

Grade 3 Informational Mini-Assessment

“Cactus Jam”

This grade 3 mini-assessment is based on a text about making jam from cactus fruit. This text is considered worthy of students’ time to read and also meets the expectations for text complexity at grade 3. Assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will employ quality, complex texts such as this one.

Questions aligned to the CCSS should be worthy of students’ time to answer and therefore do not focus on minor points of the texts. Questions also may address several standards within the same question because complex texts tend to yield rich assessment questions that call for deep analysis. In this mini-assessment there are selected-response questions that address the Reading Standards listed below and one constructed-response question that addresses Reading, Writing, and Language Standards. There are also items that replicate how technology may be used on assessments, but in paper and pencil format.

We encourage educators to give students the time that they need to read closely, answer the questions, and write to the source. Although we know that it is helpful to have students complete the mini-assessment in one class period, we encourage educators to allow additional time as necessary.

*Note for teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs): This assessment is designed to measure students’ ability to read and write in English. Therefore, educators will not see the level of scaffolding typically used in instructional materials to support ELLs—these would interfere with the ability to understand their mastery of these skills. If ELL students are receiving instruction in grade-level ELA content, they should be given access to unaltered practice assessment items to gauge their progress. Passages and items should not be modified; however, **additional information about accommodations you may consider when administering this assessment to ELLs is available in the teacher section of this resource.***

The questions align to the following standards:

RI.3.1	Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
RI.3.2	Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.
RI.3.3	Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.
RI.3.4	Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 3 topic or subject area.
RI.3.7	Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).
RI.3.8	Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g., comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence).
W.3.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

W.3.4	With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.
L.3.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
L.3.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
L.3.3	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

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The assessment questions in this document align with the CCSS and reflect the instructional shifts implied by the standards. To learn more about these topics, please go to the following link:

www.achievethecore.org

Grade 3 Mini-Assessment – “Cactus Jam”

Today you will read a passage about the Tohono O’odham Indians making jam from cactus fruit. You will then answer several questions based on the passage. I will be happy to answer questions about the directions, but I will not help you with the answers to any questions. You will notice as you answer the questions that some of the questions have two parts. You should answer Part A of the question before you answer Part B.

Take as long as you need to read and answer the questions. If you do not finish when class ends, come see me to discuss the ways you may have additional time.

Now read the passage and answer the questions. I encourage you to write notes in the margin as you read.

Cactus Jam by Ruth J. Luhrs

- 1 Once a year, the Tohono O’odham Indians make jam from cactus fruit. The Tohono O’odham live in the Arizona desert, where the giant saguaro cactus grows.
- 2 In July, when the fruit is ripe, it splits open to show its bright red insides. Everyone gets ready to help make the jam.
- 3 Young women use long poles to knock the fruit down. A saguaro can be up to sixty feet tall, and its fruit grows at the top of the cactus and at the ends of its big arms.
- 4 Children try to catch the fruit in baskets as it falls. Plop, plop! The juicy red fruit is the same size and shape as a hen’s egg. It is full of tiny black seeds.
- 5 While the young women and children gather the fruit, the men make a camp. They build a shelter to protect everyone from the hot sun. Then they gather wood and light the fires.
- 6 The children bring their baskets of fruit to the shelter. There, the older women scrape the fruit out of its peel and put it into big cooking pots. They cook it over the fire for a long time. Then they pour the juice through a wire strainer to take out the seeds.



Young women knock the fruit off the cactus.



The saguaro fruit is the size of a hen egg.

- 7 Now, the juice must be cooked some more. When it is thick and sweet, the women pour it into clay jars to cool.
- 8 Finally the jam is ready, and it's time to feast. The people dance and sing. Children spread the cactus jam on bread and eat all they can hold.

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February 2000, Vol. 10, No. 6, text copyright, © 2000 by Ruth J. Luhrs

QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between what young women do to make jam and what older women do to make jam?
 - A. Young women help gather the cactus fruit; older women cook the fruit.
 - B. Young women climb the cactus for the fruit; older women catch it below.
 - C. Young women help gather wood for the fires; older women build the fires.
 - D. Young women cook the fruit; older women spread it on bread to eat.

2. The passage shows that the process of making jam requires different tools. Each tool has a special purpose in the process. Next to the name of each tool below, in the column labeled "Purpose," write the correct purpose from the "List of Possible Purposes." Each tool should have only one purpose, and not all possible purposes will be used.

