

ACCOMMODATIONS AND MCAS TESTING

All students are required to take the state MCAS tests for their grade level, regardless of their Learning Disability. When IEP's are written, accommodations are agreed upon for state mandated MCAS testing. It is important that students understand their specific accommodations and realize that using these these accommodations is not cheating. This is especially important for older students who are sometimes resistant to using their accommodations. For testing purposes, students are grouped according to their accommodations. We try to place students, as often as possible, with a staff member they know. All students have unlimited time to complete the test **on the day the test is given**; they cannot return to the test to finish on another day.

Some accommodations are considered standard and are available to all students with an IEP. Others are considered non-standard and have narrower guidelines. These guidelines require use of these accommodations within normal instruction as well as specific requirements for individual testing accommodations. The state has notified public schools that they are monitoring those accommodations considered to be "non-standard" more critically in order to limit their use. They are referring specifically to those that allow the reading of test materials to students in English/Language Arts, the use of scribes, and using calculators or number charts in all parts of the mathematics test.

There are several factors in the use of the special accommodation that allows the reading of test materials for the Reading Tests. Because the DESE believes this accommodation ends in a result that may not accurately reflect a student's ability to meet grade level standards, it can only be used in rare cases when a student is considered to be unable to decode at all on their own. They must be virtual non-readers. Reading comprehension that is significantly below grade level is *no longer deemed an adequate reason* for use of this accommodation. The state currently provides specific testing packages for students with this special accommodation (to have the ELA test read to them), so some students may now be tested in small groups of 3-5 students instead of only 1:1, as in the past. This new guideline does not affect the opportunity for students to have all or part of the math and/or science tests read to students. This is a non-standard accommodation,

Scribes are used to help students with significant motor issues, including students who may have endurance or fatigue issues. This may be someone, for example, whose writing is illegible and for whom typing on an Alphasmart or computer is too challenging. This may also include students that can only express themselves successfully when someone else is doing the writing for them, an exceptional accommodation.

The third non-standard accommodation under scrutiny is that which allows use of a calculator, multiplication chart, manipulatives, or other devices to assist in calculation on the non-calculator sessions of Mathematics tests for grades 5 and above. Only those students that cannot complete any calculations without such assistance are eligible for this accommodation. Once again, the state has told us to use this sparingly.

As a result, these accommodations may be a point of discussion in IEP meetings and it will be more difficult than in the past for students to receive these accommodations.. In fact, the DESE has stated that we should be modifying IEPs to reflect these new guidelines. These may done

through an amendment to the IEP. It is up to the entire team to make the decision as to when to use these accommodations based upon these new guidelines. The DESE will be collecting data and sharing it with school systems as to the percentage of students using these accommodations. For more information on how this may affect your child, please discuss the issue with his/her Educational Team Leader at LPS.