

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Accommodations & Accessibility for ACT Aspire Testing in South Carolina,
Spring 2015

Listed below are frequently asked questions that the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) has received from district and school personnel about accommodations and accessibility for ACT Aspire testing in South Carolina. The numbers in parentheses indicate page numbers *in this FAQs document* where the answers are located.

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Supports for Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs)

1. How are accommodations for IEP/ 504 Plan students and ELL students organized in the *Accessibility User's Guide*?

The ACT Aspire *Accessibility User's Guide* (version 2015 - 3), located at <http://actaspire.avocet.pearson.com/actaspire/Home#4673>, lists all supports available on paper/pencil ACT Aspire assessments in Tables 1–4, located on pages 9–12 of the guide. All standard accommodations, for both students with disabilities and English language learners, are embedded in these tables. This format reflects current thinking about how accommodations should be applied based on need, not label.

2. Will the SCDE publish an “Appendix C” and “Appendix D” for ACT Aspire to separate accommodations for students with disabilities and English language learners?

The SCDE is issuing this FAQs document to clarify features of the ACT Aspire *Accessibility User's Guide*. The *Accessibility User's Guide* serves as the official document for accommodations and other usability features on the ACT Aspire assessment. To assist districts and schools in this transition, the following tables show ACT Aspire usability features in a format similar to what the SCDE has provided in the past. The following tables show supports commonly used by students with disabilities and ELLs.

The *Accessibility User's Guide* includes the complete list of available support features. There are three tiers of supports allowed on ACT Aspire tests. Embedded supports are automatically provided to all students. Open Access supports are available to any student (students without disabilities, students with disabilities, and ELLs) who has a need to use the support during testing. Accommodation level supports are available to students who are identified as having a disability or as being an English language learner. Accommodations and Open Access supports must be documented in a student's IEP, 504 Plan, or ELL Accommodation Plan prior to use on the assessment.

ACT Aspire Supports Commonly Used by Students with Disabilities (Available for all content area tests unless otherwise noted.)		
Presentation Supports	Open Access:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large Print • Magnifier Tool • Line Reader • Color Overlay
	Accommodations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Reader (English Audio) Directions Only–Reading and English tests • Human Reader (English Audio)–Writing, Math, and optional Science tests • Human Reader (English Audio + Orienting Description), for use with Braille and Tactile Graphics, Directions Only–Reading and English tests

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Reader (English Audio+ Orienting Description), for use with Braille and Tactile Graphics–Writing, Math, and optional Science tests • American Sign Language (ASL): Directions Only (English Text)–Reading and English tests • American Sign Language (ASL): Test Items (English Text)–Writing, Math, and optional Science tests • Signed Exact English (SEE) Directions Only (English Text)–Reading and English tests • Signed Exact English (SEE) Test Items (English Text)–Writing, Math, and optional Science tests • Braille, Contracted, Includes Tactile Graphics • Braille, Uncontracted, Includes Tactile Graphics
Interaction and Navigation Supports	Open Access:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer Masking–Reading, English, Math, and optional Science tests
	Accommodations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abacus- Math
Response Supports	Open Access:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond in Test Booklet or on Separate Paper • Dictate Responses • Keyboard or AAC + Local Print
	Accommodations:	None
General Test Conditions	Open Access:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaks: Supervised within Each Day • Special Seating/Grouping • Location for Movement • Individual Administration • Home Administration • Other Setting • Audio Environment • Visual Environment • Physical/Motor Equipment
	Accommodations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra Time • Breaks: Securely Extend Session over Multiple Days

ACT Aspire Supports Commonly Used by English Language Learners (Available for all content area tests unless otherwise noted.)		
Presentation Supports	Accommodations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Reader (English Audio) Directions Only–Reading and English tests • Human Reader (English Audio)–Writing, Math, and optional Science tests • Translated Directions • Word-to-Word Dictionary, ACT Approved–Writing, Math, and optional Science tests
General Test Conditions	Open Access:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaks: Supervised within Each Day • Special Seating/Grouping • Individual Administration
	Accommodations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra Time • Breaks: Securely Extend Session over Multiple Days

