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I, Ashley Sokol Jordan, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of:
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Appropriate Accomodations for Individual Needs Allowable by State Guidelines

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Appropriate Accommodations for Individual Needs

Allowable by State Guidelines

A dissertation submitted to the
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Abstract

Appropriate Accommodations for Individual Needs

Allowable by State Guidelines

Accommodation decisions should be based on the validity and accountability to provide the least restrictive accommodations for students with learning disabilities. Accommodations are based upon the allowable guidelines set by the Ohio Department of Education but the scribing accommodations do not meet the least restrictive criteria for many students with disabilities. While it is important to have guidelines and consistency when considering accommodations, it is even more crucial to determine the accommodations that would best fit the individual need of the student. Student, parent and teacher input of how they view the usefulness and effectiveness of accommodations is vital to determining the most appropriate accommodations to be used. Research comparing the specific accommodations used during state assessments versus classroom accommodations has been limited.

A particular concern is the lack of attention to differences between classroom accommodations and statewide accommodations for groups of students with disabilities. This study offers an in-depth analysis of interviews of ten intervention teacher and testing proctors, five parents with children who have specific learning disabilities, and six students with learning disabilities regarding their perceptions of the usefulness accommodations allowed during statewide assessments. A pilot study was used to determine accommodations frequently used by general education teachers and intervention specialists. With information from the review of 40 IEP testing pages and results from the pilot study, typological analysis was used to begin analysis of predetermined accommodations then inductive analysis was used to discover emerging themes across the 21 semi-structured interviews.
Within the data set of the pilot study and semi-structured interviews, the scribing accommodation was identified as having the greatest differences in use between classroom and statewide uses and acceptability. Teachers stated that they used a variation of scribing methods in the classroom, but during state testing, scribing was provided using only the state allowed dictation method. Student perceptions of the accommodations used were positive or null but no negative comments were made about testing accommodations. Other perceptions concerning differences between classroom and statewide accommodations are identified and limitations to this research as well as implications for future research are discussed.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to all students who have challenges learning in a standardized world… may words and feelings of defeat from others only make you more determined to accomplish your dreams.
Acknowledgement

First I would like to acknowledge and thank the students, parents, and teachers that participated in this study. Their honesty and genuine commitment to learning about accommodations to help others benefit was refreshing and appreciated.

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Appropriate Accommodations Allowable by State Guidelines

Statement of the Problem

Since the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004, schools have been required to provide adaptations and modifications to support students in the general curriculum. Accommodations have been defined by IDEA as alterations in the way tasks are presented that allow children with learning disabilities to complete the same assignments as other students. Accommodations do not alter the content of assignments, give students an unfair advantage or change what a test measures. The accommodations offered do have the ability to make it possible for students with disabilities to show their knowledge without the barriers of developmental delays or specific learning disabilities (Elliot, Kettler, & McKevitt, 2002). Accommodations are used to reduce barriers for students with learning disabilities so that they may have an equal opportunity to succeed in their educational setting, including when taking standardized tests.

Although accommodations vary in terms of the environment, multisensory approaches, and many other modes based upon individual need, many states have restricted the accommodation allowed for individuals with disabilities, based on the recommendations by test creators and the four criteria found in the Ohio Administrative Code 3301-13-03. Shriner and DeStefano (2003) state that there is a need for more evidence-based studies to support validation of commonly used accommodations. In this study of student, parent, and teacher perceptions, respondents stated that they felt strongly that accommodations should fit the individuals’ need rather than utilizing only the allowable accommodations for the test. Although teachers indicated that a high percentage of their students were passing the Ohio Achievement Tests, they indicated that many of the results could not be considered a true indicator of performance due to accommodation changes.
Previous studies that examined accommodations described on student Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) included high school students; few have focused on elementary and middle school (Elliot, Thurlow & Ysseldyke, 1996). As high-stakes state testing is now administered for students from third grade to graduation, it is important to explore the use of accommodations at all grade levels. The following study included elementary and middle school participants to investigate student, parent, and teacher perceptions of accommodations and the administration procedures used for developing and documenting accommodations for students with identified disabilities.

The Common Core of Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics reported six million students in the United States were eligible to receive specialized instruction specified in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) (Sable, Gaviola, & Garofano, 2007). In addition, 13.6% of elementary and secondary students have had teams of educators and specialists individually define their specific needs in instruction and assessment (Sable, Gaviola, & Garofano, 2007). Because much thought and data are considered when maintaining consistency for all test-takers, the use of test accommodations is often a necessity (Zenisky & Sierci, 2007).

Testing accommodations should coincide with instructional accommodations regularly used by students in the classroom (Gibson, Haeberli, Glover, & Witter, 2005; Salend, 2008). The multidisciplinary team conducts an Evaluation Team Report (ETR) over the period of 60 calendar days to collect data including the student’s skills, strengths, challenges, learning and testing style preferences, self-concept, attitudes, health, and effective strategies that help support his or her learning (Brinkerhoff & Banerjee, 2007). The information gathered in the ETR to determine the best possible accommodations is used when deciding appropriate accommodations
to be used for statewide, district-wide, and curriculum based measures. These accommodations also must be in compliance with state and district policies regarding allowed accommodations (Ketterlin-Geller, Alonzo, Braun-Monegan, & Tindal, 2007; Thurlow, Lazarus, Thompson, & Morse, 2005).

If the data shows a student needs to have the directions explained in simple language in order to successfully engage or relay his or her true content knowledge, the state will not allow that accommodation for high stakes testing (ODE, 2007). However it would be acceptable for curriculum based assessments during instruction in the classroom. A suggested alternative to simplifying the language or paraphrasing would be to read the questions and directions aloud to the student as many times as necessary (Thurlow & Erikson, 1998). Clearly the intended classroom accommodation, simplifying language, could create controversy and has suggestively been manipulated to protect the construct validity of the statewide assessment. Bolt and Thurlow (2007) explain providing students with visual impairments the use of large-print or braille edition of the test accommodations is perceived as rational or just. Accommodations for students with specific learning disabilities unfortunately are more controversial (Bolt, 2004).

To justify the obvious disconnect between what the student is identified to need in one situation and what the student is allowed to have in another the state argues test validity. Various research studies have been attempted to check the validity of student test scores with the use of testing accommodations in order to ensure the results yield true to the construct of the test (Thurlow, McGrew, Tindal, Thompson, Ysseldyke, Elliott, 2000; Sireci, Scarpati, & Li, 2005). The results from these studies have yielded the need for more research specific to accommodation validity before considering only a select few ways to accommodate. This is
especially important when considering the multifaceted range of accommodations needed to service the diverse scope of needs for individuals.

The current challenge for special educators is individualizing accommodations and instruction to address the learners’ needs while adhering to the specific identified accommodations allowed by the state. The tendency to give packaged accommodations (i.e. all allowable accommodations) to students with a learning disability has resulted in the need for more focus on distinguishing which accommodations used are conducive for the student while assuring that they do not receive an unfair advantage (Kopriva, Emick, Hipolito-Delgado, & Cameron, 2007). If an accommodation, such as the partial scribe, is not permitted, the challenge of finding an allowable accommodation to fit the learner’s need may result in using accommodations that are not appropriate for the individual. Particular accommodations should be based for specific student needs in order to overcome the impact of his or her specific learning disability. Students who are reading two to three grade levels below their grade level of attendance, who have significant written expression delays, or fine motor issues, may need specialized accommodations so that they can be held to the same standards as students without learning disabilities (Kopriva et. al. 2007, Crawford & Tindal, 2006). This research study explores the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents regarding the accommodations used during instruction and accommodations used for standardized assessment in order to inform educational leaders regarding the practices and policies established for teachers.

The data generated from this study has significant potential to make an impact on many levels. It should be important to government officials and multidisciplinary teams deciding on individualized accommodations for implementation on the standardized test as well as general instruction. Specifically, the results of this study: (a) inform future policy development and
decisions for state and local education leaders; (b) provide key stakeholders awareness of other student, teacher, and parent views and experiences; and (c) provide special education teachers with data to use when implementing accommodations across settings for their students.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the views held by key stakeholders, students, teachers, and parents, of allowable accommodations used for the standardized state test with a specific focus on the scribing accommodation. The study seeks to explore whether the scribing accommodation students were receiving on the state-mandated assessment varied from the scribing accommodation used in the instructional environment. Further exploration of how key stakeholders perceive accommodation differences and setting changes that take place due to implementation of accommodations were also explored. Understanding the differences across settings of the scribing accommodation and the perceptions of key stakeholders will lead to future policy and educational practice consideration.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study were designed to identify the differences in accommodations recommended for an individual learner for instruction versus what accommodations were allowable during statewide assessments, while determining if the perceptions of the key stakeholders perceive accommodation implementation useful and effective.

• What are the views and perceptions of key stakeholders regarding student awareness of setting change and differences in accommodations they receive during standardized assessments?
• Do key stakeholders view allowable accommodations for the test as effective and useful for the individual student needs during the daily instruction setting?

• Do key stakeholders believe that a full scribe (allowable) or partial scribe (not allowed) would yield more valid results for the writing assessment or enhance the response of the student?

• What knowledge do key teachers and multidisciplinary teams possess to determine individual accommodation needs?

Framework

There are state guidelines to accommodate children with learning disabilities regarding standardized assessments. These state guidelines have typically guided the accommodations described on the Individualized Education Program of a student with a learning disability. This study is needed to better understand how students, teachers and parents perceive the usefulness and acceptability of accommodations as listed per Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with specific learning disabilities. Since perceptions are generally constructed within the multiple confines of our society, this study of student, teacher and parent perceptions regarding accommodations was conducted through the postructuralism lens (Butin 2003). Operating through this lens typological analysis was used to analyze the data.

The first assumption of the poststructuralist lens is that there is no objective truth to be found rather many voices to express many truths (Butin 2003, Hatch 2002). This assumes that multiple understandings of events, activities, and phenomena are not just possible but are inevitable (Hatch 2002). This assumption relates to this study in the contexts of the many perceptions and stories teachers, students, and parents have regarding the accommodations used for standardized tests and other academic tests.
In an attempt to use predetermined categories to begin the analytic approach to the interview question data, analysis was completed with typological analysis. Literature and extant data narrowed the focus for interview questions so that the data derived were gathered with a specific purpose in mind then separated into three main categories. Inductive analysis occurred after transcription data was placed into the predetermined categories. Collecting and analyzing data by starting with a deductive approach has been efficient but ultimately has led to some unexpected patterns in the data. The predetermined categories for analysis were knowledge, awareness, feelings, and scribing. Unexpected patterns such as purpose for the standardized assessment, alternative ways of assessment, and trust are examples of unexpected patterns that arose. A comparative understanding of teachers, students, and parents regarding the current accommodations allowed is evident.

