Michigan SSD Webinar: Q&A   CollegeBoard

On July 7, 2015, the College Board led a webinar for Michigan educators about our SSD accommodations. Below are the questions the audience asked along with our answers.

General

1. Is there going to be further work with MAASE, MASSP, and MDE/OSE on how this applies in Michigan or has that work been completed?

The College Board and MDE are working throughout the summer to finalize details and information regarding the transition that will be shared in the fall. We will be participating in the Michigan Department of Education, Division of Accountability Services in August as well as the MME Testing Webcast in October. The College Board is also committed to continuing our partnerships with in-state organizations to share the latest information and conduct training sessions.

2. What happens if a student is approved for accommodations in one district and then leaves, or enters a new district with already approved accommodations? Will those accommodations requests be honored? Does a student's accommodation, once approved, follow a student if they move to another district, county, or state?

Yes. A previously approved transfer student will remain approved for accommodations. Use SSD Online to transfer the student to your dashboard. Click Submit Accommodations Request in the top right corner of the dashboard, and on the second screen of the request there will be a question asking if the student is a transfer student. You will be asked for the student's name, date of birth, and SSD Number, which you should get from the transferring school, student, or parent.

3. Why can't the accommodations specified in the student's IEP just be honored? The IEP Team is going to know the student much better than a reviewer from the College Board.

The College Board greatly respects the recommendations of the student's school. In cases where a student has had a formal plan in place for at least four school months (such as an IEP or 504 Plan), has been receiving the requested accommodations in school, and has current documentation on file with the school that meets College Board guidelines, the accommodations will usually be approved automatically through the College Board's school verification process. However, the College Board receives requests for accommodations from schools across the country and internationally, and schools vary significantly in the processes that they use for reviewing and providing accommodations. Therefore, to ensure fairness to all students, when a school does not have current documentation on file that meets College Board guidelines, or the student is requesting an unusual accommodation, the College Board will request documentation to determine if the requested accommodations are appropriate.

4. What is the accommodations approval process for PSAT 8/9?

For fall 2015, accommodations for the PSAT 8/9 are determined by the student's school and do not need to be approved by the College Board. It is recommended that students use testing accommodations for the PSAT 8/9 that they currently use for classroom or state tests. However, SSD Coordinators should also be familiar with the College Board's guidelines, since accommodations for the PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT will need to be approved by the College Board. Accommodations vary depending on the student's disability and individual needs. Some examples of accommodations include: extended time, extra breaks, alternate formats (e.g., Braille, large print), readers, scribe, and many others.

5. Would you suggest requesting accommodations for students in their 9th grade year?

Yes. Requesting accommodations early in a student's high school career will allow time to submit additional documentation in the event that the request is denied. Additionally, once approved for accommodations for PSAT/NMSQT, PSAT 10, or Advanced Placement exams, unless we are informed that the student no longer needs the accommodations, a student remains approved and does not need to re-apply when taking their next exam.

6. Is there any penalty for a student taking the PSAT without accommodations and then requesting accommodations for the SAT?.

There is no penalty and this may be advisable when a student or school is not sure if accommodations are needed. However, if it is known that accommodations will be needed, or if the student is a junior taking the PSAT/NMSQT who may be eligible for a National Merit Scholarship, testing with accommodations may provide a more accurate score.

7. **When will we have access to the testing manual for the spring 2016 testing cycle? Can we download the administration manual online?**

   The manuals for spring 2016 won't be available until late fall. The College Board will be posting the manuals online for Michigan educators.

SSD Online

8. **Is there an option to download the dashboard to an Excel spreadsheet?**

   There is no Excel spreadsheet option, but a list of approved students can be generated and printed by selecting Create Eligibility Roster. The College Board is considering adding an Excel spreadsheet option in the future.

9. **Where is the parental consent form located?**

   You can access the parental consent form from the SSD website (collegeboard.org/ssd), or from the SSD Online dashboard by selecting Forms and scrolling down to the parental consent form. Alternatively, the direct link is: collegeboard.org/pdf/ssd/ssd-consent-form-accommodations.pdf.

10. **Can there be more than one SSD Coordinator per school?**

    Yes. A school can have multiple SSD Coordinators to submit and manage accommodation requests. Each staff member authorized to use SSD Online needs an individual College Board professional account and an SSD Online access code. A school is asked to select one "primary" SSD coordinator, who would be the person responsible for administering tests to students who are approved for certain accommodations.

11. **How long does it take to get approved for SSD Online access?**

    Requests for access are generally processed within 3 business days. However, approval may take a little longer during very busy times.

12. **If a pop-up window appears saying that a student is previously approved for accommodations, does it display what the previously approved accommodation(s) are? If additional accommodation is being requested does the system allow that request to be submitted?**

    The initial window does not display the previously approved accommodations. However, once the student's name is transferred to the school's dashboard, the SSD Coordinator will be able to see all information for the student, including the approved accommodations.

13. **Will we be alerted if we have been denied access to SSD Online?**

    Yes. If, for example, the SSD Coordinator's form is not complete, you will be notified.

