



# **Inclusive (accessible) instructional and assessment practices with neurodiverse foreign language learners**

*Assessment in Multilingual Contexts: Trends &  
Challenges in Foreign Language Education*  
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- All learners are unique, special and different
- One-size-fits-all is not effective in meeting the needs of all learners'



- Remove existing barriers to learning
- Design barrier-free learning spaces



Equality



Equity



Accessibility





## PLAN OF THE TALK

1. Accessible language assessment for neurodiverse learners: **Key issues and special adjustments**
2. Accessible language assessment for neurodiverse learners: **Sample test/exam access accommodations**
3. Increasing accessibility in classroom instruction and assessment: **Universal Design for Learning**
4. Instructional and assessment accommodations: **Accommodations decision-making process**



**Accessible language assessment  
for neurodiverse learners**  
**Key issues and special  
adjustments**

# Accessible language assessment for neurodiverse learners – key issues

- What is assessment?
- Formal and informal assessment
- Formative and summative
- Tests

# Accessible language assessment for neurodiverse learners – key issues

- Assessment should be valid and fair
- Major threats to validity: construct under-representation and construct irrelevance variance
- Principles of fairness – issues especially important when assessing neurodiverse learners
  - lack of bias – bias resulting from response-format
  - equitable treatment in the assessment process – appropriate testing conditions
  - equity in the outcomes of testing
  - fairness as an opportunity to learn
- Finding the balance between valid and fair is not easy - many of the skills that **language tests intend to measure are precisely those that are problematic** for neurodiverse learners





# Accessible language assessment for neurodiverse learners – special adjustments

- No student should be at a disadvantage while taking the assessment
- Accommodations should be based on individual student's characteristics and needs
- Special adjustments – Accommodations and modifications
- Example 1: a glossary on a vocabulary knowledge test
- Example 2: a reading aloud accommodation on a reading comprehension task
- Example 3: answering reading comprehension questions orally instead of in writing
- Available accommodations in high-stakes language proficiency test vary across the examination boards (candidates apply for these accommodations and present formal documentation confirming the need for accommodations)

# Accessible language assessment for neurodiverse learners – special adjustments

Assessment adjustments:

- Accommodations
  - presentation format
  - response format
  - timing
  - test-setting
- Modifications (Note: these can be frequently used by teachers in classroom-based assessment)
  - using only parts of the test
  - using substitute tests or alternative assessments





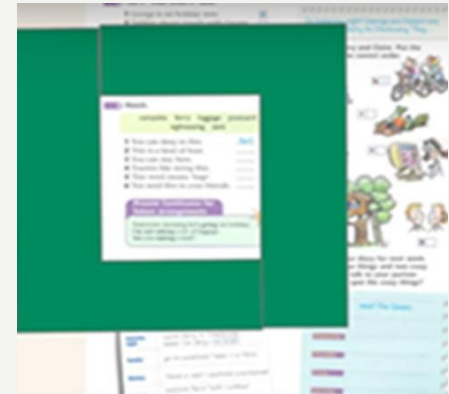
**Accessible language assessment  
for neurodiverse learners**  
**Sample test/exam access  
accommodations**



# Accessible language assessment for neurodiverse learners – sample accommodations

- Accommodations in presentation format (change in how test instructions and test items are presented):

- larger font-size and spacing
- transparent coloured overlays
- windows that limit the text area
- magnification devices
- screen reader
- oral reading



- Accommodations in response format (allow students to respond to test item in another modality):
  - answering comprehension question orally rather than in writing
  - using a computer (word processor)
  - using a scribe
  - responding directly in the test booklet rather than on a separate answer sheet
  - using organizational devices, such as spelling assistive devices, visual organizers

# Accessible language assessment for neurodiverse learners – sample accommodations

- Accommodations in timing:
  - extended time (allowing more time to complete the test – to process task instructions, to read task input and to review answers)
  - multiple or frequent breaks (supervised)
  - change in testing schedule
  - testing over multiple days (practicality and security)
- Accommodations in test setting:
  - testing individually
  - testing in a small group
  - testing in a separate room
  - adjusting the lighting
  - reducing noise, providing noise buffers (earplugs, headphones)
  - making location available for wheelchair users
  - prompter

