

presents

Using Universal Design in Test Development to Benefit ELLs

June 10, 2010

Dr. Charles Stansfield, President, Second Language Testing Inc.

Ms Lauren Kennedy, Director of Test Development, Second Language Testing Inc.

Ms Kristin K. Liu, Senior Research Fellow, National Center on Educational Outcomes, University of Minnesota

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Thank you

NCELA is operated under contract ED-04-CO-0094/0002 from the US Department of Education to The George Washington University. Our mission is to provide technical assistance information to state education agencies, local education agencies, and others regarding the education of English language learners.

Welcome

- Welcome to the webinar on “Using Universal Design in Test Development to Benefit ELLs.” Today’s webinar is hosted by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, NCELA, located at the Graduate School of Education and Human Development at The George Washington University, funded through a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition.
- NCELA's mission is to provide technical assistance information to state and local educational agencies on issues pertaining to English language learners.
- My name is Kathia Flemens, Ph.D., a Research Associate at NCELA and your Webinar facilitator.



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presents

Today our presenters are:

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Applying Universal Design for ELLs in Test Development

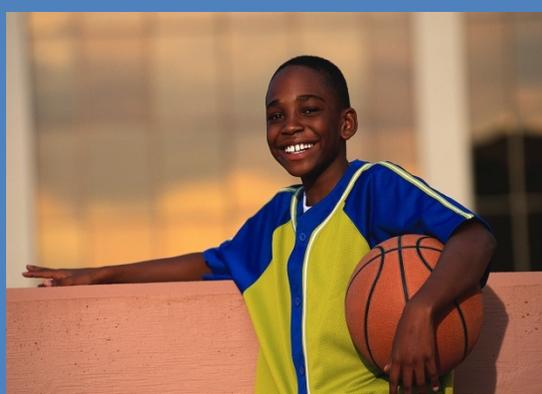


**CHARLES STANSFIELD, LAUREN KENNEDY, AND
KRISTIN KLINE LIU**

June 10, 2010



Who are the students who will likely be included in a state assessment?



Students who...

- Perform at grade level
- Read below grade level
- Come from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds
- Have limited English proficiency
- Have a disability

What are the characteristics of ELLs in this group?



- **Speak a variety of L1s**
- **Have varying degrees of L2 proficiency**
- **Have varying amounts of experience with formal schooling**
- **Have been in the U.S. differing amounts of time**
- **May be highly mobile**
- **May have a disability**

ELLs with disabilities take large-scale assessments too!



- **Roughly 9% of all ELLs have a disability (est. 423,000 to 510,000 in 2007)**

(U.S. Department of Education, 2010; Zehr, 2010; Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Stephenson, Pendzick, & Sapru, 2003)

Goals of Universal Design



- To provide optimal assessment conditions for today's diverse population of students
- Universally designed assessments are built from the **beginning** and **continually refined** to be accessible and valid for the greatest number of students, **including English language learners.**
- Universally Designed assessments increase the opportunity for ELLs to show what they know and can do in content area assessments
- All students who have had the opportunity to learn the material should have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning on an appropriate assessment of that material

Think about universal design in architecture and tool design



- **Curb cuts and ramps**
- **Signage with universal symbols**
- **Door handles rather than knobs**
- **Special pen shapes that are easier to hold**



Key characteristics



What UD is

- Assessments are designed from the outset to be a UD assessment
- Continual refinement and revision of the assessment is necessary as the population and contexts change

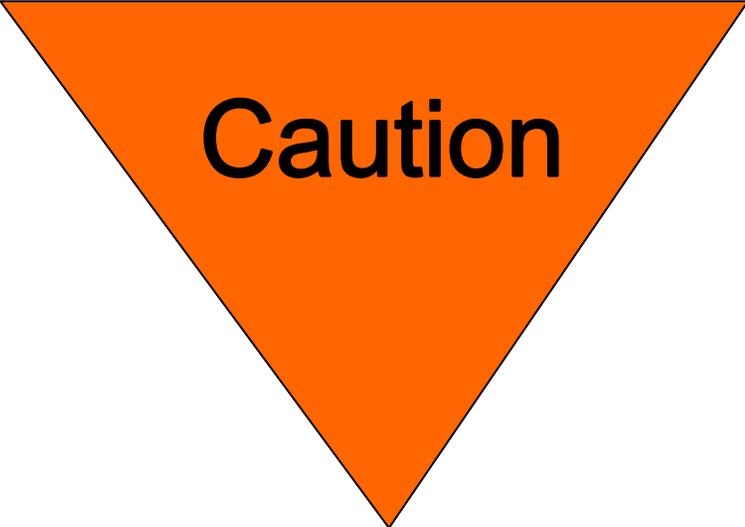
What UD is not

- UD does not change the standard of performance
- UD does not eliminate the need for test accommodations
- UD does not have pre-defined or set in stone rules
- UD does not benefit English language learners only

