



IN THIS ISSUE....

"We're Going to Teach 'Em All"

Framed by federal disabilities legislation and thrust ahead by the imperatives of high stakes testing and No Child Left Behind, testing accommodations, including the use of assistive technology, have become an uneasy part of the American educational landscape. Recently the Department of Education increased to 3%, the percentage of special education students in a district who may be tested using alternate assessments, and have their scores counted toward meeting the federal mandate of showing "adequate yearly progress (AYP)."

Yet, a schism in approach exists among practitioners, between those who believe in a liberal granting of accommodations to parents who request them and others who grant them only after sound, research-based instructional alternatives have been adequately explored. This schism reflects an overarching philosophical conflict that strongly impacts special education students in an era when the achievement of AYP is the focus of general education strategy, a strategy that can frequently consign special education students to near invisibility when high stakes test scores are computed.

Dr. Judy Elliott comes down squarely on the side of visibility for all students, including those with disabilities, in high stakes testing and of a child's right to use the same AT accommodations in high stakes testing that he or she uses in classroom instruction. Dr. Elliott is assistant superintendent of the Long Beach (CA) Unified School District. With 97,000 students, including a high percentage

for which English is a second language, her district is the state's third largest urban school district. Dr. Elliott, whose early teaching and administration background includes special education, was once an educator who advocated aggressively in favor of liberal testing accommodations on behalf of students with learning disabilities. Today, her perspective has changed dramatically.

In Long Beach, she explains, "We don't separate out the programs for children with disabilities from the general education programs. Here, it's inclusive." Her message, she says, is basic: "It's about data-based instruction, top-down accountability and including all kids, with and without disabilities."

In testing, she believes that all children should be measured, general education students plus those who require accommodations, including AT. Only then, she says, can the nation acquire an accurate overall reading of its students' proficiency.

This is not a message, she admits, that currently has much support among general educators. "When has general education ever said, 'We should include children with disabilities [in high stakes testing results]?' Now districts are asking, 'What are we going to do with these kids?' My answer is, we're going to teach 'em, which we should have been doing all along."

This newsletter examines testing accommodations, including assistive technology, their impact on children with disabilities and on schools and districts

striving to reach the ambitious proficiency goals set by No Child Left Behind.

Dr. Judy Elliott Speaks

Judy Elliott spent her first seven professional years teaching learning disabled middle school and high school students and the following seven years as a school psychologist focusing on in-class behavior and academic interventions.

She says, "I am very much biased toward interventions, because, with my teaching background, I found it easy to work with other teachers. With teachers, I can say, 'Let's tweak the instruction because what's really needed here is not testing accommodations, what's needed is instruction that's more targeted.'"

Yet testing accommodations, she declares, "are absolutely critical for kids who need them in order to have access and to show knowledge of their skills." However, testing accommodations, she cautions, are not just about testing. "It all starts in the classroom, during instruction." The harder issue, she notes, "is making sure which kids need what accommodations."

On using assistive technology as testing accommodations, she adds, "there should be no controversy about children using the same AT accommodations in state or district assessments that they have been using in classroom instruction and classroom tests."

Dr. Elliott, who earned her undergraduate and Masters degrees and Ph.D. from the State University of New York at Buffalo, left New York State for a position as a senior researcher at the University of Minnesota's National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO), where she continues to assist school districts and state departments of education in their efforts to update and realign curriculum frameworks, instruction and assessments to include all students.

Her research interests focus on effective instruction, IEP development and its

alignment with standards and assessments, decision-making for accountability, accommodation and assessment as well as translating information on standards and assessments for parents, teachers, school boards and other community groups.

Dr. Elliott continues to serve as a national consultant and staff development professional to school districts and organizations. In the U.S. and the South Pacific, she has trained staff, teachers and administrators in linking assessment to instruction and intervention, strategies and tactics for effective instruction, curricular modification for students with mild to significant disabilities, intervention and teacher assistant teams, authentic and curriculum-based evaluation, instructional environment evaluation, collaborative teaching, strategies for difficult-to-manage students, accountability and assessment practices.

Supporting our interview with Dr. Elliott are resources to assist parents and others in understanding testing accommodations and associated issues, including the role of AT. We also feature members of our **Knowledge Network**. The members spotlighted this month focus on various aspects of testing accommodations. We invite you to contact these members for further information.

Please share this newsletter with other organizations, families and professionals who may benefit from it. We invite you to contact us at <http://www.fctd.info>. We welcome feedback, new members and all who contribute to our growing knowledge base.



Testing Accommodations: “This Is the Hardest Job I’ve Ever Had”

*An Interview with Dr. Judy Elliott:
Assistant Superintendent,
Long Beach (CA) United School District*

Six years ago, on the day she began her tenure as assistant superintendent of California’s third largest urban school district, Dr. Judy Elliott was confronted by 45 complaints against the district and ongoing due process hearings, all involving parental ire over testing accommodations. Like all urban districts nationwide, hers suffered from high teacher and administrative staff turnover, with professional development an ongoing effort from an annual standing start. It was an auspicious beginning, but one that would require the employment of all her skill as an instruction expert, former special education teacher, trained psychologist and motivator.

“My bias is curriculum and instruction, so my first target was an improvement in reading instruction,” she recalls. Within a year, she says, complaints, hearings and parental frustration had fallen off. “By then, it was about kids getting the access they needed to good, research-based instruction – and making sure the right kids got the accommodations they deserved.”

Six years later, backed by a strong team of school psychologists, only 7.7% of her district’s students are on IEPs, one of the lowest percentages among all U.S. urban school districts.

