

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

RACE TO THE TOP ASSESSMENT PROGRAM
PUBLIC & EXPERT INPUT
MEETING

9:00 a.m.
Wednesday,
November 18, 2009

Salon E
Atlanta Airport Marriott
4711 Best Road
Atlanta, Georgia

FACILITATOR: JOANNE WEISS

PANEL MEMBERS:

LIZANNE DeSTEFANO
BRIAN GONG
JACQUI KEARNS
MARTHA THURLOW
ANN WHALEN
JUDY WURTZEL
PATTY GUARD

A G E N D A

<u>SPEAKER</u>	<u>PAGE:</u>
<u>Expert Presenters:</u>	
Martha Thurlow	14
Lizanne DeStephano	33
Jacqui Kearns	54
Brian Gong	75
Roundtable Discussion	95
<u>Public Presenters:</u>	
Stephen Elliott	144
Cara Cahalan-Laitusis	152
Renee Cameto	159
Lori Hagen	164
Paula Woodard	169
Marcia Harding	174
Sue Bechard	180
Theodore Mauro	185
Jeannette Downes	191
Kim Hymes	196

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MS. WEISS: We're starting a
3 little bit late this morning. That means I
4 have to talk twice as fast in my part of the
5 presentation to get through it so we can hear
6 from the people we really came to hear from
7 this morning.

8 But thank you so much for coming.

9 My name is Joanne Weiss; I'm the Director of
10 the Race to the Top program at the Department
11 of Education. And in a minute I will
12 introduce all my other colleagues around the
13 table. But first I wanted to give you a
14 quick overview.

15 Let me just see a show of hands
16 for how many people were not here yesterday.

17 Okay. Quite a few. So I apologize to those
18 who were, because I'm just going to go
19 through the quick framing that you already
20 have heard. But for those who weren't here
21 yesterday, a quick summary of what we're
22 trying to accomplish in these meetings.

23 As I think many of you know,

1 there's two different parts to the Race to
2 the Top competition. There's the \$4 billion
3 competitive grant program for states designed
4 to award and implement comprehensive
5 statewide reforms.

6 What we're here to talk about
7 today is the \$350 million assessment
8 competition that's designed to support
9 consortia of states to implement common
10 standards by funding the development of a
11 next generation of common assessments that
12 are aligned to those standards.

13 The time line for this, and the
14 process that we're undergoing is that we are
15 doing public and expert input meetings at the
16 front end of the process rather than a public
17 comment meeting after we release a
18 preliminary notice, because we felt like we
19 needed to get a lot more expert advice to us
20 in order to make sure that we were designing
21 this notice in the right way.

22 We just felt like we didn't have
23 the expertise in the Department that we

1 needed in order to ensure that we were really
2 putting together a notice that incented and
3 rewarded the right kinds of things to take us
4 as a country to where we thought we needed to
5 go in the assessment field.

6 So we're doing these meetings
7 through November and early December. We will
8 then release the final notice inviting
9 applications in March. Applications will be
10 due in June, and grants have to be awarded by
11 the end of September, because this is part of
12 the Recovery Act funding.

13 The goals of the program, of the
14 assessment program, are to support states in
15 delivering more effective and instructionally
16 useful assessments than perhaps we have been
17 using over the past several years, with more
18 accurate information about student abilities
19 that reflect and support good instructional
20 practice, and most importantly, especially
21 for today's conversation, that include all
22 students so that the front end design is put
23 together with the thought that all students

1 need to be included in the assessments
2 instead of trying, as we sometimes do, to
3 tack on at the back end the needs of all of
4 these students.

5 So that is why we're particularly
6 excited today to have a specific panel around
7 the issue of students with disabilities.
8 We're having an English language learner
9 panel in Denver right after Thanksgiving so
10 that we get not only the general expertise of
11 assessment experts, which has in every panel,
12 also included, the voices of experts around
13 ELL and students with disabilities, but in
14 addition to just have a deep dive that's
15 particularly in these areas to give us the
16 advice we need to make sure that we're
17 designing the notice in the right kinds of
18 ways to elicit the right kinds of assessments
19 that do include all students.

20 I'm going to just sort of hit this
21 at a very high level. Because we're in this
22 funny stage where we're still operating under
23 No Child Left Behind, but we know that

1 reauthorization of the Elementary and
2 Secondary Education Act will be coming up in
3 the next -- some time soon, we know that
4 whatever assessments we design today are
5 going to have to transition across this
6 period.

7 And so we've said that, at a
8 minimum, they need to meet the current
9 requirements of No Child Left Behind, which
10 is to say they need to at least cover
11 reading, language, arts and mathematics
12 annually in grades three through eight, and
13 at least once in high school. We can
14 certainly, in whatever proposals we decide to
15 fund, go above that, but that's the minimum.

16 We're talking, at a minimum again,
17 about summative assessments, but we don't
18 want to necessarily constrain the
19 conversation to thinking that summative means
20 once, or summative means only end of year, it
21 might be given several times throughout the
22 year, it might be given in a suite of tests
23 instead of just one test, so all of that, I

1 think, is open for discussion.

2 The other thing is that we are
3 talking in states that move to this about a
4 replacement set of assessments rather than an
5 additional set of assessments. And, of
6 course, they have to be valid, reliable and
7 fair to students.

8 The goals for this meeting are to
9 help all of us get a different vision for
10 what assessments could and should look like.

11 I think that we're so caught up in the
12 current vision that we have of what our
13 multiple choice assessment system looks like
14 in this country that it's very hard for us to
15 envision a system at a national scale that
16 looks different from what we have today.

17 So one thing that we've been
18 hoping, and I think we've been very lucky so
19 far, that we've had some fabulous panelists
20 who have helped us to paint through the big
21 picture vision for all of us of what
22 assessments could look like, and the role
23 they could play in instructional improvement

1 if we do them differently.

2 But also getting very, very
3 concrete expert advice, almost asking the
4 experts to put themselves in our shoes. Some
5 questions are putting themselves in the shoes
6 of the states who have to respond to these
7 proposals, some are putting themselves in the
8 shoes of the department that has to write the
9 RFP, and just helping to give us very
10 specific concrete guidance in what they would
11 do if they were us.

12 And the other thing is trying to
13 hold these sessions in a way that enables the
14 states to participate in all of the learning
15 together with the Department. We are in this
16 funny position because the states are the
17 applicants, so we can't really do it
18 together, which is why we're sitting up here
19 and you're sitting over there, but we very
20 much wanted to include all of the states in
21 all of the learning that we're participating
22 in over the course of this.

23 For those of you who are in the

1 public, the people at the table are state
2 representatives and members of the public
3 have the chairs in the back.

4 So the agenda for today looks like
5 this. We're going to have presentations from
6 each of our experts for about 15 minutes
7 which a little time for clarifying questions
8 afterwards, and then spend the bulk of the
9 time on a roundtable discussion up here.

10 All of you, I believe, have note
11 cards. My note card slide disappeared I
12 think. All of you have note cards that you
13 were given when you registered. If you've
14 got questions that you would like us to sort
15 of feed into the discussion, feel free to
16 write them down on your note cards, and if
17 you drop them off at the registration table,
18 they'll get them up to us in time for the
19 roundtable discussion so that we can ask
20 them.

21 A couple of other housekeeping
22 things, please turn cell phones to vibrate.
23 And we are transcribing everything that's

1 done today and posting it on our website, so
2 within a few days you'll see that posted on
3 our website. All of the presentations and
4 PowerPoints that you'll see today will also
5 be posted, and we're accepting written input
6 from members of the public, from anybody
7 who'd like to submit it, and all of that is
8 posted on the website for everybody's
9 learning as well.

10 So with that I wanted to thank the
11 states, many of whom have traveled long
12 distances to be here. A lot of you, I know,
13 have been at the Boston meetings last week,
14 as well as coming to Atlanta with us this
15 week. So being on the same schedule as you,
16 we know that it's a little grueling and we
17 really appreciate all the time you're taking
18 to come to these meetings, and I hope they're
19 useful for you.

20 And with that, let me quickly go
21 around the table and do introductions, and
22 then we will get started.

23 So, Martha, do you want to --

1 MS. THURLOW: Hi there. Martha
2 Thurlow, Director of the National Center on
3 Educational Outcomes and director of several
4 other projects as well. And I'm starting out
5 with a disclaimer saying, I'm here as person,
6 not representing any of my projects.

7 MR. GONG: Good morning. I'm
8 Brian Gong. I'm the Director of the Center
9 for Assessment, which provides technical
10 assistance to states.

11 MS. KEARNS: I'm Jacqui Kearns.
12 I'm the Director of the National Alternate
13 Assessment Center, and several other
14 projects. And as Martha, I'm representing
15 myself.

16 MS. DeSTEFANO: Hello. My name is
17 Lizanne DeStefano. I'm a professor of
18 educational psychology at the University of
19 Illinois in Urbana-Champaign.

20 MS. WEISS: Joanne Weiss, Director
21 of the Race to the Top Fund.

22 MS. GUARD: Patty Guard, Deputy
23 Director of the Office of Special Education

1 Programs in the Department of Education.

2 MS. WURTZEL: Judy Wurtzel, the
3 Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning
4 Evaluation and Policy Development at the
5 Department of Education.

6 MS. WHALEN: Ann Whalen, Office of
7 the Secretary, Department of Education.

8 MS. WEISS: Great. So with that,
9 let me just remind you this was -- this is
10 pulled directly from the notice that we put
11 out about these meetings, but the key
12 questions that we've asked the experts who
13 are here today to respond to, taking into
14 account the diversity of students with
15 disabilities who take these assessments, help
16 give us recommendations for the development
17 and administration of assessments for each
18 content area that are valid and reliable and
19 that enables students to demonstrate their
20 knowledge and skills in core academic areas.

21 And to sort of supplement that
22 with the notion that innovative assessment
23 designs and uses of technology do give us the

1 potential to be inclusive of more students in
2 ways that we haven't always taken advantage
3 of in our state assessment systems to date,
4 so given that technology is in a different
5 place now, how would you propose that we take
6 that into account as we're thinking about
7 these new assessments.

8 So with that, I'm going to turn it
9 over to Martha, together with the clicker.

10 If you would pass this down?

11 MS. THURLOW: Great. I'm really
12 pleased to be here today to talk a little bit
13 about what I've learned during my long career
14 in special education and broader in kind of
15 the policy world.

16 I'm going to start back a little,
17 because in the early 1990s I was jumping head
18 first into thinking about statewide
19 assessment systems that included students
20 with disabilities. And this was after a
21 considerable career where I was studying
22 instructional interventions, dropout
23 prevention strategies for students with

1 disabilities of all ages. So I've spanned
2 early childhood through leaving high school.

3 And I'd have to say those endeavors were
4 minimally successful.

5 In the early 1990s, most states
6 were including -- and this is when I jumped
7 into this -- most states were including 10
8 percent or fewer of their students with
9 disabilities in their state assessments.
10 Participation and accommodation policies were
11 either non-existent or they were limiting.
12 NAEP at that time had way less than 50
13 percent of students with disabilities
14 participating in its assessments, and really
15 it pretty much didn't know how many kids were
16 in there.

17 And accommodations were not
18 allowed. Only two states had developed, or
19 were developing, a truly inclusive assessment
20 system, one that assessed students with the
21 most significant cognitive disabilities, as
22 well as those with other disabilities.

23 So I'm not going to, although I'd

1 love to, I'm not going to review the
2 tremendous strides that we've made in
3 including students with disabilities, and in
4 better assessing them. Today nearly all
5 states have more than 95 percent of their
6 students with disabilities participating in
7 their assessments. And they all have written
8 guidelines, policies about accommodations for
9 those students.

10 I think it's generally recognized,
11 and Joanne was commenting on this, what a
12 difference the inclusion of students with
13 disabilities has made in improving their
14 education. It's increased our understanding
15 of who these students are, and it's improved
16 the design of our assessment systems.

17 I know for sure that including
18 students with disabilities in large scale
19 assessments has had more of an effect than
20 any of my research and development efforts
21 ever did. So it's been a really exciting
22 area to be in. This doesn't mean, however,
23 that the inclusion of students with

1 disabilities in assessments has been easy.
2 And being here today is probably some
3 evidence of that.

4 Because of a history of restricted
5 access to the general education curriculum,
6 these students aren't performing well. The
7 assessments, in general, are showing us the
8 reality of being a students with disability
9 in US schools today. These students are
10 often the lowest of the low in getting access
11 to the curriculum and then in how they
12 perform on state assessments.

13 But this isn't true for all
14 students with disabilities. We know that.
15 Their performance covers a range of the
16 performance of students in schools today.
17 And I mean the range of students without
18 disabilities. We see students with
19 disabilities covering that same range of
20 performance.

21 I can recall back in the early
22 `90s when states were -- or mid `90s maybe,
23 when states really were first beginning to

1 include all their students with disabilities,
2 and several being startled to find that their
3 students with disabilities actually increased
4 the overall performance levels in the state,
5 so.

6 So I just want to say, I think
7 it's irresponsible to assume that because a
8 student has a disability that student is a
9 low performer who cannot learn. And that
10 will be underlaying some of my comments
11 today.

12 So, with that little background,
13 what I want to try to do in the few minutes
14 that I have is talk about what I see are some
15 requirements for Race to the Top assessments,
16 touch briefly on computer-based assessments,
17 and then identify what are some bottom lines
18 for me. Fifteen minutes isn't enough time to
19 say that I would like to say, so I will do
20 the best in kind of covering these.

21 So when I was thinking about the
22 opportunity that is provided by the Race to
23 the Top funds to support development and

1 administration of the next generation of
2 assessments, assessments that are valid and
3 reliable and that enable students to really
4 demonstrate their knowledge and skills in
5 core content and academic areas, I reflect on
6 what we have learned during the past decade.

7
8 And we've learned a lot, and the
9 Race to the Top funds can ensure that we
10 build on that learning rather than stepping
11 back from it. And I think that's what we've
12 been hearing. Too often in the past we've
13 been retrofitting our assessments for
14 students with disabilities, and we shouldn't
15 allow that to happen at this time of
16 opportunity.

17 So in the requirements, I've kind
18 of identified three basic requirements, and
19 as I did that, I thought about the diversity
20 of students with disabilities, and I also
21 thought about the potential of computer-
22 based, or technology to be inclusive.

23 So, first, the construction of an

1 assessment system that provides valid and
2 reliable results for students with
3 disabilities has to start by recognizing that
4 students with disabilities are general
5 education students first. This should apply
6 regardless for the disability or the
7 diversity of the students.

8 Jacqui will talk about students
9 with significant cognitive disabilities. I
10 include them here in my general remarks, but
11 I'm not going to address them specifically.

12 But I do remind all of you, and
13 you probably remember this, but given the
14 nature of the disabilities that students
15 have, which do vary a lot, we still should
16 expect at least 80 percent of all students
17 with disabilities to meet the same
18 achievement standards as students without
19 disabilities.

20 Starting the development of
21 assessments from the recognition that
22 students with disabilities are general
23 education students first has several

1 implications, and the major one is that
2 assessments should be better designed from
3 the beginning with all students in mind, I
4 think we've heard that, but not -- shouldn't
5 necessarily be different for students with
6 disabilities.

7 Whether we call universally
8 designed assessments, accessible assessments,
9 it's critical that during that development
10 process we think of all students, clearly
11 define what the assessment is intended to
12 measure, and how that content will be
13 measured for all students.

14 The research base for developing
15 accountability assessments that are more
16 appropriate for all students has dramatically
17 increased over the past several years, and we
18 should look to that research base. The
19 National Center on Educational Outcomes,
20 based on a lot of its work, has developed
21 principles for assessments used for
22 accountability, and has identified five major
23 principles.

1 I'm not going to go through those,
2 they're easily found on our website. But,
3 you know, they're the basic things starting
4 from including all students, make sure that
5 you've designed in a way that allows all
6 students to show their knowledge and skills,
7 good decision-making processes are a part of
8 the assessment process that we need to be
9 thinking about. And so those principles are
10 just one example of a whirlwind of research
11 and development activity to support better
12 assessments for every student, including
13 students with disabilities.

14 I think a second fundamental
15 requirement is that, as part of the
16 assessment development process, allowable
17 accommodations should be defined. To the
18 extent that content targets are not clear, or
19 that they intertwine things such as decoding
20 and understanding of a text, we should think
21 about processes that will separate those.
22 Too often, students with disabilities are
23 penalized because their disability is in an

1 area that is the focus of the assessment.

2 For example, as I mentioned
3 before, the ability to decode is a separate
4 skill from the ability to draw inferences
5 from text, for example. Students may be poor
6 decoders but fine comprehenders. We can't
7 tell that from our assessments, and we're
8 actually penalizing students because we're
9 putting those two together.

10 I think there's more and more
11 research on the effects of accommodations,
12 and one of the critical findings is that the
13 definition of the content standards is
14 really, really important. Clarifying what
15 we're trying to measure is so important as we
16 think about accommodations.

17 If we've got explicit definitions
18 of content standards, ideally ones on which
19 we all agree, we can more easily develop
20 assessments on those standards and figure out
21 how to increase the accessibility of the
22 assessments and the accommodations that may
23 still be needed, even after we have the most

1 accessible assessment. So clear, grade-level
2 content standards are critical to the
3 development of assessments appropriate for
4 the greatest number of students, including
5 students with disabilities.

6 The National Accessible Reading
7 Assessment projects, which is another group
8 doing a lot of work on how to increase
9 accessibility in the area of reading, has
10 focused on the development of some principles
11 and guidelines to help states think through
12 what they need to have accessible reading
13 assessments, and one of those principles is
14 that reading assessments are grounded in the
15 definition of reading that is composed of
16 clearly specified constructs and formed by
17 scholarship and attuned to accessibility
18 concerns. So right from the beginning.

19 So just another comment is that
20 ensuring that we have common standards that
21 have addressed accessibility concerns does
22 not mean lowering the standards of what we're
23 those students, but it does mean that we've

1 clearly defined what we want and that we
2 think about things like, for example,
3 providing a way for students who cannot hear
4 to demonstrate their listening skills. We
5 have to think about those things from the
6 beginning.

7 Moving on. Third fundamental
8 requirement is that the assessment system has
9 to include all students. There can't be any
10 exceptions. We know from past history and
11 research that when any group of students is
12 excluded from the assessment system, there's
13 always the next group of students on the
14 precipice of being excluded.

15 In the early 1990s, research
16 demonstrated this, that when some kids were
17 excluded, they were denied quality
18 instruction that they should have received.
19 And soon, students who were not originally in
20 the group that would -- could be excluded,
21 were pushed into that group, then also
22 excluded from assessments and also excluded
23 from quality instruction. The group of

1 excluded students became larger and larger.
2 Not just those students with disabilities,
3 but also students who previously were not
4 identified as having disabilities.

5 I think this point can't be
6 emphasized enough, having an exception for
7 some students who are not included in the
8 assessment system and in high expectations
9 for instruction will result in increasing
10 numbers of students being identified
11 regardless of whether they're among the
12 intended group in the first place.

