

Policy on Assessment and Accountability

Background

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) recognizes the important role standardized and other student assessments play in documenting education accountability, and in ensuring sound educational decisions are made toward achieving the highest possible academic standards for all students. CEC endorses the various governmental efforts to ensure students with special learning needs, those with disabilities, those with gifts and talents, and those who are culturally and/or linguistically diverse, are guaranteed the right to be included in these assessments, which conforms to the larger right to inclusion in the overall educational experience CEC reaffirms the commitment for students with disabilities to be assessed with high expectations using measures that appropriately provide for the use of accommodations as needed and alternate assessments for the small percentage of students with the most significant disabilities. Decisions made by students' individualized program planning (IEP) teams within the frameworks of general assessments, assessments with accommodations, or alternate assessments must be assured.

Position

To ensure students with disabilities are appropriately assessed under educational assessment and accountability systems, it is the position of the CEC that:

- All students with special learning needs shall be included in all assessment and accountability systems, and shall have available the opportunity to participate in general assessments, including assessments with accommodations, or alternate assessments that reflect valid and reliable performance for them;
- All students with special learning needs in all settings shall be included in the assessment and accountability systems. All such systems shall include students in traditional public school placements, students who change schools or placements, and students receiving publicly funded educational services in settings such as charter schools, state-operated programs, the juvenile justice system, and other educational entities that participate in state assessment and accountability systems.
- Only assessment processes and instruments that have been developed and validated on student samples that include students with disabilities and that validly demonstrate their performance shall be used. Test designers shall be required to develop universally designed assessments;
- State and provincial determinations of achievement and progress must address the progress made on grade promotions and graduation rates for exceptional students, addressing other appropriate achievement indicators for students with exceptionalities, and toward making well-grounded appraisals of schools;
- The individualized education program (IEP) team will determine student participation in assessments as part of the review of the overall IEP based on individual student needs;

- All students with special learning needs shall be included when assessment scores are publicly reported whether they participate with or without accommodations or participate through an alternate assessment, subject to personal confidentiality requirements;
- To ensure equal access and opportunity for all students and to ensure inclusive accountability in all local and state/provincial accountability indices, performance on assessments of students with special learning needs must have the same effect on the final accountability index as the performance of other students, whether or not these students participated with accommodations or in an alternate assessment;
- Policy makers and all other stakeholders must be committed to the continuing development of a unified system of assessment and accountability for all students;
- There must be a firm commitment to continuing development of a system of structured monitoring, intensive ongoing evaluation, and systemic professional training on emerging research and best practice;
- The successful implementation of an appropriate assessment and accountability system, including its application to students with special learning needs, requires the cooperative efforts of all teachers, related service personnel, paraprofessionals, administrators, families, and students in its planning, application, and evaluation; and
- The support of legislators, other policy makers, and state/provincial educational service personnel is essential to guarantee that each student is afforded the opportunity to be appropriately assessed and included in accountability systems.