

UPDATED with  
new IDEA & NCLB  
alternate assessment  
regulations



# **Preparing Test-Resistant Students for Assessments:**



A Staff Training Guide



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# Introduction

You face a number of challenges and pressures to assure students show adequate yearly progress on high-stakes assessments. You must provide practical guidance that helps teachers prepare their students for success on the assessment. This staff development guide is a useful tool for administrators and supervisors for training their teachers.

Students who are test-resistant and/or have behavioral or emotional problems are the most difficult population of students to prepare for assessments. Nelson, Benner, Lane and Smith (2004) confirmed that students with emotional/behavioral disorders are likely to exhibit academic deficits very early in their school careers. Externalizing behaviors such as attention, aggression and delinquency were related to academic achievement in all subject content areas. Compared to other disability groups, these students have lower graduation rates and are less likely to attend postsecondary school. They must be taught well, and they may increase performance in achievement and testing if they are motivated to perform or better prepared to take the tests. This training tool provides practical suggestions to prepare and motivate test-resistant students and use assessment data to improve future instruction and test performance.

Casbarro coined the term “post traumatic test disorder” in 2003. It includes these symptoms: feelings of failure and poor self-worth, avoidance of test-taking, difficulty concentrating, an increase in general anxiety, and anxiety toward school.

High-stakes assessment in this context refers to either testing that determines whether a student graduates or is promoted to the next grade, or high-stakes testing that reflects on teachers and school performance, such as school/district report cards or the tremendous media attention that focuses on how students are progressing.

Hardman (2005) delineated this set of positive and negative consequences of high-stakes assessment.

|                  | High-Stakes Assessments |                 |                |
|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
|                  | <u>Students</u>         | <u>Teachers</u> | <u>Schools</u> |
| Good performance | Advancement             | Special         | Public         |
|                  | Diploma                 | Recognition     | Recognition    |
| Poor performance | Retention               | Reassigned      | Sanction       |
|                  | No diploma              | Terminated      | State takeover |

High-stakes assessment indeed is a common topic for conversation, especially among educators. Educators often voice concerns about how to motivate students to do their best on the assessment and what to do with students who are test-resistant.

This training manual is designed to assist staff in dealing with test resistance. Each of the manual’s four sections includes:

- Introduction
- Handouts, checklists and forms that you can duplicate and give to teachers.
- Case studies that demonstrate how the suggestions apply in real life to a test-resistant student, and challenging and interesting activities you can use with training participants.

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- References/Resources
- Overheads that you can use in presentations.

You can provide the entire training at one time or over a period of time in short segments. You also can target specific staff needs. For example, staff may need guidance on the IEP process of making decisions on accommodations and that section of the manual could be utilized alone.

You will find a wide variety of audience interactive activities. Pick and choose which activities will work with each group you train. Activities are included for large and small groups.

While this training manual focuses on students with disabilities, the ideas are useful for other students not eligible for special education services but who still exhibit test resistance.

### NOTES:

# Section 1 — Overview of Assessment Issues

- Introduction
- Overview of NCLB Requirements for Assessment
- Handouts for Overview of NCLB Requirements for Assessments
- Overview of IDEA 2004 Requirements for Assessments
- What the Courts Are Telling Us about Assessment
- Training Activities
- References/Resources
- Overheads





## Introduction

How can we improve our test scores for each subgroup of students? What can we do when we cannot control poverty? What can we do to improve student motivation to take tests? How can we get all of our students to take these tests seriously?

Almost every day, school personnel are asking these questions. At least once a week (and at times even more often) the general public can pick up the newspaper and read stories about No Child Left Behind and how a school and/or district has performed on the statewide assessment. These are very real challenges for all school personnel. Stress permeates the atmosphere of many schools — especially as test time approaches or when test scores are due to be published and school personnel worry about how their school and district will do compared to others.

Impress upon your staff that you understand this stress is real and that it often is transmitted to the students in the school. Students feel the pressure to do well on the tests, though the test scores probably will not impact their ability to go on to college or pass to another grade. At the same time, there are an increasing number of students who are test-anxious and/or test-resistant. Talk about how, in reality, very few people like to take tests. Most people become nervous about the thought of being evaluated, they don't like the pressure to complete a test within a specific period of time, and they fear they may not know items on the test. When you really stop to think about it, why would anyone enjoy such a high-pressure situation?

Discuss how newspaper articles abound on the tremendous pressures on students and school personnel stemming from high-stakes assessments. Walsh-Sarnecki said this in a 2005 article in the *Detroit Free Press* (you may want to read this during the training):

“It's all part of the federal No Child Left Behind law, which requires all public school students to be tested and their schools to be held accountable for how students perform. If scores don't measure up — which they often don't with special education students — schools can face sanctions ranging from a loss of money to being shut down.” (p. 1)

“Across town, at a school for severely emotionally impaired teens, 23 of the 26 students are taking mind-altering drugs prescribed to help them get through the day. When they take the MEAP, those students may also be distracted by their recent court appearance, their battle to overcome substance abuse or their latest problem with any of a number of state and county agencies they deal with.” (p. 1)

“And almost inevitably, not enough students will do well on the test. So the school — and the students — will be labeled “failing.” . . . Even more worrisome to educators is that No Child Left Behind is making special-education students a liability for schools.” (p. 2)

In another article in *Education Week*, Kathleen Kennedy Manzo (2005) reported: “Texas officials last week announced a sweeping review of test security and plans for a new monitoring scheme for the state accountability system.”

The reality of being a “test-driven” society is with us whether we like it or not. No Child Left Behind has mandated that the majority of students be tested and that, furthermore, the school will be evaluated based on how the students do on the test.

At the same time, an increasing population of students are coming into our schools who have discipline issues, are poorly motivated by the intrinsic goal of doing well, who are behind academically, and who may live in homes where school is not the highest priority. Students with emotional/behavioral disorders are very high risk for not doing well on tests. Data shows (Kea and Waitley, 2005) that two-thirds of them fail state competency tests, and, as a group, they have the lowest grade point average of any special education category. It is likely that these students may be test-resistant. Some of the students who are test-resistant may be special educa-

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tion students; some may be at-risk learners, or some may be good students who fear the assessment process.

Impress on your audience that our challenge today, as school personnel, is to prepare our students to do well in a test-driven society, assuring that our students are making adequate yearly progress according to the assessment determined by each state.

### **NOTES:**

## Overview of NCLB Requirements for Assessment

Under No Child Left Behind and state law, adequate yearly progress (AYP) is the basic mechanism for determining school performance from year to year. Explain that schools and districts must meet three criteria: participation, annual targets for reading and mathematics, and an additional indicator (attendance at the elementary and middle grades and graduation at the high school level). Students are tested in reading and math at third through eighth grade and in 11th grade. Science will be assessed in 2007-2008 — in one grade each for grades three-five, six-nine and 10-12.

The federal requirement under NCLB is for incremental improvement, so that by 2013-14 all students meet or exceed state standards as measured by each state's assessment. Data is disaggregated, and states determine the minimum size of the group for disaggregation. In order to make AYP, students in all disaggregated groups must meet the criteria.

The U.S. Department of Education in December 2003 issued regulations clarifying under NCLB which students can take alternate assessments under alternate achievement standards. Then, on April 9, 2007, the department issued final regulations to clarify the use of alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards. States may develop such assessment and may count the proficient and advanced scores on those assessments when determining adequate yearly progress, provided the number of those scores does not exceed 2 percent of all students assessed. Students whose IEP teams determine they are eligible for such assessment must have access to the curriculum and instruction for the grade in which the student is enrolled. If the student's IEP includes goals for a subject that is assessed at that grade level, those goals must be based on the academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled.

Examples of such assessments might include offering three choices on a multiple-choice test, using math manipulatives to illustrate the test answers, and allowing the student to receive test questions in spoken words or pictures, in addition to print. (Samuels, 2007). Off grade-level testing would not be permitted.

The modified academic achievement standards must be:

- Aligned with the state's academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled.
- Challenging for eligible students, but may they be less difficult than the grade-level academic achievement standards.
- Developed to include at least three achievement levels.
- Developed through a documented and validated standards-setting process that includes broad stakeholder input. (34 CFR 200.1).

States must include criteria for IEP teams to use in determining which students with disabilities are eligible to be assessed based on modified academic achievement standards. Students who are eligible for such assessment based on modified academic achievement standards may be from any of the disability categories within IDEA. (34 CFR 200.1).

It is important to note that IDEA 2004 further clarified the issue of including students with disabilities in state and local assessments, the role of the IEP team in determining what type of assessment is appropriate, and whether accommodations are appropriate for the student. Explain how IDEA 2004 requires that, if accommodations are appropriate, it is the function of the IEP

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team to delineate the accommodations based on the individual needs of the student and within the state educational agency's guidance parameters. Those parameters must be designed to preserve the integrity of the particular assessment.

### **NOTES:**

# Overview of NCLB Requirements for Assessments

## HANDOUT 1-A

### **KEY NCLB COMPONENTS ON ASSESSMENT AND INSTRUCTION**

- Adequate yearly progress is the basic mechanism for determining school performance from year to year.
- Schools and districts must meet these criteria: participation in assessment, annual targets for reading and math, and an additional indicator — attendance at the elementary and middle grades and graduation at the high school level.
- Students are assessed in reading and math at third through eighth grade and in 11th grade. In 2007-2008 students must be assessed in science. Science is to be assessed in one grade each for grades three-five, six-nine, and 10-12.
- Data is disaggregated.
- If a school does not make AYP in the composite or any student demographic group, it can fulfill its progress requirement by decreasing by 10% the proportion of students who do not meet/exceed standards and by meeting another academic indicator: For high schools, meet state threshold for graduation rate; for elementary and middle schools, meet state threshold for attendance rate.
- For students in current Title I-funded schools that have failed to make AYP for more than two years, parents may choose a better-performing public school in the district, following district guidance.
- Schools that are receiving federal Title I funding are required to provide supplemental educational services for students if the school fails to make AYP on assessments for three consecutive years.



## HANDOUT 1-B

### ***KEY TERMS DEFINED***

Adequate Yearly Progress— Each state establishes a definition of AYP to be used each year to determine the achievement of each school district and each school. States identify for improvement Title I schools that do not meet the definition of AYP for two consecutive years.

Participation Rate— To make AYP schools must show that at least 95 percent of all students participated in the state assessment at each grade. The requirement must be met for all students in a school and for subgroups of those students defined by race/ethnicity, poverty level, disability and English language proficiency.

Disaggregation—Each state must report the performance of the various subgroups. The state must determine the size of the subgroup utilizing statistical reliability.





## HANDOUT 1-C

### ***Accountability for the Academic Achievement of Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities***

(Regulations adopted Dec. 9, 2003)

- States may use alternate achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Those students may participate in alternate assessments.
- An alternate achievement standard is an expectation of performance that differs in complexity from a grade-level achievement standard.
- When measuring adequate yearly progress, states and school districts have the flexibility to count the “proficient” and “advanced” scores of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards — as long as the number of those proficient and advanced scores does not exceed 1 percent of all students in the grades tested.
- States or districts may submit data and make a case to exceed the 1 percent cap.
- States must define cognitive disabilities.
- Requires that if a student takes a state assessment for a particular subject or grade level more than once, the state must use the student’s results from the first administration to determine AYP.



## HANDOUT 1-D

### ***Accountability for Students Who Are Eligible for Alternate Assessments Based on Modified Academic Achievement Standards***

(Regulations issued April 9, 2007)

In addition to the 1 percent cap for students with severe cognitive disabilities, the U.S. Department of Education released regulations allowing states to count the proficient and advanced scores of 2 percent of all students who take alternate assessments based on modified achievement standards.

The IEP team will determine whether a student will be assessed based on modified academic achievement standards. States must develop guidelines for IEP teams.

The student's IEP must include

1. IEP goals that are based on the academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled.
2. Means to monitor a student's progress in achieving the student's standards-based goals.
3. Assurance that students who are assessed based on modified academic achievement standards have access to the curriculum, including instruction for the grade in which the students are enrolled.
4. Assurance that the students are not precluded from attempting to complete the requirements for a regular high school diploma.
5. A review annually for each subject to review the decision about whether assessment based on modified academic achievement standards remains appropriate. (34 CFR 200.1)

Out-of-level assessments are not allowed.

The student must be assessed with a measure that is also based on those same grade-level academic content standards, although the assessment may be less difficult than the state's regular assessment.

Modified academic achievement standards must be aligned with a state's academic content standards, describe at least three levels of achievement, include descriptions of the competencies associated with each achievement level, and include assessment scores that differentiate among the achievement levels.

Students eligible to be assessed based on alternate or modified academic achievement standards may be from any of the disability categories listed in the IDEA.

States must ensure that the parents of a student selected to be assessed based on alternate or modified academic achievement standards are informed that their child's achievement will be measured based on alternate or modified academic achievement standards.



## Overview of IDEA 2004 Requirements for Assessments

Discuss the following points:

- All children with disabilities are included in all general state and districtwide assessment programs, including assessments described in No Child Left Behind, with appropriate accommodations and alternate assessments where necessary and as indicated in their respective individualized education programs. IDEA 2004, Section 612(16)(A)
- The state (or, in the case of a district-wide assessment, the local educational agency) has developed guidelines for the provision of appropriate accommodations. IDEA 2004, Section 612(16)(B)
- The state (or, in the case of a districtwide assessment, the local educational agency) has developed and implemented guidelines for the participation of children with disabilities in alternate assessments for those children who cannot participate in regular assessments with accommodations as indicated in their IEPs. IDEA 2004, Section 612(16)(C)(i)
- Alternate assessments must be aligned with the state's challenging academic content standards and challenging student academic achievement standards; and if the state has adopted alternate academic achievement standards permitted under NCLB regulations must measure the achievement of children with disabilities against those standards. IDEA 2004, Section 612(16)(ii)
- The state educational agency (or, in the case of a districtwide assessment, the local educational agency) makes available to the public, and reports to the public with the same frequency and in the same detail as it reports on the assessment of nondisabled children:
  - The number of children with disabilities participating in regular assessments, and the number of those children who were provided accommodations in order to participate in those assessments.
  - The number of children with disabilities participating in alternate assessments that are aligned with the State's challenging academic content standards and the number of children who are participating with alternate assessment with alternate academic achievement standards.
  - The performance of children with disabilities on regular assessments and on alternate assessments (if the number of children with disabilities participating in those assessments is sufficient to yield statistically reliable information and reporting that information will not reveal personally identifiable information about an individual student), compared with the achievement of all children, including children with disabilities, on those assessments. IDEA 2004, Section 612(16)(D)
- The state educational agency (or, in the case of a districtwide assessment, the local educational agency) shall, to the extent feasible, use universal design principles in developing and administering any of these assessments. IDEA 2004, Section 612(16)(E)
- "The term 'universal design' means a concept or philosophy for designing and delivering products and services that are usable by people with the widest possible range of functional capa-

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bilities, which include products and services that are directly usable (without requiring assistive technologies) and products and services that are made usable with assistive technologies.” 29 USC 3002(17)

➤ The IEP means a written statement for each child with a disability that includes a statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child on state and districtwide assessments. IDEA 2004, Section 614(d)(1)(A)(i)(VI)(aa). If the IEP team determines that the child shall take an alternate assessment on a particular state or district-wide assessment of student achievement, a statement of why the child cannot participate in the regular assessment; and the particular alternate assessment selected is appropriate for the child. IDEA 2004, Section 614(d)(1)(A)(i)(VI)(bb)

### NOTES:

## What the Courts Are Telling Us About Assessment

As appropriate to your training issues, share the following cases with your group:

➤ An early case, *Doe v. Withers*, 20 IDELR 422 (W. Va. Cir. Ct., 1993), addressed assessment accommodations. It caused educators to take heed of the importance of following the accommodations as specified by the IEP team. In this case, Douglas Doe required testing accommodations because of his learning disability — specifically tests given orally. All teachers at the high school complied except the history teacher. Douglas failed history and therefore was banned from participating in extracurricular activities. There was not the requisite level of intentional conduct against the principal, the superintendent and the school board, but not so for the teacher. The jury returned a verdict of \$5,000 in compensatory damages and \$30,000 in punitive damages.