Process and Logistics

14. **If I submit accommodation requests in July (early) will I receive notification approval early as well, or will all approvals occur after the August deadline?**

    You will be notified as soon as the decision is made. If documentation review is required, it can take approximately 7 weeks after the request and documentation are submitted.

15. **Do test proctors need to be certified staff? Can a paraprofessional administer the test?**

    The College Board does not require test center staff to be certified staff. A school may have paraprofessionals or teacher's aids administer tests as long as they meet the guidelines defined in the Supervisor manuals, and your school and district policies allow it.

16. **How many accommodated students are allowed in one testing room? Do different accommodations need to be in separate rooms?**

    Students with different testing schedules should be seated in separate rooms, so that they do not disturb each other. For example, a student with extended time should be placed in a different room from a student with extra breaks and no extended time.

17. **Is the summer too early to submit requests for spring 2016 state testing? Due to my job responsibilities it would be more efficient to complete all of this during the summer months.**

    It is not too early. However, you will be receiving additional information about the spring testing in the fall and may wish to wait until you have all of the relevant information.

18. **I am not an SSD Coordinator, but I am a test coordinator at a high school. How do I go about setting up my account with the College Board so that I can order materials for the spring 2016 SAT?**

    The College Board will be providing more information in September and October about deadlines, ordering, and other pertinent information. You can find out more about the timing of training sessions and webinars in the SAT Corner of MDE's Spotlight Newsletter.

19. **If a virtual school student wants to sign up for the PSAT/NMSQT now, and the counselor of their local high school is not returning to school until close to the August accommodation request deadline, can their district's SSD Coordinator submit the accommodations request? Just to clarify, the K–12 SSD Coordinator could not submit a request for their student taking the test with another district.**

If the virtual school student is not attending the local high school, the parent should be advised to submit a paper accommodations request. The parent can obtain this by contacting SSD and requesting a paper Student Eligibility Form.

20. **What is the rationale for waiting out the entire testing time instead of moving on once everyone in the room is finished? Why can't there be a self-paced option, or a process that allows an extended-time group who finishes prior to the extended time limit to move on as a group?**

Just as nondisabled students (testing without accommodations) must wait until the section time is over, and cannot move on to the next section if they finish a section early, students who take the PSAT or SAT with extended time cannot move on until the approved time for a section is over. The students are treated equally and the same psychometric reasons apply to both groups. Additionally: 1) In most cases, there is more than one student in a test room. Allowing students to move on to the next section could be distracting to other test-takers and could increase the potential for mistiming; 2) Students are approved for extended time for a variety of reasons; some students may not appreciate the purpose for the accommodation and may move on to the next section inappropriately (instead of taking the time to review their responses); 3) Requiring students to wait until the time for the section is completed minimizes the possibility of a student being pressured to complete the test early (if, for example, other students in the room finish sooner).

21. **Is there an appeal process for accommodations that are denied?**

If accommodations have been denied, a request for re-review can be submitted. The request should be resubmitted through SSD Online, and additional documentation should be provided, if available. From the SSD Online dashboard, locate the student's name and select Options, and then Resubmit request.

22. **How do IEP team decisions get handled if the team disagrees with the College Board decisions? If a student has been receiving a specific accommodation on previous state or district assessments, what recourse will the school district have to appeal decisions?**

As noted above, the request can be resubmitted with additional documentation. Additionally, the SSD Coordinator may wish to speak to a SSD clinical staff member regarding the reason for the denial. This can be arranged by contacting SSD.

Extended Time

23. **Will the extended time be per section or will it be for the test as a whole? What will the testing requirements look like for the testing date in April? Will all students with extended testing for the Reading Test have to be tested in a different room than those students approved for the Math Test?**

Currently, students who are approved for extended time for one section will receive extended time for the entire SAT. Go to the Test Design page for information regarding the structure of the April SAT. You will be provided with instructions regarding rosters and seating.

24. **Will students approved for extended time be allowed to test over multiple days?**

Students who are approved for 100% extended time (double time) or more will take the SAT over two days. Students who are approved for 50% extended time take the SAT in one day, unless the accommodation of limited-time testing has been requested. In most cases, students who are approved for extended time for other College Board tests (e.g., PSAT/NMSQT) take the test in one day.

 CollegeBoard

25. What will a typical accommodation window look like for the SAT for students testing with extended time or breaks?

For the April SAT School Day administration, all students who are approved for accommodations will test on the same day as students who are testing without accommodations. If a student is approved for an accommodation that requires testing over two days (e.g., 100% extended time or limited-time testing), the student must continue the test on the next consecutive day.

If you have students who will be testing on a Saturday SAT administration, students who are approved for "center-based" accommodations, such as 50% extended time or extra or extended breaks, will test on the same day as students who are testing without accommodations. Some accommodations cannot be provided in test centers (e.g., 100% extended time, reader, computer, etc.). Students who are approved for these "school-based" accommodations will test in their school, and have a four-day window in which to begin testing (Saturday to Tuesday).

26. If we request something that SSD feels is not an appropriate request, will they make a suggestion or is it up to us to go online and submit a change request?

