General Instructions for Administering State Assessments to Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Introduction

This document is intended to help district and campus personnel and test administrators understand and meet the unique testing needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Districts should plan accordingly to ensure that those who are administering a test to a student who is deaf or hard of hearing receive training to prepare for this type of test administration and sign a security oath prior to the test administration. Unless otherwise indicated in this document, regular test administration procedures should be followed when testing a student who is deaf or hard of hearing.

Who May Serve as Test Administrators?

Test administrators should be professionals who hold valid education credentials, such as Texas educator certificates or permits, or who are under the supervision of professionals who hold such credentials. Certified and noncertified paraprofessionals who are currently employed by the district and who routinely work with students in the classroom may serve as test administrators, monitors, or assistants, provided that they are trained in test administration procedures and that they sign a security oath. Paraprofessionals must be supervised, either directly or indirectly, by a certified professional on the same campus throughout the test administration. Refer to the *District and Campus Coordinator Resources* for more information.

If a student's primary access to the TEKS is provided by a deaf educator in a classroom setting, then the deaf educator would be the test administrator. In some cases, a certified sign language interpreter may be needed to facilitate communication between the test administrator and student. Deaf educators and certified sign language interpreters who are employees of the school district should follow the general guidelines outlined in the appropriate test administrator manual regarding test administrator responsibilities.

Certified sign language interpreters who are not employees of the district are not allowed to administer tests and therefore may not be left unattended with secure testing materials. They may only facilitate communication between the test administrator and student. However, because of exposure to secure test content, a certified sign language interpreter who is not employed by the district must be trained in test administration procedures, sign a security oath, and be supervised at all times by a certified professional who is employed by the district.

Sign Language and Oral Interpretation

If a student is eligible to receive an oral/signed administration, the test administrator or certified sign language interpreter must be trained in the procedures specific to this type of administration. Guidelines for providing an oral/signed administration can be found in the Oral/Signed Administration Guidelines document located on the Accommodation Resources webpage and must be used in conjunction with these instructions when training test administrators.

Proctor codes will be available to district testing coordinators and assistants approximately one week prior to testing in the STAAR Assessment Management System to download and distribute to test administrators providing a signed administration of an online STAAR test.

TEA does not specify the sign language to be used during a test administration. The test administrator should employ the sign language that the student routinely uses as part of daily instruction.

Designated Supports for Testing

Designated supports policy documents can be found on the Accommodation Resources webpage. Designated supports used during a state assessment must be routinely used during classroom instruction and classroom testing. All materials and equipment needed by the student should be furnished before testing begins. Educators must communicate with the campus testing coordinator regarding supports that are documented in each student's IEP and that are allowed or approved for use during the state assessment.

There are a number of designated supports for testing that are commonly used during a test administration for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Students who are eligible for oral/signed administration and content and language supports who are deaf and hard of hearing will take the STAAR assessments online. A signed administration is allowed for parts of the test that can be read aloud but cannot be accessed through text-to-speech. Test administrators must be trained using the Oral/Signed Administration Guidelines and also read these guidelines for signing test content.

Beginning in spring 2019, TEA will be offering a new personal needs and preferences (PNP) option available in the STAAR Online Testing Platform (SOTP). Students eligible for an oral/signed administration will have access to American Sign Language (ASL) videos through the SOTP. This PNP option will be available for online administrations of all grades and subjects of STAAR (only English versions). It is important to note that ASL videos are not available for content and language supports. In these instances, the test administrator may sign test content as previously indicated. Students with access to this PNP will click on an ASL icon at the top of the screen, and a video of a person signing applicable test content with a closed captioning option will appear. Students will have the ability to play the video as many times as necessary and will also be able to pause, fast forward, and rewind the video. If a student needs signing support from a test administrator in addition to the ASL videos (e.g., student does not understand a sign being used in the video), this is allowed as long as the requirements for a signed administration are adhered to. These new PNP functionalities will be available in a practice test for students to become familiar with the functionality of the videos.

Sign Language Dictionary

When a dictionary is a required part of standard test administration procedures, a sign language dictionary may be used. Refer to the STAAR® Dictionary Policy, located on the STAAR Program and Policy Highlights page in the *Coordinator Resources*. The dictionary must be commercially produced. Teacher-made, student-made, and subject-specific dictionaries are not allowed.

Transcribing a Student's Signed Responses to the Writing Prompts

For students who have a TEA-approved accommodation request, a trained test administrator may record a student's signed responses to the writing prompts onto the answer document or in the STAAR Online Testing Platform (using the student's test ticket) for online administrations. Refer to the Complex Transcribing policy document. The student's responses must be recorded exactly as the student signs according to all procedures outlined in this document. Translating the student's responses into English prior to recording them onto the answer document or in the Online Testing Platform is not allowed.

Test Administration Directions: Signing, Orally Projecting, Photocopying, or Amplifying

Allowable accessibility features can be found on the Accommodation Resources webpage. These include signing or orally interpreting test administration directions to students. Test administration directions may be further clarified or interpreted as long as the substance of the directions is not changed. This applies to directions given either before or after the test. When signing test administration directions, there is no need for the test administrator to view confidential test materials.

