

Considerations When Including Students with Disabilities in Test Security Policies

► Introduction

Sound test security policies and procedures are needed to ensure test security and confidentiality, and to help prevent cheating. In this era when cheating on tests draws regular media attention, there is a need for thoughtful consideration of the ways in which possible test security measures may affect accessibility for some students with disabilities. Test security needs to be balanced with the access needs of some students with disabilities.

The ability to make valid inferences is compromised when accommodations are used inappropriately or when assessment procedures are not followed. For example, the accommodations that some students need to meaningfully access the test may require that someone other than the student sees the test, or may require the use of specialized accessibility software. Some accommodations may require individual or small

group administration, which may increase the potential that standard procedures may not be followed. Additionally some students with the most significant cognitive disabilities take alternate assessments which have some unique security issues.

Policies, processes, and procedures are needed that will support the valid measurement of what students with disabilities know and can do while maintaining test security.

► Considerations

Test security policies and procedures should address issues specific to students with disabilities, their access needs, and the alternate assessments that some take.

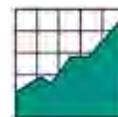
► Test Administrator Qualifications

All individuals who administer tests, including those who administer alternate assessments

and accommodated tests, should meet the same qualifications as other test administrators. Some accommodations providers may require unique skills (for example, sign language interpreters), and test security policies should address their qualifications. **Ask: Are all test administrators qualified?**

► Test Security Agreements

Procedures and processes need to be in place that ensure test security and confidentiality statements are signed prior to administration of the test. Anyone who has access to the assessment needs to sign an agreement—including test administrators, individuals who prepare accommodations, and accommodations providers. Affidavits that are signed



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The *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (AERA/ APA/NCME, 2014) state:

“Test users must balance test security with the rights of all test takers and test users.” (p. 117)

“Regardless of the purpose of testing, the goal of fairness is to maximize, to the extent possible, the opportunity for test takers to demonstrate their standing on the construct(s) that test is intended to measure.” (p. 51)

after test administration, and indicate that no procedures were violated, can also play a role in improved test security. **Ask: Does everyone who accesses the assessment sign a test security/confidentiality agreement?**

► Training

All test administrators and accommodations providers should receive training that specifically addresses how to maintain test security while providing access for students with disabilities. **Ask: Is adequate test security training provided to all that need it?**

► Logs/Records

It is a sound practice to keep a log or records that indicate who administered each individual assessment, as well as the names of any additional accommodations providers. If there are ever any questions about who administered an assessment, or provided accommodations, records can quickly provide needed information. **Ask: Are adequate logs/records kept?**

► Preferred Accessibility Features and Accommodations

When there are several accommodations that serve similar purposes (e.g., human reader/audio-taped recording/text-to-speech, scribe/speech-to-text, extended time/multiple days, magnification/copies of test materials enlarged by duplicating), best practice is to develop policies that identify accommodations with the fewer test security risks as the preferred ones. Online assessments have embedded access tools and accommodations that provide accessibility for many students with disabilities; however, some students with disabilities will still need non-embedded accommodations to meaningfully access the test.

Ask: Are accessibility features and accommodations with the

fewest security risks identified as preferred features and accommodations?

► Adaptive Technology

Test security policies need to ensure that students have access to needed adaptive technology while ensuring that security issues are adequately addressed. If students are unable to access an assessment using embedded features and accommodations, they should be permitted to use the assistive technology they regularly use during instruction unless there is a reason that it would compromise the validity of the assessment. **Ask: Do test security policies and procedures address adaptive technology?**

► Test Access Prior to Administration

There may be situations where a test administrator or accommodations provider needs to access a test prior to administration. For example, a sign interpreter may need to review a test prior to administration to ensure that he or she knows the appropriate signs for all terms. Policies are needed regarding where the assessment can be accessed and how it will be handled during the review process, as

The *Operational Best Practices of Statewide Large-Scale Assessment Programs* (ATP/CCSSO, 2013) state:

“This chapter discusses best practices for achieving test security throughout the assessment process of all paper-based and technology-based assessments, using methods that support the accessibility needs of students with disabilities and English learners.” (p. 81)

well as how it will be stored afterwards (e.g., the test will be returned to a locked room for storage). Access far in advance of the administration date may increase security risks. It is a sound practice to have a second person in the room when a test is accessed prior to administration. It is also good practice to record or log who accessed the test, why they accessed it, and when they accessed it. **Ask: Are test security procedures in place for situations when a test is accessed prior to administration?**

► Small Group and Individual Administrations

Test security policies need to adequately address small group and individual test administrations. There are some unique security risks associated with individual test administrations. They can be reduced by requiring that a second adult, who has also been trained and who has signed a test security agreement, is in the room. Individual administrations can also be video-taped to help ensure that appropriate procedures are followed. **Ask: Are appropriate procedures used for small group and individual administrations?**

► Alternate Assessments

There is a need for test security for both regular tests and alternate assessments. State and consortia policies should explicitly address alternate assessments. All test administrators for the alternate assessment should receive training and sign test security

The *Testing and Data Integrity in the Administration of Statewide Student Assessment Programs* (NCME, 2012) states:

“Policies and procedures must ensure that all students have appropriate, fair, and equal opportunities to show their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Students who need accommodations due to language differences or students with disabilities may require appropriate modifications to materials and administrative procedures to ensure fair access to the assessment of their skills.” (p. 3)

agreements. In some cases, it may be appropriate for test security policies for the regular assessment to differ in some aspects from the policies for the alternate assessment. For example, alternate assessment administrators may need to access the assessment prior to administration to prepare manipulatives. Additionally alternate assessments may be administered throughout a relatively long testing window that requires additional policies regarding assessment storage. Some states have portfolio alternate assessments. Portfolio assessments should be included in test security policies (e.g., what entails student work, when the portfolios become confidential). **Ask: Are appropriate test security procedures in place for alternate assessments?**

► Accessibility and Accommodations Policies

The information in states’ accessibility and accommodations policies and materials should match what is in test security policies, and vice versa. Often different offices are responsible for these policies which can sometimes lead to

inconsistent information being disseminated to schools and districts. **Ask: Are test security policies and accessibility and accommodations policies in alignment?**

► Summary

Many states are concerned that their test security policies may not adequately address accommodated tests, alternate assessments, and other related issues.¹ Test security policies and procedures need to address test administration procedures, accommodations, and other issues related to students with disabilities to help ensure the integrity and validity of a test. A fundamental consideration when evaluating the validity of an assessment is the “fairness” of the test. Assessments better measure what students know and can do when states and consortia thoughtfully consider how to balance test security and accessibility.

¹For example, a survey conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2013) found that 45 states believed that their state test was vulnerable to cheating when testing students in need of accommodations.

Resources

K-12 Education: States' Test Security Policies and Procedures Varied. U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2013, May). Washington, DC: Author. <http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/654721.pdf>

Operational Best Practices for Statewide Large-scale Assessment Programs. Association of Test Publishers (ATP)/ Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (2013). Washington, DC: Author.

Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME). (2014). Washington, DC: Author.

Testing and Data Integrity in the Administration of Statewide Student Assessment Programs. National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) (2012). Madison WI: Author.

Test Security and Students with Disabilities: An Analysis of States' 2013-14 Test Security Policies (Synthesis Report 95). Lazarus, S. S., Thurlow, M. L., Dominguez, L. M., Kincaid, A., & Edwards, L. M. (2014). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes. <http://nceo.info/OnlinePubs/Synthesis95/SynthesisReport95.pdf>

About NCEO

The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) provides national leadership in designing and building educational assessments and accountability systems that appropriately monitor educational results for all students, including students with disabilities, English Language Learners (ELLs), and ELLs with disabilities. NCEO addresses the participation of these students in national and state assessments, standards-setting efforts, and graduation requirements.

The Center represents a collaborative effort of the University of Minnesota, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE). It is affiliated with the Institute on Community Integration at the College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota.

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NCEO Policy Directions is a series of reports that address national policy issues related to students with disabilities. This report was prepared by Sheryl Lazarus and Martha Thurlow. It is available in alternative formats upon request.

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