

## **Plan for Monitoring the Use of State Testing Accommodations North Carolina Testing Program**

*2009–2010 School Year*

### **The Use of Testing Accommodations in the North Carolina Testing Program**

State and federal law requires that all students, including students with disabilities and students identified as limited English proficient, participate in the statewide testing program. Student participation includes participating in the state assessments on grade-level (i.e., general, alternate) with or without testing accommodations. Testing accommodations and appropriate administrative procedures are provided to eligible students to assure that individual student needs are met and, at the same time, maintain sufficient uniformity of the test administration. Accommodations allow eligible students to demonstrate their true abilities; however, students must not receive unnecessary or inappropriate accommodations.

Accommodations must never be used for score enhancement. Recommendations for the use of accommodations during test administrations based solely on the potential to enhance student performance beyond providing equal access and opportunity to perform are not appropriate. Accommodations that alter the content of the test, interfere with the measurement of the construct, or provide inappropriate assistance to the student within the context of the test invalidate the results from the test.

In determining appropriate testing accommodations, a fundamental principle is to follow the type of instructional accommodations used in the classroom. Caution must be taken to ensure that the testing accommodation is on the state approved list for the test being administered. Some instructional accommodations may not be appropriate for use on state tests. For any state-mandated test, the accommodation for an eligible student must (1) be documented in the student's current Individualized Education Program (IEP), Section 504 Plan, LEP documentation, or transitory impairment documentation and (2) the documentation must reflect routine use during instruction and similar classroom assessments that measure the same construct. When accommodations are provided in accordance with proper procedures as outlined by the state, results from these tests are deemed valid and fulfill the requirements for accountability.

### **Eligible Students**

In North Carolina, students who are classified in one or more of the following categories must have documentation on file that includes the use of testing accommodations.

- Students with a disability who have a current IEP. All students in this category are eligible to receive testing accommodations. Decisions regarding whether or not a student with a disability who has an IEP will participate in the general assessment/alternate assessment with or without accommodations be must made by the IEP Team and documented in the student's IEP. Decisions are made on a case-

by-case basis based on the needs of the student and on the construct measured on the assessment.

- Students with a disability who have a current Section 504 Plan. All students in this category are eligible to receive testing accommodations. Decisions regarding whether or not a student with a disability who has a current Section 504 Plan will participate in the general assessment with or without accommodations must be made by the Section 504 Committee and documented in the student's current Section 504 Plan. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis based on the needs of the student and on the construct measured on the assessment Note: Students with a Section 504 Plan are not eligible to participate in alternate assessments.
- Students identified as limited English proficient (LEP). Only LEP students who have met specific eligibility criteria are eligible to receive testing accommodations. To be identified as limited English proficient, students must be assessed using the state English language proficiency identification test (W-APT) at initial enrollment. Thereafter, all students identified as limited English proficient must be annually assessed using the state annual English language proficiency test for English language learners (ACCESS for ELLs<sup>®</sup>) administered to satisfy No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Title III requirements during the state-designated annual testing window. Students' scores on the W-APT/ACCESS for ELLs determine eligibility for accommodations. In order to be eligible for testing accommodations, LEP students must score below Level 5.0 Bridging on the reading subtest of the W-APT/ACCESS for ELLs<sup>®</sup> (for all tests except grade 10 writing) and below Level 5.0 Bridging on the writing subtest of the W-APT/ACCESS for ELLs<sup>®</sup> (for grade 10 writing only). Decisions regarding the use of accommodations must be made by the LEP team/committee and documented in the student's LEP documentation. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis based on the needs of the student and on the construct measured on the assessment. Note: During the 2009-10 school year, due to the elimination of the NCCLAS, students identified as LEP are not eligible to participate in alternate assessments.
- Students with a transitory impairment. A student is not regarded as an individual with disabilities if the impairment is transitory and minor (Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Amendments Act of 2008, Section 3 (3)(B)). A transitory impairment is an impairment with an actual or expected duration of six months or less. A transitory impairment does not constitute a disability for purposes of Section 504 unless its severity is such that it results in a substantial limitation of one or more major life activities for an extended period of time. On a case-by-case basis where appropriate documentation exists, students who are identified with a transitory impairment may receive testing accommodations (e.g., student breaks arm and needs dictation to a scribe). The need for accommodations must be made by a school committee and documented in transitory impairment documentation prior to testing. Copies of this documentation must be kept at the school. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis based on the needs of the student and on the construct measured on the assessment Note: Students with a transitory impairment are not eligible to participate in alternate assessments.

