Forum on Implementing Accessibility Frameworks for ALL Students

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Forum Facilitators
Anne Chartrand (Consultant)
Laurene Christensen (NCEO)
Sheryl Lazarus (NCEO)

Forum Notetakers
Vitaliy Shyyan (NCEO)
Martha Thurlow (NCEO)
Sandra Warren (CCSSO ASES SCASS)

Forum Conveners
Martha Thurlow (NCEO)
Sandra Warren (CCSSO ASES SCASS)

Forum Organizer
Laurene Christensen (NCEO)

Forum Participants
Paul Ashby, Utah State Office of Education
Shelly Andrews, Wyoming Department of Education
Elizabeth Barker, NWEA
Susan Beard, Alabama State Department of Education
Kimberly Block, CTB/McGraw Hill
Diana Bjornson, Owasso, OK
Brian Bougry, Bureau of Indian Education
Trinell Bowman, Maryland Department of Education
Jean Brassfield, Broken Arrow, OK
Kristen Brown, California Department of Education
Michelle Carroll, Wyoming Department of Education
Johnny Collett, CCSSO
Barbara Dame, ACT
Tiffany Darb, HumRRO
Lynn Dell, Pennsylvania Department of Education
Andrea Faulkner, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Louis Ferrer, Arkansas Department of Education
Beth Foley, NEA
Robert Fugate, Virginia Department of Education
Wendy Gavin, ACT, Inc
Kanetra Germany, Alabama Department of Education
Melissa Gholson, West Virginia Department of Education
Matt Greathouse, AIR
Morgan Hall, DCPS
Ketsia Hamilton, Edmentum
Herb Harris, Tri-Lin Integrated Services
Tammy Henke, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
Marcie Hickman, Westat

Forum on Implementing Accessibility Frameworks for ALL Students

Background
Sixty individuals representing staff from state departments of education, school districts, other countries, testing and testing-related companies, and other educational organizations participated in a forum on June 22, 2015 in San Diego, California, to discuss implementing accessibility frameworks for all students, including students in general education,[1] students who are English language learners (ELLs), and students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 plans. The forum was a pre-session to the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) National Conference on Student Assessment (NCSA), and was a collaboration of the Assessing Special Education Students (ASES) State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) and the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO).

Purpose
The purpose of the forum on implementing accessibility frameworks for all students was to address the challenging issues that states face as they begin to implement more broadly defined accessibility policies. These new policies have fewer tools labeled as accommodations because they are now considered to be available to greater numbers of students. A larger group of students, including ELLs and general education students, may use assessment accessibility tools, some of which were previously considered to be accommodations.

The specific focus of the forum was for participants to hear several perspectives on this topic – from states participating in an assessment consortium and states that have developed their own assessments – and then to discuss the challenges related to these new accessibility frameworks as they pertain to the three groups:

1. General education students
2. ELLs
3. Students with IEPs or 504 plans

Each of these groups addressed several questions, including:

1. What are the key issues/challenges associated with making decisions about accessibility for this group of students as new accessibility frameworks are implemented?

2. What are the possible solutions to these challenges for this group of students?

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[1] Students who are in general education classrooms and are not identified as a student with a disability or an ELL are referred to in this report as "general education students." It is recognized that students with IEPs and 504 plans, as well as ELLs, are also general education students, but for purposes of brevity here, we use the term "general education students" to refer to those students who do not have disabilities and are not ELLs.

3. What are the implications of these possible solutions for this group of students?

Although participants had limited time for discussion, the discussions were energetic and engaging. The agenda for the three-hour forum was as follows:

- Welcome (Sandra Warren, CCSSO ASES SCASS)
- Setting the Context (Martha Thurlow, NCEO)
- Panel Perspectives

  Joyce Zurkowski (Colorado Department of Education)
  Deborah Matthews (Kansas Department of Education)
  Nannette Pence (Alabama Department of Education)
  Melissa Gholson (West Virginia Department of Education)

- Discussion Sessions

  Students with IEPs and 504 Plans (facilitated by Sheryl Lazarus, NCEO)
  English Language Learners (facilitated by Laurene Christensen, NCEO)
  General Education Students Without a Learning Plan (facilitated by Anne Chartrand, Consultant)

