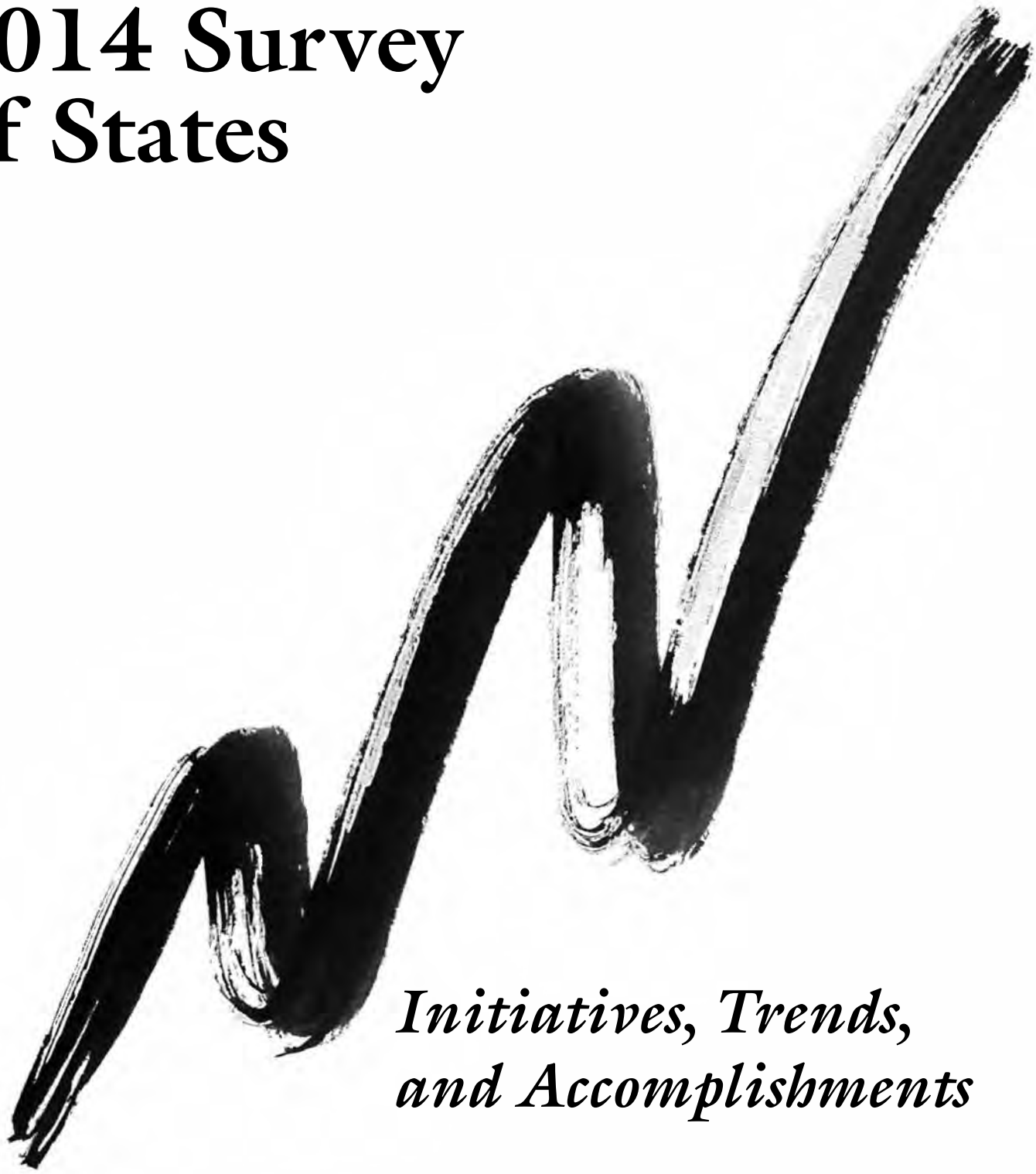
2014 Survey of States



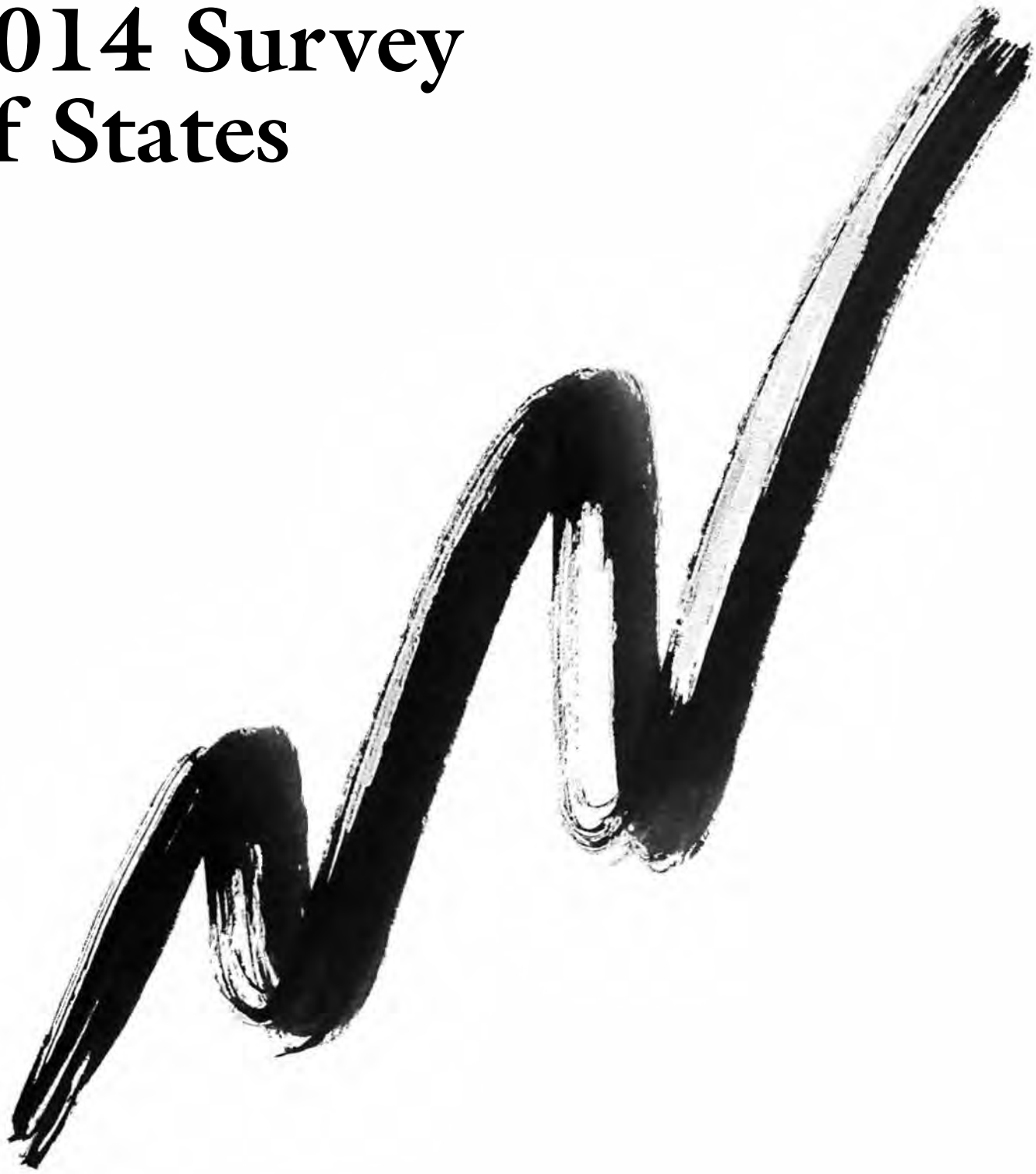
Initiatives, Trends, and Accomplishments

NATIONAL CENTER ON EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

In collaboration with:
Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)

Supported by:
U.S. Office of Special Education Programs

2014 Survey of States



Shyyan, V., Lazarus, S. S., & Thurlow, M. L. (2015). *2014 survey of states: Initiatives, trends, and accomplishments.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.

The Mission of the National Center on Educational Outcomes

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NCEO is a collaborative effort of the University of Minnesota, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). NCEO provides national leadership in assisting state and local education agencies in their development of policies and practices that encourage and support the participation of students with disabilities, English language learners, and English language learners with disabilities in accountability systems and data collection efforts.

NCEO focuses its efforts in the following areas:

- **Knowledge Development** on the participation and performance of students with disabilities in state and national assessments and other educational reform efforts.
- **Technical Assistance and Dissemination** through publications, presentations, technical assistance, and other networking activities.
- **Leadership and Coordination** to build on the expertise of others and to develop leaders who can conduct needed research and provide additional technical assistance.

The Center is supported through a Cooperative Agreement (#H326G110002) 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 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.

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September, 2015

Acknowledgments

With the support of State Directors of Special Education and State Directors of Assessment, we are able to report on the activities of all 50 regular states and eight of 11 unique states. Because of the thoughtful and knowledgeable responses of the Directors of Special Education, Directors of Assessment, and their designees who completed the 2014 survey, we are able to highlight new initiatives, trends, accomplishments, and current and emerging issues during this important period of education reform. This report is intended to make public the trends and issues occurring in states, as well as the innovations and approaches states are employing. We are appreciative of the time taken by respondents to obtain information from other areas or departments, and we hope that this collaborative effort provided an opportunity to increase awareness within and across state programs and departments.

For their support, special thanks go to:

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These were the state directors of special education in September, 2014 when NCEO administered the survey.

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These were the state directors of assessment in September, 2014 when NCEO administered the survey.

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the fourteenth survey of states by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) at the University of Minnesota. Results are presented for the 50 regular states and eight of the 11 unique states. The purpose of this report is to provide a snapshot of the new initiatives, trends, accomplishments, and emerging issues during this important period of education reform as states documented the academic achievement of students with disabilities.

Key findings include:

- Most states supported teachers by implementing college- and career-ready standards for all students, including students with disabilities.
- Many states participated in general, alternate, and English language proficiency assessment consortia.
- More than half of the states indicated that they disaggregated assessment results by primary disability category for the purpose of examining trends or reporting assessment results for students with disabilities.
- More than half of the states reported studying validity of results for accessibility features and accommodations using data collected during assessments.
- More than three-quarters of states reported a need for technology-related investments for the majority of districts in their states in order to improve the participation of students with disabilities in instructional activities and assessments. The types of investments most frequently cited as needed were additional devices and improved bandwidth or capacity for Internet connectivity.
- More than three-quarters of the states considered universal design during test conceptualization and construction.
- More than half of the states reported including data for all students with disabilities in their evaluation system for general education teachers.
- More than half of the states reported that they required students with disabilities to meet exactly the same state requirements as other students to receive a standard diploma.
- Seven states offered end-of-course alternate assessments based on AA-AAS.
- More than half of the states disaggregated assessment results for English language learners with disabilities.

States were cognizant of the benefits of inclusive assessment and accountability systems, and continued to improve assessment design, participation, accessibility and accommodations policies, monitoring practices, and data reporting. States also identified key areas of need for technical assistance to facilitate the implementation of next generation assessments.

Table of Contents

Overview of 2014 Survey of States

This report highlights the fourteenth survey of states by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO). It has been conducted for more than two decades to collect information from states about the participation and performance of students with disabilities in assessments during standards-based reform.

States are transitioning to college- and career-ready (CCR) standards-driven assessments to prepare all students, including students with disabilities, English language learners (ELLs) with disabilities, and ELLs, for post-school success. Many states are collaborating through consortia of states to develop general assessments, alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS), or assessments of English language proficiency (ELP). Some states belong to more than one consortium, some to one, and some to none.

As in the past, NCEO asked state directors of special education and state directors of assessment to agree on their responses to the 2014 survey. In compiling their responses, the directors sometimes elicited assistance of other individuals in the department who had the best current knowledge of the state's thinking, policies, and practices for including students with disabilities, and other students, in assessment systems and other aspects of educational reform. In many states, several people collaborated on completing NCEO's 2014 Survey of States.

All fifty regular states responded to the survey. In addition, eight of 11 unique states completed the survey in 2014. Most survey responses were submitted using an online survey tool. In a few instances, Word or PDF files were provided to respondents who wished to complete the survey that way.