### *Types of Accommodations*

There are three general categories of approved testing accommodations in which students may have access in North Carolina.

- Modified test formats;
- Assistive technology devices/special arrangements; and
- A special environment for testing

A student may require the use of any number of accommodations in order to obtain access to a given test. The student's IEP Team, Section 504 Committee, LEP team/committee, and/or transitory impairment committee is responsible for documenting the student's need for testing accommodations and communicating this information to the school test coordinator to ensure that the student receives the appropriate accommodations during testing.

### **Organizational Structure**

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) designates a division for Accountability Services. Within the division, there are two distinct sections (i.e., Test Development, Testing Policy and Operations). Comprehensively, these two sections form the *North Carolina Testing Program*. The Test Development Section of the NCDPI is unique as North Carolina develops its own state tests and their alternates based on NC curriculum and the needs of its students. The use of accommodations is not seen as an addition to developed tests. The Test Development staff considers the use of allowable accommodations during each stage of development including initial planning. The Testing Policy and Operations (TPO) Section is devoted to test administration logistics, the development and implementation of policy and training, and the research and monitoring of test accommodations. TPO devotes a full time position for both testing students identified as limited English proficient and testing students with disabilities or special needs to include students following a Section 504 Plan and those with transitory impairments.

For accountability services, the state of North Carolina is divided into regions. Each region has a designated Regional Accountability Coordinator (RAC) and Regional Computer Consultant (RCC) located in a central location within each region. The RACs are charged with conducting test administration training sessions for each regular assessment and alternate assessment. Each school system is required to designate a staff member as the school system test coordinator and that individual must attend each training session. The majority of training sessions are held face-to-face to ensure attendance by appropriate personnel and unrestricted interaction amongst participants. The RACs also serve as the eyes and ears in the field for the NCDPI. They monitor processes and procedures and conduct preliminary testing irregularity investigations. The RCCs assist with data collection and analysis which includes the scanning and scoring of answer sheets, reporting of scores, electronic student data management, and accommodations based data analysis.

For the purpose of this document, the term *school system* will encompass all local education agencies and charter schools.

### **Monitoring the Use of Testing Accommodations**

The North Carolina Testing Program is currently implementing a comprehensive approach in monitoring the use of testing accommodations in local school systems. A six-part strategy will be put into place for the 2009-2010 school year which includes 1) continued information distribution, 2) continued training with an emphasis on the use of accommodations, 3) new reporting methods available for state and local self-assessment, 4) increased targeted on-site monitoring and assistance, 5) continued collaboration among state-level staff, and 6) information dissemination about the State monitoring plan to local school systems. This plan may be modified in future years depending on program needs.

#### **1. Information Distribution**

The North Carolina Testing Program distributes materials that focus on the correct selection and the appropriate use of testing accommodations through electronic media such as the state public testing website for educators and parents (i.e., [www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing)) and a secure website for school system test coordinators (i.e., Testing News Network), and often as hard copy documents to school systems. In an ever-changing environment with new research continually being released, materials must be updated regularly.

North Carolina General Statutes (NCGS), North Carolina Administrative Code (NCAC), and North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) policy define responsibilities, reflect the importance of using ethical instructional practices, offer guidance for decision making, and mandate testing procedures. SBE policy is available for text search, download, and/or print on the public [www.ncpublicschools.org](http://www.ncpublicschools.org) website. Occasionally, NCGS or NCAC are written with such detail that a reference can be made directly to the state law. The *Testing Code of Ethics* 16 NCAC 06D .0306 was effective beginning in 1997 and amended in 2000. It is used as the basic premise for test administration training requirements to include tests with procedural modifications. The *Testing Code of Ethics* 16 NCAC 06D .0306 printed on colored paper is included in each Test Administrator's Manual (TAM).

The Testing News Network (TNN) (i.e., <http://wis.ncsu.edu:8080/~TNN/login>) is most often used by Accountability staff to disseminate secure information or documents, broadcast updates quickly, distribute information that does not warrant a memorandum (e.g., Testing Tables for Students with Disabilities, Testing Accommodations Training, Eligibility for LEP Accommodations Policy Updates), and distribute procedures for special processes (e.g., accommodation notification requests). School system test coordinators use the site to order test materials electronically, including materials with approved modified formats (i.e., Braille, large print, one test item per page). This system

allows the NCDPI to compare individual school system material orders from year to year and to monitor material orders in real time. Effective with the 2009-2010 school year, the TPO Section will monitor this data to look for any trends and major shifts in ordering by individual school system.

Departments of the NCDPI (e.g., Exceptional Children, English as a Second Language, and Testing) distribute collaborative memorandums to school system superintendents, test directors/coordinators, EC directors, and/or LEP coordinators when SBE policy undergoes major changes. Collaborative memorandums are also sent as reminders to school systems regarding policy and procedures (e.g., Subject: Accommodations that Invalidate Test Results). These memos are often mailed as hard copies, emailed using pre-generated lists, posted on the public NCDPI website, and posted on TNN.

The TPO Section produces the *Testing Students with Disabilities* publication and *Guidelines for Testing Students Identified as Limited English Proficient* which contain policy guidelines and procedures. These publications include guidance for determining participation, testing accommodations allowed on each test, testing accommodations that are not approved and will invalidate test scores, the required congruence of instructional accommodations and testing accommodations, and alternate assessments. Optional forms are included to assist schools with the planning and implementation of accommodations and to self-monitor the use of instructional accommodations and testing accommodations.

The North Carolina Testing Program produces the *LEA Test Coordinator's Handbook* and the *School Test Coordinator's Handbook* annually. The purpose of these publications is to provide the superintendent's designee (usually the school system test director/coordinator) with a single reference for implementing proper test administrations for the North Carolina Testing Program. The handbooks provide information to ensure that the integrity of the testing program is maintained, that results generated from the program are valid, and that any subsequent reporting is accurate and appropriate. They are available for search, download, or print on TNN and are distributed in hard copy format to each school system. The *School Test Coordinator's Handbook* is also available on the public NCDPI website (i.e., <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/policies/>).

Test Administrator Manuals (TAMs), informational documents (e.g., assessment briefs, frequently asked questions, accommodations charts), and parent publications (e.g., Understanding the Parent/Teacher Report) are produced for each assessment and its alternates. The use of accommodations is discussed in various publications to ensure information distribution.

Test Administrator's Manuals (TAMs) include detailed information regarding the use of accommodations, modified assessments, and alternate assessment participation for students with disabilities and students identified as LEP to include policy, requirements, test-specific charts indicating approved accommodations, and references for additional information. The TAMs also contain scripts for test administrations which include specific language for some accommodations and modified assessments. Separate TAMs are produced for online assessments that are often used for large print or one test item per page accommodations as the font can be increased and items can appear one per screen.

Testing Policy consultants have accommodated special requests for modified administration guides and scripts. Currently, the TAMs have separate sections discussing the use of test accommodations for students with disabilities and students identified as LEP. A chart is printed in each TAM indicating which accommodations are approved for each group of students for that assessment.

Psychometricians from the Test Development Section produce technical manuals for each newly developed test (e.g., *North Carolina EOC Science, Edition 2*). These manuals are located on the NCDPI public website (i.e., <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/technicalnotes>). The purpose of technical manuals is to provide an overview of and technical documentation for North Carolina tests. The manuals address the use of accommodations as related to various topics (e.g., content validity, test administration time, approved accommodations that will produce a valid test score).

## **2. Training**

Throughout its history, the North Carolina Testing Program has emphasized the use of policy and training in the area of state mandated testing policy and procedures. Over the last several years, there has been a particular focus in the area of the use of accommodations for students.

The NCDPI incorporates a train-the-trainer model for the Regional Accountability Coordinators (RACs). The RACs also conduct train-the-trainer sessions for school system test coordinators. School system test coordinators use a one-to-many training system to train school building staff. Currently, the RACs receive monthly policy and procedures trainings that include the use of state-approved testing accommodations, often consuming two days. Testing Policy consultants prepare RAC training notes (e.g., *Guidelines for Testing Students Identified as Limited English Proficient*) and training materials (e.g., test administrator manuals, charts, informational publications), and conduct train-the-trainer instruction for the RACs who then provide one-to-many training to school system test coordinators within their individual regions.

