

## *Test Writing Accommodations for Students*

### **Overview**

Alberta Education is committed to providing equitable access to educational opportunities for all students. Ensuring equitable access to Provincial Achievement Tests and consistent application of exam standards requires standardized criteria for accommodations. Such accommodations are reserved for students with special writing needs for whom the writing of a Provincial Achievement Test would not be possible without a specific accommodation.

The goal of accommodation(s) is to provide equitable access to the exam, not to optimize or enhance performance. Therefore, accommodations are not intended to:

- alter the nature of the construct being assessed by an exam;
- provide accommodated students with an advantage when compared to students taking exams under regular, standardized conditions; or
- compensate for a skill or knowledge deficit.

Although many accommodations are used in teaching situations, not all of those accommodations are appropriate for use in a testing situation.

Students must specify the accommodations used on the back of the test booklet, where indicated, by filling in the correct accommodation number. Accommodation use is to be validated by the test supervisor and initialed.

Provincial Achievement Tests may be administered using one or more of the following accommodations:

- Accommodation 1: CD/MP3 version (visual impairment)
- Accommodation 2: CD/MP3 version (learning and/or physical disability)
- Accommodation 3: Additional writing time (up to 2 times the scheduled time)
- Accommodation 5: Scribe
- Accommodation 6: Large print version
- Accommodation 7: Braille version
- Accommodation 8: Reader
- Accommodation 9: Sign language interpreter
- Accommodation 10: Recorded response
- Accommodation 14: Miscellaneous

Principals should contact the Special Cases & Accommodations team (see the *Contacts* section) for clarification before recommending the use of an accommodation that is not specifically identified in the list above.

**Note:** Writing in isolation is not considered to be an accommodation. Writing in isolation is a school-level decision determined by internal school business processes, availability and supervision.

**Who May Use  
Writing  
Accommodations**

All accommodations that are permitted to be used for provincial achievement test writing purposes are intended for students who regularly use them in learning and testing situations in their classroom, throughout the school year. However, even though a student may use an accommodation regularly in the classroom, the use of that accommodation for provincial achievement testing purposes must be approved by the superintendent before the administration, based on a recommendation from the principal that is supported by a child's parent.

***Accommodation Directives***

The following directives outline general requirements and expectations related to the use of accommodations when administering provincial achievement tests.

**Requests and  
Approvals**

1. The use of all writing accommodations when administering provincial achievement tests shall be approved by a superintendent, based on a recommendation from a principal that is supported by a child's parent.
2. All recommendations for the use of accommodations made by a principal shall be supported with documentation in the student's file that substantiates the need for the accommodation.
3. Superintendents may approve the use of a writing accommodation in the following circumstances:
  - a. The student has been identified with an Exceptional Student Code and regularly uses the accommodation(s) for learning and testing purposes, based on an Individual Program Plan (IPP) which specifies their use, or
  - b. The student regularly uses the accommodation(s) for learning and testing purposes, based on an assessment that clearly identifies a diagnosis or a special academic need and that specifies that these accommodations are required as a result. This psychological, medical, academic and/or intellectual assessment must be no more than five years old and must have been completed by a qualified professional.
4. All requests for special format test materials shall be forwarded to Alberta Education only after the request for use of those accommodations has been approved by a superintendent and requests must be received by the deadline specified (see the *Schedules & Significant Dates* section).

**Test  
Administration  
Using  
Accommodations**

1. The principal shall ensure that only those students who regularly use an accommodation for learning and testing purposes, and who are approved to use it when writing a specific provincial achievement test, are permitted to do.

2. The principal shall ensure that all facilities and equipment that have been set up for test writing purposes using accommodations are secured and remain secured until after the test administration and follow-up administrative procedures are completed.
3. The principal shall ensure that all facilities and equipment that have been set up for test writing purposes using accommodations are appropriately configured to safeguard test security, validity and to minimize distraction to students.
4. The principal shall ensure that all digitally recorded conversations and responses related to the administration of provincial achievement tests are immediately deleted once they have been saved to a storage device for shipment to Alberta Education.
5. The principal shall ensure that teachers or other personnel who are designated to supervise the administration of provincial achievement tests that are being written using accommodations are appropriately prepared for that role.
6. The principal shall ensure that all accommodations that are used by students when writing provincial achievement tests are recorded on the student's test materials and that all forms and documentation related to the use of accommodations is completed and forwarded to Alberta Education with the test material.

