



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF

EDUCATION

Procedures for Participation of Students in Tennessee's Assessment System

Includes Participation Criteria and Testing Accommodation Guidance for the 2014-15 school year

Forward

It is our belief that every student can learn, demonstrate growth, and has the right to actively participate in high quality, research-based education that maximizes his or her potential in the least restrictive environment.

Fostering a culture of high expectations will better prepare students with disabilities for college and careers. There are no reasons to believe that, the vast majority of students with disabilities cannot be evaluated using the same measures as their peers. Students with disabilities can achieve at high levels when held to the same high expectations as their peers. A number of schools and school districts across the country have used assessment data to change instruction and successfully improve the performance of all students, including students with disabilities. This indicates that the low performance of students with disabilities is, by and large, a problem of instruction rather than one of students' inherent capacities.

In her testimony to Congress regarding the reauthorization of ESEA, Dr. Martha Thurlow, Director of the National Center for Educational Outcomes, stated, “to address ways to improve standards and assessments so that they are best for all students, including students with disabilities, it is important to clarify first who students with disabilities are, and also to realize that students with disabilities have benefited tremendously from our country’s focus on standards and assessments, and standards and assessments, by themselves, do not guarantee that student performance will increase, or even that access to the general curriculum and instruction will occur. Students with disabilities are not to be pitied or protected from the same high expectations we have for other students. They should not be excluded from the assessments that tell us how we are doing in making sure that they meet those expectations. Students with disabilities currently make up 13% of public school enrollment, with percentages in states varying from 10% to 19% of the state public school enrollment. They are disproportionately poor, minority, and English Language Learners. The vast majority—about 80-85% based on the latest distribution of disability categories – are students without intellectual impairments. Rather, they are students who with specially designed instruction, appropriate access, supports, and accommodations, as required by IDEA, can meet the same achievement standards as other students. We must ensure that these students progress through school successfully to be ready for college or career.” *Thurlow Testimony Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP) U.S. Senate - April 28, 2010*

High quality Common Core State Standards instruction, intensive intervention in specific areas of deficit, and Instructionally Appropriate Individualized Education Plans are the pathways to success for our students to be prepared for college and careers. Using data to determine the most appropriate assessments and accommodations that will continue to reflect our culture of high expectations is essential as we prepare our students for their future.

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Section 1: Overview of Tennessee’s Assessment System

Overview of Tennessee’s Assessment System 2014-15

The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program, or TCAP, is a set of statewide assessments given in Tennessee to measure students' skills and progress. TCAP assessments in the content areas of English/Language Arts, mathematics, science, and history/social studies are intended to set reasonable targets for what teachers are expected to teach and students are expected to learn. TCAP assessments for these content areas inform parents and teachers about what students are learning in relation to the curriculum standards and hold schools accountable for teaching the curriculum content. Students in grades 3-8 either participate in the Achievement Test or the Alternate Assessment. Students enrolled in high school participate in End of Course assessments for various subjects. Student results are reported to parents, teachers, and administrators and can be found on the Tennessee Department of Education’s data page or the annual Report Card, that comes out each fall. During the 2014-15 school year, district and school accountability and TVAAS calculations will continue to be based on the TCAP Achievement and End of Course tests (and additional growth measures such as SAT 10 for those districts opting in.) The Writing Assessment will play no role in TVAAS or district or school AMOs.

All students, including students with disabilities and English learners (ELs), are required to participate in statewide assessments and have their assessment results be part of the state’s accountability systems, with narrow exceptions for ELs in their first year in a U.S. school. Federal laws governing student participation in statewide assessments include the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (reauthorized in 2008), and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, as amended.

General Education Assessments

Reading and Math

Per General Assembly legislation, the state will continue TCAP as the state’s assessments for math and reading/language arts in grades 3-8 as well as in high school End of Course subjects. The department of education will issue a request for proposals for assessments in math and reading/language arts for the 2015-16 school year through a competitive bidding process. The design of the 2014-15 Achievement and End of Course exams will mirror the design of the tests this year.

Writing

The TCAP writing assessment will be required for all students in grades 3-11. It will have the same design as the 2013-14 writing assessment, including two passages, one analytic summary essay, and one opinion essay. The rubric will remain the same and it will be given online in all grades. Students assessed on an alternate assessment will participate in writing through the alternate assessment process.

Social Studies

The new social studies standards that the State Board of Education passed in July 2013 will go into effect as planned during the 2014-15 school year. As previously communicated, there will not be TCAP Achievement or End of Course assessments in social studies during 2014-15. There will be a TCAP field test in 2014-15, and operational social studies testing will resume in the 2015-16 school year.

K-2 Assessment

The K-2 Assessment, formerly known as SAT-10, will be offered again during the 2014-15 school year. It continues to be a district's decision whether or not to offer the K-2 Assessment. If the district chooses to offer the K-2 Assessment, students who qualify to participate in an alternate assessment due to their disability will participate in the TCAP Alternate Portfolio for Reading/Language Arts and Math. The TCAP Alternate Portfolio for K-2 is scored at the district level and the district reports the scores to parents.

Science

The TCAP science assessments will continue during the 2014-15 school year.

Special Education Assessments

MAAS

As previously communicated, Tennessee will no longer use the MAAS assessment and will instead have supports in place to help students with disabilities access rigorous grade-level academic achievement standards through the general TCAP.

Portfolio

As previously announced, Tennessee is transitioning from the TCAP Alternate Portfolio to the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) assessment for the areas of English Language Arts and math. NCSC will be administered for students enrolled in grades 3-8, and 11. Additionally, the TCAP Alternate Science assessment is in development and will replace the TCAP Alternate Portfolio Science. The TCAP Alternate Science Assessment will be administered in grades 3-8 and 10th and will be scored locally and reported to the state. Additional information will be shared regarding the scoring and reporting process.

Section 2: Testing Accommodations

It is important to ensure that performance in the classroom and on the assessment is influenced as little as possible by a student's disability or linguistic/cultural characteristics that are unrelated to the content being assessed. The administration of an assessment should not be the first time an accommodation is introduced to the student. To the extent possible, accommodations:

- Provide equitable access during instruction and assessments;
- Mitigate the effects of a student's disability;
- Do not reduce learning or achievement expectations;
- Do not change the construct being assessed; and
- Do not compromise the integrity or validity of the assessment.

The accommodations and conditions in this manual are provided to ensure a valid and reliable score on the assessments, not to provide an unfair advantage to those students who receive accommodations. Accommodations or other conditions provided outside these guidelines may change the construct of what is intended to be assessed and will call into question the reliability and validity of the score and may not report what a student knows and is able to do as measured on the assessment.

Testing accommodations are changes in the administration of an assessment in terms of how the test is presented or how the student responds to it. Categories of testing accommodations include time/scheduling, setting, presentation, and response. Although accommodations do not change the construct intended to be measured by the assessment, they do provide equity and serve to level the playing field for students with disabilities. When used appropriately, accommodations reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student's disability without reducing learning expectations or providing an advantage.

Students should have the same accommodations provided for classroom instruction, classroom assessments, and state assessments. Although accommodations for instruction and assessment are intertwined, it is critical to note that some accommodations may be appropriate for instructional use, but inappropriate for use on state assessments.

Accommodations should adhere to the following principles:

- Accommodations should enable students to participate more fully in instruction and assessments and better demonstrate their knowledge and skills.
- Accommodations must be based upon individual student need and not upon the category of disability, level of instruction, or program setting.
- Accommodations should be aligned with and part of daily instruction.
- Accommodations should not be introduced for the first time during the administration of a state assessment.
- Accommodations should foster and facilitate independence for students, not dependence.
- Only accommodations listed in the Test Administration Manuals or approved by the Tennessee Department of Education may be used on tests that are a part of the Tennessee assessment program.

Accommodations may not:

- alter, explain, simplify, paraphrase, or eliminate any test question, reading passage, writing prompt, or multiple-choice answer option;
- provide verbal or other clues or suggestions that hint at or give away the correct response to the student; or
- contradict test administration requirements or result in the violation of test security; for example:
 - test items may not be modified, reordered, or reformatted in any way for any student;

- tests may not be photocopied, enlarged, altered, or duplicated;
- students may not take test intended for students in a grade other than that in which the student is enrolled

A Five Step Process for the Selection, Use, and Evaluation of Assessment Accommodations

Step 1: Expect All Students to Achieve Grade-Level Academic Content Standards

Legislation on accountability and the inclusion of all students drives equal access to grade-level content standards. Providing effective accommodations during instruction and assessments is critical to achieving this important goal.

