



# **Test Administration Accommodations for Students with Disabilities & English Language Learners**

**October 2008**

Kathy Cox, State Superintendent of Schools  
“We will lead the nation in improving student achievement.”



# Overview

- Review pertinent information about accommodations
  - What are they? What are they not?
  - Who is eligible?
- Review Georgia's policies regarding accommodation use
- Answer questions

# Historical Perspective

- Prior to IDEA and NCLB, **all** students were not always included in the assessment process
- The focus on accommodation has shifted from an “anything goes” approach for inclusion to ensuring valid measurement of student achievement
- Federal regulations stipulate states have policies on appropriate accommodations, monitor those policies, and ensure valid measurement

# Important Points to Remember

- Allowable accommodations *always* grow out of the content and skills measured by the assessment and the purpose of the assessment
- Teams and committees should consider the purpose and content of the assessment as well as the individual student's need and circumstance when selecting accommodations
- **Inappropriate use of accommodations can (and does!) negatively impact student achievement**

# Eligible Students

- Students eligible for accommodations include:
  - Students with Disabilities
    - students with individualized educational plans
    - students served under Section 504\*
  - English Language Learners
    - Students qualifying for language assistance services
    - ELL students who are also SWD
    - Students who have exited language assistance services in the last two years (ELL-Monitored)\*\*

\* Only in the rarest of circumstances would a 504 student qualify for a conditional accommodation.

\*\* ELL-M students are not eligible for conditional accommodations.

# Accommodations

- Accommodations allow access...
  - they are practices and procedures in the areas of presentation, response, setting, and scheduling that provide equitable instructional and assessment access for students with disabilities and English language learners.
- Accommodations reduce or eliminate the effects of a student's disability or limited English proficiency
- Accommodations do not provide an unfair advantage
- Accommodations do not reduce or change learning expectations

# Modifications

- Modifications, on the other hand, involve:
  - Changing, lowering, or reducing learning or assessment expectations
  - May result in implications that could adversely affect a student throughout that individual's educational career
  - Examples include
    - Requiring a student to learn less material
    - Revising assignments or tests to make them easier

**Modifications are not allowed on Georgia assessments.**

# Test Administration Accommodations

- Accommodations provide access for demonstration of achievement
  - Allow participation
  - Do not guarantee proficiency
    - and therefore should not be selected solely as mean to help ensure proficiency
- Must be required by the student in order to participate in the assessment
- Must be provided during routine instruction and assessment in the classroom (both before and after the state tests are administered)



# Test Administration Accommodations

- Some accommodations appropriate for instruction are not appropriate for assessments
  - It may be appropriate to use some instructional accommodations to provide access to grade level content, but these should be faded over time
- The ultimate goal is always meaningful measurement of what the student has learned **as a result of instruction**

# Accommodations

## In Georgia accommodations MAY NOT

- alter, explain, simplify, paraphrase, or eliminate any test item, reading passage, writing prompt, or choice option
- provide verbal or other clues or suggestions that hint at or give away the correct response to the student

Only state-approved accommodations may be used on state-mandated assessment, following the guidance issued.

# Target Skills vs Access Skills

- Target Skills: those skills and concepts the test is designed to measure
- Access Skills: those needed by the student to demonstrate knowledge and application of the target skills

**Accommodations do not alter target skills.**

# Key Considerations

- Different tests serve different purposes
  - Accommodations may be allowed for one test, but not for another...it has to do with the test's purpose and what is it designed to measure
  - When considering an accommodation, consider the purpose of the test and what it is designed to measure

# Key Considerations

- Accommodations are tools that provide students with access and help them demonstrate what they have learned.
  - It is important to consider the type of tool needed for the specific job at hand
  - If the wrong tool is used, the job will not be done well
  - If the student does not know how to use the tool, the tool will not be effective (at best) and can be destructive (at worst)

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# Key Considerations

- It is important that we match the right student to the right tool
- In making decisions we need to think about the student characteristics (disability / language proficiency) and how those characteristics interact with the specific content area
- Decisions should be made **individually** and can differ by content area based on need

# Key Considerations

- For students with disabilities we should consider –
  - the characteristics of the disability or the combination of disabilities for the individual student
  - how the disability affects/impacts the learning of specific content
  - how the disability affects/impacts the demonstration of learning

# Key Considerations

- For English language learners we should consider –
  - the student’s level of English proficiency
  - the student’s level of literacy in English
  - the student’s level of native language proficiency
  - the student’s level of literacy in native language



# Key Considerations

- For English language learners who **also** have a disability we should consider –
  - whether the need is based on
    - the disability or
    - language acquisition needs or
    - some combination of both
- The IEP team should include an language service teacher to help make appropriate decisions – services should be coordinated

# Key Considerations

- For all students we should consider –
  - the student’s need for the accommodation
  - the student’s experience with the accommodation
  - whether the accommodation was of benefit to the student
  - the student’s feelings and beliefs about the accommodation

# Standard Accommodations

- accommodations which provide access to students in order to demonstrate their achievement of target skills
  - standard accommodations do not alter or encroach on the construct measured
  - as with any accommodation, it is important that the student require the accommodation and use it regularly during routine instruction and assessment

# Conditional Accommodations

- More expansive accommodations that provide access for students with more severe disabilities or more limited English proficiency who would not be able to access the assessment to demonstrate their achievement without such support
  - Should be used sparingly, per State Board Rule
  - Must be considered when interpreting scores

# Conditional Accommodations

- Guidance on the appropriate use of conditional accommodations is provided in the Student Assessment Handbook
- Only students meeting the guidance criteria are eligible for conditional accommodations
- The educational plans for students qualifying for conditional accommodations must include specific goals that address the deficits which necessitate the accommodation

# Conditional Accommodations

- There are three accommodations that are considered conditional for the CRCT:
  - Signing reading passages (SWD only)
  - Oral reading of reading passages (**grades 3 – 8 only**)
  - Use of a basic function calculator (SWD only)
- There are no approved conditional accommodations for the GHSGT or EOCT

# Why must we attend to the guidance for conditional accommodations?

1. These accommodations were never intended to be available for all students.
2. The guidance is designed to protect the accommodations for students who truly require them.

