

Testing Accommodations Questions and Answers

RECOMMENDING TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

- 1. Is there any limit to the types of testing accommodations that may be included in a student’s IEP or 504 plan?**

No. Based on the student’s needs, a range of testing accommodations may be included in an IEP or 504 plan.

- 2. Is there a limit to the amount of extended time a CSE/Section 504 Committee may recommend for a student with a disability?**

No. However, the ability of the student to maintain optimal performance during long periods of test-taking must be considered when the CSE determines how much extended time should be provided.

- 3. How are testing accommodations recommended for students taking the NYSAA, which is administered in a computer-based testing environment?**

A student’s IEP must clearly document all testing accommodations including accessibility supports that will be provided to the student when participating in the NYSAA. This will foster appropriate decision-making prior to testing, and it will support consistency in implementation during testing. The supports that a student requires in instructional environments may be used to inform decisions on appropriate accessibility features to document in the student’s IEP. Additionally, school personnel are encouraged to provide the student opportunities to access practice test items that use accessibility features in order to inform decision-making and student familiarity regarding the use of these features. Additional information on the NYSAA, including practice test items, is available on the [Dynamic Learning Maps website](http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/) (<http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/>).

- 4. Is it appropriate to use general qualifying terms when documenting testing accommodations in a student’s IEP/504 plan, such as “as needed,” “when appropriate,” or “when necessary”?**

No. Documentation should include the conditions or types of tests in which a testing accommodation is to be provided, as well as any relevant specifications required for appropriate implementation. Using general qualifying terms without providing additional implementation specifications may lead to confusion or inconsistency in implementation and should be avoided. If it is determined that the student needs a particular testing accommodation for all tests, then qualifying conditions are not indicated or would indicate “all tests.” For example, if the IEP/504 plan states “use of scribe,” with no testing conditions specified, this would indicate that the accommodation is to be provided for all tests regardless of the amount of writing that is required.

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5. What is the process for considering and recommending “tests read” for students with disabilities in the elementary and intermediate grade levels?

Please refer to [Appendix F](#) for guidance on appropriately recommending and documenting this accommodation for students in Grades 3-8.

6. Should “questions read” be indicated as a testing accommodation in the IEP/504 plan, which would mean that only questions are read to the student?

Generally, no. The passages and multiple-choice items with those questions are considered part of the question. Therefore, to ensure a common understanding by teachers, parents, and students, and the appropriate implementation of this accommodation, the IEP/504 plan should indicate this accommodation using phrasing such as, “tests read” or “tests read aloud.” School personnel should understand that such an accommodation includes reading of passages, questions, items, and multiple-choice responses to the student on tests and quizzes in accordance with the specifications in a student’s IEP/504 plan.

7. Should the CSE or Section 504 Committee specify in an IEP/504 plan whether “tests read” should exclude tests of reading comprehension for a high school student who will be participating in Regents exams or Regents Competency Tests (RCTs)?

The testing accommodation “tests read” is permissible on all Regents Examinations (including ELA) and all RCTs (including Reading) for students with disabilities who have that accommodation documented in an IEP/504 plan. In some cases, the Committee may determine that this exception is appropriate to the unique needs of an individual student.

8. May a student’s IEP/504 plan indicate that the student reads tests aloud to himself or herself?

Yes. In order to provide this accommodation to a student, it is likely that the student will also need testing in a separate location specified in his or her IEP/504 plan.

9. Are text-to-speech, speech-to-text, and word-prediction software programs allowable testing accommodations on State assessments?

Yes. Text-to-speech, speech-to-text, and word-prediction software programs are allowable testing accommodations on State assessments at the elementary, intermediate, and secondary grade levels if documented as a testing accommodation (or implementation specification for a testing accommodation) in a student’s IEP/504 plan, as indicated in the chart in [Appendix J: Allowable Accommodations across the New York State Testing Program](#). **When using such software to implement testing accommodations on State assessments, the student must not have access to any unauthorized features, such as the internet, a dictionary, or a thesaurus.**

