

Guidelines for Inclusive Test Administration 2005



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Introduction

CTB/McGraw-Hill understands the need to include all students in large-scale testing programs as part of the educational process. We have been a leader in providing guidance to districts and states on the use of accommodations in large-scale assessment since 2000 (CTB/McGraw-Hill, 2000 & 2002). Our previous guidelines have been widely used and referenced. These new guidelines are based on the more recent research and insight into inclusive assessment including English language learner (ELL) students. Federal, state, and local regulations or policies stipulate that students be provided with appropriate accommodations during testing. The characteristics of the tested population of large-scale state and district testing programs are expected to change in response to the movement toward inclusiveness. Test publishers and those who desire to make valid interpretations of test results must consider how these changes affect the concept and practice of standardized assessment.

CTB is committed to supporting the use of appropriate testing accommodations for students taking large-scale assessments, including standardized tests, and the ability of decision-makers to make valid and useful interpretations of test data.

This document provides guidelines on the use and appropriate interpretation of the results of inclusive test administrations. These guidelines are intended to facilitate the valid interpretation of individual student results and valid comparisons of year-to-year and group-to-group summary data for students with disabilities, as well as limited English proficiency (LEP) and ELL students. These guidelines are not comprehensive in covering the many needs and issues of such students. Agencies must become familiar with the specific requirements that apply to testing these special student populations, as with all students.

In the first section we present a general framework for reconciling standardization and accommodation in support of inclusive testing practice. In the next section we discuss how to interpret criterion-referenced and norm-referenced test results that arise from inclusive test administrations and present recommendations on the use of individual and summary results. In the third section we detail a simple framework for classifying accommodations in terms of the potential effect on the appropriate interpretation of student test scores. This framework is illustrated using an arrangement of accommodations provided by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (Thurlow, House, Boys, Scott, & Ysseldyke, 2000).

Finally we list recommendations for constructive interpretations of aggregate results with regard to the use of accommodations. This approach provides relevant information for the use of test results that maintains student privacy and avoids the unintended negative consequences of labeling or “flagging” accommodated students.

A General Framework for Reconciling Standardization and Accommodation in Support of Inclusive Testing Practice

Standardization is a fundamentally important characteristic of educational assessments that are designed to support comparisons among participants. Historically, the definition of standardization in educational assessment has focused on compliance with uniform administration conditions. Requiring uniform administration conditions has resulted in the systematic exclusion of students for whom those conditions are not appropriate. The purposes of modern educational assessment now extend beyond student-to-student comparisons under uniform conditions, and the inclusion of all students in educational assessment has become highly valued and required by law. Furthermore, the interpretations to be made from assessment results have broadened, and the validity of these interpretations may be compromised by a requirement of uniform conditions. A re-conceptualization of the principle of standardization is required to support the valid interpretation of results from inclusive test administrations.

CTB advocates and has adopted an approach to standardization that recognizes inclusiveness and accommodation as equally important, nonconflicting characteristics of modern assessment practice. The approach consists of four main principles. First, publishers of standardized tests should clearly define default conditions under which tests are to be administered, and these conditions should allow for broad and meaningful participation by the vast majority of students. This principle discourages default conditions that are needlessly restrictive (e.g., short time limits, very small print), but also recognizes the importance of defining default conditions rather than leaving them to the discretion of users. Note that not providing an accommodation when it is appropriate to do so or overly providing accommodations can both influence the validity/invalidity of the assessment results.

Second, changes to publisher default conditions will be necessary for some students to meaningfully participate in the assessment. Decisions regarding the use of such accommodations should be made by appropriately trained individuals familiar with the students' disabilities or level of English language proficiency. These decisions should be documented in writing, such as in individualized education programs (IEPs), 504 Plans, or accommodation plans specific to LEP/ELL students. Under this principle it is generally not appropriate for test publishers or policy makers to decree some accommodations as universally valid or invalid. However, it is important, that in every way appropriate, the decision making process and the delivery of accommodations are each conducted using standardized procedures. For example, the procedure for deciding to provide an oral accommodation along with the delivery of the oral accommodation (i.e., videotape, cassette tape, scripted

communications) should be standard across administrations. Policy makers may exercise judgment regarding the treatment of scores arising from various accommodations.