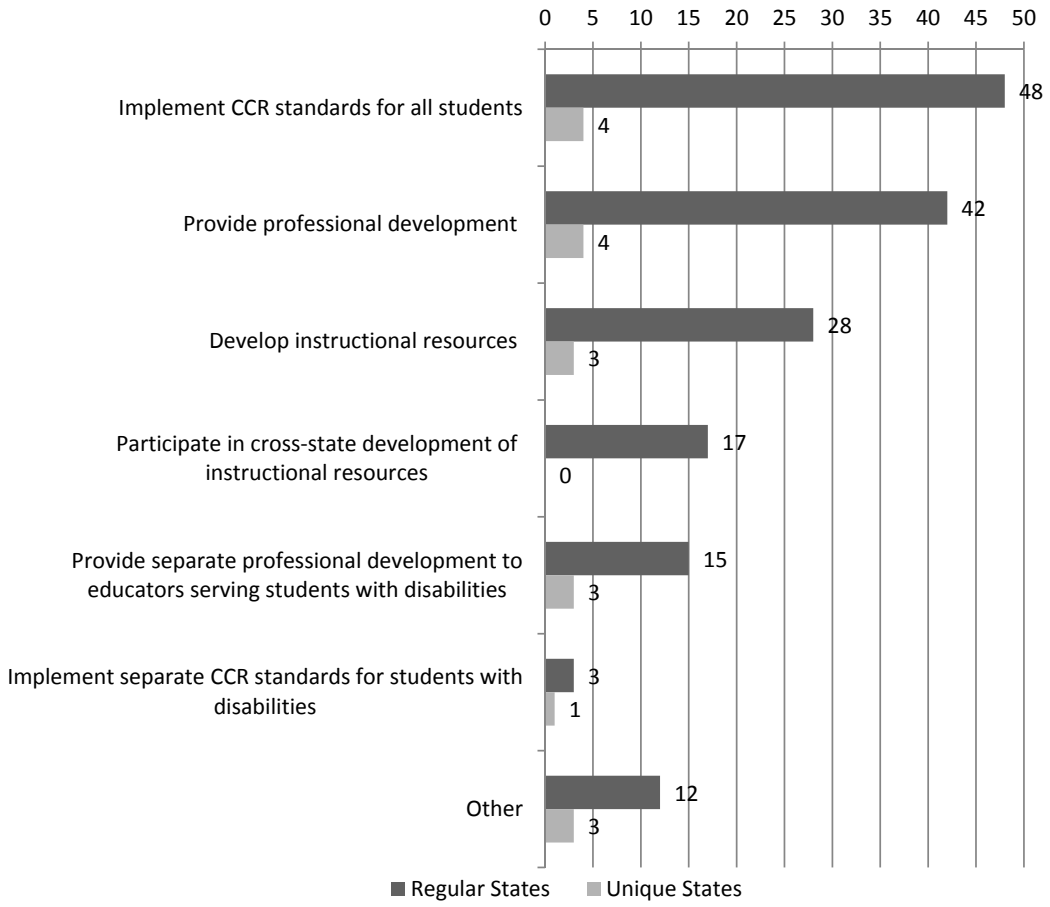
Survey respondents reported on trends in the large-scale assessment of students with disabilities and other groups of students. Topics addressed assessment participation, assessment performance, use of accessibility tools and accommodations, alternate assessments, and other related topics.

Eleven Unique States
American Samoa
Bureau of Indian Education
Department of Defense
District of Columbia
Guam
Marshall Islands
Micronesia
Northern Mariana Islands
Palau
Puerto Rico
U.S. Virgin Islands

College and Career Readiness

As states continue their transition from previous state standards to College- and Career-Ready (CCR) Standards, states sought to address the needs of students with disabilities. States were asked how they support content teachers as they help students with disabilities achieve CCR standards (see Figure 1). Most regular states reported that they supported teachers by implementing CCR standards for all students, including all students with disabilities, and many also provided professional development on CCR standards to all educators, including educators working with students with disabilities. Many unique states also reported that they implemented CCR standards for all students, and provided professional development on CCR standards to all educators. Other responses of several regular and unique states mentioned working on supports for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

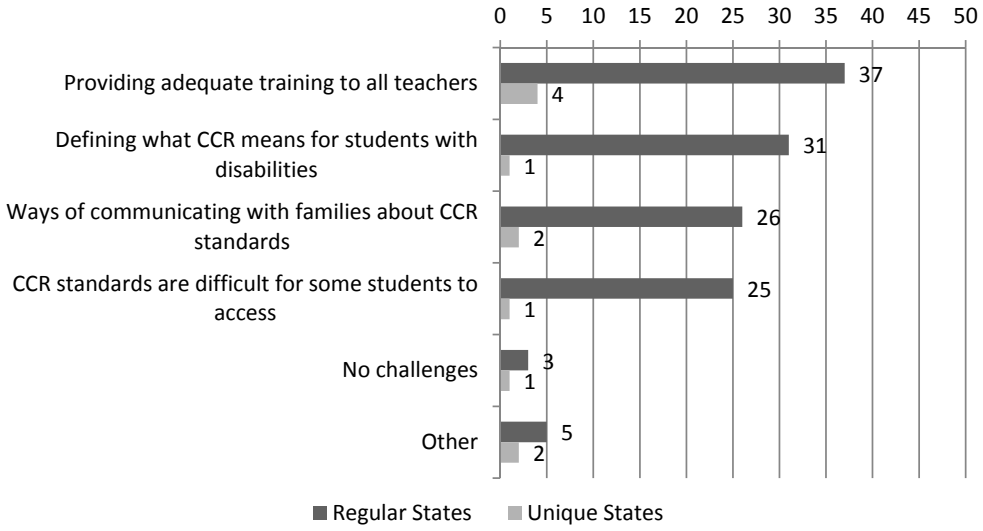
Figure 1. Ways States Support Content Teachers to Help Students With Disabilities Achieve CCR Standards



Note: Forty-eight regular and seven unique states responded to this question. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

When addressing challenges associated with implementing CCR standards for students with disabilities, many regular states (N=37) and half of the responding unique states identified challenges with providing adequate training (see Figure 2). Another challenge identified by many states was defining what CCR means for students with disabilities. About half of the regular states and two unique states also experienced challenges with communicating with families about CCR standards, and a similar number of regular states and one unique state reported that CCR standards are difficult for some students to access. Only three regular states and one unique state reported that they encountered no challenges in implementing CCR standards for students with disabilities.

Figure 2. Challenges in Implementing CCR Standards for Students With Disabilities



Note: Forty-eight regular and six unique states responded to this question. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Participation in Assessment Consortia

In 2014, many states were members of general, alternate, or English language proficiency (ELP) assessment consortia. States participated in a variety of consortium-led activities, including pilot tests, field tests, and special accessibility studies. This information is summarized in Table 1. Almost two-thirds of regular states reported being members of one of the two general assessment consortia. Fewer states were members of general assessment consortia in 2014 than in 2012 when most states belonged to one of the consortia. Nearly three-quarters of regular states reported membership in one of the two alternate assessment consortia. The two ELP consortia were identified by about two-thirds of regular states. For each consortium, some member states participated in pilot tests, field tests, or special accessibility studies. Several unique states reported membership in general assessment, alternate assessment, and ELP consortia.

Table 1. Participation of Regular and Unique States in Assessment Consortia

	Regular States					Unique States				
	Member State	Pilot Test	Field Test	Special Accessibility Study	Not a Member	Member State	Pilot Test	Field Test	Special Accessibility Study	Not a Member
General Assessment Consortia										
PARCC[1]	12	2	8	1	28	1	0	0	0	6
Smarter Balanced[2]	20	14	18	2	24	1	0	1	0	7
Alternate Assessment Consortia										
DLM[3]	18	10	11	0	25	0	0	0	0	7
NCSC[4]	18	13	9	3	24	5	2	0	0	2
ELP Assessment Consortia										
ASSETS[5]	24	4	13	1	23	2	0	1	0	6
ELPA21[6]	9	4	5	2	26	0	0	0	0	7

[1]Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers
[2]Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
[3]Dynamic Learning Maps
[4]National Center and State Collaborative
[5]Assessment Services Supporting ELs through Technology Systems
[6]English Language Proficiency for the 21st Century

Participation and Performance

Including students with disabilities in assessment and accountability processes draws greater attention to how these students participate and perform on large-scale assessments. Reporting practices for students with disabilities are of interest because they reflect how states may look at their data.

Participation Reporting Practices

Participation reporting practices varied across states in both 2012 and 2014 (see Table 2). More regular and unique states in 2014 than in 2012 did not count students as participants, and students did not receive a score, when they did not participate in the assessment in any way. Fewer regular states in 2014 than in 2012 indicated that students attended (sat for) the assessment but did not complete enough items to earn a score.

Table 2. Reporting Practices for Counting Students as Assessment Participants

	State category	Survey year	NOT counted as participants, and received no score	Counted as participants, but received no score, score of zero, or lowest proficiency level	NOT counted as participants, and earned score counted as valid	Counted as participants, and earned score counted as valid*
Students who did not participate in state assessments in any way (e.g., absent on test day, parent refusal)	Regular states	2014	37	7	0	0
		2012	31	8	1	1
	Unique states	2014	4	0	1	1
		2012	6	0	0	0
Students who attended (sat for) assessment, but did not complete enough items to score	Regular states	2014	12	23	0	7
		2012	9	25	1	8
	Unique states	2014	2	3	0	1
		2012	0	3	0	3
Students who used accommodations resulting in invalid scores (e.g., non-standard, modifications)	Regular states	2014	17	20	3	1
		2012	12	20	0	3
	Unique states	2014	2	1	0	1
		2012	1	4	0	1

*In the 2012 survey, the "Counted as participants, and earned score counted as valid" answer choice was phrased as "Earned score is counted as valid."

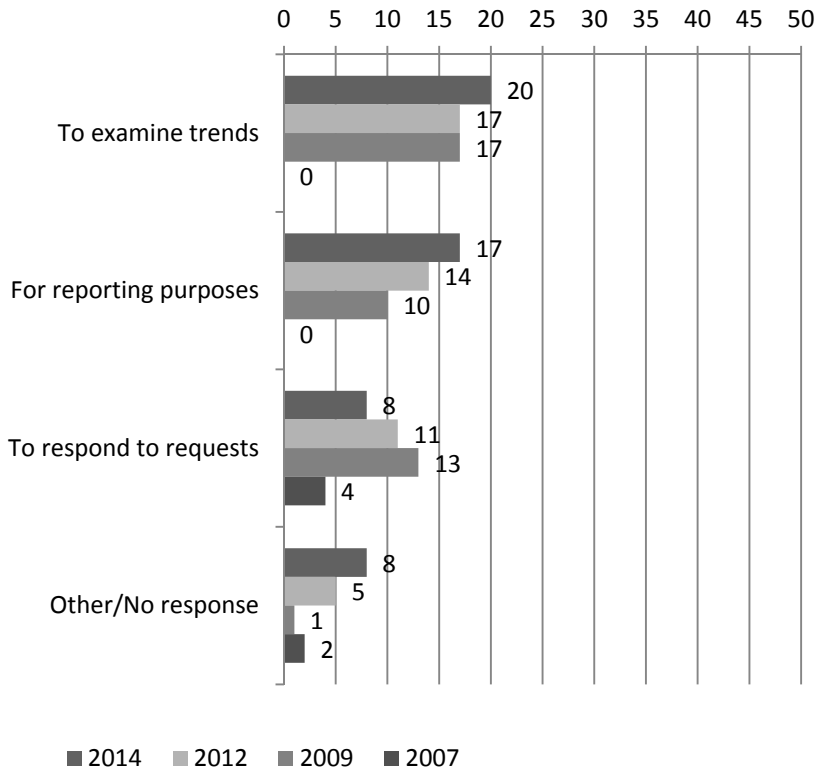
Note: Forty-nine regular states responded in 2014; forty-nine responded in 2012. For unique states, eight responded in 2014; six responded in 2012.

Nineteen regular states provided additional comments on how students with disabilities were included in assessment and accountability processes. Many comments focused on flexibility waivers and policies around reporting and calculating scores.

Reporting Practices for Students by Disability Category

Thirty-one regular states reported disaggregating assessment results by primary disability category in 2014—an increase from 28 states in 2012, 10 states in 2009, and 17 states in 2007. The most frequently listed reasons states gave for disaggregating results by disability category (see Figure 3) were to examine trends and for reporting purposes. Less often, states indicated that they did so to respond to requests.

