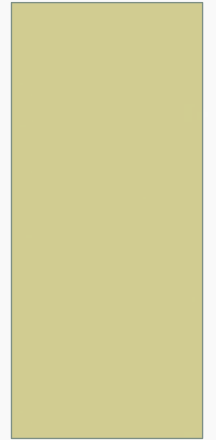# CAN YOU TEST BETTER THAN YOUR POTENTIAL?

THE MOVEMENT TOWARD UNIVERSALLY DESIGNED ASSESSMENTS

NICOLE OFIESH, PH.D. * AHEAD
MARCH, 2016, DUBLIN, IRELAND

POTENTIAL DEFINED

po·ten·tial
/pəˈten(t)SHəl/

adjective

1. having or showing the capacity to become or develop into something in the future.
   "a two-pronged campaign to woo potential customers"
   synonyms: possible, likely, prospective, future, probable; More

noun

1. latent qualities or abilities that may be developed and lead to future success or usefulness.
   "a young broadcaster with great potential"
   synonyms: possibilities, potentiality, prospects; More

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF EXAMS?

1. Identify what students have learned, strengths and weaknesses;

2. Provide a method for awards and recognition, and a basis for entrance into an internship, program, or college;

3. To gain college credit and graduate.

EXAMS IMPACT POTENTIAL

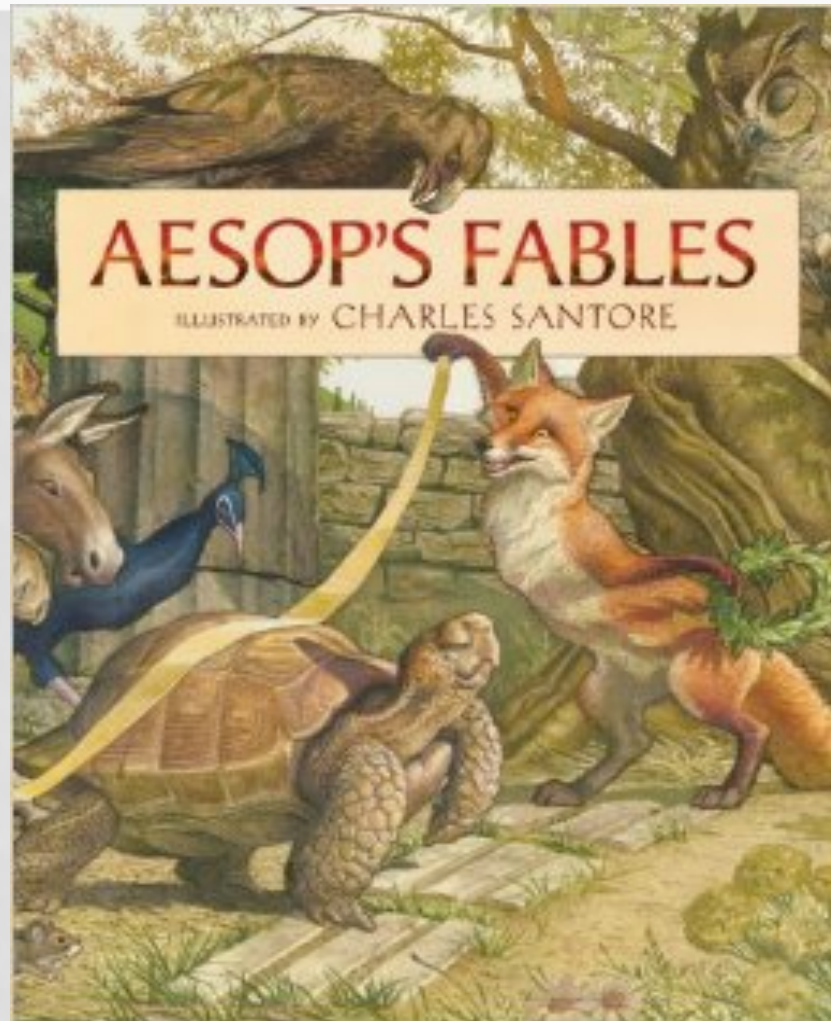# DO WE WANT TO LIMIT THE ABILITY TO DEMONSTRATE ONE'S POTENTIAL BY TIMED, PAPER-PENCIL EXAMS?

FOR THOSE WHO ANSWER "YES", THAT ANSWER IS OFTEN BASED ON OLD NOTIONS OF ABILITY. SPEED FOR EXAMPLE…

ROOTED IN FABLE…

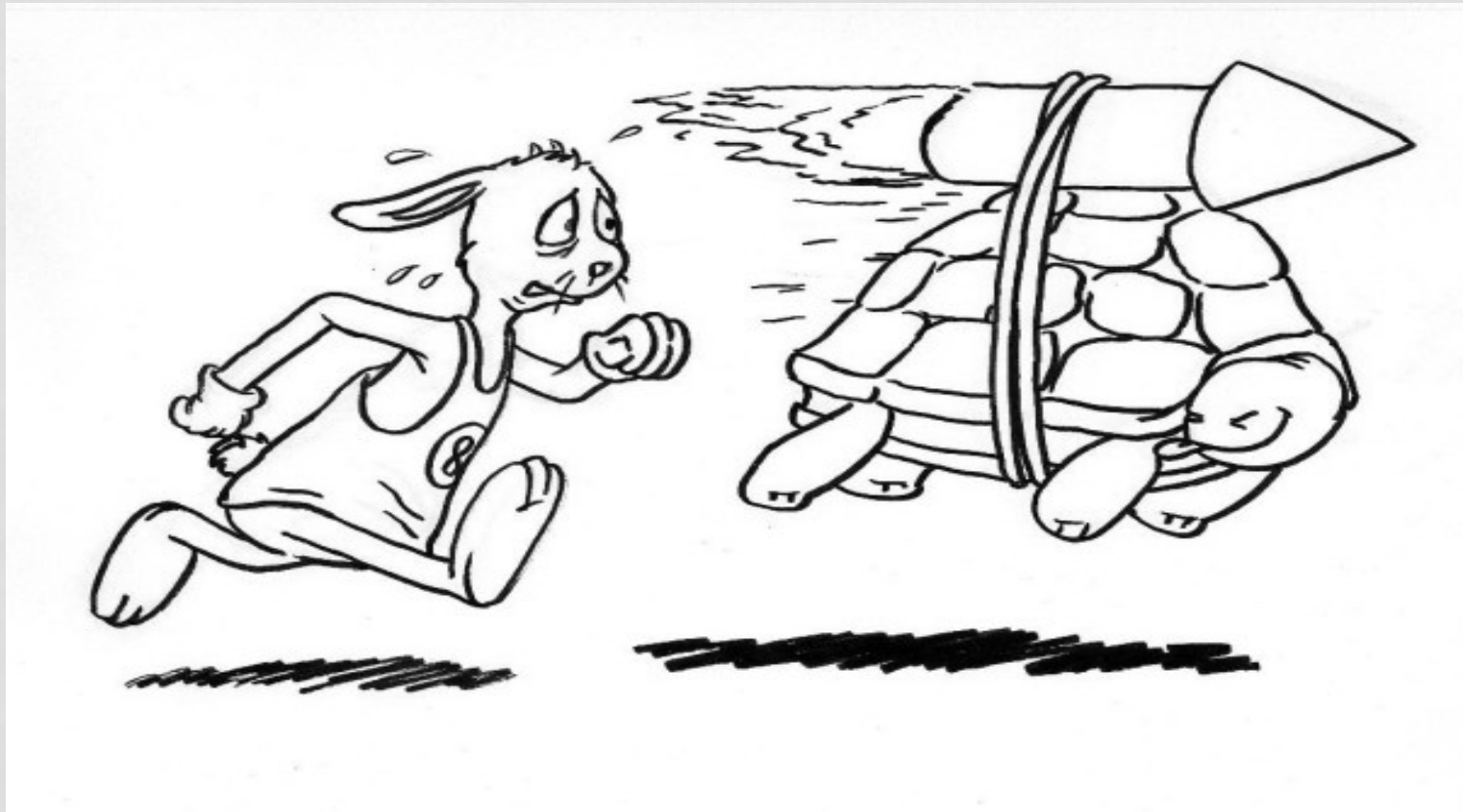THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY