

Test Writing Accommodations for Students

Overview

Alberta Education is committed to accommodating the learning needs of all Alberta students so that they may have fair and equitable access to educational opportunities, including the writing of achievement tests.

To ensure fairness and equity for all students, Alberta Education permits achievement tests to be administered using one or more of the following accommodations:

- Accommodation 1: CD version of the test – visually impairment
- Accommodation 2: CD version of the test – learning and/or physical disability
- Accommodation 3: Additional writing time – up to 2 times the scheduled time
- Accommodation 4: Calculator – Grade 3 Mathematics only
- Accommodation 5: Scribe
- Accommodation 6: Large print version
- Accommodation 7: Braille version
- Accommodation 8: Reader
- Accommodation 9: Sign language interpreter
- Accommodation 10: Recorded response
- Accommodation 14: Miscellaneous

The goal in permitting the use of writing accommodations when administering achievement tests is to promote fairness and equity by removing obstacles to performance. Consequently, accommodations are neither intended nor permitted to:

- alter the nature of the construct being measured by a test
- provide unfair advantages to students with disabilities over students taking tests under regular conditions
- compensate for knowledge or skill that a student has not attained

Although many accommodations are used in teaching situations, not all of those accommodations are appropriate for use in a testing situation.

Principals should contact the Special Cases & Accommodations team (see the *Contacts* section) for clarification before recommending the use of an accommodation that is not specifically identified in the list above (i.e., those that would be classified as ***Accommodation 14: Miscellaneous***).

Note: *Isolation* is only considered to be an accommodation if it is used in conjunction with another approved accommodation.

Who May Use Writing Accommodations

All accommodations that are permitted to be used for achievement test writing purposes are intended for students who **regularly use them** in learning and testing situations in their classroom, **throughout the school**

year. However, even though a student may use an accommodation regularly in the classroom, the use of that accommodation for achievement testing purposes **must be pre-approved by the superintendent**, based on a recommendation from the principal that is supported by a child's parent.

Accommodation Directives

The following directives outline general requirements and expectations related to the use of accommodations when administering achievement tests.

Requests and Approvals

1. The use of all writing accommodations when administering achievement tests shall be approved by a superintendent, based on a recommendation from a principal that is supported by a child's parent.
2. All recommendations for the use of accommodations made by a principal shall be supported with documentation in the student's file that substantiates the need for the accommodation.
3. Superintendents may approve the use of a writing accommodation in the following circumstances:
 - a. The student has been identified with an Exceptional Student Code and **regularly uses the accommodation(s)** for learning and testing purposes, based on an Individual Program Plan (IPP) which specifies their use, or
 - b. The student **regularly uses the accommodation(s)** for learning and testing purposes, based on an assessment that clearly identifies a diagnosis or a special need and that specifies that these accommodations are required as a result. This psychological, medical, academic, and/or intellectual assessment must be no more than three years old and must have been completed by a qualified professional.
4. All requests for special format test materials shall be forwarded to Alberta Education only after the request for use of those accommodations has been approved by a superintendent, and must be received by the deadline specified for such requests (see the *Schedules & Significant Dates* section).

Test Administration Using Accommodations

1. The principal shall decide whether to provide the opportunity for students to use approved accommodations when writing achievement tests. This decision shall be based on the principal's certainty that the school can comply with all test writing and administration rules when administering tests in this manner and with the specific rules and procedures that follow.
2. The principal shall ensure that only those students who regularly use an

accommodation for learning and testing purposes, and who are approved to use it when writing a specific achievement test, are permitted to do.

3. The principal shall ensure that all facilities and equipment that have been set up for test writing purposes using accommodations are secured and remain secured until after the test writing session and follow-up administrative procedures are completed.
4. The principal shall ensure that all facilities and equipment that have been set up for test writing purposes using accommodations are appropriately configured to safeguard test security, validity, and fairness and to minimize distraction to students.
- *NEW** 5. The principal shall ensure that all digitally recorded conversations and responses related to the administration of achievement tests are immediately deleted once they have been saved to a storage device for shipment to Alberta Education.
6. The principal shall ensure that teachers or other personnel who are designated to supervise the administration of achievement tests that are being written using accommodations are appropriately prepared for that role.
7. The principal shall ensure that all accommodations that are used by students when writing achievement tests are recorded on the student's test materials and that all forms and documentation related to this use of accommodations is completed and forwarded to Alberta Education with the test material.

Test Accommodation Guidelines

Use of a Scribe If a scribe is approved to assist a student during the administration of a test, the procedures listed in this section must be followed.

Note: Scribed papers are not marked for conventions, or in the case of functional writing, for content management. Students' scores are pro-rated.

Use of a Reader CD versions of achievement tests should be used rather than readers whenever possible, especially as students age. It is expected that readers would be requested more for Grade 3 students than for Grade 9 students. However, if a reader is approved to assist a student during a test, the procedures listed in this section must be followed.

