



For Immediate Release

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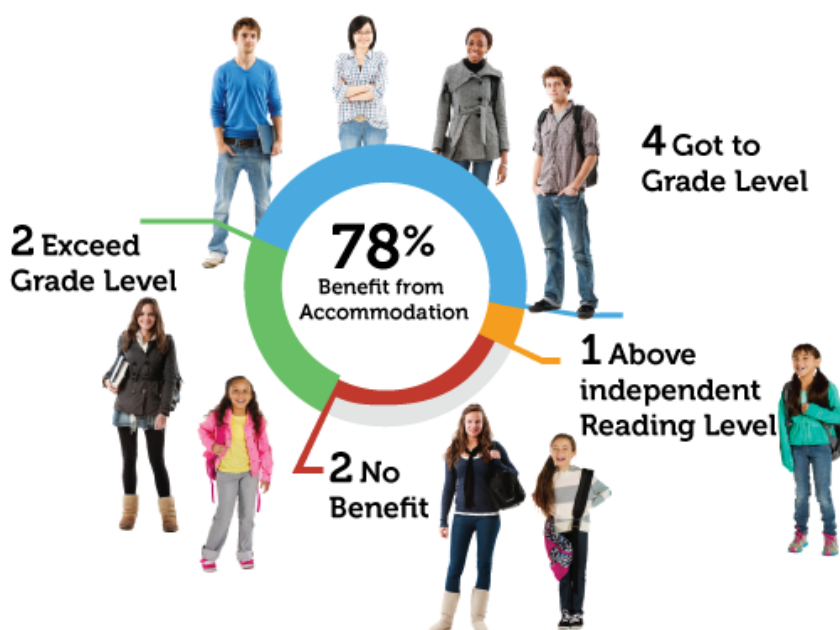
Don Johnston Releases uPAR™— *Universal Protocol for Accommodations in Reading*

VOLO, Ill., September 29, 2014 – Don Johnston Incorporated today released [uPAR™](#), an online assessment that helps educators assess the reading accommodation needs of students. uPAR is the automated, universal version of the popular PAR protocol, available in print as a free download.

“Educators have every good intention when they recommend reading accommodations, but they haven’t had the right tools to make evidence-based decisions,” said **Dr. Denise DeCoste, educator and co-author of uPAR**. “We wanted to equip education teams with a tool that can be efficiently administered to groups of students—giving educators the data needed to make informed decisions and improve the educational outcomes for students.”

The problem of inaccurate recommendations is well documented. Helwig and Tindal (2003) found that when relying on subjective judgment, teachers were *no better than chance* at determining if an accommodation is appropriate for a student. Fuchs and Fuchs (2001) found that factors such as socioeconomic status, race, and IQ were more influential to the decisions about reading accommodations than whether students *actually benefited* from the accommodations. These studies show that the need for an accommodation can’t be simply inferred from perceived reading ability. uPAR was designed to replace unreliable subjective judgment with data-driven decisions.

The release of uPAR comes ahead of the new online state assessments deploying this school year. These technology-based assessments promise to be more accommodation-friendly than traditional paper-and-pencil assessments. Text-to-speech accommodations will even be built into most state assessments and will be the preferred accommodation over human readers. Along with the new assessments, many states now require a diagnostic process to prove the need for accommodations prior to their use on the assessment. uPAR provides the data and documentation required.



“Several school districts were instrumental in developing uPAR,” said **Ben Johnston, Director of Marketing for Don Johnston Incorporated**. “The thing that stood out to the educators we worked with was how *unexpected* much of the data was. They saw that some students increased three to four grade levels above their independent reading levels with an accommodation. They found that some students who were using accommodations actually performed *worse* with them. For these districts, once they see the data, they can’t imagine flying blind again.”



uPAR can be administered to 30 students at a time in one class period. Students can also take the uPAR assessment independently on just about any web-enabled device. The administration process is straightforward. Students read a series of passages online, first independently, and then with reading accommodations (text reader and simulated human reader). After each condition, they take a comprehension quiz. Depending on how well students do with each accommodation, subsequent reading passages adjust to become more difficult or easy. The results determine how well students perform under each condition. Group and individual data is immediately available to teachers, principals, special education directors, school psychologists, Rtl coordinators, speech language pathologists, and other educators on the IEP team.

“uPAR is the first automated assessment of its kind,” said **Ruth Ziolkowski, president of Don Johnston Incorporated**. “For the first time educators can feel confident students have the right accommodations to comprehend their coursework and do well on the state test. In an age when it feels like there are far too many assessments that only confirm what teachers already know, uPAR produces data that educators can take immediate action on. I feel this decision-making tool will have far-reaching impact in the districts that adopt it.”



Grade Level	Silent Read	Adult Read	Text Reader
12		37%	67%
11		75%	75%
10			
9			
8			
7			
6			
5	43%		
4			
3			
2			
1			

Resource Links:

To learn more about [uPAR™ \(Universal Protocol for Accommodations in Reading\)](http://donjohnston.com/upar/), please visit: <http://donjohnston.com/upar/>

To watch a preview of uPAR, please visit: <http://vimeo.com/donjohnstoninc/upar-demo/>

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About Don Johnston Incorporated

Don Johnston (<http://donjohnston.com>) develops accessible reading and writing technologies to support K-12 and postsecondary students with cognitive, physical, and learning disabilities. Since 1980, the special education company has partnered with literacy experts, AT specialists, SLPs, OTs, special education teachers, university researchers and DSS coordinators to improve access to learning and to increase reading and writing independence. Tens of thousands of students with dyslexia, autism, dysgraphia, down-syndrome and diverse learning challenges use our software and hardware devices to accommodate their learning needs in schools, the workforce and at home. Find us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).



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