Literature Review

The literature that frames this study is focused on individualized accommodations provided for students with disabilities during state mandated assessments. In accordance with federal legislation, each state must determine appropriate accommodation guidelines for students with disabilities for state and district wide assessments (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004). The purpose of this review is to examine current literature supporting and defining appropriate accommodations in the context of classroom and statewide assessments as well as enhance understanding of current and emerging issues related to policy vs. practice. To complete this review of accommodations, the University of Cincinnati One Search Database was utilized to search multiple educational databases simultaneously including, Educational Research Complete, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), PsychInfo, Ohio link, UC Library Catalog. Other resources include, Google Scholar, National Center for
Research on Evaluation, personal contact with the Council for Exceptional Children in the state of Ohio, and Student Testing and the Wisconsin Center for Educational Research.

Accommodation definitions, variations of use, validity, and predictors for choosing certain accommodations were all found in past research studies. A clear disconnect was found between classroom and statewide accommodations used.

An emphasis on the word “appropriate” leaves the door open for much speculation and the educational need to operationally define an accommodation as “appropriate” for valid statewide assessments as well as classroom based assessments. Federal law forces each state to provide a list of appropriate and allowable accommodations but Bolt and Thurlow (2007) have argued that little guidance has been given about how to determine “appropriate” accommodations. Because students need accommodations to show true ability on assessments, it is important to explore current accommodations used and then question if other accommodations could possibly enhance validity and reliability for helping all students be as successful as possible. Past research can help explain appropriate accommodations that have guided current definitions, regulations, and current practices. A thorough review was completed to examine policy, multiple modes of accommodations, differentiation between appropriate accommodations used on statewide and classroom assessments, and accommodation decision-making factors.

Complying with NCLB and IDEA

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) requires all students, including those with disabilities, to participate in statewide testing programs aligned with statewide academic standards and are held accountable with a detailed report called Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). Students with significant cognitive delays are permitted to complete an alternative assessment (i.e. portfolio assessment based on modified standards). Two percent of the population who score
proficient and advanced on alternative tests are used along with the other standardized tests to
calculate AYP for the school district report card (Zenisky & Sireci, 2007; Salend 2008). Students
with specific learning disabilities participate in the same standardized statewide testing program
as their peers.

These policies were established in an effort to bring all students to a proficient level in
the areas of reading and math by the year 2014 (NCLB 2001). AYP reports were developed and
mandated for each school district to hold each school accountable, show growth, and
demonstrate regression of the NCLB goal. AYP components for schools include the number of
students (a) achieving proficiency, (b) participating in the state assessment, and (c) attending
school or graduating from high school (ODE 2007).

States have institutionalized AYP into their practice. For example, the Ohio AYP report
encompasses the combined components of federal and state percentage passage ratings and
designates each district into one of five categories; Excellent, Effective, Continuous
Improvement, Academic Watch, and Academic Emergency. Accountability for all groups of
students is measured but sub groups, are continuously watched for growth and improvement.
Sub groups of students include economically disadvantaged, minority, limited English Proficient,
and students with disabilities. Receiving lower district ratings leads to consequences
differentiated by each state. Judgment of the schools’ success leaves the subgroups, such as
children with disabilities, to take the blame for low marks on the AYP report (Salend, 2008;
Ysseldyke, Nelson, Christenson, Johnson, Dennison, Triezenberg, et al. 2004). Emphasis is then
placed on students with learning disabilities achieving a proficient grade for the test, which is
intended to lead to individual reading and math academic progress (Ysseldyke et al., 2004).
The Superintendent of Public Instruction for Ohio in 2008 claims that holding all students accountable is promoting the progress we have seen thus far with the implementation of NCLB, yet proposes that more accountability needs to be placed on the students (ODE, 2008). States across America have developed accountability pilot programs, such as Value Added, to track personal student growth on high stakes testing from year to year (ODE Pilot Proposal, 2008). The intent of these efforts is to manage improvement of schools and make systematic changes to improve instruction and student achievement.

With the pressure of accountability for every student’s progress, Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) recognized that students with disabilities need accommodations to participate in the required high stakes testing, as well as on curriculum based assessments. Documentation of accommodations is required by IDEA to be placed on the individualized education program (IEP) for state, district, and teacher-made assessments. Regulations require states to establish appropriate accommodations to be permissible for use during the high stakes assessments (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004) however, the legislation provides minimal support for key stakeholders when determining if an accommodation in place is allowable if it is not specified (Bolt & Thurlow, 2007). IEP teams or multidisciplinary teams choose the accommodations to insure that students use only guideline appropriate or allowable accommodations to produce a score that is valid for school accountability purposes (ODE 2007). But teachers, testing administrators, and other key stakeholders are left wondering why they have had little input deciding “appropriate” and “allowable” accommodations to fit the individual needs of the student they work with on a daily basis.
Distinguishing Between Standardized and Teacher Made Tests

Testing accommodations should coincide with instructional accommodations regularly used by students in the classroom (Gibson, Haeberli, Glover, & Witter, 2005, Salend 2008). The multidisciplinary team conducts a Multi Factored Evaluation (MFE) over the period of 60 calendar days to collect data including the student’s skills, strengths, challenges, learning and testing styles preferences, self-concept, attitudes, health, and effective strategies that help support his or her learning (Brinkerhoff & Banerjee, 2007). The information gathered in the MFE to determine the best possible accommodations is used when deciding appropriate accommodations to be used for state-wide, district-wide, and curriculum based measures. These accommodations also must be in compliance with state and district policies regarding allowed accommodations (Ketterlin-Geller, Alonzo, Braun-Monegan, & Tindal, 2007; Thurlow, Lazarus, Thompson, & Morse, 2005).

Consideration must also be made for an alternative assessment if the student’s cognitive understanding is not showing true ability on the standardized test. The alternative assessment allows for students with significant cognitive disabilities and students whose disabilities affect their ability to achieve grade level standards in the same time frame as their peers to be based on modified academic achievement standards (Salend 2008; Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006). Articles specific to alternative assessments were not part of this review, in part due to the decision to focus only on accommodations used for the standardized assessment.

Who receives test accommodations?

A substantial number of students with learning disabilities are required to take the high-stakes test each year. This can be credited toward the reform movement to include students with learning disabilities in the regular classroom to begin to close the achievement gap in our country.
As stated previously, in the 2006-2007 school year 9.4 million of 49.7 million students in the United States had Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) (Sable, Gaviola, & Garofano, 2007). Each program includes specific documentation about the accommodations each individual needs and will receive for district wide and state wide testing purposes (Sable, Gaviola, & Garofano, 2007). Much thought and data collection is considered when establishing accommodations that would best fit the individual needs of each student. The state department is also responsible for providing guidelines to create consistency for all test-takers in the use of test accommodations (Zenisky & Sierci, 2007). In some states and districts, students with learning disabilities who have Individual Education Plans with approved testing accommodations have not been allowed to utilize teacher recommended accommodations because it might provide them a means to score higher (ODE 2007-2008 p. 25). Although the accommodations are intended to help students with learning disabilities score appropriately, the idea of validity and fairness is priority.

A consistent fear is that accommodations give students with disabilities an unfair advantage on tests. Students with learning disabilities have been demonstrated to benefit to a greater extent from testing accommodations than students without identified learning disabilities (Sireci et al., 2005; Fletcher, Francis, Boudousquie, Copeland, Young, Kalinowski, & Vaughn, 2006; Kettler, Niebling, Mroch, Feldman, Newell, Elliot, Kratochwill, & Bolt, 2005; Lesaux, Pearson, Siegel, 2006). From those studies, some researchers chose to use the differential boost theory to examine their work. A valid accommodation in agreement with the differential boost theory should have a greater positive impact on test scores for students with disabilities than students without disabilities (Fuchs, Fuchs, Eaton, Hamlett, & Karns, 2000). Researchers who used this theory further explain if an accommodation does yield positive results for both students
with and without a learning disability it would be considered unfair not to offer the accommodation to all participants (Clapper, Morse, Lazarus, Thompson, & Thurlow, 2005; Bolt & Thurlow, 2007). However it is important to note that certain accommodations may help all students access more knowledgeable information in relation to what the test is intended to measure (Bolt & Thurlow, 2007). Yet the majority of the studies found with the correct accommodations or intervention students with learning disabilities will accomplish greater gains toward on-grade level standards (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001; Thompson, Blount, & Thurlow, 2002).

Further evidence found that both students with and without disabilities benefited from extended time, but the students with disabilities had a visible score gain (Sireci et al., 2005). As believed in the differential boost theory, only the students with disabilities benefited from the read to accommodation assessment given in the Fletcher et al. study (2006). Other studies found similar benefits to students with learning disabilities for the extended time and accommodations listed per IEP (Lesaux et al. 2006; Kettler et al. 2005). Accommodations are considered to benefit only students with disabilities for whom they are appropriate based upon current research (Zenisky & Sierci, 2007).

The testing accommodations help cultivate the design and administration of testing materials that are accessible to students of a wide range of ability levels, strengths and challenges (McGuire, Scott, & Shaw, 2006). The use of accommodations produces greater student participation and attempt to improve the validity of test scores for children with learning disabilities. Evaluation teams or Multidisciplinary Teams as defined in IDEA are composed of individuals with a wide range of expertise and skills that determine important educational decisions for students with learning disabilities (Salend 2008). If the evaluation team has determined that a student has a learning disability under the IDEA or Section 504 of the
Rehabilitation Act, an Individualized Education Plan or 504 Plan will be implemented to describe the accommodations he or she needs for participation in all assessments and the classroom environment.

**Understanding the Factors of Satisfactory Testing Accommodations**

Testing policies emphasize obtaining valid measures of student performance while taking into account the various purposes for testing and needs of the student. Valid performance for the majority of students with learning disabilities means providing accommodations that do not change the construct measured but make the test accessible to their knowledge base (Zenisky & Sireci 2007). Valid testing accommodations are changes in the way tests are administered, such as environment, scheduling, timing, equipment, technology, and procedures that allow students with disabilities to participate in testing programs (Salend, 2008; Cox, Herner, Dmeczyk, & Neiberding, 2006; Sireci et al., 2005; Gibson et al., 2005).

