

**Guidance:  
Illinois State Board of Education  
Assessment Accommodations  
Students with Disabilities:  
IEP and 504**

**2009-2010 School Year**

*This document is intended to provide non-regulatory guidance on assessment accommodations. For specific questions, contact the resources listed herein.*

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## Introduction

**NOTE: IEP teams and Section 504 Plan teams are advised that there may be accommodations required for the teaching and learning of students with disabilities that do not apply to state assessments and are not listed within this document. The use of accommodations for instructional purposes is in no way restricted to only the ones indicated in this document. IEP teams and Section 504 Plan teams are encouraged to provide all accommodations necessary to the individual student for instruction through the IEP meeting and Section 504 Planning processes.**

The 1994 reauthorized Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) (reauthorizing once again the original law of 1965), required that states adopt standards-based systems that enable all K–12 students, including students with disabilities, to strive toward the same high standards. As part of the IASA law, states were required to establish accountability systems to track the achievement of *all* students.

When the law was modified in 2002 and became the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the issue of accountability for every student was continued. Every child had to be assessed in grades 3-8 and once in high school. This includes students with disabilities, as well as all other students enrolled in each school district. The results of these assessments are to be used for “determining the yearly performance of the State and of each local educational agency and school in the State.” This is commonly referred to as “AYP” or Adequate Yearly Progress.

One strategy in testing students with disabilities is the use of accommodations in addition to the standard administration of the test. *Accommodations* are changes to a test or testing situation that facilitate students' access to test content. Accommodations do not reduce learning expectations but are intended to reduce the effects of the student's disability and “level the playing field.” Accommodations are used widely for the assessment of students who, because of a disability, are deemed unable to participate meaningfully in state assessments under standard testing conditions. To be effective, accommodations must address the unique needs of the students for whom they are provided.

With the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, Congress provided guidelines relating to the need for accommodations and emphasized that the student's IEP must include a statement of individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance on state and district-wide assessments. Accommodations are to be provided during instruction and during the administration of assessments as documented on the student's IEP.

Students with Section 504 Plans may receive accommodations on the state tests. The general guidelines for accommodations for students with Section 504 Plans are identical to those for students with IEPs.

## Eligibility

The use of accommodations is for students who have an IEP or Section 504 Plan and for whom the IEP or Section 504 Plan team has determined that accommodations are needed to provide equal access to the assessments and the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of the content.

### **Who is responsible for making decisions regarding accommodations?**

#### **IEP:**

The decisions regarding accommodations for instruction and assessment can occur during the IEP meeting at the following times (See the link for IEP forms at <http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/> to locate Form 37-44N and Form 37-44O for “Educational Accommodations and Supports”):

**Section 1. Consideration of Special Factors** - Special considerations need to be addressed in developing the IEP. It is during this time that the IEP team discusses the appropriateness of communication and assistive technology supports.

**Section 2. Supplementary Aids, Accommodations and Modifications** - This is the time when the IEP team discusses the services, activities and supports that will be provided in general education classes and other education-related settings which allow the student to be educated with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate.

**Section 3. District-Wide Assessments** – The IEP team documents the participation of the student in district-wide assessments.

**Section 4. State Academic Assessments** - The IEP team documents the participation of the student in state academic assessments. Non-participation is not an option.

**Section 5. Assessment Accommodations** – During this part of the IEP meeting the team will document the accommodations that are needed to facilitate the participation of the student in district-wide and state assessments. As stated in the IEP document “The accommodations should be appropriate for that particular assessment and reflective of those already identified for the student in the Supplementary Aids, Accommodations and Modifications” (i.e., assessment accommodations used in day-to-day classroom instruction and testing).

#### **Section 504 Plan:**

The decisions regarding accommodations for instruction and assessment can occur during the Section 504 Planning meeting. See information regarding Section 504 Plan development at <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>.

The process of making decisions about accommodations requires that the teams make good instructional decisions which align the student's learning to the state's learning standards and to standards-based instruction. This involves reviewing the student's present levels of performance in relation to the district's general education curriculum. The teams must be cognizant that accommodations are to allow the student to access the general education curriculum but do not change what is being measured by the assessment. The accommodations should remove "barriers" irrelevant to the content actually being assessed.

## **Use of Accommodations**

Testing accommodations are intended to minimize, to the extent possible, the unintended impact of a student's disability on the measure of each content area performance on the state assessment. Other additional accommodations are allowed which will minimize stress and increase comfort and confidence.

