

Part II: Who are the Students who take Alternate Assessments on Alternate Achievement Standards?

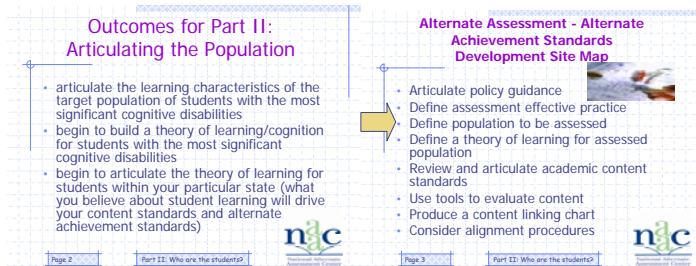


Articulating the population

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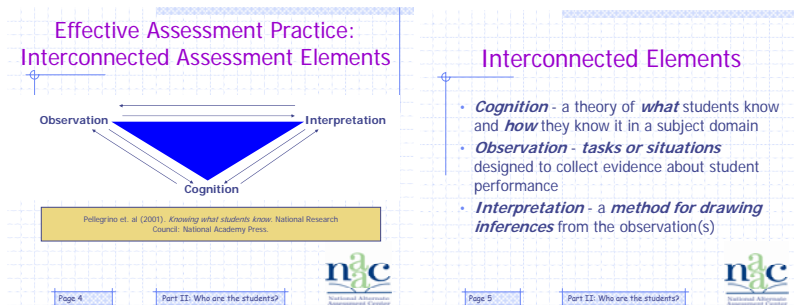
Purpose of Part II

As a result of Part II: Who are the Students who take Alternate Assessments on Alternate Achievement Standards, participants should be able to identify who will take alternate assessments on alternate achievement standards, begin to articulate the learning characteristics of this small segment of the population, and begin to build a theory of learning.



Trainer’s Note: This presentation is designed to stand alone. Therefore, you will find elements of Part I: Overview, Terminology, Theory, and Research in this presentation.

Theoretical Foundation: The Assessment Triangle




An underlying conceptual model for the work of the National Alternate Assessment Center is the “assessment triangle”, based on the work of the National Research Council’s Committee on the Foundations of Assessment’s (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001). This triangle explicates the key relationships between models of student cognition, observation of student work, and the inferences we can draw from these observations about what students know. This model focuses our attention on how assessment, including large-scale educational assessments, can reflect what good teaching and learning should look like.

The assessment triangle described by Pellegrino et al. (2001) consists of: “a model of student cognition in the domain, a set of beliefs about the kinds of observations that will provide evidence of the students’ competencies, and an interpretation process for making sense of the evidence” (p. 44). Pellegrino et al. defined three pillars on which every assessment must rest: “a model of how students represent knowledge and develop competence in the subject domain, tasks or situations that allow one to observe students’ performance, and an interpretation method for drawing inferences from the performance evidence thus obtained” (p. 2). They suggest that these pillars make up an *assessment triangle*, and that this triangle—cognition, observation, interpretation—must be articulated, aligned, and coherent for inferences drawn from the assessment to have integrity. For alternate assessments on alternate achievement standards for students with significant cognitive disabilities, we suggest that a theory of learning (cognition) in academic content has not been well articulated for this population and therefore is incomplete in the assessment design process. For this reason, we feel that it is necessary to begin this discussion of the “ground floor” with the cognition vertex of the assessment triangle and articulate how we know what students with significant cognitive disabilities know and can do in the content domains of reading and mathematics. Therefore, complete documentation of who the students are who take alternate assessments on alternate achievement standards is vitally important.

Participation

How Students with Disabilities Participate in Assessment

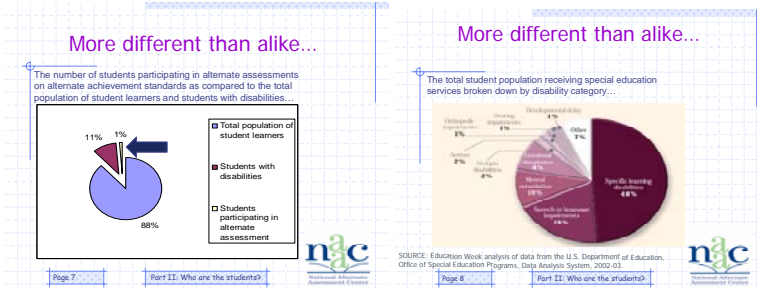
	General Assmt.	AA-GLAS	AA-AAS
Content Standards taught and assessed (access and alignment targets)	Grade level	Grade level	Grade level linkage to content standards
Achievement Standards	Grade level	Grade level	Alternate level
Participating Students	Most students, including those with disabilities (with or w/o accommodations)	Students with disabilities who need alternate way(s) to show what they know	Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities



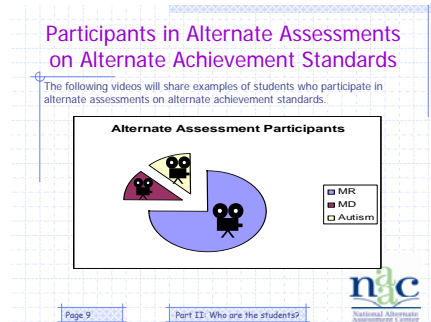
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Students with disabilities participate in assessment and accountability systems in three ways. Most students with disabilities participate in the general assessment with or without accommodations that are aligned to grade-level content and achievement standards. Some students with disabilities may participate in assessment through an alternate assessment that is also aligned to grade-level content and achievement standards. Finally, a few students with the most significant cognitive disabilities will participate in an alternate assessment. These assessments must be linked to the grade-level content standards *but may have* different definitions of proficiency (NAAC, 2004).

Student Population for Alternate Assessment on Alternate Achievement Standards



Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities represent only about 1% of the total assessed population. However the diversity of learning within this 1% is quite variable when considering assessment strategies. We find these students are more different than alike in terms of their response capabilities and may come from a variety of special education categories.



We have video taped some case study examples of each of these categories to assist participants in identifying the target population. The mental retardation category represents the largest category of students who use alternate assessments, but not all students with mental retardation will take alternate assessments. We will introduce you to Ryan and Sarah. Both Ryan and Sarah experience significant cognitive disabilities but the differences between them represent the diversity of support and response needs. Ryan and Sarah may experience difficulty with remembering new information, generalizing new information to novel situations, or applying skills to new problems.

Similarly, we find participants in alternate assessment on alternate achievement standards in the category of multiple disabilities. As with the mental retardation category, not all students with a label of multiple disability will be assessed on alternate achievement standards. We will introduce you to Rhianna, Leslie, and Martha. All five students in these two disability categories have special health, mobility, and sensory needs. In addition, they also have limited response repertoires and use assistive technology to communicate.

Finally, we introduce you to Jordan, a student with autism. Again, not all children with autism will be assessed using an alternate assessment on alternate achievement standards. Students with autism experience difficulties in the following areas: attending to the

salient features of a skill or concept, generalizing skills and concepts to new or novel situations, and self regulating or knowing when to use a skill or concept.

The slide is titled "More alike than different" in purple. It contains a bulleted list with one main point and a sub-point. The main point states that it is not the purpose to develop a separate theory of cognition for students with significant cognitive disabilities, but rather to understand within the context of current literature what might be problematic for these students. The sub-point lists the most important vertex of the assessment triangle as defined for all students, citing Kleinert & Browder's unpublished manuscript. The slide includes the n3c logo and footer information: Page 10 and Part II: Who are the students?

More alike than different

- It is *not* our purpose to develop a separate theory of cognition for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, but rather to:
 - understand within the context of our current literature, what might be problematic for students with significant cognitive disabilities, within this most important vertex of the assessment triangle as it is defined for all students (Kleinert & Browder, unpublished manuscript)

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Page 10 Part II: Who are the students?

It is *not* our purpose to develop a separate theory of cognition for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, but rather to understand within the context of our current literature, what might be problematic for students with significant cognitive disabilities, within this most important vertex of the assessment triangle as it is defined for all students. Without a careful consideration of these problematic issues for students with significant cognitive disabilities, it would not be possible to align the other dimensions of the assessment triangle (observation of student performance and interpretation of the meaning of that performance) into a coherent whole that fully gives credit for what students with significant disabilities can learn and do.

The slide is titled "Issues in Teaching/Assessing Students in Alternate Assessments on Alternate Achievement Standards" in purple. It contains a bulleted list with one main point and a sub-point. The main point states that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities present problems with learning in several areas. The sub-point lists these areas: Attention to Stimuli, Memory, Generalization, Self-Regulation, Limited motor response repertoire, Meta-cognition and Skill Synthesis, Sensory Deficits, and Special Health Care Needs. The slide includes the n3c logo and footer information: Page 11 and Part II: Who are the students?

Issues in Teaching/Assessing Students in Alternate Assessments on Alternate Achievement Standards





- Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities present problems with learning in these areas:
 - Attention to Stimuli
 - Memory
 - Generalization
 - Self-Regulation
 - Limited motor response repertoire
 - Meta-cognition and Skill Synthesis
 - Sensory Deficits
 - Special Health Care Needs

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Page 11 Part II: Who are the students?

Generally speaking, these students come with labels of mental retardation, multiple disabilities, and/or autism. However, they do not generally encompass the entirety of any of these categories. Specifically, students with significant cognitive disabilities experience difficulty in the following areas: attending to the salient features of stimuli, remembering new information, generalizing learned skills to appropriate contexts, self regulating behavior, meta-cognition and skill synthesis. Some of these students may have limited motor response repertoires, sensory deficits in both hearing and vision, and special health care needs which may limit participation in school activities. Ultimately, however, it is important to remember that these children have the same general patterns of development as other children and the assumption of competence should always be considered first.

