



# Accessibility Guidelines

## *Selecting, Administering, and Evaluating Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment*



**November 2021**

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## Introduction

This document addresses accommodation selection and accessibility decisions for instruction and statewide assessment. The action steps serve as a reference to guide the process of selecting, administering, and evaluating instructional accommodations for use by English Learners (ELs), students with disabilities, and EL students with disabilities. This resource emphasizes an individualized approach to the implementation of accessibility practices. It recognizes the critical connection between accessibility supports (tools and accommodations) in instruction and during assessments, as well as the iterative nature of reevaluating decisions for more informed decision-making as contexts and student needs evolve.

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions are used:

*Students with disabilities* are students who are eligible to receive services identified through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

*English Learners (ELs)* are students whose native language is not English or American Sign Language(ASL) and who do not yet possess sufficient English language proficiency to fully access curriculum that is in English.

*English Learners with disabilities (ELs with disabilities)* are students whose native language is not English or American Sign Language(ASL) and who do not yet possess sufficient English language proficiency to fully access content that is in English. In addition, these students have disabilities served by IDEA or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

*General education students* are those who do not have an identified disability or EL status. Although we understand that students with disabilities, ELs, and ELs with disabilities are also general education students, we use this term as a simple way to refer to students who are not identified in one of the special education categories or as an EL.

## Intended Audience

- general education, English Learner (EL), and special education educators (e.g., to find and evaluate instructional and assessment supports for their students);
- school and test administrators and related services personnel (e.g., to support selection and administration of assessment accessibility supports for each student);
- assessment staff, administrators (e.g., to provide guidance for teachers, test

administrators, etc. on options and limitations around specific accessibility supports);

- parents and guardians (e.g., to serve as a tool when advocating for accessibility supports and review processes for their children).

## The Five Step Decision-Making Process

**Audience** -- These guidelines have been designed for use by:

- IEP (Individual Education Program) teams
- EL educators
- Special education educators
- General education educators
- Administrators
- Test Coordinators



The following five step decision-making process will help ensure the consideration of specific needs of the individual student when selecting accommodations for use in a variety of instructional and assessment settings. Accommodations must be employed in instruction prior to being considered for an assessment context.

**STEP 1:** EXPECT students to achieve grade-level standards.

**STEP 2:** LEARN about accessibility supports for instruction and assessment.

**STEP 3:** SELECT accessibility supports for instruction and assessment.

**STEP 4:** ADMINISTER accessibility supports during instruction and assessment.

**STEP 5:** EVALUATE use of accessibility supports in instruction and assessment.



# STEP 1:

## EXPECT STUDENTS TO ACHIEVE GRADE-LEVEL STANDARDS

Academic **standards** are educational targets outlining what *all* students are expected to master at each grade level. The expectation that students will achieve grade-level standards is reiterated in laws, legal cases, and federal guidelines that require states to administer assessments to all students; these measures are intended to hold schools accountable for the academic performance of all their students. To provide equal access to grade-level content, some students are given accessibility supports during instruction and assessment.

Individual educators or teams of educators who are familiar with characteristics and needs of students, along with the students' parents or guardians (and the students themselves, as appropriate), should make instructional and assessment decisions that prioritize access to grade-level content. Educators are responsible for developing, implementing, and improving accessibility practices for students. Educators serving in the following roles may be involved in making accessibility decisions:

- Special education teachers, IEP or 504 plan members, and related service providers;
- General education and English language educators;
- Test Administrators, District Test Coordinators
- School administrators (Principals, School/District Officials)

To accomplish the goal of equal access in education, every educator must:

- know and instruct grade-level standards;
- be familiar with individual student needs and supports to provide access;
- collaborate with other educators, stakeholders, and parents or guardians for successful student access;
- be familiar with accountability systems at both the state and district levels.

All students work toward mastery of grade-level standards, including English-language proficiency, and should be expected to achieve these standards — provided that the following conditions are met:

1. **Collaboration** between special education, English language, and general education educators results in grade-level, differentiated instruction for the diverse/specific populations of students they are serving.
2. **Individualized approaches** to instruction and assessment are used, and individualized plans are developed and implemented for those students who need them.
3. **Appropriate accessibility supports** are provided to ensure that all students can access instructional and assessment content.

## INCLUDING ALL STUDENTS IN STATE ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

Federal law and guidance, legal cases, and state laws require that all students be administered assessments which are intended to hold schools accountable for the academic performance of their students. Educators are expected to actively engage in a planning process that addresses:

- implementation of accessibility supports to facilitate universal student access to grade-level instruction and assessments;
- use of **alternate assessments** to assess achievement of those students with the **most significant cognitive disabilities**;
- equitable access to grade-level instruction and English language development services for all EL students;
- inclusion of ELs in both academic and **English language proficiency assessments**

## FEDERAL & STATE LAWS, LEGAL CASES, & FEDERAL GUIDANCE REQUIRING STUDENT PARTICIPATION

To effectively support all students in the classroom, educators should be familiar with federal and state laws, current guidelines, and legal cases that regulate student participation in the educational processes. Several important laws require the participation of these students in standards-based instruction and assessment. Some laws solely address students with disabilities (e.g., Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – IDEA); others regulate educational policies and practices for all students (e.g., Elementary and Secondary Education Act – ESEA). Some laws or sections of laws are devoted to ELs (e.g., Title III of ESEA). Both sets of laws affect the instruction and assessment of ELs with disabilities.