Documentation in the IEP/504 Plan or ELL Accommodation Plan

3. How will ACT Aspire accessibility supports be documented in a student’s IEP?

IEP teams, following guidance from the Office of Special Education Services, must update IEPs to reflect allowable accommodations that a student will use on ACT Aspire content area tests (Writing, English, Reading, Mathematics, and optional Science). Information pertaining to this process can be found in the PowerPoint at <http://www.ed.sc.gov/agency/ccr/Special-Education-Services/documents/Spring2015AssessmentSlides.pdf>. The decision making flowchart can be accessed at <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/ccr/Special-Education-Services/documents/IEP-AmendmentProcess.pdf>.

4. Do Open Access supports need to be documented in a student’s IEP, 504 Plan or ELL Accommodation Plan?

IEP, 504 Plan, and ELL Accommodation Plan teams must document Open Access and accommodation supports that a student will use to access the ACT Aspire tests. Embedded supports are automatically provided to all students, and therefore do not need to be included in the student’s IEP, 504 Plan, or ELL Accommodation Plan. Open Access and accommodation supports are available to students based on individual need and must therefore be designated prior to testing.

5. A student’s IEP only calls for oral administration, is extra time included in oral administration, or must this be documented separately?

All Open Access supports and accommodations that a student needs for ACT Aspire must be documented separately. If a student will need one Open Access support or accommodation because of the use of another, both must be documented in the IEP, 504 Plan, or ELL Accommodation Plan; and indicated in the student’s Personal Needs Profile (PNP). Tables 1–4 of the *Accessibility User’s Guide* include recommendations for supports which may need to be bundled together or used in conjunction with one another.

6. Should IEPs show accommodations by specific test, since the Personal Needs Profile (PNP) does not allow accommodations or Open Access supports to be designated by content area?

IEPs, 504 Plans, and ELL Accommodation Plans should show supports needed by the specific content area test. Because the PNP does not indicate specific content areas or subjects for which an Open Access or accommodation support is needed, schools must use the information contained in the IEP, 504 Plan, or ELL Accommodation Plan to ensure that students are receiving the appropriate support on specific content area tests.

Levels of Support

7. Since Open Access supports are available to any student with a need (i.e., not just students with an IEP, 504 Plan, or ELL Accommodation Plan), how does a school determine who needs these supports?

Open Access supports are available to all students who need the support to access the assessment. Best practice, for all types of supports, dictates that a student be familiar with a support prior to the assessment, so the support does not in actuality impede the student from accessing the assessment, due to unfamiliarity with the support. As such, a student given an Open Access support should be using that support routinely throughout the school year in order for it to be effective. Any student using an Open Access support must have the use of that support documented in the Personal Needs Profile (PNP).

8. What documentation is required for students using an Open Access support?

Open Access supports must be documented in a student’s Personal Needs Profile (PNP) prior to the student being placed in a test session within the portal and beginning the assessment. At this time, there is no requirement for any additional documentation pertaining to a student’s use of the Open Access support prior to the assessment.

It is strongly recommended that the school test coordinator keep a list or spreadsheet of students who need an Open Access support and for which content area test the support is needed. The Personal Needs Profile (PNP) does not specify the content area or subject for which a student needs an Open Access support. Schools will need to ensure that all students are receiving the Open Access supports on the appropriate content area test(s) in order to avoid any testing irregularities.

Instructional Supports vs. Assessment Supports

9. Can students use an accessibility support on the assessment if they use it instructionally?

Students may only use accessibility supports that do not invalidate the results of the assessment. IEP, 504 Plan, and ELL Accommodation Plan teams should refer to Tables 1–4 on pages 9–12 of the 2015 *Accessibility User's Guide* for information on allowable supports. The supports listed in these tables have been determined by ACT to yield valid results.

In the course of instruction as specific skills are targeted, students may sometimes use additional supports which may not be permitted for use on standardized assessments. Often these supports play an important role in scaffolding information in an instructional setting; however, when used for assessment, they impede the ability to make meaningful inferences about a student's knowledge and skills resulting in invalid test scores. For this reason, not all accessibility supports used instructionally can be used on the ACT Aspire.

