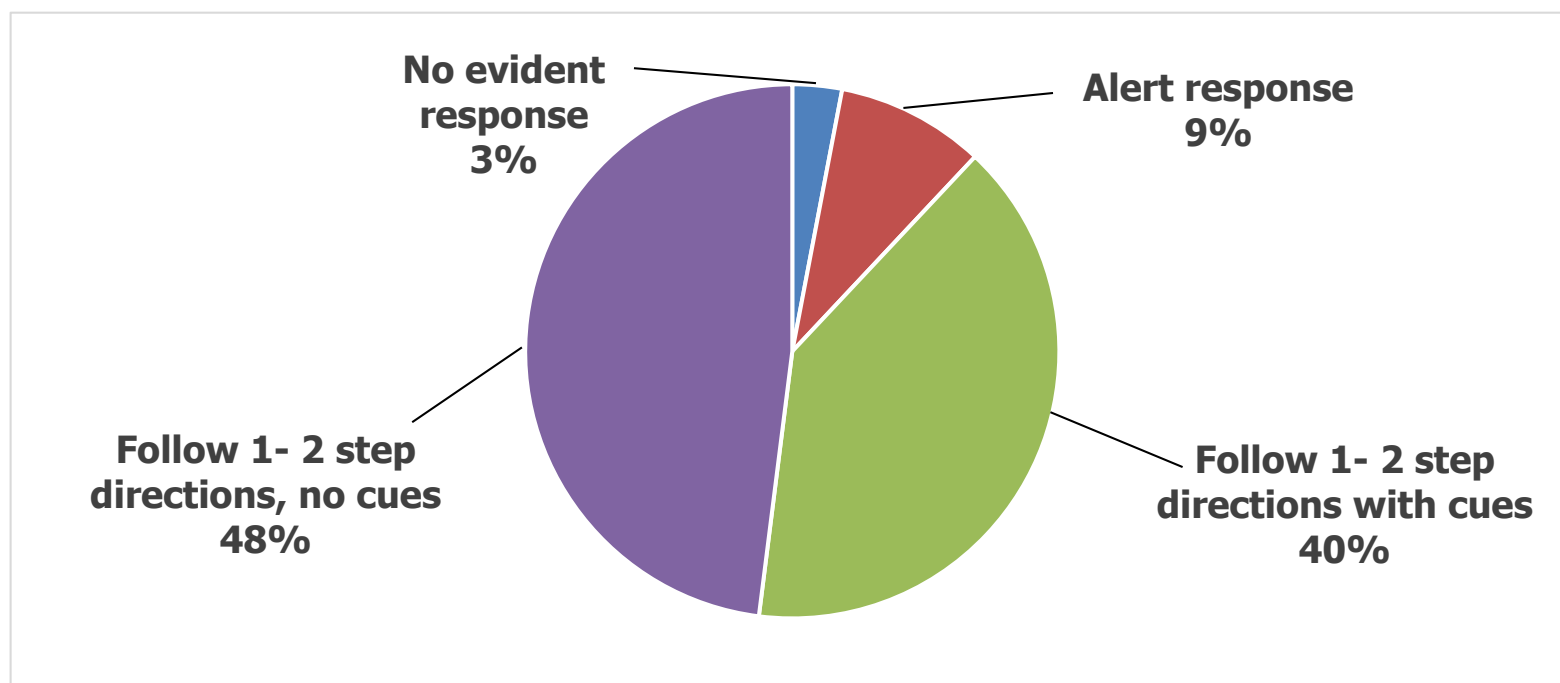

Figure includes data from 7 states (see Kearns et al., 2011)

Background Information

- Historically wide variation in how accessibility and accommodations are approached on the AA-AAAS.
  - Range from states (and the two alternate assessment consortia) that have had accessibility and accommodation policies for years to states that had no policies because they considered the AA-AAAS to the ultimately accessible test, and allowed wide flexibility (but little guidance) in what teachers could do to make the test accessible for each individual student.
- Peer review makes clear that AA-AAAS accommodations are held to the same criteria as accommodations for other assessments (Critical Element 5.3).

Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)

- Has a three-tiered accessibility system:
  - **Category 1**: Settings within personal needs profile (PNP) that activates supports (e.g., color overlay, magnification, etc.)
  - **Category 2**: Settings within PNP that require additional supports or materials (e.g., braille, individualized manipulatives, single or double switch, calculator, etc.)
  - **Category 3**: Supports provided by a human (e.g., read aloud, sign language interpretation, etc.)

Source: Dynamic Learning Maps Accessibility Manual, 2018-2019

Multi-state Alternate Assessment (MSAA)

- Administered computer/laptop/table, paper/pencil, or hybrid. Paper version is an accommodation.
- **Accessibility Features**: ". . . accessibility features should be based on individual needs." Separate lists by type of administration
  - Computer/laptop/tablet (e.g. allowed reading, alternate color theme tool, line reader tool, answer masking tool, manipulative for mathematics, etc.)
  - Paper/pencil (e.g., allowed reading, alternate color themes – acetate overlays, answer masking, manipulatives for mathematics, etc.)

Source: MSAA Test Administration Manual: March 18-May3, 2019

Multi-state Alternate Assessment (MSAA), Cont.

- **Accommodations**: "Accommodations are changes to the standard administration of an assessment that do not alter the construct being measured. Any accommodation required by a student must be included in the student's IEP prior to testing." (paper version, assistive technology, scribe, sign language).

Source: MSAA Test Administration Manual: March 18-May3, 2019

State Example: Hawaii

- **Universal Tools:** includes embedded and non-embedded. "A general rule of thumb is to provide the same level of supports during the alternate assessment as are regularly provided during instruction." (e.g., magnification, masking – paper version only, noise buffers, separate setting, etc.)

- **Accommodations**: (e.g., paper/pencil, alternate response options, scribe, concrete items, calculator, etc.)

Don't Forget the Accessibility Needs of ELS with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

- Need to consider accessibility needs for both content and ELP alternate assessments.

- Need to ensure that there are policies which address both special education and linguistic needs.

Underlying Challenges

- Wide variation across states and consortia in approaches and terminology used.

- Educators, test administrators, and humans providing accessibility and accommodations may fail to understand the relationship between instruction and assessment accessibility features and accommodations.

Strategies

- Review accessibility and accommodations policies; revise as needed.
- Collect and analyze data.
- Provide professional development to educators on accessibility and accommodations decision making for both instruction and assessment.
- Work with other SEA agencies to develop and revise policies for the accessibility and accommodations decision-making process for alternate ELP assessment.

For More Information

www.nceo.info

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