Informed decision making regarding accommodations is critical in ensuring successful and meaningful participation of students with disabilities in instruction and the assessment process. A test accommodation is a change in the way a test is administered or in the way a student responds to test questions. Similar to instructional accommodations, test accommodations are intended to offset the effects of the disability and to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills on statewide assessments. Reliance on test accommodations should never replace appropriate and rigorous instruction in the content area being tested.

Step 2: Learn About Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment

What are accommodations?

Accommodations are intended to reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student's disability; they do not reduce learning expectations. The accommodations provided to a student must be the same for classroom instruction, classroom assessments, and district and state assessments. It is critical to note that although some accommodations may be appropriate for instructional use, they may not be appropriate for use on a standardized assessment. There may be consequences (e.g., not counting a student's test score) for the use of some accommodations during state assessments.

Typically, 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 post-secondary education and at work..

Description of Accommodations Categories

An accommodation is defined as a change in the routine conditions under which students take tests that does not alter what the test is intended to measure. Accommodations are grouped into the following four categories:

- changes in test **presentation**; for example, using a large-print or Braille edition of the test
- changes in how the student **responds** to test questions; for example, dictating responses to a scribe
- changes in test **setting**; for example, administering the test in a small group or a separate setting
- changes in **timing or scheduling** of the test; for example, administering the test in short intervals or at a specific time of day

Presentation Accommodations

What are Presentation Accommodations?

Presentation accommodations allow students to access instruction and assessments in ways that do not require them to visually read standard print. These alternate modes of access include auditory, tactile, visual, and a combination of auditory and visual accommodations.

Who can benefit from Presentation Accommodations?

Students who benefit most from presentation accommodations are those with print disabilities, defined as difficulty or inability to visually read standard print because of a physical, sensory, or cognitive disability.

Response Accommodations

What are Response Accommodations?

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 or organizer.

Who can benefit from Response Accommodations?

Response accommodations can benefit students with physical, sensory, or learning disabilities (including difficulties with memory, sequencing, directionality, alignment, and organization; directionality may be an issue for ELs with certain Asian languages and Arabic that do not use the left to right script).

Timing and Scheduling Accommodations

What are Timing and Scheduling Accommodations?

Timing and scheduling accommodations change the allowable length of time to complete assignments, tests, and activities, and may also change the way the time is organized. Timing accommodations give students the time and the breaks they need to complete activities, assignments, and tests. Other changes may include the particular time of day, day of the week, or number of days over which a particular activity, assignment, or test takes place.

Who can benefit from Timing and Scheduling Accommodations?

Timing accommodations are most helpful for students who need more time than generally allowed to complete activities, assignments, and tests. Extra time may be needed to process written text (e.g., a student with a learning disability who processes information slowly; an EL who cannot maintain focus in a foreign language for extended periods of time), to write (e.g., a student with limited dexterity as a result of arthritis; ELs with a directionality issue), or to use other accommodations or equipment (e.g., assistive technology, audio tape, scribe).

Students who cannot concentrate continuously for an extended period or who become frustrated or stressed easily may need frequent or extended relaxation breaks. It may also help to schedule classes and tests that require the greatest concentration in the morning for students who have difficulty concentrating and staying on task as the day progresses. Scheduling changes might also be helpful for students on medications that affect their ability to stay alert or who have more productive times of the day.

Some students with health-related disabilities may have functioning levels that vary during the day because of the effects of medications or diminishing energy levels. For example, blood sugar levels may need to be maintained by eating several times a day at prescribed times. These students could be accommodated by scheduling tests and activities around the eating schedule or by allowing food to be taken to the classroom or testing site. Students who fatigue easily may need to take some academic classes and tests before rather than after a physical education class or recess or may need to reduce physical activity.

Setting Accommodations

What are Setting Accommodations?

Setting accommodations change the location in which a student receives instruction or participates in an assessment or the conditions of an instructional or assessment setting. Students may be allowed to sit in a different location than the majority of their peers in order to reduce distractions to themselves or others, or to increase physical access or access to special equipment. Some students may need changes in the conditions of an instructional setting. Every instructional and assessment setting should have good lighting and ventilation with a comfortable room temperature and should be as free as possible from noise, traffic, and other interruptions. Chairs should be comfortable and tables at an appropriate height with sufficient room for materials. Staff should check that all needed materials and equipment are available and in good condition.

Who can benefit from Setting Accommodations?

Changes in instructional and assessment locations can benefit students who are easily distracted in large group settings and who concentrate best in a small group or individual setting. Changes in location also benefit students who receive accommodations (e.g., reader, scribe, frequent breaks) that might distract other students. Students with physical disabilities might need a more accessible location, specific room conditions, or special equipment.

Step 3: Select Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment for Individual Students

A test accommodation is a change in the way a test is administered or in the way a student responds to test questions. Similar to instructional accommodations, test accommodations are intended to offset the effects of the disability to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills on statewide assessments. Reliance on test accommodations should never replace appropriate and rigorous instruction in the content area being tested.

Testing accommodations should be considered and discussed individually for each assessment required for the students grade level or course. They should not be broadly assigned across all assessments. Only accommodations the student needs based on his or her disability or linguistic need to access the assessment should be selected. Providing accommodations the student does not require to access the test may actually interfere with student performance and adversely affect student achievement as measured by assessments. IEP Teams, ESL professionals, and 504 Committees must consider the following:

- Whether the recommended accommodations are necessary for access to the assessment process;
- Previous experience with and usefulness of the recommended accommodations; and
- Whether or not the recommended accommodations affect the integrity or security of the assessment.

When selecting accommodations for state assessments for a student, it is important to determine what accommodations are allowed for each assessment being considered. The use of non-approved accommodations may result in a testing irregularity and the invalidation of a student's score. Accommodations not listed may not be used for TCAP testing without prior approval from TDOE.

In choosing appropriate accommodations for large scale assessments, it is important to keep the following in mind:

- Accommodations must be considered and discussed individually for each state assessment mandated for the student's grade level and should not be broadly assigned across all assessments.
- Students should receive the accommodation they need in order to participate in the assessment, but should not be given more accommodations than are necessary to participate meaningfully.
- Accommodations are not to be used to compensate for a student's lack of knowledge and skills.

- Students need opportunities to learn what accommodations are most helpful for them in day-to-day classroom instruction and assessment as well as on large scale assessments.
- The more input students have in selecting their accommodations, the more likely they are to use the accommodation.
- The use of any accommodation must be considered in light of the student’s disability or linguistic need; the use of the accommodation must be required to access the test because of his or her disability.
- Accommodations must not be provided solely as a way to help ensure proficiency on the assessment. The team must be sure that the accommodation(s) recommended for each student are providing access not advantage.

In essence, the process of making decisions about accommodations is one in which members of the IEP Team or ESL team attempt to “level the playing field” so that students with disabilities can participate in the general education curriculum. IEP Team meetings that simply require checking boxes on a state or local “compliance” document are not conducive to sound decision-making practices. In addition, the lack of dialogue fails to advance equal opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in the general education curriculum. Accommodation needs for ELs should also be considered on a case by case basis.

Each member of the IEP Team must be informed of responsibilities related to implementing the student’s IEP. Those responsibilities include selecting, administering, and evaluating accommodations during instruction and assessment. The team must select accommodations on the basis of the individual student need(s), and educators must use those accommodations consistently for instruction and assessment (the same is true for the ESL team).

Persons Involved in Accommodation Selection

The role of IEP or 504 Plan participants and suggestions for carrying out their respective responsibilities are described below. As part of the IEP or 504 Plan decision making process, any team member listed below may provide information to be considered during an IEP or 504 Committee meeting regarding the selection, implementation, and/or evaluation of accommodations appropriate for a student.

School Principal

The principal promotes the expectation at the school building level that students with disabilities are capable learners who will participate and succeed in all local and State testing programs. The principal in each school is responsible for:

- implementing the school district’s policies that provide equal access to instructional and assessment programs for all students;
- ensuring that testing accommodations are fully, consistently, and appropriately implemented during the administration of local and state assessments and classroom quizzes and tests, as specified in each student’s IEP or 504 Plan or ESL plan; and
- exercising professional discretion, on an emergency basis. For example, allowing certain testing accommodations for a student who incurs a temporary disabling condition that interferes with test performance shortly before or within the testing window of a state assessment (such as the student breaks his/her arm and will need a scribe).

Building principals should also be familiar with the policies and procedures included in the various Test Administration Manuals for various assessments.

