March 9, 2010

TO: LEA Superintendents and Charter School Directors

FROM: Rebecca Garland, Chief Academic Officer
       Angela Quick, Deputy Chief Academic Officer

SUBJECT: Accommodations

In accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), all students must participate in state assessments with or without state approved accommodations. The state approved testing accommodations must be routinely used during instruction and on similar classroom assessments that measure the same content. Students eligible to receive testing accommodations include the following:

- Students with disabilities with a current Individualized Education Program (IEP),
- Students with a current Section 504 Plan,
- Students identified as limited English proficient (LEP) who score below Level 5.0 Bridging on the reading subtest of the W-APT/ACCESS for ELLs® (for all tests except grade 10 writing) and below Level 5.0 Bridging on the writing subtest of the W-APT/ACCESS for ELLs® (for grade 10 writing only), and
- Students with appropriate documentation identified with a transitory impairment.

This memo is being sent as a reminder that the state, LEAs, and schools must monitor the use of all instructional and testing accommodations. This monitoring is to ensure that documented testing accommodations are in fact provided during test administrations, and that the usage of these accommodations is documented and kept on file.

School Level Responsibilities

Test administrators must provide approved accommodations during test administrations. These accommodations must be routinely used during instruction and on similar classroom assessments that measure the same content. All accommodations must be documented in the student’s current IEP, Section 504 Plan, LEP documentation, or Transitory Impairment documentation. Test administrators must monitor accommodation usage by completing monitoring forms (see attached). The completed forms will provide valuable information during annual meetings to determine the instructional and testing accommodations students need to receive. Therefore, completed forms must be kept on file with the student’s IEP, Section 504 Plan, LEP documentation, or
School Level Responsibilities (continued)

Transitory Impairment documentation. Immediately following test administrations, test administrators must report to the state which accommodations were provided to students during tests as marked on answer sheets or any supplemental forms provided by the North Carolina Testing Program.

LEA Responsibilities

The LEA/charter school must monitor to ensure students receive their required accommodations. This involves:

- routinely reviewing IEPs, Section 504 Plans, LEP documentation, and Transitory Impairment documentation to ensure the accommodations a student should receive are properly documented,
- ensuring approved testing accommodations are used routinely in instruction,
- reviewing school testing plans for providing testing accommodations,
- observing test administrations to ensure testing accommodations are administered appropriately,
- ensuring the school reports the provided accommodations to the NCDPI (e.g., accommodations provided to students are marked on the answer sheets), and
- ensuring completed monitoring forms are kept on file with the student’s IEP, Section 504 Plan, LEP documentation, or Transitory Impairment documentation.

State Responsibilities

Beginning in spring 2010, the NCDPI will conduct site visits in selected schools and LEAs to observe test administrations. During site visits, the NCDPI will work with LEA staff to ensure accommodations are properly documented in IEPs, Section 504 Plans, LEP documentation, and Transitory Impairment documentation. Evidence of school and LEA monitoring (e.g., monitoring forms kept on file in students’ IEPs, Section 504, LEP, and Transitory Impairment documentation) will also be reviewed to help ensure monitoring is sufficient and documented.
Beginning in 2010–11, LEAs/charter schools must report to the NCDPI all required accommodations by student, by test. To assist with this requirement, a new feature is being added to North Carolina Window of Information on Student Education (NC WISE). The Student Improvement Plans screen in NC WISE will allow schools to manually enter required accommodations for testing prior to the actual test administration. A Reporting Hub feature in NC WISE will allow required accommodation information from the Student Improvement Plan to be extracted. Once extracted, the information may be sorted by student, accommodation type, etc.

For exceptional children personnel currently using the DEC 4 IEP form to document testing accommodations in the Comprehensive Exceptional Children Accountability System (CECAS), no data in NC WISE will be required. CECAS and NC WISE are collaborating to develop a process to integrate the data from the DEC 4 in CECAS with the data from the Student Improvement Plans in NC WISE. Therefore, LEAs will enter accommodation information either in the Student Improvement Plans screen in NC WISE or in the DEC 4 in CECAS. No double entry will be required. Until the planned integration between NC WISE and CECAS is completed, Accountability Services will provide a mechanism for LEA Test Coordinators to regularly view consolidated reports on what is in each system.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction’s Data Management Group (DMG) requires that authoritative sources be utilized (Policy Number: DMG-2008-001-DQ). For the 2010–11 school year, NC WISE and CECAS will be the authoritative sources for all testing accommodations that are documented in IEPs, Section 504 Plans, LEP documentation, and Transitory Impairment documentation. Housing accommodation information in NC WISE or the DEC 4 in CECAS will provide schools, LEAs, and the state with uniform electronic access to information needed for ordering appropriate test materials (e.g., Braille, large print editions), planning for test administrations, monitoring and federal reporting.

The NCDPI will hold an Informational Webinar on March 17 from 2:00 to 3:30 to help districts understand the need to collect all required accommodations at the state level. A broad overview of the new NC WISE functionality will be discussed. It is recommended that district teams participating in the Webinar informational session consist of a representative from LEP, from Section 504, from the Exceptional
Preparing for the New Reporting Requirement of 2010–11 (continued)

Children’s Program, from NC WISE, and from Testing/Accountability. To register, go to https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/117976537. If you are unable to attend the Webinar, it will be archived and available on the Testing News Network and the NC WISE Web site (www.ncwise.org).

Thank you for your continued effort to ensure that students receive required accommodations. If you have any questions, please contact your Regional Accountability Coordinator.

RBG/AHQ/sm

c:  LEA Exceptional Children Program Directors
    LEA LEP/ESL Coordinators
    LEA Section 504 Coordinators
    LEA NC WISE Managers
    LEA Testing Directors/Coordinators
    Regional Accountability Coordinators
    June St. Clair Atkinson
    Peter Asmar
    John Wetsch
    Lou Fabrizio
    Gary Williamson
    Cindy Bennett
    Mary Watson
    Elissa Brown
    Helga Fasciano
    Ira Wolfe
    Sarah McManus

Attachments