



National Center and State Collaborative

NCSC Test Administration Manual: Rhode Island

**Grades: 3 – 8, 11
ELA and Mathematics
Testing Window: March 30 – May 15, 2015**

NCSC Test Administration Portal Link: <https://teacher-ncscpartners.ctb.com>

NCSC Help Desk:

Hours: 8:00am – 8:00pm EST, Monday - Friday

Phone: 866-239-0708

Email: NCSCServiceDesk@measuredprogress.org

RIDE Website: www.ride.ri.gov/NCSC

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National Center and State Collaborative

The National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) is applying the lessons learned from the past decade of research on alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS) to develop a multi-state comprehensive assessment system for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

NCSC is a collaborative of 24 states (13 core and 11 Tier II states) and five organizations. The NCSC core partner states include: Arizona, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Pacific Assessment Consortium (PAC-6)¹, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Wyoming. As of February 2013, the NCSC Tier II affiliated states include Arkansas, California, Delaware, Idaho, Maine, Maryland, Montana, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, and U.S. Virgin Islands. Tier II states will provide usability and sustainability tests to refine NCSC products before they are released for broad dissemination in 2015, thus ensuring that other states are able to implement them without intensive support from project staff.

The five NCSC partner organizations include: National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) at the University of Minnesota, National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment (Center for Assessment), University of North Carolina at Charlotte, University of Kentucky, and edCount, LLC.



This work was supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (H373X100002, Project Officer: Susan.Weigert@ed.gov). The contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and no assumption of endorsement by the Federal government should be made.

The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

¹ The Pacific Assessment Consortium (including the entities of American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Republic of Palau, and Republic of the Marshall Islands) partner with NCSC as one state, led by the University of Guam Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (CEDDERS).

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Contact Information and Technical Support

NCSC Test Administration Portal Link: <https://teacher-ncscpartners.ctb.com>

Rhode Island Department of Education:

Heather Heineke

401.222.8493

Heather.heineke@ride.ri.gov

NCSC Help Desk:

Hours: 8:00am – 8:00pm EST, Monday - Friday

Phone: 866-239-0708

Email: NCSCServiceDesk@measuredprogress.org

The NCSC Help Desk is available to answer questions about the following:

- User accounts
- Accessing tests assigned to a student
- Incorrect or missing student information
- Access to the NCSC Online Test Administration Training
- Scoring procedures for constructed-response or open-response items
- Recording student responses into the NCSC Assessment System
- Questions about administering a specific item

When contacting the NCSC Help Desk, please provide as much detail as possible about the issue and the system on which it occurred. Include the following:

- Your name, district, and school
- Student name, if applicable
- Any error messages that appeared
- Operating system and browser information
- Information about network configuration

Note about Eligibility for Alternate Assessments

The NCSC Test Administration Manual was written with the assumption that the student's individualized education program (IEP) team met and determined that the student met all eligibility criteria required for participation in the RIAA and that all procedures and guidelines were followed in making that decision.

If the student's IEP team has not met or you have questions about the student's eligibility for this test, please read and use the *2014-2015 IEP Team Guidance on Eligibility for Alternate Assessments*. It is available for download at www.ride.ri.gov/NCSC.

Note about the Rhode Island edition of this manual

This test administration manual contains the same information as the Test Administration Manual found on the NCSC Test Administration Portal website with the following exceptions:

1. who can administer the test,
2. the security agreement,
3. Rhode Island-specific parent letter and FAQ for parents that can be copied and distributed as necessary.

Part 1: Introduction to the NCSC Assessments

Participation in the Rhode Island Assessment Program is an important means of ensuring that each student has the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills addressed in the Common Core State Standards for ELA and Mathematics and the Alternate Assessment Grade Span Expectations for Science. The majority of students with disabilities will learn in general education classrooms, participate in the general education curriculum, and participate in the subject area assessments of the NECAP. However, some students with significant cognitive disabilities require an alternative method of assessment. Students who cannot participate in the NECAP or PARCC, even with accommodations, participate in the alternate assessments. The National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) Alternate Assessment will be used for the first time in English Language Arts and Mathematics beginning March 30, 2015.

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 2004 is the federal special education law that requires that students with disabilities be involved in the general education curriculum with supplementary aides and supports when necessary. This law further requires that students with disabilities be included in all general and district wide assessment programs with appropriate accommodations or alternate assessments when necessary, as determined by their IEP team. In addition, the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), Title I requires that all students participate in state assessments in reading, mathematics, and science and that their performance results be reported. Reading and mathematics will be assessed using the National Center and State Consortium (NCSC) alternate assessment. For information on NCSC, please go to www.ride.ri.gov/ncsc.

High-quality assessments provide information upon which to base ongoing development of curriculum and instruction that is responsive to individual student needs. Students with significant cognitive disabilities are valued and contributing members of their school and

community and are assessed using the NCSC alternate assessment in ELA and Mathematics and the RIAA in Science.

NCSC Operational Test

The NCSC tests in ELA and mathematics are presented to students online through the NCSC Assessment Portal and will be administered by trained Test Administrators (TAs) who are familiar with the student, typically the student’s teacher. Participating students will take both an ELA (reading and writing) and the Mathematics test for their grade level. Tests contain items across a range of complexity, item formats, and difficulty.