13 I know I need to move along
14 quickly. Just a few thoughts about computer-
15 based assessments. I think computer-based
16 assessments and other technology show lots of
17 promise for increasing accessibility of
18 assessments, but they can also make it easier
19 to fall back into some pitfalls that have
20 been demonstrated to create problems for
21 assessments of students with disabilities.

22 So there -- just a comment on some
23 of the promising aspects of computer-based

1 assessments. They should and can be
2 developed in a way that embeds what we think
3 of as accommodations when we're using paper-
4 based tests. They can become part of the
5 assessment itself.

6 Mike Russell at Boston College and
7 his colleagues have identified many of the
8 possibilities that using computer-based
9 technology offers to us, such as navigating,
10 interacting with the elements of the test
11 delivery system using a mouse, a keyboard, a
12 touch screen, switch mechanisms, sip and puff
13 devices.

14 The opportunity to open up the
15 assessment to many, many more students
16 without the need for accommodations is great.

17 Texts can be read aloud, just lots of
18 things. And there is a recent teaching
19 exceptional children article that address
20 some for the research on this. So there are
21 just tremendous possibilities for increasing
22 accessibility.

23 I think it's really important that

1 computer-based or other technology
2 assessments be developed to be as transparent
3 as possible about the content on which
4 students are assessed and the ways in which
5 the content is assessed. They shouldn't
6 revert to normative assessments, even in the
7 name of measuring growth. We have a history
8 of doing that before 1994 and Title I, and we
9 don't want to go there again.

10 They should not revert to an auto-
11 level testing approach. Any adaptive
12 computer-based assessments, I believe, should
13 be on grade level, and must be transparent
14 enough to know when a student is inaccurately
15 measured because of poor basic skills, but
16 good higher level skills.

17 Okay. I've got a half a minute
18 left. So a few bottom lines. You know, when
19 I think about this, it's puzzling that it
20 took assessments and an accessibility system
21 with teeth to push improved achievement for
22 students with disabilities. It doesn't mean
23 we're there yet, we still have a long way to

1 go, but standards-based assessments have been
2 essential in this.

3 So without elaborating, some of my
4 bottom lines are that we should nothing that
5 would reopen doors to lowered expectations
6 and outcomes for students with disabilities,
7 we should do nothing that could result in a
8 separate curriculum for some students with
9 disabilities, and we should do nothing that
10 would track students into a separate
11 achievement expectation early in their school
12 careers. Thank you.

13 MS. WEISS: Thanks.

14 Questions for Martha?

15 MS. GUARD: Martha, when you
16 talked about computer-based testing, you said
17 that you -- that the grade-based criterion
18 referenced approach needed to be used. And
19 we've heard some talk about out-of-grade
20 level items being included as a part of that.

21 Would you talk a little bit more about the
22 importance of the grade level?

23 MS. THURLOW: It goes back to what

1 some of the consequences are, intended and
2 unintended, and probably mostly unintended
3 here, in that when we start to go to a
4 normative approach, or an approach -- and/or
5 an approach that gets us below grade level,
6 and depending upon the transparency there, I
7 think that it's much easier for educators to
8 assume that if students are performing
9 poorly, they need to be teaching on those
10 basic skills over and over again.

11 And I think that's -- one thing we
12 have learned is that having high
13 expectations, knowing what the standards are
14 toward which we want to get, and having some
15 assessments in the classroom that help us
16 know what to do instructionally are the way
17 we need to go, but not have out summative
18 assessment really being based on things that
19 are not what the focus of instruction should
20 be for these kids.

21 MS. WURTZEL: So, Martha, we heard
22 a fair amount yesterday, and also in Boston,
23 about interest in moving towards very rich

1 performance tasks as part of an overall
2 accountability system, and tasks that really
3 create, you know, almost messy opportunities
4 for kids to look at data, to take things in
5 context, to generalize their knowledge to new
6 situations. Given what you've said about
7 assessment principles for students with
8 disabilities, how do you think about
9 including the right kind of criteria for
10 including students with disabilities in the
11 context of performance tasks?

12 MS. THURLOW: So I'm not going to
13 address all the challenges that are around
14 using rich performance tasks for
15 accountability assessments, in general,
16 because I think there are some. But I would
17 say that one of my underlying principles is
18 that if we've identified a good system for
19 students in general, that should be the
20 system for students with disabilities also,
21 the general education students first.

22 My personal belief is that there
23 is evidence that suggests that students with

1 disabilities might benefit, might be better
2 able to show their knowledge and skills with
3 some rich, hands-on kinds of assessments or
4 performance tasks. The opportunities are
5 definitely there. I have trouble -- and some
6 of my colleagues perhaps can translate that
7 into how that works for an accountability
8 assessment for all students. But that -- if
9 we figure that out, that's what students with
10 disabilities should be doing as well.

11 MS. WEISS: Other questions?

12 (No response.)

13 MS. WEISS: Okay. Let's move on
14 to Lizanne.

15 MS. DeSTEFANO: Thank you, Joanne.

16 And thanks everyone for coming
17 this morning. While I think you'll find that
18 many of my --

19 Can I have the little clicker,
20 Martha? Thank you.

21 I think you'll find that some of
22 my comments parallel what we've heard
23 already. My background, as many of you know,

1 is I'm a former special education teacher and
2 school psychologist, but now most of my work
3 involves evaluation of local implementation
4 of federal initiatives. So I'm very
5 interested in how federal legislation like No
6 Child Left Behind and Individuals with
7 Disabilities Education Act play out at the
8 local level. So I appreciate the opportunity
9 to speak today.

10 Like Martha, I think one of the
11 most important things to think about in
12 developing this initiative is the focus on
13 developing an inclusive assessment system
14 from the start, that everyone that's involved
15 in this endeavor is envisioning a system that
16 would represent all students and all students
17 could participate in with a minimum of
18 disruption, exception, accommodation.

19 And I also believe that the grade
20 level and content, and college career
21 readiness standards are at the heart of the
22 system. And I would hope that the federal
23 guidance would really stress that standards

1 are at the heart of the system rather than
2 assessment at the heart of the system.

3 It is always amazing to me how
4 quickly people shift to the assessment as the
5 driver of the system, and the assessment is
6 what's important. But when we really think
7 about the theory behind standards-based
8 reform, it's the standards that are driving
9 the system, not the assessment. So I would
10 hope that that would come across very
11 clearly, and that a phase of development of
12 these projects be examining the standards
13 upon which this system is going to be based,
14 and making sure that these standards are
15 sound and also represent the idea of
16 inclusivity.

17 And so some of the characteristics
18 of those standards, as Martha said, very
19 important to understand what the target skill
20 is, what is really the important thing that's
21 being measured. And then to recognize that
22 there might be multiple ways to express that
23 standard and allow those multiple ways to be

1 represented in an assessment system.

2 I think another thing that's very
3 critical about the standards system is the
4 performance level descriptors. They need to
5 be meaningful at all levels, and they need to
6 reflect what students can do at those levels
7 in addition to what they may not be able to
8 do.

9 Many times when I look at state
10 systems I see that at the meets or exceeds
11 category, you're talking about what students
12 can do, but the categories below meets often
13 focus on the deficits of those students
14 rather than what those students can actually
15 do. And as a teacher, I want to know what
16 the strengths of my students, what they are
17 able to do, as well as areas of challenge.

18 So I would hope that a piece of
19 this RFP would actually involve a critical
20 look at the standards themselves, and ways
21 that they could be enhanced or elaborated
22 that would provide a good inclusive
23 foundation for the system.

1 Secondly, I believe that some
2 accommodations are necessary, but I would
3 hope that the mind set with which you would
4 enter this endeavor would be to design an
5 assessment system that would minimize
6 accommodations. Some of you know some of my
7 work has been on local implementation of
8 accommodations.

9 Accommodations are a pain.
10 They're a logistical pain, they threaten the
11 validity of the assessment, they're hard to
12 monitor and make people be accountable for.
13 So a goal of this assessment system would
14 really be to minimize the need for
15 accommodation. And so to do that in an
16 empirical way, look at your data, what are
17 your most frequent accommodations, and then
18 how can you design a system that will reduce
19 or eliminate the need for those.

20 So if it's extended time, don't do
21 a time-based test. Think about other types
22 of assessment. Format is an adaptation that
23 can be easily done for all students; print is

1 an adaptation that can benefit all students.

2 So to really think about that from the very
3 beginning.

4 Thirdly, involving special
5 education teachers and related service
6 personnel at all levels and in all aspects of
7 standards and assessment development,
8 including scoring. And some of you might
9 say, Well, we do that already, and I think
10 that's true, I've read a lot of state plans
11 and I know that they're involved. But I
12 think what I'm suggesting is a more intensive
13 involvement, a more sustained involvement.

14 And I would hope that the RFP and
15 the time lines and the processes that we see
16 in these grants would be ample enough to
17 allow for really meaningful involvement of
18 special education and related services. I
19 really see a two-way benefit here. On the
20 one hand it will be useful to the system to
21 have that input into the system and the
22 design of the assessment; on the other hand
23 it will help educate the special education

1 system and the related services personnel,
2 and bring them up to -- bring everyone at the
3 same level when they're thinking about these
4 systems.

5 It still surprises me, when I go
6 into states sometimes, at how siloed and
7 departmentalized state departments are, and
8 how little interaction there actually is
9 between special education and general
10 assessment. And so I would hope that this
11 opportunity would really push that process to
12 a new level.

13 And then finally I would hope that
14 the plans that are submitted and evaluated
15 would have a robust program of cognitive
16 labs, field testing, other validation
17 activities that specifically address students
18 with disabilities and other special
19 populations.

20 And this is where partnerships
21 between states and research entities might
22 really be beneficial to push that agenda
23 forward and really develop a sound research

1 base around participation of students with
2 disabilities and other special populations in
3 the state assessments.

4 Once that piece is done, sorted
5 the standards and assessment and the process
6 that has this very sustained and robust
7 participation, I think we need to think
8 about, okay, how do we write test
9 specifications and how do we develop items
10 that, again, are accessible and do permit
11 valid and reliable assessment of the full
12 range of students who participate in public
13 schools.

14 I think test specifications make a
15 difference here, and this is where the test
16 developers, I think, could really grow and
17 learn to do things in a different way with a
18 very clear specification of the constructors
19 skill that needs to be assessed, and then --
20 so that's the target skill, that's what we
21 really care about, three by three digit
22 multiplication, and then what are the access
23 skills that a student might need to be able

1 to actually perform in that target skill.

2 Is it time, is it print, is it
3 technology, so that we really have a good
4 discussion and a clear expectation for the
5 target skill and the access skill.
6 Accommodations then address the access
7 skills, but shouldn't interfere with the
8 target skills. And right now I think that
9 that is kind of mushed together, or really
10 not addressed. So the item developers are
11 developing items without a clear idea of
12 target and access skills.

13 Also, detailed item development
14 guidelines. So we are setting the
15 expectation for items developers and item
16 review teams and test contractors, of what
17 they're expected to do, and I've provided a
18 draft that we've developed for NAEP in trying
19 to get NAEP item writers to develop
20 accessible items.

21 And then finally transparency and
22 scoring, not only for the student, for the
23 teacher, for everybody involved. Some of the

1 work that I've done have found that scoring
2 rubrics may actually penalize students with
3 disabilities because they may -- students
4 with disabilities make different assumptions
5 about what's valued in scoring. If more is
6 better, if a longer response, if more
7 examples is going to be -- will get you a
8 higher score, then that needs to be clearly
9 transmitted to the student so that they
10 understand the parameters under which they're
11 performing.

12 Oh, wrong button. Okay. I'm not
13 going to talk a lot about accessible item
14 development, but this is an area that I think
15 we can learn a lot from this endeavor, and I
16 would hope that it would be a focus of this
17 competition, because I think having a lot of
18 states working on this would really, really
19 help our understanding here.

20 Adequate precision throughout the
21 performance continuum. If we're really going
22 to design assessments that are inclusive and
23 represent the full range of students, then we

1 have to pay attention to how precise are they
2 at all points in the performance continuum.
3 Right now, and I totally understand why, a
4 lot of our state assessments are focusing
5 precision at the meets/exceeds cut points
6 because that's where they really want to be
7 able to differentiate with a great deal of
8 accuracy who meets the standards and who does
9 not.

10 But if we are really going to
11 provide useful information across the full
12 spectrum, then we need to be assured that our
13 test is measuring with good precision at all
14 levels. In some assessments that are
15 designed to high standards, precision in the
16 lower quartile is poor. They have more items
17 that measure at the upper end, fewer items at
18 the lower end, and students in the lower end
19 of the performance continuum don't have the
20 opportunity to get very many items right on
21 the assessment.

22 So we get very little information
23 about what they know and can do. We get a

1 lot of information about what they don't
2 know, but we get very little information
3 about what they do know. And so I think that
4 this is a challenge for us to think about how
5 do we design an assessment system that allows
6 for measurement at all ends of the
7 performance continuum.

8 And one of the things that I've
9 been working on for the last few years is
10 thinking about a modular assessment where
11 every student takes a common block, so
12 there's a set of items that every student
13 takes, and then there's an adaptive block
14 that a student takes that is chosen based on
15 their prior performance.

16 So for students at the upper end
17 of the performance continuum, it may be a
18 block of more challenging items to really
19 allow us to know what the full range of that
20 student performance is. For students at the
21 lower end of the performance continuum, it
22 may be a block of less difficult, less
23 complex items that again allow us to get a

1 full range of that student's performance.

2 We're really not talking about
3 making the test easier, or dumbing down the
4 test, because everybody is taking that common
5 block. And so we have a block that defines
6 the full range of performance. What we're
7 talking about is an adaptive system that
8 allows us more precision at the extreme ends
9 of the curriculum. And there's been some
10 work in NAEP that I've been involved in that
11 has done that.

12 Some special considerations for
13 general assessment design. I noticed in
14 the -- in some of the language in the draft
15 that we read that they talk a lot about novel
16 item types, and I think novel item types are
17 an attempt to prevent -- or to minimize
18 teaching to the test. Novel items types may
19 actually differentially disadvantage students
20 with disabilities. If they're expected to
21 look at an item type that they've never seen
22 before and think about how to address it, it
23 may actually detract from their performance.

1 So if novel item types are a
2 strategy that people are using, we really
3 need a set of practice examples or activities
4 that teachers can use with students so that
5 they do have familiarity with the item type.

6 So perhaps the way instructions are given in
7 that setting need to be attended to.

8 Technology is fabulous. But,
9 again, students should have ample experience
10 with technology before they actually
11 experience it in the assessment. And I've
12 seen this firsthand many, many times when
13 students are seeing technology for the first
14 time in an assessment session. And you know
15 it right away because they're looking at the
16 graphing calculator like, Geez, I've never
17 seen one of these before, what am I supposed
18 to do with it.

19 So really looking at the
20 relationship between instructional technology
21 and assessment technology, and that goes both
22 ways. If a student is actively using
23 technology in instruction, they should be

1 able to use that same technology in the
2 assessment, if you're really trying to get a
3 valid measure of what they're able to do.

4 I'm not going to go into detail
5 but we all know that international
6 comparisons are problematic for students with
7 disabilities. I've been doing a lot of work
8 in Europe, and I can tell you that students
9 are represented -- students with disabilities
10 are represented very differently in different
11 countries in Europe, so the international
12 benchmarking piece will be a challenge, and I
13 think we're going to need special education
14 experts to help us figure that out.

15 There's an emphasis on college and
16 career readiness, and just like it's really
17 important to have special education teachers
18 involved, it's really important to have
19 higher education personnel involved in the
20 standards development and standards setting.

21 I think that it will produce a different
22 picture, and, again, a two-way influence.
23 They'll give input, but also they'll get a

1 better idea of what we're talking about in K-
2 12, and of course, in my mind, multiple
3 assessments, end-of-course exams are very
4 much more preferable than one summative end-
5 of-year cumulative assessment.

6 And then finally were asked to
7 comment on how should ELAs be involved, and I
8 just think it's key to talk in the roll out
9 plan of how IAPs will be -- IAP teams will be
10 trained, how teachers will be trained, how an
11 infrastructure will be put in place including
12 professional development that will enable
13 this to be rolled out for special education
14 students. Thank you.

15 MS. WEISS: Great. Questions?

16 MS. DeSTEFANO: Question in the
17 back.

18 MS. WEISS: We actually are asking
19 people to submit on cards. I'm sorry, but
20 we -- yes.

21 MS. DeSTEFANO: So do you have a
22 card? You can -- all right. Good.

23 MS. WURTZEL: Thank you so much

1 for that, Lizanne.

2 MS. DeSTEFANO: Sure.

3 MS. WURTZEL: So you just raced
4 through the slide --

5 MS. DeSTEFANO: I'm sorry.

6 MS. WURTZEL: -- on accessible
7 item development.

8 MS. DeSTEFANO: I know. I know.

9 MS. WURTZEL: And so I have a
10 question about that --

11 MS. DeSTEFANO: There is a handout
12 though.

13 MS. WURTZEL: -- which is whether
14 you are proposing that accessible item
15 development, these criteria, are for all
16 items on assessment --

17 MS. DeSTEFANO: Yes.

18 MS. WURTZEL: -- or just -- okay.

19 MS. DeSTEFANO: All items on the
20 assessment. So I think that part of this
21 process should be defining what accessible
22 item development means for that consortia,
23 and then designing a process that will

1 promote accessible -- and a process not only
2 in the item writing, but also in the item
3 review.

4 MS. WHALEN: So you gave a lot of
5 examples and guidance on how detailed and
6 specific we should be thinking about these
7 things. Who is that guidance for, or which
8 pieces are for us to write for the notice,
9 and which pieces are for the states to be
10 thinking about as they're developing, or
11 proposing these assessment system?

12 MS. DeSTEFANO: I see it as
13 relevant to both. I think the more that
14 they're stressed in the notice, the more that
15 successful applicants will pay attention to
16 them in putting together their proposals.
17 And so I don't make a distinction. I think
18 they should be part of the evaluative
19 criteria in the notice, and then also
20 something that states are expected to respond
21 to.

22 And, you know, I mentioned timing.
23 One of the most frustrating things about No

1 Child Left Behind I think has been the very
2 ambitious schedule. And so one of the things
3 that I would hope there'd be some room for in
4 this competition is a little more time to
5 allow these sorts of reflection and
6 recrafting to occur.

7 I think if we put such an
8 ambitious time line into this RFP, we're
9 going to generate more of the same, and we're
10 not going to allow time for some of the real
11 changes in standards, performance
12 descriptors, how assessments are conducted to
13 actually take shape. So I'm seeing them
14 influencing both.

15 MS. WEISS: So let me ask the
16 question that the gentleman in the back of
17 the room posed.

18 MS. DeSTEFANO: Good.

19 MS. WEISS: He wants -- he would
20 like you to discuss the following, that
21 there's a difference between requiring basic
22 skills to be mastered in order to simply
23 impose a lock-step sequence that's

1 inappropriate and requiring certain
2 demonstrations of prerequisite competencies
3 that are really necessary for the
4 construction of understanding at the next
5 level.

