

# What School Leaders Need to do Before, During, and After the Assessment Window

School leaders play a critical role in ensuring that all students with disabilities, including students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and English learners with disabilities, gain the knowledge and skills needed to successfully participate in postsecondary education and careers by the time they exit high school. They confirm that students with disabilities have the opportunity to learn academic content for each student's enrolled grade and that Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams follow state guidelines to select appropriate assessments, accessibility supports, and accommodations. They convey to staff the integrated relationship between assessment and instruction, each informing the other.

Another critical role school leaders perform is ensuring that all students with disabilities, including students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and English learners with disabilities, participate in appropriate assessments based on the state's participation guidelines. School leaders take actions before, during, and after state and district assessments to ensure that students can accurately show what they know and can do. They are aware that assessments must be administered according to standardized procedures and conditions, including the provision of accessibility supports and accommodations, so that there can be fair and valid interpretations of assessment results.



## What can school leaders do *before* assessments for students with disabilities?

- Review test administration manuals for each assessment that will be administered.
- Provide professional development training on assessment participation criteria; making decisions about accessibility supports and accommodations; test administration; and test security procedures.
- Require that test administrators and educators who provide individual test accommodations read and sign test security/confidentiality agreement forms.
- Confirm that all test administrators and educators who provide individual test accommodations know which students require which accommodations.
- Designate appropriate staff members to plan logistics and provide accessibility features and accommodations on test days.
- Make sure that students whose test accommodations might be distracting to others or could compromise test security (e.g., having the test read aloud) are able to take their assessments in a physical location that will not interfere with the other test-takers.
- Ensure that computers are set up, working properly, and verified to permit specific accessibility features and accommodations for identified students.
- Give students the opportunity to practice using the same testing platform that will be used for the assessments, so they understand how to use new accessibility supports before test day.

CCSSO's Assessment, Standards, and Education for Students with Disabilities (ASES) and School Leadership Development and Supports (SLDS) state collaboratives made important contributions to this document.

Hinkle, A. R., Lazarus, S. S., Hall, S., Warren, S., Thurlow, M. L., & Liu, K. K. (2021). *What school leaders need to do before, during, and after the assessment window* (School Leaders Series #4). Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) & National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO).

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The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) is supported through a Cooperative Agreement (#H326G160001) with the Research to Practice Division, Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. The Center is affiliated with the Institute on Community Integration at the College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota. The contents of this report were partially developed under the Cooperative Agreement from the U.S. Department of Education, but does not necessarily represent the policy or opinions of the U.S. Department of Education or Offices within it. Readers should not assume endorsement by the federal government. Project Officer: David Egnor

## What can school leaders do *during* assessments for students with disabilities?

- Designate a staff member to answer the test administrators questions.
- Verify that students will receive allowable accessibility features and accommodations, as outlined in their IEP or 504 plan.
- Verify that students with disabilities who are also English learners receive allowable accessibility features and accommodations that support their developing English proficiency.
- Confirm that test administrators and those providing accommodations implement the assessment according to state and assessment guidelines.
- Confirm that technology is working properly.
- Make sure that test security is maintained.

## What can school leaders do *after* assessments for students with disabilities?

- Encourage teachers to ask students to identify assessment challenges, including any challenges they may have had using the technology, and the usefulness of accessibility features and accommodations in enabling them to access the content of the assessment.
- Debrief with test administrators and educators to identify refinements for future assessment administration—for example, training, logistics, test settings, providing accessibility features and accommodations, difficulties using accessibility supports, and student use of technology.
- Make sure that teachers understand how to use formative and interim assessment data to help drive instructional decisions.

## Talking Points for School Leaders

- All staff members have appropriate training to administer assessments to all students with disabilities, so that test results reflect actual student knowledge.
- All students at our school have the opportunity to practice using the testing platform for each assessment, so they are familiar with using the technology before they have to take the exam.
- Students at our school receive the accessibility features and accommodations they need, as stated in their IEPs and 504 Plans.
- Students with disabilities who are also English learners receive the allowable accessibility features and accommodations needed to support their developing English proficiency.
- School staff members debrief after testing to discuss what went well, as well as what could be improved. This helps to make the assessment administration process, including the provision of accessibility features and accommodations, go more smoothly in the future.
- Educators, parents, and guardians have an opportunity to discuss assessment results; for families of English learners, our school provides language interpreters, as needed, to bridge potential cultural and linguistic barriers.

School leaders should customize these talking points to meet their specific school contexts.

The information in this resource reflects the *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015* (Standards #4, 8) and *Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students with Disabilities*.

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