### ***What is an accommodation?***

Accommodations are practices and procedures that fall into four major areas:

1. Timing/Scheduling
  2. Setting
  3. Presentation
  4. Response
- Accommodations are intended to increase access to grade level content for students who are potentially most impacted by conditions which interfere with them demonstrating their knowledge.
  - Accommodations provided to a student during state assessments should be similar to those provided during classroom instruction and classroom assessments. However, some instructional accommodations are not appropriate for use on state assessments. It's important for educators to become familiar with state recommendations regarding the appropriate use of accommodations during assessments to ensure they are administered appropriately.
  - Accommodations for students with disabilities are intended to help students demonstrate their knowledge of test content without altering the test construct, what the test is truly intended to measure.
  - Accommodations for students with disabilities involve changes to testing materials, testing procedures, and/or the testing situation to allow the student to participate meaningfully in an assessment.
  - Accommodations for students with disabilities provide results that are comparable to standard (i.e. unaccommodated) assessments.

## ***What do good accommodations do?***

### ***Accommodations:***

- Reduce construct-irrelevant variance [e.g., large print (LP) helps the visually impaired student by removing the accessibility obstacle of print which is too small]
- Do not alter the construct measured (e.g., print size does not change the tested material)
- Produce outcomes with differential effects (e.g., large print text helps the visually impaired but is neutral for normally-sighted test-takers)

### ***What should be considered when identifying accommodations?***

- Accommodations should be selected with care on an *individual student basis*, considering student's mode of communication, level of instruction, learning style, etc.
- More accommodations are not necessarily better. Providing students with accommodations that are not truly needed may have a negative impact on performance.
- Some accommodations may be acceptable for one content area, but threaten the validity of one or more other content area assessments, particularly for reading.
- Effective decisions about accommodations begin with making sound instructional decisions. These decisions are facilitated by gathering and reviewing information about the student's specific needs and current levels of performance in relation to state academic standards. It is important to keep in mind that the purpose of accommodations during instruction and assessment is to provide equitable access to the general education curriculum.

# Allowable Accommodations in Illinois for the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) for Grades 3-8

## Timing/Scheduling:

Extended time provisions include:

- Extended testing time beyond that allowed for the regular test administration
  - Pre-planned extended-time sessions that exceed the extra 10 minutes allowed for all students. There is no specified time limit for these sessions other than they must begin and end in a single school day. Students receiving this provision must be tested separately from students getting standard time.
- Flexible schedules:
  - Test administration during the student's optimal time of day (as long as test session is completed on the same day the test session began)
  - Breaks during a test session administration
  - Breaks between test sessions (if longer than the 10 minutes allowed to all students)

### **Additional guidance for administering timing/scheduling accommodations:**

- The testing schedule may be modified from other ISAT takers in the building/district. This includes presenting the content area assessments in a different order. Starting with the subject the student is most familiar and comfortable with may ease some of the student's apprehension and approach the rest of the assessment more confidently than if the most difficult subject was assessed first. The tests may be administered at a time of day most beneficial to the student. If the test schedule is modified, the district must take steps to ensure the test materials and content remain secure.
- Test sessions may be divided into smaller time segments with more frequent breaks. Regardless of the breaks provided, each individual test session must begin and end in the same day. Of prime concern when allowing the student more frequent breaks is maintaining test security. Students must not have the opportunity to share or seek answers to test items.
- Test session breaks may be in-seat and out-of-seat. For in-seat breaks after a certain amount of time, the testing session is stopped for a period of time. For out-of-seat breaks, a student is instructed to stop working and close the test booklet after completing a specified portion of the session. In-seat breaks may be used in group settings. Out-of-seat breaks, for security reasons mentioned above, may only be provided when the student is being assessed individually.

### **Student Frustration:**

Students should be provided with a meaningful opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge to the maximum extent possible on the state assessment. There is, however, flexibility in terms of how much time students must engage in the testing activity. Once students have indicated that they are done and the administrator makes the professional judgment that the students have truly made the effort to do their best, students should be allowed to stop the test. If students are taking the test in a group,

they should be allowed to engage in some other non-disruptive activity at their desks. If they are taking the test individually, the session may be ended. Students should not be forced to continue the test beyond their frustration level.

## **Setting:**

These are modifications/adjustments to the testing environment or conditions.

- Administer the test to a small group in a separate location
- Administer the test to an individual student in a separate location
- Adjust the environment (e.g., special lighting, adaptive or special furniture such as study carrel or carrel desk, noise buffers, location with minimal distractions, special setting)
- Provide opportunities for a student to stand, move, and/or pace during the test session (student must be tested separately so as not to disturb other test takers)

### **Additional guidance on types of “Setting” accommodations:**

- Test administered in familiar room
- Test-taker provided preferential seating
- Person familiar with test-taker administers test
- Teacher faces test-taker

## **Presentation:**

These are modifications/adjustments to the test administration.