WILL BE ABOUT VELOCITY: THE SPEED OF BUSINESS AND THE SPEED OF CHANGE.
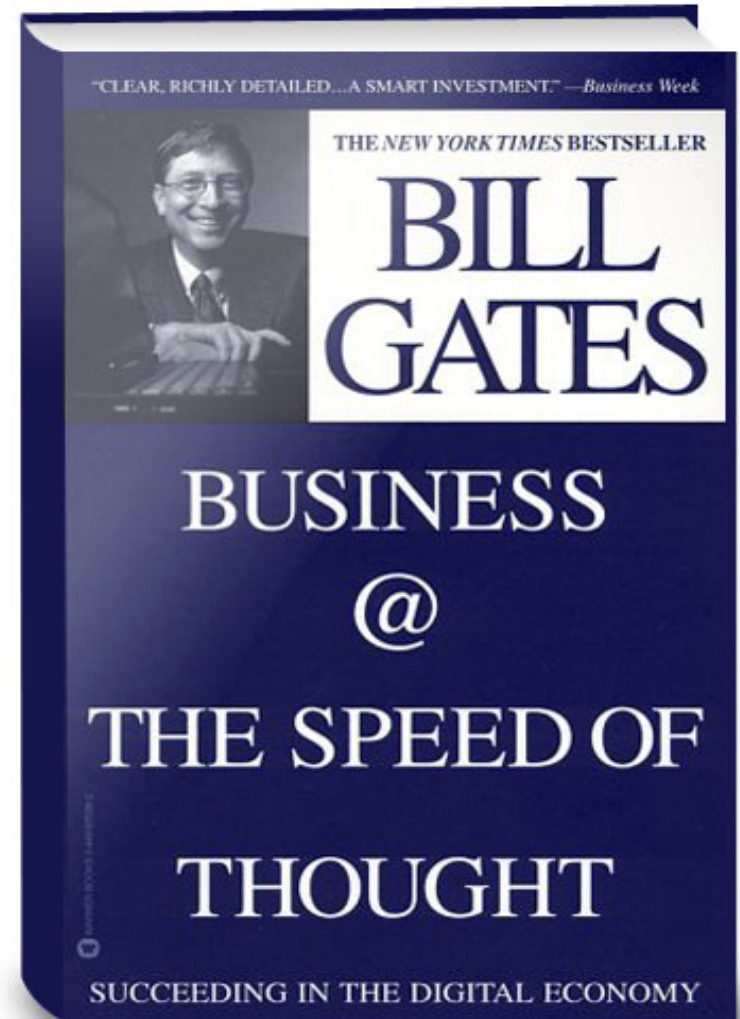
DOESN'T THIS GIVE STUDENTS AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE?

