This brief guide explains the use of testing accommodations for students with a disability participating in state or district educational assessments under federal and Florida state law. These include the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Florida Administrative Code. Planning guidelines match testing accommodations with instructional accommodations. Guidelines for providing accommodations include suggestions for modifying the setting (e.g., taking the test in a distraction-free setting), the scheduling (breaking up a test into several periods within one school day), responding (use of oral, signed, word processed, or Braille responses), and presentation format (use of mechanical devices, or revised formats including enlarged-print, Braille, and sign language). (DB)
TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

APRIL 2000

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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**TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Introduction**

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 1997, requires a statement of individual accommodations needed for the student to participate in state or district assessment of student progress. Students who qualify as a student with a disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act are also eligible for test accommodations.

Rule 6A-1.0943, Florida Administrative Code (FAC), provides the basis for accommodations to Florida’s statewide assessment system for students with disabilities. Information about allowable accommodations is provided in the test administrator’s manual for each of the statewide assessments. This paper provides additional information about test accommodations for consideration by persons administering state or district assessment programs.

**Planning for Testing of Students with Disabilities**

The following points should guide district and school personnel in providing for accommodations for students with disabilities in state and district assessment programs:

1. Test coordinators in each school district should assure that information on accommodations for students with disabilities is shared with all school-level personnel administering state or district assessment programs.

   School-level personnel should provide opportunities for persons administering assessments to review and discuss appropriate accommodations and plan the assessment administration process for students with disabilities.

   Students should receive instruction in testing procedures and be provided with opportunities to practice test-taking strategies.

   The accommodations used for an individual student during testing should match accommodations used in instruction, without invalidating the purpose of the assessment.

   Test accommodations must be indicated on the student’s individual educational plan (IEP) or the 504 plan.

**Providing Accommodations**

Consideration must be given to providing accommodations that will allow the student with a disability to demonstrate skill and knowledge without jeopardizing the quality of the testing process. Students must have an IEP or 504 plan to be considered for testing accommodations.

Each student is unique and each may require different accommodations. Even students with the same disability may require quite different accommodations. The student’s IEP or 504 plan should address the accommodations that are regularly provided for classroom activities and assessment and should guide decisions on accommodations for specific test situations. However, allowable accommodations for statewide tests are limited to those listed in the test administration manuals.

Accommodations that are allowable for students with disabilities generally are described in five different categories. These categories are defined with examples below:

**SETTING:**

Students may take the test individually or in a small group setting under a proctor’s supervision. Students who are easily distracted or require close monitoring may take a test in a setting that is distraction-free (e.g., in a study carrel or a separate room). Some students may require a flexible setting to accommodate special lighting, furniture, equipment, or acoustic needs. Other students may need calming background music, freedom to move about as needed, or a space that is familiar and comfortable for them. The special education teacher may need to proctor a test administration so that these accommodations can be provided.

**SCHEDULING:**

Students may take a session of the test during several brief periods within one school day; however, a session of the test must be completed within one school day.

Students who tire easily may need more frequent or extended rest breaks. Some students are better able to give their best
performance at certain times of
the day and may need to be tested
at a different time of day than
when the test is scheduled.

Students may be provided
additional time; however, a
session of the test must be
completed within one school day.
Some students may need
extended time to complete the
testing process. However,
extended time should not be
provided automatically. Decisions
to extend time should be based on
the student's demonstrated
performance on similar tasks in
the instructional setting. Test
administrators should monitor the
extended time accommodation to
assure that students are attending
to the testing situation.

If a district uses a timed test for
student achievement, decisions
will have to be made about
including students who typically
need extended time. If extended
time is used, the testing situation
becomes a nonvalid
administration, and results should
be reported individually with
indication of the modifications
used.

RESPONDING:
Students may provide an oral
response, a signed response, a
response on a word processor, or
a response on a Braille writer. If
an oral response is given by the
student, the proctor must ask the
student to indicate the
punctuation and spell uncommon
words. Oral responses and signed
responses must be transcribed by
a proctor into the test book
assigned to the student. Student
responses must not be edited
when transcribed. This
accommodation may require a
one-on-one test administration in
order to avoid distracting other
students.

PRESENTATION:
Students may use mechanical aids such as a magnifying device, a
pointer, a noncalibrated rule or
template, or other similar devices
to assist in maintaining visual
attention to the test book or
answer book. Flexible
presentation means that students
may need to have directions read
to them or summarized for them.
Re-reading directions may be
necessary. Some language in
directions may need to be
simplified or the student may
need to restate the directions in
his/her own words. Proctors may
answer student questions about
any test directions. Test item
language may not be reworded,
and proctors may not answer
student questions about the
wording of test questions or
interpret test questions for
students. Reading items and
passages designed to test reading
skills may not be read to students.
Simple math questions should be
read to the student in their
entirety; more complex, multiple-
step math questions may be read
one part at a time. Students may
need to use magnifiers, auditory
amplification devices, or other
devices typically used in
classroom instruction.

Flexible presentation includes
the use of revised formats.
Revised formats include:

Print Versions. Students may be
tested with enlarged-print
materials or with regular-print
materials enlarged through
mechanical or electronic
means.

Braille Versions. Students may
be tested with materials that have
been transferred to Braille code,
or tested
by using devices that permit
optical-to-tactile transformations.

Auditory and Sign Language
Presentations. The test
administrator may sign, provide
oral interpretations of, or read to
students general directions,
writing prompts, and the
mathematics items. Reading
items and passages designed to
test reading skills must be read by
the student using visual or tactual
means.
Special Note on Section 504 Implications

To assure that all qualified students with disabilities in our public education system are provided necessary related aids, services, or accommodations during the administration of a test, districts will ensure that students with disabilities who are not currently in any special education program or who do not have a current IEP be considered for and, if appropriate, provided test accommodations listed in this document. Testing accommodations for these students must be listed on the student’s 504 plan. Procedures for qualifying students as disabled under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are provided in the document: Meeting the Needs of Students: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 available from the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, 614 Turlington Building, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400.

For more information on testing accommodations contact:

Dr. Cornelia Orr, Program Director
Bureau of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Assessment and Evaluation Services
(850) 488-8198
SC 278-8198
email: orrc@mail.doe.state.fl.us

or

Dr. Carol Allman, Program Director
Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services
Exceptional Student Education
(850) 488-1106
SC 278-1106
email: allmanc@mail.doe.state.fl.us
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Signed: Arlene M. Yancey
Printed Name/Position/Title: Arkene M. Durrance, Program Director
Organization/Address: Florida Department of Education
345 W. Gaines Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400

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