

Virginia Department of Education

Testing Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Growth Assessments and Standards of Learning (SOL) Tests

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide a resource for educators and parents regarding the use of test accommodations for students with disabilities.

This document describes test accommodations that are permitted on state assessments and the selection process recommended for the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team and 504 Committee. Information on the procedures and conditions for administration of test accommodations is addressed in Appendix B of the [*Test Implementation Manuals*](#) and the [*Examiner's Resource Guides*](#).

Test Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Growth Assessments and Standards of Learning (SOL) Tests

Test accommodations provide students with disabilities access to state assessments and a means to demonstrate their knowledge and skill on academic content. Test accommodations are changes in the administration of an assessment which result in an adjustment to how the test is presented or how the student responds to test items. Although test accommodations do not alter the content assessed or the meaning of the resulting scores, they do provide equal access to the assessment for students with disabilities. When used appropriately, test accommodations reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student's disability without impacting learning expectations or providing an unfair advantage.

Test accommodations may not alter, explain, simplify, paraphrase, or eliminate any test item, reading passage, writing prompt, or answer option. Further, test accommodations may not provide verbal or other prompts or suggestions that clue, hint, or give away the correct response to the student. Any test accommodations based solely on the potential to enhance student performance beyond providing equal access are considered inappropriate and, therefore, are not permitted.

Test accommodations must be related to the student's disability and based on the individual's needs. Generally, accommodations are the same for classroom instruction, classroom assessments, and state assessments. Although accommodations for instruction and assessments are integrally intertwined, it is critical to note that some accommodations may be appropriate for instructional use, yet inappropriate and not permitted for use on state assessments.

Test accommodations provided to students should adhere to the following principles:

- Accommodations should enable students to participate more fully in instruction and assessments to better demonstrate their knowledge and skills.
- Accommodations must be based upon individual student need and not upon the category of disability, level of instruction, or program setting.
- Accommodations must be justified and documented in the student's IEP or 504 Plan.
- Accommodations should be aligned with and part of daily instruction.
- Accommodations should not be introduced for the first time during the administration of a state assessment.
- Accommodations should foster and facilitate independence for students, not create dependence.
- Only accommodations listed in the [Test Implementation Manuals](#) or approved by the Virginia Department of Education through the Special Assessment Accommodation Request process may be used on tests that are a part of the Virginia Assessment Program.

A Four Step Process for the Selection and Use of Test Accommodations¹

Step 1: Expect Students with Disabilities to Achieve Grade-Level Academic Content Standards

Legislation aimed at accountability and the inclusion of all students is designed to ensure equal access to grade-level content standards. Educators and parents should expect students with disabilities to participate in the general curriculum and learn grade-level academic content. Providing effective accommodations during instruction and assessments is critical to achieving this important expectation.

Step 2: Select State Assessment Options

To ensure students with disabilities are engaged in grade-level instruction and assessments, every IEP Team or 504 Committee member must be knowledgeable of state assessment options available to students with disabilities. Information on state assessment options available to students with disabilities is provided in the document, [*Participation in the Virginia Assessment Program: A Resource for Educators and Parents of Students with Disabilities*](#). The Standards of Learning (SOL) tests and the associated fall and winter Growth Assessments in grades 3-8 reading and mathematics must be considered by the IEP Team or 504 Committee before alternate assessments are considered. Growth Assessments and SOL tests are available in two formats: online and paper. All students are required to take the online version of the Growth Assessments and SOL tests with the exception of students who meet one of the criteria established for paper testing (see Appendix C in the [*Test Implementation Manuals*](#), Documentation of Need for Paper Assessment).

Although many students with disabilities will be able to access the Growth Assessments and SOL tests without accommodations, others will require test accommodations to address their disabilities and individual needs.

Step 3: Select Accommodations for State Assessments

Test accommodations should be considered and discussed separately for each assessment required for the student's grade level or course. Only accommodations needed by the student, due to the disability, to access the assessment should be selected. They should not be broadly assigned across all assessments. Providing accommodations that are not required by the student to access the test may actually interfere with student performance and adversely impact student achievement as measured by assessments. IEP Teams and 504 Committees must consider the following:

- whether the recommended accommodations are necessary for the purpose of accessing the assessment;
- previous experience with and usefulness of the recommended accommodations; and
- whether the recommended accommodations affect the integrity or security of the assessment. If an accommodation impacts test integrity or security, it is not permitted on state assessments.

¹Adapted from Christensen, L., Carver, W., VanDeZande, J., & Lazarus, S. (2011). *Accommodations manual: How to select, administer, and evaluate use of accommodations for instruction and assessment of students with disabilities* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: Assessing Special Education Students State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards, Council of Chief State School Officers.