Harvard Business Review (2002)

"WHEN CREATIVITY IS UNDER THE GUN, IT USUALLY ENDS UP GETTING KILLED… COMPLEX COGNITIVE PROCESSING TAKES TIME, AND WITHOUT SOME REASONABLE TIME FOR THAT PROCESSING, CREATIVITY IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE.

Source: Amabile, T. M., Hadley, C. N., & Kramer, S. J. (2002). Creativity under the gun. *Harvard Business Review,* August, 2002

ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD WILL NOT HELP SOMEONE OUTPERFORM THEIR POTENTIAL.
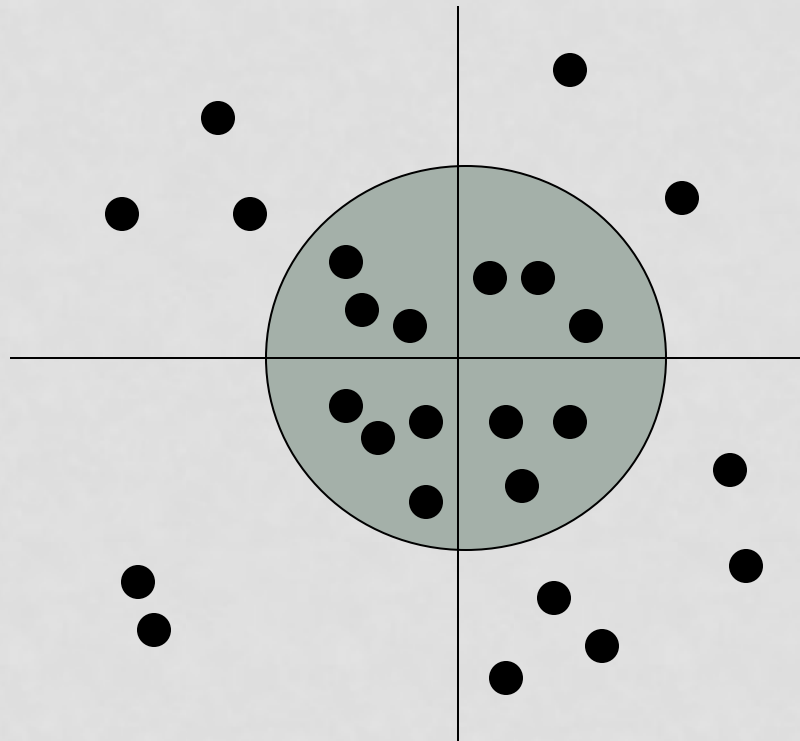
IT WILL NOT HELP ONE FIND WHAT HE OR SHE DOES NOT KNOW