Tool	Purpose
Pole	
Basket	
Scraper	
Cooking pot	
Wire strainer	
Clay pot	

List of Possible Purposes
Takes the peel off
Protects from the sun
Stores the jam
Takes out seeds
Catches the fruit
Knocks the fruit down
Holds the fruit as it heats over the fire
Stirs the fruit

3. This question has two parts. First answer Part A and then answer Part B.

Part A: Why do the young women use poles that are long?

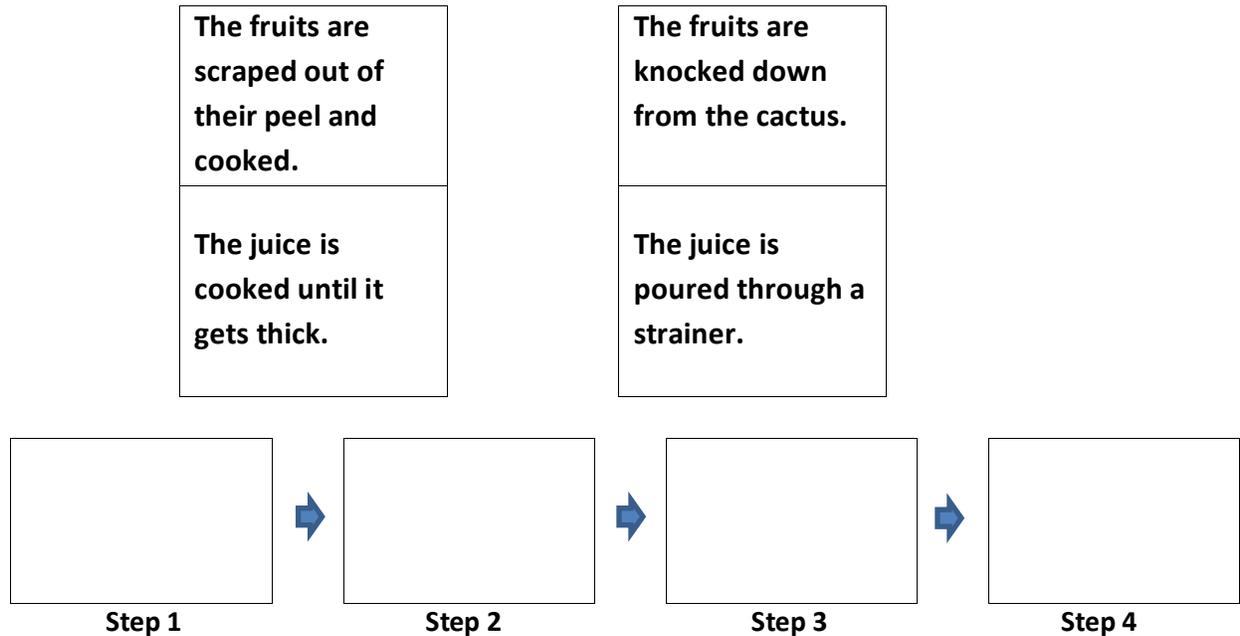
- A. to avoid getting too near the tall cactus plants
- B. to be able to reach the fruit high in the air
- C. to keep the children safe as they receive the fruit
- D. to stay out of the way of the fruit when it drops down

Part B: Which sentence from the passage tells the best reason for the correct answer in Part A?

- A. "The Tohono O'odham live in the Arizona desert, where the giant saguaro cactus grows."
- B. "Everyone gets ready to help make the jam."
- C. "A saguaro can be up to sixty feet tall, and its fruit grows at the top of the cactus and at the ends of its big arms."
- D. "Children try to catch the fruit in baskets as it falls."

4. The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.

Part A: What are the steps for making jam? Write each step in the correct box to show the order of the steps for making jam.



Part B: What has to happen before Step 1 can start?

- A. The children have to take their baskets of fruit to the shelter.
- B. The fruit has to ripen and split open.
- C. The women have to take the seeds out of the fruit.
- D. The men have to build the fires for cooking.

