



State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards

Glossary of Assessment Terms and Acronyms

Used In Assessing Special Education Students

Policy to Practice Study Group

Assessing Special Education Students (ASES)

Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS)



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Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
FOREWORD	2
GLOSSARY OF ASSESSMENT TERMS	3
KEYS TO ABC'S OF ASSESSMENT	13

Foreword

In response to the mandates and implications of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, the Policy to Practice Study Group within the Assessing Special Education Students (ASES) State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) consortium of state education agencies developed the *Glossary of Assessment Terms and Acronyms Used In Assessing Special Education Students*. The increased need for assessment literacy resulting from NCLB mandates requires general education practitioners, special education practitioners, administrators, state officers, and assessment vendors to use a common language when referencing such a vital part of student instruction. The consortium believes this resource is especially valuable when referencing students with disabilities—a population that became a required part of every school’s assessment and accountability system after July 2001. While we acknowledge the availability of diverse meanings for many of the listed assessment terms, the Policy to Practice Study Group hopes that the *Glossary of Assessment Terms and Acronyms Used In Assessing Special Education Students* will promote a common language of assessment to the benefit of future discussions related to the assessment of students and the implications of NCLB.

Glossary of Assessment Terms

Accommodations

Changes in the administration of an assessment, such as setting, scheduling, timing, presentation format, response mode, or others, including any combination of these that does not change the construct intended to be measured by the assessment or the meaning of the resulting scores. Accommodations are used for equity, not advantage, and serve to level the playing field. To be appropriate, assessment accommodations must be identified in the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 plan and used regularly during instruction and classroom assessment.

Accountability

The use of assessment results and other data to ensure that schools are moving in desired directions. Common elements include standards, indicators of progress toward meeting those standards, analysis of data, reporting procedures, and rewards or sanctions.

Accountability system

A plan that uses assessment results and other data outlining the goals and expectations for students, teachers, schools, districts, and states to demonstrate the established components or requirements of accountability. An accountability system typically includes rewards for those who exceed the goals and sanctions for those who fail to meet the goals.

Achievement test

An instrument designed to efficiently measure the amount of academic knowledge and/or skill a student has acquired from instruction. Such tests provide information that can be compared to either a norm group or a measure of performance.

Adaptations

A generalized term that describes a change made in the presentation, setting, response, or timing or scheduling of an assessment that may or may not change the construct of the assessment.

Adequate yearly progress (AYP)

A provision of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) legislation requiring schools, districts, and states to demonstrate on the basis of test scores that students are making academic progress based on test scores. Each state was required by NCLB to submit by January 31, 2003 a specific plan for monitoring AYP.

Age appropriate

The characteristics of the skills taught, the activities and materials selected, and the language level employed that reflect the chronological age of the student.

Aggregation

The total or combined performance of all students for reporting purposes.

Alignment

The similarity or match between or among content standards, performance standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessments in terms of knowledge and skill expectations.

Alternate assessment

An instrument used in gathering information on the standards-based performance and progress of students whose disabilities preclude their valid and reliable participation in general assessments. Alternate assessments measure the performance of a relatively small population of students who are unable to participate in the general assessment system, with or without accommodations as determined by the IEP Team.

Assessment

The process of collecting information about individuals, groups, or systems that relies upon a number of instruments, one of which may be a test. Therefore, assessment is a more comprehensive term than *test*.

Assessment literacy

The knowledge of the basic principles of sound assessment practice including terminology, development, administration, analysis, and standards of quality.

Assessment

The process of collecting information about individuals, groups, or systems that relies upon a number of instruments, one of which may be a test. Therefore, assessment is a more comprehensive term than *test*.

Assistive technology

A device or service that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a student with a disability. (See 34 C.F.R. Secs 300.5 and 300.6.)

Augment (customized)

The addition or deletion of test items to an existing instrument to align with content standards.

Authentic assessment

The evaluation of student learning that requires demonstration of the behavior that the learning is indicated to produce

Baseline data

The initial measures of performance against which future measures will be compared.