“We don’t test [for learning disabilities] just because parents say, ‘I want my child tested.’” Instead, she adds, “we look at state data, classroom data, standard space instruction, at how the child is performing in all venues.” If children require additional assessment, they receive it from “a top-notch assessment staff that really understands learning disabilities, the research around those disabilities and are

ethical,” in that they won’t assign IEPs – and testing accommodations -- just to assuage the demands of selected constituencies.

“I’m in our schools every morning,” she says. “I’m in those classrooms with the principals. When I go into a classroom, I ask, ‘Are the standards written on the board? Are the objectives these students are working toward written on the board? Is the instructional model being used?’” If the response to any of her questions is negative, “We find out why. That’s what top-down, bottom-up accountability is all about – and that accountability needs to be reciprocal.”

Her responsibility, she notes, “is to provide the professionals who are making accommodation decisions the right information and the right training, and to answer their questions. You can’t tell teachers, ‘Go teach standards-based instruction’ without teaching those teachers how to back-map those standards into a classroom lesson planner IEP.”

Her bottom line: “This may be the hardest – and most satisfying -- job I’ll ever have in my life.”

Making the Hard Choices on Accommodations

According to Dr. Elliott, the best method of determining which children require testing accommodations is trial and error. “Give a child a task to perform without an accommodation and see how she does. Then give the child the same, or parallel, task with the identified accommodation you think the child needs and see how she does. If the performance is improved, chances are she really does need an accommodation.”

In state or district assessments, however, a child can sometimes register a range in performance if the test is not well constructed, she warns. “In order to identify whether or not a child needs an accommodation, you watch, you see, you try an accommodation, you see if it has a positive impact.”

If a child is old enough, Dr. Elliott adds, "Ask him what he needs. We don't always ask the kids how the method of accommodation feels. After a child takes a test, whether district or state, or even just a classroom test, ask him how he thinks he did. Was the accommodation needed? Was it useful? Sometimes you discover that the accommodation gets in the way of test performance."

No Difference Between AT and "Regular" Accommodations

To Dr. Elliott, there is no difference between AT test accommodations and so-called "regular" testing accommodations like extended time. "There's no difference. If a child needs an accommodation, including an AT accommodation, she should get it."

With any issue of accommodations, whether the accommodation is as basic as extended time, or an accommodation that is more complex, including a computer adapted switch for a child with cerebral palsy, the key, explains Dr. Elliott, "is making sure that the tests are ordered early enough." A Braille test, for example, must be ordered through the state and thus requires extensive lead time. Head switches used by children with cerebral palsy also require logistical planning to accommodate their use, she adds.

The Educational Testing Service (ETS), as a benchmark, provides the following list of approved testing accommodations: computer-based testing (CBT), including extended testing time, additional rest breaks, selectable background and foreground colors, reader, recorder/writer of answers, sign language interpreter (for spoken directions only), Braille or audio cassette formats; paper and pencil testing with extended time, alternate test formats, including Braille, enlarged print, large print answer sheet, audio cassette with large-print figure supplement and audio cassette with Braille figure supplement.

An AT accommodation, Dr. Elliott reminds, can be a complex device or an aid as simple as a pencil grip or raised lines on a piece of paper.

Braille Tests: Are They Available?

Braille tests have been the subject of occasional controversies. "If a child can read Braille," Dr. Elliott declares, "her test ought to be in Braille." However, she adds, "many children are unable to read Braille, depending on when their visual impairment occurred."

Students who become vision impaired in their teens often cannot yet read Braille. Although the number of these students is low, their plight becomes a challenge for those managing AT accommodations. In some instances, Dr. Elliott explains, "the need for a reader becomes a cost issue for states, and if the test is one that cannot be read by the blind student, the test results are invalidated." Each issue involving students who lose their sight in their teens is treated selectively and separately by school, district and state authorities, she adds.

The issue of Braille tests becomes significant, she explains, "Only in that many items on state tests are written and, unless the state has conducted a bias review, cannot be converted into Braille." That discrepancy, she says, "raises another issue of test validity for kids who are blind." Having been a member of several test review boards, she notes, "I can attest that we are doing better with this issue."

CD-ROMs: Some Important Advice

When children need a reader to complete a test, she says, some teachers order CD-ROMs that children can use as an aid. Unfortunately, Dr. Elliott adds, "many of the children for whom CD-ROMs have been ordered have never taken a test using a CD-ROM, and having to use one during an important test throws a child for a loop."

Additionally, "some teachers don't realize that if they order, say, 100 CD-ROMs for

their kids who are taking a state test, 100 pieces of equipment are required to run those CDs." Some teachers and students learn that lesson the hard way, she says. "I've seen kids and teachers bringing their own CD players to state tests to use them to play CD-ROMs."

The challenge around AT, she says, "is to make sure children have used these devices throughout their schooling. If a child has a reader, that child cannot take a test in a room with other children." In fact, she adds, "that child cannot even be placed in a small group to take a test."

Standard and Non-Standard AT Accommodations

An AT device is an accommodation, like any other, and therefore subject to the same restrictions, Dr. Elliott says. "Depending on the test's construct, there are standard and non-standard AT accommodations, just like any other accommodations. "Depending on the test, there are some forms of AT that could be deemed non-standard." For example, "if a child normally uses a reader and uses that reader on a reading test, then that accommodation is considered non-standard and the test results are categorized 'far below proficient.'"

Separating Children by Test Location

Dr. Elliott agrees that separating children with disabilities from their non-disabled peers to take tests with accommodations in a different location can often cloud the testing experience for the children who must be separated out.

"I'm in the final stages of editing galley proofs of a book that Martha Thurlow and I are revising about testing kids with disabilities. One of the chapters focused on IEP teams. IEP teams get together and they, in their best, most humanistic way say, yes, the child really needs to move to a separate location to take this test. The kids in middle school or high school will leave the classroom over their dead body to go to the

special ed classroom because they feel like a geek," she notes.