# Why must we attend to the guidance for conditional accommodations?

3. Anytime an accommodation is considered it is important to reflect what the test is designed to measure.
  - The goal is meaningful (i.e., valid) measurement of student achievement
  
4. It is important to consider the long term effects of inappropriate accommodation use.
  - Accommodations should foster independence, not dependence



# Consider the ‘Constructs’

- The Reading CRCT is designed to measure reading comprehension.
  - Inherent in the state curriculum in the elementary and middle grades are reading strategies and skills.
  - Each test has a range of passages on it
- The Mathematics CRCT is designed to measure computational skill and mathematical understanding.
  - Inherent in the state curriculum in the elementary and middle grades are mathematics procedures and processes.

# Key Consideration

- Conditional accommodations provide additional access to the test for certain students
  - students must still interact with text (passage may be read **once**) and numbers (basic calculator only)
  - in this way, the accommodation facilitates the students' access and is not a substitute for the skills measured

# Guidance for Reading of Reading Passages: SWD

- The use of this conditional accommodation for the Reading CRCT must be restricted to grades 3 – 8 and may be considered when BOTH the following conditions apply:
  1. The student has a specific disability that severely limits or prevents him or her from decoding text at any level of difficulty, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so (i.e. the student is a non-reader, not simply reading below grade level); **and**
  2. The student has access to printed materials only through a reader or other electronic format during routine instruction.

# Guidance for Reading of Reading Passages: ELL

- The use of this conditional accommodation for the Reading CRCT must be restricted to grades 3 – 8 and may be considered when BOTH the following conditions apply:
  1. The student's English proficiency scores and experiences in the classroom indicate the student cannot access, retain, or comprehend written text without the assistance of a reader;  
**and**
  2. The student not poised to exit language assistance services within the current school year.

Students poised to exit: Tier C or any student approaching a performance level of 4.

Consider ACCESS reading score – if 3 or higher, this accommodation is probably not appropriate.

# Why is reading of passages restricted to grades 3 – 8?

- Students in the primary grades are learning to read
  - The curriculum standards in these grades include decoding and fluency – these things are completely compromised when the student does not read
  - It is imperative that we have a clean, accurate measure of student reading skill so that problems can be identified and appropriate services provided if needed

# Reading of Test Questions

- Most students who need accommodations are struggling readers (e.g., read below grade level).
  - Reading of the questions reducing the reading load and allows the student to focus on the passages
- Given that we are not attempting to measure reading comprehension on other content area tests (ELA, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies), it is permissible to read any prompts that accompany the items.
  - This should only be done when appropriate

# Use of a Basic Function Calculator (SWD only)

- The use of this conditional accommodation may be considered for the Mathematics CRCT when BOTH the following conditions apply:
  1. The student has a specific disability that severely limits or prevents her or his ability to calculate mathematically, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so; **and**
  2. The student has access to mathematical calculation only through the use of a calculator, which the student uses for classroom instruction.

Only a basic function calculator or function adapted calculator may be used; scientific calculators are not allowed.

# What is a basic function calculator?

- A basic function calculator has the four computational functions (addition, subtraction, multiplication, & division).
  - many basic function calculators also have square root and percentage functions
- A basic function calculator is not a scientific calculator.
  - these calculators have additional functions that encroach on the concepts and skills inherent in the curriculum

Programmable calculators are not allowed on any state assessment.



# Points to Remember

- Only state-approved accommodations may be considered
- Federal regulations specify that students participating with unapproved accommodations may not be considered participants for AYP purposes
- Use of accommodations must be accurately coded

# What if an accommodation is needed that is not on the list?

- In **RARE** circumstances a student with a disability may need an accommodation that is not on the approved list
- Follow the procedures in the Student Assessment Handbook to submit a request for consideration
  - Such requests should be vetted locally first and should be requested only on an individual basis
  - We cannot approve any request which modifies test content
  - We cannot approve requests for “classes” of students

# Additional Resources

- Student Assessment Handbook
- Accommodations Manual for SWD
- Frequently Asked Questions

All are posted on the Testing webpage:

[http://www.gadoe.org/ci\\_testing.aspx](http://www.gadoe.org/ci_testing.aspx)

# Questions/Concerns?

**Melissa Fincher**

Director

Assessment Research &  
Development

404.651.9405

[mfincher@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:mfincher@doe.k12.ga.us)

**Toni Bowen, Ph.D.**

Program Specialist

Divisions for Special Education Services  
and Supports

404.463.0616

[tbowen@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:tbowen@doe.k12.ga.us)

**Carol Johnson**

Program Specialist

Title III & ESOL

404.463.1858

[cjohnson@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:cjohnson@doe.k12.ga.us)