BUT...
WE MUST BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT WE WANT OUR STUDENTS TO KNOW AND WHY

THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT *TRADITIONAL* TESTS DO: LIMIT THE DEMONSTRATION OF POTENTIAL.

TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT METHOD

Traditional style of exam administration only meets the learning needs of a portion of the students in the classroom.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN IN ASSESSMENT

- The design of assessments which are an expression of knowledge so that the demonstration of knowledge is:

    ◆ amenable to all people, accessible by all

    ◆ to the greatest extent possible,

    ◆ without the need for adaptation

    ◆ *and without compromising the learning goals of the instructor*

UNIVERSAL DESIGN METHOD
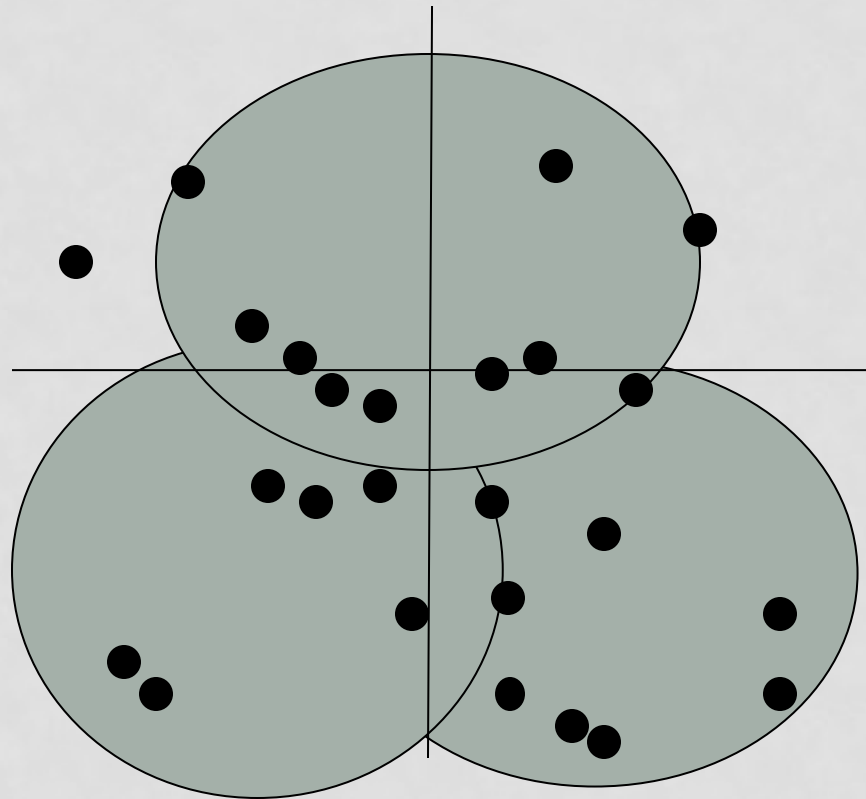
Presenting materials using a variety of visual, auditory, tactile and interactive methods, will address the learning needs of a much greater percentage of students in the classroom.
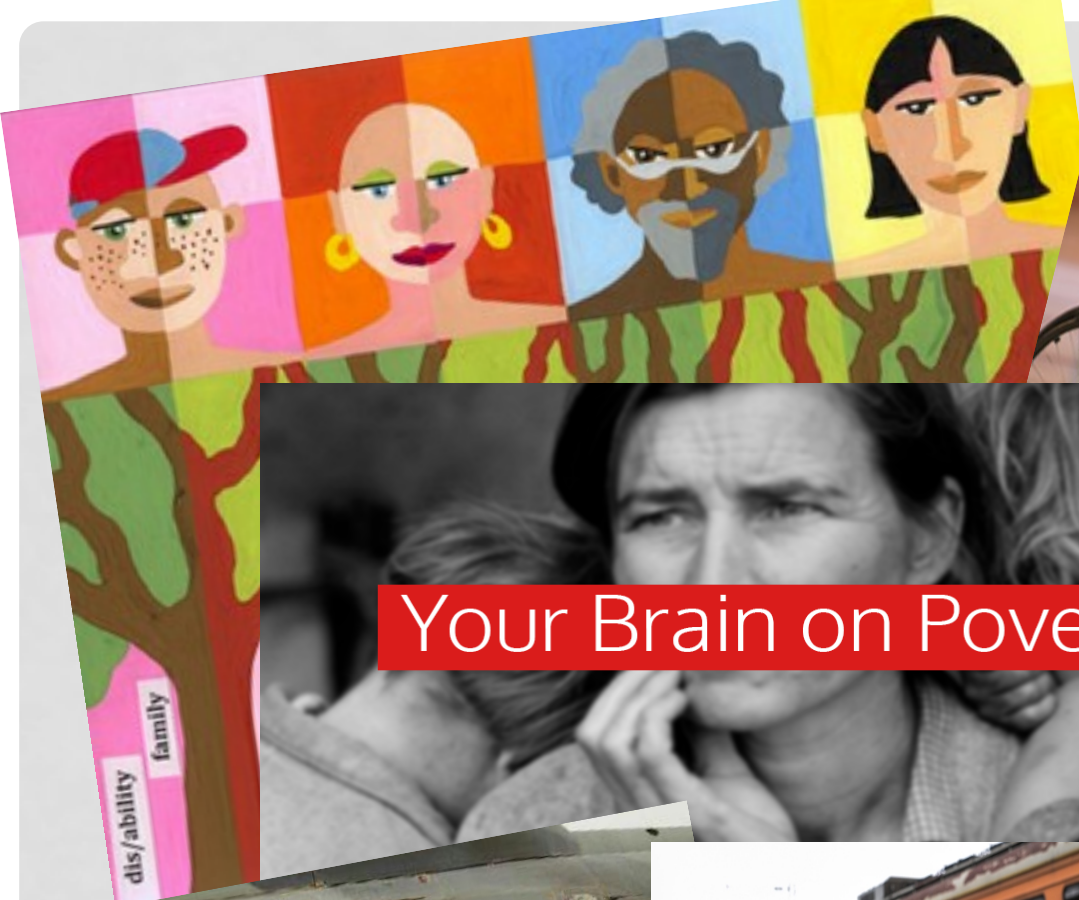
Your Brain on Poverty