2007 Federal Regulations on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act §300.160 (b) (2) (ii) require[s] that State and LEA guidelines instruct IEP Teams to select, for each assessment, only those accommodations that do not invalidate a score.

Accessibility Supports

10. Can a student use an accessibility support for some content area tests, but not all of them or for just some items on a particular test? For example, if a student uses a keyboard as a response support, can the student answer multiple-choice items directly in the answer document and only type and print responses to constructed-response or essay questions?

Decisions about a student's accessibility support needs should be based on the student's needs and the requirements of the specific content area test. A student may have a need in one content area (e.g., reading) because of the design and requirements of the particular test, but not need the support in another content area (e.g., English) because of that test's design and requirements. This is why IEP, 504 Plan, and ELL Accommodation Plan teams must indicate the need for accessibility supports by specific content area or subject tests. Because the Personal Needs Profile (PNP) does not specify supports by content area, school level personnel must refer to the IEP, 504 Plan, or ELL Accommodation Plan to ensure that accessibility supports are delivered for the appropriate tests.

In the example above, the IEP, 504 Plan, or ELL Accommodation Plan team should determine how the student will respond for each content area test.

11. Are verbal or nonverbal cues to help a student refocus permitted as an accommodation or accessibility support? Does this need to be documented in the PNP?

The role of a room supervisor is, in part, to ensure that students are participating in the assessment. As such, if a student does not appear to be on task, a room supervisor could redirect the student with a statement such as "Please be sure you are working on your test," "Keep working," or "Be sure to mark your answers on your answer document." Room supervisors, however, should not answer any questions about specific test items or

use language which would give any sort of hint to a student about his or her work on the assessment.

12. Can homebound students receive extra time, even if they do not have an IEP?

Extra time is an accommodation in the *Accessibility User's Guide* and, as such, is intended only for students with an IEP, 504 Plan, or ELL Accommodation Plan.

13. What increments of extra time are available? How do I determine how much extra time my student needs?

Extra time on ACT Aspire tests is available in increments of 150%, 200%, 250%, 300%, and 400% above and beyond the standard allowable time for a particular test.

The tables in the *Accessibility User's Guide* provide some recommendations regarding how much extended time is appropriate based on other accommodations. For example, under Human Reader (English Audio), for Writing, Math, and optional Science, ACT Aspire recommends a student also have 300% extra time. In instances where a student needs extra time and there is no recommendation for ACT Aspire to serve as guidance, IEP, 504 Plan, and ELL Accommodation Plan teams should make decisions based on the time a student typically needs to complete instructional assessments in a given subject. One way this could be achieved is through anecdotal data collection in which teachers notate the time it takes a student to complete a test/quiz in class to get a sense of how much extra time a student might need on the ACT Aspire assessment in that content area.

14. Is "Respond in test booklet or on separate paper" allowed for writing?

Yes, "Respond in test booklet or on separate paper" is allowed for the writing test. This was inadvertently left out of Table 3 in the *Accessibility User's Guide* posted on January 30, 2015. This oversight was corrected in an updated version of the *Accessibility User's Guide* (v. Spring 2015 - 3) that has been posted to the Avocet site, replacing the earlier version.

15. Some accommodations have recommendations for how much extra time should be used. Is there an extra time recommendation for the Scribe accommodation?

There is no formal ACT Aspire recommendation that addresses extra time needed for a scribe accommodation. Due to the detailed procedures for the scribe accommodation stipulated in the *Accessibility User's Guide*, pages 46–48, IEP and 504 Plan teams may consider specifying 400% extended time to ensure that a student has time to complete his/her response using the scribing procedures required.

Testing Materials/Accommodated Forms (Customized Materials)**16. Do all students with a human reader accommodation use the same form of the test?**

For each grade and subject, there are several test forms (e.g., 1A, 2A, 2B); these forms are spiraled in the shrink-wrapped test booklet packages (e.g., 1A, 2A, 2B, 1A, 2A, etc.). Prior to the “read-aloud” or oral administration, a test booklet should be selected for the student’s use. To provide the oral administration, the same form of the test booklet must be selected from the school’s overage for use by the human reader who will be delivering the oral administration accommodation.

