

The Writing Assessment System Pilot and Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
Questions and Answers

	Question	Content-Specific	On-Demand	
Word Processing	1	If/when student is using word processing to complete the Writing Assessment System (WAS), what program is allowed?	<p>Any program is allowed, including full-featured word processing programs. For the content-specific writing tasks/assignments, spelling and grammar check and other similar features may be used.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the Writing Assessment System Pilot at Grades 4 and 7, any program is allowed. For the on-demand writing tasks/assignments, the spelling and grammar check, word prediction, and other similar features must be disabled in order to receive a conventions score. If help functions can <i>not</i> be disabled, students using these computers must be informed and understand that help functions are restricted during the on-demand writing tasks/assignments. Additionally, teachers/test administrators should monitor the on-demand administrations to ensure students are adhering to the restrictions. • For the Writing Assessment System Centrally-Hosted Electronic Pilot at Grade 7, students will use the Writing Assessment System web application to receive the writing tasks/assignments online and will use the text editor provided on the screen to respond. Students may not use any outside word processing programs.
	2	If students use a specific word processor, can they use that word processor for their on-demand writing tasks/assignments (if features can be turned off)?	N/A	Yes, word processors that the students are used to are fine to use. See the response to question 1 for restrictions on the help features.

	Question	Content-Specific	On-Demand
3	In the Administrative Guide it states that students can use full-features word processing programs for the content-specific writing tasks/assignments. Does this include word processing programs that have supports such as text to speech, word prediction, or voice recognition?	Yes, all these features are acceptable to use for the content-specific writing tasks/assignments.	N/A
4	How would we address technology needs for students with visual impairments, particularly for 7th graders?	For the content-specific writing tasks/assignments, any accommodation that is used in instruction is fine to use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the Writing Assessment System Pilot at Grades 4 and 7, most accommodations for students with visual impairments would be acceptable for the on-demand writing tasks/assignments including increasing the font on the screen, using screen magnifiers, and use of a screen reader. Any accommodation used in instruction that allows the student to access a word processing program is acceptable. Whether or not use of the accommodation would result in a valid conventions score would depend on whether the accommodation provided the student with assistance in the area of spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, or other conventions skills. • For the Writing Assessment System Centrally-Hosted Electronic Pilot at Grade 7, most accommodations for students with visual impairments would be acceptable such as increasing the font on the screen and using screen magnifiers. Screen readers may need to be pretested before an actual administration. Larger monitors with lower resolution (if available) may also be of use to students with visual impairments.

	Question	Content-Specific	On-Demand
	5 If a student word processes through voice recognition, is that an allowed accommodation for the on-demand writing tasks/assignments, particularly at 7th grade?	This is an allowable accommodation. Students would still receive a conventions score.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the Writing Assessment System Pilot at Grades 4 and 7, this is an allowable accommodation; however, the student will not receive a conventions score. This is an allowable accommodation for the Writing Assessment System Centrally-Hosted Electronic Pilot at Grade 7,; however, the student will not receive a conventions score. The voice recognition program would need to be pretested to ensure proper functioning prior to an actual administration.
	6 Can the test administrator remind students using word processing to save their work prior to the stretch break?	Yes, students should be reminded to save their work periodically.	
Documentation	7 What is the requirement for this to be denoted on IEPs/Section 504 Plans? Will IEPs/Section 504 Plans need to be changed?	All instructional accommodations are allowed for the content-specific writing tasks/assignments. These do not need to be specified on students' IEPs/Section 504 Plans.	For the on-demand writing tasks/assignments, these should be noted as they were for the previous writing assessment. It is understandable that some IEPs/Section 504 Plans of 7 th graders may need to be changed through the amendment process due to the word processing response mode.
	8 For the writing assessment system, is the prior requirement of testing accommodations being on the IEP for 30 days prior to the assessment still in place given the recent dissemination of information?	No. Because of the ongoing development of this system and its pilot status, IEPs may and should be changed, as necessary, to address the new writing assessment system. It is the expectation of NCDPI that any accommodation that is specified for testing has been used during instruction and similar classroom assessments. Therefore, if a 7 th grade student requires speech-to-text software and has been using it when doing word processing work in the classroom, but it was not previously specified in the student's IEP, it may be added as a testing accommodation, following the proper IEP addendum procedures. Note: For all other assessments, the 30-day requirement remains in place.	