### ***Test Accommodation Guidelines***

**Use of a Scribe**                      If a scribe is approved to assist a student during the administration of a test, the procedures listed in this section must be followed.

**Note:**    Scribed papers are not marked for conventions, or in the case of functional writing, for content management. Students' scores are pro-rated.

**Use of a Reader**                      CD/MP3 versions of provincial achievements tests should be used rather than readers whenever possible, especially as students age. However, if a reader is approved to assist a student during a test, the procedures listed in this section must be followed.

**Sign Language**                      Under the following conditions, an interpreter may use sign language to interpret language arts, mathematics, science and social studies provincial achievement tests to a student who is deaf or hard of hearing:

- The student has a specific impairment that greatly limits his or her ability to decode text, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so.

- The student has access to printed materials only through a reader or sign-language interpreter, or is routinely provided with text on tape or in another electronic format for instruction.

Interpreters must interpret test items and prompts according to the procedures listed in this section.

**Test Administration Times**

All students must complete a test within the allotted time unless approval for additional writing time has been granted by the superintendent. The allotted time includes the time officially scheduled for the test and the additional half hour that all students are permitted.

Students granted additional writing time as an accommodation may be given up to twice the amount of time officially scheduled for the test. The additional time that all students are permitted may be added at the end of this period, if needed.

Upon approval from the superintendent, the test may be administered in short periods with frequent supervised breaks. The test may also be administered at a time of day that takes into account the student's medical or academic needs.

**Additional Writing Time and CD/MP3 Accommodations for ESL and Francisation Students**

English as a Second Language (ESL) and Francisation students may require one of the following accommodations:

- Additional Writing Time (up to twice the allotted time); and/or
- CD/MP3 version of the test, with the exception of English Language Arts part B, French Language Arts Partie B, and Français Partie B.

A student may be identified as ESL or Francisation if the student is working to achieve grade level language development as demonstrated by a language proficiency assessment tool.

Language proficiency is a central component of English Language Arts and Français coursework and learning outcomes. Accommodations must not be used to compensate for limited English/French language proficiency and/or unattained subject matter, knowledge and skills.

ESL and Francisation students are eligible for provincial assessment accommodations if the student has:

- not yet achieved grade level language development as demonstrated by a language proficiency assessment tool and,
- used the accommodation for classroom testing

These accommodations do not require superintendent approval or identification on test answer sheets. Schools must, however, order the CD/MP3 version of tests for ESL and Francisation students using the *Special Format Materials Request Form* (see *Forms & Samples* section).

**Large Print**

If a student writes a large print version of a provincial achievement test, both the large print test and the answer sheet must be returned with the other test materials.

**CD/MP3 Version and Recorded Response**

CD/MP3 versions of tests will be provided in English and French for all provincial achievement tests. Except in unique circumstances, a CD/MP3 version of the test should be used as an accommodation rather than a reader.

*Physical Environment and Equipment*

Students must write in a room that is free from distractions. Several students using a CD/MP3 version of the test can write in one room provided headsets are available. It is the school's responsibility to supply the necessary hardware (CD player/networked computer).

Since many schools no longer have physical CD players, schools are able to request MP3 files. MP3 files can be requested using the *Special Format Materials Request Form* (see Forms & Samples section).

To enable student access to the MP3 files, school technical staff can either:

- Create a secure network location to store the MP3 files, taking the necessary steps to ensure only students with the approved accommodation can access the files
- Transfer the MP3 files to a device (e.g. MP3 player).

After the administration of the tests, technical staff must ensure that all MP3 files are removed from either the network locations or storage devices.

Students who are dictating their responses require separate rooms in which to work.

*Testing Environment*

The supervisor may provide the following modifications to the test environment:

- administer the test in a small group setting
- administer the test in a room other than the one used by the rest of the class
- administer the test to the student individually (using routine administration procedures)
- administer the test with the student wearing noise buffers (after directions have been given using routine administration procedures)

*The Testing Process*

It is important to emphasize that students should use the printed and CD/MP3 tests in a manner that best suits them; for example, students should be made aware that they may listen to part or all of the

CD/MP3 files more than once.