➤ Bevilacqua (2004) summarized a history of recent high-stakes assessment court cases. In 1998 in *Florida State Dep't of Educ.*, 28 IDELR 1002 (OCR 1998), the parent of a student with a disability filed a complaint with the federal Office for Civil Rights, alleging the student was subjected to disability discrimination when she was denied the opportunity to have a proctor read and explain certain sections of a statewide high school competency test. The applicable guidelines for administration of the test state all accommodations must be the same, or nearly the same, as those the student used in class.

Under Florida regulations, items may not be read or explained to a student on the communications section of the test because of the possibility of impacting validity. Although the district allowed the accommodation, it was barred on the competency test. Accordingly, the testing guidelines did not violate Section 504 or the Americans with Disabilities Act, the OCR held.

➤ In *Rene by Rene v. Reed*, 34 IDELR 284 (Ind. Ct. App. 2001), Indiana's rule requiring students with disabilities to take and pass a graduation qualifying exam did not violate students' constitutional due process or their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, according to the state appellate court. The court rejected the students' request to prohibit the state from enforcing its graduation qualification requirements for students with disabilities. Two separate classes of students with disabilities sued the state superintendent, challenging a rule requiring all students, including those with disabilities, to successfully complete the Indiana graduation qualifying examination. The court determined the students received adequate notice of the new requirements.

It also upheld a lower court's finding that the students were exposed to the curriculum tested on the exam. The court also determined that even if a district failed to teach its students the subjects tested, the proper remedy was to offer additional remediation, not to graduate the student.

➤ In *Chapman v. California Dep't of Educ.*, 36 IDELR 91 (N.D. Cal. 2002), a class consisting of California students with learning disabilities who were eligible for either an IEP or Section 504 plan sought an injunction to stop the administration of the California High School Exit Exam. The test was given to freshmen in the class of 2004 on a voluntary basis. The complainants claimed that there was no alternate assessment available, students did not receive required accommodations, material in the test was not material that the students had the opportunity to learn, and the

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test did not conform to nationally recognized standards. The federal appellate court ordered the state to modify the exam to provide accommodations to students with disabilities, citing the IDEA mandate that all students must be accorded meaningful participation in assessment programs. The court disagreed with the Indiana ruling that the state did not have to permit IEP-prescribed accommodations to students taking a high school exit exam.

➤ However, in an unpublished decision following the *Chapman* case, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals maintained the state's right to exercise its authority with regard to diploma requests and refused to address alleged alternate assessment failures.

According to Bevilacqua (2004), "An independent study has since forecasted 20 percent of students in the class of 2004 — a large part of which includes students who are Latino, black, disabled, poor and limited English proficient — likely would fail the California High School Exit Exam and be denied a diploma. As a result, state schools Chief Jack O'Connell canceled administration of the test." (*Special Ed Connection*, p. 1)

➤ In Massachusetts, lawyers for six minority seniors at Springfield and Holyoke High Schools filed a federal class action suit recently to overturn the 5-year-old Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, claiming the exam is invalid under the equal protection clauses of state and federal constitutions. Boston's Center for Law and Education joined Multicultural Education, Training and Advocacy in Somerville, Mass., and various other civil law groups in the federal class action suit filed over the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System. The groups claim the exam is not valid under the equal protection clauses of state and federal constitutions. Students with the highest failure rates on the exam were those with disabilities and limited English proficiency, as well as students who were vocational, black and Hispanic students. This issue is pending.

➤ The same firm that challenged California and Alaska's policies on testing accommodations challenged in Oregon. Under a settlement agreement, Oregon agreed to make changes — broadening its current list of allowable accommodations. The case was brought against the state and the Portland Public Schools.

➤ *Joint Policy Memorandum on Assessments — Office of Special Education Programs*, 27 IDELR 138 (OSEP 1997). Stress the key points of this policy memo:

- Section 504, Title II of the ADA and IDEA require the inclusion of students with disabilities in state and districtwide assessments. If accommodations are required for the student with a disability to participate in an assessment, accommodations must be provided.
- Whether a student will participate in a particular assessment and what accommodations, if any, are appropriate should be addressed through the individualized education planning process or other evaluation and placement process and included in the student's IEP or Section 504 plan.

➤ *Letter to Anonymous*, 102 LRP 12908 (OSEP 2001). Stress the key points in this policy letter:

The state cannot limit the authority of the IEP team to select individual accommodations and modifications in administration needed for a child to participate in an assessment. However, a state may develop a comprehensive policy on the use of testing accommodations (author's note: IDEA 2004 requires the state to develop guidelines).



In the case of a calculator, the state may conclude that the use of a calculator on the specific portion of a test used for the express purpose of measuring a student's ability to perform mathematical computations would not preserve the integrity or validity of the test. The ruling stated that, "The State may determine because the results of the test would measure only the student's ability to perform mathematical computations with the use of a calculator, which is not the skill that the test is intended to measure, the test results cannot be used for certain purposes. However, as noted above, the State cannot limit the authority of the IEP team to select individual accommodations and modifications in the administration that are needed in order for the child to participate in a particular assessment."

➤ *Memorandum to Chief State School Officers*, 23 IDELR 293 (OSEP 2001). Stress the key points in this policy letter:

The state education agency or local education agency must ensure that assessments are valid, reliable and consistent with professional and technical standards. It is possible for an IEP team to select individual accommodations or modifications in administration that produce scores that are not valid. The IEP team must base all decisions regarding accommodations on a full understanding of the consequences of reporting and accountability.

Important considerations are:

1. The basis for the SEA or LEA's determination that an accommodation or modification is invalid for a specific purpose. The use of national norms as the basis for public reporting and/or school or student accountability requires that the administration conditions for the state/local assessment match those of the norm group. This is problematic for children with disabilities and when accommodations are not included in the norming process. Use of performance standards rather than use of national norms as the basis for reporting or accountability might mitigate this concern.

2. The nature of the consequences or "stakes" connected with an assessment. When assessments are associated with high stakes such as promotion, diplomas, or access to programs, then certain legal principles would apply regarding the possible denial of benefits on the basis of disability.

3. If assessments are associated with high stakes for teachers, schools or systems, then states and districts should be vigilant in order to minimize any policy implications that provide incentives for selecting accommodations or modifications that invalidate students' scores for accountability purposes.

Assessment accommodations should be chosen on the basis of the individual student's needs and generally should be consistent with the accommodations that are provided during instruction.

➤ *Capistrano (Ca) Unified School District*, 101 LRP 957 (OCR 1999). Stress the key points in this policy letter:

Among the complaints filed with the Office for Civil Rights was the charge that the standards for providing adequate accommodations to meet the student's individual needs were inappropriate. The student had an inability to open her eyelids. The District prepared an Interim Section 504

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Accommodation Plan. The complainants submitted their own detailed itemized plan for adequate accommodations. The complainants decided to prepare the student for the California High School Proficiency Exam and to enroll her in the local community college. The student then received an evaluation resulting in the student being identified as in need of special education. The district stated that the complainants refused accommodations offered to them and denied the District the opportunity to assess the student in the social-emotional area. OCR stated that: "Although delayed, efforts to meet the student's individual needs were ongoing and they appear to have included attempts to provide appropriate accommodations for tests."

### NOTES:

## Training Activity

### Think-Pair-Share

Note to the trainer: This is a good opening activity. Take a few moments to have trainees participate in a Think-Pair-Share activity. Have each participant write down one challenge that they are facing in their school that is related to high-stakes assessment.

After each participant has done so, have them pick a partner as the person who has the birthday closest to theirs. Depending on the size of the group, it will take a few minutes for participants to find a partner. When participants have found a partner, have them discuss the challenge that they wrote down. After five minutes, have three sets of participants share what they discussed with the larger group.

#### NOTES:

## Training Activity

### IDEA Dominoes 2004

Based on an audience of 30, write down these 15 questions on index cards or cut up the questions made here for you. Then write the answers to the questions on 15 other cards. Shuffle the cards and pass out one card to each audience participant. Audience members then must find the person who has the matching card.

After this activity, reflect with the participants on the advantage of using such an activity to learn important information about the law, as opposed to a test activity.

#### ONE CARD

#### MATE CARD

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 1%   | Cap on # of students with "severe cognitive disabilities" taking alternate assessments against alternate achievement standards. |
| 2%   | Cap on # of students who can take alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards.                        |
| The state  | Who determines what is a cognitive disability?  |
| IDEA 2004 (or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act) | The latest reauthorization of IDEA.   |
| IEP team   | Who determines the participation of the student in the assessment process?  |
| Accommodations   | These do not change the content of the test.  |
| Integrity of the test  | An accommodation cannot jeopardize this.  |
| Section 612  | Section of IDEA where many provisions about assessment can be found.  |
| Section 614  | Section of IDEA where specific IEP provisions are found.  |
| 95%  | Percentage of students who must participate at each grade in state assessment.  |
| Alternate achievement standard   | An expectation of performance that differs in complexity from a grade-level achievement standard.                               |
| July 1, 2005   | Effective date of assessment provisions of IDEA 2004.   |
| The state  | Must develop guidelines for appropriate accommodations.   |

Universal design

Products and services directly usable and those usable with assistive technologies.

Same frequency as for nondisabled children

How often assessment scores for children with disabilities are reported to the public.

**NOTES:**

## **Training Activity**

### **Case Study**

The state recently sent Lincoln Junior High School the results of its test scores. The junior high school is a seventh- and eighth-grade facility with 700 students. Sixty-five percent of the students are low-income. Eighty-two percent of the population is white, 16 percent is black, and 2 percent is Hispanic.

The school has 90 special education students in the school building, 45 of whom receive services less than 21 percent of the time for learning disabilities. Five receive resource services less than 21 percent of the time for speech and language; 10 receive resource services for less than 21 percent of the time for emotional/behavioral disorders; 10 receive resource services between 21 percent and 60 percent of the time for mild mental retardation; five receive their special education for more than 60 percent of their time for students with significant mental retardation; and, 15 students receive their programming more than 60 percent of their time for students with varying disabilities. The school also has 10 students receiving services in an alternative special education site for students with significant behavioral problems.

The school failed to make AYP in the special education subgroup in both reading and math. All other subgroups made AYP. When the scores are released to the newspaper, many people in the community are upset with the test scores, and school district personnel are upset that their school did not make AYP for the first time.

You have been hired as a consultant to assist the school district in improving its test scores for students with disabilities. Outline the first five steps you would take to do so:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

**NOTES:**

## **Training Activity**

# **The NCLB Quiz**

The following is a quiz you should provide to participants as a way to review their knowledge of No Child Left Behind. Give the following directions.

*This is a test designed to assess how much you know about No Child Left Behind. When we are finished with this test, you will exchange papers. There are a total of 10 questions on this test. We will review the correct answers after you are finished. You will have a total of five minutes to take this test. After the papers are corrected, I will ask the person who corrected your paper to announce your score. We will then post your scores here on the board; anyone who fails to get at least eight correct will fail the test and will have to move over to the remedial staff development session. Please read the directions carefully and begin when I say, "go."*

### **How Much Do You Know About No Child Left Behind and Assessment?**

Please read each question in this section carefully and draw a ring around one of the words, "true" or "false," based on your understanding of the law.

1. Under No Child Left Behind and state law, adequate yearly progress (AYP) is the basic mechanism for determining school performance from year to year. Schools and districts must meet three criteria: participation, annual targets for reading and mathematics; and an additional indicator (attendance at the elementary and middle grades, and graduation at the high school level).      True or False
2. All students must have made adequate yearly progress as determined by the state by 2013-2014.      True or False
3. Even if a school does not make AYP in the composite or any student demographic group, it can fulfill its progress requirement by decreasing by 10% the proportion of students who do not meet/exceed standards and meeting another academic indicator — for high schools, meet state threshold for graduation rate; for elementary and middle schools, meet state threshold for attendance rate.      True or False.
4. Safe harbor targets are based on decreasing by 10% the percentage of scores that did not meet state standards from the previous year.      True or False.
5. For students in current Title I-funded schools that have failed to make AYP for more than two years, parents may choose a better performing public school in the district, following district guidance.      True or False.

For this next set of questions, please draw a circle around the entire correct answer.

6. When any school fails to make adequate yearly progress for three consecutive years, the school district must do what:



- A. Close down the school.
  - B. Provide school choice and supplemental education services from any service provider of their choice.
  - C. Provide school choice or supplemental education services from a list of supplemental education providers approved by the SEA.
  - D. None of the above.
7. Students in Title I schools only must be assessed as follows:
- A. Students in grades 2-8 must be assessed in reading and math.
  - B. Students in grades 1-8 must be assessed in reading and math.
  - C. Students in grades 1-8 and students in 11th grade must be assessed in reading and math.
  - D. None of the above.
8. The regulations for No Child Left Behind provide the following:
- A. Only students from low-income families are eligible for supplemental educational services.
  - B. All students are eligible for supplemental educational services.
  - C. School districts must provide transportation for students receiving supplemental educational services.
  - D. None of the above.
9. Which of these statements is not correct?
- A. If the amount of funds available for supplemental educational services is insufficient to provide services to each student whose parents request these services, the LEA must give priority to the lowest achieving students.
  - B. If the amount of funds available for supplemental educational services is insufficient to provide services to each student whose parents request these services, the LEA will have to assess parents for the services.
  - C. If the amount of funds available for supplemental educational services is insufficient to provide services to each student whose parents request these services, the LEA must give priority to all students and raise additional funds locally.
  - D. If the amount of funds available for supplemental educational services is insufficient to provide services to each student whose parents request these services, the LEA must give priority only to students with disabilities.



**HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE 2% REGULATIONS???**

**TRUE OR FALSE**

Test how much you know about the regulations issued April 9, 2007, regarding alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards.

Mark whether the following statements are true or false:

1. No more than 2 percent of students with disabilities can participate in alternate assessments based on modified academic achievement standards. True or False
2. States must develop guidelines for IEP teams to ensure that they are appropriately identifying students to be assessed based on modified academic achievement standards. True or False
3. If a student is in seventh grade but is achieving at the fifth-grade level, he can take the statewide assessment at the fifth-grade level. True or False
4. IEP goals based on grade-level content standards must be included in the IEP of a student who is assessed based on modified academic achievement standards. True or False
5. Children who will be eligible to take an alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards are children who have significant cognitive disabilities. True or False
6. IEP goals for a student who takes an alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards must include those that are based on the academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled. True or False
7. Parents of students selected to be assessed based on alternate or modified academic achievement standards must be informed of this decision. True or False
8. If a student is given an alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards, the student is not eligible to receive a regular high school diploma. True or False
9. The tests given to the 2% population can be easier than the tests given to the general student population, but the alternate assessments must reflect grade-level content. True or False
10. States have two years to develop the tests. True or False

Answers to the quiz:

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. False | 6. True  |
| 2. True  | 7. True  |
| 3. False | 8. False |
| 4. True  | 9. True  |
| 5. False | 10. True |

## **Training Activity**

# **Here Comes the Judge!**

**How did the court rule in this case?**

The student had diabetes and had a frequent need for drinking water. The student was denied the use of the drinking fountain because of a problem with another student on the playground? *North Lawrence (Ind.) Community Schools*, 83 IDELR 194 (OCR 2002).

