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Assessment & Accommodations

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THE WORLD IS FULL of examples of accommodations that permit people with disabilities to perform specific tasks they might not otherwise be able to. Drivers with poor vision wear glasses or contacts, elevators mark the buttons in Braille, and voters with disabilities may be given assistance by the person of their choice.

Accommodations play an important role in educational settings, too, particularly for students whose disabilities interfere with performing *learning* tasks (such as reading a book, taking notes in class, or writing an essay) or *testing* tasks (such as getting through the items within the time limit or filling in the circles on a multiple-choice test). A critical part of teaching and assessing students with disabilities, then, is providing them with accommodations that support learning *and* that support their ability to show what they know and can do.

But what accommodations are appropriate for which students? How do accommodations affect students' learning and their performance on tests? This *Evidence for Education* addresses these and other questions and explores the research base in this area. Commentary from education professionals and examples from the field are included to highlight practical tools and

resources designed to help educators and families determine appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities.

The Big Picture: Expectations, Content, and Testing

ASSESSMENT IN SCHOOL is not a casual affair—not for the school, district, or state that must demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP) as part of public accountability—and not for students working to meet high performance standards. More than ever before, students with disabilities are included in the high performance standards states establish and in the required testing they conduct. In fact, federal law mandates it. Both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) call for students with disabilities to participate in the general education curriculum and in testing programs to the maximum extent possible for each student. Because of these laws, schools have become accountable in new and significant ways for the education of all students with disabilities.