Table 1. Overview of NCSC AA-AAS

Tested Content Areas	English Language Arts (reading and writing) Mathematics
Grades	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11
Test Content Alignment	Aligned to Common Core State Standards and NCSC Core Content Connectors (CCCs). www.ride.ri.gov/NCSC for copies of the CCCs.
Test Delivery Method	Computer with paper option: Trained test administer provides a one-to-one test administration using the online test platform and Directions for Test Administration for grade specific item presentation and response collection. All passages, items, and response options are designed to be read to the student by the screen reader or the test administrator.
Security	All test items, passages, test administration directions, student answers, scratch paper, and any word boards created by teachers are secure. Please see Appendix D for the Security Agreement for Rhode Island.
Test Window	March 30 – May 15, 2015
Training	Two options: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In-person training or 2. Online self-paced training modules starting March 12, 2015. <p>NOTE: Access to DTAs and tests for students cannot be given until TAs have completed one of the training options and have achieved at least 80% on the online final quiz.</p>
Sample Test Items	Sample items for both reading and mathematics are available for teachers to use prior to testing on the NCSC Assessment Portal. These sample items allow the TA and student to engage with and become familiar with the online item presentation.
Testing Time per Student	Testing time will vary for each student. Testing may be paused and resumed, based on student needs.
Assessment Features	The following assessment features are available for all students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer Masking

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio Player • Alternate Color Themes • Increase/Decrease Size of Text/Graphics • Increase Volume • Line Reader Tool • Read Aloud/Reread item directions, response options, passages
Accommodations	<p>The following accommodations may be included in the student’s IEP as necessary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistive Technology (AT) for viewing or responding to test items • Paper version of item(s) • Scribe • Sign Language

Documents Needed for NCSC Test Administration

Below is a description of each document needed to administer the NCSC alternate assessments. Please review each document carefully as it will influence how the test is administered.

Table 2. Documents Needed for Test Administration

	Documents	Purpose	User
1	Test Administration Manual (TAM)	Provides policies and procedures to prepare for test administration.	TAs and TCs
2	Directions for Test Administration (DTA)*	Each test form has an accompanying DTA that provides directions and a script to administer each item of the test. DTAs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allowable manipulatives • reference materials for specific items • scoring rubrics for mathematics CRs • open-response reading foundational items for grade 3 and 4 tests. 	TA
3	NCSC Assessment System User Guide	Provides information to access and navigate the NCSC Assessment System.	TAs and TCs
4	Directions for Test Administration for Students who are Blind, Deaf, and Deaf/Blind**	These are special instructions for students who are blind, deaf, or deaf/blind; they will also receive a special test form.	
Location of Documents: http://teacher-ncscpartners.ctb.com			

* DTAs are available only after training and successful completion of the final quiz.

** Please contact your district special education director if you feel your student needs these special instructions. The deadline for ordering this test form is March 13, 2015.

Test Design

ELA Test Session Design

NCSC ELA Sessions		
Reading Session 1	Reading Session 2	Writing
Literary and informational reading passages and associated Selected-Response Reading items Open-Response Foundational Reading items (Grades 3 and 4 only)	Literary and informational reading passages and associated Selected-Response Reading items Open-Response Foundational Reading items (Grades 3 and 4 only)	Selected-Response Writing items and one Constructed-Response Writing item

Mathematics Test Session Design

NCSC Mathematics Sessions	
Mathematics Session 1	Mathematics Session 2
Selected-Response Mathematics items	Selected-Response Mathematics items
Constructed-Response Mathematics Completion items in selected grades	Constructed-Response Mathematics Completion items in selected grades

Description of Item Types

In reading, writing, and mathematics, students are assessed using selected-response items. Open-response items are used to assess reading foundational skills for grades 3 and 4. In writing, all grade levels include constructed-response items; in mathematics, some grade levels include constructed-response items.

Selected-Response Items (all content areas)

Selected response (SR) items, or multiple choice items, are presented to students in the following order:

- Item stimulus (may include a passage, passage part, picture, graphic, or illustration)
- Item question
- Answer options. Answer options are presented in a vertical format but may be changed to horizontal format if more appropriate for the student.

Constructed-Response Items (Mathematics)

The Constructed-Response (CR) items require students to develop their answer rather than select an answer. CR items are presented as novel tasks, using materials and content presented in an on-demand test format. Each item is presented to the student in a standardized, scripted sequence of steps culminating in the TA scoring of the student's answer using the Mathematics Scoring Rubrics. Rubrics will be available on the NCSC Assessment System. Not all grade levels include constructed-response items in mathematics.

Constructed-Response Items (Writing)

The writing constructed response items require students to produce a student work product in response to a writing prompt. Each CR item is presented in a scripted series of steps and contains a template that students can complete either on the computer or on paper. They can use words, pictures, Meyer-Johnson symbols, braille, or objects. The student or TA must record the student's answers in the response templates either directly into the computer or on paper. See Appendices A and B for more information on administering the writing CR items.

Open-Response Items (Foundational Skills; grades 3 & 4)

Open-response (OR) items are included in ELA in grades 3 and 4 only. The items are word identification tasks. Students identify three to five words and the TA enters the student scores into the NCSC Assessment System.

Students with clear and consistent oral speech are administered the reading foundational items as they are designed. Students using a communication mode other than oral speech, such as an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices, American Sign Language, or eye gaze are administered the reading foundational items in selected-response response format.

Part 2: Responsibilities of Test Administrators and Test Coordinators

NOTE: The qualifications listed below comply with Rhode Island State Policy and may differ from the qualifications listed in the generic NCSC Test Administration Manual.

Test Administrator Role (TA) and Qualifications (Rhode Island)

Individuals in the roles listed below may serve as a Test Administrator:

- Teachers employed by the LEA
- LEA and school-level administrators (e.g., principals, assistant principals, directors, assistant superintendents, associate superintendents, superintendents)
- Long-term substitute teachers holding a teaching certificate, or state equivalent credentials, employed by the LEA as teachers
- Teachers employed by the LEA who hold provisional certificates
- **NOTE:** All positions must have completed the NCSC required training and passed the final quiz with an 80% accuracy rate before they can administer any part of the test.

Who cannot be a test administrator?

- **Student teachers** may not serve as Test Administrators in charge of administering the test. They may serve as Proctors who assist the Test Administrators.
- **Parents** are not allowed to be in the classroom during testing nor are they allowed to administer or proctor a test. A teacher who is also a parent of a student he or she teaches may serve as a Test Administrator.