How did the court rule?

Trainer's note: The court ruled in favor of the student's right to have water, saying the student could have a water bottle on his desk.

**NOTES:**

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## Preparing Test-Resistant Students for Assessments

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34 CFR 200.1

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.

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OVERHEAD

#1-A



**WORKING WITH  
TEST-RESISTANT  
STUDENTS:  
CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS**





OVERHEAD

#1-B

## The Challenges

- Increasing # of students with discipline issues.
- Poor motivation to do well.
- Behind academically.
- Background where school may not be the highest priority.



OVERHEAD

#1-C

## **NCLB AND ASSESSMENT**

AYP — Basic mechanism for school performance

- Participation
- Annual targets for reading and math. Science in 2007-2008
- Additional indicator:  
Attendance — elem./middle grades  
Graduation — high school



OVERHEAD

#1-D

## KEY TERMS

- disaggregated
- AYP
- Participation Rates



OVERHEAD

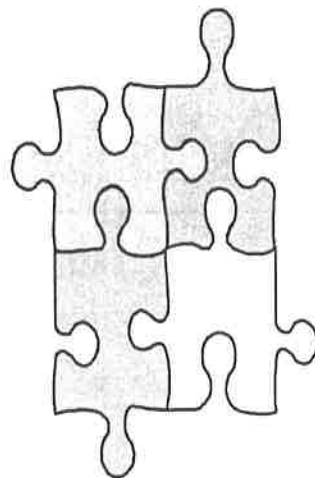
#1-E

## **ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT . . .**

With alternate achievement standards, may be utilized for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities—1% of the student population

**Or**

With modified academic achievement standards, may be utilized for up to 2% of the student population whose disability has prevented them from achieving grade-level proficiency and who will probably not reach grade-level achievement in the same timeframe as other students.







OVERHEAD

#1-F

## **IDEA 2004**

- All children with disabilities included in assessment as indicated by IEP.
- States develop guidelines for accommodations.
- States report to public with same frequency and detail as for students without disabilities.
- Utilize universal design to the extent feasible.



OVERHEAD

#1-G

## WHAT THE COURTS SAY:



- Students are to be included in state and districtwide assessments.
- Accommodations must be made for students with disabilities.
- For students with disabilities, accommodations are included in the student's IEP or Section 504 plan.
- Accommodations must preserve the integrity and validity of the test.



## **Section 2 — Strategies Prior to Testing**

- Introduction
- The Role of the IEP Team in Determining Assessment Needs
- Getting Parents Involved in the Testing Process
- Getting Students to Come to School to Take the Tests
- Handouts: The Role of the IEP Team
- Functional Assessment in Test Resistance
- 15 Interventions for Reducing Test Resistance
- Universal Design for Learning
- Accommodations
- Specific Accommodations
- Training Activities
- References/Resources
- Overheads



## Introduction

One of the issues your training group learned in the first section is the important role the IEP team plays in determining the individual assessment needs of the student. Those needs may be multiple and complex, particularly for a student who is test-resistant. Explain to your training group that the first part of this section deals with the role of the IEP team in determining appropriate assessment for students with disabilities. The remainder of the section has a variety of practical suggestions that can and should be used with any student who is test-resistant, including ways in which your school personnel can seek cooperation from parents. The section also includes:

- Information on performing a functional assessment to prepare a plan for the test resistance.
- A segment with 15 interventions for test preparation to reduce resistance.
- A brief overview of the possibilities of universal design for assessment.
- A comprehensive look at accommodations, along with an array of accommodations appropriate for test-resistant students.

### NOTES:





## The Role of the IEP Team in Determining Assessment Needs of Students with Disabilities

Point out to your trainees that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (the 2004 law amending and reauthorizing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA 2004) and No Child Left Behind have stressed the importance of including students with disabilities in the assessment process. The IEP team, with its mandated participants, determines the exact nature of the participation of children with disabilities in the state and districtwide assessments. Make it clear that no one person makes the determination of the exact nature of that participation. Explain that No Child Left Behind requires students with disabilities to be included in the state assessment systems, and that those scores must be reported along with the results of alternate assessments.

The U.S. Department of Education issued final regulations April 9, 2007, clarifying that the state must ensure that all children with disabilities are included in all general state and districtwide assessment programs with appropriate accommodations or be provided with alternate assessment. The IEP team determines the nature of the specific participation. The IEP team cannot exempt children with disabilities from participating in assessment.

The state (or in the case of a districtwide assessment, a local education agency) must develop guidelines for the provision of appropriate accommodations. Those guidelines must identify only those accommodations for each assessment that do not invalidate the score and instruct the IEP teams to select, for each assessment, only those accommodations that do not invalidate the score. (34 CFR 300.160)

For alternate assessment, the state (or in the case of a districtwide assessment, an LEA), must provide IEP teams with a clear explanation of the differences between alternate assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards, those based on modified academic achievement standards, or those based on alternate achievement standards. (34 CFR 300.160).

These accommodations must be within the parameters of protecting the integrity of the test. Describe how, for example, if a child is being tested on reading recognition, the test cannot be read to the student. Accommodations, as discussed later in this section, mean changes in the way the test may be presented, the way the student responds, the setting in which the test is taken, the timing and the scheduling for the test. The IEP team can determine that the students will not participate in a state or local assessment (or part of the assessment). If that is the case, then an alternate assessment must be provided. If the IEP team determines the state and local assessment is not appropriate, they must provide the reasons why it is not and how the child will be assessed. All students must be assessed.

Describe to your group how, when convening the IEP team, it is important that both the special education teacher and the regular education teacher come to the table with the knowledge of what academic or achievement standards will be assessed on the test, and whether the child has been exposed to those standards — and if not, why. Explain that these teachers should review previous test scores on state and local assessments and what accommodations were used on those assessments. They also should know whether the accommodations were appropriate or not, and it should be discussed at the meeting. The school should have a mechanism to track how individual students with disabilities have done on the assessment, with or without accommodations.

Tell your trainees that IEP teams should explore each academic area to be assessed to determine: Can the student take the assessment without accommodations, and why or why not; then, can the student take the assessment with accommodations, and why or why not. If the answer to

## Preparing Test-Resistant Students for Assessments

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this question is yes, then the accommodations must be clearly delineated, looking closely at what accommodations are being used within instruction, because the assessment accommodations should match the instructional accommodations. If the student is not able to take the statewide assessment, then an alternate assessment must be provided.

The IEP also must discuss these key variables outlined by Elliott, Braden and White (2001):

- Curriculum and test content alignment
- Motivation
- Reading ability
- Instructional accommodations
- Testing history

Be cautious of making false assumptions when determining assessment accommodations. For example, a very common assumption about students with special needs is that they need extended timelines. You'll find that accommodation on many IEPs. However, some students may not need those extensions in time; if they do not know the content of the material, extended timelines will not assist them. It also may be that providing extended timelines will give a false sense of security to a student — the student will procrastinate and not start the task for awhile because the student thinks she/he has plenty of time. The student also may not have learned how to budget time.

## Getting Parents Involved in the Testing Process — Seeking Their Cooperation Prior to Testing

There are a number of ideas to solicit parent cooperation in the process of test-taking. One of the most obvious you should share with your training group is that they should stress to parents the importance of having their children get to bed early the night before the test and to eat a good breakfast before the test. Explain how, at the same time, we need to realize that these typical ideas may not work for test-resistant students because there is a strong likelihood that the students may also be resistant at home. In addition, the parents also may have been resistant to taking tests, may have had a bad experience in school, or may be overwhelmed in the everyday world of raising their child. In other words, parents of test-resistant students may not be able — or willing — to get the child to go to bed early or to eat breakfast. Consequently, remind your trainees that we need to be creative and realistic in what we expect parents to do.

We also must be careful not to give them suggestions that may result in increased power struggles at home. In a study of parents' concerns about assessment, Nelson (2002) discovered that anxiety was the most common theme voiced by parents of students with disabilities. Share these ideas with your trainees:

1. Have some small group meetings with parents to give them suggestions on positive self-talk ideas and words of encouragement that they can use with their children.
2. Ask the parent what the student is saying about the test and any information the parent can give you about how his/her child responds to stress. Does the child grind his teeth, bite his fingernails, pick at his face or hair?
3. Work together as a team to enlist the parents' assistance. Rather than saying, "I'm afraid Bill is not going to do well on the test," it is better to say, "How can we work together to improve Bill's performance on the test." This frames the discussion positively and communicates to the parent that you want to work collaboratively. (Johns and Crowley, 2007)
4. Ask parents to help you make a "test survival kit." The kit should be a clear, zip-lock bag that includes Kleenex, extra sharpened pencils, erasers, hand lotion and other items that you know will make the test less stressful for the student. (Frender, 1990) recommends these items for a survival kit:
  - 2-3 sharpened pencils with erasers
  - An extra eraser
  - Scratch paper
  - Compass/protractor
  - Calculator
  - Small stapler or paper clips.

### NOTES:



## Getting Students to Come to School to Take the Tests

An increasing number of students are engaging in the ultimate escape/avoidance behavior when they don't want to take the tests — they just don't come to school. Schools are now charged with coming up with innovative and creative ways to get students to come to school. Remind your trainees that the No Child Left Behind Act requires that at least 95 percent of students participate in assessment; if students do not participate in the assessment, the school is at risk of not making adequate yearly progress.

The solution to this problem begins by working to increase student attendance throughout the school year — reinforcing students for getting into the habit of being in school on a regular basis. In the world of work, individuals lose their jobs when they don't show up or are consistently tardy.

During a recent training workshop, I was talking about the importance of school attendance and providing ideas for improving school attendance. As I spoke, I noticed two people shaking their heads “no.” I made a point of talking with them during a break because I was concerned that they didn't agree with what I was saying and wanted to get their viewpoint. They said they agreed wholeheartedly that school attendance is important, but they worked in a large school where the principal said that attendance and homework were no longer important; what mattered was whether the students scored “proficient” on the test so the school/district made AYP. They were no longer supposed to count attendance or homework in calculating grades because the key factor was the state assessment.

It certainly is troublesome that the teachers' administrator had lost sight of school attendance. It is impossible to teach a student the curriculum that is the basis of the test if the student is not present. It is critical to recognize not only students who have excellent attendance, but also students who show improvement in school attendance. The pressure is on to assure school attendance on the days of the test — school personnel must motivate students to come to school to take the tests.

Here's a program one high school in Illinois initiated to meet this challenge. Share it and the following suggestions with your trainees as possible solutions to sagging attendance:

1. Students who come to school and complete the assessment and meet/exceed in all categories are allowed to take off-campus lunch two Fridays per month.
2. Students who meet/exceed in all categories receive one extra “college day,” a day set aside to visit potential post-secondary options.
3. The names of students who meet/exceed in all categories will be placed in a scholarship drawing.
4. Students who meet/exceed in all categories are exempt from final exams in year-long courses if they have no more than 3 absences in the course.
5. Students who do not meet or exceed in all categories will be required to take a remedial English or Math course.

(Johns and Carr, 2007)

## Preparing Test-Resistant Students for Assessments

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The district then established the following guidelines for off-campus lunch (though be sure to check if your district has its own guidelines):

1. Students are allowed to go off campus for lunch two scheduled times per month.
2. Lunch is limited to those eating establishments within walking distance of the school.
3. Prior arrangements must be made with local restaurants to prepare for students.
4. The high school office will compile a list of students who meet/exceed in all categories.
5. Students have both homeroom and lunchtime for off-campus privileges.
6. Students must return on time. Students who do not return on time are not allowed to go out to lunch on the next scheduled time.
7. If a student has gone to the off-campus lunch three times without any problems, the student is permitted to drive to a neighboring community for the fourth scheduled lunch. This will carry over to all additional off-campus lunches.
8. Parent permission is required for students to take others in cars.
9. Taking unauthorized students means the student loses off-campus lunch privileges.

(Johns and Carr, 2007)

Another school district established a system that allowed students who attended school and met test criteria to take an end-of-day elective class the next semester that released earlier than the usual dismissal time. (Johns and Carr, 2007)

Other school districts have established incentives for students who attend on test days and meet or exceed proficiency on test scores, providing door prizes, class trips for groups whose composite scores meet or exceed, pizza parties for improvement in scores, or coupons for restaurants or other privileges. There are endless privileges that can be provided: chances on items that could be donated within the community, passes to sporting events, movie tickets and DVDs, to mention a few. (Johns and Carr, 2007)

### NOTES:

## Section 2 Handouts

# The Role of the IEP Team in Determining Assessment Needs

### HANDOUT 2-A

#### IEP TEAM CHECKLIST FOR DETERMINING ASSESSMENT AND ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

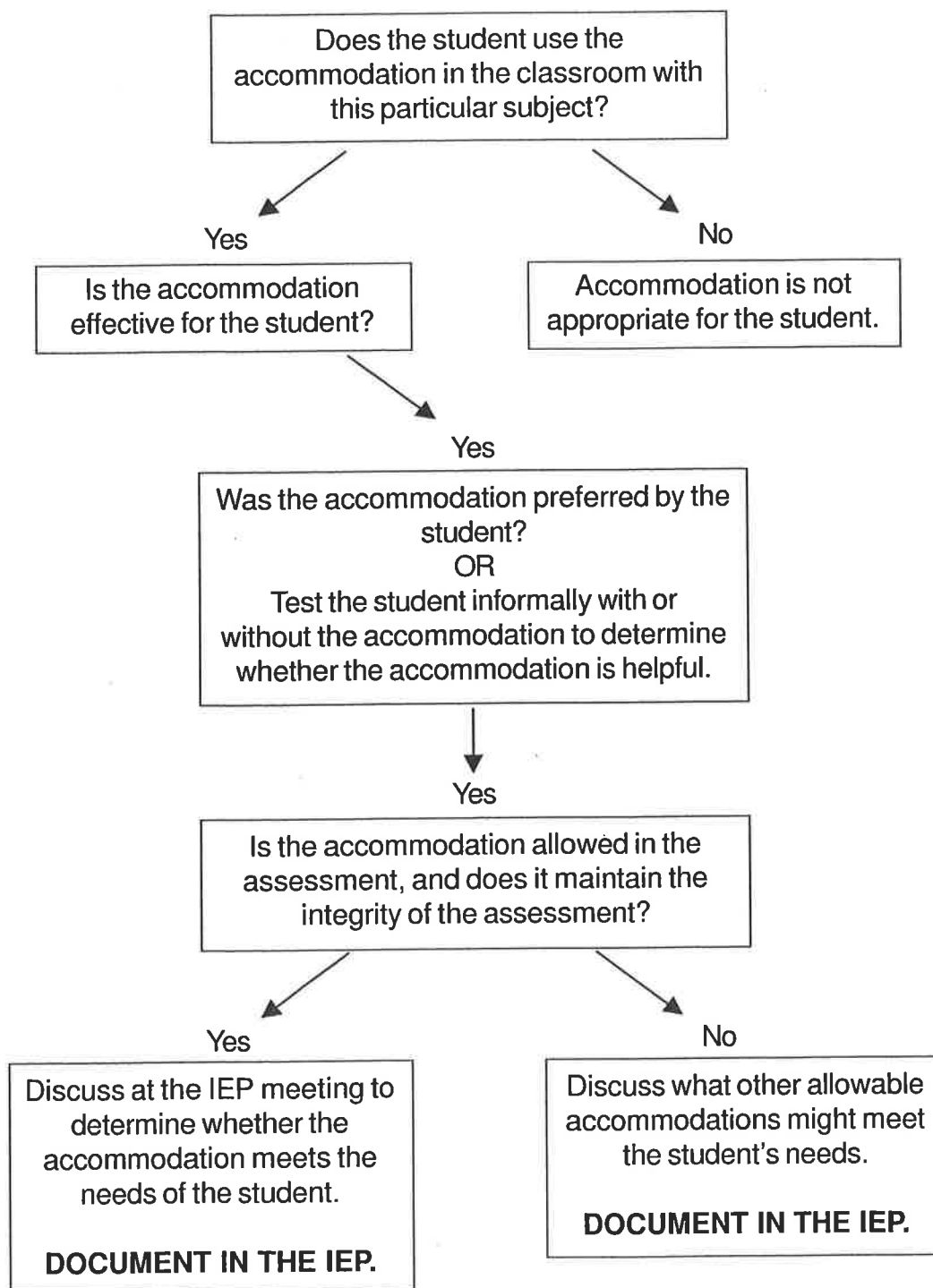
- What is the specific nature of the student's disability?
- What is the student's preferred method for learning — visual, auditory, tactile?
- If the student has a learning disability, what is the processing deficit?
- Does the student have specific medical needs that may impact testing?
- How has the student done on previous assessments?
- What accommodations were used previously and were those successful?
- What accommodations are currently being used in instruction?
- What are the student's current achievement levels?
  - Reading Recognition Skills
  - Reading Comprehension Skills
  - Math Computation Skills
  - Math Problem Solving Skills
  - Written Expression Skills
  - Fine Motor Skills
  - Attention Span
  - Auditory Memory Skills
  - Auditory Processing Time
  - Visual Memory Skills
  - Organizational Skills
- What is the student's attendance history?
- Has the student been exposed to the standards that are being assessed?
- What is the student's history of motivation for taking tests?
- What is the student's history of anxiety about taking tests?
- What, if any, test-taking strategies have been taught to the student?
- How does the student deal with timed tests or other timed activities?





