

Case 2: Does the worksheet show what Dec knows?

Dec can explain a circuit out loud but gets lost on a crowded worksheet, so the crew asks what the task measures.

On your own Read What happened. Underline what Dec can do out loud and where he gets stuck. About 5 minutes.

Your role: You're the one who reads the goal line before anyone decides what Dec knows. **New skill:** Check what a task is meant to measure.



Dec points to a small light circuit on the table while Anika watches.

What happened

Anika, 16, and Dec, 17, are at the study table twenty minutes before theater rehearsal. They are building a light circuit for a school set. Dec can explain out loud how the current travels through the circuit. On the written practice sheet, he loses his place in the instructions.

The sheet has six dense paragraphs and one small diagram. Anika's first idea is to run the same timed practice sheet again. Then she draws a larger sketch, and Dec traces the whole circuit correctly.

Mari, 19, is on her break from the bookshop. She does not assume she knows why Dec is stuck. Dec wants help with this task, but he does not want a diagnosis from the group chat.

Your question: Does the practice sheet show what Dec knows, and what should Dec ask his teacher?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 6 minutes.

Learning goal A learning goal is the knowledge or skill that a task is meant to show.

En español: meta de aprendizaje

In this case: The practice brief names one goal: explain how a simple circuit works. It does not list speed or reading six dense paragraphs.

Evaluation An evaluation is a school's formal process for learning about a student's needs, using more than one measure.

En español: evaluación

In this case: Dec's practice sheet is not an evaluation. It is one observation the crew can describe to a teacher.

Eligibility Eligibility is meeting the requirements for a particular service or program.

En español: elegibilidad

In this case: A practice sheet cannot show whether Dec is eligible for special education. Under IDEA, no single measure can be the only basis for that decision.

Who is involved



Dec

Theater crew, working on the circuit sheet

"I can show you where the current goes. Then I get halfway through the written question and lose my place."



Anika

Studying the circuit with Dec

"I kept pointing at the page and saying 'it's right there.' I never looked at how the question was written."

Before you look at the evidence, why do you think Dec gets stuck on the worksheet?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Validity, support and who decides

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Learning goal:** A learning goal is the knowledge or skill that a task is meant to show.
- **Evaluation:** An evaluation is a school's formal process for learning about a student's needs, using more than one measure.
- **Eligibility:** Eligibility is meeting the requirements for a particular service or program.
- **Context:** Context is the information around an event or a quote that you need to understand what it means.

The story: A correct explanation and a wrong answer

Dec, 17, can explain a simple circuit aloud with complete accuracy. He is building one for a school theater set with Anika, 16, at a study table twenty minutes before rehearsal. The written practice sheet for the same content defeats him. It has six dense paragraphs, one small diagram and four questions to answer in complete sentences. On paper, he skips a line in the instructions and answers a question that was not asked. When Anika redraws the circuit larger, he traces it correctly.

The case is built around a problem that teachers, testers and employers meet constantly. A performance can fail for reasons unrelated to the skill being measured. It also shows how quickly helpful people overreach. Anika's first proposal is to repeat the timed sheet. A group chat could easily move from "Dec struggled" to a confident theory about why. Dec draws the line himself. He asks his friends to say what happened, not what is wrong with him, and to ask him before anyone tells his teacher what he needs.

Mari, who is dyslexic and switches between print and audio, models a different stance. She asks Dec to walk her through the circuit and then compares that with the worksheet. Your role is to read the goal line before anyone decides what Dec knows.

❓ Stop and think. Where have you seen a test or application measure format more than the skill it names?

Construct and format

The practice brief states its **learning goal**: explain how a simple circuit works. A learning goal is the knowledge or skill that a task is meant to show. In assessment language, the goal is the construct, and everything else about the sheet is format. The brief does not ask for speed and sets no time limit. The density of the text and the size of the diagram may still be affecting the score. When format drives performance, the result says less about the construct.

Case 1's habit of returning to the original source applies directly. The goal line, not the group's impression, defines what should be measured. Case 1's term **context** also applies. The written answer is authentic evidence, but alone it is a partial frame, like a cropped clip. The study-table notes supply the rest: correct aloud, incorrect on paper, cause unknown.

The crew's response respects those limits. Dec tries a clearer practice diagram and explains his reasoning again, so the new format still requires the target skill. Anika changes the study plan. Dec decides whether to raise the question of support.

? **Stop and think.** Dec sets the terms for what his friends say. What would change if Anika wrote to Ms. R on her own?

