

SPECIAL EDUCATION RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Chapter 11

Information on District-Wide Assessments / Graduation Requirements

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Chapter 11

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The answers in this chapter, as in all the other chapters, are based on special education laws and court decisions in effect at the time of publication. In the area of state testing, the changes in the law have been frequent. Revisions by the State Board of Education and California Legislature are ongoing. If there is a question about the continued legal authority of any information in this chapter, contact CASE, Disability Rights California or a legal resource in your community.

1. What is STAR testing and how will it affect my child?

The Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program measures students' achievement of the "academically rigorous content standards and performance standards" adopted by the State Board of Education. School districts, charter schools, and county offices of education must administer to student in grades 2 through 11, an assessment instrument known as the California Standards Tests (CST). Depending on your child's grade level, the CST tests students' knowledge of reading, written expression, spelling, math, history, social science and science. [California Education Code Sections (Cal. Ed. Code Secs.) 60603(k), 60640 & 60642.5.]

The State Superintendent and Board of Education must adopt levels of performance on these tests that will be the minimum level required for satisfactory performance in the next grade. [Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 60648.] Each school district and county office of education must adopt a policy for the promotion and retention of students between the 2nd and 3rd, 3rd and 4th, and 4th and 5th grades, and between elementary and middle school, and between middle school and high school. The policy regarding retention and promotion must include a method for identifying those students who should be retained and those who are at risk of being retained, based on either the STAR testing results or their grades or other indicators of academic achievement determined by the school district. [Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 48070.5.] For special education students, retention is a decision to be made by the IEP team after considering academic, social, emotional and other factors. The fact that your child may need certain services, supports, accommodations or modifications to have access to the general curriculum should not be used as an excuse for retention. [34 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) Secs. 300.39 & 300.116(e).]

2. Is my child entitled to accommodations or modifications when taking the “STAR test” (CST)?

Special education students do not have to participate in STAR testing. Whether or not to take the test is an IEP team decision, which should be included in the IEP. If your child *does* take the STAR test, she must be provided the accommodations and modifications written in her IEP. The IEP team may decide that a student should take alternate assessments if it determines that she cannot take the regular assessment. The IEP team must state in the IEP why an alternate assessment is necessary and why the assessment chosen by the team is appropriate. [Cal. Ed. Code Secs. 56345(a)(6) & 60640(e).]

Under California regulations, accommodations and modifications are considered a type of testing "variation" — “a change in the manner in which a test is presented or administered, or in how a test taker is allowed to respond . . .” An **accommodation** is a variation in the exam environment or process that does not fundamentally alter what the test measures or affect the comparability of scores. Accommodations may include variations in scheduling, setting, aids, equipment, and presentation format. A **modification** is any variation in the exam environment or process that does fundamentally alter what the test measures or affects the comparability of scores. All accommodations and modifications for testing and for the classroom should be specifically written in the IEP. [5 California Code of Regulations (C.C.R.) Secs. 850(a), (j) & (s).]

Testing variations available to *all* students — with or without disabilities — are:

- (1) Have test directions simplified or clarified.
- (2) Write in test booklets for grades 2 to 11, on the standards-based achievement test inclusive, e.g., underlining, working math problems. Any marks other than those in response circles for grades 2 and 3 must be erased to ensure that the tests can be scored.
- (3) Have as much time as needed within a single sitting to complete a test or test part on the standards-based achievement tests.

In addition, the following variations are available “if regularly used in the classroom”:

- (1) Special or adaptive furniture.
- (2) Special lighting, special acoustics, or visual magnifying or audio amplification equipment.
- (3) An individual carrel or study enclosure.
- (4) Test individually in a separate room provided that an employee of the school, school district, or nonpublic school, who has signed the STAR Test Security Affidavit, directly supervises the pupil.
- (5) Colored overlay, mask, or other means to maintain visual attention to the test or test questions.
- (6) Manually Coded English or American Sign Language to present directions for administration.

[5 C.C.R. Secs. 853.5(a) & (b).]