The third principle is to define as standard, the inclusive administration of assessments to all students who may meaningfully participate under either default, IEP-specified, or ELL-appropriate conditions. As a result, students with documented needs for accommodations will participate in assessments under the accommodated conditions they experience in daily instruction. This inclusive definition of standardization guides the creation, publication, and norming of standardized tests at CTB, including *TerraNova, The Second Edition*, and criterion-referenced tests such as custom standards-based assessments. Inclusive test development also includes collaboration within the context of state accommodation guidelines and policy. We believe that it allows for a more meaningful set of interpretations from the results.

Finally, interpretation of the results of inclusive administrations requires careful consideration of the targeted skills being measured, the nature and frequency of accommodations used, and the possible impact of the accommodations on reported performance. We elaborate on this principle in the next section.

Appropriate Interpretations of Test Results

In this section we discuss appropriate interpretations of test results when some students take the test under accommodated conditions. That is, we focus on the validity of inferences to be made from the results of a test. When test administration conditions vary from the default conditions specified by the test publisher, the interpretation of test scores, both criterion- and norm-referenced, should take into account the actual administration conditions. We are not suggesting that any score level changes will occur to the test results due to a non-default accommodation. We instead suggest caution and sensitivity in interpreting test results from administrations that vary from default conditions, especially given the research is not definitive on the impact to test constructs with some accommodations.

Criterion-referenced interpretations of test scores may be supported. They represent a fixed level of achievement that can be interpreted in terms of what students know and are able to do at a given score—raw score, scale score, or performance level defined by a range of scale scores. For example, a student who achieves a performance level designated as “Proficient” on a second-grade mathematics test may demonstrate the following knowledge, skills, and abilities:

Proficient students know place value to hundreds; count by twos; measure to nearest inch and centimeter; measure lengths in nonstandard units; read time to the half-hour; describe and classify common shapes; have three-dimensional spatial sense; combine pattern blocks to form given shapes;

complete tally charts and bar graphs; use data to solve problems; extend numerical and geometric patterns.

When a student achieves the “Proficient” performance level with the accommodation “extra time,” for example, the testing conditions should be considered along with the knowledge and skills ascribed to the student. In this case, the interpretation may be that, given the particular raw score, scale score, or performance level, the student can demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and abilities cited above, with the accommodation “extra time.”

Norm-referenced interpretations test scores may also be supported. National percentile rank (NP), normal curve equivalent (NCE), and grade equivalent (GE) scores are examples of norm-referenced scores. Norm-referenced scores are interpreted in terms of a student’s performance compared with the performance of a specified (traditional or inclusive) norm group. When a student achieves a given norm-referenced score, say the 50th NP, on a mathematics test with the accommodation “teacher reads the test directions, stimulus material and questions,” the testing conditions should be considered along with the NP score. In this case, the valid interpretation is that the student who took the mathematics test that was read aloud performed as well as or better than 50% of the students in the norm group. In accordance with the principles set forth, CTB’s inclusive norm group includes those students able to participate in the test administration with or without accommodations.

Given these interpretive guidelines, CTB recommends the following approaches for interpreting the results of inclusive test administrations.

Appropriate information for the interpretation of individual performance. A student who takes a test using accommodations should receive the same scale scores (criterion- or norm-referenced) or scores referenced to the same norms tables as students with the same test performance achieved under default conditions. However, individual student results obtained using testing accommodations should be interpreted in light of the accommodation(s) used. As supplement to such interpretations, classification summaries for three categories of accommodations are included in this document. These summaries are composed of common accommodations categorized according to the effect on the appropriate interpretation of individual student results, as detailed in the following section.