Sign Language Under the following conditions, an interpreter may use sign language to interpret language arts, mathematics, science and social studies achievement tests to a student who is deaf or hard of hearing:

- The student has a specific impairment that greatly limits his or her ability to decode text, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so.
- The student has access to printed materials only through a reader or sign-language interpreter, or is routinely provided with text on tape or in another electronic format for instruction.

Interpreters must interpret test items and prompts according to the procedures listed in this section.

Test Administration Times

All students must complete a test within the allotted time unless approval for extra writing time has been granted by the superintendent. The allotted time includes the **time officially scheduled** for the test and the additional half hour that all students are permitted.

Students granted extra writing time as an accommodation may be given up to **twice** the amount of **time officially scheduled** for the test. The additional time that all students are permitted may be added at the end of this period, if needed.

Upon approval from the superintendent, the test may be administered in short periods with frequent supervised breaks. The test may also be administered at a time of day that takes into account the student's medical or learning needs.

Additional Writing Time for ESL and Francisation Students

English as a Second Language (ESL) and francisation students may have up to twice the allotted time to write any of the achievement tests. This is an accommodation that **does not** require superintendent approval or identification on test answer sheets.

Large Print

If a student writes a large print version of an achievement test, both the large print test and the answer sheet must be returned with the other test materials.

CD Format and Recorded Response

CD versions of tests will be provided in English and French for all achievement tests. Except in unique circumstances, a CD version of the test should be used as an accommodation rather than a reader, particularly for students in grades 6 and 9.

Physical Environment and Equipment

Students must write in a room that is free from distractions (e.g., having no noise or windows opening onto busy traffic areas). Several students can write in one room provided headsets are available. It is the school's responsibility to supply the necessary hardware (tape recorder/CD player).

Students who are dictating their responses require separate rooms in which

to work.

Test Setting

The test administrator may provide the following modifications to the test setting:

- administer the test in a small group setting
- administer the test in a room other than the one used by the rest of the class
- administer the test to the student individually (using routine administration procedures)
- administer the test with the student wearing noise buffers (after directions have been given using routine administration procedures)

The Testing Process

It is important to emphasize that students should use the printed and CD tests in a manner that best suits them; for example, students should be made aware that they may listen to part or all of the CD more than once.

If a student appears confused about the testing process, the teacher should explain the process to the student until satisfied that the student understands the process.

Recorded Response

Students who are dictating their responses should be encouraged to do some rough work in the test booklet. Rough work will not be marked but serves to guide the student as he or she dictates a response. For written-response questions, advise students to indicate verbally when they have finished one assignment and are beginning the next one by saying “I am now finished assignment one, and I am ready to begin assignment two.”

***NEW** Student responses may be recorded using audiotape or as digital audio files in WAV or MP3 format.

Returning Materials

All special format materials must be returned to Alberta Education along with the regular return shipment of other test booklets from the school.

***NEW** All storage devices used to return a student’s recorded response must be clearly labeled with the:

Name of Student School Name
Subject and Grade School Code

Text-to-Speech Software

Students may only use this accommodation to read back their own work when using a computer to compose their English or Français/French Language Arts Part(ie) A test responses. Features such as word prediction, word wizard, fact folder/finder and scientific calculator must be disabled.

Currently, no scanning of test materials is allowed; however, Alberta Education is working on an initiative that will allow for the use of text-to-speech for the achievement tests.

Information Sheet for a Scribe of Achievement Tests

If a scribe is approved by the superintendent to assist a student during a test, the following procedures apply:

- Scribed achievement test written response papers are not marked for conventions. To assist with clarity, the scribe may insert basic punctuation.
- The scribe must record the student's response verbatim; that is, exactly as the student dictates.
- The scribe may record the student's response in handwriting or may use a computer.
- The scribe should confirm the student's responses which may include reading the student's responses back for clarification.
- A scribe may not ask leading questions or provide suggestions or interpretations of any kind.
- A scribe may not initiate the use of test taking strategies.
- The student shall review the scribed work and request changes if necessary.
- A scribe may not read a test to a student. CDs or readers will be provided for this purpose, if previously approved.
- The school jurisdiction is responsible for the appointment of a scribe and for any expenses incurred.
- A student who is being assisted by a scribe must complete the test in the normally allotted time unless additional time has been approved as a separate accommodation by the superintendent
- A specially designated supervising teacher must supervise a scribe-assisted student.
- The scribe is expected to adhere to the *Achievement Testing Directives*.
- A scribe shall not be a relative, friend, or a past or present teacher of the student.
- A test administered by a scribe shall take place in a separate area so that other students who are writing the test are not disturbed.
- A scribe must sign the student's work and indicate his/her position, i.e., program aide.
- The principal will record on the *Principal's Statement* that a scribe was utilized for a particular student and attach the *Statement of Scribe, Reader and/or Interpreter and Principal* to it (see the *Samples/Forms/Letters* section).