3. What accommodations and modifications are available for STAR testing?

Students in special education and on 504 plans are permitted to take the STAR test with the following *accommodations*:

- (1) Large print versions.
- (2) Test items enlarged if a font larger than that used on the large print versions is required.
- (3) Braille transcriptions provided by the test contractor.
- (4) Audio or oral presentation of the mathematics, science, or history-social science tests.
- (5) Manually Coded English or American Sign Language to present test questions on the mathematics, science, or history-social science tests.

- (6) For grades 4 to 11 responses marked in test booklet and transferred to the answer document by a school, school district, or nonpublic school employee who has signed the STAR Test Security Affidavit.
- (7) Responses dictated orally, in Manually Coded English or American Sign Language to a scribe for selected-response items (e.g., multiple-choice test questions).
- (8) Responses dictated to a scribe, audio recorder, or speech to text converter on the writing portion of the English-language arts tests, and the student indicates all spelling and language conventions.
- (9) Use of word processing software with spell and grammar check tools turned off, on the writing portion of the English-language arts tests.
- (10) Use of an assistive device that does not interfere with the independent work of the student on the multiple-choice or writing portion of the test.
- (11) Supervised breaks within a section of the test.
- (12) Administration of the test at the most beneficial time of day to the student.
- (13) Administration of any test or test part to be given in a single sitting over more than one day except for the writing portion of the English-language arts tests.
- (14) Test administered by a test examiner to a student at home or in the hospital.
- (15) Extra time within the testing day on the designated achievement test.

[5 C.C.R. Sec. 853.5(c).]

Students in special education and on 504 plans are permitted to take the STAR test with the following *modifications*:

- (1) Calculators, arithmetic tables, or mathematics manipulatives on the mathematics or science tests.
- (2) Audio or oral presentation of the English-language arts tests.
- (3) Manually Coded English or American Sign Language to present test questions on the English-language arts tests.

- (4) Spellcheckers, grammar checkers, or word processing software programs that check or correct spelling and/or grammar on the writing portion of the English-language arts tests.
- (5) Mechanical or electronic devices or other assistive devices that are not used solely to record the student's responses, including but not limited to transcribers, scribes, voice recognition or voice to text software, and that identify a potential error in the student's response or that correct spelling, grammar or conventions on the writing portion of the English-language arts tests.
- (6) Responses dictated orally, in Manually Coded English or American Sign Language to provide an essay response to a scribe and the scribe provides spelling, grammar, and language conventions.
- (7) Dictionary.

[5 C.C.R. Sec. 853.5(d).]

If the IEP or 504 plan calls for an accommodation or modification that is not listed above, the school district can apply to the California Department of Education CDE for review of the requested variation. [5 C.C.R. 853.5(e).] See *CDE Accommodations and Modifications Matrix*, Appendices Section, Appendix R.

Whether you want your child tested with any or all of the above variations depends on various factors. For example, to determine whether your child is appropriately accessing the curriculum or to improve her chances of success in competitive standardized tests, it would be best to provide her with her classroom variations. On the other hand, to determine your child's academic standing in the general education pool of students, you may want to test her without variations.

4. What are the alternate assessments to the STAR Test (CST)?

If the IEP decides that a student should take alternate assessments, it must state in the IEP why an alternate assessment is necessary and why the assessment chosen by the team is appropriate. [Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 56345(a)(6).] There are two alternate assessments:

- (1) **The California Modified Assessment (CMA)** is designed to assess those students whose disabilities preclude them from achieving grade-level proficiency on an assessment of the California content standards (the CST) with or without accommodations. The CMA has been developed to provide more access so students can better demonstrate their knowledge of the content standards.
- (2) **The California Alternative Performance Assessment (CAPA)** is designed to assess those students with significant cognitive disabilities who cannot participate in the CST or the CMA — even with accommodations and/or modifications. CAPA links directly to the California academic content standards at each grade level and accurately reflects the portions of the content standards from kindergarten through high school that are accessible to students with significant cognitive disabilities.

The CMA qualifies as a grade-level standards test for purposes of the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act*; the CAPA does *not*. Districts may exempt up to two percent (2%) of their students from grade-level testing (including every student taking the CAPA) which has a direct impact on the school’s ranking under NCLB. The CDE has emphasized that the IEP team’s selection of a particular alternate assessment (CMA or CAPA) should not be based on the student’s disability or how it affects school ranking. Instead, it should be based on the student’s individual needs.

