



# Student Communication and the NCSC Alternate Assessment

The online NCSC alternate assessment is accessible to participating students in a number of ways.

The student can access the test questions by:

- Listening to the recorded voice read the test question
- Listening to the teacher read the test question
- Reading the test question independently
- Having the test question signed

Students may respond to test questions by:

- Using the mouse to select the answer online
- Verbalizing the answer and the teacher will record the answer online
- Gesturing or pointing to the answer
- Using assistive technology (AT) to indicate the answer
- Using an eye gaze chart to select the answer
- Circling or marking the answers on a paper copy of the test

The vast majority of students who participate in the online NCSC Alternate Assessment will be able to complete the assessment because they can access the test questions and communicate their responses to the test questions. However, 12—15% of students are reported by their teachers to have no observable way to communicate what they know in order to participate in classroom or large-scale assessments.

Therefore, NCSC developed a policy to be sure that the teacher can clearly identify which answer a student indicates in response to a test question. If a student cannot enter his/her response to a test question online or if the student's response to a test

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question is not observable by the teacher, using any of the ways a student may respond to a test question listed above, the teacher will not be able to enter the student's response into the online NCSC test.

NCSC also developed a Communication Toolkit to help educators plan communication interventions in order to increase access to the general education curriculum and to the NCSC assessment.

## **Before Testing**

### **Conduct a Student Response Check**

If the teacher is not certain that he/she will be able to observe a student's response to a test question, the teacher will conduct a Student Response Check (SRC). The purpose of the SRC is to ensure that the teacher can clearly identify which answer the student chooses for a selected-response (e.g., multiple choice) test question.

The SRC is a 3-question task. The student is asked to demonstrate his or her preferred methods of communicating a response to a question. The teacher can use the computer or a paper version to conduct the SRC. The student is asked a question and may respond by:

- Using the mouse to select the answer
- Verbalizing the answer
- Gesturing or pointing to the answer
- Using AT to indicate the answer
- Using an eye gaze chart to select the answer
- Circling or marking the answers on a paper copy of the test

Note: The use of hand-over-hand or any physical prompt does not count because the student is not indicating his/her answer choice independently. It is important that the assessment tests the student's knowledge without the possibility that the answer is influenced by another person.

### **After Conducting the Student Response Check**

If the student does communicate an observable response using one of the methods included in the SRC, then the student will be asked all the test questions in the English Language Arts (Reading/Writing) and Mathematics test. Breaks can be taken and the testing can be spread out across the period in which the state administers the test.

If the student does not communicate an observable response during the SRC, the teacher will ask the student the first four questions from either the Reading or

Mathematics part of the test. If the teacher observes a student response to at least one of the first four questions, then the teacher will ask the student all the test questions in English Language Arts and Mathematics (with breaks as needed). However, if the teacher does not observe a student's response to any of the first four questions, then the testing will be stopped.

It is very important to ensure that the test is not stopped because a student does not correctly answer the test questions. Students who are answering questions incorrectly must complete the test. It is important to have this information to determine the academic and instructional interventions that may be needed for this student.

If the test is stopped because the student did not communicate an observable response, the student's multidisciplinary team should provide interventions to develop the student's communication skills. The NCSC Communication Toolkit is one of the courses that can be found at <https://wiki.ncscpartners.org> in the wiki resources section called Educator Professional Development and Parent Resources.

The Toolkit provides professional development for teachers and related service team members (e.g., speech language pathologists) and is also useful a resource for parents and guardians. There are video modules in the Toolkit, as well as written materials and links to additional resources showing preschool through high school examples. The Toolkit will help educators, parents, and guardians identify types of communication; consider hearing, vision and motor challenges the student may have; select communication goals; select the appropriate Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC); teach communication; work on communication during academic lessons; and monitor progress.