General Education Teacher

The general education teacher has an active and significant role in the determination and use of instructional and testing accommodations for students with disabilities, disabling conditions, or ESL needs. General education teachers are familiar with curriculum content and the purpose of state and district assessments. Ensuring that students with disabilities and disabling conditions have full access to the programs and services that are available to their nondisabled peers often require that general education teachers, in collaboration with special education teachers, provide appropriate instructional and testing accommodations. The results of assessments inform teachers of accommodations that will support the individual student in achieving academic standards. General education teachers are critical team members who also must be familiar with and knowledgeable of each student's accommodations and how to appropriately administer them.

Special Education Teacher

The special education teacher plays an important role in providing information on how to match learning characteristics of the student with a disability to appropriate instructional and testing accommodations, ensuring that the student is able to demonstrate his/her knowledge and skills without being limited or unfairly restricted by his/her disability. In collaboration with general education teachers and related service providers, special education teachers assist in recommending and implementing appropriate instructional accommodations used in the classroom. These recommendations will serve as a link to the types of testing accommodations a student may need for classroom, state, and district assessments. Special educators may directly provide the testing accommodations or may assist school staff in the administration of testing accommodations that are included in a student's IEP or 504 Plan.

English as a Second Language Teacher

The ESL teacher serves an important role in implementing the classroom accommodations and assisting in the determination of the testing accommodations. The ESL teacher may also assist the general classroom teacher in the selection of classroom and assessment accommodations that will be beneficial to the EL.

Related Service Providers

Related service providers such as speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, physical therapists, and occupational therapists serve vital roles in supporting the education of many students with disabilities in school environments. As part of school teams, related service personnel can use their unique expertise to provide students with disabilities access to an appropriate education and facilitate students' pursuit of important learning outcomes. It is critical that related service personnel possess the collaborative skills required to work effectively with others in the context of a team-centered approach in a variety of educational environments.

Student

Students can provide valuable information on accommodations needed. They can provide information on their strengths and on how the accommodations they use for instruction are working. The student's perspective can inform decisions regarding the appropriateness of recommended accommodations during tests. At times, students may be reluctant to use certain testing accommodations because they do not want to appear to be different from their peers. This is especially the case with ELs as they acquire English skills. Including students in decision-making will help them understand the need and reason for the accommodation and may increase their willingness to consistently use the accommodation. The IEP, ESL, or 504 Committee teams must review testing accommodations that a student needs at least annually. Accommodations recommended for students early in their school careers may not be needed as they develop skills, knowledge, and experience to increase their ability to demonstrate what they know and can do.

Involving Students in Selecting, Using, and Evaluating Accommodations

It is critical for students to 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 students, one for which they need guidance and feedback. This may also be a difficult cultural shift for ELs. Educators can play a key role in working with students to advocate for themselves in the context of selecting, using, and evaluating accommodations. The more that students are involved in the selection process, the more likely they are to use the accommodation, especially as students reach adolescence and the desire to be more independent increases. Self-advocacy skills become critical for this age group. Students need opportunities to learn what accommodations are most helpful for them and then to learn how to make certain those accommodations are provided in all of their classes and wherever they need them outside of school.

Parents/Guardians

As members of the team, parents participate in the development, review, and revision of their plan. Parents are familiar with the strengths and needs of their child and can provide valuable information to enhance discussions about the need for instructional and testing accommodations. Parents have information about strategies their child uses to complete homework assignments and other tasks around the home. To enable parents to participate in meaningful discussions, it is important that they have information about the following:

- the need and rationale for testing accommodations, when and where appropriate;
- the types of testing accommodations and how they are administered; and
- the purpose of tests, what they measure, and how the results are used.

Directions for Teams on Selecting Accommodations

Focus on Student Characteristics

Assessment accommodations are intended to provide access to assessments. When selecting each testing accommodation, educators should consider the following questions:

1. What are the student’s learning strengths?
2. What areas of further improvement are needed?
3. Are the accommodations the student currently receives providing opportunities for the student to attain the level of independence needed as an adult?
4. Does the student know how to advocate for appropriate accommodations?
5. How do the student’s learning needs affect the achievement of grade-level content standards?
6. What specialized instruction (e.g., learning strategies, organizational skills, reading skills) does the student need to achieve grade-level content standards
7. What accommodations are regularly used by the student during instruction and assessments?
8. What were the results for assignments and assessments when accommodations were used and not used?
9. What is the student’s perspective of how well an accommodation “worked?”
10. Are there effective combinations of accommodations?
11. What difficulties did the student experience when using accommodations?
12. What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and specialists about how the accommodation worked?
13. Should the student continue to use an accommodation, are changes needed, or should the use of the accommodation be discontinued?

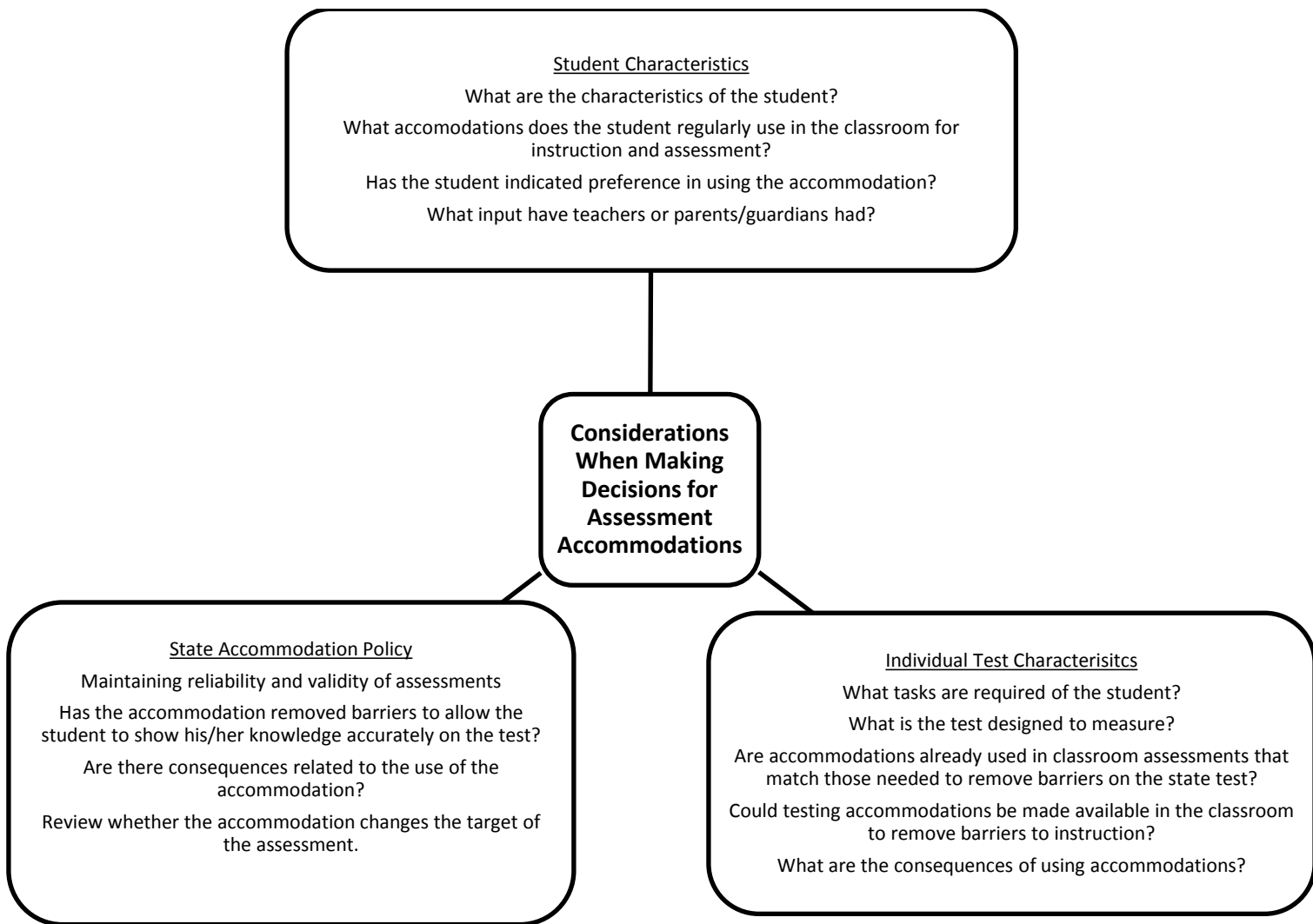
Consider Each Assessment Individually

In addition to TCAP, students may take other standardized or district-wide tests. Different assessments may require different types of accommodations. Consider:

1. What are the characteristics of the test the student needs to take?
2. Are the test tasks similar to classroom assessment tasks or does the student have the opportunity to practice similar tasks prior to testing?
3. Does the student use an accommodation for a classroom task that is allowed for similar tasks on state or district tests?
4. Are there other barriers that could be removed by using an accommodation that is not already offered to or used by the student?

Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment

In some cases, the accommodations used in instruction may not be allowed on a test because they would invalidate the results of the test (i.e. the performance no longer reflects what the test was designed to measure). In these instances, teachers should be sure to allow the student ample opportunities to perform on classroom tasks and assessments without the use of the accommodation. If the accommodation is considered a necessary step in scaffolding grade-level content instruction, having some practice without the accommodation during classroom work would be an expected practice to gauge student progress independent of the accommodation and would also provide student opportunities to practice not using an accommodation before the state assessment. If the instructional accommodation is more permanent in nature and is not permitted on a state assessment, decision-makers should consider whether the accommodation alters what the test measures. If, after considering these steps, the appropriateness of using an accommodation is not clear, contact district or state personnel about its use or apply for a Unique Accommodation.



Step 4: Administer Accommodations during Instruction and Assessment

Plan how and when the student will learn to use each new accommodation. Be certain there is ample time to learn to use instructional and assessment accommodations before the state assessments are administered. The student must be provided the selected accommodations during instructional periods that necessitate their use. Accommodations may not be used solely during assessments.

Planning for Test Day

Once the team has decided to provide accommodations to meet individual student needs, school personnel must map out the logistics of implementing the accommodations during TCAP assessments. It is important to engage the appropriate personnel to plan the logistics and provisions of assessment accommodations on test day.

Building Test Coordinators are responsible for the overall conduct of the assessment administration and should be involved in the planning and coordination of accommodations. Prior to the day of a test, the Building Test Coordinator

should ensure relevant test examiners and proctors know what accommodations each student will be using and how to administer them properly.

Tennessee regulations specify practices to assure test security and the standardized and ethical administration of assessments. Test examiners, proctors, and all staff involved in test administration must adhere to these regulations and practices. Providing a student with an accommodation not documented on the student's IEP, or ESL or 504 Plan or failing to provide an accommodation during a state assessment constitutes a test irregularity which may result in invalidation of the student's score. Refer to the Test Administration Manual for specific information regarding testing irregularities.

Step 5: Evaluate and Improve Accommodations Use

Challenges for evaluation of effectiveness

Accommodations must be selected on the basis of the individual student's needs and must be used consistently for instruction and assessment. Collecting and analyzing data on the use and effectiveness of accommodations are necessary to ensure the meaningful participation of students with disabilities in standards-based instruction and state and district-wide assessments. Data on the use and effect of accommodations during assessments may support the continued use of some accommodations or the rethinking of others and reveal questionable patterns of accommodation use. Examination of the data may also indicate areas in which the IEP Team, ESL Team, 504 Committee, and test administrators need additional training and support.

In addition to collecting information about the use of accommodations within the classroom, schools also need to gather information on the implementation of accommodations during assessment. Observations conducted during test administration, interviews with test administrators, and talking with students after testing sessions will likely yield data that can be used to guide the formative evaluation process at the school or district level and at the student level. Information on the use of accommodations can be feasible to collect when it is coded on the test form with other student information. Accommodation information can be analyzed in different ways. The questions below should guide data analysis at the school, district, and student level.

Questions to Guide Evaluation of Accommodation Use at the School or District Level:

1. Are there policies to ensure ethical testing practices?
2. Are there policies to ensure the standardized administration of assessments?
3. Are there policies to ensure test security practices are followed before, during, and after the day of the test?
4. Are there procedures in place to ensure test administration procedures are not compromised with the provision of accommodations?
5. Are students receiving accommodations as documented in their IEP, ESL or 504 plans?
6. Are there procedures in place to ensure that test administrators adhere to directions for the implementation of accommodations?
7. What types of accommodations are provided and are some needed more often than others?
8. How well do students who receive accommodations perform on state and district assessments?
9. If students are not meeting the expected level of performance, is it due to the students' lack of access to the necessary instruction?
10. If students are not meeting the expected level of performance, is it due to the students' lack of accommodations or using the accommodations that were not effective?

Questions to Guide Evaluation of Accommodation Use at the Student Level

1. What accommodations are provided to/used by the student during instruction and assessments?
2. What are the results of classroom assignments and assessments when accommodations are used versus when accommodations are not used?
3. If a student did not meet the expected level of performance, is it due to the lack of access to the necessary instruction?
4. If a student did not meet the expected level of performance, is it due to the lack of accommodations or using accommodations that were not effective?
5. What is the student's perception of how well the accommodation worked?
6. What combination of accommodations, based on measureable data, seem to be effective?
7. What are the difficulties encountered in the use of accommodations?
8. What are the perceptions of teachers and others about how the accommodation appears to be working?

Of the accommodations that match the student's needs, consider:

- whether the accommodation is respectful of a student's age and grade (e.g., older students may prefer to receive a verbatim reading accommodation via technology as opposed to a human reader);
- the student's willingness to learn to use the accommodation;
- providing explicit instruction in how to use the accommodation in classroom and testing settings; and
- conditions for use of the accommodation on state assessments.

Plan how and when the student will learn to use each new accommodation. Be certain there is ample time to learn to use instructional and assessment accommodations before an assessment takes place. Finally, plan for the ongoing evaluation and improvement of the student's use of accommodations.

Assessment Accessibility Features for All Students

Use of assessment accessibility features are based on individual student need and may be used by any student as necessary. Assessment accessibility features are not coded on the student's demographic information. Students may use multiple features as needed.

Assessment Accessibility Features include:

1. Timing/Scheduling: Adjust the scheduling of a test
 - Time of day
 - Breaks during tests
 - Multiple test sessions
2. Setting: Adjust the place in which the testing normally occurs
 - Individual testing (one-on-one)
 - Special lighting
 - Adaptive or special furniture
 - Test administered in locations with minimal distractions
 - Hospital/home-bound setting
3. Presentation: Adjust the presentation of test material and/or test directions

- Visual aids (e.g. magnifying glass, large monitor, screen magnifier, template, mask or marker to maintain place)
 - Amplification equipment (e.g. hearing aid, auditory trainer, whisper phone)
 - Large print
 - Braille
 - Sign oral instructions verbatim
 - Re-read/sign oral instructions verbatim
4. Response: Adjust the manner in which students respond to answer test items
- Student answers in test booklet*
 - Student answers on separate piece of paper*
 - Scribe*
 - Calculator/Mathematics Tables-Content Area of Math and Chemistry only.
 - Multiplication, Division, Subtraction, Addition tables only for grades 3-8 and high school, Square Root Table high school only

*All student responses must be transcribed to the student’s answer document or on-line platform. Test administrators must follow instructions in the Test Administration Manual when transcribing student response.

Section 3: Students with Disabilities

Participation of Students with Disabilities

Decision Making Framework for IEP Teams for Individual Student Participation in State Assessments

Both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) require all students with disabilities to be included in state assessment systems. The prohibition against exclusion from participation or denial of benefits to, or discrimination against, individuals with disabilities contained in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act applies to state assessment and accountability systems. In addition to state assessments, the IDEA (section 612(a)(16)) requires that all students with disabilities participate in district-wide assessment programs and that alternate assessments be provided for student with disabilities who cannot participate in grade-level assessments, even with accommodations. Students with disabilities enrolled in Tennessee public schools may participate in the assessment system in one of the following ways:

1. General grade-level assessment, with or without accommodations; or
2. Alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards.

IEP teams must first consider student participation in the general grade level assessment, with or without accommodations, before considering student participation in an alternate assessment. Students with disabilities who are not able to show what they know and can do on the general grade-level assessment, even with appropriate accommodations, must be assessed with an alternate assessment. In order to assist the IEP Team with the determination of how students with disabilities participate in statewide assessments for accountability, the following five-question decision framework has been provided.

Question 1: In what way does the student access the general education curriculum?