6 MS. DeSTEFANO: Yes, I agree, and
7 that's where I think we can do some work with
8 the performance descriptors to really not
9 think of it as minimum competency or basic
10 competency, but really to think of it as a
11 continuum of, okay, where do we start when
12 we're learning this target skill, what's the
13 next step, how do we manifest competence in
14 this target skill, and then how do we extend
15 this target skill.

16 So I would shift the language away
17 from minimum competency or basic competency
18 and think about a learning progression or a
19 learning continuum and think about that as a
20 framework for how we construct our
21 performance descriptors. You can tell I like
22 performance descriptors. I think that that's
23 really something that we --

1 MS. WEISS: Yes.

2 MS. DeSTEFANO: -- could do a
3 better job.

4 MS. WEISS: Yes. Other questions?

5 MS. THURLOW: So, Lizanne, you
6 talked about kind of the collaboration -- the
7 silo problem and the need for collaboration.
8 You did talk about that at a couple of
9 different points. Do you think there needs
10 to be evidence of that kind of collaboration
11 at each -- every -- each and every step for
12 the development process?

13 MS. DeSTEFANO: I think each and
14 every step in each and every level. I think
15 that if they have TACs, technical advisory
16 committees, or high level groups of experts
17 that are kind of advising these, then there
18 needs to be representation there. I think at
19 the state level, I think at the LEA or
20 district level. I think through it all we
21 need to see this collaboration between
22 special education -- I'm including related
23 services because I think IT, physical

1 therapy, occupational -- I think speech, I
2 think people also, those professionals also
3 can be very valuable in this endeavor.

4 So I see it -- yes, I see it at
5 multiple levels, and I see it in all aspects.

6 And, again, it's a two-way; they bring
7 valuable information, we're actually
8 educating them about what the expectations
9 are. But this takes time. And so that's why
10 we have to really be realistic about what
11 we're -- what our time line for this is going
12 to be.

13 MS. WEISS: Great. Let's turn to
14 Jacqui.

15 MS. KEARNS: It would get to me
16 some time.

17 I'm very humbled by being asked to
18 be here, and I'm very excited about this
19 initiative and the possibilities for all
20 kids.

21 About 18 years ago I was in the
22 room when the Kentucky Education -- a similar
23 discussion was going on about the Kentucky

1 Education Reform Act, and the folks in the
2 room were describing a comprehensive
3 assessment system that was going to entail
4 rewards and sanctions for schools, and all of
5 those kinds of things. And while many of
6 those things have now fallen by the wayside,
7 the one thing that came out of it was, Well,
8 if you're not going to include all kids, then
9 who gets rewarded; if you're not going to
10 include all kids, what happens in the
11 sanctions; if you're not going to include all
12 kids, what are the unintended consequences of
13 an accountability system like that.

14 And I happened to be in the room
15 because we had a statewide systems change
16 project; Dr. Harold Klinert was the director
17 of it, Dr. Ed Reedy was in the room, and they
18 said, You know, got a point there. So the
19 first -- one of the very first scored
20 included alternate assessments was born.

21 And I'm not here really
22 necessarily to talk about alternate
23 assessment, per se, because I know that's not

1 on your agenda, but what I am here to talk
2 about is what we're learning about who those
3 children are, because for the last probably
4 15 years, we've just assumed we knew who the
5 1 percent of the population is, and now we
6 have some more definitive data. And I use
7 those data in helping formulate an answer to
8 your very important question.

9 So, in thinking about this, I
10 thought a world class inclusive assessment
11 system would recognize that students with
12 disabilities, including those with
13 significant cognitive disabilities, benefit
14 from participation in the general curriculum
15 based on the same goals and standards as
16 their typical peers. As Martha said, as
17 Lizanne said, they're all general education
18 students first. IDEA is really grounded in
19 access to and progress in the general
20 curriculum to the maximum extent appropriate.

21 And then my second bullet is we're
22 learning about who that population, or who
23 those children with significant cognitive

1 disabilities are. In a survey that we just
2 finished in seven states, there's a
3 publication that's coming out, we found that
4 75 percent of the 1 percent, okay, of
5 students with significant cognitive
6 disabilities who are participating in state
7 alternate assessments are reading sight words
8 and using a calculator to do basic math
9 operations.

10 Now, the sad thing about that is
11 they're doing that in elementary school,
12 middle school and high school. There is no
13 curriculum progression. They're just not
14 getting the instructions. So if there --
15 that's a really important thing to note.

16 The other thing is, of that 75
17 percent of the 1 percent are also symbolic
18 language users that either use oral speech or
19 they use a symbol-based augmentative
20 communication system to communicate. So we
21 just want to keep that in mind. Now 25
22 percent of the population have more varied
23 communication systems, but we're even finding

1 that that's probably a high estimate, and I
2 have an example that I'm going to show you a
3 little bit in terms of how those students
4 communicate and what we know that they are
5 able to do.

6 So, keeping that in mind, that
7 already we have low expectations for this
8 particular group of children, but 75 percent
9 of them learn to read sight words, it's very
10 well documented in the special education
11 literature for this population of kids, I
12 started to think about how could we think
13 about assessment differently. And we've had
14 the opportunity to look at a variety of
15 alternate assessment models, but some of
16 those models are teaching us what we might
17 could learn for a fully more inclusive
18 system.

19 So one of the things I'd like to
20 re-emphasize that I think has been emphasized
21 earlier, particularly in your discussions
22 from yesterday, is authentic demonstrations
23 of skills and knowledge for all students.

1 That doesn't necessarily mean performance
2 tasks, because when we looked at performance
3 tasks, they all don't -- they all are
4 different and it depends on what happens
5 between -- for this population the student
6 and the child, but what happens in the
7 assessment event. So -- but make it
8 authentic, make it -- put the child in the
9 context that they need, and make sure --
10 because that will make sure that you get a
11 more accurate measure.

12 Authentic contextualized
13 demonstrations are essential for students
14 with significant cognitive disabilities. If
15 you -- and practice within that -- and
16 instruction and practice within the
17 discipline. In order for them to generalize
18 information they have to -- there has to be a
19 context. Just answering question B probably
20 isn't going to do it.

21 Include structured processes that
22 ensure that all have the opportunity to show
23 what they know. And by structured processes,

1 I'm thinking there may be some scaffolding
2 required, you know, you have to think about
3 that within the context of assessment. I
4 understand that, but think about the full
5 range of possibilities that allow a kid to
6 enter and give us a response in the
7 assessment.

8 The third thing I would really
9 think a lot about, and it's -- Lizanne and
10 Martha both mentioned the content standards,
11 of how important those content standards are.

12 But I would also think some training on
13 standards-based curriculum instruction so
14 that assessments on the academic content
15 isn't the only time a student sees it, and
16 I'm not sure that that's just not true -- not
17 just a problem for children with
18 disabilities, as probably understanding
19 standards-based systems, understanding how
20 curriculum works is probably a problem for
21 the general assessment -- general population
22 as well.

23 If you understand standards-based

1 assessments, and you understand standards-
2 based curriculum, any kid with a disability
3 will be successful in their classroom. My
4 teacher has -- my son has a wonderful
5 teacher, he has ADHD, does not have a
6 significant cognitive disability, but, man,
7 he's in there practicing every day, and she's
8 really good. Now how's he going to do on the
9 test, I can't say. But she really
10 understands how standards work, and how his
11 performance is different and what gifts he
12 brings to the classroom. So technical
13 assistance for teachers is going to be really
14 important.

15 One of the things I'm really
16 excited about is the formative evidence and
17 instruction on assessed content and the
18 context of instruction, as well as summative
19 demonstrations of skill and knowledge. So
20 some way to incorporate both.

21 But I'm really, really excited
22 about the possibility of giving teachers
23 feedback and information on students in real

1 time. In real time like during the course of
2 the school year. I'm not -- the original
3 alternate assessments were really designed to
4 help teachers take a look at instructional
5 data on a weekly or daily basis, and that
6 unfortunately hasn't panned out as quite as
7 nicely as we would like, but in an
8 assessment, a summative assessment design,
9 but I think the possibilities are still
10 there, and we should really explore what that
11 would look like.

12 I also think that if we provide
13 some information for accessibility purposes,
14 we have to think about -- again, we have to
15 think about all kids and we have to think
16 about the intended and unintended
17 consequences if we do and if we don't. So we
18 have to think about those kinds of things.

19 But I think this formative
20 evidence is critically important to provide
21 LEAs and SEAs with needs assessment data to
22 guide ongoing instruction, to guide
23 professional development. One of the things

1 that we've been able to do in the last couple
2 of years with the assessment data in Kentucky
3 is use the information we learned from the
4 student results, as well as the
5 characteristics of the learners to inform
6 professional development and leverage dollars
7 under other grant programs to really enhance
8 professional development.

9 It was a resource that the state
10 had had before, but they were really now
11 targeting this particular population because
12 they knew they needed to provide better
13 access to the general curriculum. And what a
14 great opportunity for all teachers if we
15 could really think about that, how to
16 leverage additional resources, help states
17 leverage additional resources to bring in
18 training and technical assistance to go along
19 with this. The assessment is just one piece
20 of the puzzle because it really is assessment
21 instruction as well as curriculum.

22 So, and also I really like
23 Lizanne's comment about informing teacher

1 training and licensure and involving higher
2 education from the get go as a part of the
3 process. Very critical part of the process
4 because building their capacity for what
5 you're going to do and why you're going to do
6 it along the way, the purpose and being
7 explicit about the purpose and use -- being
8 explicit about the purpose and use of the
9 assessment results, what it means for them,
10 or what it doesn't mean for them.

11 Because I think being clear about
12 that, not just for kids with disabilities,
13 but for all kids is really, really important.

14 And to have them as an advocate for you in
15 your educational reform initiative and your
16 assessment process will be helpful. And
17 what's it going to give them, because very
18 often the schools get results from summative
19 assessment results, but higher ed doesn't see
20 the link to them whatsoever. And we really
21 have to think about how to bring them into
22 the picture.

23 Oh, wrong button. Sorry. I bring

1 up the triangle because as you're -- it's
2 because your specific question had to do with
3 designing an assessment system, and this is
4 an adaptation of Pellegrino, Chudowsky and
5 Glaser's assessment triangle in their book,
6 *Knowing What Students Know*. We found it very
7 useful in our work, in the work we did with
8 the alternate -- early alternate assessment
9 center, that we really think about who the
10 student population is, the cognition vertex,
11 the observation vertex, and the
12 interpretation vertex, and those three pieces
13 being balanced.

14 So when you're -- in your design
15 process, really think about, very carefully
16 about student -- under cognition student
17 population, the content, and the theory of
18 learning that goes with that content.
19 Absolutely critical.

20 One of the things we've learned
21 about alternate assessments is that kids --
22 we don't have that theory of learning because
23 there's been a variety of curricular

1 approaches throughout the years for those --
2 that particular population of students. So
3 what I would encourage you to do is to be
4 very thoughtful about who the population is.

5 Don't just guess that you have 1 percent, or
6 2 percent, or make arbitrary distinctions of
7 1 percent or two percent, or whatever
8 percentage you are thinking about. Really
9 study it and really know who your kids are.

10 And then what is the theory of
11 learning, truly, that guides the design of
12 the assessment. That's critically important,
13 and we didn't realize probably that important
14 fact until we start looking at assessments
15 for alternate assessments. They really tell
16 us how important the absence of that
17 particular piece is.

18 But also balancing the three, how
19 students are observed, lots of ideas around
20 technology, lots of opportunities there, I
21 think, but being thoughtful about the balance
22 between cognition, who the kids are, the
23 observation you want to do, and most

1 importantly the interpretation you want to
2 make out of it.

3 You know, one of the things I
4 think happens in large scale assessment is we
5 expect assessments to tell us everything.
6 Well, they can't. We have to be specific
7 about what they -- what we need from them and
8 what the -- how they should be used, and what
9 the resulting information can and cannot do.

10 I think that's really, really critically
11 important that we are clear about that
12 because the validity of those assessments
13 hangs on the clarity of that, and I think
14 that's really, really important, and that's
15 why validity evaluation is the centerpiece
16 that we should really be thinking about.

17 I keeping turning off -- sorry, I
18 can't do this. And then finally, I would
19 like to end a little bit with a vignette
20 here. This is a video tape I'm going to
21 show. The young man in the video, his name
22 is Bruce, and we are seeing Bruce in high
23 school. And prior -- and you'll see in the

1 second clip, you'll see he has a computer,
2 but in the first clip he does not.

3 He was described as having a
4 severe significant cognitive disability, non-
5 verbal, did not have a way to communicate
6 other than some gestures. Technical
7 assistance from related services -- this gets
8 back to also Lizanne's comment, his speech
9 therapist said, Oh, we're going to drop him
10 for service because he's not making progress.

11 They got -- the school got -- an insightful
12 teacher got technical assistance, and I'm
13 going to show you what happened within a week
14 of receiving a communication system which is
15 why it's so critically important that, one,
16 we don't leave anybody out, and, two, that we
17 are very careful about the inclusion.

18 So would you click on Bruce where
19 he's using his computer?

20 (Plays video.)

21 MS. KEARNS: What you're seeing
22 is -- and I'm sorry you're not seeing, I
23 thought we fixed it -- Bruce is actually

1 using the communication system to answer
2 questions about forecasted and predicted
3 temperature on a three-level communication
4 system that he's two weeks. Not only should
5 this student have not been in an alternate
6 assessment, he probably should have been in a
7 general assessment. And the technology is
8 allowing him to fully more meaningfully
9 participate, and we won't even talk about the
10 lack of instruction. And I'm sorry it didn't
11 work.

12 MS. WEISS: Questions?

13 MS. GUARD: Jacqui, I want to go
14 back to Martha's advice that we build on what
15 we've learned, and would you talk a little
16 bit about the current status of the states' 1
17 percent assessments, and specifically I'm
18 talking about the kinds of characteristics
19 you've described here for assessment. Are
20 there some states, many states that are using
21 some or all of these components? What have
22 we learned so far?

23 MS. KEARNS: What we're learning

1 about alternate assessments, and we just
2 finished a new survey, but we still are
3 seeing a wide variety of options. Most
4 people are still using what they call a
5 portfolio, although nominal category is not a
6 good way to describe what you see because
7 when you actually get into what is happening
8 between the teacher and student, it can take
9 a variety of other types of forms.

10 It can be a performance task that
11 the results get put into a collection of
12 evidence, if it's a rating scale there are
13 often evidence requirements in addition to.
14 So we've come a long way. We are beginning
15 to see some electronic versions, but they're
16 rare and I think they're on the horizon,
17 but -- and we're also beginning to see what I
18 would call hybrids. So they're multiple
19 formats in one. So, but that's kind of where
20 it is right now today. But a student
21 clearly, like Bruce, could use, very easily
22 use an electronic-based system.

23 MS. WEISS: So I know that one of

1 the goals that we have with this new
2 assessment program is to try to make the
3 assessment reflect good instruction, and I
4 totally agree with Lizanne's statement that
5 the standards need to drive the other things,
6 not have the assessments be the driver. On
7 the other hand, there are ways in which
8 assessments could provide incentives back for
9 what good instruction might have looked like,
10 and the example you showed us was perhaps a
11 good example of one, where if we had caught
12 stuff through an assessment vehicle that was
13 missed in instruction, it could perhaps have
14 driven a difference in what the instruction
15 looked like for that student.

16 Are there sort of big-picture
17 principles we have, are there more specific
18 things that we should do in an RFP like this
19 that would help us use a vehicle like
20 assessment to drive these kinds of
21 reflections?

22 MS. KEARNS: I think you can be --
23 if you use the heuristic and really think

1 about the student population in the
2 assessment designs, I think you'll be on the
3 right track. But I would also caution you
4 not -- to be careful about the accessibility
5 implications about who's in and who's out, as
6 have my other colleagues.

7 Really using that, I mean the --
8 Pellegrino, Chudowsky and Glaser really --
9 you know, a triangle seems like a very simple
10 thing, but when you think about that the
11 three vertices have balance, so what should
12 that look like.

13 But really paying attention to who
14 are the students and what is the content you
15 want them to use and what does the literature
16 tell us about how students learn that
17 content, and then how can we take the best of
18 what we know about who the students are and
19 how they gain competence in academic domains
20 to inform the assessment design, and that's
21 the observation as well as the
22 interpretations that we're going to make from
23 the -- use from the results.

1 I don't know that I answered your
2 questions as clearly as I would like.

3 MS. WEISS: No, you didn't. You
4 have to just think about how to --

5 MS. KEARNS: Uh-huh.

6 MS. WEISS: Yes, did you have a
7 question, Brian?

8 MR. GONG: This is a follow-up to
9 the question which the man asked. Jacqui,
10 based -- and Martha and Lizanne -- based on
11 your experience in working with states and on
12 collaborative research process and other
13 things, one of the questions is, how do you
14 think the best practice will occur? --
15 because the RFP can't fund the entire part
16 providing direction and incentive, so what
17 extent are those best practices already
18 present in the states, to what extent are
19 they still being researched in research-based
20 projects, or in centers. But that is, if the
21 RFP asks for things, how easy is it going to
22 be to have the number of states get those
23 out?

1 MS. KEARNS: I think there are
2 some tools emerging from our validity -- we
3 have a validity crusade; we have a number of
4 states who are developing instruments and
5 tools to document validity of alternate
6 assessments, and thinking more carefully
7 about validity evaluation.

8 And validity evaluation is not an
9 easy thing to undertake, but probably should
10 be very definitely considered in an
11 initiative such as this for the entire system
12 as well as for the kids with disabilities
13 part. And the validity evaluation is -- you
14 know, can go on forever, but what are the
15 things that the assessment system is intended
16 to do and for good or for bad.

17 There are instruments that we --
18 that have been developed, but the field for
19 alternate assessment is still fairly young
20 when we compare it to the field work, to the
21 whole thing.

22 MS. WEISS: Thanks. I think we're
23 going to move on. We're going to definitely

1 come back to this question, I think, during
2 our roundtable because I think there's a lot
3 more to say about it.

4 So, Brian, let's turn it over to
5 you.

6 MR. GONG: I'm here speaking as an
7 assessment person. I don't have the deep
8 background in students with disabilities that
9 my colleagues do.

10 So I have three main
11 recommendations. The first is that the, I'll
12 refer to it as the RFP, but the common
13 assessment RFP build on the gains made in
14 assessment for students with disabilities
15 over the past 20 years, that when -- I think
16 the RFP has to think about more advanced
17 assessments, but that it should take care to
18 do no harm, as those new types of assessments
19 come in.

20 And include considerations of
21 students with disabilities in the assessment,
22 and in the uses, and particularly in
23 accessibility. I know we're not supposed to

1 talk about accessibility, but.

2 In terms of consolidating things,
3 the students with disabilities issue is quite
4 different than the general assessment. The
5 general assessment -- the practice across the
6 states for regular assessments is, I think,
7 very close in quality. That is, if you went
8 to the state that has the lowest performing
9 students by name and the state that highest,
10 it's not true that the quality of the state
11 assessments is lower in those states. That
12 is the quality of the state assessments, I
13 think, is pretty high in general and pretty
14 even across.