- Wrap up

Structure of This Report
Although this report summarizes the introductory information provided to forum participants, its main purpose is to describe the panel presentations and the facilitated forum discussions. Summaries of the panel presentations were developed from notes taken during the presentations, and from the presenters' slides. Summaries of the facilitated discussions were developed from notes taken by notetakers.
Participants were encouraged to comment and discuss freely, with assurances that no individual's name, nor any state, company, or organization would be attached to comments that were made. Complete anonymity of statements was assured. This led to frank and open conversations.

Session Introduction
Dr. Sandra Warren, CCSSO ASES SCASS Advisor, provided an overview of the forum and highlighted the goals of the session. She assured participants of the desire for open and candid conversations, and noted that a report would be produced as a result of the sessions' discussions.

Setting the Context for Topic Discussions
Dr. Martha Thurlow, Director of NCEO, opened her remarks by observing that states have been coping with a great deal of shift in the area of accessible assessment. She noted that states are moving from paper-based assessments to technology-based assessments, and with these changes, have come new ways to provide access and to document the kinds of accessibility tools used on assessments. She also pointed out that many states have changed one or more of their consortium memberships. These are all key issues setting the stage for the discussion.

Following Dr. Thurlow's context setting, four individuals shared their perspectives on implementing accessibility frameworks for all students in their respective states.

Four State Perspectives

Joyce Zurkowski, Executive Director of Assessment, Colorado Department of Education

Joyce Zurkowski provided context on the Colorado Measures of Academic Success.

Colorado has been conducting online testing since 2014. Colorado was able to build its science and social studies assessments using an online platform. Ms. Zurkowski reported that starting with these assessments was helpful because they are lower stakes assessments given in fewer grades than English language arts or math, for example. The state wanted to leverage technology so students could show concepts and skills in new ways, while balancing the need to not introduce irrelevant variables.

Colorado encountered challenges in building these early technology-based assessments—science simulations and non-textbased primary and secondary sources are often highly visual. How do you make the assessments engaging to other senses? How do you make simulations accessible using universal design? Colorado faced challenges in providing accommodations for innovative items, like text-to-speech for a map, or color contrast for a simulation.

Ms. Zurkowski noted that in order to address these issues that arose related to the standards, Colorado staff members went to the classroom to see how these challenges were being addressed in the classroom. In some cases, they found that the assessments were moving ahead more quickly than instruction. Educators had not yet fully developed their instructional approaches to meet the standards and the increased expectations.

To ease the transition to online assessments, Colorado used a phased accountability approach, which meant that it only included participation for accountability in the first year of implementation.. That approach helped the state get buy-in and support from districts. Colorado will be reintroducing additional stakes over the next few years.

Deborah Matthews, Educational Program Consultant, Kansas State Department of Education

Deborah Matthews provided context on the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards (KCCRS) assessment, which was developed for its first administration in 2014-15 after the decision was made by the Kansas State Board to resign from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium.

In terms of accessibility, Ms. Matthews noted that the Kansas Assessment Program (KAP) complies with the Accessible Portable Item Protocol (APIP) and uses the Personal Needs Profile (PNP) to ensure that students receive needed accessibility features. Several tools are available for most assessments (e.g., striker, eraser, highlighter, tags, notes, search tool, pointer, calculator, whole screen magnification, scientific calculator, reference sheet, periodic table); these do not require selection in the PNP.

Ms. Matthews also noted that accommodations are available to all students, including those with IEPs, 504 plans, ELL plans, or a statement of student need for accommodations. Accommodations, which are available only when selected in the PNP, include color overlay, reverse contrast, color contrast, auditory calming, masking, text-to-speech audio, text-to-speech for reading passages, and special forms (braille, large print, Spanish). Text-to-speech for reading passages is available only to students with IEPs who are non-readers. Additional accommodations are being added for the 2015-16 assessment, including American Sign Language videos, Spanish keywords, and screen magnification enhancements.