When selecting accommodations for state assessments for a student, it is important to determine which accommodations are permitted for the specific assessment. Tables listing test accommodations for the Writing and Non-Writing assessments are provided in Appendix B of the Test Implementation Manuals. The use of an accommodation that is not permitted is considered a testing irregularity which may result in invalidation of the student's score and may require re-testing. Accommodations not listed in the Test Implementation Manuals may not be used for Growth Assessments and SOL tests without prior approval from the Virginia Department of Education through the Special Assessment Accommodation Request process. Additional information regarding this process is available in Appendix B of the Test Implementation Manuals.

Note: Some adjustments to testing conditions are available to all students, including students with disabilities. These adjustments are not considered accommodations. Testing condition adjustments available to all students are listed in Appendix B in the Test Implementation Manuals. If a student with a disability requires an adjustment to testing conditions in order to access the assessment, this may be documented in the IEP.

Step 4: Administer Accommodations during State Assessments

Plan how and when the student will learn to use each new accommodation. Ensure that there is ample time for the student to learn to use the accommodation during instruction so that the student is familiar and comfortable with the accommodation when state assessments are administered. Students must be provided with practice in using the selected accommodations before they are used on any Growth Assessment or SOL test.

Planning for Testing

Once decisions have been made about providing accommodations to meet individual student needs, the logistics of providing the accommodations during state assessments must be determined. It is important to involve the appropriate personnel to assist with planning the logistics and providing the test accommodations.

School Test Coordinators are responsible for the overall test administration in their buildings and should be involved in planning for the provision of the accommodations. Prior to the day of a test, the School Test Coordinator should ensure that Test Examiners and Proctors know what accommodations each student will be using and how to administer them properly. Procedures and conditions for administering the selected accommodations are located in the [Test Implementation Manuals](#) and must be reviewed to ensure that accommodations are provided appropriately and testing irregularities and security breaches are avoided. Conditions provided within responses to Special Assessment Accommodation Requests must also be met.

The VAP *School Division Personnel Test Security Agreement* and Virginia General Assembly legislation specify regulations and guidelines that all testing staff must agree to and follow to ensure test security, standardization, and the ethical administration of assessments, as well as consequences for violation of those procedures. Test Examiners, Proctors, and all staff involved in test administration must adhere to these regulations and practices. Providing a student with an accommodation not documented in the student's

IEP or 504 Plan, failing to provide a documented accommodation during a state assessment, and improper administration of an accommodation are considered testing irregularities which may result in invalidation of the student's score and may require re-testing. Refer to the [Test Implementation Manuals](#) for specific information about testing irregularities and the reporting process.

Copies of the VAP *School Division Personnel Test Security Agreement* and the related Virginia General Assembly legislation are located in Appendix A of the [Test Implementation Manuals](#).

Test Accommodations Permitted on State Assessments

Test accommodations are grouped in the following categories: time/scheduling, setting, presentation, and response. Time/scheduling accommodations address adjustments in the test schedule and may include accommodations such as breaks or testing during a selected timeframe within the school day. Setting accommodations address adjustments to the physical environment where the test would normally be administered to the student. Presentation accommodations include changes in the format of the test such as large-print or braille or adjustments in how test items are presented to the student. Response accommodations address how the student answers or completes the test items.

A complete list of accommodations is provided on the following page. Additional information about assessment accommodations can be found in the resources listed below and located on the [Participation and Inclusion](#) page on the Virginia Department of Education website.

- *Participation in the Virginia Assessment Program: A Resource for Educators and Parents of Students with Disabilities*
- *Procedures for the Read-Aloud Accommodation: Growth Assessments and Standards of Learning Tests*
- *Explanation of Testing Accommodations for Students with Disabilities - Math Aids – Accommodation Code 19*
- *Explanation of Testing Accommodations for Students with Disabilities - Assistive Technology Accommodations*
- *Calculator Accommodation Criteria Form*

Conditions and procedures required for the administration of test accommodations are available in the [Test Implementation Manuals](#) in Appendix B.

Permitted Test Accommodations by Category

The accommodations listed below and described on the following pages are available to eligible students with disabilities. Careful adherence to all conditions and procedures is paramount to ensuring student access as well as test validity and security. Staff administering Growth Assessments and SOL tests to eligible students with these accommodations must be familiar with the procedures and conditions detailed in the appropriate [Test Implementation Manuals](#).

