

Test Accommodations

Overview

This document states Dwight School's policy for access and implementation of assessment accommodations. In accordance with United States Federal law, the State of New York and International Baccalaureate (IB) policy, Dwight School believes that all students should be assessed under conditions that are fair and appropriate.

Definition of Learning Disability

A child is diagnosed with a learning disability when he or she does not achieve adequately for his or her age or to meet grade-level standards in one or more of the following areas, when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the child's age or grade-level standardsⁱ:

- Oral expression
- Listening comprehension
- Written expression
- Basic reading skills
- Reading fluency skills
- Reading comprehension
- Mathematics calculation
- Mathematics problem solving

Establishing eligibility for accommodations under Federal law, a qualified professional must determine through testing, that the student meets specific criteria to be diagnosed with at least one of the 13 disabilities listed in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA).ⁱⁱ

Purpose of Test Accommodations

Standard assessment conditions may put students with learning disabilities at a disadvantage by preventing them from appropriately demonstrating their level of attainment.ⁱⁱⁱ The goal of assessment accommodations is to allow each Dwight student a fair chance to demonstrate his or her potential in learning and assessment.

According to the New York State Education Department (NYSED), testing accommodations are changes to test administration procedures intended to remove barriers or obstacles caused by a student's disability or level of language acquisition, as applicable, without changing the skill or content that the test is measuring (e.g., the "constructs" of the test).^{iv}

Majority of Dwight School students who qualify for accommodations will have recommendations due to one or more of the following:

- Specific learning difficulties including Asperger's Syndrome
- Speech and/or communication difficulties
- Medical conditions
- Physical and/or sensory challenges

Qualifying for Accommodations in School

Dwight will honor the recommendations for accommodations made in a student's psychoeducational evaluation or IEP/504 Plan. Dwight School requires that the documentation on file be current within five (5) years.

Accommodations for Standardized Testing

It is important to note that having an evaluation or IEP/504 Plan that recommends assessment accommodations and receiving those accommodations in school does not guarantee receiving the same accommodations on standardized or IB tests.

Test Accommodations (continued)

The external test bodies, SAT, ACT and IB, all have their own separate application process. The Director of Quest will provide support to families seeking accommodations on external tests. For more information on qualifying for test accommodations on external exams, visit the Special Testing Accommodations section in the MyDwight portals.

Defining Assessment Accommodations

Assessment accommodations are recommended based on students' individual needs specifically to address the student's documented disability. Assessment accommodations are changes in the standard administration of the assessment procedure or format. These accommodations are not meant to invalidate the results or to provide an unfair advantage. Assessment accommodations serve to level the playing field by compensating for a diagnosed deficit, enabling a student with a disability to participate in assessment programs on an equal basis with their non-disabled peers.^{vi}

Assessment accommodations can take a number of forms. The two most common test accommodations recommended for Dwight students are extra time and use of a laptop or word processor. However, other accommodations are occasionally recommended. Assessment accommodations generally fall into the four categories shown in the table below:

Timing Accommodations	Method of Response Accommodations	Method of Presentation Accommodations	Setting Accommodations	Other
Time and 1/2	Laptop	Reader	Separate Location	Calculator
Double Time	Scribe	Enlarged Print	Preferential Seating	Frequent Breaks
Unlimited Time (extremely rare)	Oral Response	Modified Visual Complexity		Spelling Waived

Assessment Accommodations in Practice

Families providing the appropriate paperwork to the Admissions Department upon acceptance to Dwight School will be added to the internal list for test accommodations. The student's evaluation or IEP/504 Plan will be kept on file with the school counselor and the Director of Quest and Special Studies. All documentation related to special testing will be locked up in a secure location.

The internal list of accommodations and recommendations will be available to the entire faculty as a Google document. Cases where privacy may be an issue will be denoted with a star. Faculty will understand to consult the school nurse in these cases.

Students seeking accommodations of any kind after admission to Dwight School should submit their paperwork to the Director of Quest and Special Studies.

Timing Accommodations

Extra Time

Students qualify for extended or extra time only if their disability causes them to work more slowly than other students.^{vii} Students who qualify for extra time will likely have one or more of the following disabilities; slow cognitive processing, limited attention span, severe reading disorder or limited physical stamina.^{viii} If a student is usually able to complete school-based tests in the allotted time, or if the student's inability to complete tests is not related to a disability, then extended time will not be recommended.

The amount of extra time provided varies from student to student. Extended time options include:

- Time and a half, or 50 percent additional time
- Double time, or 100 percent additional time
- Unlimited time (very rare)

Note: IB will occasionally approve 10% extra time based on their interpretation of the student's psychoeducational evaluation.