Having been a school psychologist in a high school, she notes, one of the most difficult things about working with high school kids with disabilities was a) persuading them to understand they do have a disability and how that impacts their life and their academic functioning, and b) including them in discussions about the purpose of their accommodation. "Sometimes they need an accommodation but don't want it because they don't want to be singled out. Children and adolescents who resist accommodations probably have not yet accepted their disability. That's the place to start."

Avoid Paralysis by Emphasizing Instruction Over Compliance Issues

Elsewhere in the U.S., she says, districts have found themselves stymied in their quest for more equitable and realistic testing accommodations because of the fear of being out of compliance with current law. Her district, she notes, does not share such a preoccupation with compliance issues. "I tell my staff repeatedly, 'We will never be in total compliance. We'll be in substantial compliance, but never 100% compliance.'"

She recommends her district's approach to other districts. "That approach helps districts sustain momentum, whereas if districts remain mired in compliance issues, inertia is the likely result." Nevertheless, her district does not ignore compliance issues. "We know when we have to fix something," she insists.

Her background, she points out, is in curriculum and instruction, not compliance. "Anyone can learn about compliance," she claims. "Sixty percent of the people who work for me are general educators, not special educators. I want people who know instruction. That's not to say that special educators do not know instruction, but it's a different perspective when you have reading and literacy professionals on your staff vs.

others who know how to quote the law chapter and verse.”

She concludes, “I’m not saying that compliance is not important, because it absolutely is important, but no district will achieve 100% compliance.” Her advice to other districts and professionals in the field: “Don’t let the inability to achieve 100% compliance paralyze you and prevent you from doing beneficial things for children and families.”

The Most Difficult Aspect of the Accommodation Process

According to Dr. Elliott, the logistics of implementation are the most difficult aspect of the accommodations process. “If you’re talking about classroom instruction in middle school and high school, the IEP teams may say that a student requires accommodations, but if that student is taking the majority of his classes in general education, eight or nine teachers must be monitored, depending on how the periods are structured, to make sure that that student is being given the accommodations that are written on the IEP.”

Her district has developed a variation of the Cliff Notes format that is designed to help general ed teachers negotiate the accommodations process. “It’s a one-page front and back summary of the IEP and what accommodations a student needs.”

The general education teacher, she emphasizes, “needs to understand the reason for an accommodation: that it’s not to give the student a leg up but it’s because the student really needs it. The logistics of implementing this process starts with the teachers, making sure that general ed and special ed teachers understand the purpose and the need for accommodations.”

The larger implementation issue, she adds, “is during the instructional process, not during the testing process, because the testing process is one discrete window. You can map out a plan for a testing window.

But what’s more difficult to monitor is the day-to-day implementation of accommodations for instruction.”

Making good instructional accommodations starts with the IEP team, Dr. Elliott observes. “That’s a challenge in and of itself to make good, solid decisions. The next most difficult part of the process is to make sure those decisions are implemented.”

In testing, she explains, “there are standard accommodations and there are non-standard accommodations. That terminology has changed. There are accommodations and modifications, but we look at everything as an accommodation.”

The standard accommodations do not impact the construct of the test or the task that’s being measured, she explains. However, there are non-standard accommodations that do impact the construct of the test. For example, reading a reading test – “and you have to be careful how you say this because there are some reading tests that can be read because the construct being measured is not phonetics.” Or, in a timed test, when a child is allowed more time than what is standard – extended time – and that non-standard extended time therefore invalidates the construct that’s being measured.

California allows specific standard accommodations, she notes. “If a child takes the California Achievement Test Six, for example – called the CAT 6 -- with a non-standard accommodation, regardless of how they do on the test, their test is automatically classified as ‘far below proficient.’” A child with a non-standard accommodation can perform brilliantly on the test, scoring “‘proficient’ or ‘above proficient,’” but because the child used a non-standard accommodation, his test score is categorized “‘far below proficient,’” she explains.

The objective of the CAT 6, she notes, is accountability, to ascertain the performance level of all third, fifth and eighth graders in California. However, because assessments

or tests have not been universally designed, “children cannot gain full access to those assessments and therefore they need to rely much more on accommodations.”

Sometimes, she adds, those accommodations have been deemed non-standard. As a consequence of that determination, the child who used non-standard accommodations and his school are penalized.

The Frustration of Non-Standard Accommodations

What frustrates Dr. Elliott – “and I’m surprised there hasn’t been a challenge in a court of law -- is that we worked so hard to have IEP teams really understand the purpose and the need to have accommodations for kids. The teams make a good decision that a child needs a certain accommodation. They find out that the accommodation is used in classroom instruction, in classroom tests. Then they get to the district assessment and learn that, yes, the child needs that accommodation, but in the state of California, if the child uses that accommodation on a state test, no matter how well the child tests, the results are classified ‘far below proficient.’”

“It’s a double whammy,” she declares. IEP teams “make good decisions for kids but then the teams are slapped because they made a good decision for a child who happens to need a non-standard accommodation.”

The result, she notes, “is that there are education professionals around the country who are saying, ‘Let’s not give the child the accommodation needed for this test and let’s see how the child performs without it. Maybe the child will do better than ‘far below proficient.’ To me, that is educational malpractice.”

In her district, she doesn’t care whether a testing accommodation is standard or non-standard, “if the child needs that accommodation, the child gets it. I don’t ever want to hear someone tell me that

they’re not going to give the child an accommodation to see how the child will perform without one.”

A Universally Designed Test: The Final Frontier?

Will a universally designed test, for which Dr. Elliott is a forceful advocate, provide the ultimate resolution for these unanticipated dilemmas? How do educators and state authorities traverse the treacherous territory between today’s often inconsistent and apparently inequitable system of accommodations and the ultimate destination, a universally designed test?