Many students benefit from packaging, bundling or grouping different types of accommodations because they benefit from more than one testing accommodation (Fletcher, Francis et al., 2006; Bolt & Ysseldyke, 2006; Higgins, Russell, & Hoffman, 2005; Mandinach, Bridgeman, Cahalan-Laitusis, & Trapani, 2005). However Gibson cautions that using multiple accommodations could have an adverse effect on the test validity or determination of best-used accommodation (Gibson et al. 2005). Instead of assuming the more accommodations the better, the multidisciplinary team must recognize that an essential element to defining a valid testing accommodation is that it must not change the test’s content, format, construct, and results (Edgemon, Jablonski, Lloyd, 2006; Salend, 2008).
Decision making process regarding testing accommodations

The field of education is constantly evolving as new research and legislation related to testing accommodations develops in the ever-changing world of assessment. A process to continually evaluate testing accommodations is essential to examine usefulness and fairness (Cox, Herner, Demczyk, & Neiberding, 2006). Assessing factors to indicate if the accommodation is improving student performance, boosting self-esteem, as well as other positive, null, and or negative impacts is important to determine effectiveness (Edgemon et al., 2006).

Students may need experience to fully use accommodations successfully. Evaluating the effectiveness of accommodations entails using allowed high-stake testing accommodations in the classroom during teacher-made tests so that students will become comfortable with the conditions they will encounter when taking the high-stake tests (Salend, 2008). Students can then give feedback about their perception of the accommodation effectiveness as well as communicate with the teacher about positive and/or negative thoughts of the encountered conditions. By using accommodations that are allowed per state rulebook documentation, teachers are able to reflect upon what is available and accessible to students with learning disabilities. However, many teachers may find effective techniques and strategies to assist with the learners’ needs that are not on the list of allowable accommodations. These teachers should be encouraged to use other accommodations to reflect upon differences, effectiveness, and acceptability. Some states will allow teachers to request accommodations that are not listed as allowed but the documentation must be specific to the need of the student and not interfere with the validity of the test (Zenisky & Sierci, 2007).
Ensuring Implementation

Teachers are required to use accommodations consistent with state and district polices. Federal law requires states to design accommodations to mirror those used in day to day classroom instructions and classroom tests (ODE, 2007) and individually determined rather than by disability category (Salend, 2008). Identifying accommodations that do not invalidate content for assessments is essential. Resources to assist multi disciplinary teams in making individual accommodation decisions include the Survey of Teacher Recommendation (Ketterlin-Geller, Alonzo, et. al. 2007); Assessment Accommodation Checklist (Elliot, Kratochwill & Schulte, 1998); and the Dynamic Assessment of Test Accommodations (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001).

State policies describe individual accommodations that can be identified by multidisciplinary teams or IEP teams who determine accommodations for individuals as needed (Zenisky & Sireci, 2007; Lazarus, Thurlow, Lail, Eisenbraun, & Kato, 2006). The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) conducted an informal meta-analysis of 32 studies on accommodations between 2005-2006. Seven specific types of accommodations and two accommodation categories emerged: presentation accommodations and timing/scheduling accommodations (Zenisky & Sireci, 2007). Johnstone, Altman, Thurlow, and Thompson (2006) and Thompson, Blount, and Thurlow (2002) reported similar accommodation categories of presentation method of responding, setting, and timing/scheduling. Presentation, response, timing, scheduling, setting alternatives, and linguistically based factor formats can best encompass the many accommodations used (Edgemon et al., 2006). The unique qualities of students and various purposes of testing require a strong knowledge base to become aware of all the possible accommodations and the intended use of those accommodations. However it seems most useful to focus on the accommodations most frequently identified on the students IEP and
used by intervention specialists who use the accommodation considered on a daily basis as well as for statewide and district wide assessments (Bolt & Thurlow, 2007).

Table 1 highlights defining accommodation modalities used with examples of accommodations and the scope and range that may occur with some of the accommodations. Further explanations of each modality follow the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation Modality</th>
<th>Definition with Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRESENTATION</td>
<td>Changes the way questions and directions are presented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Simplify language, read directions and questions aloud,</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>provide a sample of each item, fewer items on a page, use color acetate, sound amplification devices, etc.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPONSE</td>
<td>Changes the way students respond to or determine answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Dictate answers, use partial, full, or word processor scribe, allow devices to help remember learned strategies, etc.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMING/SCHEDULING</td>
<td>Alternatives to where, when, and whom students take tests with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Extended time, shorter version of the test, breaks as needed, adjust testing order, vary times of testing sessions, administer tests over several days, etc.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SETTING</td>
<td>Alternatives to where and whom students take tests with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Taking tests in small groups/ individually in separate locations, allowing movement and background sounds, adaptive furniture and equipment, eliminating visual and auditory distractions, etc.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Address the needs of English Language Learning Students.

*Use familiar language, orally repeat directions, translate, teach testing vocabulary, provide context clues, provide alternate ways to demonstrate mastery of test, use technology to give students choices to use bilingual materials and pop-up translations.*

*Presentation mode accommodations* refer to changes in the ways test questions and directions are presented to the students (Elbaum, 2007). Accommodations include but are not limited to (a) reading directions and items aloud, (b) clarify/simplifying language, (c) repeating directions as necessary, (d) providing a sample of each item type, (e) highlighting changes in the directions, (f) presenting fewer items on a page, (g) using markers/color acetate to mark place, (h) presenting tests via screen readers, (i) audio recordings, and verbal descriptions of pictorials, (j) sound amplification devices, and (k) reminders to check over work, etc. The intensity or level of the accommodation varies per individual need. For example, a student may require a visual representation when providing a model or representation to explain directions (e.g. show the story they just read to explain the word “selection”). While others may only need directions put into a simplified language (e.g. explain that another word for “selection” is another word for story).

Teachers and administrators also must consider that clarifying language throughout may alter the validity depending on vocabulary being assessed, which would alter interventions to assist with learning vocabulary. Students may be given choices about the presentation modes they prefer to give them ownership in their personal learning (Singer, 2005). Though all
presentation mode accommodations are used when taking state, district-wide and teacher-made
tests, the read aloud/to accommodation remains the most frequently used.

Bolt and Thurlow (2007) completed an analysis of the reading complexity of math story
problems to identify whether the read-aloud accommodation enhanced student. Students with
specific learning disabilities in the area of reading were key participants used to identify whether
reading the text to the students as an accommodation had the intended effect of removing the
reading barrier of the math assessment. Because the math assessment is intended to score the
mathematical knowledge of the participants, the score was indicative of their mathematical
knowledge and the construct of the intended measure remained the same. The fourth-grade
students in this study who received the read-aloud accommodation scored significantly higher on
story problems that were difficult to read because they were able to identify what the math
problem was asking, and then they used computation correctly (Bolt & Thurlow, 2007). This
supportive finding contributes to reasons why the read aloud accommodation is one of the most
frequently used.

Response mode accommodations are changes in the way students respond to test items or
determine their answers (Cox, Herner, Demczyk, & Nieberding 2006). Accommodations
include but are not limited to (a) allowing students to dictate answers (b) using multiple choice
items (c) providing a scribe (d) allowing students to use devices to help them remember learned
strategies (e) the use of technology to respond. The intensity or level of the accommodation
varies per individual need. For example, the scribing accommodation can be complex when
comparing differences in use for classroom assessments versus statewide testing.

Variations of scribing exist within the classroom, ranging from the teacher rewriting
answers provided by the student, dictation, or word processing. The dictation method and word
processor methods are the only two types of scribing permissible during statewide. The
dictation method allows the students to orally respond to all answers, leaving the test
administrator to write everything. The student is not permitted to write if this method is used.
The word processor scribing method allows the student to use a keyboard to respond to test
questions but the spell checker and other tools to assist in the writing process are disabled
(ODE, 2008). Again, time, cost, experience, and comfort level may limit the use of these
accommodations.

Timing and scheduling accommodations are alternatives to where, when, and with whom
students take tests with (Elliot & Marquart, 2004). Accommodations include but are not limited
to (a) giving more time or untimed tests (b) providing shorter versions of the test (c) allowing
breaks as needed (d) adjusting testing order (e) varying the times of the testing sessions (f)
administering tests over several days. Again, the intensity or level of the accommodation varies
per individual need.

In an effort to reduce anxiety, students may be told that they may take as much time as
needed to complete a test. Other students may need to take the test in small increments of time
with multiple breaks. Allowing the students to complete easier test questions first to build
confidence or to begin however they choose is yet another variation. A test may be shifted to the
morning or after lunch to fit the needs of the student for nourishment or focus. Accommodations
are used when taking state, district-wide and teacher-made tests. The most frequently
researched accommodation from the 2005-2006 review of research is extended time (Zenisky &
Sireci, 2007).
Extended time has been related to a positive effect on the student test scores of students with processing, attention, and learning disabilities. This testing accommodation has also been frequently identified on IEPs. However, as part of a larger strategy of integrating universal test design, untimed tests may be a positive accommodation to use for all students who need more time to process information (Zenisky & Sireci, 2007). Many of these accommodations are used day to day in the classroom but cannot be used within the confines of state assessments. Testing times and days in which the test has to be completed is very strict and puts limits on what may be used for the students (ODE testing administration handbook, 2008). However, instead of assuming that all students with disabilities need extended time, decisions should be based of the specific needs of the student (Salend, 2008).

Setting accommodations are alternatives to where, when, and with whom students take tests with (Elliot and Marquart 2004). Specific accommodations include but are not limited to (a) taking tests in small groups/ individually in separate locations, (b) allowing movement and background sounds, (c) providing adaptive furniture and equipment, (d) eliminating visual and auditory distractions, and (e) providing specific environmental arrangements. Limitations and considerations need to be made for the requirement of open rooms to provide for a distraction free environment and multiple staff to administer the test. Consideration to permit the use of lighting, acoustics, sound amplification, background music, slant boards, weighted pencils, human socks, deep pressure equipment, etc. should be discussed during the decision making process (Gibson et al., 2005).
The small group accommodation is most frequently used on written IEPs and is most accepted during the state assessments. Multiple testing administrations are needed to break students into small groups and provide for individual locations. This becomes an issue if the student feels uncomfortable with the person administering the test. For example, if a student has been reprimanded by the principal who then has to monitor the test the student may feel uncomfortable and the accommodation may have a negative effect. Further issue may occur with the amount of open rooms to provide for a distraction free environment.