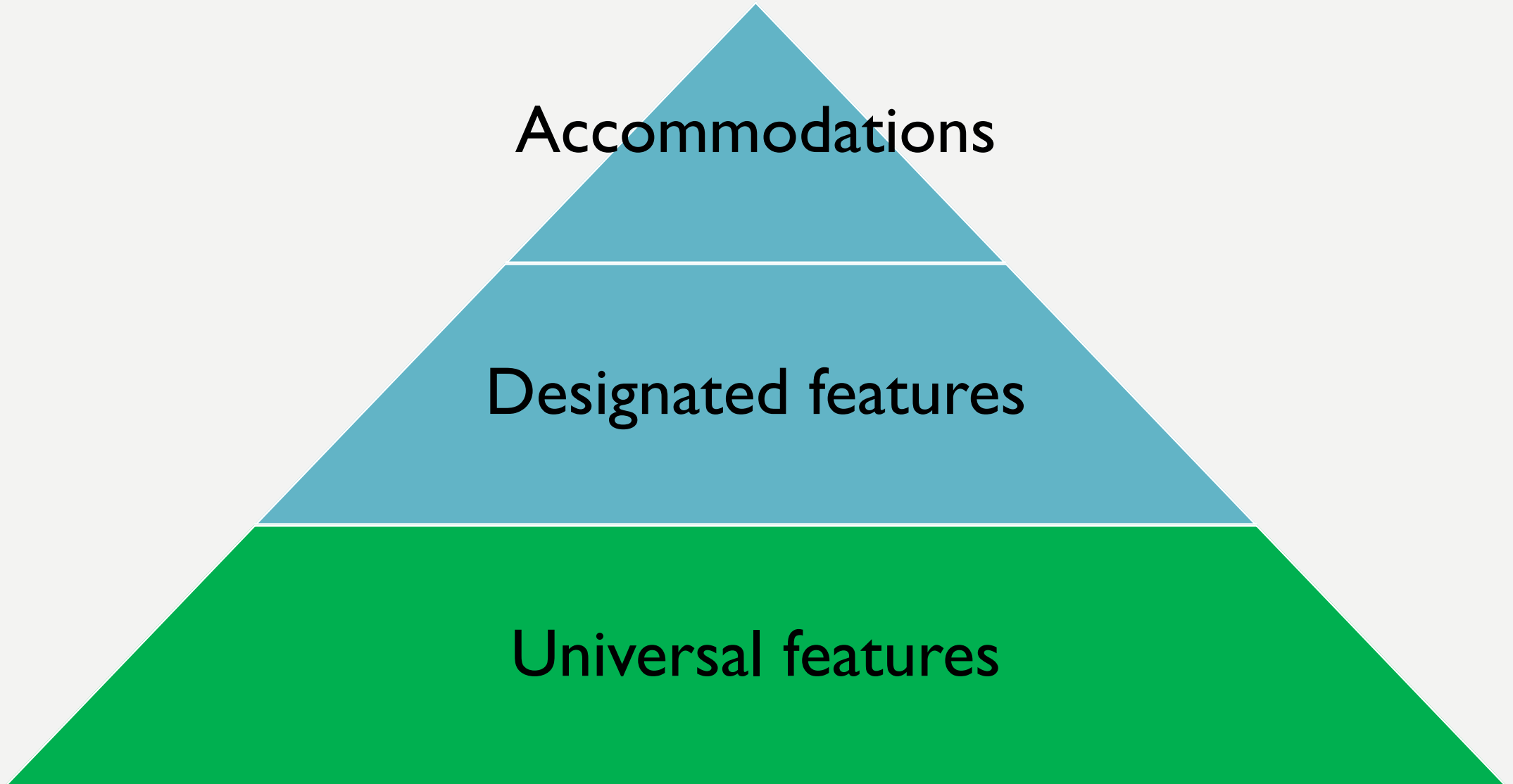


# **Increasing accessibility in classroom instruction and assessment**





# Three-tiered approach to accessibility



# Three-tiered approach to accessibility



- **Universal accessibility features** are available to all students as they access instructional or assessment content

**Examples of universal accessibility features:** volume control/headphones, noise buffer, digital notepad (virtual scratch paper), expandable passages (enlarged), zoom (item-level), highlighter, line reader/line reader mask tool, keyboard navigation, flag for review, breaks, also dictionary and glossary, spellchecker – for classwork and selected assessment tasks

- **Designated accessibility features** are those features that are available for use by any student for whom the need has been indicated by an educator

**Examples of designated features:** colour contrast, colour overlays, magnification devices, answer masking (blocking off answer choices), general masking (blocking off content), text-to-speech/audio support (in headphones), zoom (test-level), human read aloud/read aloud, native language translation of task instructions, paper-and-pencil test, separate setting, student reading test aloud (to himself in order to focus – one-to-one testing so that it does not disturb other students), turning off universal features (that might interfere with student performance, or be distracting to the student).