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Text-to-speech capabilities are embedded within the Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics CBT platform and may be activated prior to testing for a student with a disability if included in the testing accommodation recommendations in the student's IEP/504 plan. If a student is using text-to-speech software as a testing accommodation for a paper-based State Assessment or Examination, the school must submit to the Office of State Assessment a request for approval to reformat the test. Please refer to Section IV: Implementing Testing Accommodations of this document for additional detail on submitting reformatting requests. For additional information on the use of text-to-speech software to provide the "tests read" testing accommodation, please refer to [Appendix F: *Recommending and Administering "Tests Read."*](#)

Speech-to-text and word prediction software programs are considered to be changes in the method of response. Changes in the method of response do not require a request to reformat. A student who uses this technology to implement testing accommodations must use a school-provided device during State testing. When word processing using word-prediction or when dictating using speech-to-text software on a State assessment, the school must print the student's response and staple the response to the test booklet. If a student using such accommodations is participating in computer-based State testing, the student's exact responses must be entered into the computer-based testing platform by a test proctor or appropriate school staff.

10. Can a paper test be recommended as a testing accommodation for students with disabilities who would otherwise be expected to participate in computer-based State testing?

Yes, if appropriate to the needs of the student and if necessary to implement other testing accommodations (e.g., use of a human reader to implement "tests read"). If a student with a disability who would otherwise be participating in computer-based testing is recommended to use a paper test in accordance with IEP/504 plan recommendations, the paper version of the test must be requested by contacting the Office of State Assessment.

11. Is the use of "word banks" an allowable accommodation on State assessments?

No. For State assessments, the use of a word bank is considered a non-allowed testing modification. The use of word banks in teacher-made tests would be left up to the discretion of the student's teachers, since they know the skills they are intending to measure and how this would affect the validity of the test.

Only those standardized reference materials specifically permitted or provided by the Department are allowable for use by students taking State assessments. Word banks are not authorized reference materials; their availability during the administration of a State examination may invalidate the student's test.

12. When may the use of a "spell check device/software" be implemented as an accommodation on State assessments?

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A “spell check device/software” may be used as a testing accommodation on any State assessment or Regents Examination in accordance with the testing accommodations recommendations documented in the student’s IEP/504 plan. For students with disabilities who participate in the Grades 3-8 ELA Tests, the recommendation for this testing accommodation on **all tests** (which would include the Grades 3-8 ELA Tests) is appropriate only for students with disabilities that severely limit their ability to spell words while writing/typing. A recommendation for a “spell check device/software” as a testing accommodation for students in grades 3-8 should be informed by evaluative information indicating that, even after explicit, systematic, and research-based spelling instruction, the student’s disability precludes or severely limits his/her ability to spell words, including words at the early stages of spelling skill development.

13. In order to implement certain accommodations, the need for additional accommodations may need to be recommended. An example is the need for “separate location” when a student uses a scribe. Does the IEP/504 plan need to indicate separate location, or can this be provided at the school’s discretion?

The CSE/Section 504 Committee must anticipate such consequences and must indicate in the IEP/504 plan all such accommodations. Accommodations used in the administration of State assessments to students with an IEP/504 plan may not be devised or put into effect outside of the specifications and requirements directly stated in the student’s IEP/504 plan.

14. What types of calculators are not permitted to be used by students when taking Regents Examinations?

Under no circumstances may calculators with symbol manipulation be made available to students taking Regents Examinations. In addition, calculators that can communicate with other calculators through infrared sensors or any other method of transmission are **not** permitted. The use of operating manuals, instruction or formula cards, or other information concerning the operation of calculators is also **not** permitted during the examinations. Additional information on the use of calculators on secondary-level examinations may be found in the [School Administrator’s Manual for Secondary-Level Examinations](#) available on the Office of State Assessment’s webpage (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/manuals/>).

15. Are students permitted to have sheets of mathematical formulas for use on State assessments?

Please refer to the most current [School Administrator’s Manuals](#) for elementary-, intermediate-, and secondary-level examinations available on the Office of State Assessment’s webpage (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/manuals/>).

16. If a student’s handwriting is illegible, can a scribe be used to rewrite the student’s response?

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If indicated in the IEP/504 plan, the student may have a scribe who rewrites the student's responses as dictated by the student. Documentation in the IEP/504 plan must state "use of scribe for rewriting student's responses as dictated by the student."

