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Subject: gw Non-Standard Accommodations for AYP and Report Cards

Date: January 28, 2009

To: Superintendents
District Testing Coordinators
District Report Card Coordinators
District Special Education Coordinators

Subject: Non-Standard Accommodations/Modifications for AYP and Report Cards

Last week, districts received information from SCDE regarding federal requirements for non-standard accommodations (also called modifications) for students with disabilities. The information specifically referenced the oral administration of ELA and the use of a calculator for Math on PACT/PASS in grades 3 and 4.

There has been much discussion about the impact of this requirement and the following decisions have been made, for the current time:

1. For the 2008-2009 school year, there will be no change in the way AYP is calculated based on this requirement. That means that students using either of those non-standard accommodations/modifications will be included in the participation and performance calculations for AYP if their IEPs indicate such modifications.
2. For the 2008-2009 school year, there will be no change in the way ratings are calculated for the state report card. That means that performance levels will be assigned point values normally and those will be included in normal calculations.
3. For the 2009-2010 school year, students with such modifications will be excluded from participation calculations (lowering the percent tested value) and will be counted as not proficient in the performance calculations (possibly lowering the percent proficient value).
4. Additional discussions will be held before a decision is made about the impact on report card ratings for 2009-2010 and beyond.

The decision to wait until the 2009-2010 school year to implement this requirement is based on the following statement in the federal regulations and guidance:

"A State...must develop guidelines for the appropriate use of accommodations in State...assessments. The guidelines must: (a) identify the accommodations for each assessment that do not invalidate the test score; and (b) instruct IEP teams to select, for each assessment, only those accommodations that do not invalidate the score."

We feel that districts have not been given sufficient time, in this school year, to "instruct IEP teams" regarding these requirements.

The implications of the requirements about the modifications in grades 3 and 4 are important to understand. The PACT/PASS tests in those grades assess different skills and knowledge from what is tested in grades 5 through 8.

The PACT/PASS ELA component in grades 3 and 4 is an assessment of reading. An oral administration does not assess reading and is, thus, a non-standard accommodation/modification. The PACT/PASS ELA component in grades 5 through 8 is an assessment of comprehension; thus, an oral administration can be used for that purpose.

The PACT/PASS Math component in grades 3 and 4 is an assessment of computational skills; thus, the use of a calculator can bypass the assessment of those skills. In grades 5 through 8, the PACT/PASS Math component is an assessment of arithmetic applications. The use of a calculator does not interfere with that type of assessment.

If you have additional questions the impact on AYP and report cards, please let me know.

Gary

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