# Three-tiered approach to accessibility

➤ **Accommodations** are changes in procedures or materials that ensure equitable access to instructional and assessment content and generate valid assessment results for students who need them. Accommodations are generally available for students for whom there is a documented need, an IEP or accommodation plan

**Examples of accommodations:** extended time, assistive technology (customized keyboards, assistance with using a mouse, touch screen, and trackball, speech-to-text conversion, or voice recognition), scribe, also for other SEN students: sign language, closed captioning (for hard of hearing and deaf students), unlimited rerecordings of the spoken answers, Braille.







**Increasing accessibility  
in classroom instruction and  
assessment: Universal Design  
for Learning**

# Increasing accessibility in classroom instruction and assessment: **Universal Design for Learning**



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- Multiple options for accessibility in classroom instruction and assessment can be provided in following areas: **representation, engagement, action and expression.**
- In other words, we can offer different options and choices when: presenting new information, engaging students with content and letting them show what they have learned

# Increasing accessibility in classroom instruction and assessment: **Universal Design for Learning**

## Offer multiple means of **representation**

Accessibility: Provide options for perception

- a) *Provide the same information through different modalities*
- b) *Provide information in a format that will allow for adjustability by the user*



# A) provide the same information through different modalities

## When presenting information through sound:

- Use text equivalents in the form of captions or automated speech-to-text (voice recognition) for spoken language
- Provide visual diagrams, charts,
- Provide written transcripts for videos or auditory clips
- Use visuals to represent emphasis and prosody (e.g., emoticons, symbols, or images)

## When presenting information through images, graphics, animations, video, or text:

- Provide descriptions (text or spoken) for all images, graphics, video, or animations
- Transform text into audio
- Allow for a competent aide, partner, to read text aloud
- Provide access to text-to-speech software
- Add narration to a PowerPoint presentation or to Google Slides



## **B) provide information in a format that will allow for adjustability by the user**

**Offer ways of customizing the display of information**

**Display information in a flexible format so that the following perceptual features can be varied**

- The size of text, images, graphs, tables, or other visual content
- The contrast between background and text or image
- The colour used for information or emphasis
- The volume or rate of speech or sound
- The speed or timing of video, animation, sound, simulations, etc.
- The layout of visual or other elements
- The font used for print materials

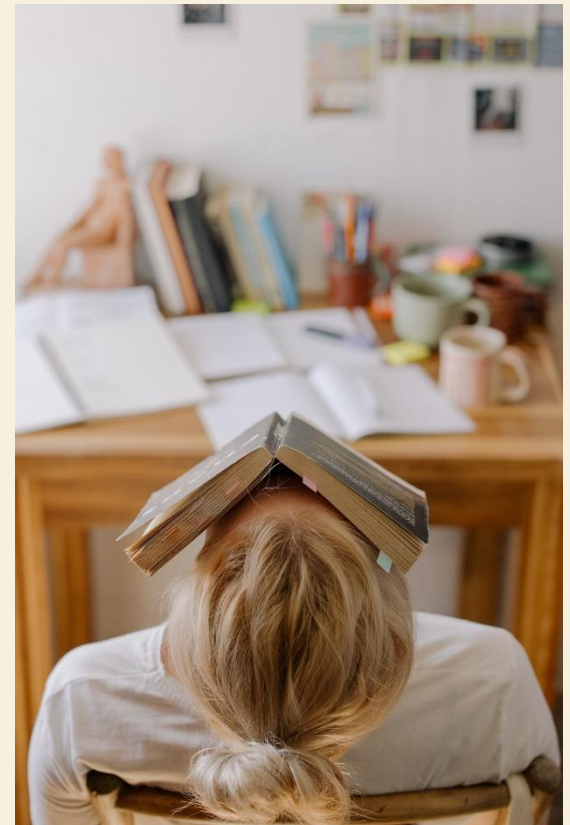
[UDL guidelines by CAST](#)