Appropriate information for the interpretation of group performance. CTB recommends that summaries of results that are used for accountability purposes be presented in both aggregated and disaggregated forms. *Aggregated* results are summaries of results that include all students tested. These should be presented with the number and percent of students who took the test(s) using accommodations so that the aggregated results can be interpreted with respect to changes in the use of accommodations across groups and years. Identifying the number and percent of

students using accommodations provides valuable information. For example, a school district may be able to learn from the data that some schools provide more accommodations than other schools. The difference may be due to the need at some schools for more assistance during test administration time to provide the needed accommodations. Such a finding could lead to policy changes and funding efficiency.

Disaggregated result summaries include only students who meet a specified criterion, such as students who took the test(s) under the conditions defined as default by the test publisher. CTB recommends disaggregating results for students who take tests under default conditions and presenting the results separately from those for students who take tests under accommodated conditions. However, reports should never be presented for any group for which the number is so small that the confidentiality of student information would be violated (FERPA, 1974). It is also important not to base inferences or important decisions on small numbers of students.

A Framework for Classifying Accommodations

Below, CTB outlines a simple framework for classifying accommodations for use in reporting. To make the framework concrete, we classify into our categories each accommodation listed as common by NCEO (Thurlow, et. al., 2000). CTB also examined other accommodation lists for ELL students in all fifty states to insure inclusive, valid assessment (such as those found in Abedi, 2001, and Rivera & Collumn, 2004). This framework may also be used by the local agency to categorize accommodations that are not listed by applying the classification criteria indicated below. CTB places each assessment accommodation into one of three categories, depending on the potential influence on the appropriate interpretation of student test scores.

CTB and others have conducted research on these accommodations. For example, the categories were provided to and used by a sample of teachers, and analyses were conducted on the agreement between the student need for accommodation as stated by the teacher and the teacher's placement of the accommodation within the categories. "The results of this study indicate that teachers are able to accurately translate the accommodations commonly used in their classrooms into accommodation categories when a list such as that in the appendix is provided" (Lewis, et. al., 2002, p.14). However, Bielinski, et al. (2003) found that special education professionals and assessment directors tend to disagree on how the categorical placements of many accommodations should be classified. The study also showed that deep seated beliefs about accommodations lead many individuals to consider all accommodations as not changing the construct, whereas, other respondents considered almost all accommodations as influencing the construct. CTB will continue to research this important issue.

Additionally, CTB convened a panel of nationally recognized experts in LEP/ELL education to review and categorize accommodations listed for LEP/ELL students included in large-scale assessments. CTB continues to conduct studies to validate the categorization of accommodations listed in this document.

The list of accommodations is not intended to be exhaustive, nor are the classifications of accommodations intended to be definitive. The classifications are meant as guidelines and a standard framework from which test users can begin to discuss and understand possible impacts. The classification of an accommodation may change for a particular test or subject area and may vary for different item types, such as selected-response and constructed-response items. How accommodations are classified may also vary from test to test, just as the underlying construct(s) of tests vary. This can become particularly sticky in areas where test constructs are defined differently but referred to similarly. For example, a test of Reading might seek to measure Reading comprehension, language comprehension, decoding, or some combination. The impact of an oral accommodation on the test of Reading, and thus the category in which such an accommodation might be placed, depends upon the construct the test was designed to measure.

Unfortunately, the results of the limited research on the impact accommodations have on student performance are inconclusive (Sireci, Li, & Scarpati, 2003). That is, the overall impact of accommodations on student scores may vary, and such is dependent upon the purpose of the instrument. Further, some accommodations appear to “boost” results for students regardless of disability or limited English. In addition, not all practitioners will agree with all of the classifications described, nor should they as tests vary in the intent of their measure. The purpose is to provide a framework for the classification of accommodations that may be used as policy and thoughtful application dictate. Both criterion- and norm-referenced scores are meaningful and useful when interpreted according to the following guidelines.

Category 1. Category 1 accommodations are not expected to influence student performance in a way that alters the standard interpretation of either criterion- or norm-referenced test scores. Individual student scores obtained using Category 1 accommodations should be interpreted in the same way as the scores of other students who take the test under default conditions. These students’ scores should be included in summaries of results without notation of accommodation(s).

