

# Critical Information about Accommodations for Students with Disabilities taking State Assessments

This document outlines the appropriate use of accommodations for students with disabilities taking the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®), STAAR Spanish, STAAR L, and STAAR A. Information about accommodations for students taking STAAR Alternate 2 or the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) can be found in the applicable test administration manuals. For purposes of state assessments, students needing accommodations due to a disability include

- students with an identified disability who receive special education services and meet established eligibility criteria for certain accommodations
- students with an identified disability who receive Section 504 services and meet established eligibility criteria for certain accommodations
- students with a disabling condition who do not receive special education or Section 504 services but meet established eligibility criteria for certain accommodations

For students who receive special education or Section 504 services, the decision to use accommodations during the state assessments is made by the admission, review, and dismissal (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
- might be appropriate for classroom use but might not be appropriate or allowed for use on a state 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 an advantage to a student with a disability (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 Classroom 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 use 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 might 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 can determine if the accommodation becomes inappropriate or unnecessary over time due to the student's age or changing needs. Likewise, data can confirm for the educator that the student still struggles in certain areas and should continue to use the accommodation.

## Accommodations During State Assessments

Educators, parents, and students must understand that accommodations provided during classroom instruction and classroom testing might differ from accommodations allowed for use on state assessments. While classroom instruction can be individualized to meet the unique educational needs of each student, the state 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 state assessment. For this reason, not all accommodations suitable for instruction are allowed during the state assessments.

The decision to use an accommodation during a state 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 classroom testing. A student who is unaccustomed to using a particular accommodation might 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 the Texas Education Agency (TEA), results in two important outcomes.

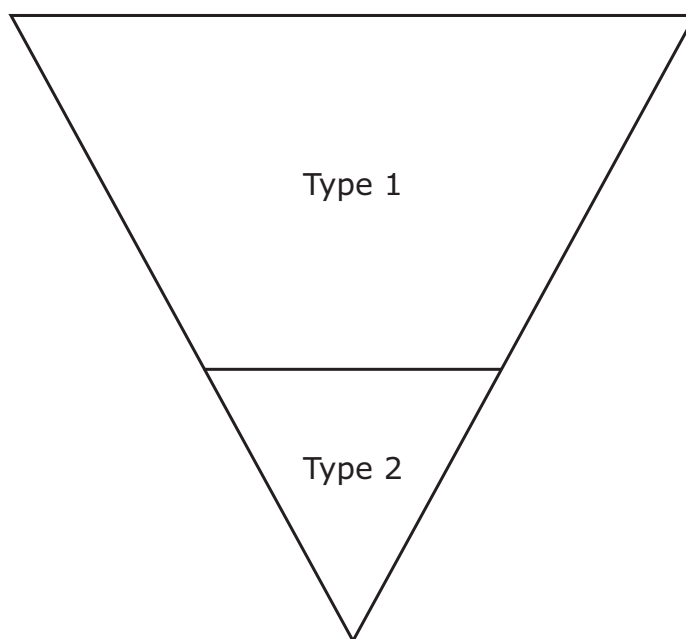
1. The student has used the accommodation often enough during classroom instruction and testing that he or she is able to use it independently during the state assessment. Independent accommodation use is applicable to some accommodations (e.g., calculator) but not to others (e.g., oral administration).
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.

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

**NOTE:** Test administration procedures and materials that any student may use on state assessments are described in the Allowable Test Administration Procedures and Materials document on the TEA's Accommodations for Students with Disabilities webpage. These are not considered testing accommodations and are allowed for any student who needs them.

## The Accommodation Triangle

After determining which accommodations are effective for a student, the educator should investigate whether each accommodation is allowed on a particular state assessment, as not all accommodations are applicable to all assessments. The Accommodation Triangle below organizes accommodations for students with disabilities by type. The complete Accommodation Triangle, with links to each accommodation policy, is available on the TEA's Accommodations for Students with Disabilities webpage.



Type 1—accommodations approved locally: This type of accommodation is available for students who meet specific eligibility criteria. The decision to provide a Type 1 accommodation to a student is made by the appropriate team of people at the campus level (e.g., ARD committee, ARD committee in conjunction with LPAC, Section 504 placement committee, RTI team, student assistance team). An Accommodation Request Form should **NOT** be submitted to TEA.

Type 2—accommodations requiring TEA approval: This type of accommodation requires the submission of an Accommodation Request Form to TEA. For accommodations listed in the Accommodation Triangle under Type 2, the appropriate team of people at the campus level (e.g., ARD committee, ARD committee in conjunction with LPAC, 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 state 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 state assessments. Testing coordinators, test administrators, and other campus personnel involved in state 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 the answer document or in the Texas Assessment Management System for online tests?