

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 6 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 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.

Reading passage

Is the test measuring the right thing?

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 cue sheet with no numbers

The study table is covered in wire, a battery pack and a drawing that is getting bigger by the minute. Anika, 16, and Dec, 17, are building a light circuit for a school set, and rehearsal starts in twenty minutes. Dec can trace the current out loud without a pause: battery, switch, LED and back. On the written practice sheet, he gets halfway through a question and loses his place. The sheet has six dense paragraphs and one small diagram. “It’s like a cue sheet with no numbers,” he says.

Anika’s first instinct is repetition. She suggests running the same timed practice sheet again. Later she admits she kept pointing at the page and saying “it’s right there” without ever looking at how the question was written. When she sketches the circuit larger, Dec traces the whole path correctly. Mari, 19, is on her break from the bookshop. She switches between print and audio in her own reading, and she does not assume she knows why Dec is stuck. She asks him to walk her through it first.

Dec is clear about one boundary. He wants help with this task, but he does not want his friends to diagnose him. Before anyone tells his teacher, Ms. R, what he needs, they have to ask him.

❓ Stop and think. Anika’s first idea was to repeat the timed sheet. What would a second try on the same sheet show, and what would it miss?

Reading the goal line

In Case 1, you found the original source before trusting a cropped clip. The original source here is the practice brief. Its goal line reads: “Explain how a simple circuit works.” The brief lists no time limit.

Reading the goal line, continued

A **learning goal** is the knowledge or skill that a task is meant to show. Once you know the goal, you can ask a sharper question. Is the sheet measuring circuit understanding, reading speed or both? Dec's study-table notes answer part of it. Out loud, with the larger sketch, he traced the whole circuit correctly. On paper, he skipped a line in the instructions and answered a different question from the one asked.

Case 1 also gave you the word **context**, the information around an event or a quote that you need to understand what it means. A single written answer is a little like a cropped clip. It is real, but it leaves out the spoken explanation that shows what Dec knows.

❓ **Stop and think.** How would you know that a new format shows Dec's learning more clearly instead of giving away the answer?

Where the crew's power ends

The crew can change a practice plan. It cannot decide what support Dec qualifies for. 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 IDEA, a federal law, a public school must use varied tools in an evaluation, and no single measure can be the only basis for deciding eligibility (U.S. Department of Education, IDEA regulations, 34 CFR 300.304). Special educators hold themselves to a similar standard. The Council for Exceptional Children asks them to use assessments that "accurately measure what is intended to be measured" (CEC Ethical Principles and Practice Standards, no date listed).

Federal guidance on testing makes the same point from another side. Tests should measure a person's skill, not their disability (ADA.gov, U.S. Department of Justice, February 28, 2020). Reporters are still asking whether common supports, such as extended time, help students show what they know (Education Week, October 13, 2025).

So the crew does what it can. Dec tries the clearer diagram and explains his reasoning again. Anika changes the study plan. Dec decides for himself whether to ask Ms. R about more support. Your role is to read the goal line before anyone decides what Dec knows.

❓ **Stop and think.** Why does a study session fall outside the IDEA evaluation rule?

Sources

Real source | U.S. Department of Education | No date listed

IDEA regulations, 34 CFR § 300.304 (evaluation procedures)

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 are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners and a thin black border around the edges.

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 12 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?

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.

Key idea: learning goals

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics. Then answer the question in the box. About 10 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 circuits, the sheet tests ____.

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 page 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 8 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

Grades 9–10

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 8 minutes.

Draft a message to the teacher in Dec’s voice, written with his permission, that describes the observations and asks about support options.

Use: All three evidence cards, including the IDEA evaluation excerpt.

You’ll make: Email, 60–100 words, plus 2-sentence note on what you left out and why

Time: 50 minutes

- 1 Underline the goal line in Evidence A.
- 2 List two observations from Evidence B: one spoken and one written.
- 3 Write one question the evidence cannot answer.
- 4 Write an email of 60 to 100 words in Dec’s voice on the Your draft page.
- 5 Finish the email with one question Ms. R can answer.
- 6 Write a two-sentence note that explains what you left out and why.
- 7 Check your email with the questions on the Check your work page.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

The learning goal

Observation 1: spoken

Observation 2: written

One question the evidence cannot answer

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.

Your draft

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 18 minutes.

Your email to Ms. R, 60 to 100 words

Hi Ms. R,

What I left out, and why: two sentences

I left out ___ because ___.

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 email name the learning goal first?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it describe two observations without a diagnosis?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it ask Ms. R a question she can answer?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Would Dec agree to send it as written?	☐ 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 ____.

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 text or other markings on the paper.

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 ____.

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 are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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.