5. What does the photograph of a saguaro fruit help the reader understand about making jam?

- A. The photograph shows that jam made from these fruits will be naturally sweet in flavor.
- B. The photograph shows that the size of the fruits makes gathering them fun to do.
- C. The photograph shows that gathering fruits is difficult because the fruits are stuck tightly to the plant.
- D. The photograph shows that the fruits must be peeled because they have cactus spines on them.

6. The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.

Part A: What is one of the main ideas in the passage?

- A. Groups of Tohono O'odham make jam by doing different jobs and working together.
- B. The Tohono O'odham make food from different plants they find in the desert.
- C. Groups of Tohono O'odham enjoy working outside in the summer.
- D. The Tohono O'odham enjoy having a special sweet treat at the end of a busy day.

Part B: Which three details from the passage best support the main idea in Part A?

- A. The Tohono O'odham live in the Arizona desert.
- B. The saguaro fruit grows at the top of the cactus and at the ends of its arms.
- C. The young women and children gather the fruit from the cactus plants.
- D. The men make a shelter and build fires for cooking.
- E. The older women scrape the fruit out of its peel, cook it, and strain it.
- F. The more it cooks, the thicker and sweeter the jam gets.
- G. When the jam is ready, children spread it on bread and eat all they can.

Information for Teachers: Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses of the Text

Regular practice with complex texts is necessary to prepare students for college and career readiness, as outlined in Reading Standard 10. The text for this mini-assessment has been placed at grade 3, and the process used to determine the grade level placement is described below. “Appendix A to the Common Core” and the Supplement to Appendix A, “New Research on Text Complexity,” lay out a research-based process for selecting complex texts:

1. Place a text or excerpt within a **grade band** based on at least one¹ quantitative measure according to the research-based conversion table provided in the Supplement to Appendix A: “New Research on Text Complexity” (www.corestandards.org/resources).
2. Place a text at a **grade level** based on a qualitative analysis.

Quantitative Analysis		
“Cactus Jam”	Quantitative Measure #1	Quantitative Measure #2
	Flesch-Kincaid: 3.3	Reading Maturity: 4.02

After gathering the quantitative measures, the next step is to place the quantitative scores in the Conversion Table found in the Supplement to Appendix A (www.corestandards.org/resources) and determine the **grade band** of the text.

Figure 1 reproduces the conversion table from the Supplement to Appendix A, showing how the initial results from the Flesch-Kincaid and Reading Maturity measures were converted to grade bands.

Figure 1: Updated Text Complexity Grade Bands and Associated Ranges from Multiple Measures⁷

Common Core Band	ATOS	Degrees of Reading Power [®]	Flesch-Kincaid [‡]	The Lexile Framework [®]	Reading Maturity	SourceRater
2 nd – 3 rd	2.75 – 5.14	42 – 54	1.98 – 5.34	420 – 820	3.53 – 6.13	0.05 – 2.48
4 th – 5 th	4.97 – 7.03	52 – 60	4.51 – 7.73	740 – 1010	5.42 – 7.92	0.84 – 5.75
6 th – 8 th	7.00 – 9.98	57 – 67	6.51 – 10.34	925 – 1185	7.04 – 9.57	4.11 – 10.66
9 th – 10 th	9.67 – 12.01	62 – 72	8.32 – 12.12	1050 – 1335	8.41 – 10.81	9.02 – 13.93
11 th – CCR	11.20 – 14.10	67 – 74	10.34 – 14.2	1185 – 1385	9.57 – 12.00	12.30 – 14.50

Quantitative data shows that placement in grade 2 or 3 would be appropriate. To find the **grade level** of the text within the designated grade band, engage in a systematic analysis of the characteristics of the text. The characteristics that should be analyzed during a qualitative analysis can be found in Appendix A of the CCSS. (www.corestandards.org)

¹ For higher stakes tests, it is recommended that two corresponding text complexity measures be used to place a text in a grade band. When two measures are used, both placing the text in the same **band**, the results provide additional assurance that the text selected is appropriate for the band.

