GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS

FOR

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

**Compiled by the
Special Education Unit Arkansas
Department of Education
In Collaboration with the
Academic Standards and Assessment Unit**

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Purpose

Stronger accountability for results is one of the four basic education reform principles contained in the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. This law complements the provisions in IDEA by providing public accountability at the school, district and state levels for ALL students with disabilities. There are several critical elements in No Child Left Behind (NCLB) that ensure that schools are held accountable for educational results, so that each student receives an education that results in high achievement on high standards. Academic content standards (what students should learn) and academic achievements standards (how well they should learn) in reading and mathematics (with science added in 2007-2008) form the basis of the state's accountability systems.

Based on current trends, the use of accountability assessments and other measures will likely increase in the future, supported by other legislative initiatives passed to implement educational reform.

How It Works

School accountability is based on measuring each school's success in educating all of its students. The accountability system is defined in terms of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), a way to measure the improvement in achieving standards for all students each year. Schools and states are held accountable for improvements on an annual basis by public reporting (as well as individualized reporting to parents) and ultimately through consequences, if adequate results are not achieved.

Key Requirements

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, Public Law 108-446, specifically governs services that are provided to students with disabilities. Accountability at the individual level is provided through Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) developed on the basis of each child's unique needs. IDEA requires the participation of ALL students with disabilities in statewide assessments.

How It is Measured

In the State of Arkansas, students with disabilities are expected to be assessed on grade level using the regular Benchmark Exam, End of Course Exams and Grade 11 Literacy Exam with or without accommodations. Students with a significant cognitive disability may be assessed with the alternate portfolio.

Assessments for Accountability Measure:
• How successful schools are in including all students in standards-based education. • How successful instructional strategies are in helping all students achieve at high levels. • What specific curriculum and instructional areas need improvement for specific groups of students.

Standards based assessments include all students with disabilities in state assessments that are administered to hold schools accountable for the academic achievement of all students. In most cases, students will only need one or two accommodations included in these guidelines to access grade level state assessments. However, for students with significant cognitive disabilities, alternate assessments may be used.

ACADEMIC CONTENT

Academic content standards are educational targets for students to work toward at each grade level. Teachers ensure that students work toward content standards by using a range of curricular and instructional strategies that are selected based on the varied strengths and needs of students.

The academic content standards developed by this state are the result of extensive planning, discussion, and interaction with administrators, teachers, parents and other school partners.

In order to involve students with disabilities in standards-based instruction, every IEP team member needs to become familiar with the state content standards.

Learning about standards is a big step for special educators and related service providers who may not have been involved in training and development of standards in the past. If assumptions are made that a group of students will be excluded from the state's standards, assessments, and accountability system, assumptions are also made that the people who work with these students have no need to know about this system. These assumptions can further diminish the education of these students and the perceived value of their education.

The State of Arkansas requires students to meet grade level academic content standards in the areas of math and language arts. All content standards can be found on the website for the Arkansas Department of Education at www.arkedu.state.ar.us.

> *All students with disabilities can work toward grade level academic content standards, and most of these students will be able to achieve these standards when three conditions are met:*

- Instruction is provided by teachers who are certified in content areas addressed by state standards and who know how to differentiate instruction.

- IEPs (Individualized Education Programs) ensure the provision of specialized instruction.

- Accommodations are used to help students access grade level instruction and demonstrate achievement through assessment. Choosing and using accommodations is the focus of these guidelines.

USE OF ACCOMMODATIONS

When students have had standards-based instruction, with support provided through special education services and strategies, they need an opportunity to show what they have learned on state assessments – with access that is equal to the access provided to students without disabilities. For some students, this access can be increased through the use of accommodations.

Accommodations are changes in the way a student accesses instruction and assessment, without changing the actual standards a student is working toward. The goal is to find a balance that gives students equal access to instruction and assessment without changing or watering down the content.

Accommodations are tools and procedures in the areas of presentation, response, timing/scheduling, and setting that provide equitable instructional and assessment access for students with disabilities. Accommodations are intended to *mediate* the effects of a student's disability—they are *not* intended to reduce learning expectations.