Figure 3. Reasons for Reporting Assessment Results by Disability Category for Regular States*



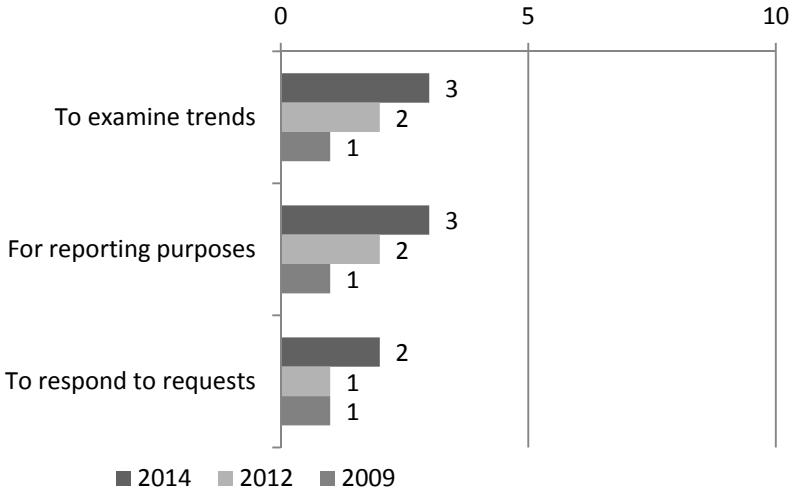
*In 2014, 18 states reported not disaggregating results by primary disability.
Note: Forty-nine regular states responded to this question in 2014, 2012, and 2009; fifty responded in 2007. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Several regular states provided additional comments about reasons for disaggregating by primary disability. For example:

- Our state makes disaggregated data available to the public so that they can evaluate it any way we have not.
- We have started doing this at the state level as part of our data analysis for the SSIP (State Systemic Improvement Plan).
- We provide no public disaggregation by disability category. Internally, special programs staff look at data by disability category.

Figure 4 summarizes the reasons given by unique states for reporting assessment results by disability category. Five unique states reported disaggregating assessment data by disability category in 2014. Similar to regular states, assessment results were reported by disability category in unique states to examine trends, for reporting purposes, and to respond to requests.

Figure 4. Reasons for Reporting Assessment Results by Disability Category for Unique States*



*Three unique states reported not disaggregating results by primary disability in 2014.
Note: Five unique states reported that they disaggregated assessment results by primary disability category in 2014, two unique states reported that they disaggregated data in 2012, and one unique state reported that it disaggregated data in 2009. None of the unique states disaggregated data by primary disability category in 2007. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Accessibility and Accommodations

Reforms in educational testing, and the shift to more technology-based assessment, have brought many changes in approaches to accessibility and accommodations since 2012. Greater numbers of students now have access to needed accessibility features that are built into the testing platform. For the first time, this year's Survey of States focused on both accessibility and accommodations for states' assessments. Many states and assessment consortia have adopted approaches to accessibility that included several levels. In this report, *accessibility features* refer to all approaches other than accommodations that used to ensure access for students with disabilities (and possibly other students).

Practices Related to Accessibility and Accommodations

States used a variety of approaches to monitor the provision of accessibility features and accommodations (see Table 3). Twenty-four regular states and seven unique states reported that they directly observed test administrations on test day, including a focus on the provision of accessibility features and accommodations. Nineteen regular states reported conducting desk audits. Thirteen regular and three unique states reported that they sent teams on a random, scheduled, or targeted basis into districts/schools to compare Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) with what teachers said happened in class and during assessment.

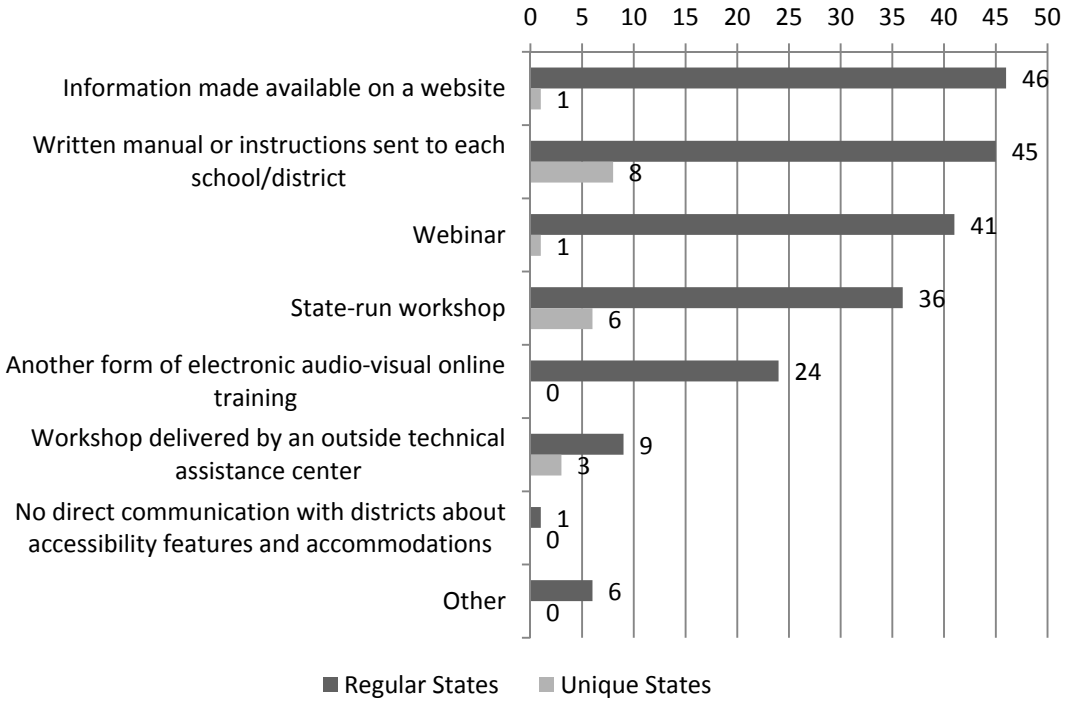
Table 3. Ways of Monitoring Accessibility Features and Accommodations

Ways of Monitoring	Regular States	Unique States
We do not monitor the provision of accessibility features.	7	1
We do not monitor the provision of accommodations.	7	0
We complete online record reviews.	13	2
We conduct desk audits.	19	0
We directly observe test administrations, including the provision of accessibility features and accommodations, on test day.	24	7
We interview students, teachers, and administrators about accessibility features and accommodations.	9	1
On a random basis, we send teams into districts/schools to compare IEPs to what teachers say happens in class and during assessment.	13	3
On a scheduled basis, we send teams into districts/schools to compare IEPs to what teachers say happens in class and during assessment.	9	2
On a targeted basis (using data on accessibility features and accommodations), we send teams into districts/schools to compare IEPs to what teachers say happens in class and during assessment.	10	0
Other	10	1

Note: Forty-five regular and eight unique states responded to this question. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

States used a variety of modes to communicate about accessibility features and accommodations to districts, schools, and teachers (see Figure 5). Most often, regular and unique states made information available on a website, by sending out information in written manuals or instructions, or by distributing information via webinars or state-run workshops. Three unique states also reported hosting a workshop delivered by an outside technical assistance center.

Figure 5. Modes of Communicating Accessibility Features and Accommodations Information to Districts, Schools, and Teachers

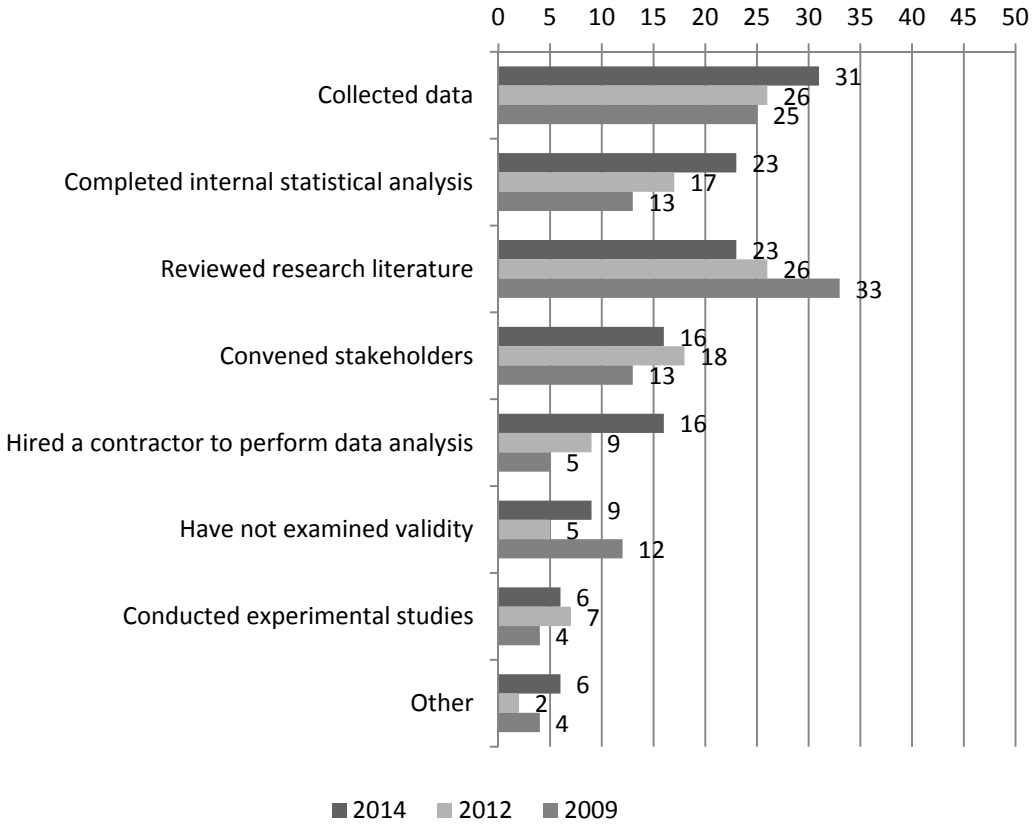


Note: Forty-nine regular and eight unique states responded to this question. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Other modes mentioned included preliminary presentations, non-state educational agency sponsored workshops, a speaker from another state, a regional state support team network of trainers, and biweekly assessment updates e-mailed to principals and central offices.

Regular states employed a variety of approaches to examine the validity of assessment results when accessibility features and accommodations were used. Figure 6 shows this information as reported in 2009, 2012, and 2014. More states in 2014 than previously studied validity using data collected during assessments and by completing internal statistical analyses. The number of states examining validity of accessibility features and accommodations by reviewing research literature decreased over the same time period.

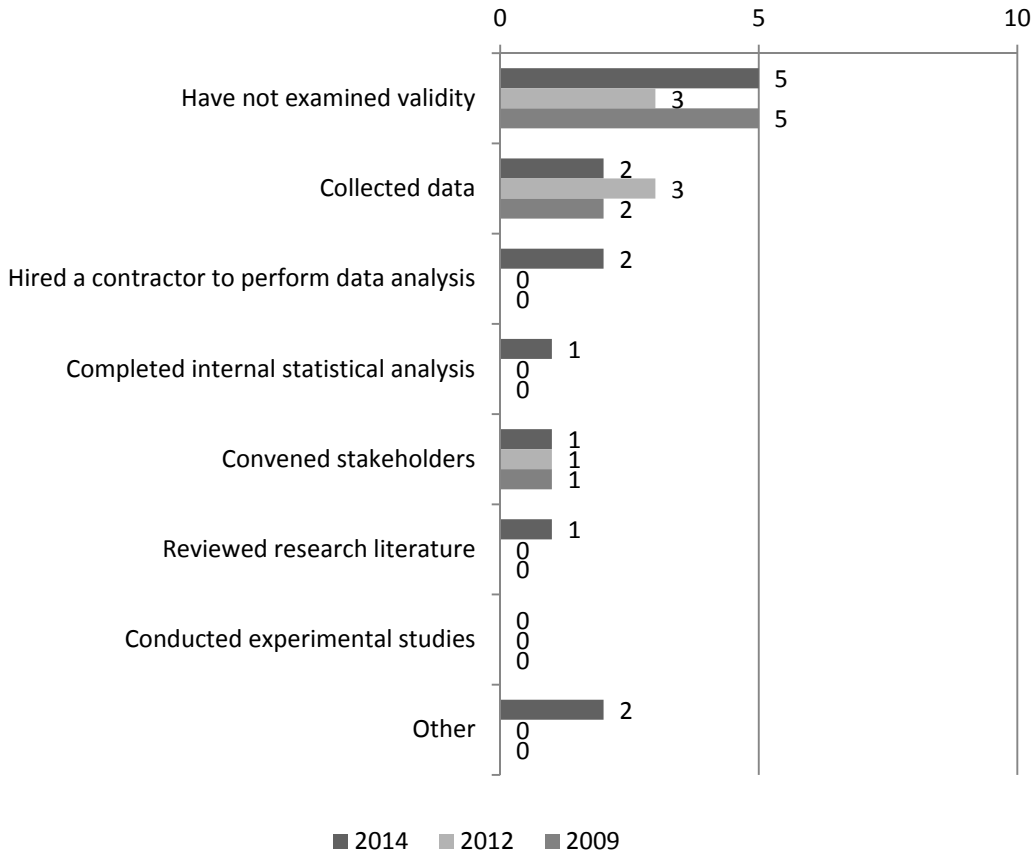
Figure 6. Ways That Regular States Examined Validity of Accessibility Features* and Accommodations



*Accessibility features, in addition to accommodations, were addressed only in the 2014 survey.
Note: Forty-seven regular states responded to this question in 2014, forty-six regular states responded in 2012, and fifty responded in 2009. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

In 2014 most of the unique states did not examine the validity of assessment results when accessibility features and accommodations were used (see Figure 7). Two unique states reported that they collected data and hired a contractor to analyze their validity results.

