

ACTION REQUIRED

October 27, 2006

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Dyslexia Accommodations for TAKS Reading

This letter provides an important update regarding the accommodations districts may use to administer the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) reading tests at grades 3 through 8 in spring 2007.

As you know, a series of studies were conducted in 2004 and 2006 to evaluate the effects of three accommodations on the performance of students with dyslexia on the TAKS reading tests. Both students with dyslexia and special education students who have a severe reading disability that causes them to have difficulty reading words in isolation were eligible to participate in these studies.

The three accommodations studied included

- orally reading all proper nouns associated with each selection before students began individual reading of that selection,
- orally reading all questions and answer choices to students, and
- extending the testing time over a two-day period.

These three accommodations were “bundled”; that is, the purpose of the studies was not to determine which accommodation was most effective but whether these accommodations as a group provided appropriate support for this population of students without creating an unfair advantage or invalidating their reading performance on the test.

In spring 2006, districts were permitted to use the bundled accommodations to administer TAKS reading tests to eligible students in grades 3 through 5. This year the use of bundled accommodations will be expanded to middle school. Beginning in spring 2007, districts may use these accommodations to administer TAKS reading tests both in English and in Spanish at grades 3 through 6 and TAKS reading tests in English at grades 7 and 8. To receive the accommodations, students in both elementary and middle school must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Students not receiving special education services must be identified with dyslexia.
- Students receiving special education services must either be identified with dyslexia or have a severe reading disability that exhibits the characteristics of dyslexia, causing them to lack word-identification skills and to have difficulty reading words in isolation.

- Students must routinely receive accommodations in classroom instruction and testing that address the difficulties they have reading words in isolation.

Districts must use these accommodations as a “bundled” package; that is, the test administrator must administer the reading test using all three of the accommodations. Students may test individually or in small groups.

The 2007 TAKS reading dyslexia schedule for grades 5 and 8 will vary slightly from the published TAKS testing schedule. Please note the changes listed below:

- Fifth grade students taking the TAKS reading April retest with dyslexia accommodations will take the first day of reading one day earlier than noted on the calendar to allow this test to be administered over two days. These students will retest on April 17th and 18th so that they may take the science test on April 19th, the day all grade 5 students are scheduled to take TAKS science.
- Eighth grade students taking the TAKS reading test with dyslexia accommodations will take their TAKS mathematics test one day earlier than noted on the calendar. These students will take TAKS mathematics on Monday, April 16th so that their TAKS reading test can be administered over two days: April 17th and April 18th.

These changes in schedule will require special attention to administration logistics at the campus and district level. However, because these accommodations have the potential to allow students with dyslexia to show their best reading performance, these accommodations are being implemented beginning this school year. More information about the bundled accommodations will be disseminated in the coming months. However, districts are encouraged to begin logistical planning for the expanded use of these accommodations in spring 2007.

If you need additional information or require further information, please contact the Student Assessment Division at (512) 463-9536.

Sincerely,

Lisa Chandler
Director, Student Assessment

cc: District Test Coordinator; ESC Executive Director and Test Coordinator