For more information on alternative assessments, visit the CDE website at www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/participcriteria.asp.

5. What is the “prescribed course of study”?

The prescribed course of study means the minimum number of units or courses students must complete in various subject areas in order to graduate high school. The minimum prescribed course of study for every California district includes: three courses in English, two courses in mathematics (including Algebra I), two in science, three in social studies, one in visual or performing arts or foreign language, and two in physical education. Districts typically require additional core

courses and electives to reach the total units of prescribed study. Students must complete their local district's prescribed course of study in order to receive a diploma. [Cal. Ed. Code Secs. 51224.5 & 51225.3(a).]

6. Is there an alternative way to complete the prescribed course of study?

Yes. The local district board of education “with the active involvement” of parents, administrators, teachers and students, shall adopt alternative means for students to complete the prescribed course of study. This may include: practical demonstration of skills and competencies, supervised work experience or other outside school experience, career technical education classes, courses offered by regional occupational centers or programs, interdisciplinary study, independent study and credit earned at a college or university. [Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 51225.3(b).]

If the IEP team has individualized a course of study for a particular student, that course of study becomes the “prescribed course of study” for satisfying graduation requirements. [Cal. Ed. Code Secs. 51225.3(b) & 56345(b)(1).] Parents should include a written statement in the IEP that the student's individualized course of study meets that requirement.

In addition, the State Board of Education has the general authority to grant a waiver of any requirement of the California Education Code if “necessary or beneficial” to implementing a student's IEP. [Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 56101(a).] This waiver provision applies to a student's individualized prescribed course of study, including the Algebra I graduation requirement. For more information, visit the CDE website at www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/fp/algebra1.asp.

7. How will the state requirement for an exit examination from high school affect my child's entitlement to receive a diploma?

Once a general education student has completed the prescribed course of study, she is required to take and pass a high school exit examination as a condition of graduation. [Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 60851.] The exam tests students in the areas of

language arts and mathematics. [Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 60850(a).] This exit examination is called the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).

As of July 2009, students with disabilities are exempt from the CAHSEE requirements and do not have to *pass* the exam in order to receive a diploma, but must still complete the prescribed course of study. However, most students on a 504 Plan or IEP must *take* the exam in 10th grade, as required by the *No Child Left Behind Act*. This exemption shall last until the State Board of Education either implements an alternative means for students with disabilities to demonstrate achievement in the standards measured by the CAHSEE or determines that an alternative means assessment is not “feasible.” This *may* happen as early as January 2011. [Cal. Ed. Code Secs. 60852.1 & 60852.3(b).] For more information, visit the CDE website’s Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) at www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/cahseefaexempt.asp.

Students with “significant cognitive disabilities” are not required to take the CAHSEE, but will instead take the California Alternative Performance Assessment (CAPA).

After January 2011, check with CASE, Disability Rights California, and/or the CDE website for up-to-date CAHSEE requirements for students with disabilities.

8. If a student with a disability left high school without passing the CAHSEE before the exemption went into effect, can she still get a diploma?

Yes. If a special education student has not reached age 22, she may re-enroll and the district may be required to reopen and revise an IEP for this student.

Appropriate revisions should include additional quality instruction to help the student pass the CAHSEE and may include receiving a diploma without passing the exam if the student has satisfied all other graduation requirements. A student who was on a 504 Plan during high school should contact her local school district for its policy regarding issuance of a diploma under the exemption statute.

9. What accommodations are available to students taking the CAHSEE?

Although not required to *pass* the exam in order to receive a diploma, students with disabilities shall be permitted to take the CAHSEE with the following accommodations or variations. These must be specified in their IEP or 504 Plan for use on the CAHSEE, standardized testing, or during classroom instruction and assessments.

“Presentation” accommodations include:

- (1) Large print versions in 20-point font.
- (2) Examination enlarged if larger than 20-point font is required.
- (3) Braille transcriptions provided by the test contractor.
- (4) Audio or oral presentation of the mathematics section of the examination.
- (5) Manually Coded English or American Sign Language to present test questions on the mathematics section of the examination.