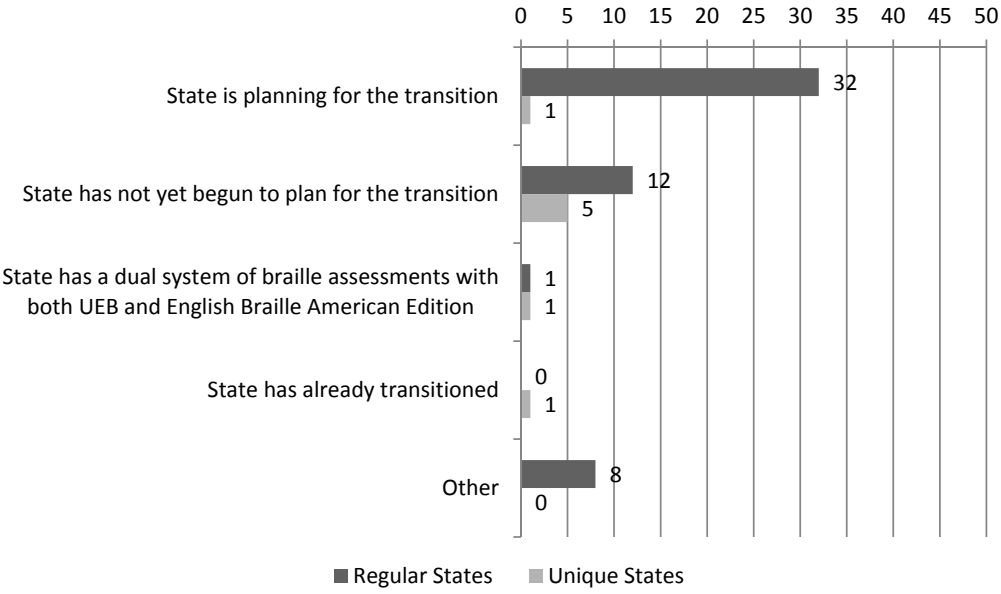
Figure 7. Ways That Unique States Examined Validity of Accessibility Features* and Accommodations



*Accessibility features, in addition to accommodations, were addressed only in the 2014 survey.
Note: Seven unique states responded to this question in 2014, six unique states responded in 2012, and five responded in 2009. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Unified English Braille (UEB) was adopted by the United States for implementation in January, 2016. Thirty-two regular states and one unique state reported that they were planning the process for transitioning their assessments to UEB (see Figure 8). Twelve regular and eight unique states indicated that this transition had not yet begun. One unique state reported it had already transitioned to UEB.

Figure 8. Transitioning Assessments to Unified English Braille (UEB)



Note: Forty-five regular and eight unique states responded to this question. State respondents were limited to selecting one response option with the exception that *Other* could be selected to insert a comment.

Difficulties Related to Accessibility Features and Accommodations

Many states commented on difficulties encountered in districts in ensuring that accessibility features and accommodations were provided on test day (Figure 9). The primary challenges reported by regular states were:

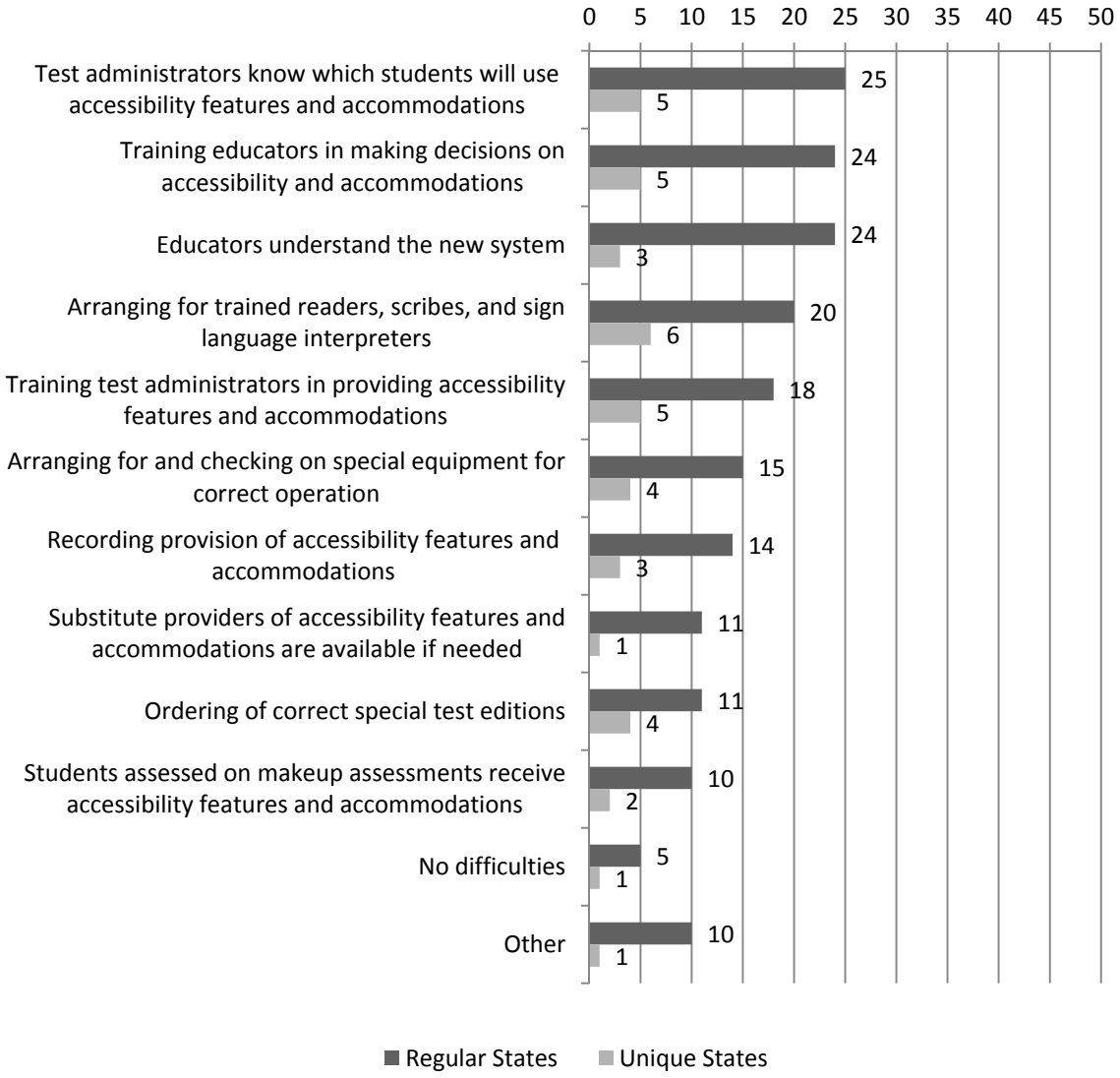
- ensuring test administrators/proctors knew which students they would supervise and what accessibility features and accommodations those students were to receive
- training educators in making decisions related to accessibility features and accommodations
- ensuring educators understood the new system

Unique states reported the following primary challenges:

- arranging for trained readers, scribes, and sign language interpreters
- ensuring test administrators/proctors knew which students they would supervise and what accessibility features and accommodations those students were to receive
- training educators in making decisions related to accessibility features and accommodations
- training test administrators/proctors in providing accessibility features and accommodations in small groups or individual settings

Five regular states and one unique state reported that they experienced no difficulties in this area.

Figure 9. Challenges in Provision of Accessibility Features and Accommodations



Note: Forty-one regular and seven unique states responded to this question. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Additional challenges reported in the *Other* category included, for example, difficulty with braille on test day and challenges with supporting the assessment of general education students. Several states indicated that some difficulties had been resolved by extensive training or by providing guidance on resolution of potential issues.

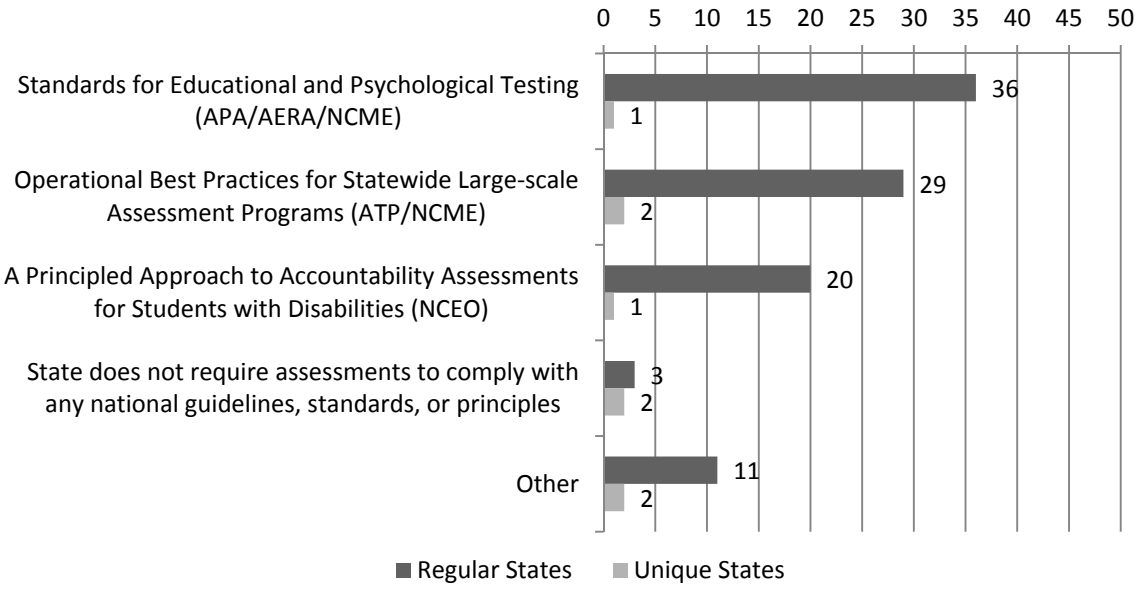
Current and Emerging Issues

States face many current and emerging issues as they develop and implement next-generation assessments. Issues include assessment guidelines, standards, and principles that inform assessment development processes; technology and universal design components of assessments; teacher evaluation priorities; and graduation requirements.

Assessment Guidelines, Standards, and Principles

Many states asked test vendors to develop assessments that are compliant with one or more sets of guidelines, standards, and principles (see Figure 10). Thirty-six regular states and one unique state reported asking vendors to use the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing developed by the American Educational Research Association* (AERA), the American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council for Measurement in Education (NCME). Other commonly used guidelines, standards, and principles included the *Operational Best Practices for Statewide Large-scale Assessment Programs* developed by the Association of Test Publishers (ATP) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and *A Principled Approach to Accountability Assessments for Students with Disabilities* developed by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO). Three regular and two unique states reported that their states did not require assessments to comply with any national guidelines, standards, or principles.

