

## **Session C-1: State Critical Elements: Inclusion**

**Panelists:** *Angela Broaddus, Dan Farley, Fran Warkomski, Melissa Gholson*

**Moderator:** *Leslie Clithero, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services*

Panelists discussed the types of evidence that support the critical elements for inclusion in the updated Guide. The ESSA clarifies and reinforces several peer review requirements for inclusion. Peers discussed the importance of practice and policy that supports the inclusion of all students in the state assessment, and how a state may document these policies and practices for peer review purposes. The discussion also addressed the application of these critical elements on ELP peer review. This session addressed section 5 of the updated Guide. Ms. Leslie Clithero introduced the panelists, who addressed several questions.

***When states submit evidence for peer review, what works well—especially, what pieces of evidence?***

### **Critical Element 5.1: Procedures for Including Students with Disabilities (pages 59–62)**

Ms. Angela Broaddus said that many questions are answered during a monitoring session. The state should provide documentation to be followed in accordance with critical element 5.1. Documents should be up to date and have evidence that that guidance was carried out. Strong documentation indicates which students the assessments are appropriate for and provides messages for parents. The new requirement is for equal benefits. It is particularly important to document the consequences of students taking particular assessments, such as delays in matriculation. Flow charts and records of training for LEAs are sometimes useful. Peer reviewers will check to ensure that the state actually did what it said it would. It is helpful for states to review the relevance of their entire series of manuals to make sure they are up to date.

### **Critical Element 5.2: Procedures for Including English Learners in Academic Content Assessments (pages 62–63)**

Ms. Gholson said a good example of what has worked well is a plan for language for ELs. She mentioned the Performance Assessment Networks (PAN). It should have what was included, with cautions about possible problems. States must be specific about what was provided or indicate why it was not provided. Peers need to see the alternate assessment. Define all the accessibilities and who might benefit from the support. For example, read-aloud support would not be helpful for a person who does not speak the language. Make sure the guidance includes any supports available to students, as well as accommodations for the general population. Reference all training materials. Not every LEA can train staff in accessibility options, but states can show that they have a coherent system and a body of evidence to answer the requirements.

### **Critical Element 5.3: Accommodations (pages 63–64)**

Mr. Dan Farley said this is an exercise in how to choose and use the most appropriate supports. “Accommodations” have morphed into universal design considerations. The definition states that the accommodation has to be selected for the individual student, including designated supports. Designated supports should be monitored, in addition to accommodations. A best practice is to submit one central document. However, states can’t assume that anyone reads what they are distributing. The only way to

verify is to offer training and have people sign statements indicating that they took the training and understand it. What assessments are appropriate? Many states do not do well at documenting a literature review that supports the accommodation(s) made. Training is also needed on the use of the Assessing Special Education Students manual (a CCSSO publication), and the fact that training actually occurred must be documented. The state should also provide evidence that the state has a process for reviewing unique accommodations.

#### **Critical Element 5.4: Monitoring Test Administration for Special Populations (page 64)**

Ms. Fran Warkomski said monitoring test administration for special populations requires state leadership and coordination. There is more than one way to do it. New assessments allow states to re-look at the accommodations available. The same people are working on this, whether it's cognitive impairment or dyslexia, so they need to be trained. Coordination is needed across all areas: assessment, special education, and EL programs. When monitoring is done on-site, deploy the personnel who are useful for you. Local people have to be involved to aid in test administration. States need to decide what to monitor and how to go about it. Options include being on-site, using Skype, or using training as part of the monitoring. Reviewers want to see a checklist for monitoring. What training do monitors receive? What was the result? You have to answer the "so what?" question. How does that state use the information gleaned from monitoring? You have a result with some data and training materials; what did you do with it when you finished? What did your back-up show you? Did you do what you said you would do?

#### ***When working as a peer reviewer, what would be helpful for states to think about in those areas?***

Ms. Broaddus said manuals should contain criteria for providing documents on how states should identify students that need accommodations and design supports. The manuals should explain the processes aligned to alternate achievement standards. They should be written so parents can understand them and state what they are agreeing to. LEAs and states should identify potential risks and should document training for the people who provide accommodations and supports. Monitoring should detail how it is done. Manuals should substantiate how LEAs supply guidance and who does it. Include processes for what should be done if something doesn't happen the way it is supposed to happen. Refer reviewers to specific page numbers, and provide a summary of how that evidence meets the requirements of the critical element.