No Child Left Behind legislation, she insists, “has pushed accountability in accommodations and attention to kids with disabilities in assessments. One of the things NCLB has driven is the question of whether or not assessments are universally designed.”

Universally designed tests, she acknowledges, “are not going to happen overnight, but the discussion about how kids with disabilities should be included in these accountability systems, including AYP, is underway and the field is seeking thoughtful solutions on how to include all sub-groups in a universally designed approach to high stakes testing.”

The bottom line, she notes, “is that this is a money issue; but when a federal law elevates issues, like NCLB has done, it pushes an agenda in a positive way.”

The Universal Design Trend in Testing: “It Has to Continue”

The trend toward universally designed assessments, she says, “has to continue. This is not just a kids-with-disabilities issue. This involves all children.” Until it can be guaranteed that children will have access to high quality instruction, there will always be kids who will need some sort of accommodations, she adds.

"Let's face it," she declares, "any child in an urban district can be qualified for special education. In California, this is not about kids with disabilities; this is about *all* kids. Fifty percent of the children in Long Beach are limited English or redesignated English proficient kids."

Rhode Island, she notes, was among the first states to allow accommodations for all children. "It doesn't matter if the child has an IEP or a section 504 plan (which ensures that a child with a disability has equal access to an education. The child may receive accommodations and modifications), any child who needs an accommodation gets it, and that makes sense to me."

Children in urban districts, she insists, "may or may not have learning disabilities. Their learning difficulties might be a product of their environment, for example." Current policies, she adds, "encourage kids to be put into special education because if they get an IEP then they get an accommodation. Look at the phenomenon with kids in high school at the SATs. Sometimes we encourage it when we shouldn't. I saw it when I was a school psychologist in a high school in upstate New York. For years I saw this phenomenon first-hand with kids in ninth and tenth grade being referred for learning disabilities."

For now, in her district, when it comes to assigning accommodations, school psychologists are the gatekeepers, Dr. Elliott says. "We don't test just because parents say, 'I want my child tested.'"

Needed: Intervention-based Programs

She continues, "If your goal is to make sure the 'right' kids are assigned IEPs, you need to make sure you have good intervention-based programs that have been tried, where you have progress monitoring and the data has been collected."

The classroom, she declares, is the best laboratory in which to judge the effectiveness of instruction. "Too often we

put a child under a microscope. I believe you have to get into those classrooms. You need to look at the quality of instruction. You need to look at how a child's learning needs are being met, what strategies are being used in the classroom. You have to do intervention-based programs with progress monitoring. Anything you try has to be documented. High quality assessments are the only way to get the most eligible kids on an IEP."

Once the right children have been assigned IEPs, she adds, "You then need to have good, thoughtful discussions on whether or not a child needs an accommodation. That discussion, she emphasizes, must be data based."

"I ran IEP teams when I was in New York," she recalls, "and we gave accommodations away liberally. We found out that we could have been hurting the child because the child might not have needed the accommodations."

For a long time, she says, IEP teams were primarily concerned about a child's eligibility. "Now, IEP teams are about what tests, what accommodations, what instruction is needed. There's so much more responsibility now on IEP teams."

"How Could They Have Said That to Me?"

It's the rhetoric that irritates and frustrates Dr. Elliott. "People say, 'We'll leave it up to the IEP team.' I ask, 'Who's training the IEP teams to know how to make the right decisions?' When I was leading these teams, I didn't know what constructs were being measured on these tests; we just gave out accommodations. We thought we were doing right by the kids." Instead of leaving it up to rhetoric, she declares, "IEP teams need to be trained in how to make the right decisions about testing accommodations."

Professionals at the district level, assistant superintendents and superintendents, she says, ought to ensure that principals, who

are the designees of those IEPs at the school sites, are trained. The special education district administration, she adds, should arrange training to help professionals understand what constitutes accommodations and modifications.

Dr. Elliott is an active speaker to groups of school district administrators nationwide. Her message, she says, has generally been well received. The feeling, nationally, she claims, "is that, yes, this approach is good. We need to include kids with disabilities. We probably always should have included them. The question now is, how do we do it? It's one of those be-careful-what-you-ask-for situations, because a change in the cap is a direct relation to the political pressure some states, such as Utah, are exerting against Washington."

Nationwide, I'm pleased to report, professionals want to know how this goal can best be achieved, how test scores can be raised, how children with disabilities can be accounted for in test scores and how those kids can do better."

"Then, I'm happy to get up before groups and share the data we have about the rating programs we've done for all kids, including those with disabilities, and the effective interventions we've performed in this district for all kids, including kids with disabilities."

"This is a big change from my early days as a special ed teacher in New York, when I was often told, 'Your kids have been tested enough. Why don't you keep them home [on test day] or take them on a field trip?' That approach, thankfully, is the antithesis of what we now advocate. It wasn't until years later that I thought, 'Why those b-----! How could they have said that to me?'"

Hearts Are In the Right Place

Unfortunately, she concedes, those bad old days are not yet gone. Nationwide, pockets of resistance to change remain. Fortunately, however, "parents and professionals have been nailed enough by those old, bad

attitudes and are better consumers and now know what is happening and why."

It has taken 30 years for attitudes to evolve while special education secured its own place in America's education terrain. It will take more time for further evolution to occur and for needed progress to be achieved, a likelihood that NCLB administrators are beginning to acknowledge, she says. "The trajectory of 2014 (when NCLB proficiency goals are to be met) may or may not be realistic for many school districts and states, only because there is a lot of clean-up yet to be done – and right on the heels of major budget cuts."

Still, she is optimistic. "I believe that people's hearts are in the right place, but parents still come to our district office angry, so there's much fixing yet to be done before we get it right."



