

**Guidance for IEP and 504 Plan Teams:
Determining Accommodation Administration on
End-of-Course Examination Program
Statewide Assessments**



**South Carolina Department of Education
Office of Assessment and Standards
Office of Special Education Services**

December 2022

Guidance for IEP and 504 Plan Teams: Determining Accommodations for Use during the Administration of End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) Statewide Assessments

Introduction

This document is provided to assist individualized education program (IEP) and section 504 teams in making decisions regarding whether the use of accommodations on the End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) statewide assessments are appropriate for an individual student.

The IEP or 504 Accommodations Plan team is responsible for determining which, if any, allowable accommodations a student needs to *access* statewide assessments. Allowable or standard accommodations are those supports that provide a student access to the assessment. The intent of accommodations is to allow a student to demonstrate what he or she knows and can do. Accommodations are not intended to and should not be used to provide a student an advantage in taking the assessment (i.e. selecting an accommodation for the intent of boosting a student's test score); just because an accommodation is allowable does not mean the student needs it to access the assessment.

The IEP or 504 teams must exercise caution in selecting accommodations for students to use on statewide assessments. An accommodation should not be used on statewide assessments if the accommodation or a similar accommodation has not been used by the student during instruction and classroom assessments throughout the school year. Giving a student an accommodation that has not been used consistently prior to an assessment may put the student at a disadvantage. When a student is assessed using unfamiliar accommodations, the results of the assessment may be a reflection of the student's ability or inability to use the accommodation and not a reflection of what the student knows and can do.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that State and Local Educational Agency (LEA) guidelines instruct IEP or 504 Plan teams to select, for each assessment, only those accommodations that do not invalidate a score (34 CFR § 300.160_(b)_2_(ii)). Non-standard accommodations interfere with the constructs that an assessment is measuring and yield invalid results. Non-standard accommodations do not give an accurate picture of what a student knows and can do in relation to the standards being assessed.

Accommodations do not reduce learning expectations. They meet specific instructional and assessment needs of students with disabilities and allow educators to know that measures of a student's work are valid. The IEP and 504 teams should use the following guidelines when deciding whether a student who is participating in the EOCEP needs accommodations.

Definition of Accommodations:

Setting: The EOCEP should be administered in a setting appropriate to the student's individual needs.

Description: Preferential Seating

The definition of this accommodation is defined by the student's IEP or 504 Plan and will look different dependent upon the student's needs. Preferential seating should be defined in the daily instructional accommodations portion of the student's IEP or 504 Plan so that the Test Administrator (TA) knows exactly what the expectation is.

Considerations: The IEP or 504 Plan should include a definition of the accommodation so that it is delivered correctly during testing. The IEP or 504 team should determine if it is necessary during standardized testing based on the purpose of the accommodation used during instruction. Why is the accommodation needed and what does it look like? Does it mean seating closest to the point of instruction to hear directions or see materials? Does this mean seating away from distractions? If so, is this a behavioral support or visual/hearing support? Does this accommodation make sense for the assessment? If the purpose is to be seated closed to the point of instruction, is this needed during a standardized assessment?

Description: Separate Location

This accommodation is intended for students taking the assessment in a location other than the school building. This accommodation is NOT selected for a student taking the test in a location inside the school building. Some examples of students who may use this accommodation are students who are homebased, hospitalized, or unable to come to the school building for other reasons.

Considerations: The separate location must be specified on the student's IEP or 504 Plan.

Description: Small Group

The SCDE does not quantitatively define small group with a specific number. The student's needs should be defined clearly enough in the IEP or 504 Plan so that a test coordinator or administrator is able to determine the appropriate group size. Small group administration is for testing students in a separate space, NOT administering the test "at a separate table" or "in a different part of the room"; these would be examples of preferential seating accommodations and NOT small group.

Considerations: The size of the small-group administration should be consistent with the group size for routine classroom assessments. The student's regular education teacher or special education teacher should be able to provide the necessary information on routine classroom assessment size.