RACs offer identical training sessions on multiple dates to accommodate mandatory attendance requirements. The state requires all school system test coordinators to attend training for each assessment every testing cycle (i.e., semester 4x4, traditional year long) where the Test Administrator's Manual (TAM) is carefully reviewed regardless of any previously received training. If the designated school system test director/coordinator does not attend a regional training session, the school system will not receive test materials for that assessment which would result in sanctions. Each school system's test coordinator then provides this training to all necessary school system and individual school staff members (e.g., test administrators, proctors, Exceptional Children specialists, Limited English Proficiency specialists). Mandatory attendance is required for all test administrators and proctors. Upon request and when travel is permitted, Testing consultants attend regional meetings to assist the RACs as they train on accommodations. When travel is restricted, online meetings are created to allow for virtual attendees.

Ongoing training occurs as the RACs are updated each month and time is provided for discussion and questions regarding the appropriate use of testing accommodations.

The Testing Policy and Operations Section seeks ongoing assistance from several committees (e.g., Testing Security Advisory Committee, Configuration and Control Board, Testing Students Identified as Limited English Proficient Advisory Committee) consisting of stakeholders from local school systems. These committees make recommendations regarding decision making, training, policy, and information distribution. The Testing Security Advisory Committee (TSAC) advises the State Board of Education and the NCDPI in the development of processes for consistent implementation and training of testing security procedures and in the handling, documenting, and reporting of testing irregularities. The Configuration and Control Board (CCB) serves as an oversight group that acts as an advisory committee for Accountability Services and serves as a school system advocate (i.e., <https://www.rep.dpi.state.nc.us/ccb/>). The purpose of the Testing Students Identified as Limited English Proficient Advisory Committee is to provide recommendations to the NCDPI regarding issues, policies, procedures, and guidelines related to the assessment and accountability of students identified as limited English proficient.

Each year, the Accountability Services Division hosts a three-day conference at a central location in North Carolina. The conference is comprised of many small group sessions discussing topics requested by individuals in the field, NCDPI Accountability staff members, other NCDPI staff members, and organizations. The conference offers separate in-depth supplemental training on important topics such as testing students with accommodations for new test coordinators. Each year, there is a session or panel discussion on testing students with disabilities and testing students identified as LEP to include the use of accommodations and assistance with the documentation of how eligible students participate in state testing and school system level assessments. NCDPI Exceptional Children and English as a Second Language (ESL) staff are requested to participate in presentations and panel discussions. Conference presentations and related conference materials are made available on the NCDPI public website (i.e., <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability>) following the conference for local use. During the 2009-2010 school year the Accountability Conference was held on February 17-19, 2010.

Each year NCDPI Accountability staff members collaborate with exceptional children and limited English proficient staff members to develop necessary training materials. For example, in 2008, Testing Consultants worked jointly with Exceptional Children and Limited English Proficient staff members to develop the Testing Accommodations Training. This Webex training was broken into Part 1: Trainer Information and Module I lasting 90 minutes and Part 2: Modules II and III lasting 60 minutes. These training modules can be accessed on the NCDPI public website (i.e., <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/ec/policy/presentations/>). The presentations contain additional information in the Notes page view to assist with local training. Training materials are used by the NCDPI Accountability staff during conferences, web meetings, and train-the-trainer sessions, and are posted on the NCDPI website for public access.

New school system test coordinators receive multiple opportunities, in addition to the monthly RAC meetings, to participate in supplemental training on important topics. The RACs conduct individualized training sessions with new test coordinators as needed. In the fall of each year, new test coordinators are invited to participate in small group sessions held over one day at the NCDPI. Due to budget constraints, the fall 2009 new test coordinator face-to-face training sessions were cancelled.

### **3. Reporting Methods Available for State and Local Self-Assessment**

The North Carolina Testing Program has collected information on the use of testing accommodations by test on the student answer sheet for several years. Each state-approved testing accommodation for an assessment is printed on the accompanying scannable student answer document. North Carolina does not offer “other accommodation” as an option. Following the assessment, the test administrator completes additional coding on the student answer sheet that indicates if a student has an IEP, Section 504 Plan, is identified as LEP, or has a transitory impairment and specifies which approved testing accommodation(s) were provided. The test administrator also codes the identified disability category for students with IEPs or Section 504 Plans. School systems are provided the software and hardware to scan student answer sheets locally, offering them immediate access to test scores and the ability to disaggregate any collected information. This standardized data collection process is also provided for students who utilize the online testing system. School systems receive electronic files from the online assessment system that can be merged with the scanned paper/pencil electronic files for local data analysis and self-monitoring.