## HANDOUT—2-B

# Guidance for the IEP Team in Determining Appropriate Assessment Accommodations





## HANDOUT 2-C

# Guidance for School Personnel in Determining Who Should Participate in Alternate Assessments

*Developed by Stephen N. Elliott, Vanderbilt University*

School personnel have to justify why certain students with disabilities should take alternate assessments. Here are criteria established by most states, as determined by Stephen N. Elliott, professor of special education and educational and psychological assessments at Vanderbilt University:

- Student cannot complete the academic curricula even with accommodations and modifications.
- Student requires extensive direct instruction in multiple setting to accomplish application and transfer of his/her skills.
- Student is not able to use academic skills at a minimal competency level through typical classroom instruction.
- Student's difficulties with the regular academic curricula are not the result of extensive absences or social, cultural or economic differences.
- Student is not able to acquire, maintain or generalize skills and demonstrate performance without intense, individualized instruction.
- Student works to an expectation that differs in complexity from grade-level expectations.
- Student is working toward educational goals other than those prescribed for a modified standard, standard or advanced studies diploma program.
- Student's impairments cause dependence on others for most, if not all, their daily living needs, and student is expected to require extensive ongoing support in adulthood.
- Student's instructional program emphasizes life skills and functional applications of the general education curriculum.

(Source: Checkosky, A., Editor. (2004). "States face 5 common challenges to develop alternate assessments." *Special Ed Connection* ([www.specialedconnection.com](http://www.specialedconnection.com)), Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.: LRP Publications, Inc. Oct. 20, 2004.)

An increasing number of states are dealing with the difficulty of getting students with emotional/behavioral challenges to participate in assessment. Thurlow and colleagues (2005) conducted a study to examine the state participation and accommodation policies in place in 2001 at the beginning of the No Child Left Behind accountability requirements. One of the changes that had been made in some states in policies from 1999 to 2000 was that student emotional anxiety had been added to several state participation policies as a criterion to determine participation in assessment. Six states permitted the assessment participation decision to be based, in whole or in part, on a student's emotional anxiety and the student's possible adverse reaction to the testing situation.



## Functional Assessment in Test Resistance

Explain the importance of understanding the reason for a student's test resistance. Just as we do functional assessment when we see behavioral problems within and outside the school setting, we also must look at the function of the student's behavior when he or she is resisting testing. Behavior is communication, and when students behave in a particular way it is for a reason — it serves a function for them. Point out that one of our jobs as educators is to figure out the function of the test resistance.

Lead your group through the various functions of behavior and examine how these might apply to test taking:

Access — Many students engage in a particular behavior in order to access attention or to access control of a given situation. Within the test setting, the student may act up during the testing in order to get attention from you, the teacher, or from her peers. She might want to be the class clown and enjoys disrupting the testing situation in order to gain the attention of her peers. To help you determine whether the function of the behavior is for access, ask yourself these questions:

1. Am I providing enough positive attention to the student while she is working positively on a test?
2. Am I using proximity control when the student is working on the test?
3. Is the student engaging in the behavior in order to get peer attention? Do peers easily influence the student's behavior?
4. Should I separate the student from her peers when she is taking the test?
5. Am I getting into a power struggle with the student to do the test? A student who is passive-aggressive may try to control a situation and get your attention by putting her head on the desk and refusing to do the test. You might become upset and begin to "beg" the student to do the task. The student "digs in her heels" and refuses to do the test. You become upset. The student has definitely controlled the situation.
6. Have I shown empathy to the student? Good teachers try to put themselves in the student's place and get a sense of how a student is feeling. Good teachers then recognize those feelings and attempt to assist the student in working through her fears/feelings.

Avoidance/escape — Many students engage in behaviors to avoid doing the task. They may be overwhelmed by the amount of work ahead, they may perceive the work as too difficult, or they may prefer to do something else. We have all seen students who suddenly become "ill" when they face a daunting task (such as a test) and want to go to the nurse's office or want to go home — or they just don't come to school in the first place. When you suspect that the student is engaging in behavior to avoid the task, ask yourself these questions:

1. Is the student overwhelmed by the appearance of the test?
2. Is the student overwhelmed by the amount of the test?
3. Is the student afraid that he or she will fail the test?

## Preparing Test-Resistant Students for Assessments

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4. Is the student afraid that he or she will be embarrassed in front of his or her peers?
5. Are the directions unclear to the student?
6. Have I kept the directions short and clear?
7. Have I provided visual cues for the student?
8. Have I thoroughly prepared the student for the test?

**Sensory** — Students have distinct sensory needs, just as adults do. It is important that we are tuned in to the optimal situations in which the students can learn. Many students with autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may need increased movement in order to do well on the test. Any student will have difficulty doing well if he or she is hungry or thirsty during the test. Any student also will have difficulty doing well if he or she is hot or cold during the test. Some students learn better with different types of lighting, while some may be distracted by flickering fluorescent lights. Some students are bothered by certain types of clothing or clothes that may be too tight. A child with autism may have spilled something on his clothes just before the test and becomes very upset about it. Some students need soft music in the background; others do not. Here are questions you can ask yourself when determining whether the student has a sensory need that may be the function of the test-resistant behavior.

1. Am I providing opportunities for movement during the testing? Am I giving frequent breaks to the student? Does the student need a stress ball/fidget? Does the student need to be able to doodle when he works?
2. Is the student hungry or dehydrated? Does he need some healthy food prior to taking the test, or does he need a water bottle during the test?
3. Is there too much sensory stimulation in the classroom that is preventing the student from doing well?
  - a. Is the room too noisy?
  - b. Are there unnecessary distractions in the room, such as a humming fan or light? Sensitivity to environmental stimuli among students with autism or ADHD may be so high that they notice a distraction a teacher or other students have learned to tune out.
  - c. Does the student perceive that his hands are dirty or he has a spot on his clothing or that something is out of order on his desk? Some students who have obsessive compulsive disorder will get very upset by some of these annoyances. While you may be able to ignore them, such annoyances could ruin a student's day and certainly impact his/her performance on a test.

### NOTES:

## 15 Interventions for Reducing Test Resistance: Preparing Students for Assessment

Following are 15 intervention strategies your teachers can use to prepare test-resistant students for assessment:

1. Provide practice tests. Many states provide practice tests that can be given to students to assist in test preparation. On some state web sites you'll find test items from previous tests. See if your state offers this tool. It gives you an opportunity to examine specific test items, what directions are involved, and the type of vocabulary used. It also allows you to show students what to expect. You should give students the opportunity to practice tests — especially timed tests.
2. Teach students how to read directions. Teach the key vocabulary words used in test directions. For example: "Draw a circle around," "Underline," etc. Often we change words in directions and students do not know the terms we've chosen. You also may want to teach students how to use a highlighter for the directions, to help them remember what they are supposed to do. You also can create a direction word poster to help students remember what each direction word means.
3. Teach students how to use a bubble sheet for an answer. Typically statewide assessments are administered with a test question sheet and a bubble sheet for the answers. Students must be taught how to look at the question on one sheet of paper and answer the question on another sheet of paper. Specifically, you should teach students how to move from the question sheet to the correct row on the bubble sheet, because:
  - Some students with learning disabilities or mental retardation may have difficulty understanding this concept.
  - Some students may have problems tracking from one place to another.
  - Some students may have visual motor problems that make bubble sheet use challenging.
  - Some students may have short-term memory problems that make it difficult to remember the answer long enough to put the answer on the bubble sheet.

Needless to say, students should have multiple opportunities for practicing the use of bubble sheets before being expected to use those specific skills on a statewide assessment. I remember vividly being part of a monitoring visit many years ago in a school district. The district had required all students to take a minimal competency test. I was observing a class of third-grade students who had been identified as having mental retardation and were attempting to take the minimal competency test. They had received no prior training on how to take such a test, and they didn't understand the concept of looking at the questions on one sheet of paper and answering the questions on another sheet of paper. They were crying at their desks. It was a very sad sight that taught me the importance of preparing students to take tests.

Mastropieri and Scruggs (2000) recommend you teach students these helpful words when they are learning how to complete a bubble sheet: "Quick," "Dark" and "Inside the Line." You might want to make a poster for younger students as a reminder. The researchers also say you should get practice tests from the publishers and practice arranging the test booklet

and answer sheets so the numbers of the appropriate items match. They also recommend having students mark the answers on the booklet, then practice transferring marked responses to the correct location on the answer sheets.

#### 4. Teach the students how to scan the test.

When preparing students for state assessment, we need to stress that they should scan the test to find the easiest questions and answer them first. Then the student should go back to more difficult questions. It gives students an emotional boost to know they can answer some questions and instills confidence in their ability to take the test.

5. Teach the students how to move on when they see a question they believe they do not know. Like any student, test-resistant students will begin a test and come to a question or problem they cannot do. They immediately give up or ponder the answer too long and fail to go any further. Students need to be taught that it is important to skip a question they don't know the answer to and move on to the next question. They need to be taught that they shouldn't waste too much time on one question.

6. Assist students in dealing with distractions within the test. One of the most effective strategies for this problem is to have the student cover up part of the test so the student sees only one part of the test at a time. Some students are overwhelmed or easily distracted when they see the entire test at one time. A simple and cheap technique is to take a file folder and cut the front cover into strips. The test booklet can then be put inside the file folder so the student sees only the portion of the test where a strip of the folder is peeled back. The folder strips also serve as a ruler for the student, making it easier for the student to keep his place.

7. Teach the student how to deal with timed tests. Visual devices that show students how much time they have to do the assessment are very helpful. A simple kitchen timer may be appropriate, or try some other strategies for students who may have difficulty grasping the concept of time in relation to testing or work completion.

Here's another example: "Beat the Clock." I found this technique very helpful for a student who could not manage his own time and would sit without working for lengthy periods of time. I knew that the student clearly could do the work within a short period of time if he were properly motivated. So I would comment to the student, "Andrew, I bet that task will take you five minutes to do." Andrew would then get it done even sooner to prove me wrong.

You also can use a time estimation game, where the student estimates how long it will take to do the test and writes down that time; when the student finishes the test, he records how long it actually took him to complete the test. This practice gives the student a realistic view of time management and time on task.

#### 8. Teach students to use elimination strategies.

Studies have revealed that there are many students with disabilities who are unaware of elimination strategies. They don't always read all the options (Mastropieri and Scruggs, 2002). They may panic and just not move any further. If the student taking the test has some prior knowledge of the topic but isn't sure of the correct answer, the student can be



taught how to eliminate the options that he knows are incorrect. A good game you can play to prepare a student for this test-taking strategy is a spin-off of the popular game show, "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire." When facing four options, have the student take away two options as a "lifeline."

### 9. Teach students how to guess wisely.

Some students may not realize that guessing is a better option than leaving a test question answer blank. A 1985 study showed that students who reported guessing on particular test items scored higher than expected (Scruggs, Bennion, and Lifson, 1985).

Before the test, problem-solve with students what might happen during the test. Spend time with a group or individual student and actually brainstorm the possible problems they might encounter on the test and discuss solutions to those problems. You could then make a poster for the students depicting the problems they might encounter and the solutions to those problems.

### 10. Teach students how to use proofreading checklists.

Teachers should develop proofreading checklists and teach students how to proofread their own work. Make a stamp of the checklist and put in on a sheet of paper on the student's desk. Or staple a proofreading checklist to the student's test as a reminder. Another option is for the students to create their own proofreading checklist. Here is an example of a checklist:

- Have I put my name on my paper?
- Have I answered all the questions?
- Have I checked spelling?
- Have I checked the punctuation?

11. Teach the student how to deal with the situation when expectations change within the test. It is very difficult for many students to "switch gears" in the middle of an activity or test. I recently reviewed a test on which a student had performed very poorly. Upon examining the two-page test, I saw that the directions had changed eight times. Changing directions on the same page may be very problematic for some students. Some students persevere on a task — as an example they start on one task and keep going on that task whether it is required or not. They just keep "going and going." If the first set of directions requests that the student "add" the numbers and then the next set of directions require the student to "subtract" the numbers, the student might keep adding. Because in the reality of high-stakes assessment students must be taught to carefully read different directions, teach them to highlight those directions if they need to.

12. Teach the student positive self-talk strategies. The more we tell ourselves that we can do a task, the more likely we are able to do it. We know that a defeatist attitude and a "What's the use — I'm stupid" attitude will guarantee failure. It's a good idea to make sure that stress balls have those positive "self" statements on it. Teaching the student some self-talk

## Preparing Test-Resistant Students for Assessments

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statements is beneficial. Practicing positive self-talk statements immediately before the test will more likely result in the student using the statements during the test. Immediately prior to the test, you can ask the student to write down three positive self-statements and keep them on the desk during the test (if the provisions of the test administration allow it).

13. Use self-determination to improve test-taking skills. Self-determination is the process of teaching students to take control of their lives. Karvonen and colleagues (2004) refer to self-determination as a model based on research-based definitional concepts that include: choice-making; decision making; problem-solving; goal-setting and attainment; self-advocacy; self-efficacy; self-knowledge and understanding; self-observation, evaluation and reinforcement; independence — risk-taking and safety; self-instruction; and internal locus of control.

With test-taking, there is an excellent opportunity for students to use self-determination to empower them and give them more of a feeling of control over the environment. Students can employ choice-making in determining the order of the test questions they answer or as a possible accommodation allowing the student to choose which particular subject in the test they want to take first or second.

Students also have the opportunity to make decisions and problem-solve on the test, as discussed earlier. Students can set goals for how many questions they want to be able to answer and then evaluate how many they answered. Test-taking is a process of independence because little help is provided and the student is taking risks. Students also can be taught to reinforce themselves when they have done well on a particular section of the test.