RESOURCES

ARTICLES

Implications of High Stakes Testing for Students with Learning Disabilities

By Candace Cortiella
SchwabLearning.org 2005

The author, who is director of the non-profit Advocacy Institute, examines, in a Q&A format, the current state of high-stakes testing and defines the benefits and risks of high stakes testing for students with learning disabilities. She writes, "While students with learning disabilities have a lot to gain from increased focus on student achievement, high-stakes standardized testing can also pose serious obstacles and consequences." She answers the following questions:

- What exactly is meant by "high-stakes" standardized testing?

- How many states currently have high-stakes testing in place?
- Do states have the right to impose such tests on students with disabilities?
- Are students with disabilities required to participate in high-stakes tests?
- What are the barriers to success on high-stakes tests for students with LD?
- Are there certain questions that parents of students with LD should ask regarding their state's high-stakes assessment system?

The article offers parents a bonus takeaway: *Parent Checklist: Essential Elements of a Fair Assessment System*, a ready-to-print pdf of the information featured in Ms. Cortiella's article.

<http://www.schwablearning.org/articles.asp?r=846>

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in High School

By Martha Thurlow

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCET) January 2002

According to Ms. Thurlow, fewer students with disabilities in middle schools and high schools use accommodations than students with disabilities in elementary schools. She writes, "There is nothing about students with disabilities, nor about instruction and assessment that would suggest that the number of students with disabilities using accommodations should change as they progress through school. Are there other things occurring that might affect the number of students receiving accommodations? Are there constraints on the provision of accommodations that can be alleviated to ensure that all middle school and high school students who need accommodations receive them?"

The grades in which students with disabilities are involved in transition planning are the same grades in which we see declining numbers of students using accommodations, she points out. She asks, "Does that mean

that students are less likely to be aware of their need for accommodations because they are not being built into transition plans? If they are not built in during transition planning, do students leave school without any idea of their accommodations needs? And if so, what impact does this eventually have on their success in their postsecondary work or education?"

She concedes, "There clearly are many unanswered questions about the issue of declining percentages of students with disabilities receiving accommodations as they reach middle and high school. An important next step is to begin to answer some of the many related questions."

<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=247>

Accommodations: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

By Judy Elliott and Judy Schrag

International Dyslexia Association 2001

The authors served on Oregon's Blue Ribbon Panel on testing accommodations in 2000. They discuss the downfalls of some evaluations, insisting that evaluations can "invalidate" a child's learning disability rather than focusing on methods that make education easier. The authors cite cases in Oregon where steps were taken to guarantee the procedures to be followed in an evaluation.

<http://207.44.158.59/~admin2/dyslexia/index/articles/display/64>

The Impact of Providing Testing Accommodations to Students with Disabilities

By Stephen N. Elliot and Andrew T. Roach

Wisconsin Center for Education Research 2002

This paper, presented by the authors at the 2002 American Education Research Association, examines the impact of testing accommodations on students, parents and teachers while secondarily discussing their impact on state-level education leaders and the accountability systems these leaders

manage, researchers conducting studying validity studies and psychometricians responsible for developing new tests that are more inclusive. The authors concluded that testing accommodations: 1) Facilitate a meaningful proportion of students who, historically, would not have participated in large-scale assessments; 2) Increase the test score of most students with disabilities; 3) Challenge many teachers and parents about tests, testing and accountability issues; 4) Are desired by many who may not be disabled. The authors add, "It is safe to say that testing accommodations are having an impact on many more people than just students with disabilities. In fact, the entire educational testing and accountability network has been impacted in some measurable way."

<http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/testacc/Publications/aera2002.doc>

A Guide to Testing Accommodations

By Jonathan Mooney
Family Education 2004

Instead of focusing on strategies that "fix" children or to improve their performance, the author focuses "how the environment can be changed to integrate kids who think differently." The test and testing environment, he adds, "can be disabling and needs to change to accommodate a child's individual differences." To families of children with disabilities, he recommends the following principles to help create accommodations for their child:

- 1) *Be student centered:* "Not all accommodations will work for all students. Too often we hand kids a set of accommodations without really thinking about what they need as individuals. Ask your child what might work for her. It's okay if she doesn't have any ideas of her own. Give her some suggestions from [the author's] accommodation list and ask her which she thinks may be helpful."
- 2) *Find accommodations that suit the situation:* "It is equally important to realize that not all accommodations work

in all classes. Different classes draw on different skills and each may need their own set of accommodations. So start new with each class, think it over, then settle on what accommodations will work."

- 3) *Don't jump the gun:* "Kids are often given an accommodation that does not seem to work, so it is immediately discontinued. But the reality is, you won't know what accommodation will work in what situation until your child has the opportunity to try one out, fail at it, reevaluate it, and then try again. This process of trial-and-error is the only way to empower a student to discover what accommodations he needs."
- 4) *Model advocacy skills:* "So much emphasis is placed on the idea that kids need to be their own advocates. But how can they learn the necessary skills? Well, it starts with them learning from your example. Many parents are made to feel ashamed when they try to fight for their kids, but don't be intimidated. You have every right to advocate for your child. Share with your child how it feels to talk with teachers, and let her know what's on your mind. Model good advocacy skills by making your anger constructive, and work to form a partnership with your child's teachers. Most importantly, always talk about your child not in terms of deficits and disorders, but in terms of strengths and weaknesses."
- 5) *Create opportunities for self-advocacy:* "The final goal is for your child to be able to ask for accommodations himself. However, self-advocates are not created overnight. It is unreasonable to throw a kid into a classroom and expect him to march up to a teacher he doesn't know and ask for accommodations. Instead, try to create opportunities for successful self-advocacy. For example, work with a teacher who you know is understanding about accommodations, set up accommodations with this teacher in advance, and then have your child ask the teacher for accommodations or have

a conversation about his accommodation. Creating these safe opportunities will give your child the skills and confidence he needs to go into more difficult situations as a positive self-advocate."