Example of a Category 1 Accommodation: Take the test alone or in a study carrel. This and similar accommodations compose Category 1. These accommodations are not expected to affect the interpretation of individual students’ criterion- or norm-referenced scores. Both individual results and summaries can be treated in the same manner as those for students who do not use accommodations. Individual student scores can be interpreted directly, and student scores can be included in the aggregate score reports without special notation of the accommodation.

Category 2. Category 2 accommodations may have an effect on student performance that should be considered when interpreting individual criterion- and norm-referenced test scores. In the absence of research demonstrating otherwise, test scores and any consequences or decisions associated with them should be interpreted in light of the accommodation(s) used.

Example of a Category 2 Accommodation: Use extra testing time for any timed test. The accommodation “Use extra testing time” may have an effect on student performance that should be considered when interpreting students’ scores. Category 2 comprises accommodations that may affect the interpretation of individual students’ criterion- and norm-referenced scores. CTB recommends that individual student scores obtained with Category 2 accommodations be interpreted in light of the accommodation(s) used.

Category 3. Category 3 accommodations are likely to change what is being measured and have an effect that alters the interpretation of individual criterion- and norm-referenced scores. This occurs when the accommodation is strongly related to the knowledge, skill, or ability being measured (e.g., the use of a Braille test where not all items in the non-Braille version are administered in Braille). In the absence of research demonstrating otherwise, criterion- and norm-referenced test scores and any consequences or decisions associated with them should be interpreted not only in light of the accommodation(s) used, but also in light of how the accommodation(s) may alter what is measured.

Example of a Category 3 Accommodation: Use a calculator for a mathematics computation test. The accommodation, “Use a calculator for a mathematics computation test” may have an effect on students’ criterion- and norm-referenced scores and may change what is being measured. Consider the skills a student must demonstrate to solve the following problem with and without a calculator.

Subtract: $3,438 - 2,954 =$

A student taking the item under default conditions, “without a calculator,” must demonstrate the ability to subtract and apply the concept of “regrouping.” A student using a calculator does not need to apply the concept of “regrouping,” but instead must demonstrate the ability to perform subtraction on a calculator. The skill measured by this item is clearly different for students using a calculator than for those who do not, and both criterion- and norm-referenced scores must be interpreted accordingly.

Most Category 3 accommodations are specific to the test content. CTB recommends carefully considering the relationship between the test content and desired inference and the accommodation when interpreting individual student scores obtained using Category 3 accommodations.

Often, accommodations are not provided singly; rather by nature they require a combination of accommodations (such as providing a separate test setting for students receiving extra time or an oral accommodation). Score interpretations should consider the assessment accommodation combination and whether any or all of the accommodations will change what is being measured. When categorizing accommodations, particularly when tracking for policy purposes, concurrent accommodations should be categorized at the highest probability level. For example, if one accommodation is a Category 1 and another, given concurrently, is a Category 3, the higher of the two (Category 3) should be considered and documented.

Additional Reporting Considerations for Inclusive Administration

Agencies using both individual student results and summary results must have some awareness of the specific conditions of testing. At the individual student level, agencies must interpret the results appropriately, necessitating a specific awareness of the testing conditions. To facilitate appropriate interpretation of individual student results, testing accommodation decisions and use should be well documented. Because teachers are most directly involved with test administration and the use of test results, they are most likely the best providers of information about the testing conditions and accommodations used. Such documentation includes IEP, 504 plan, or LEP/ELL team recommendations for both instructional and testing accommodations and details about the actual use of accommodations, in both instruction and testing.

Score reports for students who take tests under accommodated conditions sometimes indicate or “flag” the conditions of testing to encourage valid interpretation of the students’ test scores. However, this practice may have the unintended consequence of labeling, and thus stigmatizing, the student. There may also be legal and regulatory restrictions on flagging the scores of students who use accommodations. CTB recommends that agencies fully understand any legal requirements applicable to all aspects of their specific testing programs, including the use of accommodations.

