

Accommodations on Stanford 10 for Students with Disabilities

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Requirements for Inclusion

Requirements for including all students with disabilities (SWD) in assessments stem from a number of federal laws, including Section 504 of the *Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973* (Section 504), Title II of the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990* (ADA), Title I of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997* (IDEA). More recently, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), which reauthorized and amended Title I of ESEA, requires that students with disabilities be provided accommodations, where appropriate, and if documented on the student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 plan. Since assessment is often associated with direct individual benefits (e.g., promotion, graduation) and is an integral part of accountability systems, it is imperative for Pearson to look closely at the accommodations it allows on the *Stanford Achievement Test Series*, Tenth Edition (Stanford 10).

Defining Accommodations

Accommodations, according to Tindal & Fuchs (1999), “are changes in standardized assessment conditions to ‘level the playing field’ for students by removing the construct-irrelevant variance created by their disabilities. Valid accommodations produce scores for students with disabilities that measure the same attributes as standard assessments measured in non-disabled students” (p. 7).

Pearson uses the accommodations taxonomy listed below, which was developed by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO), University of Minnesota. We have modified the taxonomy of timing/scheduling as indicated with an asterisk.

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Timing/Scheduling* | Changes to when the assessment is given |
| Setting/Administration | Changes to where the assessment is given |
| Presentation Format | Changes to how the assessment is given |
| Response Format | Changes to how a student responds to the assessment |
| Other | Use of dictionaries/word lists/glossaries |

* NCEO separates Timing & Scheduling, where Pearson combines them.

It is important to note that in the recent evolution of assessment terminology in psychometrics, the use of “accommodations” defines changes in format, response, setting, timing, or scheduling that do not alter in any significant way what the test measures or the comparability of scores (Phillips, 1993). In contrast, “modifications” refers to where changes in the assessment alter what the test is supposed to measure or the comparability of scores (e.g., Braille in some accountability systems) (Phillips, 1993).

IDEA uses the terms “accommodations” and “modifications in administration” interchangeably. It uses the terms “adaptations,” “individual modifications” and “necessary accommodations” as well. Many states use these terms interchangeably. NCLB uses the term “accommodations” (Elliott, 2001; Bielinski & Ysseldyke, 2000; Koretz & Hamilton, 1999; NCEO, April 2001; Thurlow, Elliott & Ysseldyke, 1998).

An Empirical Basis for Defining Accommodations

In addition to using the taxonomy of accommodations, Pearson has utilized Tindal’s (Tindal & Fuchs, 1999) classification of research approaches to examine the validity of test accommodations. The approaches are classified as descriptive, comparative, or experimental.

Descriptive Approach. With a descriptive approach, accommodations are analyzed logically to consider the disability along with the characteristic of the assessment. According to Tindal & Fuchs (1999), large print is considered to be valid for a student with visual disabilities because it allows access to printed information and lets the student demonstrate what he or she knows by preserving the meaningfulness of the measured content (p. 9).

Comparative Approach. With this approach, extant databases are analyzed to gain insight into how accommodations may affect students with disabilities. Koretz (1997) and Koretz & Hamilton (1999) utilized this approach. Both studies indicated that accommodations, at times, overestimated the academic competence of students with disabilities (Tindal & Fuchs, 1999, p. 10). Pearson has utilized this method of data review. While the methodology permits interesting insights into the affects of accommodations, the approach often leaves important questions about validity of specific accommodations unanswered.

Experimental Approach. In this approach, the effects of accommodations are examined with controlled research designs, which examine effects for students with and without disabilities, with and without accommodations (Tindal & Fuchs, 1999). Pearson reviewed the studies reported in Tindal & Fuchs (1999), Elliott (2001), Koretz & Hamilton (1999), and Thurlow, Elliott, & Ysseldyke (1998). In addition, Pearson is in the process of developing and conducting similar studies.

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Pearson's Policy on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

As shown in the following table, students using accommodations marked under “standard administration” can receive norm-referenced scores that are considered to be valid and can be aggregated with those of other students.

| Accommodations | Standard Administration | Non-standard Administration |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| Time/Scheduling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaks between subtests • Time of day most beneficial to students • Frequent breaks within a subtest | x x x | |
| Setting/Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test in a small group with Special Ed. teacher • Test individually with Special Ed. teacher • Test in regular classroom • Home/hospital setting • Environmental modifications: Special lighting, adaptive furniture, noise buffers, carrels, special seating • Sign language (ASL, cued speech) for directions | x x x x x x | |
| Presentation Format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large Print (18 point text) • Repeating directions • Simplifying directions • Visual aids (magnifiers, templates) • Audio amplification equipment • Calculator/talking calculator use allowed for Mathematics Problem Solving subtest, grades 4 and up (disable device's programming capability) • Audio recordings/audio (except decoding and reading comprehension) • Abacus for visually impaired (VI) students • Braille | x x x x x x x x | x |
| Response Format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual Aids (graph paper, templates, rulers) • Special pencil, pen, pencil grip • Auditory aids • Braille | x x x | x |
| Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Augmentative, assistive, or adaptive technology (contact local DOE) | | |

Pearson recognizes that some students with disabilities require the use of accommodations when our assessments are administered. Often, the conditions under which the test was standardized differ from those present when accommodations are used. These differences, in some cases, reach a level sufficient to jeopardize the validity of interpretations. However, based on available evidence, most of the accommodations listed in the table above are considered to be “incidental to the construct intended to be measured by the test” (AERA *Standards*, 1999, p. 101).

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