

Information for Parents
and Teachers

Planning FCAT and FCAT 2.0
Accommodations
for Students with Disabilities

Revised 2010

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Introduction

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) require that students with disabilities be provided with needed accommodations on state and district assessments. Each student's individual educational plan (IEP) must include a statement of any classroom and testing accommodations the student needs. Students who qualify as students with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act are also eligible for classroom and test accommodations.

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), is administered to students in grades 3 through 11. Beginning in 2010–2011, the statewide assessment program will transition to assessing the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards using new tests called FCAT 2.0. Most students with disabilities work toward a standard diploma by learning the content knowledge and skills in the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards and taking the FCAT and FCAT 2.0.

Many students with disabilities take the FCAT and FCAT 2.0 in the same way that nondisabled students do. However, students with disabilities are eligible to have **accommodations** when they take the tests, if they need them. Accommodations are changes in **how** the test is given. Changes in **what** is tested are not allowed on the FCAT and FCAT 2.0. Accommodations are provided to enable the student with a disability to demonstrate knowledge and skills in ways that do not affect the validity or reliability of the test.

Selecting FCAT and FCAT 2.0 Accommodations

The FCAT administration manuals list the accommodations that are allowed as required by Section 1008.22, (F.S.), and Rule 6A-1.0943, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.).

The IEP or Section 504 planning team decides which testing accommodations the student will receive, if any. The team should first consider accommodations that the student receives for classroom instruction and then determine whether the student also needs those accommodations for district assessments and the FCAT and FCAT 2.0.

Some accommodations that students receive in the classroom are not allowed on the FCAT and FCAT 2.0. These accommodations are not allowed because they affect the tests' validity and reliability. Examples include:

- Use of calculator in grades 3–6
- Access to the spelling or grammar check if using a word processor for FCAT Writing
- Oral or sign language presentation or use of text-to-speech software for items that test reading skills

If accommodations are recommended for classroom instruction or testing that are not permitted on the FCAT and FCAT 2.0, parents must be notified and give their signed consent for the use of those accommodations in the classroom. Parents must acknowledge in writing that they understand the possible future consequences of using accommodations in the classroom that are not permitted on the FCAT and FCAT 2.0.

Types of Accommodations

Allowable FCAT and FCAT 2.0 accommodations for students with disabilities are described in five categories.

Presentation

Students may be administered sections of the test through use of:

- Large print test materials
- Braille test materials
- Signed or oral presentation for directions, mathematics and science questions, and the writing prompt
- Use of text-to-speech technology for computer-based administrations of select FCAT and FCAT 2.0 Mathematics tests and all End-of-Course Assessments
- Magnification devices
- Straightedge, blank card, or positioning tool to enhance visual attention
- Printed copy of directions from FCAT and FCAT 2.0 administration scripts
- Directions may be repeated, summarized, or clarified, or the student may paraphrase or repeat directions to demonstrate understanding
- Colored transparencies or overlays
- Verbal encouragement (keep working)

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Responding

Students may respond to the test using varied methods, including:

- Dictation of responses to a test proctor or audio recorder
- Sign language responses to an interpreter
- Responses brailled on separate paper
- Answers entered directly in test booklet
- Special paper with raised, shaded, or color-coded lines
- Gridded paper to organize computation
- Writing guide for legibility
- Speech-to-text technology
- Alternative keyboards, pointing devices, and switches
- Communication devices to generate oral or written responses
- Word processor with spell check and grammar check inactivated
- Monitoring to determine if student is marking in the correct space and sequence
- Large key display or adapted calculator for grades 7–10
- Abacus, geoboard, or Math Windows® for students with visual impairments in all grades

If the student responds in an alternate way, the responses must be transcribed into the student's answer book by the test proctor (or the test contractor, for braille or large print). If the student provides oral or signed responses, the proctor must ask the student to indicate the punctuation and to spell uncommon words. Responses must not be changed in any way when transcribed; however, the student may tell the proctor how to edit the response.