Universal Design can increase the reliability and validity of assessments for ELLs



- Abedi (2002) found that language can be a source of measurement error that can negatively impact **reliability** of test results for ELLs.
- Language has also been found to be a source of construct irrelevance that can have a negative impact on the **validity** of the results for ELLs (Abedi, 2002).



Caution

While Universally Designed assessments can make tests more equitable, producing results that are more valid for all students, they cannot replace instructional opportunity or test accommodations!

Elements of a Universally Designed test



- measures what it intends to measure
- respects the diversity of the assessment population
- has a clear format for text
- has clear pictures and graphics (when essential to item)
- has concise and readable text
- allows changes to its format without changing its meaning or difficulty (including visual or memory load)
- has an overall appearance that is clean and organized

**Is the question clearly
identifiable?**



**Let's look at examples of test
items**

Grade 12 Reading comprehension item



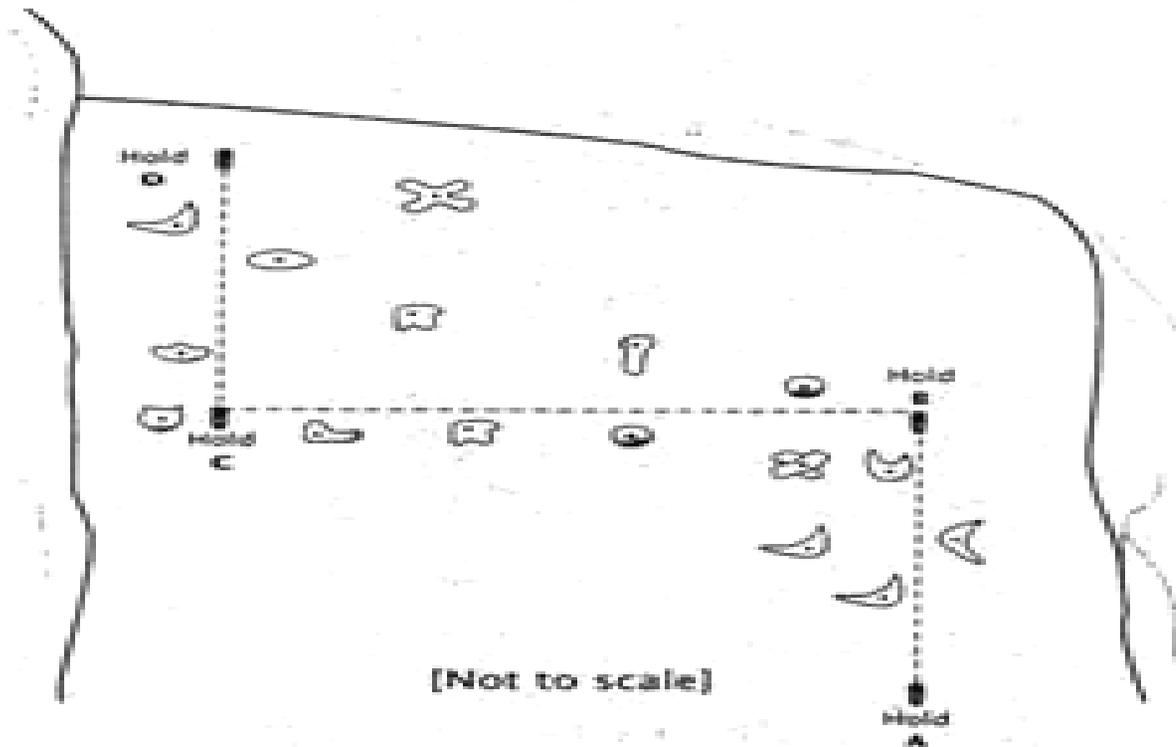
Using information from the speech, explain why Mr. Minow believed that television programmers bear greater responsibility to the public than do newspaper publishers.