### 14. Teach test “wiseness”

Deshler, Ellis and Lenz (1996) outline the steps students need to learn to become test wise:

- a. Eliminate similar options — When two items in a multiple-choice set of answers are so similar as to be the same, neither one should be considered — after all, only one answer can be correct.
- b. Eliminate absurd options — Student eliminates an answer that is obviously incorrect or is an obvious attempt by the teacher at humor.
- c. Use stem-option agreement — Sometimes in multiple-choice questions cues are inadvertently given, typically dealing with grammatical construction. As an example, if the stem of a multiple-choice item ends with the word “an” and several of the options begin with consonants, this may be a cue that they are wrong. Or sometimes one option contains some of the same words as the stem.
- d. Use length of option — This cue occurs when one or more options is obviously longer by at least three to four words than the other options. The best strategy for guessing here is to select this answer as the option, avoiding specific determiners — absolute words such as always and never.

Students with learning disabilities are less likely to use these test-wise skills. They need to be taught how to do so, and it certainly may reduce their test resistance when they feel they have a “bag of tricks” to help them get through the test.

15. Teach Test-taking Strategies — There are a wide array of well-researched test-taking strategies you can teach to students. Below are some of the most well known and effective. You may know others or may want to create some of your own, depending on your students' individual needs. Deshler, Ellis and Lenz (1996) remind us that students need multiple opportunities to practice strategies with close teacher monitoring and feedback using tests that are samples or similar in format to the actual standardized tests.

Here is a very popular and effective test-taking strategy for students:

- P** — Prepare to succeed (put your name and PIRATES on the test, allot time, say affirmations, start within 2 minutes).
- I** — Inspect the instructions.
- R** — Read, remember, reduce.
- A** — Answer or abandon.
- T** — Turn back.
- E** — Estimate (avoid absolutes, choose the longest or most detailed choice, eliminate similar choices).
- S** — Survey.

(Deshler, Ellis, and Lenz, 1996)

**TRUST** (Emily Warrick, Univ. of North Texas, Denton)

- T** — Take a deep breath.
- R** — Read the directions and/or remember what you are doing.
- U** — Use your brain and your instincts.
- S** — tuck? Skip it and come back later, or stretch, take a look around, look back at your task.
- T** — Tell yourself “I trust myself.”

(Warrick, 2003)

**SNOW** — Strategy for Essay Tests

- S** — Study the question.
- N** — Note important points.
- O** — Organize the information.
- W** — Write directly to the point of the question.

(Mastropieri and Scruggs, 2000)

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**SCORER** — To help with test performance

**S** — Schedule time.

**C** — Clue words.

**O** — Omit hard items.

**R** — Read carefully.

**E** — Estimate answers.

**R** — Review work.

(Carman and Adams, 1972)

**PACER**

**P** — Preview the test.

**A** — Arrange your time.

**C** — Look for clue words.

**E** — Easy questions do first.

**R** — Review the test before handing it in.

(Lapsansky, 1991)

**SOLVE** — A strategy for approaching math word problems on tests.

**S** — Study the problem.

**O** — Organize the facts.

**L** — Line up a plan.

**V** — Verify the plan/computation.

**E** — Examine your answer.

(Enright and Beattie, 1989).

**WRITING STRATEGIES**

The following strategy was designed by De La Paz and colleagues in 2000 to prepare students for state writing assessment:

**PLAN**

**P** — Pay attention to the prompt.

**L** — List main ideas.

**A** — Add supporting ideas.

**N** — Number your ideas.

**WRITE**

**W** — Work from your plan to develop your thesis statement.

**R** — Remember your goals.

**I** — Include transition words.

**T** — Try to use different kinds of sentences.

**E** — Exciting, interesting, \$100,000 words.

(De La Paz, Owen, Harris and Graham, 2000)

Warger (2002) notes that difficulties in writing for students with disabilities exist because students know less than their nondisabled peers about the characteristics of good writing, they begin writing with little or no planning, they limit revisions to minor corrections, and have problems with transcription processes such as spelling, handwriting, and punctuation. She urges that teachers use these techniques when assisting students to perform at their best on writing assessments:

1. Use the three principles of effective writing instruction — a basic framework of planning, writing and revision.
2. Instruct students in the steps of the writing process and features and conventions of writing.
3. Provide feedback guided by the information explicitly taught.

**TREE**

Strategy for an opinion essay

**T** — Topic Sentence

**R** — Reasons

**E** — Examine reasons

**E** — Ending

(Graham, Harris and Troia, 2000)

**NOTES:**



## Universal Design for Learning

As you showed your group in the first section of this manual, IDEA 2004 requires that each state educational agency (or, in the case of a districtwide assessment, the local educational agency) must, to the extent feasible, use universal design principles in developing and administering any of these assessments. Universal design principles provide many opportunities for test-resistant students. Using technology when taking a test may be much more motivating and less intimidating than taking a test using paper and pencil. When tests are digitized, there are multiple opportunities to highlight or underscore key words and change the font size or pagination. These are just a few of the many possibilities of adapting assessment when it is universally designed.

“Universal design implies that assistive supports are built-in, rather than added on as an afterthought,” according to Nolet and McLaughlin (p. 89, 2000). To stay current with the latest developments in universal design, go to the Web site for the Center for Applied Special Technology ([www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org)).

### NOTES:





# Accommodations

## Involving students in accommodations discussions

Explain how it is important to involve students in discussions about accommodations in instruction and assessment, especially via the IEP process, when students with disabilities are involved. Once when I was participating in a high school student's IEP meeting, some members of the team recommended the student use a tape recorder in class because he was having difficulty remembering the lecture material. The student responded, "I don't like tape recorders." To attempt to force the use of a tape recorder at his level would have been a real struggle. Instead, he had other specific ideas about what would help him. The teachers were willing to give him their lecture notes ahead of time, and he would review the notes (with assistance from his family) before the lecture. As a result, he paid closer attention and remembered more material from the class, because he was more familiar with the material (Johns and Crowley, 2003).

## Determining appropriate accommodations

Define accommodations. Here's a good definition: An appropriate accommodation is a change in testing conditions that removes a barrier to valid assessment. The accommodation is based on the student's disability and does not change the nature of what is being assessed.

Thurlow (2002) reported a bothersome finding: Accommodations are used with a greater percentage of students at the elementary level than at either the middle or high school levels. Explain that as subject content increases in middle school and high school, it is critical to consider and use accommodations.

Tindal and Fuchs (2000) did a comprehensive review of accommodations in order to provide school district and state department personnel with a comprehensive synthesis of the research literature on the effects of test accommodations on students with disabilities.

They broke down accommodations into the following categories, with some of the researchers' examples provided:

### Timing/Scheduling

- Flexible schedule
- Frequent breaks during testing
- Extended timelines
- Test administered over several sessions

### Setting

- Special lighting
- Study carrel
- Administer the test individually in a separate location
- Administer the test to a small group in a separate location
- Special or adaptive furniture

## Preparing Test-Resistant Students for Assessments

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Reduced distractions

### Presentation

Large print

Prompts available on tape

Increased spacing between questions

Increased size of answer bubbles

Read directions to students

Highlight key words/directions

Visual magnification

Dark, heavy, or raised lines

Secure paper to work area with magnets or tape

### Response

Increased space

Wider lines and/or wider margins

Graph paper

Allowing students to mark answers in test booklet rather than bubble sheet

Word processor

Alternative response such as oral response

Spell check

Calculator

Assistive technology/supports

Tell your trainees that the National Center on Educational Outcomes, directed by Matha Thurlow, has created a current database on testing accommodations for students with disabilities — an excellent resource for the field. Share the URL: [www.education.umn.edu/NCEO/Accomstudies](http://www.education.umn.edu/NCEO/Accomstudies). Ongoing research on the use of accommodations is critical, and this Web site is designed to keep those in the field up to date on research.

Describe how the most common accommodations reported by the NCEO are:

- Braille editions
- Computer response to scribe

- Dictate response to scribe
- Extended time
- Interpreter for instructions
- Large print book
- Mark answers in test booklet
- Read aloud
- Test direction clarifications
- Test breaks

It's important to note that some of these accommodations may be appropriate for students who are test-resistant, but those decisions must be made on an individual basis.

Elliott, Braden, and White (2001) discuss four categories of accommodations:

- Timing
- Environment
- Presentation
- Recording or response format

*Discover IDEA — Supporting Achievement for Children with Disabilities: An IDEA Practices Resource Guide* (2003) outlines these same categories of testing accommodations — Timing/scheduling, setting adaptations, presentation adaptations, test directions support test items and manner of response.

Share with your training group how, in another study, Thurlow (2005) breaks accommodations down into five types and lists the number of states that allow these accommodations without restrictions:

### Presentation

Braille — 35 states

Read-aloud — 5 states (1 state completely prohibits this)

Read-reread-clarify directions — 29 states (1 state completely prohibits)

Sign interpretation — 37 states

### Equipment and materials

Amplification/equipment — 34

Audio/Videocassette — 16 (2 states completely prohibit)

Calculator — 14 (1 state completely prohibits)

Magnification equipment — 40

### Response

Computer or typewriter — 30 (1 state completely prohibits)

Proctor/scribe — 31

## **Preparing Test-Resistant Students for Assessments**

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Spell checker/assistance — 7 (11 states completely prohibit)

Write in test booklet — 37

### Scheduling/timing

Extended timelines — 26 (3 states completely prohibit)

Over multiple days — 19 (2 states completely prohibit)

Time beneficial to student — 35

With breaks — 33

### Setting

Individual administration — 46

Separate room — 36

Small group — 46

Student's home — 12 (1 state completely prohibits)

### **Key points to remember about accommodations**

- Curricular and instructional accommodations are necessary adjustments for enabling students to access educational programming as adequately as their normative peers.
- These are not “give-aways” where teachers simply enable students with disabilities to finish their task.
- They include a variety of strategies, but the exact nature of accommodations is based upon the individual needs of the student.
- They provide access to remove irrelevant barriers to performance.
- Accommodations in assessment should match accommodations in instruction.
- The student must be taught how to use the accommodation.

### **The difference between accommodations and modifications**

- Accommodations: content of material taught remains the same, but student is accommodated. Example: tape recorder for lectures.
- Modifications: content is changed. Example: fewer number of spelling words, high-interest low-vocabulary materials.

### **Steps for making accommodations**

- Develop array of accommodations, such as those provided in this manual.
- Identify criteria to select accommodations.
- Does a problem exist? If so, describe it.
- Determine all accommodations for special education students within the IEP.
- Disseminate to all who will have to make accommodations.

### **NOTES:**

## Specific Accommodations

This manual is not designed as an exhaustive list of all possible accommodations; rather, this section in particular is intended as a guide to possible accommodations that may meet the specific, individual needs of test-resistant students. For purposes of determining accommodations for these students, I've broken the accommodations down into the following categories: Motivational, Setting, Material and Organizational.

### Motivational Accommodations

- Positive reinforcement for testing responses — while in high-stakes assessment we cannot reinforce students immediately for correct responses, but we can reinforce the students for starting the test, reinforce them for working on the test and reinforce them when they complete certain sections of the test.
- Using positive self-vocalizations. In an early study by Jackson, Farley, Zimet, and Gotmann (1979), these researchers saw increased scores on testing when students were given a reminder card and read it frequently. The reminder card said: "I will stop, listen, look and think before I answer."
- Letting the student choose the order of the testing task.
- Gaining behavior momentum by giving a part of the test that the student is more easily able to do first before proceeding to a more difficult part of the test.
- Doing a portion of the task and then taking a short break.
- Doing a portion of the task and then receiving a reinforcer — premack principle.
- Choosing the time of day to do the test (Johns, 2002).
- Choice in types of pencil used to complete the test.
- Tape recording of the questions and answer options — in this author's college classes she has had students who needed the test read to them. She would record the questions and potential answers ahead of time (this was a familiar voice to the students), and they could listen to the questions as many times as they needed. She also gave the student the choice of listening to the tape with earphones within the classroom or in a separate area.
- Tape recording periodic positive statements or cues for the student to relax or take a deep breath, or to remind the student to move on if he or she gets to a question he or she doesn't know.
- Taping music and letting the student listen to it during the test.
- Extended timelines. (However be very cautious that with test-resistant students who may not be able to budget their time in the first place this may encourage them to engage in delay behaviors. Unless students have been taught to manage their time wisely by breaking down the tasks and being able to estimate how much time each task will take to do, extended timelines may be ineffective.)

### NOTES:

## Preparing Test-Resistant Students for Assessments

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### Setting Accommodations

- Allowing the student to work in a different area with fewer distractions or in a separate supervised room
- Soft background music
- Use of a study carrel
- Tester familiarity
- Sensory friendly — specific type of lighting, pleasant aroma in the room, water bottle, artificial plants for beauty in the setting
- Small timer (Utilize a commercial timer that gives a visual cue of how much time the student has left.)

### NOTES:

### Material Accommodations

- Additional white space on the test. I once heard a researcher say that if we did nothing more than increase the amount of white space on test papers we could improve test scores. Small print is hard to read and can be overwhelming to test-resistant students.
- File Folders. Since we don't have the luxury of adding white space to state assessment, what is another option that is available? We can put the test in a file folder that has been cut on the front sheet into strips. The test paper is put into the file folder and the student can lift the strips up one at a time exposing only part of the test at one time. This file folder also can be used as a ruler/marker that will assist the student in keeping his/her space.
- Large print materials — these are not only appropriate for students who are visually impaired but may be very appropriate for a student who is overwhelmed with fine print or too much print on one sheet of paper.
- Flashlight. Some students can “track” better utilizing a small flashlight.
- Fidget items — a ball that the student can squeeze. If the test provisions do not allow students to have anything on their desk other than test materials, then the student will be required to keep the fidget in his/her pocket.
- Computer mouse pad on student desk. Sometimes students need to tap their pencil on the desk. They need movement of the pencil while they are thinking. However tapping a pencil might drive the other students up the wall or may drive the teacher up the wall. I have found that placing a mouse pad on the student's desk is effective so that the student can tap the pencil on the mouse pad and the noise is diffused.
- Highlighters — my favorite are the triangular highlighters that have three different colors of highlighters in one pen — the student can highlight the directions in one color or the teacher can highlight the directions in one color, key vocabulary words could be highlighted in another color, and whatever else needs to be highlighted for the student can be done.
- A proofreading checklist or a strategy checklist for the test.
- Calculator — I prefer the large calculators particularly for students who have small motor problems.

#### For writing:

- Pencil grips
- Wider size pencil
- Taping the test paper onto the desk to prevent it from moving
- Clipboard to prevent paper from moving

## Preparing Test-Resistant Students for Assessments

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- Computer
- Replacing the answer booklet with wider-lined paper
- Specific software programs for transcription and sentence generation — speech synthesis. For children with learning disabilities in the upper elementary and middle school, it has been found that dictated compositions are longer and qualitatively superior to compositions written by hand or word processor. It also has been found that students with learning disabilities produced better essays if they could dictate to scribes or speech recognition systems than if they wrote by hand (MacArthur and Cavalier, 1999).
- Software application programs for cognitive and planning processes such as prompting programs, outlining and semantic mapping software.
- Dictation and speech recognition technology. In a study conducted by MacArthur and Cavalier (2004), it was reported that high school students with and without learning disabilities learned to use speech recognition software with acceptable accuracy. For students with learning disabilities, essays that were dictated using speech recognition were better than handwritten essays, and essays dictated to a scribe were even better. No differences in quality were found for students without learning disabilities. This study investigated both dictation to a scribe and dictation using speech recognition software. The authors found that the available evidence indicates that dictation has the potential to improve the writing performance of students with learning disabilities by removing the barrier that is often created by their difficulties with mechanics. A question that still remains is whether dictation changes the construct being assessed. When writing is used to assess knowledge in content areas, the use of dictation would not change the constructs of the tests. But when the test is intended to measure writing achievement itself, a conceptual question that must be resolved is whether the construct of writing includes the mechanics of producing the text or whether the tests are intended to assess composing separate from the mechanics. (MacArthur and Cavalier, 2004).