Data collected from student answer sheets may be used at the local level for program monitoring in the Exceptional Children and English as Second Language areas. This information is also used at the state level for state and federal accountability and reporting. The North Carolina State Testing Results (i.e., The Green Book) provides results that are released each year, giving state level comparison data for school systems to assist with local monitoring. Reports for each assessment include Statewide Student Accommodations Use and Participation and Performance Results by gender, ethnicity, economically disadvantaged, Title I, migrant, LEP, students with disabilities (SWD), disability category, and Section 504.

Beginning with spring 2010 testing, test administrators must monitor accommodation usage by completing monitoring forms (i.e., Review of Accommodations Used During Testing, Review of Accommodations used During *NCEXTENDI* Testing). The completed forms will provide valuable information during annual meetings to determine the instructional and testing accommodations students need to receive. Therefore, completed forms must be kept on file with the student’s IEP, Section 504 Plan, LEP documentation, or transitory impairment documentation. Immediately following test administrations, test administrators must report to the state which accommodations were provided to students during tests as marked on answer sheets or any supplemental forms provided by the North Carolina Testing Program.

School systems are required to develop and implement a local testing plan that includes a school system level plan and a school level plan for each school in the district. Each plan must include, but is not limited to, rules for test administrator training including the documentation of attendance records, maintenance of test security, preparation of a proper testing environment, administration of the NCDPI-designated secure test form, self-monitoring of test administration sessions to include sessions using testing accommodations, and the preparation and return of secure test materials. Optional forms provided in the *Testing Students with Disabilities* and *Guidelines for Testing Students Identified as Limited English Proficient* publications can assist schools with the planning and implementation of accommodations and with self-monitoring the use of instructional accommodations and assessment accommodations. Beginning with the 2009-2010 school year, school systems are required to include additional information in their local testing plans to: (1) address how school-based IEP Teams/Section 504 Committees, LEP teams/committees, and transitory impairment committees communicate documented testing accommodations to school test coordinators; and (2) document how schools will ensure that eligible students are receiving testing accommodations listed on the student's IEP, Section 504 Plan, LEP documentation, or transitory impairment documentation on test day (e.g., self-monitoring records, district affidavits that provide assurance that appropriate accommodations are given to students). The North Carolina Testing Program provided school systems with an optional template for creating a complete local testing plan.

Reports of testing irregularities are captured in the North Carolina Online Testing Irregularity Submission System (OTISS). OTISS is available to school systems and school buildings through a secure web-based interface. School building test coordinators are responsible for reporting all testing irregularities. School system test coordinators, superintendents, and RACs can monitor irregularities using filters (e.g., test name, school system name, school name, irregularity category) in real time and send messages to the reporting person regarding incomplete information, additional steps necessary, or any other pertinent information. Testing irregularities that are entered in OTISS are reviewed by Testing Policy consultants of the North Carolina Testing Program. These consultants review and classify each report of testing irregularity and have the capability to produce statewide reports on each irregularity. There are three testing irregularities that are of concern in the state monitoring plan: (1) students do not receive the approved testing accommodation, (2) the approved testing accommodation was not provided appropriately to students, and (3) students receive a testing accommodation that was not specified in the IEP, Section 504, LEP, or transitory impairment documentation. School system personnel may use testing accommodations irregularity information to monitor, self-assess, and make necessary program improvements in the implementation of testing accommodations for students. OTISS will serve as a database and electronic archive for data analysis to assist with on-site monitoring.

Each school system, charter school, and state operated program (SOP) in North Carolina submits a Continuous Improvement Performance Plan (CIPP). The CIPP is aligned with the first fifteen indicators of the State Performance Plan. The CIPP requires a local

Stakeholder/Steering Committee that assists local systems in the development of the plan. Data for Indicator 15 is gathered through the Internal Record Review of the CIPP. Each school system, charter school, and SOP conducts an Internal Record Review of Exceptional Children records annually. Records are selected from all disability categories served and the percentage of records reviewed is based on state requirements. This review includes monitoring the participation of each student in the North Carolina Assessment Program. The Internal Record Review documents include the compliance checklists, deficit sheets, and a summary report. The summary report denotes compliance/noncompliance and includes a corrective action plan for each area of noncompliance. For the CIPP, each school system gathers data for Indicators 11, 12, 13 and district wide assessments for Indicator 3 and submits them to the state. Data on graduation rates, dropout rates, state assessments, parent satisfaction, post-school outcomes, disproportionate representation, and Least Restrictive Environment are provided to the school systems. Data profiles are developed utilizing all of the required data for Indicators 1 – 15. Working with NCDPI, each school system must verify its profile for accuracy. Once all data are verified and improvement strategies are developed, the CIPP is submitted to the state. The DPI consultants review the CIPP and crosswalk data available at the state in reference to formal parent complaints, due process hearings, grant applications, and other required data submissions.