Mr. Minow believes that television programmers have a greater responsibility to the public than do newspaper publishers. Why does Mr. Minow believe this? Use information from the speech to explain why.

**Are unrelated technical terms
are avoided or defined?**



“Four **holds** on a **rock climbing wall** are labeled on the diagram below. Matthew climbs vertically 10 feet from Hold A to Hold B, horizontally 25 feet from Hold B to Hold C, and then vertically 15 feet from Hold C to Hold D. How many fewer feet would Matthew have climbed if he had climbed directly from Hold A to Hold D?”



- Is the use of “hold” as a noun familiar to students?
- Is the concept of a “rock climbing wall” familiar?
- Will students be distracted by the odd shapes on the diagram?

**Does the item contain
commonly used words?**



Grade 8 Science item



When you exercise **strenuously**, your body produces **excess** heat. Describe what your body does to help prevent your temperature from rising **excessively**, and explain why the body's response is effective.

**Is the sentence complexity
appropriate for the grade level?**



Grade 8 Science item



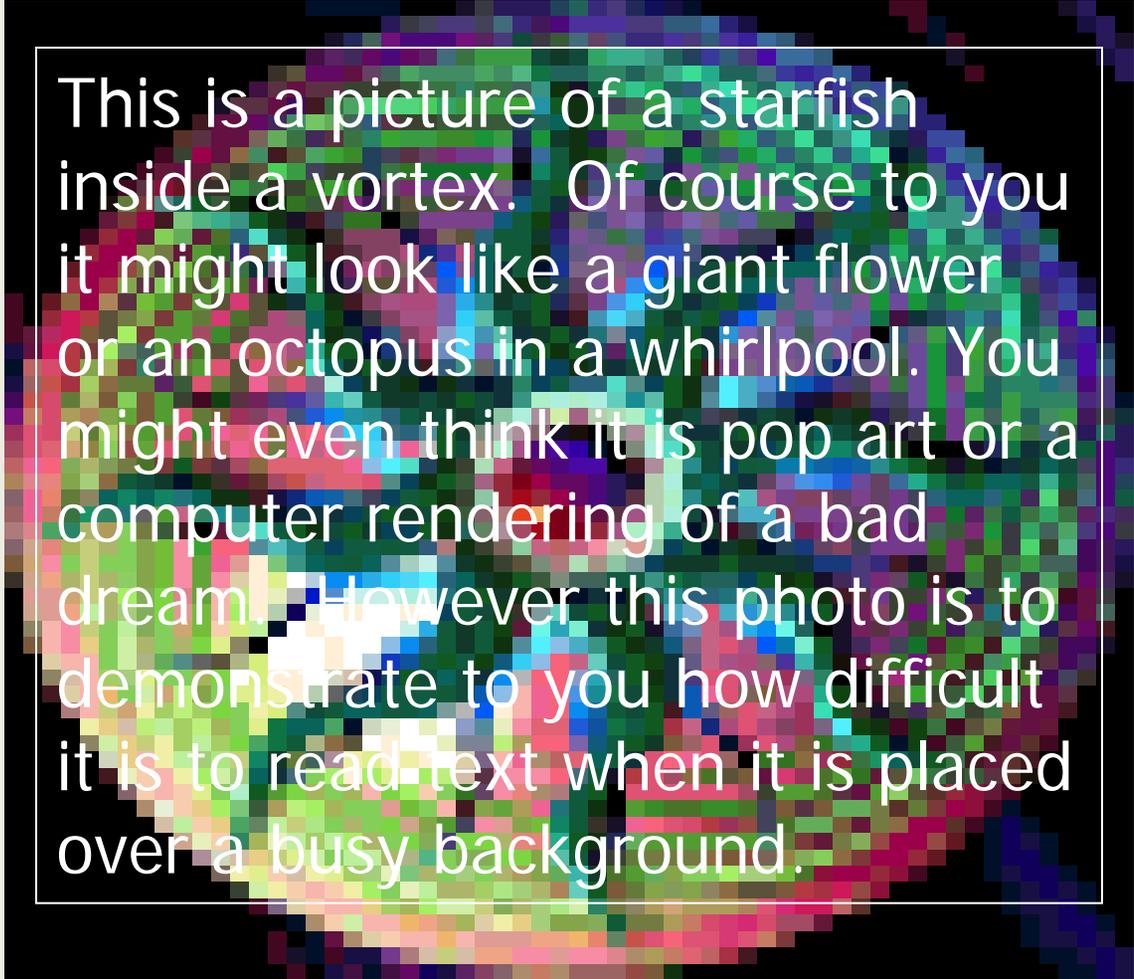
If a rainstorm washed some fertilizer from a nearby field into the pond, what would happen to the algae in the pond system after one month? Why do you think the fertilizer would affect the algae this way?