## EQUAL ACCESS TO GRADE-LEVEL CONTENT

It is important for all educators to be familiar with current standards and accountability systems, at both the district and state levels. This knowledge frames a context in which educators are required by law to make sure that all students, including students with disabilities, ELs, and ELs with disabilities, work toward grade-level academic content standards; for ELs, this means maintaining grade-level work while also improving their English-language proficiency. The goal is to provide meaningful, differentiated instruction of grade-level content for diverse students by selecting appropriate accommodations and fostering continual collaboration between EL/special education educators and their general education counterparts.

To aid the goal of providing equal access to grade-level content, accessibility supports and accommodations must be provided for students during both instruction and assessments. Accommodations should be used consistently for a reasonable length of time prior to use on state assessments. Only supports utilized throughout instruction should be selected for use in assessments.



## STEP 2:

### LEARN ABOUT ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS FOR INSTRUCTION & ASSESSMENT

With the evolving use of technology in instruction and assessment, it is important to be aware of the possible impact of new technological developments on the provision of educational supports. Educators are encouraged to:

- Review Test Administration Directions and Test Administration Manuals about appropriate use of supports during assessments.
- Understand the application of **universal design** principles to instruction and assessment.
- Review Test Administration Directions and Test Administration Manuals for information on administrative considerations for state assessments.

Thanks to advances in technology, computer-based accessibility supports can be used to facilitate individualized educational processes by reducing or eliminating the effects of a students' disabilities— thereby enabling them to more effectively demonstrate what they know and can do. For example, when the instructional objective is focused on comprehension, appropriate supports for a student with a reading disability might include reading the material aloud or letting the student use a text-to-speech app to access grade-level content. However, read-aloud or text-to-speech supports would not be appropriate when the learning target is decoding text. **Accessibility supports provided in the classroom do not reduce expectations for learning. Accessibility supports empower students with a multitude of choices, enabling them to effectively access instructional and assessment content.**

As noted above, accessibility supports provided during state assessments must also be provided during classroom instruction, classroom assessments, and district assessments. However, some instructional accessibility supports may not be appropriate for use on certain statewide assessments. In other cases, accessibility supports provided on assessments may be slightly different from those provided in the classroom (e.g., magnification on an assessment), since the technology used for the assessment may differ from that used in the classroom. It is important that educators help students become familiar with the supports provided on the assessment, so students are not using these tools for the first time on test day.

It is critical for educators to be familiar with each assessments test administration policies regarding the appropriate use of accessibility supports during assessments. In the age of technology-mediated educational practices, accessibility supports facilitate instruction and assessment of students effectively – but only when they are appropriately selected, used, and evaluated for continued effectiveness. For some students, use of accessibility supports may not begin and end in the school setting. For instance, they might utilize similar supports in the library or at home to read or complete homework. As students become more proficient in grade-level content areas and/or English proficiency, their need for some supports may decrease. However, all

accessibility supports for instruction and assessment are integrally intertwined and should be treated as such.

When determining accessibility supports for state assessments, it is important to remember that the AZELLA, Achievement, and MSAA assessments measure different **construct** knowledge, skills, and abilities. For example, the AASA math content area assessment may allow text-to-speech but the AZELLA Reading assessment will not. Therefore, different accessibility supports may be necessary for each assessment.

The key to effective and equitable instruction and assessment is meaningful collaboration around instruction and accessibility supports among general education teachers, special education teachers, EL teachers, school administrators, assessment officials, parents or guardians, and students.

## UNIVERSAL DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

*Universal design principles* improve access to instruction and assessments for all students. Some instructional and assessment formats may inhibit the ability of some students to fully participate and demonstrate what they know and can do. Universal design principles help resolve this dilemma. In contrast to retrofitting, these principles are meant to be applied and integrated consistently during the initial phase of planning and developing accessible instructional and assessment materials:

- inclusion of diverse student populations;
- precisely defined instructional and assessment **constructs**;
- maximally accessible, non-biased content;
- compatibility with accommodations;
- simple, clear, and intuitive instructions and procedures; and
- maximum readability, comprehensibility, and legibility.

Universal design is not synonymous with computer-based instruction or online assessments. However, as technology improves, options for universal design are likely to also advance. Traditionally, universal design comes first, and accommodations are applied as needed during instruction and assessment. Today, some accommodations are **embedded** into the design and may be included in the online delivery of instructional and assessment content. This dynamic allows for more universal or designated features to be made available to more students as accessibility options.

## ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION & ASSESSMENT

Some administrative resources and strategies, such as scheduling instruction and testing at times that are most beneficial to the student, should be available for all students. These administrative considerations are often addressed in a test administration manual and should be used for all students, whenever possible.

