



Minnesota
**Manual of
Accommodations**

for Students with Disabilities
in Instruction and Assessment

**A Guide to Selecting,
Administering, and Evaluating
the Use of Accommodations**



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Introduction

The *Minnesota Accommodations Manual: How to Select, Administer, and Evaluate Use of Accommodation for Instruction and Assessment of Students with Disabilities* presents a five-step process for Individualized Educational Program (IEP) teams, 504 Plan committees, general and special education teachers, administrators, and district level assessment staff to use in selecting, administering, and evaluating the effectiveness of the use of instructional and assessment accommodations by students with disabilities. A companion Professional Development Guide supports the use of this manual.

The guidance in this manual applies to students with disabilities who participate in large-scale assessments and the instruction they receive. The five steps are:

1. Expect students with disabilities to achieve grade-level academic content standards.
2. Learn about accommodations for instruction.
3. Make decisions about accommodations for assessment.
4. Administer accommodations during instruction and assessment.
5. Evaluate and improve accommodation use.

Steps 1-4 provide Tools to help make appropriate decisions about accommodations in instruction and assessment, informed by Minnesota's policies for statewide assessments.

Additional training materials, including a CD and a PowerPoint presentation, are available to help school personnel become more familiar with the information presented in this manual. Please contact the Minnesota Department of Education for information on how to obtain the CD and PowerPoint presentation.



Expect students with disabilities to achieve grade-level academic content standards

Equal Inclusion in Grade-Level Content

With the focus of legislation aimed at accountability and the inclusion of all students comes the drive to ensure equal inclusion in grade-level content standards. Academic content standards are educational targets for students to learn at each grade level. Teachers ensure that students work toward grade-level content standards by using a range of instructional strategies based on the varied strengths and needs of students. Providing accommodations during instruction and assessment may also promote inclusion in grade-level content. To accomplish this goal of inclusion,

- every IEP team member must be familiar with Minnesota’s academic standards and accountability systems at the state and district level;
- every IEP team member must know where to locate Minnesota’s academic standards and updates; and
- collaboration between general and special educators must occur for successful student inclusion in grade-level content.

All students with disabilities can work toward grade-level academic content standards and most of these students will be able to achieve these standards when the following three conditions are met:

1. Instruction is provided by teachers who are qualified to teach in the content areas addressed by state standards and who know how to differentiate instruction for diverse learners.
2. IEPs for students with disabilities are developed to ensure the provision of specialized instruction (e.g., specific reading skills, strategies for “learning how to learn”).
3. Appropriate accommodations are provided to help students access grade-level content.

Academic standards for content areas assessed on statewide tests may be found on Minnesota’s Web site: <http://education.state.mn.us>

Both NCLB 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 2004 (IDEA) require the curriculum for students with disabilities to be included in the same grade-level content standards and goals set for all other students, as defined by states for purposes of federal accountability. Minnesota points out that this requirement does not, however, eliminate the need to provide instruction in functional living skills for students with identified needs in this area. For more information on the legal basis for providing equal access to grade level content standards see the end of this section.

Including Students with Disabilities in State Accountability Assessments

Both federal and state laws require that all students with disabilities be administered assessments intended to hold schools accountable for the academic performance of students. Accommodations may be provided to eligible students on each of the assessments in the Minnesota Assessment Program. Individualized Education Program (IEP) team members must actively engage in a planning process that addresses:

- assurance of the provision of accommodations to facilitate student inclusion in grade-level instruction and state assessments, and
- use of alternate assessments to assess the achievement of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

For a current overview of the tests given to students in Minnesota, including accountability assessments (regular and alternate), graduation tests, and tests of English language proficiency (included here for students with disabilities who are also English language learners), please see the Procedures Manual located at: http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Accountability_Programs/Assessment_and_Testing/DAC/Corner/Policies_Procedures_Guidelines/index.html

Legal Basis

Federal and State Laws Requiring Participation by Students with Disabilities

Several important laws require the participation of students with disabilities in standards-based instruction and assessment initiatives. These include federal laws such as No Child Left Behind 2001 (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

Stronger accountability for results is one of the four basic education reform principles contained in NCLB. This law complements the provisions in providing public accountability at the school, district, and state levels for all students with disabilities.

One of the basic reform principles of NCLB is stronger accountability for results for all students. Through this federal legislation, in addition to other state and local district initiatives, assessments aimed at increasing accountability provide important information with regard to:

- how successful schools are at including all students in standards-based education
- how well students are achieving standards
- what needs to be improved for specific groups of students

There are several critical elements in NCLB that hold schools accountable for educational results:

1. Academic content standards (what students should learn)
2. Academic achievement standards (how well they should learn)

State assessments are the mechanism for checking whether schools have been successful in supporting students in gaining the knowledge and skills defined by the content standards. School, district, and state accountability is based on measuring success in educating all students and determining what needs to be improved for specific groups of students.

Minnesota Assessments

For the most current information about Minnesota statewide assessments, refer to the Procedures Manual on the Minnesota Department of Education Web site. At the time of printing of this *Minnesota Manual of Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Instruction and Assessment*, Minnesota's assessments for NCLB accountability included:

Title I assessments

All Minnesota students must take annual assessments in mathematics, reading and science:

- Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments-Series II-Mathematics (MCA-II-Mathematics) for students in grades 3-8 and 11
- Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments-Series II-Reading (MCA-II-Reading) for students in grades 3-8 and 10
- Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments-Series II-Science (MCA-II-Science) for students in grades 5, 8 and high school (year depends upon when students take their Life Science course)
- Mathematics Test for English Language Learners (MTELL) for students in grades 3-8 and 11. This accommodated mathematics test is written in simplified language.
- Minnesota Test of Academic Skills in Mathematics, Reading and Science. These alternate assessments are for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and are administered in the same grades as the MCA-II.

Minnesota reports results of the Title I assessments to the U.S. Department of Education for the purpose of determining whether or not Minnesota schools and districts are meeting annual progress goals.

Title III assessments

English language learners must take annual language proficiency assessments:

- Test of Emerging Academic English (TEAE), a test of reading and writing proficiency for students in grades 3-12
- K-2 Reading and Writing Checklist, a teacher rating of reading and writing proficiency for students in grades K-2
- Minnesota Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (MN SOLOM), a teacher rating of listening and speaking skills for students in grades K-12

These English language proficiency tests fulfill NCLB requirements to assess ELLs' progress in acquiring academic English proficiency. The results are used to calculate whether or not districts are meeting their Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO).

Graduation assessments

In addition to assessments for federal accountability, Minnesota administers a statewide diploma test which students must pass in order to graduate from high school. Students who entered grade 8 in 2004-05 or earlier must pass the Basic Skills Test (BST) in reading, writing and mathematics. At this time, the BSTs are only administered to students who did not pass the tests on previous attempts.

Students who entered grade 8 in 2005-06 or later must pass the Graduation-Required Assessment for Diploma (GRAD) in reading, writing and mathematics in order to graduate. The GRAD reading and mathematics tests are embedded in the MCA-II. Students take the GRAD Test of Written Composition in grade 9, the GRAD/MCA-II-Reading in grade 10 and the GRAD/MCA-II-Mathematics in grade 11.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004

IDEA requires the participation of students with disabilities in state and district-wide assessments, and specifically governs services provided to students with disabilities. Accountability at the individual level is provided through IEPs developed on the basis of each child's unique needs, but with the goal of inclusion in the general curriculum within a standards-based education system.



Learn about accommodations for instruction

What Are Accommodations?

The purpose of accommodations is to reduce or eliminate the effects of a student's disability, and in the case of a student who is also identified as an English language learner (ELL), to eliminate barriers to the academic standards caused by language differences. Students with IEPs, 504 Plans, or identified as limited English proficient (LEP) may be provided with assessment accommodations; the accommodations do not reduce expectations for learning.

Accommodations are practices and procedures in the areas of presentation, response, setting and timing/scheduling that provide equitable access to grade level content for students with special needs. Accommodations provided to a student during state assessments must also be provided during classroom instruction, classroom assessments, and district assessments; however, some instructional accommodations may not be appropriate for use on certain statewide assessments. It is critical that educators become familiar with state policies about the appropriate use of accommodations during assessment.

Typically, accommodation use does not begin and end in school. Students who use accommodations will generally also need them at home, in the community, and as they get older, in postsecondary education and at work. Accommodations for instruction and assessment are integrally intertwined.

Who is Involved in Accommodations Decisions?

IEP teams must make assessment and accommodation decisions for students based on individual need in accordance with state and federal guidelines.