Accessibility for students who are blind was highlighted. The KAP will use a stage adaptive approach starting 2015-16. For students who are blind, eight booklets are created so that the student has a stage adaptive approach that is similar to what other students experience. This is accomplished via the computer, which identifies the next braille booklet to use, based on student responses on each set of items.

Nannette Pence, Education Specialist, Alabama Department of Education

Nannette Pence provided context on the assessment system in Alabama. In 2011, the state began to shift to the ACT and ACT Aspire. Alabama has college- and career-ready standards, but it is not part of any consortium for content assessments. For its ELP assessment, Alabama is part of ACCESS.

From 2008 to 2012, Alabama was part of a GSEG (General Supervision Enhancement Grant) with NCEO. One of the things the GSEG did was look at data on the use of accommodations. After looking at the data, NCEO and the Alabama Department of Education developed a series of five online professional development modules on accommodations decision making. These were widely used throughout the state (as well as in other states). The modules are available at:
http://www.cehd.umn.edu/nceo/OnlineAccommodationsTraining.html.

Alabama worked closely with ACT, and thought carefully about universal design principles. The next step was to take a careful look at what the state was doing related to accommodations. As part of the shift to ACT and ACT Aspire, Alabama began to use a new framework that addressed both accessibility and accommodations. The state's accommodations manual was updated and revised, and new forms were created. Additionally, statewide professional development and podcasts were implemented to introduce the concept of accessibility and accommodations. The list of accommodations was reduced, and the accommodations are available only to students with IEPs. Historically Alabama had an issue of over-accommodating students in reading. The new framework helped reduce the number of requests for the read aloud accommodation.

Alabama is continuing to work to develop new resources – including trying to track which features students are actually using by creating a form that lists the features that a student has available so the teacher can check them off. ACT/ASPIRE provides information on what the student can use (pops-up on screen) and then the student can say whether everything needed is available. Alabama is also still working on developing some accessibility- and accommodations-related items (e.g., video of ASL, text-to-speech, magnifier, "sandbox" with a limited number of test items to try out features).

Melissa Gholson, Coordinator, Office of Assessment and Research, West Virginia Department of Education

Melissa Gholson highlighted West Virginia's systems perspective on accessibility and accommodations. The goal of the cyclical process underlying the assessment system is to provide access and equity for all students to be able to demonstrate what they know and can do on all state assessments. This approach allows West Virginia to use data to provide equitable outcomes for specific subgroups and to identify where targeted assistance is needed.

According to Ms. Gholson, one of the practices that West Virginia has in place is an annual meeting with stakeholders to review accessibility and accommodations policies, processes, and procedures. The focus of the review is on improving the system and supporting teachers and students. Review experts revise accessibility and accommodations policies based on research and evaluation and identify areas to target for training.

Ms. Gholson also provided context on data processes stemming from West Virginia's membership in multiple assessment consortia. Rigorous procedures for data entry, monitoring, and analysis are followed to ensure equitable access for students in the state to various large-scale assessments. Ms. Gholson noted that not everything that comes with online testing is an opportunity. Text-to-speech is currently the highest used accessibility feature on the assessment, but there are some concerns in the field that too many students are receiving it, including some students who may not benefit from this feature. There is also need for greater consistency in the language used to describe accessibility features and accommodations across assessments. In addition, there are

nuances within an accommodation that also need to be considered when making accessibility decisions for students.

Ms. Gholson described the Accommodations 14 tool that schools use to see what accommodations students receive. West Virginia uses a monitoring form so that teachers can indicate what each student was actually provided. In the future, this process of selecting and monitoring accessibility features and accommodations might be turned into an electronic app. Ms. Gholson concluded with some considerations about supporting educators in keeping up with the different policies and platforms of each assessment; assisting educators in understanding the tools, supports, and accommodations across multiple platforms; keeping up with technological advances; and other salient accessibility and accommodations issues.