15 But that's not true in
16 consideration of assessment for students with
17 disabilities. I think that the general
18 quality has many areas to improve and that
19 there's much more variation between the
20 states. So we -- I think we've been working
21 on standards-based assessments for a number
22 of years, and great progress has been made on
23 that, but unlike the other areas, I think

1 it's possible to slip back and have problems.

2

3 The other thing I wanted to
4 mention in relation to accessibility is that
5 inclusion is not as much an issue as the
6 regular assessment, but it's small changes in
7 the accessibility with the assessment. I
8 think that there could be a large impact on
9 students with disabilities and not just the 1
10 percent of students, but in general.

11 And so right now we're using --
12 we're mixing -- in No Child Left Behind
13 assessment and accessibility are mixed
14 together. The requirement that students be
15 tested on grade level is a way to force --
16 try to force access to the general
17 curriculum. For students with disabilities
18 that's a much bigger issue than it is for
19 many other students.

20 And so I would, in general,
21 advocate for a clearer distinction between
22 assessment and accessibility for regular
23 assessment for regular students. I think

1 it's a danger still to not pay attention to
2 the signaling and the push for access, the
3 consequential validity part of the
4 assessment.

5 That's going to -- so and people
6 sometimes talk about monitoring and driving
7 the system. It's very hard to have
8 assessments that do both, that provide good
9 information about monitoring and then also
10 drive for aspirational things when we talk
11 about the monitoring part, but just a
12 reminder that the driving part is really
13 important.

14 Okay. So in terms of
15 consolidating, one recommendation I've made
16 is that pay attention to the conditions of
17 learning. As Jacqui's example showed, but
18 research in general, we are trying to say
19 that these are the standards and they have --
20 which students they apply to.

21 And if we take the current
22 conditions, I think we will get an under-
23 reading about what many students with

1 disabilities are actually able to do, so we
2 should be careful about not reifying those
3 expectations, either in the assessment or in
4 the standards.

5 This second part about creating
6 assessments, I think everyone mentioned
7 this -- creating assessment systems that
8 inform both what students can and cannot do.

9 You have to optimize that by design by
10 purpose. The summative assessment, if we
11 want to do school accessibility, I don't
12 think that we -- there are ways to get models
13 that don't bring up this detailed content
14 information, but I think it has to be done.

15 It may be done in other ways
16 besides the summative assessment. Lizanne
17 gave a innovative model, but in the summative
18 I think there's an area for discussion about
19 whether that should be done at the summative,
20 or whether you can do it at the other parts.

21 So I think we have to have
22 standards-based diagnostic and progress
23 assessments, but we should be clear about

1 what is being done by which assessments, and
2 in particular how they're being valued, so
3 coming back to the use of this, whether it's
4 accessibility or something else.

5 And I won't spend much time on
6 this, but there is a long tradition of
7 curriculum -- of interim informative
8 assessments at the local level, especially
9 for students with disabilities that needs to
10 be brought -- made coherent with the
11 discussion that we're talking about.

12 So everyone was talking about
13 growth models and progress and learning
14 progressions like these are new things, but
15 they aren't new things for educators of
16 students with disabilities. But there are
17 very different traditions than the standards-
18 based accountability that we're obviously
19 talking about.

20 In all assessments, I think we
21 should be using evidence-centered design
22 methods. Lizanne gave great examples of
23 those. In general, those are not what's

1 being done in large-scale assessment now.
2 We're doing some, but we could and should be
3 doing much more. Those are things that could
4 be done immediately starting with
5 implementation now to affect current
6 assessments going forward. It will take a
7 while to really make that as deep and
8 pervasive as we'd like.

9 For example, in order to evidence-
10 centered designs, the standards must include
11 more detailed content and information about
12 expertise than current performance standards
13 do. An example is, if you took the current
14 performance standards and you said, What's
15 the difference between the general assessment
16 and what has emerged is this concern about a
17 2 percent assessment with modified
18 achievement standards. It's very difficult
19 to tell in most states' content standards.

20 Are those things that -- are the
21 modified -- how did the modified relate to
22 the others and could -- if you gave two sets
23 of people the same general content standards,

1 would they come up with the same modified
2 standards. I don't think so. There
3 aren't -- there's not enough detail about
4 that in the current standards, and there's
5 not enough direction about how we should have
6 them change the standards.

7 That's a general weakness, because
8 if we're trying to assess for the full range
9 of knowledge and skills, we have an under-
10 specification in the current content
11 standards, which means that we don't really
12 know what the construct is. So the first one
13 is, specify the construct and degree and
14 conditions of expertise, and current content
15 standards and performance standards do not do
16 that. Including, I might say, the draft
17 common standards that are being now
18 circulated.

19 So I think -- my other point is
20 careful empirical work will help determine
21 what's construct irrelevant variance and
22 valid access. And the use of technology
23 really brings this up because it provides a

1 lot of ways to provide students to interact,
2 or have access, but it may also introduce
3 large amounts of construct irrelevant
4 variance as well as reducing it. If you
5 don't know what the construct is, you
6 don't -- we don't know which side it's really
7 happening on that.

8 I think that the current RFP could
9 actually help change, build on the tradition
10 of what's been well on assessments for
11 students with disabilities and actually
12 challenge or improve what's been done in
13 general. And I'll give three examples.

14 One is it is -- has been a common
15 practice, particularly in the 1 percent, but
16 also for when students appeal, they will have
17 different types of performances, performance
18 tasks or other types of evidence. I think
19 that building on that tradition that has been
20 worked on a lot for students with
21 disabilities, and using it to form the
22 general assessment, will strengthen the
23 general assessment.

1 The second is the measurement
2 models we know don't work very well. For
3 many students with disabilities, particular
4 the 1 percent assessment is bringing itself
5 up, but any assessment where we think that a
6 population is a little different. So an
7 example is in the 1 percent assessment the
8 interpretation about learning progressions is
9 content-based, it's not score-based.

10 And in the regular assessment,
11 depending upon the scale to tell us what is
12 higher or lower, and when students with
13 disabilities and curriculum-referenced
14 assessments use the information from the
15 curriculum or from the content, to tell -- to
16 provide a lot of information about it, and I
17 think that that's an area that could be built
18 on quite a bit.

19 What people want in the
20 interpretations, they want to know what
21 students can and can't do, and if we go from
22 an assessment through a score and then back
23 to the content, we have a lot of problems.

1 The assessment with students with
2 disabilities has done a lot of work to inform
3 having that more direct connection.

4 I think the third is that
5 assessments of students with disabilities has
6 had the -- has a lot of intention about what
7 is the construct, particularly around
8 expertise. When is -- and what is support or
9 generalization, what is really needed in the
10 construct, and what is not. And so of the
11 scoring rubrics for many past -- we see that
12 those things are explicitly paid attention
13 to. And in the general assessment, we assume
14 that there will be generalization and that
15 there is no support.

16 We take a lot of care to say that,
17 this item that we see on the general
18 assessment should be one that requires
19 generalization, and since that, we seem to
20 have seen it before. And so you learn
21 something and you're supposed to perform on
22 that. But we have no real specifications
23 about how far that transfer is or how close

1 it is, and -- but with the assessment with
2 students with disabilities we pay a lot of
3 attention -- everyone talked about knowing
4 the context, so this is an area where the
5 learnings from what assessment of students
6 with disabilities can help the general
7 assessment.

8 And if those three things are
9 done, as we look about the comparability for
10 similar but not the same tasks, if we get at
11 the construct, we have different measurement
12 models, and we pay attention to the construct
13 of expertise, it will be a more appropriate
14 assessment for all students.

15 My second recommendation was do no
16 harm with advances. And just two examples:
17 One is there's a lot of discussion about
18 technical issues and growth and value added.

19 I think you have a lot to add, but the -- if
20 we implement them as they are without careful
21 attention to including students with
22 disabilities, students with disabilities will
23 be differentially disproportionately included.

1 And Lizanne already talked about
2 international assessments, where that's a
3 problem. And there are other reasons people
4 start to say, Well, we should leave them out,
5 or we can't include them for various
6 technical reasons.

7 I think that -- really think
8 through about the consequences of that, and I
9 think there are some ways to work around it.

10 For example, this is not just students with
11 disabilities, but when AYP said, Let's not --
12 we can exclude students who are mobile and we
13 could sort of not in the full academic year,
14 in effect those students disappeared off the
15 category radar, and those are
16 disproportionately Title 1 students. This
17 inclusion is a really big issue for students
18 with disabilities.

19 And also, testing at a level has
20 some really promising things that we could do
21 as a way of -- but we need to be very careful
22 because we know that the impact of that has
23 been negative for students with disabilities,

1 in particular, but many foreign students.

2 One last note on this is, as you
3 think about consolidating gains and making
4 improvements but doing no harm with these
5 advances, I think it's really important to
6 think about which partners can make that
7 happen, because as I was suggesting, it's not
8 the usual practice now, if these things will
9 represent a conditional increase in quality
10 of practice for most states and their vendor
11 partners.

12 Just in the last one, this is -- I
13 couldn't help myself; I had a little policy
14 recommendation that is really more about the
15 accountability than the assessment. I would
16 personally recommend not carrying forward the
17 2 percent. I think that was an artifact.
18 The reason for this is that we'll get more
19 resources for focusing on the assessment
20 goals than we have on real goals.

21 And just some last issues. We're
22 talking about assessment. I think that if
23 you want to do multi-state common

1 assessments, there are some other really big
2 places that you could focus on that would
3 actually affect the instructional experience
4 of students, perhaps more than just the
5 assessment does. These would -- and I think
6 all of these would be great places for multi-
7 state work.

8 MS. WEISS: Thank you.

9 Questions for Brian?

10 MS. WURTZEL: So, Brian, I had a
11 clarifying question. You spoke about the
12 different lineages of interim assessment and
13 the progress monitoring assessment RTI that's
14 used in special education, the desirability
15 of maybe including those together.

16 Could you speak to that a little
17 bit more, what you see as the differences and
18 what would be -- what would it look like if
19 we somehow brought them together?

20 MR. GONG: One of the -- the great
21 strength of standards-based assessment is
22 that we said it's true for all students and
23 this is where we want to get. And then when

1 we get in the thick of instruction, we say,
2 Well, how can I help a student make some
3 progress, and what -- and a lot of these
4 curriculum-based measures in RTI is to give a
5 really strong good feedback between the
6 instruction and the action. So it's exactly
7 what we want assessment to be.

8 But they're not necessarily linked
9 to that goal. That is you can do -- my
10 curriculum-based measure is showing that
11 making -- the student's making good progress,
12 but it has to be linked eventually to these
13 standards. And that's why -- that's the
14 fundamental thing that has to be joined on
15 them, and that has not been done, in my
16 experience, in traditional -- in previous
17 experiences.

18 MS. WHALEN: Can I ask another
19 clarifying question. On your do no harm
20 slide you referred to kind of technical
21 issues with growth and value added excluding
22 students with disabilities. So I was
23 wondering if you could talk about that more,

1 and then explain, or if you could reference
2 if there are any places that are thinking
3 about doing this well, so we can avoid kind
4 of the exclusion, but think proactively about
5 the points that we need to put in the notice
6 to ensure their inclusion.

7 MR. GONG: Here are three specific
8 issues or examples. One is to do growth we
9 have to have two scores. If you don't have
10 two scores, you either have to compute one or
11 you get dropped from the analysis. And so
12 students who don't have two scores typically
13 are dropped, and that means anyone, and
14 students with disabilities, mobile kids, are
15 disproportionately among those. So just we
16 need to be aware of that and see if there's a
17 way to address that. So --

18 MS. WEISS: Because they missed
19 one of the testing events.

20 MR. GONG: That's right. If you
21 don't have enough data, then you get dropped.

22 MS. THURLOW: Can I jump in and
23 say that there is research that shows they

1 are more highly mobile than other students,
2 is a big part of it, yes.

3 MR. GONG: The other is the
4 current models, you have to deal -- another
5 class of kids is kids who are retained
6 because the growth model often -- you look
7 for progression returns. And there are a
8 number of reasons you want to think about.

9 The second is attribution. So if
10 you think about teacher effectiveness, this
11 is a general issue, but if you have one
12 teacher and one kid, you can do that at
13 length; that's good. If you have two
14 teachers and one kid, now you're doing
15 teacher effectiveness. That is a real
16 problem for most models, and many students
17 with disabilities don't have just one kid,
18 so -- I mean, don't have just one teacher.

19 So people are going to say, you
20 know, you've created -- this is too complex
21 for my model, so I'm either going to make an
22 assumption about the one that dropped from
23 the analysis. So it's a -- get into the

1 details about where those are. So those are
2 just two examples.

3 MS. WHALEN: But those sound like
4 policy consequences, rather than technical
5 issues that the assessments went wrong.

6 MR. GONG: Yes, it's not the
7 assessment, that's right. It's --

8 MS. WHALEN: So the assessment can
9 allow --

10 MR. GONG: Right.

11 MS. WHALEN: -- for that type
12 of --

13 MR. GONG: Right.

14 MS. WHALEN: -- conclusion --

15 MR. GONG: But growth and value
16 added are not about the assessments.

17 MS. WHALEN: Okay.

18 MR. GONG: It's about the
19 derivative scores coming from the assessment.

20 MS. WEISS: Thanks. I'm going --

21 MR. GONG: I'll just mention one
22 more -- sorry -- and that is the mention I
23 made about progress, as Lizanne said, high

1 end and low end on most state assessments is
2 really not very good.

3 MS. WEISS: Great.

4 I am going to ask that we take a
5 quick five minute break and come back here at
6 quarter -- around quarter of, and we will
7 start the roundtable discussion then. So see
8 you back here in a couple of minutes.

9 (Whereupon, a short recess was
10 taken.)

11 MS. WEISS: Thanks, everybody.
12 We're running a little bit late. We're going
13 to still do the full 45 minutes for the
14 roundtable, because this is just such an
15 important part of the conversation, but we
16 will still end on time. We've got time built
17 in to the back part of the schedule that I
18 think we will be able to do more efficiently.

19 So that's our plan.

20 Let me start by going back to a
21 question that we touched on a little bit when
22 Jacqui was talking and said that we could
23 come back to, and it's a question that we've

1 been -- that we're really interested to hear
2 a discussion about, and that is, in the RFP,
3 what should we say about how an evaluation
4 process of the assessments should be
5 constructed in order to confirm that the
6 assessments are really effective. This is
7 particularly for students with disabilities,
8 but of course we might take what you say and
9 generalize it because it's a big question we
10 have in general for the whole project.

11 But what would an evaluation
12 program look like? Feel free to just jump
13 in.

14 MS. DeSTEFANO: Well, I think,
15 from my point of view, the evaluation process
16 would address both the process of assessment
17 development and assessment implementation,
18 and also then the actual outcomes of the
19 assessment. So, you know, I know we have a
20 huge shift right now to outcomes assessment,
21 but here I would really advocate for an
22 evaluation of both process and outcomes.

23 The other thing, I think, is sub-

1 group analysis is really important in any
2 kind of an evaluation strategy that I would
3 recommend when we want to know does this
4 assessment work equally well for different
5 sub-populations. And here I'm not only
6 talking about students with disabilities, I'm
7 talking about a number of sub-groups
8 including gifted students.

9 And one indicator of that would
10 be -- and English language learners and
11 students of poverty and, you know, other sub-
12 groups -- and one indicator of that to me is
13 precision along the full range of the
14 performance continuum. And I just wanted to
15 reinforce something that Brian said because
16 it's really important, and I can't believe I
17 didn't say it in my own presentation, which
18 is that in growth modeling, precision is so
19 important.

20 And I actually like growth
21 modeling and I think it has a lot of -- to
22 offer. But I'm very worried about its use
23 with students with disabilities and other

1 kids who are, again, in that lower range,
2 because we don't have very much information
3 on them. And so if you're modeling on not
4 very much information, the model is going to
5 be poor. So one characteristic that I would
6 make paramount is how well are we measuring
7 at the various levels.

8 MS. WEISS: Martha, yes.

9 MS. THURLOW: I would add -- and
10 maybe you were implying this, Lizanne -- but
11 I would add that when you think about your
12 sub-group analyses, you look at -- make sure
13 that you're looking -- or evaluating both
14 participation and performance because that
15 participation is such a critical piece of
16 what does the performance actually mean.

17 MS. WEISS: Brian?

18 MR. GONG: I think this is a
19 really essentially important question about
20 what evaluation process -- what the RFP
21 should say about establishing an evaluation
22 process to ensure the quality of the
23 assessment, especially the validity for

1 students with disabilities. And so I think
2 the evaluation process has the what, has the
3 process of doing it, it has the criteria of
4 quality and it has the evidence for meeting
5 that.

6 And if there were industry norms,
7 you could just say do it. Like if you had
8 something like scoring quality, everyone has
9 some idea of what -- a pretty good idea
10 about what that is, and every vendor would
11 say, we have good process. That's not the
12 case here. So I think that you have to give
13 more direction about the what, the process,
14 the criteria and the evidence, or have them
15 propose that and then have your technical
16 reviewers look for that.

17 I think that in the ongoing
18 thing -- so that will sort of select for it,
19 but the ongoing process, I would suggest that
20 you have the process and the evidence
21 actually be made public and subject to
22 technical review, and I don't -- you could do
23 peer review, but I would suggest rather than

1 peer review, an internal technical review
2 because they can pay more attention to that.

3 And, in fact, I think the US Department of
4 Ed would have a hard time saying what the
5 technical review should be now since it's an
6 evolving -- I'm talking specifically about
7 evidence --

8 MS. WEISS: Yes.

9 MR. GONG: -- centered design
10 types of things. So I think the RFP could
11 actually specify something along those lines.

12 MS. WEISS: Any other thoughts?

13 MS. KEARNS: The other thing I
14 would add is, while it can be incredibly
15 expensive and can be the tail that wags the
16 dog, if you will, some attention to
17 consequences is absolutely critical. Is the
18 assessment having the intended consequences,
19 and being very explicit about what the
20 intentions are and what the non-intentions
21 are. That sounds pretty basic, but if you --
22 a lot of times we think something sounds
23 really good in policy, but when it gets put

1 into practice, it will zing off to the right
2 or the left; it will not go where you thought
3 it would go. So some attention to
4 consequences is really critically important.

5 MR. GONG: Just along those lines,
6 you know, the consequences will be post-award
7 and post-initial administration, so this is
8 really -- you're setting up the --

9 MS. WEISS: Right.

10 MR. GONG: -- sort of the norms
11 for practice, which I think is a great thing
12 to do. There are models -- some models for
13 doing that, and Jacqui mentioned the project
14 that NAC and NCO are leading, and that's a
15 great source. There are a couple of others,
16 and people can give you some pointers if you
17 wanted to point other people to -- Jacqui
18 mentioned tools we develop, Lizanne gave an
19 example of tools, and so on.

20 MS. DeSTEFANO: I think that in
21 designing the evaluation aspect of the RFP, I
22 would really balance formative and summative
23 assessment. I don't think you want to wait

1 till the end of five years to find out what's
2 going on in this.

