

New Standardization Policies Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. Why were these policies put into place?

The new standardization policies were put into place in an effort to increase standardization and promote independent student test taking. Standardization promotes test validity, and the types of activities described in the policies have the potential to influence student test taking behavior.

While the policies are addressed to test administrators, they also apply to proctors and any school personnel who enter the room during testing (e.g., school assessment coordinator, principal). **ALL school staff and proctors must be aware of and adhere to the new policies.**

2. If one of the new policies is violated, are we required to invalidate student tests?

No. The sole purpose of these policies is to improve test administration practices. If a test administrator violates one of the new policies, that behavior may be addressed at the local level, and retraining may be appropriate.

If there is a case where invalidation is being considered, the individual factors of that case must determine the decision to invalidate. District assessment coordinators are encouraged to reach out to the Bureau of K–12 Student Assessment for guidance with difficult invalidation decisions.

3. Can teachers still teach students test taking strategies to use during testing?

Yes. The new standardization policies are not intended to keep teachers from instructing students about various strategies throughout the year. These policies outline prohibited activities once the test materials are in the testing room.

4. Can the test administrator (TA) wake up a sleeping student during testing?

Discretion must be used on a case-by-case basis. Please see the scenarios below:

1. A student falls asleep as soon as or shortly after the session begins. The TA may wake up the student. If the student continues to fall asleep after reasonable attempts to wake him or her up, the student should either be left alone or removed from the testing room. To help make a decision to remove the student:
 - Consider whether the student may be ill. If the student does not leave campus, another attempt may be made for the student to complete testing that same day.
 - Consider whether the situation may be disruptive, either by the attempts to wake the student or the influence on other students. If the student does not leave campus, another attempt may be made for the student to complete testing that same day.

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2. A student who has been actively testing closes his or her book and puts his or her head down or falls asleep. In this case, it should be assumed that the student is finished testing and should not be disturbed. The department does not have a timeframe for this scenario (e.g., after 30 minutes of testing). Because the TA is actively monitoring the room and has observed the student engaged with the test, the TA should not intervene based on how long they think it should take for a student to finish the test.

Please remind TAs that if a student does not seem well on a testing day, perhaps that student should be tested on a makeup day. This includes if a student did not get adequate rest and will be unable to fully engage in testing because he or she is too tired.

5. Can a TA redirect a student who seems not to be on task and not actively taking the test?

If the student is being disruptive, yes. However, if the student is sitting with his or her test materials and just does not seem to be engaged, the student should be left alone. Reminders from the script may be given during the break.

6. If a district decides to provide language from the script to be displayed on a poster in the testing room, do all classrooms have to post the resource?

This is entirely up to the district.

7. If a student has verbal encouragement on his/her IEP/Section 504 Plan, does that student now need to be tested in a small group so it's not seen as an unfair advantage?

This is up to the school's discretion. If in normal classroom practice, this student receives accommodations, other students may not notice or be affected by it. If it may be a distraction or cause questions from other students, the school may choose to test these students in an alternate location.

8. Are behavior incentives prohibited, such as rewarding students who behave well during testing with a Good Behavior ticket to be redeemed for an ice cream party?

Yes. A behavior incentive requires students to know that they are being actively monitored during the test session for this purpose, which could distract them. However, providing a celebration or reward after testing not contingent upon specific testing behaviors is certainly permitted.

9. What about "pep rallies" prior to testing?

The new policies do not address or disallow district-approved activities that are planned before testing.

10. Can we provide attendance incentives this spring?

Yes. Incentives for students who attend school on testing days do not affect student behavior during testing.

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11. Can we post reminders from the script on the inside of students' testing carrels?

No. Information from the scripts may only be posted to general areas of the room.

12. If students have an extended time accommodation and are ready to submit, can the TA ask, "Are you finished?"

Yes. The test administrator may clarify with students to determine if they are finished with testing when a session is ending and students may need to use additional time.

13. Are TAs allowed to encourage students to use their accommodations (e.g., reminders to use their highlighter) during testing?

Test administrators should adhere to what is stated in the IEP and what they've discussed with parents/guardians about how the accommodation will be implemented. More specificity in the IEPs would help define what the expectations are during instruction or testing. Schools should have a plan for when the student will be offered/reminded of using their accommodations, similar to the process they use during instruction. However, TAs should be mindful of the policies if it is clear that a student is purposely choosing not to use a specific accommodation and should not keep reminding the student as that could be disruptive to his or her testing experience.

14. Can we still provide mints or snacks during testing?

This is a local decision. If the snacks are distributed before testing begins and don't cause any undue disturbance, they are allowable. TAs may not remind students to eat the snacks.

15. Can TAs wear t-shirts with motivational sayings?

This is a local decision. Test administrators' clothing should not be distracting to students or provide an unfair advantage if they would be considered a visual aid.

16. If a child seems to be rushing through his or her test and has ample time left in the session, can the TA tell the student to relax and take his or her time?

No. How the student manages his or her time during testing is up to the student and part of independent test taking. TAs may repeat information from the script at the break (e.g., "When you have finished this session, review your work carefully and make sure you have answered every question.").

17. If a child is stuck on a question and isn't moving on, can the TA tell them to skip it and keep moving?

No. Students must make this determination on their own. TAs may repeat information from the script at the break (e.g., "If you aren't sure how to answer a question, skip it and keep going.").

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18. If a student raises their hand and says they are nervous/upset, how is the TA allowed to respond?

If a student initiates communication with a concern, the TA can address with that individual student and provide some encouragement for the student to begin or continue testing. The TA will have to address test-day scenarios as they come up and handle concerns the best way possible while adhering to the spirit of the standardization policies.

19. What are some examples of allowable interactions during testing?

- Students need help with their test materials, such as breaking a seal, completing the boxes on the front cover, requiring a new pencil or extra work folder, or logging into or submitting a computer-based test.
- Students wish to report an item they believe is defective (see the *TA Responsibilities During Testing* section in the manuals).
- A student reports feeling ill or upset.
- A student is being disruptive.
- A student asks how much time is left in the session.
- A student requests a restroom break.
- If a student asks the TA a specific question like “Am I bubbling correctly?” or “Did I do this right?” referring to completion of a response grid (not whether the answer is correct), the TA may refer the student to posted instructions from the script regarding responding or to the gridded response instructions in his or her test and answer book.

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Examples of Prohibited Activities:

Testing Strategies

Incentivizing could be instructing students to use certain strategies, such as underlining key words in passages, and then monitoring the room to see if each student is using the strategy.

A **checklist** would have the students' names and boxes next to "underlined passages," which would then presumably be used to praise or caution the student after testing depending on his or her behavior.

A TA should not say, "Jay, you weren't underlining. I better see you underlining in Session 2." The student's testing behavior is being influenced by the monitoring, and is not fully independent.

Check Your Work

If a student has finished testing and has closed his test and answer book before the allotted time is up, he may not be approached or told to go back and check his work. This includes individual inquiries, such as "Are you sure you are finished?" or "Did you answer every item?"

Requiring a student to return to the test when she feels she has finished is not independent test taking and could cause her to change something (right or wrong) she otherwise would not have.

It must be the student's decision to check work.

Reminders (script excerpts) may be displayed or re-read for the whole group during the break.

"Brain Dumping"

Once students have test materials, a TA or other school staff may not instruct them to write specific items from memory before testing begins (e.g., formulas, acronyms).

Students may choose to do this on their own; that is not prohibited. Any student notes, marks, or other work must be independent and not influenced by a test administrator or proctor.

As with testing strategies, TAs may not monitor to see if students wrote specific items from memory on their materials.