

National Center on Educational Outcomes

Special Topic Area:

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Introduction

Accommodations are changes in testing materials or procedures that enable students to participate in assessments in a way that allows abilities to be assessed rather than disabilities. They are provided to "level the playing field." Without accommodations, the assessment may not accurately measure the student's knowledge and skills.

Many states have grappled with their accommodations policies for students with disabilities. We know that all states have written guidelines to indicate which accommodations are "allowed." Accommodations are generally grouped into the following categories:

- Presentation (e.g., repeat directions, read aloud, large print, Braille, etc.)
- Equipment and material (e.g., calculator, amplification equipment, manipulatives, etc.)
- Response (e.g., mark answers in book, scribe records response, point, etc.)
- Setting (e.g., study carrel, student's home, separate room, etc.)
- Timing/Scheduling (e.g., extended time, frequent breaks, etc.)

Although there is variability in the categories used across states, and often extreme variability in specific accommodations allowed, there now is common federal legislation. Several federal laws, including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 and 2004 call for accommodations to be provided as necessary to allow students with disabilities to participate in assessments. IDEA 2004 also requires states to have accommodation guidelines for assessments, and the report the number of students using accommodations during general and district assessments.

Research on accommodations is growing rapidly. The research includes policy studies, evaluation studies, and experimental comparisons.

[NCEO Online Accommodations Bibliography](#). Search a compilation of empirical research studies on the effects of various testing accommodations for students with disabilities.

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