

What are accommodations, and who is eligible to receive them?

It is important to ensure that performance in the classroom and on the assessment is influenced as little as possible by a student's disability or linguistic/cultural characteristics that are unrelated to the content being assessed. For PARCC assessments, accommodations are adjustments to the testing situation, test format, or test administration that provide equitable access during assessments for students with disabilities, students who are English learners, and students with disabilities who are also English learners.

To the extent possible, accommodations:

- Provide equitable access during instruction and assessments;
- Mitigate the effects of a student's disability;
- Do not reduce learning or achievement expectations;
- Do not change the construct being assessed; and
- Do not compromise the integrity or validity of the assessment; and
- Should already be familiar to the student.



Accommodations are intended to reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student's disability and/or English language proficiency level; however, accommodations do not reduce learning expectations.

Principals of Accommodations

To the extent possible, accommodations adhere to the following principles:

- Accommodations enable students to participate more fully in instruction and assessments and to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.
- Accommodations selection should be based upon individual student needs and not upon a category of disability, English language proficiency alone, level of instruction, amount of time spent in a general classroom, program setting, or availability of staff.
- Accommodations should be based on a documented need in the instruction/assessment setting and should not be provided for the purpose of giving the student an enhancement that could be viewed as an unfair advantage.
- Accommodations for students with disabilities should be described and documented in the student's appropriate plan (i.e., either the Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 plan).
- Accommodations for English learners should be described and documented in writing.

To learn more, visit: www.MarylandPublicSchools.org and click on "Prepare for PARCC: What Every Parent Should Know."

- Students who are both English learners and students with disabilities may qualify for students with disabilities and English learner accommodations, and should have all accommodations listed in an IEP/ Section 504 plan and other documentation deemed appropriate.
- Accommodations should be implemented during daily instruction as soon as possible after completion and/or approval of the appropriate plan.
- Accommodations should not be introduced for the first time during the testing of a student.
- Accommodations should be monitored for effectiveness.
- Accommodations used for instruction should also be used, if allowable, on district and state assessments.

What are “accessibility features,” and who is eligible to receive them?

On PARCC computer-delivered assessments, accessibility features are tools or preferences that are either built into the assessment system or provided externally by test administrators.

Accessibility features can be used by any student taking the PARCC assessments (i.e., students with or without disabilities, gifted students, English learners, and English learners with disabilities).

Since accessibility features are intended for all students, they are not classified as accommodations. Students should be exposed to the selected features prior to testing, and should have the opportunity to select and practice using them. Accessibility features are intended to benefit a wide range of students, and are available to any student at his or her discretion during testing.

Practice tests with supports will be made available for teacher and student use throughout the year.

A relatively small number of students may require additional accessibility features that are based on their specific needs, but are not required by the vast majority of students (e.g., changing the background or font color on-screen, or text-to-speech for the math assessment). The additional onscreen controls needed for these features might distract other students or interfere with other features or accommodations, and therefore must be “turned on” for a particular student during the test registration process prior to testing. Additional accessibility features, therefore, must be identified ahead of time by students, teachers, and/or parents, whichever provides the greatest benefit to the student. Students may decide, without consequence, whether to actually use the support.

For additional information on accommodations for students taking PARCC, please consult your local school principal. Or visit <http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-accessibility-features-and-accommodations-manual>.