### NOTES:



### Organizational Accommodations

- Visual prompts of where items should be kept.
- File folder for the student in which the student can keep the test. The file folder's front cover can be cut into strips so the student can only see the specific portion of the test he is working on at the time and is not overwhelmed by the test.
- Test survival kit as discussed previously.
- Photo album sheets — Some educators have found this very helpful for students. Purchase a full size photo album that has sheets that have a clear overlay. The educator can take each of the test pages and put them in it between the sheet. It is easier for the student to keep it where it belongs and also keeps it neater for the student.
- Extended timelines. These may be appropriate for some students and assist them in getting organized. However the educator must be very cautious that this is not an organizational hindrance for a student. Some students have difficulty organizing their time and unless they are taught how to manage it during a test, extended timelines could be more of a hindrance than a help.

### NOTES:



## Training Activity

### Carousel Brainstorming

Place four large sheets of paper around a room. Flip charts work nicely. Title the sheets with the categories "Motivational," "Material," "Organizational" and "Setting."

Divide the participants into four groups. There are different ways to do this, depending on the overall composition of your group, whether you need an ice-breaker, or if you just want to have a little fun. You can divide the groups by passing out four different types of candy or small items. One of my favorite ways to divide people into small groups is an activity called "Humdinger." Write the names of four different songs on equal numbers of slips of paper, whose overall total equals that of your group. Use songs whose tunes are easily identified, such as "Old MacDonald," "Oh, Susanna," "Jingle Bells" and "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." Each participant draws one of the slips of paper. Then direct participants to move around the room and hum the song, until they find the group of people humming their song.

Now assign each group to gather in front of one of the large sheets of paper. Ask each team to choose a team leader, who is given a magic marker. Give each group five minutes to brainstorm accommodations that fit under the category on the sheet of paper, while the leader writes them on the sheet.

Pick out some appropriate music to use while the groups move from station to station (I like "I Get Around" by the Beach Boys). Tell the participants that when the music starts playing, they must move as a group to the next sheet of paper. This time, give the groups about two minutes to look over what the previous group did and then brainstorm more options for another five minutes. Then start the music again and the groups move to the next category. The activity is completed when the four different groups have brainstormed all four categories.

Now give the participants a few minutes to move around the room and view the four category sheets. They should see some creative accommodation ideas they might not considered before.

#### NOTES:

## **Training Activity**

# **Accommodation or Modification?**

Hold a group discussion about whether these are accommodations or modifications.

- Extended timelines
- Off-level testing
- Changing the order of the task
- Use of a calculator

**NOTES:**



### Training Activity

### Case Study

Jesse is a fifth-grader who has significant mental retardation and behavioral problems. He is able to read 10 words by sight and understands the meanings of those words. His math computation is at a second-grade level. About 90 percent of the time, Jesse refuses to do any paper-and-pencil tasks, so manipulative materials are used the majority of the time. Jesse receives special education in a self-contained program for students with mental retardation. He is in a regular classroom for social studies and for all other non-academic activities. He receives specialized instruction in the special education class for his reading and math skills.

You are the special education coordinator and are chairing the IEP. At the IEP meeting it is time for the discussion of assessment. All of the school personnel present recommend that Jesse receive alternate assessment for reading and math. The parents believe that Jesse should take the state-wide assessment with accommodations. The parents want to see how Jesse will do on the assessment. What questions will you, as the chair of the IEP team, ask of participants to determine what type of assessment is appropriate for Jesse?

**NOTES:**

## Training Activity

### What's Wrong with This Picture?

Here is an example of a poorly written test. What's wrong with this picture? List the problems a test-resistant student would have with this test. Then discuss how you would rewrite this test.

#### MATH TEST

Write these numbers in standard form:

1.  $60,000 + 5,000 + 400 + 60 + 8$  \_\_\_\_\_
2. 18 thousand, 2 hundred \_\_\_\_\_
3. Eight thousand and six tenths \_\_\_\_\_
4. 9 million, 6 thousand, fifty six \_\_\_\_\_
5.  $400 + 5 + .6$  \_\_\_\_\_

Write in words:

6. 68,005 \_\_\_\_\_
7. 1,328,000 \_\_\_\_\_
8. 11.043 \_\_\_\_\_
9. 265.45 \_\_\_\_\_
10. 36.008 \_\_\_\_\_

Put in order from least to greatest.

3.46, 3.64, 3.59

102, 10.2, 1.02

0.15, 0.97, 0.01

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Fill in the missing number.

$$(4 + 5) + 6 = 4 + (\underline{\quad} + 6)$$

$$(8 + 2) + 3 = 8 + \underline{\quad}$$

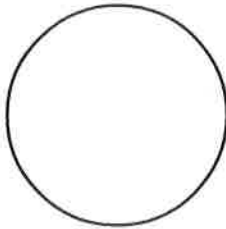
**NOTES:**

## **Training Activity**

### **Post It**

Break participants into groups. Provide one sheet of poster board to the group. Have the group develop a test-taking poster for depicting directions that would assist the student in taking the high-stakes assessment. On that poster provide a visual cue. Examples:

If the test says draw a circle around the answer, do this:



If the test says underline the answer, do this:

---

**NOTES:**



## Training Activity

# A Flurry of Test-Taking Strategies

Pick a partner and brainstorm all of the ways you could help students remember a test-taking strategy that you are teaching. Here are a few examples:

- Make a bookmark for the students
- Make a key ring containing each letter of the strategy.
- Make a poster.
- 
- 
- 

**NOTES:**



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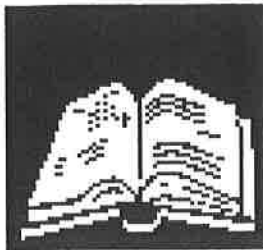
[www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org)

NCEO's database — <http://education.umn.edu/NCEO/Accomstudies>.

34 CFR 300.160.

## ROLE OF IEP

- **Team determines exact nature of assessment participation.**
- **No unilateral action.**
- **Cannot exempt children from participation of some type.**
- **Determine accommodations within integrity of test.**
- **Special education and general education teacher information needed:**
  - **What standards have been assessed?**
  - **Has student been exposed to standards?**
  - **Previous test scores.**



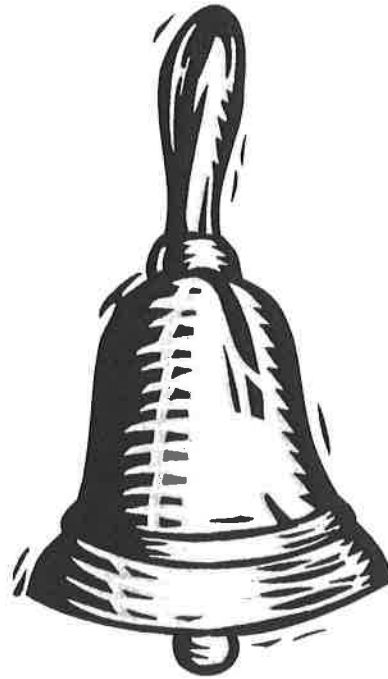


OVERHEAD

#2-B

# Key variables to be considered by IEP team

(Elliott, Braden, White, 2001)



Curriculum and test content alignment

Motivation

Reading ability

Instructional accommodations

Testing History





OVERHEAD

#2-C

## IEP Team Checklist



- Specific nature of student's disability**
- Student's preferred method of learning**
- Processing deficit, if learning disability**
- Medical needs**
- Past testing performance**
- Accommodations — current and past**
- Current achievement levels**
- Attendance**
- Exposure to assessed standards**
- History of motivation, anxiety, test-taking strategies, timed tests**



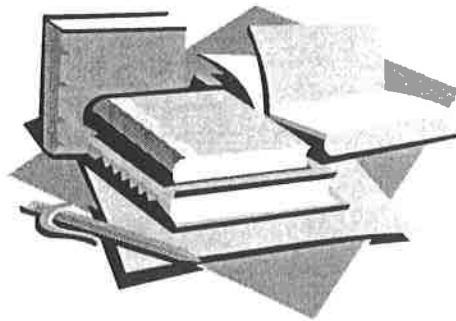
OVERHEAD

#2-D

**WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT**

(Criteria by Elliot, 2004)

- **Student can't complete the academic curricula even with accommodations and modifications.**
- **Requires extensive direct instruction in multiple settings.**
- **Not able to use academic skills at a minimal competency level.**
- **Difficulties not due to absences or social, cultural or economic differences.**
- **Needs intense, individualized instruction.**
- **Working to an expectation that differs in complexity.**
- **Working toward different goals other than typical diploma.**
- **Dependence on others for most of needs.**
- **Instructional program emphasizes life skills.**





OVERHEAD

#2-E

## Getting Parents Involved



- 1. Avoid giving suggestions that result in increased power struggles at home.**
- 2. Hold small group meetings with ideas for positive self-talk and words of encouragement.**
- 3. Solicit information about what type of stress the child exhibits at home.**
- 4. Work as a team.**
- 5. Enlist parent to prepare a test survival kit.**



OVERHEAD

#2-F

## GETTING STUDENTS TO COME TO SCHOOL

- Reinforce students on an ongoing basis for coming to school
  
- Recognize students who come to school on assessment days — possible recognition
  - Off campus lunch—High School
  
  - Door prizes
  
  - Special field trips
  
  - Pizza parties
  
  - Coupons



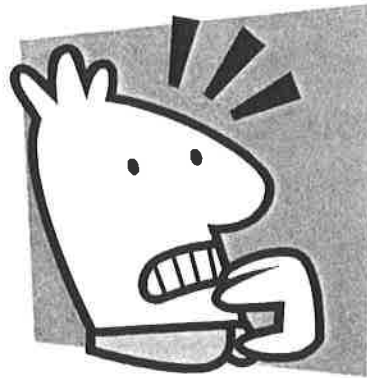




OVERHEAD

#2-G

**WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE FUNCTIONS OF TEST  
RESISTANCE?**



**Access — attention, control**

**Avoidance/Escape**

**Sensory**



OVERHEAD

#2-H

# **Interventions**

**Practice tests**

**Reading Directions**

**Using Bubble Sheets**

**Scanning the Test**

**Moving On**

**Dealing with Distraction**

**Timed Tests**

**Eliminating Strategies**

**Proofreading**

**Avoid Changing Expectations**

**Self-talk**

**Self-determination**

**Test wiseness**



OVERHEAD

#2-1

## Test-Taking Strategies

Pirates

**Trust**

**Snow**

SCORER

Pacer

*Solve*

**Write**

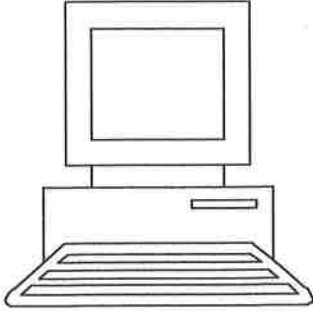
Plan

**Tree**



OVERHEAD

#2-J



## **UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING**

- **SEA shall, to the extent feasible, use universal design principles in assessment.**
- **Assistive supports are built in.**





OVERHEAD

#2-K

# ACCOMMODATIONS — LADDERS TO SUCCESS





## ACCOMMODATIONS

- **Accommodations:** Content of material taught remains the same, but student is accommodated. Example: tape recorder for lectures.

## Modifications

- **Modifications:** content is changed. Example: Fewer number of spelling words, high-interest, low vocabulary material.



## Making Accommodations Step by Step

### ➤ **Develop Array of Accommodations.**

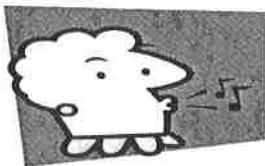
**This manual provides you with an array of accommodations.**

### ➤ **Identify Criteria to Select Accommodations.**

#### ➤ **Does a Problem Exist? Yes or No**

#### ➤ **Determine all accommodations for special education students within the IEP.**

#### ➤ **Disseminate to all staff who will have to make accommodations.**





OVERHEAD

#2-N

## Accommodations for Test-Resistant Students



**Motivational:** choices, self-talk, behavior momentum

**Setting:** soft background music, study carrel, sensory friendly

**Material:** white space, file folders, fidgets

**Organizational:** visual prompts, test survival kit, photo album





## Section 3 — Strategies During the Test

- Introduction
- Checklist for Preparing the Testing Environment
- Stress Reduction Activities Prior to the Beginning of the Testing
- Practical Behavioral Strategies During Testing
- The Student Frustration Cycle in Testing
- Observing the Student During the Test
- Training Activities
- References/Resources
- Overheads



## Introduction

The educator believes he has done everything possible to prepare the student for the assessment. Now *The Day* has arrived. The students are there. The educator wants to make sure he does everything possible to assure maximum performance of the students on the test while maintaining the integrity of the test. This section provides practical strategies for making sure the testing environment is ready for the student — and vice versa. The educator can precede the test administration with a number of stress-reduction activities, some of which are provided in this section. Also included is an overview of some general behavioral interventions educators can use during the test. You also will find a review of the frustration cycle students may engage in during the test, and how to advise educators to deal with it when they see it happening.

It's important to tell your trainees that it is critical they closely observe student test behavior while the student is taking the test, then record it so the information can be shared after the test for planning purposes. You'll find an observation form for recording purposes in this section.

### NOTES:



## Checklist for Preparing the Testing Environment

- ✓ **Is the setting clean and well organized?** Students need structure and a sense of organization within the room in which they are taking the test. It also is more pleasant to be in an environment that is clean and aesthetically pleasing.
- ✓ **Have you removed needless distractions?** Items such as noise outside the door, a humming fan, a blinking fluorescent light, a noisy furnace, and telephones ringing in the background can be very distracting to a student. Students who are very sensitive to sensory stimuli will be bothered greatly by even very subtle noises within the setting. Some children will notice subtle noises that some adults have learned to tune out.
- ✓ **Is the lighting in the setting adequate for all students?** Sometimes the lighting is excellent in some parts of the room and not as good in other parts. Good lighting is critical for all students. Prior to testing, school personnel should move around the room to assure that there is adequate lighting wherever a student sits in the room. If a student does better with natural sunlight, it is important to seat that student by the window so she has access to the light. It is critical that students who are depressed have access, if possible, to the natural light.
- ✓ **Are the desks and chairs at an appropriate work height for the students?** Recently someone I knew was complaining that her back was hurting because she had been working on the computer a great deal. Upon investigating her work situation, it was clear her problem stemmed from situating her computer at a table that was lower than her chair, forcing her to bend over or stoop when she worked. When students are expected to take a test that will last a few hours, we must make sure that their tables and chairs are at an appropriate height for comfort. It also is important that the chairs are comfortable.
- ✓ **Does the room look warm and inviting?** Simple touches such as plants (silk or live) make any room look more appealing to students. A couple of lamps in a room also add a feeling of warmth to what otherwise can be a very anxiety-producing environment.
- ✓ **Is the smell in the room pleasant?** When we are working with junior high-age students, we have to be conscious of the aroma in the room. An unpleasant or musty smell is not appealing to students. School personnel may want to use air fresheners, however you must be sure none of the students are allergic to certain fragrances or have sensitivities.
- ✓ **Are necessary items readily available for the students?** Is there a supply of tissues, sharpened pencils, extra erasers, hand lotion for students (it is very comforting for students to be able to rub lotion on their hands — many find this very relaxing).
- ✓ **Will soft music be played in the background?** Some students will do better on a test if there is calming music in the background; by the same token, some students may prefer to take the test in a quiet setting and are bothered by any music. If some students prefer calming music and others are bothered by it, the option is to provide headphones for the students who want or need the music.