- Braille; Large Print
- Visual Assistance - abacus, magnifiers, templates or tests copied onto colored paper (The colored paper is considered secure and must be returned to the contractor with all other test booklets.)
- Auditory Assistance - paraphrasing of directions, amplifiers, student reading aloud to self (must be individual administration to avoid distraction to others)
- Sign Language - signing test items for mathematics, writing, or science tests. No part of the reading test may be signed (this includes reading passages, questions, or alternatives).
- Oral presentation - via reader script, audiocassette, CD for mathematics and science. No part of the reading test may be presented orally. This includes reading passages, questions, or answer choices.
- Fewer items per page - Any enlargements or segments of the test materials are considered secure and MUST be returned to the contractor with all other test booklets.
- Calculators for the Grade 3 Mathematics Test
- Directions Only - teachers may highlight key words or phrases
- Providing cues (arrows or stop signs) on test booklets or answer documents



## **Additional guidance and information regarding “Presentation” accommodations:**

### **Reader Scripts:**

- Reader Scripts are special test booklets designed to be read by the test administrator to the test-taker(s). The booklets include instructions, test items, and item choices. The script is shipped with standard Form 1 student test booklets.
- Reader scripts may be used in small groups sizes determined locally, being mindful of manageability.
- Eligible students who are not in a session using a reader script or audio recording may have parts of the test read aloud to them upon request as long as:
  - The test administrator reads from a reader script, not a standard test booklet.
  - All students in the session are eligible for a reader script accommodation.
  - If a student in the session is the only one with a reader script accommodation, that student must be assessed individually (automatic change of setting required).

### **Audio Recordings:**

- Audio recordings are the test directions, items, and answer choices on cassette or compact disk intended for use by individual students.
- Audio recordings may be used in a group setting provided each student has personal ear/head phones and the ability to independently repeat portions of the recording.

### **Reading of Directions:**

- Scripted test directions may be read to the student.
- Scripted directions may be repeated based on student request.
- Restatement of directions or paraphrasing of directions is permissible.
- Emphasis on key words in directions is permissible.
- Verifying the student’s understanding by having the student repeat the directions is permissible.

<h2><b>Response:</b></h2>
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These are modifications/adjustments affecting the provision of answers.

- Student points to or marks multiple-choice answers in the test booklets.
- Student dictates answers to multiple-choice questions or written composition in writing – dictated answers can be recorded by a scribe, tape recorded, or both. All dictation (tape recorded or written) must be destroyed after verbatim transcription is completed.
- Assistive, adaptive, or augmentative technology (i.e., word processors or other devices - spell-check, grammar check, word prediction and/or text organization computer features must be disabled).
- Visual Assistance - students write answers on large paper or large-spaced paper, use templates, rulers, or other devices used to help students keep their place on the answer documents or the test booklets.

## **Additional guidance and information regarding “Response” accommodations:**

### Using a Scribe

- The test-taker may dictate to a live scribe (a school staff member who is or under the line-of-sight supervision of a certified education professional) and/or to an audio recording device.
- Responses must be scribed verbatim. The scribe may write using standard English capitalization and punctuation. The test-taker must not be prompted, reminded, or otherwise assisted in formulating his/her response during or after the dictation. The scribe may ask the test-taker to pause, slow down, repeat, or speak more clearly. Such requests must not be communicated in a manner suggesting that the student make a change or correction.
- Students who dictate to a “live” scribe may review and modify their response before the end of the testing session. No one may suggest corrections or improvements during this review, but may clarify that the student can make any desired changes to the response. Students who dictate to only a recording device may review the recording before the end of the testing session and append material or re-record the response, but they may not later review the scribed response on their answer document.
- Student dictates answers to multiple-choice questions, or dictates the written compositions in writing. Dictated answers can be recorded by a scribe, tape recorded and/or both.
- All dictation (tape or written) must be destroyed after verbatim transcription is completed.

<b>Other</b>
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Any accommodations that were not addressed in the preceding sections may be implemented IF they do not invalidate the assessment and are appropriate methods for increasing access for the student with disabilities to demonstrate ability and knowledge. Use of any accommodation during testing should be familiar to the student because the accommodation has been utilized in the student’s instructional programming.

# Allowable Accommodations in Illinois for the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) for Grade 11

**Day 1 of the PSAE includes:** ACT English, Mathematics, Reading, Science, and Writing. There are *no subject area exemptions* on the ACT. A self-paced administration may be advantageous for students with disabilities (Timing Code 6).

**Day 2 of the PSAE includes:** ISBE-Developed Science test, ACT WorkKeys *Applied Mathematics*, and ACT WorkKeys *Reading for Information*.

The PSAE utilizes three unique forms for its spring administration: an initial Day 1 and Day 2 test form for students testing with no accommodations, a makeup Day 1 and Day 2 test form for students testing with no accommodations who were absent on an initial Day 1 or Day 2 administration, and an accommodations Day 1 and Day 2 test form for students testing with accommodations during the 2-week PSAE testing window.