*Linguistically based accommodations* provide changes to the assessment that allows for true content to be assessed for those who English is a second language (Albus, Thurlow, Liu, & Bielinski, 2005). Technology based testing has recently begun to offer a range of ways to implement testing accommodations (Thompson, Quenemeon, & Thurlow 2006). Computers may allow students to use alternative formats and customize the presentation of the test to their individual needs (Salend, 2008; Zenisky & Sireci, 2007).

Computers allow students to dictate answers, magnify text, pace presentation, or obtain translation. Results of studies related to computer-based accommodations have not been definitive (Johnstone, 2006). Computer based testing for research purposes and accommodation purposes have been limited due to challenges of limited technology however the potential to minimize the construct-irrelevant variance is the goal (Zenisky & Sierci, 2007; Meyen et al., 2006). Computerized testing services are offered in some states as part of the accommodations based upon student need (Zenisky & Sireci, 2007). The computerized assessment accommodation can be expensive and research is not readily available to multi disciplinary teams regarding the benefit students may receive with the use of this accommodation. The decisions to use certain accommodations need to be based on the student characteristics and strengths (Salend, 2008).
Examining Issues of Fairness, Appropriateness, and Effectiveness

When students cannot use their IEP-approved accommodations because their school district or state will not allow their use on high stakes testing related to issues of reducing validity, confusion, anger and disappointment abound (Salend, 2008). With the recent implementation of states-recommended lists of testing accommodations that are allowed and not permissible for use during testing, the intended accommodation written by the multidisciplinary team and listed on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) may not be the actual accommodation the student is allowed to use during the test (Horvath, 2005). Accommodations that have been deemed allowable for statewide testing have created differences from typical classroom accommodations such as, students using a different setting, instructor/administrator/proctor, small group population, full scribe instead of partial, as well as other variations to which the student is accustomed.

An example of this variation is found in the use of the “scribe” accommodation. The most recent publication of the testing handbook released in February of 2008, declared in Appendix K that only children without full function of their hands could use the scribe accommodation (Ohio Testing Guide, 2008, pg. 64). This description is in contrast to the typical use of “scribe” in the daily classroom offered to children with dyslexia, sensory integration disorder, low tone motor skills, as well as other disabilities. Many of those children have full function of the use of their hands but suffer from poor handwriting, illegible spelling, and lack of fluency in writing. The state of Ohio also clarified that students with illegible spelling did not qualify to use the scribe accommodation (ODE, 2008). The new restrictions only added to the frustration of some teachers who scribe for their students using a variation from the dictation
method which they have had to train students to use in order to be effective (MacArthur & Cavalier, 2004).

Bridging policy, research, and practice is ultimately no easy task. Variations across operational definitions, tests, populations, settings, and contexts effect past and current policy implications (Zenisky & Sireci, 2007). Decisions surrounding the use of testing accommodations involve increasingly high-stakes consequences and examining issues of effectiveness, appropriateness and acceptability remain at the forefront (Salend 2008). Gathering these crucial elements to inform decision making is essential to offer novel researched ways to design and implement all types of testing accommodations (Ketterlin-Geller, Yovanoff, & Tindal, 2007).

Explicit directions of how accommodations are to be administered are also included with the administration guide (ODE 2007). Due to the way in which these federal policies are written, the results of the standardized assessments may or may not also be guiding the accommodations that are written on the IEP. Teachers are in a quandary, having to consider the value of an accommodation in class testing that may not be allowed during statewide testing. For example the state’s definition of “scribe” and a teacher’s actual use of “scribe” in the daily classroom could vary per student need. To follow regulations passed by the state the accommodation must be adapted to the specifications listed in the guide for Ohio Achievement test administrators. According to the rule book the “dictation method” and the “Word-Processor Method” without the use of a spell checking device are the two methods of scribing (pg. 64).

Testing materials are vague in the use of accommodations. No alignment between IEP and testing is described, so teachers can only assume that the “dictation method” or “word processor method” are acceptable if “scribe” is listed as an allowable accommodation on the student’s IEP for other schoolwork. However, there are other various ways “scribe” can be
interpreted and used. For example, a student (a) could write an answer, (b) read his or her writing to the administrator; and (c) have the response recorded by a scribe. The allowable accommodations listed in the administration guide are not explicit, and could be understood differently by students, teachers, or parents. This is problematic in the sense that it limits the use of the scribe accommodation and is another example of previous research finding a disconnect between classroom and high-stakes testing (Horvath et al., 2005).

Special educators incorporate strategies to modify or accommodate the curriculum and testing procedures to learners’ needs. Students with learning disabilities often succeed and show their actual content knowledge, although use of accommodations used may be perceived as unfair, embarrassing, or unacceptable (ODE, 2007; Polloway, Bursuck, Jayanthi, Epstein, & Nelson. 1996). It is important to consider the acceptability of the accommodation to ensure that accommodations do not adversely affect either the students or their classmates (Elliot & Marquart, 2004; Sireci et al., 2005; Salend, 2008).

Gathering Information to Inform Decision Making

Understanding the overall student, teacher, and parent perception toward and knowledge of accommodations to provide useful and acceptable accommodations for all stakeholders is important (McLesky & Waldron 2002). Teacher and student attitudes about the effects of testing accommodations on the validity of standardized test scores has been studied (McKevitt & Elliott, 2001). A similar study reviewed the attitudes and perceptions of testing accommodations as well and found that the majority of 8th grade students assessed in the study refused the “read aloud” accommodation (Gibson et al. 2005). Survey data suggested that students thought accommodations were helpful but thought that the read-aloud accommodation was too difficult to follow along as the teacher read (McKevitt & Elliot, 2001). This research validates the
continued need to assess effective accommodations for each student. For instance, if students begin to notice that the read aloud accommodation is not helping them, testing administrators and/or teachers should begin to fade the accommodation from the student’s assessment and use a more effective and acceptable accommodation (Salend, 2008).

One research study found that teachers’ knowledge regarding which students benefit from accommodations and which students should receive accommodations varied (Maccini & Gagnon, 2006). Further research on accommodation decision making suggests that teachers vary in ability to make accurate decisions about who does and does not benefit from accommodations (Helwig & Tindal, 2003). Unfortunately student need for an accommodation is not necessarily the deciding factor as to whether he or she actually receives an accommodation. Lack of identification, lack of accommodation knowledge, or misuse of a less effective accommodation all yield negative results for students (Shriner & DeStefano, 2003). Poor policy restrictions with limited information to support appropriate accommodations could be partially responsible for findings suggesting poor implementation (Bolt & Thurlow, 2007).

McKevitt and Elliot (2001) reported that teachers perceived the use of accommodations for students with disabilities as appropriate ways to measure their ability without barriers but were concerned about the effects accommodations had on test score validity. More recently, teacher perception toward accommodations have been reported to include (a) the ease of use (i.e., ease of implementation in the classroom given the resources of time, personnel, space, materials, and training), (b) effectiveness (i.e., allow a student to better demonstrate his/her ability), (c) appropriate for the setting, fair (i.e., do not invalidate the task) and (d) reasonable (Edgemon et al, 2006; Schulte et al., 2000). McKevitt and Elliot (2001) stated that teachers rely on professional and personal judgment when making accommodation decisions. This research
implied that the educators should rely on their own empirical testing of accommodation effects. Therefore, teachers’ knowledge about the use and effects of testing accommodations is critical (Schulte et al., 2000; McKevitt and Elliot 2001). Empowering the teachers with research information that explains the choice for appropriate and allowable accommodations may significantly increase test effectiveness. However limited information to support Ohio’s reasoning for choosing to allow or not allow certain accommodations has been retrieved; further investigation is needed. Table 2 demonstrates allowable and not allowable accommodations for the OAT with the few examples from Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation Modality</th>
<th>Allowable</th>
<th>Not Allowable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRESENTATION</td>
<td>Read directions and questions aloud, fewer items on a page, use color acetate, sound amplification devices</td>
<td>provide a sample of each item, simplify language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPONSE</td>
<td>Dictate answers, use full, or word processor scribe</td>
<td>Partial scribe (student writes first then dictates response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>allow devices to help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>remember learned strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMING/SCHEDULING</td>
<td>Extended time, breaks as needed</td>
<td>a shorter version of the test, adjust testing order, vary times of testing sessions, administer test over several days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Allowable and Not Allowable Accommodations for OAT from the examples provided
**Summary.** It is important for students with learning disabilities to reach goals such as comprehending reading on grade level and other high academic standards. Including students with learning disabilities in the assessment process produces a positive outcome, which is higher inclusion in the general education curriculum. It is equally important to remember that the students with learning disabilities are immersed in the same high academic standards as their peers but during the instructional day special education teachers implement a multitude of accommodations in order to assist with multifaceted learning needs. Removing these accommodations or restricting them during high stakes testing may reduce the validity of the test score.

Understanding the issues surrounding the use of test accommodations is pivotal at this time (Zinesky & Sireci 2007). There is a critical need for research in the assessment and evaluation area to understand best practice and explore new hypotheses as research continues to move forward to address these policy implications (Zenisky & Sierci, 2007). Based on findings from past studies, additional research on the effects of testing accommodations is appropriate to
determine valid testing accommodations for students with learning disabilities. This research begins to address the accommodations used for high-stakes testing as perceived the students, parents, and special education teachers.

Methodology

Setting and Context

This study was conducted in three elementary schools and two grade schools, grades three through eight. The schools are located in a suburban area, with a range of students eligible for special education accommodations. The setting for this study is a moderately sized public school district in Southwestern Ohio. This district has a total student population of 3871 students in grades kindergarten through 12th grade. It is comprised of three K-4 buildings, one grade 5-6 building, one junior high school (grades 7 and 8) and one high school (grades 9 through 12). The school district employs 221 teachers and the average number of teaching years is thirteen. Of those, 26.5 were Intervention Specialists highly qualified to teach students with disabilities. All of the teachers held at least a Bachelor’s degree and 57% had a Master’s degree or higher. The average student-teacher ratio is 17-1. The average student-intervention teacher ratio was 16-1.

The ethnic representation of this district was predominately White, with a relatively small but equal distribution of other ethnic groups. The percentage of students with disabilities in each ethnicity group is shown in table 3.
The main subgroup of interest to this research study includes students with disabilities. Of the 3871 students attending this school district 560 students (14.2%) receive special education services.

