

NCELA
National Clearinghouse for
English Language Acquisition and
Language Instruction Educational Programs

presents

Meaningfully Assessing English Learners in Local and Statewide Academic Assessments: What Does It Entail?

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Rebecca Kopriva, Wisconsin Center for Educational Research (WCER)

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Thank you

NCELA is operated under contract ED-04-CO-0094/0002 from the US Department of Education to The George Washington University. Our mission is to provide technical assistance information to state education agencies, local education agencies, and others regarding the education of English language learners.

Welcome

- Welcome to the webinar on “Meaningfully Assessing English Learners in Local and Statewide Academic Assessments: What Does It Entail?” Today’s webinar is hosted by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, NCELA, located at the Graduate School of Education and Human Development at The George Washington University, funded through a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition.
- NCELA's mission is to provide technical assistance information to state and local educational agencies on issues pertaining to English language learners.
- My name is Kathia Flemens, Ph.D., a Research Associate at NCELA and your Webinar facilitator.

presents

Today our presenter is:

- Dr. Kopriva is a Senior Scientist at the Wisconsin Center for Educational Research (WCER) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, author of the 2008 book *Improving Testing for English Language Learners: A Comprehensive Approach to Designing, Building, Implementing, and Interpreting Academic Tests*, and lead designer of the ONPAR assessments.



Meaningfully Assessing ELs in local and statewide academic assessments:

What does this entail?

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Laying the Groundwork

- One of the biggest fallacies is that all English learners can be served in academic assessments in the same way.
- Because of this, research has generally focused on if specific supports or accommodations ‘work’ or ‘don’t work’.
- Not surprisingly, this research approach has led to confusing results.....



Laying the Groundwork

- English learner specialists know that the backgrounds and language proficiencies of their ELs differ

AND

these differences influence how they go about teaching their students math, science, and other academic subjects.

- The same should be true for testing.....



Laying the Groundwork

- Students with different needs should be supported *appropriately* when they take academic assessments...
- Not surprisingly, different students need different kinds of supports.



Laying the Groundwork

- If students are being instructed or tested in English, the level of English proficiency is certainly a primary indicator of how to support students
BUT not the *only* one.
- Students who are at different levels of English proficiency, and who have other background characteristics, are often supported DIFFERENTLY.



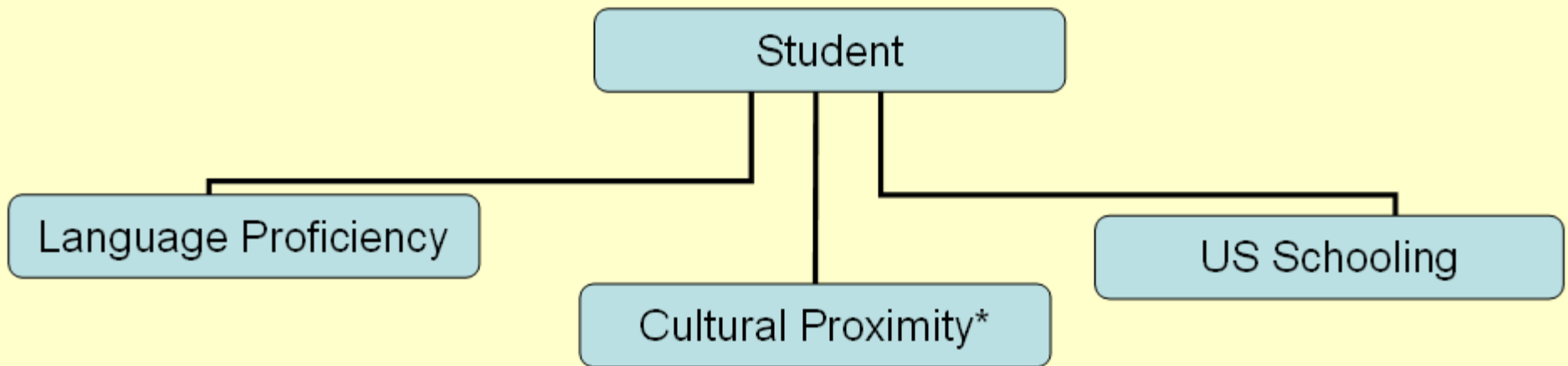
Questions to Address

So,

- What are the most salient *student characteristics* that relate to different testing supports?
- What are the most promising *supports*?
- *Who* should get *what*?

