

Issue Date: August 28, 2025

Assessment Accommodations by Student Needs

This document should serve as a resource for identifying what accommodations are needed for students with active Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 plans to successfully and equitably complete an assessment. This document should also serve as a tool to help inform IEP teams, families, and students what accommodations are available on the general assessment ([VTCAP](#)) (and, potentially, the alternate assessment ([MSAA](#)) or English Language Proficiency assessment ([ACCESS](#))). A table overviewing what accommodations are available for students with specific barriers is included at the end for quick reference.

When to Use This Document

This document can be used when schools, IEP teams, parents/caregivers, and students want to identify what accommodations are available to students with specific needs when taking statewide assessments. The Agency of Education (AOE) does not determine which assessment is correct for a student, but this document should be a useful resource when determining what accommodations would be appropriate for a student taking the VTCAP or ACCESS. If the IEP team is considering the MSAA, reviewing the [Vermont Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool](#) is recommended; likewise, if the IEP team is considering the Alternate Access, reviewing the [WIDA Alternate ACCESS Participation Decision Tree](#) is recommended.

Why All Students are Expected to Participate

Statewide assessments are carefully designed to be valid, reliable, and accessible to all students, including those with disabilities and English learners. While state assessments are not designed to improve instruction in real time – that’s best handled by classroom formative assessments – they are essential in helping families, educators, administrators, and policymakers understand which programs and policies are working well for Vermont students and which are not. These assessments are used to:

- Monitor statewide educational progress
- Identify strengths and areas for growth at the school, district, and state levels
- Ensure equity and access for all learners
- Meet federal accountability requirements

Having all students participate in state assessments allows educators to monitor growth and achievement, evaluate programs, report accurate statewide data, and understand what skills and knowledge students have and need to learn. Including students with IEPs is essential for fairness, access, and their right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). These assessments hold all students to high expectations, track progress alongside peers, and ensure access to



grade-level content with appropriate supports. Under the federal legislation IDEA and ESSA, students with disabilities must be included—whether with accommodations or alternate assessments—so schools remain accountable, and achievement gaps are visible. Excluding a student may mean they are missing access to the full benefits of FAPE.

Important Reminders

A few considerations to keep in mind:

- IEP teams should identify what barriers to assessment the student has related to their disability and how those barriers can be accommodated – NOT what may benefit the student based on their disability category.
- Any student using an accommodation on the assessment should also be using that accommodation during instruction or, at the very least, during a practice test. In other words, assessment conditions should reflect an environment similar to the student's typical education setting.
 - For example, if a student has not utilized a scribe on a grade level assessment, it may not be appropriate to introduce a scribe for the VTCAP.
- Accommodations should be documented in the student's IEP prior to test administration and based on the student's need, not on the category of the student's disability.
- Disability category is not necessarily a useful way to identify which accommodations a student should use. Teams should consider what barriers may prevent a student from accessing an assessment and then identify which accommodations to utilize.
- Selection of some accommodations can alter what is being assessed in the student; for example, an accommodation of Text-to-Speech and Human Reader on the reading comprehension portion of the ELA test does not evaluate a student's reading comprehension. Those accommodations remove reading comprehension from a student's results and instead contribute to the student's listening comprehension results.
- Students who experience a medical emergency are able to use temporary accommodations without needing an IEP or 504 plan to provide them access to the assessment:
 - For example, if a student breaks a bone and cannot use their dominant hand or either hand, they can get a temporary accommodation for a scribe.
 - Another example would be if a student is cleared to return to instruction after a concussion, they can use temporary accommodations of a paper test, frequent breaks, test over multiple days, scribe, or even human reader.

Barriers and Accommodations Table

Example Barrier	Example Accommodation
Reading printed text Color blind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large-print materials • Braille materials • Color Contrast
Decoding text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text-to-speech • Test over multiple days
Writing out responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permit oral response (Scribe) • Speech-to-text software
Distress due to change in routine (e.g. taking a test)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take frequent breaks • Test over multiple days • Alternate response options
Low frustration threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test over multiple days • Limit testing time in one day • Hybrid testing (paper & computer)
Unable to hear audio and videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed captioning • American Sign Language
Difficulties in short-term memory or decoding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplified test directions
Remaining focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow frequent breaks • Paper version
Listening comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplified test directions • Screen reader • Human reader
Use of adaptive keyboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternate response options