## MODIFICATIONS IN INSTRUCTION & ASSESSMENT

*Accessibility supports* meet students' specific needs and enable their work to be a more valid measure of what the students know and can do. Accessibility supports do not reduce or change learning expectations or standards.

*Modifications* refer to practices or materials that change, lower, or reduce state-required learning expectations. Modifications may change the underlying **construct** of an assessment. Examples of modifications include:

- requiring a student to learn less material (e.g., fewer objectives);
- reducing or revising assignments and assessments (e.g., complete only the easiest questions, remove some of the answer options);
- using an accessibility support that invalidates the intended **construct**; and
- giving a student hints or clues to the correct responses on assignments and assessments.

Providing modifications during classroom instruction and classroom assessments may reduce the student's opportunities to learn critical content, creating unintended inequities. Nevertheless, if modifications are deemed necessary in instruction, students and parents or guardians must be made aware that *these modifications will not be provided on the state assessments*. It is important to emphasize: when students' access to critical, assessed content is reduced, they are put at risk for not meeting state requirements.

**Providing a modification during a state accountability assessment constitutes a test irregularity. If you have questions pertaining to a particular student, please contact ADE Assessment at [Testing@azed.gov](mailto:Testing@azed.gov)**



## **INSTRUCTIONAL ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS**

In order to optimize students' educational experiences, it is vital for educators to meet regularly to coordinate instructional approaches and familiarize themselves with state policies. Educators should consider:

- student characteristics and needs;
- criteria for the student to demonstrate grade-level proficiency of state standards; and
- consistency between accessibility supports for instruction and for assessments.

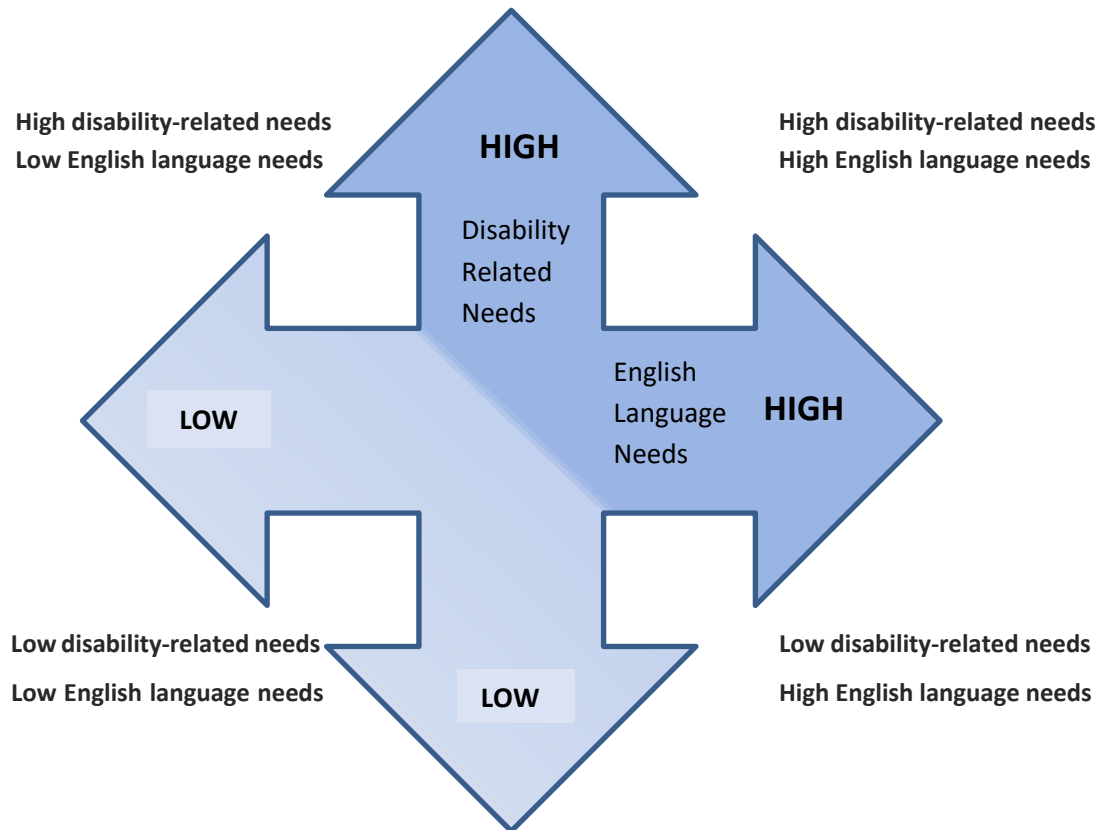
### **FOUR KEY QUESTIONS FOR EDUCATORS TO ASK:**

- 1. What are the student's specific instructional and assessment needs?**
- 2. How does facilitating the student's access to curriculum, instruction, and assessments support the goal of developing independence?**
- 3. Is there a universal feature the student should not have?**
- 4. Does the student need any designated features or accommodations?**

These questions help educators to focus on students' needs. For instance, a student may not be receiving enough accessibility supports — or may be receiving too many. More is not necessarily better. Providing students with unnecessary supports may negatively impact their performance. A better approach is to focus on the student's identified needs within the general education curriculum.

