

Testing Accommodations for Homeschooled Children with Special Needs in NYS (Updated 4/2009)

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According to the New York State Regulations on Homeschooling 8 NYCRR § 100.10 (h), "At the time of filing the fourth quarterly report as specified in the IHIP, the parent shall also file an annual assessment in accordance with the subdivision. The annual assessment shall include the results of a commercially published norm-referenced achievement test which meets the requirements of paragraph (1) of this subdivision or an alternate form of evaluation which meets the requirements of paragraph (2) of this subdivision." Paragraph (1) of the subdivision lists the commercially published norm-referenced achievement tests recognized by the New York State Department of Education. Paragraph (2) of the subdivision describes the "Alternate evaluation methods", the written narrative assessment.

A parent must consider several things prior to testing their child. Remember that teachers in public school may spend a good part of the school year, every year, teaching their students HOW TO take standardized tests. This ensures the student is familiar with the test layout as well as material being tested. In the public school system, standardized tests are used to determine how the school district is meeting state standards as well as what students take the various "tracks" – special education, regular education, or advanced placement. Generally, the school district does not use these tests as teaching tools. In your own formal education, did your public or private school teacher ever go over the results of your standardized test with you? The results of these tests always seemed to be a big secret. Testing is a tool that should be used to determine how quickly a child is learning material that is presented. If a child has gotten a question incorrect, it is the teacher's responsibility to help the child understand their error and to assist the child in correcting it. If a test is used in this manner, it is being used as an effective teaching tool.

Parents' homeschooling children with special needs need to ask an important question prior to giving their child a standardized test. "Does my child have a disability that will negatively impact their ability to demonstrate their knowledge of the material being tested?" If you answered "YES," your child may need testing accommodations in order to successfully demonstrate their knowledge of material being tested.

What are testing accommodations?

Testing accommodations are defined in the **Test Access & Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities** published by the NYS Educational Department Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities Office for Special Education as "changes made in the administration of the test in order to remove obstacles to the test-taking process that are presented by the disability without changing the constructs being tested."

Some examples of testing accommodations are: 1) flexibility in scheduling/timing, 2) flexibility in the setting used for the administration of assessments, 3) changes in the method of presentation, 4) changes in the method of response.

For a complete list of testing accommodations allowed by the New York State Department of Education, parents should obtain a copy of the "**Test Access & Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities**" book available for the New York State Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities Office for Special Education Services, One Commerce Plaza, Room 1624, Albany, NY 12234, or through your local school district Office of Pupil Personnel Services.

An online listing can be found at:

<http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/policy/testaccess/guidance.htm#leg> .

If a parent homeschooling their child feels that their child may need testing accommodations, they are **NOT** required to go through their local school district to get them. Instead they may choose to get their private service provider to recommend the appropriate accommodation(s). You should check with the specific test publisher of the achievement test you plan to use on what they require for an accommodation to be given. Generally, the private service provider should be a competent and appropriate professional person in the student's disability. The private service provider should also confirm the specific justification for administering the test under the requested conditions.

The written verification obtained privately is done through an evaluation. The evaluation may be a psychological or neuropsychological evaluation. The evaluation may also "label" your child with a diagnosis. The initial evaluation process required to determine if testing accommodations are needed can take a few weeks to complete, so do not wait until the a month before you need the testing accommodations to try and get them! If you choose to have the evaluation done through your school district, you will not have to pay for it. If you choose to have your child evaluated privately, you have to pay for that cost out of your own pocket. Some medical insurance plans may cover all or part of this cost.

Information on testing accommodations for the GED test is available at:
<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ged/accomodations.html>

Information on testing accommodations for the PSAT/SAT is available at:
http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/ssd/eligibility_form_instructions.pdf

For additional information on ways to help homeschooled children with special learning needs, please go to
www.hslda.org.

Tips for Preparing to Take a Standardized Test:

If your child has never taken a standardized test before, please don't expect them to be a perfect student and take the test as specified in the testing directions. Asking your child to do that would be like asking them to drive your car to the local grocery store, purchase some milk, and drive home. A young child can't do that.

Regardless of whether or not your child has testing accommodations, some helpful hints for preparing for standardized testing include:

- 1) Purchasing and using Test Prep books for your child's grade level. For example: McGraw-Hill Children's Publishing Spectrum Test Prep books. These are available for all grade levels and can be purchased at your local Staples Office Supply store.
- 2) Start practicing at least two months prior to testing.
- 3) After you obtain a copy of the standardized test that you have chosen to give your child, review the directions thoroughly. If you have any questions, contact the testing service that provided the test.
- 4) After you review the test directions, review the content of the test. Make sure to note any material that your child may not have been taught yet.
- 5) TEACH your child any material that they have not yet been taught. It is unfair to test a child on material that they have not been exposed to.
- 6) Relax! The superintendent does not have your house wired with cameras and microphones. If you are relaxed, your child will be relaxed. A relaxed atmosphere yields better performance and will prevent emotional breakdowns by the student and yes, the teacher.
- 7) After your child has taken the test and all of their answers have been recorded on the bubble sheet, go over it with them. Go over any questions that were answered incorrectly. Use the test as a teaching tool.
- 8) Celebrate a job well done! Take your child out for a special lunch. Have an end of the school year party. Do something to celebrate your child's efforts and completion of the test.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5