Table 3 Student ethnicity breakdown with percentage of race with a disability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percent of student population</th>
<th>Percentage with disability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Disability Category Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Percent of students within subgroup</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific Learning Disabilities</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech and Language Impairments</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Health Handicap- Minor</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,4,&amp;5 Year Olds (Early Intervention)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Disabilities</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Delay</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthopedic Impairments</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Disturbance</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing Impairments</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The yearly median income in this District is $40,652.00 and the yearly average income is $69,797.00. The total per typical pupil expenditure is $8,378 and the district uses the over half of the total expenditure for instructional purposes. The total per student with disability cost is $14,891 with prorated expenditures at $12,338. The more severe the disability the more time, cost, and personnel are needed to implement accommodations and specialized instruction. The group of students with specific learning disabilities have the highest percentage rating of inclusion for statewide testing and need accommodations found in reviewing 40 random testing pages of extended time, read aloud, read to, and small group.

Figure 1 Accommodations Found in Extant Data Analysis

The Ohio department of Education recognized 96 schools in which 75 percent of all students, including students with disabilities, scored proficient or above on the 2006-2007 achievement tests or the Ohio Graduation Tests in reading and mathematics. Thirty-three of these schools were among the 83 schools that earned the School of Distinction designation during the previous year and four schools have had this honor all three year's of the program's existence.
This school district earned the School of Distinction Award in 2006-2007 and has held the Excellent rating for the past eight years.

It is important to note that using the contacts from the school district in which I am currently employed helped provide access to the large, suburban school district in which the study was conducted. Working in the school district for over six years has allowed me to establish a strong rapport with the Special Education Director of the county and Assistant Superintendent. The Special Education Director and Assistant Superintendent granted permission to conduct research in this district after reviewing protocol submitted and ensuring complete confidentiality of participants. The teachers in the district were excited to contribute to the pilot study and current study as well as eager to learn what the data suggested from their input. Being committed to the mission statement of our school district influenced my role as an “insider” which means the participants were able to view me as member in their group. I chose this school district because of its convenience, AYP Excellent track record, and strong rapport with key stakeholders.

Student Participants

The sample of students interviewed in this study all took the Ohio Achievement Test (OAT) with testing accommodations. Students who took the alternate assessment were not part of this study. I interviewed 2 third grade students, 3 fourth grade students, and 1 seventh grade student. I sought to have participants who had utilized the scribing accommodation in class and/or for the OAT. Three out of the six students interviewed received the scribing accommodation for the OAT and during instruction. Three out of the six students received the scribing accommodation only during instruction time. All students names used in the study are pseudonyms.
Parent Participants

When I spoke with each student’s parent to discuss the study and gain permission to interview his/her child I also asked if he/she were interested in participating in the interview. Five parents participated in this study. All of the parents had children identified with a learning disability and took the OAT with accommodations. All parent names used in this study are pseudonyms.

Teacher Participants

The sample of ten teachers and testing proctors used in this study have all provided specific accommodations to students with learning disabilities for the OAT. I sought to interview special education teachers who had utilized the scribing accommodation both during instruction and for the OAT. All teachers interviewed ranged in teaching experience from 5 to 20 years. Pseudonyms were used for all participants to protect their identity.

Instruments. A survey was developed and used as part of a pilot study to capture teacher thoughts regarding their understanding and acceptability of allowable and appropriate state policy accommodations. The test accommodations included on the survey were gathered from the previous review of IEP testing pages from 40 students with learning disabilities from the school used in this study. Prior to its use, two experienced researchers, one experienced intervention specialist, and one third-grade teacher reviewed the survey and evaluated the appropriateness of its content and format to provide participation readability and content validity.

Pilot. The results from the pilot study yielded important results critical to the groupings for analysis of the current study. From the six listed accommodations studied during the pilot, the scribing accommodation received an overwhelming response from the teachers regarding anger, confusion, usefulness, test validity, and acceptance. “Scribing the way I normally scribe
for them would provide accurate scores. Right now students are scribed for in an unusual way twice a year just because we have to follow the exact guidelines of the state.” The focus on the scribe accommodation responses emerged after analyzing the typologies because the most information from the participants’ voice was contributed toward this particular accommodation. Feelings, Awareness/ Knowledge, and Scribe variations became the three main categories used in this study.

Teachers completed the survey based on past and present experience they encountered with the use of state policy accommodations. The survey included 5 multiple choice questions, 4 short essay response, and 3 likert scale questions ranging in low to high acceptability of appropriate accommodations. The results from the survey held implications related to a central theme- consideration and direction for accommodation policy consistent with those received in classroom instruction and assessment. Continuing issues of (a) addressing and accessing practitioner knowledge for individual accommodation needs, and (b) policy clarification to specify factors and considerations for allowable aspects of the scribing accommodation narrowed the focus of questions addressed in this study.

Survey and questionnaire tools. I used the survey question responses from the previous study to further develop, outline and clarify new interview questions. Interviews were the primary source of data for this study. A total of eight semi-structured questions were asked to each group of participant. A previous statewide assessment was used during the interview so as to provide a realistic but fictitious student sample of full scribe and partial scribe. Work samples of the scribing variations were included in the interview to determine the subjective opinion of validity for the scribe accommodation.
Data management. Survey Monkey was used to organize and interpret data from the pilot survey. I used an excel spreadsheet to assist in my analysis. Interview transcripts were organized using open coding methods and typological analysis. I expanded on each code to encompass the range of responses. Table 3 shows the sub-codes developed for each major codes, which formed the basis of data analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Codes and subcodes for interview analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNOWLEDGE (Awareness)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEELINGS (Accommodations and OAT)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCRIBING</td>
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Procedure. All general education teachers and special education teachers who have given the Ohio Achievement Tests to third through eighth grade students were invited to participate in individual interviews. Interviews with eleven special education teachers, six students with an IEP, and five parents of students with an IEP took place during the months of December, January, and February. Members from the Council for Exceptional Children and the Ohio Testing services did not participate in an interview but offered important information through personal conversations. Informed consent of participants, as required by the Institutional
Review Board (IRB) and the school district, was granted from all participants before any information was gathered. Pseudonyms were given to all participants in order to protect their identities.

This study followed a qualitative design and typological analysis was conducted to organize data into categories that then allowed to represent emerging themes from participant voice. I followed a four-step process for constructing Typological Analysis. I first developed a coding scheme based on the four categories identified in the research questions and also established in the interview protocol (understanding and/or knowledge of accommodations used during the OAT, feelings about accommodation implementation, scribing experience, full scribe vs. partial scribe). Then I assembled and organized the transcripts into identified typologies on a summary document. I looked for relationship among the patterns identified in each group of participants. I then synthesized the information into one-sentence generalizations while keeping track of the excerpts that supported each generalization. When I began grouping the information I purposefully left off names and only groups’ excerpts into student, parent, and teacher/ test proctor groupings. In this way I could look at the responses from all the participants at once to find patterns instead of individually.

Reliability and Validity (trustworthiness)

Multiple techniques, including peer debriefing, member checking and participant clarification were completed to ensure the trustworthiness of this study. Using participants from a school district in which I have worked the past six years established prolonged engagement and positive rapport. To ensure an accurate reflection of participant voice in this research, each participant will be given a chance to review and comment on data as it was analyzed. Peer debriefing occurred with a fellow doctoral student outside of my program and multiple professors in my program examined the data to ensure it has merit to the field.
Student, Parent, and Teacher Perceptions of the OAT

What are students with disabilities’ understanding of the changes implemented to provide them with accommodations for the OAT? How do they feel about changes such as having a different teacher or principal give them the OAT in a different room they are unfamiliar with? What do their parents know about OAT accommodations? Are they aware their child may be in an unfamiliar environment with a test proctor they may be unfamiliar with? What is the understanding from the teacher’s perspective about the student’s feelings? What accommodations do they deem as useful? Do they think the allowable accommodations give their students what they need or do they use other accommodations not allowed that they see as more useful? These are the questions that initially inspired the purpose of this study.

An in-depth understanding of students’, parents’, and teachers’ responses makes clear whether the allowable accommodations are useful in the sense of providing the support students need to assess their knowledge while not enhancing the answers to be scored. Understanding how these key stake holders respond to the policy and practice of accommodations will help when implementing and defining allowable accommodations that are useful and maintain the validity of the standardized test.

Knowledge and Awareness of Accommodations Used for the OAT

*Student awareness of testing differences from their peers.* I asked the students to describe the ways they take the test that is different from their peers. I wanted to know their knowledge and awareness level of implemented accommodations they used. An explanation of what I meant by “differently” was necessary with all students interviewed. When I explained I gave the example of going to a room that was not their own classroom to take the test and then it was understood on some level what I meant. Students showed an awareness of many testing
accommodations they received. Five students said the teacher read the questions to them. One student said she reads the test aloud herself. Four students noted that they took it in a different room, two students said they took the test with a different teacher, two students stated that a teacher writes for them, and one student said chewing gum and taking breaks help them.

*Parent awareness of testing accommodation implementation.* I asked parents to explain to me how their child takes the OAT. I wanted to know how much they understood about the accommodations they helped to write during the IEP meeting. At this time I clarified any misinterpretation or questions they had about how their child took the test. The six parents interviewed had an idea of how their child took the test but three of them answered with some reluctance because they were not positive their information surrounding the accommodations their child received was correct.

One parent in particular thought that her son took the test with the rest of the class but still received extended time to take the test. She noted that he received accommodations such as small group, extended time, and a scribe prior to the current year but then said “The teacher said he could not have the accommodations that he received last year because something about a new law that the state would not let Nate have the scribe accommodation. Does that sound right? I’m not sure.” I spoke with her about the importance of giving Nate the accommodations he needed and to discuss with his current teacher why the accommodations he received prior were discontinued. A reminder to ask if he is still using extended time and scribe during the instructional day was necessary. She went on to say that her son passed the OAT when he had small group, extended time, scribe, and questions read to him but that he did not pass the following year.
Two parents claimed that their children did not receive “different” accommodations for the test. Caesar said that the setting and teachers were the same and that his son did not receive any accommodations but in a follow up question he stated that his son needed a scribe. Emma stated that her daughter was reminded to stay on task with cues and prompts. Information was limited to parent report in that the study did not include reviewing the students’ IEPs. However knowing that the parents’ children were diagnosed with a learning disability it would be highly unlikely that no testing accommodations would be used. After I provided both parents with some examples of different accommodations their children might be exposed to such as small group and extended time, Caesar said “Oh, he does get those things but that is what he normally gets.”

