



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

DATE: March 30, 2018
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: Steven M. Constantino, Ed.D., Acting Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: Guidance for the IEP/504 Team for the Read Aloud Accommodation Determination for the Standards of Learning Reading Test/End of Course Test

This document is designed to provide additional guidance to Individualized Education Program (IEP)/504 teams regarding the read aloud guidelines originally outlined in the [Superintendent's Memo](#) dated October 27, 2006. According to the “*Regulations Governing Special Education Programs in Virginia*,” the IEP must include a statement of supplementary aids and services necessary for the student to be involved and progress in the general curriculum. The IEP team must determine individual accommodations approved for use in the administration of statewide assessments that are needed in order for the child to participate in the assessments (8VAC20-81-11). In the case of students identified with a disability under section 504, the 504 committee must also determine the appropriate accommodations. To identify the appropriate student for the read aloud accommodation for the Standards of Learning (SOL) reading assessment, the IEP/504 team should consider the following questions and support the response with appropriate documentation. The decision should be determined at least annually during the IEP/504 review process. For additional information regarding testing information, refer to the [Guidelines for Special Test Accommodations \(2017\)](#).

Consideration for the Read Aloud Accommodation

- 1. Is there evidence that this student has a visual impairment, including blindness that visually prevents the student from accessing print using braille or alternate digital file?**

Explanation: There should be documentation of a visual impairment. This information may be documented in student’s medical records, eligibility reports, or IEP/504 Plan.

- 2. Is there evidence that this student has a specific disability that severely limits or prevents them from decoding text at any level as determined by a diagnostic tool or instrument administered by a qualified professional?**

Explanation: The student has an identified disability. The student is severely limited or prevented from decoding which implies that the student cannot apply the knowledge of letter-sound relationships, including using the knowledge of letter patterns, to correctly pronounce written words. The existence of a decoding weakness may be observed in younger students when they read real words in isolation while the existence of a decoding weakness in older students may be best observed when they read nonsense words and/or nonsense syllables in isolation. Weaknesses in phonological/phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle and phonetic principles can contribute to severe weaknesses in decoding.

The term *at any level* refers to the developmental stages of reading; a continuum that explains how students’ progress as readers. Decoding weaknesses can be found at any level, but skill development for decoding typically occurs at emergent or early/beginning reading stages. Diagnostic assessments that

measure decoding include formative and summative assessments (i.e. reading inventories, standardized test, PALS, phonics inventories) and can be administered by a qualified professional.

3. Is there evidence that this student's demonstrated weakness in decoding is addressed in the IEP/504 Plan with goals?

Explanation: During the IEP process, a goal or goals were developed to address the decoding weakness. The student should be provided specially designed instruction or intervention to address the goals with on-going progress monitoring. Generally when developing a 504 plan, a description of the student's disability is included and supports or accommodations or services are documented.

4. Is there evidence that this student demonstrates adequate comprehension?

Explanation: Adequate comprehension implies that the student can make meaning from text when listening or reading. When determining whether a read aloud accommodation is appropriate, listening comprehension should be well developed. Listening comprehension is the ability to make meaning from text through an auditory format. Listening comprehension can be measured in a variety of ways including a standardized listening comprehension assessment. Observational data and/or performance on formative classroom or curriculum based assessments can be evidenced documenting that the student's performance improves on grade level print based tasks when information is presented to the student in auditory format. The observational data and performance assessment should be conducted with print based materials with and without the auditory accommodation.

5. Is there evidence that this student has access to the general education curriculum?

Explanation: To ensure that the student has access to the general curriculum so that the child can meet the educational standards that apply to all students, the regulations require that the student receive specially designed instruction which means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability (8VAC20-81-10). Things to consider when discussing access to the general education curriculum may include the student class schedule, services, least restrictive environment placement and the extent of curriculum modification.

6. Is there evidence that the student uses accommodations for the identified weakness in decoding?

Explanation: This implies that the IEP/504 team has considered and determined that accommodations for the identified weakness in decoding are necessary due to evidence that the student engages in instruction and improves performance in print based tasks when presented or augmented with an auditory format. There is evidence that the accommodations are used during instruction and not used for assessment purposes only.

Justification for the Read Aloud Accommodation:

Students should be considered for a read aloud accommodation based on the documentation of the following factors:

- visual impairment, including blindness that visually prevents the student from accessing print using braille or alternate digital file, or
- specific disability that severely limits or prevents them from decoding text at any level as determined by a diagnostic tool or instrument administered by a qualified professional, and
- demonstrated weakness in decoding that is addressed in the IEP/504 Plan with goals, and
- adequate comprehension, and
- access to the general education curriculum, and
- accommodations for the identified weakness in decoding.

The decision should not be determined primarily because of other factors such as specific disability categorical label, gender, social, cultural, or economic status. In addition, excessive or extended absences, belief that the student will fail the test, below grade level reading performance, behavior or need for promotion or graduation should not be considered as determining factors.

If you have questions concerning the instructional project, please contact Kim Bausum-Brown; Dyslexia and Specialized Reading Specialist by email at Kim.Bausum-Brown@doe.virginia.gov or at (804) 225-2080.

SMC/KBB/tc

Virginia Department of Education © Commonwealth of Virginia, 2018