One size does not fit all with accessibility supports. To ensure that all students are engaged in grade-level instruction, educators should consider individual needs and characteristics when making accessibility decisions. Supports for dually identified students should be approached with both their English-language needs and disability needs considered. For example, IEP team members for ELs with disabilities will need to make individualized accessibility decisions based on the specific language- and disability-related challenges faced by each student (See Figure 1). Moreover, it is critical to recognize that a student's needs are not static but lie on a continuum; accessibility supports may change as a student's English-language or disability-related needs change.

**Figure 1: English Language & Disability-Related Needs Affecting Accessibility Decisions**



Categories included in this figure are based on Shyyan, Christensen, Touchette, Lightborne, Gholson, and Burton, 2013. Accommodations manual: How to select, administer, and evaluate use of accommodations for instruction and assessment of English language learners with disabilities. Washington, DC: CCSSO.

**This approach aims to reiterate that educators should fully account for the complexity of both language and disability implications during the instruction and assessment of ELs with disabilities.**



## STEP 3:

### SELECT ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS FOR INSTRUCTION & ASSESSMENT

Effective decision-making around the provision of appropriate accessibility supports begins with appropriate instructional decisions. In turn, optimal instructional decisions are facilitated by gathering and reviewing reliable information about the student’s access needs, disability, **English language proficiency**, and present level of performance in relation to state standards.

To promote all students’ meaningful and equitable participation in the general curriculum, educators need to select accessibility supports based on distinct, individual student characteristics. **Making blanket decisions for groups of students at specific language acquisition levels or with specific disabilities is not appropriate.** When individualized accessibility decisions are made thoughtfully, they can advance equitable opportunities for students to participate in the general education curriculum.

Students’ needs, characteristics, and even preferences are important criteria to consider when making optimal accessibility decisions. In addition, with regard to EL students, other criteria may help educators determine which accessibility supports are most appropriate – including :

- literacy levels in the student’s native language;
- if applicable, education received before coming to the U.S. (e.g., evidence of limited or interrupted formal education);
- time spent in English-speaking schools;
- resources available in the student’s native language; and
- student/family cultural background.

While it is important to research all accessibility support options, note that some options may *not* be allowed on certain assessments. For example, use of a glossary may be allowed for a math assessment but prohibited for the AZELLA assessment, since the support could alter the construct being measured, thereby invalidating the results.

#### DOCUMENTING ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS FOR ALL STUDENTS

To ensure continuous monitoring and improvement of accessibility approaches, educators should both review notes from other educators and document how students use accessibility supports). They also should document which universal features (if any) are deactivated and which designated features/accommodations are available. This enables other educators to make more informed decisions based on longitudinal data. It is also important to use or create an after-test exit survey to collect information on the use of accessibility supports; this data can be used to inform future decisions about instruction and assessment practices.

## DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

There are many factors to consider when making decisions about providing accessibility supports —most importantly:

1. Student characteristics (disabilities, language proficiency, previously used accessibility supports, student preferences, etc.).
2. Student needs (what will enable the student to access state assessments):
  - a. the type of tasks required, so the teacher can replicate them in classroom instruction and on assessments; and
  - b. ways to remove barriers that inhibit a student’s ability to perform those tasks.

If multiple accessibility supports are employed for a student, educators should be aware of possible unintended consequences. For example, when using a highlighter, the color might change if the “contrast” function is activated, which could be challenging for vision-impaired students.

## ACCESSIBILITY SELECTION

Selection of accessibility supports for instruction should be based on the individual student’s characteristics and student needs. It is important to implement the selected supports as planned by the team of educators. Assessment accessibility supports are based on instructional supports, as well as specific assessment policies. These work together to allow for a valid measure of what the student knows and can do.

When matching accessibility supports with students’ characteristics, educators should consider:

- the student’s willingness to learn to use the accessibility support;
- opportunities to learn to use the accessibility support in classroom settings; and
- conditions for use on district and state assessments.

After considering student characteristics, it is important to examine student needs during instruction and testing as well as the types of tasks students are asked to perform in the classroom and on state or district assessments. When matching accessibility supports with student needs, it is also key to consider how the support interacts with:

- the construct of the material for which the student will use the accessibility support;
- content exposure, with varying cognitive complexities and range of difficulty; and
- the opportunity to show mastery (according to achievement or performance-level descriptors for the assessment).

## INVOLVING STUDENTS IN SELECTING, USING, & EVALUATING ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS

It is critical that students come to understand their own needs and learn to self-advocate. Informing others of their preferences, particularly in the presence of “authority figures,” may be a new task for some students. By providing guidance and feedback in the context of selecting, using, and evaluating accessibility supports and their combinations, educators and parents or guardians play a key role in developing a student’s self-advocacy.