Some students with disabilities access the general education curriculum in the same way as students who are not disabled; that is, students with disabilities are included in general education classes and/or are expected to master the general education curriculum to the same breadth, depth, and complexity as their nondisabled peers, although they may need some accommodations to do so (that should not change the construct being measured). An IEP team should recommend that students who are focusing on grade-level achievement standards as part of their ongoing instructional programs take the general assessment without or with accommodations. If a student has been taking the general assessment (either without or with accommodations) but has not achieved proficiency, IEP teams should consider the type and quality of instruction the student has been receiving before recommending an alternate assessment method that is judged against modified or alternate achievement standards. Before recommending an assessment other than the general statewide test, without or with accommodations, the IEP team should consider these three questions:

1. Has the student received instruction in the grade-level academic content?
2. Was this instruction evidence-based?
3. Was instruction delivered by a highly qualified teacher?

If the answer to any of the three questions is “No,” then the IEP team should recommend that a student’s instructional program be altered before considering an assessment method based on modified or alternate achievement standards.

Question 2: What has the student’s response been to academic interventions?

Many students with disabilities respond to appropriate intensive interventions aimed at improving performance on academic, behavioral, or social skills. Their progress can be reliably documented, measured, and reported using various curriculum-based measures that are predictive of performance on state assessments. With teachers monitoring students’ progress, instructional adjustments can be made along the way (during the year) so that students have a maximal opportunity to catch up. Ideally, with instruction continually informed by student progress, students can keep pace with the grade-level curriculum and perform proficiently on the statewide assessments in a timely fashion. For students whose academic program focuses on their learning essential and highly prioritized academic content, alternate assessments judged against alternate achievement standards may be appropriate.

Question 3: How does the student interact with text?

For many students with disabilities, their interaction with text is the focus of their instruction: they learn to read and complete math problems in a traditional manner, using the symbol systems of the alphabet and numbers and operations. For this group of students, the focus is likely to be on accommodations and adjustments in the statewide testing program that provide better access to that text. A student who can learn with text and instructional supports that do not change the breadth, depth, or complexity of the general education curriculum should have the opportunity to demonstrate grade-level achievement through the general assessment, with or without accommodations.

In contrast, students with the most significant cognitive disabilities may have inconsistent or rudimentary skills in reading and math. For example, they may be gaining word or number awareness while using symbols to fill in reports and other student assignments, or they may be able to understand a concept in a content text if the text is not only simplified and made accessible with technology or a human reader, but also supplemented with extensive picture or auditory cues. Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities may also use minimal sight word vocabulary to glean meaning from phrases, headlines, and other signs. In all of these examples, the critical issue is the appropriate balance of skill and content knowledge.

Question 4: Do the supports required by the student to perform or participate meaningfully and productively in the general education curriculum change the complexity or cognitive demand of the material?

Some students with complex physical or sensory challenges can perform on grade level if given alternative ways to demonstrate learning. One student may have significant physical challenges and communicate in a way that requires extensive time and possibly a translator to convey the message. Another student may have serious medical challenges that require providing assessments using unique responses and contexts. If students with these types of challenges have been able to access text and other instruction in the general education curriculum in ways that do not change its complexity or cognitive demand, then they may be candidates for the general assessment with accommodations.

Question 5: What inferences can be made about how the students will generalize skills to different contexts (i.e., transfer information taught in one context to the other)?

Generalization or transfer of learning always exists within some limits. The extent of these limits differs among students with disabilities. Some students with disabilities can demonstrate transfer of learning with little or no direct instruction on generalization. Most students with disabilities, however, have some difficulty generalizing learned information to new situations. For example, students who learned basic division in school may not automatically apply this skill to dividing the cost of a pizza among four friends. While such generalization problems are also encountered in students without disabilities, they can be magnified in students with disabilities. However, many of these same students respond well to generalization training that helps them to apply what they have learned to different life situations.

Refer to Appendix B for additional guidance.

If the IEP Team determines that the student must participate in the alternate assessment instead of the general TCAP test, a statement that addresses the following must be included in the IEP:

- Why the student cannot participate in the regular assessment,
- Why the particular assessment selected is appropriate for the student, including that the student meets the criteria for the alternate assessment, and,
- How the student's participation in the alternate assessment will affect the student's promotion, graduation, or other matters.

Role of the 504 Committee

Each school division is required to determine appropriate educational programs for all students with disabilities who qualify under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, by convening a knowledgeable group to evaluate and determine program needs. Therefore, decisions about the participation in each of the assessments, the need for, and selection of accommodations are the responsibility of a 504 Committee. Each student's parent, legal guardian, or surrogate parent must be a participant in these decisions. These decisions should be made during the 504 Committee meeting that precedes the assessment administration. If the decisions were not made at this time, an additional 504 Committee meeting must be held to address these issues prior to the test administration. The ramifications of the decision must be clearly explained to and understood by all 504 Committee members including the student's parent, legal guardian, or surrogate parent and the student, if appropriate.

A student's 504 Plan must specify the student's participation in the state assessment system as follows:

1. Participation in the TCAP assessment with or without accommodations; or
2. Participation in the Writing assessment with or without accommodations.

Non-Participation of Students with Disabilities in the Tennessee Assessment Program

Neither the IEP Team nor the 504 Committee can make decisions for non-participation in state assessments. If the parent requests non-participation in a particular TCAP assessment, an IEP Team or 504 Committee must convene to explain the consequences associated with non-participation. For grades 3 through 8 and high school End of Course exams, consequences may include:

- teachers, parents and the student will not receive information on student progress contained in the assessment score reports; and
- the student may not have an opportunity to experience an assessment in the content area that may lead to required credit for graduation.

If the parent decides on non-participation in the Tennessee assessment program, the decision will be considered a refusal to participate and the student, the school, and the school division will receive a score of 0 for that test. Documentation indicating that the consequences of the decision have been fully explained to and understood by the parent, guardian, surrogate or student must be attached to or become part of the student's IEP or 504 Plan.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Decisions about the need for and selection of accommodations for students with disabilities are the responsibility of the IEP Team or 504 Committee. The use of accommodations must be determined individually for each statewide assessment and identified in the student's IEP or 504 Plan. Accommodations may not be used only for participation in statewide assessments. If the accommodation is not used consistently and proficiently by the student during classroom instruction and assessments, the student may not use the accommodation. However, use of an accommodation during instruction does not necessarily qualify a student to receive the same accommodation on a statewide assessment.

Students with disabilities served by an IEP or a 504 Plan are eligible to receive test accommodations on statewide assessments. The right of a student with a disability to receive test accommodations on statewide assessments is protected by both federal and state laws. The student's IEP or 504 Plan must specify precisely which accommodation(s) he or she will receive. In cases where a 504 Plan is under development, the school personnel responsible for writing the plan must have already met and agreed upon the necessary accommodation(s) before a student may be provided the accommodation(s). Except in the case of a broken arm or other sudden medical emergency, a student who does not have a documented disability and is not served by either an IEP or 504 Plan is not eligible to receive accommodations on statewide tests, regardless of whether the student already receives instructional support or accommodations.

Accommodations are intended for use by a small number of students who would not otherwise be able to access the test. Teams must exercise caution, therefore, in considering whether a student requires an accommodation, and must carefully review the description for each accommodation on the list.

It is critical for students with disabilities to understand their disabilities and learn self-advocacy strategies for success in school and throughout life. Self-advocacy skills become critical as students learn which accommodations are most helpful for them.

The department will continue to review the rates of accommodation use and provide districts with this information. The district must ensure that IEP and 504 Committees are applying appropriate criteria for use of accommodations by carefully reviewing all criteria and eligibility requirements for the accommodation and revising the IEPs and 504 Plans of students with disabilities accordingly. IEP Teams and 504 Committees are encouraged to make consistent, defensible, and appropriate decisions for each student, and to amend the IEPs and 504 Plans of students who do not meet the criteria for use.

Eligibility for Test Accommodations

The use of accommodations is based on the individual needs of a student with a disability and may only be provided when all of the following conditions have been met:

1. The accommodation is documented on the state and district-wide assessment page of the student's IEP and the IEP has been signed and approved prior to the date of test administration; or the accommodation is listed as a test accommodation in a 504 Plan.
AND
2. The student uses the accommodation routinely (with rare exceptions) during classroom instruction and assessment in the subject, both before and after the test is administered. However, use of an accommodation during instruction does not necessarily qualify a student to receive the same accommodation during statewide testing.
AND
3. The student requires the accommodation in order to participate in the statewide testing.
AND
4. The accommodation is listed as an approved accommodation (or prior to testing, the district has consulted with the department and received permission to use an accommodation not listed in this manual).

The IEP Team must reconvene annually to determine what accommodations will be needed and to document any changes to accommodations listed in the plan. If the IEP Team or 504 Committee believes that a test accommodation listed in the student's IEP or 504 Plan should be removed because it is no longer necessary and appropriate for the student, the team must amend the plan accordingly prior to testing.