Students with 504 Plans must be provided accommodations based on individual need as long as the accommodations do not invalidate the assessment. Accommodations should be documented in the 504 Plan.

For students with disabilities who are also ELLs, the English as a second language (ESL) or bilingual teacher should also be involved. A collaborative dialogue among ESL/ bilingual teachers, general education teachers, parents and families, test examiners or coordinators, program coordinators, and the student's own input can help determine what is best for the individual student.

Description of Accommodation Categories

Explanations of four accommodations categories used for instruction:

- **Presentation Accommodations**—change how an assignment or assessment is given to a student. These include alternate modes of access which may be auditory, multi-sensory, tactile or visual.
- **Response Accommodations**— allow students to complete assignments, assessments, and activities in different ways (alternate format or procedure) or to solve or organize problems using some type of assistive device or organizer.
- **Setting Accommodations**—change the location in which an assignment or assessment is given or the conditions of the setting.
- **Timing/Scheduling Accommodations**—increase the allowable length of time to complete an assignment or assessment, or change the way the time is organized for an assignment or assessment.

Note: For Minnesota state assessments the Setting and Timing/Scheduling accommodations are not identified as accommodations because they are considered general practices that are available to all students.

Accommodations and Modifications

Accommodations do not reduce learning expectations. They provide access. However, modifications refer to practices that change, lower, or reduce learning expectations.

Modifications can increase the gap between the achievement of students with disabilities and expectations for proficiency at a particular grade level. Using modifications may result in implications that could adversely affect students throughout their educational career. Examples of modifications include:

- requiring a student to learn less material (e.g., fewer objectives, shorter units or lessons, fewer pages or problems)
- reducing assignments and assessments so a student only needs to complete the easiest problems or items
- revising assignments or assessments to make them easier (e.g., crossing out half of the problems on a math assignment so that a student has to work on only a subset of skills), or giving a student hints or clues to correct responses on assignments and tests.

IEP Team Considerations for Instruction Accommodations

To assure students with disabilities are engaged in standards-based instruction, every IEP team member needs to be familiar with the Minnesota Academic Standards (and for ELLs with disabilities familiarity also with the English language proficiency standards). In essence, the process of making decisions about accommodations is one in which the IEP team members attempt to “level the playing field” so that students with disabilities can participate in the general education curriculum. In leveling the field the team should consider the following (also see Figure 1).

1. Student characteristics: Reduction of the effects of a disability or language barrier (for ELLs with disabilities)
2. Instructional tasks expected of students to demonstrate grade level content in state standards: Assignments and class tests
3. Consistency with standards-based IEP for classroom instruction and assessments: Fidelity to accommodations and achievement standards noted in IEPs



Does the student really need the accommodation?

A student may not be receiving an accommodation he or she needs or may be receiving too many. Research demonstrates that more is not necessarily better when it comes to accommodations, and that providing students with accommodations that are not truly needed may have a negative impact on performance.

The better approach is to focus on a student’s identified needs within the general education curriculum.

For English Language Learners with Disabilities

Teams making instructional accommodations decisions with ELLs who have disabilities should additionally consider the following characteristics for accommodations decisions in the classroom:

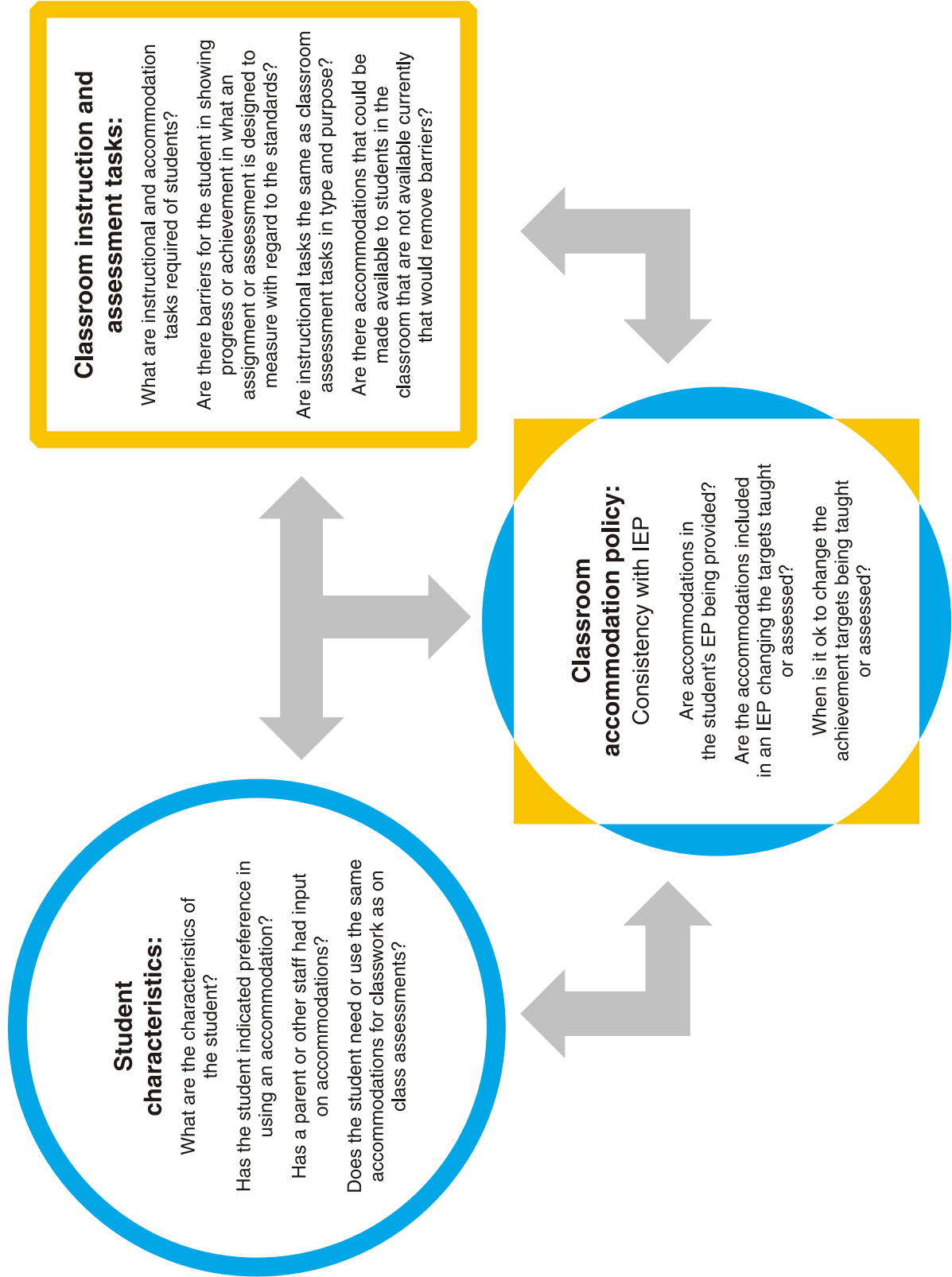
- The student’s current English language proficiency level
- Annual review of the student’s progress toward attaining English language proficiency
- The student’s experience and length of time in U.S. schools
- The primary language of instruction in each content area, and the length of time that the student has received instruction in that language

You may want to use the following tools to help make decisions about accommodations and to track their use in the classroom for each student.

Questions to ask about student characteristics:	Tools to Use:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What student characteristics may require accommodations to access academic content? 2. Does the student have an accommodation preference? 3. Has the student advocated for a specific accommodation? 4. Have parents or guardians had input into accommodations used? 	<p>Inclusion needs that may require accommodations (Tool 2.1)</p> <p>Accommodations from the student's perspective (Tool 2.2)</p> <p>Accommodations journal (Tool 2.3)</p> <p>Parent input on accommodations (Tool 2.4)</p>
Questions to ask about class instruction tasks and consistency with IEP:	Tools to Use:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the accommodation being used in class noted in the student's IEP? 2. What barriers have needed to be removed in classroom instruction? 3. Has the student needed or shown facility for using an accommodation for class work, or classroom tests? 	<p>Accommodation use in the classroom (Tool 2.5)</p> <p>Evaluating accommodation use in the classroom (Tool 2.6)</p>

Step 3 describes how to make decisions regarding accommodations for state assessments. It builds on the "tools for instruction" by considering the following criteria: accommodation policies, the nature/goal of state assessment tasks and individual student characteristics.

Figure 1. Considerations When Making Decisions for Instructional Accommodations





Make decisions about assessment accommodations

Accommodations and Modifications on Assessments

Accommodations do not change what is being measured on a test. They provide access so that students can demonstrate what they know. Modifications refer to practices that change what is being measured. The categories used to describe types of accommodations in Step 2 will carry over throughout the rest of this manual.