Benchmarks

A specific statement of knowledge and skills within a content area's continuum that a student must possess to demonstrate a level of progress toward mastery of a standard.

Bias (test bias)

In a statistical context, bias is a systematic error in a test score. In discussing test fairness, bias is created by not allowing certain groups into the sample, not designing the test to allow all groups to participate equitably, selecting discriminatory material, testing

content that has not been taught, etc. Bias usually favors one group of test takers over another, resulting in discrimination.

Body of evidence

Information or data that establish that a student can perform a particular skill or has mastered a specific content standard and that was either produced by the student or collected by someone who is knowledgeable about the student.

Breadth

The comprehensiveness of the content and skills embodied in the standards, curriculum, or assessments.

Cohort of students

A group of individuals who generally cannot be compared to themselves over time. This incomparability is usually due to attrition factors, such as moving away or dropping out of school. Types of cohort studies include comparing groups of different students at the same grade level over time or comparing scores from the same group over time even though some group members may change.

Confidence intervals

The likely range for a given value, given known levels of error or “mistake.”

Construct validity evidence

Data that illuminate the extent to which a test produces results that accurately reflect the construct that the test is designed to assess.

Content validity evidence

Data that illuminate the extent to which

- the knowledge, skills, and cognitive demands of the learning objectives underlying an assessment are accurately reflected in the assessment, and
- the assessment adequately covers the domain of knowledge, skills, and cognitive demands represented in the learning objectives.

Criterion-referenced tests (CRT)

A test that measures specific skill development as compared to a predefined absolute level of mastery of that skill.

Cues

Assistance, words, or actions provided to a student to increase the likelihood that the student will give the desired response.

Curriculum

The knowledge and skills that are taught to a student.

Curriculum-based assessments (instructionally supportive tests)

Assessments that mirror instructional materials and procedures related to the curriculum resulting in an ongoing process of monitoring progress in the curriculum and guiding adjustments in instruction, remediation, accommodations, or modifications provided to the student.

Cut score

A specified point on a score scale. Scores at or above that point are interpreted differently from scores below that point.

Depth

The level of cognitive processing (e.g., recognition, recall, problem solving, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) required for success relative to the performance standards.

Disaggregation

The collection and reporting of student achievement results by particular subgroups (e.g., students with disabilities, limited-English-proficient students) to ascertain the subgroup's academic progress. Disaggregation makes it possible to compare subgroups or cohorts.

Errors of measurement

The differences between observed scores and the theoretical true score; the amount of uncertainty in reporting scores; the degree of inherent imprecision based on test content, administration, scoring, or examinee conditions within the measurement process that produce errors in the interpretation of student achievement.

Exclusion

The act of barring someone from participation in an assessment for reasons such as parental requests, medical condition of students, and out-of-school placements. Federal law prohibits exclusion from testing. For students with limited English proficiency, H.R.1 Section 1111. Academic Assessments (3) (II)(x), provides *“The academic assessment (using tests written in English) of reading or language arts of any student who has attended school in the United States (not including Puerto Rico) for three or more consecutive school years, except that if the local educational agency determines, on a case-by-case individual basis, that academic assessments in another language or form would likely yield more accurate and reliable information on what such student know and can do, the local educational agency may make a determination to assess such student in the appropriate language other than English for a period that does not exceed two additional consecutive years, provided that such student has not yet reached a level of English language proficiency sufficient to yield valid and reliable information on what such student knows and can do on tests (written in English) of reading or language arts.”*

Exemplar

Scored student work that evidences or exhibits the ideal for a particular rubric score point.

Exemption from testing

The act of releasing student from a testing requirement to which others are held.

Extended standards

A content standard that has been expanded while maintaining the essence of that standard, thereby ensuring that all students with significant cognitive disabilities have access to, and make progress in, the general curriculum.

Gap analysis

An investigation of differences in achievement performance between two or more different groups of students, such as general education students and students with disabilities.