17. What type of accommodations are permitted for a student with a disability who is unable to independently manipulate objects during science performance assessments (required labs) due to physical or other impairments?

In general, the types of instructional accommodations provided in the classroom will be permitted as a testing accommodation if indicated in the IEP/504 plan. This includes the use of an aide who will manipulate objects as directed by the student. It is especially important that the student and aide have experience in using this accommodation during instruction and classroom tests.

18. What types of testing accommodations may be considered for students in physical education?

Due to the unique nature of physical education, the accommodations that may be provided to enable students with disabilities to participate in physical education assessments are also unique. Accommodations can include changes in equipment, environment, and/or the basic rules. The following are suggestions for physical education instructional and assessment accommodations for students with disabilities:

- Reduce the size of the playing area
- Reduce the number of participants
- Reduce the time of the task
- Varied size, weight, color of equipment
- Use of brightly colored paint to identify field markings
- Use of cones or markers to indicate field markings
- Field markings may be modified in width
- Use of a beeper ball and/or a localizer to identify bases
- Use of hand signals or teammate shoulder tap to start and stop play
- Allow use of alternative communication methods (e.g., interpreter, picture board, flash cards, etc.) by student
- Select the court environment with the least noise
- Increase the size of the playing area to allow the student more personal space and less likelihood of contact
- Provide verbal cues
- Provide pinch runner for games requiring running

IMPLEMENTING TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

Method of Presentation

19. How is "tests read" administered to students with disabilities as a testing accommodation on State tests?

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Please see [Appendix F](#): *Recommending and Administering Tests Read*.

20. What are the procedures for the use of text-to-speech programs or audio playback devices as testing accommodations when administering State assessments?

Please see [Appendix F](#): *Recommending and Administering Tests Read*.

21. Is it permissible to read information to a student more than once when State assessments are being read?

Yes. For a student who has the accommodation of tests read, questions, passages, and/or directions may be reread to the student, should the student indicate to the reader the need to have an item re-read or repeated during testing.

22. Is it permissible to simplify questions when State assessments are being read?

No. This is not permissible on State assessments, as it would invalidate the examination. However, on teacher-made tests or quizzes, the teacher can make a determination as to whether and the extent to which any clarification may be provided without compromising test validity. Only clarification or simplification of directions is permitted on State assessments when required by the IEP/504 plan.

23. Can questions or multiple-choice answer options be deleted on a State assessment?

No. Individual items or answer options may never be modified or eliminated.

24. Is revised test format (other than Braille or large type) an allowable accommodation on State assessments? If so, who is responsible for revising the test format?

If the student's IEP/504 plan requires a revised test format on State assessments, the principal is responsible for implementing this accommodation. Changes in test format, such as only one item on a page, increased spacing between items, changing size or shape or location of space for answers, etc., can be made by the school. A request to make these types of format changes must be submitted to and approved by the Office of State Assessment. Information on the requirements for submitting reformatting requests is available in Section IV: Implementing Testing Accommodations of this document.

25. May teachers or test proctors implement certain testing accommodations recommended in an IEP/504 plan at their discretion?

No. All testing accommodations recommended in an IEP/504 plan must be consistently implemented on all State and classroom tests/quizzes in accordance with the testing

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conditions and implementation recommendations documented in the student's IEP/504 plan.

Method of Response

26. How should the student's responses be recorded for State assessments if the student's IEP/504 plan accommodations include "use of scribe," "use of recording device," "use of word processor," or "speech-to-text software"?

Teachers should indicate in writing on the test booklet whether the student used a scribe, recording device, word processor, or speech-to-text software. If a student uses a word processor or speech-to-text software, the printed answers must be stapled to the test booklet. For students using scribes, recording devices, large type, or braille editions, responses must be transcribed onto regular test answer documents and test booklets (or entered into the computer-based testing platform) exactly as dictated or recorded.

27. Can a scribe use a word processor to record the student's responses?

Yes. The student's responses typed by the scribe should include the student's name. The student's response typed by the scribe must be printed out and attached to the test booklet.

28. Can a scribe read a student's dictated responses back to the student?

A scribe may read a student's dictated responses back to the student if the student is provided read aloud testing accommodations or if the student is blind or visually impaired.