Summary of Small Group Discussions

After the panelists shared their states' perspectives on implementing new accessibility and accommodations frameworks, meeting participants divided into three discussion sessions: one group discussed issues for general education students; one group shared perspectives on implementing accessibility and accommodations frameworks for ELLs; a third group focused its discussion on students with disabilities. Each group targeted the conversation to address three questions:

1. **What are the key issues/challenges associated with making decisions about accessibility for this group of students as new accessibility frameworks are administered?**
2. **What are the possible solutions to these challenges for this group of students?**
3. **What are the implications of these possible solutions for this group of students?**

Each of these group discussions is summarized here following the question format that was used for the discussion.

Students in General Education

Key Issues/Challenges Associated With Making Decisions About Accessibility for General Education Students

Participants agreed that communication and professional development are the main issues/challenges and that resources played a large part in assisting with this effort. There were many specific issues and questions that fall under those categories. Specific comments included:
- It has taken a couple of years to become comfortable with the PNP process and many issues are around questions such as "Who is responsible for it?" and "What if they do not provide it?"
- General education students may not have been exposed to these supports. The systems know them, but the teachers, families, and students do not. Now that

supports do not have to be approved by the state department of education, there is sometimes the thought that "more is better," an approach that can cause other problems.

- The other side of "more is better" is teachers may act like the decision process does not really exist for them so it is not personalized for the student and no one assumes the responsibility.
- There is a need to think about how accessibility features are used at home. There are parents who do not agree with features given or not given to students. What are the guidelines if not governed by IEPs or 504 plans? There are no regulations, so there can be questions about why a student did or did not receive a certain support and what are the rights of parents and students.
- A challenge is what resources educators need to make decisions. Extensive data are available from IEPs and 504 plans but little information exists for general education students. Are they to use educator observations and performance throughout the year?
- Asking the student/parent whether it is a preference or a need – how do you balance the difference? Could a preference become a barrier?
- What do our baseline data tell us in terms of the number of students using or requesting supports? What does it mean to have parents be a part of the decision-making process?
- Some states reported having limited professional development support from their state departments in their local agencies. They have found in some places through practice tests that many students have never had experience with the assessment or tools. Communication and professional development are vital at many levels so that students have exposure to what is available or going to be used in assessments.
- Several participants mentioned that adults will put their own perceptions/experience regarding computer use on the students.
- Students often struggle with multiple response items regardless of their capabilities or disabilities. A focus on this type of responding is not usually in the instructional process in the classroom.

Possible Solutions to the Challenges of Implementing Accessibility Frameworks for General Education Students

The entire group agreed that *planned and effective* communication and professional development are also the solutions to the issues stated previously. They agreed that many of these procedures and practices were new to everyone, and it would take time to develop processes and assistance that will be helpful. States and districts are very different and have to define their own mechanism for success. Some suggestions and comments included:

- Focus groups and cognitive labs have been very useful after tests and practice tests to discuss observations and student feedback as well as student surveys.
- Developing a PNP questionnaire and specific training on serving general education students would help.
- Some states are very "locally controlled" and they must be careful not to exceed authority or invitations.
- A parent questionnaire may be helpful as a tool to tease out nuances (however, some states would never mandate the questionnaire).
- Being careful to consider the difference between a *need* and a *preference* is important.
- A document explaining the difference between accommodations and accessibility features, including examples, would be helpful.
- Research discussing how decisions were made and why, helps with communication to teachers.
- Diversity in a state can impact conversations. Diversity exists in terms of rural locale (lack of bandwidth), economics, and culture.
- Peer-to-peer mentoring may be helpful in places where professional development from the state is limited.
- Issues about the use of computers in assessment are decreasing, but this process takes time; the teacher's experience is the key. Matching instruction to assessment is a huge element to be trained. The first time a child touches a computer should NOT be on assessment day. Teachers who differentiate instruction will be better able to differentiate during assessment while ensuring standardization. Not everyone needs the same accessibility.
- Professional development needs to be with special educators and general educators together sometimes, but there is also the need for the two groups to have separate training. Some type of flow chart would be helpful for decision making. What are the lessons learned in making similar decisions in special education?

Implications of Possible Solutions for General Education Students

The group focused on the most important points in the discussions that occurred. Implications included better assignments for accessibilities, knowledge of responsibilities in decision making, more productive professional development, and better alignment between instruction and assessment. Other comments that were reiterated were:
- Communication – We need to bring in special education, English development, ELLs with disabilities, and general education into these conversations. (When you understand differentiating for special populations, it can help with differentiating with general education students.)