“Response” accommodations include:

- (1) Responses marked in test booklet and transferred to the answer document by a school, school district, or nonpublic school employee who has signed the Test Security Affidavit.
- (2) Responses dictated orally, or in Manually Coded English or in American Sign Language to a scribe for selected-response items (e.g., multiple-choice test questions).
- (3) Responses dictated orally or in Manually Coded English to a scribe, audio recorder or speech-to-text converter on the writing portion of the examination, and the eligible student or eligible adult student indicates all spelling and language conventions.
- (4) Word processing software with spell and grammar check tools turned off on the writing portion of the examination.

- (5) An assistive device that does not interfere with the independent work of the eligible student or eligible adult student on the multiple choice or writing portion of the examination.

“Scheduling/timing” accommodations include:

- (1) Testing over more than one day after consultation with the test contractor.
- (2) Supervised breaks within a section of the examination.
- (3) Administration of the examination at the most beneficial time of day to the eligible student or eligible adult student after consultation with the test contractor.

“Setting” accommodations include tests administered by a test examiner to an eligible student or eligible adult student at home or in the hospital. [5 C.C.R. Secs. 1215.5(a)-(e).]

Variations include :

- (1) Extra time within a testing day.
- (2) Test administration directions, but not test questions, that are simplified or clarified.
- (3) Marks by student in test booklets (other than responses), including highlighting.
- (4) Testing students in small group setting.

Students may have the following testing variations *if regularly used in the classroom*:

- (1) Special lighting or special acoustics; or special or adaptive furniture.
- (2) Visual magnifying or audio amplification equipment.
- (3) Noise buffers (for example, an individual study enclosure).
- (4) Testing individual students in a separate room, if that the student is directly supervised by an employee of the school district or nonpublic school who has signed a Test Security Affidavit.

- (5) Colored overlay, mask, or other means to maintain visual attention to the CAHSEE or test items.
- (6) Manually Coded English or American Sign Language to present test administration directions, but not test items.

[5 C.C.R. Sec. 1215.]

According to state regulations, the use of accommodations on the exam will not invalidate an eligible student's test score. [5 C.C.R. Sec. 1215.5(f).] Similarly, although not specifically stated, the use of *variations* should not invalidate test scores.

10. What modifications are available to students taking the CAHSEE?

Although not required to pass the exam in order to receive a diploma, students with disabilities shall be permitted to take the CAHSEE with the following modifications — which “fundamentally alter what the examination measures or affect the comparability of scores.” These must be specified in their IEP or 504 plan for use on the CAHSEE, standardized testing, or during classroom instruction and assessments.

- (1) Arithmetic table, calculators, or math manipulatives on the mathematics section of the examination.
- (2) Audio or oral presentation of the English-language arts section of the examination.
- (3) Manually Coded English or American Sign Language to present test questions on the English-language arts section of the examination.
- (4) Spellcheckers, grammar checkers, or word processing software programs that check or correct spelling and/or grammar on the writing portion of the examination.
- (5) Mechanical or electronic devices or other assistive devices that are not used solely to record the eligible student's or eligible adult student's responses, including but not limited to transcribers, scribes, voice

recognition or voice-to-text software, and that identify a potential error in the eligible student's or eligible adult student's response or that correct spelling, grammar or conventions on the writing portion of the examination.

- (6) Responses dictated orally, in Manually Coded English, or in American Sign Language to provide an essay response to a scribe and the scribe provides spelling, grammar, and language conventions.

[5 C.C.R. Sec. 1216(b).] See *CDE Accommodations and Modifications Matrix*, Appendices Section, Appendix R.

11. If a student takes the CAHSEE using modification(s) and receives a passing score, does she still need a waiver from the local board of education to receive a diploma?

No. Currently, students with disabilities do not need to pass the CAHSEE in order to receive a diploma. However, the local board of education waiver requirements still remain in state law for those students who take the CAHSEE with modification(s). Since the State Board of Education may change the current requirements after January 2011, check CASE, Disability Rights California and/or the CDE website for up-to-date CAHSEE requirements. [Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 60851(c); 5 C.C.R. Sec. 1216(c).]