Knowledge of accommodated administration conditions cannot be assumed for administrators who will be using the summary results. Those using the summary results typically are not concerned with the testing conditions for individual students, but they do need to know the number and percent of students using accommodations at the school, district, and state level. This information, along with additional information about the student population, is necessary to provide valid comparisons from year to year or from group to group, as well as to discourage the use of accommodations when they are not legitimately needed and to further ensure that students are receiving the accommodations that they do need.

Test publishers should provide the necessary summary information while maintaining anonymity at the individual student level. CTB’s scannable answer

documents, for example, allow for special coding to indicate student disabilities and/or types of accommodations. Agencies may assign accommodation information to one or more of these special codes spaces, and CTB can disaggregate the necessary information on score reports and/or research data files. Test administration conditions may also appear on individual student reports, but will be interpretable only by those familiar with the code layout.

Summary

The evolution of inclusive testing practices has challenged traditional definitions and approaches to standardizing and norming educational tests. As schools continue to adopt inclusive administration practices as standard practice, it is appropriate for publishers of educational assessments to adopt standardization and reporting practices that are more inclusive and informative. The approach pioneered by CTB is reflected in the guidelines presented in this document and in the reports associated with standardized and custom assessments at CTB under inclusive practices.

Following the guidelines discussed can help educators provide students with appropriate accommodations and enhance the validity of the interpretations of results for all participating students who take tests under default or accommodated conditions. CTB is engaged in ongoing research to address the consequences of accommodations (Barton, et al., 2003; Bielinski, et al., 2003; Barton, et al., 2002; Karkee, et al., 2002; Lewis, et al., 2002; Shulte, 2000.) CTB researchers have conducted unpublished studies examining the comparative effects of testing accommodations on the performance of students with and without disabilities. We apply item-response theory methods to examine whether and how items function differently for students with differing levels of ability and proficiency. We pay careful attention to the potential effects of testing conditions on test score interpretations and adhere to the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999).

Even with an aggressive program of research, however, there is still insufficient empirical evidence concerning the relationships between accommodations and test results. CTB urges using the guidelines set forth in this document and exercising professional care in developing policy and interpreting test results.

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Appendix

The accommodations listed herein are adapted from M. Thurlow, A. House, C. Boys, D. Scott, J. Ysseldyke (2000). *State Participation and Accommodation Policies for Students with Disabilities: 1999 Update*. National Center on Educational Outcomes. Accommodations might be appropriate for various types of students; however, each list includes a separate set of accommodations specific to LEP/ELL, only.

Category 1: The accommodations listed in Category 1 are not expected to influence student performance in a way that alters the interpretation of either criterion- or norm-referenced test scores. Individual student scores obtained using Category 1 accommodations should be interpreted in the same way as the scores of other students who take the test under default conditions. These students' scores may be included in summaries of results without notation of accommodation(s).

Presentation

- Use visual magnifying equipment
- Use a large-print edition of the test
- Use audio amplification equipment
- Use markers to maintain place
- Have directions read aloud
- Use a tape recording of directions
- Have directions presented through sign language
- Use directions that have been marked with highlighting

Response

- Mark responses in test booklet
- Mark responses on large-print answer document
- For selected-response items, indicate responses to a scribe
- Record responses on audio tape (except for constructed-response writing tests)
- For selected-response items, use sign language to indicate response
- Use a computer, typewriter, Braille writer, or other machine (e.g., communication board) to respond
- Use template to maintain place for responding
- Indicate response with other communication devices (e.g., speech synthesizer)
- Use a spelling checker except with a test for which spelling will be scored

Setting

- Take the test alone or in a study carrel
- Take the test with a small group or different class
- Take the test at home or in a care facility (e.g., hospital), with supervision
- Use adaptive furniture
- Use special lighting and/or acoustics

Timing/Scheduling

- Take more breaks that do not result in extra time or opportunity to study information in a test already begun
- Have flexible scheduling (e.g., time of day, days between sessions) that does not result in extra time or opportunity to study information in a test already begun.