Specific Points for Implementing Extra Time at Dwight School

1. Students qualifying for extra time need to identify themselves to the classroom teacher at least 48 hours prior to the assessment date to allow the teacher adequate time to check the list. Upon confirmation, the student and teacher will work together to arrange how the extra time will be taken.
2. Classroom teachers can use Quest to monitor extra time if needed. Classroom teachers will need to inform Quest how much time the students are to be allocated and bring the test to Quest. One Quest teacher each period will be designated as the "extra time" monitor. A quiet section of the Quest office will be reserved specifically for this purpose. Tests can be turned in to Quest teachers, who will return them to classroom teachers.
3. Students will be responsible for using their own lunch period or study hall to take extra time. In cases where the student has the test after their lunch period they may need to come in at lunch to start the test early or agree to stay after school. Quest periods may not be used to take extra time on assessments without prior agreement from the Quest teacher.
 - In accordance with the NYSED policy, adjustments to the start time of assessments may be made solely at the discretion of the individual classroom teacher, Department Head and Director of Quest.
4. Extra time must be taken on the same day of the test.
5. Students who fail to identify themselves to the teacher and make arrangements for extra time prior to the class period may not receive their extra time.
6. Students should not miss time in other classes to take their extra time for the class where the test is being given.
7. Any student in need of support advocating for an accommodation should contact the Director of Quest.

Method of Response Accommodations

Laptop

Students with a physical disability that impairs writing, such as Dysgraphia, or a severe language-based learning disability may qualify for a laptop or word processor.^{ix}

Teachers and families should be aware that poor handwriting does not necessarily mean a student has Dysgraphia and will qualify for a laptop accommodation.^x

Specific Points for Implementing Extra Time at Dwight School

1. Students qualifying for laptop need to identify themselves to the classroom teacher at least **48 hours** prior to initial laptop usage to allow the teacher adequate time to check the list.
2. Students will be permitted to use personal laptops for classwork provided the student adheres to school policy governing laptop use in school.
 - In the event the student repeatedly violates school policy on appropriate laptop use, the teacher may require the student use a laptop issued by the school with limited Internet access.
3. Classroom teachers have the right to mandate students use a laptop provided by the school for all formal assessments.
4. Classroom teachers have the right to require students with the laptop accommodation to sit in such a way that the screen is visible to the teacher.
5. Personal laptops will never be permitted during final exams or on any IB or standardized tests.
6. Laptops may be used only to record essay and short-answer responses requiring multiple sentences. They may not be used for multiple-choice sections or short-answer responses requiring a single word or phrase.
7. Use of spell-check, grammar-check, word prediction, and cut-and-paste features must be disabled, unless specifically recommended in the psychoeducational evaluation and/or IEP/504 Plan.
 - In order to be eligible for a spelling waiver spell checker a student must show evidence of a standard score that is below 90 on spelling in a psychological test.
8. Any student in need of support advocating for an accommodation should contact the Director of Quest.

Scribe

When a student's handwriting is illegible, a scribe may be recommended. A scribe is a teacher who writes down the dictated response of the student for the requirements of an assessment and may be permitted for all forms of assessment where a student is unable to provide a handwritten response or use a computer. The scribe will literally write exactly what the student says. The student will be asked to point out where to place punctuation and spell difficult words. A scribe can also be used to transcribe answers from a test booklet to an answer sheet.

Specific Points for Implementation of a Scribe at Dwight School

1. Students qualifying for a scribe need to identify themselves to the classroom teacher at least **48 hours** prior the assessment to allow the teacher adequate time to check the list and make the necessary arrangements.
2. Classroom teachers will work with the Director of Quest and Special Studies to arrange for the provision of a scribe as needed.
3. Scribes must write word-for-word what the student dictates, leaving out punctuation and asking the student to spell difficult words. During the assessment, the scribe will show the student the written response and ask him or her to indicate where capitalization, punctuation and paragraphing should be used.
 - If the psychoeducational evaluation and/or IEP/504 Plan waives spelling, punctuation and/or paragraphing requirements the scribe may record answers as spoken without asking the student to add punctuation or spell words.

Method of Response Accommodations (continued)

4. Prior to completion, the student should read the completed transcription and be given a chance to indicate if there are any further changes to be scribed.
5. Upon completion, the student will sign the assessment confirming the scribed answers have been reviewed and approved for submission.
6. Any student in need of support advocating for an accommodation should contact the Director of Quest.