All accommodations requested for use by the students for statewide testing must be documented in the student's current IEP and be on the list of allowable accommodations. The same accommodations requested for testing must also be used with the student for instructional purposes in the classroom.

Accommodation use needs to be linked or matched to classroom instruction, classroom testing and state tests. Most accommodation use does not begin and end in school. Students who use accommodations will generally also need them at home, in the community, and, as they get older, in postsecondary education and at work.

Students who require accommodations need to have opportunities to learn to use an accommodation in classroom settings, and they also need to be able to take classroom tests using needed accommodations. Testing conditions in the classroom should be as

close as possible to the state testing situations to increase the student's comfort level and allow for his/her enhanced performance.

Accommodations for assessment and instruction are integrally intertwined. There are some accommodations that are appropriate for classroom use that would NOT be appropriate, or permitted, in testing situations. Some accommodations may provide an unfair advantage in assessment situations. No accommodation should be recommended for an assessment that a student has not had a thorough opportunity to learn to use comfortably and effectively during classroom activities.

Accommodations are commonly categorized in four ways: (1) Presentation, (2) Response, (3) Timing/Scheduling, (4) Setting

PRESENTATION ACCOMMODATIONS—Allow students to access information in ways that do not require them to visually read standard print. These alternate modes of access include visual, auditory and a combination of visual and auditory.

RESPONSE ACCOMMODATIONS—Allow students to complete assignments, tests and activities in different ways or to solve or organize problems using some type of assistive device.

TIMING/SCHEDULING ACCOMMODATIONS—Change the allowable length of a test or assignment and may also change the way the time is structured due to the individual/physical needs of some students.

SETTING ACCOMMODATIONS—Change the location in which a test or assignment is given or the conditions of the assessment setting.

In a broader sense, an accommodation provides students with access, or as some have referred to it, as "leveling the playing field." This is an important point, because it reflects one of the most fundamental beliefs we have about our educational system—that ALL individuals should be provided with equal opportunity—including the opportunity to achieve grade level content standards. This is why the right to appropriate and reasonable accommodations have been codified in such major federal laws as IDEA, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and, more recently, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

When choosing an assessment accommodation for a particular student, it is important to look at the state guidelines to determine whether the accommodations are considered "okay" or "not okay" to use. "Not okay" assessment accommodations are commonly referred to as modifications, adaptations, alterations, and nonstandard, non-allowable, or nonapproved accommodations. The use of these "not okay" accommodations could invalidate the test, change the construct of the test, or in some way provide unfair advantage to the student.

Some assessment changes are never considered "okay." For example, helping students in any way does not give a true picture of what students know. Helping includes coaching, editing student work, answering questions, or giving cues in any way, including gestures, facial expressions, or encouragement to change an answer. It is important to simply encourage students to do their best. Changing the content of a test to make it easier for students who have not learned the content being tested invalidates a test, especially if the test is designed to be used for accountability. These changes might include allowing a student to answer fewer questions, reducing the number of responses required or changing the content by paraphrasing or offering additional information.

Accommodations are intended to promote access, not give students with disabilities an "unfair advantage."

Effective decision-making about the provision of appropriate accommodations begins with making good instructional decisions. In turn, making good instructional decisions is facilitated by gathering and reviewing good information about the student's present level of performance in relation to the state academic standards. In essence, the process of making decisions about accommodations is one in which members of the IEP team attempt to "level the playing field," so that students with disabilities can participate in the general education curriculum. IEP meetings that simply engage people in checking boxes on the compliance document are not conducive to sound decision-making practices, nor do they advance equal opportunities for students to participate in the general education curriculum.

The process of deciding which accommodations a student with disabilities needs or will use is not a one shot or episodic event. There are times when a decision is not too difficult—as in the case of a student whose accommodations have been well documented and shown to be effective over time. There are other times, however, when making decisions about accommodations is very challenging, particularly for students with disabilities who demonstrate highly varied learning styles and preferences. The tendency may be to recommend the use of a variety of accommodations, with the assumption that "the more accommodations, the better," or "at least something will help" a student to do his or her best. Unfortunately, this hit or miss approach does not necessarily enhance a student's access to learning or test performance.