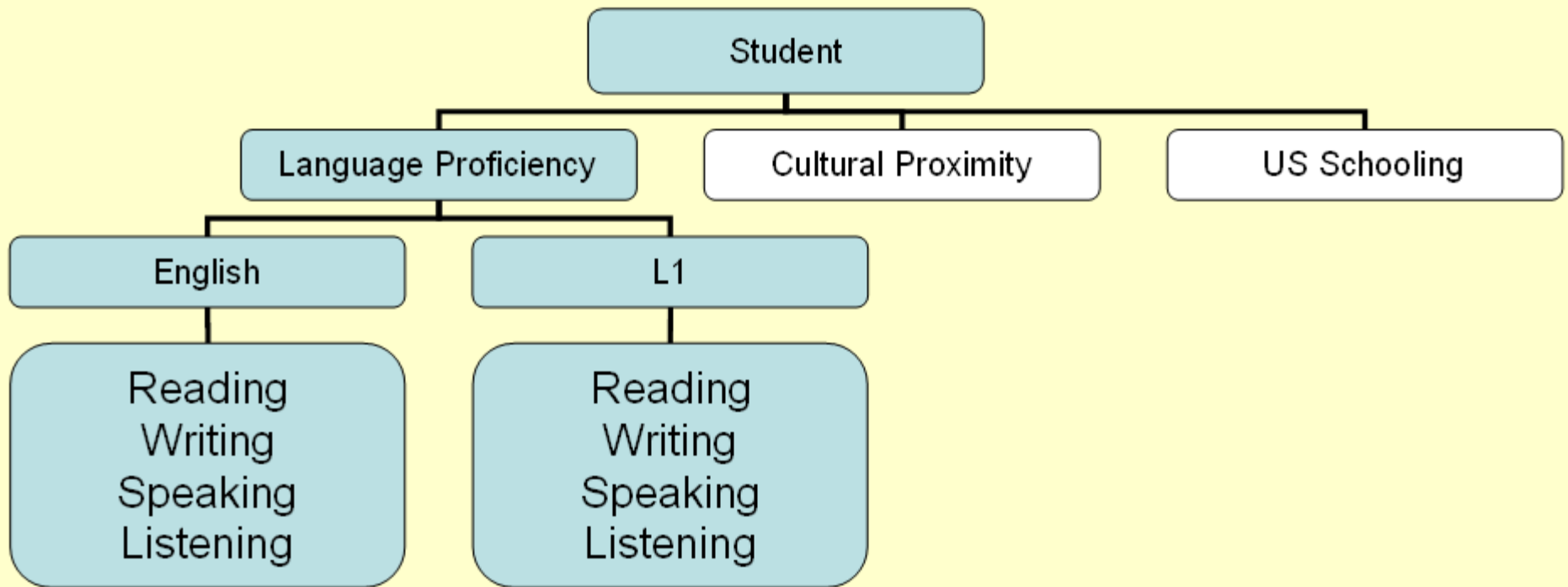


The Most Relevant Student Characteristics for Testing



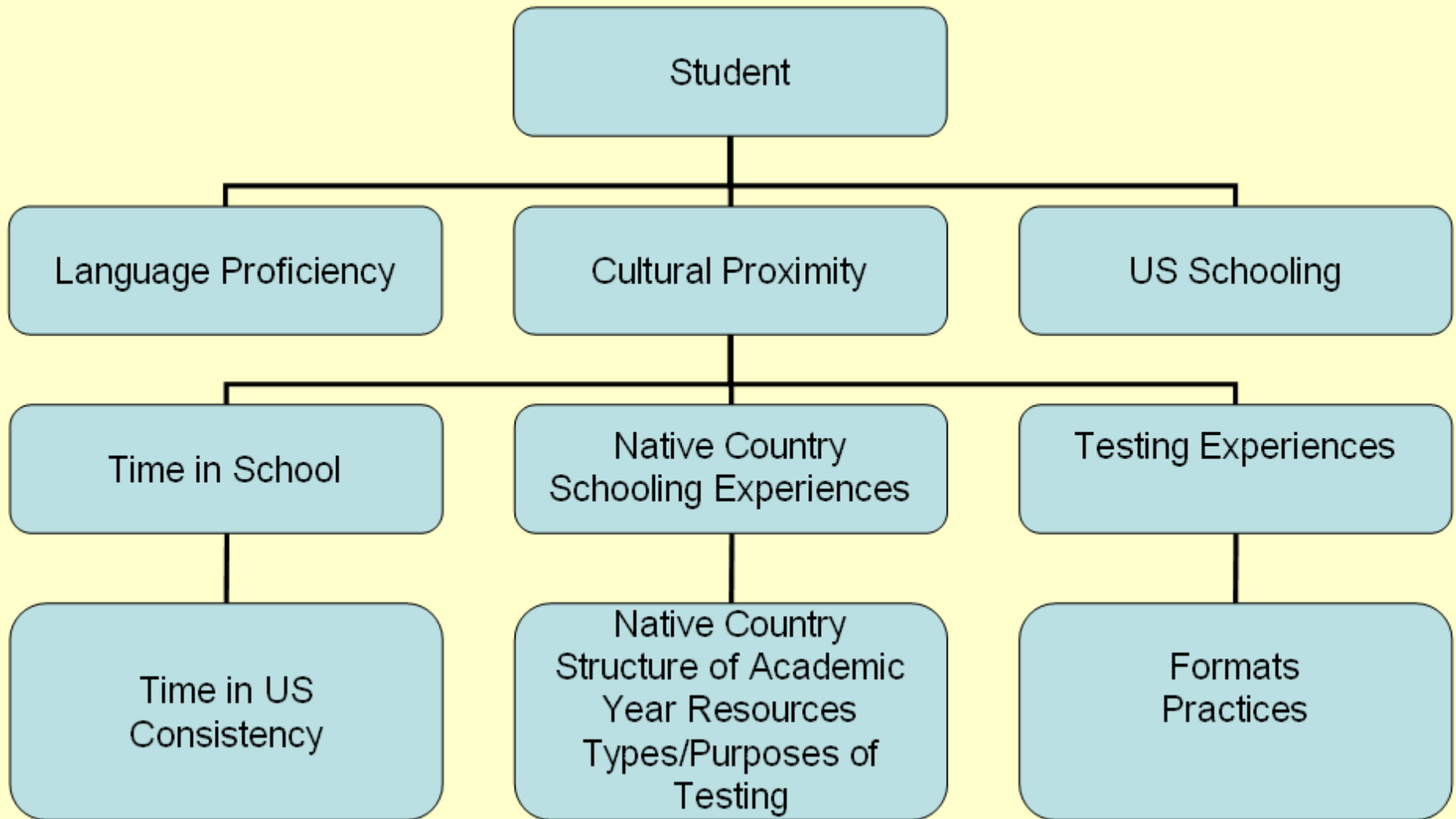


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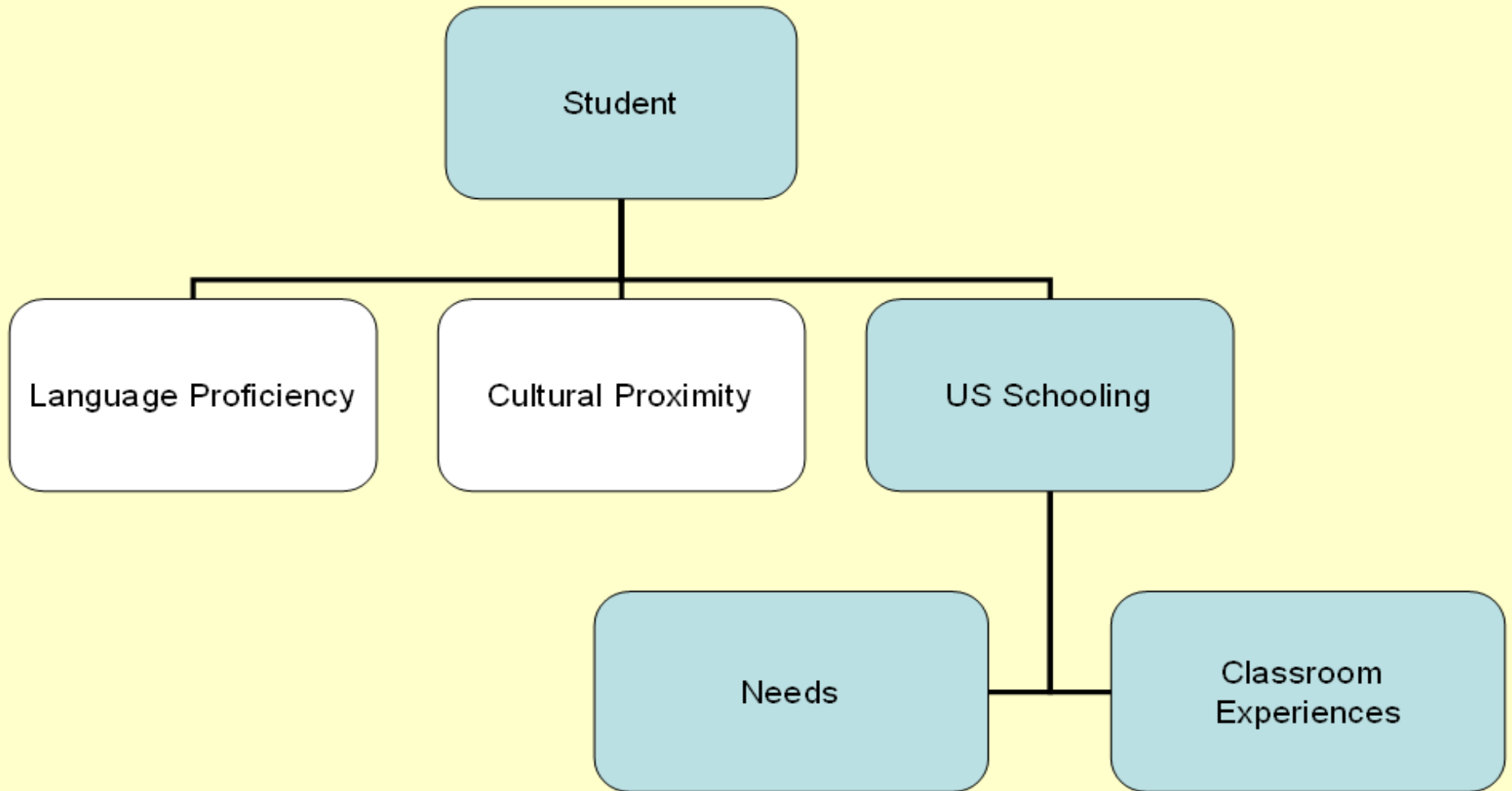