Responsibilities of the Test Administrator

- Sign and submit Rhode Island Test Security form to district test coordinator or district special education director (Appendix D).
- Complete either the in-person training or the online training modules and attain at least an 80% score on the End-of-Training Final Quiz.
- Complete *Accommodations: Before Test* tab
- Complete *Student Response Check*, if necessary.
- Read this document (*NCSC Test Administration Manual for Rhode Island*)
- Make arrangements to provide a testing area that is free from distractions, noise, interruptions, is consistently available (do not move student from one place to another over the course of testing). See *Optimal Testing Conditions* section below.
- Create a schedule for testing students with your special education director and/or test coordinator.
- Review and complete sample items with your student
- If necessary, practice scribe protocol.
- Test any assistive technology devices to ensure that they work with the NCSC test platform.
- Create any eye gaze or word boards students might need (Appendix)

Test Coordinators (TC) Role and Qualification (Rhode Island)

Test Coordinator is the one individual at the LEA/school level responsible for the overall coordination of test administration within that LEA/school. Test coordination tasks may be taken on by the Principal or designee depending on the structure and capacity of the school and district.

Optimal Testing Conditions

Optimal testing conditions, appropriate assessment features, and the accommodations in a student’s IEP that are consistent with NCSC accommodations policies support student access to the test so that students can demonstrate their knowledge. Provision of optimal testing conditions, assessment features, and accommodations must be planned for prior for testing the student. TAs must provide each student an appropriate testing environment during every testing session. TAs can ensure an appropriate testing environment by providing:

Before Test Administration: Optimal Testing Conditions

Document that the student has a consistent and observable way to communicate his/her response to the items by completing the Student Response Check. Refer to Part 3: Administration of the Test, Student Response Check.
Review the assessment features and prepare for use as appropriate for individual students.
Identify the student’s IEP accommodations that are consistent with NCSC accommodations policies and prepare for implementation during testing.
Make sure that the computer and any AAC and assistive technology device a student may use to interact with the test items meet the minimum requirements, located in the NCSC Assessment System User Guide for Test Administrators, are in working order, are available for testing, and are compatible with the NCSC Assessment System.
Log on to the NCSC Assessment System before testing to ensure that the computer, login information, and the assessment features are working as intended.
Review the sample items in the NCSC Assessment System with the student and practice using appropriate assessment features and accommodations in the student’s IEP that are consistent with NCSC accommodations policies.
Read the DTA for the test assigned to the student, organize all the test materials according to the DTA and print a copy of any reference sheets or stimulus materials.
Arrange to administer the test in a familiar setting that is free of noise and distractions.
Develop a schedule to administer the test during the best time of day for the student; consider time needed for breaks for the student.

Assessment Features and Accommodations

Assessment features and accommodations increase access to the test content and remove barriers for students as they participate in the test. There are two types of supports for students on the test: assessment features and accommodations. Each should be considered carefully before testing to ensure that students receive the supports that will promote their ability to access and respond to the test items. Accommodations, unlike assessment features, must be included in the student’s IEP before testing.

Assessment features are available for all students and are either built into the NCSC Assessment System or are typically available on a computer, like volume control. Assessment features may be enabled by the student or TA at the time of testing and can be turned off or on for each test item. **Students and TAs should be familiar with the assessment features and should practice using them with the sample items prior to test administration.**

NCSC Assessment Features

Refer to the *NCSC Assessment System User Guide for Test Administrators* for screenshots and directions for enabling the assessment features.

- **Answer Masking** allows students/TAs to electronically cover and reveal individual answer options as needed.
- **Audio Player** allows text to be read aloud to the student by the computer. The Audio Player reads each line automatically until it is paused or stopped. It can repeat phrases and sentences as well but not individual words.
- **Alternate Color Themes (Color Contrast)** The student/TA can change the onscreen background color and/or font color. Options are: black text on white background (default), black text on cream background; black text on light blue background; black text on light magenta background, and white text on black background; light blue text on dark blue background.
- **Increase Size of Text and Graphics.** Through the computer, the TA or student can zoom in or out. Projectors, smart boards, or other equipment may also be used to enlarge the text.
- **Increase Volume.** Using the computer, the TA or student can increase or decrease the volume.
- **Line Reader Tool.** The line reader allows one part of the text to be highlighted at a time.
- **Magnification.** A magnification tool built in to the test is available as well as increasing the browser size with the computer controls. Also acceptable are projection devices and smart boards. Students must be tested in a separate setting if using projection devices or a smart board.
- **Read Aloud and Reread Item Directions, Response Options, or Passage.** The TA may read the directions, response options, or passage as often as is reasonable to obtain a student's response to an item. All text must be read to students exactly as written (i.e. no paraphrasing or emphasis of words in ways that provide hints as to correct or incorrect answers).

Accommodations

Accommodations are changes in the materials or procedures of the assessment that do not alter the construct being measured. These are different from the assessment features in that they are highly individualized and could impair student access to the test if not appropriately considered based on individual student needs. The table below explains each accommodation.

Note on Physical Prompting: The use of any physical prompting, including hand-over-hand, invalidates the results of the test for the student. The use of physical prompting is considered

to be a modification or change to the Directions for Test Administration. **Physical prompting is not permitted and is considered to be an inappropriate test practice and a test irregularity.**

Table 8. NCSC Accommodations

Refer to the *NCSC Assessment System User Guide for Test Administrators* for screenshots and directions for enabling the assessment features.

Accommodations	How to Access
<p>Assistive Technology (AT) devices can be used for viewing, responding to, or interacting with the test items. The student and TA should use the AT device with the sample items to ensure that it functions properly with the NCSC Assessment System. The NCSC Assessment System supports various AT devices, such as alternate keyboard, switches and hub, head mouse, etc.</p>	<p>Refer to <i>NCSC Assessment System User Guide for Test Administrators</i> for information concerning the compatibility of the NCSC Assessment System with assessment features and AT devices.</p>
<p>Paper Version of Item(s): Large print forms are not available. Please refer to the <i>NCSC Assessment System User Guide for Test Administrators</i> for directions to use the assessment feature, Increase Size of Text and Graphics.</p>	<p>TA may print a copy of an item or items. This copy must be given to the TC for shredding upon completion of the test.</p>
<p>Scribe/Transcription:</p>	<p>Refer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix A: Scribing Protocol for Writing • Appendix B. Protocol for Writing Constructed-Response Items • Appendix C. AAC Guidelines for Writing Constructed-Response Items
<p>Sign Language (e.g., ASL, PSE, SEE):</p>	<p>TA may provide sign language interpretation to student as indicated on the IEP.</p>

Procedures for Assessing Students Who are Blind, Deaf, or Deaf/Blind

Students who are blind, deaf, or deaf/blind will be assigned to the test form with items that reduce barriers for vision and hearing. Additional test administration procedures called, *Procedures for Assessing Students who are Blind, Deaf, or Deaf/Blind*, are available through the State Test Coordinator that includes:

- Guidelines for administering items and suggestions for developing tactile symbols, using object replacements, and providing sign language interpretation.
- Alternative text to be read to a student who has vision impairment. For example, for an item that includes a bar chart, a verbal description of the bar chart is embedded in the item for a student who has difficulty seeing the bar chart.
- Reading foundational items (grade 3 and 4 only) in braille for students who use braille.