It is necessary to work with and observe a student prior to the IEP meeting using a variety of accommodations in the classroom in order to figure out what works best. Every student with a disability does not need an accommodation, nor do all students with the same disability need the same accommodations. The ultimate effectiveness of the use of an accommodation depends on a student's familiarity with it and opportunity to practice using it in everyday life—in the classroom, at home, and in the community.

Selecting accommodations for instruction and assessment is the role of each student's IEP or 504 team.

Consider these questions in the selection process:
•   What are the student's strengths and needs? •   How do the student's needs affect the achievement of grade level content standards? •   What specialized instruction does the student need to achieve grade level content standards? •   What accommodations will increase the student's access to instruction and assessment?

Begin discussions of accommodations use with a review of an evaluation of accommodations the student has already experienced.

Discuss these points:
•   Accommodations used by the student in the classroom and on tests. •   Test and assignment results when accommodations were used and not used. •   Student's perception of how well an accommodation worked. •   Effective combinations of accommodations. •   Difficulties of accommodations use. •   Perceptions of parents, teachers, and specialists about how the accommodation appears to have worked.

Based on a review of the key points above, decide if the student should continue using an accommodation as is, if changes are needed, or if the accommodation should be discontinued.

Consider possible new accommodations (especially if the student is receiving special education or 504 services for the first time). All members of the IEP or 504 team should help gather a list of the student's needs and possible accommodations to try.

Of the accommodations that match the student's needs, consider:
•   Student's willingness to learn to use the accommodations.   •   Opportunities to learn how to use the accommodations in classroom settings.   •   Conditions under which assessments will be given.   •   How and when the student will learn to use each new accommodation.   •   Appropriate time span to learn to use an assessment accommodation before test day.   •   Plan for the ongoing evaluation and improvement of accommodations use.

INVOLVING STUDENTS IN CHOOSING AND USING ACCOMMODATIONS

It is critical for students with disabilities to understand their disabilities and learn self-advocacy strategies for success in school and throughout life. Some students have had limited experience expressing personal preferences and advocating for themselves. Speaking out about preferences, particularly in the presence of "authority figures" may be a new role for some students. They may need guidance and feedback in this area. Teachers and other IEP team members can play a key role in working with students to advocate for themselves in the context of choosing and using accommodations.

The more students are involved in the selection process, the more likely it is that the accommodations will be used—especially as students reach adolescence and desire to be more independent. Self-advocacy skills become critical here. Students need opportunities to learn which accommodations are most helpful for them, and to make sure those accommodations are provided in their classes and wherever they need them outside of school.

Choosing, using, and evaluating the effectiveness of accommodations are skills that can be valuable throughout a student's daily life, and into postsecondary education, career, and community life. These are critical skills for students to learn while still in school.

ACCOMMODATIONS AND THE STUDENT'S IEP

For students with disabilities served under IDEA, determining appropriate instructional and assessment accommodations should not pose any particular problems for the IEP teams that follow good IEP practices. With information obtained from the required summary of the student's present level of educational performance, the process of identifying and documenting accommodations should be a fairly straightforward event. Describing the student's present level of educational performance is a federal requirement. IEP team members must state "how the child's disability affects the child's

involvement and progress in the general education curriculum—the same curriculum as non-disabled children" (34 CFR (§300.346).

There presently are potentially three areas in which accommodations can be addressed in the IEP. One area is generally referred to as "Consideration of Special Factors" (34 CFR §300.346), where communication and assistive technology supports are considered. It is important to stress that the use of assistive technology may be considered an accommodation, but must be requested on an individual basis.

Another area of the IEP where planning team members are required to consider the use of accommodations is where "Supplementary Aids and Services" (34 CFR. §300.28) must be specified. This area of the IEP includes "aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes or other education-related settings to enable children with disabilities to be educated with non-disabled children to the maximum extent appropriate."