Test administration directions do not contain secure information, and therefore may be projected or photocopied for students who want to read the print directions as the test administrator signs them.

A student who is deaf or hard of hearing may use an amplification device, such as a frequency modulated (FM) system.

Test Content: Projecting or Photocopying

When a student is eligible for an oral/signed administration and needs test content signed, it may be necessary for the test content to be projected onto a screen so that the student can access the test in both print, sign and/or through speech reading. Projection devices that do not involve the photocopying of secure test content are preferred and are allowable accessibility features.

Proctor test tickets are used by test administrators to log in to a STAAR test in the Online Testing Platform. The test can then be projected onto a screen for students to access during a signed administration (including an administration accessed by speech reading).

Projection devices that involve the photocopying of secure test content require the submission of an "Other" Accommodation Request Form. For cases in which this designated support is necessary for a group of students, one request form may be used if additional information is included that indicates the number of students receiving the support. Specific guidelines related to photocopying test materials will be provided to districts with any approved Accommodation Request Form.

Test Content: Signing, Orally Interpreting, or Amplifying

Test content can be signed, orally interpreted, or amplified for students who are deaf or hard of hearing if the student meets the eligibility criteria for an oral/signed administration. The general test administration procedures intended for all students must also be followed for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Any test administrator administering an oral/signed administration must be trained on the Oral Administration Guidelines. Refer to the specific accommodation policies or test administrator manuals for certain assessments for information about when the test administrator may sign or orally interpret all or only certain parts of a state assessment. Test administrators conducting an oral/signed administration must be aware that they are viewing secure test content. Responding to test items, making notes about test questions, and discussing the content of the test at any time are prohibited.

Procedures Specific to Signing Test Content

The sign language used for signed administrations should be consistent with the sign language used during classroom instruction. When providing a signed administration of a test to a student who is deaf or hard of hearing, the objective is to provide the same level of access to the printed information that would be provided to a hearing student who receives an oral presentation.

The following are guidelines for deciding what sign to use when signing test content during a state assessment.

A. **If a sign for a word or phrase exists, the test administrator should use the sign when the word or phrase occurs in print on the test.** Signs that are commonly used in sign language are allowable in the signed administration of state assessments.

   Occasionally a commonly used sign that is "conceptually accurate" may appear to give the student an unfair advantage; however, conceptual accuracy is a critical component of American Sign Language and most sign systems. Conceptually accurate signs incorporate meaning in the production of the sign. For example, if an item asks the student to identify a triangle, the commonly used sign is a pantomimed drawing of a triangle. This is the commonly accepted sign used in conversation and instruction and therefore should be the sign that is used when the English word "triangle" appears in the test. Fingerspelling is not an acceptable substitution because it increases the difficulty of the item by requiring the student to recognize "triangle" by its spelling. A hearing student would not be required to recognize a word by its spelling in an oral administration; therefore, it should not be required of a student who is deaf.

B. **If a sign for a word or phrase has been locally developed and routinely used in instruction, the test administrator may use the sign when the word or phrase occurs in print on the test.** For much of the vocabulary used in instruction, there are not commonly used signs. In many cases, teachers or sign language interpreters will develop signs for frequently used vocabulary, with the understanding that these are locally developed signs for a particular instructional setting. These locally developed signs may be used in a signed administration if they are regularly used during instruction.

   An example of a locally developed sign might be for the English word "fission." It is not a commonly used word and it would be extremely rare to find it in any sign language dictionary. However, if "fission" is used frequently during science instruction, the teacher or sign language interpreter might develop a sign to be used only in the instructional setting. The concept of "splitting apart" might be incorporated into the formation of the sign. It would be allowable to use this locally developed sign in the testing situation. Conceptual accuracy in a sign that exists or in a sign that has been locally developed is a key component of sign language and should not be denied to the sign language user.

C. **If there is no commonly accepted sign for a word or phrase and a local sign has not been developed, the test administrator must determine if the word or phrase IS or IS NOT the concept being assessed.**

   If the word or phrase **IS** the concept being assessed, the test administrator must fingerspell the word. It is not acceptable to create new signs or to use an equivalent or expansion to explain vocabulary that is being assessed. Consider this sample question:

   Which best describes one of the subatomic particles that could be found at location X in the model of an atom shown above?

The phrase "subatomic particles" is the concept being assessed. Therefore, if a sign for this word does not exist or has not been locally developed, the test administrator must fingerspell it.

If the word or phrase **IS NOT** the concept being assessed, the test administrator may use a reasonable equivalent or expansion. The test administrator has more flexibility when signing words or phrases that are not the concepts being assessed. Consider this sample question:

What is the range of the sale prices for a Stunt-Pro bicycle at these stores?

It is unlikely that a sign exists or has been locally developed for "Stunt-Pro." However, because this is not the concept being assessed, the test administrator may provide a reasonable equivalent or expansion.

Following these guidelines may require a test administrator to preview test content in order to properly prepare for a signed administration. Previewing test content is only allowed on the day the test is administered and should be done in strict accordance with all standard test security policies and procedures outlined in the Security section of the *Coordinator Resources*.

> Contact TEA's Student Assessment Division at 512-463-9536 if you have any questions regarding the administration of state assessments to students who are deaf or hard of hearing.