12. What should I do if the variation (accommodation or modification) my child needs on the CAHSEE is not on the approved list?

If you or the district are not sure about a particular variation, the district may file a request CDE for a case-by-case determination of whether the proposed variation will be valid for use on the CAHSEE. The request must be received by CDE at least 30 working days before the student takes the exam. The request must include:

- (1) A description of the requested variation(s);

- (2) A certification that the IEP or Section 504 plan specifies that the requested variation is appropriate and necessary to access the exam due to the student's disability; and
- (3) The variation is currently listed in the IEP or 504 Plan.

CDE will determine whether the requested variation fundamentally alters what the test measures, and its determination is final. The CDE must make its decision within 15 working days of receiving a request. [5 C.C.R. Sec. 1218.]

13. Is there any special tutoring available to students to prepare them for the CAHSEE?

Students who have not passed the CAHSEE by the end of 12th grade are entitled to intensive instruction and services for up to two consecutive school years or until they pass both parts of the exam, whichever comes first. [Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 1240(c)(2)(J)(iv).]

Intensive instruction and services may include, but are not limited to, all of the following:

- (1) Individual or small group instruction;
- (2) Hiring additional teachers;
- (3) Purchasing, scoring, and reviewing diagnostic assessments;
- (4) Counseling;
- (5) Designing instruction to meet specific needs of eligible students;
- (6) Teacher training to meet the needs of eligible students; and
- (7) Instruction in English-language arts or mathematics, or both, that eligible students need to pass those parts of the exit exam they have not yet passed.

Intensive instruction and services may be provided during the regular school day. However, they may not take the place of the student's core curriculum areas or physical education. Instruction and services may also be provided on Saturdays,

evenings, or at a time and location determined by the district. [Cal. Ed. Code Secs. 37254(c)(2) & (3).]

The Uniform Complaint Procedure should be used to resolve any deficiencies related to the instruction and services. [Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 35186].

For more information, visit the CDE website at www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/ab347qa.asp.

14. If my child meets the graduation requirements and receives a diploma, does special education eligibility end?

Yes. Graduation with a regular high school diploma will make your child ineligible for further special education services. Graduation with a regular diploma is a change of placement for special education students. [34 C.F.R. Sec. 300.102(a)(3)(i); Cal. Ed. Code Secs. 56026.1(a), 56500.4 & 56500.5.] The district must send you a prior written notice (a reasonable amount of time before this change in placement) which includes: a description of what the district intends to do, an explanation of the reasons for the action, a description of any alternatives the district considered and why those were rejected, and a description of the reports, tests, and procedures on which the action is based. [34 C.F.R. Secs. 300.102(a)(3)(iii) & 300.503.] Without this required notice, the district's proposal to graduate your child may be inappropriate. [*Union School District v. Smith*, 15 F.3d 1519 (9th Cir. 1994).] However, no new evaluation of your child is required before awarding her a regular high school diploma. [34 C.F.R. Sec. 300.305(e)(2); Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 56381(e).] If you disagree with the IEP team's determination that your child will graduate, you may file for due process.

15. If a student did not receive adequate transition planning or services, can she continue to be eligible for special education?

Yes. A special education student with an IEP is entitled to transition planning and services beginning at age 16, or younger if appropriate. These services are part of that student's prescribed course of study and a fundamental prerequisite to

awarding a diploma. Although a student may have completed all other requirements in the district's prescribed course of study, and earned the necessary units for graduation and passed the CAHSEE, she may continue to be eligible for special education services if the district has not provided him appropriate and individualized transition services before she receives a diploma. [Cal. Ed. Code Secs. 56345(a)(8) & (b)(1).] See Chapter 10, *Information on Transition and Vocational Education*.

16. When my child reaches the age of 18, will she begin to make decisions regarding the IEP or will I continue to be the decision-maker for educational purposes?