The final area where the IEP team is required to consider accommodations is referred to in IDEA as "Participation in Assessments" (34 CFR §300.138). This section of the IEP documents accommodations needed to facilitate the participation of students with disabilities in general statewide assessment programs.

Information obtained from the most recent reevaluation, results on state assessments, input from special and regular education teachers, and information obtained from the student and parents should serve as a solid foundation for making "consistent, coherent, and legally defensible" decisions about the identification and use of appropriate instructional and assessment accommodations for students with disabilities. (DeStefano & Shriner, 2003)

ADMINISTERING ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS

Once decisions have been made about providing accommodations to students, the "logistics" of providing the accommodations must be considered. In this case, "logistics" simply refers to how the accommodations will be provided. It is not uncommon for members of the IEP team, most often special education teachers, to be given the responsibility for arranging, coordinating, and providing assessment accommodations for all students who need them. It is essential that EVERYONE involved in this process knows and understands the requirements and consequences of using accommodations for statewide assessments.

ACCOMMODATIONS MONITORING

On the day of the test, a designated member of the IEP team should make certain that the test administrator knows what accommodations the student will be using. Don't assume the person assigned to give the test "knows" how and "what" accommodations to administer. A test administrator, particularly those unfamiliar with the student, will need to know details; for example, whether extra time will be allowed for a student and, if so, how much.

Similarly, the test administrator may not be familiar with some of the less conventional response formats—like allowing the student to write responses directly on the test booklet. If alternative response formats are considered for a student, it is critical that those administering the test are aware of the general parameters within which the accommodation can be provided. Even the most creative and well thought-out accommodations will mean little if they are poorly implemented—so logistical considerations are vitally important.

During testing all accommodations must be implemented by a certified teacher. All teachers administering exams should be familiar with the accommodations given to the student, as well as the general administration of the test.

Classroom practice should be used to aid and to prepare students for assessments. All students are expected to take the Benchmark, End of Course, and Grade 11 Literacy Exams with or without accommodations unless they have a significant cognitive disability. Students recognized as having a significant cognitive disability may be assessed with the alternate portfolio instead of the Benchmark Exam.

Practices to avoid when planning for the implementation of accommodations during testing:
•   Making "on the spot" decisions about what accommodations a student needs for testing, •   Making an accommodation available to "everyone" simply because of convenience, and •   Not considering an accommodation as essential because only one student needs it.

Strict adherence to the accommodation guidelines is necessary to ensure that the test results reflect actual student learning. If accommodations are administered inconsistently, the results will not be comparable across examinees. For example, if the directions given to students vary, some students may receive too little assistance from the teacher administering the test and some may receive too much. The use of detailed guidelines not only ensures that the efforts of students and teachers will yield meaningful information, but it also makes the test administration easier.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 , Public Law 108-446 Section 612 (E), indicates that "the State educational agency shall, to the extent feasible, use universal design principles in developing and administering any assessments under this paragraph."

Every effort will be made to employ the concept of universal design in the statewide assessments in Arkansas. Universal test design is a concept which assures that tests are designed and developed to allow participation of the widest possible range of students. Universal test design results in valid inferences about the performance of all students who participate in the assessment. This does not mean that standards should be relaxed or that constructs to be measured should be changed. Items on universally designed standards-based assessments must be aligned to the content and achievement standards with the same depth and breadth of coverage and the same cognitive complexity as the standards specify.

Modification means changing the construct of what is assessed. Modifications are not allowed on the ACTAAP Exam. Examples of NON-ALLOWABLE changes include READING ALOUD THE READING TEST; therefore, the reading test becomes a listening test. Limiting the number of multiple-choice items from which a student selects his/her answer gives an advantage to that student in such a way that guessing counts more than knowledge.   Limiting the multiple-choice responses is not an allowable accommodation on Benchmark, End of Course, or Grade 11 Literacy Exams.