Figure 10. Collaboration With Test Vendors on Developing Assessments Compliant With Guidelines, Standards, or Principles



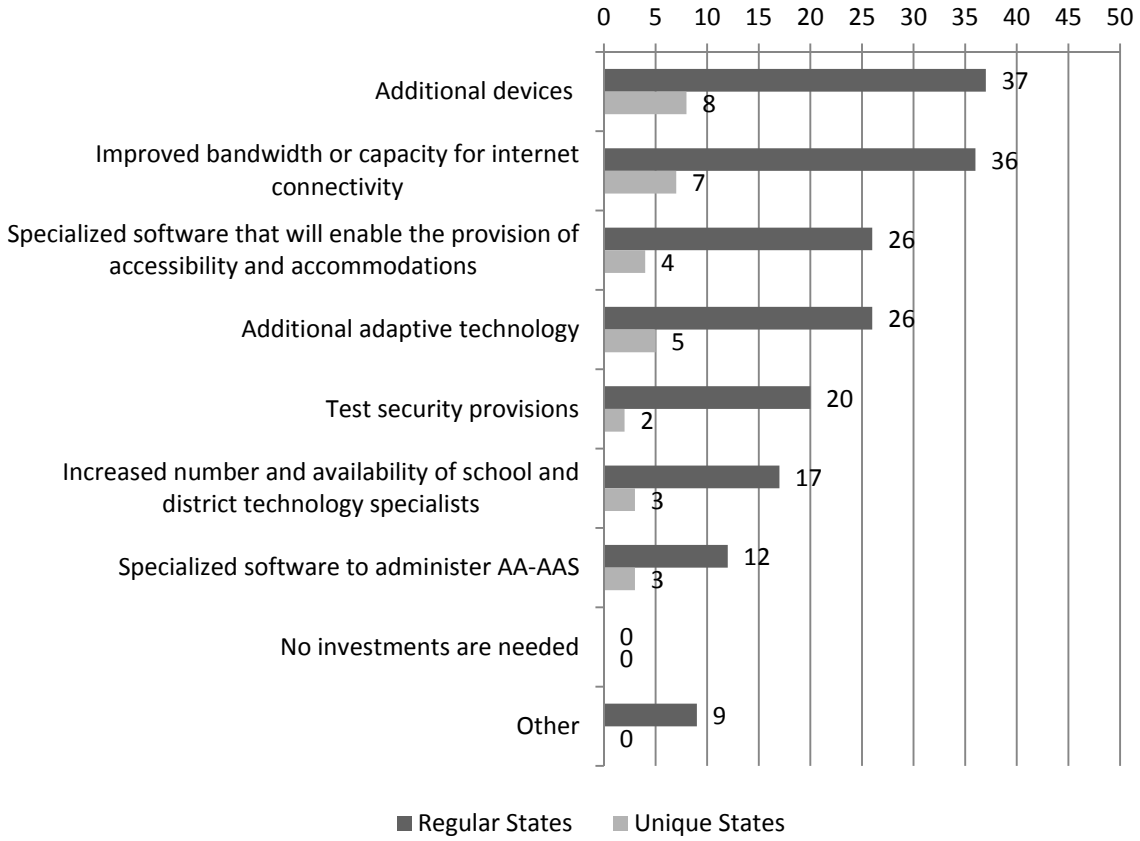
Note: Forty-three regular and four unique states responded to this question. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Other comments included a variety of other types of guidance, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, Accessible Portable Item Protocol, and Guidelines from CCSSO's TILSA (Technical Issues in Large Scale Assessment) work.

Technology

States indicated that there was a need for districts to make additional technology-related investments to better enable students with disabilities to participate in instruction and assessments (see Figure 11). Additional devices, such as computers and tablets, were identified as a need by the largest number of regular and unique states, followed closely by a need for improved bandwidth or capacity for Internet connectivity. About half of both regular and unique states indicated needs for specialized software for accessibility and accommodations, and additional adaptive technology. *Other* identified needs included, for example, computers with refreshable braille and security provisions. No regular or unique state indicated that no investments were needed for technology-related needs.

Figure 11. Needed Technology-Related Investments for Better Participation of Students With Disabilities

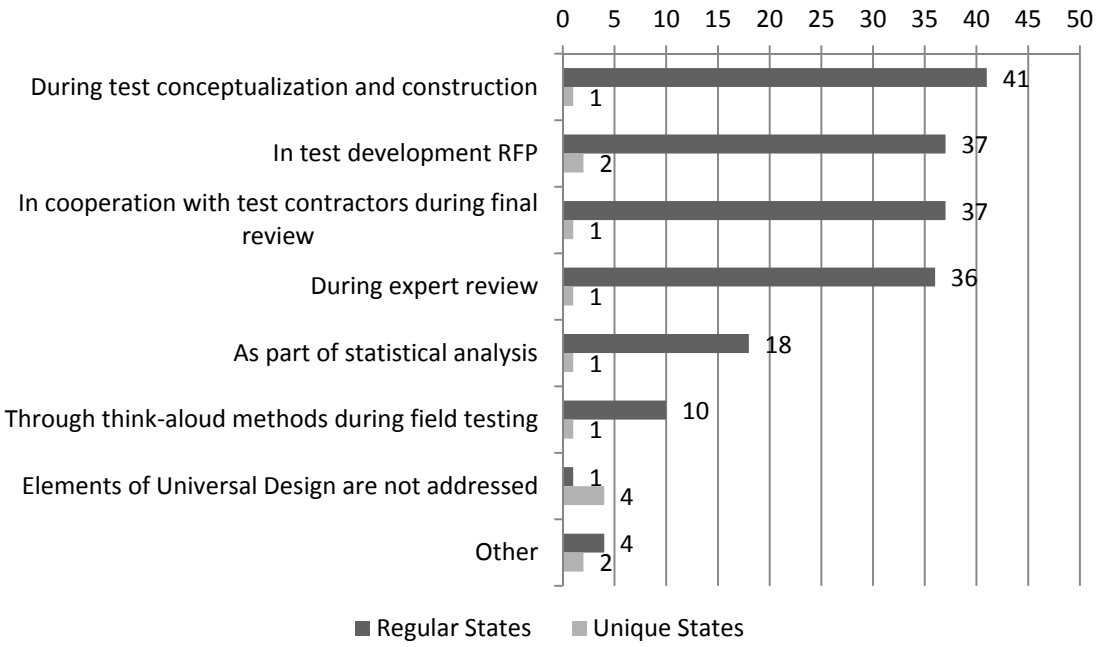


Note: Forty-five regular and eight unique states responded to this question. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Universal Design

More than three-quarters of the states reported that elements of Universal Design were considered during test conceptualization and construction (see Figure 12). Universal Design also was addressed in requests for proposals for test development, final reviews conducted with test contractors, and expert reviews. Several states indicated that Universal Design was addressed in *Other* ways including the development of custom items and via test specifications. Fifty percent of responding unique states did not address elements of Universal Design, although some unique states addressed Universal Design in some areas.

Figure 12. Areas in Which Universal Design Is Addressed in the General Assessment Development Process

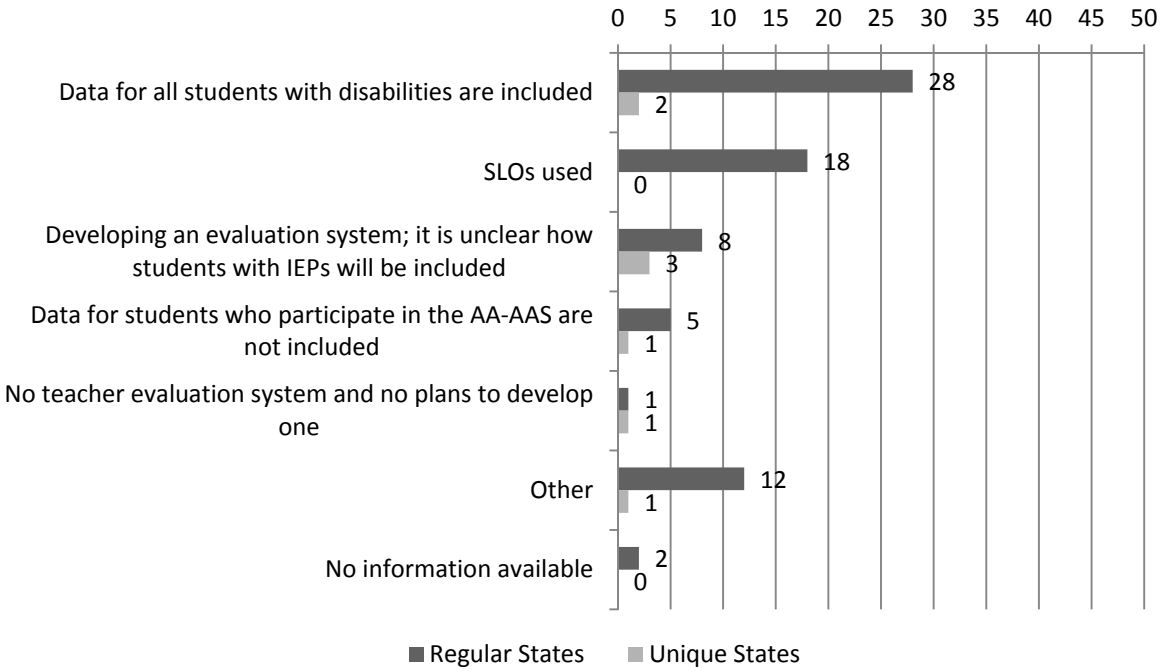


Note: Forty-six regular and six unique states responded to this question. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Teacher Evaluation

Data from students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) were included in the teacher evaluation system for general education teachers who teach core subjects (reading, English language arts, math) in tested grades in a variety of ways (see Figure 13). More than half of the regular states and two unique states reported that data for all students with disabilities (students with IEPs and 504 plans) are included in the general education teacher evaluation system. About one-third of states used Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) to measure the performance of students with IEPs for teacher evaluation purposes. A few states indicated that they were still developing their teacher evaluation systems or did not have one.

Figure 13. Inclusion of Data From Students With IEPs in the State's Evaluation System for General Education Teachers



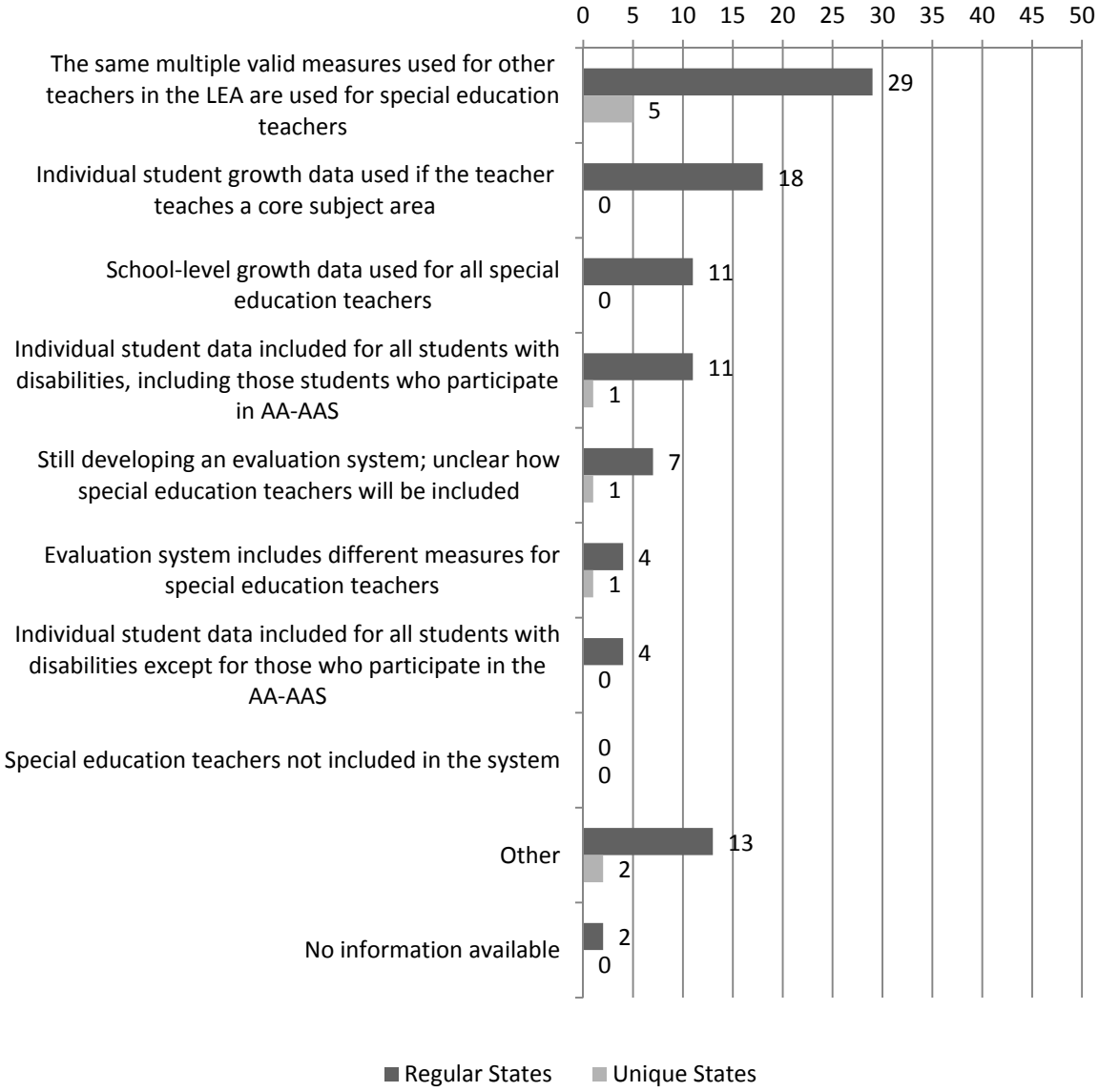
Note: Forty regular and seven unique states responded to this question. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Most states indicated that the same multiple valid measures used for non-core subject teachers were used for special education teachers (see Figure 14). Eighteen states indicated that individual student growth data were used if the teacher taught or co-taught a core subject area in a tested grade.