At age 18, educational decision-making authority transfers from the parent to the student, unless the student has been determined incompetent under California law. The school district must notify both you and your child of the transfer of rights and must provide a notice of procedural safeguards no later than one year before your child turns 18. [34 C.F. R. Sec. 300.520; Cal. Ed. Code Secs. 56041.5 & 56043(g)(3).] If a student has not been determined incompetent by any court, she has the legal authority to make all necessary educational decisions. The student has the option of making all of these decisions on her own, or including parents in the IEP decision-making process. She may also assign educational decision-making authority to a parent, if she chooses to do so. See *Assignment of Educational Decision-Making Authority form*, Appendices Section, Appendix P.

A school district could take the position that a student is legally incompetent to make her own decisions — including a decision to assign her educational rights to a parent — and needs to have a court-appointed “conservator.”

However, the decision to seek a conservatorship is *yours*, not the district's. You *may* wish to consult an attorney and/or others about the benefits and disadvantages of filing a petition for limited or full conservatorship with the superior court. Only a court of law may make a determination of competency or capacity.

17. If my child is not receiving a regular diploma, but will receive a certificate of achievement or completion, is she still eligible for special education?

Your child is eligible for special education services until the academic year in which she reaches the age of 22, unless she meets graduation requirements before that time. [34 C.F.R. Sec. 300.102(a)(3)(ii); Cal. Ed. Code Secs. 56026(c)(4) & 56026.1.] Your non-graduating child may, however, receive a “certificate of achievement” (“certificate of completion”) at the end of the typical senior year or at any time before she exits the school district at age 22. The certificate may provide some recognition to students who meet their IEP goals or complete a prescribed alternative course of study, but who will not receive a regular diploma. The certificate was also created to overcome objections by district officials who believe special education students should not participate in graduation ceremonies with their same-age peers when they are not being awarded a diploma. Because a certificate does not end eligibility, a student who receives a certificate could continue working toward a regular diploma. [Cal. Ed. Code Secs. 56390 & 56392.]

In addition, the district must continue to provide your child needed transition services. [Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 56345(a)(8).] You should discuss, and write into the IEP, how your child’s goals addressing transition will be completed before all services from the district have ended.

18. If my child is receiving a certificate of achievement or completion, can she participate in the graduation ceremony and related activities?

According to state law, a student receiving a certificate of achievement or completion has the right to participate in graduation ceremonies and any school activity related to graduation. [Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 56391.] Districts, *may*, but are not required to award a certificate of achievement or completion. [Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 56390.] However, if participating in graduation-related activities is specified

in your child's IEP (as part of her participation in integrated activities at school), the district must implement the IEP and allow him to participate in the graduation activities. You should address this participation in the IEP, beginning with your discussion of transition at age 16 or younger. This will ensure enough time to take any necessary action to resolve disagreements before the graduation ceremony.

19. If the school district and I disagree on whether my child is ready to graduate, can I challenge the district's decision?

Before a diploma is issued, the school district must convene an IEP team meeting to decide whether your child should graduate. This is because graduation is a significant change in placement. Once the district decides that a disabled student will graduate, you (and/or she) have due process rights to challenge the district's decision. [34 C.F.R. Sec. 300.507; Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 56500.4.] The IEP team should meet at an appropriate time *before* graduation to review your child's program to ensure that graduation requirements will be met, and that the goals and objectives in the IEP will be completed.

The district will be expected to provide prior written notice within a reasonable time before graduation. This is to ensure that there is sufficient time for you and your child to plan for or challenge the pending graduation. [34 C.F.R. Secs. 300.102(a)(3)(iii) & 300.503; Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 56500.5.] Failure to provide the required notice would be a procedural violation. This could make the proposed graduation inappropriate. [*Union School District v. Smith*, 15 F.3d 1519 (9th Cir. 1994).]

If you file for due process to challenge graduation, the "stay-put" provision applies and the district is required to maintain your child's placement and implement the IEP during due process proceedings. [20 United States Code (U.S.C.) Sec. 1415(j); 34 C.F.R. Sec. 300.518; Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 56505(d).] If your child's IEP specifies that she will participate in graduation ceremonies without receiving a diploma or certificate, that aspect of the IEP must be implemented — even if you challenge the district's decision that your child should graduate.