The practice of limiting multiple-choice responses and eliminating short answers and essays in the classroom does not prepare students to take the criterion-referenced assessments. Students must attempt to answer the constructed response items. What the student writes must show minimal understanding of the prompt to receive credit.

Students in the State of Arkansas are allowed accommodations that do not change the construct of what is being assessed on Benchmark, End of Course, and Grade 11 Literacy exams. The accommodations listed below must be in the student's current IEP and used regularly in the classroom to be allowed during the assessment.

ALLOWABLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STATEWIDE BENCHMARK, END OF COURSE, AND GRADE 11 LITERACY EXAMS

Strict adherence to these accommodations is necessary to ensure that the test results reflect actual student learning. If accommodations are administered inconsistently the results will not be comparable for all students.

TRAN – Transfers – A teacher transfers the answers from the student's test booklet to an answer document. This accommodation allows the student to write directly in the test booklet rather than on an answer sheet such as the scanable "bubble" sheet. The student's answers are the only things permitted to be transferred to the answer document. This is a common accommodation for students using alternate format exams such as Braille or large print booklets. A student with a physical disability which prevents him/her from completing the regular "bubble" sheet may need this accommodation.

REC *(Revised December 2011)* – Records –The test administrator records and serves as a scribe for the student's responses. The scribe writes down these responses in the student answer document from the student's speech, sign language, pointing or by using an assistive communication device. Extensive practice is required when using a recorder or scribe. A scribe may not edit or alter student work in any way, and must record word-for word exactly what the student has dictated. Students will be allowed to review and edit what the scribe has written. A person who serves as a scribe needs to prepare carefully to assure that he or she knows the vocabulary involved and understands the boundaries of the assistance to be provided. In general, the role of the scribe is to write what is dictated, no more and no less.

The writing sessions (prompts) on the benchmark examinations are scored for mechanics and usage, and particular skill is involved when recording the student's responses. *THE STUDENT MUST PROVIDE THE CAPITALIZATION, PUNCTUATION, AND EXACT SPELLING FOR THE WRITING PORTIONS OF THE TEST.* Classroom practice on this type of dictation before the day of the test is recommended to give the student experience with the process. (Note: The test administrator may not write it out first and then go back to ask the student to insert punctuation or adjust spelling.)

SIGN – Sign language – The directions for the test are signed for the student with a hearing disability by an interpreter. Sometimes an interpreter is only needed to sign instructions or to assist in communication. Interpreters need to be able to translate in the same method of sign language typically used by the student, such as American Sign Language or Cued Speech. No other interpretation is permitted in administering the test outside the provisions allowed for hearing students. Interpreters must not paraphrase, clarify, elaborate, or provide assistance with the meaning of words, intent of test questions, or responses to test items. It is recommended that the student be familiar with the interpreter for the test and have some time to practice with the interpreter before the

day of the test to ensure that they can understand each other and that the level of interpretation meets the needs of the student.

PREF – Preferential seating –Preferential seating is allowed for students who may need to sit in a different location from the majority of the students in order to reduce distractions to themselves or others, or to increase physical access to special equipment. A student who is easily distracted should not sit near windows, doors, or pencil sharpeners. Sitting near the teacher's desk, or in the front of a classroom, or the back of the classroom, may be helpful for some students. Students with low vision may need to sit in the part of a room that has the best light.

For some students a change in physical access is necessary. For example, a student who uses a wheelchair with a specially designed tabletop and assistive technology may not be able to take a test in an auditorium with theatre seating. A student who uses large print materials may need to sit at a table rather than at a desk with a small surface area.

SMGT – Small group testing – Testing in a small group is permitted when students need a smaller or private space to help them perform better. Some students can perform better when they can read and think out loud or make noises that distract other students. Small group settings are required for students who are taking the exam with an interpreter, reader, or with a scribe. Students using a Braillewriter may also need a small group setting to reduce the noise distractions for the other students. The size of the small group can vary; however, it should be smaller than the student's regular class. Usually the small group is from 3-5 students.

INT – Individual Testing – Testing in an individual situation may be necessary for a very small number of students. This setting would place the student in a situation with the teacher for the duration of the exam.