**Student involvement in the selection process of their accessibility supports provides opportunities to learn self-advocacy skills and independence.** Students need these opportunities to learn how to make certain the accessibility supports they need are

provided, both in and out of school. Even students with **the most significant cognitive disabilities**, many of whom do not have sophisticated expressive communication systems, can show teachers their preferences. For example, when shown two versions of an accommodated graph, students could gesture to the one they like or understand better. It is important to not limit students' options but rather expand their opportunities to provide feedback and self-advocate. This is especially important for those students who cannot communicate their preferences in traditional ways.

## **PRIOR USE OF ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS**

Students are most successful with accessibility supports when they have used the supports and are comfortable with them prior to the test. As noted, accessibility supports **should not** be used for the first time on a state assessment. Educators are encouraged to implement accessibility supports during instruction and local assessments, so students can become adept at using them before the state assessment is administered.

It is therefore important to plan time for students to investigate and become familiar with new accessibility supports and learn how to use and practice **embedded** and **non-embedded** accessibility supports. (Note that, for embedded supports, there may be tutorials and/or practice or sample exam items students can experience prior to test administration.) It is also valuable to build in time to evaluate the use of accessibility supports and make improvements as needed, both before and after the state assessment (**Tools 6 and 7**).

## **ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS FOR INSTRUCTION & ASSESSMENT**

On some assessments, accessibility supports may be presented differently from their variations used during instruction. Teachers should make sure students are informed about these differences and provide opportunities for them to practice the different accessibility supports prior to the test. Sample items are a great resource to help familiarize students with test content and accessibility features prior to assessment. This is particularly important for students with the **most significant cognitive disabilities**.

If the accessibility support is considered a necessary step in scaffolding grade-level content instruction, practicing classroom work without the support helps gauge student progress independent of the support. This provides students with opportunities to practice not using the support before the state assessment. Please contact the specific assessment team for guidance. For Achievement and the AZELLA assessments, District Test Coordinators may submit a request for additional accommodations.

## **VALID MEASURE OF WHAT THE STUDENT KNOWS & CAN DO**

When selecting accessibility supports for state assessments, it is important to understand the accessibility policies that the ADE has established to maintain the validity of assessment results. It is also important to know the consequences of support-selection and use decisions. For example, if educators determine that a student should use an allowed accessibility support during an assessment but the student refuses to use the support, the student's decision could compromise the validity of the measurement results about what the student

knows and can do. Note that the validity implications for such decisions are different for the AZELLA assessment than they might be for content assessments (i.e., providing a translation of the test content, versus providing a translation of test directions). Accessibility supports for ELs should be selected in accordance with whether the test is assessing English language proficiency or content-area knowledge.

Consideration of longer-term consequences is important, as well. For example, as students begin to make post-secondary choices, the best accessibility supports may be those that help prepare them for their future as adults. The team (educators, parents or guardians, and students) may want to discuss whether their current accessibility decisions with regard to instruction and assessments might affect the student's prospects for successful self-efficacy in the future. The team should plan how and when the student will learn to use each new accessibility support and ensure ample time for practice before an assessment takes place. They should also plan for an ongoing evaluation of the student's use of accessibility features and, if applicable, how and when the student is to become independent of some or all supports.

The following tools provide additional information on this step.

[\*\*Tool 2: Questions to Ask When Selecting Accessibility Supports\*\*](#)

[\*\*Tool 3: Accessibility Supports from the Student's Perspective\*\*](#)

[\*\*Tool 4: Parent Input on Accessibility Supports\*\*](#)

[\*\*Tool 5: Accessibility Selection Questions for Teams\*\*](#)

[\*\*Tool 6: Accessibility Supports in the Classroom for Teams\*\*](#)

[\*\*Tool 7: After-Test Accessibility Questions for Teacher-Student Discussion\*\*](#)



## STEP 4:

### ADMINISTER ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS DURING INSTRUCTION & ASSESSMENT

#### ACCESSIBILITY DURING INSTRUCTION

Accessibility supports should *not* be used solely during assessments. Students who need and benefit from accessibility supports should be provided with them during instruction.

Tracking the use and effectiveness of supports during instruction not only facilitates equitable access to academic material but also facilitates the student's transition away from specific accessibility supports as they become no longer necessary (See **Tool 6**).

Since many assessments and aspects of instruction can now be administered via technology-based platforms, educators must provide ample opportunity for students to familiarize themselves with both the technology itself and the administration process. This includes providing all students with opportunities to use technology while learning and allowing them to take practice tests using the appropriate online testing platform. In addition to student interaction with technology in instruction, teachers must also be aware of the range of accessibility supports available for their students and use these supports appropriately and consistently in instruction and assessment.

#### ACCESSIBILITY DURING ASSESSMENT

It is critical to map out the logistics of how accessibility supports will be provided during the assessments—keeping in mind that the same accessibility supports may not be allowed on all types of assessment (i.e., Achievement, AZELLA, and MSAA).

