



# Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner  
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February 24, 2012

## Testing Accommodations: Changes to Benefit Students

The Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) recently approved changes in [703 KAR 5:070](#), the regulation related to testing accommodations for students with disabilities. Due to the legislative process, these changes will not take place until the 2012-13 state assessments. The most controversial change in accommodations was the elimination of adult readers for the Kentucky reading tests. There were three major reasons for this decision.

1. Validity – Kentucky is changing its state assessments this year, and the reading test for 2012 and beyond will be a decoding and comprehension assessment. If we allow adult readers on the reading test, then we are invalidating the construct of the test, and we would have to invalidate the assessment scores of any student provided with a reader. Allowing readers on a decoding and comprehension test turns the test into a listening comprehension test.
2. More than 42 percent of special education students in Kentucky were allowed readers on the reading test in 2011. This number has grown steadily since the enactment of the Kentucky Education Reform Act. Schools and teachers are under great pressure to produce proficient scores on state and federal assessments. By allowing the use of a reader, we have provided a negative incentive to help students with disabilities learn to read. It is the goal of special education to help students become independent readers so they can be successful in college, military and/or the workplace.
3. 2009's Senate Bill 1 mandates national comparisons. Kentucky's performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress ([NAEP](#)) could be questioned due to the large number of students who are provided readers. Students who are provided readers on state assessments are exempted from the NAEP assessments. NAEP allows a state to exempt up to 15 percent of its disabled students; however, in Kentucky 58.2 percent of the 8th-grade disabled students and 53.1 percent of the 4th-grade disabled students were excluded from 2011 NAEP reading tests. Therefore, the NAEP results could be questioned, and in the future, states that have large percentages of exempted students will come under increasing scrutiny.

Moving forward, it is essential to provide teachers and students with the levels of support needed to help more students become independent readers. While the KBE action does eliminate readers for state assessments on reading, readers will continue to be allowed for mathematics, social studies and science assessments, since those are tests of content and not

reading. Also, daily instructional practice is not impacted by the change. Teachers certainly will continue to utilize readers with students during daily instruction as they move to transition students to independent reading.

Some national organizations have questioned Kentucky's decision; however, once they realize that Kentucky changed the assessment to a reading assessment and Kentucky's decision is in alignment with [recommendations](#) from the National Assessment Governing Board, then it is clear that the Kentucky decision was based on research and ensuring validity of assessments.

*See information on the changes to state regulation 703 KAR 5:070 made by the KBE at its December 2011 meeting [here](#).*

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