## **What is the process for ordering accommodations test materials?**

If the district plans to provide accommodations for Day 1 of the PSAE (*ACT Plus Writing*), one of the following two forms must be submitted for each student to trigger the order of the accommodations Day 1 test form.

- Request form for *ACT-Approved Test Accommodations*
- Application form for *State-Allowed Accommodations*

Both forms are mailed to Test Accommodations Coordinators in the fall and apply only to Day 1 of the PSAE. Quantities for accommodations materials for Day 2 must be entered online, and no form is required.

## **NOTE:**

Students who apply for and utilize ACT-Approved accommodations on Day 1 of the PSAE will receive reportable ACT scores. Those who are denied ACT-Approved accommodations and/or choose to use State-Allowed accommodations on Day 1 of the PSAE will not receive reportable ACT scores.

## **Timing/Scheduling:**

- Extended testing time beyond that allowed for the regular test administration  
*Note: Students must begin and end a subject-area test in a single school day. Students receiving this provision must be tested separately from students testing with standard time. Students testing with different timing codes must test separately.*
- Standard time for Day 1 ACT multiple-choice tests and extended time for Day 1 ACT writing test
- Standard time with stop-the-clock breaks
- Testing over multiple days
- Test administration time moved to student's optimal time of day, as long as each subject-area test is completed in one day and in the prescribed order.

## Setting:

- Administer the test to a small group in a separate location (provided timing codes are the same)
- Administer the test to an individual student in a separate location
- Adjust the Environment (e.g., special lighting, adaptive or special furniture such as study carrel or carrel desk, noise buffers, location with minimal distractions, special setting)
- Provide opportunity for student to stand, move, and/or pace during the test session (student must be tested separately so as not to disturb other test takers)

## Presentation:

- Reader script
- Audiocassette
- Audio DVD
- Braille and Large Print
- Exact English Signing (EES) of directions and test items
- Signing of directions and test items in sign language other than EES

## Response:

- Student points to or marks multiple-choice answers in the test booklet instead of on the answer document
- Student dictates answers to multiple-choice questions – dictated answers may be recorded by a scribe, tape recorded, or both
- Student employs an alternative response mode (via computer, grammar check must be disabled)
- Student utilizes a Braille writer
- Student dictates responses that are transcribed to standard answer folder (Day 1 ACT writing test)
- Students write answers on large paper or large-spaced paper, use templates, rulers, or other devices used to help students keep their place on the answer documents or test booklets.

## Other

Any accommodations that were not addressed in the preceding sections may be implemented IF they do not invalidate the assessment and are appropriate methods for increasing access for the student with disabilities to demonstrate ability and knowledge.

## Resources

Francis, D., Lesaux, N., Kieffer, M., & Rivera, H. (2006). *Research-based recommendations for the use of accommodations in large-scale assessments*. Houston, TX: Center on Instruction. Retrieved October 10, 2007, from <http://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/ELL3-Assessments.pdf>.

Thurlow, M., Ysseldyke, J., & Silverstein, B. (1993). *Testing accommodations for students with disabilities: A review of the literature (Synthesis Report No. 4)*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes

## Assessment Contacts

**The first contact should always be your local test coordinator at the building level.**

Illinois State Board of Education  
100 North First Street  
Springfield, IL 62777

[www.isbe.net](http://www.isbe.net) or [www.isbe.net/assessment](http://www.isbe.net/assessment)

Students with IEPs (Accommodations): Pearl Schneider at [pschneid@isbe.net](mailto:pschneid@isbe.net)

ELL Accommodation Issues: Barry Pedersen at [bpederse@isbe.net](mailto:bpederse@isbe.net)

ISAT Issues: Dennis Goedecke at [dgoedeck@isbe.net](mailto:dgoedeck@isbe.net)

PSAE Issues: Megan Forness at [mforness@isbe.net](mailto:mforness@isbe.net)

Overall Student Assessment Issues: Joyce Zurkowski at [jzurkows@isbe.net](mailto:jzurkows@isbe.net)

Test Providers:

Pearson, Help Desk: 1-800-627-7990, ext. 824; or [mnmca@pearson.com](mailto:mnmca@pearson.com)

ACT, Phone: 1-800-553-6244, ext. 1788 or [PSAE@act.org](mailto:PSAE@act.org) (use subject "State Testing")

## Special Education Contact

Special Education Division, ISBE: 217/782-5589 [www.isbe.net/spec-ed/](http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/)

Section 504 Plan: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights,

Chicago Office, 312/730-1560 [OCR.Chicago@ed.gov](mailto:OCR.Chicago@ed.gov)