Scheduling

Students may be administered the test in flexible ways, including:

- Taking a specific session at a specific time of the day
- Having extended time to take any session of the test
- Taking the test in several brief periods, allowing frequent breaks

Decisions to extend time should be based on the student's performance on similar tasks in the classroom.

Setting

Students may be administered the test:

- In an individual or small group setting
- In a specially designed classroom to accommodate special lighting or acoustic needs
- With adaptive or special furniture
- In an environment with reduced stimuli (in a study carrel, desk cleared of extraneous items)
- With increased or decreased opportunity for movement
- With white noise (sound machines) to reduce auditory distractions

Assistive Devices

Students may use assistive devices, including:

- Adapted calculators for complex computation as authorized in the FCAT and FCAT 2.0 administration manuals
- Communication devices that are word-, phrase-, or letter-based
- Technology for FCAT Writing, without accessing spelling- or grammar-checking applications (word processing software, digital voice, or audio recorder)

Other assistive technology the student typically uses in the classroom may be used, provided the purpose of the testing is not violated. However, the test responses must be the independent work of the student.

Unique Accommodations

Unique accommodations are usually those that involve alterations to existing test materials. Examples of unique accommodations include:

- Increased space between test items
- One item on a page

Unusual circumstances requiring unique accommodations, including some assistive devices, must be approved in advance by the Commissioner of Education or a designee.

Section 504 Considerations

To ensure that all qualified students with disabilities in our public education system are provided necessary aids, services, or accommodations during the administration of a test, districts must ensure that students with disabilities who are not currently receiving special education services or who do not have a current IEP are considered for and, if appropriate, provided test accommodations. In this case, testing accommodations must be listed on the student's Section 504 plan.

Procedures for qualifying students as disabled under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are provided in the document *Meeting the Needs of Students: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, available from the Clearinghouse Information Center (850) 245-0477; fax: (850) 245-0987; e-mail: cicbiscs@fldoe.org.

Planning for Administering Assessments to Students with Disabilities

District assessment coordinators share information about the FCAT and FCAT 2.0 assessments and accommodations for students with disabilities with personnel administering the test.

School assessment coordinators determine what staff, locations, and testing schedules are required for administering the FCAT and FCAT 2.0 assessments with accommodations to students with disabilities. Test administrators must make sure that students with disabilities have the opportunity to use the accommodations they need.

Parents should be informed about the use of allowable FCAT and FCAT 2.0 accommodations and about the particular accommodations their child may use during testing, if any.

Students should learn about the testing procedures for the FCAT and FCAT 2.0 and practice test-taking strategies. They should use their accommodations in instructional situations before taking the test.

Future Directions

The statewide assessment program in Florida is changing. In 2010–2011, the FCAT will begin to assess skills in reading and mathematics in the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. The FCAT 2.0 will measure how well students have learned these skills.

End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments are planned for certain high school courses, such as Algebra I, Biology I, Geometry, and U.S. History. Students will take the tests on a computer. The Algebra I End-of-Course Assessment will be administered beginning May 2011.

The following tests will be discontinued:

- FCAT Mathematics: Grade 9 in 2010–2011
- FCAT Mathematics: Grade 10 in 2011–2012
- FCAT Science: Grade 11 in 2011–2012

Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

A small number of students with significant cognitive disabilities are taught using access points aligned to the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. These students generally do not take the FCAT and FCAT 2.0; their learning is measured with the Florida Alternate Assessment. Students taking the Florida Alternate Assessment work toward a special diploma, rather than a standard diploma.

Each student's IEP team, with parent input, decides which standards the student will follow, based on the student's needs. This information is reflected in the IEP. If necessary, the team can change the decision.

For more information contact:

Florida Department of Education

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
(850) 245-0475

<http://www.fldoe.org/ese/fcatasd.asp>

or

Bureau of K–12 Assessment

(850) 245-0513

