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Improving the validity of assessment results  
for English language learners with disabilities

# Including students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing in English language proficiency assessments: A review of state policies

Laurene L. Christensen, Debra A. Albus, Aleksis Kincaid, Kristi K. Liu, Elizabeth M. Christian,  
and Martha L. Thurlow

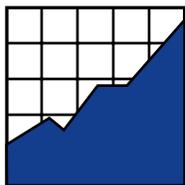
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## Executive Summary

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English language learners (ELLs) with and without disabilities are required to participate in all state and district assessments, including assessments used for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to demonstrate academic proficiency in different content areas for accountability purposes (Title I), assessments used to measure annual growth in English proficiency (Title III, i.e., Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening), and other state and local assessments administered to all students.

This report documents participation and accommodation policies for ELLs who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing (HH) on English language proficiency (ELP) assessments used for Title III accountability. Accommodations policies are discussed with reference to five accommodations commonly used by ELLs who are Deaf/HH, including: Sign Interpret Directions, Sign Interpret Questions, Visual Cues, Sign Response, and Amplification Equipment.

Key findings include:

Of the 49 states with participation criteria, slightly more than half ( $n=29$ ) allowed **selective participation** (i.e., requiring a student to take some parts of an ELP assessment, such as Reading and Writing, but not others, such as Listening or Speaking) based on a specific disability. Of these, 26 allowed selective participation for ELLs who were Deaf/HH.

Across all domains, **Sign Interpret Directions** and **Amplification Equipment** were the least controversial accommodations, with the majority of states allowing their use (range of 36-38 and 35-36 states, respectively) on all assessment domains.

**Sign Interpret Questions** was consistently prohibited across assessment domains by the majority of states (prohibited in 30-32 states). Sign Interpret Questions was the only accommodation to be allowed only in certain circumstances or with scoring implications.

**Sign Response** was prohibited in the majority of states across all assessment domains (prohibited in 26-27 states). Yet, there was a small number of states that allowed its use (allowed in 2-3 states).

Very few states had policies about **Visual Cues** ( $n=5$ ). Of the states that had policies, Visual Cues was consistently allowed in four states, and prohibited in one state.

Over time, states' policies on participation and accommodations on ELP assessments for ELLs who are Deaf/HH have continued to evolve and become more detailed. Still, there is room for improvement. States should continue to evaluate the construct being measured by each domain and evaluate how specific accommodations impact the validity of student scores. Controversial accommodations should be re-evaluated to make sure that the greatest numbers of students have access to the assessment while maintaining the construct being measured. States should also determine whether and in what circumstances selective participation by domain is appropriate for ELLs who are Deaf/HH.



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## Overview

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From 1992 to the present, reports published by NCEO have tracked the changes made to federal laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990 and Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as well as the impact of these changes on the participation and inclusion of students with disabilities in state assessments, the participation options available to students, and the accommodations that may or may not be used by students with disabilities on state assessments (Christensen, Braam, Scullin, & Thurlow, 2011; Christensen, Lazarus, Crone, & Thurlow, 2008; Clapper, Morse, Lazarus, Thompson, & Thurlow, 2005; Lazarus, Thurlow, Lail, Eisenbraun, & Kato, 2006; Thurlow, Lazarus, Thompson, & Robey, 2002; Thurlow, Scott, & Ysseldyke, 1995a, 1995b; Thurlow, Seyfarth, Scott, & Ysseldyke, 1997; Thurlow, Ysseldyke, & Silverstein, 1993). These reports have focused on participation in content assessments (i.e., Reading/English Language Arts, Math, and Science) in state accountability systems. Under Title I and III of ESEA, students with disabilities who are English language learners (ELLs) also are required to take annual state assessments measuring progress toward attaining English language proficiency in Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking (No Child Left Behind, 2001).

Because the focus of ELP assessments is to measure levels of proficiency in English language skills across specific domains, it is important for policymakers to consider diverse linguistic and disability perspectives when developing their state participation and accommodation policies for these assessments. NCEO previously highlighted this need in reports that analyzed the participation and accommodation policies for ELLs with disabilities in ELP assessments (Albus & Thurlow, 2007, 2008). These reports analyzed accommodations using the categories of “indirect linguistic support” and “direct linguistic support” that had been put forth by the George Washington University’s Center for Equity and Excellence in Education website and had been used in previous policy studies (Rivera & Collum, 2006). Although the current report does not use these linguistic categories in analyzing the data collected, we have drawn from linguistic and disability perspectives throughout the process of this study and in the interpretation of the policies.