RMT/RWT/RST *(Revised December 2011)* – Reading the Math Test/Reading the Writing Test/Reading the Science Test – Test administrators are allowed to assist students by reading directions and the test items for the math, writing, or science sections of the test. Individual words may be read to a student, at the request of the student, without reading the entire item. **NO PORTION OF THE READING TEST IS ALLOWED TO BE READ OR INTERPRETED FOR THE STUDENT.**

A single form of the Grade 11 Literacy, Augmented Benchmark and End-of-Course exams will be designated for read-aloud. Licensed personnel will administer the allowable portions of the exams to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that specify the accommodation of read-aloud.

Test administrators should use an even vocal inflection so that the student does not receive any cues by the way the information is read. It is important that they read test items/questions and text word-for-word exactly as written. Test administrators may not clarify, elaborate, or provide assistance to the students, and need to be familiar with the terminology and symbols specific to the content. This is especially important for high school mathematics and science assessments. A student should have the option of asking a reader to slow down or repeat text.

MD – Magnifying Devices – Some students with visual impairments read regular print materials and enlarge the print by using magnification devices. These include line magnifiers, hand held magnifiers, enlarged computer monitors such as Closed Circuit Television (*CCTV*) to enlarge print and display printed material with various image enhancements on a screen. These are passive devices and do not download or store any of the test material. No device is permitted as an accommodation which would breach the security of the test by downloading the text of the test.

NB – Noise Buffer – Noise buffers as an accommodation simply reduce noise distractions for the student taking the test. These accommodations range from individual study carrels, to headsets, to earplugs, to individual portable buffers set on the student's desk. The Student's IEP team will determine the use and variety of the buffer needed for the test.

IS – Individualized Scheduling – Individual testing is permitted for those students who are unable to remain in the testing conditions due to medical, physical or emotional situations. Short breaks may be given at predetermined intervals or after completion of assignments, tests or activities. Sometimes a student is allowed to take breaks when individually needed, such as a student with diabetes when snacks are needed. Stretch breaks may be necessary for some physically disabled students.

If possible, schedule tests and activities that require focused attention at the time of day when the student is most likely to demonstrate peak performance. This is especially needed for medically fragile students.

ET – EXTENDED TIME – Extended time is perhaps the most frequently provided accommodation for students with disabilities. There are no specific time limits on this accommodation. The student should be permitted the time, within reason, to complete the test. Limits of one and one half time the allotted time is not a rule for providing extended time. Decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis, keeping in mind the type of accommodations being provided, the disability involved, and the type of assignments, tests, and activities. Sometimes students who request extended time end up not needing it because of the reduction in anxiety just knowing that plenty of time is available. Students who have too much time may lose interest and motivation to do their best work. All testing scheduled for a given day must be completed by the conclusion of the school day. No test may extend into a non-scheduled test day.

LPT – LARGE-PRINT TEST BOOKLETS – Large print test booklets are available for those visually impaired students who routinely use large text materials in the classroom. These test booklets must be ordered early in the year so they will be available at test time. There are no large print test answer documents since these enlarged sheets could not be machine scored. It will be necessary for the student to write in the test booklet and a scribe will need to transfer these answers to a regular answer document.

BT – BRAILLE TEST BOOKLETS – Braille test booklets are available for those low vision students who require Braille materials in the classroom. These booklets must be ordered early in the year to provide time for production and delivery. There are no Braille answer documents. The teacher must transcribe the student's answers from the test booklet and record the answers on the regular student answer document.

Advanced Braille skills may be necessary to transcribe some of the answers from the Braille to the answer document. This is particularly evident in upper level high school exams which may require the use of the Nemeth Code. Nemeth Code is a system of Braille that makes it possible to convey technical expression in a written medium to students who are blind or visually impaired. The Nemeth code contains numerous technical symbols that occur in math and science applications.

AB – ABACUS – An abacus is a hand held non-electrical device used by visually impaired students in much the same way that paper and pencil are used to work math problems for the sighted students. Students requiring an abacus may provide these individually. They may also be provided by the school.