Learning Similarities and Differences

<p>Attention to Stimuli</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience difficulty in attending to the salient features of a stimulus (e.g., size, color, shape, position) and which cue is indicative of the correct choice. <p>Page 12 Part II: Who are the students?</p> 	<p>Memory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience difficulty remembering when to use skills. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate learning opportunities • Insufficient opportunities to practice • Meaningful contexts (Westling and Fox, 2004) <p>Page 13 Part II: Who are the students?</p> 	<p>Generalization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience difficulty applying what was learned in one situation to another different situation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Must be demonstrated with different people, different materials, different settings, and at different times. (Haring, 1988; Fox, 1989) <p>Page 14 Part II: Who are the students?</p> 
<p>Self-Regulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience difficulty identifying the appropriate action for the situation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Monitor own behavior – Evaluate own behavior – Self-determine – Meta-cognitive strategies (Whitman, 1990) • Improves with opportunities to practice and specific instruction. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Agran, Fodor-Davis, Moore, & Martella, 1992; Hughes and Agran, 1993; Hughes, Hugo, and Blatt, 1996) <p>Page 15 Part II: Who are the students?</p> 		

Meta-cognition is often used to understand how students are processing information. Meta-cognition is practiced to attempt to regulate one's own cognition, and maximize one's potential to think, learn, and process stimuli from the surroundings. While there is some evidence that meta-cognition can be taught, communication difficulties may interfere with or compromise meta-cognition. For skill synthesis, students with the most significant cognitive disabilities may have difficulty understanding their own thinking. Therefore, students with the most significant cognitive disabilities must then be taught relevant skills in clusters as they have difficulty applying isolated skills in natural contexts.

<p>Meta-cognition and Skill Synthesis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication difficulties may interfere with or compromise meta-cognition. • Difficulty applying isolated skills in natural contexts. • Relevant skills must be taught in clusters. <p>Page 16 Part II: Who are the students?</p> 	<p>Sensory Deficits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may also experience sensory deficits in the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Vision – Hearing – Both vision and hearing <p>Page 17 Part II: Who are the students?</p> 	<p>Limited Response Repertoires</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited motor responses impacting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Oral language production (speaking) – Fine motor skills needed for writing and/or signing <p>Page 18 Part II: Who are the students?</p> 
<p>Special Health Care Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May limit the number of days of school attendance • May limit the amount of alert time during instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – seizures – medications <p>Page 19 Part II: Who are the students?</p> 		

Participation & Accessibility of Assessments

We also want to make sure that ALL assessments adhere to the fairness/accessibility standards by providing opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills, ensure that assessments are administered fairly, and results are reported and interpreted fairly.



In addition, the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) also apply to alternate assessments on alternate achievement standards in that general assessments are valid and accessible for the widest array of possible users. Adherence to these principles could both reduce the need for accommodations and reduce the need for multiple alternate assessments. Universal Design as applied to alternate assessment means that consideration should be given to multiple means of expression, multiple means of representation, and multiple means of engagement.

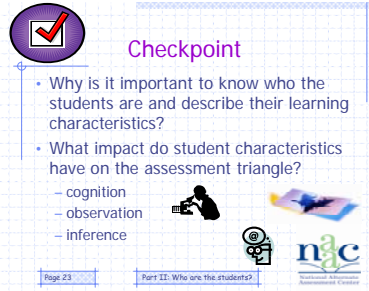
Just as in architecture, when the design from the beginning contains requirements to meet the needs of all users, thoughtful, functional, elegant design is the usual result. However, when forced to retrofit (make changes after completion of the design), the product is often less efficient, less effective, and frequently not to standard. In assessment, retrofitting solutions to accommodate students with disabilities may result in assessments that are no longer technically adequate. The validity and reliability of the measures may be compromised in retrofitting alterations. The end result, we may not be measuring what is needed, the standards, or student knowledge.

In adopting the principles of UDL when building assessments, the National Alternate Assessment Center (NAAC) will be considering student diversity from the start. In this way, those issues that interfere with measuring the intended constructs will be minimized.

UDL Principles:

1. Provide alternative formats for presenting information (multiple or transformable accessible media). Recognition
2. Provide alternative means for action and expression (write, draw, speak, switch, graphic organizer, etc.). Strategic
3. Provide alternative means for engagement (background knowledge, options, challenge, and support). Affective

Checkpoint: Think, Pair, Share



Checkpoint

- Why is it important to know who the students are and describe their learning characteristics?
- What impact do student characteristics have on the assessment triangle?
 - cognition
 - observation
 - inference

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Notes

References

National Alternate Assessment Center (NAAC). (2004). www.naacpartners.org

Pellegrino, J., Chudowsky, N., Glaser, R. (2001) *Knowing what students know*. National Research Council: National Academy Press.