An additional report published as part of the Improving the Validity of Assessment Results for English Language Learners with Disabilities project (IVARED) focused on state participation and accommodations policies for the broad population of ELLs with disabilities on ELP assessments in the 2009-2010 school year (Christensen, Albus, Liu, Thurlow, & Kincaid, 2013). Two related reports focusing on state participation and accommodation policies relevant to ELLs who are Deaf/HH and ELLs who are Blind/Visually Impaired were developed, due to the unique needs of these low incidence populations. This report addresses state participation and accommodation policies relevant to the assessment of ELLs who are Deaf/HH. State policies

relevant to the assessment of ELLs who are Blind/Visually Impaired are addressed in another report (Christensen, Albus, Kincaid, Christian, Liu, & Thurlow, 2014).

States face several challenges in assessing the English language proficiency of ELLs who are Deaf/HH. States must report on the progress of all ELLs in the domains of Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking, although the disability of students who are Deaf/HH may preclude them from participating meaningfully in certain domains of the assessment (specifically the Listening and Speaking domains) in the same way as their peers without disabilities. States must provide scores for each individual student in each assessment domain for accountability purposes, and students must have scores in each assessment domain in order to exit English language instruction programs. To ensure that ELLs who are Deaf/HH participate meaningfully in ELP assessments, states have developed participation and accommodations policies to direct IEP teams making decisions for individuals in this population. These policies are examined in detail in this report.

## Process Used to Review State Policies

This abbreviated report relied on methods that are described in more detail in the full report on all participation and accommodation policies for the broad population of ELLs with disabilities (Christensen et al., 2013). A search for online state participation and accommodation policies for 2009-2010 English proficiency assessments occurred during October, 2010, and March, 2011. Policies for the 50 states and Washington, DC were collected. Some states' accommodation policies were not available online publicly. For example, for one state an administration manual for a consortium-developed assessment was publicly available but was not available on any of the other state websites. The data from this document along with information available at the consortium's website were sent for verification to leading staff for the consortium before being added to summary documents that were sent to states for verification. See Christensen et al. (2013) for more information on the processes used to review state policies, and for informational tables on states' participation and accommodations policies.

## Organization of Report

This report is divided into two sections. Section 1 presents information collected on state participation policies for ELLs who are Deaf/HH. Section 2 presents a review of accommodation policies focused on the four domains of the ELP assessment: Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening. Section 2 also includes an analysis of five selected accommodations in states with computer-based ELP assessments. The selected accommodations highlighted in this report are those that are most typically used by Deaf/HH students to meet their specific needs. These accommodations include Sign Interpret Directions, Sign Interpret Questions, Visual Cues, Sign

Response, and Amplification Equipment. Our definition of signing included only American Sign Language (ASL).

Accommodation policies for the ELP assessment are compared to those for the content assessment in the discussion section of this report. Information about accommodations for the content assessment is based on 2009 state policies (Christensen et al., 2011). All assessment policies presented in figures and tables are from documents collected for the 2009-2010 year (see Christensen et al., 2013, for more information).

## Section 1—Participation Policies

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In this section, we examine the participation options and criteria states provided to IEP teams to guide decision making about the portions of the ELP assessment in which ELLs participated. For the purposes of this report, we present only the participation options that affect ELLs who are Deaf/HH.

### Participation Options

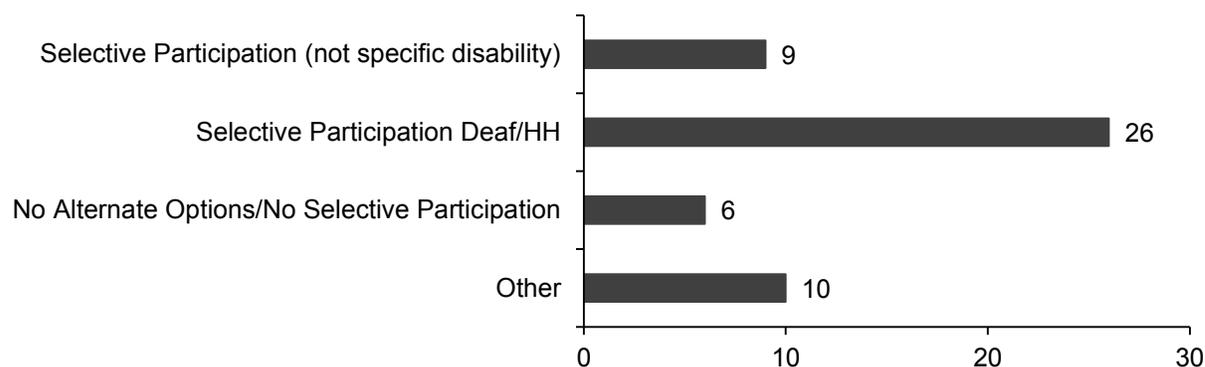
ELLs participate in all domains of the ELP assessment (Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking) with or without accommodations. Some states allow ELLs to take an alternate assessment for specific domains on the ELP assessment, or for the whole assessment.

