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TO: Public School Administrators
Nonpublic School Administrators
Charter School Administrators
Committees on Special Education

FROM: Angélica Infante-Green *A. Infante - Green*

SUBJECT: Guidance on Accommodation Features Available for the 2017 Grades 3-8
English Language Arts and Mathematics Computer-Based Tests

In the 2015-16 school year, the New York State Education Department (NYSED or “the Department”) began the first step in the transition to computer-based testing by offering schools the option of administering the 2016 stand-alone field tests in Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics on computer. Beginning with the 2016–17 school year, in addition to having this option for the stand-alone field tests, schools will also have the option of administering the operational tests as either computer- or paper-based tests. Schools will be able to select the grade(s) and subject(s) they choose for operational computer-based test administration.

The purpose of this memorandum is to advise school administrators, teachers, and Committees on Special Education (CSEs) of the accommodation features that are currently available to students with disabilities as part of the Grades 3-8 ELA and mathematics computer-based tests. These accommodation features enable administrators and teachers to customize the computer-based tests to meet the individual needs of students, allowing students with disabilities to accurately demonstrate their knowledge. For the 2017 operational tests, students who require the use of braille, large-type editions, or tests read (by way of human reader) will only be able to take their tests on paper editions.

As with the 2016 Grades 3-8 ELA and mathematics computer-based field tests, the 2017 Grades 3-8 ELA and mathematics computer-based operational and field tests will be administered through the Nextera test delivery system developed by the Department’s contractor, Questar Assessment, Inc. This system provides accommodation features that must be selected by the teacher prior to testing. Testing accommodations that reflect the need for such features must be documented on a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan (504 Plan).

The following is a list and brief description of these features:

- *Answer Masking Tool* – This tool initially hides all answer choices, allowing students to focus on and display the answer choices in any sequence the student prefers. Clicking on an answer choice reveals it. Clicking on it again hides it.

- *Initial Page Zoom* – This tool adjusts the default zoom level of the test. The zoom level can be adjusted during the test at any time.
- *Reverse Contrast* – This feature presents all text in white on black background. Reverse contrast cannot be used in conjunction with *Background Color*.
- *Background Color* – This feature changes the color of the background and text based on the selection made. Background color cannot be used in conjunction with *Reverse Contrast*.
- *Screen Reader (Text-to-Speech)* – This feature reads the text of the directions, passages, question stems, and answer choices to the student. (This is now an allowable accommodation for ELA as well as for mathematics. Additional information on changes in allowable accommodations for the Grades 3-8 ELA Assessments is available at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/documents/changes-in-allowable-testing-accommodations-grade-3-8-ela.pdf>.)

Whenever possible, students with disabilities should not be provided an accommodation for the very first time during a State assessment. Most of the accessibility features listed above are currently available for viewing on the Question Sampler, which is a web-based platform that closely resembles the secure test platform that students testing on computer will use for the actual test. The Text-to-Speech functionality on the Question Sampler is expected to be available in the coming weeks. Educators are encouraged to have their students use the Question Sampler to practice with the accommodations features that students will receive during State testing in accordance with their IEPs and 504 Plans in order to better prepare students for the tests.

The Question Sampler is available at <http://www.nysed.gov/edtech/schools/question-sampler>.

Additional information about computer-based testing is available at <http://www.nysed.gov/edtech/schools/computer-based-testing-cbt>.

Questions regarding computer-based testing may be directed to cbtsupport@nysed.gov.

Questions regarding accommodations features of the Nextera test delivery system may be directed to: Questar Assessment, Inc. at 866-997-0695 or NY.3-8.help@questarai.com.

Questions concerning testing policies and procedures may be directed to the Office of State Assessment at 518-474-5902 or emscassessinfo@nysed.gov.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.