

Section 1: Participation Guidelines and Required Documentation for Students with Disabilities and English Learners

1.1 Participation Guidelines for Assessments

All Grade 3-8 students, including students with disabilities and ELs, are required to participate in the Illinois Assessment of Readiness and the Illinois Science Assessment and have their assessment results be part of ISBE's accountability system, with narrow exceptions for certain students with disabilities who have been identified by the Individualized Education Program team to take the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment (DLM-AA). All other Grade 3-8 students will participate in the ELA/literacy, mathematics, and science assessments. Federal laws governing student participation in statewide assessments include the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (reauthorized in 2008), and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, as amended.

All students are initially registered for the standard computer-based Illinois Assessment of Readiness and the computer-based Illinois Science Assessment through the Student Information System. All Grade 3-8 students are assigned a grade-level ELA/L and mathematics assessment and a science assessment at Grades 5 and 8. The Illinois Assessment of Readiness and Illinois Science Assessment are timed tests.

Accommodated computer-based tests are available for students with disabilities. Paper-based tests are available as an accommodation for students with disabilities or who meet a qualifying condition.

Four distinct groups of students may receive accommodations on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness and Illinois Science Assessment:

- 1) **Students with disabilities who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP);**
- 2) **Students with a Section 504 plan** who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, have a record of such an impairment, or are regarded as having such an impairment, but who do not qualify for special education services;
- 3) **Students who are ELs;** and
- 4) **Students who are ELs with disabilities and who have an IEP or 504 plan.** These students are eligible for both accommodations for students with disabilities and accommodations for ELs.

1.2 Required Documentation for Students with Disabilities and English Learners

This is essential to ensure that the unique needs of the student are accurately identified and addressed for statewide testing.

1.2.1 Required Documentation Elements for Testing

- **Clear Identification of Disability or Condition or Language Support:** The IEP or 504 documentation must explicitly state the specific disability or medical condition affecting the student. The

description should be thorough enough to support the need for accommodations during testing. The EL documentation should include instructional supports that are appropriate and effective for the student's English language proficiency level. Test support should closely match each EL's unique linguistic needs and those supports that are provided during daily classroom instruction.

- **Rationale for Accommodations:** The documentation must also explain the reasons behind the assignment of any accommodations. This explanation should connect the student's disability, language status, or condition with the necessity for each specific accommodation the student needs to successfully complete testing.

1.2.2 Determining Testing Accommodations on a Student's IEP or 504 plan

For students with disabilities, the IEP team or 504 Plan Coordinator, in conjunction with the School Test Coordinator, Principal, or Designee, make decisions about which testing accommodations should be identified and assigned in the Illinois Administration Platform and which testing accommodations should be identified and assigned locally. These testing accommodations should be documented explicitly in the student's IEP or 504 plan. For EL students, campus educators who are familiar with the student's language proficiency, in conjunction with the School Test Coordinator, Principal, or Designee, make decisions about which English language supports should be identified and assigned in the Illinois Administration Platform and which English language supports should be identified and assigned locally.

1.2.3 Documenting Testing Accommodations on a Student's IEP

For students with disabilities served under IDEA, determining appropriate instructional and assessment accommodations should not pose any particular problems for IEP teams that follow good IEP team practices. With information obtained from the required summary of the student's "present levels of academic achievement and functional performance," the decision of identifying and documenting accommodations is a fairly straightforward process. The term "present levels of achievement and functional performance" refers to a federal requirement in which IEP team members must state "how the child's disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum— the same curriculum as nondisabled children" [20 USC § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(I)].

There are three areas in which accommodations can potentially be addressed in the IEP:

- 1) "Participation in Assessments" [20 USC § 1412(a)(16)]. This section of the IEP documents accommodations needed to facilitate the participation of students with disabilities in state and district assessments.
- 2) "Consideration of Special Factors" [20 USC § 1414(d)(3)(B)]. This is where communication and assistive technology supports are considered.
- 3) "Supplementary Aids and Services" [20 USC §1401(33) and 20 USC §1414(d)(1)(A)(i)]. This area of the IEP includes "aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes or other education related settings to enable students with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled students to the maximum extent appropriate."

1.2.4 Documenting Testing Accommodations on a Student's 504 Plan

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, specifies that no otherwise qualified person with a disability shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from participating in federally- funded programs or activities, including elementary, secondary, or postsecondary schooling. "Disability" in this context

refers to a “physical, sensory, or mental impairment, which substantially limits one or more major life activities.” This can include physical impairments; illnesses or injuries; communicable diseases; chronic conditions like asthma, allergies and diabetes; and learning problems. A 504 plan spells out the accommodations that will be needed for these students to have an opportunity to access the test to the same extent as his/her nondisabled peers, and might include such things as wheelchair ramps, blood sugar monitoring, interpreting/transliteration services, preferential seating, an extra set of textbooks, a peanut-free lunch environment, home instruction, or a tape recorder or keyboard for taking notes.

Each student who meets the eligibility guidelines for accommodations under Section 504 will have a Section 504 plan developed for him/her to use in school. The plan specifies the nature of the impairment, the major life activity affected by the impairment, accommodations necessary to meet the student’s needs, and the person(s) responsible for implementing the accommodations. It is recommended that accommodations be listed separately in the 504 plan for instruction and for assessments, since they may differ or be allowed for one and not the other.

1.2.5 Determining Testing Accessibility Features and Accommodations for ELs

Determining appropriate linguistic support for ELs during classroom instruction and on assessments is facilitated by gathering and reviewing information about the student and the student’s level of performance in relation to district and state academic standards and current English language proficiency level. The process of determining the amount and types of instructional and assessment supports involves attempts by members of the educational team to remove barriers and “level the playing field” for the student so that he or she can participate in the general education curriculum and assessments.

Decisions about assessment accessibility features and accommodations for ELs should be made by a group of individuals familiar with the student who can identify the appropriate accessibility features and accommodations for each EL and should document the accessibility features made available to the student.

1.3 Refusal of Accommodations

If a student refuses the accommodation(s) listed in his or her IEP, 504 plan, or, if required, EL plan, the school must document in writing that the student refused the accommodation(s). However, the accommodation(s) must be offered and remain available to the student during the test administration. The *Student Accommodation Refusal Form* must be completed and placed in the student’s file. Also, on the day of the student’s refusal of an accommodation, a copy of the completed form must be sent home to the parent/guardian. The School Test Coordinator should work with Test Proctors to determine who else should be informed of the student’s refusal of the accommodation(s). In addition, the team involved in the student’s IEP, 504 plan, or, if required, EL plan, may want to consider discussing this issue at the student’s next meeting.