Description: Individual Administration

The student's needs should be defined clearly in the IEP or 504 Plan. Individual Administration is NOT administering the test "at a separate table" or "in a different part of the room." Individual Administration would be defined as one student and one TA or sometimes one TA and one monitor per student in a separate room.

Considerations: This accommodation is sometimes necessary when used with other accommodations, such as read aloud to self, oral cueing, or for some special circumstances. This accommodation works in both directions. For some students this accommodation is necessary for them to be able to focus and complete the test. There are other situations where the student's behavior can create unnecessary distractions or a negative testing environment for other students. Regardless, this should be consistent with the way the student is tested for routine assessments throughout the school year and listed in their daily instructional accommodations portion of the IEP or 504 Plan. Some situations described in Appendix C of any TAM, or some types of special requests require an individual administration. This is usually for test security purposes. For example if a student has a "read aloud to self" accommodation the test must be administered individually because if this is done in a room with other students, the student would be disruptive to other students, especially if the student is not reading the test correctly.

Timing: The EOCEP tests are not timed tests, however, for this accommodation; the test is started and completed on the same day. Students may take as long as they need to complete each test during that school day. During breaks test security must be maintained. Timing accommodations may include frequent and extended breaks.

Description: Frequent Breaks

Frequent breaks are breaks that are predetermined with a set time prior to the start of the testing session. The student is permitted to take the break(s) during a given testing session. The physical make-up of the break(s) should look the same every time. For example, a student has severe test anxiety due to the nature of his/her disability and, as a result, the IEP or 504 Plan team predetermines that the break(s) will last no longer than five minutes. During this time, the student is permitted to stand, stretch, and use the restroom. This may occur multiple times during one testing session.

Considerations: During breaks test security must be maintained. Timing accommodations may include frequent and extended breaks.

Description: Extended Breaks

Extended breaks are breaks that are longer than what is permitted for nondisabled students. For example, if per district policy, all students are given a fifteen minute break between test sections. If a student with a disability needed longer breaks, then that time could be extended and the time extension would be predetermined by the IEP or 504 Plan team.

Considerations: During breaks test security must be maintained. Timing accommodations may include frequent and extended breaks.

Scheduling: The student may take portions of the EOCEP over several days, as long as all testing is completed by the last day of make-up testing. Students must begin testing on the regularly scheduled testing date and may not go back to previously completed sections of the test. Make sure the IEP or 504 Plan team is familiar with the TAM. All students are allowed to take all the time necessary to complete the test, and there are procedures defined in the TAM as to when a student needs additional time. Scheduling accommodations are intended for a student the IEP or 504 plan team determined during the team meeting as needing additional time and multiple sessions or days are intentionally scheduled.

Description: Afternoon Administration

Considerations: Why would a student need this? What is the purpose? Instructionally, are all tests in the afternoon? Starting the English assessment in the afternoon is not advisable. The English assessment, for most students, takes the longest to complete.

Description: Multiple Testing Sessions on Each Day

Estimate the duration of each testing session for the student based on documentation of the time a student typically works on a task as defined in the IEP or 504 Plan. Determine whether the student can complete the test in one day or over several days, in one session or over several sessions. The writing portion of the English assessment must be completed in one day for test security purposes.

Considerations:

- Online administration: For a student testing online over multiple days, the student's test must be unlocked each day. Please refer to the TAM for more information about unlocking tests.
- Paper pencil administration: If it is determined that the student requires testing over several days, divide the test into sections according to the time allotted for each test session. Each section should end with the last question on an odd-numbered page so that the student is not able to see test questions for the next section.

Description: Multiple Testing Days

The student may take portions of the EOCEP over several days as long as all testing is completed by the last day of make-up testing. Estimate the duration of each testing session for the student. This should be based on the IEP or 504 Plan documentation of the time a student typically works on a task. Determine whether the student can complete the test in one day or over several days, in one session or over several sessions. Testing over multiple days is NOT allowed with the writing portion of the English 1 EOCEP.