17. What if a student moves into a school after the close of the window for creating test sessions (March 19), but prior to the conclusion of the testing window?

The student should first have a Personal Needs Profile (PNP) created, if needed, and then be placed into a test session in the ACT Aspire portal. If the student needs accommodated materials, the school must call ACT Aspire’s customer service at 888-802-7502 to alert ACT Aspire to the change and ensure that materials are shipped. If the student does not need accommodated materials, test materials should come from the school’s overage. In both cases, the student’s answer documents will need to be manually coded.

Personal Needs Profile (PNP)**18. Do all PNPs need to be completed before any test sessions can be created?**

No, all PNPs do not need to be completed prior to creating test sessions in the ACT Aspire portal. Test sessions can be created for students who do not require a PNP (i.e., students who are not using accommodations or Open Access supports) prior to a school completing the PNP process for students who will need accommodations or Open Access supports. Schools may choose to create test sessions for all students not requiring a PNP while PNPs are being created for students who need them. Students who have PNPs can then be added to test sessions at completion of creating their PNPs.

19. During the PNP process, are the accommodations that are selected subject-specific?

At this time, the PNP process does not allow schools to select specific supports by content area or subject. If a student needs a support for some but not all content area tests, the support must be indicated in the student’s PNP. The school test coordinator and the special education, 504, or ELL staff at the school must work together to ensure that the student receives only the needed supports during the appropriate content area test.

Some accommodations and Open Access supports, for example Braille and large print, trigger the ordering of accommodated materials. If a student needs large print for mathematics only, the student’s PNP should be marked indicating large print. The student should use this support only for mathematics. To participate in the other content areas of ACT Aspire, the student should use a standard test booklet from overage.

Even though the PNP does not list subject-specific accommodations, the IEP, 504, or ELL Accommodation Plan team must address accommodations and Open Access supports by content area tests in a student's IEP, 504 Plan, or ELL Accommodation Plan.

20. Do students testing at off-site programs (e.g., alternative schools) need to have “Other Setting” selected on their PNPs? How will this affect the packaging of their materials?

Yes, students who test at off-site programs (e.g., alternative schools) must have “Other Setting” indicated in their PNP. It is recommended that these students be placed in separate test sessions in the ACT Aspire portal, so that their preprinted answer documents will be packaged separately and easily identified for transporting to the off-site location.

21. Do homebound students need to have “Home Administration” selected on their PNPs?

Yes, homebound students should have “Home Administration” indicated in their PNPs.

22. What accessibility supports must be indicated in a student's PNP?

ACT Aspire has three levels of support available to students. “Embedded” supports are automatically available to all students participating in ACT Aspire and do not need to be indicated in a PNP. “Open Access” supports are available to any student who needs them, regardless of disability or ELL status, and must be indicated in the student's PNP.

“Accommodations” are available to students with an IEP, 504 Plan, or an ELL Accommodation Plan, and must be indicated in the student's PNP.

Accommodations and Open Access supports must be indicated in the PNP for any eligible student in need of the supports prior to that student being placed into a test session within the ACT Aspire portal.

Administration Procedures for Accessibility Supports

23. If a student must have snacks due to a medical condition, may those be provided during breaks? Does the student need to leave the testing room? How is this documented on the student's PNP?

Snacks due to medical conditions may be provided to a student during breaks. If the student has a medical episode (e.g., low blood sugar) and needs to have a snack in the middle of testing, the room supervisor should note the time it takes the student to have the snack and ensure that the student is given the full amount of time allotted for the test being taken. For example, a student who is participating in the 60-minute reading test starting at 8:00 a.m. and who takes 10 minutes in the middle of the test for a snack due to a medical condition should be allowed to work on the Reading subtest until 9:10 a.m. to be given a full 60 minutes for testing.

Students may have their snacks in the testing room. However, the room supervisor must take care that this does not disrupt other students who are testing. In addition, care must be taken to ensure that the student's test booklet and answer document are not damaged by food or drink.