Timing/Scheduling Accommodations Adjust the scheduling of a test: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• multiple test sessions• time of day• order of tests• planned breaks during test	Setting Accommodations Adjust the place in which the testing normally occurs: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• test location• adaptive or special furniture• special lighting
Presentation Accommodations Adjust the presentation of test material and/or test directions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• written directions accompanying oral directions• specific verbal prompts• visual aids• amplification equipment• noise dampening equipment• large-print test• braille test• read-aloud test• audio test• interpreting/transliterating testing directions• interpreting/transliterating the test	Response Accommodations Adjust the manner in which students respond to or answer test items: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• enlarged copy of the answer document• communication board or choice cards• Examiner records responses• braille• word processor or word processor with speech-to-text• augmentative communication device• word prediction software• spelling aids• English dictionary• dictation using a recording device• dictation to a scribe• read back student response• calculator and arithmetic tools• calculator with additional capabilities• math aids• dry erase board• additional writing implements

Descriptions of Permitted Test Accommodations

Timing/Scheduling Accommodations

The Growth Assessments and SOL tests are untimed, but ample time should be allotted for all students to complete the test prior to the end of the scheduled school day. Some students, for example, may be unable to concentrate for a long period of time, have short attention spans, or have a disability that affects stamina. Establishing breaks or scheduling the test over two or more school days may be appropriate for these students. See Appendix B of the [Test Implementation Manuals](#) for special procedures and conditions for these assessment accommodations.

Multiple Test Sessions

Students with disabilities who require multiple test sessions, when the test will be completed in two or more school days, are to be administered a paper test. When administering a paper test, care must be taken to ensure that the student is exposed only to those test items in the portion of the paper test that he/she is attempting that day. Previously completed items and items not yet accessed must be sealed to prevent accidental exposure to the student.

NOTE: The short-paper component of the *Writing* assessment, whether administered in paper or online, must be completed in one school day and does not qualify for multiple test sessions; however, the student may be given breaks under secure conditions.

Flexible Schedule

Students with disabilities may receive adjustments to their test schedule to include:

- **Time of Day:** The student is assessed during the time of day that is most appropriate for the student.
- **Order of Tests:** The order of tests administered is based on what is most appropriate for the student.
- **Planned Breaks:** Students, who require breaks, but not multiple test sessions, must complete the test in one school day. The schedule for breaks must be determined prior to testing and be based on the routine use of scheduled breaks during classroom assessment. The Test Examiner and School Test Coordinator should work together to establish the procedure for notifying the student to begin and end a break during testing. Breaks are available for either online or paper tests. Additional information on planned breaks is available in Appendix B of the [Test Implementation Manuals](#).

Setting Accommodations

Setting accommodations involve changes in the location or conditions of the educational setting or environment. The setting in which a student with disabilities is tested may be adjusted to provide the optimal testing environment for the student. Setting Accommodations described in this section include location, adaptive or special furniture, and special lighting.

- **Location:** The test is administered in an alternate location, to minimize distractions for the student, or the student is assessed in a non-school setting as determined by the IEP team or 504 committee.
- **Adaptive or Special Furniture:** The student is assessed using adaptive equipment or special furniture, such as balance balls, cushions or a raised desk surface.
- **Special Lighting:** The lighting in the testing room may be modified based on what is most appropriate for the student.
- **Fidget/Sensory Items:** Fidget/Sensory items permit the student to move during testing without disrupting others, help maintain focus, provide a reinforcement system, and help manage anxiety or impulsivity.

Presentation Accommodations

The manner and format of test item presentation is an important access issue for students with disabilities. The test presentation and format should be one that the student has used as a part of regular instruction so the student is familiar with the format well in advance of the Growth Assessment and SOL test administration. Presentation accommodations are frequently used for students with sensory or processing disabilities. Presentation accommodations described in this section include providing written directions with oral directions, specific verbal prompts, visual aids, amplification equipment, large-print and braille tests, read-aloud/audio tests, and interpreting and transliterating testing directions and/or test items. See Appendix B of the [Test Implementation Manual](#) for special procedures and conditions for these assessment accommodations.

Written Directions Accompanying Oral Directions

The student may receive a copy of the bold, “**SAY**,” testing directions from the *Examiner’s Manual* (for online tests) or from the *Supplement to the Examiner’s Manual* (for paper tests). Prior to providing the directions to the student, the student’s copy must be reviewed by a second staff member to ensure all the **SAY** directions from the *Manual* are included. The non-bold directions that provide instructions only for the Examiner/Proctor should be removed.

Specific Verbal Prompts

The Examiner is permitted to use specific verbal prompts to help students with disabilities remain focused on completing the assessment. The following statements are the only prompts that may be used with students during tests:

“Please continue with your test.”

“Keep working.”

“Keep going.”

“Focus.”

“Stay focused.”

The IEP Team or 504 Committee must select from these five phrases to choose the specific verbal prompt(s) which will be used. The specific verbal prompt(s) selected must be documented in the IEP or 504 Plan. All other verbal prompts must be approved by the Virginia Department of Education using the *Special Assessment Accommodation Request* form before the prompts are used on any tests.

Visual Aids

A variety of visual aids may be used to provide access to the Growth Assessments and SOL tests for students with visual impairments and other disabilities. Visual aids may include magnification devices, overlays, tinted screens, templates, masks, and graphic organizers.