ELL specific

- Spelling aids, such as spelling dictionaries (without definitions), spell/grammar checkers provided, for a test for which spelling and grammar conventions will not be scored
- Computer-based written response mode for constructed response items other than for a Writing test. For Writing test computer writing aids are disabled (e.g., grammar and spelling checks) that interfere with what is to be scored.
- Computer-based testing with glossary without content related definitions

- Bilingual word list, customized dictionaries (word-to-word translations), and glossary provided for words that are not content related
- Format clarification of test
- Directions clarified
 - Directions explained/clarified in English
 - Directions explained/clarified in native language
- Both oral and written directions in English provided
- Both oral and written directions in native language provided
- Directions translated into native language, including audio-taped directions

Category 2: Category 2 accommodations may have an effect on student performance that should be considered when interpreting individual criterion- and norm-referenced test scores. In the absence of research demonstrating otherwise, scores and any consequences or decisions associated with them should be interpreted in light of the accommodation(s) used.

Presentation

- Have stimulus material, questions, and/or answer choices read aloud, except for Reading
- Use a tape recorder for stimulus material, questions, and/or answer choices, except for Reading
- Have stimulus material, questions, and/or answer choices presented through sign language, except for a Reading test
- Communication devices (e.g., text talk converter), except for a Reading test
- Use a calculator or arithmetic tables, except for a mathematics computation test

Response

- Use graph paper to align work
- For constructed-response items, indicate responses to a scribe, except for a writing test

Timing/Scheduling

- Use extra time for any timed test
- Take more breaks that result in extra time for any timed test
- Extend the timed section of a test over more than one day, even if extra time does not result
- Have flexible scheduling that results in extra time

ELL specific

- Test items read aloud in linguistically clarified** English on a test other than Reading
- Test items read aloud in native language on a test other than Reading
- Test items read aloud in English on a test other than Reading
- Audio-taped test items provided in English on a test other than Reading

- Test that is linguistically clarified in English for words not related to content on non-Reading (e.g. words defined, explained) in English
- Oral response in English using a scribe for tests other than Writing*
- Written response in native language translated into English for tests other than Writing*
- Audiotaped test items provided in native language version provided for content other than Reading and Writing.
- Side-by-side bilingual test or translated version provided for content other than Reading and Writing.

*These may be appropriate, but not feasible for most ELL students.

**Linguistic clarifications are developed and provided by test publisher, not by test administrator.

Category 3: Category 3 accommodations change what is being measured and are likely to have an effect that alters the interpretation of individual criterion- and norm-referenced scores. This occurs when the accommodation is strongly related to the knowledge, skill, or ability being measured (e.g., having a reading comprehension test read aloud). In the absence of research demonstrating otherwise, criterion- and norm-referenced test scores and any consequences or decisions associated with them should be interpreted not only in light of the accommodation(s) used, but also in light of how the accommodation(s) may alter what is measured.

Presentation

- Use Braille or other tactile form of print
- On a Reading (decoding) test, have stimulus material, questions, and/or answer choices presented through sign language
- On a Reading (decoding) test, use a text-talk converter, where the reader is required to construct meaning and decode words from text
- On a Reading (decoding) test, use a tape recording of stimulus material, questions, and/or answer choices
- Have directions, stimulus material, questions, and/or answer choices paraphrased
- For a mathematics computation test, use of a calculator or arithmetic tables
- Use a dictionary, where language conventions are assessed

Response

- For a constructed-response writing test, indicate responses to a scribe
- Spelling aids, such as spelling dictionaries (without definitions), spell/grammar checkers provided, for a test for which spelling and grammar conventions will be scored
- Use a dictionary to look up words on a writing test

ELL Specific

- Test items read aloud in linguistically clarified** English on a test of Reading
- Test items read aloud in native language on a test of Reading
- Test items read aloud in English on a test of Reading
- Words on Reading test orally clarified (e.g. words defined, explained) in English
- Oral response in native language using a scribe for tests other than Writing that are translated in English for scoring*
- Spelling aids, such as spelling dictionaries (without definitions), spell/grammar checkers provided, for a test for which spelling and grammar conventions **will** be scored
- Computer-based written response mode for constructed response items for a Writing test when there is any computer writing aid relevant to what is scored.
- Audio-taped test items provided in English on a test other than Reading