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WHAT ARE THE COGNITIVE DEMANDS OF EXAMS?

Cognitive Demands Associated with Exam Access

Access and Output

Cognitive Demands Associated with Exam Output

Language Comprehension

Visual-Spatial Thinking

Perceptual Speed

Working Memory

Attention

Processing Speed

Cognitive Flexibility
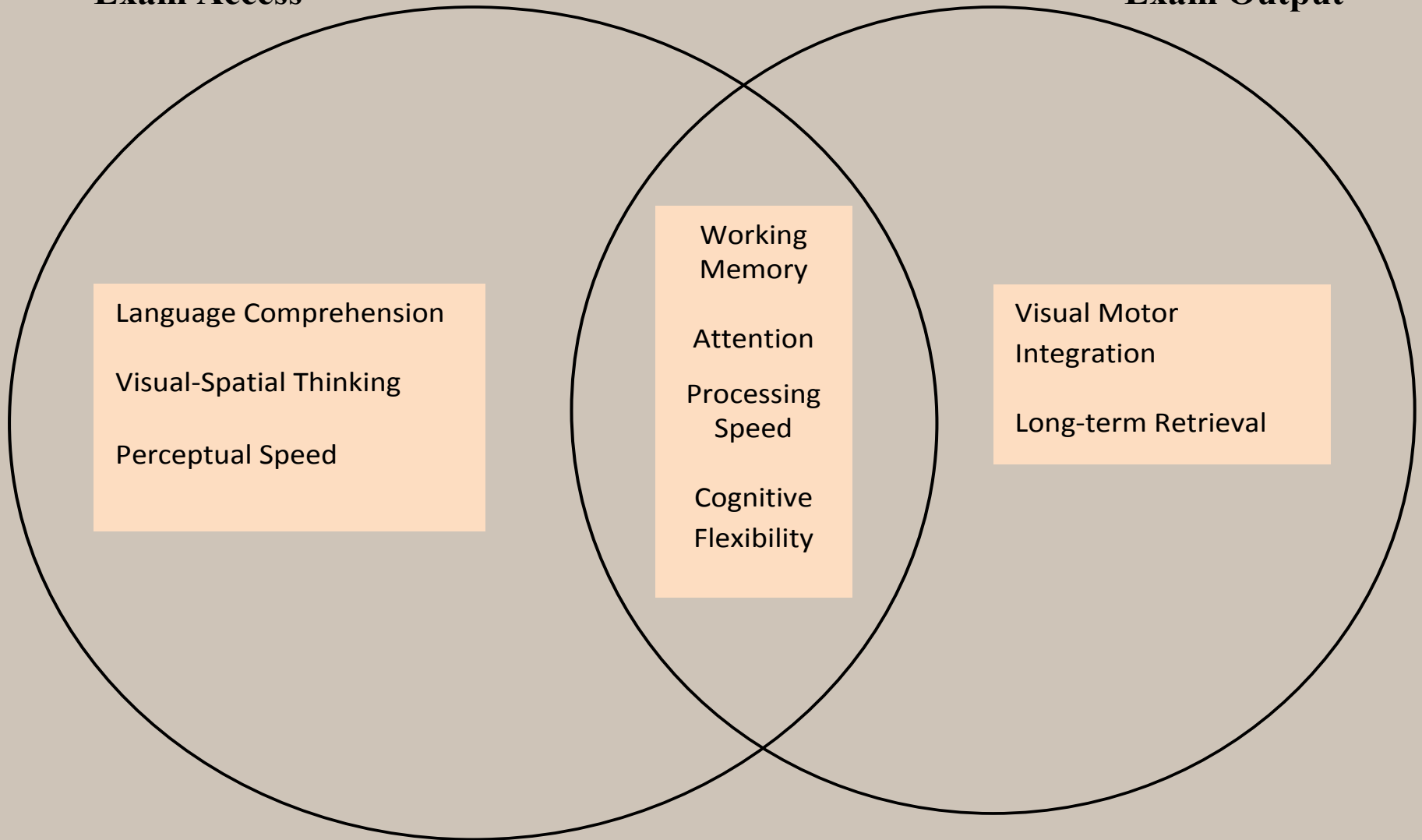
Visual Motor Integration

Long-term Retrieval

Figure I. Cognitive demands of exam access and output (Adapted from Shinn & Ofiesh, 2012)

THESE EXAM-RELATED DEMANDS IMPACT NOT ONLY STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES BUT ALSO THE LARGEST GROWING SEGMENTS OF STUDENTS ATTENDING HIGHER EDUCATION.

KNOWLEDGE WE CAN TEACH

1. Dispel the myth that UD lowers standards

KNOWLEDGE WE CAN TEACH

2. Universally designed assessments simply interface with technology.

KNOWLEDGE WE CAN TEACH

- 3. Will still need accommodation and disability service providers; there will always be situations that can't be predicted and the need for alternate formats that are too costly to embed.