Magnification Devices

Magnification devices may be physical devices or electronic devices designed to enlarge test content. Test administration staff must ensure assessment items are not visible to other students during a testing session.

- Physical devices that may be used may include devices, such as a magnifying glass or screen magnifier, which are placed over the display for visually impaired students.
- Electronic magnification devices, such as a closed-circuit television (CCTV), a large monitor, an interactive or electronic whiteboard, or an LCD projector which projects the assessment onto a large screen or board, may be used by visually impaired students for magnification purposes only. Electronic magnification devices must not save or capture any portion of the Growth Assessments or SOL tests or require the use of software running concurrently with the online Growth Assessment and SOL test delivery software.

Color Overlays or Tinted Screens

A student may use one blank color overlay on paper or online tests. Tinted screens are also permitted on online tests. Before a color overlay or tinted screen is used, the Examiner and student must use practice tests to ensure that the overlay or screen does not obscure any shaded areas of the online test items.

Templates or Masks

A student may use a template (mask) that is blank that allows a student to see one word, sentence, or line of print at a time. Students taking online SOL tests or Growth Assessments must receive prior practice using the Line Reader Mask and Answer Mask on practice items using TestNav. A student taking a paper Growth Assessment or SOL test may use a blank place marker to help the student maintain his/her focus while reading test items.

Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers are frequently used by students with disabilities as tools to organize content in a meaningful way. Graphic organizers must be blank and not contain directions, words, letters, numbers, symbols, color coding, or text of any kind. The structure of the graphic organizer may not clue or guide the student in any manner. Similarly, electronic software that produces blank templates or graphic organizers may be used by the student electronically or in print, but must not contain directions, words, letters, numbers, symbols, color coding, or text of any kind. If software is used to produce the template during an online

Growth Assessment or SOL test, a separate workstation must be used. Template libraries, hyperlink functions, or access to the Internet must be disabled.

Periodic Tables

A student with a disability may use a paper copy of the Periodic Table of Elements with the online Chemistry SOL test. The Periodic Table of Elements must be downloaded from the [Virginia Department of Education website](#).

Auditory Aids

Amplification Equipment

Students may use amplification equipment, such as an auditory trainer, FM system, or other devices, that will amplify the examiner's voice for students with a hearing disability or difficulty maintaining focus.

Whisper Phone

A student may use a whisper phone as auditory support to amplify the sounds and words they are reading. This accommodation must be administered in an individual session to ensure that other test takers are not distracted.

Noise Dampening Equipment

A student with a disability may wear noise dampening headphones, ear muffs, or ear plugs to reduce distractions while taking a Growth assessment or SOL test.

A [Hearing Aids with Internet-Connected Device Form](#) must be submitted to the VDOE for students with disabilities who require hearing aids that need a connection to an Internet-enabled device, such as a phone or tablet, during the administration of a VAP test.

Large-Print Test

Large-print tests are available primarily for students who have a documented visual impairment. The large-print Growth Assessment and SOL test forms are designed to ensure that students with visual impairments can access test content as documented in the IEP or 504 Plan. The font type for the large-print test is Tahoma and the font size is 18-20 pt. Any text embedded in graphics, maps, tables, or charts is enlarged proportionately to the size of the item. A copy of the large-print test is provided in regular print to the Examiner or Proctor administering the test.

Braille Test

Braille tests are available only to students with documented visual impairments. Braille tests are only available in paper formats. A copy of the braille test is provided in regular print to the Test Examiner or Proctor administering the braille test. For details regarding the Braille code used for individual Growth Assessment and SOL tests, refer to the [Test Implementation Manuals](#).

Read-Aloud or Audio Accommodation

Students with disabilities that impact their ability to read may have test items read aloud in English by the test examiner using the read-aloud accommodation or delivered through an audio or text-to-speech player in an online test. The IEP Team or 504 Committee must determine whether the audio or read-aloud accommodation is the most appropriate delivery method for the student for online or paper testing.

Read-aloud Accommodation

The IEP or 504 Plan must document how the test items will be administered during a read-aloud testing session. The IEP or 504 Plan must state whether the student will have

- the entire test read (directions, questions, and answer options); or
- words, questions, sentences or answer options read only when requested by the student.

When reading test items aloud, the Examiner must be careful not to lead the student to select an answer by intonation or to repeat any part of the test which is not specifically requested by the student. For more detailed information on reading test items aloud, refer to the [*Procedures for the Read-Aloud Accommodation: Growth Assessments and Standards of Learning Tests*](#).

Audio Accommodation

Students with disabilities are expected to have practice in using the audio accommodation prior to being administered an audio Growth Assessment or SOL test.