Rain washes fertilizer from a field into the pond. What effect does the fertilizer have on the algae in the pond after one month? Why does the fertilizer affect the algae in this way?

Is the format is easy to navigate?
[computer testing]



Text with background graphics or other media is difficult to read.

A square image with a black background. In the center, there is a colorful, pixelated vortex or whirlpool. The colors are a mix of red, green, blue, yellow, and purple. A white starfish is visible in the center of the vortex, partially obscured by the swirling colors. The text is overlaid on this image.

This is a picture of a starfish inside a vortex. Of course to you it might look like a giant flower or an octopus in a whirlpool. You might even think it is pop art or a computer rendering of a bad dream. However this photo is to demonstrate to you how difficult it is to read text when it is placed over a busy background.

**Does the item rely on an
assumed shared experience?**



A math item



To raise money for a trip to the Wolfridge Environmental Learning Center, sixth graders at Johnson Middle School are selling **raffle tickets**. The raffle prize is an electric scooter worth more than \$300. A total of 500 tickets were sold. You bought two raffle tickets, your sister bought three and your father bought one. What is the probability that someone in your family will win the prize?

**Does the content unfairly
advantage or disadvantage any
students?**



Grade 5 math item

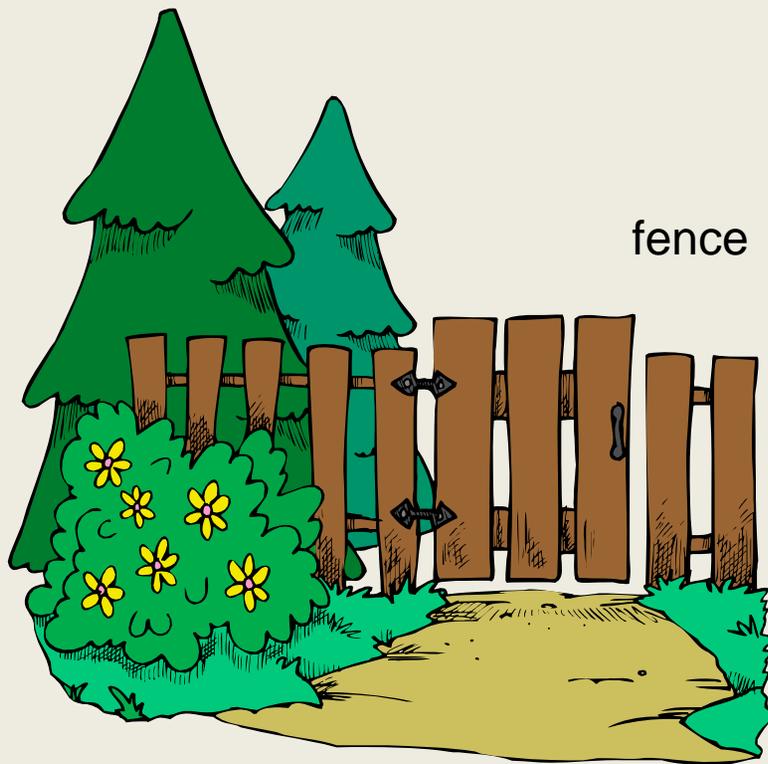


The **Skytrain** travels from Glenmont station to the ferry dock at 80 km/hr which is 20 km away. How long would it take you to go between Glenmont and the **ferry dock** if you took the Skytrain?

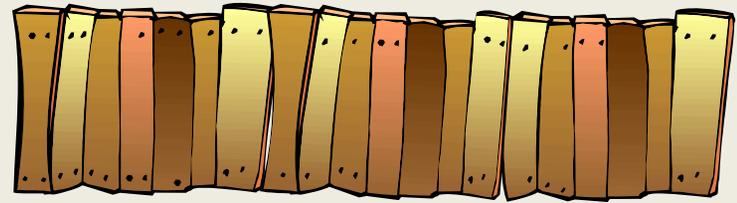
Are there clear, nonfuzzy
pictures?