<http://www.familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,23-28416,00.html>

FACT SHEETS

Disabilities and Testing: Information about Testing Accommodations

Educational Testing Service (ETS) 2004

This document provides the following examples of testing accommodations that may be approved by ETS: Computer-Based testing (CBT), including extended testing time, additional rest breaks, selectable background and foreground colors, reader, recorder/writer of answers, sign language interpreter (for spoken directions only), Braille or audio cassette formats; Paper and Pencil Testing, including Extended testing time, additional rest breaks, reader, recorder/writer of answers, sign language interpreter (for spoken directions only); Alternate Test Formats, including Braille, enlarged print, large print answer sheet, audio cassette with large-print figure supplement and audio cassette with Braille figure supplement.

<http://www.ets.org/disability/info.html>

Providing Testing Accommodations for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

**Compiled by David Buchloski
Northeast Technical Assistance Center (NETAC) 2000**

Compiled by the training coordinator for the Midwest Center for Post Secondary Outreach in St. Paul, MN, this NETAC Teacher Tipsheet evaluates the acceptability of assistive technology and other accommodations requested or used by deaf and hard of hearing students nationwide. He writes, "As the number of deaf and hard of hearing students seeking enrollment in postsecondary education programs increases, the accommodations

they request to ensure equal access also increases."

The author cites the following examples of testing accommodations provided to deaf and hard of hearing students and gives useful explanations of each:

Extended-Time

Test Editing

Signed Test Question ÷ Signed Response

Using Adaptive Equipment

Distraction-Free Environment

For more information about this NETAC Teachers Tipsheet, contact:

Northeast Technical Assistance Center (NETAC)

Rochester Institute of Technology
National Technical Institute for the Deaf
52 Lomb Memorial Drive Rochester, NY
14623-5604

Phone: (585) 475-6433 (V/TTY)

Fax: (585) 475-7660

Email: netac@rit.edu

<http://www.netac.rit.edu/publication/tipsheet/testaccom.html>

BOOKS

The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing

Developed and published by: American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME)

Revised significantly from the 1985 version, the 1999 *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* has more in-depth background material in each chapter, a greater number of standards, and a significantly expanded glossary and index. The updated version reflects changes in federal law and measurement trends affecting validity, testing individuals with disabilities or different linguistic backgrounds and new types of tests as well as new uses of existing tests. The *Standards* is written for the professional and for the educated

layperson and addresses professional and technical issues of test development and use in education, psychology and employment. This book is a significant reference for professional test developers, sponsors, publishers, users, policymakers, employers and students in education and psychology. <http://www.apa.org/science/standards.html>

JOURNALS

Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation (PARE)

Department of Measurement, Statistics and Evaluation, University of Maryland

PARE is an on-line journal providing education professionals access to refereed articles that can have a positive impact on assessment, research, evaluation and teaching practice, especially at the local education agency (LEA) level.

Manuscripts published in *PARE* are scholarly syntheses of research and ideas about issues and practices in education. They are designed to help members of the community keep up-to-date with effective methods, trends and research developments. While they are most often prepared for practitioners, such as teachers, administrators, and assessment personnel who work in schools and school systems, *PARE* articles can target other audiences, including researchers, policy makers, parents and students.

<http://pareonline.net/>

POSITION PAPERS

Appropriate Use of High Stakes Testing in Our Nation's Schools: How Should Student Learning and Achievement Be Measured?

American Psychological Association, May 2001

This APA-produced paper on high stakes testing accommodations concludes, "Testing is an extremely valuable part of educational

assessment, but it is only a part of the formula for quality learning. When tests are used in high-stakes circumstances, a number of safeguards must be in place." Test developers, the paper adds, "must ensure that certain groups of students are not disadvantaged by a test, and test users must guard against allowing the testing process--the need for students to pass a certain test--to overwhelm the rest of a student's mastery of a wide curriculum. Furthermore, remedial programs should be in place for students who score low or fail such tests."

This paper is available from:

APA

Office of Public Affairs

750 First Street, NE • Washington, DC • 20002-4242

Phone: (202) 336-6123; (202) 336-5700 (TDD/TTY)

Fax: (202) 336-5708

<http://www.apa.org/pubinfo/testing.html>

Large Scale Assessments and High Stakes Decisions: Facts, Cautions and Guidelines

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) 2002

This paper highlights the factors influencing large-scale assessment and summarizes the cautions in implementing high stakes testing programs while offering basic guidelines to policymakers and administrators. The paper focuses on the following sub-topics: recognizing the multiple purposes of large-scale assessment; high stakes and negative consequences; use of a single test score in making promotion/retention decisions; use of a single test score in graduation decisions; use of test performance as a basis for systems level rewards and sanctions; impact on mainstream education; who is assessed; what tests are used and what they measure; what accommodations were provided; high stakes testing for individual students; test design and selection. This document is available from:

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)

4340 East West Hwy #402
Bethesda, MD 20814

http://www.naspcenter.org/factsheets/highstakes_fs.html



KNOWLEDGE NETWORK MEMBERS

American Psychological Association (APA)



Based in Washington, DC, APA is a scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the U.S. With more than 150,000 members, APA is the world's largest association of psychologists.

The APA has published a position paper on high stakes testing accommodations entitled, "Appropriate Use of Testing in Our Nation's Schools: How Should Student Learning and Achievement Be Measured."