The use or development of a value-added model for teacher evaluation purposes was reported by 11 regular states and one unique state (see Figure 15). Twenty-two regular states and two unique states indicated that their state teacher evaluation system would not include a value-added model.

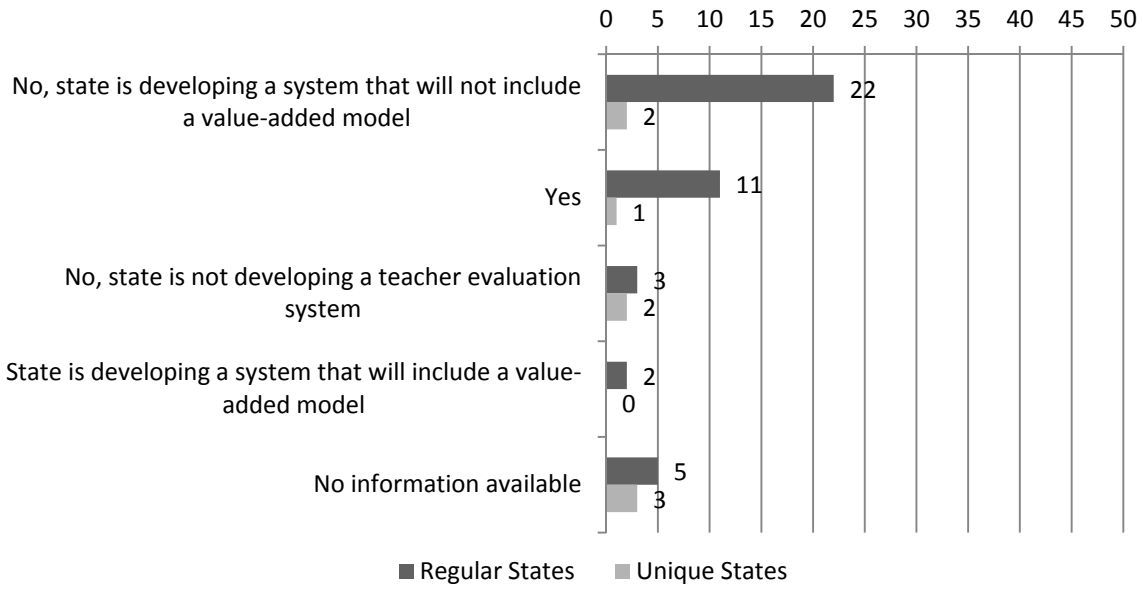
Four regular states further indicated that their value-added teacher evaluation model adjusted and provided differentiated accountability for students with disabilities. Six reported that this was not the case, and one commented that the student growth component of teacher evaluation was a local joint committee decision.

Figure 14. Inclusion of Special Education Teachers in the Teacher Evaluation System



Note: Forty-two regular and seven unique states responded to this question. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Figure 15. Value-Added Model Use for Teacher Evaluation



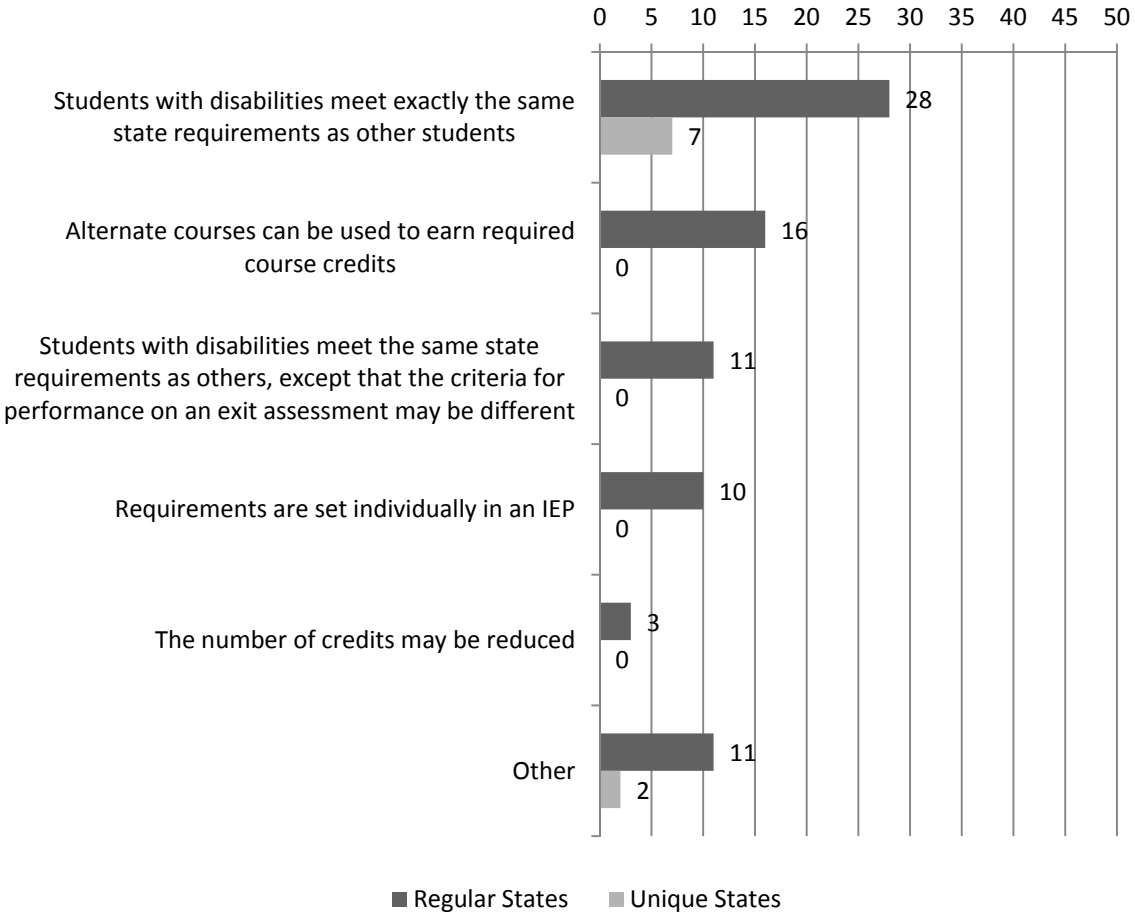
Note: Forty-three regular and eight unique states responded to this question.

Graduation Requirements

More than half of the regular states and most of the unique states indicated that the graduation requirements for earning a standard diploma were the same for students with disabilities and students without disabilities (see Figure 16). Sixteen regular states reported that students with disabilities could take alternate courses to earn required course credits, while 11 regular states reported that students with disabilities met exactly the same course requirements as other students, but that the criteria for performance on an exit assessment might be different. Ten regular states indicated that the requirements for students with disabilities were set individually in an IEP.

For students with disabilities who participated in the regular assessment, but did not meet the requirements for a regular diploma, 17 regular states and three unique states reported that they issued no other end-of-school documents. Other end-of-school documents issued by states included certificates of attendance, completion, achievement, or attainment. Several regular states indicated that decisions about which graduation document a student received involved local-level decisions.

Figure 16. Allowances Made for Students With Disabilities Who Participate in the Regular Assessment to Receive a Standard Diploma



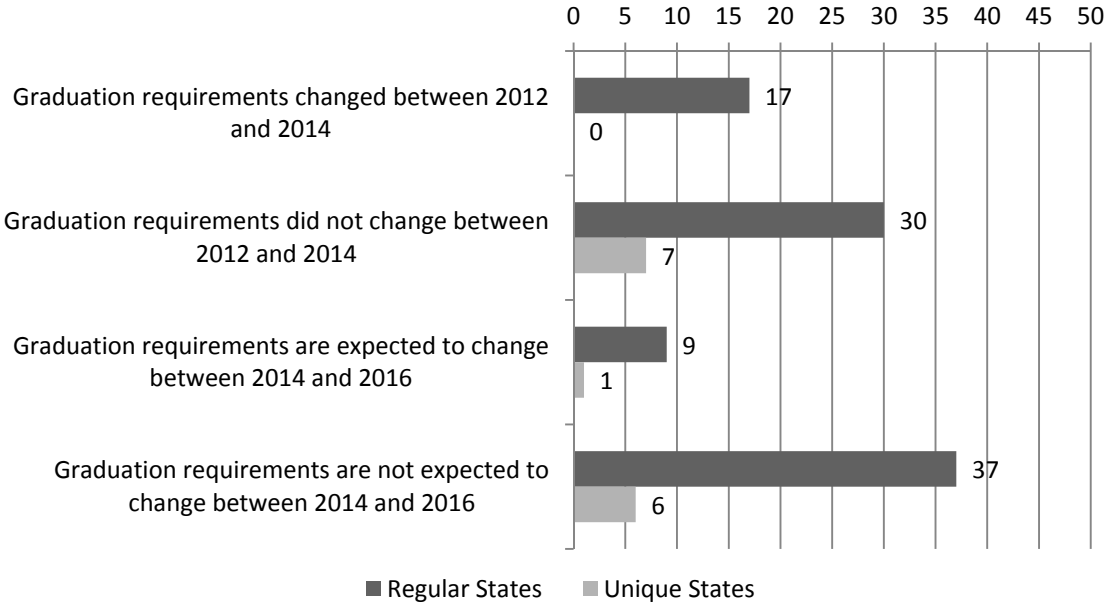
Note: Forty-five regular and seven unique states responded to this question. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

States addressed the implications for Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) graduation rate accountability of students with disabilities who participated in the regular assessment and did not meet the requirements for a standard diploma. See individual state responses in the Appendix. The most frequent comments were:

- Not counted as graduates, but included in the denominator of the rate calculation.
- They are counted the same as students without disabilities.

Seventeen regular states reported that graduation requirements for students with disabilities changed between 2012 and 2014, while 30 regular and seven unique states reported no such changes for the same period (see Figure 17). Nine regular states and one unique state expected changes in graduation requirements between 2014 and 2016, while 37 regular states and six unique states did not anticipate any changes.

Figure 17. Changes in Graduation Requirements for Students With Disabilities



Note: Forty-seven regular states addressed changes in graduation requirements in 2012-2014, and 46 regular states addressed these changes in 2014-2016. Seven unique states addressed changes in graduation requirements for both periods of years.

Successful Practices and Recurring Challenges

FOR SEVERAL ASSESSMENT TOPICS, STATE RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED TO INDICATE whether the state had developed successful practices or faced recurring challenges. Respondents rated each item as very challenging, challenging, successful, or very successful. Most states reported that validity of assessment results of students with disabilities, instructional accessibility and accommodations, and assessment accessibility and accommodations were areas of success (see Table 4). The unique states also reported that both instructional and assessment accessibility and accommodations were areas of success. The use of assistive technology for assessment activities was reported by regular states to be the most challenging area. Unique states found validity of assessment results of students with disabilities and assessment of ELLs with disabilities for accountability purposes to be challenging areas.

Table 4. Successful Practices and Recurring Challenges

	Regular States					Unique States				
	Very Challenging	Challenging	Successful	Very Successful	N/A	Very Challenging	Challenging	Successful	Very Successful	N/A
Assessment accessibility and accommodations	2	13	22	12	0	1	3	4	0	0
Instructional accessibility and accommodations	1	14	25	10	0	2	3	3	0	0
Validity of assessment results of students with disabilities	0	12	26	11	1	3	2	3	0	0
Assessment of ELLs with disabilities for accountability purposes	6	16	20	8	0	3	2	2	0	1
Inclusion of ELLs with disabilities in ELP assessment	5	12	19	14	0	1	3	2	0	2
Inclusion of students with disabilities in graduation tests	0	4	11	9	26	0	2	0	0	5
Use of assistive technology for assessment activities	1	24	19	5	1	1	3	2	0	1

Note: Fifty regular states and eight unique states responded to this survey question.