A student will be assigned to this test form if the student has one or more of the following conditions:

- low vision; uses vision for some activities of daily living
- no functional use of vision for activities of daily living, or unable to determine functional use of vision
- hearing loss aided, but still with a significant loss
- profound hearing loss, even with aids; and/or undetermined functional use of hearing
- uses braille (contracted or uncontracted) - Braille forms will be available for students who are eligible for Braille and are in grade 3 or 4.

The reading foundational items in braille (grade 3 and 4 tests only) will be shipped to the district office for distribution by Measured Progress to students who use braille.

Test Security Procedures and Test Irregularities

The NCSC AA-AAS is an online test and all test forms and test materials are available in the NCSC Assessment System. Secure handling of test materials protects the integrity and confidentiality of test items and the validity of student results. It is essential that unauthorized persons are prevented from accessing or viewing Pilot 2 Test content in the NCSC Assessment System or in paper form.

TAs and TCs must ensure that all aspects of the test are maintained in a secure manner. Items are for the exclusive use of testing and are not to be used for instruction, and are not to be shared, emailed, copied, or distributed in any manner. To do so is a test irregularity and a violation of test security. After the TA completes all training requirements, the DTAs, which include test items, will be available prior to the testing window. For printed test materials including, but not limited to, DTAs, test-specific reference pages, scoring rubrics, and test forms, a TA must:

- Test Administrators, District Test Coordinators, and School Test Coordinators will comply with their state’s test security protocols and procedures and will sign and submit their state-specific required test security agreements as outlined in state law and policy. The security agreement can be found in Appendix D.
- Maintain all printed test materials in a secure, locked location.
- Protect secure materials from view by other students, teachers, parents, school staff, or other individuals.
- Ensure secure transport of testing material from school building to school building.
- Refrain from duplicating, reproducing, or sharing items or other secure test materials.
- Give ALL printed test forms or other printed material to the TC as prescribed in state-specific policy, after the test session is completed, for shredding.
- Delete any test materials, items, or information from the computer and/or any assistive technology used by the student after testing is complete.

Preparing a Secure Testing Environment

A secure test environment includes, but is not limited to:

- Administering the test only through the password-protected testing environment, the NCSC Assessment System.
- Restricting student access to resources that are explicitly identified in the Directions for Test Administration (DTA).
- Viewing of test items only by the student taking the Pilot 2 Test and the certified, licensed, and trained TA administering the Pilot 2 Test.
- Removing electronic devices and photography technology that could jeopardize test content in the test-taking environment.
- Ensuring a quiet test-taking environment, void of talking or other distractions, and one that does not permit other students hearing the responses to the test items of the student being tested.

Inappropriate Test Practices

TAs must administer all test items according to the DTA. Inappropriate test practices are any actions contrary to those explicitly stated in the DTA and the test security agreement. Examples of inappropriate test practices/test irregularities include, but are not limited to:

- Changing the wording of test directions, items/questions, response options, or any text as it is written in the DTA.
- Using non-prescribed manipulatives or replacement objects, graphic organizers, or mnemonic aids.
- Using any physical prompting, including hand-over-hand.
- Providing students a preview of the test at any time.
- Providing answers to students in advance of or during test administration.
- Providing students clues or supports not included in the DTA.
- Manipulation of testing materials in a way that hints at a correct or incorrect answer (e.g. reducing answer options).
- Changing a student's answer.
- Reminding the student of previously used materials or experiences directly related to concepts in an item.
- Teaching test content immediately before the test or the administration of an item.
- Sharing test items, test content, or test forms, written or verbally, with colleagues, parents, other staff members, the general public, or students.
- Transporting printed test materials in a non-secure manner.
- Leaving secure printed test materials including, but not limited to, DTAs, test items, and scoring rubrics unattended.
- Leaving the NCSC Assessment System unattended while logged in for any reason.
- Administration of the test by a staff member who has not completed the online training modules and passed the final quiz.
- Allowing the use of electronic devices or photography technology that could jeopardize test content in the test-taking environment.

Reporting Testing Irregularities

Monitoring testing procedures and reporting inappropriate test practices are outlined in state law and policy. Each person participating in the state assessment program is directly responsible for immediately reporting any violation or suspected violation of test security or confidentiality. TAs and other staff must notify their School Test Coordinator (STC) and/or District Test Coordinator (DTC) if they witness or become aware of an inappropriate test practice or suspect one has occurred. DTCs and STCs must follow their state procedures. DTCs must report any incidents involving alleged or suspected violations that fall under the category of a serious irregularity to the State NCSC Coordinator. State professional codes of ethics and state law provide the guidelines for determining the consequences for any inappropriate test practices.

Part 3: Administering the Test

Step 1: Activate Test Administrator Account

The TA will receive an auto-generated log in user name and password from NCSCServiceDesk@measuredprogress.org. The TA will open a web browser and type in: <https://teacher-ncscpartners.ctb.com>. The TA will enter in his/her email address that was used to register your student. Enter the password provided in the email and click, "Log In."

Step 2: Complete/Verify Student Information before Testing

Before testing, TAs will update the following information in the NCSC Assessment System:

1. Student Demographics (**not required to update**)
2. Learner Characteristics Inventory (LCI)
3. Accommodations: Before Test
4. Conduct Student Response Check, if necessary

Refer to the *NCSC Assessment System User Guide for Test Administrators* for screenshots and directions for each section. Once this information is saved, a confirmation message will appear confirming that this information has been updated. ***The test cannot be accessed or started until this step has been completed.***

1. Student Demographics

The TA can review and confirm the demographic information provided for each student but it is not required. Any demographics entered will be overwritten by data collected directly from the district.