Considerations:

- Online administration: For students testing online over multiple days, the student's test must be unlocked each day. Please refer to the TAM for more information about unlocking tests.
- Paper pencil administration: If it is determined that the student requires testing over several days, divide the test into sections according to the time allotted for each test session. Each section should end with the last question on an odd-numbered page so that the student is not able to see test questions for the next section.

Presentation: The student may require that the test be presented in a different manner, such as the use of a customized format of the test.

Description: Highlighting

All students are permitted to highlight in their test. This accommodation is NOT for the *student* to highlight, but for the TA to highlight in the directions for the student. The TA may highlight key words or phrases for students in the directions only. For example, TAs may highlight phrases such as “Read the passage and answer questions 6–10” in the student’s test booklet.

Considerations: The TA may highlight directions only immediately after reading the directions and before testing begins. Consider the student’s other accommodations; if the student needs oral administration, highlighting is unlikely to help. Remember that this is also something the student should be receiving in daily instruction. If he/she is not receiving this on a regular basis, it could cause unnecessary distraction and hinder instead of helping the student. There is a highlighter tool available for each item in the online testing system; this accommodation does NOT require paper and pencil administration.

Description: Cueing

In the test booklet, TAs may write cues or cue symbols (e.g. providing arrows, stop signs, or phrases such as “Read the passage and answer questions 6–10”) about the directions only. The TA may orally cue the test directions from the student’s individual test booklet, or the computer screen, to individual students. This may require an individual administration.

Considerations: Cueing is different from highlighting. Cueing is more likely to be successful with a student who receives oral administration than highlighting. Cueing provides a visual (in the form of a symbol) or tactile (in the form of pointing) indication to the student. As with all accommodations, this must be something used in daily instruction.

Description: Reading Aloud to Self

A student may read the test questions aloud to himself or herself. This accommodation requires an individual administration of the test.

Considerations:

The team needs to consider the data in the student’s IEP or 504 Plan. Is there data that specifically supports this accommodation? Is the student actually reading aloud? The IEP or 504 Plan should not include accommodations because the student “might” need them. The IEP or 504 Plan team should have data that shows that, because of the student’s disability, he/she needs the accommodation.

Description: Repeating/Signing Directions

The student may repeat or sign the directions to the TA for clarification or to demonstrate his or her understanding.

Considerations: This accommodation is for the student to repeat the directions to the TA. Be familiar with the TAM. TAs may reread directions from the TAM or script as requested for *all* students during testing. This accommodation is not for that purpose.

Description: Oral or Signed Administration

For online test takers oral administration is completed online using human voice audio. Paper and pencil administration will require a TA to read the test to the student using an Oral Administration Script that provides the directions to TAs regarding the appropriate way to read test questions, passages, and answer choices. The IEP or 504 Plan team is responsible for determining the allowable accommodations a student needs to access statewide assessments. Allowable or standard accommodations are those supports which provide a student *access to the assessment*. The intent of accommodations is to allow a student to show what they know and can do. Accommodations are not intended to and should not be used to provide a student with an advantage in taking the assessment (i.e. selecting an accommodation for the intent of boosting a student's test score); just because an accommodation is allowable it does not mean the student needs it to access the assessment. Oral administration should not be used on statewide assessments if the accommodation or a similar accommodation (e.g. human reader vs. text-to-speech) has not been used by the student during instruction and classroom assessments throughout the school year.

Considerations: Decisions for EOCEP need to be based on access to the content in the subject area. Oral administration on the English 1 EOCEP should not be provided based only on a student reading below grade level. Reading below grade level does not indicate that a student needs oral administration. There is not a specific formula that can be applied to determine if a student needs oral administration to access the EOCEP; there is not a specific number of grade levels below their current grade level the student must be reading in order to receive oral administration on the English 1 EOCEP. The team needs to review what the student uses *DAILY* in instruction and routine assessments and what the student needs in order to access the grade level material. Again, any accommodation is to provide access to the content.

Response Options: The student may require an alternative method of responding to a test question.

