

Testing Accommodations for Homeschooled Children
with Special Needs in NYS
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According to the New York Codes, Rules and Regulations on Homeschooling 8 NYCRR § 100.10 (h), “At the time of filing the fourth quarterly report as specified in the IHIP, the parent shall also file an annual assessment in accordance with the subdivision. The annual assessment shall include the results of a commercially published norm-referenced achievement test which meets the requirements of paragraph (1) of this subdivision or an alternate form of evaluation which meets the requirements of paragraph (2) of this subdivision.” Paragraph (1) of the subdivision lists the commercially published norm-referenced achievement tests recognized by the New York State Department of Education. Paragraph (2) of the subdivision describes the “Alternate evaluation methods”, the written narrative assessment.

A parent must consider several things prior to testing their child. In the public school system, standardized tests are used to determine how the school district is meeting state standards as well as what students take the various “tracks” – special education, regular education, or advanced placement. Generally, the school district does not use these tests as teaching tools. In your own formal education, did your public or private school teacher ever go over the results of your standardized test with you? The results of these tests always seemed to be a big secret. Testing is a tool that should be used to determine how quickly a child is learning material that is presented. If a child has gotten a question incorrect, it is the teacher’s responsibility to help the child understand their error and to assist the child in correcting it. If a test is used in this manner, it is being used as an effective teaching tool.

Parents’ homeschooling children with special needs need to ask an important question prior to giving their child a standardized test. “Does my child have a disability that will negatively impact their ability to demonstrate their knowledge of the material being tested?” If you answered “Yes,” your child may need testing accommodations in order to successfully demonstrate their knowledge of material being tested.

What are testing accommodations?

As defined in the Testing Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Policy and Tools Guide Decision-Making and Implementation – February 2018 published by the New York State Education Department:

“Testing accommodations are changes in testing materials or procedures that enable students to participate in assessments in a way that assesses abilities rather than disabilities. The purpose of testing accommodations is to enable students with disabilities to participate in assessment programs on an equal basis with their nondisabled peers. Testing accommodations provide an opportunity for students with disabilities to demonstrate skills and attainment of knowledge without being limited or unfairly restricted due to the effects of a disability. Testing accommodations promote the access of students with disabilities to assessment programs, as well as to more challenging courses and programs. The student’s individual needs must drive the recommendation for testing accommodations, and testing accommodations should alter the standard administration of the test to the least extent possible.”

A complete of testing accommodations allowed by the New York State Department of Education can be found at: <https://www.nysed.gov/special-education/testing-accommodations-guide>

If a parent homeschooling their child feels that their child may need testing accommodations, they are not required to go through their local school district to get them. Instead, they may choose to get their private service provider to recommend the appropriate accommodation(s). Parents should check with the specific test publisher of the achievement test they plan to use on what they require for an accommodation to be given. Generally, the private service provider should be a competent and appropriate professional person in the student's disability. The private service provider should also confirm the specific justification for administering the test under the requested conditions.

The written verification obtained privately is done through an evaluation. The evaluation may be a psychological or neuropsychological evaluation. The evaluation may also “label” your child with a diagnosis. The initial evaluation process required to determine if testing accommodations are needed can take a few weeks to complete, so do not wait until the month before you need the testing accommodations to try and get them! If you choose to have the evaluation done through your school district, you will not have to pay for it. If you choose to have your child evaluated privately, you have to pay for that cost out of your own pocket. Some medical insurance plans may cover all or part of this cost.

Information on testing accommodations for the GED is available at:
<https://www.ged.com/about-test/accommodationsundertheadaa.html>

Information on testing accommodations for the PSAT/SAT is available at:
<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/special-circumstances/students-with-disabilities>

For additional information on ways to help homeschooled children with special learning needs, please go to www.hslda.org

Tips for Preparing to Take a Standardized Test:

If your child has never taken a standardized test before, please don't expect them to be a perfect student and take the test as specified in the testing directions. Asking your child to do that would be like asking them to drive your car to the local grocery store, purchase some milk, and drive home. A young child can't do that.

Regardless of whether or not your child has testing accommodations, some helpful hints for preparing for standardized testing include:

- 1) Purchasing and using Test Prep books for your child's grade level. For example: McGraw-Hill Children's Publishing Spectrum Test Prep books.
- 2) Start practicing at least two months prior to testing.
- 3) After you obtain a copy of the standardized test that you have chosen to give your child, review the directions thoroughly. If you have any questions, contact the testing service that provided the test.
- 4) After you review the test directions, review the content of the test. Make sure to note any material that your child may not have been taught yet.
- 5) Teach your child any material that they have not yet been taught. It is unfair to test a child on material that they have not been exposed to.
- 6) Relax! A relaxed atmosphere yields better performance and will prevent emotional breakdowns by the student and yes, the teacher.
- 7) After your child has taken the test and all of their answers have been recorded on the bubble sheet, go over it with them. Go over any questions that were answered incorrectly. Use the test as a teaching tool.
- 8) Celebrate a job well done! Take your child out for a special lunch. Have an end of the school year party. Do something to celebrate your child's efforts and completion of the test.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5