Method of Presentation

Reader

Students with reading speed/reading accuracy/reading comprehension deficits or a severe language-based learning disability may qualify for the reader accommodation. A reader is a teacher who will read the assessment question and related material to the student. The reader will read the entire test must be read including reading passages, questions, multiple choice items, etc. Content may be re-read more than once. The reader will not paraphrase or answer any questions for the student. In accordance with NYSED's policy guidance on test access, a reader should be a low-incidence accommodation for students with severe reading disabilities.^{xiii}

Specific Points for Implementation of a Reader at Dwight School

1. Students qualifying for a reader need to identify themselves to the classroom teacher at least **48 hours** prior the assessment to allow the teacher adequate time to check the list and make the necessary arrangements.
2. Classroom teachers will work with the Director of Quest and Special Studies to arrange for the provision of a reader as needed.
3. The Reader accommodation will be administered individually rather than in a group setting to limit distraction for the other students.
4. Content must be read **word for word**, in a neutral manner, without intonating, emphasizing or otherwise drawing attention to key words and phrases.
5. The reader may not offer clarification or explanation of assessment items.
 - On teacher-made tests or quizzes the teacher can make a determination as to whether and the extent to which any clarification may be provided without compromising test validity.^{xiv}
8. Any student in need of support advocating for an accommodation should contact the Director of Quest.

Note: Though ideal, a reader does not have to be familiar with the content of the subject being assessed.

Enlarged Print/Modified Visual Complexity

Students with visual processing disabilities or a severe language-based learning disability may qualify for enlarged print or modifications to the visual complexity of assessments. Standard modifications of font sizes are 18, 24, and 36 points.^{xv} This accommodation should only be given when changes to the appearance of the assessment can be achieved without compromising the validity and objective of the assessment.

Specific Points for Implementation of Enlarged Print/Modified Visual Complexity at Dwight School

1. Students qualifying for **Enlarged Print/Modified Visual Complexity** need to identify themselves to the classroom teacher at least **48 hours** prior the assessment to allow the teacher adequate time to check the list and make the necessary arrangements.
2. Classroom teachers can work with their Head of Department and the Director of Quest and Special Studies to make the necessary changes to the layout and appearance of the specific student's assessment.
 - The content of the assessment will not be altered. For example, a modified math test may have fewer problems per page in a larger font, but the content of the problems will be unchanged.
3. Any student in need of support advocating for an accommodation should contact the Director of Quest.

Flexibility in Setting

Separate Location

Separate location is an accommodation for students with severe attention issues. The separate location accommodation means a student is administered the assessment in a separate room apart from the standard setting being used to administer the test.^{xvi} The student can be administered the test individually or in a small group.

Specific Points for Implementation of Separate Location at Dwight School

1. Students qualifying for a separate location need to identify themselves to the classroom teacher at least **48 hours** prior the assessment to allow the teacher adequate time to check the list and make the necessary arrangements.
2. Classroom teachers will work with the Director of Quest and Special Studies to arrange for the provision of a separate location as needed.
3. Any student in need of support advocating for an accommodation should contact the Director of Quest.

Preferential Seating

Preferential seating is an accommodation for students with attention issues. The Preferential seating accommodation means a student is administered the assessment in a seat close to the teacher or proctor. In accordance with IB policy, these students are eligible for prompts to stay on task during the assessment at the teacher's discretion.^{xvii}

Specific Points for Implementation of Preferential Seating at Dwight School

1. Students qualifying for a **preferential seating** need to identify themselves to the classroom teacher at least **48 hours** prior the assessment to allow the teacher adequate time to check the list and make the necessary arrangements.
2. Classroom teachers will work with the student to arrange seating for assessment no less than 24 hours prior to the assessment date.
3. The chosen "preferential seat" should be in close proximity to the teacher and afford easy access for quiet prompts as needed.
4. Any student in need of support advocating for an accommodation should contact the Director of Quest.

Other

Calculator

Calculator use is an accommodation for students with math disabilities, such as Dyscalculia, or a severe language-based learning disability. When recommended, calculator use is permitted in class, on homework and assessments.

Calculator use is not meant to be a substitute for memorizing basic math facts or understanding how to carry out arithmetic operations. In accordance with Dwight School Math Department policy, students are expected to memorize basic addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts. As appropriate, students are also expected to memorize the squares of whole numbers 1-12 and the accompanying square roots. The calculator is not meant to replace simple mental math. Classroom teachers will give strategies for mental math expected of students with math-specific learning disabilities.

FINAL NOTE

Accommodations recommended in a psychoeducational evaluation or IEP/504 Plan are not meant to limit common sense accommodations and support provided by classroom teachers. Below is a list of approved accommodations a Dwight School teacher may provide without official authorization^{xviii}:

- Students are permitted to take assessments in a separate room if it is in the best interests of the student or other students in the class. Arrangements can be made through the Head of Department and Director of Quest as needed.
- Students with severe attention issues may be prompted to stay on task during an assessment to ensure the student pays attention to the assessment. The prompts should not disturb other students.
 - ✓ The teacher should only prompt the student and not provide any form of assistance.
- Extended deadlines on individual assignments.
- Rest breaks due to medical, physical, psychological, or other conditions.
- Use of noise buffers such as earbuds or headphones as needed.
- If students, parents or classroom teachers have any questions about test accommodation policy or implementation please contact the individual Head of Department or the Director or Quest and Special Studies.



Citations

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