Description: Nonverbal Indication of Responses

A student may indicate his/her responses nonverbally to the TA (e.g., by pointing or by using a personal communication device).

Considerations: A monitor must be present during the administration or a video recording must be made of the entire administration. Due to the test security law and regulations, no personal video recording devices (e.g., cell phone, tablet, or computer) can be used for the administration. Read the directions in the TAM for specific details.

Description: Dictation of Responses

A student may dictate his/her answers to the TA verbally or through the use of a personal communication device that does not include spell-check, grammar-check, or word prediction programs. This accommodation requires an individual administration.

Considerations: It is required that at least two adults be present during the entire session: the TA and a monitor. Read the directions in the TAM for specific details. Dictation to a scribe for TDA items has very specific steps that must be followed. Read and understand the steps prior to choosing this as an accommodation. This is how the student **MUST** be responding for daily instruction.

Description: Braille Response Options

A student may use a Braillewriter, slate and stylus, or electronic braille note-taking device to answer test items.

Considerations: A TA must transfer the student's responses to the online test. A monitor must be present to verify that the student's responses were recorded accurately. Read the directions in the TAM for specific details.

Description: Paper/Pencil Administration

The assessment is given on paper and pencil and not online.

Considerations: This is related to the student's disability and NOT the student's preferences. There are very few students who must have paper and pencil accommodations because of their disabilities. An example of a student who would need paper and pencil administration is a student with a seizure disorder who cannot access the test online because extended screen time in front of a computer is contraindicated for their medical condition. This is not based on student preference; there must be evidence in the student's IEP or 504 Plan that he/she is not able to take the test online and does not receive any routine instruction or assessments using a computer.

Information/Data Considerations

IEP and 504 Plan team members should ask: does the student really need any accommodation? A student may not be receiving an accommodation he or she really needs or may be receiving too many. Research indicates that more is not necessarily better, and that providing students with accommodations that are not truly needed may have a negative impact on performance. The better approach is to focus on a student's identified needs within the general education curriculum.

The IEP or 504 team should collect and review relevant data from the student's records and consider this information and data during the decision making process to determine if a student needs an accommodation. In reviewing data, it is important to examine the trend over time; the decision to allow oral administration must not be made based on a single test score or data point. Whenever possible, IEP and 504 teams should review data from several administrations of an assessment to look at a student's growth over time. IEP and 504 teams should consider other information on a student, such as the student's processing speed, working memory, and listening comprehension or receptive language skills. It is important for IEP and 504 teams to consider all relevant sources of information on student performance.

The IEP or 504 team must review and discuss multiple sources of information. Sources that the team may consider reviewing include, but are not limited to: psychological evaluation reports, cognitive ability tests, achievement assessments, language assessments, district-wide assessments, individual reading assessments, teacher collected data from classroom observations, progress monitoring data, accommodation usage logs from classroom and statewide assessments, and IEPs or 504 Plans.

The IEP and 504 team should also consider (but is not limited to) the following:

- Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) and goals for the student.
- Accommodations and instructional supports used on a daily basis by the student.

The types of services the student currently receives, and the duration and intensity of those services should also be considered.

- Description of any modifications to the general curriculum or typical instruction and progress data.
- Teacher collected data and work samples from classroom instruction and assessments.
- Results of statewide and districtwide assessments.
- Results of individual assessments.
- Achievement score data from any other relevant assessments.

It is critical for students with disabilities to understand their disabilities and 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. Teachers and other IEP or 504 Plan team members can play a key role in working with students to advocate for themselves in the context of selecting, using, and evaluating accommodations.

The more a student is involved in the selection process, the more likely the accommodations will be used, especially as students reach adolescence and the desire to be more independent increases. Students need opportunities to learn which accommodations are most helpful for them, and then they need to learn how to make certain those accommodations are provided in all of their classes and wherever they need them outside of school. There should never be an instance where a student refuses an accommodation on a test. The IEP or 504 Plan team should know the student's preferences and needs far in advance of the test. The student should be using the accommodation in daily instruction; delivery of an accommodation at state assessment time should not be a surprise.