## Preparing Test-Resistant Students for Assessments

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✓ **Is the environment sensory friendly?** Have you considered the student's need for movement? If the student needs to move around during the test, that should be considered within test accommodation discussion. We know that some students, regardless of their grade level, have difficulty sitting still. The student may be able to perform better if she is able to move. A simple way to accommodate that need is to allow the student to have frequent breaks — going to the water fountain supervised, allowing the student to sharpen her pencil. However, while allowing this accommodation, you also must balance the individual child's needs with the needs of the remainder of the group. There may be other students who are easily distracted and bothered when one student gets up to sharpen her pencil. In cases where the student needs to move but other students are distracted, here are a couple of ideas:

- Exercise pedals under the student's desk. For students who need to move their legs and feet, exercise pedals that can be ordered from a mail order catalogue. Place the pedals under the student's desk so he can pedal while he works, but without distracting others.
- Place cushions on the chair so the students can move quietly on the chair. You can buy cushions made especially for this purpose or improvise.
- Fidgets are recommended for students who need to move or doodle while they work. Squeeze stress balls and other types of fidgets should be available for any student who needs one.

✓ **Have you provided water bottles for students who may need them?** Luckily, more educators recognize this need.

✓ **Is the temperature of the room comfortable?** Granted, we can't please everyone with the room temperature, but if the room is too hot, students may have trouble staying awake. If the room is too cold, students may be unable to concentrate.

✓ **Is the student familiar with the environment and the people administering the test?** Students with specific accommodations are often tested in a different room. It's critical that the student be familiar with the environment prior to the testing. Again, it is important that students have structure and routine. If the structure or routine is changed, the student may become upset. If the student will need to be tested in an environment other than one with which he or she is familiar, you should familiarize the student with that setting before administering a difficult task such as a test. As an example, some students with autism can become upset and perform poorly if moved to a room they have never seen. The case example provided in this section addresses this need in more detail.

Just as important as familiarity with environment is familiarity with the individual administering the test. Research shows that students do better on assessment when it is provided by an individual with whom the student is familiar. (Tindal and Fuchs, 2000). If a student becomes upset with a change in routine, you must be very cautious about introducing a test administrator the student does not know. However, if this cannot be avoided, then it is critical the individual administering the test and the student(s) become familiar prior to the assessment. In this process, it also is critical that the test administrator works with the student on activities the student is able to do so that the student associates the individual with pleasant activities. For example, if an individual with whom the student has had an unpleasant experience tests a student with autism, the results of the test will be affected adversely.

### NOTES:

## Stress Reduction Activities Prior to the Beginning of the Testing

Prior to the beginning of the test, the educator administering the test can and should engage in a number of stress reduction/relaxation activities with the students. Here are a few suggestions.

1. A technique that Tanis Bryan has recommended and thoroughly researched is to have the student, immediately prior to beginning the task or test, close his/her eyes for 45 seconds to a minute and think of something that makes he or she happy. Her research has proven that this technique conducted with students with learning disabilities, behavior disorders, and normally achieving students have shown that this technique has significantly positive effects on students' social problem solving, performance, and learning. (Bryan, 1998)
2. Do some stretches with the students prior to beginning the test. The educator might want to use some basic yoga stretches for the students; not just during testing but at the beginning of each day.
3. Consider having the students jump up and down for one minute prior to starting the test. An excellent occupational therapist who worked with this author's students with significant behavioral disorders recommended that at the beginning of each morning, we begin the day by jumping up and down for one minute. We did this every day and played music while we jumped. While one might think it made the students more hyperactive, it in fact helped them to get focused and better prepared to complete academic tasks. One also might think that there would be no way that high school students with significant behavioral problems would do this, but indeed they did. Of course, all staff also engaged in the activity.
4. Make a large stress ball using a beach ball or other similar size ball for the class. This lightens up the atmosphere and relieves tension of students. Prior to beginning the test, throw the ball to each student. Wherever the student's left thumb lands, the student must engage in that activity. As an example here are activities that you can print, using a permanent marker, on the stress ball. This author likes to purchase a yellow ball with a happy face on it. Activities on the stress ball can include:
  - Blow a bubble — the teacher can have bubbles available to provide to the student. Blowing bubbles encourages reduction of stress and proper breathing.
  - Rub some lotion on your hands. It is very soothing and calming to rub lotion on your hands. The teacher should have no fragrance lotion for the males who may not want the fragrance for the female students.
  - Squeeze a fidget. The teacher should have small stress balls available for students.
  - Play with some play dough.
  - Scratch your back. You can purchase very cheap back scratchers to have available.
  - Share a favorite memory.
  - Say — "I am a great person" three times.
  - Inhale and exhale four times.
5. Practice positive self-talk. The educator might ask each student to make two positive statements about how he/she is going to do on the test. Another alternative is to have the entire group of students taking the test say in unison: "I am going to do my best job on this test. I can do it."

## Preparing Test-Resistant Students for Assessments

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6. Consider allowing students to have their “security blanket” — an item that makes the student feel comfortable. Many adults have a favorite item that they carry with them at all times — it provides a sense of security. They may have a favorite item to keep in the car or they take when they travel. We carry pictures of our loved ones. In a tense situation such as a testing environment the student might need some item with him/her that provides comfort. Depending on the student’s age, it may be a very small item so that none of the other students see it. Another option is for the teacher to engage in an open discussion about what is a security blanket for the student. The teacher could share whether he or she has a security blanket and then ask all students to share whether they have such an item. The students could then be told that they could bring an acceptable item and keep it in their pocket.

### NOTES:



## Practical Behavioral Strategies During Testing

1. **Request that the student start the test.** Psychologically the student is more apt to start the test if you make that simple request. If the educator makes the statement that the student has 45 minutes to get the section done, the student may feel overwhelmed before even starting. Whereas, by asking the student only to start the test, it is easier for him/her to continue with the test once he/she has started.

2. **Thank the student for starting the test.** While we cannot reinforce students for correct responses, we can start the student off on a positive note by thanking him/her for starting the test.

3. **Keep your oral directions to the student short and utilize visual cues.** In a report by Rowe, Rowe, and Pollard (2004), they noted the relationship between the ability to auditory process directions and behavioral problems. They provided five auditory processing support strategies that teachers should utilize as follows:

- a. Assure that you have attracted the student's attention.
- b. Speak slowly, use short sentences, and acquire eye contact.
- c. Pause between sentences and repeat when necessary.
- d. Use visual cues.
- e. Create hearing, listening, and compliance routines for students.

To do that this author recommends utilizing strategies, mnemonics, songs to help remember test-taking behavior, or any other creative means the teacher can develop.

These researchers also found these results in determining appropriate sentence length for directions given to students:

- Children who are 4.7-6 years of age were unable to accurately process sentences longer than 9 words.
- Children who are 6-7 years of age were unable to accurately process sentences longer than 10 words.
- Children who are 7-8 were unable to accurately process sentences longer than 11 words.
- Children who are 8-9 were unable to process sentences longer than 12 words.
- Children who are 9-10 were unable to accurately process sentences longer than 13 words.

4. **Utilize behavior momentum.** Students are more likely to do what they may perceive is difficult if they have had success with the previous two-three tasks. As an example, if the educator gets ready to administer the test and sees that the student may become resistant, the educator may want to give the student a couple of easy tasks. As an example, the teacher might request that the

## Preparing Test-Resistant Students for Assessments

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student pass out pencils to the other students. When that is finished, the teacher may request that the student put his name on the paper. Then the teacher might request the student put the date on the paper. After the student completes each task, the teacher should positively reinforce the student. Since the student has had success, the student is more likely to continue with the test. The old adage “success breeds success” holds true.

**5. Be positive, be brief, be gone.** This is one of the author’s favorite behavior management statements because this short phrase says so much about effective behavioral interventions. When the educator wants the student to do a task, the student should make the request in positive terms: “Thanks for putting your name on your paper. Then the teacher should pause. The teacher then says: “I need you to begin the test.” The statement is brief and positive. The educator should then move away from the student. This is critical because the student may need to process the information or the student may need to save face. The student is less likely to start the task if the teacher hovers over him/her.

**6. Utilize empathy.** This is sometimes difficult for teachers to do. The student says the test is too hard or that he can’t do it. The educator, instead of listening to what the student says, denies the student’s feelings by making a statement such as: “Oh, the test is easy.” If the student is frustrated, he or she does not want to hear that statement — the educator is contradicting what the student said. A more appropriate statement for the teacher to make would be: “I know you are upset over the test but see what you can do” or “Can you tell me what’s bothering you.”

**7. Show the student that you have faith in him that he can do the test.** One of my favorite statements I like to make to students during test taking is: “I know you will do your best on this test. “ Teachers can make such statements as: “I have confidence in you.” Those statements of affirmation can make a big difference to the student. A study reported in the Wall Street Journal on Friday, January 28, 2005, by Dr. Joshua Aaronson of New York University showed the phenomenon he referred to as “stereotype threat.” “If you’re reminded before a test that society thinks the group you belong to does badly on whatever the test tests, you do worse than if you’re not reminded. This holds for girls taking math tests, blacks taking standardized tests, and white boys on the basketball court. It also accounts for at least some of that gender gap in top scores on math tests.” (p. B1).

**8. Utilize attribution statements with students.** It is critical that the teacher teach cognitive strategies to students. Research shows that students are more likely to use effective cognitive strategies when they come to “attribute” their learning success to the use of these strategies (Mastropieri and Scruggs, 1991). If students fail to learn something, the teacher should assist the student in seeing that he or she failed to execute the appropriate cognitive strategy correctly, rather than attributing the failure to a lack of effort or laziness. Students can then understand what they need to do differently the next time when the teacher stresses the elements in the correct use of a strategy. If the teacher is not specific with the student, the student cannot learn and change his behavior. A statement by the teacher that the student is lazy does not teach the student where he or she can make changes and gives the student a feeling that the situation appears hopeless. Mastropieri and Scruggs (1991) suggest such statements as: “Yes, You answered that correctly because you used the strategy we talked about!” or “The reason you didn’t learn this information is that you didn’t apply the strategy we practiced in class.” (p. 95).

**9. Utilize proximity control throughout the test.** To prevent cheating and to provide moral support to students who may need it, it is critical that the educator monitoring the test move around the room to provide supervision and to watch for signs of frustration from students. This is not to

say that the individual should hover over the student — this will make someone who is nervous even more nervous.

**10. Positive reinforcement should be provided to the student with every opportunity possible.** While the educator is not allowed to reinforce students for correct responses on a statewide assessment, the educator can move around the room quietly thanking students who are working hard and staying on task. The educator also can thank the student when the student has completed a portion of the test and provide words of encouragement to keep the student going on the test.

**NOTES:**



## The Student Frustration Cycle in Testing

Just as educators need to be skilled at recognizing frustration in instruction, educators also must learn to recognize that frustration in assessment. Frustration in assessment may occur more easily just because of the nature of the stress associated with testing. The following is a chart depicting the student frustration level and the teacher response that can result in reducing that frustration. (Johns and Carr, 2002; Beck, Coleman and Wineman, 1985)

### Student Symptoms

#### First Stage: Anxiety

Student Sighs  
Puts head down  
Holds Head in Hand

#### Second Stage: Stress

Taps pencil  
Wads up paper  
Breaks pencil lead when writing

#### Third Stage: Defensiveness or Verbal Aggression

Slams book or fist  
Yells or argues  
Says: "I won't do this"

### Teacher Intervention

#### Stage Support

Active Listening  
Nonjudgmental Talk  
Empathetic Talk

#### Interactive Support

Proximity Control  
Hurdle Help  
Supportive Assistance

#### Clear limits

Brief statement of rule reminders  
Antiseptic bouncing  
Use of "I" statements  
Provide clear consequences

### First Stage

It is preferable to stop frustration at its first sign. When the student sighs or puts his head down or shows some other frustration during the test, an effective strategy is active listening while remaining nonjudgmental and empathetic to the student. If the student is getting frustrated, the teacher might ask the student what is happening. The teacher should listen for the cause of the anxiety — some students are simply afraid of tests; others may be trying to get attention, or some are confused by the test and get agitated. The student may comment that the test is "just too hard." The educator should never say: "Oh, that's easy." Instead the educator might make a statement such as: "I know tests can be pretty hard. Do you have a question about the directions. I know you are trying very hard." In this example, the teacher has

## Preparing Test-Resistant Students for Assessments

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asked what is wrong, listened to the student. The teacher has recognized the student's feelings — she is being empathetic.

### Second Stage

Increased stress is seen in the second stage of frustration (Johns and Carr, 2002). Some students, during tests, may show their signs of stress by tapping a pencil or wadding up paper. In this scenario, the student is stressed but does not voluntarily express frustration in words. This is a good time to use proximity control. During testing, the teacher should be moving around the room anyway providing close supervision for all of the students. Instead of focusing on the broken pencil lead or the crumpled paper, the teacher should focus on the test. The teacher should look at what the student has completed and comment about what the student has done. If the student is too upset to receive help, the teacher should state that he/she will be glad to help the student when he is ready.

### Third Stage

In the third stage of frustration the student is no longer keeping his stress inside. He/she is now defensive and becoming verbally aggressive. He or she is now disrupting the class and may be yelling at the teacher or other students. At this stage of frustration, the educator should make a very brief and calm statement of the expectations: "What do you need to do to follow rule #3." Of course, the rules for the class should always be posted. If there are a special set of test rules, those should be posted. For younger students those rules should have pictures as examples. If the student then becomes quiet and behaves, always remember to thank the student. If the student does not become quiet, this is the time to state very calmly and use "I" statements such as: "I need you to work quietly on the test — remember that the test has to be done before you go home today. I know you can make a good decision and start on this." Another effective intervention is known as "antiseptic bouncing." This intervention is merely to change the activity that the student is doing for a very short period of time — the teacher sees that the student is getting frustrated and he/she might move over to the student and suggest he sharpen his pencil or get a drink of water. The student gets a short break from the frustration, and the test looks more manageable when the student comes back.

### NOTES:

## Observing the Student During the Test

Stress to your training group that if they assist students in future test-taking endeavors, it is important that they closely observe the student during the test and record the information they observe.

Included on the next page is a form that the educator administering the test can use to record key information about a student who is or may be test-resistant. The information should be shared after the testing as part of the plan to teach the student future test-taking strategies.

### NOTES:





## Form: Student Observation During the Testing

Name of the Student \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Testing \_\_\_\_\_

1. What accommodations were actually utilized?
2. What accommodations appeared to be effective and why?
3. What accommodations did not appear to be effective and why?
4. Would other accommodations be more appropriate?
5. What was the student's general test behavior?  
Effort  
Anxiety/frustration  
Aggression  
Response to other students
6. Was there anything in the test setting that bothered the student?

\_\_\_\_\_  
Observer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Training Activity

### Case Study

Jeremy is an 11th-grader and has been diagnosed with autism. He is able to read with comprehension at a ninth-grade level and is able to do math overall at a seventh-grade level. He becomes very upset if his routine is changed and frequently talks to himself. For part of his day, he is in a special class with one teacher and an assistant. For three periods of the day he is in regular education classes. At his IEP it was determined that he would participate in the statewide test, but it should be administered by his special education teacher because of his familiarity with her. As part of the requirement of the test, he must be provided the test in a separate room other than his classroom. Other accommodations listed in the IEP include: extended timelines, clarification of directions, and very short breaks of 2-3 minutes after every 20 minutes of the test. These accommodations are ones that are utilized effectively within the classrooms. The teacher is concerned about giving the test within a different classroom environment of which Jeremy is not familiar. As a result she decides that two weeks prior to the administration of the test, she will start taking Jeremy to the new environment for short periods of time and then increase the time he is in that room up to two hours. The administrator in her building agrees to hire a substitute for her classroom so she can take the time to do this. When she takes Jeremy to this room, she works with him on tasks that are easy for him to do. She does two to three easy tasks with him, reinforces him, and then gives him a more difficult task, but one that she knows he can do. When it is time for him to go to the room to take the test, he is familiar with the room and associates the room with tasks that he is able to do. The administration of the test is much easier than it might have been if she would not have familiarized him with the setting in advance. Jeremy met the state standards in both reading and math.