3 So I think, building on what Brian
4 said, kind of have an annual review process
5 that involves technical expert review. I
6 agree, I think peer review is valuable, but I
7 think in this case it's going to be more
8 efficient and give you a bigger bang to have
9 technical expert review.

10 And then some sort of
11 dissemination, like lessons learned. Okay,
12 what have we learned from what's happening
13 with this round of funded projects and how
14 can we disseminate that to drive what's
15 happening in other districts, or in other
16 funded projects, because you're going to have
17 some consortia that excel at some things and
18 develop some things really well, you're going
19 to have others that do other things, and if
20 you can get them to share among each other,
21 it's going to drive the whole initiative, I
22 think, more effectively.

23 MS. THURLOW: So to jump on that

1 idea of the technical expert review, I think
2 consideration needs to be given to who's on
3 that technical expert panel that would
4 review, and I would suggest a broad diversity
5 measurement, people who know the kids, et
6 cetera.

7 MS. DeSTEFANO: And you can serve
8 as a model. You know, one of -- I'm on the
9 NAEP validity panel and one of the things I'm
10 always telling them is NAEP should be a
11 model, NAEP should exemplify the kinds of
12 things that we're asking states to do. So I
13 think it would send a powerful message if the
14 federal government modeled that kind of
15 review and participation.

16 MS. WEISS: So let me sort of jump
17 on the question that I think you raised,
18 Lizanne, about growth, measuring growth, and
19 couple it with another thing that we've been
20 hearing at a bunch of the general assessment
21 conversations.

22 A big feeling that while on-grade
23 level testing is important as a way to set a

1 standard, that we know we have a lot of kids
2 having nothing to do with students with
3 disabilities, a lot of just kids in our
4 system who are not operating on grade level,
5 and by only doing testing within grade level,
6 the teachers aren't actually getting the
7 information that they need to understand how
8 to help move those kids forward and so
9 understand the sensitivity in this world to
10 that.

11 But how do we make sure in this
12 system that we both have the precision we
13 need to do these kinds of measurements, and
14 that we're giving teachers the information
15 they really need to take kids from where they
16 are up to where they need to be, knowing that
17 accessibility still staying -- appear on are
18 you on track, but wanting to not lie to
19 teachers either about where their kids really
20 are so that don't have information.

21 MS. DeSTEFANO: I think backing
22 away from grade level entirely is a slippery
23 slope that you do not want to go --

1 MS. WEISS: Yes.

2 MS. DeSTEFANO: -- down. I would
3 feel very strongly against that. I think the
4 modular idea that I described where everybody
5 takes some grade level stuff, and so it
6 always gets communicated back to teachers,
7 back to parents, back to administrators, how
8 this student performs in relation to grade
9 level standards.

10 But there is an additional
11 opportunity for students to perform at
12 whatever level they are -- is their modal
13 performance, is their best, or most typical
14 performance, whether it be at the high end,
15 at the middle, at the low. So I think some
16 kind of adaptive testing, or modular testing,
17 or Brian made an excellent point, it doesn't
18 all have to be focused on summative.

19 There could be -- it could be a
20 series of assessments that test at various
21 points in the curriculum that you could
22 build. But I think backing away from grade
23 level standards for any student is not

1 something that I would advocate.

2 MS. WEISS: Yes, I know your
3 modular approach was an interesting one. Are
4 there specific things about measuring growth
5 for these kids that we need to be thinking
6 about as we're specifying what assessments
7 look like?

8 MS. DeSTEFANO: I think --

9 MS. WEISS: Beyond the continuum.

10 MS. DeSTEFANO: Yes, I think
11 precision is really important. It's hard to
12 measure growth, not easy to do. And then I
13 think there has to be a level of
14 standardization, or consistency in
15 measurement that really supports a growth
16 model. As Brian said, kids with
17 disabilities, lots of wiggle room in their
18 assessment, some accommodation, sometimes
19 different accommodation than other times.
20 One point -- testing at one point in the
21 year, another one time tested with one
22 teacher, another with the other. So there
23 has to be a level of standardization that

1 we're comfortable with in really looking at
2 growth.

3 I don't think we have all the
4 answers here. I think this is -- when I'm
5 advocating for a program of research that's
6 specific to learning to kids with
7 disabilities, this is one for the areas. I
8 think we need to look at growth models for
9 this population. And also how it relates to
10 RTI. You know, I think that this is going to
11 be cognitive dissonance for a lot of
12 teachers. Okay. I'm doing RTI, but then I
13 have this other thing.

14 So one of the things this
15 initiative has to do is kind of make sense
16 for that at the local level, but then at the
17 state level and also at the federal level.
18 So I think we need to think that through.

19 MS. THURLOW: I'll add a couple of
20 thoughts. One of the challenges, I think,
21 when we're thinking about kids with
22 disabilities is creating a system that
23 doesn't punish them for having profiles that

1 may differ from most kids, and that is that
2 you're likely to find kids who don't have
3 some of the basic skills I'm calling them,
4 like decoding, but do have higher level
5 skills, say, in math.

6 They may not be able to do, you
7 know, the adding and subtracting very well,
8 but they are great at problem solving. And
9 how do you develop in a system, particularly
10 one where you're trying to measure growth,
11 that doesn't inaccurately measure and show
12 what they actually know and are able to do
13 with then all the implications for what
14 happens instructionally.

15 I have been looking at the
16 assessment system, I've been trying to look
17 at the assessment system in Oregon where they
18 have an adaptive on-grade level -- which I
19 think is not that dissimilar from what
20 Lizanne is suggesting in her kind of her
21 modular approach, which would still remain on
22 grade level -- and would like to get more
23 information on how are kids actually sent

1 through in different pathways and what does
2 that mean, having had the assurance that
3 those students are getting items related to
4 all the standards.

5 So one of the challenges is you
6 don't get to all the standards, you don't get
7 to all the content that you want the kids to
8 have based on how the adaptive system sends
9 kids through the different items. So I guess
10 just thinking about all of those and looking
11 at some models that are out there, or are
12 emerging that may have some potential in this
13 area.

14 MR. GONG: I have a little
15 different view on on-grade level. There are
16 two reasons why we want on-grade level. One
17 is as a driver or a signal for what we want
18 to happen in the curriculum. The other is a
19 measurement one.

20 I think most of the justifications
21 that we've heard so far is about the driver,
22 and I think that people are saying could we
23 take care of, through accountability or

1 curriculum or professional development, some
2 other thing, the incentive part, and then
3 have the assessment be more of a monitoring
4 for information, because you mentioned
5 providing useful information to teachers, and
6 if you have an assessment that is essentially
7 not where the student is, then you're not
8 providing useful information. What you're
9 telling them is the student can't do these --
10 an assessment that's been constructed for
11 this group of a standard.

12 So my -- I guess my first point is
13 that I wouldn't make the summative assessment
14 try to give that information. I would just
15 try to get that information through a
16 different --

17 MS. WEISS: Which is that
18 information?

19 MR. GONG: The information useful
20 to --

21 MS. WEISS: For instruction.

22 MR. GONG: -- for instruction.

23 So -- and I have two reasons for that. One

1 is if you want detailed content information,
2 I think that the typical assessments, both --
3 though Lizanne's given some good ways to try
4 to get around that, but I think the content-
5 based interpretations that teachers need are
6 not what summative assessments are built for.

7 They're uni-dimensional scales;
8 they're going to -- they're almost always
9 built with a compensatory scoring model so
10 that whatever item you get counts the same as
11 the other, and there are a lot of reasons why
12 it doesn't lend itself to a type of
13 diagnostic part.

14 So the on-grade level that -- so
15 let me talk a little bit about why you might
16 have an instructional level, or modal level
17 test. If you're trying to know what the
18 student can do -- let's say these grade level
19 tests are really built only grade standards,
20 and let's say we have a student at the top
21 end, what we're finding out with a higher and
22 higher score, or progress on that, is that
23 they are doing better and better on that

1 content.

2 Okay. But what if the student's
3 not -- what if the student is advanced so
4 they really shouldn't be on that content,
5 they're -- actually gone beyond the content,
6 so that is they're beyond that grade level.
7 In the same -- have the same issue about
8 below grade level. And so I think the big
9 policy question is, why do you have students
10 in the grade who are not being instructed on
11 grade -- that's a policy -- you know, that's
12 a real policy question.

13 But if you wanted to measure the
14 student accurately about what they know and
15 can do, I think that there's a good argument
16 for making the assessment track the
17 instruction with the caveat that we know that
18 if you want the instruction to drive it
19 higher, that won't do it necessarily.

20 I'm just saying that if you want
21 good measurement of growth, there's a really
22 strong argument about starting where students
23 are. And if you had a pre-post system, you

1 would start with actually -- you would --
2 like a within year, or an interim that was
3 doing something within the three. You'd
4 really want to know what the student -- start
5 off where they are and then have something
6 that was designed to that, and you'd actually
7 have different assessments for different
8 kids.

9 So I'm just saying the
10 instructional -- a growth model based on this
11 content mastery is going to be a very
12 different design than what we're trying to
13 get out of typical summative assessment
14 designs.

15 MS. WEISS: So I'm still not sure
16 I know what your -- so you're recommending --
17 so you said there's two different purposes, a
18 driver of instruction and measurement, and to
19 drive instruction I heard you say that we
20 need to have --

21 MR. GONG: Stay with grade level.

22 MS. WEISS: -- possibly some kind
23 of -- oh, to -- okay.

1 MR. GONG: Stay with grade level.

2 MS. WEISS: Okay.

3 MR. GONG: If you want standards-
4 based assessment, keep the assessment focused
5 on -- if you want -- but if you want to do
6 program improvement and growth, then I think
7 giving accurate information around students
8 moving from where they are, there's a -- it's
9 a better model if you could actually assess
10 where they are. And I think that there are
11 models for accountability that can help keep
12 systems from sliding. But I know that's a
13 controversial issue.

14 MS. THURLOW: So just --

15 MS. WEISS: But just to -- yes,
16 just to -- so I think -- so you're saying
17 separate them, and the formative or interim
18 assessments are used to measure, and then do
19 continuous information for teachers, and the
20 summative assessment is used to drive high
21 levels of instruction on grade level?

22 MR. GONG: Yes.

23 MS. WEISS: Okay. Is that what

1 you were going to --

2 MS. THURLOW: Can I just add
3 though, we have to be really careful when we
4 think about students being assessed out of
5 their grade level. What does that mean? Are
6 they really being instructed -- if they're a
7 fourth grade student, are we really using the
8 curriculum from grade two to instruct them.
9 I would say, no, we're not. So we wouldn't
10 want to be using second grade --

11 MS. WEISS: Right.

12 MS. THURLOW: -- tests to assess
13 them.

14 MS. WEISS: Right.

15 MS. THURLOW: So we need to be
16 very careful when we go down that slippery
17 slope, because we should be looking at how
18 they're scaffolding into the grade level --

19 MS. WEISS: Right.

20 MS. THURLOW: -- and that means
21 they're most likely getting the content at
22 the grade level, but getting scaffolds and
23 other kinds of assistance. So lots of

1 caution I would express, that's what I think
2 here.

3 MS. DeSTEFANO: And that really
4 gets back to a standards issue: How are the
5 standards constructed. And is it explicit
6 what the relationship is between the grade
7 levels, and then within grade level, what are
8 the steps to get to grade level standard. So
9 really this is not an exclusively assessment
10 issue.

11 MS. WEISS: No.

12 MR. GONG: That's right.

13 MS. DeSTEFANO: This is a
14 standards issue.

15 MS. WEISS: Right. Right. It's
16 about learning progressions and --

17 FEMALE VOICE: Yes.

18 MS. WEISS: Yes.

19 MR. GONG: And it's very closely
20 tied to student placement, it's curriculum,
21 when we talk about access to the general
22 curriculum. If we have a classroom that's
23 instructing in -- you know, you hear people

1 say, I've got five grade levels of
2 instruction, if it's -- if the idea is that
3 kids who are two grade levels off are always
4 two grade levels off and that that's okay,
5 and our system is going to continue and --

6 MS. WEISS: Right.

7 MR. GONG: -- in fact, the gap
8 grows until they fall out of the system.

9 MS. WEISS: Right. That would be
10 bad.

11 MR. GONG: Right. So I don't want
12 the assessment to mirror that, and I think
13 that's what Martha is talking about.

14 MS. WURTZEL: So I have one more
15 follow-up question on this same issue, which
16 is Lizanne proposed really sort of a hybrid
17 model that seems to be trying to address both
18 these issues. And I'm wondering from the
19 other panelists what you see as kind of the
20 strength and challenges of that proposal and
21 whether it adequately threads the needle
22 here, .

23 MR. GONG: Just to -- a friendly

1 amendment. I think that if there are
2 other -- what we typically see on computer-
3 adaptive tests is that we have easier items
4 that are easier -- if you do cognitive
5 analysis, they're not doing what the
6 curriculum is doing.

7 So I would say put in things that
8 are -- have the dimensions like what we are
9 talking about on the curriculum, so more
10 scaffolding or more supports, less
11 generalization, and the hardest one is they
12 need -- of the ones that are closer to
13 instructions so that it's not this
14 decontextualized generalization. That will
15 help you know where students are, but in
16 order to do that well, you have to have some
17 sense of what the curriculum is.

18 MS. KEARNS: And that curriculum
19 underpinning is really critically important
20 because the further away kids are, and
21 this -- and we know this from kids with
22 significant cognitive disabilities the
23 curriculum is essentially bankrupt, there is

1 none, or just has begun to have one in the
2 last five years.

3 So the curriculum really underpins
4 growth models, it underpins anything that we
5 would put into play. So careful thought
6 about the stake, the standards, the stake in
7 the ground if you will, or the standards, and
8 that progression is something that we really
9 have to give some thought to.

10 MS. WEISS: So let me pivot us a
11 little bit into the question of performance
12 tasks. In the past general assessment
13 meetings we've had we've gotten pretty strong
14 recommendation that some of these interim
15 assessments, that perhaps roll up into a
16 summative score, perhaps they're separate,
17 but that they are different kinds of
18 performance tasks, sometimes pretty complex
19 ones, they're not just constructed responses,
20 they might take place over the course of
21 hours or even weeks and be graded in a
22 consistent way, maybe blind grading by groups
23 of teachers so they are standardized in terms

1 of how they're administered.

2 What does that mean -- how do we
3 need to think about that if we put something
4 like that into a proposal, what do we have to
5 make sure we stay about students with
6 disabilities to make sure that this meets
7 their needs too?

8 MS. DeSTEFANO: Well, certainly in
9 the design of the performance task there
10 needs to be people involved in the design who
11 can think about how that -- how students with
12 disabilities can participate fully in that
13 task. So what scaffolds are needed, what
14 physical modifications, what other things.
15 So the development of the task should include
16 that.

17 And then, you know, I would be
18 suspect of any proposal that recommend --
19 that had as a goal to include performance
20 tasks that didn't have intensive professional
21 development on how to administer those
22 performance tasks, and score those
23 performance tasks. So, you know, easier said

1 than done. Very, very difficult to get
2 consistent, thoughtful administration. So I
3 think the two challenges I see are
4 constructing the task, including the rubric,
5 including how the tasks are scored in ways
6 that are inclusive, and then the second one
7 is fidelity of implementation of the task.

8 MS. KEARNS: I would say that
9 fidelity question is really critically
10 important, even to the extent that the
11 script, whatever scripts are put in place
12 are -- you collect data on that particular
13 type of implementation. The other thing I
14 would add to what Lizanne said is,
15 particularly in the design, that hearing,
16 vision, motor come up first in my mind,
17 making sure that kids can respond with visual
18 impairments, hearing impairments, can
19 respond -- and combinations of those can
20 respond to the items, kids with motor
21 impairments can respond to the items.

22 So having a diversity analysis of
23 the items by people who are well-schooled in

1 those particular areas, not just the -- they
2 have to really understand the VI, or
3 visually -- accommodations for kids with
4 visual impairments, et cetera, et cetera.

5 MS. THURLOW: And I would just add
6 that it will be really important to consider
7 the nature of the response, what are the
8 data. And if we once again depend upon
9 writing skills to look at students'
10 performance, I think we're going to have
11 challenges for many kids, but also particular
12 for kids with disabilities.

13 MS. WEISS: Any other advice you'd
14 have for us on that? Okay.

15 MR. GONG: I find it a little
16 curious that we're asking whether students
17 with disabilities can do performances. I
18 think that if they can do them in
19 instruction, we can design the assessments.

20 MS. WEISS: Right.

21 MR. GONG: It shouldn't be a
22 question about whether it can --

23 MS. WEISS: No, it's how.

1 MR. GONG: Yes, I think -- so I
2 think that there's good direction on how to
3 do it. In fact, the 1 percent is all
4 performance essentially.

5 MS. DeSTEFANO: And it can be
6 powerful. I think it could be powerful to --
7 a powerful message to say how can we include
8 kids in these deep, nice, exciting
9 activities, you know. So I think there's an
10 instructive element also that would be good,
11 but don't underestimate how -- you know, the
12 challenges of doing it.

13 MS. KEARNS: And one of the
14 promises of those types of assessment is it
15 gets us beyond recall --

16 MS. DeSTEFANO: Yes.

17 MS. WEISS: Yes.

18 MS. KEARNS: -- you know, and what
19 we found for -- even for kids, or most
20 particularly for kids in the 1 percent is, if
21 you get beyond recall to application, to
22 higher orders of cognitive processing, you
23 get better responses from them.

1 MS. WEISS: So another question
2 that we've been talking a lot about over the
3 past few days with out experts is, just the
4 thinking around how to organize and structure
5 these multi-state consortium, and it strikes
6 me, as I've been listening to this, that
7 there might really be some power in numbers
8 here that -- things that might pose
9 challenges for other kids maybe actually
10 gives us more strength of expertise in these.

11
12 Do you have some thoughts on how a
13 multi-state consortium could be or should be
14 structured in ways that particularly -- are
15 particularly designed to put more experts
16 around these issues of developing the
17 assessments for students with disabilities?

18 MS. THURLOW: I don't know that I
19 can exactly answer that question other than
20 to say there are some good examples out
21 there. I think that we've seen some great
22 examples in the enhanced assessment grants
23 that have been awarded, in the general

1 supervision enhancement grants that have
2 awarded where the projects have really
3 brought together diverse perspectives. So
4 they brought together assessment of special
5 education, related services, content
6 curriculum people, lots of different
7 perspectives to address how do we work
8 together on some challenging issues.

9 And some of the -- most of those
10 are cross-state, those are collaboratives
11 across states. So maybe even talking to some
12 of those projects on what made things work
13 well, or not so well. I mean my suspicion is
14 that it takes a really solid leader who is
15 able to kind of manage and pull everything
16 together so that things are moving along as
17 they should be. But those are management
18 issues.

19 I also just wanted to comment --
20 and I think this is a tremendous
21 opportunity -- Brian mentioned, you know,
22 that there is quite a bit of diversity across
23 different states in terms of their

1 accommodation policies, how they're thinking
2 about kids with disabilities.