Audio Accommodation for Online SOL and Growth Assessments

Since it would be very difficult for school divisions to provide an online audio accommodation during instruction, the following guidelines have been established to provide clarification as to the circumstances under which a student could be provided with an online audio accommodation during testing.

- The IEP Team or 504 Committee must determine whether the read-aloud accommodation administered by a Test Examiner or the online audio accommodation is the more appropriate delivery method for online testing. It is particularly important that the parent agrees to the delivery method and that the decision is clearly documented in the IEP or 504 Plan.
- The online audio accommodation on a Growth Assessment or SOL test may be provided to students who typically have a read-aloud accommodation during instruction or to those who use recorded media or text readers in the classroom.
- If the IEP Team or 504 Committee determines that the online audio accommodation is the more appropriate accommodation, the student should have practice with audio practice items available in the online application, TestNav, which is used to administer online Growth Assessments and SOL tests. See the [*SOL Practice Items*](#) page on the Virginia Department of Education website for more details of how to access the audio practice items.

The online audio accommodation for the 2016 Mathematics SOL tests, the 2017 Reading SOL tests, the 2018 Science SOL tests, and the 2015 History SOL tests (Virginia Studies, Civics and Economics, and Virginia and United States History) will be delivered through the text-to-speech feature in TestNav. The online audio accommodation for the World History to 1500 test, World History from 1500 to the Present test, World Geography test, Science (2010) tests, and all Writing tests will continue to use the audio player in TestNav.

Audio Accommodation for Paper Growth Assessments and SOL Tests

For tests administered in paper, an audio accommodation remains available for some SOL tests. For the paper SOL tests with an audio accommodation available, a CD-ROM with a recording of the SOL test items is provided for eligible students.

The following tests do not have an audio accommodation available for the **paper** format: Mathematics (2016 SOL) tests, Reading (2017 SOL) tests, History & Social Studies (2015 SOL) tests, Science (2018 SOL) tests, and the Writing Prompt. A read-aloud accommodation should be provided to students with disabilities taking any of these paper tests who need the test items read aloud.

Read-Aloud or Audio Accommodation on SOL and Growth *Mathematics, Science, History/Social Science* and *Writing* Assessments

The read-aloud or audio accommodation is permitted for students with disabilities on the *Mathematics, Science, History/Social Science*, and *Writing* assessments as specified in the student's IEP or 504 Plan.

Read-Aloud or Audio Accommodation on the SOL and Growth *Reading* Assessments

The read-aloud and audio accommodations on the SOL and Growth *Reading* assessments are allowed only for students with a visual impairment, including blindness, and those students with a specific disability that severely limits or prevents them from decoding text at any level of difficulty as determined by a diagnostic tool or instrument that was administered by a qualified professional. Students with disabilities who are simply having difficulty reading text and/or are reading below grade-level are not permitted to use the read-aloud or audio accommodation on the statewide *Reading* assessments.

Note: For the EOC *Reading* test, under certain circumstances, students with disabilities may receive the read-aloud accommodation even though the student has not been determined as eligible by the school division according to the criteria required for the read-aloud accommodation on the *Reading* Assessment. To qualify, the student must meet all of the following criteria:

- the student is retaking the EOC *Reading* test, having failed the previous attempt(s) without using the read-aloud or audio accommodation; and
- the student's IEP or 504 Plan lists the read-aloud or audio accommodation for other tests; and
- the student receives the read-aloud or audio accommodation in the classroom.

If the student received the read-aloud accommodation on the EOC *Reading* test as a result of meeting these criteria, it will be considered a non-standard accommodation. Refer to the [*Test Implementation Manuals*](#) for instructions regarding proper coding. If a student passes the EOC *Reading* test using a non-standard accommodation, the student is considered to have passed for the purpose of earning a verified credit toward graduation.

Read-Aloud Accommodation on a Computer Adaptive Test (CAT)

Test questions presented to students during a computer adaptive test (i.e., grades 3-8 reading and mathematics online Growth Assessments and SOL tests) are selected by the computer based on the student's response to each question. Because the selection of items is customized for each student, the Examiner/Proctor must read from the student's computer in an individual test session. Follow the Guidance for Providing the Read-Aloud Accommodation on a Computer Adaptive Test provided in Appendix B of the [Test Implementation Manuals](#).

Interpreting/Transliterating Accommodation (sign language, cued speech) Test Directions Delivery

Testing sessions for students who are deaf or have a hearing impairment and who normally communicate in sign language or using cued speech may include a qualified interpreter or transliterator for testing directions or to interpret/transliterate questions answered by the Test Examiner.