2. Learner Characteristics Inventory (LCI)

Next, the TA will complete the LCI, which includes 16 learner characteristics that will provide a description of the characteristics of the students who participated in this test.

3. Accommodations: Before Test

The *Accommodations: Before Test* tab is completed by the TA before administering the test. These accommodations are required to be in the IEP.

4. Student Response Check (SRC)

The purpose of the Student Response Check (SRC) is to ensure that the TA can clearly identify which answer a student chooses for a selected-response test item. For students who have a clear method of communication and who clearly select their answers to the test questions by either responding verbally or using assistive technology (AT), conducting the entire Student Response Check is not necessary, however TAs must still select the modes of communication the student will use during the test.

Directions for conducting the SRC can be downloaded from the NCSC Assessment Portal. For screenshots of the SRC, refer to the *NCSC Assessment System User Guide for Test Administrators*.

Note: The use of hand-over-hand or any physical prompt that directs the student toward an answer is not considered a consistent and observable response because the student is not indicating his/her answer choice in an independent way.

If the SRC with a student, there are two options for administering the test.

Student Displays Consistent Observable Responses During SRC	Student Does Not Display Consistent Observable Response During SRC	
Administer All Test Items in Reading, Writing and Mathematics	Administer the First 4 items in Reading or Mathematics	
	If TA observes a student response to at least one of the first 4 items,	If TA does not observe a student response to Any of the first 4 items,
	Then TA administers all test items in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics.	Then TA may close the test session in accordance with procedures described in NCSC Assessment System User Guide for Test Administrator.

Step 3: Administer the Test

Pausing and Resuming the Test

If a student exhibits frustration, lack of engagement, refusal to participate, or becomes sick during the administration of the test, you can pause the test by clicking on the **Save/Exit** button and take a break. A break may consist of a few minutes or a few days, depending on the student’s needs. Resume administration of the test at an appropriate time for the student. You may pause and resume the administration of the test as often as necessary during the test window, based on a student’s needs.

Step 4: After Test Administration Tasks:

1. Accommodations: After Test

Following test administration, record the accommodations the student *actually used* during the test in the *Accommodations: After Test* tab.

2. End of Test Survey

At the completion of each student’s content area test the TA will complete the End of Test survey. The survey is intended to provide additional data about how the test functions for students, student engagement with the test, and the opportunity to learn the content contained in the Common Core State Standards/CCCs. Survey responses will support potential revisions and refinements for subsequent years.

Appendix A. Scribing Protocol for Writing

A **scribe** is an adult who writes or types exactly what the student communicates by speech, sign language, or assistive technology in order to document the student's answer to a test question, complete a graphic organizer, or response template. A scribe may also write or type a student response obtained through an audio recording.

NOTE: The decision to use a scribe for a student should be made prior to testing. This process should be practiced prior to testing to ensure that the student and the scribe are comfortable with the procedure and it does not interfere with the student's ability to access the test.

Rhode Island Note: The test administrator or aide/paraprofessional can serve as scribe. If an aide or paraprofessional will serve as a scribe, the test administrator must be present.

Qualifications and Responsibilities of a Scribe:

- Scribes must be familiar to the student.
- Scribes must be familiar with all the accommodations in the student's IEP
- Scribes must sign and submit state test security agreements.
- Scribes must review *Appendix B: Protocol for Administration of Writing Constructed-Response Items*.
- **Aide/paraprofessionals** can serve as a scribe under the direction of a qualified, trained test administrator who is present and actively administering the test.

Preparation:

- Scribes are expected to familiarize themselves with the test before testing.
- Scribes are expected to be knowledgeable of the accessibility features and accommodation that the student will have access to during testing.
- Scribes should practice the scribing process with the student before testing begins with the sample test items.

Appendix B. Non-AAC Protocol for Writing Constructed-Response Items

This protocol is to be used in conjunction with the DTA and provides necessary information to deliver a standard administration of the writing constructed-response (CR) for students who will not independently enter their responses directly into the NCSC Assessment System.

For students using a paper version of the writing section of the test, the following steps describe item administration, scribing, annotating, and uploading student responses into the NCSC Assessment System, and transcription of the CR items.

Step 1. Directions for Test Administration

All TAs should become familiar with the DTA prior to the administration of the CR items. The CR items require students to produce a permanent product in response to a writing prompt. Each item is presented to the student in a standardized, scripted sequence of steps that include statements read by the TA and directions for the presentation of grade- and prompt-specific materials that need to be printed and prepared before testing, as appropriate. The TA must write the NCSC Student ID Number in the space indicated at the bottom of the completed Student Response Template.

Step 2. Follow procedure for scribing (if necessary)

A **scribe** is an adult who writes or types exactly what the student communicates by speech, sign language, or assistive technology to document the student's response in order to complete a graphic organizer or response template. A scribe may also write or type a student response obtained through an audio recording.

NOTE: The decision to use a scribe for a student should be made prior to testing. This process should be practiced prior to testing to ensure that the student and the scribe are comfortable with the procedure and it does not interfere with the student's ability to access or respond to the test questions.

Scribing Protocol for Writing Constructed-Response Items

- The scribe will write exactly what the student communicates on paper or directly into the NCSC Assessment System so other students cannot see the student's answers.
- The scribe will correctly spell all words (spelling is not scored).
- The scribe will not capitalize words or punctuate text unless indicated by the student.
- The scribe will allow the student to edit for punctuation, capitalization, or other edits as described in the Directions for Test Administration (DTA).
- The scribe will make student-requested changes, even if incorrect.
- The scribe will orally confirm meaning of homonyms and commonly confused homophones, e.g., *than* and *then*; *to*, *two*, and *too*; *there*, *their*, and *they're*.

- **If necessary:** if the student did not enter the response into the online system independently, the scribe will transcribe the written product into the NCSC Assessment System using the procedures found in step 5 of Appendix C.
- After testing, the scribe will collect scratch paper, graphic organizers, other ancillary materials, and login information and give to the school TC for shredding. Scribes and/or teachers may not keep any testing materials after testing is complete.

Step 3. Follow procedure for annotating (if necessary)

In cases where a student’s written product may not be easily read due to inventive spelling that interferes with understanding, illegible penmanship, or use of symbolic expressions, you must provide annotations. Annotations do not alter the intent of the student’s original response; rather annotation ensures that the response is interpretable and meaningful to a scorer. Please note that spelling is not scored.

The TA will read the student’s response and any annotations that would:

- describe the intended meaning of pictures, symbols, or objects included in the student’s original response.
- clarify illegible writing.
- clarify incorrect spelling.

To correctly annotate **student responses on paper** effectively, follow these guidelines:

- Use a different color pen or pencil from the student’s original response.
- Write above or below the pictures, symbols, or objects or words.
- Do not cover any part of the student’s response.
- Do not include comments or explanations of the student’s response.
- Provide an opportunity for the student to review and modify the annotations.

To correctly annotate **a response a student entered on the computer themselves**, follow these guidelines:

- Type annotations using parentheses next to words or phrases. Example:
- Do not delete any part of the student’s response.
- Do not include comments or explanations of the student’s response.
- Provide an opportunity for the student to review and modify the annotations.

Step 4. Follow procedure for Uploading Student Evidence

Screen shots and step-by-step directions can be found in the User Guide.

- Only constructed-response writing items require evidence to be captured and uploaded.
- All evidence must be uploaded while the item is on the screen.
- TAs are expected to capture an image of the Response Template pages which contain the student’s original product when the response is NOT entered by the student independently into the NCSC Assessment System. The system allows a TA to either use a webcam to take a snapshot of the student’s paper or scan it with the school’s scanner, and upload to the system. In both cases, the evidence should be added to the appropriate assessment item; that means when the specific ELA constructed-response writing item is visible on the screen, the TA should click the capture evidence

button/icon. This ensures the student response is associated with the correct constructed-response item.

- more than one piece of evidence for an item can be provided. (e.g., the student's response took 2 or more pages).
- A short description can also be added in a description text box. **Note:** once a session is completed and/or a test is submitted, the system does not allow a TA to upload the student evidence.

Step 5. Follow procedures for transcription (if necessary)

For students who are not able to independently type their response into the NCSC Assessment System and they complete the test item on paper or using objects, the TA will need to transcribe it for them. Transcription is the accurate and exact typing of the student's final response into the NCSC Assessment System, which includes any annotations. The steps for transcription are:

1. In the NCSC Assessment System, enter the entire student response into the item text boxes exactly as written and annotated according to Step 3.
2. Do not revise, edit, or alter the student's response in any way.
3. Do not provide feedback regarding the correctness of the student's response.
4. Provide all test materials to the TC for shredding after the student evidence has been uploaded and the transcription has been completed.

Appendix C. AAC Protocol for Writing Constructed-Response Items

The Test Administrator (TA) must record the student's response(s) for writing constructed response items exactly as the student indicates using the student's existing augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) system or device. When a method currently used by the student during instruction conflicts with these guidelines, these guidelines should inform the method ultimately used during the administration of the test.

Guidelines for Administering the Writing Test Using AAC Devices

When administering the constructed-response items to a student using an AAC device, TAs must adhere to the AAC Protocol to ensure that the student's response is generated in a manner that allows for accurate measurement of the student's writing ability. Examples of word boards are on the following pages.

- Words/symbols/pictures/phrases that the student typically uses during instruction to communicate can be provided.
- Introduce vocabulary related to the prompt, but do not practice the prompt or teach the vocabulary in the context of the prompt. To do so is a violation of testing protocols.
 - a. For example, if the prompt refers to supporting a claim related to “solar energy,” it is appropriate to define and describe “solar energy” and its uses in order to familiarize the student with the related symbol(s) using the AAC device. However, it is not appropriate and a violation of test policy and procedure to practice *writing a persuasive essay using “solar energy” as the context*.
- Any content represented in the stimulus materials found in the DTA can be added to the student's AAC device (e.g., list of temporal words, problem/solution cards, words from mentor text or sample essay) to support the student's access to the test.
 - a. Ensure the words/pictures/symbols/phrases used from the stimulus materials are familiar or can readily be understood.
- The student's response **cannot** be the result of a series of dichotomous choices of words, phrases, or sentences selected by the TA.
 - a. An example of a series of dichotomous choices that would **not** be allowed is: The teacher asks, “Do you want to say that the girl was tall or short?” The student chooses tall. The teacher then asks, “Do you want to say the girl ran or swam?” The student chooses swam. The teacher asks, “Do you want to say the girl swam in the lake or in the pool?” The student chooses the pool.
- The student's answer must be the result of the student completing the writing process using a series of two categories to communicate his/her word/picture/symbol/phrase preference.
 - a. For example, a series of choices that is allowable is: The teacher asks, “Do you want nouns or action words?” The student selects nouns and the teacher then gives the choice of People or Thing words. The student chooses People words. The teacher then presents a series of choices of People words to allow the student to select the preferred person from those on the board. (As stated

above, this should not result in a series of dichotomous choices of words, phrases, or sentences selected by the TA.)

- Words/symbols/pictures/phrases **cannot** be arranged on a student’s communication board so that any selection would be correct.
- Use the instructions in the DTA regarding the placement and presentation of words, pictures, checklists, graphic organizers, and/or templates.

AAC Procedure

- Student should use the communication mode/system with which the student is the most competent and which provides the most accessibility to producing a writing product.
- Allow the student to select the word/symbol/picture/phrase in the communication mode/system in the same manner as used in instruction (e.g., direct select, indirect such as scanning, eye gaze).
- Allow the student to access words/symbols/pictures/phrases within their communication mode/system in the same manner as in instruction (e.g., subject specific boards, multiple levels by categories). See Figures 1 – 4 below.