- Involving parents and students in conversations is critical to help everyone understand the system. Give more simple written explanations and examples of proper decisions.
- Preference versus need is a big issue. Who makes the decision and how? How do we know if something is a barrier or a challenge?
- These topics tie into the notion of a PNP for all students. Who makes the decision and **follows through**? Some decisions may be made in the fall, and things may change by spring.
- Processes will improve over time and with experience using these new accessibility possibilities. But they must be constantly studied. Professional development and documents to help explain what has been learned must be provided. These need to be for everyone, not just provided in districts that have done their own studies and investigations.

Students Who Are ELLs

Key Issues/Challenges Associated With Making Decisions About Accessibility for ELLs

Participants in this group generally thought that tests need to be developed with considerations for ELLs right from the start. The group discussed both content assessments and English language proficiency assessments.

- It is important to think about the language we are creating for the field, so that all educators can relate to our terminology (e.g., bias review). Developers need to consider what terminology they are using and provide clear definitions, if necessary.
- There are a lot of accessibility features and accommodations for students with disabilities, but how do you create accessible tests for ELLs to measure their language proficiency? What accessibility features are language-specific? We need to make sure that language complexity is appropriate.
- When designing items, we need to think about the context and student background knowledge. We need to provide enough information for students if the construct is new to them so that they are able to respond to the item effectively (the window-mirror metaphor). We have to eliminate unnecessary "noise." Also some students might not be comfortable with computer-based assessments if they are from different educational contexts, so we have to ensure that there are paper-and-pencil versions.

- Items have to be self-contained. Enough information should be provided if a new concept is introduced. Graphics are important. Items should be designed so that they are accessible for non-ELLs as well as ELLs.
- It is important not to create too much cognitive fatigue. Sometimes items are so extensive that after reading the whole item the student forgets what the beginning was about. Avoiding too much explanation is important.
- Student background knowledge, language complexity, and context have to be factored in when we are designing accessible items for ELLs. We also have to remember that there is a range of students' needs within this category and design for those ELL students who have disabilities as well.
- Examples from states highlighted that the decision-making process, as well as the accessibility tools allowed, varies from state to state.
- Translations are difficult, due to inequities in providing translations as well as reliable sources for good quality translations. In addition, the issue of translating graphics and other test content was raised.
- Test items are based on standards. And instruction is shifting. But ELLs need a lot of scaffolding with complex and lengthy content taught in the classroom.
- One of the challenges is to make items accessible from the start and avoid retrofitting in the future. The construct for ELP is different from those for content assessments. We also need to consider learning stages and the implications of shifting to online assessments.

Possible Solutions to the Challenges of Implementing Accessibility Frameworks for ELLs

The group thought that universal design considerations were particularly important. However, group participants also had a number of other considerations, particularly on the use of simplified language. Again, this group addressed both content assessments and English language proficiency assessments.

- ELLs are often seen from a deficit model. But speaking two languages is powerful and important. The U.S. is changing, and in the next 20 to 30 years, being monolingual will not be an advantage.
- Building from the foundation up is important to begin with. You cannot add a layer of supports at a later time without disturbing the equilibrium of other elements in the system. These changes will inevitably lead to other changes.
- Designing for all populations from the get-go is important. It was noted that one consortium is designing ELP assessments considering the continuum of disabilities. Despite the disagreement at the federal level about what is a construct

and what is not, we need to come up with some solutions, particularly around students who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind or have low vision, or selectively mute. Thinking about these populations at the beginning is critical, and involving psychometricians is also important.