24. If dictation and scribing is used, does ACT Aspire require that a witness be present?

For test security purposes, and in keeping with past SCPASS requirements, South Carolina will continue to require that a monitor be present during dictated/scribed testing sessions.

25. Are there minimum qualifications for a person transcribing braille responses?

For ACT Aspire, braille responses must be transcribed by a school or district prior to being returned for scoring. This transcription should be done by someone qualified in braille transcription services. Usually a district vision specialist can perform this service. Schools should contact their DTC if they need assistance with transcribing.

26. Can an ASL or SEE interpreter review the test booklet/items prior to administration?

Yes, an ASL or SEE interpreter may view the test booklet/items in Writing, Mathematics, and optional Science up to two days before the test. (NOTE: For the Reading and English tests, only the directions can be provided in ASL or SEE.) For example, if testing begins on Tuesday, reviews may begin on Friday of the previous week. All reviews must take place at the school with no students present and must be coordinated with the school test coordinator in adherence with test security procedures. The interpreter may make notes in the test booklet pertaining to how to sign test items (e.g., signs to use, finger spelling, etc.); however, no copies of test booklets or notes may be removed from the room prior to the administration.

Appendix C of the *Accessibility User's Guide* contains guidelines for sign language interpretation.

27. For hearing impaired students, are the translators allowed to write cues or use cue symbols about the directions in the test booklet?

Direction cue symbols may not be written, but test directions themselves may be manually signed.

28. Do ASL or SEE translators who will be in the classroom with a regular room supervisor need to be added to the ACT Aspire Portal?

For paper based testing, it is not necessary to enter regular room supervisors or any additional testing support staff (such as ASL or SEE translators) into the ACT Aspire Portal.

29. Can a human reader for an oral administration review the test booklet/items prior to administration?

Yes, a human reader may view the test booklet/items in Writing, Mathematics, and optional Science tests up to two days before the test. (NOTE: For the Reading and English tests, only the directions can be read aloud.) For example, if testing begins on Tuesday, reviews may begin on Friday of the previous week. All reviews must take place at the school with no students present and must be coordinated with the school test coordinator in adherence with test security procedures. The human reader may make notes in the test booklet

pertaining to how to read items based on the specified procedural instructions and table in Appendix E of the *Accessibility User's Guide*; however, no copies of test booklets or notes may be removed from the room prior to the administration.

30. The *Accessibility User's Guide* recommends 1:1 administration for Human Reader (English Audio). Can this be administered in a small group instead?

Best practice is for an oral administration with a human reader to be delivered in a 1:1 model. This model allows for the student to work at his/her own pace. Each student processes information at a different speed, needing to have different items repeated and to spend longer on some items than others. When human reader is delivered in a small group, it becomes more difficult to take these differences into account. Some students may become frustrated by a slow work pace and tune out or try to work ahead (in essence not fully utilizing the accommodation), while others may struggle to keep up with the pace of a small group administration and not have time to fully process the information. For these reasons, 1:1 administration is highly recommended.

In some school settings, however, 1:1 administration creates an insurmountable staffing and/or scheduling burden. In such cases, it may be necessary for a school to schedule small group administrations of the human reader accommodation. If a school administers human reader through a small group, care must be taken during scheduling to ensure that students are able to fully utilize their human reader accommodation. Whenever possible, students should be grouped with other students who process at similar speeds. In order for students to receive the human reader accommodation in a small group, all students in the group must be using the same form (see question 16 in this FAQs document). All students testing with an oral administration in a small group must be testing using the same subject, grade, and form of the test; the human reader, of course, must also be using that same subject, grade, and test form.

31. Is Human Reader (English Audio) the only option for an oral administration?

For the 2014–15 academic year, the South Carolina state legislature mandated that the statewide ELA and mathematics assessments for grades 3–8 be given in paper-pencil format. Many districts, however, have requested the option to test students needing oral administration via computer-based or online testing. The SCDE has received approval from the state legislature and worked with ACT Aspire to offer an online option for students needing to use oral administration to access the assessment. As a result, schools now have the option to administer oral administration through human reader using the paper-pencil format or through text-to-speech via the online testing system for ACT Aspire. Schools and districts must use caution when determining how a student receiving oral administration will test. ACT Aspire currently does not have a “sandbox” for students to practice navigating the testing system prior to actual testing. Schools and districts must ensure that students being assigned to the online delivery format will be comfortable with this testing environment and that the technology will not interfere with a student’s ability to demonstrate content knowledge and skills.