TEST SECURITY

In order to administer test accommodations appropriately, teachers and other school personnel must understand the importance of test security, standardization, and ethical testing practices. Adherence to standard procedures and directions for the implementation of accommodations is necessary to preserve the integrity of the test.

Test administrators must also be cognizant of test security. Any disclosure of test items or answers may adversely affect the value of the test by invalidating the test results. Test security can become an issue when accessible test formats are used such as Braille or large print, or when someone other than the student is allowed to see the test, such as the reader or transcriber.

 In other to ensure test security and confidentially, test administrators need to (1) keep all test materials in a secure place to prevent unauthorized access, (2) keep all test content confidential—refrain from sharing information with or implying test content to anyone, and (3) return all materials as instructed. Accessible format tests (Braille and Large Print) need to be provided to the test administrator under secure and confidential means.

Test administrators must also recognize the importance of ethical testing practices. An important consideration for ethical testing practices during test administration relates to interactions between test administrators and students taking the test. If a student receives extra help during testing, his or her scores may not be valid indicators of what he or she can do. Helping includes coaching, editing student work, answering questions, or giving cues in any way, including gestures, facial expressions, or encouragement to change an answer.

Changing the content of a test to make it easier for students who have not learned the content being tested invalidates a test.

EVALUATING THE USE OF THE ACCOMMODATIONS

Assessment accommodations should be selected on the basis of an individual student's needs and should be consistent with the accommodations provided during instruction. Evaluating the effectiveness of the use of accommodations is necessary to ensure the meaningful participation of students with disabilities in the statewide assessment. The information from the evaluation can be used in any number of different ways—from identifying questionable patterns of accommodation use to indicating areas in which IEP/504 team members and test administrators need additional training and support.

The purpose of evaluating the use of accommodations is to determine the extent to which students with disabilities are provided with equitable access. The approach can be one that is fairly simple and straightforward by conducting what is known as a "formative" evaluation. This information can include comments, observations, notes, or anecdotal reports from the student's teachers, parents, and other members of the IEP team, including the students themselves.

Formative evaluations are based on the premise that no plan is likely to work perfectly the first time and maybe not even after two or three iterations. Choosing and using accommodations is by nature a dynamic process and one that requires continuous improvement, hence, a formative approach is one that can help members of the IEP planning team to monitor and gauge when changes are necessary.

Do's and Don'ts When Choosing Accommodations

Do's	Don'ts
Do…make accommodation decisions based on individualized needs.	Don't…make accommodation decisions based on whatever is "easiest" to do (e.g., preferential seating).
Do…document instructional and assessment accommodation(s) on the IEP.	Don't…use an accommodation that has not been documented on an IEP.
Do…be familiar with the types of accommodations that can be used as both instructional and assessment accommodations.	Don't…assume that all instructional accommodations can be used for assessment.
Do…be specific about the "Where, When, Who, and How" accommodations will be provided.	Don't…just indicate that an accommodation(s) will be provided "as appropriate" or "as necessary."
Do …refer to state-allowable accommodations list and understand implications of selections.	Don't…check every accommodation possible on a checklist just to be "safe."
Do…evaluate whether instruction and assessment accommodations are used by the student.	Don't…assume that the same accommodations should remain appropriate year after year.
Do…get input about accommodations from general educators, parents, and students, and use to make decisions at IEP meetings.	Don't…make decisions about instructional and assessment accommodations alone.
Do…provide accommodations for assessments that are routinely used for classroom instruction.	Don't…provide an assessment accommodation for the first time on the day of the test.
Do mediate the effect of the disability to access instruction and demonstrate learning.	Don't…select accommodations that are unrelated to documented student learning needs, or are intended to give students an unfair advantage.

Access Needs that May Require Accommodations

Directions: Use these questions to identify various types of accommodations for students with disabilities: Presentation, Response, Timing/Scheduling, and/or Setting. The list is not exhaustive – it's purpose is to prompt members of IEP teams to consider a wide range of accommodation needs. Use the list in planning by indicating **Y** (Yes), **N** (No), or **DK/N/A** (Don't Know or Not Applicable).

