



Accommodations Fact Sheet



Higher expectations for students with disabilities have led to greater attention being paid to the accommodations students need in order to have full and equal access to educational opportunities in instruction and testing. The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997* (IDEA) reflect and reinforce these higher expectations. For example, IDEA states that the education of students with disabilities can be made more effective by having high expectations for such children and ensuring their access to the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible. The law requires Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams to develop concrete strategies for linking IEPs to the general curriculum, which should reflect state educational standards.

IDEA also recognizes the importance of assessment as a way to improve educational results for students with disabilities. Therefore, IDEA also now requires that all students with disabilities participate in any state and districtwide assessment programs

being given to the general student population.¹ IEP teams must now address how students will participate in large-scale assessments, including needed accommodations. This **Fact Sheet** focuses primarily on the use of accommodations in large-scale state and districtwide assessments.

If needed, students with disabilities have the right to receive accommodations during testing. When used during testing, an accommodation generally does not change the test content or difficulty. Rather, an accommodation allows students to demonstrate what they know by reducing the interference of the disability. IEPs must include a statement of individual modifications and accommodations necessary for a student with a disability to participate in assessments.

In an effort to assist parents, educators, and policymakers as they move toward full participation of students with disabilities in large-scale assessments, the Parents Engaged in Education Reform

¹ Participation in large-scale assessments is also required by the *Americans with Disabilities Act* and Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*.



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(PEER) Project compiled examples of accommodations drawn from a review of policy documents developed by 47 states as of 1997.²

The following list of examples of accommodations used across the country is by no means exhaustive. Test accommodations and modifications must be based on a student's *individual* needs. Consequently, it is not possible to develop a comprehensive listing of all the possible testing accommodations for students with every type of disability for all different tests or test items. Rather, this list was developed to assist IEP teams in considering the broad spectrum of accommodations that may be needed to provide students with disabilities full and equal opportunity to participate in assessment programs.

The law requires IEP teams to consider the full range of accommodations, including those utilized in classroom instruction. Use of some types of accommodations may initially be controversial, especially when the accommodation is closely related to the skill being assessed (for example, reading a reading test). Yet it is essential to allow consideration of *all* types of accommodations to protect against discrimination in test administration. Considering all types of accommodations becomes even more critical for high-stakes tests.

The examples of accommodations for IEP Team consideration that must be considered by the IEP team are organized into four categories: Presentation Accommodations, Response Accommodations, Timing and Scheduling Accommodations, and Setting Accommodations.



Presentation Accommodations

- ✓ Braille or large print editions of tests
- ✓ Directions and/or all test items read aloud by test administrator
- ✓ Directions repeated
- ✓ Directions given in simplified language
- ✓ Fewer items placed on each page
- ✓ Student "physically" assisted to track test items by pointing or placing the student's finger on the items
- ✓ Student cued to remain on task
- ✓ Assistive technology (adaptive keyboard, word processor, augmentative communication systems, voice-activated word processor, voice synthesizer, etc.)
- ✓ Cues (e.g., arrows, stop signs) provided on answer form
- ✓ Physical assistance provided
- ✓ Opportunity for movement increased or decreased
- ✓ Stimuli reduced
- ✓ Device to screen out extraneous sounds (e.g., noise buffers)
- ✓ Test administered by special education teacher or aide
- ✓ Appropriate adjustment of any medication to prevent interference with the student's functioning

² Accommodations noted in this document are from this review. IDEA does not define or categorize accommodations.

- ✓ Directions and test items signed by interpreter
- ✓ Placemaker, special paper, writing template, etc. to allow student to maintain position or focus attention
- ✓ Mounting system, including slantboards, easel, tapes, magnets
- ✓ Amplification equipment, (e.g., auditory trainer, hearing aid)
- ✓ Reading assessments read to student when the intent of reading is to measure comprehension

✓ Response Accommodations

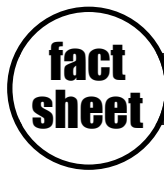
- ✓ Student marks answers in test booklets or large-spaced paper
- ✓ Student marks answers by machine
- ✓ Student dictates answer to scribe or tape recorder to be later transcribed
- ✓ Student knows the scribe, has previous experience working with scribe
- ✓ Student uses signs or gestures
- ✓ Assistive technology, including assistive communication devices
- ✓ Periodic checks to ensure student is marking in correct spaces
- ✓ Calculator
- ✓ Spell-check device
- ✓ Grammar-check device
- ✓ Pencil adapted in size, special grip pencil
- ✓ Arithmetic table, abacus
- ✓ Braille writers, slate and stylus

✓ Timing and Scheduling Accommodations

- ✓ Extended time or untimed testing sessions
- ✓ Multiple testing sessions
- ✓ At time of day or week most beneficial to student
- ✓ In periods of ___ minutes followed by rest breaks of ___ minutes
- ✓ Test administrator determines length of sessions and need for breaks based on observation of student's ability, stamina

✓ Setting Accommodations

- ✓ In small group or individually
- ✓ In front of classroom
- ✓ Teacher facing student
- ✓ Near teacher or aide
- ✓ At the student's home or at the hospital
- ✓ Special lighting or acoustics
- ✓ Adaptive or special furniture



Information in this **Fact Sheet** is based on the *PEER Information Brief, "Accommodations: Examples from State Assessment Policies"* by Julia K. Landau, Janet R. Vohs, and Sue Cusack.

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