Evaluation, eligibility and professional duty

The crew cannot answer the question of support, and the law says why. An **evaluation** is a school's formal process for learning about a student's needs, using more than one measure. **Eligibility** is meeting the requirements for a particular service or program. Under the IDEA regulations, a public school must use a variety of assessment tools and strategies, and no single measure may be the sole basis for an eligibility decision (U.S. Department of Education, IDEA regulations, 34 CFR 300.304). The rule guards against the very shortcut the case warns about: one performance, read as a verdict.

Professional codes reinforce the point. The Council for Exceptional Children asks special educators to use assessment procedures that "accurately measure what is intended to be measured." It also calls for "actively involving families and individuals with exceptionalities in educational decision making" (CEC Ethical Principles and Practice Standards, no date listed). The NEA code limits what educators may disclose about students (National Education Association, Code of Ethics, 1975). Federal testing guidance frames accommodations as a way to measure skill, not disability (ADA.gov, U.S. Department of Justice, February 28, 2020).

Design research offers a complementary strategy. CAST's Universal Design for Learning Guidelines recommend building more than one path into and out of a task from the start (CAST, 2024). A systematic review and meta-analysis examined the effectiveness of that approach (Almeqdad et al., Cogent Education, May 29, 2023). Journalists continue to test specific supports, asking whether extended time helps students with ADHD show what they know (Education Week, October 13, 2025).

Evaluation, eligibility and professional duty, continued

The unresolved questions are real. The ethical baseline is not. Measure the goal, and let the student decide what is shared about him. That question, what is this document or task designed to show, will return when you read pay statements, ballots and budgets in later cases.

?

Stop and think. CEC calls for involving individuals in decisions about them. How does the crew follow that principle without being bound by it?

Sources

Real source | U.S. Department of Education | No date listed
IDEA regulations, 34 CFR § 300.304 (evaluation procedures)

Real source | Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) | No date listed
CEC Ethical Principles and Practice Standards

Real source | National Education Association (NEA) | 1975
Code of Ethics of the Education Profession

Real source | ADA.gov (U.S. Department of Justice) | February 28, 2020
ADA Requirements: Testing Accommodations

Real source | CAST | 2024
Universal Design for Learning Guidelines 3.0

Real source | Cogent Education (Almeqdad et al.) | May 29, 2023
The effectiveness of universal design for learning: A systematic review of the literature and meta-analysis

Real source | Education Week | October 13, 2025
Does Extended Time on Tests Actually Help Students With ADHD?

Notes

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 10 minutes.

Evidence A | Practice brief, handed out Monday

The assignment

Goal: Explain how a simple circuit works. Read the six paragraphs below before you answer. Use the diagram to trace the path of the current from the battery through the switch and the LED and back. Answer questions 1–4 in complete sentences.

Look closely: Which skill does the goal line name, and which does it leave out?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Study-table notes, Wednesday 3:40 p.m.

Dec's explanation

Out loud, with the larger sketch: traced the whole path, battery to switch to LED and back. Correct. Written sheet: skipped a line in the instructions and answered a different question from the one asked. Dec: the layout is hard to follow.

Look closely: What did Dec get right out loud that the sheet did not record?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

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Key idea: learning goals

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics. Then answer the question in the box. About 12 minutes.

Dec's written answer and his spoken explanation give the crew different information. A **learning goal** is the knowledge or skill that a task is meant to show. The practice brief names one goal: explain how a simple circuit works. It does not list speed, and it does not list reading six dense paragraphs. So the next question is what the sheet was meant to measure and what got in the way.

CAST's Universal Design for Learning Guidelines encourage giving learners more than one way to take in information and show what they know. For Dec, a larger diagram is a practice option to test. It is not a diagnosis, and it does not change an official test. Ask Dec what helped, and check that he can still explain the circuit.

An **evaluation** is a school's formal process for learning about a student's needs, using more than one measure. Under IDEA, a federal law, a public school must use varied tools in an evaluation. No single measure can be the only basis for deciding **eligibility**. Eligibility is meeting the requirements for a particular service or program. A study session is not an evaluation, so Dec decides whether to ask his school how that process starts.

Professional standards

Real source | Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

CEC Ethical Principles and Practice Standards: Special Education Standards for Professional Practice: Teaching and Assessment

“Use culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment procedures that accurately measure what is intended to be measured”

In plain words: Special educators who follow CEC's standards use assessments that measure the skill the task is meant to measure.

Question: The goal is explaining a circuit. Which parts of the sheet test something else, like reading six dense paragraphs?