In addition to participation with or without accommodations, and participation in alternate assessments, some states allow selective participation for ELLs on the ELP assessment. Selective participation means a state allows some ELLs to take certain parts of the ELP assessment without being required to take others, such as taking the Reading and Writing tests but not taking the Listening or Speaking tests. Sometimes selective participation is allowed without limitations, but often it is available only for a specific type of disability (e.g., Deaf/HH).

Participation policies were obtained for 50 states; the state of Connecticut did not have a policy publicly available online. An additional 10 states did not have information about selective participation in policy documents. Figure 1 shows the participation options made available in the remaining 40 states with reference to Deaf/HH students. Of 35 states with policies allowing selective participation for certain ELLs, 9 states allowed selective participation without reference to a specific disability, and 29 states allowed selective participation based on specific disability categories (some states fell into both categories). Among the 29 states where policies offered selective participation options for students with specific disabilities, policies in 26 states allowed students who were Deaf/HH to selectively participate (generally indicating that they were not required to participate in the Listening domain), and policies in 25 states allowed

non-participation in the Speaking domain. Policies in six states were explicit about prohibiting alternate options for the ELP assessment, requiring all students to participate fully (i.e., no selective participation). The “Other” category includes states where policies authorized an IEP team to decide whether all domains of a state’s ELP assessment were appropriate for a student. One state policy allowed an alternative way for assessing ELLs with disabilities on the ELP assessment, in part or for the whole assessment.

**Figure 1. Summary of Types of Additional Participation Options**



Note: State N=40. Categories of options in the figure overlap.

## Section 2—Accommodation Policies

In this section, we examine the accommodations policies states provided to IEP teams to guide decision making about which accommodations could be used by ELLs on ELP assessments. For the purposes of this report, we present accommodations options that affect ELLs who are Deaf/HH.

Accommodation policies for ELP assessments were publicly available online for 49 of the 51 states (which included Washington, DC) that we examined. In two states, Connecticut and Iowa, there were no accommodation policies available on either the state website or a consortium website that provided accommodation policy information for a consortium-developed assessment.

### Type of Accommodation and Impact of Use

In the following section, tables illustrate how five accommodations commonly used by ELLs who are Deaf/HH (Sign Interpret Directions, Sign Interpret Questions, Visual Cues, Sign Response, and Amplification Equipment) impact scoring in each of the four domains on the ELP assessment, as noted in state accommodations policies. The five highlighted accommodations fall into three broad accommodation categories: Presentation (Sign Interpret Directions, Sign Interpret Questions, and Visual Cues); Response (Sign Response); and Equipment (Amplification Equipment).

Assessment scores are affected by the use of accommodations in one of several ways. Accommodations may be allowed, allowed in certain circumstances, allowed with implications for scoring, allowed in certain circumstances and with implications for scoring, or prohibited. A particular accommodation may be categorized differently in different state policies (e.g., some states may allow the use of Sign Interpret Directions on the Reading assessment, while other states prohibit the same accommodation). These differences are examined in detail here.

The majority of states had policies for Sign Interpret Directions and Questions, Sign Response, and Amplification Equipment. Very few states had policies on the use of Visual Cues ( $n=6$ ) across the four domains of the ELP assessment.

## **Reading**

Table 1 summarizes state policies for accommodations that are used by ELLs who are Deaf/HH for the Reading domain of the ELP assessment. Under Presentation accommodations, we included sign language interpretation as two separate accommodations: Sign Interpret Directions and Sign Interpret Questions. Policies in 36 states allowed Sign Interpret Directions on the Reading portion of the ELP assessment. Policies in 7 states prohibited Sign Interpret Directions for the ELP assessment. One state policy allowed Sign Interpret Questions for the ELP assessment, 3 states allowed it with implications for scoring, and 1 state allowed it in certain circumstances with implications for scoring. Policies in 32 states prohibited the accommodation Sign Interpret Questions for the ELP assessment. The Visual Cues accommodation was allowed in four states and was prohibited in 1 state on the ELP assessment.

One response accommodation, Sign Response, was included in this analysis. Policies in 3 states allowed Sign Response for ELLs with an IEP/504 taking the ELP assessment. Policies in 26 states prohibited the use of Sign Response in the Reading component of the ELP assessment.

Under the Equipment category, we examined Amplification Equipment (i.e., equipment that increases the level of sound during a test). Policies in 36 states allowed Amplification Equipment for the Reading component of the ELP assessment.