Educators will need to make accessibility support decisions in alignment with local and state policies, and then correctly document those decisions. It is therefore key to understand the state's or district's requirements and consequences for using various accessibility supports during assessments.

Staff members who administer accessibility supports — for example, by reading aloud to a student or scribing a student's responses or must adhere to specific guidelines to ensure that the student's scores are valid. When providing **non-embedded** supports, providers should first review the state's test security policies to ensure the protection of student and assessment confidentiality.

**Prior to the day of an assessment, teachers should ensure that test administrators and proctors know which accessibility supports each student will be using and how to administer them properly.**

#### ETHICAL TESTING PRACTICES

Ethical testing practices must be maintained before, during, and after the administration of a test. Unethical testing practices include disclosing or discussing secure information with others (e.g., colleagues, parents or guardians, and students) and inappropriate interactions between test administrators and students taking the test. These interactions include, but are

not limited to, offering additional information, coaching students during testing, editing student responses, suggesting that a student review an answer, or giving clues in any other way. **Any test improprieties must be reported to ADE Assessment.**

## **STANDARDIZATION**

Standardization is an essential feature of assessments and is necessary to produce accurate information about student learning. Strict adherence to guidelines detailing instructions and procedures for the administration of accessibility supports is required to ensure that test results reflect a comparable measure of knowledge for all students.

Supports that are **embedded** in the testing platform lend themselves better to standardization. It is therefore important for teachers to communicate clearly with assessment coordinators to ensure the assessment's embedded-support functionality is properly programmed and enabled with the appropriate accessibility supports for each student. They also should make sure that test administrators and proctors understand and adhere to state policies regarding what to do if selected accessibility supports do not work as intended on the day of the test.

Tools that provide additional information on completing this step:

[\*\*Tool 6: Accessibility Supports in the Classroom: Questions for Teams\*\*](#)





## STEP 5:

### EVALUATE USE OF ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS IN INSTRUCTION & ASSESSMENT

**Accessibility supports must be (a) selected based on the individual student’s characteristics and needs; (b) used consistently for instruction and assessment; and (c) phased out at the appropriate time to promote independence.** Collecting and analyzing data on the use and effectiveness of accessibility supports will help ensure students’ meaningful participation in district- and statewide assessments (**Tools 7, 8, 9, and 10**). These data also may indicate problematic patterns regarding the use of some accessibility supports and inform decisions about the continued use of those supports.

Examination of the data also may reveal areas in which teachers and test administrators need additional training and support. In addition to collecting information about the use of accessibility supports within the classroom, it is important to gather information on the implementation of accessibility supports during assessment by test administrators. Observations conducted during test administration, interviews with test administrators, and conversations with students after testing sessions likely will yield useful data for the ongoing evaluation process at the school, district, and student levels.

Gathering information on accessibility supports may be easier when supports are programmed into a technology-based assessment platform. However, just because information *can* be collected does not necessarily mean that it *should* be collected. Educators, schools, and districts are encouraged to determine which questions they need to answer and which accessibility data will be most meaningful in addressing them (See **Tools 7, 8, 9, and 10** for examples).

#### POST-SECONDARY IMPLICATIONS

As students plan for their transition to post-secondary settings, it is important for educators, students, and parents or guardians to plan which accessibility supports to phase out, which to continue using and in what capacities. It is also important for educators to document students’ use of accessibility supports, so that, if appropriate, students can continue to use them as needed in their college and career settings.

Colleges and universities traditionally allow fewer accessibility supports than are available in K-12 settings, so this documentation will give students the information they need to advocate for themselves. This documentation will also be useful for students who are transitioning into vocational programs and workplaces. Educators can encourage students to research how they can self-advocate for their particular accessibility needs within the context of each environment they are preparing to enter as young adults – be it an educational setting, workplace, or new community.

Tools that provide additional information on completing this step are:

[Tool 7: After-Test Accessibility Questions for Teacher-Student Discussion](#)

[Tool 8: Questions to Guide Evaluation of Use of Accessibility Supports at the School or District Level](#)

[Tool 9: Questions to Guide Formative Evaluation at the Student Level](#)

It is critical to stress that **formative evaluation is not the responsibility of just one individual.**

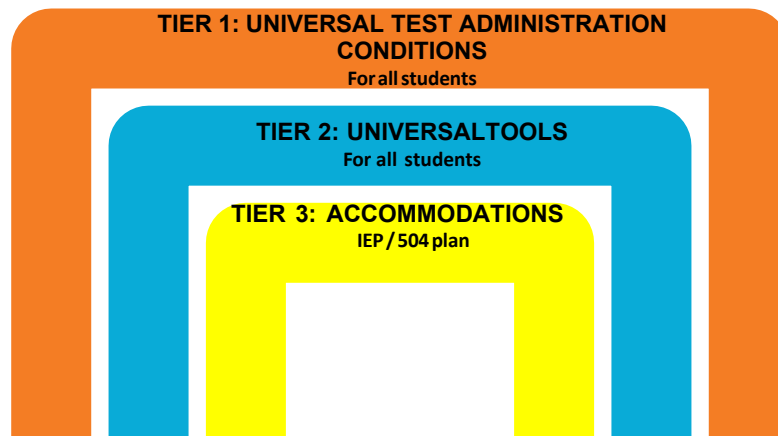
Teams of educators should contribute to the information gathering and decision-making processes. School- and district-level questions can be addressed by a committee responsible for continuous improvement efforts, while the student-level questions need to be considered by educators working directly with the student.