Two parents, Teddy and Rosa, were the most knowledgeable and involved with the accommodations their son received for the OAT. They knew exactly how their son took the test because they talked to their son’s intervention teacher at great length about the OAT process.

Different room with a smaller group of kids, different teacher. He knows the teachers, it’s his intervention teacher, she grouped him with kids that have similar needs. She had four kids and she worked with him. He read the story and she read him the questions. He had to write the answer. He had to read the story but she read the questions. She read the questions first then he read, then he answered the questions and she read the questions to him.

Teddy even noted the reason why his son needs accommodations “He’s required to do the work of a third grader so he gets accommodations to help him. Small group, read to, extended time. Typically his work is modified and he is working at his reading level.” The knowledge from these parents certainly shows how effective communication with the child’s intervention teacher produces accurate and clear information. That parents who had inaccurate information or were not fully aware of the accommodations their child received suggests that clear examples
and effective communication is necessary to produce higher parental awareness of the accommodations their children receive.

**Teacher Perception of Student Awareness.** I asked the teachers if they thought the students were aware of the setting, presentation, and response accommodations differences given to them for the OAT as opposed to instructional assessments. I wanted to know their experience with student awareness level of implemented accommodations they used. Eight teachers said that they think students are aware of the accommodations students with leaning disabilities received during the OAT. They further stated that they are aware that they are taking the test differently from their peers because they go to a different room or are with a different teacher. Two teachers stated that the students are not aware that they are taking the test differently than their peers.

**Feelings Regarding Accommodation Implementation Differences for the OAT**

The Statewide Standardized tests come with consequences for test stakeholders, including school districts, teachers, students, and parents (Heubert & Hauser, Elliot dissertation). If school districts lose their Excellent/ Effective Rating or fall below due to any of the poor performing AYP distinctions they may lose funding, tremendous pressure is placed on teachers to continuously improve test scores, and students may be retained because of failing. The consequences also referred to as “high-stakes” give way to attitudes and feelings from the key stakeholders. Important to this study are the attitudes and feelings regarding the perceived usefulness and effectiveness of testing accommodations used to increase validity for students with learning disabilities.

Multiple testing administrators are needed to break students into small groups and provide for individual accommodations. This is a potential issue if the student feels
uncomfortable with the person administering the test to them. For example, if a student has been reprimanded by the principal who then has to provide the student with their accommodations the student may feel uncomfortable and therefore have a negative effect. Further issue may occur with the amount of open rooms available to provide a distraction free environment. As I designed the interview question for this typology I was thinking about getting information that will lead to a better understanding of student feelings toward significant setting and presentation changes to implement testing accommodations.

While previous studies have shown that students with learning disabilities prefer using testing accommodations and react positively to the ability to use them (Kosciolek & Ysseldyke, 2000; Marquart, 2000) more studies need to examine the presentation and setting differences that are necessary when implementing accommodations as perceived by all stakeholders. A qualitative study performed in the early 1990s showed that teachers observed high stakes tests causing burnout, fatigue, illness, misbehavior, and psychological distress in students. Other teachers in the same study reported that the tests caused test anxiety and feelings of failure in students (Rottenburg & Smith, 1990). It is then predicted that because students are often placed with unfamiliar testing proctors (i.e. teacher that is not their own) and settings (i.e. room other than own classroom) to satisfy the individual accommodation needs, they will experience some level of undue stress, anxiety, confusion, discomfort, and/or frustration.

*Student feelings about the OAT accommodations.* Six students who received accommodations for standardized tests were asked what they thought about taking the test differently from their peers. Four students stated that they did not care that they took the test differently and the other two students made a positive comment about the accommodations they receive. All students expanded on their feelings regarding accommodations stated for the
previous awareness question. Jefferson, a third grade student, replied “What do you mean? I take the same test as everyone else. [Yes you do but remember how you told me you had a different teacher in a different room giving you the test? How do you feel about that]? It’s ok, I really don’t care.” Jefferson’s body language let me know that he was offended when I used the word “different”. Samson, a fourth grade student explained, “It makes me nervous. I was really nervous when I took the test. I’m not nervous when I take other tests. The teacher tells me when I don’t understand something in other tests.” Samson alluded to the actual test that made him nervous, not the actual accommodations used. Nate, a seventh grade student, Jason, a third grade student, and Noah, a fourth grader, all made “I don’t care” statements when referring to accommodations that put them in an unfamiliar setting or with an unfamiliar teacher. Jason said, “I don’t know what the other kids think.” Christopher, a fourth grader, stated “I guess its ok. You guess? I’m comfortable with that because I’m used to it.” Nate, a seventh grade student, shrugged his shoulders when I asked him what accommodations helped him and then said “nothing helps me.”

Only one student commented that it was “weird” that a different teacher gave him the test but then said, “I don’t care who gives me the test. It’s weird but I have had a lot of different teachers.” Surprisingly the students were aware of how the accommodations helped them and not concerned with the environmental changes that took place in order to provide them with those accommodations. Four of the students said the quiet area helps them focus, they do not worry about when everyone else is getting finished. “I like the small group because I’m less nervous and not worried about what the other kids are doing.” “I’m less nervous in the small group because I’m not worried what the other kids are doing.” All of the students appreciated the read aloud accommodation. “Teachers read the questions to me, it helps me because when I read
it I get stuck on the words, then I forget where I was.” Two students explained that taking the practice tests before the OAT helped them get prepared for the test so that there was not much difference from the OAT. “We’ve been having practice tests to be prepared for this test. Not much difference.”

**Parent perceptions of student feelings about accommodations used for the OAT.** I asked the parents how they thought their son or daughter felt about taking the test differently from their peers and I also asked how they felt about the accommodations their child received for the OAT and during the instructional day. Five of the parents expressed some form of positive aspect for testing accommodations, noting that they helped their child focus, took some stress off, and put them in a more comfortable environment "he is comfortable in small group, certainly advantageous.” When I analyzed the parent data two themes arose when discussing how they thought their child felt about the difference in placement. First, five of the parents said that their child was affected by the accommodation implementation in a positive way or had a null effect. Citing reasons such as “He felt good about the setting he was in,” “She knew it helps her,” “He is fine with it”, “He’s not aware that he took the test differently”, “He was in a comfortable environment.” This finding supported what the students had said, they experience a null or somewhat of a positive effect if they are in a different environment or if a different teacher gives the test. Just as the students said, they are used to getting help and so this just is a continuation of that help. Surprisingly, a positive finding of appreciation for accommodations used to make students more comfortable instead of concern for accommodation implementation was implied.

While finding that testing accommodations were viewed positively by parents and students, the second theme yielded that two parents had a negative feeling for the OAT. They noted that their child did experience stress, feelings of inadequacy, frustration, and nervousness
not because of accommodation implementation but because they were forced to take a test that was above their current reading level.

*Parents saw the OAT as unnecessary.* Accommodations used by the IEP teams follow criteria found in the Ohio Administrative Code 3301-13-03 and guided or allowed by the OAT so that the accommodations do not change what the test is intended to measure or enhance the students’ response. However two parents who were interviewed believed that the accommodations used for the OAT were needed but revealed concerns about the purpose of students with learning disabilities taking the OAT with accommodations and questioned the intentions of content measured for specifically the reading assessment. The below statement is great in length but it is important to paint an accurate depiction of this parent’s feelings so that a better understanding of parent perception can be learned and further studied.

If he’s already carved out, and we’ve already identified that he is not proficient and he is already on a different level, then why is he taking this test- it is irrelevant. What does it show? We’ve already identified that he’s not typical, we have already set standards that he can hopefully achieve. He’s moving along but at his own rate. He’s already behind so we’re trying to get him to that level. Even if they read the test to him and they wrote the answers and he answered correctly, that really is not indicative of his level, what would that tell us? He can comprehend perhaps but not at that level at all. He can’t read at a third grade level, he can’t. He can’t write at the 3rd grade level yet. We all know that. That’s a known fact, that’s why he has an IEP to begin with. That’s what is frustrating, I feel that he was forced to take a test, to make him feel inadequate- no question about it. He knew that, he just didn’t get it. I don’t think you can give accommodations to enable someone to be proficient based upon a certain level. Now I understand that there has to be a benchmark. It’s kinda like cheating to become proficient.

Both parents further believed that the OAT should be modified *instead of* accommodated for students with learning disabilities in order to get an accurate picture of the student’s true proficient level. While noting that the OAT as well as standardized testing in general had merit to typical learners, they believed that the intervention
teachers that provide individualized instruction capable of assessing the student’s true level.

I believe people on an IEP should be carved out and measured in a different way. If we set a goal for a certain reading level and he exceeds that, then the school has done a great job but the state per se doesn’t know what his strengths and weaknesses are—his teachers do because they’re the ones that work with him. His success doesn’t come from doing well on an Achievement test. It comes in small strides based upon what his teachers have done for him. That’s the problem with standardized tests, for that IEP student it is worthless. For the other students it has merit.

This parent believed that the time spent toward closing his son’s achievement gap would be best spent on working towards the goals written by the multidisciplinary team instead of for the OAT which was not his son’s independent reading level. For this parent, the accommodations used for the test did not equal justification for establishing an accurate measure of achievement. Instead the realization that students with an Individualized Education Plan would likely benefit from using the time spent on the OAT towards working at their own reading level in order to close the achievement gap with the help of the local school who knows and cares about his son personally.

Teacher perceptions of student feelings about accommodations used for the OAT. Eight teachers said that students are aware they are taking the test differently from their peers due to accommodations used. Four of those teachers stated the students’ awareness level had a positive effect. “I think when my students know they get the amount of breaks we’ve talked to the other students that they have to sit there for two hours and they know they don’t have to sit there for two hours.” “Someone is helping them get their thoughts down so that they might know what the child can actually do.” “For some it’s a relief because the amount of stressed placed on it.”

Two teachers said even though the students were aware that they were taking the test differently it had no effect on them because they were “used to doing that, I mean they are used to being pulled. Its second nature to them, it is natural.” The other teacher stated that the students
were aware that they will take the test differently because of “the time we take to practice giving them the test just like we will for the real thing so that we can practice accommodations the way the state wants us to.” Therefore they were aware they are taking the test differently but because they become used to it, it does not bother the students.