**Table 1. Number of Regular States Where Policies Allowed or Prohibited Selected Accommodations on the Reading Domain of the State ELP Assessment**

Accommodation	Type of Accommodation/Impact of Use <sup>a</sup>					
	A	AC	AI	AC/AI	P	NI
<b>Presentation</b>						
Sign Interpret Directions	36 <sup>1</sup>	0	0	0	7	8
Sign Interpret Questions	1 <sup>2</sup>	0	3	1 <sup>4</sup>	32	14
Visual Cues	4	0	0	0	1	46
<b>Response</b>						
Sign Response	3	0	0	0	26	22
<b>Equipment</b>						
Amplification Equipment	36 <sup>3</sup>	0	0	0	0	15

<sup>a</sup>A = Allowed with IEP or 504; AC = Allowed in Certain Circumstances; AI = Allowed with Implications for Scoring; AC/AI = Allowed in Certain Circumstances and there are Implications for Scoring; P = Prohibited; NI = No Policy or No Information.

<sup>1</sup> One state allowed Sign Interpret Directions for ELLs without an IEP/504.

<sup>2</sup> One state allowed Sign Interpret Questions for ELLs without an IEP/504.

<sup>3</sup> Two states allowed Amplification Equipment for ELLs without an IEP/504.

<sup>4</sup> One state allowed the oral prompt parts of questions to be signed, with implications for scoring.

*Definitions:*

**Amplification Equipment** = equipment that increases the level of sound during the test (e.g., hearing aids).

**Sign Interpret Directions** = directions portion of the assessment presented to the student via sign language.

**Sign Interpret Questions** = assessment items presented to the student via sign language.

**Sign Response** = responses may be given by sign language to a sign language interpreter.

**Visual Cues** = additional visual cues are provided for students, such as arrows or stickers.

## Writing

Table 2 summarizes state policies for accommodations used by ELLs who are Deaf/HH for the Writing domain of the ELP assessment. A large number of states allowed Sign Interpret Directions ( $n=36$ ), and a small number of states allowed Visual Cues ( $n=4$ ) on the Writing portion of the ELP assessment. The majority of states prohibited Sign Interpret Questions ( $n=30$ ), 6 states prohibited Sign Interpret Directions, and only 1 state explicitly prohibited Visual Cues on the ELP assessment.

Three states allowed the use of the Sign Response accommodation on the writing portion of the ELP assessment. Policies in 27 states prohibited its use on ELP assessments. Amplification Equipment was allowed in 35 states on the Writing domain of the ELP assessment.

**Table 2. Number of Regular States Where Policies Allowed or Prohibited Selected Accommodations on the Writing Domain of the State ELP Assessment**

Accommodation	Type of Accommodation/Impact of Use <sup>a</sup>					
	A	AC	AI	AC/AI	P	NI
<b>Presentation</b>						
Sign Interpret Directions	36 <sup>1</sup>	0	0	0	6	9
Sign Interpret Questions	5 <sup>2</sup>	0	2	0	30	14
Visual Cues	4	0	0	0	1	46
<b>Response</b>						
Sign Response	3	0	0	0	27	21
<b>Equipment</b>						
Amplification Equipment	35 <sup>3</sup>	0	0	0	0	16

<sup>a</sup>A = Allowed with IEP or 504; AC = Allowed in Certain Circumstances; AI = Allowed with Implications for Scoring; AC/AI = Allowed in Certain Circumstances and there are Implications for Scoring; P = Prohibited; NI = No Policy or No Information.

<sup>1</sup>One state allowed Sign Interpret Directions for ELLs without an IEP/504.

<sup>2</sup>One state allowed Sign Interpret Questions for ELLs without an IEP/504.

<sup>3</sup>Two states allowed Amplification Equipment for ELLs without an IEP/504.

*Definitions:*

**Amplification Equipment** = equipment that increases the level of sound during the test (e.g., hearing aids).

**Sign Interpret Directions** = directions portion of the assessment presented to the student via sign language.

**Sign Interpret Questions** = assessment items presented to the student via sign language.

**Sign Response** = responses may be given by sign language to a sign language interpreter.

**Visual Cues** = additional visual cues are provided for students, such as arrows or stickers.

## Listening

Table 3 summarizes state policies for accommodations that are used by ELLs who are Deaf/HH for the Listening domain of the ELP assessment. The majority of states allowed Sign Interpret Directions ( $n=38$ ), while only 5 states allowed the use of Sign Interpret Questions, and 4 states allowed the use of Visual Cues on the ELP assessment. Sign Interpret Questions was the most controversial of the three accommodations in the Presentation category. One state allowed it

with implications for scoring on the ELP assessment, and 30 states prohibited its use on ELP assessments.

Sign Response was allowed in 2 states on the Listening portion of the ELP assessment. It was prohibited by 27 states on the ELP assessment. Amplification Equipment was allowed by 35 states on the ELP assessment.