The Comprehensive Exceptional Children Accountability System (CECAS) is a case management and data analysis system that is offered to school systems, charter schools, and state operated programs (SOPs) as a means to manage and analyze exceptional children data. CECAS serves as the state's system of record for exceptional children data management. School system data is uploaded to a state database three times per year. This web-based system provides more efficient tracking and monitoring of services for exceptional children. It provides summary reports such as the number of students that received particular instructional accommodations printed by participation in a particular state test. Implementation began in 2004. As of the time of this publication, approximately 50% of school systems are currently using CECAS to provide information about accommodations for students with disabilities. See [www.ncecas.org](http://www.ncecas.org) for additional information. Accommodation information is collected on a state mandated form (i.e., IEP DEC 4). State forms are used by Exceptional Children personnel within the traditional school systems, charter schools, and state operated programs to assist with the information gathering process for students with disabilities. The IEP DEC 4 form (i.e., <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/ec/policy/forms/>) tracks the use of test accommodations that correlate to classroom accommodations used routinely throughout the school year.

The Exceptional Children Director and Section 504 Coordinator, in collaboration with the school system test director/coordinator, are to review the accommodations determined by the IEP Teams and Section 504 Committees. In order to assist Exceptional Children Directors and Section 504 Coordinators in collecting data regarding the use of accommodations and alternate assessments, the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services/North Carolina Testing Program (NCTP) provides optional forms in the *Testing Students with Disabilities* publication that are also available at

<http://www.ncpublicschools/accountability/policies/tswd>. These forms are for local use only. These tables and forms are updated as needed and generally include the following: (1) documentation for tests and field tests at grades 3–8; (2) documentation for end-of-course, *NCEXTEND2* OCS, and grade 10 tests; (3) documentation for state-identified English language proficiency tests; (4) documentation for district-wide assessments; and (5) forms for schools to summarize the appropriate accommodations or alternate assessments for a particular test. Whenever changes in IEPs or Section 504 Plans are made, information on the individual student NCTP tables should be updated.

Summary forms (e.g., *Accommodations for State Tests at grade 3-8 Summary Form for Schools by Test*) for groups of students can be used closer to the time of testing to verify the accommodations scheduled for each student. This verification helps to ensure that the test administration will mirror what is documented in the student’s IEP or Section 504 Plan. Once the accommodations have been verified, the school test coordinator can use this information to plan the small group administrations and to ensure that proper test materials have been ordered (e.g., Braille editions, large print editions). In addition, it is helpful to think of the logistical considerations involved with accommodations. The *Testing Accommodations: Logistics Planning Checklist* is a useful tool when thinking about the details to be considered with the provision of accommodations. It is recommended that school systems monitor actual test administrations to determine whether students are actually receiving the accommodations that have been documented. Another optional form is available to assist with this observation process (i.e., *Review of Accommodations Used During Testing, Review of Accommodations Used During NCEXTEND1 Testing*).

In rare cases where an IEP Team or Section 504 Committee decides that a student requires the use of an accommodation not specified in the state accommodations publications in order to access state tests, a request must be submitted to the NCDPI Division of Accountability Operations. School systems are required to submit an Accommodation Notification Form which can be found on TNN or in the *Testing Students with Disabilities* publication. The Accommodation Notification Form requires the following detailed information: (1) describe how the accommodation will be used during the test administration; (2) explain the reason(s) why the accommodation(s) allowed by the state are not appropriate for the student; and (3) explain the reason(s) that the student requires the use of this accommodation and verify that the student has used this accommodation routinely during regular classroom instruction and similar assessments this school year.

#### **4. Targeted Monitoring Plan and Assistance**

Effective with the 2009-2010 school year, the North Carolina Testing Program will implement a formalized state monitoring plan for targeted on-site monitoring of test administrations. This plan will join specific activities from each area (i.e., Testing, Exceptional Children, Section 504, and English as a Second Language) to effectively and efficiently monitor the use of accommodations. The state plan consists of four phases:

(1) desk monitoring; (2) pre-site review; (3) on-site monitoring; and (4) state response and targeted assistance.