It is acceptable for teams to list an accommodation in the plan with the notation "as requested by the student," signifying that the student may require the accommodation only periodically during testing; for example, a student who tires easily may need a scribe only during the latter part of a test session.

In the event a student was provided a test accommodation that was not listed in his or her IEP or 504 Plan, or if a student was not provided a test accommodation listed in his or her plan, the school should follow the Report of Irregularity procedures.

If a student refuses an accommodation listed in his or her plan, the accommodation must be offered and remain available to the student during testing. The school should document in writing that the student refused the accommodation and keep this documentation on file at the school. Students should never be asked to sign an agreement waiving their right to receive an accommodation.

List of Accommodations for Students with an IEP or 504 Plan

This list is not applicable to progress monitoring assessments, K-2 assessment or ACT (including EXPLORE and PLAN).

A. EXTENDED TIME: Extended Time may be used as an accommodation on any timed test. To the extent possible, the amount of scheduled Extended Time should be documented in the student's current IEP or 504 Plan for the TCAP Achievement and Writing assessment.

According to a publication by the Council for Exceptional Children, "When a student has too much time to finish the assessment, s/he may engage in nonproductive guessing or change answers when they should not be changed."

Eligible students must receive this accommodation under the following conditions:

- The student must be tested in an individual setting or small group setting with other students needing the same accommodation.

All TCAP End-of-Course (EOC) assessments are untimed. However, no single session may extend beyond the end of the regular school day, and any single test session must be completed on the same day. To ensure equivalent testing conditions in schools across the state and that all students are afforded an equal opportunity to benefit from the untimed tests, it is particularly important for all testing to occur during regular school days.

B. READ ALOUD INTERNAL TEST INSTRUCTIONS/ITEMS:

This accommodation is intended to provide access to text for students with a visual impairment, including blindness, and those students with a specific skills deficit that severely limits or prevents them from decoding text at any level of difficulty as determined by a diagnostic tool or instrument that was administered at the school level. Students with disabilities who are simply having difficulty reading text and/or are reading below grade-level should not need the Read Aloud accommodation to access text.

Additional Considerations for IEP Teams

In making decisions whether to provide the student with this accommodation, IEP and 504 teams are instructed to consider whether the student has either:

1. Blindness or a visual impairment and has not learned, or is unable to use, Braille
2. Student has a specific skills deficit in the area of reading decoding, reading fluency, or reading comprehension that severely limits or prevents him/her from accessing printed text.

2. A. Additionally, the student must have:

- an intervention provided at Tier III or Special Education in the identified area of deficit,
- the area of deficit must be identified in the present level of educational performance in the IEP, and
- a measurable annual goal is written to address the specific area of deficit

- Special Instructions: The student must be tested in an isolated area in which students who do not need the accommodation may not hear the test administration. This may be provided in an individual or small group setting with students needing the same accommodation.
- Internal Test Instructions/Items must be read exactly as they are written in the test book. Any variation from the text will invalidate the test.
- All passages and test items must be read word for word, exactly as written in order of item and passage sequence. The test administrator may not provide assistance to the student regarding the meanings of words, intent of any test item, or responses to test items. The test administrator must read in a neutral tone, without emphasis on any terms, passages, or response options, and with no detectable changes in inflection.
- Students grouped together must have the same test version number, because all questions in a given test form are identical.
- The online audio accommodations on the writing test may be provided to students who meet the guidelines.

As with all accommodations, the need for the Read Aloud Internal Test Instructions/Items must be documented in the student's IEP or 504 Plan. Accommodation B may be used on all content areas, as needed, by students with IEPs. The use of Accommodation B for tests that **do not** measure reading/language arts is permitted for students with 504 Plans who have documented need.

Note: Accommodations are provided to allow students with disabilities to access the content and not for the purposes of scoring enhancements or advantages.

C. PROMPTING UPON REQUEST: Prompting upon Request must be documented in the student’s IEP or 504 Plan. The use of Prompting upon Request on tests that do not measure reading/language arts is permitted for students with 504 Plans who have documentation of need. Prompting upon Request may be used on all tests, including those measuring reading/language arts, as appropriate, by students with IEP documentation of need.

Prompting on Request is a viable alternative for the Read Aloud Internal Test Instructions/Items accommodation. Use of Prompting on Request is appropriate when the student requires assistance to read isolated words in the test context or for reading charts/graphs/timelines. The student indicates need for this assistance by raising his or her hand.

There are no accommodations that allow the student to be provided with a definition or any variance from what is written in the test, verbatim. This accommodation is appropriate for students who may need only certain words or text read to them upon request. Students using this accommodation will not need the entire test or even entire passages read aloud.

Eligible students must receive this accommodation under the following conditions:

- The student must be tested in an isolated area in which students who do not need the accommodation may not hear the test administration.
- Internal Test Instructions/Items must be read exactly as they are written in the test book. Any variation from the text will invalidate the test.

D. INTERPRETER SIGNS/CUES: This accommodation may be used only by students with a Hearing Impairment or Deafness. IEP documentation of consistent use of this accommodation is required. Sign language interpreters should attempt to sign test instructions and items exactly as written. The interpreter may use a sign that is close to the word during test administration when doing so would not reveal the answer to the question. To the extent possible, the standard sign for a word or concept is to be used during the test administration. In the event there is no standard sign and a shortcut sign is available, the shortcut sign may be used during the administration of a TCAP test if the sign will not indicate the answer. A shortcut sign is a sign created in the classroom setting between the interpreter and the student for a commonly used subject-specific word for which there is no sign. Shortcut signs are not to be created during the actual administration of an assessment.

Eligible students must receive this accommodation under the following conditions:

- Fingerspelling must not be used to administer items that require the student to demonstrate the skill of spelling.
- The interpreter is to sign greater/less than signs, equal signs, exponents, etc. in the same manner they are signed when used during classroom instruction and similar classroom assessments. The interpreter is not to sign information that would provide the student with the answer. For example, a question asks: Which digit is in the *thousands place* in the number 3,849? The interpreter would sign the number as “three—comma—eight—four—nine” instead of “three-thousand eight hundred forty-nine.”
- The student must be tested in an isolated area in which students who do not need the accommodation may not see the test administration. This may be provided in an individual or small group setting with students needing the same accommodation.
- Students grouped together must have the same test version, because all questions in a given test form are identical.

E. MANIPULATIVES: May be used on mathematics tests by students with an IEP or 504 Plans when manipulatives are used consistently throughout the mathematics program.

Manipulatives include number lines, counters, shapes, textured material (e.g., sandpaper), and representation of money, beads, or any other items that may be physically counted or manipulated by the student. Manipulatives used on statewide assessments must be the same manipulatives used throughout classroom instruction and similar assessments. When the student typically uses manipulatives in mathematics instruction, those manipulatives should be brought to the mathematics testing session.

Eligible students must receive this accommodation under the following conditions:

- The student must be tested in an isolated area in which students who do not need the accommodation may not have access to the manipulatives during the test administration. This may be provided in an individual or small group setting with students needing the same accommodation.
- Manipulatives used on statewide testing must be the same manipulatives used by the student throughout classroom instruction and similar assessments.
- The Test Administrator may not review the test to determine if additional manipulatives are needed.

G. CALCULATOR/MATHEMATICS TABLE: Calculator use is not considered an accommodation in the content area of Math on TCAP assessments.

The use of Calculator/Mathematics tables is recorded as an accommodation on the answer document for Achievement when used as an accommodation for the content area of Science. Refer to the Test Administration Manual for calculator restrictions.

Eligible students must receive this accommodation under the following conditions:

- The student must be tested in an isolated area in which students who do not need the accommodation may not have access to the calculator during the test administration. This may be provided in an individual or small group setting with students needing the same accommodation.
- Calculators used on TCAP testing must be the same calculators used by the student throughout classroom instruction and similar assessments.
- The Test Administrator may not review the test to determine if calculators are needed.

F. ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY: Assistive Technology may be used by students with an IEP or 504 Plan where there is a written goal that requires use of technology consistently throughout the general education program.

Technology used as an accommodation must be necessary for everyday communications and post-school success. Assistive Technology can include, but is not limited to: computers, speech-synthesizers, communication devices, word processors with or without talk-text technology, and electronic readers.

Any device that would “Read-Aloud” any portion of TCAP Assessments must be approved prior to use. Please follow the unique accommodation instructions for use of any device that would read the assessment.