## ACCESSIBILITY TOOLS

This section includes ten accessibility tools that may help facilitate the selection, administration, and evaluation of accessibility supports.

### TOOL 1: Three-Tiered Approach to Accessibility

This tool provides a general framework of accessibility supports. Universal Test Administration Conditions and Universal Tools are available to all students. Accommodations are available to students whose IEP or 504 Plan outlines the need for them.



### TOOL 2: Questions to Ask When Selecting Accessibility Supports

1. Are accessibility decisions based on individualized student needs (e.g., English language proficiency, disability needs) rather than on what is easiest, what other students are using, or what might provide a student with a potential advantage?
2. Do the supports reduce the effect of the student's disability and/or language barrier in ways that facilitate access to content and demonstration of learning?
3. Are the instructional and assessment accommodation(s) documented in the student's IEP or 504 plan? Can it be confirmed that only documented supports are being used?
4. Are selected accommodations based on multiple stakeholders' input instead of unilateral or blanket decisions?
5. Have decisions about accommodations been made prior to the assessment day to ensure that the various combinations of supports will work effectively?
6. Have specific questions been answered about "Where, When, Who, and How" regarding the provision of supports to be sure they will be used appropriately on assessments?
7. Have current state accessibility policies been reviewed? Are the implications of selections understood?

8. Have supports used by the student been evaluated and selected appropriately? (Versus selecting every support on a checklist simply to be “safe” or assuming that the same supports are appropriate year after year.)
9. Are the supports to be used during assessments also being used for classroom instruction, to enable students to learn and practice each support before the testing date?

### **TOOL 3: Accessibility Supports from the Student’s Perspective**

Use this questionnaire to collect information about needed accessibility supports from the student’s perspective. The questions can be answered by the student independently or as part of an interview process. Be certain that the student understands the concept of “accessibility supports” (universal test administration conditions, universal tools, and accommodations), and provide examples as necessary. Also, provide a list of possible accessibility supports to give the student a good understanding of the range of supports that may be available.

1. What parts of learning are easiest for you?
2. What is something that you do well in class?
3. What parts of learning are hardest for you?
4. What is something in class that is hard for you?

### **TOOL 4: Parent and Guardian Input on Accessibility**

This tool contains questions that parents and guardians may want to consider when providing input about their child’s accessibility support needs during instruction and assessment.

#### Questions about Instruction

1. Is the need for each support recorded in my child’s IEP, 504 plan? How do educators and staff who work with my child know which supports to use and when there are changes to supports?
2. What supports does my child need and prefer to use to perform to grade-level work?
3. How can my child and I make sure there are neither too many nor too few supports? Is there a parent group or mentor available?
4. What supports does my child use at home but does not have access to in the classroom?
5. How long will my child be given the supports? What is the plan for deciding when to stop using the supports?
6. How do all the educators and staff members who work with my child make supports available throughout the day and in different settings?

7. What type of program support does my child receive in different classes (e.g., math, science, or ELA)?
8. If a support used during instruction is not allowed on a test, is my child learning how to work without the support prior to the test? How can I tell how well my child was able to perform without the support?

#### Questions about Assessments

1. Are the tests my child takes and the supports my child uses recorded in all planning tools? Who records this information?
2. What are the assessments my child needs to take? What is the purpose of each test?
3. What supports are available for my child during state, district, school, and class tests?
4. How can I support my child at home to facilitate their performance on assessments?
5. How can my child take an assessment with or without certain supports? Why is one support allowed on one test and not on another?
6. Are there any negative consequences if my child is allowed to use supports during tests? How will changes affect my child's test scores and how they are counted for accountability purposes?
7. How do the assigned accessibility supports help or hinder my child during different types of tests?
8. If a planned accessibility support was not used during instruction (or used in a different way – e.g., using an online versus hand-held calculator), how will my child practice using the support prior to the day of testing?

#### TOOL 5 Accessibility Selection Questions for Teams

This tool includes a list of questions to guide the selection of appropriate accessibility supports-both for students being assigned the supports for the first time and for those already using them. These questions address student characteristics and needs that may influence which accessibility supports to consider for an individual student.

1. What are the student's language learning strengths and areas of further improvement? (Applicable to all students, not just ELs)
2. How do the student's learning needs affect the achievement of grade-level standards?
3. What specialized instructions (e.g., learning strategies, organizational skills, reading skills) does the student need to achieve grade-level standards?
4. What accessibility supports will increase the student's access to instruction and assessment by addressing the student's learning needs?
5. What accessibility supports are used regularly by the student during instruction, assessments, and at home?
6. How does the student's performance on assignments and assessments compare when accessibility supports are used, versus when they are not used?

