



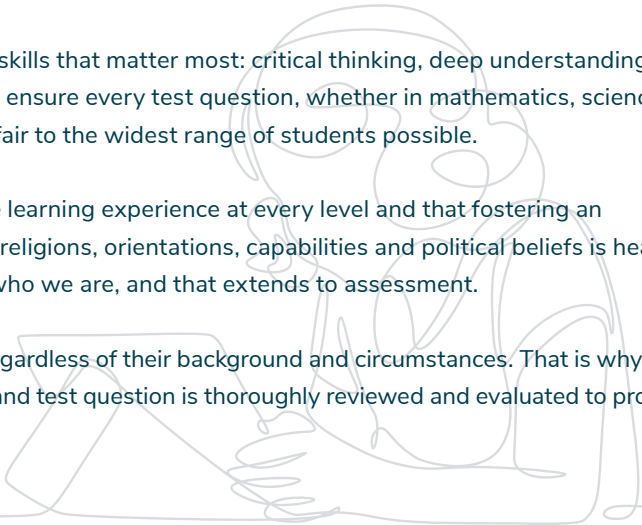
Assessments That Work for All Students

New Meridian creates test questions starting with rigorous standards, then implements extensive review to maximize cultural inclusivity and minimize bias.

At New Meridian, we believe assessments must measure the skills that matter most: critical thinking, deep understanding, and the ability to communicate effectively. To do that, we strive to ensure every test question, whether in mathematics, science, or English language arts, is culturally inclusive, free of bias, and fair to the widest range of students possible.

Cultural inclusion is the recognition that diversity enriches the learning experience at every level and that fostering an environment reflective of all ages, genders, races, ethnicities, religions, orientations, capabilities and political beliefs is healthy for our school systems. Education should impart honesty about who we are, and that extends to assessment.

Every student must be able to take the test on equal footing, regardless of their background and circumstances. That is why we implement a comprehensive process to ensure every passage and test question is thoroughly reviewed and evaluated to provide an equitable experience and a clear picture of student knowledge.



* For example, before 2020 a passage on the Spanish Flu may have been appropriate, but not so in a post-pandemic environment



1 | Content Development

Content Selection and Development

New Meridian works with experienced subject matter experts to find or develop reading passages, science scenarios, or multimedia selections (collectively referred to as “content”). All New Meridian content researchers and developers are trained to select or write material with bias and sensitivity in mind, using **New Meridian’s Fairness Guidelines**. These guidelines are reviewed, updated and revised annually.

Content Review: Pre-Screening

Content is reviewed by New Meridian’s internal subject matter experts, and any found to have bias or sensitivity issues as described in our Fairness Guidelines are edited to alleviate these issues or are eliminated from the process. In most cases, state education officials are also invited to participate in the review.

Content Review: Educator Committees

Educators from across the country and from a wide variety of backgrounds come together to review content that represents a wide range of authors and sources. New Meridian educator committees—one for content and another for bias and sensitivity review—are created with diversity in mind. Each educator is trained on bias, sensitivity, and fairness and provided with the Fairness Guidelines before they begin reviewing. The committees review all content and materials that have been accepted in the pre-screening stage. Each committee discusses the content in detail, and then accepts, rejects or edits each. All accepted content moves forward for item development.

Question Development

Once content passes New Meridian’s rigorous review process, they are moved on to item writers to begin the question development process. Subject matter experts refer to the approved content and write test questions that meet our high-quality standards.

Question Review: Pre-Screening

Questions are reviewed by New Meridian’s internal subject matter experts, and any that are found to have content, bias, sensitivity, fairness, or accessibility concerns are either rejected or revised before they are reviewed by an educator committee.

Question Review: Educator Committees

Like content, questions are reviewed by a diverse committee of educators who are trained and provided with guidelines. These committees review questions with their related passages and other content, meet to discuss, and then accept, reject, or edit each question. Questions that are revised are then reviewed again. All accepted questions move forward to piloting.

Assessment Review: Special Circumstances

In the event of extraordinary circumstances that may affect the accessibility of content, New Meridian implements an additional round of review to examine content through the lens of recent events that could impact student performance. For example, passages and related questions were re-reviewed by subject matter experts in 2020 taking Covid-19 and nationwide protests over racial injustice into account.



The **New Meridian Fairness Guidelines** are core to our mission to advance quality and equity in assessment and in our educational systems at-large. Our guidelines are used throughout the assessment design and development process to ensure technically fair, valid, and reliable tests and help us constantly evaluate our content and questions against widely accepted industry benchmarks of excellence.



2 | Piloting

Field-Testing and Statistical Analyses

All New Meridian content and questions are field-tested as part of a regular assessment administration, either as embedded, inter-mixed questions or as a separate unit. These questions do not contribute to a student's reported score. The statistical performance of the field-tested questions is calculated using student response data.



A FOCUS ON: BUILDING BETTER TESTS

New Meridian's review process is designed to eliminate content and questions that could lead to biased or unfair testing. Here are some examples:

- ✓ Questions that require knowledge or skills not related to the purpose of the test in order to answer questions correctly.
- ✓ Language or images that can cause strong emotions, which may interfere with the ability to respond to a question correctly.
- ✓ Context that advantages (or disadvantages) members of a certain group.
- ✓ Controversial subject matter that is not supported by state standards.
- ✓ Language that is potentially offensive, demeaning, insensitive or negative toward any population.
- ✓ Stereotypes, for example, those involving age, disabilities, ethnicity, gender, national or regional origin, native language, race, religion, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.



3 | Evaluation

Field-tested questions are analyzed using sophisticated statistical models designed to identify potential bias based on student performance. Often, this type of analysis can identify problematic material in ways that other reviews, such as those conducted by educators, cannot.

For example, Differential Item Functioning (DIF) is just one of the statistics calculated. It compares the question performance between demographic subgroups such as high-performing boys and high-performing girls.

This analysis can be applied to racial and ethnic groups, English language learners, and students with disabilities, after controlling for student ability.

The DIF value can indicate potential bias if found to be statistically significant. Question performance is again presented to educator committees for review to ensure that the performance difference is not due to the question itself before being approved for operational use. Questions that do not meet acceptance criteria are excluded.

Commitment to Quality is a Team Effort

More than a dozen people from different backgrounds are involved in writing, reviewing and piloting a single New Meridian assessment test question—and that is before thousands of students field test every single one.

New Meridian Professional Staff

A diverse group of subject matter experts and psychometricians who review content, questions and other materials for bias, sensitivity and fairness.

New Meridian Item Writers

Subject matter experts from a variety backgrounds and different parts of the country who are trained on content standards, bias, sensitivity, and fairness issues before they write test questions.

New Meridian Educator Committees

A diverse group of educators who provide a perspective from the students they serve, review all content and test questions to ensure fairness.

Students

Students field-test questions during operational test administrations. The results are statistically analyzed before these questions are approved for future operational use.



NEW MERIDIAN ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT BY THE NUMBERS

6,000 New Meridian has developed more than 6,000 test items in the last 4 years.

200+ Our item review process involves more than 200 educators every year.

2M+ Our assessments are administered to more than 2 million students each year.



The average assessment item takes dozens of hours to write, edit, review, and field-test, and costs thousands of dollars to develop.

Ready to make a commitment to high-quality assessment?

Call us at 512-399-3440 to set up a consultation with a New Meridian expert.



New Meridian

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