	Question	Content-Specific	On-Demand
	9	The phrase, “designed for maximum flexibility at the local level” is used in the Administrative Guide. Does this mean that at the local level we can determine how this will be documented on IEPs?	Please see Question 7.
	10	If a 7 th grade student uses an adapted keyboard or adapted mouse, will the school need to just document on the IEP, or will this require a unique accommodation request?	No documentation is necessary. Having this accommodation documented on the IEP/Section 504 Plan is adequate. An Accommodation Notification Form is not required for these accommodations.
	11	It has always been stated that whatever accommodations are on the IEP or Section 504 Plan for testing should be based on classroom accommodations. It is not always the norm that students word process at school for longer writing assignments; does this mean that in this case the IEP/Section 504 Plan for testing will look different than the accommodations for classroom work?	While students may not always use a word processor for longer writing assignments, the focus should be when one is used, what accommodations are necessary in order for the student to access it? These are the accommodations that should be documented. All students, including students with disabilities, should be receiving instruction in computer skills. If a student is unable to access the computer because of his or her disability, the IEP team/Section 504 committee may need to discuss and document ways in which those skills can be addressed.
Dictation to a Scribe	12	If a 7 th grade student has Dictation to a Scribe for the content-specific writing tasks/assignments, will the scribe record the response via pencil and paper or word processing?	Either may be done. It is the expectation that the student has used Dictation to a Scribe during instruction and so it should be done during the assessment in the same manner as was used during instruction. The student must be given the opportunity to edit his or her dictated work. If the scribe recorded the response via pencil and paper, it must be transcribed into the word processing program.
	13	Does the Dictation to a Scribe accommodation invalidate the conventions scores? If it is used for the on-demand tasks, will the scribe handwrite it or type it into the word processor?	No, it is an acceptable accommodation for the content-specific writing tasks/assignments. Students would still receive a conventions score. Use of the Dictation to a Scribe accommodation invalidates the conventions scores for the on-demand writing tasks/assignments. It is an allowable accommodation for the content-specific writing tasks/assignments. Please see question 12 regarding the manner in which the scribe will record the response.

	Question	Content-Specific	On-Demand	
NCEXTEND2	14	The Administrative Guide states that students eligible for the NCEXTEND2 Writing Assessment System be administered the test in a classroom separate from students participating in the general test administration. Is this small group considered separate setting? Are the prompts going to be different?	This is an instructional activity and should take place during the course of normal instruction. Each teacher may use NCDPI samples or use them as models for developing their own tasks/assignments.	This should be done in the same manner as was done for the previous writing assessment. The prompts for the on-demand writing tasks/assignments are provided by the NCDPI and are the same for the general assessment as for <i>NCEXTEND2</i> ; the difference is in how the rubric is applied.
	15	Are there different scoring rubrics for the NCEXTEND2 writing assessment?	No, the rubrics are the same for both the general and the <i>NCEXTEND2</i> writing tasks. The difference is in how the rubrics are applied.	
Other	16	The Administrative Guide states that NCCLAS and NCEXTEND1 alternate assessments for writing are available to eligible students...are these the same format as the NCCLAS and NCEXTEND1 that were used last year?	Yes, the NCCLAS and <i>NCEXTEND1</i> assessments are the same format and follow the same timelines as used during the 07–08 school year. If a student’s IEP team plans on him or her using one of these alternate assessments, it must be designated in the IEP. The NCCLAS for writing follows the same timelines as NCCLAS for EOG for reading, mathematics, and science. Training for test administrators should take place prior to the midpoint of the school year. The testing window for <i>NCEXTEND1</i> for writing is during March. Training for test administrators will take place prior to the testing window.	
	17	How much structure can the teacher provide? For example, can the teacher lead the student through the different steps of the writing process, requiring the student to complete a graphic organizer, complete a rough draft, edit the rough draft with feedback, etc?	Teachers should be involved throughout the writing process for the content-specific writing tasks/assignments.	The on-demand writing tasks/assignments must be done independently by the students.

	Question	Content-Specific	On-Demand
18	It states in the Administrative Guide that for the content-specific writing tasks/assignments, students should not have to submit their work on the same day that their topic is assigned. Will extended time be an option? Is there a maximum timeframe for a non-identified student? What would be the maximum timeframe for an identified student?	The content-specific writing tasks/assignments are to be completed within a designated timeline determined locally. Students should be allowed adequate time to plan, draft, revise, and submit their final work. Students should not have to submit their work on the same day that the topic is assigned, and teachers should have flexibility to determine when the final copies are due for each of their students/classes. There is no maximum timeframe for any student and extended time does not apply to content-specific writing tasks/assignments.	The on-demand writing tasks/assignments must be completed within the same day in which they are administered unless a student has the multiple testing sessions (testing over multiple days) accommodation.
19	The Administrative Guide states that multiple test sessions do not have to occur on the same day. Does that include the on-demand writing tasks/assignments as well as the content-specific?	The content-specific writing tasks/assignments are designed to take place over multiple days for all students.	Yes, the LEA/school testing plan should address how multiple test sessions will be handled.

	Question	Content-Specific	On-Demand
20	<p>What is the maximum allowed time for on-demand writing tasks/assignments as opposed to content-specific?</p>	<p>There is no maximum allowed time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the Writing Assessment System Pilot at Grade 4, the recommended testing time is 75 minutes. Any student may receive additional time if needed. • For the Writing Assessment System Pilot at Grade 7, the recommended testing time is 90 minutes. Any student may receive additional time if needed. • For the Writing Assessment System Centrally-Hosted Electronic Pilot at Grade 7, there is a maximum testing time of 90 minutes. However, the electronic timer is preprogrammed for 95 minutes in order to allow for student breaks. In order to disable the electronic timer for students who have the scheduled extended time or multiple test sessions accommodation, the accommodation must be noted in the system prior to testing.