The Most Relevant Student Characteristics for Testing





The Most Relevant Student Characteristics for Testing





The Most Promising Supports for Standardized Testing

- Two points of access that, potentially, need to be supported are:
 1. To meaningfully understand what the test questions are asking.
 2. To meaningfully respond in a way that successfully communicates the student's knowledge and skills.
- Rivera and others say that language supports are primary. Different language supports work for students with different needs.
- Other supports can effectively enhance how language supports are used.



Supports for Understanding

To support meaningful access to comprehend the questions:

- Language supports include:
 - L1 or dual language text
 - Plain language text
 - Computer interactive forms*
 - Oral L1*
 - Oral English
 - Bilingual tools
- Other modalities which inform comprehension include:
 - Visual representations
 - Interactive engagement
 - Using simulation to depict contexts over time



Supports for Responding

- For some students, response support is crucial. This includes:
 - The opportunity to use L1 or code-switching
 - The opportunity to construct responses
 - The opportunity to use alternative methods*
- Often students who are new to this country or from very different backgrounds need explanation and ongoing practice during the year in
 - Why our instructional methods include ongoing evaluations
 - The types of questions we ask, for instance word problems in mathematics
 - The types of responses we ask for



Who Should Get What?

- Consistently, research has shown that current methods of identifying which students should get which supports do not work (See Kopriva, 2008, Chapter 10).
- A study showed that students who get the proper supports score higher on tests.
Students who receive improper supports, score no differently than those who received no supports.
- STELLA. Check it out at www.wida.us/UW/STELLA



Who Should Get What?

In general,

- Students at the high intermediate level and above on English proficiency tests (usually about mid-3's on a 5 point scale) can and should take one of the test forms with *proper* supplementary supports or accommodations. There is variation in who should get what.
- For students at the lower levels of English proficiency (especially pre-emergent and beginner ELs), choices are more limited. Three possible options will be summarized next.



For Lower English proficient ELs

1. The 'Michigan example'

Sireci and Wells (2009) found that using oral L1 with written English booklets seemed to show promise for some ELs.

Oral L1 is dubbed over a video showing someone following the audio and pointing to the place in the test booklet that is being read.

This is a low budget option. Its success depends on a clear and well produced video, good pacing of the audio, and sufficient care taken to make sure students are not overwhelmed or lost.



For Lower English proficient ELs

2. The ONPAR example

The ONPAR projects are investigating the viability of computer interactive academic assessments built specifically to address the needs of low English ELs.

ONPAR items use the computer's capabilities to engage students interactively using simulations, non-text rollovers, drop and drag, assembling and modeling to convey cognitively complex assessment questions with little language.

Studies to date have shown that, controlling for ability, low English proficient ELs scored the same as their native English speaking peers on ONPAR items.

Assessment cores designed to fit within general testing systems are being developed by WIDA. They will measure the same test blueprints.



Presentation of a few ONPAR items

Please visit <http://www.onpar.us>





For Lower English proficient ELs

3. Academic portfolios

Assuming the method is correctly implemented, classroom portfolios are a viable approach although, to date, specifications for this purpose are still scarce.

Portfolios have been used successfully to evaluate academic work in AP art and writing within a standardized system. The keys to successful portfolio programs are to:

- Develop clear and specific criteria for including classroom work in the portfolio, and high quality training for teachers.
- Develop defensible guidelines for scoring student work.
- Design and implement research to defend the viability of the approach and how the scores relate to scores from the general testing system.



Questions?



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Thank you

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- For more information or if you have additional questions contact:
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or
- If you have additional questions regarding the webinar contact Kathia Flemens, Ph.D. at kflemens@gwu.edu.

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