3 And bringing states together to
4 really address the issues of who are the kids
5 and what are their needs, and what are we
6 really trying to measure, what are the
7 standards that we're getting at, and from
8 there move on to really thoughtful, because I
9 think bringing the different perspectives
10 together will help produce really even more
11 thoughtful than already exists participation
12 criteria, and thinking about how do we up
13 that accessibility of the assessment so you
14 can reduce the need for accommodations. So
15 they're just a part of the assessment itself.

16 And then how do we come up with
17 that list of accommodations that don't change
18 what we're trying to measure, but that
19 they're still acceptable for the students who
20 will still need them.

21 MS. DeSTEFANO: I agree with
22 Martha, I think there are some examples. And
23 there's also some examples in ELL where

1 states have formed consortiums like the WIDA,
2 very successful. So I think maybe looking at
3 kind of those successes would help.

4 Maybe also in the RFP asking
5 states to rationalize their consortia, why
6 this group of states, what was the -- what
7 pulled them together, and where do they see
8 the resources, consortium-wide that they're
9 going to bring to bear on this So have they
10 done an analysis of what they do well and
11 what their needs are, and use that in putting
12 together the consortium.

13 I think a lot of consortia are
14 geographic, which, you know, has some merit
15 too, but in WIDA they started out geographic,
16 and then other states came on as they saw a
17 connection between what happening in that
18 project and their own curriculum. And
19 that's kind of a nice organic model. So, you
20 know, maybe trying to ask states to talk
21 about why they chose particular partners.

22 MS. KEARNS: I would also
23 recommend, having worked in a project where

1 you brought in multiple experts, is you have
2 to spend an adequate amount of time, and I'm
3 not sure what that amount of time is, in
4 orienting the experts that you bring in, and
5 bringing them all up to the same place to get
6 them to be able to do the work that you want
7 them to do.

8 So just -- it's not going to be as
9 easy as bring them all into the room and
10 solve the problem. You're probably going to
11 have to do some professional development
12 around the problem before you can even start.

13 MS. THURLOW: And I would add that
14 I think it's really important to have a
15 commitment, a really strong commitment not
16 dependent on a single person in a state,
17 because what we have observed is that there's
18 a lot of people changing, moving out of their
19 position and somebody else coming in, and so
20 being able to incorporate that mobility in
21 personnel is going to be very important.

22 MS. DeSTEFANO: One of the things
23 that I'd request is that if state department

1 people are going to be on this grant, that it
2 actually be a percentage time of their
3 appointment, and other things are reduced to
4 allow them to do the work of this grant,
5 because I think what I've noticed with the
6 GSEGs is that they're piled on top of
7 everything else that the person has to -- or
8 else hire some other people who actually, you
9 know, do a lot of the work.

10 The GSEGs are piled on people who
11 have a million other jobs, three of their
12 colleagues have left and weren't replaced, so
13 they have their three jobs too. Very hard to
14 get up from under that, and so to really
15 think about the time commitment and how it's
16 going to actually resolve and people who are
17 able to find the time to do the work.

18 MS. WEISS: I'm guessing that,
19 from the reactions out there, there's people
20 who are in rabid agreement with that
21 statement.

22 MS. DeSTEFANO: Yes, and external
23 contractors are very valuable, but they alone

1 cannot do the work. I mean they provide a
2 valuable service, but there needs to also be
3 a time commitment within the states and the
4 localities, if LEAs are going to be
5 meaningfully involved to be able to carry out
6 the work.

7 MR. GONG: I think that the
8 structure of multi-state consortia depends
9 partly on whether it's a developm3nt of a new
10 project, EAGs and GSEGs I think were
11 typically things pushing beyond current
12 practice. So if that's the project, then
13 there's one structure. If it's implementing
14 sort of what's known and trying to get that
15 into an operational assessment, I think
16 that's either a different project or it's a
17 different phase of the project and the
18 consortium comes together maybe a little
19 different for that.

20 So I think that multi-state
21 consortia can help in at least three or four
22 really significant ways, different than the
23 general assessment. One is that there's

1 not -- there's a limited amount of expertise
2 on how to do these things well, and to do the
3 development, and that was less true in the
4 general assessment. So there's a real reason
5 for states together on that, to bring the
6 expertise to bear.

7 The second is that many of these
8 are -- will represent areas of new policy,
9 and so you don't have states saying, I've had
10 this policy, like we have for the general
11 assessment, I've had it for 20 years and it's
12 really hard for me to change that.

13 Many of these things that we're
14 talking about people will say, I haven't been
15 satisfied with what we've done so far for
16 making these assessments really valid and
17 sensitive for students with disabilities;
18 we're open to changing what we're doing.

19 I think that that creates an
20 opportunity and it's a great thing to have
21 states work together on the development of
22 those policies because I think that if they
23 didn't work together we will have 50

1 different ones, and many of these policies
2 really should be quite common across states.

3 I think that also we know that
4 much of this is expensive and not covered in
5 the current budget. So unlike the general
6 assessment where there's already a funding
7 stream for it, people can make incremental
8 improvements in sort of existing cost models.

9 Many of the things we've talked about really
10 is attractive for states to develop new
11 products and new processes, these tools and
12 criteria that people have talked about.

13 So I think those are at least
14 three really great things for multi-state
15 things that may not be as true for some of
16 the general assessment. I think that if you
17 highlight those and say, This is what we
18 want, then the consortium can be structured
19 to achieve those.

20 MS. WHALEN: So can I ask sort of
21 a step further than that, is that I heard a
22 lot of what you guys are saying during
23 presentations that the contextual curriculum

1 and instruction matters, and then how you
2 develop these assessments. So beyond the
3 kind of target skills that were outlined,
4 what would you want to see this consortia
5 agree upon as part of coming together around
6 the development of these assessments, what
7 would help advance that objective? Does that
8 make sense?

9 MS. DeSTEFANO: Well, I think some
10 of the things that kind of all of us laid out
11 at the beginning of our presentations, I
12 think it's designing an inclusive assessment
13 system from the get go, and what would that
14 look like across a lot of different policy
15 contexts, you know.

16 I don't know that we're saying
17 that every state has to have exactly the same
18 policy, but how could you design, you know, a
19 system that floated above that policy and
20 still was relevant for the states. I think
21 the standards are really important and not
22 only the standard themselves, but the process
23 for constructing those standards. And then I

1 think the use and the consequential validity
2 piece is very, very important to look in a
3 multi-state context. So those to me would be
4 sort of the three big pieces.

5 MS. KEARNS: I would ditto the
6 consequential piece, I would ditto the
7 curriculum piece, and also some work
8 around -- some commitment to being sure
9 that -- who their exact -- exactly who their
10 population is and what the theory of learning
11 is that underpins the standards.

12 MS. WHALEN: So can I ask, so what
13 would you want us to look for in a question
14 asking them to describe their theory of
15 learning?

16 MS. KEARNS: That at least maybe
17 they've looked at the literature.

18 (General laughter.)

19 MS. KEARNS: I think that's really
20 important, and not just the literature that
21 underpins the standards that they have, not
22 that they, you know, that they just use the
23 standards that they've always used before,

1 but that they really have some thoughtful
2 review of why that is the way it is, why that
3 particular standard is important at that
4 particular point in time, and what the
5 literature says about that.

6 MS. DeSTEFANO: And I think it
7 should be evidenced in the performance
8 descriptors and the learning progressions
9 that when you read them you can see that
10 they're based in what we know about how
11 students learn and the variability in how
12 students learn. So I think there's artifacts
13 that they could produce that would allow you
14 to make a judgment. Are they using what we
15 know about cognition and learning and is it,
16 you know, both generally and also within the
17 content area.

18 MS. WEISS: Okay. So one last
19 question. I don't know if this is a quick
20 one or not. Are there significant
21 differences between elementary and high
22 school assessment for students with
23 disabilities that we need to be thinking

1 about?

2 MS. DeSTEFANO: Yes.

3 MS. WEISS: That was the quick
4 answer. No would have been an ever quicker
5 answer actually.

6 (General laughter.)

7 MS. DeSTEFANO: You know, I think
8 the difference is that in high school we're
9 really talking about discipline specific --
10 it's they're organized in departments,
11 there's, you know, specific content within
12 the discipline, so I think for me it's an
13 infrastructure issue, you know, how do you
14 involve those teachers and those
15 administrators and those different
16 disciplinary people in the development of
17 standards and in the development of
18 assessment. So it's -- to me it's a
19 difference in organization.

20 MS. THURLOW: Yes, and I would
21 just add though that that doesn't mean it's
22 different for students with disabilities.

23 MS. DeSTEFANO: Yes. Correct.

1 MS. THURLOW: So it may be that
2 it's just different in general, but that
3 doesn't mean it should be different for
4 students with disabilities. It does mean
5 that access to the curriculum is even more
6 important and that it's got to be extremely
7 important throughout the grade range because
8 you -- we do not want kids any longer going
9 through their elementary school years
10 thinking they're doing just fine. We've
11 monitored their progress and they're doing
12 fine, and what we're measuring -- and then
13 they get into the high school years and
14 they're like nowhere near where they need to
15 be.

16 MS. DeSTEFANO: And here's where
17 involvement of higher ed could have a big
18 impact, because if you have higher ed faculty
19 who are involved in training future science
20 teachers, future math teachers, future --
21 they typically pay very little attention to
22 the fact that they're going to be working
23 with English language learners, or students

1 with disabilities. So here by bringing them
2 into the process, I think you can affect
3 teacher preparation and the way that these
4 things are dealt with in a higher education
5 organization.

6 MR. GONG: I think the differences
7 between elementary and high school are very
8 large, they're not just for students with
9 disabilities. But I think that high schools
10 typically -- I would say that there is no
11 general curriculum sequence. That's why
12 we're talking about end-of-course exams.

13 So all of our concern about
14 standards-based and having kids be on track,
15 or the structure for that, for enforcing that
16 disappears in high school, and I think it
17 will differentially affect students with
18 disabilities and if there are other students
19 who are lower performing and need more
20 supports, that we know the high school is
21 just a different model.

22 MS. WEISS: Okay. Thanks. I just
23 want to maybe give you guys the last couple

1 of minutes that we have left before we turn
2 to the public speaking portion to just tell
3 us if there's anything we didn't ask or we
4 didn't touch on that you want to just make
5 sure we're keeping in mind, or any final
6 words of wisdom or advice you have for us.

7 MS. THURLOW: Well, I'll start by
8 reiterating what I think I said. We don't
9 want to lose track on where we've already
10 gotten to. So we've made so much progress.
11 I think that the assessment system and all
12 that surrounds it has raised awareness of
13 students with disabilities and lack of access
14 to the curriculum, and is making, in many
15 places, a big, big, big difference for those
16 students.

17 I think we're gathering slowly
18 more and more evidence that tremendous
19 improvement can be seen for these kids as we
20 focus on standards, as we think about
21 standards-based IEPs, as IDEA and ESEA have
22 come closer and closer together and are not
23 creating this kind of wall where people are

1 saying, Well, I don't have to do it because
2 of this, and I don't have to do it because of
3 that.

4 So I just -- I would encourage
5 that we continually think about the
6 consequences of decisions as we move forward.

7
8 MR. GONG: For me, the new insight
9 I had just in the discussion today was that
10 the improvements that are necessary for valid
11 assessment for students with disabilities are
12 actually the types of practices that we would
13 want for the general assessment, and that are
14 not in place strongly now.

15 And so I think that this is a
16 great leverage point because to make them
17 appropriate, make assessments that are
18 appropriate and valid to students with
19 disabilities will, in fact, increase the
20 quality of assessments for everyone. And so
21 this should not be treated as an optional
22 thing. I think this is a core leverage point
23 for the RFP in general.

1 MS. KEARNS: I would ditto both
2 previous comments, but I would add that
3 attention to consequences is going to be
4 really important, but also using the evidence
5 that we have, using the research base that we
6 have, and being thoughtful about it
7 throughout as an iterative process, not as a
8 one-time event, but an iterative process is
9 really important.

10 MS. DeSTEFANO: And I ditto my
11 colleagues and I would only add that I don't
12 see this as tinkering. I see this as
13 substantial changes and so to allow for the
14 time that is needed to do these substantial
15 changes and be realistic, both from the
16 federal government part and also the
17 applicants, be realistic about what you can
18 accomplish and the time that you need to do
19 that.

20 MS. WEISS: Let me start by
21 thanking the four of you. I thought this was
22 a fabulous discussion. I almost ran out of
23 notebook. So thank you very, very much for

1 sharing your time with us, but more
2 importantly for sharing your wisdom and your
3 experience and your expertise. I hope it
4 will -- I hope you will see it reflected in
5 the final notice that we put out.

6 And once again, I just want to
7 thank the states and the members of the
8 public who've joined us, for taking your time
9 and hope that it's been useful.

10 We're going to reconvene here at
11 11:40 sharp to begin the public comment
12 section. Anyone who is signed up to do
13 public comments, if you could come up here to
14 the front of the room, Anya will help get
15 your guys set up and organized, and we're
16 just going to move the podium up here for
17 you.

18 And we will get started in 10
19 minutes. Thank you.

20 (Whereupon, a short recess was
21 taken.)

22 MS. WEISS: I'm giving some quick
23 instructions to the folks who are going to be

1 speaking. On your podium you will see a
2 handy little green, yellow, red light. It's
3 a countdown timer. It's pretty self-evident,
4 but it'll got to yellow when you have two
5 minutes left, and the it goes to red when
6 you're out of time.

7 And with that, I see our first
8 speaker is ready to take it away.

9 MR. ELLIOTT: Thank you very much.

10 My name's Steve Elliott, and I'm a professor
11 at Vanderbilt University, Director of the
12 Learning Sciences Institute. And I have
13 enjoyed listening to the session yesterday
14 and today, and hopefully my comments will be
15 able to be -- contribute to it. I have
16 provided the panelists a copy of everything
17 that I'm going to present, so hopefully I can
18 speed along.

19 The two questions, or two issues
20 that I picked out of the *Register's*
21 announcement of the filing, dealing with
22 required characteristics of the design of
23 assessment, I want to speak to the concept of

1 accessibility, it's been mentioned several
2 times over the course of the last couple of
3 days, and unpack it a little bit. The second
4 thing I want to talk about is obviously the
5 direct question that was asked about the
6 assessment of students with disabilities.

7 I want to preface this by saying
8 that I think innovation is right in front of
9 us. Okay. In many cases, obviously not in
10 all, but in many cases, and I think some of
11 the panelist have spoken to that. I think
12 the issue in many cases is scaling up.

13 Okay. So my comment virtually all
14 concern access for students with
15 disabilities. Access to the enacted
16 curriculum that is well aligned with the
17 intended grade level curriculum, in other
18 words the content standards, and access to
19 the assessments aligned with both of these
20 curricula.

21 Let me just note that I think for
22 too long we've accepted the concept of
23 alignment being analogous to opportunity to

1 learn. Alignment between test standards and
2 tests is -- often overlooks instruction a
3 lot. And so I'm going to bore into the piece
4 dealing with instruction when I'm talking
5 about access to the enacted curriculum

6 I wish to assert that optimal
7 accessibility is rarely ever achieved on our
8 current large scale assessments. This is a
9 result of at least four factors. Okay.
10 These factors are teachers' limited training
11 an use of materials that facilitate access to
12 the intended curriculum. This is not a
13 negative statement about teachers, this is a
14 statement about professional development and
15 support.

16 Two, students having insufficient
17 opportunities to learn the intended
18 curriculum. We have a lot of evidence that
19 suggests that kids with disabilities sitting
20 in regular classrooms get a different -- have
21 a different life than other students not
22 comparable.

23 Testing accommodations being

1 implemented inconsistently or with poor
2 integrity. And finally, tests that are
3 comprised of many items with extraneous
4 information which result in construct
5 irrelevant variance. This is the visual.
6 Okay. The pathway, the access pathway in
7 many cases has got -- is ladened with
8 barriers. Okay. These barriers in many ways
9 minimize optimal assessment.

10 I'd love to give you some
11 statistics, but I'll just tell you that
12 recently we've looked at five states' large
13 scale assessments. We found fewer than 5
14 percent of their items met a high standard of
15 optimal accessibility. Okay. We can do
16 better. Okay.

17 To doing better involves several
18 things. Okay. And I've laid it out in
19 visual too what I'm envisioning. Many people
20 have talked about professional development,
21 people have talked about doing a better job
22 with testing accommodations. I'm going to
23 focus on, again, instructional access and

1 construct irrelevant variance. And I have
2 recommendations to make, four specific
3 recommendations.

4 The overall here is that I
5 recommend that the consortia involved in
6 developing and validating large scale
7 assessments with Race to the Top funding
8 should be required to demonstrate the
9 following: a) that their assessments are
10 based on content that students have
11 opportunities to learn; b) that the enacted
12 curriculum for students with and without
13 disabilities are comparable, that's grade
14 level comparable; and c) the items in
15 statewide achievement tests of reading and
16 mathematics are highly accessible. We have
17 ways of knowing whether this is accomplished.

18 Okay. It's going to take some work.

19 The first recommendation I make,
20 and I'm specifying just changing the language
21 of what's in the *Federal Register* here, The
22 required characteristics -- you can read
23 along with me -- must contain only content

1 which has empirically documented that
2 students with and without disabilities have
3 had a reasonable opportunity to learn. We're
4 going to need measurement tools to do that.
5 The SEC, the web method, these don't do it
6 for us. Okay. There are other methods that
7 we have to design and develop.

8 The second required characteristic
9 for the design of assessments listed for the
10 Race to the Top funds is to revise the
11 concepts of item accessibility -- separate
12 the concepts of item accessibility and
13 testing accommodations. This is designed to
14 facilitate clarity and documentation efforts.

15
16 So the revision that I would have
17 is the revised characteristics should read,
18 A -- 2A, contain only test items which have
19 been empirically determined to meet high
20 standards of accessibility for students with
21 disabilities and English language learners;
22 and 2B, be compatible with the accommodations
23 proven to facilitate access and improve the

1 validity and intended test score inference.
2 It's going to require some research to
3 document that along the way.

4 My third and fourth
5 recommendations is to advance the development
6 of assessments that are sensitive to
7 diversity of students with disabilities. I
8 recommend that all items undergo an
9 accessibility review by expert panels using a
10 structured process coupled with item indices.

11 And I list several kinds of item indices
12 that I think are essential.

13 And it clarifies that
14 accessibility too isn't necessarily the same
15 thing as depth of knowledge, isn't the same
16 thing as item difficulty. It brings to life
17 what we mean, and I'm going to argue that
18 accessibility reviews should parallel
19 fairness reviews. We do fairness reviews and
20 accessibility reviews should have the same
21 status.

22 Finally, to advance the
23 administration of assessments that are

1 sensitive to the diversity of all -- with
2 students with disabilities. Individuals
3 providing accommodations should have to
4 document the actual accommodation used during
5 the testing event. It's going to require
6 some post-assessment documentation, note
7 which ones were essential for use in future
8 assessments, and which were difficult to
9 implement.

