



March 2016

**FIELD ADVISORY**

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**SUBJECT: Testing Accommodations for Students with Disabilities for the Spring 2016 Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics Tests**

The purpose of this memorandum is to reiterate New York State Education Department (NYSED) policy on the appropriate implementation of testing accommodations for students with disabilities, specifically for the upcoming Spring 2016 Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics State Assessments.

State regulations require that the individualized education program (IEP) of a student with a disability provides a statement of any individual testing accommodations to be used consistently by the student:

- in the recommended educational program; and
- in the administration of district-wide assessments of student achievement; and
- in accordance with Department policy, State assessments of student achievement that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the student.

Consistent with federal regulations, Department policy limits or prohibits use of certain testing accommodations on State assessments when providing these accommodations would modify the construct of what is being assessed and therefore, would invalidate the student's score.

Information on the provision of testing accommodations for students with disabilities when taking the Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics Tests is provided in Appendix G of

the *2016 Grades 3-8 New York State Testing Program School Administrator's Manual* and explained herein. In general, students with disabilities must be provided with the testing accommodations specified in their IEPs or Section 504 Accommodation Plans (504 Plans) when taking State assessments. It is the principal's responsibility to ensure that students receive their testing accommodations and that staff who will be providing them are appropriately trained. Teachers are advised to become familiar with the accommodations specific to the particular test being administered as well as with the general instructions for administering the tests provided in the *Teacher's Directions*. As explained in the *School Administrator's Manual* for these assessments, only those testing accommodations that do not alter the constructs measured by the test are permitted.

Please note that beginning with the Spring 2016 administration of the Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics assessments, all students, including students with disabilities, who are working productively will be allowed to continue working past the recommended testing times for these assessments. As long as students are productively working, they should be allowed as much time as they need within the confines of the regular school day to complete that day's test booklet. Because the 2016 tests are not timed, the accommodation of extended time will in essence be available to all students including all students with disabilities. However, students with disabilities who have flexibility in scheduling, such as breaks at specified intervals, indicated as an accommodation in their IEPs or 504 Plans must be provided such accommodation.

## **Accommodations Specific to the 2016 Grades 3–8 ELA Tests**

### **Teacher Reading to Student**

As in past years, for the 2016 Grades 3–8 ELA Tests, only test directions that are to be read aloud to all students may be read aloud. The test directions are not to be confused with any part of the actual student task, including the passage, which follows the test question number. However, it is important to note that, as illustrated in Step 6 of the *Teacher's Directions*, a considerable proportion of the general instructions for taking these tests are read aloud to all students as part of the standard procedures for administering these tests.

### **Use of Spell-Checking and/or Grammar-Checking Devices**

Because the tests measure writing skills, students are not allowed to use spell-checking and/or grammar-checking devices during any part of the Grades 3–8 ELA Tests.

### **Scoring Student Writing**

Students may not have requirements for use of correct spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation of complete sentences waived for any part of the 2016 Grades 3–8 ELA Tests.

## **Use of Scribes or Tape Recorders**

The use of scribes and tape recorders are allowable accommodations for the Grades 3-8 ELA Tests. However, the use of a word processor (with thesaurus, spell-checking, and grammar-checking applications disabled) in place of a scribe or tape recorder may be a more appropriate recommendation for some students with disabilities. For those students who have experience with computers, word processing allows the student more control over his or her environment, fosters independence, and is less labor intensive than using a scribe. If using a computer or word processor, be sure to delete the student's work after it has been printed. When taking the 2016 Grades 3–8 ELA Tests, students using scribes or tape recorders must provide all information—including spelling of difficult words, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation—for the writing sections of the tests.

Scribes must use the following procedures:

- The scribe must use lined paper and must write on every other line.
- The scribe must record word-for-word what the student dictates or records, leaving out punctuation and capitalization, and must circle all words that are difficult to spell.
- When the dictation/tape transcription is completed, the scribe must ask the student to spell aloud any difficult to spell words; then the scribe must write the student's spelling above the circled words.
- The scribe must show the student the written response and ask him or her to indicate the capitalization and punctuation to be used.
- The student must read the completed dictation/transcription and indicate on the skipped lines any further changes to be transcribed.
- The scribe must then transfer the student's completed response into the test book exactly as dictated or recorded and should attach the lined paper with the student's dictation to the back of the test book, preferably by stapling, to ensure against the student's response being lost.