Two teachers said that the students were only aware they were taking the OAT differently because of the environment change. “I believe the students are aware they are taking the test differently from their peers, they are usually isolated from them.” “Because they are in a different room or with a different teacher they are aware but I don’t think they are bothered by that.” The two teachers that said the students were not aware that they were taking the test differently cited similar reasons to the teachers that claimed the students were aware but not effected. “I don’t think mine are aware because they do everything with me typically anyways.” “The students are not aware they are taking the test differently from their peers because it is normal for them.”

The Scribing Accommodation Used for the OAT

Student perceptions. I asked the students if their teacher writes answers for them (a) always, (b) sometimes, (c) never; if choices a or b were chosen they were asked to explain their thoughts about their experiences with the scribe accommodation. Five out of the six students said “my teacher writes for me sometimes.” One student said the teacher never writes for her. Of the students who said the teacher writes for them sometimes, four of them stated that they like it when the teacher writes for them because they can get their work done much quicker and easier. “I just tell them what to write and they write it, it’s easier, makes me get done quicker and it’s a lot easier.” Another cited reason was that one student recognized he had poor handwriting and the teacher has to write for him regularly so that his work can be read “I have trouble
writing, making some letters frustrate me when I’m makin’ them.” He also stated, “I’m comfortable with that because I’m used to it.” One student perceived this accommodation as needed when he was not able to keep up with his peers, “she only does it if I’m falling behind and everyone else has it done.”

The student who said the teacher never writes for her did not think it was fair to have the teacher write student answers, stating that “if the teacher writes for you then you’re cheating.” She went on to explain that the teacher makes her write all of the time and if the teacher cannot read the writing she tells her what she wrote. I asked her if she told the teacher exactly what to write and the teacher wrote it if she would still consider that “cheating”. She replied, “Yes, because if the teacher is writing it that is her writing not yours. I think it would be fair for me to write it and tell the teacher. It’s not really fair for the teacher to have to write all of the work. Normally I write on my own. If she can’t read what I write… spelling doesn’t count on most things.”

**Parent Perception.** I asked the parents specifically about the scribing accommodation used for their child and other students. Three out of five parents said that scribing for their child has a significant impact on allowing them the ability to relay information. “He will divulge much more information if someone can write for him, than if he has to think about it and write it and process it. He has processing problems, so you get a better idea of what he really knows with a scribe.” This same parent also stated that the teacher told her he would not be receiving the scribe accommodation this year because he has nice handwriting. She was disappointed that her son would not be offered the scribing accommodation. One parent said “he cannot articulate and write what he is thinking but if you talked with him and worked through it he would get the point.” One parent did not think that the scribing accommodation was used for her child.
**Classroom use of scribe versus OAT use of scribe.** This theme arose while talking to Teddy and Rose. They stated that their son needed a scribe to express answers but that there are clear differences in the classroom environment vs. the test. In the classroom Teddy said that his son receives more help with organizing his written work and writing himself. When the scribe accommodation is used for the test, their son can not utilize the accommodation because “he cannot articulate long answers, he can say a, b, c, or yes/no. It’s difficult for him to generate words let alone write the words. He needs talk throughs to explain himself.” Teddy said that he knows we are not allowed to “talk through” responses with his son and he offers yet another solution of having him write his response then asking him to tell the teacher why he wrote so that she could write above it.

**Partial scribe versus full scribe.** I showed a student example of a partial scribe and a full scribe to the six parents interviewed in this study and asked them to choose the example that they thought showed the student’s true writing ability. All six parent participants said that example B, the partial scribe example, showed the students true ability. Appendix G is a sample used. “The most advantageous would be if he wrote his response and the teacher would write above it. If the teacher wrote his response it would show what he was thinking but not his writing ability.” Another parent said that it ultimately depends on the ability of the student however stated that, “Personally I like the partial scribe because it tells you more about what they know about the writing process but depending on the test you can see the content. Whereas if they’re just talking to you, your not seeing the periods, capitals, ect. It depends on the child’s’ ability and it also depends on how much time you have for that test. Some tests take a lot longer to do a partial scribe than if you just wrote what they said.”
Teacher perception. I analyzed participant responses looking for themes, patterns, and relationships of how the teachers understood, used, and viewed the effectiveness of the scribing accommodation methods for the OAT and on a daily basis. Analysis of teacher responses revealed seven themes: they said they are not scribing for students as much as they did in the past; they saw the dictation method as useful depending upon what would be assessed; they raised concern for unintentionally enhancing the test or causing student failure; they understood the allowable guidelines to only use the dictation method or word processor method of scribing tighten guidelines so that everyone would scribe the same way; they saw the partial scribing method as useful for the classroom and OAT; they saw the full dictation method as a forced way to accommodate and troublesome when asking students where to put mechanics of writing; and finally they saw the full dictation method as more of an enhancement to the OAT than the partial scribing accommodation. A common relationship of teacher desire to provide the scribing accommodation that would best fit the student’s individual need while showing student independent level was found across themes. Many of the themes emerged from the causation of explaining thoughts regarding understanding and experience they have encountered with the scribing accommodation.

Allowable and unallowable methods of scribing. There are currently only two allowable ways of scribing for students on the OAT; dictation method or commonly referred to as full scribe and word processor method for scribe. The Partial scribe method was discussed in this study to understand the perceptions of usefulness of all scribing accommodation methods used in the classroom and for the OAT. The Partial scribe as defined in this study is when students write their response then are asked what they wrote. Then the teacher will write in legible handwriting the information relayed directly from the student’s response. I asked the ten teachers who
participated in this study to analyze all scribing methods (a) full scribe, (b) partial scribe and (c) word processor scribe.

Of the teachers interviewed only one teacher stated that she has used the word processor method of scribing for one of her students during statewide tests a long time ago and did not deem it as useful or time efficient. All ten teachers stated that the partial scribe shows the students’ true ability yet allows for the reader to see content. All ten teachers also have used the full scribe dictation method and revealed their concerns with using this accommodation. They also stated their perceived understanding about why the partial scribing accommodation they use in the classroom and used previously for the Ohio Proficiency test was no longer allowed.

*Who can receive the scribe accommodation?* I asked each teacher interviewed how many students they will be scribing for this year during the OAT assessment. Seven teachers stated that they were waiting for the rules, *Testing Handbook*, to come out before deciding whom they will scribe for on the assessment. A common explanation offered among the teachers was that last year they had written the scribe accommodation on their students’ IEP and then the state department defined disabilities that would and would not qualify for this accommodation. One teacher stated “they changed the rules of who could receive the scribe accommodation before the test so that we could not scribe for them. So we had to change their testing sheet on the IEP. So we are waiting to see what they’re going to allow us to do.” Another teacher specified that the regulations in the handbook stated that only children who could not physically motorically write could benefit from using a scribe. However she disagreed stating that “in my mind there are many other children with learning disabilities who need a scribe to show what they really know and can do.” She then gave several examples of children with processing disorders and even
attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) that have all needed the use of a scribe for testing purposes.

This year five teachers removed the scribing accommodation off of IEPs even though they scribe for those same students using a partial scribe in the classroom. Only two teachers stated that they will use the full dictation scribing method for two separate students because they felt under the state guidelines these children would qualify, however they admitted that they were not positive the state would completely agree with them. Another teacher stated that she did use the partial scribe for students who have the scribe accommodation listed on their IEP for large test assessments. This was slightly confusing because it is not allowed according to the state issued guidelines. Six teachers noted that the way the State Handbook specifies groups of children with types of disabilities to utilize the scribe accommodation as “confusing as to who gets it or if they should get it, its difficult to generalize when we are used to individualizing.” Regardless of the confusion the common perception of the scribing accommodation, both full scribe and partial, was that it is beneficial for many students with various disabilities.

Usefulness of the full scribe. Twenty percent of the teachers interviewed described the full dictation method of scribing as useful depending upon the intended measurement of the assessment and individual need of the student. Rose, an intervention teacher, said, “I have the students tell me what to write word for word in science and social studies when they are learning the information.” She explained that “some kids would not get information down” if she was unable to provide that accommodation. Another intervention specialist who services students with learning disabilities said, “For the writing piece they usually write for themselves. However, when there is limited time they want me to write it for them, they have it in their head but getting it down… processing it is very difficult so I write it for them.” This finding is
important because the teachers found this accommodation useful when there was not enough
time for the students to process or the write the information independently in the time provided.
However if writing was being assessed or taught the latter teacher stated the student should write
first, then she would write above for readability.

Usefulness of the partial scribe. All teachers and testing proctors interviewed described
the partial scribe accommodation as useful for written assignments. Three sub themes emerged
from the data; participants saw the partial scribe accommodation as a vehicle for readability,
letting the students verbally express more content knowledge than they were able to write, and to
access actual student writing ability without enhancement. Three participants said that the partial
scribe allows for readability. “A person scoring the writing of a student with a learning disability
without the use of a partial scribe may tend to be very judgmental of the work, may not be able
to identify the content or words written and they would tend to score very low. There is no way
you would be able to figure out what they wrote without the partial scribe.” Another teacher said,
“I use the partial scribe accommodation so that we can look at the content to see if they’re
actually answering the questions.” “I write so the teacher can read what it is,” one teacher
responded in a frustrated tone. “Writing for the students so that we can understand what they
know for reading comprehension or science, social studies makes sense.”

Students with written expression delays who had a very difficult time writing the
information they could verbalize was another theme found. Two teachers stated that they always
have the students write what they can and then when the student tells them what they wrote they
verbalize more. “They often will elaborate on their answers.” “If they have a lot more
information they are not able to get down because the writing is getting in the way I will
continue with the dictation method but I like to have them attempt it first so that I get a picture of their writing ability.”

Last, seven participants revealed that they think the partial scribe is useful and acceptable because the students are showing what they can write and also what they know without enhancing their answers. “I think it is more valid information when they write their response so you can see what their true ability is for writing and then by looking at the adult scribe you can see their intended response.” “I would definitely say that the partial scribe shows more of what the student can do vs. what someone else is recording.” “It makes much more sense for the child to write it and then assess their work with the child identifying the words intended. Instructionally, the teacher would edit with them. For assessment purposes the teacher would want the student to write but they would not edit. The child needs to be there to tell exactly what they wrote.”

