



Educator Perspectives on Using Assessment Accessibility Features and Accommodations

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Agenda

- Learn about the new accessibility framework in the U.S.
- Discuss educators' challenges with the accessibility framework
- Explore possible solutions to those challenges

New Accessibility Framework

- In the past, accommodations were available to students with disabilities and English learners (ELs)
 - American Sign Language, braille, extra time
- Now a wide range of accessibility features are available to all students
 - Some (e.g., text-to-speech) are available if an educator identifies a need for them in advance
 - Some (e.g., glossaries, highlighters) are part of universal design and are available to all students who choose to use them

New Accessibility Framework



Universal Features

for all students

Designated Features

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

Accommodations

for students with disabilities and ELs

Educator Responsibilities

- Educators have to collect data from both assessment and instruction to make accessibility decisions
- Their decisions should account for students' individual needs and preferences
- Their decisions should be based on current policy

Problem

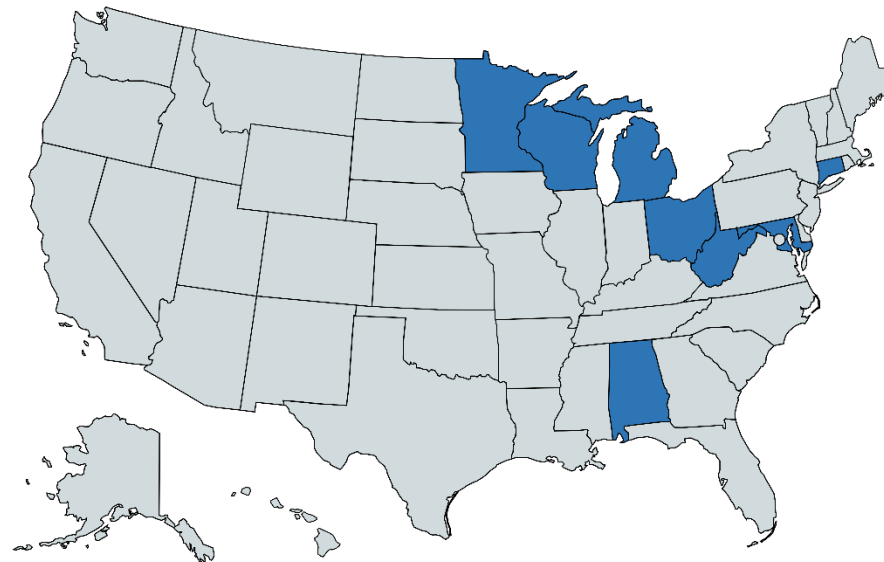
More accessibility
features and
accommodations
available

=

More decision
making by more
educators

DIAMOND Project

- Data Informed Accessibility – Making Optimal Needs-based Decisions
- Collaboration between the National Center on Educational Outcomes and nine state departments of education



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

DIAMOND Project

- Research activities include a white paper, a survey, focus groups, phone interviews, and in-person interviews
- Goal is to create online professional development modules to help educators make decisions about accessibility features and accommodations



Challenges

Accessibility Framework Is Hard to Understand

- States and tests do not use the same language for the accessibility framework (white paper)
- Teachers sometimes confuse the accessibility framework with other frameworks that are in use in schools (focus groups)
- Teachers are sometimes unclear about where certain accessibility features and accommodations belong in the framework (phone interviews)

Teachers Lack Clear Roles in Decision Making

- General education teachers are the most confused about timelines and criteria for making decisions (focus groups)
- Some teachers implement accessibility features and accommodations without having a role in choosing them (in-person interviews)

Connecting Assessment and Instruction Is Difficult

- Most teachers believe that students receive consistent accessibility features and accommodations across assessment and instruction (survey)
- However, some report that the accessibility features and accommodations used in class are not available on tests (in-person interviews)

Resources Are Scarce

- Making individualized decisions for all students with different needs and preferences is time consuming (phone interviews)
- Access to technology is sometimes limited, so students cannot use certain accessibility features and accommodations (phone interviews)



DIAMOND Professional Development Modules

Purpose & Audience

- Purpose: Improve decision making about accessibility features and accommodations for all students
- Audience:
 - General Education Teachers
 - Special Education Teachers
 - EL Teachers



Exit

1

Thinking About Student Needs



2

Making and Implementing Instructional Support Decisions



3

Making and Implementing Assessment Accommodations



4

Putting It All Together



Module Structure

- Start with a scenario
 - *You are starting a new academic year. One of your first goals is to understand how each student learns best to determine their access needs. How can you do that?*
- Review student profiles
 - *Daisy, student with learning disability*
 - *Adrián, EL student*
 - *Gavin, non-EL student with no disabilities*
- Go through targeted tutorials as needed
 - *What are accessibility features?*
 - *Who is eligible for them?*
- Answer questions to resolve the scenario



Discussion

Discussion Questions

- In your experience, what are the most pressing needs for educators related to accessibility features and accommodations?