<http://www.apa.org/pubinfo/testing.html>

For additional information on APA, contact:
American Psychological Association (APA)
750 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4242
Phone: (202) 336-5700; (202) 336-6123
(TDD/TTY)
Fax: (202) 336-5708
<http://www.apa.org>



Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation and Educational Policy (CSTEAP)



CSTEAP is an educational research organization located in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. Since its inception in 1980, CSTEAP has conducted research on:

- Testing, evaluation, and public policy
- Studies to improve school assessment practices
- International comparative research

CSTEAP conducts small- and large-scale research, collaborating with individual schools, districts, states and countries to advance educational testing practices and policy and to improve the quality and fairness of education. The organization's professional staff includes nationally and internationally recognized experts in educational measurement, large-scale assessment, evaluation and policy issues.

CSTEAP houses the Technology Assessment Study Collaborative (inTASC), a not-for-profit research group that collaborates with schools, educational agencies and businesses to conduct research and development on a variety of issues related to technology and assessment. inTASC gathers researchers who have examined several aspects of technology and assessment in schools over the past decade to focus on new questions and issues that arise from the field. Schools, educational agencies and businesses approach inTASC with their own ideas and/or questions that require systematic research. Research conducted by inTASC is developed, conducted and often disseminated in cooperation with its educational and business partners.

inTASC believes that advances in educational technologies and continuously emerging applications of those technologies, coupled with growing demand to document impacts on teaching and learning, require a dual

focus on the instructional uses of computer-based technology and its applications to the technology of testing and assessment.

For additional information on CSTEED and inTASC, contact:

CSTEED

Campion Hall
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467
Phone: (617) 552-4521
Fax: (617) 552-8419
Director, Joseph Pedulla
pedulla@bc.edu
<http://wwwcsteed.bc.edu/>

National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy (NBETPP)

The National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy is an independent organization that monitors testing in the United States, for appropriate use and technical adequacy. The Board focuses primarily on tests that are highly consequential for students, teachers, and schools. These include tests used in making admissions, promotion, or graduation decisions and tests used to evaluate schools and school reform.

The Board provides ongoing information on the uses and outcomes of educational testing for decision-making purposes, paying special attention to groups historically underserved by the educational system.

The Board gathers, creates, and synthesizes information on testing from a variety of sources. This information is provided to, among others, students, parents, educators, and policy makers. Given the range of audiences, the Board disseminates information using a variety of approaches, including:

- Professional reports on testing issues, practices, and programs
- A series of broadly accessible reports on testing issues/topics
- Introductory background material on testing and public policy
- Presentations at educational conferences and other professional meetings
- Popular dissemination of testing information via the web, PBS-type videos, press seminars, and spokesperson broadcasts

For further information on NBETPP, contact:

National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy (NBETPP)
Lynch School of Education
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467
(617)552-4521 phone
(617)552-8419 fax
<http://www.bc.edu/research/nbetpp/index.html>

American Association of School Administrators (AASA)



AASA, founded in 1865, is the professional organization for over

13,000 educational leaders nationwide and overseas. AASA aims to support and develop effective school system leaders.

The organization, with a staff of 50, is one of elementary and secondary education's oldest professional organizations. The AASA website features several testing accommodations resources.

For more information on AASA, contact:
American Associations of School Administrators
801 N. Quincy Street, Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22203-17300

Phone: (703) 528-0700

Fax: (703) 841-1543

<http://www.aasa.org>

American Counseling Association (ACA)



Founded in 1952, ACA is the world's largest association exclusively representing

professional counselors in various practice settings. The association provides leadership training, publications, continuing education opportunities, and advocacy services to nearly 52,000 members. ACA maintains a task force on high stakes testing.

The organization seeks to promote public confidence and trust in the counseling profession. ACA has been instrumental in setting professional and ethical standards for the field and has achieved accreditation, licensure, and national certification. ACA also represents the interests of the profession before Congress and federal agencies.

For additional information on the ACA high stakes testing task force contact:

ACA Task Force on High Stakes Testing
Dr. Bradley T. Erford, Chair
Timonium Graduate Center
Loyola College
2034 Greenspring Drive
Timonium, MD 21093
Phone: (410) 617-1509
Fax: (410) 617-5097
berford@loyola.edu

For additional information on ACA, contact:
American Counseling Association
5999 Stevenson Avenue
Alexandria, VA 304
Phone: (800) 347-6647 (toll free); (703) 823-6862 (TDD)
Fax: (800) 473-2329
<http://www.counseling.org//AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home>

National Association of Test Directors (NATD)



The National Association of Test Directors (NATD) is an association of K-12 public education assessment administration programs in North America. The purpose of the organization is:

- to share information about testing in educational settings;
- to encourage the appropriate use of testing in educational settings;
- to improve the applications of measurement to students and educational programs; and
- to encourage research in the area of elementary and secondary school testing and measurement.

NATD publishes a newsletter several times annually. Monographs of NATD/National Council on Measurement in Education sessions and occasional papers are published and mailed to members. These publications are also available for purchase.

NATD monitors legislation affecting testing and seeks to have member representation on panels which study testing issues or set testing standards. NATD periodically surveys its membership to compile information on assessment trends and member needs and shares the results with the membership.

For more information on NATD, contact:
<http://www.natd.org/overview.htm>

National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME)



NCME is a professional organization for individuals active in assessment, evaluation, testing and other aspects of educational

measurement. Members are involved in the construction and use of standardized tests and new forms of assessment, including performance-based assessment. The membership also includes program designers and program evaluators, university faculty, test developers, state and federal testing and research directors, professional evaluators, and testing specialists in business, industry, education, and community programs.