Qualitative Analysis of “Cactus Jam”

Category	Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band	Where to place within the band?				
		Too low	Early to mid-2	Mid 2 to low 3	Mid to high 3	NOT suited to band
Structure: (both story structure or form of piece)	The structure of this text is chronological and therefore should be readily accessible to young readers.					
Language Clarity and Conventions (including vocabulary load)	Simple sentence structures are used throughout and there are many temporal words to help students understand the sequence of events. However, there are several academic and domain-specific vocabulary words that increase the complexity of this text.					
Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary)	Knowledge demands are low, as even if students don't know what jam is, it is described as something sweet to put on bread. The Indians and the cactus are sufficiently described so little prior knowledge is needed.					
Levels of Meaning (chiefly literary)/ Purpose (chiefly informational)	There is an explicit message and purpose and strong use of evidence, including steps in a process, cause and effect, and illustrations to aid understanding. However, there is also an implicit purpose, to show how a group that takes different roles and works together can achieve a common purpose.					
Overall placement: Grade 3	Justification Even though the structure is readily accessible and the knowledge demands are low, there is sufficient complexity in the vocabulary and the concepts in the process to make this text appropriate for the early part of grade 3.					

Question Annotations and Correct Answer and Distractor Rationales

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options														
1	A	RI.3.3, RI.3.1	<p>A. This is the correct answer. The response requires students to synthesize the information in paragraphs 3 and 6 to determine the different roles of the two groups.</p> <p>B. Although the passage indicates that there are people who try to catch the fruit, the children take this role, not the older women. The passage does not mention climbing the cactus.</p> <p>C. Although there are groups of people who gather wood and build the fires, these are not the young women or the older women.</p> <p>D. Although the role of cooking is described in the passage, the passage makes it clear that the older women do the cooking and everyone spreads the jam on bread.</p>														
2	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 30%;">Tool</th> <th style="width: 70%;">Purpose</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Pole</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Knocks the fruit down</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Basket</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Catches the fruit</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Scraper</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Takes the peel off</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Cooking pot</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Holds the fruit as it heats over the fire</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Wire strainer</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Takes out seeds</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Clay pot</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Stores the jam</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Tool	Purpose	Pole	Knocks the fruit down	Basket	Catches the fruit	Scraper	Takes the peel off	Cooking pot	Holds the fruit as it heats over the fire	Wire strainer	Takes out seeds	Clay pot	Stores the jam	RI.3.8, RI.3.4, RI.3.1	<p>The purpose of each tool is stated in the text. One unused purpose, “Protects from the sun,” refers to the shelter built by the men. The other, “Stirs the fruit,” is not named in the passage.</p>
Tool	Purpose																
Pole	Knocks the fruit down																
Basket	Catches the fruit																
Scraper	Takes the peel off																
Cooking pot	Holds the fruit as it heats over the fire																
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<p>3 Part A</p>	<p>B</p>	<p>RI.3.8, RI.3.1</p>	<p>A. Although the photographs show spines on the cactus, the text does not mention that people avoid getting too close to the plants.</p> <p>B. This is the correct answer. The text and the first photograph indicate that the poles have to be long because the cactus grows high in the air.</p> <p>C. Although the text mentions that children try to catch the fruit as it falls, maintaining the safety of the children is not the purpose of the long poles.</p> <p>D. Although the young women need the long poles to make the fruit fall down, the purpose of the long poles is not to keep the young women at a safe distance from the falling fruit.</p>
<p>3 Part B</p>	<p>C</p>	<p>RI.3.8, RI.3.1</p>	<p>A. Although this quotation refers to the cactus plant as “giant,” this reference is not the best explanation for the use of long poles instead of short ones.</p> <p>B. Although this quotation implies that everyone in the group has a role to play in making the jam, this reference does not explain the use of long poles instead of short ones.</p> <p>C. This is the correct answer. The poles have to be long to reach high in the air because the saguaro cactus grows extremely tall and bears fruit at the top of the plant. Although catching the falling fruit is related to the long poles, it does not explain why the poles have to be long instead of short.</p>
<p>4 Part A</p>	<p>Step 1: The fruits are knocked down from the cactus.</p> <p>Step 2: The fruits are scraped out of their peels and cooked.</p> <p>Step 3: The juice is poured through a strainer.</p> <p>Step 4: The juice is cooked until it gets thick.</p>	<p>RI.3.3, RI.3.1</p>	<p>The order of the steps is delineated in the text; the first step is to get the fruits separated from the cactus; the second step is to peel the fruits and start cooking them; the third step is to remove the seeds from the partially cooked juice; and the final step is to cook the juice until it turns to jam.</p>