Eligible students must receive this accommodation under the following conditions:

- The student must be tested in an isolated area in which students who do not need the accommodation may not hear or see the technology during the test administration.
- The Test Administrator must follow all directions exactly as they are written in the Test Administration Manual.
- The Test Administrator must check the equipment prior to the test administration to ensure it is in working order.

- All student responses must be transferred to a regular answer document.
- All documents, computer discs, or any record of student responses must be returned to the state. Refer to the Test Administration Manual for special handling and return instructions.
- The Building Level Testing Coordinator must verify any test items or student responses that are removed from computer hard drives.

H. SCRIBE/RECORDING ANSWERS:

This accommodation is considered an accommodation for the Writing Assessment and students must meet the required conditions for Accommodation H prior to its use. When there is a short-term situation (e.g., broken dominant arm) where a student without an IEP or 504 Plan will require the use of a Scribe for the Writing Assessment, directions for Scribe must be followed for the administration of the test. In this case, the school should document the issue and keep the documentation on file at the district level.

Assistive technology, such as speech-to-text programs, should be considered in lieu of a Scribe for the writing assessment. Most assistive technology devices are compatible with the on line Writing test platform.

Special Instructions

- The test must be administered individually in a separate setting
- During the testing session, the scribe must type exactly what the student dictates. The scribe may not edit or alter the student's dictation in any way. When scribing, the scribe may assume that each sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a period. All other capitalization, punctuation, and paragraph breaks are the responsibility of the student.
- The student does not have to spell each word for the scribe. The scribe may use appropriate spelling for the student.
- After the student has finished dictating his or her response, the scribe must ask the student to review the draft composition and make any necessary edits, including edits to capital letters, punctuation, and paragraph breaks. The student may make edits independently or may direct the scribe to make the edits. The scribe must not assist the student in making decisions during the editing process.
- When a student uses an electronic speech-to-text conversion device, the test administrator must ensure compatibility with the MIST platform; however, the use of speech-to-text is not coded as Scribe. It is coded as Assistive Technology.

I. UNIQUE ACCOMMODATIONS: Based on the final NCLB Regulations for students receiving special education services, requests regarding accommodations not listed will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis using the *Unique Accommodations Request Form (UARF)*. All *Unique Accommodations Request Forms* should be received by the Department of Education via EdTools no later than one month prior to the TCAP Assessment(s) to which they apply.

The following guidelines should be used when determining if a *Unique Accommodations Request Form* should be considered:

- The use of the accommodation must be currently documented in the student's IEP.
- A copy of the approved *Unique Accommodations Request Form* should be attached to the IEP.
- The accommodation must be used for the purpose of student access to the general education curriculum.
- The accommodation shall be age appropriate, related to the student's disability, and must meet the individual instructional needs of the student.

- The accommodation must be part of the student’s regular instructional program and used consistently throughout the school year for all related classroom assignments and tests. The accommodation may not be introduced for the first time on a TCAP assessment.
- The student must be proficient in the use of the accommodation.
- Any accommodations that change the standards measured by altering the number of items on the test or answer choices will not be considered.

To request a UARF review, the form must be completed and uploaded to EdTools. Email tned.assessment@tn.gov once the form has been uploaded. The appropriate form may be found via

http://www.tn.gov/education/assessment/doc/UAARF_2010_11.pdf

Section 4: English Learners

Participation of English Learners

The Tennessee English Language Learners (EL) Testing Policy states: “The purpose for including our student population of English Language Learners in our Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program is to help ensure that children who are limited English proficient, including immigrant children and youth, attain English proficiency, develop high levels of academic attainment in English, and meet the same challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards as all children are expected to meet.” EL status must be determined by the approved state screener or the English Language Proficiency Assessment. Tennessee is an English-only state; all state assessments are provided in English only.

Education is a basic right for all children in the United States, including ELs. According to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), ELs are those students who have a native language other than English, or who come from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on their level of English proficiency, and whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual (i) the ability to meet the state’s proficient level of achievement on state assessments, (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English, or, (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society. (For full text of the definition, please see Public Law 107-110, Title IX, Part A, Sec. 9101, (25) of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001).

EL status must be determined by the English Language Proficiency Assessment. A score of less than English Proficient on any subtest qualifies students as EL. Tennessee does not offer any assessments in a Native Language format. Students classified as English Learners will continue to have the TCAP English Linguistically Simplified Assessment (ELSA) as an option for the 2014-15 school year. Tennessee will administer the ACCESS for ELLs for measuring English language proficiency beginning in the 2014-15 school year. Information concerning ACCESS for ELLs may be found on the wida.us website.

EL First Year Excluded

In the first calendar year (fewer than 365 days) after an EL student is enrolled in a U.S. school, he or she may be exempted from participation in the Reading/Language Arts content area of the TCAP Achievement Test. A recently-arrived EL student must participate in the Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies content areas of the TCAP Achievement Test. The “EL Excluded” bubble must be used to indicate the student is being exempted from the Reading/Language Arts content area of the TCAP Achievement Test. There is no blanket exclusion of EL students. EL

students may be exempted from the Reading/Language Arts content area of the TCAP Achievement Test and may have their Mathematics Achievement Test score excluded (must be coded using the “EL Excluded” bubble) from AYP calculations if they are in their first year of enrollment in a U.S. school. These exemptions are one time only, regardless of how many times the student leaves and re-enters the U.S. Students may not be excluded for more than one year for calculations for accountability. At the end of the first year of enrollment in a U.S. school, all EL students are expected to take all state assessments and are included in accountability calculations.

EL Students Classified as T1/T2 EL

Transitional Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students are non-English language background students who were classified as EL based on the Tennessee ESL Assessment and have scored English proficient or above on all subtests on the Tennessee English language Proficiency Assessment. Students are classified as Transitional 1 (T1) the first year after scoring proficient, and as Transitional 2 (T2) the second year. T1/T2 EL students are required to take all content areas of the Achievement Test. T1/T2 students **are** eligible to receive EL accommodations.

English Learners Who Have a Disability

The IEP or 504 Committee should collaborate with school EL professionals to determine the English language development needs of an EL with an identified disability. For example, an EL with a learning disability that affects his/her language acquisition may need support from both EL and special education staff.

The EL and the IEP or 504 Committee should meet to:

- Determine the appropriate accommodations that address the student’s linguistic needs and disability;
- Discuss the effective implementation of the accommodations; and
- Determine the effectiveness of such accommodations.

Making decisions in isolation can result in an inappropriate accommodations plan and/or inconsistent use of accommodations for the student. An EL who also has either an IEP or 504 Plan must also receive specific accommodations listed in the plan based on accommodations allowed on state assessment.

Accommodations for English Learners

Accommodations are practices and procedures that provide equitable access during instruction and assessments for ELs and provide a valid means for ELs to show what they know and can do. Accommodations are intended to provide support to students with developing English language proficiency in the classroom and on state assessments in terms of their access to instructional or test content, interactions with content, and response to content. Once an EL becomes English proficient, the accommodation may no longer be necessary.

Selecting the appropriate accommodation for an EL student requires the examination of several background characteristics, if available:

Level of oral language proficiency in English and the native language:

- Refer to the student’s English proficiency level (ELP) score in listening and speaking on the ACCESS for ELLs

Literacy levels in English and the native language:

- Consider the student’s current academic achievement and test performance in the content areas.

- Attaining academic English and content vocabulary is a major factor in the assessment of content knowledge.
- Determine the student’s level of literacy in English.
 - Refer to the student’s English language proficiency (ELP) score in reading and writing on the ACCESS for ELL or other language proficiency assessments.
- Determine the student’s level of literacy in the native language.
 - If possible, find out how well student reads and writes in the native language.
- Consider whether the student’s oral proficiency in English or the native language is stronger than the student’s written proficiency in either language.
 - This is an important consideration when selecting the accommodation that will yield the most accurate assessment of the student’s knowledge of content.

Language of instruction in the student’s current/past schooling

- Determine the language(s) in which the student has received academic instruction; one language may be stronger than the other.
- Consider that a beginning student literate in a non-alphabetic script such as Chinese may benefit from oral response accommodations.

Years of formal schooling

- Find out if the student’s schooling has been interrupted.
 - A student with interrupted formal education may have low literacy skills in both native language and English; oral accommodations may be more useful than written.
 - Highly mobile students may have gaps in their education.