NCME's purpose is to:

- Encourage scholarly efforts to advance the science of measurement in the field of education, improve measurement instruments and procedures for their administration, scoring, interpretation and use, and improve applications of measurement in assessment of individuals and evaluations of educational programs
- Disseminate knowledge about theory, techniques, and instrumentation available for measurement of educationally relevant human, institutional and social characteristics; procedures appropriate to the interpretation and use of such techniques and instruments; applications of educational measurement in individual and group evaluation studies

For more information about NCME, contact:
National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME)
Central Office
1230 17th St. NW
Washington, DC 20036-3078
Phone: (202) 223-9318
Fax: (202) 775-1824
<http://www.ncme.org/about/>

Educational Testing Service (ETS)



ETS is the world's largest private educational measurement

organization and a leader in educational research. The ETS website features sections dedicated to physical and psychiatric disabilities and testing accommodations.

ETS was founded in 1947 by Henry Chauncey, who expanded upon a concept first proposed by educator James Bryant Conant a decade earlier – that a single organization devoted to research and testing could "make fundamental contributions to the progress of education in the United States." Nearly 60 years later, this independent, nonprofit organization has broadened that objective to include learners worldwide.

For further information on ETS, contact:
Educational Testing Service (ETS)
Office of State and Federal Relations
Suite 900
1800 K Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: (202) 659-0616; (202) 659-8067 (TTY)
Fax: (202) 659-8075
<http://www.ets.org/aboutets/index.html>

American College Testing Program (ACT)



Founded in 1959, ACT is an independent, not-for-profit organization providing more than 100 assessments, research, information, and program management services in the broad areas of education and workforce development. ACT annually serves millions of individuals in elementary and secondary schools, colleges, professional associations, businesses and government agencies, nationally and internationally.

ACT meets the testing needs of students with disabilities by providing reasonable accommodations appropriate to a student's disability. ACT policies regarding an applicant's disability and the process for requesting accommodations are contained in

the ACT Policy for Documentation to Support Requests for Testing Accommodations on the ACT Assessment which is available on the ACT website.

Effective with ACT score reports issued after September 1, 2003, ACT no longer flags scores achieved with extended time as "special." ACT is offered only in English. Accommodations, including extended time, are not available solely on the basis of limited English proficiency.

For additional information on ACT, contact:
ACT
500 ACT Drive
P.O. Box 168
Iowa City, Iowa 52243
<http://www.act.org/aap/disab/>

Joint Committee on Testing Practices (JCTP)

Testing and Assessment



The Joint Committee on Testing

Practices (JCTP) provides "a means by which professional organizations and test publishers can work together to improve the use of tests in assessment and appraisal." JCTP has established several working groups to fulfill this goal, and these groups have produced several products.

JCTP publications include:

The ABC's of School Testing

Developed by JCTP and a collaboration of several other testing organizations, this videotape is designed to help parents understand the many uses of testing in schools today. Various types of tests (including aptitude and achievement tests) and their appropriate use in schools are discussed. In addition to the videotape, two publications are included: *Leader's Guide* and the *Code of Fair Testing Practices*. To obtain an order form for this video package, contact the Science Directorate via phone at (202) 336-6000 or contact the National

Council of Measurement (NCME) at (202) 223-9318.

Assessing Individuals with Disabilities in Educational, Employment, and Counseling Settings

Developed by the Assessment of Individuals with Disabilities Working Group of the JCTP, the book provides guidance and assistance for testing persons with disabilities. The book is comprised of three sections: (1) basic legal, policy and psychometric issues; (2) necessary steps and considerations in the process of assessing individuals; and (3) the assessment of people in specific testing situations. To obtain a copy, contact the APA Order Department by phone at 1-800-374-2721.

Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education

The *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education* was initially developed by JCTP in 1988 as a statement of the primary obligations that professionals who develop or use educational tests have toward test takers. The *Code* has been revised to be consistent with the 1999 *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*. The *Code* provides guidance to professionals who develop or use educational tests. To obtain a printed copy of the *Code*, which may be reproduced and/or disseminated, contact the Science Directorate at (202) 336-6000.

Responsible Test Use: Case Studies for Assessing Human Behavior

One of the major problems in educational and psychological measurement has been the misuse of test data. *Responsible Test Use* was developed to help train professionals to use tests wisely. It analyzes the misuse of test data and shows how it can occur in so many different ways. To obtain a copy of *Responsible Test Use: Case Studies for Assessing Human Behavior*, contact the APA Order Department at 1-800-374-2721.

Test User Qualifications: A Data-Based Approach to Promoting Good Test Use

This 143-page technical report examines models for screening qualifications for test

users; for a copy contact the Science Directorate at (202)-336-6000.

Rights and Responsibilities of Test Takers: Guidelines and Expectations

This statement explains the rights and responsibilities of test takers during the testing process as well as the general expectations of test takers held by those who develop, administer, and use tests. The 1999 version is available online at the website identified below.

To learn more about the JCTP, contact:
American Psychological Association (APA)
Science Directorate
750 First Street, NE • Washington, DC
20002-4242
Phone: (202) 336-6000; (202) 336-6123
(TDD/TTY)
Fax: (202) 336-5953
<http://www.apa.org/science/jctpweb.html>



Newsletter Editor: Thomas H. Allen

Electronic Formatting and Distribution: Ana-Maria Gutierrez

Be the first on your block
to own a copy of the Family Center's

***Family Information Guide
to Assistive Technology***



The Guide is conveniently organized in the following sections:

- The Possibilities of Assistive Technology
- Assistive Technology in Schools
- Funding Assistive Technology
- Quick Questions and Tips
- Illustrated Glossary of AT Terms and Devices
- Additional AT Information Resources

The Guide will be available soon on the FCTD website. It will be free as a PDF file. Organizations and individuals may request one free print copy of the Guide. Additional copies are available for \$10. To order one or more copies, visit the FCTD website, or contact us at: fctd@aed.org. To speak with an FCTD representative, call: (202) 884-8068 or (202) 884-8217.

Checks can be sent to:

Family Center on Technology & Disability
Academy for Educational Development
1825 Connecticut Ave., N.W., 7th floor
Washington, D.C. 20009