In some cases, a different accommodation may be approved. For example, if a student requests "extended time in order to take breaks," extra breaks may be approved instead of extended time. Similarly, if a student requests 100% extended time or more, and the accommodation is not supported by the documentation, a lesser amount of extended time may be approved. However, in other cases alternate accommodations may not be approved. If you have a question about what accommodations may be appropriate, you may go online or contact SSD and ask to speak with a clinical staff member.

27. Does SSD make the determination for how much extended time a student receives? Or does the school indicate how much extra time would be most beneficial?

The school would request the specific amount of time that they feel is most appropriate. If documentation is required, SSD will then review the requested amount.

28. Is extended time only time and a half of the original time? Is double- or triple-time over multiple days available?

Most students who are approved for extended time are approved for 50% (time and one-half), or 100% (double-time). However, there are students who are approved for more than 100%.

29. What is the difference between "breaks" and "extended time"?

Students who are approved for "extended time" test for longer than other students. For example, if a student receives 50% extended time for a three-hour test, the student will test for 4.5 hours. Students who are approved for extra breaks have the same amount of testing time as other students, but more break time. Break time does not count as test time. For example, a student who is approved for extra breaks for a three-hour test would still be provided 3 hours test time, but would have three additional breaks. A student who is approved for extended breaks would have the same amount of breaks as other students, but the breaks would be longer. Please note that for the redesigned SAT, beginning in March 2016, students who are approved for extended time will also be provided extra breaks (i.e., they will test for longer than other students, and will also have more breaks).

30. If we request the MP3 accommodation, do we also get extended time or does that need to be requested separately?

Students who are approved for the MP3 Audio Test Form will be permitted 100% extended time. Please note, however, that students who are approved for the Assistive Technology Compatible Test Form will not automatically be provided extended time and should request this accommodation if needed.

Documentation

31. Is an assessment of cognitive ability required for requests for accommodations for students with learning disabilities? We do not administer tests of cognitive abilities or IQ tests as part of our learning disability eligibility process.

Cognitive tests are recommended but not required. If no test of cognitive ability has been completed, please submit other documentation that demonstrates the student's disability, the functional impact, and the need for the requested accommodations.

32. Please clarify what documentation is required for a student with ADHD. What is considered recent?

When a student with ADHD is requesting extended time, a psycho-educational evaluation, including tests of cognitive ability and academic achievement, are most helpful. In most cases, the educational evaluation should be no more than five years old. See the ADHD page for additional information. If no test of cognitive ability has been completed, please submit other documentation that demonstrates the student's disability, the functional impact, and the need for the requested accommodations.

33. Is the current IEP sufficient in cases where a psychological evaluation isn't current or available?

This depends on how much information is in the IEP. The school should ensure that the information fully demonstrates the student's disability, the functional limitation, and the need for the requested accommodations.

Specific Accommodations

34. Is there a required practice for a scribe? For example, must a student indicate upper/lower case letters, punctuation, and spell out words?

The student should indicate punctuation, but does not need to spell out words unless the word is unclear. The SAT SSD Coordinator's Manual includes additional information for scribes.

35. If you requested the cassette tape for students, is it now a MP3 automatically, or do we need to request it? In addition, do we have to ask for extended time or is it understood that it is included with the MP3 accommodation?

Students who currently are approved for the cassette will automatically be approved for the MP3 Audio Test Form. Nothing needs to be done unless a different accommodation is preferred. Students approved for MP3 Audio Test Form will be provided 100% extended time.

36. Can students request a calculator for the "No Calculator" portion of the SAT? If so, what types of calculator are allowed?

Students can request a four-function calculator for the No Calculator portion of the Math Test. If approved, a basic four-function calculator would be permitted. Scientific and graphing calculators are not allowed. The student should request "four-function calculator" and include documentation of a math disorder.

37. What do we do for students who develop the need for accommodations just before the test? For example, if a student breaks their arm.

Schools can submit a Request for Temporary Assistance, by downloading the form from the SSD website. For the SAT, however, temporary assistance is limited to graduating seniors. See the Temporary Medical Conditions page for more information.

38. How many students can be with one proctor if we request an audio format or a reader?

When a student uses a reader, the test must be administered in a one-to-one setting. For students using an audio test format, multiple students can test in a test room if the students are using headsets or earphones.

39. If a student is approved for a reader, how is test time determined given that this is one-on-one testing? Would the full time allotted need to be used if the student finishes early?

Students who are approved for a reader are also provided 50% extended time. The student must stay for the entire test.

40. Will there be an audio version of the test or do we request a reader script?

Beginning in October 2015 for the PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT, and beginning in March 2016 for the SAT, the College Board will offer two new audio formats: The MP3 Audio Test Form (an audio version of test for students to listen to), and the Assistive Technology Compatible Test Form (a digital form of the test to be used with screen-readers or other assistive technology). Both test forms will be delivered on a flash drive. Prior to March 2016, the College Board will continue to offer a Cassette Test Form for the SAT. Additionally, the College Board will continue to offer the accommodation of a reader.