



Understanding Statewide Testing Accommodations

UNDERSTANDING STATEWIDE TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

If your child has a disability and is receiving services through an Individual Education Plan (IEP), he/she may need to receive accommodations during instruction and statewide testing.

What are testing accommodations?

Accommodations are changes in the administration of an assessment (test) in terms of how the student takes or responds to the assessment. Accommodations do not change the construct, i.e., the concepts intended to be measured by the assessment. Nor do they change the meaning of the resulting scores. Broad categories of accommodations include setting, scheduling, presentation, and response.

Accommodations are designed to provide equity, not advantage, and serve to level the playing field for students with disabilities. When used appropriately, they reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student's disability; they do not reduce learning expectations or the meaning of the resulting scores.

How will accommodations help my child with a disability?

Your child will likely feel more capable during the testing process if his/her disability does not interfere with his/her ability to show what s/her has learned. This will allow a more accurate assessment of his/her knowledge and skills.

Who determines if my child receives accommodations on statewide testing?

The IEP team, which includes the parents, determines if your child needs accommodations during testing. During the IEP meeting, goals and objectives will be written as part of an annual plan. One of the discussions of the IEP team should include what kind of supports and/or accommodations, if any, are needed during daily instruction. Accommodations that your child needs on testing will be applicable to statewide tests as well as any tests given throughout the school year.

The needed accommodations should be clearly listed in the IEP. They should include what they will be and how and when they will be used. For instance, if extended time is designated, the IEP should define the amount of extended time that is appropriate. It is important to consider all accommodations that are used during routine instruction throughout the year as testing accommodations.

Remember, accommodations are meant to provide access and allow participation to instruction and testing. They do not guarantee proficiency or allow students with disabilities an unfair advantage over other students. They cannot change the content of the test and cannot provide clues or suggestions that hint at or give away the correct response to the student.

My child with a disability has a 504 plan. Can s/he receive testing accommodations?

Yes, students who have been identified as having a disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act may have necessary instructional and testing accommodations included on their 504 plan. These accommodations should be clearly specified in the plan, including what the accommodations are and how and when they will be used.

Are there limitations on the testing accommodations my child can receive?

Yes, students with IEPs are allowed accommodations on testing, but there are strict guidelines for using accommodations during statewide testing. These limits are determined for each individual test. The IEP team should be aware of the statewide testing that will take place during the year and the accommodations that are allowed for each test. It is important to remember that although some accommodations may be appropriate for instructional use, they may not be appropriate or allowed for use on a standardized or state assessment. 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. However, some accommodations are appropriate for instruction and not testing.



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What are some examples of testing accommodations?

The accommodations a student receives will depend on his/her individual needs. The accommodation may be made in the area of setting, test presentation, student response, or scheduling.

Accommodations in Setting or Location: Examples include:

- Testing in a special education classroom; small group; individual or study carrel; preferential seating
- Special or adapted lighting; adaptive furniture (e.g. Slant Board)

Accommodations for Test Presentation: Examples include:

- Low vision aids (e.g. CCTV, magnifying equipment); large print; braille
- Signing directions, test questions, or reading passages (in allowable tests or with specific eligibility)
- Repeating the directions; explaining or paraphrasing the directions for clarity
- Oral reading of test questions or reading passages (in allowable test or with specific eligibility)
- Color overlays, templates, or place markers; materials presented with contrast and tactile cues

Accommodations for Student Response: Examples Include:

- Technology such as a Braille, word processor or other communication device with all grammar and spell check devices disabled
- Student marks answers in test booklet; student points to answers; verbal response
- Adapted writing tools (e.g. pencil grips, large diameter pencil)
- Scribe (student gives his or her responses to test items by talking or using a communication device)
- Basic function calculator or adapted basic calculator (specific eligibility)

Accommodations for Scheduling: Examples include:

- Frequent monitored breaks; optimal time of day for testing
- Extended time (length of extended time should be determined on IEP)

It is important that the student learns how to use each accommodation. Be certain there is enough time to learn to use instructional and assessment accommodations before the assessment takes place. Also, examine and evaluate the student's use of accommodations on a regular basis to determine if they are still effective, need improvements, or are no longer needed.

Where to go for more information:

Parent to Parent of Georgia
770 451-5484 or 800-229-2038
www.p2pga.org

Georgia Department of Education, Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports
404 656-3963 or 800-311-3627 and ask to be transferred to Special Education
http://www.gadoe.org/ci_exceptional.aspx

Additional resources: Contact the **Special Education Director** for your school system.