



## Advocating for Inclusive Assessments to Anti-DEI Audiences

Recent attempts by the far right to ban books and censor what is taught in schools is making many students of color feel unwelcome and unsupported in their schools. In the face of these attempts, advocating for inclusive assessments may be more difficult, but is no less necessary. The following guide will help advocates make the case for inclusive assessments to decision-makers who oppose diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts.

### Crafting Your Message

When developing your message, there are three core principles to keep in mind:

#### 1. Connect Your Argument to Your Audiences' Values

In engaging with anti-DEI audiences, it is important to speak their language. Connect your argument directly to the values of your audience, keeping in mind that they will differ from your own. An anti-DEI audience will not see inclusivity as inherently valuable, but they may value fiscal responsibility, effective governance, and the need for reliable data to ensure government accountability. The more you can frame your argument in these terms, or others that your audience cares about, the more receptive your audience will be to your argument.

#### 2. Define the Problem by Making It Personal

Anti-DEI audiences are unlikely to view the lack of inclusivity in assessments as an issue in and of itself, especially if the topic is discussed abstractly. Advocates should, therefore, demonstrate why the lack of inclusivity in assessments is a problem. One way in which to do so is to highlight stories that demonstrate how non-inclusive assessments impact your community. Students can discuss how non-inclusive assessments have compromised their ability to demonstrate their knowledge in school, while parents and teachers can highlight how non-inclusive assessments have undermined their faith in the quality and usefulness of assessment data. Having students, parents, or teachers speak about their experiences can be a powerful way to make the problem real and local for your audience.

#### 3. Have a Clear Call to Action

Your argument should end with a call to action that is clear, precise, and relatively simple to implement. Examples can be found in the report on inclusive assessments. Your specific call to action will depend on the current political climate in your community and your audience's decision-making power.

### Sample Arguments

- **Inclusive assessments provide policymakers with more accurate data on student achievement**
  - Statewide assessments provide the only comparable data on student academic achievement, enabling state and district leaders to target resources to students and districts with the highest needs. If students cannot understand, or do not fully engage with, assessments, their scores on them are less likely to accurately reflect their knowledge and abilities.

- Research shows that students are more engaged when they see people like themselves in school materials, including testing materials. Greater engagement leads to summative assessment scores that paint a more accurate picture of students' abilities.
- Inclusive assessments allow all students to demonstrate their full capabilities on summative assessments, providing more accurate data to statewide policymakers on student achievement in their state. (Note: "statewide" can be substituted with "districtwide")
- **Inclusive assessments allow schools, districts, and states to more effectively target resources toward the students who need them most**
  - Statewide assessments provide valuable data that allows policymakers to compare student achievement across the state and within districts.
  - Policymakers rely on this data to identify student groups that need additional support and target resources toward them, ensuring all students have the support they need to succeed. These resources can only be effective if they go to the right students.
  - If students cannot understand, or do not fully engage with, assessment content, their scores on statewide assessments are less likely to reflect their true knowledge and abilities. Inaccurate data can lead policymakers to allocate public education resources ineffectively.
  - More accurate assessment data shows a clearer picture of student achievement, so inclusive assessments help policymakers and educators allocate public resources more effectively.

### What to Avoid When Crafting Arguments

1. Don't connect inclusive assessments to other debates on inclusivity in education. De-politicize the issue wherever possible and distance it from other debates when necessary.
2. Avoid using jargon that requires additional knowledge of education issues or terms that are commonly used in anti-DEI campaigns occurring in your community (i.e. DEI, racism, etc.)
3. Avoid focusing the need to decenter whiteness when discussing the shortcomings of current assessments. Although they do center whiteness, raising that issue is likely to close off avenues of conversation with those opposed to DEI efforts.

### What to Emphasize When Crafting Arguments

1. Emphasize the objectives of statewide assessments, why we administer them, and how we use their results to inform public policy.
2. Showcase the impact of non-inclusive assessments on students in your community. Parents, students, and teachers are often the best advocates to relay this message.
3. Emphasize the need for better assessment data, and how this data impacts policymakers' ability to make informed decisions about resource allocation and other issues, such as future workforce readiness, that may be more important to those who oppose DEI efforts.