Figure 1. Sample Noun Category Board



Figure 2. Sample Phrase Board

	
<p>having a friend is important</p>	
	
<p>everyone needs a dream</p>	
	
<p>living under a bridge is hard</p>	

Figure 3. Sample Subject Board: Subject-specific board about flight (mixture of single words, phrases, and sentences)

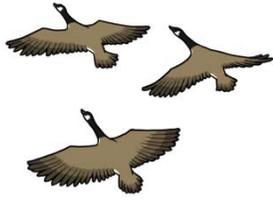
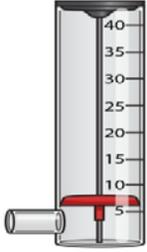
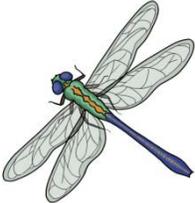
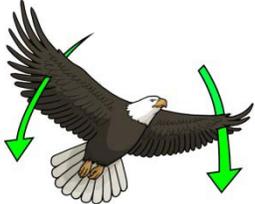
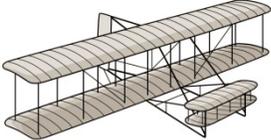
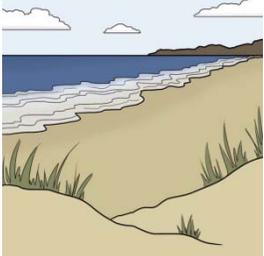
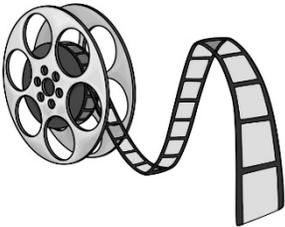
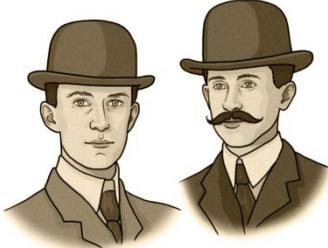
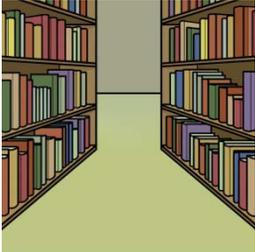
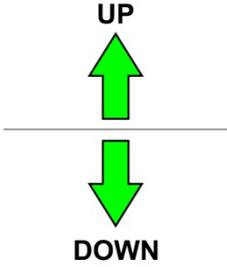
 <p>flying</p>	 <p>birds fly</p>	 <p>people fly</p>	 <p>wind speed</p>
 <p>insects fly</p>	 <p>kites fly</p>	 <p>How does a bird fly?</p>	 <p>Birds fly with their wings.</p>
 <p>Who invented the first airplane?</p>	 <p>internet</p>	 <p>books</p>	 <p>on the beach</p>
 <p>video</p>	 <p>The Wright Brothers</p>	 <p>library</p>	 <p>up and down</p>

Image attributes: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:LucasTerrier.jpg>;
<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a5/Thanakaboy.jpg>

Appendix D: Test Security Agreement

Rhode Island Administration of the NCSC Alternate Assessment 2015 Test Security Agreement

I acknowledge that the NCSC Alternate Assessment is a secure test and agree to the following conditions of use to ensure the security of the test.

1. I shall take necessary precautions to safeguard all test materials.
 - a. I shall sign the RI NCSC Security Agreement.
 - b. Access to all test materials, including online test items and printed material, is restricted. I shall not attempt to gain access to test materials beyond that which is granted to me by my school/district test coordinator, superintendent, or program administrator.
 - c. I shall keep all test materials distributed to me under lock and key **except during actual test times**.
 - d. I shall not permit students to remove test materials from the testing room except under the supervision of staff.
 - e. I shall not examine, read, or review the NCSC test **except in accordance with test administration directions**.
 - i. I shall not disclose, nor allow to be disclosed, in any way, the content of the test.
 - ii. I shall not discuss any test item at any time.
 - iii. I shall not report any students' answer choices outside the testing window.
 - iv. I shall give all test materials, including *Directions for Test Administration*, student work, word boards, and printed copies of test items, after testing is complete to the school/district test coordinator for shredding immediately upon completion of the test.
 - v. I shall delete any files, including *Directions for Test Administration*, student work, word boards, and printed copies of test items, after testing is complete, from any computer used for testing.
 - f. I shall not use any test materials for instruction before or after test administration.
2. I will follow and implement all directions and instructions contained in the test materials for the NCSC assessments with fidelity.
3. I understand that if assurances are intentionally false, under R.I.G.L. 11-8-1, educational certification may be suspended or revoked for cause under R.I.G.L. 16-11-4.

Individuals who will administer the NCSC Alternate Assessments must also agree to the following conditions to ensure the correct administration of the tests.

4. I shall participate in training activities prior to administering the test.
5. I shall review the *Test Administration Manual* and the *Directions for Test Administration*, as appropriate for administering the test.
6. I shall follow all instructions in the *Test Administration Manual* and the *Directions for Test Administration* **including presenting all test items from all sections of the NCSC assessments to the student during the student's school day.**

By signing my name to this document, I am assuring my district/program and the Rhode Island Department of Education that I will abide by the above conditions and that anyone I supervise, who will have access to the 2015 NCSC Alternate Assessment, will also sign a Test Security Agreement.

Signed by: _____ Print Name: _____

Title: _____ District: _____ School: _____

Appendix E. Parent Letter Template

[date]

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Rhode Island is among a group of ten leading states that make up the National Center and State Consortium (NCSC). Together, over the last three years, we developed new alternate assessments. Beginning March 30, 2015, these new alternate assessments will be given for the first time to all students who meet the eligibility criteria. Rhode Island educators helped to develop these next-generation tests in math, ELA, and writing that are of exceptional quality and will measure students' content knowledge and key skills.

The NCSC Alternate Assessments (which are replacing the RIAA Mathematics, Reading, and Writing portfolio tests) were pilot tested twice in our state. The first pilot test was administered last spring and the second pilot test was given in October, 2014. This was a voluntary process so your child may not have participated at that time. These two pilot tests provided important information to the states and we were able to make refinements to further ensure that each student's needs are met and they have the greatest possible opportunity to show us what they know and can do.