Accommodations Decisions for State Assessments

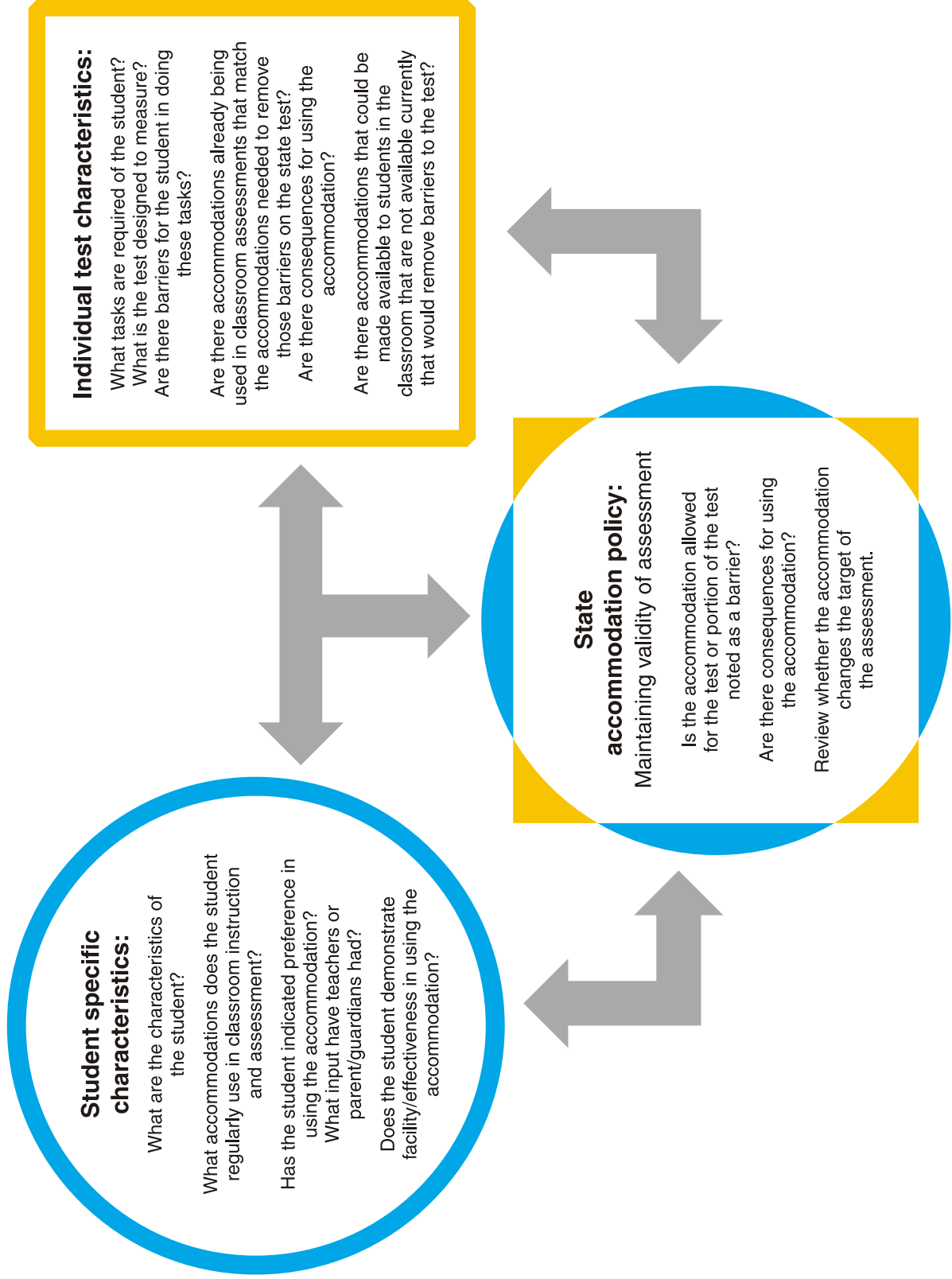
It is the IEP team's responsibility to determine whether testing accommodations are needed on state assessments for each student who receives special education services. For a student who has a disability under IDEA, specific accommodations are documented annually in the IEP prior to testing. Likewise, a 504 team should document in the 504 Plan the decision about accommodations. Further, as with instructional accommodations, if a student is also an ELL, appropriate ESL or bilingual staff should be involved in the team's decisions concerning assessment accommodations.

The decision-making process for state assessment accommodations should include at least these three factors (also see Figure 2):

1. student characteristics (e.g., disabilities, language proficiency, accommodations used in classroom instruction/assessments to access and perform in academic standards and state tests)
2. Individual test characteristics: knowledge about what tasks are required on state assessments and ways to remove physical and other barriers to students' ability to perform those tasks
3. state accommodation policies for the assessment or for part of an assessment and consequences of decisions.

These and related areas to consider for decision making are addressed in this manual. An Accommodation Decision Tracking Sheet may be used to organize the information gathered through the various tools provided in this manual to help in decision-making. The Tracking Sheet is located after Step 5.

Figure 2. Considerations When Making Decisions for Assessment Accommodations





Student Characteristics: Questions to Guide Accommodation Selection on State Assessments

Selecting accommodations for assessment is the role of a student’s IEP team or 504 Plan committee. Use the questions provided below to guide the selection of appropriate tools for helping make decisions about accommodations for students receiving special education services or a 504 Plan. See the tools for appropriateness of use with students using accommodations either for the first time or who are currently using accommodations.

Questions to ask about student characteristics:	Tools to Use:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What student characteristics may require accommodations to be included in a state or district test? 2. What feedback has the student given after using accommodations on state tests previously? 3. Has the student advocated for a particular accommodation on an assessment? 	<p>Refer to Tool 2.1</p> <p>After-test accommodation questions (Tool 3.1)</p> <p>Assessment accommodations agreement (Tool 3.2)</p>

Involving Students in Selecting, Using, and Evaluating Accommodations

It is critical for students with disabilities to understand their disabilities and learn self-advocacy strategies for success in school and throughout life. Some students have had limited experience expressing personal preferences and advocating for themselves. Speaking out about preferences, particularly in the presence of “authority figures,” may be a new role for students, one for which they need guidance and feedback. Teachers and other IEP team members can play a key role in working with students to advocate for themselves in the context of selecting, using, and evaluating accommodations.

The more students are involved in the selection process, the more likely the accommodations will be used, especially as students reach adolescence and the desire to be more independent increases. Self-advocacy skills become critical here. Students need opportunities to learn which accommodations are most helpful for them, and then they need to learn how to make certain those accommodations are provided in all of their classes and wherever they need them outside of school. This is the rationale for the Assessment Accommodations Agreement Tool 3.2.



Prior Accommodation Use

Accommodations should not be used for the first time on a state test. Instead make sure to address these instructional concerns ahead of the state assessment:

- Plan time for student to learn new accommodations
- Plan for evaluation and improvement of accommodation use (see the accommodations monitoring section).



Accommodations for Instruction Vs. Assessment

Sometimes accommodations used in instruction may not be used on an assessment.

- Plan time for students to practice NOT using certain accommodations before the state assessment.
- Some instructional accommodations may alter what a test is designed to measure.

In some cases the accommodations used in instruction may not be allowed on a test because they would invalidate the results of the test so that the performance no longer reflects what the test was designed to measure. In these instances teachers should be sure to allow the student ample opportunities to perform on classroom tasks and assessments without the use of the accommodation.

If the accommodation is considered a necessary step in scaffolding grade level content instruction, having some practice without the accommodation during classroom work would be an expected practice to gauge student progress independent of the accommodation and would also provide student opportunities to practice not using an accommodation before the state assessment. If the instructional accommodation is more permanent in nature and is not permitted on a state assessment, decision-makers should consider whether the accommodation alters what the test measures. If after considering these steps the appropriateness of using an accommodation is not clear, contact district or state personnel about its use.

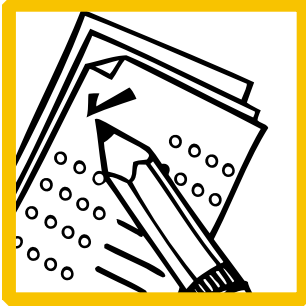
For English Language Learners with Disabilities

In addition to the previously mentioned factors to consider for assessment accommodations, teams making accommodations decisions with ELLs should also consider the following characteristics (same as for instruction accommodations):

- The student's current English language proficiency level
- Annual review of the student's progress toward attaining English language proficiency
- The student's experience and length of time in U.S. schools

- The primary language of instruction in the content area, and the length of time that the student has received instruction in that language

The IEP must include an individual familiar with the language learning needs of the ELL for whom the assessment accommodation decisions are being made.



