

Critical Information about Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Taking STAAR, STAAR Spanish, STAAR L, STAAR Modified, and TELPAS

This critical information outlines the appropriate use of accommodations for students with disabilities. For the purposes of the statewide assessments, students needing accommodations due to a disability include

- a student with an identified disability who receives special education services and meets established eligibility criteria for certain accommodations
- a student with an identified disability who receives Section 504 services and meets established eligibility criteria for certain accommodations
- a student with a disabling condition who does not receive special education or Section 504 services but meets established eligibility criteria for certain accommodations

For students who receive special education or Section 504 services, the decision for a student to use accommodations during the statewide assessments is made by the ARD committee or Section 504 placement committee. In those rare instances where a student does not receive services but meets the eligibility criteria because of a disabling condition, the decision about using accommodations on the assessments is made by the appropriate team of people at the campus level, such as the Response to Intervention (RTI) team or student assistance team.

Understanding the basic principles of accommodations helps ensure their appropriate use in all educational settings.

Accommodations



- are changes to instructional materials, procedures, or techniques that allow a student with a disability to participate meaningfully in grade-level or course instruction
- should be effective in allowing a student access to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)
- must be individualized for each student
- are intended to reduce the effect of a student's disability
- can change over the course of the school year or from year to year based on student needs
- may be appropriate for classroom use but may not be appropriate or allowed for use on a statewide assessment
- should be documented in the appropriate student paperwork
- should be evaluated regularly to determine effectiveness and to help plan for accommodations the student will need each year



- are not necessary for every student
- are not changes to the performance criteria of an assignment or assessment
- are not changes to the content being assessed and should not replace the teaching of subject-specific knowledge and skills as outlined in the TEKS
- should not be provided to an entire group of students, such as those in the same classroom or disability category, as a "one-size-fits-all" accommodation
- are not intended to provide a student with a disability an advantage (e.g., increase a passing score to a higher score)
- should not be provided to a student without evidence of effectiveness from year to year

Accommodations During Classroom Instruction and Testing

Accommodations are changes to the materials, procedures, or techniques that allow a student with a disability to participate meaningfully in grade-level or course instruction. The use of accommodations occurs primarily during classroom instruction as educators utilize various instructional strategies to meet the needs of each student, thus allowing each student to maximize his or her academic potential. In many instances, students use an accommodation only on a temporary basis while they are learning a new skill. In some cases, though, a student may require the accommodation throughout the school year or over several years.

In order to make accommodation decisions for students, educators should have knowledge of the TEKS and how a student performs in relation to them. Educators should also collect and analyze data pertaining to the use and effectiveness of accommodations (e.g., assignment/test scores with and without the accommodation, observational reports) so that informed educational decisions can be made for each student. By analyzing data, an educator may be able to see that the accommodation becomes inappropriate or unnecessary over time due to the student's age or changing needs. Or it may confirm for the educator that the student still struggles in certain areas and should continue to use the accommodation.

Accommodations During Statewide Assessments

Educators, parents, and students must understand that accommodations provided during classroom instruction and testing may differ from accommodations allowed for use on statewide assessments. Classroom instruction is when educators develop and implement unique and individualized instructional strategies to meet the educational needs of each student. However, the statewide assessment is a standardized tool for measuring every student's learning in a reliable, valid, and secure manner. Certain accommodations used in the classroom would invalidate the content being assessed or compromise the security and integrity of the statewide assessment. For this reason, not all accommodations suitable for instruction are allowed during the statewide assessments.

The decision to use an accommodation during a statewide assessment should be made on an individual-student basis and take into consideration the needs of the student and whether the student routinely receives the accommodation during classroom instruction and testing. A student who is unaccustomed to using a particular accommodation may be hindered rather than helped by an accommodation not routinely used. However, this does not mean that the accommodation must be used every day during instruction. Routine accommodation use, as defined by TEA, results in two important outcomes:

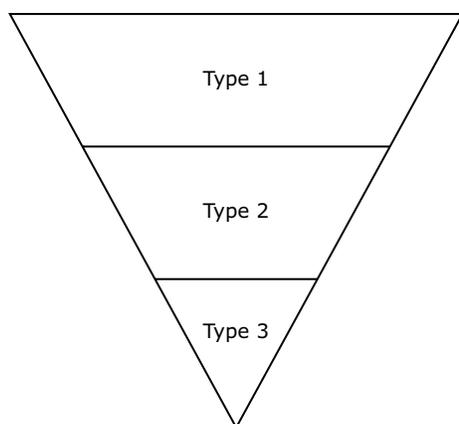
1. The student has used the accommodation often enough during classroom instruction and testing that he or she is able to use it independently during the statewide assessment. Independent accommodation use is only applicable to some accommodations (e.g., calculator) and not to others (e.g., oral administration).
2. The accommodation has proven to be effective in meeting the student's specific needs, as evidenced by student scores or teacher observations with and without accommodation use. This means that it is acceptable and appropriate to occasionally withhold an accommodation in order to confirm or deny its effectiveness.

It is important to keep in mind that the policies for accommodation use on statewide assessments should not limit an educator's ability to develop individualized materials and techniques to facilitate student learning. Instruction is when learning occurs. Instruction comes first, lasts longer, and can be customized to meet the needs of each student. Unlike instruction, statewide assessments must be standardized so that student results can be compared and interpreted.

Note: Refer to the “Optional Test Administration Procedures and Materials” document for procedures and materials that can be used on statewide assessments. These are not considered testing accommodations and are available to any student who needs them. A link is provided on the Accommodations for Students with Disabilities webpage.