**Table 3. Number of Regular States Where Policies Allowed or Prohibited Selected Accommodations on the Listening Domain of the State ELP Assessment**

Accommodation	Type of Accommodation/Impact of Use <sup>a</sup>					
	A	AC	AI	AC/AI	P	NI
<b>Presentation</b>						
Sign Interpret Directions	38 <sup>1</sup>	0	0	0	4	9
Sign Interpret Questions	6 <sup>2</sup>	0	1	0	30	14
Visual Cues	4 <sup>3</sup>	0	0	0	1	46
<b>Response</b>						
Sign Response	2 <sup>4</sup>	0	0	0	27	22
<b>Equipment</b>						
Amplification Equipment	35 <sup>5</sup>	0	0	0	0	16

<sup>a</sup>A = Allowed with IEP or 504; AC = Allowed in Certain Circumstances; AI = Allowed with Implications for Scoring; AC/AI = Allowed in Certain Circumstances and there are Implications for Scoring; P = Prohibited; NI = No Policy or No Information.

<sup>1</sup> One state allowed Sign Interpret Directions for ELLs without an IEP/504.

<sup>2</sup> One state allowed Sign Interpret Questions for ELLs without an IEP/504.

<sup>3</sup> One state allowed Visual Cues for ELLs without an IEP/504.

<sup>4</sup> One state allowed Sign Response for ELLs without an IEP/504.

<sup>5</sup> Two states allowed Amplification Equipment without an IEP/504.

*Definitions:*

**Amplification Equipment** = equipment that increases the level of sound during the test (e.g., hearing aids).

**Sign Interpret Directions** = directions portion of the assessment presented to the student via sign language.

**Sign Interpret Questions** = assessment items presented to the student via sign language.

**Sign Response** = responses may be given by sign language to a sign language interpreter.

**Visual Cues** = additional visual cues are provided for students, such as arrows or stickers.

## Speaking

Table 4 summarizes state policies for accommodations that are used by ELLs who are Deaf/HH for the Speaking domain of the ELP assessment. The majority of states allowed Sign Interpret Directions ( $n=37$ ), while a small number of states prohibited its use ( $n=5$ ). The use of Sign Interpret Questions on the Speaking domain of the ELP assessment was more controversial, with

5 states allowing its use, and 31 states prohibiting its use. The Visual Cues accommodation was allowed in 4 states and prohibited by 1 state on the Speaking domain of the ELP assessment.

Sign Interpret Response was allowed by 3 states and prohibited by 26 on the Speaking domain of the ELP assessment. Amplification Equipment was allowed by 35 states on the ELP assessment.

**Table 4. Number of Regular States Where Policies Allowed or Prohibited Selected Accommodations on the Speaking Domain of the State ELP Assessment**

Accommodation	Type of Accommodation/Impact of Use <sup>a</sup>					
	A	AC	AI	AC/AI	P	NI
<b>Presentation</b>						
Sign Interpret Directions	37 <sup>1</sup>	0	0	0	5	9
Sign Interpret Questions	5 <sup>2</sup>	0	1	0	31	14
Visual Cues	4 <sup>3</sup>	0	0	0	1	46
<b>Response</b>						
Sign Response	3 <sup>4</sup>	0	0	0	26	22
<b>Equipment</b>						
Amplification Equipment	35 <sup>5</sup>	0	0	0	0	16

<sup>a</sup>A = Allowed with IEP or 504; AC = Allowed in Certain Circumstances; AI = Allowed with Implications for Scoring; AC/AI = Allowed in Certain Circumstances and there are Implications for Scoring; P = Prohibited; NI = No Policy or No Information.

<sup>1</sup>One state allowed Sign Interpret Directions for ELLs without an IEP/504.

<sup>2</sup>One state allowed Sign Interpret Questions for ELLs without an IEP/504.

<sup>3</sup>One state allowed Visual Cues for ELLs without an IEP/504.

<sup>4</sup>One state allowed Sign Response for ELLs without an IEP/504.

<sup>5</sup>Two states allowed Amplification Equipment without an IEP/504.

*Definitions:*

**Amplification Equipment** = equipment that increases the level of sound during the test (e.g., hearing aids).

**Sign Interpret Directions** = directions portion of the assessment presented to the student via sign language.

**Sign Interpret Questions** = assessment items presented to the student via sign language.

**Sign Response** = responses may be given by sign language to a sign language interpreter.

**Visual Cues** = additional visual cues are provided for students, such as arrows or stickers.

### Accommodation Summaries Across Domains

This section provides an overview of the policies for each accommodation across the four ELP assessment domains detailed in the previous section. State results are presented as a range (for example, Sign Interpret Directions was allowed in 36 to 38 states depending on which assessment domain was investigated).