#### Audience discussion:

What are the ways in which the teacher addressed Jeremy's individualized needs so that he could participate effectively in the state assessment?

#### NOTES:

## **Training Activity**

### **Beach Ball Brainstorm**

Purchase some blank beach balls and provide permanent markers for the participants. A group of 3-4 individuals can work together to print on the ball a whole array of stress-reducing activities that can be used prior to the test.

#### **NOTES:**

## Training Activity

### Talk about Stress

Have participants break into groups of 3-4 and ask them to discuss how they deal with stress and which of those ways could be implemented within a classroom.

**NOTES:**



## References/Resources

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- Begley, S. (2005). Harvard chief's words on innate differences lack basis in science. *Wall Street Journal*, Friday, January 28, 2005.
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- Johns, B. and Carr, V. (2002). *Techniques for managing verbally and physically aggressive students*. Denver: Love Publishing.
- Mastropieri, M. and Scruggs, T. (1991). *Teaching students ways to remember: strategies for learning mnemonically*. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.
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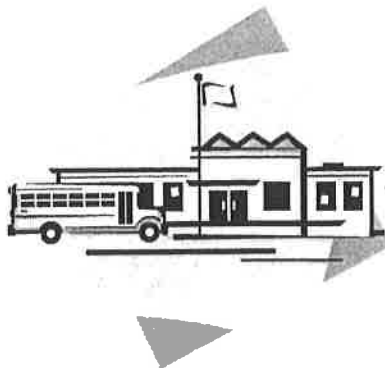




**OVERHEAD**

**#3-A**

**Preparing the Setting**



**Clean and well organized**

**No needless distractions**

**Adequate light**

**Appropriate desk and chair height**

**Warm and inviting**

**Pleasant smell**

**Accessible items**

**Soft background music**

**Sensory friendly**

**Familiarity with environment and tester**



OVERHEAD

#3-B

# **STRESS REDUCTION ACTIVITIES**

Thinking happy thoughts

Stretches

Jumping

Stress ball

Positive self-talk

Security blanket



OVERHEAD

#3-C

# BEHAVIOR STRATEGIES DURING TEST

**Request student start test and thank him**

**Oral directions short with visual cues**

**Behavior momentum**

**Positive, brief, gone**

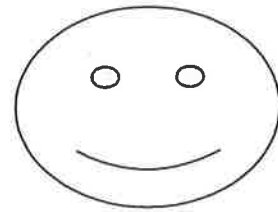
**Empathy**

**Show belief in student**

**Attribution statements**

**Proximity control**

**Positive reinforcement**





OVERHEAD

#3-D

## THE TEST FRUSTRATION CYCLE

### Student Symptoms

#### First Stage: Anxiety

Student Sighs

Puts head down

Holds Head in Hand

#### Second Stage: Stress

Taps pencil

Wads up paper

Breaks pencil lead when writing

#### Third Stage: Defensiveness or Verbal Aggression

Slams book or fist

Yells or argues

Says: "I won't do this"

### Teacher Intervention

#### Support

Active Listening

Nonjudgmental Talk

Empathetic Talk

#### Interactive Support

Proximity Control

Hurdle Help

Supportive Assistance

#### Clear Limits

Brief statement of rule reminders

Antiseptic bouncing

Use of "I" statements

Provide clear consequences





OVERHEAD

#3-E

## OBSERVATION OF STUDENT DURING TEST

- Accommodations utilized
- Effective? Why? Ineffective? Why?



- Other Accommodations Needed
- Test Behavior — effort, anxiety, aggression, response to other students
- Anything that bothered the student



## **Section 4 — Strategies After the Testing**

- Introduction — After the Test, Then What?
- Reinforcing the Student for Completing the Test
- Sample Student Reinforcer Survey
- Interviewing the Student after the Test
- Utilizing Assessment Information for Future Instruction
- Conclusion
- Training Activities
- References/Resources
- Overheads



## Introduction — After the Test, Then What?

Explain that a summary of consequences of high-stakes assessment for students with disabilities (Ysseldyke, Nelson, Christenson, Johnson, Dennison, Triezenberg, Sharpe, and Hawes, 2004) showed that there “seems to be little activity in relation to using the results of statewide assessments as a means of identifying or monitoring IEP goals and objectives.” (p. 82). Describe how two states did focus groups and found that teachers almost totally disregarded the results of large-scale assessments in the consideration of their goals and objectives. The most common reason cited was that norm-referenced, individually administered achievement tests tended to provide more information regarding the instructional needs of the particular student. Another concern that was expressed was that the results were not available when the IEPs took place.

Explain to your training participants that if high-stakes testing continues as a reality (and it will), they must focus their efforts on using the information from that testing to plan future instruction. Describe how they must reinforce the student for taking the test and working hard at it, learn from what they observe during the testing, record that information, share the test scores with the student, and make a plan for future testing.

Tell them how critical it is to also share that information with others who need to know and use it as a basis for decision making. If the student has an IEP or a Section 504 plan, the recorded information should be brought to the table and discussed as part of the student’s current levels, individualized educational needs, and need for accommodations for instruction and assessment.

### NOTES:



## Reinforcing the Student for Completing the Test

Using the reinforcement survey (next page), tell your group to reinforce the student for working hard on the test. When we have completed a very difficult task we often reward ourselves by going shopping or engaging in another preferred activity. When students have completed the test and have worked hard, reinforce them for their efforts. While students may not have met or exceeded proficiency standards, tell your trainees that if students worked hard at the task and made improvements, they should be recognized for that improvement. Explain that students with disabilities may not be able to meet or exceed standards, given the very nature of their disability; they may feel like, "What's the use?" Explain how critical it is to teach them to recognize and revel in the fact that they worked hard and improved. When testing is over, teachers should plan special activities for the student.

### NOTES:

## **Student Reinforcer Survey**

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite subject is: \_\_\_\_\_

The subject I dislike the most is: \_\_\_\_\_

When I come to school I worry about: \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite thing to do is: \_\_\_\_\_

What I like to do when I get home is: \_\_\_\_\_

If I had \$20, I would buy: \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite food is: \_\_\_\_\_

I learn best when I can: \_\_\_\_\_

What I like best for the teacher to do is: \_\_\_\_\_

I am afraid to make a mistake in: \_\_\_\_\_

When I get my work done, I like to: \_\_\_\_\_

I like to spend time with: \_\_\_\_\_

If I could earn anything, it would be: \_\_\_\_\_



## Interviewing the Student after the Test

How do we use assessment results in planning for future appropriate instruction? Explain that the first step is to interview the student after the testing. Suggest to your trainees that they ask the following questions:

1. How did you feel when you took the test?
2. How do you think you did on the test?
3. What items were particularly difficult for you?
4. What items were easy for you?
5. Did you understand the directions?
6. Is there anything else that could have been done to make you feel more comfortable during the test?
7. How can I help you to prepare for future tests?

**NOTES:**



## Utilizing Assessment Information for Future Instruction

Describe how, based on observations of the student during the test and information gained from the student, teachers can formulate student goals that can be discussed at the next IEP meeting. Even if the scores are not available, educators can report on the student's behavior during the test. If the student had a high degree of test anxiety, it is critical to delineate what may have caused the anxiety. Was the student bothered by taking the test in a large group? Was the student under stress because of the length of the test? The IEP team can then write a goal to reduce test anxiety by teaching the student stress-reducing techniques. Perhaps the educator noted that the student froze when he got to a certain math problem that he didn't know, and he forgot to put his name on his paper. A goal for the student might be to demonstrate and apply a test-taking learning strategy such as PIRATES.

Tell your trainees to carefully review test scores when they receive them. Use this example: If the writing score was low, ask these questions:

- Does the student have a written expression problem?
- Has the student been exposed to the three types of essays?
- Is it a skill, performance, or fluency deficit?
- Did fine motor skills influence ability to do well on the test?
- Is further assessment needed to gain more information?

Tell the trainees that the identified deficit area should then become the basis for a goal at the IEP. Use this example of a goal tied to the state standard, based on the individual needs of the student and the results of the assessment:

*John will be able to write a paragraph using a persuasive argument.*

*Or John will be able to design an advertisement selling a particular product.*

Describe how educators should thoroughly review the specificity of the test score breakdown, write suggested goals for those areas to be discussed at the next IEP if the student is in special education, and plan a course of remediation for the student in those areas.

Nolet and McLaughlin (2000) stressed that a goal for the student should be clear enough to focus instruction and still be broad and balanced enough to not limit what is expected or taught.

Tell trainees to also review the test results individually with the student, pointing out the student's areas of strengths and areas in need of improvement. Stress that when working with test-resistant students, it is important to seek input from the student on what he or she needs to do better on the test and what kind of assistance the student would like to have.

Share these examples of problem areas a student may have on a high-stakes assessment, and some sample goals:

### Problem Area

### Potential Goal

1. Did not understand directions

Student will be able to pick out direction words and highlight those words before starting a task.

2. Very nervous during test as exhibited by shaking and perspiring

Student will be able to use positive self-talk statements during trial and real test situations.

## Preparing Test-Resistant Students for Assessments

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3. Did not meet standards in math problem solving

Student will learn a strategy for math problem solving and will be able to apply it to word problems at his grade level.

4. Was unable to utilize a map in order to answer questions

Given a variety of maps at the appropriate grade level, student will demonstrate that he can interpret information from the map.

## Conclusion

As we continue in this age of high-stakes assessment and accountability, we are looking for ways to motivate our students to do well on the assessment. Students who are test-resistant present increased challenges to school personnel. This training manual is designed to provide a wide array of practical ideas and to stimulate open discussion on this critical topic. As you deal with student resistance and anxiety, you must decrease your own anxiety by familiarizing yourself with the many proactive options provided in this manual. It is up to you to help the educators in your school or district to find the most appropriate ways to motivate students to succeed in the assessment world. With this manual at your side, it is my most sincere desire to help you in that process.



## Training Activity

### Case Study: Michael

Michael, a special education student with high anxiety level and Asperger's syndrome, was scheduled to take the 11th-grade state assessment in reading and in math. Michael's previous test scores showed that he could achieve at an 11th-grade level if material was presented to him in short doses and if he received very frequent positive reinforcement—at least one praise statement every five minutes was provided by his special education teacher. He could not function well in a group of over five to six students because of his high anxiety. During his IEP, it was determined that he would need extended timelines for the assessment. While the teacher, of course, could not give positive reinforcement for correctly answering questions on the test, it was determined by the IEP team that Michael could be given frequent breaks every 15 minutes and during that time his teacher could reinforce him for working on the test. Michael was given the test in a room with another female student, Tricia. Tricia also had been recommended by her IEP team for extended timelines. Tricia however completed each section of the test very quickly because she knew few of the answers. When Michael saw that Tricia had completed a section before he did and knew that he wasn't even close to getting the section done, he would start sweating and literally shaking.

Group discussion questions:

Have you encountered a similar situation with a student? What could have been done differently to prevent Michael's high level of anxiety?

**NOTES:**

## **Training Activity**

### **Scoring Goals**

Have training participants break into groups and have each participant identify one problem area in the state assessment exhibited by a student with whom they are working. Have the group brainstorm possible goals for that student.

**Problem Area Observed**

**Potential Goal**

**NOTES:**



## Training Activity

# Developing a Reinforcer Survey

Have participants break into groups and utilizing the sample reinforcer survey (see page 4-6), have them develop a reinforcer survey that they might use with their students.

### NOTES:



## References/Resources

Nolet, V. and McLaughlin, M. (2000). *Accessing the general curriculum: including students with disabilities in standards-based reform*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

Ysseldyke, J., Nelson, J., Christenson, S., Johnson, D., Dennison, A., Triezenberg, H., Sharpe, M. and Hawes, M. (2004). What we know and need to know about the consequences of high-stakes testing for students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children* 71(1), 75-94.



OVERHEAD

#4-A

**TEACHERS ALMOST TOTALLY  
DISREGARDED THE RESULTS OF  
LARGE SCALE ASSESSMENTS WHEN  
THEY CONSIDERED IEP GOALS:  
WHY???**

- 1. NORM REFERENCED, INDIVIDUALLY ADMINISTERED  
ACHIEVEMENT TESTS TENDED TO PROVIDE MORE  
INFORMATION.**
- 2. RESULTS WERE NOT AVAILABLE AT THE TIME OF  
THE TESTING.**

**HOW CAN WE CHANGE THAT???**

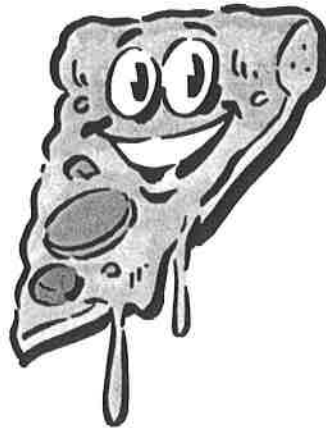


OVERHEAD

#4-B

## STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

1. UTILIZE A REINFORCER SURVEY
2. REINFORCE THE STUDENT FOR STAYING ON TASK
3. REINFORCE THE STUDENT FOR MAKING IMPROVEMENT
4. PROVIDE THE STUDENT FEEDBACK
5. SOLICIT THE STUDENT'S INPUT FOR FUTURE TESTS







OVERHEAD

#4-C



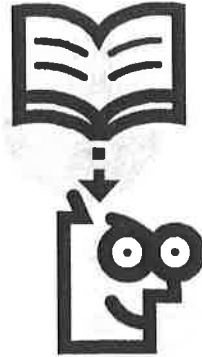
## **ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR WHEN TEST SCORES ARE RECEIVED**

- 1. Review the specificity of breakdown of test scores.**
- 2. Write suggested goals for those areas for next IEP.**
- 3. Plan a course of remediation for the student in those areas and be prepared to discuss at IEP.**
- 4. Do more informal and formal assessment to determine the nature of the problem and be prepared to discuss at IEP.**



OVERHEAD

#4-D



**Problem Area: Student's writing score was below state standards. Ask yourself these questions:**

- ◆ **Does student have a written expression problem?**
- ◆ **Has the student been exposed to the three types of essays?**
- ◆ **Is it a skill, performance, or fluency deficit?**
- ◆ **Did fine motor skills influence the student's ability to do well on the test?**
- ◆ **Is further assessment needed to gain more information?**



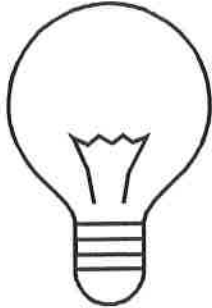
OVERHEAD

#4-E

## PINPOINT PROBLEM AREAS TO ASSIST IN WRITING GOALS

Problem Area

1. Did not understand directions



Potential Goal

Student will be able to recognize direction words and highlight those words before starting a task.



**OVERHEAD**

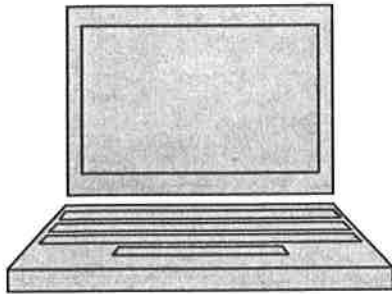
**#4-F**

**PROBLEM AREA**

Very nervous during test as exhibited by shaking and perspiring.

**POTENTIAL GOAL**

Student will be able to use self-talk statements during trial and real test situations.







OVERHEAD

#4-G

**Educators must be committed to the creation of a school environment where all children can bloom and grow, academically and socially.**