While this test is going to be delivered online, we know some students will not be able to interact with the computer on their own. In addition to the online test platform being able to work with many assistive technology devices, teachers can also use a paper copy and apply many other accommodations and supports in order to address the student's unique needs. Please discuss any accommodations and other supports with your child's teacher. The states that designed NCSC provided teachers with many options for administering the test to your child.

Thank you for your continued involvement in and support of your child's education. If you wish to learn more about NCSC, please visit www.ride.ri.gov/NCSC to view the Parent FAQ under the NCSC tab or ask your child's teacher or principal.

Sincerely,

[District/LEA Superintendent]

Appendix F. Parent FAQ

The letter and FAQ can be printed and distributed to parents as necessary. They are also available for downloading at ride.ri.gov/NCSC.

1. What is the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC)?

The National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) is a consortium of 24 states and five national organizations. NCSC received a grant to develop a new alternate assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in math and English Language Arts (ELA) for grades 3-8 and 11 by the 2014-15 school year. ELA includes reading and writing. NCSC also developed curriculum and instructional resources and professional development modules which are publicly available at <https://wiki.ncscpartners.org/mediawiki>. You can read more about NCSC partner states and organizations at <http://www.ncscpartners.org/about>.

2. Are schools required to give an assessment like this to students with significant cognitive disabilities?

Yes. Two federal laws, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) require that students with disabilities participate in state assessments. States are required to use an alternate assessment, such as the NCSC assessment, for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are not able to participate in the general assessment even with accommodations and other supports.

3. Why are state assessments important for children with significant cognitive disabilities, including those whose disabilities are considered profound?

The performance data from all state assessments are expected to be used to improve the educational system. Research shows that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities can perform well on academics when they have had the opportunity to learn the content. Challenging state assessments designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities can raise expectations and improve instruction and performance. Although the assessments focus on academic content, working on this content also helps build critically important functional skills.

4. What is the process for deciding which students will participate in these assessments?

Each year, before the end of September, the IEP team reviews the criteria students must meet in order to be considered eligible for this test. The [2014-15 Guidance on Eligibility for IEP Teams](#) document explains the criteria and the evidence that IEP teams can and cannot use when making this decision. There are additional parent resources at <http://www.ncscpartners.org/resources>.

5. What computer skills are required for my child to take the test?

There are no required computer skills for this test. If a student were to take the test independently on the computer, being able to use a mouse and basic keyboarding skills would be necessary. While the test is delivered through the online testing platform, there is no expectation that students be able to use a computer on their own because the test can be printed. It is also compatible with many assistive technology devices and tablets.

6. If my child can't use a computer, how can he/she take the test?

If a student cannot use the computer independently or with a mouse, the teacher has several options. One option is that the test and any other materials may be printed out. Another is that the test is also compatible with a wide range of assistive technology devices and programs that can help a student answer test questions on their own. There are other supports available for students to increase their ability to access the test. Please visit with your child's teacher for supports and accommodations that would fit your child's needs.

7. How will my child's teachers be able to focus on teaching my child the functional skills he/she needs to be successful in the community if the focus of the assessment is on academics?

Academic instruction will promote many important skills that improve the ability of a student to function successfully in the community. In addition, most other functional skills can be learned and practiced as part of academic instruction. Effective communication is the most important functional skill of all. Reading and writing instruction can include using picture symbols, objects, or other communication methods. NCSC has made it a priority to provide resources designed to help teachers find a way for students to communicate effectively.

8. If my child does not have a consistent way to communicate, will he/she be able to take this assessment?

There will likely be a few, rare situations where a student does not have an effective communication system with which to answer questions during the assessment. If a student does not complete the test, then we cannot provide accurate information to schools and parents about what that student knows.

9. How long will it take to get the assessment results and how will the results be reported to parents?

The length of time for receiving parent reports will differ by state. NCSC will meet state and federal timelines for release of test scores, including parent reports. Schools will distribute student reports to parents. These reports will provide test scores and performance levels in math and ELA as well as provide descriptions of what their child can do in reading, writing, and math.

10. What are the consequences for my child if they take the NCSC tests?

Any consequences that come from a student taking this assessment should be explained and discussed in detail upon entering high school or as early as possible at the IEP Team meetings. However, when parents ask this question they are often concerned that their children may not receive a diploma or be able to graduate from high school. Even though the NCSC assessment is more academically rigorous than the previous alternate assessment and is aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), it measures a student's ability on the Core Content Connectors (CCCs) which are smaller pieces of the CCSS. In addition it is different in several important ways:

1. The test questions use language below grade level.
2. The teacher can model the task first and then give the test question to the student.
3. All of the tests are designed to be read out loud and include pictures and graphics and other supports to increase student access.
4. The PARCC assessment assesses most standards for each grade level; the NCSC assesses about 8-10 CCCs at each grade level.

11. The NCSC is aligned to the CCSS. Does that mean my student can receive a diploma?

The Secondary Regulations have been out for public comment and are now on the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education's agenda for January 12. Guidance for students who are eligible for alternate state assessment will be made available after the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education adoption of the Secondary Regulations. Regardless of which state assessment a student takes, they must

demonstrate that they have met, at a minimum, the 10th grade level standards in order to be eligible for a diploma.

The Rhode Island diploma system is designed to ensure students leave school ready for success in college, career and life. To do this, districts must provide academic, life skills, transition planning, and other supports so students have multiple opportunities to meet the graduation requirements in order to access the best possible opportunities after high school.

Although aligned with Common Core State Standards, the NCSC assessment does not test enough of the Common Core standards at a sufficient level of rigor (difficulty) to meet the 10th grade level standards established by the RI Board of Education in 2011.

12. If my child won't receive a diploma, what other options are there for my child?

There are a variety of resources to assist districts as they continue to develop multiple pathways for students who may not reach the 10th grade standards, including career readiness standards and certificate options (available at <http://www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/RIPublicSchools/DiplomaSystem.aspx> (open the *Student Certificates* tab).

The certificate options were originally designed for students taking the Alternate Assessment, however, given the variety of pathways students can use to meet the graduation requirements, these certificates can be used for a broader group of students regardless of the test they take or diploma determination.