### **Sign Interpret Directions**

The number of states that either allowed or prohibited this accommodation was fairly consistent across the ELP assessment domains of Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking. Sign Interpret Directions was allowed in 36 to 38 states across all domains on the ELP assessment. It was prohibited in 4 to 7 states. States were more likely to prohibit Sign Interpret Directions for the Reading and Writing domains of the ELP assessment.

### **Sign Interpret Questions**

The use of Sign Interpret Questions was more controversial than Sign Interpret Directions. This accommodation was allowed in 1 to 6 states across all domains on the ELP assessment. Between 1 to 3 states allowed Sign Interpret Questions with implications for scoring on the ELP assessment. Sign Interpret Questions was prohibited in 30 to 32 states across domains on the ELP assessment.

### **Visual Cues**

Very few states had policies on the use of Visual Cues for the ELP assessment ( $n=5$ ). Four states allowed Visual Cues across all domains on the ELP assessment. One state policy prohibited its use across all domains on the ELP assessment.

### **Sign Response**

Students were allowed to sign responses in 2 to 3 states across domains on the ELP assessment. The accommodation was prohibited in 26 to 27 states across domains on the ELP assessment.

### **Amplification Equipment**

Amplification Equipment appeared to be fairly noncontroversial for the ELP assessment. The accommodation was allowed in 35 to 36 states across domains.

### **Administration Guidelines**

Only 4 state policies included signing guidelines for any part of an ELP assessment. Three of these states' policies contained guidelines specific to the Sign Interpret Directions and Sign Interpret Questions accommodations. All 4 state policies addressed use of the Sign Response accommodation.

## Accommodation Policies by States with Computer-based ELP Assessments

An increasing number of states have changed policies to incorporate computer-based delivery of the ELP assessment in recent years (Thurlow, Lazarus, Albus, & Hodgson, 2010). Computer-based ELP assessments were administered in three states: Massachusetts, Oregon, and Texas. Participation policies for computer-based ELP assessments varied in the restrictions they placed on selective participation (i.e., whether a student needed to have an IEP for a disability such as Deaf/HH).

Table 5 presents a comparison of accommodation policies for the five common accommodations administered to ELLs who are Deaf/HH in the 3 states with computer-delivered ELP assessments. One state policy allowed Sign Interpret Directions for all domains, and 1 state policy allowed it for one domain. One state policy prohibited Sign Interpret Directions for all domains. Sign Interpret Questions was not available for any domain in 1 state, and 2 state policies contained no information about this accommodation. One state allowed Visual Cues for all domains of the computer-delivered ELP assessment, and 2 had no information.

Sign Response was allowed in 1 state for one or more domains of the computer-delivered ELP assessment. Another state indicated that Sign Response was not available for any domain, and one other state policy had no information on the use of Sign Response for the computer-delivered ELP assessment. Policies in 2 states allowed Amplification Equipment for all domains. One state allowed it for one or more domains on the computer-delivered ELP assessment.

**Table 5. Comparison of Accommodation Policies Across States with Online ELP Assessments**

Accommodation	Allowed for all domains	Allowed for one or more domains	Not available for any domain	Not allowed for any domain	No information
<b>Presentation</b>					
Sign Interpret Directions	1	1	0	1	0
Sign Interpret Questions	0	0	1	0	2
Visual Cues	1	0	0	0	2
<b>Response</b>					
Sign Response	0	1	1	0	1
<b>Equipment</b>					
Amplification Equipment	2	1	0	0	0

**Amplification Equipment** = equipment that increases the level of sound during the test (e.g., hearing aids).

**Sign Interpret Directions** = directions portion of the assessment presented to the student via sign language.

**Sign Interpret Questions** = assessment items presented to the student via sign language.

**Sign Response** = responses may be given by sign language to a sign language interpreter.

**Visual Cues** = additional visual cues are provided for students, such as arrows or stickers.

## Discussion

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### Participation Policies

The majority of the 50 states and Washington, DC offered policy information online for their ELP assessments ( $n=49$ ). Only 2 states did not have public participation policies online. States addressed the participation of ELLs who are Deaf/HH on the ELP assessment in very different ways. Some states allowed students to take alternate assessments for one or more domains on the ELP assessment, while other states allowed selective participation for some ELLs. For states where selective participation was allowed for certain students on the ELP assessment, 26 of them referred to selective participation for students who were Deaf/HH for the Listening domain, and 25 states discussed selective participation for students who were Deaf/HH for the Speaking domain. Other states explicitly prohibited alternate test options or selective participation on the ELP assessment. State policies have continued to evolve as they have considered the participation challenges for ELLs with Deaf/HH disabilities on ELP assessments. More states now include information on the variables that can be used to make decisions about ELP assessment participation, and more state policies include considerations for the unique assessment needs of ELLs who are Deaf/HH on certain domains of the ELP assessment (Albus & Thurlow, 2007; Christensen et al., 2013).