29. If a student has the testing accommodation of recording answers directly into the booklet, should the teacher transcribe the student's responses to the multiple-choice questions onto the answer sheet?

Yes.

Timing/Scheduling

30. When implementing the accommodation of "extended time," must the student remain in a testing space for the full amount of time, even when the student has confirmed that he/she has completed the test and is prepared to submit test materials?

No. Schools must ensure that students who have "extended time" recommended as a testing accommodation in an IEP/504 plan are provided the full amount of their extended time. If a student who receives extended time has completed testing and is ready to submit materials, determinations on whether the student may leave the testing space are typically determined locally. For State tests, all test administration practices must comply with the provisions in the [School Administrator's Manual](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/manuals/) for each respective test (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/manuals/>).

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31. Is it permissible for students with disabilities whose IEP/504 plan specifies “extended time” to begin a State test earlier in the day than the general administration time?

Yes. Adjustments to the starting time of State assessments may be made solely at the discretion of the principal and do not need to be specified in the IEP/504 plan. However, Department policy governing the Uniform Statewide Admission Deadlines, which are delineated in the [School Administrator’s Manual for Secondary Level Examinations](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/manuals/home.html) (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/manuals/home.html>) must be observed even in the case of students with disabilities. The purpose of these deadlines is to eliminate any possibility of the exchange of information between students at different examination centers.

32. For students with disabilities who have “breaks” recommended as a testing accommodation, are those breaks included in the student’s overall testing time?

Breaks are provided in addition to the student’s overall testing time. For example, a student with a disability may be recommended for testing accommodations that include extended time double the length of the standard administration period and a 10-minute break after 30 minutes of testing. If the student is taking a test for which all students have 40 minutes to complete the test, he or she would have 80 minutes to complete his or her test. In addition to being provided 80 minutes of testing, the student would be provided two 10-minute breaks in accordance with the recommendations in his or her IEP/504 plan.

33. If a student’s IEP or 504 plan documents multiple-day administration of State assessments, and the student has more than one examination in a single day, must he or she begin each examination on the day scheduled for all students?

Yes. Each examination must begin on the day scheduled for its administration, and the student must complete at least one section of each examination begun on a given day. On subsequent days of multiple-day testing, the student is not permitted to resume work on a section that was begun on a previous day and may never alter responses made on a previous day. On a section-by-section* basis, an additional day or more may be provided for completion of the remaining sections of the examination. Students may be provided only a photocopy of the sections they completed on a previous day (photocopied by the school), so that they have access to all information on the test. For more information on administering tests over multiple days, see [Appendix H](#).

* The Department does not define the size or contents of a “section” for the purposes of multiple-day testing. Decisions on how to divide a test for a student with a disability receiving multiple-day testing are made locally.

Setting

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34. Must a separate setting be a separate room, or can a student be in the same room as other students, but in a section away from the group?

Separate setting means a student is administered the test in a separate room apart from the standard setting being used to administer the test. The student can be administered the test individually or in a small group. Small group or individual test administration must be specified in the IEP/504 plan.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

35. If a student who is deaf or hard of hearing is provided the use of a scribe through a sign language interpreter, does the interpreter translate the student's signed response into standard English for the scribe?

Yes. However, for the Grades 3-8 ELA Tests, it would be expected that only students who are deaf or hard of hearing who may have additional disabilities that preclude them from writing their own responses would be using a scribe through a sign language interpreter to respond to questions measuring a student's writing skills.

36. What form of sign language may be used when providing testing accommodations?

Students who use sign language due to being deaf or hard of hearing may use any form of sign language (American Sign Language, Signing Exact English, fingerspelling, etc.). Forms or dialects of sign language from areas in which a language other than English is the primary language (e.g., "Puerto Rican dialect of Spanish sign language") are not allowed on tests of English language proficiency, except as interpretation of directions is allowed.

37. Can the Grades 3-8 ELA Tests be signed to students who are deaf or hard of hearing?

Yes, as appropriate to the unique needs of the student. If a student is deaf or hard of hearing and there is evidence that the student's disability **precludes or severely limits** his or her ability to decode printed text (possibly due to other co-occurring disabilities or long-term language deprivation in early childhood), then the CSE may consider recommending that a sign interpreter translate text for the student as a testing accommodation.