10 MS. WEISS: Thank you.

11 MR. ELLIOTT: There's the visual.

12 MS. WEISS: Thank you.

13 DR. CAHALAN-LAITUSIS: Good
14 morning, and thank you for the opportunity to
15 talk to you today. My name is Cara Cahalan-
16 Laitusis, and I'm a senior research scientist
17 at Educational Testing Service in Princeton,
18 New Jersey.

19 Currently I'm project director for
20 two research projects funded by the US
21 Department of Education to investigate
22 improving state reading assessments for
23 students with learning disabilities, and

1 students who are blind or visually impaired.

2 In addition, I manage the research on
3 improving measurement for individuals with
4 disabilities that ETS funds through out
5 validity research initiative.

6 My colleagues at ETS and I have
7 analyzed the test data for several state
8 assessments and have conducted experimentally
9 designed research studies to examine the
10 impact of testing accommodations. Our
11 research results have shown that current
12 state assessments are unreliable measures for
13 large portions of students with disabilities
14 because they are too difficult relative to
15 the students' current achievement levels.

16 In the state assessments that I
17 have worked with, the proportion of students
18 without disabilities who are responding at
19 chance level is less than 3 percent. This
20 number jumps to 10 to 20 percent when you
21 look at students with learning disabilities
22 responding at chance level on current state
23 assessments.

1 This difficulty level is required
2 to assess state standards, but results in
3 test scores that are less reliable. In
4 addition, it may have a negative impact on
5 students' emotions and motivation, as well as
6 the ability of the test to accurately measure
7 growth from year to year.

8 On possible solution to this
9 mismatch between test difficulty and student
10 achievement level is adaptive testing.
11 Currently, several states are now exploring
12 adaptive testing models. There are a number
13 of positive reasons for using adaptive
14 testing models for students with
15 disabilities, and one of the most important
16 reasons is that such tests provide a better
17 match between the difficulty level of the
18 test and the students' current achievement
19 level.

20 This is important because
21 providing an assessment that is a better
22 match to a student's achievement level will
23 not only result in a more precise estimate of

1 the student's skills, but it will also result
2 in a less frustrating experience for the
3 student. In addition, it may be possible for
4 states to use adaptive test designs to
5 objectively route some students to a modified
6 assessment.

7 One of the projects I'm working on
8 includes a two-stage adaptive assessment
9 which measures reading comprehension, using a
10 read aloud accommodation, and reading
11 fluencies separately for students with
12 reading-based learning disabilities who
13 perform at or below chance level on a short
14 routing test.

15 This type of test design has the
16 potential for allowing states to measure
17 proficiency level, while also providing
18 additional information to teachers' scores
19 for two separate components of reading,
20 providing students with test content that is
21 closer to their current achievement, and
22 allowing a portion of students to use a read
23 aloud accommodation.

1 Although adaptive testing models
2 have the advantage of targeting the
3 difficulty levels of the assessment to the
4 students' current achievement levels, there
5 are several disadvantages that are non-
6 trivial for students with disabilities.
7 Although adaptive testing models have this
8 advantage, one potential disadvantage is that
9 adaptive testing may impact students with
10 divergent knowledge patterns, and this is
11 common in students with specific disability
12 subtypes.

13 For example, many learning
14 disability classifications are defined by
15 divergent knowledge profiles, or lower
16 achievement levels in specific academic
17 knowledge areas, or sub-skills. The
18 implication is that students with learning
19 disabilities defined by a deficit math
20 fluency, for example, may perform poorly on
21 relatively easy test questions that measure
22 calculation, but perform well on relatively
23 difficult test questions that measure

1 estimation.

2 The use of computer adaptive tests
3 in the presence of idiosyncratic knowledge
4 patterns has been studied, and results have
5 shown that scoring of adaptive tests is
6 problematic when test takers respond to
7 questions in an unexpected way. Additional
8 research would be required to determine the
9 impact of this for students with
10 disabilities.

11 Another disadvantage of
12 implementing adaptive tests is that providing
13 some testing accommodations can be
14 problematic. This is particularly
15 challenging in developing alternate test
16 formats such as Braille. For item level
17 adaptive tests because the selection of
18 questions in an item level adaptive test are
19 based on the specific performance of test
20 takers on previous test questions.
21 Therefore, it is impossible to assemble a
22 test prior to administration.

23 In addition, many computerized

1 testing platforms do not provide
2 magnification and pre-recorded audio and none
3 of the existing platforms currently provide
4 refreshable Braille. For these reasons,
5 individuals who require Braille test forms do
6 not currently participate in item level
7 adaptive tests. Instead, these test takers
8 typically take an alternate paper-based
9 linear form of the assessment.

10 In conclusion, I believe that
11 adaptive testing, particularly multi-stage
12 adaptive testing, holds promise for students
13 with disabilities. However, it is not a
14 panacea. In my written comments I have
15 provided eight recommendations for how Race
16 to the Top common assessment funds could be
17 used to develop the infrastructure for
18 delivering accessible assessments that target
19 test questions to student achievement.

20 Since I have time, I will read my
21 first one. Specific -- okay, my one thing is
22 I think you should use assessment -- common
23 assessment funds to develop open-source

1 computer-based testing platforms.

2 MS. WEISS: We will read it. I
3 promise.

4 DR. CAHALAN-LAITUSIS: Okay.

5 MS. CAMETO: Thank you for the
6 opportunity. My name is Renee Cameto. I'm
7 with SRI International.

8 Students with disabilities
9 challenge conventions with respect to the
10 teaching, learning, and assessing of academic
11 content. Assessment designers are challenged
12 to develop systems that adequately and
13 reliably show what these students know and
14 can do. Indeed, it is the shear variability
15 in this target population, the assumptions
16 about measuring their achievement, and the
17 variability of design implementation
18 procedures that make traditional approaches
19 inapplicable without some reformulation.

20 The application of evidence
21 centered design to assessments of students
22 with disabilities directly addresses the most
23 pressing issues by using a replicable design

1 process that can be applied to all content
2 areas and all types of assessment, from
3 performance tasks and portfolio activities to
4 technology-based simulations and animations
5 to traditional multiple choice item formats.

6 The use of evidence-centered
7 design can enhance the technical
8 characteristics of assessments and prove the
9 efficiency with which future assessments can
10 be developed, and documents the myriad of
11 design decisions required when developing a
12 valid assessment of student learning.

13 We at SRI International have been
14 working with a number of federal, state and
15 organizational partners on a variety of
16 evidence-centered design R&D activities.
17 Currently we're engaged with several
18 consortia of states on projects funded by
19 NSF, IES and EAG grants.

20 Through nearly a decade of work,
21 we are finding that evidence-centered design
22 framework is an innovative and effective
23 approach to the assessment design and

1 development process for all standards-based
2 assessments including those for students with
3 disabilities.

4 SRI has a web-based assessment
5 design system that embodies the principles of
6 evidence-centered design and provides a
7 platform for the design of assessments. This
8 web-based system is fully operational and has
9 been successfully applied to assessments for
10 students in elementary through post-secondary
11 schools in reading, math, sciences, and
12 social sciences, and two assessments for
13 students in general education and in special
14 education, including students with
15 significant cognitive disabilities.

16 Evidence-centered design is a
17 five-step process. First, domain analysis
18 and a step -- specific content to be included
19 in the assessment is determined, state
20 content standards, and the pending common
21 core standards are examples of these domain
22 analyses. The second step domain modeling,
23 a high level description of the overall

1 components of the assessment is created and
2 documented.

3 The third step is the creation of
4 a conceptual assessment framework. In this
5 step, the knowledge, skills and abilities to
6 be assessed, the evidence that needs to be
7 collected, and the features of the tasks that
8 will elicit the evidence are specified.

9 We also specify any non-focal KSAs
10 that may be required to respond correctly to
11 an assessment task but are not the target of
12 the assessment. For example, reading skills
13 in a math exam. By identifying these non-
14 focal KSAs, we can reduce the construct
15 irrelevant variance they introduce.

16 The fourth step in the process is
17 implementation. In this step the assessment
18 items, or tasks, are authored using the
19 specifications created in the conceptual
20 assessment framework. It includes scoring
21 rubrics and scoring processes.

22 In the last step, delivery, the
23 processes of the assessment administration

1 and reporting are created. We answer
2 questions such as how will the assessment be
3 administered, will it be delivered one-on-one
4 or in classrooms, what about reporting.
5 Evidence-centered design work synergistically
6 with other innovative approaches to
7 assessment such as universal design for
8 learning.

9 UDL principles are incorporated in
10 our evidence-centered design process right up
11 front, using assessment design and item
12 authoring by considering multiple means of
13 perception, express, cognition, language and
14 symbol use, executive functioning, and
15 engagement.

16 Creating appropriate and valid
17 assessments for students with disabilities
18 and those with significant cognitive
19 disabilities challenges traditional
20 assessment approaches and assumptions.
21 Solutions to the challenges to serve students
22 with disabilities have frequently resulted in
23 techniques and approaches that have

1 applicability to the broader population.

2 There are a range of new
3 approaches that move us closer to having
4 assessment systems that students with
5 disabilities deserve, and that can improve
6 assessment technologies for all students.
7 Evidence-centered design incorporating UDL is
8 one of these innovative approaches that we
9 strongly recommend. Thank you.

10 MS. WEISS: Thanks.

11 MS. HAGEN: Good morning. My name
12 is Lori Hagen, and I am one of 3800 members
13 of Local 1420 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I
14 am a national board certified teacher as an
15 exceptional needs specialist. I work for the
16 Albuquerque Public Schools District which
17 currently has over 86,000 students with
18 approximately 14 percent of those being
19 students with disabilities.

20 This is my 31st year teaching
21 students with disabilities. I've worked in
22 self-contained, inclusion, and
23 departmentalized classrooms from elementary

1 to high school. I have worked with students
2 with learning disabilities, emotional and
3 behavioral concerns, autism, speech
4 articulation needs, communication disorders,
5 dyslexia, twice exceptional, and other health
6 impairments.

7 I've supported my district in
8 serving on the Standards Writing Committee
9 representing students with disabilities, and
10 in the Peer Assistance Review Program going
11 into classrooms and assisting teachers with
12 lesson plans, behavior management, data
13 keeping, and formative assessments, as well
14 as helping first year teachers prepare for
15 conferences, manage paperwork, write IEPs,
16 communicate with parents, and provide
17 professional collaboration.

18 I am the local coordinator of the
19 Albuquerque Teachers Federation National
20 Board Candidate Support Program encouraging
21 teachers to strengthen their profession by
22 looking reflectively at their practice to
23 improve student learning. National board

1 certification requires teachers to prepare a
2 portfolio including videos and evidence that
3 students of all levels and abilities are
4 challenged and learning in their classrooms.

5 I have been a national trainer of
6 trainers for the American Federation of
7 Teachers Education Research and Dissemination
8 Program in managing anti-social behavior for
9 over 14 years. I've also served as a team
10 members of the national IDEA cadre in
11 supporting all stakeholders working with
12 students with disabilities.

13 Mostly I have witnessed students
14 whose self-esteem has been shattered and hard
15 work completely ignored through their
16 participation in state-based assessments
17 which are not at their functioning level.
18 Nor does this testing take into consideration
19 their multi-sensory mode o learning.
20 Currently, assessment testing of students
21 with disabilities does not provide educators,
22 such as myself, worthwhile information to
23 make informed educational decisions based on

1 individual student needs.

2 Today I stand before you on behalf
3 of the 1.4 million members of the American
4 Federation of Teachers to share my thoughts
5 and recommendations on how the US Department
6 of Education and Secretary Duncan, given this
7 unique opportunity to develop high quality
8 assessments may be aligned to a common set of
9 K-12 standards. This is a daunting task, but
10 I am encouraged by the initial steps in
11 making this happen.

12 However, like many past
13 initiatives, I remain concerned that in the
14 absence of systematic change, appropriate
15 funding, ongoing monitoring, and appropriate
16 adjustments at various levels this initiative
17 will fall to the wayside as so many have in
18 the past.

19 I strongly recommend that you take
20 the following recommendation into
21 consideration as you move forward. One,
22 convene a panel of assessment experts,
23 classroom educators, district and state

1 assessment administrators to review existing
2 research on how to best assess students with
3 disabilities using technology that is both
4 flexible enough to accommodate a number of
5 modifications and adaptations for students
6 with disabilities.

7 Two, conduct a review of teacher
8 preparation programs and determine how to be
9 prepare pre-service teachers coming into the
10 field. This generation of teachers will have
11 had much more exposure to recent advances in
12 technology and will need to incorporate this
13 into their pre-service training.

14 Consider the use of universal
15 design principles, multiple means of
16 presentation, expression, and engagement.
17 This type of assessment design will meet the
18 needs of a wider range of all students,
19 including students with disabilities and
20 English language learners.

21 Four, invest in the development of
22 computer-based assessments and the structures
23 and systems needed to support the use of such

1 assessments. Educator will need ongoing
2 training, buildings will need updated
3 hardware and software, and parents and
4 students will need to be involved by
5 understanding how the assessments will be
6 used and how to prepare for them.

7 I appreciate this opportunity to
8 speak on behalf of New Mexico Teacher
9 Federation, and our national organization,
10 the American Federation of Teachers. Thank
11 you.

12 MS. WOODARD: Good afternoon. My
13 name is Paula Woodard, and I'm a teacher with
14 the Marietta City School System here in the
15 metro Atlanta area. I'm also a member for
16 the National Education Association and a
17 member for the NEA-IDEA resource cadre. I am
18 here representing NEA, which is the nation's
19 largest professional employee organization.

20 NEA's 3.2 million members work at
21 every level of education from preschool to K
22 through 12 public schools, to university
23 graduate programs, which includes general and

1 special education teachers, administrators,
2 college educators, specialized instructional
3 personnel, and education support
4 professionals in every state, as well as in
5 more than 14,000 communities across the
6 United States.

7 NEA strongly supports the
8 inclusion of students with disabilities in
9 state and local assessments. However, many
10 students with disabilities are struggling to
11 pass their states high stakes assessments.
12 If the students don't pass the assessments,
13 they may not receive a high school diploma.

14 For example, just recently I saw a
15 former student at one of the local malls. He
16 graduated from high school two years ago with
17 the correct number of credits and a special
18 education diploma. However, he is still
19 retaking one section of the Georgia high
20 school graduation test because he didn't make
21 the minimum score on all sections.

22 And, in fact, in a few days he was
23 getting ready to retake the math section once

1 again because he is unable to obtain the
2 minimum score. At this point, this student
3 has probably taken that section at least 10
4 times. Obviously, if there had been an
5 alternative valid assessment, his situation
6 might be drastically different. Therefore,
7 it's critical that assessments for students
8 with disabilities be valid, reliable, and
9 meaningful.

10 I attended this student's exit IEP
11 meeting and he stated that he wanted to
12 attend a two-year technical college. Since
13 he doesn't have a high school diploma, he
14 cannot attend a two-year technical school
15 because a special education diploma won't
16 allow him entry into any post-secondary
17 institution. He's currently in a holding
18 pattern until he passes the last section of
19 the Georgia high school graduation test.

20 Unfortunately, this student's
21 story is not unusual, due in large part to
22 the fact that accessible, meaningful
23 assessments are not readily available to all

1 students with disabilities. These students
2 are currently subjected to high stakes
3 assessments that limit their future options,
4 leaving them frustrated and demoralized.

5 Obviously this situation must
6 change. To address these concerns, NEA
7 recommends the following. Assessments for
8 students with disabilities should focus on
9 evaluating their growth through student
10 progress monitoring and other growth
11 measures.

12 Accessible assessments should be
13 developed for all students using the
14 principles of universal design for learning.

15 Students should be provided with the widest
16 range of assessment accommodations feasible.

17 To do this, test designers must run
18 validation studies using a broad range of
19 accommodations, including the read aloud
20 accommodation and Braille.

21 Educators need to be provided with
22 professional development on the use of
23 accommodations and instruction, and

1 assessments. In particular, classroom
2 teachers and members for IEP teams need to
3 understand the impact of the accommodation
4 recommendations and alternative assessments
5 defined in the student's IEPs.

6 Alternate assessments can be
7 effective vehicles for measuring students
8 skills, knowledge, and growth. However, the
9 administration time for alternate assessments
10 should not decrease the instructional time
11 that these students need.

12 Computer adaptive assessments can
13 provide in depth measurement of knowledge and
14 skills of students who have difficulty
15 showing their abilities on typical paper-
16 pencil tests. We encourage the US Department
17 of Education to fund research on creating
18 valid and reliable computer adaptive
19 assessments.

20 Thank you for allowing me this
21 opportunity to share with you today as an NEA
22 member and educator. I want all students to
23 have the opportunity to participate in

1 assessments which are not only valid, but
2 reliable and meaningful as well.

3 MS. WEISS: Thank you.

4 MS. HARDING: I am Marcia Harding,
5 president of the National Association of
6 State Directors of Special Education and the
7 current Director of Special Education for the
8 State of Arkansas. Thank you for this
9 opportunity to speak to you today about
10 assessing students with disabilities.

11 As an organization, NASDSE called
12 for the inclusion of students with
13 disabilities in an inclusive accountability
14 system as far back as the 1990s, long before
15 it was fashionable or popular to do so. Our
16 members have continued to support the
17 inclusion of students with disabilities in
18 the general education curriculum, recognizing
19 that students with disabilities are general
20 education students first.

21 We believe that all students,
22 including students with disabilities, should
23 be held to high standards, and that most

1 students with disabilities can take and
2 should be able to pass the regular
3 assessments that are now required by the No
4 Child Left Behind Act.

5 However, we also recognize that
6 for some students with disabilities, the
7 regular assessment may be a mountain that is
8 simply too high for them, even with all of
9 the supports that a school can provide. For
10 some of those students, those now referred to
11 as the most significantly cognitively
12 impaired, they will need to be assessed on an
13 alternate assessment that is based on
14 alternate achievement standards. That system
15 was put into place by regulation after
16 passage of NCLB, and appears to be well-
17 understood among the states.

18 There's considerably more
19 controversy over other students with
20 disabilities. Some feel that all remaining
21 students with disabilities should be able to
22 take the regular assessment based on regular
23 achievement standards, with or without

1 accommodations. Students and their parents
2 have expressed frustration that their
3 particular accommodation has not always been
4 permitted for that particular assessment,
5 however, lending an additional concern to the
6 entire assessment process.

7 And other, including NASDSE,
8 believe that some students with disabilities,
9 even with all of the best instructional
10 supports and services that we can offer,
11 can't be successful on the regular assessment
12 based on regular achievement standards.
13 NASDSE believes that these students need an
14 alternate assessment based on modified
15 achievement standards in order to demonstrate
16 their capabilities in the full.

17 It is equally important that
18 assessments for students with disabilities be
19 able to reflect their educational gains and
20 growth because not all students with
21 disabilities will be able to make and
22 demonstrate a year's worth of progress on a
23 regular assessment. It is critically

1 important that assessments be accessible so
2 that the student can be recognized for
3 whatever growth he or she has made.

