Using Online Professional Development Modules to Learn about Accessibility Features and Accommodations

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Agenda

- Learn about the new accessibility framework
- Discuss educators' challenges with the accessibility framework
- Explore modules that aim to address those challenges
- Discuss how the modules can be used by EL teachers

Background

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
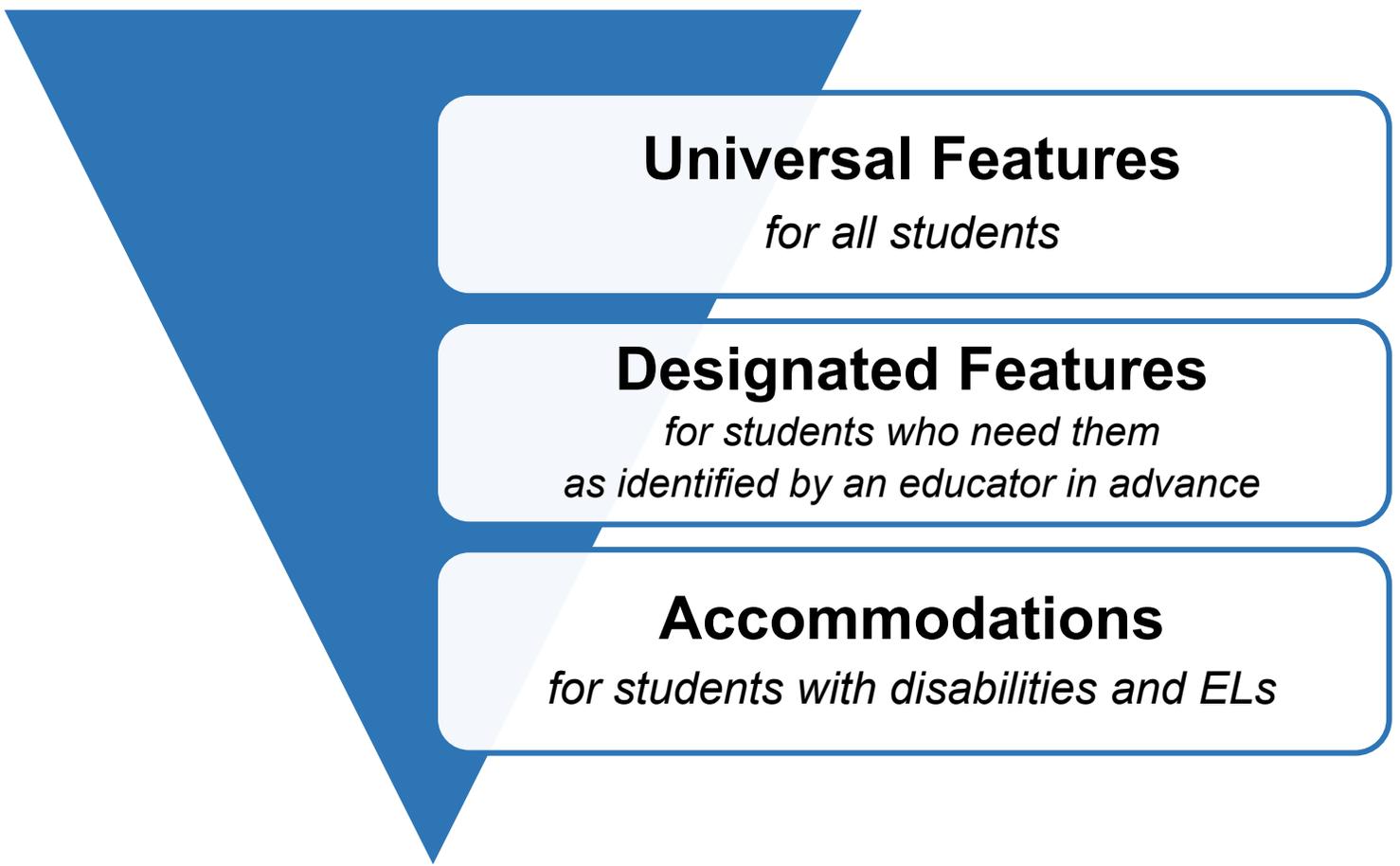
Universal Features
for all students

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

Accommodations
for students with disabilities and ELs

Discussion Questions

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

- What resources could address these needs?

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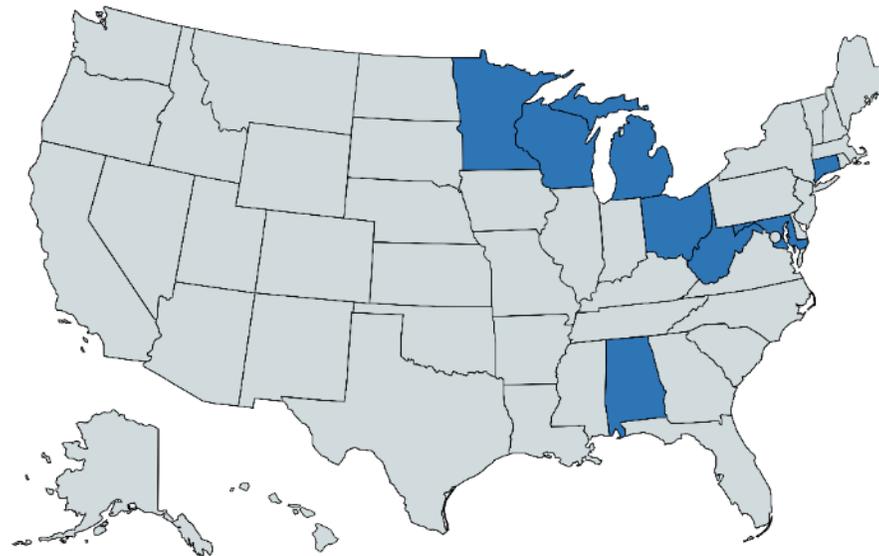
- Alabama
- Connecticut
- Maryland
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Ohio
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin
- U.S. Virgin Islands

DIAMOND Project

Research activities:

- white paper
- survey (n=2,250)
- focus groups (n=46)
- phone interviews (n=74)
- in-person interviews (n=28)

Goal:

- to create online professional development modules that help educators make decisions about accessibility features and accommodations

Challenges for Teachers

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

Development

- Wrote the module content
- Collected feedback from panel of experts and states
- Assembled modules with audio and visuals
- Will conduct a usability study of modules on November 30, 2018
- Will pilot modules in Spring 2019
- Will publish modules in Summer/Fall 2019

Module Structure

Four modules:

1. Start with students' needs
2. Choose accessibility features for instruction
3. Choose accessibility features for assessment
4. Review how well the accessibility features work

1 **Thinking About Student Needs**

2 **Making and Implementing Instructional Support Decisions**

3 **Making and Implementing Assessment Accomodations**

4 **Putting It All Together**

DIAMOND DATA INFORMED ACCESSIBILITY — MAKING OPTIMAL NEEDS-BASED DECISIONS

Discussion

Discussion Questions

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

- What resources could address these needs?

- How could the DIAMOND modules address these needs?