1. Desk Monitoring: The on-going process of desk monitoring allows the NCDPI to review and track program performance by using data from state collection systems and other quantitative data. The NCDPI collects and reports data using several methods such as student answer sheets, OTISS, NC WISE, and CECAS which are useful for desk monitoring. Due to budget constraints and possible travel restrictions, desk monitoring is a very important phase of the state monitoring plan. Randomly selected local testing plans will be included in the desk monitoring process. Selected school systems will be required to forward an electronic copy of their local testing plan.

Multiple methods may be used for selecting the on-site visit locations. Desk monitoring assists in determining locations to visit on-site (e.g., visits due to pending investigations, test administration observations). Received complaints from other divisions, Regional Accountability Coordinators (RACs), parents, teachers, and others will be discussed, as well as their outcomes. Select school systems that are experiencing difficulty in the provision of testing accommodations, as reflected in OTISS, will be discussed as well as school systems reporting no or a low incidence of irregularities related to accommodations. During the 2009-2010 school year, a random sample of six school systems have been selected for desk monitoring (i.e., one from each of the state's accountability regions).

2. Pre-Site Review: The pre-site monitoring review is conducted prior to every scheduled site visit. It consists of determining which school systems and which school(s) will receive an on-site visit, the assigned team members and their roles, and what additional documentation will be requested prior to the visit or upon arrival. Using all information, four school systems will be selected for on-site monitoring visits. From the four school systems, two high schools, two middle schools, and two elementary schools will be chosen to receive a visit from a monitoring team. Teams will monitor spring 2010 end-of-course and end-of-grade test administrations.

The RACs will conduct on-site monitoring for school systems that are under investigation regarding serious misadministrations, those with chronic breaches of testing policy and procedures, or randomly selected school systems. The RACs will not only make visits to individual schools, but may visit the district office to review school system testing plans and local procedures. Visits may occur on the day of testing to monitor a test administration or may occur on a non-testing day to allow for additional documentation review and interviews with personnel. The RACs then implement a targeted assistance plan based on the needs of the school system. On-site monitoring visits and any additional investigations are documented and archived at the NCDPI.

The assigned monitoring team will consist of at least two Testing/Accountability staff members and a member of the Exceptional Children, English as a Second Language,

and/or Section 504 staff. Team members, including the RACs, will be required to attend training sessions regarding procedures for on-site monitoring visits.

School systems and schools that will receive on-site monitoring visits are informed 30 calendar days in advance of the first day in the school system spring 2010 testing window. The notification letter will be emailed and mailed using the US postal system to the superintendent and the school system test coordinator. Selected school systems will be required to forward an electronic copy of the LEA testing plan, each school's testing plan, and any other requested documentation within seven working days of notification. NCDPI Testing staff will work collaboratively with local school systems to establish dates and times for site visits that will not disrupt the testing environment for students. School system personnel will be asked to make available the following at each selected school site: (1) school system testing plan; (2) each school building testing plan; (3) test administration training attendance records; (4) self-monitoring records; (5) test material check in/out procedures; and (6) student IEP/Section 504/LEP and/or Transitory Impairment documentation.

The NCDPI reserves the right to conduct out of cycle on-site monitoring.

3. On-Site Monitoring: Monitoring teams witness the entire testing day's activities at the school building level. Each Testing Policy and Operations consultant will complete two checklists. *Observation Checklist I* documents pre-test administration observations and general observations related to test administration policy, procedures, and security. *Observation Checklist II* documents observations made during the monitored test administration with an emphasis on provided accommodations. Additional members of the monitoring teams (i.e., NCDPI Exceptional Children staff, NCDPI English as a Second Language staff, NCDPI Section 504 staff) will only complete *Observation Checklist II*.

Team members will each observe separate testing sessions using accommodations and, if time allows, a second testing session without accommodations. When the test administrations are complete, the team will review corresponding student IEP/Section 504/LEP/ and/or transitory impairment documentation.

While on site, interviews may be conducted with the school principal, school test coordinator, test administrator, proctor, Exceptional Children teachers, and/or English as a Second Language teachers to gather information about processes and procedures employed prior to and during test administrations. A standard set of questions will be used for each type of interview.

Results and observations from the on-site monitoring visit will not be shared with school system or school building staff prior to leaving the site.