Individual Test Characteristics: Questions to Guide Accommodation Selection

After considering student characteristics, it's important to look at the tasks students are being asked to do on the various state and district assessments. Below are more questions to ask, suggested tools, and new ways of using tools already introduced.

Questions to ask about individual test characteristics:	Tools to Use:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the characteristics of the test my student needs to take? Are the test tasks similar to classroom assessment tasks or does the student have the opportunity to practice similar tasks prior to testing? 2. Does the student use an accommodation for a classroom task that is allowed for similar tasks on the state or district tests? 3. Are there other barriers that could be removed by using an accommodation that is not already offered or used by the student? 	<p>Minnesota Test Characteristics (Tool 3.3)</p> <p>Refer to Tool 2.2</p> <p>Refer to Tool 3.2</p>



State Accommodations Policies: Maintaining Validity of Assessment

Maintaining Validity and Considering Consequences of Decisions

When selecting accommodations for a student, it is important to keep in mind both the accommodation policies set to maintain the validity of an assessment and to know the consequences of decisions. If the IEP team determines that a student should use a certain accommodation during an assessment but the student refuses to use the accommodation, the validity of the assessment is compromised.

Consideration for longer term consequences is important for IEP teams as well. For example, as students with disabilities begin to make post-secondary choices, these may factor into the nature of accommodation choices and availabilities open to them. The IEP team may want to discuss whether or how this affects decisions about accommodations for assessments.

If there is a need to ask about assistance regarding the use of a specific accommodation on a state assessment not addressed in the procedures manual, contact the Minnesota Department of Education at mde.testing@state.mn.us or by calling 651-582-8200.

Questions to ask about maintaining validity of assessment:	Tools to Use:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the state or district allow the identified accommodation for the test (or portion of the test noted as a barrier)? 2. If not, does the accommodation change what is measured on the assessment? 3. Are there additional principles to help guide decision making? 	<p>See Procedures Manual</p> <p>See test specification documents on state Web site and refer to Tool 3.3</p> <p>Do's and don'ts when selecting Accommodations (Tool 3.4)</p>

Step 4 addresses the administration of accommodations during instruction and assessment. This includes guidelines for specific Minnesota accommodations (e.g., scribes), general principles of responsible assessment practice, examples of ethical and unethical practices, and basic test security information.



Administer accommodations during instruction and assessment

Instruction Accommodations

The student must be provided the selected accommodations during instructional periods in which they are needed. The following chart provides examples of appropriate and inappropriate practices for accommodation use in instruction.

Table 1. Examples of appropriate and inappropriate accommodation practices in instruction

During instruction:	
Appropriate Practices	Inappropriate Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use accommodations that allow student to be included and to achieve in grade-level content. • Accommodation choices are made that will provide the most seamless experience between instruction and assessment (while maintaining validity of assessment). • Accommodations needed in assessment are available in instruction. • School personnel track students' ongoing accommodation use to ensure their needs for accommodations are met on assessment days.* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodations chosen in instruction are very different from what is allowed on assessments. • Allowable accommodations a student will need on the assessment are not available for instruction. • Use accommodations that compromise student's ability to learn grade-level content. • School level personnel are not aware of the accommodation needs of students in instruction.

*We note that IEP teams often meet in advance of assessment windows, perhaps up to a year before testing day, and that some changes may take place in a student's IEP that affect accommodation use in instruction and thus possibly also on an assessment.

See Tool 4.1 for a planning tool that IEP team members and school personnel can use to plan for the logistics of accommodations on test days.

Assessment Accommodations

This section presents some examples of professionally responsible and ethical practices in the administration of accommodations in Minnesota Assessments. For more comprehensive information on ethical practices, see the Minnesota Procedures Manual.

A primary goal of Minnesota’s assessment system is to be able to make valid inferences about student achievement. The principles discussed in this step are intended to provide guidance for determining whether a practice related to the administration or use of Minnesota Assessments supports this goal.

Note: Because of the complex nature of the standardized assessment process, any practice not specifically permitted should be presumed inappropriate until and unless specifically authorized by the Minnesota Department of Education. Districts should submit questions to mde.testing@state.mn.us.

Table 2. Examples of ethical and unethical accommodation practices in test preparation

In test preparation:	
Ethical Practices	Unethical Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop instructional objectives based on the academic standards. • Base assessment decisions on individual student needs. • Ensure that accommodations used in instruction that are needed and allowable for an assessment are available. • Use item samplers to familiarize teachers and students with item types and test content. (Item samplers are available on the MDE Web site) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare instructional objectives or study guides based on specific Minnesota test items and teach accordingly. • Encourage IEP teams to base assessment decisions on what is typically used for students with similar characteristics. • Restrict access to or deny allowable accommodations on the assessment that are normally used during instruction. • Look at test booklets for any reason other than to distribute and collect them and to respond to students’ procedural questions.

Table 3. Examples of ethical and unethical accommodation practices during the assessment

During the assessment:	
Ethical Practices	Unethical Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abide by rules for wall charts found in general testing practice guidelines. • Transcribe student oral responses exactly, including grammatical errors and incorrect responses, when a student uses the applicable scribe accommodation. • Follow state guidelines on appropriate accommodations that maintain test validity for specific tests. • Allow assistive technology where indicated as needed on assessments in a student’s IEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave wall charts up that contain multiplication tables, fraction equivalents, place values or other aids that could artificially inflate student scores. • Scribe the essence of a student’s response rather than the exact student response, including grammatical errors and incorrect responses, when scribing is the accommodation. • Allow the use of notes or other materials that give students an edge in answering questions. • Allow students to have cell phones or other electronic devices not otherwise necessary as accommodations in the testing area.

Test Security for Minnesota Assessment Materials

The following information only briefly addresses security issues related directly to the administration of testing accommodations. For complete information on all aspects of test administration see the Minnesota Procedures manual.

General Security Information

Minnesota Assessments require the highest level of test security and accountability. Security of the test books, answer books/documents and accommodated materials must be maintained before, during and after the test administration.

Non-Disclosure Agreement

Test Monitors, School Assessment Coordinators and translators are in a position to handle test materials and thus may see test items; They also may see items if asked by students whether an item is printed properly. All Test Monitors, school assessment coordinators, translators and anyone else who may see test items must sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement before testing.

Staff can sign the form at the beginning of the school year, and it will apply to all the statewide tests administered during this school year.

Other Notes on Test Security

Notifying MDE about security breaches (e.g., including misplacing materials) are the responsibility of the School Assessment Coordinator. The School Assessment Coordinator also is responsible for the reporting of misadministrations and special circumstances (e.g., student moving to next test segment before instructed to do so, use of calculator in non calculator segment, use of word processor or computer-assistive technology, etc.).



Evaluate and improve accommodations

Collecting and Analyzing Data

Collecting and analyzing data on the use and effectiveness of accommodations are necessary to ensure the meaningful participation of students with disabilities in state and district assessments. Data on the use and impact of accommodations during assessments may reveal questionable patterns of accommodations use, as well as support the continued use of some accommodations or the rethinking of others.

Examination of the data may also indicate areas in which the IEP team, 504 Plan committee, and test administrators need additional training and support. In addition to collecting information about the use of accommodations within the classroom, information also needs to be gathered on the implementation of accommodations during assessment. Observations conducted during test administration, interviews with test administrators, and talking with students after testing sessions will likely yield data that can be used to guide the evaluation process at the school or district level and at the student level. Information on the use of accommodations can be feasible to collect when it is coded on the test form with other student information. Accommodation information can be analyzed in different ways. Here are some questions to guide data analysis at the school and district level and the student level.

Guiding Evaluation of Accommodation Use at the School or District Level

1. Are there policies to ensure ethical testing practices, the standardized administration of assessments, and that test security practices are followed before, during, and after the day of the test?
2. Are there procedures in place to ensure test administration procedures are not compromised with the provision of accommodations?
3. Are students receiving accommodations as documented in their IEP and 504 Plans?

4. Are there procedures in place to ensure that test administrators adhere to directions for the implementation of accommodations?
5. How many students with IEPs or 504 Plans are receiving accommodations?
6. What types of accommodations are provided and are some used more than others?
7. How well do students who receive accommodations perform on state and local assessments? If students are not meeting the expected level of performance, could it be due to lack of necessary content instruction, not receiving an appropriate accommodation or receiving accommodations that were not effective?

These and other questions about accommodations in instruction and assessment may be addressed by using the information collected in specific tools provided in this manual or those your school or district may already be using at the local level.

Questions for Evaluating Accommodation Use:	Tools to Use In instruction	In assessment
What accommodation does the student use during instruction and assessment? What accommodation seems to be effective?	Refer to Tool 2.2	Refer to Tool 3.1 Analyze data at school or district levels.
What are the results when accommodations are used versus not used?	Refer to Tool 2.6	
How do teachers and others perceive the effectiveness of the accommodation?	Refer to Tools 2.2 and 2.4	
What is the student's perception of how the accommodation worked for him or her?	Refer to Tools 2.2, 2.3, and 2.6	Refer to Tool 3.1

School- and district-level questions can be addressed by a committee responsible for continuous improvement efforts, while the student-level questions (e.g., What accommodation does the student use during instruction and assessment and what is the student's perception of how well it worked) need to be considered by the IEP team. It is critical to stress that evaluation is not the responsibility of just one individual. The entire IEP team should contribute to the information gathering and decision-making processes.

Staff may want to investigate other resources on how to evaluate these and other accommodations related questions at the local level such as the following books.

Bernhardt, V. L. (1998). *Data analysis for comprehensive school wide improvement*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, Inc.

Elliott, J., & Thurlow, M. (2006). *Improving test performance of students with disabilities...On district and state assessments*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Holcomb, E. L. (1999). *Getting excited about data: How to combine people, passion, and proof*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc

Thurlow, M., Elliott, J., & Ysseldyke, J. (2003). *Testing students with disabilities: Practical strategies for complying with district and state requirements*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.



Appendix: Tools to Use

Accommodation Decision Tracking Sheet

Use this sheet to track and summarize positive or negative input on the use of specific accommodations recorded in the tools referred to in each column. You may use plus (+) or minus (-) notation or another system that suits you to characterize the input. Then use this information for making final decisions and recording them in the student's IEP or 504 Plan.

Student Characteristics and Accommodation Use Summary					Student and Assessment		Assessment Needs Summary	
Inclusion Needs (Tool 3.1)	Student Preference (Tools 3.2-3.7)	Teachers Input/ Classroom Use (Tool 3.2, 3.4)	Parent Input (Tool 3.8)	Previous Assessment Use (Tool 3.3)	Specific Test/ and Test Tasks Posing Barriers (Tool 3.9)	Policy info: See Procedures Manual		
Presentation								
Response								
Other								

Tool 2.1: Inclusion Needs That May Require Accommodations

Directions: Use these questions to identify students’ characteristics that may indicate a need for an accommodation. Mark Yes if the student has the characteristic. Then you may follow the next steps for more information about potential types of accommodations (e.g., presentation and response) that could be helpful in instruction and the Minnesota state tests.

Student _____

Date _____

Student Characteristics	YES	Next Step (refer to 2.1 Tables for accommodations)
1. Does the student have blindness, low or partial vision that requires an accommodation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	➡ Go to “A” Table
2. Does the student have a hearing impairment that requires an accommodation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	➡ Go to “B” Table
3. Does the student have some other physical disability that requires an accommodation? (e.g., uses a word processor, tape recorder, or scribe to complete assignments or tests?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	➡ Go to “C or H” Table
4. Does the student have a communication disorder?	<input type="checkbox"/>	➡ Go to “D” Table
5. Has the student been identified as having a reading disability, or difficulty with decoding?	<input type="checkbox"/>	➡ Go to “E” Table
6. Does the student have a writing disability or have difficulty with spelling?	<input type="checkbox"/>	➡ Go to “F” Table
7. Does the student have weak manual dexterity, a motor disability, or have trouble typing or using a pencil?	<input type="checkbox"/>	➡ Go to “C” H or F” Table
8. Does the student have a mathematics related disability?	<input type="checkbox"/>	➡ Go to “G” Table
9. Is the student easily distracted, or does the student have a short attention span or have difficulty tracking from one page to another and maintaining his or her place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	➡ Go to “I” Table
10. Does the student need directions repeated frequently?	<input type="checkbox"/>	➡ Go to “J” Table
Characteristics Affecting Setting Accommodations	YES	Next Steps for this section
11. Do others easily distract the student or does that student have difficulty remaining on task?	<input type="checkbox"/>	➡ Go to “K” Table
12. Does the student require any specialized equipment or other accommodations that may be distracting to others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
13. Does the student have visual or auditory impairments that require special lighting or acoustics?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14. Can the student focus on the student’s own work in a large group setting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
15. Does the student exhibit behaviors that may disrupt the attention of other students?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
16. Do any physical accommodations need to be made for the student in the classroom?	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Characteristics Affecting Timing and Scheduling	YES	Next Steps for this section
17. Can the student work continuously for the length of time allocated for standard test administration?	<input type="checkbox"/>	➡ Go to "L" Table
18. Does the student use other accommodations or adaptive equipment that require more time to complete test items (e.g., Braille, scribe, use of head pointer to type)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
19. Does the student tire easily due to health impairments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
20. Does the student have a visual impairment that causes eyestrain and requires frequent breaks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
21. Does the student have a learning disability that affects the rate at which the student processes written information?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
22. Does the student have a motor disability that affects the rate at which the student writes responses?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
23. Does the student take any type of medication to facilitate optimal performance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
24. Does the student's attention span or distractibility require shorter working periods and frequent breaks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Language Characteristics That May Not Be Related to a Disability (ELLs with Disabilities)	YES	Next Steps for this section
25. Does the student have trouble, unrelated to disability, with reading directions, prompts or classroom test items?	<input type="checkbox"/>	➡ Go to "M" Table
26. Does the student have trouble constructing responses in English because of limited language proficiency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
27. Does the student have trouble with English vocabulary?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
28. Does the student need help organizing responses in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
29. Does the student need more time to complete work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Tool 2.1 Tables: Accommodations for Instruction Based on Student Characteristics

Table A. Student Characteristic: Blind, Low Vision, Partial Sight

Accommodation Category	Consider the following accommodations for use in instruction* to help student reach grade-level content:	If the student is an ELL with this characteristic consider these accommodations for instruction* in addition to those listed at left:
Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large print • Magnification devices • Braille • Human reader • Audiotape or compact disk (CD) • Screen reader • Large print or Braille notes, outlines, and instructions • Talking materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large print in another language • Human bilingual reader • Other language, bilingual, or simplified English audiotape or compact disk (CD) • Screen reader in another language • Other language* Braille versions of notes, outlines, and instructions • Bilingual/other language talking materials
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express response to a scribe through speech • Type on or speak to word processor • Type on Braille • Speak into tape recorder • Use personal note taker • Use calculation devices (e.g., talking calculator with enlarged keys, abacus) for math 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express response to a scribe through another language • Type on or speak to word processor in other language • Type on other language Braille • Speak into tape recorder in other language • Use personal note taker in other language

*Note: Although it is beneficial to consider using identical accommodations in instruction and assessment, in some situations an accommodation used in instruction may not be allowed for assessment. For example Minnesota does not currently allow translated content for state tests.

Table B. Student Characteristic: Deaf; Hard of Hearing

Accommodation Category	Consider the following accommodations for use in instruction* to help student reach grade-level content:	If the student is an ELL with this characteristic consider these accommodations for instruction* in addition to those listed at left:
Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign language • Audio amplification devices • Screen reader • Visual cues • Written notes, outlines, and instructions • Videotape and descriptive video • Advanced organizers and outlines of lectures • Use gestures (e.g., point to materials) • Repeat questions and responses from classmates • Allow student to copy notes from classmate • Captioned versions of video/film with script • Give interpreter instructional materials in advance • Learn manual signs and teach them to hearing classmates • Telecommunication device 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign language or use of signs other than American sign language • Screen reader in other language • Written notes, outlines, and instructions in English, simplified English or other language • Videotape and descriptive video captions or narrative in English, simplified English or other language • Provide advanced organizers and outlines of lectures for student to follow in English, simplified English or other language • Allow student to copy notes from classmate in another language • Simplified English or bilingual captioning of versions of videos/films with script • Give language or sign interpreter instructional materials in advance
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express response to scribe or interpreter • Type on or speak to word processor • Use spelling and grammar assistive devices • Use visual organizers • Use graphic organizers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express response to bilingual scribe or interpreter • Type on or speak to word processor in other language • Use spelling and grammar assistive devices in English or bilingual

*Note: Although it is beneficial to consider using identical accommodations in instruction and assessment, in some situations an accommodation used in instruction may not be allowed for assessment. For example Minnesota does not currently allow translated content for state tests.

**Table C. Student Characteristic: Weak Manual Dexterity;
Difficulty with Pencil; Difficulty Typing on Standard Keyboard**

Accommodation Category	Consider the following accommodations for use in instruction* to help student reach grade-level content:	If the student is an ELL with this characteristic consider these accommodations for instruction* in addition to those listed at left:
Presentation		
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express response to a scribe through speech, pointing or by using an assistive communication device, voice-activated computers • Type on or speak to word processor • Speak into tape recorder • Use thick pencil or pencil grip • Use written notes, outlines, and instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express response to a English or bilingual scribe through speech, pointing or by using an assistive communication device • Voice activated computer • Type on or speak to English or bilingual word processor • Use written notes, outlines, and instructions in English, simplified English or in combination with other language

*Note: Although it is beneficial to consider using identical accommodations in instruction and assessment, in some situations an accommodation used in instruction may not be allowed for assessment. For example Minnesota does not currently allow translated content for state tests.

Table D. Student Characteristic: Communication Disorder

Accommodation Category	Consider the following accommodations for use in instruction* to help student reach grade-level content:	If the student is an ELL with this characteristic consider these accommodations for instruction* in addition to those listed at left:
Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen reader in another language
Response		

*Note: Although it is beneficial to consider using identical accommodations in instruction and assessment, in some situations an accommodation used in instruction may not be allowed for assessment. For example Minnesota does not currently allow translated content for state tests.

Table E. Student Characteristic: Reading Disability; Difficulty Decoding

Accommodation Category	Consider the following accommodations for use in instruction* to help student reach grade-level content:	If the student is an ELL with this characteristic consider these accommodations for instruction* in addition to those listed at left:
Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human reader • Audiotape or CD • Screen reader • Videotape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human bilingual reader • Simplified English or other language audiotape or CD • Screen reader in English or other language • Videotape with English, simplified English, other language or bilingual captioning
Response		

*Note: Although it is beneficial to consider using identical accommodations in instruction and assessment, in some situations an accommodation used in instruction may not be allowed for assessment. For example Minnesota does not currently allow translated content for state tests.

Table F. Student Characteristic: Writing Disability; Difficulty with Spelling

Accommodation Category	Consider the following accommodations for use in instruction* to help student reach grade-level content:	If the student is an ELL with this characteristic consider these accommodations for instruction* in addition to those listed at left:
Presentation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow spelling dictionary/reference lists
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express response to a scribe through speech • Type on or speak to word processor • Speak into tape recorder • Use spelling and grammar assistive devices (e.g., electronic spelling device, spell check on computer) • Use written notes, outlines, and instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express response to a bilingual scribe through speech in English or other language • Type on or speak to word processor in English or other language • Speak into tape recorder in English or other language • Use spelling and grammar assistive devices in English or in other languages • Use written notes, outlines, and instructions in simplified English or another language

*Note: Although it is beneficial to consider using identical accommodations in instruction and assessment, in some situations an accommodation used in instruction may not be allowed for assessment. For example Minnesota does not currently allow translated content for state tests.

Table G. Student Characteristic: Mathematics Disability

Accommodation Category	Consider the following accommodations for use in instruction* to help student reach grade-level content:	If the student is an ELL with this characteristic consider these accommodations for instruction* in addition to those listed at left:
Presentation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow simplified English or bilingual versions of math information • Allow computation steps to be presented in other culture’s way
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calculation devices • Visual organizers • Graphic organizers • Math tables and formula sheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow student to perform computations using their cultural way if different • Bilingual calculation devices • Simplified English or bilingual organizers, tables or formula sheets

*Note: Although it is beneficial to consider using identical accommodations in instruction and assessment, in some situations an accommodation used in instruction may not be allowed for assessment. For example Minnesota does not currently allow translated content for state tests.

Table H. Student Characteristic: Physical Disability

Accommodation Category	Consider the following accommodations for use in instruction* to help student reach grade-level content:	If the student is an ELL with this characteristic consider these accommodations for instruction* in addition to those listed at left:
Presentation		
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express response to a scribe through speech, pointing, or by using an assistive communication device • Type on or speak to word processor • Speak into tape recorder • Use augmentative devices for single or multiple messages (e.g., BIG Mack, Jelly Bean switch, or Dynovox) • Use written notes, outlines, and instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to scribe in other language • Type on or speak to word processor with other language capabilities (e.g., Naturally Speaking for other languages) • Use written notes, outlines, and instructions in English, simplified English, or other language

*Note: Although it is beneficial to consider using identical accommodations in instruction and assessment, in some situations an accommodation used in instruction may not be allowed for assessment. For example Minnesota does not currently allow translated content for state tests.

**Table I. Student Characteristic: Easily Distracted;
Short Attention Span**

Accommodation Category	Consider the following accommodations for use in instruction* to help student reach grade-level content:	If the student is an ELL with this characteristic consider these accommodations for instruction* in addition to those listed at left:
Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use books on tape or recorded books to help focus on text • Give short and simple directions with examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use books on tape or recorded books in simplified English or in bilingual versions
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write in test booklet instead of on answer sheet • Monitor placement of student responses on answer sheet • Use materials or devices used to solve or organize responses • Use visual organizers • Use graphic organizers • Highlight key words in directions • Have student repeat and explain directions to check for understanding • Use template • Use graph paper to keep numbers in proper columns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use visuals or graphics with English, simplified English or bilingual text • Allow student to repeat or explain directions in other language for understanding

*Note: Although it is beneficial to consider using identical accommodations in instruction and assessment, in some situations an accommodation used in instruction may not be allowed for assessment. For example Minnesota does not currently allow translated content for state tests.

Table J. Student Characteristic: Needs Repetition of Instructions/Directions

Accommodation Category	Consider the following accommodations for use in instruction* to help student reach grade-level content:	If the student is an ELL with this characteristic consider these accommodations for instruction* in addition to those listed at left:
Repeating Instructions/ Directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat directions or instructions • Write directions out • Model steps in directions/instructions • Student takes notes during directions • Student retells directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present directions in simplified English or other language • Depending on appropriateness, slower rate or more clearly spoken directions. Natural speech is important.

*Note: Although it is beneficial to consider using identical accommodations in instruction and assessment, in some situations an accommodation used in instruction may not be allowed for assessment. For example Minnesota does not currently allow translated content for state tests.

Table K. Student Characteristics Related to Setting Needs (for instruction)

Accommodation Category	Consider the following accommodations for use in instruction* to help student reach grade-level content:	If the student is an ELL with this characteristic consider these accommodations for instruction* in addition to those listed at left:
Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use headphones, sound buffers, or preferred acoustic seating for student • Study carrel, alternate seating within room or resource room • Special lighting • Checkpoints for work completion • Clearly defined limits • Frequent reminders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration for cross-cultural norms for personal space, individual/group behavior, schooling expectations, etc. • Acoustic considerations for linguistic needs (some sounds harder to perceive by other language backgrounds)- may influence communication style in classroom activities/setting

*Note: Although it is beneficial to consider using identical accommodations in instruction and assessment, in some situations an accommodation used in instruction may not be allowed for assessment. For example Minnesota does not currently allow translated content for state tests.

Table L. Student Characteristics Related to Timing and Scheduling (for instruction)

Accommodation Category	Consider the following accommodations for use in instruction* to help student reach grade-level content:	If the student is an ELL with this characteristic consider these accommodations for instruction* in addition to those listed at left:
Timing and Scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow more time on assignments and assessments • Allow more breaks • Study buddy to help student keep on track • Reduced assignments while keeping key concepts • Alternate assignments or class assessments • Chunk material with flexible timing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitivity to cultural timing needs (e.g., religious practices, special observances) • Bilingual or same language speaking study buddy to keep on track with class work

*Note: Although it is beneficial to consider using identical accommodations in instruction and assessment, in some situations an accommodation used in instruction may not be allowed for assessment. For example Minnesota does not currently allow translated content for state tests.

Table M. ELLs with Disabilities: Language Characteristics That May Not Be Related To Disability

Accommodation Category	Consider language proficiency level related to where student should be by grade for instruction* accommodations to help student reach grade-level content:	
Other Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify directions, prompts or how class test items are written or presented to student • Use familiar cultural contexts for content • If known, address differences in writing organization in first language and English – side by side or using outlines grids • Allow more time to complete work – language processing, or more “wait time” after questions for student to form response in English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use simpler sentence structures as a step towards more complex structures • Active voice • Picture or text glosses in English or other languages • Data displayed in alternate way than text or text only • Building solid base of high frequency vocabulary while adding more challenging vocabulary

*Note: Although it is beneficial to consider using identical accommodations in instruction and assessment, in some situations an accommodation used in instruction may not be allowed for assessment. For example Minnesota does not currently allow translated content for state tests.

Tool 2.2 Accommodations From the Student's Perspective

REMOVE THIS TEXT BEFORE USE

Use this questionnaire to collect information about needed accommodations from the student's perspective. The questions can be completed independently or as part of an interview process. Whatever method is used however, be certain that the student understands the concept of an "accommodation," providing examples as necessary.

Also, provide a list of possible accommodations to give the student a good understanding of the range of accommodations that may be available.

Student: _____ Date: _____

1. Think about all the classes you are taking now. Which is your best class?

2. Explain what you do well in this class.

The things you said you can do well above are your strengths. For example, you may have mentioned reading, writing, listening, working in groups, working alone, drawing, or doing your homework as some things you can do well. If you said you really like the subject, have a good memory, and work hard in class, these are also examples of your strengths.

3. What class is hardest?

4. What's the hardest part of this class for you?

The things you said were hardest are areas you need to work on during the school year. For example, you might have listed paying attention in class, reading the book, taking tests, listening, staying in the seat, remembering new information, doing homework, or doing work in groups.

These are all things in which an accommodation may be helpful for you. In the space that follows, record all of the classes you are taking now. Then look at a list of accommodations. Next to each class, record what accommodation(s) you think might be helpful for you.

Class List

Accommodations

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

5. There are many new tools available today that you may have heard about or seen other students use (e.g., reading pens). Are there any tools like this that you would like to try?

Tool 2.3 Accommodations Journal

One way to keep track of what accommodations work for a student is to support the student in keeping an “accommodations journal.” The journal lets the student be “in charge” and could be kept up to date through regular consultation with a special education teacher or other staff member. It will be helpful to the IEP team in deciding which accommodations to document on a student’s IEP if the student comes to the IEP meeting with a journal documenting all of the following:

- accommodations used by the student in the classroom and on tests
- test and assignment results when accommodations are used and not used
- student’s perception of how well an accommodation “works”
- effective combinations of accommodations
- difficulties of accommodations use and
- perceptions of teachers and others about how the accommodation appears to be working

In the spaces provided below, design and organize the use of an accommodations journal for one of your students. Answer these questions:

1. What would you include as headings for the journal?

2. When would the student make entries in the journal, and what types of support would the student need to make these entries?

3. With whom would the student share journal entries, and when would it be done?

4. How could the journal be used in the development of a student’s IEP?

Tool 2.4 Parent Input in Accommodations

Questions Parents Should Ask About Accommodations in Instruction and Assessments

About Instruction

- Is my child expected to reach regular or alternate achievement standards? Does this affect what types of accommodations are available to my child in instruction or on assessments?
- What accommodations does my child need to access and reach the academic standards?
- Are there accommodations that could be allowed in instruction that are not currently being provided?
- Are there accommodations being used at home that could be used in instruction to help students access and learn content, or help them in performing certain academic tasks?
- How can my child and I advocate to receive accommodations not yet provided in instruction?
- Are the accommodations my child is receiving in instruction meant to be a temporary support? If yes, what is the plan to help determine when to phase out or discontinue the use of a certain accommodation?
- How are the various staff members who work with my child providing accommodations? (across regular, special education, ESL/bilingual or other staff)

About Assessment

- What are the tests my child needs to take, what do they measure (e.g., regular or alternate academic standards), and for what purpose is each given?
- Are the accommodations allowed on state tests also provided for district tests?
- Can my child participate in part of an assessment with or without accommodations?
- If my child is not taking the general assessment, is it because the test is “too hard” or because the accommodation needed is not allowed on the assessment?
- If an accommodation is not allowed on a statewide assessment, refer to the Procedures Manual for a list of accommodations that the state has determined do not change what is being measured. Contact the Minnesota Department of Education if you have questions about whether specific accommodation not listed can be allowed.
- Are there consequences for allowing certain changes to how my child participates in a test? How will my child’s test scores count?
- Do consequences of accommodations vary by type of test? If my child is also an ELL, are the accommodations allowed on tests of English language proficiency the same as other tests?

Questions for Instruction and Assessment

Is the need for each accommodation documented in my child's IEP or 504 Plan?

Are there too many or too few accommodations being provided?

What are my child's preferences for specific accommodations?

If my child needs accommodations, how will they be provided?

If an accommodation used in instruction is not allowed on a test, Is there another option to support the student that is allowable?

If yes, has it been documented and tried in instruction first?

If no, how is my child being prepared to work without the accommodation before the test?

Other questions you may have

Questions are based in part on questions and content from: NCLD's Parent Advocacy Brief NCLB: Determining Appropriate Assessment Accommodations for Students with Disabilities, and Testing Students With Disabilities: Practical Strategies for Complying With District and State Requirements, 2nd ed. (2003) By Martha Thurlow, Judy Elliott, and James Ysseldyke.

Tool 2.5 Accommodation Use in the Classroom

Use this chart to track different aspects of how a student uses an accommodation in your classroom. This will help inform decision making on assessment accommodations.

Student _____ Date _____

What accommodation(s) does the student use in the classroom? List them under accommodation in the chart. Then follow the questions in the chart.

Accommodation	1. Is it noted in student's IEP?	2. For what task(s) is it used? (e.g. task type* or content/standard)	3. Does the student use it for that task every time? Note how often.	4. Is the need for it fixed or changing?	5. Does the student use it alone or with assistance? (e.g. Aide, peers?)	6. Notes: (e.g. does one accommodation seem more effective used with another on a task, etc.)

*How taking in or responding to information presented, solving or organizing information, specific content/standards being learned or assessed, etc.

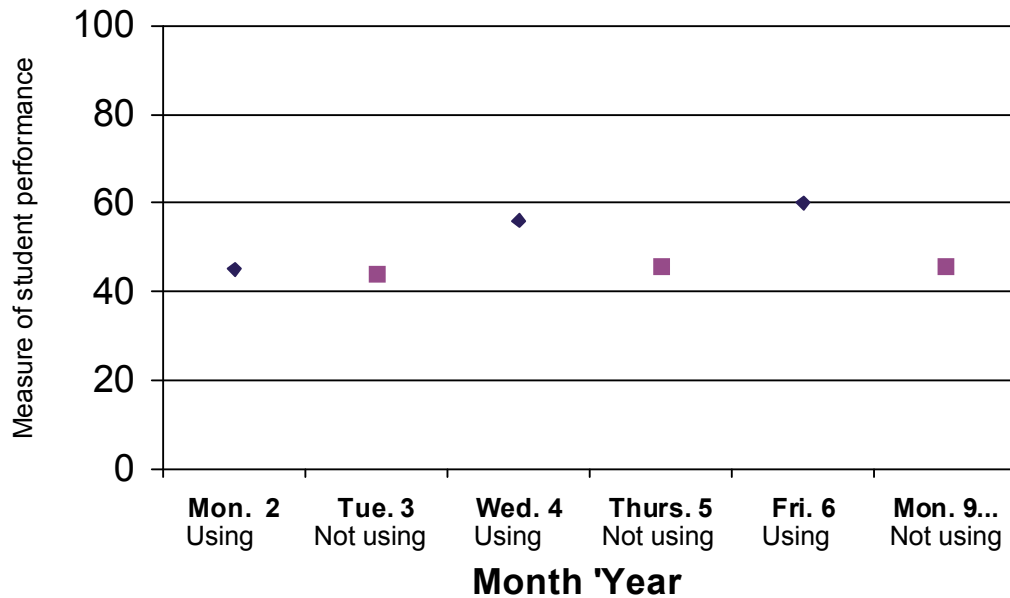
Tool 2.6 Evaluating Accommodation Use in the Classroom

Student _____ *Date* _____

Using the list of accommodations in the chart in Tool 2.5, consider the following questions for each:

1. Have you tracked or documented the student's performance on a specific task before and after using the accommodation (or accommodations that are routinely used together) in the classroom?
2. If yes, has the student appeared to benefit from using the accommodation(s)? How do you know, or how might you find out?
3. Figure 1 is an example of a chart you can use to track performance of a student on the same type of task across days. A larger example that can be adapted follows this tool. You may note or color code student performance with and without accommodation(s) across time to see whether there is a difference.

Figure 1. Example of accommodations tracking chart



The above example is based on a chart "Tracking the Effects of Accommodations" from page 61 in *Improving Test Performance of Students with Disabilities on District and State Assessments*, 2nd ed., by Judy Elliott and Martha Thurlow (2006).

4. A good idea is to combine student input on his or her own performance and facility in using the accommodation during the same time period that data are collected.

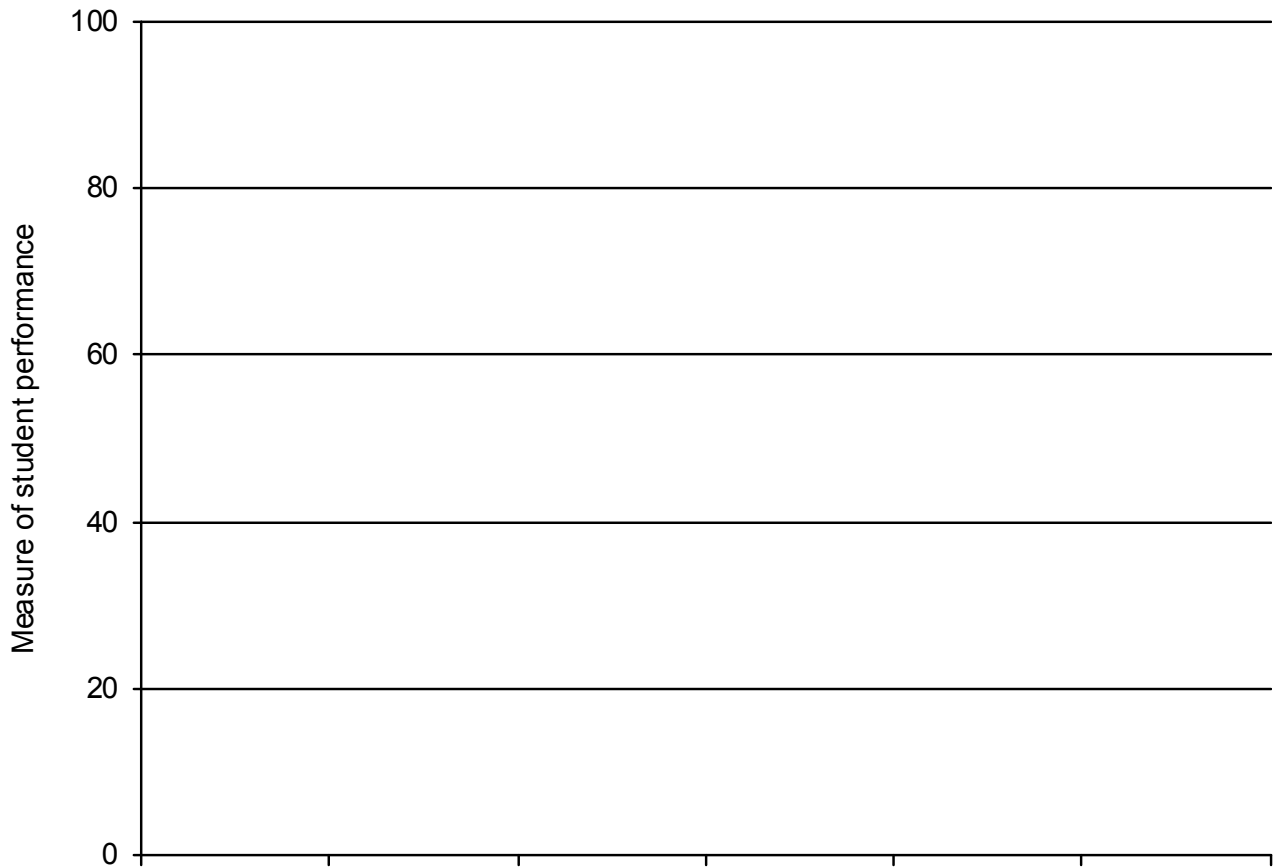
If the student has not seemed to benefit, why not? (e.g., implementation, student factors, teacher/aide factors, not enough time to feel comfortable using it, or it just not working)

Student Accommodation Use Tracking Sheet

Student _____

Notes:

Class/content _____



Tool 3.1 After-Test Accommodation Questions

Use this form after a test to interview a student about the accommodation(s) provided, used, whether it was useful and whether it should be used again. Also note any adjustments or difficulties experienced by the student in either how the accommodation was administered or in using the accommodation during the assessment.

Student _____ Date _____

Test Taken	Accommodation Provided	Was the accommodation used?	Was the accommodation useful?	Were there any difficulties with the accommodation? (are adjustments needed?)	Should the accommodation be used again?
1.		Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
2.		Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
3.		Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
4.		Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No

Student signature _____

Assistant signature (if applicable) _____

Tool 3.2

Assessment Accommodations Agreement

REMOVE THIS TEXT BEFORE USE

(Here is an example of a form a student could carry on test day. This type of format supports the student in building self-advocacy skills and sets the expectation that, with these accommodations, students can show what they know on the test. Some accommodations (e.g., special test editions) need to be arranged long before test day but should still be included on this list to make certain the student receives the correct test booklet. A similar form could be carried to class or emailed in an alternate format to remind teachers about daily accommodations. Different schools, teachers and students might format these statements differently. Note that the student is supposed to list the necessary accommodations and present this list to the test administrator or teacher. This experience is particularly important for students with disabilities who intend to pursue a post-secondary education.)

I, _____,
(Student's name)

need the following accommodations to take part in this assessment:

If I need more information about these accommodations, I can talk to:

(Name of special education teacher, parent, principal, and/or related service provider)

Thank you for helping me to do my best on this test!

(Student signature)

(Date)

Tool 3.3 Minnesota Test Characteristics

See Minnesota Procedures Manual (at http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Accountability_Programs/Assessment_and_Testing/DAC/Corner/Policies_Procedures_Guidelines/index.html) and test specification documents on the Minnesota Department of Education Web site for specific characteristics of state assessments by grade, including available font sizes, number and type of passages, test format (e.g., multiple choice or constructed response), and other information specific to administration of tests such as those delivered on computers (e.g., some may use static graphics, video, 2-D and 3-D animation, audio voice-over, or may require navigating points on a screen using drag and drop, etc).

You may use this space to take notes on the specific tests required and potential barriers to participation that may need to be addressed for a particular student. Consider the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments, GRAD, or for ELLs with disabilities, the ELL proficiency tests.

Specific Test(s)	Potential Barrier	Accommodation(s) Allowed to Address Barrier (not all instructional accommodations may be allowed)
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Tool 3.4 Do's and Don'ts When Selecting Accommodations

Do...make accommodation decisions based on individualized needs.

Don't...make accommodations decisions based on disability category or whatever is easiest to do (e.g., preferential seating).

Do...select accommodations that reduce the effect of the disability and increase access instruction and demonstrate learning.

Don't...select accommodations unrelated to documented student learning needs or are intended to give students an unfair advantage.

Do...be certain to document instructional and assessment accommodation(s) on the IEP or 504 Plans.

Don't...use an accommodation that has not been documented on the IEP or 504 Plan.

Do...be familiar with the types of accommodations that can be used as both instructional and assessment accommodations.

Don't...assume that all instructional accommodations are appropriate for use on assessments.

Do...be specific about the “Where, When, Who, and How” of providing accommodations.

Don't...simply indicate an accommodation will be provided “as appropriate” or “as necessary.”

Do...refer to state accommodations policies and understand implications of selections.

Don't...check every accommodation possible on a checklist simply to be “safe.”

Do...evaluate accommodations used by the student.

Don't...assume the same accommodations remain appropriate year after year.

Do...get input about accommodations from teachers, parents, and students, and use it to make decisions at IEP team or 504 planning committee meetings.

Don't...make decisions about instructional and assessment accommodations alone.

Do...provide accommodations as needed routinely for classroom instruction.

Don't...provide an accommodation for the first time on the day of a test.

Do...select accommodations based on specific individual needs in each content area.

Don't...assume certain accommodations, such as extra time, are appropriate for every student in every content area.

Do...consider the individual needs of ELLs with disabilities.

Don't...assume ELLs with similar disability characteristics to fluent English students will need the same accommodations.

Tool 4.1 Accommodations Logistics Plan for Assessment

Student Information

Name: _____

Date of Assessment: _____

Name of Assessment: _____

Case Information Special Education

Teacher: _____

School Year _____

Building/School: _____

General Education Teacher:

Assessment accommodations needed for this assessment and date arranged:

Accommodations	Date Arranged
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____

Comments: _____

Person Responsible for arranging accommodations:	Due Date
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____

Comments: _____

Room assignment for assessment: _____

Planners for this process (signatures): _____