7. Which supports does the student use at home to complete homework?
8. What challenges does the student experience when using accessibility supports?
9. What are the perceptions of the student, parents/guardians, educators, and other specialists regarding how well the effectiveness of the accessibility support?
10. Should the student continue to use an accessibility support, are changes needed, or should the use of the accessibility support be discontinued?
11. When matching accessibility supports with students' characteristics, have educators ensured:
  - The student's willingness to learn how to use the accessibility support;
  - Opportunities for the student to learn the use the support in classroom settings;
  - If permissible, conditions for use of support(s) on state assessments?
12. What are the characteristics of the test?  
Consider grade-level content standards, cognitive complexity, proficiency level, blueprints, performance-level descriptors, etc.
13. Are tasks on the test similar to classroom assessment tasks? Do classroom tasks expose students to the same cognitive complexities, level of mastery (based on achievement or performance-level descriptors), and range of difficulty for each content standard as the assessment?
14. Are there ample opportunities for the student to practice similar tasks prior to testing?
15. Does the student use an accessibility support for a classroom task, and is it allowed on district or state assessments?
16. Does the student use an accessibility support in the classroom that could compromise the construct being assessed?
17. Are there other barriers which could be removed by using an accessibility support that is different from what is already offered or in use (e.g., scheduling accommodation or universal condition)?

## **TOOL 6: Accessibility Supports in the Classroom: Questions for Teams**

### **Accessibility Supports in the Classroom: Questions to Consider**

1. Is the accessibility support documented in the student's IEP or 504 Plan?
2. For what types of task(s) does the student benefit from accessibility supports?
3. Does the student use an accessibility support to complete these tasks every time?  
Note how often.
4. Does the student use accessibility supports independently or do they need assistance?
5. If more than one support is available, how do these supports interact? For example, does one accessibility support seem more effective when used with another on a task?
6. If the accessibility support is presented differently on the test (e.g., an online calculator), how can you give the student opportunities to practice using it?
7. Does the student's IEP or 504 Plan need to be updated?

### **TOOL 7: After-Test Accessibility Questions for Teacher-Student Discussion**

1. Was the accessibility support used? Why?
2. Was the accessibility support useful? Why?
3. Were there any challenges with the accessibility support (are adjustments needed)? Why?
4. Should the accessibility support be used again? Why?

### **TOOL 8: Questions to Guide Evaluation of Use of Accessibility Supports at the School or District Level**

1. Were current policies reviewed to ensure ethical testing practices, the standardized administration of assessments, and adherence to test security practices before, during, and after the day of the test? Were educators offered formal professional development training on using the accessibility supports?
2. How many students utilize accessibility supports?
3. What types of accessibility supports are provided and are some used more than others?
4. Are students receiving the accessibility supports/accommodations documented in their IEP or 504 Plan?
5. How well do students receiving certain accessibility supports perform on state and local assessments? If a student is not meeting the expected level of performance, is it due to lack of access to the necessary instruction, lack of the appropriate accessibility support, or some issue with the use of supports?
6. What procedures need to be in place to make sure that test administrators properly provide the appropriate assessment accessibility supports?
7. How can assessment data and accessibility data be used to ensure that appropriate accessibility supports are being used?
8. What does the data on use of accessibility supports indicate about the provision of accessibility supports to students?
9. How are data on the use of accessibility supports being collected and reviewed?
10. How are accessibility supports provided to students during instruction and assessment evaluated? How can the process and procedures used to evaluate accessibility supports be improved?

### **TOOL 9: Questions to Guide Formative Evaluation at the Student Level**

Use these questions to: (a) evaluate the effectiveness of individualized accessibility supports provided during instruction and/or assessment at the student level; (b) inform the team decision-making process; (c) and identify needed changes in the accessibility supports.

1. What accessibility supports are used by the student during instruction and assessments?
2. What are the results of classroom assignments and assessments when accessibility supports are used, versus when they are not used?
3. If a student is not meeting the expected level of performance, is it due to lack of access to the necessary instruction, lack of access to accessibility supports, or some issue with the use

of accessibility supports?

4. What is the student's perception of how well the accessibility support worked?
5. What combinations of accessibility supports seem to be effective?
6. What are the difficulties encountered in the use of accessibility supports?
7. What are the perceptions of teachers and others about how the accessibility support appears to be working?
8. How have the characteristics of the student changed over time to warrant a plan or accessibility support change?

#### **TOOL 10: Evaluation of Classroom Accessibility Features and Accommodations**

1. List each accessibility support used and assign one of the following ratings: very effective, somewhat effective, not effective. Each IEP or 504 Plan member including the student should rate each support.
2. How effective was the accessibility support for a class activity, assignment, and test?
3. Which accessibility support does the student use, prefer, or decline to use? Why?
4. What changes, if any need to be made to improve the effectiveness of the selected accessibility supports?
5. Are there too few or too many accessibility supports?