



Communicating with Parents (and Guardians) about NCSC

Suggestions for Administrators and Educators

This resource has been created to provide suggestions for communicating with parents about the NCSC project in a way that will help them be informed members of their children's Individualized Education Program (IEP) Teams, especially with respect to the state assessment participation decision. The suggestions can also help parents support their children's education at home. The way you communicate with parents about NCSC and the importance of a standards-based "college and career ready" education for every student will influence parent expectations for their children and encourage support for your state, district, and school role in the NCSC project.

1. Review the Resources for Parents provided by your state and on the NCSC website at <http://www.ncscpartners.org/resources>. The state or district should provide accessible versions and versions in other languages, as needed. These NCSC resources were designed for parents, but are also useful for others who may be interested in summaries of the project.
2. As soon as possible, explain to parents that changes are happening in both instruction and assessment to ensure that students who take an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS) are working on college and career ready standards (in most states this refers to the Common Core State Standards, but other states have developed their own college and career ready standards). This can be done at parent-teacher conferences, at a school-wide or district-wide informational meeting, and/or via written materials that are sent home. If this information and the documents described below are provided at a large meeting or sent home, parents should be given contact information for someone who can answer any follow-up questions.
 - a. Provide parents with the *NCSC Project Description*, *NCSC Discussion of College and Career Readiness for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities*, and the *NCSC Diagram and Explanation* documents (or your state versions of these documents). Also provide parents with the link to these and other resources for parents on your state's website and/or at <http://www.ncscpartners.org/resources>. Since some parents do not have access to a computer, it would be useful to have a binder with all these documents at each school.

- b. Explain that instruction on college and career ready standards does not mean functional goals will not be met—they can be embedded in academic instruction. Give the parents a few examples. College and career readiness (CCR) in the NCSC model includes community readiness. For example, communicative competence is a core component of CCR and can be worked on as part of any academic lesson. There is a parent resource at <http://www.ncscpartners.org/resources> with more information about communicative competence.
 - c. Provide the link to the NCSC Wiki at <https://wiki.ncscpartners.org>. Explain that the purpose of the Wiki is to provide resources to support general and special educators who teach students with significant cognitive disabilities. The wiki is publicly available and free. There is a great deal of information on the wiki, including instructional strategies and supports, which can help parents work with their children at home. Direct parents to the link on the wiki main page called Parent Tips and Tools. These resources will help parents navigate the wiki and understand the information they can find there.
 - d. It would also be helpful to provide parents with printed materials from the wiki that reference instructional strategies. The Curriculum Resource Guides for each math and ELA topic area include descriptions of the important concepts and how the content builds within and across grade levels. The Content Modules include descriptions of how the content can be made accessible for all students through universal design for learning, and examples of real life applications to show the linkage to functional skills. Samples of these can be printed to share with parents as their children progress through the grade levels.
3. Prior to the IEP meeting at which the participation and accommodations decisions for the NCSC AA-AAS will be discussed, parents should be provided with the guidelines governing the decisions and other relevant assessment documents. As many states will also be administering another alternate assessment, e.g., in science or other content areas, it is important for schools to be prepared and transparent about all the alternate assessments in which students may be participating. The steps below can be combined with those in section #2, above, or handled separately. If these documents are provided at a large meeting or sent home, parents should be given contact information for someone who can answer any follow-up questions.
- a. The *NCSC IEP Team Guidance for Alternate Assessment Participation Decisions* can be found at <http://www.ncscpartners.org/resources> under Resources for Parents. This document (or your state's version of the document) will help parents understand the terms that the IEP team will use when deciding whether the student should participate in the NCSC AA-AAS, as well as help them understand other important information.
 - b. In addition, on the same NCSC resources webpage, there are two assessment Q&A documents for parents. One is a parent-friendly version of the NCSC AA-AAS FAQs provided to educators called *Summary of NCSC Frequently Asked*

Questions regarding the Alternate Assessment. The other is called *NCSC Answers to Common Parent Questions about Alternate Assessments*. The questions in the second document were posed by a parent of a student with very significant physical and cognitive disabilities and can help answer some of the questions that the parents of your students may have. There is also a document call *NCSC Assessment Policies*, which will help explain policies on topics such as optimal testing conditions, assessment features and accommodations.

4. At the IEP meeting, respond to any remaining questions or concerns the parents may have about the AA-AAS information that was provided.
 - a. Some parents may resist the suggestion that their child take an AA-AAS because they are concerned that the assessment decision will prevent their child from being educated in the general education classroom. It may help to point out the language in FAQ #4 of the *NCSC IEP Team Guidance for Alternate Assessment Participation Decisions* document, which states that participation in the NCSC Alternate Assessment is not a reason for educating a student outside the general education classroom.
 - b. Inform parents whether participation in the AA-AAS will impact their child's opportunity to earn a regular high school diploma. If your state permits students who take an AA-AAS to work towards a regular high school diploma, parents may be less likely to resist this assessment decision. If taking an AA-AAS means that the students will be working toward some other exit document, parents should have this information explained to them in order to be informed members of the IEP team.
 - c. If there is disagreement with the parents about the assessment participation decision, parents should be informed of their options for addressing it.

Please contact your state's Department of Education for more information on the NCSC project as needed.