Alternate Assessments

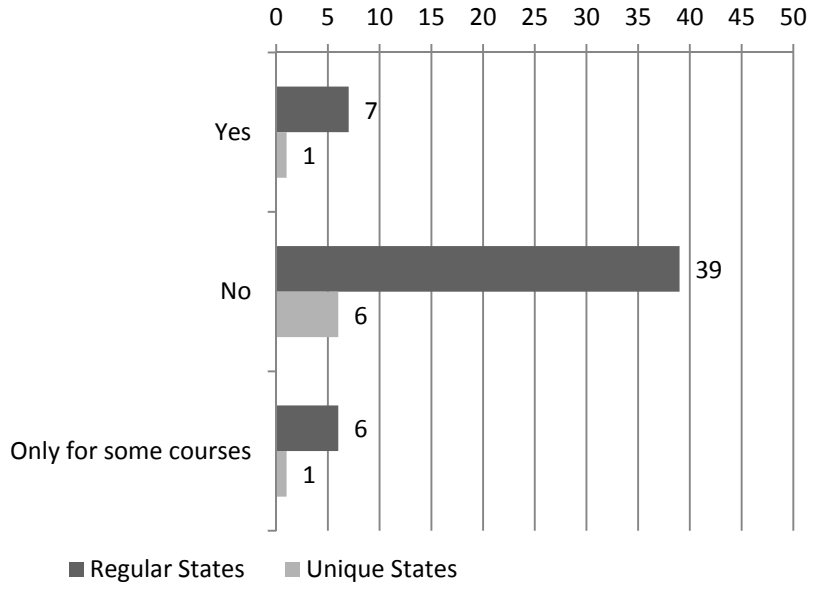
ALTERNATE ASSESSMENTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR SOME STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES. Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities participate in alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS). In the recent past, some states also offered an optional alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards (AA-MAS) for some low-performing students with disabilities, although this assessment was being phased out in 2014-2015 as students transitioned to general assessments. This section of the report highlights the information generated by survey items on the two types of alternate assessments for students with disabilities.

Alternate Assessment Based on Alternate Achievement Standards

Most regular and unique states revised their alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS) between 2012 and 2014. Forty-three regular states made changes to their AA-AAS. Of these, 28 states reported making major revisions. Six responding unique states reported making major revisions to their AA-AAS.

Only seven regular states and one unique state had end-of-course AA-AAS fully incorporated into their assessment system (see Figure 18). Six additional regular states and one unique state had end-of-course AA-AAS only for some courses.

Figure 18. End-of-Course AA-AAS for Students With the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities



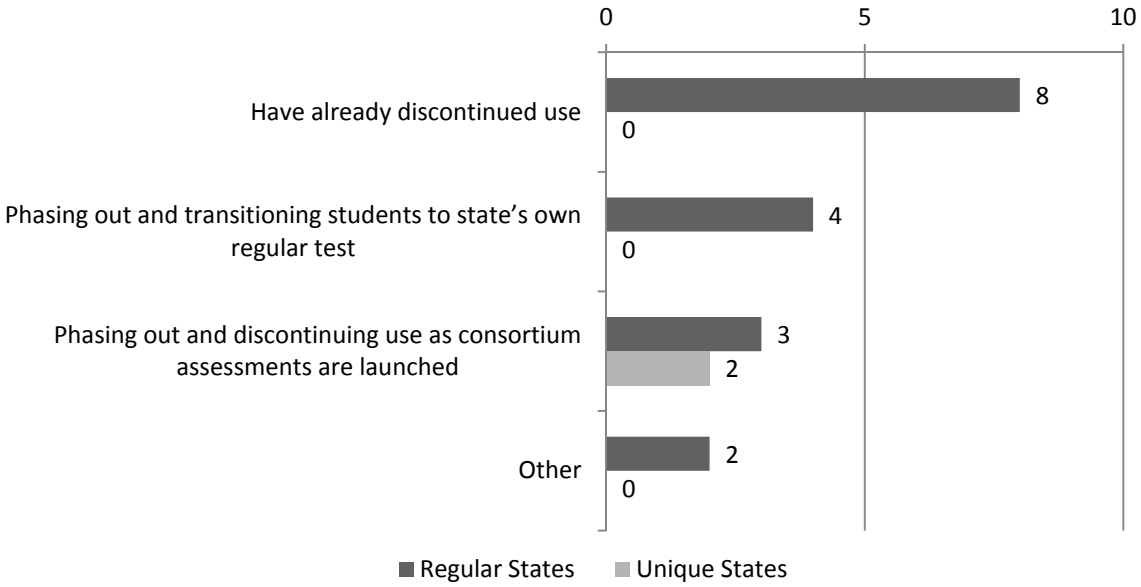
Note: Forty-six regular and seven unique states responded to this question.

If AA-AAS was used only for some courses, participants were asked to list the courses. The reported courses for regular states included English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and biology. One unique state reported English language arts, mathematics, and science as the AA-AAS-related courses.

Alternate Assessment Based on Modified Achievement Standards

Fifteen regular and two unique states reported having the alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards (AA-MAS) at one time. About half of the regular states had discontinued using this assessment prior to the 2014-2015 school year (see Figure 19). Most of the remaining states were in the process of phasing it out.

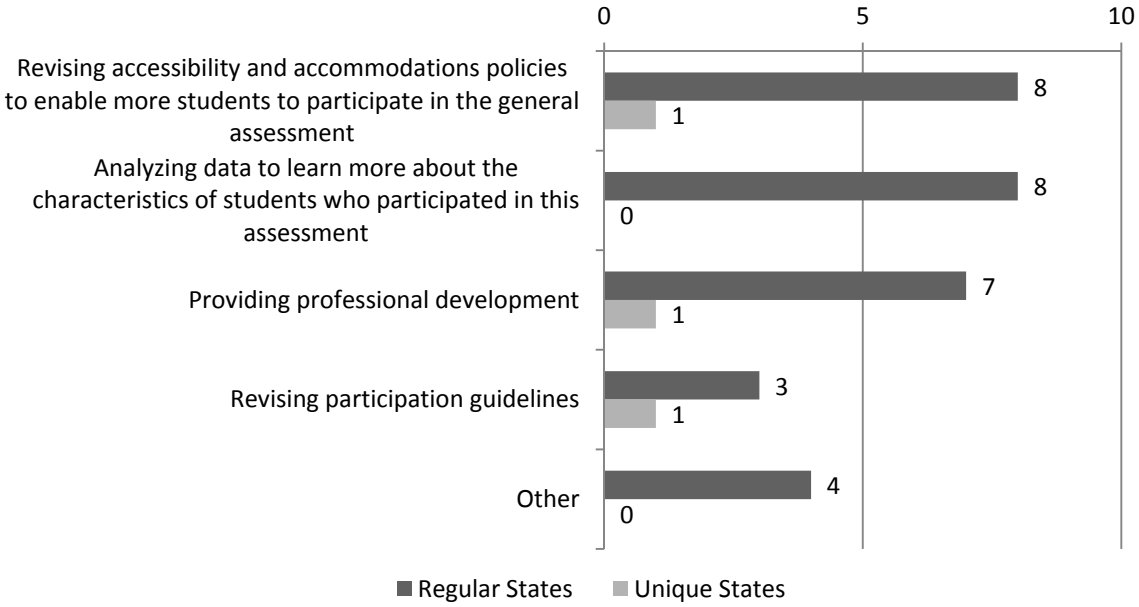
Figure 19. Phasing out of the AA-MAS



Note: Fifteen regular and two unique states responded to this question. State respondents were limited to selecting one response option, with the exception that *Other* could be selected to insert a comment.

States' transition processes from AA-MAS to general assessments are summarized in Figure 20. Many regular states reported revising accessibility and accommodations policies to enable more students to participate in the general assessment, analyzing data to learn more about the characteristics of students who participated in AA-MAS, and providing professional development opportunities on this topic.

Figure 20. Ways of Transitioning From the AA-MAS to the General Assessment



Note: Thirteen regular and two unique states responded to this question. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

English Language Learners With Disabilities

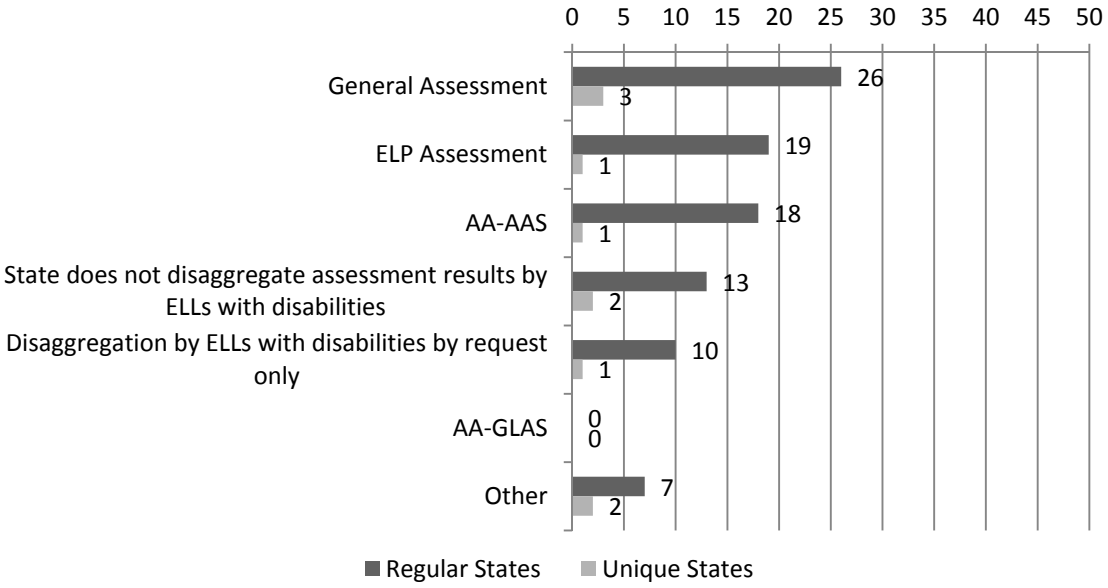
This section presents the information shared by states regarding their reporting practices for ELLs with disabilities, accessibility and accommodations, and participation of ELLs with the most significant cognitive disabilities in ELP assessments.

Reporting Practices for English Language Learners With Disabilities

More than half of the regular states and several unique states reported disaggregating assessment results for ELLs with disabilities for the general assessment (see Figure 21). About one-third of the regular states disaggregated results for ELLs with disabilities for the ELP and AA-AAS. Some states disaggregated results for ELLs only upon request. Other states did not disaggregate data for this group.

Some respondents addressed the regulations on including ELLs with disabilities in assessment reports. For example, several indicated that results for these students are included as long as the group size meets the state's minimum group size for reporting.

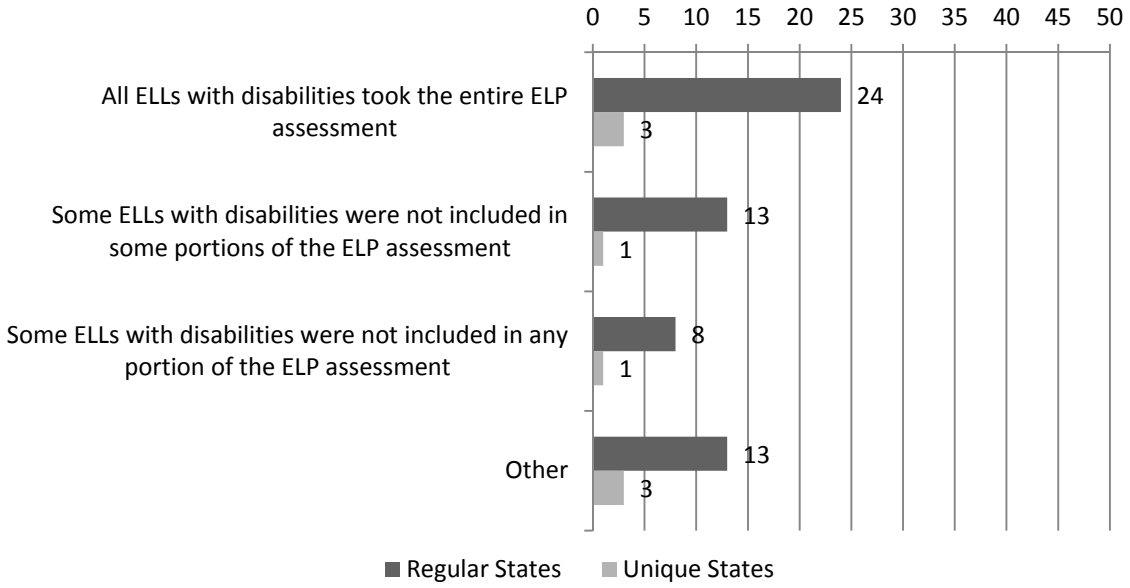
Figure 21. Reporting Practices for ELLs With Disabilities



Note: Forty-six regular and six unique states responded to this question. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

In almost half of the regular states and in three of the unique states, all ELLs with disabilities took the entire ELP assessment (see Figure 22). In 13 regular states and one unique state, some ELLs with disabilities were included in some portions of the ELP assessment. In eight regular states and one unique state, some ELLs with disabilities were not included in any portion of the ELP assessment.