Grade equivalent

A score that represents the average performance of students assessed at a specific month of a school year. For example, a grade equivalent of 5.4 on the fifth-grade test would be interpreted as a score that is average for a group that has completed the fourth month of grade 5.

Grade level

The grade in which a student is enrolled or, for students not assigned a grade, the academic grade of same-age peers who are in a general education classroom.

Grade range

Two or more consecutive grade levels; for example, grades 3-6 are an elementary grade range that includes grades 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Graduation rate

The percentage of students who graduated from high school as determined by a state-specific formula.

Gray area of assessment

The gap created when a current assessment system is unable to adequately or equitably assess students either in the general assessment, with or without accommodations, or by using an alternate assessment.

High stakes testing

A test for which important consequences are attached to the results for students, teachers, schools, districts, and/or states. Consequences may include promotion, graduation, rewards, or sanctions.

Individualized education program (IEP)

A document that reflects the decisions made by an interdisciplinary team, including the parent and the student when appropriate. During an IEP meeting for a student with a disability (SWD), the team will identify the student's abilities and disabilities.

Large-scale assessments

Tests that are administered simultaneously to large groups of students within the district or state.

Longitudinal methods

The comparison of measurements of the same groups of students collected at two or more points in time.

Matrix sampling

A measurement technique organizing a large set of test items into a number of relatively short item subsets, each subset each of which then is administered to a subsample of test takers, thereby avoiding the need to administer all items to all examinees.

Minimum *n* (under NCLB)

The smallest number of students a state has determined can produce statistically reliable results for a group while protecting the confidentiality of the student within the group.

Modification

A change to the testing conditions, procedures, and/or formatting so that measurement of the intended construct is no longer valid.

Multiple measures

Measurement of student or school performance through more than one form or test.

- For students, these might include teacher observations, performance assessments, or portfolios.
- For schools, these might include dropout rates, absenteeism, college attendance, or documented behavior problems

Natural cue

Assistance given to a student that provides a flow among the expectations presented by the educator, opportunities to learn, and the desired outcome exhibited by the student.

Norm-referenced tests (NRT)

A standardized test designed, validated, and implemented to rank a students' performance by comparing that performance to the performance of that student's peers.

Opportunity to learn

The provision of learning conditions, including suitable adjustments, to maximize a student's chances of attaining the desired learning outcomes, such as the mastery of content standards.

Out-of-level Testing (off-grade or off-level)

Administration of a test at a level above or below a student's present grade level to enable the student to be assessed at the level of instruction rather than the level of enrollment.

Participation rate

The percentage of students in a particular group or subgroup who took a test as compared to the total number within the group or subgroup who could have taken the test.

Performance assessment

A task or series of tasks requiring a student to provide a response or create a product to show mastery of a specific skill or content standard.

Performance levels

A measurement that distinguishes an adequate performance from a novice or expert performance. Performance levels provide a determination of the extent to which a student has met the content standards.

Portfolio

A collection of student-generated or student-focused evidence that provides the basis for demonstrating the student’s mastery of a range of skills, performance level, or improvement in these skills over time. The portfolio evidence may include student work samples, photographs, videotapes, interviews, anecdotal records, interviews, and observations.

Portfolio assessment

An organized collection or documentation of student-generated or student-focused work typically depicting the range of individual student skills.

Readability

The formatting of presented material that considers the organization of text, syntactic complexity of sentences, use of abstractions, density of concepts, sequence and organization of ideas, page format, sentence length, paragraph length, variety of punctuation, student background knowledge or interest, and use of illustrations or graphics in determining the appropriate level of difficulty of instructional or assessment materials.

Real-world application

The opportunity for a student to exhibit a behavior or complete a task that he or she would normally be expected to perform outside of the school environment.

Reliability

The consistency of the test instrument; the extent to which it is possible to generalize a specific behavior observed at a specific time by a specific person to observations of similar behavior at different times or by different behaviors.

Response requirements

The type, kind, or method of action required of a student to answer a question or testing item. The response may include, but is not limited to, reading, writing, speaking, creating, and drawing.