Students with Blindness or Visual Impairment

38. Is it permissible to highlight or use colored pencils on graphs on State assessments to make a graph or illustration more visible for a student with visual impairments?

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Yes. This is permissible only if indicated in the student's IEP/504 plan as a testing accommodation needed in order to enhance the contrast on the item for the student or to help distinguish art from text. In this case, the entire graphic must be highlighted or colored, so that the student's attention may not be drawn to a particular element presented in the graph or illustration. Please note: schools may permit students to use highlighters when taking State assessments. Proctors must monitor student use of highlighters to ensure that they are **not** being used by students to record their responses to questions that must be answered in pencil and that the use of the highlighters does not obscure the students' responses to open-ended questions.

39. What is the procedure for obtaining braille or large type editions of State assessments?

The school principal may indicate the need for large type or braille editions in the Online Examination Request System prior to each examination period. Schools are cautioned to observe the published deadlines for all examination requests, but especially for braille editions, which are produced on an as-needed basis.

40. Does the Department delete items that cannot be reproduced in braille?

On occasion, the Department will revise a test question on the braille edition of a State assessment to make it accessible to braille readers. When it is impossible, even with revision, to make a test question accessible, the Department will replace the item with another item measuring a similar skill. When this occurs, the Department provides special instructions for scoring the affected braille edition.

41. Is it permissible to use templates or graph paper as a testing accommodation for State assessments?

Yes. Templates and graph paper enable some students to maintain their place or record answers.

42. What types of accommodations are permitted for a student with a visual impairment who is unable to see specimens/objects or see through a microscope during science labs, while taking the Grades 4 and 8 Science performance assessments, or during other science class activities or assessments?

In general, the types of instructional accommodations provided in the classroom that are used to enable the student to learn will be permitted as a testing accommodation if indicated in the IEP/504 plan. This includes assistive technology devices, or the use of an aide who will describe to the student what is seen. If a human aide is used in this case, the student will draw conclusions and analyze verbal data to make a response. Students must have instruction and practice in using this accommodation during instruction, classroom, and State tests. Aides must receive training and experience to appropriately implement this accommodation.

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43. Are there special considerations when providing the testing accommodation, “use of a scribe” or “use of recording device” for students who are blind?

Yes. Students who are blind are **not** required to provide capitalization, punctuation, and/or paragraphing when using the testing accommodation “use of a scribe” or “use of recording device.” For additional guidance on the use of a scribe, see [Appendix G](#).

Students with Disabilities Who are English Language Learners/ Multilingual Learners

44. What types of testing accommodations may be provided to students with disabilities who are ELLs/MLLs?

All students who are ELLs/MLLs are entitled to certain testing accommodations during the period of time that they are identified as ELL pursuant to Part 154 of the Regulations of the Commissioner and for up to two years immediately after they have achieved proficiency in English on the NYSESLAT alone or in combination with other criteria. For students with disabilities who are also ELLs/MLLs, it is the responsibility of the CSE/Section 504 Committee to identify in the student’s IEP/504 plan any individual testing accommodations needed by the student because of his or her disability, which may include, but are not limited to, the same testing accommodations that the student is entitled to as an ELL/MLL or Former ELL/MLL student.

The NYSESLAT is New York State’s test of English language proficiency. It is designed specifically to assess the English language proficiency of ELLs/MLLs. Therefore, some testing accommodations ordinarily permitted for ELLs/MLLs taking other State tests (e.g., a bilingual glossary) are not permitted for the NYSESLAT. However, if a student with a disability who is also an ELL/MLL is participating in the NYSESLAT, he/she would be provided the testing accommodations specified in his/her IEP/504 plan to meet the student’s disability-related needs as consistent with Department policy.

Policies on testing accommodations for students with disabilities and ELLs/MLLs participating in State assessments may be found in the [School Administrator's Manual](#) for each respective State assessment (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/manuals/>).

45. Can the testing accommodation “tests read” be provided to students with disabilities for the Reading questions on the NYSESLAT?