4 Part B	B		<p>A. Although the delivery of the baskets of fruit is an early part of the process, it is not the earliest requirement for the process to start. If the fruit is not ripe, the jam cannot be made.</p> <p>B. This is the correct answer. Unless the fruit ripens sufficiently, the process of making jam will not begin.</p> <p>C. Although taking the seeds out of the fruit is an important part of the process, it is not the earliest requirement for the process to start.</p> <p>D. Although the cooking fires are essential to the process of making jam, they are not the earliest requirement; the ripening of the fruit triggers the entire process.</p>
5	D	RI.3.7, RI.3.1	<p>A. Although the passage mentions that the jam is sweet, the photograph cannot show the sweetness of the cooked fruit.</p> <p>B. Although the caption of the photograph states that the fruits are about the size of a hen's egg, the photograph does not indicate whether or not gathering the fruit is an enjoyable chore.</p> <p>C. Although the photograph shows a fruit that is still attached to the cactus plant, the photograph cannot indicate whether or not detaching the fruit is difficult.</p> <p>D. This is the correct answer. The passage mentions that the fruit has to be scraped out of its peel, and the photograph shows that one reason for the scraping is that there are spines on the fruit.</p>
6 Part A	A	RI.3.2, RI.3.1	<p>A. This is the correct answer. The passage illustrates a group of people working together with clearly defined roles to reach a common goal.</p> <p>B. Although the Tohono O'odham make jam from a desert plant, the passage does not focus on different foods or different desert plants.</p> <p>C. Although the passage illustrates the Tohono O'odham working outside to make jam, this concept is not the central idea of the passage.</p> <p>D. Although the passage ends with the Tohono O'odham celebrating by eating jam at the end of the day, that idea is not the central focus of the text.</p>

<p>6 Part B</p>	<p>C, D, E</p>		<p>A. Although this fact is taken from the text, it does not support the central idea that the members of the group make jam by taking different roles and working together.</p> <p>B. Although the location of the fruit on the cactus plant is accurately indicated in this statement, it does not support the central idea that the members of the group make jam by working together in different roles.</p> <p>C. This is a correct answer. The fact that the young women and children together obtain the fruits for the jam supports the idea that the members of the group take different roles but work together for a common goal.</p> <p>D. This is a correct answer. The men’s roles making a shelter and building fires supports the idea that each group plays a role in working together for a common goal.</p> <p>E. This is a correct answer. This fact from the passage also shows a specific group with its own role, working with the other groups to achieve a goal that benefits the entire group.</p> <p>F. Although it is accurate that the jam becomes thicker and sweeter as it cooks, this fact does not support the central idea of the texts, that the various groups work together for a common goal.</p> <p>G. Although the text states that the children spread the jam on bread and eat all they can, this fact does not support the central idea of group members taking different roles to accomplish the goal of making jam.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>See bullets to the right for possible ideas that could be included in a top-score response.</p>	<p>W.3.3, W.3.4, RI.3.3, RI.3.1, L.3.1, L.3.2, L.3.3</p>	<p>A good student response will include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one or more fictional characters, and/or a narrator, who are in the situation of making jam from cactus fruits as described in the text • an event sequence that reflects the events described in the text and adheres to the roles of different groups as indicated in the text • dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences based on information in the text • temporal words and phrases that signal event order • a sense of closure

Using the Mini-Assessments with English Language Learners (ELLs)

Mini-Assessment Design and English Language Learners

Each mini-assessment is designed using the best practices of test design. English Language Learners will benefit from the opportunity to independently practice answering questions about grade-level complex texts.

Prior to delivering the mini-assessment, teachers should read through each item. If there is language in the question stems specific to the standards (e.g., plot, theme, point of view), make sure that students have been introduced to these concepts prior to taking the assessment. Teachers should not pre-teach specific vocabulary words tested in the assessment (e.g., words students are asked to define) and should only pre-teach language that would impede students from understanding what the question is asking.

The mini-assessments attend to the needs of all learners, and ELLs specifically, by including texts that:

- *Are brief and engaging:* Texts vary in length, but no individual text is more than three pages long.
- *Embed student-friendly definitions:* Footnotes are included for technical terms or words that are above grade level when those words are not surrounded by context that would help students determine meaning.