Rubric

A scoring tool based on a set of criteria used to evaluate a student’s test performance. The criteria contain a description of the requirements for varying degrees of success in responding to the question or performing the task. Rubrics may be diagnostic or analytic (providing ratings of multiple criteria), or they may be holistic (describing a single, global trait).

Secure forms of assessments

Tests that will be used repeatedly with different groups of students and must be safeguarded so that all students have equal exposure to the test materials and equal opportunities for success.

Stakeholders

A group of individuals perceived to be vested in a particular decision (e.g., a policy decision).

Standard error of measurement (SEM)

The average amount that scores in a distribution differ from the corresponding actual scores for a specified group of test takers. The SEM can be used to establish a range within which a student's actual score would be likely to fall.

Standardized

An established procedure that assures that a test is administered with the same directions, and under the same conditions (time limits, etc.) and is scored in the same manner for all students to ensure the comparability of scores. Standardization allows reliable and valid comparison to be made among students taking the test. The two major types of standardized tests are norm-referenced and criterion-referenced.

Standards

There are two types of standards, content and performance.

- **Content standards:** Statements of the subject-specific knowledge and skills that schools are expected to teach students, indicating what students should know and be able to do.
- **Performance standards.** Indices of qualities that specify how adept or competent a student demonstration must be and that consist of the following four components:
 1. levels that provide descriptive labels or narratives for student performance (i.e. advanced, proficient, etc);
 2. descriptions of what students at each particular level must demonstrate relative to the task;
 3. examples of student work at each level illustrating the range of performance within each level; and
 4. cut scores clearly separating each performance level.

Standards-based assessments

Assessments constructed to measure how well students have mastered specific content standards or skills.

Starting Point

The accepted baseline that is referenced to determine future levels of performance or progress.

Student self-reflection

Assessment by a student of his or her own instruction or work.

Student with disabilities (SWD)

In the Individuals with Disabilities Act, a student with disabilities is defined as “a child evaluated in accordance with §§300.530-300.536 as having mental retardation, a hearing impairment including deafness, a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment including blindness, serious emotional disturbance (hereafter referred to as emotional disturbance), an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, an other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services.”

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 includes the following definitions:

j) Handicapped person—

- (1) Handicapped person means any person who (i) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, (ii) has a record of such an impairment, or (iii) is regarded as having such an impairment.
- (2) As used in paragraph (j)(1) of this section, the phrase:
 - (i) Physical or mental impairment means (A) any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory, including speech organs; cardiovascular; reproductive, digestive, genito-urinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin; and endocrine; or (B) any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.
 - (ii) Major life activities means functions such as caring for one’s self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.
 - (iii) Has a record of such an impairment means has a history of, or has been misclassified as having, a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
 - (iv) Is regarded as having such an impairment means (A) has a physical or mental impairment that does not substantially limit major life activities but that is treated by a recipient as constituting such a limitation; (B) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits major life activities only as a result of the attitudes of others toward such impairment; or (C) has none of the impairments defined in paragraph (j)(2)(i) of this section but is treated by a recipient as having such an impairment.

Subgroup

A well-defined group of students. For example, the NCLB Act identifies the following specific subgroups that must achieve adequate yearly progress: students of racial or ethnic minority, students with disabilities, limited-English-proficient (LEP) students, and economically disadvantaged students.

Supports

A generic term for adaptations, accommodations, and/or modifications required and used routinely by a student to perform a skill or task independently.

Test

A measuring device or procedure. Educational tests are typically composed of questions or tasks designed to elicit predetermined behavioral responses or to measure specific academic content standards.

Test forms

Parallel or alternate versions of a test that are considered interchangeable, in that they measure the same constructs, are intended for the same purposes, and are administered using the same directions.

Test presentation

The method, manner, or structure in which test items or assessments are administered to the student.

Test security

Established procedures to ensure current or future confidentiality, fidelity, and integrity of a test whereby public access is limited and strictly monitored, with clearly outlined consequences for breaches in test security.