## **Use of Tablets**

In order for students to use school-provided tablets during any part of the Grades 3-8 ELA Tests, schools must receive prior written approval from the Department. No personal tablets are allowed. Speech-to-text or text-to-speech software is not permitted on the Grades 3-8 ELA Tests.

## **Accommodations Specific to the 2016 Grades 3–8 Mathematics Tests**

### **Teacher Reading to Student**

Testing accommodations in students' IEPs or 504 Plans that are reading-related—for example, reading the test to the student—are permitted for the 2016 Grades 3–8 Mathematics Tests. Unless the IEP or 504 Plan specifically disallows it, when reading a mathematics test question to a student who has this accommodation, all numbers and mathematics symbols, along with words, should be spoken by the teacher to the

student. For example, the symbol  $<$  should be read as “less than,” and 1,211 should be read as “one thousand, two hundred, eleven.” However, test questions may never be modified or simplified, nor may teachers provide additional examples.

### **Use of Scribes**

The following procedures should be used to implement the testing accommodation, “use of scribe,” specific to the administration of the Grades 3–8 Mathematics Tests.

- The scribe must record what the student dictates on a separate sheet of paper.
- The scribe must ask the student to indicate exactly where the numbers need to be placed and lined up.
- The scribe must record the operational sign as dictated by the student (e.g., addition sign, subtraction sign).
- When dictating numbers, the student must indicate how the number is written and indicate place value. For example, if the student says “one thousand thirty-eight,” the student should specify how that is written (e.g., one, zero, three, eight).
- When computing a problem, students must indicate to the scribe how they are making the computation and should be specific in terms of what numbers to write down, including how to record carrying. For example, when adding 23 and 9, the student should indicate the following: “9 plus 3 is 12; put down the 2 and carry the 1 above the 2.”
- The scribe shows the student the written response and asks him or her to indicate if there are any further changes to be made.
- The student does not have to provide spelling, capitalization, and punctuation in word responses. Therefore, it is not necessary for the scribe to leave out capitalization and punctuation or to circle words difficult to spell.
- The scribe must then transfer the student’s completed response into the test book exactly as dictated or recorded and should attach the lined paper with the student’s dictation to the back of the test book, preferably by stapling, to ensure against the student’s response being lost.

### **Use of Tablets**

In order for students to use school-provided tablets during any part of the Grades 3-8 Mathematics Tests, schools must receive prior written approval from the Department. No personal tablets are allowed.

### **Use of Manipulative Devices**

Students whose IEPs or 504 Plans specify the use of counting blocks, counters, or an abacus are permitted to use such devices with all books associated with the Grades 3-8 Mathematics Tests.

### **Use of Mathematics Spatial Boards with Large Type or Braille Editions**

Students whose IEPs or 504 Plans specify the use of mathematics spatial boards are permitted to use these devices with the large type and braille editions of the Grades 3–8 Mathematics Tests.

### **Use of Calculators and Mathematics Tables**

Grades 3–5

Because these tests measure student proficiency involving calculations, the use of a calculator or mathematics table is not allowed.

Grades 6–8

Book 1: The use of a calculator or mathematics tables is not allowed for Book 1.

Book 2 and Book 3: For Grade 6, the use of a four-function calculator with a square root key or a scientific calculator is required for all students. For Grades 7 and 8, the use of a scientific calculator is required. Graphing calculators are not permitted. The use of mathematics tables is permitted for Book 2 and Book 3 if specified in a student's IEP or 504 Plan.

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To ensure dissemination to appropriate individuals within a school district, superintendents are asked to share this memorandum with individuals such as directors of special education, school psychologists, CSE chairpersons, school counselors, directors of pupil personnel, and parent teacher associations.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Questions regarding this memorandum may be directed to:

Office of State Assessment - (518) 474-5902 or [emscassessinfo@nysed.gov](mailto:emscassessinfo@nysed.gov)

Office of Special Education Policy Unit - (518) 473-2878 or [speced@nysed.gov](mailto:speced@nysed.gov)