Figure 22. How States Included ELLs With Disabilities in ELP Assessment Results



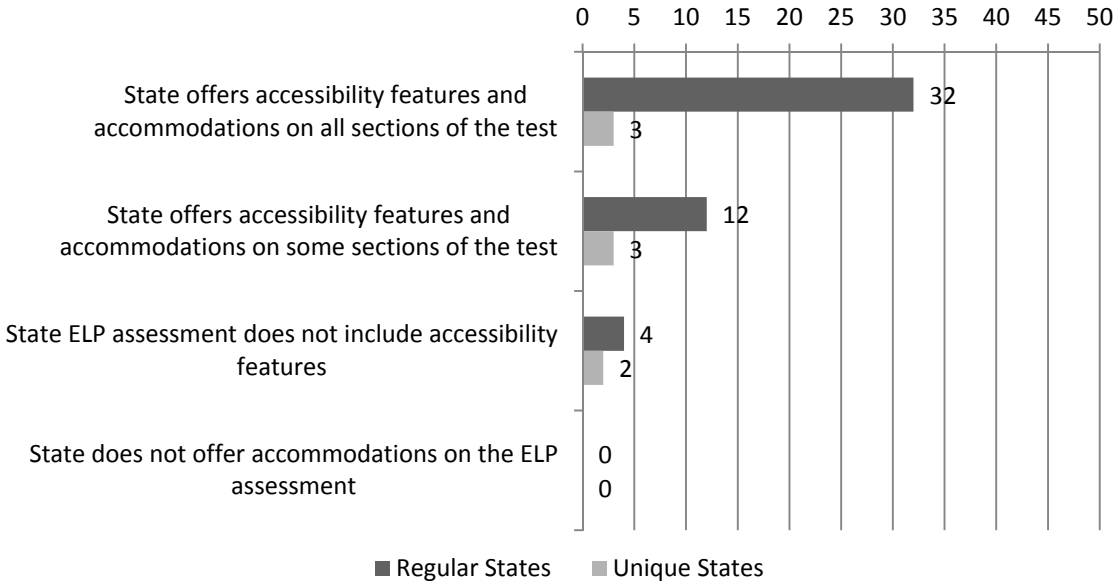
Note: Forty-five regular and five unique states responded to this question.

In their comments, respondents reported that certain categories of ELLs with disabilities (ELLs who are deaf or hard of hearing, ELLs who are blind or visually impaired, and ELLs with the most significant cognitive disabilities) were not able to participate in ELP assessments partially or fully.

Accessibility and Accommodations for English Language Learners With Disabilities

Almost two-thirds of the regular states and several unique states reported offering accessibility features and accommodations on all sections of their ELP assessments (see Figure 23). Twelve regular and three unique states reported offering accessibility features and accommodations on some sections of their ELP assessments. Four regular and two unique states reported that their ELP assessment did not include accessibility features.

Figure 23. Accessibility Features and Accommodations Use on ELP Assessments

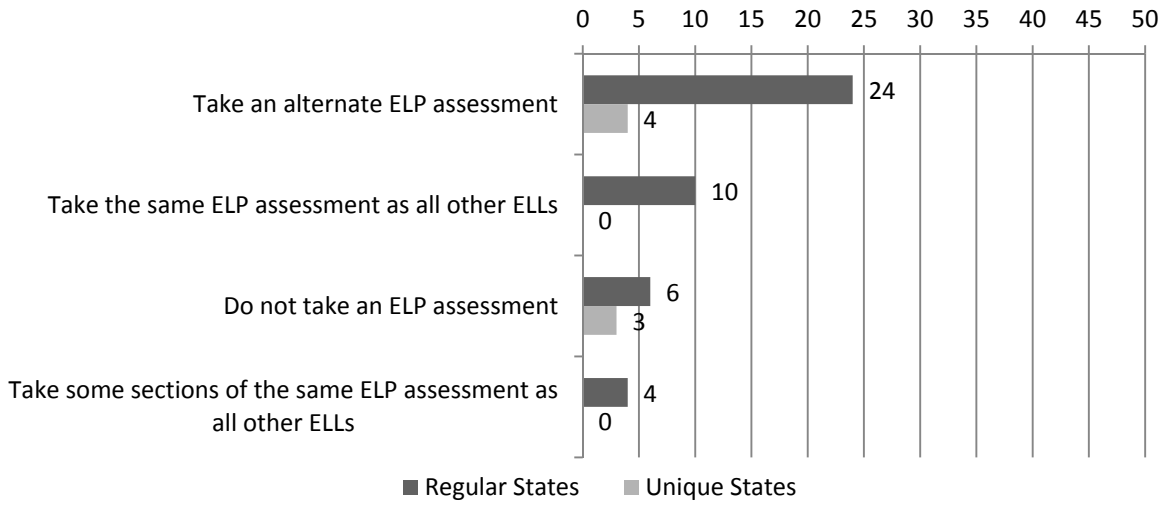


Note: Forty-six regular and seven unique states responded to this question. State respondents were able to select multiple responses.

English Language Learners With the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities

A few states (six regular and three unique) did not require ELLs with the most significant cognitive disabilities to participate in ELP assessments. In states that required participation for this population, there was variation in how students participated in ELP assessments (see Figure 24). Twenty-four regular and four unique states required ELLs with the most significant cognitive disabilities to take an alternate ELP assessment. In 10 states, these students were required to take the same ELP assessment as all other ELLs. In four regular states, ELLs with the most significant cognitive disabilities were required to participate in some sections of the same ELP assessments as other ELLs.

Figure 24. ELLs With the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities Participation in ELP Assessments



Note: Forty-four regular and seven unique states responded to this question.

Technical Assistance Needs

Survey respondents were asked to rank 15 types of technical assistance in terms of their helpfulness. These rankings and their average scores are highlighted in Table 5. The top three types of technical assistance selected by regular states were: (1) "how to" documents on accessibility and accommodations, alternate assessments, etc. available on the Internet for self review; (2) conference calls on hot topics; and (3) webinars on assessment related topics. The top three types of technical assistance identified by unique states were: (1) individual consultation in the state; (2) assistance with data analysis; and (3) consultation and review of state materials.

Table 5. Technical Assistance Ranked by Order of Preference

Regular States		Unique States	
Types of Technical Assistance	**Score**	**Types of Technical Assistance**	**Score**
"How to" documents on accessibility and accommodations, alternate assessments, etc. available on Internet for self review	11.2	Individual consultation in the state	12.9
Conference calls on hot topics	10.9	Assistance with data analysis	12.0
Webinars on assessment related topics	9.5	Consultation and review of state materials	10.1
Consultation and review of state materials	9.1	Individual consultation at meetings	9.9
Individual consultation in the state	9.0	"How to" documents on accessibility and accommodations, alternate assessments, etc. available on Internet for self review	9.0
Awareness materials	8.8	Ready-made workshops	8.9
Individual consultation at meetings	8.7	Awareness materials	8.6
Assistance with data analysis	7.6	Small group "clinics"	8.5
Individual consultation for the state via phone or web-based meeting space	7.6	Individual consultation for the state via phone or web-based meeting space	7.4
Opportunities to participate in discussion forums	6.9	Opportunities to participate in discussion forums	7.1
Ready-made workshops	6.9	Videos	6.1
Descriptions of assessments in other states	6.7	Conference calls on hot topics	6.0
Videos	6.3	Descriptions of assessments in other states	5.4
Small group "clinics"	5.9	Webinars on assessment related topics	5.3
Podcasts	4.8	Podcasts	4.0

Note: Forty-eight regular and eight unique states responded to this question.

When asked whether their rankings of technical assistance materials and strategies would be different if these materials and strategies focused on ELLs and ELLs with disabilities, the majority of regular and unique states responded "No." Those regular states that responded "Yes" provided the following reasons: ELLs were not separated at the time in state reporting; there was greater reliance on webinars and downloaded training materials in ELL instruction and assessment; ELLs with disabilities were not separated from general population of ELLs in state reporting; and there was no information on the ELLs with disabilities topic. Unique states with affirmative responses to this question reported not having ELL assessments at the time of completing the survey. They also noted the differing accommodations needs of ELLs with disabilities.

Appendix: Implications of ESEA Graduation Rate Accountability

States were asked to explain any implications for Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) graduation rate accountability that may occur if students with disabilities who participate in the general assessment do not meet the requirements for a regular diploma.

Comments From Regular States:

- The students do not contribute to the 4-year cohort.
- Included for participation.
- Not applicable.
- Pursuant to Act 155, passed by [state] General Assembly in Spring 2015, as long as students with disabilities complete the requisite coursework, they will be offered a state-issued diploma. No statewide assessment data may be used in determining whether or not a student is issued a diploma.
- They are not counted as graduates, but they are in the denominator of the rate calculation.
- For graduation rate purposes, it doesn't matter whether a student with disabilities participates in the regular assessment or the alternate assessment. A student who does not graduate within four years of his or her initial grade nine entry counts in the denominator of the adjusted four-year cohort graduation rate.
- [State's] 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (ESEA) is based on the percentage of students who graduate from secondary school with a regular high school diploma. The Regular High School Diploma is the standard high school diploma awarded to students that is fully aligned with the state's academic content standards and does not include a GED credential, certificate of attendance, or any alternative award. Only students who receive a regular high school diploma are included in the graduation rate calculation.
- The four-year graduation rate counts a student who graduates with a regular high school diploma in four years or less as a high school graduate in his or her original cohort—that is, the cohort with which he or she started 9th grade.
- A student who graduates in more than four years is counted as a non-graduate in the four-year graduation rate.
- Students with disabilities who participate in the regular assessment and do not meet the requirements for a regular diploma are not recorded as graduated for the purposes of ESEA graduation rate accountability.

- All students are included in the graduation rate for accountability purposes in their cohort regardless of what state assessment they take.
- They are included in graduation rates.
- Graduation is not tied to an assessment.
- These students would be part of the denominator with calculating accountability.
- The students count toward the eventual tabulated figures/rates.
- Treated the same as students without disabilities who do not meet the requirements for a regular high school diploma.
- Such students are counted in the graduation rate accountability system.
- We use the federal graduation rate calculation.
- Students with disabilities who earn a Special Diploma, or a Modified Standard Diploma are not included in the graduation calculation.
- These students are counted in the denominator per federal requirements for determining the cohort graduation rate.
- They are counted same as students without disabilities.
- [State] uses the standard 4-year on-time grade rate. We do not have an alternate diploma for students with disabilities. We do not exclude any students with disabilities from the graduation calculation. If a student with a disability does not earn a stand H. S. Diploma, they do not count as on time grad. These students are reported as "other exit" which equates to a "dropout."
- Students' individualized education program teams make determinations about how the assessments play into graduation requirements.
- Not counted as graduates, and may be counted as other completers.
- They do not count as a graduate in the 4 year graduation rate.
- In order to receive a regular diploma, students must meet two criteria:
  –Pass the required course work
  –Pass the [exam]
  However, if special education students pass all the required courses and are unable to pass the [exam], after multiple attempts, they may request a waiver of the [exam] requirement from the [state department of education]. If the waiver is granted, the student receives a regular diploma and is counted as a graduate in the cohort graduation rate.
- Counted in the same way as non-disabled peers.
- Don't know.
- That the graduation rate may be negatively affected.
- Since the [state] High School Graduation Exam is no longer a diploma requirement, the student who does not meet requirements for a regular diploma (does not meet course requirements) would count as a non-graduate.
- They count as zero.
- They are not counted as graduates, but also not counted as dropouts if they remain in school until they age out.
- They are included in the overall calculations but are not considered on time graduates receiving a standard diploma.

- All students receive a regular diploma upon graduation.
- Any student who doesn't meet the requirements for a regular diploma counts against a school's grad rate, regardless of his/her demographic category.
- ESEA grad rate only includes students who earn a regular diploma.
- Students may be included in 5 or 6 year graduation rate if applicable.
- The students are counted as non-graduates.
- Remains the same.
- If they graduate in the four year cohort they are reported as a graduate for ESEA graduation.
- We don't make any distinction.
- They are counted as a drop out.
- Those students are counted against the overall 4-year graduation rate.
- They are not included as graduates.
- ESEA waiver.
- Requirements for a regular diploma are a district-level decision and so may vary for SWD. Decisions made by districts may impact their graduation rate accountability.
- Non-Completer.

Comments From Unique States:

- Not applicable.
- N/A - ESEA does not apply in [state].
- Our students, regular and special education, do not participate in any assessment as a requirement for a diploma.
- N/A - no graduation requirements associated with state tests.
- Not sure.

They are considered "leavers." They exit school by graduating, aging out of school, or dropping out.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
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