Presentation Accommodations	Y	N	DK/NA
• Does the student have a visual impairment that requires large-type or Braille materials?	☐	☐	☐
• Is the student able to read and understand directions?	☐	☐	☐
• Can the student follow oral directions from an adult?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student need directions repeated frequently?	☐	☐	☐
• Are assistive technology devices indicated on the student's IEP?	☐	☐	☐
• Has the student been identified as having a reading disability?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student have low/poor reading skills that may require the reading of tests or sections of the tests that do not measure reading comprehension in order to demon- strate knowledge of subject areas?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student have a hearing impairment that requires an interpreter to sign directions?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student have a hearing impairment and need a listening device?	☐	☐	☐

Response Accommodations			
• Does the student have difficulty tracking from one paper to another and maintaining his or her place?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student have a disability that affects the ability to record his/her responses in the standard manner?	☐	☐	☐
• Can the student use a pencil or writing instrument?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student need the services of a scribe?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student have a disability that affects his/her ability to spell?	☐	☐	☐

Timing/Scheduling Accommodations			
• Can the student work continuously for the length of time allocated for standard test administration?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student use other accommodations or adaptive equipment which require more time to complete test items (e.g., use of scribe)?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student tire easily due to health impairments?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student have a visual impairment that causes eyestrain and require frequent breaks?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student have a learning disability that affects the rate at which he/she processes written information?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student have a motor disability that affects the rate at which he/she records written responses?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student take any type of medication to facilitate optimal performance?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student's attention span and/or distractibility require shorter working periods and frequent breaks?	☐	☐	☐

Setting Accommodations			
• Do others easily distract the student and/or does he/she have difficulty remaining on task?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student require any specialized equipment or other accommodations that may be distracting to others?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student have a visual or auditory impairment that requires special lighting or acoustics?	☐	☐	☐
• Can the student focus on his/her own work in a setting with large groups of other students?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the student exhibit behavior that may disrupt the attention of other students?	☐	☐	☐
• Do any physical accommodations need to be made for the student in the classroom?	☐	☐	☐

Logistic Planning Checklist

Directions: The following Logistics Planning Checklist can be used in the planning and implementation of accommodations for any individual student on the day of the test, as well as preparation before that event. Use the checklist by indicating **Y** (Yes), **N** (No), or **DK/N/A** (Don't Know or Not Applicable).

	Y	N	NA
Accommodations Throughout the Academic Year			
• Accommodations are documented on student's IEP	☐	☐	☐
• Students uses accommodation regularly	☐	☐	☐
• A master accommodations list/data base listing assessment accommodation needs for all students tested is updated regularly	☐	☐	☐
Preparation for Day of the Test			
• Special test editions are ordered for individual students based on information contained in master accommodations plan (e.g., large print, Braille)	☐	☐	☐
• Test administrators receive a list of accommodation needs for students they will supervise (list comes from master accommodations plan/data base)	☐	☐	☐
• Adult supervision is arranged and test administrators receive training for each student receiving accommodations in small group or individual settings (with substitute available)	☐	☐	☐
• Trained readers, scribes, and sign language interpreters are arranged for individual students (with substitutes available)	☐	☐	☐
• Special equipment is arranged and checked for correct operation	☐	☐	☐
Accommodations on the Day of the Test	☐	☐	☐
• All eligible students receive accommodations as determined by their IEP			
• Provision of accommodation is recorded by test administrator	☐	☐	☐
• Substitutes are available as needed	☐	☐	☐
• Plans are made to replace defective equipment	☐	☐	☐
Consideration After the Day of the Test			
• Students' answer documents are completed for students needing the information transferred	☐	☐	☐
• All equipment is returned to appropriate locations	☐	☐	☐
• Students who take make up tests receive needed accommodations	☐	☐	☐
• Effectiveness of accommodations use is evaluated by test administrators and students and plans are made for improvement	☐	☐	☐