START THE DISCUSSION ON CAMPUS

- Do committees exist that review teaching and learning?
- Is faculty development available?
- What resources are available to students?
- What is the climate on campus for "struggling" students?
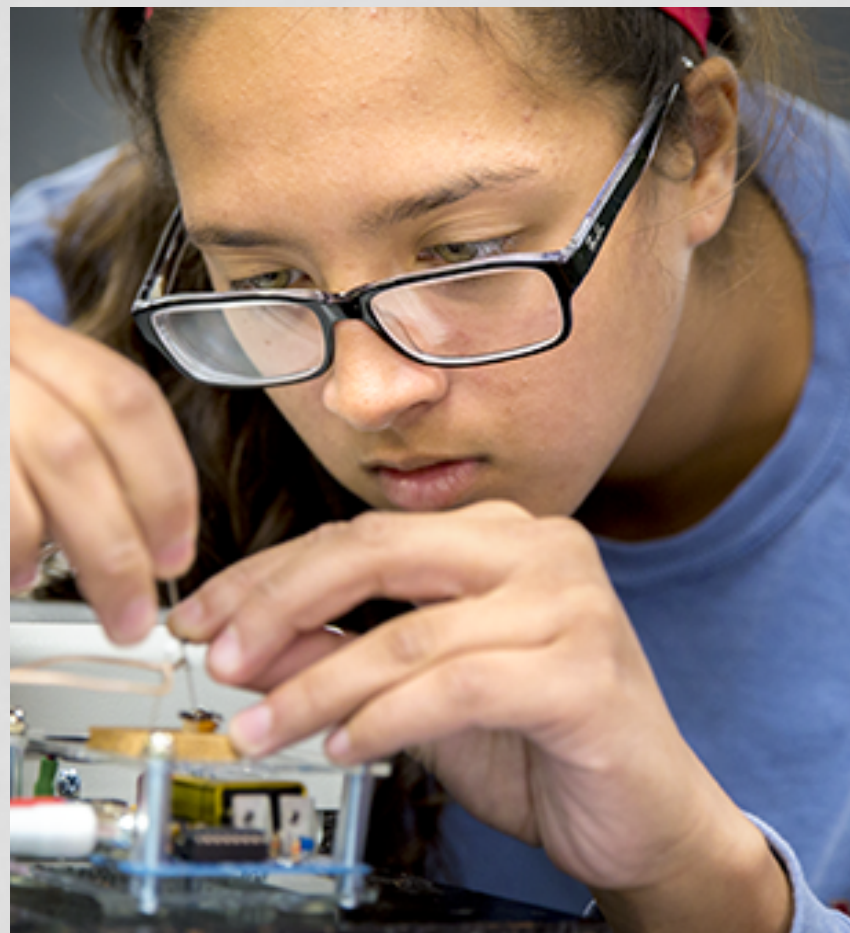
IDENTIFY COLLABORATORS

- Center for Teaching and Learning
- Academic Support Systems
  - Technology support centers
  - Disability Service office
- Committees:
  - Learning and teaching
  - Curriculum Standards

WORK WITH FACULTY

- 1. Encourage faculty to think about the goals and objectives of their courses and tests as you would with an accommodation.
- 2. Start with technology embedded changes:
  - Font size
  - Electronic and adaptable text
  - Basic 4-function calculators
  - Time (often max at 3-4 times)
- 3. Alternatives to paper/pencil exams are possible when goals and objectives are clear.
- 4. Provide a rubric or checklist for assessment with the necessary requirements.

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POTENTIAL IS A MYTH

SOME WITH POTENTIAL MAY STILL CHOOSE TO DO NOTHING ABOUT IT

SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS TWO YEARS OUT OF GRADUATION WERE THE ONES WHO WORKED HARD, ASKED FOR HELP, OFTEN STUDIED ALONE AND FOR LONG HOURS.

WE SWITCH OUR FOCUS FROM THE LIMITATIONS OF THE LEARNER and ACKNOWLEDGE THE LIMITATIONS OF METHODS AND MATERIALS

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Figure 1: Conceptual Model Underlying the Smarter Balanced *Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines*.

Universal Tools

Embedded
Breaks, Calculator, Digital Notepad, English Dictionary, English Glossary, Expandable Passages, Global Notes, Highlighter, Keyboard Navigation, Mark for Review, Math Tools, Spell Check, Strikethrough, Writing Tools, Zoom

Non-embedded
Breaks, English Dictionary, Scratch Paper, Thesaurus

Designated Supports

Embedded
Color Contrast, Masking, Text-to-speech, Translated Test Directions, Translations (Glossary), Translations (Stacked), Turn off Any Universal Tools

Non-embedded
Bilingual Dictionary, Color Contrast, Color Overlay, Magnification, Noise Buffers, Read Aloud, Read Aloud in Spanish, Scribe, Separate Setting, Translated Test Directions, Translation (Glossary)

Accommodations

Embedded
American Sign Language, Braille, Closed Captioning, Streamline, Text-to-speech

Non-embedded
Abacus, Alternate Response Options, Calculator, Multiplication Table, Print on Demand, Read Aloud, Scribe, Speech-to-text