Beginning with the 2017 administration of the NYSESLAT, students with disabilities whose IEPs/504 plans document that tests be read aloud (by way of human reader or technology) must be provided this testing accommodation in accordance with the specifications in the IEP/504 plan for all sections of the NYSESLAT including Reading. Recommending the accommodation of “tests read” on **all** tests for students in the elementary and intermediate grades is typically appropriate for those students who have disabilities that preclude or severely limit the ability to decode or access print. Recommending the “tests read” accommodation for all tests, including tests primarily

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assessing reading comprehension (e.g., the Reading section of the NYSESLAT), may not be appropriate for students with mild or moderate reading disabilities who may be provided the “tests read” accommodation on other sections of the NYSESLAT (e.g., Listening, Speaking, and Writing). Providing read-aloud accommodations for students who do not need them may have a negative effect on such students’ test performance, and, in the case of the NYSESLAT, may affect a student’s identification for subsequent services. For more information on recommending and implementing “tests read,” please refer to [Appendix F](#).

OTHER

46. If testing accommodations such as, “use of spell checking device” or “tests read” are recommended in the student’s IEP/ 504 plan, should these skills continue to be a part of that student’s instruction?

Yes. Testing accommodations allow students with disabilities to demonstrate their content knowledge in all subject areas by reducing the barriers caused by a disability. Testing accommodations do not replace the need for high-quality instruction and assessments for students who receive accommodations in certain areas. Spelling and reading skills are a part of the State’s learning standards and must continue to be a part of the student’s instruction. For students who are provided accommodations such as “tests read” or “use of spell-checking device,” schools must consider and recommend, as appropriate, services and supports designed to improve the student’s foundational reading and spelling skills. Goals should also be developed to address the student’s reading and spelling challenges.

47. Are graphic organizers permitted on State assessments?

Only the blank shell of a graphic organizer would be permitted. There must be no words, directions, or headings on the paper. For those students who have been taught to use this tool for writing, it is best to teach them to develop their own graphic organizer similar to ones used in the classroom. A student who cannot draw his or her own graphic organizer can have a scribe draw one for them as directed by the student.

48. What options are available when a student is scheduled for more than one State examination in a single day?

When the CSE/Section 504 Committee discusses and recommends appropriate testing accommodations for a student with a disability, the discussion must include consideration of any State assessments the student is scheduled to take that year. The CSE/Section 504 Committee should receive information about the examination schedule from school officials as soon as it is disseminated. If, based on the courses the student is enrolled in, he or she will be expected to take more than one State assessment in a single day, the following options should be considered:

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- Consider the testing accommodation of multiple day administration of State assessments. (See [Appendix H](#))
- Postpone one of the examinations until the following administration period. Schools are encouraged to provide review and preparation for affected students prior to any examination(s) that is/are postponed for this reason. When postponing one or more examinations to the August administration period, in order to provide the student with the additional time needed and still have time for scoring, the school must remember that the August examination period is only two days long. No student, whether identified as having a disability or not, should be scheduled to take more than two examinations during the August administration.
- Consider the option of having the student take a Department-approved alternative test. Many of these examinations are offered several times a year. Information on [Department-approved alternative tests](#) is available on the Office of State Assessment's webpage (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/hsgen/>).

49. What are the consequences if a school fails to provide the testing accommodations required by the student's IEP/504 plan?

The school's failure to provide the testing accommodations required by the student's IEP/504 plan may result in the invalidation of the student's test score.

For elementary- and intermediate-level tests, the school would report the test as a misadministration.

For secondary-level tests required for graduation, if the student fails the test or is not satisfied with the score, the school would report the test as a misadministration and the principal could request the Office of State Assessment to invalidate the score so that it does not appear on the student's record. The student will then have to retake the examination during a subsequent administration period. If the student does pass the test and is satisfied with the score, it can be considered a valid score.

50. Will a student's testing accommodations documented in an IEP/504 plan be available in postsecondary settings?

As students with disabilities plan for their transition to postsecondary settings, it is important for CSEs/Section 504 Committees to have documented the student's use of accommodations. While colleges and universities may or may not allow all of the testing accommodations specified in a student's IEP or 504 plan, it is important that students have documentation of the testing accommodations used in high school to help inform decisions regarding continued access to accommodations in college and career settings. This documentation will support the student in advocating for his or her accommodation needs in a variety of postsecondary settings.

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