Interpreting/Transliterating Accommodation on *Mathematics, Science, History/Social Science, and Writing* Assessments

Students who are deaf or have hearing impairments and who normally communicate in sign language or using cued speech may be given access to state assessments using the interpreting/transliterating accommodation provided by a qualified interpreter or transliterator. This accommodation may be provided as specified in the IEP or 504 Plan for *Mathematics, Science, History/Social Science, and Writing* tests. The Interpreter/Transliterator may interpret/transliterate test directions, sample items, and questions regarding the mechanics of testing directed to and answered by the Examiner. For these content areas, the accommodation may also be provided for test items interpreted/transliterated directly from assessments (paper or online formats including Computer Adaptive Test) or from items read to the student by Test Examiners. The student's IEP Team or 504 Committee should determine the best method to provide the student with hearing impairments or deafness access to assessment items.

Interpreting/Transliterating Accommodation on the *Reading* Assessment

Students who are deaf or have a hearing impairment may be considered by school divisions for the interpreting/transliterating accommodation on the *Reading* assessment because of difficulty distinguishing phonemes, which is a part of the decoding process. Eligibility must be determined by a diagnostic tool or instrument administered by a qualified professional. If a student who is deaf or hearing impaired is found eligible for the interpreting/transliterating accommodation because his/her hearing impairment severely limits the ability to decode text, the test would be administered through an interpreter if that student uses sign language as his/her method of communicating.

Interpreting/Transliterating Guidelines for Computer Adaptive Tests (CAT)

Test questions presented to students during a computer adaptive test are selected by the computer based on the student's response to each question. Follow the Guidance for Interpreting/Transliterating a Computer Adaptive Test provided in Appendix B of the [Test Implementation Manual](#).

Response Accommodations

Response accommodations provide a variety of means for students to respond or answer test items. These accommodations may provide support for students with physical or sensory disabilities or for those with disabilities that impact memory and/or attention. It is important to remember that even when accommodations are provided, all responses on the assessments must be generated by the student and not influenced by others. See Appendix B of the [Test Implementation Manual](#)

Enlarged Copy of Answer Document

Available with paper tests only

The student marks responses on an enlarged copy of the answer document. **Note:** It is the school division's responsibility to provide the enlarged answer document for the student.

Communication Board, Choice Cards

Students with disabilities which prevent them from responding verbally, in writing, or with a computer mouse or keyboard, may point or otherwise select their answer choice from those presented on a communication board or choice cards. It is important that the student and the scribe have ample practice with this procedure in the classroom. For online testing, practice tests must be used so that both the student and the scribe are familiar with the level of communication required to complete the technology-enhanced items (TEI).

Examiner Records Responses

Students who are unable to respond to test items by recording answer choices on a regular or enlarged paper answer document or by selecting the answer online, may respond by using a variety of alternative means including but not limited to: marking the test booklet, responding verbally, pointing or otherwise indicating their answers.

Students participating in online assessments may give the Examiner directions on how to respond to TEI items by responding verbally, pointing or otherwise indicating their answers. The student may ask the school official to perform tasks that may include writing on the student's scratch paper; using manipulatives; completing each step of mathematical or scientific calculations, with or without the use of a calculator; and manipulating TestNav features/tools.

Brailier

Blind and vision impaired students may use a braille writer as scratch paper to take notes or complete calculations, to respond to the writing prompt of the short-paper component of the Writing test, or to record responses to multiple-choice questions on the Growth Assessment and SOL tests.

Word Processor or Word Processor with Speech-to-Text or Augmentative Communication Device

Short-paper component of the Writing assessment only

Response accommodations for the short-paper component of the *Writing* assessment are available for students with a disability that interferes with the composing process or prevents them from composing their response within the online test. These students may use a word processor (software or device) which may have speech-to text capability or an augmentative communication device to complete the short-paper component of the SOL *Writing* test. To be

eligible for this accommodation, documentation must exist indicating the student uses a word processor (software or device) which may have speech-to text capability or an augmentative communication device for his/her written work.

Augmentative Communication Device

Augmentative communication devices are allowed for students that may have limited expressive communication and are unable to adequately verbalize their responses for a Growth Assessment or SOL tests. Documentation must exist indicating the student uses an augmentative communication device for his/her written work. Only augmentative communication devices which produce student responses verbatim may be used. Augmentative communication devices may be used to verbally dictate responses to a scribe to:

- complete the short-paper component of the Writing assessment
- manipulate TestNav features/tools or use manipulatives
- perform mathematic or scientific calculations
- record notes in preparation for answering an assessment item in the multiple-choice/TEI component of the Growth Assessments or SOL tests.

The examiner must record the student's responses exactly as the student indicates.

Word Prediction Software

Short-paper component of the Writing assessment only

Students with disabilities may use word prediction/selection software on the short-paper component of the SOL *Writing* assessments. Word prediction/selection is defined as any software providing a student with a selection of single words from student-generated single or multiple keystrokes. For example, a student may type the letter "p." The software will provide the student with a list of single words starting with the letter "p" (e.g., "part," "plane," "plain," "please," "put"). The word prediction/selection must be limited to the software providing selections of single words and not phrases, grammatically appropriate options, or other unrelated word choices generated by student keystrokes to predict sentence structure.