Age/grade level

- If the student is younger (early elementary), oral accommodations may be more appropriate as students at this age are less likely to have developed strong literacy skills in either English or the native language.
- If the student is older and requires accommodations that would set him/her apart from peers, consider selecting an appropriate test administration practice such as testing in a separate supervised location.

ELs may need accommodations during TCAP assessment administration. Additionally, ELs with disabilities are entitled to accommodations listed for students with disabilities in Section 3. Accommodations should be considered for ELs by a group of educators familiar with the student, using the guidance provided in Section 2. In cases of ELs with disabilities, at least one person familiar with the language needs of the student should be a participating member of the IEP or 504 team, where accommodations decisions are made.

Decisions should be made by the school team responsible for planning the student’s academic program and should be shared with the student’s parents or guardians. Decisions about accommodations should not be made by an individual. The role of the team is to discuss the student’s needs and the accommodations that may help the student for state testing, and decide what accommodations will be used. It is good practice to document the accommodations used to aid decision-making in future years.

Members of the Accommodation Decision Making Team might include:

- EL teacher

- General education teachers
- School administrators
- School/district test coordinators
- The student (as appropriate)

The team should use the following EL-responsive criteria to match accommodations to student needs:

- Level of oral language proficiency in English and the native language.
- Literacy levels in English and the native language.
- Language of instruction of the student’s current/past schooling.
- Years of formal schooling and/or interruptions in schooling.
- Age/grade level.

Guiding questions to consider when determining accommodations:

1. What support does this individual student need to be able to show what he/she really knows about the content?
2. Will the testing accommodation be implemented appropriately so that the construct of the test is not compromised?
3. Has the student had prior experience using this accommodation?

The process of determining the amount and types of instructional and assessment support involves attempts by local educators to “level the playing field” for the student so he or she can participate in the general education curriculum and assessments.

The following is a complete list of approved accommodations provided for ELs on state assessments:

A. Extended Time

- Typically defined as time and a half per subtest,
- May be used for all TCAP Achievement and Writing assessments,
- Is not applicable to any EOC assessment (all EOC assessments are untimed).

See Test Administration Manual for additional information

B. Bilingual Dictionary

- May not be used for content areas measuring English Language Arts, including the Writing Assessment
- Electronic dictionaries and/or translators are prohibited for all students

C. Read Aloud in English Test Instructions

- This accommodation may be used for all assessments.

Eligible students must receive this accommodation under the following conditions:

- The student must be tested in an isolated area in which students who do not need the accommodation cannot hear the test administration. This must be provided in an individual or small group setting with students needing the same accommodation.
- Internal test instructions must be read exactly as they are written in the test book. Any variation from the text will invalidate the test.

D. Read Aloud in English Internal Test Items

- This accommodation is not allowed for the content area of ELA, including the Writing Assessment.

Eligible students must receive this accommodation under the following conditions:

- The student must be tested in an isolated area in which students who do not need the accommodation cannot hear the test administration. This must be provided in an individual or small group setting with students needing the same accommodation. Ensure that all students in the group setting have the same versions of the assessment.
- Internal test items must be read exactly as they are written in the test book. Any variation from the text will invalidate the test.

Additional Resource Section

Appendix A: Alternate Assessment Participation Criteria

- **The criteria for participation in the alternate assessment reflect the pervasive nature of a significant cognitive disability. All content areas should be considered when determining eligibility for this assessment. Thus, a student who participates in the alternate assessment participates in this assessment for all content areas.**

In addition, evidence for the decision for participating in the alternate assessment is **Not Based** on:

1. A disability category or label
2. Poor attendance or extended absences
3. Native language/social/cultural or economic difference
4. Expected poor performance on the general education assessment
5. Academic and other services student receives
6. Educational environment or instructional setting
7. Percent of time receiving special education
8. English Language Learner (ELL) status
9. Low reading level/achievement level
10. Anticipated disruptive behavior
11. Impact of student scores on accountability system
12. Administrator decision
13. Anticipated emotional duress
14. Need for accommodations (e.g., assistive technology/AAC) to participate in assessment process

Participation Criteria	Participation Criteria Descriptors	Agree (Yes) or Disagree (No)? Provide documentation for each
1. The student has a significant cognitive disability	Review of student records indicate a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. <i>*Adaptive behavior is defined as essential for someone to live independently and to function safely in daily life.</i>	Yes / No
2. The student is learning content linked to (derived from) the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)	Goals and instruction listed in the IEP for this student are linked to the enrolled grade level CCSS and address knowledge and skills that are appropriate and challenging for this student.	Yes / No
3. The student requires extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measureable gains in the grade-and age-appropriate curriculum.	The student (a) requires extensive, repeated, individualized instruction and support that is not of a temporary or transient nature and (b) uses substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways to acquire, maintain, generalize, demonstrate and transfer skills across multiple settings.	Yes / No

The student is eligible to participate in the NCSC Alternate Assessment if all responses above are marked Yes.

Appendix B: Decision Framework for IEP Teams

Decision Framework for IEP Teams to Use When Choosing Assessment Methods, by Type of Method and Student Educational Characteristics				
Prerequisite Considerations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has the student had access to grade-level content? 2. Has the student had evidence based instruction? 3. Was instruction by a highly qualified teacher? 			
If any answers to the questions above are “No”, then address access considerations and continue to apply grade-level achievement standards and evaluate response to intervention. If the answer to all three questions is “Yes”, then consider the methods and questions below.				
Questions to Consider	Assessment Recommendation			
	General Assessment	General Assessment with Accommodations	Alternate Assessment Modified Achievement	Alternate Assessment Alternate Achievement
Question 1: In what way does the student access the general curriculum?	Shows progress in the full scope and complexity of the grade-level curriculum but may not yet be on grade level.		Does not show grade-level achievement; needs changes in complexity and scope of curriculum to show progress in grade-level content. Has not scored proficient or advanced on previous modified assessment administrations in both reading/language arts and math.	Due to significant cognitive disabilities (e.g., memory, transfer of learning), needs extensive prioritization within grade-level content.
Question 2: What has been this student’s response to academic interventions?	Responds to grade-level instruction by may not yet be on grade-level.		Academic problems persist despite appropriate and intensive instruction, multiple years behind grade level expectations.	Requires ongoing systematic instruction to learn prioritized skills; needs to focus on critical essence of content.
Question 3: How does this student interact with text?	On or near grade level in reading.		Needs controlled vocabulary/reduced reading level; may also need text reader.	Needs key words, pictures, and auditory cues embedded in adapted or controlled text; may need text reader to use these cues; may have some emerging reading skills.
Question 4: Do the supports required by the student to perform or participate meaningfully and productively in the general education curriculum change the complexity or cognitive demand of the material?	None needed.	Needs accommodation.	Needs supports that reduce the complexity or breadth of the assessment items, such as aids that reduce judgment needed to do tasks or teacher scaffolding during assessment.	Needs extensive supports, such as simplified symbol systems, peer model or motivation through choice making to retrieve response.

Question 5: What inferences can be made about the student's generalization/transfer of learning?	Shows transfer of learning to the extent expected for the grade level during ongoing instruction.	Transfer of learning is more limited in scope than grade level; may only transfer to similar or familiar content or contexts.	Needs systematic instruction to generalize; generalization is especially challenging during instruction and should not be assumed unless assessed.
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Appendix C: Teacher Tool: Do's and Don'ts When Selecting Accommodations

Do ... make accommodation decisions based on individualized needs.	Don't ... make accommodations decisions based on whatever is easiest to do (e.g., preferential seating).
Do ... select accommodations that reduce 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.
Do ... be certain to document instructional and assessment accommodation(s) on the IEP or 504 Plan.	Don't ... use an accommodation that has not been documented on the IEP or 504 Plan.
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 are appropriate for use on all assessments.
Do ... be specific about the "Where, When, Who, and How" of providing accommodations.	Don't ... simply indicate an accommodation will be provided "as appropriate" or "as necessary."
Do ... refer to state accommodations policies and understand implications of selections.	Don't ... check every accommodation possible on a checklist simply to be "safe."
Do ... evaluate accommodations used by the student.	Don't ... assume the same accommodations remain appropriate year after year.
Do ... get input about accommodations from teachers, parents, and students, and use it to make decisions at IEP Team or 504 planning committee meetings.	Don't ... make decisions about instructional and assessment accommodations alone.
Do ... provide accommodations for assessments routinely used for classroom instruction.	Don't ... provide an assessment accommodation for the first time on the day of a test.

Do ... select accommodations based on specific individual needs in each content area.

Don't ... assume certain accommodations, such as extra time, are appropriate for every student in every content area.