

How Schools Use Zoom™ to Proctor Assessments

There's no getting around the fact that administering assessments during distance learning is tough. However, if you have decided that your district will administer at-home assessments in fall 2020, we urge district leaders, building administrators, teachers, and families to work in partnership to create a detailed assessment plan.

Your approach to proctoring and administering an online assessment, such as the *i-Ready Diagnostic*, will be central to this plan.

In preparation for Back to School 2020, Curriculum Associates has spoken with hundreds of district and school leaders about effective distance-learning practices. Our discussions about at-home assessment and proctoring in particular have shown us that most districts are using one of two ways to proctor:

- **Option One:** Families proctor their children after they have attended training sessions and agreed to follow the district's protocols (including not helping their children).
- **Option Two:** Teachers use videoconferencing software to proctor students.

We've covered family proctoring programs in a recent article about three Innovative Education Management (IEM) virtual charter schools in California. In this article, we're going to share information about using videoconferencing software to proctor students during an at-home Diagnostic. The practices collected here were used by schools to assess students at home in spring 2020.

It's worth noting that Zoom was the most popular videoconferencing software among the educators we spoke to, and it's the software we use to explain the tips below. However, Curriculum Associates is not endorsing Zoom specifically. Educators have a number of software options, so in this article Zoom is meant to be representative of videoconferencing software in general.

The Takeaway

Technology and Privacy

- Make sure students and teachers have the technology tools they need.
- Train educators and students in using videoconferencing software and assessment program.
- Student privacy is paramount. Ensure compliance with laws, software security, etc.

Planning and Communications

- Create a "day of" assessment plan. If necessary, create a separate plan for students on asynchronous learning paths.
- Administrators communicate with families first. Then teachers follow up with families and students to convey messages on a more personal level.
- Communication includes an overview of the test, how it's helpful, *and* the logistics of assessment day.

Assessment Day

- Diagnostic day: Begins with preparation and directions, followed by students taking the Diagnostic and teachers monitoring via videoconferencing software.
- Stop assessments after the recommended amount of time for each grade level. Complete assessments during additional sessions that follow the same "day of" steps.

Preparation and Planning

Technology

- Each student and educator/proctor will need a computer with a webcam, microphone, and sound output.
- Many videoconferencing apps have desktop and mobile versions. Students and proctors should use the desktop version for the assessment.
- Note that during the assessment, students should use only their computer display—i.e., no additional monitors or displays unless, of course, they have special needs. Why does this matter? Because students will only be sharing one computer screen each during the assessment. If they have a second display or monitor, they could use the second screen for games, to search for assessment answers, chat with friends, etc.
- Students will need a strong Wi-Fi signal to use Zoom and an assessment program at the same time. Before the assessment, determine if students need Wi-Fi hotspots to boost their home signals.

Permissions

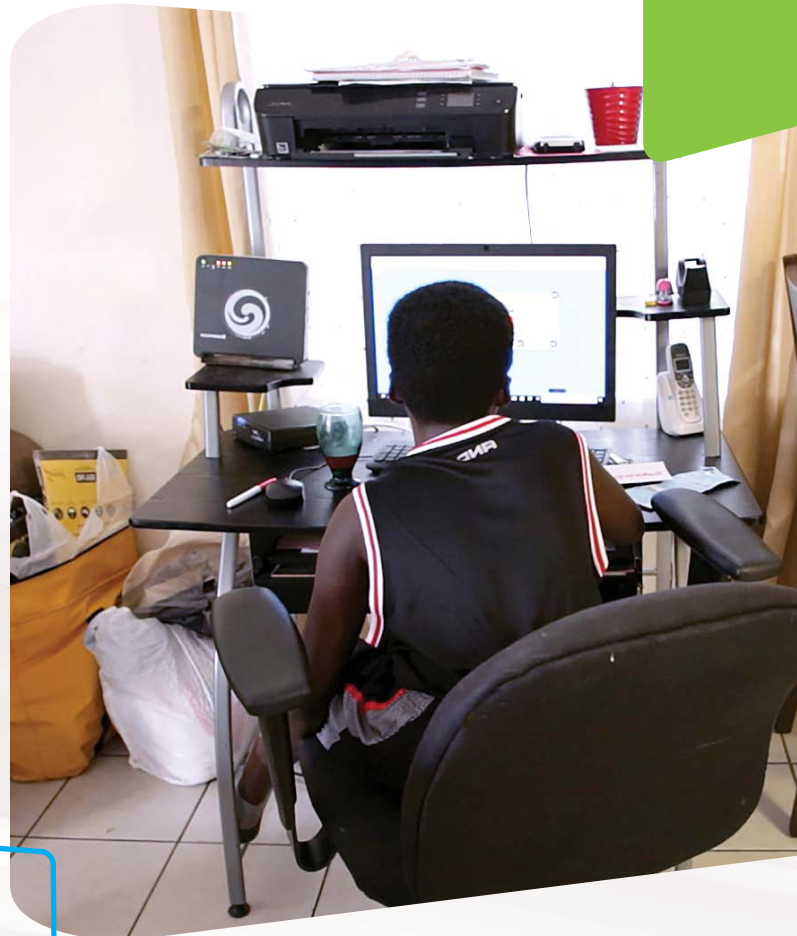
District and school leaders should always remember to obtain families' consent to use services such as Zoom. Never assume that programs are doing this work for you. Educators will ultimately be responsible for proving compliance with the [Children's Online Privacy Protection Act](#) and other applicable laws.