Professional standards, continued

Your answer

Besides its goal, the sheet measures ____, so ____.

In the news



Real source | Education Week | October 13, 2025

Does Extended Time on Tests Actually Help Students With ADHD?

Asks the case’s question in real life: does a test accommodation help students show what they actually know?



Real source | K-12 Dive | December 3, 2025

IDEA at 50: How the landmark law changed education

Explains where IDEA, evaluations and IEPs came from and why schools must plan around each student’s needs.

Notes

Sort the evidence

On your own Read each decision in the diagram. Write who decides it in each blank box. About 8 minutes.

Sort who can decide each question. Which decision belongs to the teacher, which to a formal school process, and which only to Dec?

Try a clearer practice format for the circuit goal

Who decides

The teacher, who sets the practice format and the learning goal

Under which rule

Who lives with it

Dec, who decides what to share and whether to ask

Your way in

Start a formal IDEA evaluation or a Section 504 conversation

Who decides

The school's evaluation process, with a parent or guardian for a student under 18

Under which rule

IDEA evaluation rule: varied tools, no single measure as the sole basis

Who lives with it

Your way in

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what the crew should try and explain why. Then fix the two marked lines. About 6 minutes.

What should the crew try at the study table?

- ☐ **A** Run the same timed sheet again so Dec gets more practice.
- ☐ **B** Let Dec explain with a larger diagram, then compare his reasoning with the sheet.
- ☐ **C** Tell Dec he probably needs an IEP.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Hi Ms. R, Dec failed the circuit sheet again and we think the test is unfair to him. He obviously knows the material because he explained it to us perfectly. At the study table he went through the whole thing out loud with no mistakes. ① We think he might have a learning disability and should get an IEP so he can get extra time. My cousin has one and it helped her a lot. ② Can you give him an easier version? We really think this would help him pass. Thanks, Anika and Mari.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write a one-page guide for volunteer tutors in a library or youth program who work with high school students like Dec. The guide shows how to describe what a tutor observes without diagnosing and how to point a student and family to the school's own process.

Use: Case documents: Dec's practice brief, his study-table notes and Dec's and Anika's statements. Real sources: the IDEA evaluation rule summary (34 CFR § 300.304) and the CAST UDL Guidelines summary. Also use the case's safety note.

You'll make: Tutor guide, 350—450 words, with one worked example based on Dec

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 Sort the details in Evidence B into observed, possible explanation and not established.
- 2 Write the IDEA rule in one plain sentence.
- 3 List who a tutor should send formal questions to.
- 4 Sketch one redesign of the practice sheet that keeps the circuit goal.
- 5 Draft the guide, 350 to 450 words, on the Your draft page.
- 6 Use Dec's case as the one worked example, without diagnosing him.
- 7 Check the guide with the questions on the Check your work page.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Observed

Possible explanation

Not established

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

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Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does your guide separate what was observed from what is not established?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it state the IDEA rule accurately?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it send formal questions to the student, the family and the school?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Did you leave out every real student's grades, diagnosis and support plan?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ Mentions only the score.	☐ Describes Dec's explanation vaguely.	☐ Cites the goal and two specific observations.	☐ Uses observations and notes what they cannot show.
Reasoning	☐ Concludes Dec has a disability or the test is illegal.	☐ Suggests easier content without linking to the goal.	☐ Connects a possible format barrier to the learning goal.	☐ Distinguishes classroom support from IDEA evaluation accurately.
Audience & purpose	☐ Message speaks for Dec without his input.	☐ Mentions Dec but ignores his voice.	☐ Written in Dec's voice with his permission.	☐ Respects Dec's control and gives the teacher a clear next step.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Removes one problem line.	☐ Replaces the diagnosis with an observation.	☐ Explains how each change protects Dec's privacy and agency.

I changed ___ because ____.

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Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then finish My take. About 10 minutes.

1 Is the practice sheet checking circuit understanding, reading speed or both?

2 How would you know a new format shows Dec's learning more clearly instead of giving away the answer?

3 What does the IDEA evaluation rule cover, and why does a study session fall outside it?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

[illegible]

Talk about this case at home

Case 2: Does the worksheet show what Dec knows?

In this case, a student can explain a light circuit out loud but gets lost on a crowded worksheet. Your student compared the worksheet's goal with notes from a study session and thought about what the worksheet really measures.

Questions to talk about

- 1 Can one test show everything a person knows? Why or why not?
- 2 What makes the directions on a worksheet or a form easy to follow?
- 3 Who at a school can students ask about help with schoolwork?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.