Accessibility for Technology-Enhanced Assessments

About the Grant

The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) has received an Enhanced Assessment Grant from the US Department of Education to investigate the accessibility of computerized assessments for students who are blind, have low vision or motor disabilities. These students are among the most challenging to accommodate on computer assessment systems. KSDE has contracted with the Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation (CETE) at the University of Kansas to conduct research activities and analyses. The $1.75 million grant runs through September 2014 and will involve approximately 3600 students in grades 3, 5, 7 and 10 from across eight participating states.
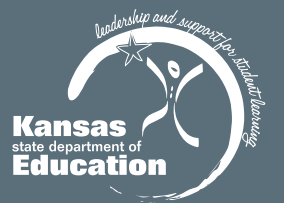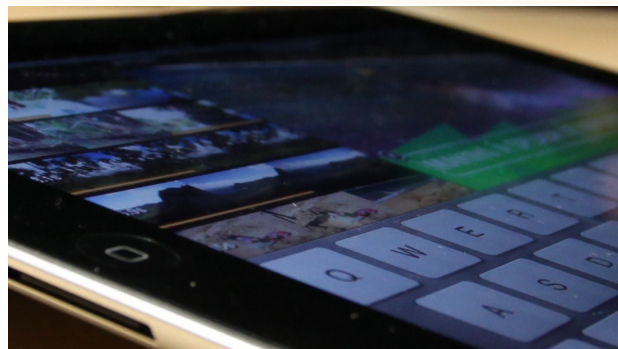
New Assessments Underway

Currently, there are six major federally funded assessment consortia preparing new large-scale assessments. These consortia are:

- Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)

- SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)

- Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment System Consortium (DLM)

- National Center and State Collaborative Partnership (NCSC)

- Assessment Services Supporting ELs through Technology Systems (ASSETS)

- English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21)

A major impetus for the development of new assessments is the widespread adoption of the Common Core State Standards, which dramatically change the way that instructional goals are conceptualized. A key feature of these new assessments will be the use of desktop, laptop, and touchscreen tablet technology for delivery of tests and collection of student responses. When implemented during the 2014/2015 school year, the tests will represent a major shift in the application of technology and educational testing innovation in K-12 schools across the country.
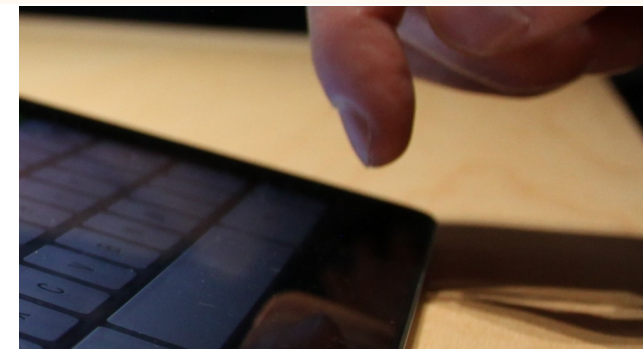
The Accessibility for Technology-Enhanced Assessments Project

The ATEA project will investigate next-generation computerized assessments to determine if they are accessible or how they can become accessible for students with blindness, low vision, or motor disabilities so that inferences made from test scores for these students are comparable to those of other students. Assessment items and tasks for both English language arts and mathematics will be written and prepared for delivery through task tryouts and large-scale field tests in eight states. Within the evaluation of score comparability, issues of time requirements, cognitive load, effort, and fatigue will be studied. These questions will be examined for both person and technology-delivered accessibility methods.

The resulting outcomes will include a catalog of accessible technology-enhanced item and task types with guidelines for maximum access, a comprehensive description of student characteristics, data on student performance and the comparability of scores, procedural documentation, and recommendations by task and item type for students with vision and motor disabilities.

Results are expected to positively impact assessments based on the Common Core State Standards, which Kansas has adopted as College and Career Readiness Standards. The completion of this project promises to provide partnering states with tools that will significantly improve the accessibility of assessments for students who are blind, have low vision or motor disabilities resulting in improved assessment validity and educational planning.

ATEA
Accessibility for Technology-Enhanced Assessments

For more information, please visit the ATEA website at

ateassessments.org