Spelling Aids

Short-paper component of the Writing Assessment only

Students with disabilities are permitted to use approved spelling aids on the SOL short-paper component of the *Writing* assessment only. Spelling aids include spell checkers and spelling dictionaries. A spelling dictionary provides a list of words, but does not include definitions. The spelling aid must meet the criteria established by the Virginia Department of Education. See Appendix B in the [Test Implementation Manuals](#).

English Dictionary

Short-paper component of the Online Writing Assessment only

Students who cannot access the online spell check tool or other permitted spelling aid for the short-paper component of the online *Writing* test may use an English dictionary to check spelling.

Note: The English dictionary is only designated as an accommodation on the short-paper component of the online *Writing* test. For any paper short-paper component of the *Writing* test (2010 SOL), the English dictionary is available to all students and should not be designated as an

accommodation.

Dictation to a Recording Device

Short-paper component of the Writing Assessment only

Students with disabilities that interfere with the composing process may use the dictation to a recording device accommodation for pre-writing planning or draft composition.

Dictation to a Scribe

Short-paper component of the Writing Assessment only

Students with disabilities that have difficulty with writing are permitted to have a scribe record their responses to the prompt in the short-paper component of the Writing SOL test. The scribe, who should have experience with the student, must format, capitalize, and punctuate only as directed by the student. The student is not required to spell each word to the scribe. Care must be taken by the scribe not to provide help on test items. Examples of prohibited help include, but are not limited to: discussing the prompt, providing hints or clues, giving reminders, giving verbal indications or non-verbal cues about the correctness of the student's answer.

Read Back Student Response

Short-paper component of the Writing assessment only

Reading a student's short-paper response back to the student is only permitted for students with disabilities and must be documented in the student's IEP or 504 Plan as an accommodation. The IEP or 504 Plan must clearly document whether the student's short-paper response will be read back by the Test Examiner or from a workstation equipped with text-to-speech capabilities. In addition, the read back accommodation must be used routinely in the student's instruction.

Calculators and/or Arithmetic Tools

Grades 3-7 Mathematics assessments only

Students with disabilities may use calculators and/or arithmetic tools on sections of the Grades 3-7 Mathematics SOL tests and Growth Assessments in which a calculator is not allowed.

Arithmetic machines and tables/charts are defined as tools that serve the same function as a simple calculator (e.g., four-function calculator). Examples include multiplication, addition, subtraction, or division charts, tables or machines. In order to use a calculator and/or arithmetic tool on items in which a calculator is not allowed, students with disabilities must be found eligible by their IEP Team or 504 Committee using the *Calculator Accommodation Criteria Form*. If the student is determined eligible, the IEP Team or 504 Committee must document the decision on the student's IEP or 504 Plan and maintain a copy of the completed and signed *Calculator Accommodation Criteria Form* in the student's educational record.

Calculators with Accessibility Features

Students with disabilities may use a calculator with accessibility features that enable the student to access the calculator. These features include a large display, large buttons, and/or audio capabilities. The calculator must have the same mathematical capabilities as those available on the corresponding Desmos Virginia calculator.

Calculator with Additional Mathematical Capabilities*

Grades 4-8 and EOC Mathematics and Grades 5, 8, and EOC Science assessments only

A calculator with additional mathematical capabilities is a calculator with mathematical capabilities designed to accommodate a student's disability. Calculators with additional mathematical capabilities provide functions beyond those found on the corresponding Desmos Virginia Calculator.

To prevent the use of calculators with additional mathematical capabilities which exceed those used to accommodate a student's disability, the following guidance must be used when selecting calculators with additional mathematical capabilities and/or accessibility features for eligible students with disabilities.

ALLOWED

A calculator with additional mathematical capabilities is allowed if the additional mathematical capabilities are required for the student to access the Growth Assessments and SOL tests and are directly related to the student's disability. Both the disability and the corresponding additional mathematical capabilities must be clearly documented in the justification statement of the [Calculator Accommodation Criteria Form](#). The justification statement should explain the student's disability as it relates to mathematics and provide a rationale as to why the additional mathematical capabilities are necessary.

NOT PERMITTED

A calculator with additional mathematical capabilities is not permitted if the additional mathematical capabilities:

- are not related to the student's disability;
- provide an unfair advantage to the student;
- are designed solely to enhance student performance; or
- are designed to compensate for below grade level mathematic skills.

If the IEP/504 Committee determines that the student is eligible to use a calculator with additional mathematical capabilities, the IEP/504 Committee must complete the [Calculator Accommodation Criteria Form](#) and maintain a signed copy in the student's educational record.

