



What Parents Need to Know About Accessibility Supports for Statewide Assessments

Background

All students in Delaware, including students with disabilities, are required to participate in state and district-wide assessments. A small population of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities will take an alternate assessment. Most students, however, will participate in the regular assessments, either with or without accessibility supports according to their needs.

Delaware regulations state: 3.1.1 All students in tested grades in need of designated supports and accommodations shall be tested according to the Department's Accessibility Guidelines for the Delaware System of Student Assessments (DeSSA), as the same may from time to time be amended.

The information in this handout applies to students who will be taking the DeSSA general content area assessments.

In order to make well-informed decisions about accessibility supports for testing, it is important for parents to know the following information:

When does the team need to address the need for state or district-wide testing accessibility supports?

The team will discuss the student's accessibility needs every year and for each grade that the student participates in state and/or district assessments. The team documents decisions regarding the student's participation and outlines the different levels of support the student will receive.

What are accessibility supports?

Accessibility supports, sometimes referred to as accommodations, are the tools a student needs in order to receive equitable access to the state assessment. These supports can either be embedded or non-embedded. Embedded supports are provided inside the testing platform and non-embedded supports are provided outside the testing platform.

Is there a difference between accommodations and modifications?

Yes. Accommodations involve how students access the test. Modifications change the construct of the test.

What are the different kinds of accessibility supports?

There are three kinds of accessibility supports available to students: Universal Tools, Designated Supports and Accommodations.

- *Universal Tools* are available to all students who participate in statewide assessments.
- *Designated Supports* are available for general education students who need supports, English Learners and for students with IEPs or 504 Plans.
- *Accommodations* are available only to students with IEPs or 504 plans.

Do accessibility supports change the tests?

Accessibility supports help students demonstrate your child's knowledge without lowering or changing the standard or level of the test. Supports provide the student with the tools they need to access the assessment.

Adjustments may be made in the way the information is presented; the way the student responds; the setting in which the test is taken; or in the timing and scheduling of the test.

For example, a student with a fine motor impairment might need a note taker to write their answers. The test is the same, only the conditions under which it is taken is different.

What is a modification? Are there modifications on the general content area assessments?

A modification is a change in the testing conditions that results in a change in the level of difficulty. The general content area assessments are not modified. The ELA and Math assessments are adaptive and adjust according the student's ability, giving students a more or less difficult item on grade level.

Does Delaware have a modified assessment?

Delaware's alternate assessment is a modified assessment that is less in breadth, depth and complexity. To participate in this assessment, a student must be found eligible by the IEP team.

How will the team determine what supports my child needs?

Through input provided by the student, the classroom teacher, parents, specialists, therapists, the team determines the best supports that meets the student's needs.

This may be a school-based MTSS team, a 504 Plan or an IEP team.

Can the team decide to provide any support they wish for a student?

Supports must not invalidate the student's score on the test. Delaware provides a list of state approved accommodations in its Accessibility Guidelines Manual (AG) which is released yearly with updated supports and relevant information.

If the student needs a support not listed in the AG, it may be requested to the Delaware Department of Education. The school designee would complete this process.

Will the accommodations for statewide testing be the same as the accommodations my child receives in the classroom during the regular school day?

Supports provided for a student during statewide testing must also be provided during classroom instruction and assessments. However, there may be some other classroom instructional supports that will not be appropriate for statewide assessments. Not all supports received inside the classroom are able to be used on statewide assessments.

What if I disagree with the school about what supports are needed?

If you disagree with the school about the supports the students needs, you can state your disagreement at the team meeting. If you were not present at the meeting, you can send your concerns in writing. You can also request a mediation or hearing.

Why is it important to record supports my child receives? (504 Plan, IEP etc.)

In order for supports to be effective, they need to be consistently provided. School personnel changes frequently, so it is important to have a record of the agreed-upon supports. In addition, documentation of testing accommodations may be required for a student requesting accommodations for the SAT.

Where are the supports recorded?

Supports are recorded on Appendix A-1 of the Accessibility Guidelines (AG) and are usually attached to a student file such as an IEP.

Does receiving accessibility supports on statewide assessments lower my child's performance score on statewide assessments?

No. Accessibility Supports do not impact your child's performance score on the statewide assessments.

Does receiving accessibility supports on statewide assessments impact my child's ability to earn a high school diploma?

No. Accessibility supports are allowed on general assessments. Diploma requirements are not linked to participation in statewide assessments.

Is my child allowed to have the ELA passages read aloud during a statewide assessment? If the passages are read aloud does that impact their score?

If your child has an IEP/504 Plan that documents the need for ELA passages to be read aloud and this is also provided throughout the school year during instruction, the student may have the passages read aloud. This requires a special approval process that school personnel will complete in order for your child to be granted this accommodation.

Are there supports available for English Learners?

A student whose primary language is not English can use Universal Tools and Designated Supports (Level 1 and Level 2) listed on Appendix A-1. English Learners are provided a range of supports to meet their language needs, for example, Human Interpreter, glossaries, dictionaries.

If your child has been enrolled in school for less than 12 cumulative months, the student is eligible for an exemption from ELA testing for one year from the general assessment, alternate assessment and SAT Reading.

Additional Resources:

[Delaware's High School Diploma versus Diploma of Alternate Achievement Standards](#)