20. If my child plans to take the SAT college admissions exam, will she automatically be granted an accommodation if she has an IEP or 504 plan?

No. Even if your child has an IEP or 504 Plan that includes testing accommodations, she still must apply to the College Board, which administers the SAT, to get approval for an accommodation. You must submit documentation of your child's disability and how the disability limits an ability function in the testing situation in time to get a decision (and appeal if necessary) before the testing dates.

The documentation must meet these seven College Board documentation guidelines:

- (1) **State the specific disability**, as diagnosed. The diagnosis should be made by a person with appropriate professional credentials, should be specific, and, when appropriate, should relate the disability to the applicable professional standards, or example, DSM-IV.
- (2) Generally, the evaluation and diagnostic testing should **be current and have taken place within five years of the request** for accommodations. For psychiatric disabilities, an annual evaluation update must be within 12 months of the request for accommodations. For visual disabilities, documentation should be within two years. For physical/medical disabilities, an update must be within one year from the time of the request.
- (3) **Provide relevant educational, developmental, and medical history.**
- (4) **Describe the comprehensive testing and techniques** used to arrive at the diagnosis. Include **test results with subtest scores** (standard or scaled scores) for all tests.
- (5) **Describe the functional limitations.** Explain how the disability impacts your child's daily functioning and ability to participate in the test.
- (6) Describe the **specific accommodations** being requested on College Board tests, including the amount of extended time required or the maximum amount of time your child can be tested in a day, if applicable. State why the disability qualifies your child for such accommodations on standardized tests.

- (7) Establish the **professional credentials of the evaluator** (for example, licensure; certification; area of specialization).

In addition, you should describe the **functional limitation** of the disability. Usually, this is included in the documentation required above. However, there are other ways to demonstrate functional limitation:

- (1) Psycho-educational evaluation, including both test scores and narrative (should always be included when the student has a learning disability or ADHD).
- (2) Standardized test scores, using national norms to support both the diagnosis and functional limitation (include standard/scaled scores).
- (3) Summary of your child's developmental, educational and/or medical history.
- (4) Teachers' observations.
- (5) Where applicable, results of speech and language or occupational therapy evaluations.

Doctor's notes, Section 504 plans or IEPs are not sufficient to document a request for accommodations. Statements without supporting information are also not sufficient. In most cases, test scores, including subtest scores, are needed. The documentation should show not only that the student is disabled, but that she requires the *specific* accommodation being requested. It is critical that you provide, and emphasize, your child's history of need and the kinds of accommodations that have been provided in the past and present to support her educational achievement.

The accommodation eligibility guidelines and application procedures for the ACT are similar to the College Board's. For information, visit <http://www.act.org/aap/disab/>.

21. What types of accommodations are available on the SAT?

Accommodations — but not *modifications* — are the only type of testing variations which a student test taker is allowed for the SAT. The College Board website lists examples of testing accommodations.

Accommodations can be approved for **how testing materials are presented** (for example, large-print materials, reader), **how responses are recorded** (for example, computer, Braille recorder), **how tests are timed** (extended time, extra breaks), or **general testing environment**. Many of these accommodations require in-school testing, but some of the accommodations can be offered in the nonstandard testing rooms at test centers.

Some adjustments to the test setting can be provided in the standard testing rooms, such as wheelchair accessibility, seating that allows a student to lip-read, and writing answers in the test book.

For more information on accommodations for the SAT, visit <http://www.collegeboard.com/ssd>.

22. If my child is denied the use of accommodations, can she appeal the decision?

There is no formal appeals process, but you may provide more information and resubmit your request. Once you have made a request for accommodations, the College Board will send you a decision letter that:

- (1) Requests More Information;
- (2) Gives Partial Approval; or
- (3) Determines that Documentation does not Support Accommodation.

If you have new information or information not previously provided, you may submit the additional documentation to the College Board for another review. If you do not understand why the request was denied, you may request to speak with

Information on District-Wide Assessments / Graduation Requirements

College Board clinical staff for a better explanation of why accommodations were not provided. For more information, visit

<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/ssd/application/after/denied> .