***Note:** The [Calculator Accommodation Criteria Form](#) contains a checklist of the features included on the corresponding Desmos Virginia calculators as well as an appendix detailing specific scientific calculators with accessibility features and additional mathematical capabilities and the conditions for their use by a student with a visual impairment.

Guidance for the Desmos Virginia Calculator for the Mathematics (2016 SOL) Tests

For online Grades 4-8 and EOC *Mathematics* (2016 SOL) tests, the Desmos Virginia calculator is provided within TestNav for the items in the mathematics assessments in which a calculator is permitted. Students that need a calculator on all items due to their disability may have the Desmos Virginia Calculator on a separate device or a hand-held calculator as determined by their IEP team through the use of the Calculator Accommodation Criteria form.

For paper Grades 4-8 and EOC *Mathematics* (2016 SOL) tests administered to students with a documented need for a paper test, school divisions may provide a Desmos Virginia calculator or a hand-held calculator for the sections of the Mathematics assessments in which a calculator is permitted. Refer to the Test Implementation Manual for more information.

For students with disabilities eligible to use a calculator on items or sections of the online or paper Grades 3-7 *Mathematics* SOL tests and Growth Assessments in which a calculator is not allowed, the IEP/504 Plan must specify whether to provide a Desmos Virginia calculator or a hand-held calculator during their mathematics test. Refer to the Test Implementation Manual for more information.

Math Aids

Mathematics assessments only

Students with disabilities may use approved math aids on *Mathematics* assessments if the accommodation is documented in the student's IEP or 504 Plan as a testing accommodation. Examples of approved math aids include: number lines, colored shapes, and fraction circles. For a complete list of both approved and not approved math aids, refer to the document [*Explanation of Testing Accommodations for Students with Disabilities - Math Aids Accommodation Code 19*](#), available on the Virginia Department of Education website.

Dry Erase Board

Test-takers are provided with scratch paper for Growth Assessments and SOL tests; however, some students with disabilities may need a surface larger than typical scratch paper. These students with disabilities may use a dry erase board, including a large wall-mounted board.

Additional Writing Implements

Students may be provided additional (3 or more) writing implements such as, but not limited to: highlighters, markers, colored pens, colored pencils, etc. The student may use the additional markers, highlighters, colored pencils, and/or pens in the test booklet or on his/her scratch paper; however, these items must not be used anywhere on the student's answer document. The additional markers, highlighters, colored pens, and/or pencils must be provided to the student at the beginning of the session and must be used independently without assistance from the examiner.

Procedures for Requesting a Special Assessment Accommodation

Some students with disabilities may require accommodations beyond those listed in this document to access Growth Assessments and SOL tests. Prior approval from the Virginia Department of Education is required in order to provide these accommodations. The Division Director of Testing or his/her designee should complete the [Special Assessment Accommodation Request](#) form available on the Virginia Department of Education website.

The [Special Assessment Accommodation Request](#) form must be submitted to the Virginia Department of Education following the directions provided with the form. The request must be submitted prior to the deadline for the appropriate test administration as provided with the form. The accommodations required for each student should be considered early in the school year, to meet the requirement that each student use any requested accommodation(s) instructionally prior to submission of the [Special Assessment Accommodation Request](#) form.

Each request for a special assessment accommodation will be reviewed based upon the need to provide equal access to the Growth Assessment and SOL test for the student and the need to maintain standardized procedures and test security. Accommodations may be “approved,” “approved with conditions,” or “not approved.” Some accommodations that are approved or approved with conditions may be designated as non-standard accommodations. The Division Director of Testing or his/her designee will be notified as soon as the decision concerning the special assessment accommodation has been made.

If a request for a special assessment accommodation receives an “approved” or “approved with conditions” response, the approval for that accommodation will remain in effect for subsequent Growth Assessments and SOL test administrations for that same student only, if:

- the subsequent Growth Assessment or SOL test is in the same content area(s) as the original approval;
- the student’s continuing need for the same accommodation is documented in the IEP; and
- the conditions specified in the original response will be met.

Appendix: Additional Resources

The [*Participation and Inclusion page*](#) on the Virginia Department of Education's website includes a number of documents related to how students participate in the Standards of Learning assessments.

- 2022-2023 Special Assessment Accommodation Request Deadlines and Directions
- 2022-2023 Special Assessment Accommodation Request Form
- Calculator Accommodation Criteria Form
- Explanation of Testing Accommodations for Students with Disabilities - Math Aids
- Explanation of Testing Accommodations for Students with Disabilities - Assistive Technology Accommodations
- 2022-2023 Hearing Aids with Internet-Connected Device Form

The [*Test Implementation Manuals*](#) include information related to how students may participate in the required state assessments:

- Documentation of Need for Paper Virginia Assessment Program (VAP) Assessments (Appendix C)
- Testing Condition Adjustments Available to All Students (Appendix B)