### Accommodation Summaries

Previous reports published by NCEO and through the IVARED project have examined state participation and accommodation policies for content and ELP assessments. In this section, the results for each accommodation are summarized and compared to current state policies on content assessments and past state policies on ELP assessments.

### Sign Interpret Directions, Questions, and Responses

The use of ASL for directions, questions, and responses appears somewhat controversial across states on the ELP assessment; it is allowed in some states and prohibited in others. State policies that addressed Sign Interpret Directions consistently allowed the accommodation across domains on the ELP assessment (allowed for 36 to 38 states). Only 4 to 7 states prohibited the use of Sign Interpret Directions on the ELP assessment. The majority of state policies that addressed Sign Interpret Questions and Sign Response did not allow them on any part of the ELP assessment. Sign Interpret Questions was prohibited in 30 to 32 states and allowed in only 1 to 6 states across domains. Depending on the domain being assessed, Sign Interpret Questions was allowed with implications for scoring in 1 to 2 states. Only a few states allowed Sign Response across domains on the ELP assessment. The definition we used for signing was specific to ASL,

but we are aware that there are other sign languages besides ASL that a student could use. No state policy addressed whether sign languages other than ASL were allowed.

Sign Interpret Directions was allowed in more states on content assessments ( $n=45$ ; Christensen et al., 2011) than on the ELP assessment (range of 36 to 38). In contrast, on the content assessment, there was only 1 state that prohibited Sign Interpret Directions, while 4 to 7 states prohibited it on one or more domains of the ELP assessment. Sign Interpret Questions was allowed in 18 states without restrictions on content assessments, while a range of 1 to 6 states allowed it on ELP assessments. More states allowed Sign Response on the content assessment than on the ELP assessment (14 states allowed Sign Response with no restrictions, and 5 states allowed Sign Response in certain circumstances), and no states prohibited its use (Christensen et al., 2011).

In the previous report on state accommodation policies for the ELP assessment (Albus & Thurlow, 2007), researchers found that 14 states allowed Sign Interpret Directions for one or more domains, and 1 state prohibited it for one or more domains. The data collected for the current report indicated that the number of states that allowed Sign Interpret Directions more than doubled across domains (range of 36 to 38) as compared to past findings. In 2007, Albus and Thurlow reported that 4 states allowed Sign Interpret Questions in one or more domains, 3 states allowed it with implications, and 7 states prohibited it for at least one domain. Current policies show a sharp increase in the number of states where Sign Interpret Questions was explicitly prohibited (30 to 32 states) across domains on the ELP assessment. The numbers of states that allowed Sign Interpret Questions, with and without implications, were comparable to the previous report.

## **Visual Cues**

Use of the Visual Cues accommodation on ELP assessments was not addressed in the majority of state policies. In fact, just 5 states included information in accommodations policies on the visual cues accommodation. One out of the 5 states consistently prohibited its use across domains on the ELP assessment, while the remaining 4 states allowed it. In contrast, several state policies addressed and allowed the use of the Visual Cues accommodation on content assessments ( $n=17$ ; Christensen et al., 2011). The number of states that allowed Visual Cues on the ELP assessment decreased from 10 to 4 since the previous report on state accommodation policies for the ELP assessment (Albus & Thurlow, 2007). The number of states that prohibited the accommodation remained consistent between the previous report and current data ( $n=1$ ).

## **Amplification Equipment**

Amplification Equipment was allowed in 35 to 36 states across domains on the ELP assessment, and no state policy prohibited its use. Most states also allowed Amplification Equipment

for content assessments ( $n=48$ ; Christensen et al., 2011). It is possible that the Amplification Equipment accommodation is not addressed in some states' accommodations policies for ELP assessments because policymakers in a greater number of states have built the accommodation into their content assessments or consider it to be best practice for test administration rather than an accommodation.

In the previous report on state accommodations policies for the ELP assessment, researchers found that 13 states allowed Amplification Equipment across all domains, and one state policy prohibited it (Albus & Thurlow, 2007). Data collected for the current report indicate that the number of states where this accommodation is allowed more than doubled since the previous report.

### Administration Guidelines

Only 4 states provided signing guidelines in their accommodations policies for the ELP assessment. This is concerning given that depending on the domain being assessed, 36 to 38 states allowed Sign Interpret Directions, 1 to 6 states allowed Sign Interpret Questions, and 5 states allowed Sign Response. Of the 4 states with signing guidelines, 3 of them offered guidelines for Sign Interpret Directions or Sign Interpret Questions, and all 4 provided guidelines for Sign Response. Although there were 5 states across domains on the ELP assessment where Sign Response was allowed, only 2 states provided guidelines for Sign Response specifically. In the other 2 states with signing guidelines, the guidelines were the same for Sign Response, Sign Interpret Directions, and Sign Interpret Questions. Some consortium states may not have had the same documents available on their websites as other states within their consortia. Therefore, the number of states with signing guidelines could be higher than is reflected in this report.

