

IMPORTANT UPDATE REGARDING MCAS ACCOMODATIONS

Please Review the New 2008 Participation Guidelines
Help Ensure Students with Disabilities Receive
Equal Opportunities to Demonstrate Competencies on MCAS

The MA Department of Education (now called Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) has issued important new guidance clarifying the use of a test administrator to read aloud the English Language Arts Reading Comprehension Test and the calculator for the Mathematics Test (nonstandard accommodations).

School districts and parents should review the new **DOE Spring 2008 Update, Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in the MCAS**

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/participation/sped.pdf>

We realize there is significant confusion around the use of the “read aloud” for ELA and the use of the “calculator” for math. Therefore we are summarizing the major points of the new 2008 Guidance below.

- The DOE Spring 2008 Update replaces the DOE’s 2007 guidance regarding use of the “read aloud” and “calculator”, with several important changes.
- Students must have documented disabilities and be served by either an IEP or a 504 plan to receive MCAS accommodations.
(In rare circumstances, i.e. a student with a recently occurring disability or temporary disability, a student may receive an accommodation with the approval of DOE.)
- The decision regarding the use of MCAS accommodations for an individual student is solely a decision of the IEP Team or 504 Team.
- Criteria for determining whether student needs “read aloud”:
 - Student has a disability that severely limits or prevents him or her from decoding text or from comprehending decoded text, even after varied and repeated attempts to the teach the student to do so.
--Student must be a virtual non-reader, not simply reading below grade level *and*
 - Student has access to printed materials only through a reader, **and /or** is provided with spoken text on audiotape, CD, video or other electronic format during routine instruction, except while the student is actually being taught to decode *and*
 - The need for the accommodation is documented on the IEP or 504 plan
- Criteria for determining whether the student needs “calculator”
 - Student has a specific disability that severely limits or prevents him or her from calculating mathematically.
--Student must be virtually unable to perform calculation without use of calculator, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so *and*
 - Student has access to mathematical calculation only though use of a calculator which the students uses during routine instruction except while the student is actually being taught to calculate *and*
 - The need for the accommodation is documented on the IEP or 504 plan.
- **NOTE: Request an IEP Team meeting** in writing to review the IEP if a student requires accommodations to be assessed fairly, based on the the new state guidelines.