Student Privacy

Proctoring via Zoom requires all students to have their webcams on. This raises student privacy concerns as well as the worry that students will get distracted by one another's "backgrounds." Educators can avoid these problems by having all students use physical backdrops. A backdrop can be as simple as a plain sheet or as professional as a fold out or pop-up canvas.

Cybersecurity

Districts' IT and cybersecurity professionals should help educators ensure that their virtual classrooms are secure. Educators, in turn, should be trained in their software program's control features. In Zoom, for example, the meeting host can require passwords to join sessions, block screen sharing among participants, lock meetings to prevent anyone else from joining, and disable participants' webcams and audio.



Training

- Districts should provide software workshops in advance. Educators can also master their videoconferencing software by watching videos and reading articles online. Zoom, for example, has a [large library of educator-centered training materials](#).
- Students will also need to be knowledgeable of and comfortable with the technology far before they take the Diagnostic. It can't hurt to offer a training for families, so they can help children with snafus and troubleshooting.
- Teachers should conduct a practice assessment with their proctors. (If they have time to do a run through with students, that would be even better.)

Planning

- Determine how you will break up your assessment within your district's assessment window. For the *i-Ready Diagnostic*, we recommend that educators divide the assessment into three separate sessions for kindergarteners and two sessions for students in Grades 1–8. These recommendations are based on the average active testing time it takes to complete the Diagnostic for each subject.
- Enlist other educators and school staff to help proctor.
- Schedule your assessment via Zoom. As educators configure the invitations they'll be sending to their classes, they can also perform setup work that will make implementing the actual assessment a little easier. For example, they can set up "breakout rooms"—Zoom sessions that split off from the main room—and assign a student to each one. On the day of the Diagnostic, teachers will "send" students to their assigned individual rooms to take the Diagnostic.
- Divide students into groups and assign a proctor to each one. Proctors will be monitoring students' webcams and their screens. It's a lot to keep track of, so keeping group numbers low is important.



Communicating with Families and Students

District Leaders to Families

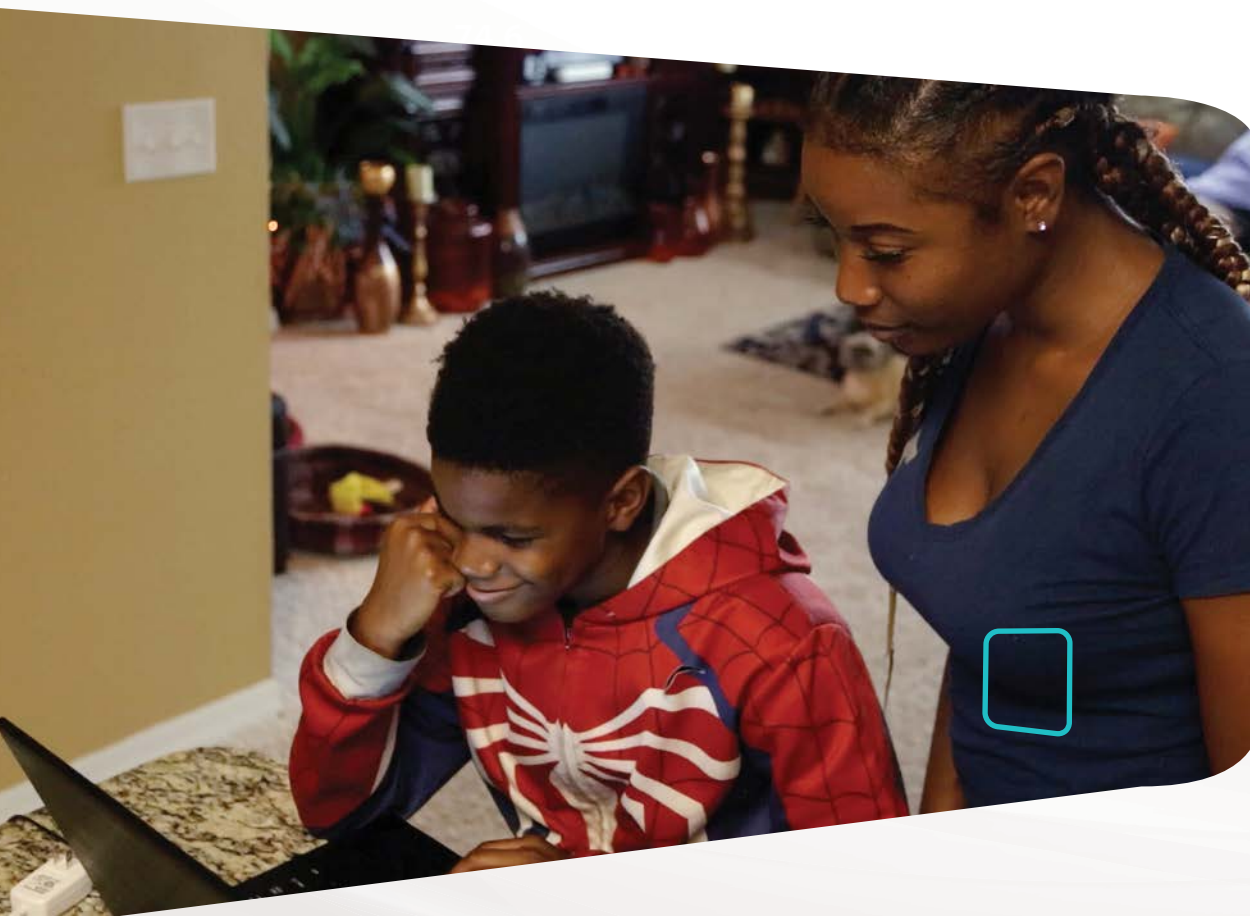
The first communication to families about an upcoming assessment needs to come from district leaders. Having a superintendent, for example, be the first to tell families and students that there will be an assessment communicates the importance of it and shows families that the decision to assess at home came from the top. The first communication should provide an overview of the assessment and explain why it's so important (e.g., gives teachers specific information about each student's skills, helps them personalize learning, aids in preparing students for state assessments, etc.).

Teachers to Families

Classroom teachers will provide families with detailed information about how the assessment will work. The districts we spoke to recommended that teachers have a checklist to ensure they deliver key information, such as basic assessment literacy, reasons why families should never help students with assessment answers, and security precautions the district is taking. This checklist should also have things teachers need to verify: Have families or guardians signed necessary permission forms? Is there a quiet room in the house that the student can use during the assessment? Does the student's computer meet all the technical requirements, etc.?

Teachers to Students

If this is the first Diagnostic students will be taking at home, educators should begin talking about the assessment with students right after district leaders have announced that they will take place. They should talk to their classes about why the assessment is so important; remind them that it's not a test, but rather, a way to help teachers help them learn; and explain how virtual proctoring will work.



The Day of the Assessment

- Students set up their physical backgrounds (if they are using one) and log in to Zoom via the assessment invitation 10 to 15 minutes before the start of the assessment. With Zoom, teachers have the option of putting students in a “Waiting Room” before bringing them into the main meeting room.
- The teacher (“host”) begins in the main meeting room and assigns each proctor the position of “co-host,” which gives the proctors the privileges they need to monitor their group of students.
- The teacher brings students into the main room and goes over the rules, procedures, and purpose of the assessment one final time. What teachers specifically cover will depend on their unique assessment plans, but topics could include:
 - That students should use the Zoom chat function to ask proctors questions. If possible, have an IT professional on standby to answer complicated tech questions should they arise.
 - The things that are allowed (e.g., scratch paper, pen, pencil, etc.) and what’s not allowed (e.g., a second monitor, calculator, etc.)
 - Remind students that teachers will be able to see students’ faces and screens and hear them at all times.
 - Reiterate that the test will get harder as they progress and that what matters the most is that they all try their best.
- The teacher sends students to their assigned individual “breakout rooms.”
- Students share their screens and audio.
- The teacher shares a link to the assessment program through Zoom’s chat feature. Students log in and begin the assessment.
- The teacher and proctor monitor students by popping in and out of individual students’ breakout rooms. They continue to check in on their students throughout the Diagnostic, ensuring that there are no technology issues, making sure students are sharing their screens and that their microphones are on, etc.
- Five minutes before the end of that day’s assessment sessions, the teacher tells students how much time they have left.
- The teacher brings all students back to the main meeting room. The class discusses how everything went and the logistics of the next session. Students are instructed to log out of *i-Ready* for the day and then everyone is dismissed.

This guide is only an overview, but hopefully one that has given administrators and educators a sense of the complications and benefits of proctoring at-home assessments live with Zoom.



Curriculum Associates Resources

i-ReadyCentral.com/AssessingAtHome

Assessing at Home Toolkits

Family Checklist

Supportive Phrases to Use with Students



Zoom Resources

Zoom.US

Comprehensive Guide to Educating through Zoom

School Administrator's Guide to Rolling Out Zoom



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