Frequently Asked Questions: Accommodations for MAP® Assessments

I have recently seen two different versions of NWEA’s allowable accommodations this fall. Which one is correct?

In August 2012, NWEA published an updated list of allowable accommodations for MAP assessments. This recent update has caused confusion among some of our partners. For the most current list of allowable accommodations for MAP assessments, please visit http://www.nwea.org/accommodations. Here you will find added clarification on interpreting test results.

What is being done to clarify NWEA’s position on allowable accommodations?

NWEA has created a single information source to provide a list of allowable accommodations for MAP assessments at http://www.nwea.org/accommodations. This web page will serve as the primary source for accommodation information. Subsequently, any future updates will be communicated in advance before these changes are implemented.

Will the recent changes to allowable accommodations affect the NWEA norms?

No. Recent changes to the list of allowable accommodations will not affect NWEA norms. When a student is provided an accommodation(s) for an assessment, interpretation of the student’s score must ultimately be determined using professional judgment.

If a student is given an accommodation that is not on the current NWEA allowable accommodations list, that score may be an unrealistic estimate of the student’s achievement level. Referencing the norms with such a score may impact the comparability of the student’s score relative to the norm sample.

If you choose to provide an accommodation not listed in the Allowable Accommodations, NWEA recommends the test is recorded as administered with a non-standard accommodation provided to the student. Please refer to the instructions on How to Track Accommodations to record this non-standard administration.

Where else is NWEA’s accommodations information available?

The Proctor Handbook and Teacher Handbook also provide accommodations information. In an effort to update all accommodations references, these handbooks have been updated with the new webpage. All future updates will be made to this webpage: http://www.nwea.org/accommodations.

Why can all parts of the test question be read aloud to the students, but not the answer options?

NWEA believes that not reading the answer options aloud will reduce the amount of potential bias that can occur. Individuals providing assistance to a student by reading an item will vary in how they do so, e.g., it is hard to control for tone and inflection while reading the answer options. This may cue or miscue the student to particular answer option choice. If a student needs to have question and answer options read aloud because of varying circumstances (e.g., Individualized Education Program (IEP), Section 504 Plan, etc.), NWEA recommends the test is recorded as given
with a non-standard accommodation to indicate this accommodation was given to the student. Please refer to the instructions on How to Track Accommodations to record this non-standard administration.

How do I track which accommodations I’m providing my students?

To record accommodations provided, NWEA recommends you confirm which MAP platform your district or school uses, Client/Server MAP or Web-based MAP, and use the applicable option below:

1) In Client/Server MAP, print the Accommodations Checklist and record the student name(s) and accommodation(s) provided.
2) In Web-based MAP use the Assign Accommodations feature. The Assign Accommodations button appears when you set up testing sessions (Test Students page) or test students (Set Up Testing page). A box opens with a list of accommodations you can select. It is a shortened version of the list of accommodations in the NWEA Accommodation guideline at http://www.nwea.org/accommodations. If an accommodation is provided a student which is not on the list provided by NWEA in this box, it is recommended that a record is kept of such an accommodation, such as use of a calculator when one is not presented with a math item. You should print off the Accommodations Checklist and record the student’s name and the accommodation provided as described (1), above, and maintain that record.

What is the definition of an “allowable” accommodation?

NWEA no longer uses the term “allowable” to accommodations because this has caused confusion with respect to accommodations contained in IEP and 504 Plans. The states vary widely on the guidance they provide regarding what is an allowable accommodation and how IEP or 504 Plan teams should determine what is appropriate (allowable) for a student. Going forward, instead of trying to define what is allowable when administering the MAP test, NWEA has developed General Guidelines for Accommodations and provided a list of Accommodations which it believes, in its professional judgment, will be irrelevant or only minimally affect the validity of a student’s test score. In addition, NWEA has included a NOTE accompanying certain Presentation accommodations to indicate that there are inherent concerns about how those particular accommodations may affect the student’s test score, such as Native language translation (oral or signing) of test directions. If an accommodation is not on the list provided by NWEA in its Guidelines, NWEA does not express an opinion as to whether it is appropriate or not to administer it if provided for in a student’s IEP or 504 Plan. Test Proctors should look for guidance from the district and state policy regarding use of accommodation pursuant to a student’s IEP or 504 Plan.

Should a student’s IEP or 504 Plan take priority over NWEA’s list of accommodation as to what should be permitted during testing?

Proctors should always look to their State or District’s Guidance on the use of Accommodations. For example, NWEA does not list calculators as an accommodation for students in Mathematics unless the calculator is provided in the test with the item. NWEA is saying by implication that it believes the use of a calculator in those instances where it is not provided with a Math item may have an impact on the student’s scores. However, should a student’s IEP or 504 Plan Team choose to provide a calculator to a student as an accommodation during MAP testing when the MAP item does not do so, the school/district should consider that in interpreting the student’s Math scores, particularly if such scores are being used for high stakes purposes such as teacher evaluation or promotion or retention in a course, classroom or grade.