Universal design of assessment

A method for developing an assessment to ensure accessibility by all students regardless of ability or disability. Universal design of assessment is based on principles used in the field of architecture in which user diversity is considered during the conceptual stage of development.

Validity

The extent to which a test measures what it was designed to measure. Multiple types of validity exist. Common types of validity include the following:

- **Construct validity:** The extent to which the characteristic to be measured relates to test scores measuring the behavior in situations in which the construct is thought to be an important variable.
- **Content validity:** The extent to which the stimulus materials or situations composing the test call for a range of responses that represent the entire domain of skills, understandings, or behaviors that the test is intended to measure.
- **Convergent validity:** The extent to which the assessment results positively correlate with the results of other measures designed to assess the same or similar constructs.
- **Criterion-related validity:** The extent to which test scores of a group or subgroup are compared to other criterion measures (ratings, classifications, other tests) assigned to the examinees.
- **Face validity:** Concept based on a judgment concerning how relevant the test items appear to be, it relates more to what a test appears to measure than to what the test actually measures.

Keys to ABC's of Assessment

504	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
AA	Alternate Assessment
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AERA	American Educational Research Association
AASA	American Association of School Administrators
ALEPS	Assessing Limited English Proficient Students (SCASS)
ARTS	Arts Education Assessment
ASES	Assessing Special Education Students (SCASS)
ASR	Accountability Systems and Reporting (SCASS)
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
CAS	Comprehensive Assessment Systems for Title I (SCASS)
CAST	Center for Applied Special Technology
CCSSO	Council of Chief State School Officers
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CISA	Commission on Instructionally Supportive Assessment
CPP	Curricular Prioritizing Panel of the US Department of Education
CRESST	National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing
CRT	Criterion Referenced Test
CSSAP	Comprehensive Social Studies Assessment Project (SCASS)
ECEA	Early Childhood Education Assessment Consortium (SCASS)
EDGAR	Education Department General Administrative Regulations
EHA	Education of the Handicapped Act
ELL	English Language Learners
EPRR	Education Policy Reform Research Institute
ERIC	The Educational Resources Information Center
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESL	English as Second Language
FAPE	Free and Appropriate Public Education
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
GEPA	General Educational Provisions Act
GLARRA	Great Lakes Regional Resource Area
HEAP	Health Education Assessment Project (SCASS)
IASA	Improving America's Schools Act
IDEA	Individuals With Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IHE	Institutions on Higher Education
LEA	Local Education Agency
LEP	Limited English Proficient
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MCREL	Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory
MPRRC	Mountain Plains Regional Educational Laboratory

MRC	Materials Review Committee of the US Department of Education
MSRRC	MidSouth Regional Resource Center
NAGB	National Assessment Governing Board
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NAESP	National Association of Elementary School Principals
NASBE	National Association of State Boards of Education
NASDSE	National Association of State Directors of Special Education
NASP	National Association for School Psychologists
NASSP	National Association for Secondary School Principals
NASTID	National Association of State Title I Directors
NCAC	National Center on Assessing General Curriculum
NCEO	National Center on Educational Outcomes
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act
NCREL	North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
NERRC	Northeast Regional Resource Center
NLIST	Network for Leadership, Inquiry and Systemic Thinking
NRT	Norm Referenced Test
NSBA	National School Boards Association
OCR	Office for Civil Rights
OERI	Office of Educational Research and Improvement
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs
OSERS	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services
QSP	Quality School Portfolio
RFP	Request for Proposal
RLAA	Reading/Language Arts Assessment for NCLB
RRC	Regional Resource Center
SCASS	State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards
SEA	State Education Agency
SEC	Surveys of the Enacted Curriculum (SCASS)
SERRC	Southeast Regional Resource Center
SWD	Students with Disabilities
TA	Technical Assistance
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
TILSA	Technical Issues in Large-Scale Assessment (SCASS)
TIMSS	Third International Mathematics and Science Study
USDOE	United States Department of Education
USED	United States Department of Education