Ms. Gholson said to focus on ELs and define where the gaps lie. On test day, monitor linguistic supports. Without knowing that you have fidelity, you don't know whether the student can do it. This is important for students with disabilities and EL students. Lack of evidence submitted includes a lack of training on linguistic supports—just the availability of linguistic supports does not help the student. Checking every box is not helpful. English-only policies need to clarify the relationship between what is provided, what was trained for, and what actually happened. This could be a state policy issue. Not having glossaries in the languages spoken by students is a problem. You can't overly rely on your vendor, because the vendor may not know all the state policies. There is a disconnect between participation guidelines and vendors' publications. With such deficiencies, it isn't clear that you have a coherent system. Not all test administration is done with fidelity.

Mr. Farley said that if you don't have a centralized accommodation manual, you have a decentralized one, which is not coherent. If you are not providing that guidance to your teachers in a comprehensive manual, you are not serving them well. They need information on how to select accommodations.

What's missing is evidence that that has been delivered to teachers in training. Available accommodations can be compiled in a list that identifies which ones are appropriate for which test; then define the students who take that test. There is an impact when mediating students' access, and states must provide literature to guide decision-making. If reviewers don't see that the scores are comparable, there must be a process for addressing and accepting unique accommodation requirements. Peer review process outcomes remain a murky area. They have become more systematized, but still depend on the reviewers. States and ED have a supporting role and a monitoring role to help figure these issues out. If necessary, contact ED or other state departments of education for assistance.

Ms. Warkomski said 5.4 lists six items. The policy and procedures document describes what should happen; we follow up with monitoring to see what did happen. Reviewers look for what's in the manual. Your preferences go on the right-hand side, but they don't make it into the report that goes out to you. Elements go on the left, evidence in the center with the page number, and suggestions in the last column (i.e., what else you can do after meeting the requirement). If you met it, you need to provide evidence that you met it. Not all states have the same ability to conduct state assessments. You can monitor and help decide where to go on-site. All states are different, so this should be done according to what makes sense for the state. If you see that an element is not being addressed, provide evidence that it is not being addressed. You may have an accommodation, but it may not be consistent with what's on the IEP. States have to list all available accommodations. A summary of what happens with the results of monitoring is often missing. To help reviewers finding evidence, provide a page number.

Mr. Farley said it's important to submit vendors' documentation (e.g., PAN), but there must also be assurances that the state is following the vendors' documentation, as well as documentation on any aspects you are not following.

***Is there new assessment peer review guidance to which states should pay particular attention?***

Ms. Broaddus said preparing a document describing EL students (5.2) is complicated. But documentation must be easy for teachers to read. Equal benefits is an important requirement. There is good information on this in the front matter of the Guide.

Ms. Gholson said there is nothing new in 5.2. Participation guidelines must be updated annually. Evidence is needed under meaningful consultation. In participation guidelines, be sure to include all stakeholders, including advocates and experts in accessibility. You can give them the old guidelines and ask them to help with updating them.

Mr. Farley said that accommodation is not just what is made available; it also must be relevant, and the state must demonstrate its interoperability. The accommodations should not deny student participation, especially in the high school context. Monitoring includes which accommodations are allowed. Interoperability is not simple because of the challenges with test security and third-party apps. So far, vendors haven't been able to ensure test security—that's an ongoing process. Make sure an accommodation does not violate the state's authority.

Ms. Warkomski said 5.4 brings together stakeholders, including parents, to help with updates.

**Questions and Comments**

- Ms. Warkowski said to refer back to what was done for monitoring; then assign and select places based on risk factors. Explain the situation. Address components in relation to what others have done. Check on a site during test administration. You don't have to start from scratch. How many protocols do you have? Use that information to summarize what you intend to do.
- A participant asked if monitoring included monitoring accommodations. Ms. Gholson replied that monitoring test administration differs from monitoring accommodations and the supports that are available. For example, when too many students got scribing support, the state investigated and found that it was inappropriately given. This issue was included in training for the next year. Knowing high numbers for specific accommodations is very important. This relates to the test security you should have. Use the state content. It's important to track who was getting what. EL teachers do not get the same level of training that special education teachers get. Review accommodations and have a plan to address discrepancies.
- Another participant asked if equal benefits apply for grade 3 as well as high school. Mr. Farley explained that equal benefits are not exclusive to high school. States need to consider them across the board.
- One participant was surprised by the conversation on monitoring. She had no support for EL assessments and was relying on the local monitors who submit reports. About 100 visits were conducted, mostly for administration. She said this requirement would be a stretch for them. Ms. Gholson said having limited English proficient (LEP) and IEP allows for an electronic process, but that requires electronic input. There are ways to do it that are not as cumbersome as one might think. In West Virginia, everything is uploaded daily.