The Insight
Assessments need to be inclusive to be a true measure of a student's ability.

Implications
Multiple forms of assessment are needed if we want to provide equitable education for all.

"Assessment, if not done with equity in mind, privileges and validates certain types of learning and evidence of learning over others, can hinder the validation of multiple means of demonstration, and can reinforce within students the false notion that they do not belong in higher education."
(Montenegro & Jankowski, 2017, P. 5)

Accessible Assessment

Too often, whether an assessment is accessible is only addressed when a student requires special accommodations. For assessments, this usually involves giving students a quiet space, extended time, and other accommodations dependent upon their obvious needs (e.g., visual, auditory, or physical accommodations). However, many people fail to think about other potential accessibility issues when designing assessments.

According to a research study on the design of assessments reported on by David Malouf, an Education Programmer in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Service at the U.S. Department of Education:

> Students who were confident of content did not have problems with design.
> Students who had no idea how to solve the problem did not have problems with design.
> Students "in the middle" – not sure of content, some reading difficulty, design made a difference. (Malouf, 2016)

Many students "in the middle" may not have a learning disability and, therefore, would not receive any special accommodations. Most students are likely to fall into this category, where the design of the assessment can make a big difference to how they perform. Additionally, the accessibility of an assessment can vary based on a student's background. "Assessment, if not done with equity in mind, privileges and validates certain types of learning and evidence of learning over others, can hinder the validation of multiple means of demonstration, and can reinforce within students the false notion that they do not belong in higher education." (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2017, P. 5)

Some suggestions for making assessments more accessible to all students are to ensure that:

> Overall appearance is clean and organized.
> Clear format for text.
> Clear format for pictures and graphics (when essential to item).
> Concise and readable text.
> Format allows for changes without changing meaning or difficulty.
> Meets criteria for measuring what it is intended to measure. (Malouf, 2016)

Many of these suggestions can be undertaken easily, but the last suggestion of measuring what it is intended to measure should be considered more carefully. "Organisations must ensure that the assessment evaluates learning outcomes and not the speed, manual dexterity, vision, hearing, or physical endurance of the learner." (Jisc, 2014)

Considering this further, if the purpose of the assessment is to evaluate the student's achievement of the learning outcomes, then "The manner in which students demonstrate learning is irrelevant when student demonstration is held to the same learning outcomes and evaluative criteria." (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2017, P. 7) Assessment should not be 'one-size fits all'. If a teacher requires a specific method of assessment, then they should be able to provide a rationale for that particular method of assessment or provide a range of assessment methods for assessing the same outcomes. (McClaskey, Bray, Ullah, & Lowe, 2012)

Accessibility in education is no longer limited to accommodating disabilities. Accessibility is about providing equitable education to everyone. Allowing students a variety of assessment formats, personalized assessments, or evidence-based assessments are some ways to accommodate diverse learners and help reduce barriers for everyone.

References:
Jisc. (2014). *Making assessments accessible*. Retrieved from Jisc: https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/making-assessments accessible
Malouf, D. (2016). *Making Assessments Accessible and Valid for All Students.* Retrieved from National Center on Educational Outcomes: https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/Presentations/UDresearch.ppt
McClaskey, K., Bray, B., Ullah, L., & Lowe, P. (2012). *Personalization: Assessment AS Learning*. Retrieved from Personalize Learning: Transform Learning for All Learners: http://www.personalizelearning.com/2012/07/personalization-assessment-as-learning.html
Montenegro, E., & Jankowski, N. A. (2017, January). *Equity and assessment: Moving towards culturally responsive assessment* (Occasional Paper No. 29). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA).