



The IEP Team's Guide to FCAT Accommodations

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Introduction

This document is written to assist school district personnel, parents, and others when making decisions about the use of accommodations in state and district testing programs by students with disabilities. The first section includes a description of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and participation of students with disabilities. The second section presents an explanation of allowable accommodations. The third section includes a step-by-step process and a quick reference guide for making decisions by the individual educational plan (IEP) team.

Accountability for Student Learning

Participation in the testing program is mandatory for all students attending public school...

The State Board of Education shall adopt rules, based upon recommendations of the commissioner, for the provision of test accommodations and modifications of procedures as necessary for students in exceptional education programs and for students who have limited English proficiency. Accommodations that negate the validity of a statewide assessment are not allowable.

**Section 1008.22(3)(c)6,
Florida Statutes**

Accountability for the learning of all students is the key element of Florida's system of school improvement. Student achievement data from the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) are used to document the achievement and annual learning gains of individual students on the Sunshine State Standards. The statewide accountability and achievement plan that mandates this assessment program is often called the A+ Plan.

The majority of students with disabilities take the FCAT. The Florida Alternate Assessment Report (FAAR) is used by teachers to report information about the progress of a small number of students with disabilities who are tested with alternate assessments. The results from the FCAT and FAAR are used to measure the adequate yearly progress of schools, districts, and the state of Florida toward the goal of all students reaching proficiency in reading, writing, mathematics, and science as required by the federal law, No Child Left Behind.

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test

The FCAT contains tests for measuring students' knowledge of selected benchmarks in reading, writing, mathematics, and science from the Sunshine State Standards (FCAT SSS). It also includes a second part, a norm-referenced test (FCAT NRT) that allows the performance of Florida students in reading and mathematics to be compared with the performance of students nationwide.

All public school students in grades 3 through 11 are required to take the FCAT. Students with disabilities who have an individual educational plan (IEP) or a 504 accommodation plan and students who are limited English proficient (LEP) are assessed on the FCAT often with accommodations. A small number of LEP students are exempt from taking the FCAT, but they must be assessed in other ways. The FCAT tests are administered in all public

schools in Florida, including charter schools. Students receiving an Opportunity Scholarship who attend a private school must also take the FCAT. Students with disabilities who have accepted a McKay Scholarship and attend a private school may take the FCAT if desired. Home education students are tested if their parents or guardians select this as an evaluation option.

Students in grades 3-10 take the FCAT reading and mathematics tests in March each year. Students in grades 4, 8, and 10 take the FCAT writing test in February. Students take the FCAT science test in grades 5, 8, and 11 in March. Students may retake the grade 10 FCAT reading and mathematics tests on multiple occasions to attempt to earn passing scores required for graduation with a standard diploma.

Characteristics of the FCAT

The FCAT measures knowledge and skills from the Sunshine State Standards, which is the general curriculum adopted by the State of Florida. The standards are broad statements of what students should know and be able to do. They are divided into smaller units called “benchmarks.” The FCAT measures certain benchmarks in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. Not all benchmarks can be measured because the FCAT is a single test administered in a short period of time. For example, while students are expected to know how to conduct library research and write a research paper, the FCAT does not assess this outcome.

Questions and Content

The FCAT includes 3 types of questions to assess student performance in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. A description of each type of question used on the FCAT follows this paragraph (taken from *Keys to FCAT 2004*, Florida Department of Education). The FCAT NRT includes only multiple-choice questions. The chart on page 6 lists the types of questions by grade level and subject area being assessed.

Multiple-choice questions require students to choose the best answer from 4 possible choices and to mark their answers by filling in the appropriate “bubble” in their test books or answer documents.

Gridded-response questions require students to solve mathematical problems and “bubble,” or mark,

their numerical answers on answer grids. Students must accurately fill in the corresponding circles below the numbers in their answers to receive credit for their answers.

Performance tasks require students to respond to test questions in their own words or to show their own solutions to mathematical problems. For FCAT reading, mathematics, and science, there are 2 types of performance tasks: short-response tasks and extended-response tasks. Performance tasks are scored using rubrics (criteria). The raw score for a short-response answer that is complete and correct is 2 points, and for a partially correct answer is 1 point. For an extended-response task, a complete and correct answer earns 4 points, and a partially correct answer earns 1, 2, or 3 points. For FCAT writing, students are asked to produce a draft response to an assigned topic and answer multiple-choice questions. The performance tasks for the FCAT reading, mathematics, science, and writing tests are described in the following paragraphs.

FCAT Reading “Read, Think, Explain”

performance tasks require students to read all parts of the question carefully, to plan how to answer the question, and to write the answer in their own words. The answer must be supported by information from the reading passages. A short-response task may ask a student to describe how a character in a story changes or shows growth. An extended-response task requires a longer, more detailed response, such as comparing traits or actions of 2 different characters. Students are provided with 8 lines for short-response tasks and 14 lines for extended-response tasks on which to write their answers.

FCAT Mathematics “Think, Solve, Explain”

performance tasks require students to read all parts of the question carefully, to think about and analyze the problem, to determine a way to solve the problem, and to write a method of solution or an answer to the problem in their own words. A short-response task may ask for an equation that represents a problem situation. An extended-response task requires a longer, more detailed response, such as constructing a graph. Performance task answer spaces include blank work space, charts or graphs, or lined answer space, based on what is required to complete the performance task.

FCAT Science “Read, Inquire, Explain”

performance tasks require students to read all parts of the question carefully, to plan how to answer the question, to explain the scientific process used to determine the answer, and to provide the answer to the question in their own words. A short-response task may ask the student to explain a scientific concept. An extended-response task requires a longer, more detailed response such as describing the steps to use in an experiment. Performance task answer spaces include blank work space, charts, drawings, or lined answer space, based on what is required to answer the performance task.

FCAT Writing + “Prompt” performance tasks require students to apply their writing skills. Each FCAT writing prompt has 2 parts: the writing situation and the directions for writing. The writing situation orients the students to the subject about which they are to write. The directions for writing guide the students to think about the topic before they begin to write.

Grade 4 students write an essay in response to a prompt that asks them to explain (expository writing) or to tell a story (narrative writing). Grade 8 and grade 10 students write an essay in response to a prompt that asks them to

FCAT Question Formats by Grade and Content						
Test		Question Format				
Content		Multiple Choice	Gridded Response	Short Response	Extended Response	Writing Prompt
Sunshine State Standards	Writing +	Grades 4, 8, 10				Grades 4, 8, 10
	Reading	Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10		Grades 4, 8, 10	Grades 4, 8, 10	
	Mathematics	Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	Grades 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	Grades 5, 8, 10	Grades 5, 8, 10	
	Science	Grades 5, 8, 11	Grades 8, 11	Grades 5, 8, 11	Grades 5, 8, 11	
Norm-Referenced Tests	Reading and Mathematics	Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10				

explain (expository writing) or to persuade (persuasive writing).

The scoring rubric establishes the criteria for each possible score from 1 to 6, with 6 being the highest score. The criteria are different for each grade level tested. Student essays may be unscorable and assigned a score of 0 for many reasons, such as refusal to write, illegibility, and writing that is off-topic or in a foreign language.

A new section in the FCAT writing (FCAT Writing+) test includes multiple-choice items and creates a more comprehensive assessment of writing. The items measure the Sunshine State Standards benchmarks that are not directly measured on the essay test. The first operational administration of this test is scheduled for 2006. This new section of the test allows writing performance to be used to meet the graduation requirement as stated in Florida statute.

FCAT Reading passages and questions in the test are drawn from topics in subject areas such as social studies, science, health and physical education, the arts, and the workplace, as well as from reading and mathematics. The tests contain literary passages, such as short stories and poems, and informational passages, such as magazine articles and selections from books. The test uses graphic displays and illustrations to make the test interesting as well as to help students understand information by giving visual clues. The FCAT questions and performance tasks incorporate thinking and problem-solving skills that match the complexity of the standards being assessed. The questions range in difficulty in order to measure the most capable students' proficiency.

Calculators and rulers are provided for students for some portions of the FCAT, depending on the grade level and type of test. Calculators are not allowed to be used on the test in grades 3-6.

Use of FCAT Results

For individual students, a total score for each subject for the FCAT is reported, as well as how the student performed on certain content strands. Scores are also reported in terms of achievement levels from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). "Proficiency" is a score of level 3 and "advanced" is levels 4 and 5. A passing score has been designated for the grade 10 FCAT in reading and mathematics, since students must pass these tests for graduation.

(a) The decision to exclude any student with a disability, as defined in Section 1003.57, (formerly Section 228.041(18)), Florida Statutes, from statewide or district assessment programs is made by the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) team and recorded on the IEP. Students may be excluded from statewide or district assessment programs if the following criteria are met:

1. The student's demonstrated cognitive ability prevents the student from completing required coursework and achieving the Sunshine State Standards as incorporated by reference in Rule 6A-1.09401, FAC, even with appropriate and allowable course modifications, and
2. The student requires extensive direct instruction to accomplish the application and transfer of skills and competencies needed for domestic, community living, leisure, and vocational activities.

Rule 6A-1.0943 (1), FAC

If a student does not participate in the statewide assessment, the district must notify the student's parent and must provide the parent with information regarding the implications of nonparticipation.

Section 1008.22(3)(c)6, Florida Statutes

The Department of Education is accountable for the achievement of all students and must accurately report the progress of all students to the parents, schools, districts, and federal government. The scores of students with disabilities on state assessments are included in statewide summary results. Scores of students with disabilities are disaggregated on assessment reports. For the purposes of determining schools' performance grades beginning in 2004-2005, the learning gains of students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency are included. The scores of students with disabilities on the FCAT and on alternate assessment are included for determining adequate yearly progress.

Participation of Students with Disabilities in Statewide Assessment

Students with disabilities are expected to participate in state and district assessments for accountability purposes. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 require that students with disabilities participate in the statewide testing program and be afforded appropriate accommodations in instruction and assessment. Further, IDEA requires that the accommodations be documented on the student's individual educational plan (IEP). Accommodations are described in detail in the next section of this document.

Students with disabilities who do not participate in the statewide testing program must be assessed with an alternate assessment. The decision to exclude a student with disabilities from state and district testing is made by the IEP team based on the guidelines in Rule 6A-1.0943, Florida Administrative Code (FAC). This decision should be guided by past performance of the student; demonstrated low cognitive ability; and the need for extensive direct instruction in the application of skills in domestic, community, and vocational activities. The IEP team also determines which alternate assessment will be used. Students with disabilities who take an alternate assessment rather than the FCAT will be working toward a special diploma.

Districts must make sure that parents are notified and that they understand the implications if their child does not participate in the FCAT and has an alternate assessment. This is especially important for elementary students.

Sometimes a student may be excluded from participation because the IEP team may not wish to put the child under the stress or pressure of such a test. They may feel that the results would not provide an accurate picture of the child's progress. However, excluding an elementary student from the FCAT may prevent the student from having sufficient opportunities to practice and use his or her skills in real testing situations. This could impact the student's performance on the FCAT in future grades.

Students Classified Disabled as Defined by Section 504

All qualified students with disabilities in Florida's public education system must be provided necessary related aids, services, or accommodations during the administration of the FCAT. Districts must ensure that students with handicaps defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are considered for, and provided the same test accommodations as students with disabilities who have an IEP.

Students with disabilities who are not classified as exceptional students with an IEP under IDEA may qualify as handicapped persons as defined in Rule 6A-19.001(6), FAC:

“Any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits 1 or more major life activities; has a record of such an impairment; or is regarded as having such an impairment.”

A 504 accommodation plan is developed for such students to determine what related aids, services, or accommodations are needed for instruction and assessment, including the FCAT.

Questions concerning these requirements should be directed to the student services office in the local school district or the K-20 Office of Equity and Access, 850-245-0511 (SunCom 278-0511).

Preparing for FCAT Administration

All stakeholders must be informed and make the necessary preparations to ensure that students with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in the statewide testing program.

Test coordinators in each school district are responsible to make sure that information about FCAT accommodations for students with disabilities is shared with all personnel administering the test.

School-level personnel should provide opportunities for persons administering the FCAT to become familiar with the allowable accommodations and to participate in planning the FCAT administration process for students with disabilities. School-level personnel will need to determine what staff will be needed and what facilities will be used. They will also need to prepare testing schedules that provide for the needed accommodations for students with disabilities. Planning ahead for the implementation of accommodations during the assessment is critical for successful test administration.

Parents should be informed about the use of allowable FCAT accommodations in general and about the particular accommodations their child may use during testing, if any. The decisions about FCAT participation and use of accommodations is made as part of the development of the student's IEP or 504 accommodation plan.

Students should receive instruction in testing procedures and have multiple opportunities to practice test-taking strategies. They should also be familiar with using the accommodations in instructional and classroom testing situations before taking the FCAT. Preparing students for the testing situation should be considered as important as selecting the accommodations. Test preparation will provide students with the necessary knowledge and tools to be able to approach the assessment situation with confidence. Before the testing situation, the teacher may need to assist students with relaxation and stress-reduction techniques and use any motivation practices (verbal encouragement, behavior contingencies) that will encourage students to do their best during the actual assessment. The teacher may also need to discuss with students how their assessment situation will be different from that of peers and why the accommodations are needed.

Waiver or Special Exemption from the FCAT Graduation Requirement

Students must earn a passing score on both parts of the grade 10 FCAT in order to graduate with a standard diploma. However, a waiver from the FCAT graduation requirement may be recommended for students with disabilities who have an IEP. The student must be a senior who has not yet passed the grade 10 FCAT after taking

General requirements for high school graduation. --

(11)(a) Each district school board must provide instruction to prepare students with disabilities to demonstrate proficiency in the skills and competencies necessary for successful grade-to-grade progression and high school graduation.

(b) A student with a disability, as defined in s. 1007 (2), for whom the individual educational plan (IEP) committee determines that the FCAT cannot accurately measure the student's abilities taking into consideration all allowable accommodations, shall have the FCAT requirement of paragraph (5)(a) waived for the purpose of receiving a standard high school diploma, if the student:

1. Completes the minimum number of credits and other requirements prescribed by subsections (1) and (4).
2. Does not meet the requirements of paragraph (5)(a) after one opportunity in 10th grade and one opportunity in 11th grade.

**Section 1003.43,
Florida Statutes**

Students with disabilities, as defined 228.041(18), Florida Statutes, are eligible for consideration of a special exemption from the graduation test requirement under extraordinary circumstances that create a situation where the results of administration of the graduation test would reflect a student's impaired sensory, manual or speaking skills rather than the student's achievement.

Rule 6A-1.09431, FAC

it at least twice with allowable accommodations. The requirements for a waiver include:

- The student must complete the required number of credits and earn the required 2.0 grade point average.
- Any senior who has not achieved a passing score on the FCAT must receive intensive remediation.
- To help evaluate the effectiveness of the remediation and ensure each student has had every opportunity to pass the FCAT, the student must participate in the March administration of the FCAT during his or her senior year.
- The IEP team must make a determination that the FCAT cannot accurately measure the student's abilities and that the student has mastered the Sunshine State Standards.

If all requirements are met, the student may be granted a waiver for the FCAT graduation requirement. Waivers are only available for students working on the traditional 24-credit, 4-year standard diploma program. Students working on the 18-credit, 3-year college preparatory or career preparatory programs are not eligible for an FCAT waiver. The FCAT waiver is authorized by section 1003.43(11) Florida Statutes.

Students with disabilities may also request a special exemption from the graduation test requirement for a standard diploma. The request may be approved if the student's FCAT scores would reflect the student's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills rather than the student's achievement. A request may be made for an exemption from any or all sections of the test required for graduation. The school district superintendent must make this request in writing to the Commissioner of Education at least 1 semester before the anticipated graduation date. The Commissioner will decide whether the exemption shall be granted based upon the documentation provided by the district school superintendent, showing that the student has mastered the Sunshine State Standards tested on the FCAT. The student must meet all other criteria for graduation with a standard diploma. The special exemption is authorized in Rule 6A-1.09431, FAC.

The primary difference between the exemption and waiver is that the exemption requires approval from the Commissioner of Education. The waiver is based on a determination made by the IEP team.

(1) All students classified as limited English proficient (LEP) must participate in the statewide assessment program, prescribed in Section 229.57, Florida Statutes. There is no categorical exemption from participation in the statewide assessment program for LEP students.

(2) An exemption from participation in any component of the statewide assessment program for an individual LEP student may only be made by specific action of a LEP committee as defined in Rule 6A-6.0901(5), FAC., and only for a student whose date of classification as LEP falls within one (1) year prior to the assessment date.

Rule 6A-1.09432, FAC

Students with disabilities with an IEP who are not granted a waiver and who have not passed the FCAT graduation test are still eligible for the provision of a free appropriate public education until the age of 22. These students may continue to attend school and work towards a standard diploma or in another program of study.

Students with disabilities who have a 504 accommodation plan are not eligible for a waiver or special exemption from the FCAT.

Additional Testing Options for Students Who Are Limited English Proficient

Students with disabilities who are also limited English proficient (LEP) are eligible for exemption and alternative assessments for the FCAT. LEP students are those students who have a home language other than English and are also below the average proficiency level of English speaking students in listening comprehension, speaking, reading, or writing in English. LEP students who have been in an English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) program for 1 year or less may be exempted from the FCAT. The district must provide alternative assessments for measurement of standards for these students. LEP students are also eligible for accommodations when they take the FCAT.

Testing Accommodations

(2) Each school board shall utilize appropriate accommodations to the statewide assessment instruments and procedures, within the limits prescribed herein. Accommodations are defined as adjustments to the presentation of the assessment questions, method of recording examinee responses to the questions, schedule for administration of the assessment, or use of assistive devices to facilitate administration of the assessment. Statewide assessment accommodations may be used only if they do not alter the underlying content that is being measured by the assessment or negatively affect the assessment's reliability or validity. Accommodations shall be identified for each eligible student and recorded on the student's IEP or plan developed under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Allowable accommodations are those that have been used by the student in classroom instruction as long as the accommodations are within the limits specified in this rule.

Rule 6A-1.0943, FAC

Testing accommodations are changes or adjustments to standard testing procedures or materials that enable a student with a disability to participate in state or district assessments. Students with disabilities are eligible for accommodations on the FCAT, if needed. The IEP team or the team that develops the 504 accommodation plan identifies the needed accommodations for the FCAT for students with disabilities.

Accommodations are described in 5 categories: presentation, response, setting, scheduling, and assistive technology. In this section, each category is defined in the context of the required format or procedures used in the FCAT and possible accommodations for students with disabilities. The test administration manual for the FCAT has an appendix that describes allowable accommodations for the test authorized by State Board of Education Rule 6A-1.0943, FAC, and other state publications.

The accommodations allowed on the FCAT are also allowed on the FCAT NRT and on the Stanford 10 (SAT 10) when given to third graders to determine promotion.

Other standardized tests used by districts and schools to measure student academic progress may or may not allow the same testing accommodations as the FCAT. The test administration manual or the test publisher should be consulted. A report of any testing situation using accommodations that are not allowed should be placed in the student's permanent record with a note of accommodations or changes made during testing with an explanation of their purpose. Such scores should not be aggregated.

Presentation

The presentation category of accommodations involves the way the test content and questions are formatted. The test content and questions of the FCAT are presented in a printed document. The readability level and complexity of print and graphic information aligns with the grade level of

the test. Students are expected to read the test passages and questions for the FCAT reading, mathematics, and science items independently and interpret illustrations and graphics. The prompt (topic) for the FCAT writing test is provided in writing. Passages and questions used in the FCAT reading tests must be read by the student through visual or tactile means and may not be signed, read aloud, or communicated through text-to-speech technology.

Directions for the FCAT are given orally using a script provided in the test administration manual. Students are expected to listen to the directions to learn how to respond to test items.

Students who need augmentation of the visual format of the tests may use
•enlargement of the regular print versions through mechanical or electronic means
•large print versions
•Braille versions for students who use Braille materials
•means to maintain or enhance visual attention to items, such as a pointer, template, blank card, or noncalibrated ruler, or a means to mask portions of the test to direct attention to uncovered item(s)
•positioning tools such as a reading stand
•colored transparencies or overlays
Unique accommodations (require prior approval by Commissioner of Education)
•papers secured to the work area
•increased spacing between test items
•fewer items placed on each page
Students who have difficulty hearing, understanding, or remembering verbal directions and information may have
•a printed copy of the directions read by the teacher from the FCAT administration script
•signed presentation of the directions
•the opportunity to paraphrase or repeat directions to show understanding
•directions repeated, summarized, or clarified
•use of a highlighter or highlighter tape to mark key words and phrases in directions, questions, and passages. If a highlighter is used at grade levels where the test questions and answers are in the same book, the answers must be transcribed into a separate book. If highlighting marks are found on an answer document, the student's answers must be transcribed.
•visual cues on the answer form that relate to test directions (arrows and stop signs)
•use of text-to-speech technology to communicate directions and test items other than reading passages and items
•extra examples for practice

Students who are unable to read the writing prompt or the mathematics and science test items independently may have

- signed or oral presentation of the topic (prompt) on the writing test and all mathematics and science items. Passages and items on the reading test must be read by the student through visual or tactile means.
- the test administrator read all mathematics and science questions. The test questions may not be reworded, summarized, or simplified.

Students who have difficulty maintaining attention and effort in written assessments may have

- white noise (sound machines) to reduce auditory distractions
- verbal encouragement (e.g., “keep working,” “make sure to answer every question”); may not be used to cue a student regarding correct/incorrect responses

Response

The response category of accommodations involves the method the student is expected to use for answering the test questions. The FCAT includes questions that require different types of responses. The configuration of the test documents changes by grade level and by type of test. For certain grade levels the test questions and answers are in the same book, while separate answer documents are provided for other grade levels. Check the test administration manual to identify the specific test configuration used each year. Students write answers to short-response and extended response tasks or the FCAT writing prompt on a separate document.

Multiple-Choice and Gridded-Response Test Items

Answers to multiple-choice items are recorded by filling in the appropriate “bubble” in the test booklets or on a separate answer document (depending on the test configuration for a particular grade level each year). Students must match the test item to the number on the answer sheet and fill in the circle with the letter of the selected response. Numerical answers to items on the mathematics and science tests are recorded by filling in the bubbles with the digits in the correct sequence on a grid.

Students who have difficulty recording answers to test questions on a separate answer document may
•enter answers directly in the test booklet
•be monitored periodically by the test proctor to ensure that the answers are marked in the proper space for the item
•dictate responses to the test proctor
•dictate responses into a tape recorder
•sign responses to an interpreter
•use a pointing device to indicate answers
•Braille responses on a separate answer form
•use speech-to-text technology to indicate answers
•use computer switch, computer, or alternative keyboard, or other communication device to indicate answers

Performance Tasks (Extended Response)

Students are expected to write answers to the performance tasks on the FCAT reading, mathematics, and science tests. Students must limit their response to the space provided. Graphic icons appear next to each performance task to remind students of what to do to respond to the task. Short-response and extended-response tasks allow partial credit for some answers, even if they are not completely correct. Answers are scored based on their completeness and correctness using rubrics developed for each grade level and type of test. Errors in handwriting, spelling, grammar, or mechanics are not penalized unless the content is not legible or cannot be understood.

Students are also expected to write an essay in response to the prompt provided in the FCAT writing test. Each essay is scored holistically by at least 2 trained readers.

If the student provides responses in any of the alternate ways, the responses must be transcribed into the student’s answer book either by the proctor or by the test contractor (for Braille or large print versions). A transcribed response must fit into the designated space provided in the regular print answer document and not continue to additional pages. The student must be told the amount of space in which the response must be transcribed. Responses must not be edited or changed in any way when transcribed; however, the student may tell the proctor how to edit the response. If the student provides oral or signed responses, the proctor will ask the student to indicate punctuation. Student responses may not be edited in any way.

Students who need assistance to use their own handwriting to write responses for performance tasks or the writing prompt may use
•special paper with raised, shaded, or color-coded lines
•a writing guide (grid) to produce legible answers
•math guides (gridded paper) to organize mathematical computation

Students who are unable to respond to the performance tasks or the writing prompt independently may
•dictate to a proctor or tape recorder
•sign responses to an interpreter
•Braille responses on separate paper
•use speech-to-text technology to indicate answers
•use alternative keyboards, pointing devices, and switches
•use communication devices

Use of Calculators and Rulers

FCAT mathematics has explicit requirements about the use of calculators. Calculators may not be used for the basic computation tested on FCAT mathematics or science in grades 3-6. Calculators are provided for all students on the FCAT mathematics tests in grades 7-10 and the FCAT science tests in grades 8 and 11. These requirements apply to students with disabilities, as well. Students with disabilities may have adapted calculators, if needed, in grades 7-11. Students with disabilities may not use any type of calculator in grades 3-6. For the FCAT NRT mathematics test, rulers are provided for all students in grades 3-6 and rulers and calculators are provided for all students in grades 7-11.

An exception for students with disabilities involves the use of an abacus. An abacus may be used as an accommodation in all grades if the student is visually impaired.

Students who must use assistive technology for calculations may use
•an adapted calculator for FCAT mathematics in grades 7-10 and FCAT science in grades 8 and 11
•an abacus if the student is visually impaired (all grades) as a substitute for paper and pencil computation

Scheduling

The third category of accommodations involves the schedule (date and time) when the test is given and the amount of time allowed for individual test sessions.

The FCAT must be given in Florida school districts on specified dates during February and March established by the State. The scheduling of the exact date is determined by the State and the specific time may be determined by school district. Students are expected to complete a session of the test within a certain period of time. The writing assessment should be completed within 1 school day.

Students who require adjustments to the FCAT time limits or schedule may
•take a specific session at a specific time of the day
•have extended time to take any session of the test
•take the test in several brief sessions, allowing frequent breaks during the session, within specifications of the test manual.

Decisions to extend time should be based on the student’s performance on similar tasks in the classroom. Test proctors should carefully monitor the use of time by students. Extended testing time may only prolong test anxiety for some students. Test proctors should be aware of the needs of each student using accommodations. Students who are testing with Braille or large print versions generally benefit from the use of extended time because of the reduced reading speed typically associated with the use of these formats. Test proctors may encourage students to answer 1 type of test question first and then others. For example, the student may be encouraged to answer multiple-choice questions first and then answer the short-response and extended-response questions. When using this accommodation in the FCAT reading test, it is important that the student answer the entire set of questions related to a given reading passage.

For students who need scheduling accommodations, the test proctor must carefully monitor student progress on completion of each test session. The student must not be allowed to go back to completed sections of the test to change answers.

In limited cases, students with disabilities may not complete a mathematics or reading session of the FCAT in 1 day. In these cases, the student may be tested over more

than 1 day in a session as long as the following conditions are maintained:

- The student may not be permitted to change his or her responses to items that were completed on a previous day.
- The test administrator must supervise the administration of the test to make sure that the student does not preview parts of the test to be answered on the following day.
- The test administrator must secure all test books without student answers at the end of each testing day to prevent the student from looking at any portion of the book completed on a previous day. The administrator must use a paper clip or binder clip to secure the answer books and prevent the student from reviewing his or her answers from the previous day. The clips must be removed after testing is complete. Staples and tape should not be used.

Setting

The fourth category of accommodations involves the setting or location where the student takes the test. The setting in which the FCAT is given is determined at the district or school level. Students may take the test in a large group situation in a separate area in the school or in their classrooms. Tests for accountability purposes are often given in large group settings to ensure that standardized testing procedures are followed.

Students who are unable to sustain attention and effort in large group settings may take the tests
•in an individual or small group setting
•in an environment with reduced stimuli (a study carrel, desk cleared of extraneous items)
•with increased or decreased opportunity for movement
•with white noise (sound machines) to reduce auditory distractions
•with verbal encouragement (“keep working,” “answer every question”)
•in a familiar place such as the home with a test proctor present and/or a familiar person for students who are hospital/homebound students
•other specialized settings may be approved as a unique accommodation.
Students who have special physical or sensory needs may take the test
•in a classroom designed to accommodate special lighting or acoustic needs and FM systems

Assistive Devices

The fifth category of accommodations involves the use of assistive technology. Assistive technology may be used to provide alternate presentation formats or alternate ways of responding. Students may use the same assistive devices when taking the FCAT that they typically use in classroom instruction and assessment activities.

Students who need assistive devices when taking the FCAT may use
•adapted calculators as authorized for grades 7-11
•visual magnification and auditory amplification devices
•technology such as word processing software, digital voice, tape recorder, or communication device for performance tasks or writing, without accessing spelling or grammar check
•use of an English/sign language dictionary for students who use sign language as their primary means of communication. The dictionary may not contain definitions of words, but may contain the sign picture, the word, synonyms, and an index.

When considering communication devices and the possibility of online FCAT, consider devices that provide good computer access, since these devices will be used as the students alternative keyboard as well as the communication device. Examples of devices that would serve that purpose include those from the Prentke Romich Company (Pathfinder, Vanguard, or Vantage) and DynaVox Systems (DV4 or MT4). These are all word-, phrase- and letter-based. In addition to providing computer access, they all can be used to spell out a word that might be required when responding to the FCAT. There are many other devices that could be used for multiple choice responses but not for extended responses or computer access.

This list of assistive technology is not exhaustive. Other assistive technology typically used by the student in classroom instruction may be used, provided the purpose of the testing is not violated. However, it must be ensured that test responses are the independent work of the student. Unusual circumstances requiring unique accommodations, including some assistive devices, must be approved by the Commissioner of Education as described in the following section.

Unique Accommodations

The last category is used for accommodations that are not already described in the first 5 categories. Some

students need unusual or unique accommodations. Unique accommodations typically involve alterations to the test materials or booklets. The unique accommodation must be one that is regularly used by the student for classroom instruction and may not alter the underlying content of the assessment. Unique accommodations require special approval from the Commissioner of Education.

Examples of unique accommodations that may be approved include
•increased space between test items
•fewer items on a page
•tabbed or modified pages for easy turning
•paper secured to the work area
•specialized setting

The district’s assessment coordinator makes the request for a unique accommodation to the Office of Assessment and School Performance at the Florida Department of Education no later than November 1 of each year. The request must include a written description of the student’s disabling condition and a specific description of the unique accommodation requested. A copy of the most recent IEP or 504 accommodation plan and a written description of accommodations or modifications provided in the student’s classroom instruction must accompany the request. The Commissioner of Education shall review the request and determine whether or not it is approved for use on the assessment.

(3) School districts shall offer test accommodations to LEP students who currently are receiving services in a program operated in accordance with an approved district LEP plan. ...

(5) Limited English proficient students who otherwise are classified as exceptional education or handicapped students shall be afforded the additional test accommodations specified in Rule 6A-1.0943, FAC.

6A-6.09091 (3) and (5), FAC

Accommodations for Students Who Are Limited English Proficient

Students with disabilities who are limited English proficient (LEP) may need special accommodations. Many of the allowable accommodations for LEP students are the same as those used by students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who are limited English proficient may be provided these accommodations. The following list describes the allowable accommodations.

•**flexible setting**—testing in a separate room with the English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) or heritage language teacher acting as test administrator.

•**flexible scheduling**—taking a part or session of the test during several brief periods within 1 school day. However, a session must be completed within 1 school day.

•**flexible timing**—additional time to complete each test section. A session of the test must be completed within 1 school day.

•**assistance in the heritage language**—access to an English-to-heritage language/heritage language-to-English dictionary such as those typically used in instructional settings. A dictionary with definitions written exclusively in the heritage language or English shall not be allowed. Electronic dictionaries are strictly prohibited and may be cause for invalidation.

Limited assistance may be provided from the ESOL or heritage language teacher, including answering student questions about the general test directions in the heritage language, specific inquiries concerning a word or phrase, and questions for clarification.

For mathematics and science tests, limited assistance may be provided using the student’s heritage language to answer specific questions about a word or phrase. The teacher may not give assistance that would help the student solve mathematics and science test questions.

For the reading test, the ESOL or heritage language teacher may answer student questions about the general test directions in the student’s heritage language. The teacher may not read words to the student from the passages, test items, and performance tasks, and may not answer student questions about the reading passages, test items, or performance tasks.

For the writing test, the ESOL or heritage language teacher may answer student questions about general test directions in the student’s heritage language. The teacher may answer questions about a word or phrase in the writing prompt. The teacher may not read the prompt to the student or give assistance to the student in responding to the writing prompt.

... If modifications are made in the student's instruction to provide accommodations that would not be permitted on the statewide assessment tests, the district must notify the student's parent of the implications of such instructional modifications. A parent must provide signed consent for a student to receive instructional modifications that would not be permitted on the statewide assessments and must acknowledge in writing that he or she understands the implications of such accommodations. ...Accommodations that negate the validity of a statewide assessment are not allowable.

**Section 1008.22 (3)(c)6,
Florida Statutes**

Non-Allowed Accommodations

Some accommodations that students commonly use in the classroom are not allowed on the FCAT. Examples of accommodations that are not permitted on the FCAT include

- reduced number of test questions
- use of spelling or grammar check in a word processor on extended responses and essays
- graphic organizer software to assist in preparing responses
- text-to-speech software for passages and items testing reading skills
- having someone read aloud passages and items that test reading skills
- use of a calculator for basic math computation.

These accommodations are not allowed on the FCAT because they negatively affect the test's validity and reliability. If accommodations are recommended for a student for classroom instruction or testing that are not permitted on the FCAT, the parent must be notified. The parent must give his or her signed consent for the use of those accommodations in the classroom and must acknowledge in writing that he or she understands the possible future consequences of using accommodations in the classroom that are not permitted on the FCAT.

Technical Assistance

If there is uncertainty about the use of a test accommodation, contact the test coordinator or exceptional student education (ESE) director in your local school district. Questions may then be referred to the Office of Assessment and School Performance, 850-245-0513 or SunCom 205-0513 or to the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, 850-245-0478 or SunCom 205-0478.

Making Decisions about Accommodations

Making decisions about accommodations begins with the basic principle that each student with a disability is an individual. Decisions about accommodations that may be needed by an individual student are made by evaluating the impact of the student's disability on his or her ability to take the FCAT. The selection of accommodations must be based on the needs of the individual student, not solely on exceptionality, educational placement, or grade level. Students may need certain accommodations on some subtests, but not on others. For example, a student may need extra time and testing in a small group situation to complete extended response questions, but can take a test with multiple-choice questions without accommodations. The IEP or 504 team should follow the guidelines listed below.

GUIDELINES

- 1. Accommodations should facilitate an accurate demonstration of what the student knows or can do.**
- 2. Accommodations should not provide the student with an unfair advantage or interfere with the validity of the test. They must not change the underlying skills that are being measured by the test.**
- 3. Accommodations for the FCAT must be the same or nearly the same as those used by the student in classroom instruction and assessment activities. The student should be familiar with the accommodations. The testing situation should not be the first time the student uses the accommodations.**
- 4. Accommodations must be necessary for enabling the student to demonstrate knowledge, ability, skill, or mastery.**

A Process for Decision Making

Decisions about accommodations that an individual student will use on the FCAT should be made with careful consideration of 3 questions:

1) What does the student need to know and be able to do to take the test?

To answer this question, the IEP team needs to identify what knowledge and skills are being tested. A quick review of the Sunshine State Standards will guide this inquiry. For more detailed information, including the test item specifications for the FCAT, visit the Department of Education website (<http://www.fldoe.org>).

In addition to the content being tested, the IEP team needs to know the kinds of questions and format that are used on the FCAT, the types of responses that are expected, and the policies affecting the setting and scheduling of the test. Information about the format and questions is included in this document. Information about setting and scheduling policies should be obtained from the assessment coordinator in the local school district.

2) How does the student’s disability impact his or her ability to perform on the test?

To answer the second question, the IEP team must consider the way the student typically performs tasks like those on the FCAT. The team will want to consider how the student obtains information from textbooks and printed material and how the student responds to assignments and assessments that require writing or “bubbling” in answer circles. Factors related to the setting and schedule for the test should also be addressed.

3) How effective have accommodations been in previous instruction and testing situations?

An effective accommodation is one that reduces the impact of the student’s disability so that he or she fully participates in the test. The first thing the team has to consider is whether or not the student actually used the accommodation. For example, a student may be given extended time as an accommodation, yet still finish the test before the normal time limits. The second thing to consider is whether or not the student achieved the intended learning objectives when using the accommodation. For example, a student may have used an audio version of a science book to compensate for low reading ability and still not achieved the science objectives.

FCAT Accommodations Quick Reference Guide

To assist IEP teams in making decisions about FCAT accommodations for an individual student, this guide includes brief descriptions of

- the content assessed on the FCAT
- allowable accommodations grouped by category.

FCAT Content

The content assessed on the FCAT has been selected to measure student progress on the knowledge and skills of the Sunshine State Standards. This table shows the broad categories of content assessed at each grade level. For more specific information, consult FCAT test materials such as *Understanding FCAT Reports 2004* and FCAT test items and performance specifications available on the Department of Education web site.

Grade Levels

	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Reading —words and phrases in context; main idea, plot, and purpose; comparisons and cause/effect; reference and research	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Mathematics —number sense, concepts, and operations; measurement; geometry and spatial sense; algebraic thinking; data analysis and probability	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Writing —writing on an assigned topic (prompt); emphasis on focus, organization, support, and conventions Grade 4 using an expository (explain) or narrative (tell a story) structure Grades 8 and 10 using an expository (explain) or persuasive (persuade) structure		X				X		X	
Science —physical and chemical sciences, earth and space sciences, life and environmental sciences, and scientific thinking			X			X			X

Does the student need a different type of presentation?

FCAT tests are presented in printed test books with written questions and passages, graphs, diagrams, and illustrations, and information relevant to the test procedures or content. Alternate versions of the test in large print and Braille materials are available from the Department of Education, generally for students with visual impairments. Test reference sheets are available in large print and Braille; Braille rulers and a talking calculator are also available.

<p>The student uses large print or Braille in the classroom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓large print version of test books, answer documents, and mathematics and science reference sheets; gridded response instructions sheets ✓Braille versions of test books and mathematics and science reference sheets, Braille FCAT NRT ruler, and FCAT Talking Calculator
<p>The student uses special tools to help focus attention on print materials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓magnification equipment ✓pointer ✓blank card, noncalibrated ruler, positioning tools ✓colored transparencies or overlays
<p>The student needs assistance maintaining attention and effort in written assignments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓white noise (sound machines) to reduce auditory distractions ✓verbal encouragement (“keep working,” “make sure to answer every question”); may not be used to cue a student regarding correct or incorrect responses
<p>The student needs assistance to be able to understand and follow oral directions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓repeat, summarize, or clarify directions ✓ask the student to paraphrase or repeat the directions after hearing them ✓give the student a copy of directions from the FCAT test administration script ✓sign language interpreter for directions ✓text-to-speech technology for writing prompt ✓visual cues on the answer form that relate to test directions (arrow keys, stop signs)
<p>The student has written instructional materials read aloud, or presented by sign language, or uses text-to-speech technology.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓read aloud mathematics and science test items other than passages or questions that test reading ✓sign language interpreter to sign mathematics and science test items or the writing prompt ✓text-to-speech technology for mathematics, science, and writing prompt only
<p>The student needs unique accommodations that require prior approval from the Commissioner of Education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓papers secured to the work area ✓increased spacing between test items ✓fewer test items placed on each paper

Does the student need a different way to respond?

Depending on the grade level and test configuration for any given year, the student may need an accommodation in order to be able to respond. The student responds to short-response and extended-response questions on FCAT reading, mathematics, and science tests by writing the answers on a test form in print or cursive handwriting. The student responds to the FCAT writing prompt by writing in the Writing Folder.

<p>The student cannot record answers to test questions on a separate answer document.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓tell answers to a proctor or dictate to a tape recorder ✓mark answers in test book and proctor transcribes to FCAT test answer document ✓monitor the student's test book or answer form to make sure he or she is marking the correct spaces ✓use a pointing device to indicate answer ✓use a computer switch, alternative keyboard, or communication device to indicate answer
<p>The student dictates or uses signed responses for written assignments and assessments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓dictate or sign responses to extended response questions and essays <p><i>Dictated and signed responses may be transcribed for the student. For FCAT writing + (essay), punctuation must be indicated and unfamiliar words must be spelled by the student.</i></p>
<p>The student uses speech-to-text technology for written assignments and assessments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓speech-to-text technology for short- and extended-response questions and FCAT writing <p><i>The spell check and grammar check must be inactive.</i></p>
<p>The student uses a computer, word processor, or braillewriter for written assignments and assessments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓word processor <p><i>The spell check and grammar check must be inactive.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓braillewriter ✓use a computer switch, alternative keyboard, or communication device to indicate answer
<p>The student uses special paper for written work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓paper with wide lines ✓paper with raised or colored lines ✓paper with math guides (grids) for computation <p><i>Responses on special paper must be transcribed to the answer document for the student.</i></p>
<p>The student uses assistive technology for calculations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓an adapted calculator for FCAT mathematics or science in grades 7-11 only ✓an abacus if student is visually impaired (all grades), as a substitute for paper and pencil computation.

Does the student need a different schedule?

Both FCAT SSS and FCAT NRT tests are given in March. FCAT Writing + is given in February. The total testing time may be broken into segments.

The student can only work for short periods of time when completing assignments and assessments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓break the test time into short sessions <i>The sessions can be spread across more than 1 day if the test documents are secured and the student is prohibited from going back over completed test questions or previewing test questions before they are answered.</i>
The student tires easily when completing assignments and assessments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓frequent breaks ✓close monitoring
The student needs extra time to complete classroom assignments and assessments, even when working continuously.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓extended time to complete the tests
The student's performance predictably deteriorates at certain times.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓let the student take the test at a preferred time of day

Does the student need a special setting?

The school district determines the locations where the tests are given. Contact the assessment coordinator at the school or district for information. If a separate setting is required for a student, make arrangements for this in advance of the test administration to assure the availability of location and proper staff.

The student requires a small group setting or one-to-one instruction when completing assignments and assessments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓individual or small group setting
The student needs a distraction-free environment or requires close monitoring when completing assignments and assessments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓individual or small group setting ✓study carrel or partitioned area ✓close monitoring ✓white noise (sound machine) to reduce auditory distractions ✓reduced stimuli (limit items on the desk, study carrel)
The student has special sensory or physical needs that require special equipment or environmental adaptations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓environment with special lighting ✓acoustical treatment ✓adaptive or special furniture ✓special acoustics such as FM systems or special rooms to decrease auditory distractions
The student needs to take the test in a familiar environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓administer the test in a familiar place such as the home with a test proctor present and/or a familiar person for students who are hospital/homebound students <i>Other specialized settings require approval as a unique accommodation.</i>

Does the student need assistive technology?

Assistive technology typically used by the student in classroom instruction may be used, provided the purpose of the testing is not violated. It must be ensured that test responses are the independent work of the student.

The student uses an adapted calculator for computation	✓adapted calculator for computation in mathematics for grades 7, 8, 9, and 10 and in science for grades 8 and 11
The student with visual impairments uses an abacus for computation.	✓abacus for all grade levels ✓talking calculator
The student uses assistive technology for communicating or writing.	✓assistive technology for communicating or writing responses to the FCAT
The student uses assistive technology for reading.	✓assistive technology for reading test questions other than reading passages and items

Does the student need a unique accommodation?

A unique accommodation is an accommodation that requires changes or alterations to the test materials. The unique accommodation must be regularly used by the student for classroom instruction and must not alter the underlying content of the assessment. The accommodation must not impact the reliability or validity of the test.

The district’s assessment coordinator may request a unique accommodation by submitting a written request to the Office of Assessment and School Performance, Florida Department of Education. The request must include a written description of the student’s disabling condition and a specific description of the unique accommodation requested. A copy of the student’s most recent IEP/504 plan and a written description of the accommodations or modifications provided in the classroom must accompany the request.

Upon receipt of the written request, the evidence will be reviewed and a recommendation will be made to the Commissioner of Education. The use of unique accommodations must be approved by the Commissioner of Education.

References

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