# Increasing accessibility in classroom instruction and assessment: **Universal Design for Learning**

Provide multiple means of **engagement**

Accessibility: Provide options for recruiting Interest

- a) *Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity*
- b) *Optimize individual choice and autonomy*



# Increasing accessibility in classroom instruction and assessment: **Universal Design for Learning**

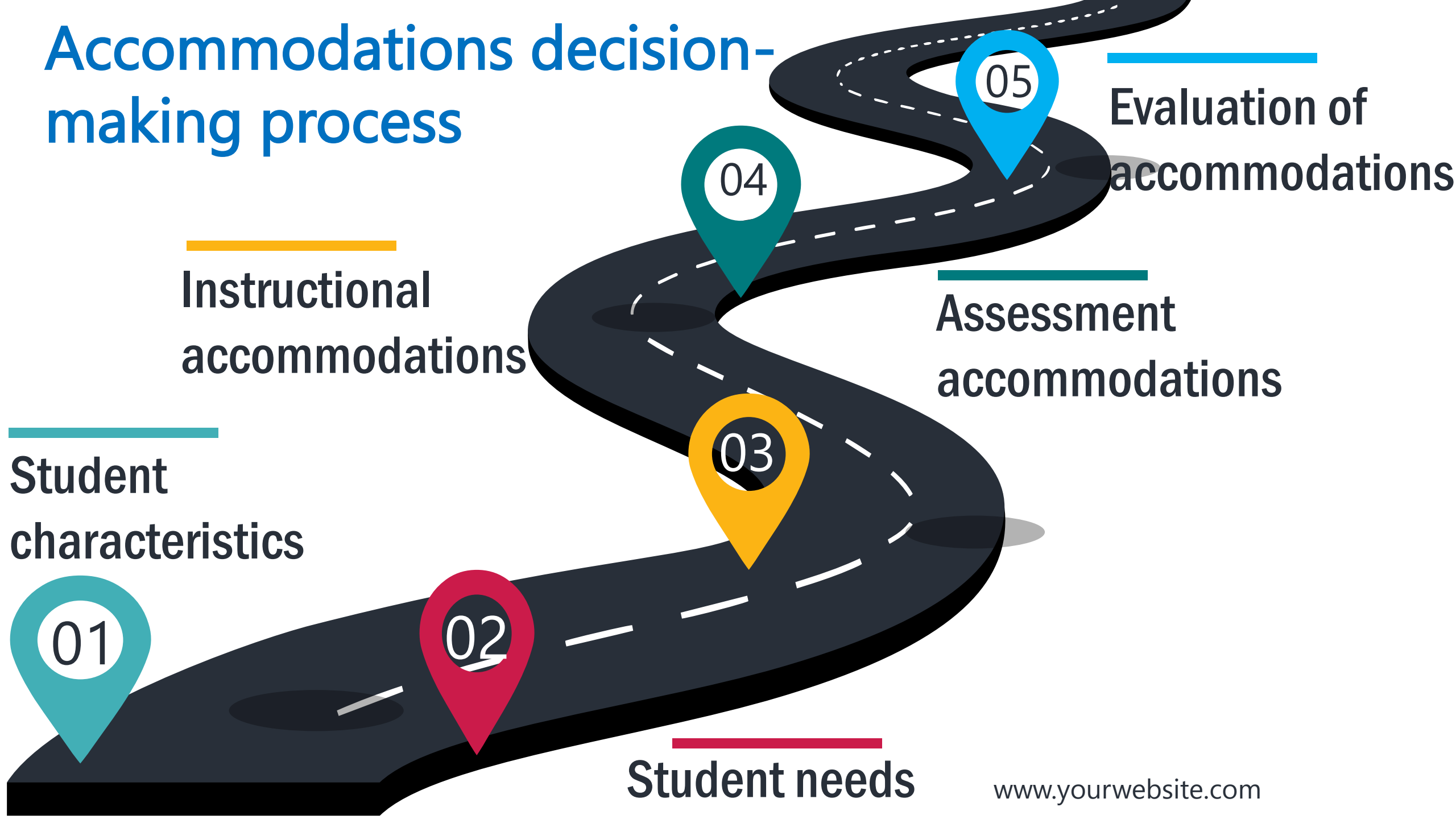
## Provide multiple means of **action and expression**