### Accommodations on Computer-based ELP Assessments

Though more states are moving toward delivering ELP assessments on computers, very little information was available on accommodations for those assessments. As in accommodations policies for paper-and-pencil tests, Amplification Equipment appeared to be the least controversial of the 5 accommodations examined in this report, with all 3 states allowing its use in at least one domain of the ELP assessment. No consistent patterns were observed in state policies for the other 4 accommodations, and in several cases there was no information provided. It is expected that more information will be made available on accommodations for computer-based ELP assessments in the future.

## Conclusion

State policies on the participation and accommodation of students with disabilities in ELP assessments have continued to evolve. Over time, more states have developed policies on participation and accommodations, and have made these policies publicly available. In addition, states continue to adjust policies to meet the needs of small populations of students with unique needs. One such population is ELLs who are Deaf/HH. Including ELLs who are Deaf/HH in all domains of the ELP assessment has been an important consideration for states.

In most cases, ELLs who are Deaf/HH participate in all domains of an ELP assessment (Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking) either with or without accommodations. In addition, there may be state policies available that govern other ways of participating in an ELP assessment in part or as a whole. For students who are Deaf/HH, participating in the Listening and Speaking assessments may be challenging in states that have limited accommodations available for receptive and expressive language. The review of policies in this report indicates that states are making progress in ensuring that ELLs who are Deaf/HH can access test content. However, more work can be done to address the participation needs of ELLs who are Deaf/HH on the ELP assessment, especially with respect to test domains that may be challenging for this population (i.e., Listening and Speaking).

Many state policies allow ELLs who are Deaf/HH to use accommodations on ELP assessments. For example, Amplification Equipment is an allowed accommodation in 35 states. Other states may not consider amplification equipment such as a hearing aid to be an accommodation, but instead a corrective device similar to glasses or corrective lenses. Several other accommodations are available to ELLs who are Deaf/HH as well, though states may disagree on which accommodations are allowed.

The use of sign language on the ELP assessment continues to be controversial. Though most states allow Sign Interpret Directions on each of the four domains of the ELP assessment, some states prohibit its use. In addition, most states prohibit the use of Sign Interpret Questions or Sign Responses on ELP assessments. Still, many ELLs who are Deaf/HH use sign language in their daily communication. In addition, ELLs who use a language other than English at home may sign in a language other than American Sign Language. States may want to consider developing policies that address the use of other signed languages for ELP and content assessments. Three other accommodations that may benefit ELLs who are Deaf/HH are captioning, cued speech (representing English phonemes with a sign), and lip reading. These accommodations were not addressed in this report, but may warrant future consideration by states as accommodations to help ELLs who are Deaf/HH access assessment content. In their comprehensive review of state accommodations policies Christensen et al. (2013) found no mention of cued speech or captioning in any state's accommodation policies. Regulations in one state specified

that it allowed cued speech along with signing for any student. Lip reading was mentioned by two states as a potential accommodation on the Listening and Speaking domains of the ELP assessment (Christensen et al., 2013). More states may want to examine these accommodation options in the future.

More research and expert judgment are needed about the appropriateness of sign language in relation to the construct being measured on each of the ELP assessment domains. States may want to consider how expressive and receptive language is defined relative to the constructs measured on these assessments and establish clear policies delineating when sign language is appropriate. Some states have begun to include this language in their accommodation policies. For example, a few state policies likened the signing of prompts on certain domains of ELP assessment to translation into another language. Because such translations change the construct of interest and invalidate the test, they were prohibited (Christensen et al., 2013).

Finally, some states have established guidelines that take into account the student's fluency in sign language as a prerequisite for using sign language as an accommodation. Given that not all students who are Deaf/HH use sign language, other states may want to develop similar policies to ensure that sign language is assigned only to students who are able to use it effectively to show what they know and can do.

Students who are Deaf/HH comprise a small portion of the population of ELLs with disabilities in most states. Nonetheless, their unique needs are ones that should be addressed directly in state participation and accommodation policies for ELP assessments. The results presented in Christensen et al. (2013) demonstrated that states continue to make progress in developing clear policies for participation and accommodation of ELLs with disabilities on ELP assessments. Additional information presented in this report and the companion report on ELLs who are Blind/Visually Impaired suggests that states are also refining participation and accommodation policies with respect to the needs of special populations, yet there is still work to be done. It is crucial that state policies and assessments continue to evolve together, so that the knowledge and skills of all students—including ELLs who are Deaf/HH—are accurately measured.

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