4. State Response and Targeted Assistance: Following the on-site monitoring visit, consultants reconvene at a designated date and time at the NCDPI to discuss observations and potential findings. The team will discuss strengths and weaknesses

of the processes and procedures observed during the visit. The team of consultants will agree on any required or suggested targeted assistance. The team will summarize the monitoring activities, findings, recommendations, targeted assistance, and possible sanctions into a letter that will be emailed and mailed using the US postal service to the superintendent within 90 calendar days of the site visit date. The letter will also provide any additional information regarding follow-up visits, requirements for the submission of additional documentation for review if necessary, and timelines.

### **5. Collaboration among State-level Exceptional Children, English as a Second Language, Testing, and 504 Staff**

The NCDPI has been successful with collaboration and communication across divisions over the last few years through combined monthly meetings (e.g., Testing, EC, and Curriculum meetings known as the TEC meetings, LEP partnership that includes attendance from both Testing and LEP consultants on the state and federal level). Joint committees of staff members are also used to make individual student and school-based decisions (e.g., medical exceptions waivers, accommodation notification requests, waivers for 1% rule). The NCDPI conducts annual statewide meetings and cross-training sessions to support collaboration between school system test coordinators/directors, EC Directors, 504 Coordinators, and/or LEP Coordinators. Collaborative presentations and training development have also been normal protocol.

Exceptional Children, English as a Second Language, Section 504, and Testing staff distribute collaborative memorandums to school system superintendents, EC directors, Section 504 coordinators, LEP coordinators and/or testing directors/coordinators when any related SBE policy undergoes major changes. Collaborative memorandums are also sent as reminders to school systems regarding policy and procedures (e.g., Subject: Accommodations that Invalidate Test Results). Testing consultants to include the RACs, Exceptional Children consultants, Section 504 staff, and English as a Second Language consultants also work closely together to resolve complaints received from the field (e.g., from parents, teachers, child advocates, anonymous individuals).

Effective with the 2009-2010 school year, teams of cross-division state-level staff members will be responsible for conducting on-site monitoring of the use of testing accommodations. This will require collaboration and a coordination of efforts among Exceptional Children, Section 504, English as a Second Language, and Testing professionals. Each section individually serves as an expert in their specialty area, yet will be able to lend one another expertise as it relates to pairing instructional accommodations with testing accommodations. While the work of the team culminates with the on-site visit, it must begin earlier through sharing the plan for on-site assistance along with strategies and techniques that are currently used during on-site monitoring visits (e.g., sharing sample monitoring protocols and documentation that is currently used). This cross-division training will be necessary for building a quality monitoring program and providing coordinated assistance with both instructional and testing accommodations in the school system.

## **6. Communicating and Disseminating Information about the Plan to Local School Systems**

As discussed in a section 1 (i.e., Information Distribution), the North Carolina Testing Program distributes materials through electronic media such as the state public testing website for educators and parents (i.e., [www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing)) and a secure website for school system test coordinators (i.e., Testing News Network), and often as hard copy documents to school systems.

The LEA Test Coordinator's Handbook is produced annually. It is available for search, download, or print on TNN and is distributed in hard copy format to each school system. The purpose of this publication is to provide the superintendent's designee (usually the school system test coordinator) with a single reference for implementing proper test administrations for the North Carolina Testing Program. The handbook includes information regarding the state monitoring plan, guidance for the creation of local testing plans, and additional information about the use of accommodations for students.

Beginning in the fall of 2009, the RACs were informed of the more structured plan for monitoring the use of testing accommodations. Information was shared during each RAC meeting and electronically. RACs have provided a copy of the state plan to monitor accommodations to school system test coordinators/directors. School system test directors/coordinators are required to coordinate changes to local policies and procedures to reflect state requirements (e.g., for local testing plans, for record keeping of school system monitor visits that include IEP reviews).

Detailed information about the plan for monitoring the use of testing accommodations was posted on TNN for school system test directors/coordinators in March 2010. A memo from the NCDPI summarizing the accommodations monitoring requirements for 2009-2010 was posted on TNN and sent to LEA Superintendents on March 9, 2010. In addition, the NCDPI held an informational Webinar on Monitoring Accommodations on March 17, 2010. The purpose of the Webinar was to help districts understand the need to document the provision and use of instructional and testing accommodations for the 2009-2010 school year. State-level Exceptional Children, Section 504, and English as Second Language personnel will be asked to continue to communicate information about the monitored use of testing accommodations during their state and local conferences and through electronic web boards.