- a) *Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies* (provide alternate keyboard commands for mouse action; customize overlays for touch screens and keyboards)
- b) *Use multiple media for communication* (text, speech, drawing, illustration, comics, storyboards, design, film, music, dance/movement, visual art, sculpture, or video)  
Use social media and interactive web tools (e.g., discussion forums, chats, web design, annotation tools, storyboards, comic strips, animation presentations)
- c) *Use multiple tools for construction and composition* (provide spellcheckers, grammar checkers, word prediction software, text-to-speech software (voice recognition), recording, sentence starters or sentence strips; use story webs, outlining tools, or concept mapping tools)

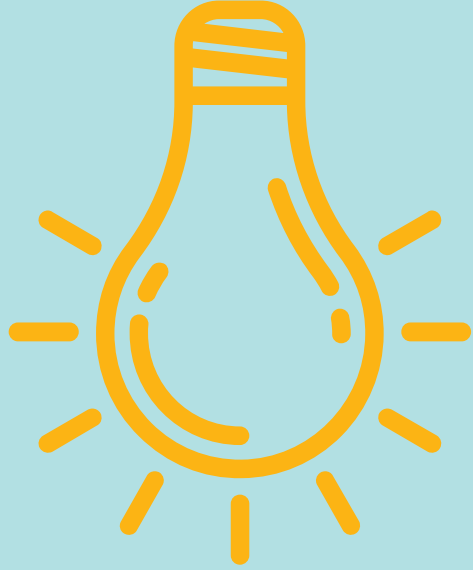


# **Instructional and assessment accommodations: Accommodations decision-making process**

# Accommodations decision-making process

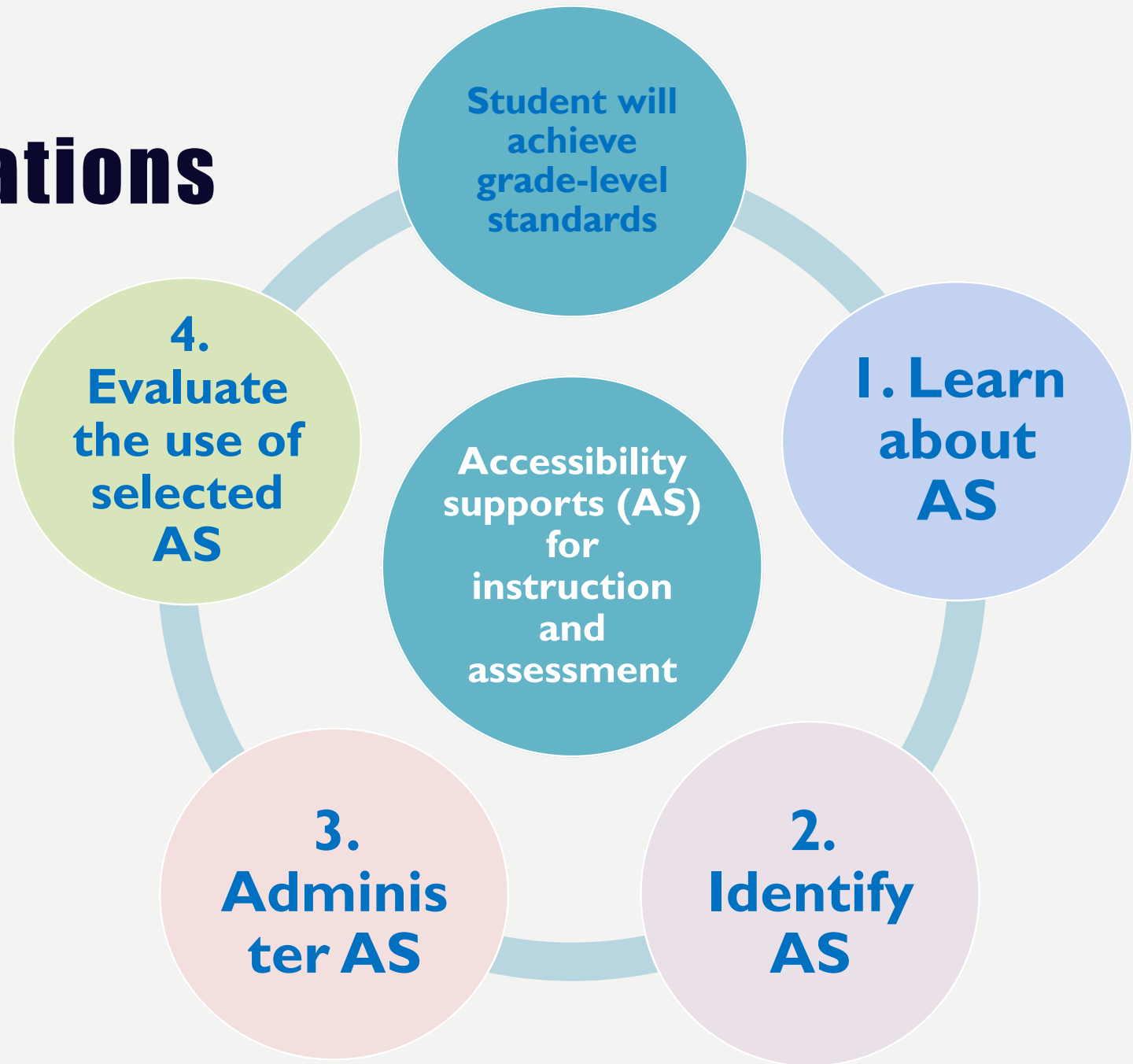






Some accommodations which are used for instruction and informal assessment **may not be appropriate (and allowed)** on state tests or during high-stake exams because they would interfere with the knowledge and skills that the test is intended to measure (they may alter what a test is designed to measure) and in that way invalidate the results of these exams

# Selecting accommodations



# Selecting accommodations

How do you know which accessibility features are appropriate for which student?

- Students with a given SpLD may have different characteristics. **Basing accommodations decisions on the category alone (e.g. learners with dyslexia, ADHD or dyspraxia) is inappropriate and will likely result in ineffective (or harmful) accommodations.**
- Students of the same background or similar academic outcomes may learn very different ways
- Students can have similar accessibility needs regardless of the type of learning difficulty, e.g.
- All appropriate accessibility features are based on students individual characteristics
- Granted accommodations should be matched to a given student' characteristics and needs

# Selecting accommodations

How do you know which accessibility features are appropriate for which student?

- Know your students well, learn about their needs, observe how they perform on different tasks – this is the key to understanding which accessibility features we should identify for them
- Ask students what accommodations they think would help them perform better, what their preferences are and whether they are willing to learn to use the accommodation
- Consider using accessibility features allowed during state test