If a student appears confused about the testing process, the teacher should explain the process to the student until satisfied that the student understands the process.

*Recorded Response*

Students who are dictating their responses should be encouraged to do some rough work in the test booklet. Rough work will not be marked but serves to guide the student as he or she dictates a response. For the written response component, advise students to indicate verbally when they have finished one assignment and are beginning the next one by saying “I am now finished assignment one and I am ready to begin assignment two.”

Student responses may be recorded using audiotape or as digital audio files in WAV or MP3 format.

**Returning Materials**

All special format materials must be returned to Alberta Education along with the regular return shipment of other test booklets from the school.

All storage devices used to return a student’s recorded response must be clearly labeled with the:

Name of Student	School Name
Subject and Grade	School Code

**Text-to-Speech Software**

Students may only use this accommodation to read back their own work when using a computer to compose their English or Français/French Language Arts Part(ie) A test responses. Features such as word prediction, word wizard, fact finder and scientific calculator must be disabled.

## ***General Information for Scribes, Readers, Sign Language Interpreters and Transcribers***

The following information applies to all scribes, readers, sign language interpreters and transcribers. Information specific to these accommodations follow below.

- Once an exam administration session has commenced, a continuous recording of the entire communication that occurs between a scribe, reader and/or sign language interpreter and student must be made. This recording must be of sufficient sound quality to permit clear understanding of the communication between the scribe, sign language interpreter and student. **Note:** If a reader and a scribe have been approved concurrently, one recording may be used to capture the readings completed by the reader and the response dictated to the scribe by the student. In this situation, the Exam Supervisor must ensure that all communications are clearly heard and understood.
- To ensure anonymity during marking, the identity of a student must not be revealed during the recording of the communications with the scribe, sign language interpreter and/or reader.
- Student responses and the recorded communication may be recorded using any audio format including digital audio files.
- All storage devices containing scribe, recorded response or reader communication with a student must be clearly labeled:
  - Name of Student
  - Alberta Student Number
  - Index Number
  - Course Name
  - School Code
  - Identify the accommodation used *scribe, recorded response, reader*
- All scribed, recorded responses, reader and sign language interpreter communications must be immediately deleted from the recording device once they have been saved to a storage device for shipment to Alberta Education.
- All student work dictated during an exam administration under a scribe or recorded response accommodation must be transcribed. Students must be able to read the transcribed version of their recorded exam response(s) during the allotted exam writing time to verify that the transcription accurately reflects what was vocalized.

## ***Information Sheet for a Scribe of Provincial Achievement Tests***

When a scribe is approved by the superintendent to assist a student during a test, the following procedures apply:

- Scribed provincial achievement test written response papers are not marked for conventions. To assist with clarity, the scribe may insert basic punctuation.
- The scribe must record the student's response verbatim; that is, exactly as the student dictates.
- The scribe may record the student's response in handwriting or may use a computer.
- The scribe should confirm the student's responses which may include reading the student's responses back for clarification.
- A scribe may not ask leading questions or provide suggestions or interpretations of any kind.
- A scribe may not initiate the use of test taking strategies.
- The student shall review the scribed work and request changes if necessary.
- A scribe may not read a test to a student. CD/MP3s or readers will be provided for this purpose, if approved.
- The school jurisdiction is responsible for the appointment of a scribe and for any expenses incurred.
- A student who is being assisted by a scribe must complete the test in the normally allotted time unless additional time has been approved as a separate accommodation by the superintendent.
- A specially designated supervising teacher must supervise a scribe-assisted student.
- The scribe is expected to adhere to all of the *Provincial Achievement Test Administration Directives, Guidelines and Procedures*.
- A scribe shall not be a relative, friend, or a past or present teacher of the student.
- A test administered by a scribe shall take place in a separate area so that other students who are writing the test are not disturbed.
- A scribe must sign the student's work and indicate his/her position, i.e., program aide.
- The principal will record on the *Principal's Statement* that a scribe was utilized for a particular student.