32. The *Accessibility User's Guide* includes a Signed Interpreter Agreement (Appendix C, page 53) and a Reader's Agreement (Appendix E, page 72). What should schools do with these ACT Aspire agreement forms?

Schools must have all sign interpreters and readers complete a form. The form must be sent to the district test coordinator, who must maintain a district file of the forms for three years. These forms are maintained internally in the district and should not be sent to ACT or the SCDE.

33. How do we administer the English and Reading assessments for students who have recently become blind and who cannot yet fluently read braille?

Oral administration is not allowed for the ACT Aspire English and Reading tests; however, all students must still participate in these tests. Annual statewide student assessments serve to both fulfill the obligation for state and federal accountability, as well as provide information on student achievement to schools and districts for instructional planning purposes. While a student's performance on the English and Reading tests may fall below what the student could achieve if using an oral administration accommodation, it provides the school and district with a more accurate picture of the student's abilities in those content areas than they would receive with the use of non-standard accommodations. The ACT Aspire Reading and English tests are aligned to different standards than the previous SCPASS English Language Arts (ELA) test. As such, the constructs being measured are different from SCPASS and result in a different set of allowable accommodations. The content developers of the ACT Aspire test have determined that an oral administration of the Reading and English tests at any grade level violates the construct of the assessment. The ACT Aspire Reading and English tests, in part, measure a student's decoding ability during these critical years of development.

For students recently blinded, who may know little braille, the assessment in the content areas of Reading and English will serve as important baseline data to assist in measuring a student's progress as he/she works towards mastery of fluency in braille. The data gathered in the assessment should not be used solely for placement decisions, but should be used to help with instructional planning.

34. In the *Accessibility User's Guide* posted in January, the human reader + orienting description (for use with Braille and tactile graphics) was not covered in Appendix E: Procedures for Local Delivery of Read-Aloud Support. How is this support administered?

Information on the human reader + orienting description has been added to Appendix E of the updated version of the *Accessibility User's Guide* (v. Spring 2015 - 3). A student receiving this support will also have a companion braille-tactile graphic booklet to use. The student should be tracking along in the booklet as the item is read aloud exactly as printed. It is permissible, however, for the human reader to provide a navigational orienting description to a visually impaired student if needed. Such description must have no relation to content; rather, it functions only to name and roughly locate the parts contained in the item, as shown in the following example.

Example: “This item has a statement followed by two tables. At the end of the item, there is a question followed by five answer choices for you to consider. Be sure to find these in your braille booklet.” The human reader may state the parts of the item and their physical location as long as no further information is provided.

35. If a student responds in braille, using a keyboard or AAC + local print, or on separate paper, how should the student’s responses be returned for scoring?

All student responses must be recorded in the student answer document in order to be scored. All original student work must be returned with other non-scorable materials. No copies of student work can be retained by the school, and any electronic copies must be deleted from a computer, tablet, or ACC device after the student prints his/her work.

For brailled responses, the responses must be transcribed by a school or district prior to being returned to ACT. Please refer to question 25 in this FAQs document for information about transcriber requirements.

36. Can a student using extra time leave the testing room when he/she has completed the test?

Yes, a student may leave the testing room once his/her test is completed, even if the student has not yet used all of his/her allotted time. Students should not rush through the test to leave early. Once a student indicates that he/she has finished testing and leaves, he/she may not return at a later point to continue work, even if extended time remains.

This document has been created by the SCDE.

For more information about the use of accommodations for statewide assessments, please contact Anne Mruz, Office of Assessment, amruz@ed.sc.gov or 803-734-8034. Questions about ACT Aspire testing in South Carolina may also be directed to Sheila Graybeal, Office of Assessment, sgraybea@ed.sc.gov or 803-734-8649.

Please refer to ACT Aspire documentation and websites for current policies and procedures.