Fence, or bridge, or what?



fence



fence

Add context and labels to help identify pictures

**Do items reflect the intended
content standard?**



K-2 listening item



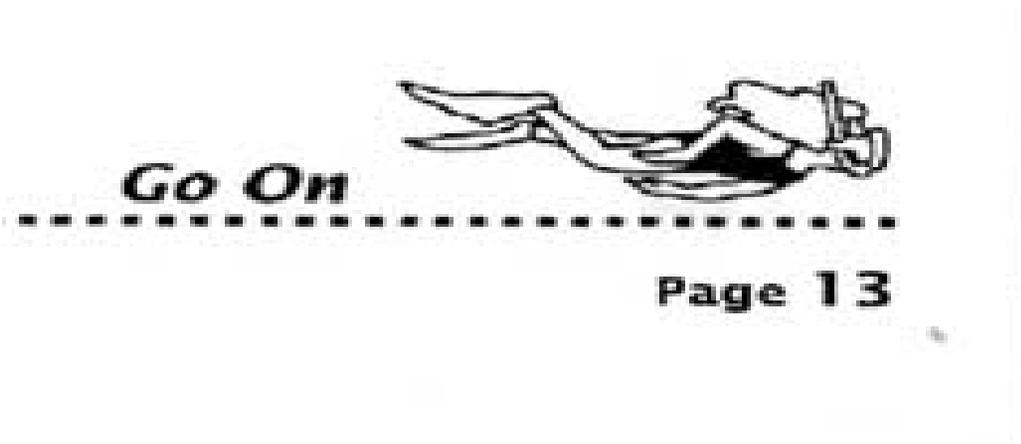
Draw a nose on the man's face.



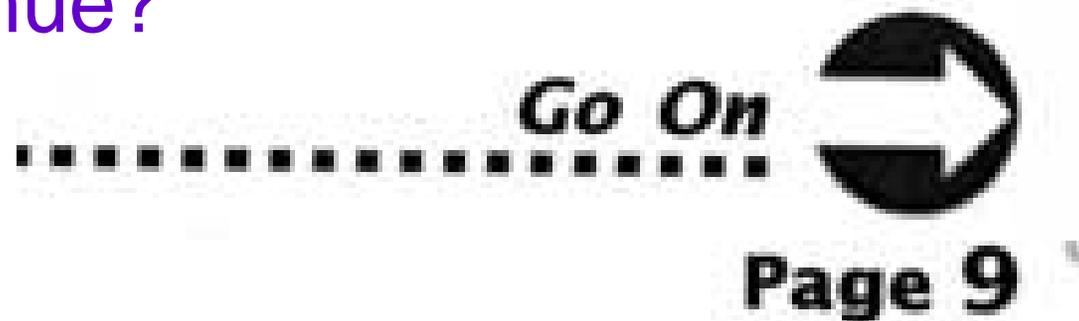
Does the item use highly distinguishable symbols?



Is the swimmer at the bottom of the page distracting?



Is this a better way to remind test takers to continue?



Questions to consider



- Can we change the item without changing the construct?
- How well do our test items align with the intended constructs for each item?
- What types of accommodations will students be using on the test? How do they affect the accessibility of the items?
- How can we design tests that allow ELLs to show what they know and can do?



**Help make
better
assessments
so we all can
make more
informed
decisions
about the
academic
achievement
of ELLs!**

- **Get involved in state standards development and other assessment activities relevant to ELLs.**

Credits



Thompson, S., Anderson, M., and Liu, K. (2004). *Training module for the universal design of English proficiency and content area assessments. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.*

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Questions?





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NCELA

National Clearinghouse for
English Language Acquisition and
Language Instruction Educational Programs

Thank you

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- For more information or if you have additional questions regarding today's webinar topic contact:

Dr. Charles Stansfield at cstansfield@2LTI.com

Ms. Lauren Kennedy at lkennedy@2LTI.com

Ms. Kristin K. Liu at kline010@umn.edu

or

- If you have additional questions regarding the webinar contact:

Kathia Flemens at kflemens@gwu.edu.

This webinar will be archived on NCELA's website. To view archived webinars, please visit <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/webinars/>

Thank you