- Consult state policies for use of accommodations in instruction and assessments



# Selecting modifications



**Modifications** refer to practices or materials that change, lower, or reduce standard/required learning expectations. **Unlike accommodations, modifications provided in the classroom reduce expectations for learning and may change the underlying construct of an assessment.**

Examples of modifications include:

- requiring a student to learn less material (e.g., fewer objectives, shorter units or lessons, fewer pages or problems),
- reducing assignments and assessments so a student only needs to complete the easiest problems or items or answer fewer questions,
- using an accessibility support that invalidates the intended construct,
- revising assignments or assessments to make them easier (e.g., crossing out half of the response choices on a multiple-choice test so that a student only has to pick from two options instead of four), or
- giving a student hints or clues to correct responses on assignments and tests (Shyyan et al., 2016: 21)

# Practising accommodations

- Accessibility supports provided in the classroom should not reduce expectations for learning
- Sufficient time should be planned for students to learn new accommodations
- Students should have an opportunity to practice granted accommodations in classroom settings before taking the test (e.g. how to work with a reader or a scribe, or using assistive technology such as screen readers)
- Educators should ensure that students have ample opportunity to practice accessing assessment content without certain supports





# Evaluating accommodations



- Monitor the student's academic progress over time. Is the student more successful when using accommodations?
- Invite the student's perspective. Does she or he think that accommodations are helpful?
- Consider how the student perceives his or her classroom performance. Did the student perceive an increase in performance resulting from accommodations?
- Explore the student's level of comfort using accommodations. Is she or he receiving enough support when using accommodations during instruction?
- Students provide valuable information about how accommodations are "working," and whether they feel comfortable using them.
- Inform parents about accommodations. Ask parents for their perspective about accommodations use and effectiveness. Ask how accommodations used at home may be used for instruction.

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**Thank you very  
much for your  
attention!**

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