Informational text sets, such as those included in the mini-assessment, specifically attend to the needs of ELLs by:

- *Building student knowledge:* Mini-assessments often include multiple texts or stimuli on the same topic:
 - For sets with two texts or stimuli, the first text is generally broader, providing a foundation in the content and introducing key vocabulary, and the second text provides more detail or contrast on the same topic. This allows ELLs to dig into the features of the passage being assessed rather than being inundated with dissimilar content and vocabulary.
 - For sets with more than two texts or stimuli, there is an “anchor” text that provides introductory information on the topic.
- *Containing ideas that lend themselves to discussion from a variety of perspectives:* Often these pairs or sets of texts present multiple perspectives on the same topic.

The mini-assessments attend to the needs of all learners, and ELLs specifically, by including questions that:

- *Feature a variety of academic words:*
 - Each mini-assessment contains at least one vocabulary item. Items assessing vocabulary test one of the following:
 - The meaning of Tier 2 academic words in context.
 - The meaning of a figurative word/phrase in context.
 - The impact of word choice on meaning and/or tone.
 - MOST vocabulary items test Tier 2 words.
 - All tested words are chosen because:
 - They are central to the meaning of the text.
 - They are surrounded by sufficient context to allow students to determine meaning.
- *Highlight “juicy” sentences that feature grade-appropriate complex structures, vocabulary, and language features:* Most mini-assessments include at least one item assessing Reading for Literature or Reading: Informational text standard 5. These items point students to analyze the structure of the text. While standard 5 items specifically focus on the structure of the text, other items require the analysis of language features, vocabulary, and relationships between ideas, all of which build student understanding of texts.
- *Provide graphic organizers to help students capture and reflect on new knowledge:* Most mini-assessments include at least one item mimicking a “technology enhanced item.” These items include things like tables and charts.
- *Provide writing activities that allow students to use new vocabulary and demonstrate knowledge of new concepts:* Most mini-assessments include an optional writing prompt that allows students to write about the text(s).

Administration Guidelines for ELLs

When assessing ELL students, appropriate accommodations may be considered. Modifications to the assessment itself should not be made. According to the *Accommodations Manual: How to Select, Administer, and Evaluate Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of English Language Learners, First Edition*:

- “Modifications refer to practices or materials that change, lower, or reduce state-required learning expectations. Modifications may change the underlying construct of an assessment.”
- “Accommodations are accessibility supports [that] do not reduce learning expectations. They meet specific needs of students in instruction and assessment and enable educators to know that measures of a student’s work produce valid results.”

Teachers **may** choose to make accommodations that meet the unique needs of ELLs. Prior to delivering any practice assessment, especially if the mini-assessment is to be used in a more formal setting (e.g., as part of a district benchmark assessment), teachers should research what accommodations will be available to students during their state’s summative assessment. For example, some states allow ELLs to use a bilingual dictionary during an assessment; other states do not allow this. Ensure your ELLs are practicing with the accommodations they can expect to see on the summative. Some examples of appropriate accommodations include:

- Reading the directions aloud to students multiple times.
- Providing student directions in student native language.
- Allowing students additional time to complete the mini-assessments.
- Exposing students to item types prior to the assessment.
- Reading the scoring expectations for the writing prompt aloud to students.

Because the goal of literacy mini-assessments is to measure grade-level literacy as students progress toward college- and career-readiness, teachers must be careful **not** to make modifications that may be commonly used in classroom instruction. Examples of modifications that should **not** be used include:

- Reading passages aloud for students.
- Adding student glossaries of unfamiliar terms.
- Pre-teaching tested vocabulary words.

In any testing setting, teachers must be careful to choose accommodations that suit the needs of each individual student.

Additional resources for assessment and CCSS implementation

Shift 1 – Complexity: *Regular practice with complex text and its academic language*

- See Appendix B for examples of informational and literary complex texts http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf
- See the Text Complexity Collection on www.achievethecore.org

Shift 2 – Evidence: *Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational*

- See Close Reading Exemplars for ways to engage students in close reading on <http://www.achievethecore.org/steal-these-tools/close-reading-exemplars>
- See the Basal Alignment Project for examples of text-dependent questions <http://www.achievethecore.org/basal-alignment-project>

Shift 3 – Knowledge: *Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction*

- See Appendix B for examples of informational and literary complex texts http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf

Sample Scoring Rubric for Text-Based Writing

Prompts: http://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Scoring_Rubric_for_Text-Based_Writing_Prompts.pdf