Note: To properly record student responses, scribes should have:

- adequate word processing skills or a handwriting style that is very legible and familiar to the student
- adequate literary skills and knowledge of the subject area

If you have any questions concerning the above or any comments regarding the use of a scribe to assist a student when writing an achievement test, contact the Special Cases & Accommodations team at (780) 427-0010, by fax (780) 422-4889 or e-mail special.cases@gov.ab.ca. For a toll-free connection, dial 310-0000.

Information Sheet for a Reader of Achievement Tests

If a reader is approved by the superintendent as an accommodation to assist a student during the administration of an achievement test, the following procedures apply:

- The reader is expected to consult with the student to establish the most comfortable seating arrangement.
- The reader should have adequate reading skills and knowledge of the subject to read appropriately.
- The reader must read at a rate that is comfortable for the student, monitoring to ensure that the pace is appropriate.
- The reader must read the test verbatim; that is, exactly as it appears in the test booklet. A reader may not add emphasis, inflection, or read in such a way as to prompt or guide the student. A reader may not ask leading questions, provide suggestions, provide interpretations, or provide word definitions of any kind.
- The reader must read in such a way that the student understands the beginning and end of each sentence and paragraph. Without leading the student, the reader must be aware of and obey all punctuation and read in such a way that the student understands the use and purpose of the punctuation.
- The reader may repeat readings as often as necessary and must read consistently in the same way each time, being careful not to indicate a correct/incorrect response.
- The school jurisdiction is responsible for the appointment of a reader and for any expenses incurred in appointing the reader.
- Students must complete the test in the allotted time, unless additional time has been approved by the superintendent.
- The reader is expected to adhere to the *Achievement Testing Directives*.
- A reader shall not be a relative, friend, or a past or present teacher of the student.
- A test administered by a reader shall take place in a separate area so that other students who are writing the test are not disturbed.
- The principal will record on the *Principal's Statement* that a reader was utilized for a particular student and attach the *Statement of Scribe, Reader and/or Interpreter and Principal* to it (see the *Samples/Forms/Letters* section).

If you have any questions concerning the above or any comments regarding the use of a reader to assist a student when writing an achievement test, contact the Special Cases & Accommodations team at (780) 427-0010, by fax (780) 422-4889 or e-mail special.cases@gov.ab.ca. For a toll-free connection, dial 310-0000.

Note: The Reader may make one attempt to “reword” a word or phrase to assist the student in comprehending terminology that is unfamiliar to them. This “rewording” or “restating” is not to lead the student, provide a definition, or make a suggestion. “Rewording” presents the word or phrase in an alternate way without inference. An example of “rewording” is as follows: *Every other day* – not familiar to the student can be “reworded” to *every second day* and the student understands.

Information Sheet for Sign Language Interpreters of Achievement Tests

If an interpreter is approved by the superintendent as an accommodation to assist a student during a test, the following procedures apply:

- The interpreter is a neutral person who interprets a spoken message into American Sign Language or into one of the Manually Coded English Systems for a student with hearing loss.
- The interpreter also voices what is signed by the student.
- The interpreter must not record the student's responses. This is the role of a scribe. The use of a scribe must be approved by the superintendent as a separate accommodation.
- The interpreter must not function as a Reader. The request for a Reader must be approved by the superintendent as a separate accommodation and a person other than the scribe or interpreter must be designated that role.
- For purposes of interpreting for a Provincial Achievement Test, the interpreter is used for interpreting all words spoken during the examination period that are intended for all students.
- The interpreter must render the message faithfully, always conveying the content and spirit of the spoken word using the signed language most readily understood by the student. The interpreter must not provide definitions or interpret beyond conveying the spoken message.
- The interpreter must not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions.
- The interpreter must not ask leading questions, provide suggestions, or provide word definitions of any kind.
- If the student has a question or a query, the student is to be directed to the teacher. In this case, the interpreter will interpret spoken and signed messages between the student and the teacher.
- The interpreter may repeat interpretations as often as necessary and must interpret consistently each time.
- The school jurisdiction is responsible for the appointment of an interpreter and for any expenses incurred in appointing these individuals.
- Students must complete the examination in the allotted time unless additional time has been approved by the superintendent as a separate accommodation.
- The interpreter is expected to adhere to the Achievement Testing Directives.
- An interpreter shall not be a relative, friend or a past or a present teacher of the student.
- The principal will record on the Principal's Statement that an interpreter was utilized for a particular student and attach the Statement of Scribe/Reader and/or Interpreter and Principal to it (see the Samples/Forms/Letters section).

If you have any questions concerning the above or any comments regarding the use of an interpreter to assist a student when writing an achievement test, contact the Special Case & Accommodations team at (780) 427-0010, by fax (780) 422-4889 or e-mail special.cases@gov.ab.ca. For a toll-free connection, dial 310-0000.