The Accommodation Triangle

After determining the instructional accommodation(s) that is effective for a student, the educator should investigate whether each accommodation is allowed on a statewide assessment. The Accommodation Triangle below organizes accommodations for students with disabilities by type in accordance with the specificity of the eligibility criteria and the need for TEA approval. The accommodation type should be recorded on the student’s answer document. The complete Accommodation Triangle, with links to each accommodation policy, is available on the Accommodations for Students with Disabilities webpage. Note that not all accommodations are applicable to all assessments.



Type 1 Accommodations: This type of accommodation is available for students who have a specific need and who routinely, independently, and effectively use the accommodation during classroom instruction and testing. It is not necessary to submit an Accommodation Request Form to TEA.

Type 2 Accommodations: This type of accommodation includes the requirements of Type 1, along with additional specific eligibility criteria. It is not necessary to submit an Accommodation Request Form to TEA.

Type 3 Accommodations: This type of accommodation requires the submission of an Accommodation Request Form to TEA. For accommodations listed in the Accommodation Triangle under Type 3, the appropriate team of people at the campus level (e.g., ARD committee, Section 504 placement committee, RTI team, student assistance team) determines whether the student meets all of the specific eligibility criteria and, if so, submits an Accommodation Request Form to TEA. Accommodation Request Forms must be received by TEA according to the posted deadlines. Late requests will NOT be processed unless circumstances involving the student change after the deadline (e.g., newly enrolled student, medical emergency, updated ARD committee decisions). The request must be approved by TEA before a student can use the accommodation on the statewide assessment. Any accommodation that requires the submission and approval of an Accommodation Request Form must be documented in the student’s paperwork as “pending TEA approval.” In the event that a request is denied, the campus should be prepared to meet the student’s needs with allowable accommodations.

Planning for Testing Accommodations

Careful review of state accommodation policies is required so that students receive only those accommodations that are allowed or approved by TEA for use on statewide assessments. Testing coordinators, test administrators, and other campus personnel involved in statewide testing must consider the following questions related to providing accommodations on test day.

- Which students will receive accommodations on test day?
- What special arrangements need to be considered for students who will use accommodations on test day? For example, ensuring that calculators and other equipment have sufficient batteries or choosing separate settings for students who use certain accommodations requires advance planning.

- What staff training is needed to properly provide certain testing accommodations? For instance, transcribing a student's responses onto an answer document or providing an oral administration requires advance training.
- What campus and district procedures are in place to ensure test security?
- What procedure is in place and who is responsible for recording accommodations on a student's answer document?

Accommodations in Unexpected or Emergency Situations

Unexpected or emergency situations may occur just prior to or on the day of the statewide assessment that necessitate the use of a testing accommodation. For example, a student may arrive at school without his or her prescribed eyeglasses and need a large-print test booklet, or a student may have a broken arm and need his or her responses transcribed onto the answer document. In unexpected or emergency situations, testing coordinators should first review the Optional Test Administration Procedures and Materials and then review the Accommodation Triangle to see if anything can meet the student's needs.

When considering how to meet a student's needs in an unexpected or emergency situation, encouraging student independence should be a priority. For example, if a student who broke his dominant hand is able to write math computations on a white board with his non-dominant hand and dictate his responses for the test administrator to transcribe, then the allowance of scratch paper or another workspace under Optional Test Administration Procedures and Materials and Basic Transcribing is more appropriate than requesting a Mathematics Scribe to write all computations.

If an Optional Test Administration Procedure/Material, a Type 1, or Type 2 accommodation can meet the student's needs, the testing coordinator does not need to contact TEA. If a student requires a Type 3 accommodation, the testing coordinator must immediately contact a member of TEA's Accommodations Task Force for permission and additional instructions. In these situations, there is no expectation that the student would have routinely received the accommodation during previous classroom instruction and testing. However, it is recommended that the student (and the test administrator, if applicable) be given the opportunity to practice using the new accommodation prior to testing, if time permits.

After testing, the accommodation type should be recorded on the student's answer document or in the Assessment Management System (for online administrations). In addition, the situation and accommodation should be taken into consideration when interpreting test results. Be aware that the allowance of a testing accommodation in an unexpected or emergency situation applies to the current test administration only and does not transfer to subsequent test administrations.

For additional questions about testing accommodations in unexpected or emergency situations, contact a member of TEA's Accommodations Task Force at (512) 463-9536.

Recording Accommodations on the Student's Answer Document

Information about students' access to testing accommodations on statewide assessments is used to analyze policy decisions and evaluate accommodation use across the state. Campus personnel must be trained in accurately recording accommodations on each student's answer document or in the Assessment Management System (for online administrations) according to the accommodation type, which is indicated at the top of each accommodation policy document. Mark the accommodation type for each accommodation that is documented and made available to a student, even if the student did not use the accommodation during testing. More information is available on the Accommodations for Students with Disabilities webpage.

TELPAS Accommodations

The accommodation information in this document applies to the TELPAS reading tests for grades 2–12. For information about accommodations for the holistically rated assessments, refer to the *2013 TELPAS Manual for Raters and Test Administrators*.

TELPAS and STAAR L Paper Administrations

TELPAS reading tests for grades 2–12 and STAAR L assessments are administered as online testing programs. However, in rare instances in which the use of an accommodation is not feasible or appropriate for an online administration, or if the administration of an online test is inappropriate due to a student's particular disability, a special request may be made to TEA for approval to administer a paper test booklet (large print, if applicable). An Accommodation Request Form must NOT be used for these requests. Refer to the *2013 District and Campus Coordinator Manual* for more information about the special request process for a paper administration.