**Note:** To properly record student responses, scribes should have:

- adequate word processing skills or a handwriting style that is very legible and familiar to the student
- adequate literary skills and knowledge of the subject area

If you have any questions concerning the above or any comments regarding the use of a scribe to assist a student when writing a provincial achievement test, contact the Special Cases and Accommodations team at (780) 492-1400, by fax (780) 492-1153 or email [special.cases@gov.ab.ca](mailto:special.cases@gov.ab.ca).

## *Information Sheet for a Reader of Provincial Achievement Tests*

When a reader is approved by the superintendent as an accommodation to assist a student during the administration of a provincial achievement test, the following procedures apply:

- The reader is expected to consult with the student to establish the most comfortable seating arrangement in the area designated by the principal.
- The reader should have adequate reading skills and knowledge of the subject to read appropriately.
- The reader must read at a rate that is comfortable for the student, monitoring to ensure that the pace is appropriate.
- The reader must read the test verbatim; that is, exactly as it appears in the test booklet. A reader may not add emphasis, inflection, or read in such a way as to prompt or guide the student. A reader may not ask leading questions, provide suggestions, provide interpretations, or provide word definitions of any kind.
- The reader must read in such a way that the student understands the beginning and end of each sentence and paragraph. Without leading the student, the reader must be aware of and obey all punctuation and read in such a way that the student understands the use and purpose of the punctuation.
- The reader may repeat readings as often as necessary and must read consistently in the same way each time, being careful not to indicate a correct/incorrect response.
- The school jurisdiction is responsible for the appointment of a reader and for any expenses incurred in appointing the reader.
- Students must complete the test in the allotted time, unless additional time has been approved by the superintendent.
- The reader is expected to adhere to the *Achievement Testing Directives*.
- A reader shall not be a relative, friend, or a past or present teacher of the student.
- A test administered by a reader shall take place in a separate area so that other students who are writing the test are not disturbed.
- The principal will record on the *Principal's Statement* that a reader was utilized for a particular student.

If you have any questions concerning the above or any comments regarding the use of a reader to assist a student when writing a provincial achievement test, contact the Special Cases and Accommodations team at (780) 492-1400, by fax (780) 492-1153 or email [special.cases@gov.ab.ca](mailto:special.cases@gov.ab.ca).

## ***Information Sheet for Sign Language Interpreters of Provincial Achievement Tests***

When an interpreter is approved by the superintendent as an accommodation to assist a student during a test, the following procedures apply:

- The interpreter is a neutral person who interprets a spoken message into American Sign Language or into one of the Manually Coded English Systems for a student with hearing loss.
- The interpreter also voices what is signed by the student.
- The interpreter must not record the student's responses. This is the role of a scribe. The use of a scribe must be approved by the superintendent as a separate accommodation.
- The interpreter must not function as a Reader. The request for a Reader must be approved by the superintendent as a separate accommodation and a person other than the scribe or interpreter must be designated that role.
- For purposes of interpreting for a Provincial Achievement Test, the interpreter is used for interpreting all words spoken during the examination period that are intended for all students.
- The interpreter must render the message faithfully, always conveying the content and spirit of the spoken word using the signed language most readily understood by the student. The interpreter must not provide definitions or interpret beyond conveying the spoken message.
- The interpreter must not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions.
- The interpreter must not ask leading questions, provide suggestions, or provide word definitions of any kind.
- If the student has a question or a query, the student is to be directed to the teacher. In this case, the interpreter will interpret spoken and signed messages between the student and the teacher.
- The interpreter may repeat interpretations as often as necessary and must interpret consistently each time.
- The school jurisdiction is responsible for the appointment of an interpreter and for any expenses incurred in appointing these individuals.
- Students must complete the examination in the allotted time unless additional time has been approved by the superintendent as a separate accommodation.
- The interpreter is expected to adhere to the *Achievement Testing Directives*.
- An interpreter shall not be a relative, friend or a past or a present teacher of the student.
- The principal will record on the Principal's Statement that an interpreter was utilized for a particular student.

If you have any questions concerning the above or any comments regarding the use of an interpreter to assist a student when writing a provincial achievement test, contact the Special Cases and Accommodations team at (780) 492-1400, by fax (780) 492-1153 or email [special.cases@gov.ab.ca](mailto:special.cases@gov.ab.ca).