- It is important for all items to go through content and bias reviews. Designing graphics for students with visual impairments is an issue. It is difficult to balance out items so that they are accessible for all.
- In testing science and math, language needs to be simplified. Language does not have to be difficult. We should use high frequency words, grade appropriate language (e.g., "use" instead of "implement").
- Having language accessibility from the start helps with accessibility overall.
- Simple syntax and shorter sentences need to be used as well. However, sometimes teachers have to work with longer texts. That is when scaffolding is needed to support students. There needs to be some balance between social and academic language used on assessments and in instruction.
- What we are assessing is important. ELP assessments are different from content assessments because you have to demonstrate your understanding of the word for the former and understanding of the phenomenon, e.g., photosynthesis, for the latter.
- Maintaining the rigor of assessments is critical. For content assessments, dictionaries may be allowable and will be useful for those students who need them. We need to work closely with practitioners to learn about what supports are assigned and used in the classroom. Sometimes teachers are tempted to check as many supports as possible and, as a result, over-accommodate students. We need to educate the field about all the supports because they know students best.

Implications of Possible Solutions for ELLs

The group focused on the importance of addressing the individual needs and preferences of students. This included the kinds of accessibility tools that might be provided as well as ensuring that translations are appropriate to the local instructional context.

- We are getting better at getting things right. It has been a continuous push-and-pull process. Students sometimes get overloaded with too many supports, but decision making is getting better. We need to also remember that students may not need the support this year even if they needed it last year.
- Supports need to be there for students, especially if they are provided throughout the year. There should be close collaboration between students and teachers to make comprehensive decisions about what students really need to support them.
- One state reported getting feedback from the test engine to see what is actually assigned for students. It is also tracking to see if accommodations create

irregularities. In such cases, notifications are generated the day of testing to see if the student needs to be retested.

- We need to work with test administrators and vendors to collect comprehensive data – to see not only if an accommodation was used but also how and to what extent it was used.
- Earlier we discussed drag-and-drop and its implications for students with visual impairments and motor control disabilities. It is important to design items so that these issues are addressed and complex items are presented differently so that they can be accessible to all students. We want to take advantage of technologic opportunities but we need to do it comprehensively.
- Student needs and preferences can be reflected in their online profiles to indicate whether they are comfortable with certain features.
- And what if the student simply does not like to drag and drop? That should be considered as well.
- We are invalidating the construct if we start changing test items randomly. With regard to translations, there were some issues with items that needed to be changed but then were no longer comparable to the item equivalents, so everything had to be redesigned. This was based on differences in Spanish spoken locally compared to the Spanish in which those items were written.
- Spanish was noted to be a family of languages. The implications may result in a whole host of challenges.
- Correct translations are needed because students end up not taking test items seriously otherwise.

Students Who Have IEPs or 504 Plans

Key Issues/Challenges Associated With Making Decisions About Accessibility for Students With IEPs or 504 Plans

Participants commented on several successes that were noted during the past spring's implementation of new assessments in many states, including the significant shift to technology-based assessments. Specific comments included:
- Switch to technology-based assessments was quite smooth, with more students actually being able to take the test than in the past.
- New assessment frameworks required more communication between general educators and special educators, which is a positive aspect.
- Despite concerns that the new tests would be more difficult, and students would do worse, this was generally not the case.
- Heightened attention to assessment issues pushed increased discussion about implementation in the classroom, and the need for additional training and resources.
- Students really appreciated the provision of text-to-speech; it was respectful of their access needs.

Participants noted many challenges that emerged during the spring's new assessments. Specific comments included:

- There were many new assessments administered this spring, and the details about the various supports and their use were confusing.
- Many issues exist about the provision of a text-to-speech or read aloud for reading passages. Both of the general assessment consortia now allow these as accommodations for students with disabilities, and both are trying to keep the numbers down in the early grades. This requires rethinking of what the construct is, and who the students are who really should have text-to-speech or the passages read aloud.
- Associated concerns for what happens instructionally were expressed about the text-to-speech accommodation specifically, as well as more generally for other features that may have a negative impact on the provision of opportunity to learn.
- There were questions about whether there is a way to align the IEP format to the various assessment features that are now being included in policies.
- There was a desire for states to collaborate on guidelines about the appropriate use of various features, including accommodations, so that each state does not have to reinvent these.
- Continued monitoring of the assignment (and ideally the use) of various assessment features was viewed as very important, especially given the known negative effects of over-accommodating.
- A complicating factor is the need for strong fine motor skills to operate text-to-speech; these skills are sometimes lacking in students with disabilities.
- Several sign language interpretation issues were noted. For example, there were concerns about who was signing when a video was created and whether different parts of the county might be using different "slang" signs. GAAP (Guidelines for Accessible Assessment Project) publications were noted here as a way to bring some consistency to the signing issues.
- Different JAWS screen readers (i.e., different versions) worked differently with the various platforms. The same problem occurred with voice recognition software. Further, some software would automatically update, and then it would not work with the testing platform.
- Many issues were noted in relation to the transition to Unified English Braille for ELA, but keeping the Nemeth Code for math. The challenge of upgrading all the assessments to the new version was noted, as well as the possible costs for upgrading and the need for teacher professional development.
- Concerns surrounded the provision of a paper version as an accommodation, especially when the test is adaptive in some way. The paper version generally is not adaptive, and thus, the student really does not receive a comparable assessment.
- Concerns about personally identifiable information are hampering the sharing of data, which is a necessary condition for examining data for students with low incidence disabilities.

Possible Solutions to the Challenges of Implementing Accessibility Frameworks for Students With IEPs/504 Plans

Several ideas emerged during discussions about possible solutions for the challenges and issues that were identified. Some of these were:

- There needs to be someone who really understands the technical aspects of all the changes.
- Districts should be required to test all assistive technology on practice tests to see whether it will work on operational tests. This must be done every time an update is made to assistive technology software.
- A research agenda should be established to look at comparability for various approaches, including paper versions versus adaptive online versions. Part of the challenge in doing this is that data are needed across states to have enough students, but states have concerns about security and sharing personally identifiable information. It is important that the consortium leads identify research issues that need multiple states' data, and push to get these data to address important questions. Communications about how security and personally identifiable data issues are actually lessened when data from many states are merged is an important part of the solution.
- States, districts, and schools should allow upgrades to assistive technology software only during the summer, not during the test window or the spring.

Implications of Possible Solutions for Students With IEPs or 504 Plans

Participants in the discussion noted several implications of the suggested solutions to issues for students with IEPs or 504 plans. They included the following:

- If the solutions are appropriately implemented, the potential impact will be great on instruction and on moving things forward for these students.
- Connection of accessibility and accommodations in assessment to what occurs in instruction is now really happening, whereas it was not happening before. And, part of the discussion is about instruction as well as assessment.
- If states can figure out ways to share the data so that research studies can be conducted, it will actually promote the implementation of data-driven instruction.
- People are finally talking about accessibility and accommodations for all students. The focus on accessibility issues for all students is making the lessons learned with students with IEPs and 504 plans even more important in the vision of decision makers than they were before. This will continue.
- There is now a broader understanding of assessment literacy and thinking about the construct being measured and what it means for accessibility.
- There is now an increased load on teachers – teachers now have to do more than ever before. The implication is that there needs to be increased professional developing and thinking about ways to decrease the load on teachers.

Conclusion

The meeting closed with remarks by Dr. Sheryl Lazarus, Research Associate at NCEO. Dr. Lazarus noted that each of the three groups had a rich discussion around the key issues that states are facing in implementing accessibility frameworks for all students. Overall recommendations of the group included the following:

·   Convene SEA/LEA/school policy planning conversations that include a variety of stakeholders, including students and family members.

·   Develop resources that

  o   Identify and document appropriate supports permitted by an SEA/LEA/school.

  o   Identify preferences versus needs for supports by individual students. Consider resources tailored specifically for educators/counselors, families, and students.

  o   Facilitate documentation (i.e., data collection) of supports identified and implemented.

  ·   Determine who makes, implements, and monitors support decisions.

  ·   Consider developing a personal needs profile for ALL students. Include guidelines so that changes to a PNP can reflect the student's current educational needs.

  ·   Develop SEA/LEA/school framework to evaluate selection and use of supports – include considerations for identifying over/under identification/use of supports.

Dr. Lazarus concluded by observing that states are making progress in the implementation of accessibility frameworks, and that in general, these are exciting times as we move forward with assessments that are designed from the start to be more accessible to all students.