4 We know that we have the
5 technology available that can provide
6 students with access to both curricular
7 content and the most appropriate assessment.

8 We can accomplish this through the materials
9 and assessments that are developed using the
10 constructs of universal design for learning,
11 or UDL. NASDSE urges you to consider
12 proposals that take advantage of this
13 technology.

14 Given this brief overview, I would
15 like to make the following points. Special
16 education, including disability advocates and
17 local educators, must be at the table when
18 critical policy decisions are being made at
19 the federal level regarding assessments. It
20 is important to remember that students with
21 disabilities span a broad range of
22 disabilities, even within a specific category
23 of disability. It could be mild to severe.

1 Assumptions about the severity of
2 a student's disability, or what kind of
3 assessment or accommodations a student needs,
4 should not predicated on that issue, or a
5 category of disability. When designing
6 assessments the federal government can use
7 its bully pulpit and funding to encourage and
8 support strategies that incorporate the
9 concepts for universal design for learning so
10 that all students can access the assessments.

11 In giving out Race to the Top
12 grants, we encourage you to consider UDL as
13 one of the factors that you look for in
14 considering grant applications. We're
15 concerned that the Department intends -- that
16 if the Department intends to tie assessment
17 grants to the common core initiative
18 currently underway, that this initiative has
19 to date made no accommodation for students
20 with disabilities. NASDSE believes that the
21 common core initiative must accommodate
22 extended standards for students who need
23 them. Likewise, any assessments that are

1 tied to the standards must reflect this need
2 as well.

3 And finally we note that some
4 states have been working diligently to
5 develop alternate assessment based on
6 modified achievement standards, yet the
7 Department has found fault with virtually all
8 of them, and yet offered little or no
9 guidance as to how to fix them. If the
10 Department intends to continue this peer
11 review process, or construct, in the
12 reauthorization of the ESEA, then we urge you
13 to provide better guidance to states on what
14 you are looking for in the way of modified
15 assessments, as well as technical assistance
16 in competitive grants that would speed up the
17 process for development of these assessments.

18 Again, I thank you for the
19 opportunity to speak before you today, and
20 I'm happy to answer any questions you might
21 have at any point in time. Thank you.

22 MS. WEISS: Thank you.

23 MS. BECHARD: Good afternoon. My

1 name is Sue Bechard. I work at Measured
2 Progress; it's a not-for-profit assessment
3 development company in Dover, New Hampshire,
4 and I am the Director of Inclusive
5 Educational Assessment there. I've worked
6 for about 10 years now with a number of
7 states on their alternate assessment programs
8 and have worked in a number of the GSEG and
9 EAG grants.

10 I'd like to make three
11 recommendations today for the Race to the Top
12 proposals, and sort of based on where we've
13 been, what we've learned and a vision of what
14 may be. My first recommendation you've heard
15 already a number of times today before. It's
16 around the development process and at the
17 very beginning how this funding might allow
18 states the opportunity to do something they
19 haven't had a chance to do at this point, and
20 that is to develop a unified vision of their
21 assessment system and all the components, and
22 develop a plan and propose a plan within
23 their RFP.

1 One of -- there's four things that
2 should be in their development plan. First
3 of all, they should articulate the purposes
4 of their assessment system and the components
5 of the assessment system. They should
6 require that -- how the principles of
7 universal design are going to be articulated
8 and applied to all components of the system,
9 starting with the standards and looking at
10 the description of expectations for students'
11 performance, test construction and
12 development, and instruction. Development
13 plans should, within that, provide
14 information about how they're assessments are
15 going to allow for multiple means of access
16 and response and engagement.

17 Since no one measure can serve all
18 purposes, I think multiple measures,
19 including outcomes beyond test scores, should
20 be articulated in a development phase. For
21 example, decreasing dropout and increasing
22 post-school success in careers and college
23 should be indicators that are used to develop

1 the -- to understand the effectiveness of the
2 program. And in that, also part of their RFP
3 should have a strong evaluation plan that
4 expresses how they are going to evaluate both
5 the intended and unintended consequences.

6 Second, I think there's two
7 consideration for the demonstration of
8 knowledge and skills and the validity in the
9 administration of the assessment. And as a
10 number of speakers have already talked about
11 this idea of growth and measuring growth
12 appropriately, I think is very important.

13 Race to the Top could provide
14 opportunities that have not yet been
15 available, to explore more meaningful ways to
16 measure the achievement of students with and
17 without disabilities, and should allow for
18 some development of some assessments that are
19 not burdened by high stakes, but are devoted
20 to find better ways to allow students to show
21 what they know so teachers can determine
22 better ways to teach.

23 Growth does transcend grade level

1 and so should assessments designed to measure
2 it. Measuring growth implies there is an
3 understanding of the learning progressions,
4 or pathways, that students typically follow
5 as they master key academic concepts. There
6 are many gaps in our current research in this
7 area for non-disabled students, and there's
8 practically no information regarding students
9 with disabilities. So in this way these
10 funds could help advance our knowledge.

11 Next, the proposal should describe
12 precisely what academic content will be
13 assessed. A clear understanding of the
14 relevant constructs are going to be really
15 necessary.

16 And finally, in terms of
17 innovative assessment design, technology
18 holds a lot more promise than to speed up the
19 delivery of results. It can really allow us
20 better ways to provide access to students
21 with disabilities in ways we haven't done on
22 paper and pencil tests, and also to get
23 better understanding of their knowledge and

1 their cognition, and to explore these
2 learning pathways.

3 Also, it's obvious that technology
4 provides many tools for educators in terms of
5 delivering assessments for multiple purposes,
6 for multiple audiences, can be used to
7 establish baseline data to diagnose areas of
8 needs, and to monitor progress, and to
9 determine if students have reached important
10 performance milestones.

11 Thank you very much.

12 MS. WEISS: Thank you.

13 DR. MAURO: Good morning. My name
14 is Dr. Ted Mauro. I'm the Educational
15 Director of ED101, Incorporated of South
16 Carolina. We're an educational consulting
17 and advocacy group for disadvantaged youth.
18 I need to state that I appear today on my own
19 accord and not as a representative of ED101
20 or its clients.

21 I thank you for this opportunity
22 to address your panel on the incredible
23 challenges of creating a 21st Century

1 assessment system for special education
2 students, a diverse and exceptional group,
3 while attempting to maintain the components
4 in an objective, valid and relevant student
5 progress measure.

6 Flexibility is the most desired
7 trait in today's special educator, and one of
8 the most -- and few consistent -- excuse
9 me -- one of the few consistent in the
10 classrooms. The one thing you know as a
11 special educator is that today is not going
12 to be like tomorrow, and tomorrow is not
13 going to be like the next day. The system of
14 assessment must be flexible, yet embrace
15 students in their individuality.

16 That is why we support a needs-
17 based assessment, a needs-based assessment.
18 I personally have administered five different
19 special education assessments at the high
20 school level and found some much more
21 appropriate than others. Nothing was more
22 frustrating than giving a paper test to a
23 student who could not spell their name or

1 perform its base measure on a test that
2 wasn't necessary.

3 Because of the variety of
4 individual performances, and the varied
5 factors in each classroom, I found the
6 portfolio-based assessment is the best
7 advice, not only for myself as the
8 instructor, but also is the best understood
9 by parents, administrators, school boards,
10 and potential employers.

11 I have learned this when I became
12 an assessor for the national boards. They
13 opened my eyes to the large variety of
14 outstanding programs across the country. It
15 allowed me to further my expertise as I
16 learned and emulated some of the best
17 teachers and programs in the country. This
18 system is also supported by the National
19 Association of Secondary School Principals.

20 Portfolio can include all levels
21 of assessment, like a mixed methods research
22 study. I've used portfolio-based systems in
23 South Carolina and saw it, but received

1 little feedback from it and found it
2 confusing in intent. While I would seek to
3 create and maintain electronic portfolios,
4 all portfolio assessments are flexible enough
5 to adapt to different students and different
6 needs.

7 It also has the added benefit of
8 providing stratified evidence of relevant
9 classroom instruction, assist researchers
10 with latitudal and longetudal data of various
11 real world measures. Portfolios can also
12 adapt particularly well to mainstream and co-
13 teaching environments, produced cultural
14 evidence, artifacts, and not only that of a
15 student, but of a program and a district. It
16 could document Part B or Part C transitions.

17 It could document other agency's
18 involvements, or community involvement.

19 Similar to a personnel file that
20 is held in every Fortune 500 company in the
21 United States, it's a collection of data,
22 evaluation reports, IEP, statistical data,
23 teacher qualifications, restraints and

1 seclusion reports, vocational instruction,
2 parental involvement, and other assessments.

3 Supporting documentation would be part of
4 this portfolio.

5 I would see this portfolio as an
6 integrated part of a merit-based pay system
7 for special educators, along with the IEP
8 itself as an extension of state
9 accountability systems. It can tie the LEA
10 to the SEA, and to ED, and no matter what
11 models becomes a stronger assessment system
12 of the entire system.

13 Components of these portfolios
14 could be dictated by the age classification
15 student, as the needs of students change with
16 maturity, the basic academic subjects we
17 transition to an I to indicate a 13 and 14,
18 as well as independent living skills. It
19 would include bar coded tracking systems that
20 will link each portfolio so components could
21 follow educational transitions, migrant
22 students, as well as post-secondary outcomes.

23

1 What could be more valuable to me
2 as a teacher from another district, or
3 working vocational rehabilitation than to
4 receive a collection of student-produced work
5 that go along with the IEP.

6 Finally, it's a method of appeal
7 and evidence gathering for LEAs, SEAs that
8 seek to be able to document a student's
9 growth. This is not to say that portfolios
10 don't have their challenges. They could be
11 difficult to store, hence the desire to
12 create an electronic version, but with
13 today's iPhones, videos, electronic IEPs and
14 massive download speeds, the ability to
15 maintain these portfolios with direct
16 student-produced work is better than ever.
17 The electronic component will also allow the
18 redacting of personal information and the
19 encryption of data.

20 Another challenge is that
21 portfolio-based assessments are labor
22 intensive unlike a paper test and daily
23 consideration. However, like the NCAT, or

1 national boards, it is -- it causes one to
2 question how one does instruction and what
3 programming is provided. The key to the
4 overall effectiveness of this program is
5 going to come down to the effectiveness of
6 the portfolio design, its appropriate rubric,
7 the training of educators, administrators,
8 assessors, and the guidelines that are going
9 to be shared with the SEAs and the LEAs.

10 MS. WEISS: Thank you. We have
11 your statement, don't worry, we will finish
12 reading it.

13 DR. MAURO: I know you will.
14 Thank you.

15 MS. WEISS: Thank you.

16 MS. DOWNES: Good afternoon. My
17 name is Jeanette Downes, and I come before
18 you as a parent, educator and union leader.
19 As a parent I support a child who had IEPs in
20 elementary school, testing accommodations in
21 high school, and now for the first time
22 classroom-based learning accommodations in
23 college.

1 As an educator, I support 150
2 teachers and paraprofessionals as a UFT
3 Teacher Center representative providing
4 professional development services. My school
5 serves 500 children with significant autism,
6 cognitive delays, hearing impairments, and
7 emotion disturbances. My role as a parent
8 and educator is to ensure our children have
9 what is needed to succeed in school and life.

10
11 I'm an active member of the United
12 Federation of Teachers in New York City. We
13 support 118,000 active educators and 1.1
14 million students in 1600 schools. I also
15 stand before you on behalf of the 1.4 million
16 members of the American Federation of
17 Teachers to offer some thoughts on how you
18 can better align systems to a common set of
19 K-12 standards.

20 I am encouraged by the active and
21 ongoing dialogue occurring across the nation.

22 However, I am worried about the
23 implementation of such assessment systems if

1 they are not well-designed, well-funded,
2 understood by front line implementers, and
3 punitive in nature.

4 As a practitioner I would support
5 assessment systems that are innovatively
6 designed and incorporate the use of
7 technology across content areas which have
8 the greatest potential to increase the rates
9 of accessibility and participation of all
10 students, including students with
11 disabilities and English language learners.

12 I believe such systems should
13 pursue measurements of student outcomes that
14 are universally designed, performance-based,
15 and embedded in curriculum. Universally
16 designed assessment systems would include
17 formats that multiple measures of
18 presentation, expression and engagement.
19 Such assessments would support the types of
20 accommodation and modifications that many
21 students with disabilities need to access
22 instruction as well as assessments. I would
23 further ask that improved accommodations do

1 not invalidate a test and be permitted for
2 use in both local and state assessments.

3 Expand your research in
4 technology, which has flexibility and
5 capacity to support authentic assessments,
6 and can become integrated into a state's
7 assessment system. Universally designed
8 assessment systems may incorporate a variety
9 of accessibility tools and features which are
10 customizable for each student, and would
11 permit students to use those tools and/or
12 features needed while taking a test.

13 Expand your research and determine
14 the best approaches for educators to use
15 performance-based assessments as a way to
16 gain access to information that can provide
17 ways to improve achievement, demonstrate
18 exactly what a student does or does not know
19 or understand, relate learning experiences to
20 instructions and combine assessment with
21 teaching. This is sound instruction. It is
22 what teachers do every day, it is what I do
23 every day.

1 Blending such sound instructional
2 methods with existing technology, such as a
3 computer-based assessment, is more likely to
4 increase access and participation of students
5 with disabilities. Consider expanding the
6 use of assessments embedded in curriculum
7 which allows teachers to require real time
8 snapshots of student mastery.

9 It occurs simultaneously with
10 learning, such as projects, portfolios, and
11 exhibitions. This support increased access
12 to curriculum that is relevant and meaningful
13 to students with disabilities. Again, this
14 is what teachers do and validates current
15 practice.

16 All of this will require
17 appropriate, not adequate but appropriate
18 levels of funding across multiple levels,
19 district, state and national. Educators will
20 need training at both the pre-service level,
21 ongoing training at the in-service level to
22 match changes in technology as they occur.
23 Technology adaptations require

1 infrastructures to be in place, hardware and
2 software updates, maintenance and personnel
3 to monitor data and outcomes in a timely
4 manner.

5 I believe, if we work together on
6 this, we can increase access and the rates of
7 participation of students with disabilities
8 in assessment systems. I know the AFT is
9 committed to working with Secretary Duncan to
10 identify programs, develop technology, and
11 collaborate on providing technical assistance
12 and professional development to practitioners
13 who will facilitate access to assessment
14 systems for students with disabilities.

15 I thank you, and appreciate this
16 opportunity to speak on behalf of the United
17 Federation of Teachers and the American
18 Federation of Teachers.

19 MS. WEISS: Thanks.

20 MS. HYMES: Good afternoon. My
21 name is Kim Hymes. I'm here on behalf of the
22 Council for Exceptional Children, and this is
23 an issue of great importance to CEC's 40,000

1 members who are special education teachers,
2 early intervention providers, administrators,
3 researchers, and higher education faculty.

4 As you know, NCLB has dramatically
5 changed how students with disabilities
6 participate in our national accountability
7 system. However, because our accountability
8 system is -- can only be as strong as the
9 assessment on which it is based, CEC has
10 advocated for revamping current assessments.

11 As the Department considers the
12 development of the Race to the Top assessment
13 competition, CEC urges a focus on the
14 following three areas. First, creating
15 assessments that are accessible to diverse
16 learners; second, creating high quality
17 alternate assessments based on both modified
18 and alternate achievement standards; and,
19 third, creating assessments that provide
20 meaningful feedback for decision makers --
21 for decision making for educators and
22 families.

23 Regarding our first point,

1 creating assessments that are accessible to
2 diverse learners, CEC urges the Department to
3 fund the creation of assessments and
4 assessment systems with the need of diverse
5 learners in mind. Current assessments were
6 not created to address the diverse learning
7 needs of students, and as a result attempts
8 have been made through the use of
9 accommodations and other strategies to
10 retrofit current assessments so they are more
11 accessible.

12 Instead of this piecemeal
13 approach, CEC recommends that the Department
14 fund grants that consider the needs of
15 diverse learners, including but not limited
16 to students with disabilities, from the
17 beginning. Specifically, CEC urges the
18 Department to fund grants that create
19 assessments which use multiple measures that
20 are more in reference on students with
21 disabilities such as standardized test
22 criterion, reference assessments, and
23 portfolios, are formative and summative in

1 nature in an effort to provide educators with
2 useful feedback, take into account
3 accommodations and modifications, utilize the
4 principles of universal design for learning,
5 and include computer adaptive testing.

6 Regarding our second point in
7 creating high quality alternate assessments
8 based on both modified and alternate
9 achievement standards, we want to, as was
10 stated earlier, point to the fact that there
11 has been -- well, there is a policy in place
12 to have both alternate assessments based on
13 alternate and modified achievement standards,
14 the consistency and availability of the
15 assessments vary widely between states.

16 A recent study within IES found
17 that many states approach the alternate based
18 on alternate differently. Some states use a
19 portfolio or body of evidence that constitute
20 the entire assessment, others use techniques
21 such as a rating scale or check list, and
22 these inconsistent approaches to these
23 assessments across states create varying

1 standards and expectations.

2 Currently the Department has only
3 approved one alternate assessment based on a
4 modified achievement standard for Texas and
5 states clearly need assistance in this area.

6 Therefore, CEC urges the Department to use
7 this opportunity to fund assessments based on
8 both alternate and modified achievement
9 standards as part of this Race to the Top
10 competition.

11 Also, we believe it is critical
12 for grants to include other elements that
13 contribute to effective assessments for --
14 and administering this type of assessment,
15 such as professional development, potential
16 for scaling up, dissemination practices, and
17 additional research that may be needed.

18 Regarding our third main point
19 which is creating assessments that provide
20 meaningful feedback to educators and
21 families, we encourage the Department to
22 place a strong emphasis on the importance of
23 creating assessments that yield this

1 information that can be used in the
2 classroom.

3 Assessments should be tools that
4 help inform instruction, identify areas of
5 strength and weakness, and help inform
6 decision making. However, assessments can
7 only be effective if they are presented in a
8 way that enables a student to accurately
9 demonstrate their knowledge and skill. To
10 this end, CEC encourages the Department to
11 include these types of grants and also
12 highlight professional development and
13 training that is needed.

14 In conclusion, CEC appreciates the
15 opportunity to provide feedback as the
16 Department moves forward in funding these
17 grants, and we will submit written comments
18 as well that expand on these issues, but also
19 highlight the needs of students who are
20 gifted and talented. All students will
21 benefit from assessments that allow them to
22 effectively demonstrate their knowledge and
23 skill, and our ability to have a true

1 understanding of how students with
2 disabilities are performing depends on having
3 accurate assessments on which to evaluate
4 them by.

5 MS. WEISS: Thank you very much.

6 I think that was our last speaker.

7 Right? Good.

8 Thank you all for coming; we're
9 right at time, so I will not delay. Let me
10 just thank, again, our experts for spending
11 the day with us today, and thank all of you
12 for traveling from wherever you traveled, and
13 I hope you have a safe trip back home again.

14 Thank you.

15 (Whereupon, at 12:32 p.m., the
16 meeting was concluded.)

17

18

19

20

21