Concern and worry using the dictation method for scribing accommodation. As I analyzed the data a common theme among teachers and testing proctors was the fear that they unintentionally enhanced the representation of the student’s ability or caused a student more difficulty by asking them to spell words as well as stop to add in writing mechanics. “We are limited to the full scribe way and we are afraid of interpreting too much for the students.” Four teachers with over fifteen years of experience referred to the full dictation method of scribing as the “new way” and the partial scribe as “the way we used to do it.”

I know the way that they are having us do it now is very difficult, to make sure that you are not putting something in there that the student possibly wouldn’t have put on their paper. I’m much more nervous now placing that information on there versus when I was able to have the student write their answers and then I was able to ask them and identify what they intended to write.
Three teachers stated that they have scried for students that they did not know and worried that they may have spelled typical words the students should know but did not ask the students to make sure they could really spell them. They were worried that by them spelling words correctly for students that may not have spelled them correctly they may have enhanced the student’s score.

I think it's really hard when you don’t know the child, you don’t know what they can spell and you’re just helping out. I felt better when they wrote it and they just told me what they wrote, then I could see what they could and could not spell. I always felt a little uncomfortable with the function of the words they could spell. It is only my interpretation of a word that they may not be able to spell.

Another teacher expressed frustration in the form of a hypothetical question, “If they have a processing disorder, how am I supposed to stop them in the middle of their thought to ask how they would spell a word?” More frustration from another teacher, “You can’t sit there and ask them to spell every word on the writing test.” Another teacher expressed her thoughts on the scribing dilemma.

It's all very confusing, if I do all the writing then the person grading has no idea what the student can really do. But if the student did all the writing on his or her own, the person grading may not be able to understand the content that was truly conveyed. That’s why there must be a way, like we used to be allowed to do it, so that there is a true picture.

Another teacher stated that she felt like she was cueing the students to add periods when she asked them to review what they told her to write and add punctuation. “Plus when they write the period you know they have written the period, you are not prompting them to show you where to put the periods.”

A perception from yet another teacher was that she thought the state was trying to ban the ability to use the scribing accommodation for most of the students with disabilities and this was not justifiable. “It feels like the state is making it impossible for use to scribe at all for the
students and that scares us because we think the students answers may not be interpreted by the grader, no clarification will be able to be given.” Another teacher said if we are not able to scribe for our students an unfortunate outcome will occur. “Then the people scoring the students work can’t read what they wrote and they are not understanding the child’s content.” A solution heard from 70% of the teachers interviewed suggested that it is the full dictation scribe that may enhance the students work and that the partial scribe offers the chance of less interpretation.

In my personal opinion for some students it would be best if the student writes and then we go back and write. Because as much as you don’t want to interpret something that they’re saying, sometimes they’re referring to things and I mean how can you really decide what a child’s level is? Or know exactly how they’re trying to word things.

Understanding the change in rules. When the teachers and testing proctors explained their perceptions of the partial scribe and full dictation scribe a pattern emerged from the responses. The pattern from 7 responses was that they were previously allowed to utilize the partial scribe for standardized testing but when the OAT began they were only allowed to use the full dictation method or the word processor method. “When we scribe now we have to write everything for them. In years past we were allowed to let them write and then write underneath them for clarification for what they intended to say.” Another example to support the pattern, “Scribing didn’t have any rules in the beginning, there wasn’t a set way to scribe when we first started scribing. So a lot of us in the building thought that the most valid way to scribe would be to have them write their response and then we would write above it. And then a couple of years down the road, that was taken away from us.”

I asked the teachers who referenced this change why they were no longer allowed to use the partial scribe accommodation for the students during the OAT so that I could better understand their perception of why this change took place. Four participants said they were
unsure why this change took place. “We have no idea why it was taken away.” “I don’t totally understand the thinking of the state.” Two teachers said that they thought the state wanted to place guidelines on the scribing accommodation so that there could be more consistency with how everyone was scribing throughout the state. “I think what happened was that they just realized they didn’t have any set guidelines for scribing so they decided to firm it up.” “I’m sure that throughout the entire state they had a lot of different interpretations of what the scribe accommodation was used for.” “We also used to write in pen above what the student wrote so you could tell the teacher writing and then they said we needed to use pencil and that wasn’t explained why they changed it.” Two teachers believed that the state held meetings to explain the changes but no reason as to “why” the partial scribe was no longer allowed. “They held meetings to explain the new guidelines which were that we either had to write everything for them or use the word processor.” “We sent an administrator to those meetings but I don’t think anything was clarified as to what research went into their decision.”

Dislike for full dictation scribe. When asking participants for their final thoughts on this issue seven teachers responded with disdain for the full dictation method for scribing. Two main reasons related to this theme. First, the full dictation method is hindering the ability to provide for the individual need of the student due to the limitations of what is allowed. The below statements are a combination of several teacher comments all related to the same theme.

I think it needs to be fixed, the current way we are scribing now is a disservice to our children. I think we were tougher on students in the past and we know more about their writing than we do now. Now it’s just about can they tell me a sentence or tell me where the periods and capitols are and spell. That’s not telling me anything. Now we are more prone not to scribe for them at all because I actually think that they are judged harder at a harder level. So they get lower scores. It’s much better to see what they can get down. The trend was that the kids that were scribed for this past year scored low on the test. In order to practice for the test though we do occasionally say, well just tell me the answer and I’ll write it for you. We are not scribing for children as much as we did in the past because we
are limited to the full scribe way and we are afraid of interpreting too much for the students. Then the people scoring the students work can’t read what they wrote and they are not understanding the child’s content.

Second, the full dictation method is an enhancement of student work. The seven teachers were adamant that for students who do need a scribe and are “forced” to use a full dictation scribe have a difficult time telling where the periods, indentation, capital letters, correct spelling, and so on go for the written piece. Admittedly teachers stated that they naturally may write the correct spelling, capital, period, and so on without asking and therefore run the risk of actually enhancing the students work unintentionally.

I think the full dictation scribe method is hard not to assume they know how to spell most words but if you’re not then you are constantly asking them how to spell words and where to put punctuation. It almost makes it a lot harder on the student to see what they can really do. And for me that’s the whole purpose is for them to show what they know and can write, not what they can tell you. Trying to make the decisions as a proctor, what words should I ask them to spell, which words should I assume they already know? If they have a processing disorder, how am I supposed to stop them in the middle of their thought to ask how they would spell a word.

Then again, reemphasizing the point that “when the students write themselves you can see exactly what they can do and they will more than likely remember to put the period down than they are to remember to tell you to put a period or a capital.”

Does the partial scribe enhance the student work? Seven participants spoke of the possibility that the full dictation scribe does enhance the students work in some cases; I also wanted to know if they thought the partial scribe would also enhance the student’s work. The seven teachers believed the partial scribe does not enhance the students work unless the scribing proctors were to intentionally correct the child’s work. “I think that if the testing proctor/scribe were to erase or scratch out the students mistakes that the words are written above so that the person scoring the tests could not see what the child had written, then that would enhance the
student’s response or if the scribe added an (s) to make the word plural then that would be the case.” However they saw the partial scribe not as an enhancement but a way to see the ability of the student. “I don’t think that is change or enhancing the students’ response because that is what they have written for one and all that the testing scribe has done is to write it so that it is legible.” The main point given, “so as not to clarify or make it better but to help the person scoring read their work for content while seeing their true writing ability.” The teachers and testing proctors believed that when it comes to scribing on a writing assessment the partial scribe should be made available. “Having the choice to do what is best for our students based on their needs in order to assess their writing level according to content, organization, and mechanics would be best left up to the multidisciplinary team.”

Discussion

This study offers a unique perspective on the policy of providing allowable accommodations within state guidelines for students with disabilities in state accountability tests; a view from the students, parents, and teachers. Students with disabilities experiences with testing accommodations, teachers’ perceived usefulness for state allowable accommodations, and parent perceptions of accommodations used for their children with learning disabilities were considered to address the four research questions posed. Specifically this research investigated how teachers, students, and parents perceive the scribing accommodation differences allowed and not allowed across settings.

Findings and Implications

This research finds that accommodations used for standardized assessments and classroom assessment are simultaneously viewed as beneficial and negatively restricting. Key
Stakeholder responses generally revealed the use of accommodations as positive, the guidelines dictating allowable ways to scribe for students as negative. That is, in some cases the full scribe dictation method was described useful for some students but an invalid way to assess writing ability for many students with individual needs. Overall teachers and parents perceived the full dictation method for scribing as inappropriate for large scale writing assessments because it interferes with the construct being measured. Students believed the full scribe dictation method was quick and easy however could be considered cheating if the teacher wrote all of the work. A method not allowed by state guidelines, referred to as the partial scribe, was recommended by both teachers and parents in order to measure student writing level as well as content and organization for writing. Accommodations were viewed as positive and helpful for students with learning disabilities even when students were forced to be in an unfamiliar situation.

Research Question One and Two

What are the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding student awareness and feelings of setting change and differences in accommodations they receive during standardized assessments? Do key stakeholders view allowable accommodations for the test as effective and useful for the individual student needs during the daily instruction setting? Students with disabilities perceived setting change (i.e. unfamiliar room), teacher placement (i.e. testing proctor other than known teacher), and/or accommodation differences (i.e. variation of the scribing assessment) used for the OAT as positive, natural, helpful, and/or null. That is, they did not care they took the test differently from their peers or they did not think about what their peers may have thought about them. Further explanation that they were “used to it” and they “practiced” for the OAT came from the students. These students did not perceive the accommodations used for the OAT as negative or different from the “help” they usually receive.
Additionally, the students felt that their teachers provided them with adequate preparation for the OAT with practice assessments and accommodation practice.

The students expressed that the setting or teacher may have been different but the constant of their familiarity with the accommodations used through practice relieved predicted anxiety, frustration, worry, and confusion. The state guided accommodations used for the OAT were intended to mirror those used by students in the classroom to better fit the needs of the students. What cannot be said is whether the need to “practice” state guideline accommodations is actually indicative of accommodations used for individual need on a daily basis. In other words it is unclear if there is a direct match between accommodations used for the OAT and accommodations used in the classroom as ideally hoped in theory (Thompson, Lazarus, Thurlow, and Clapper, 2005). Further research is needed to explore if individual needs are guiding the accommodations used or if the guidelines limit or enhance the accommodations that would best determine the needs of the student while assessing the construct of the test.

Parents who have children with learning disabilities perceive testing accommodations as positive changes in their child’s environment to give them the support they need for the OAT. Extra time, questions read to their children, scribe, and a small group setting were all accommodations viewed as ways to alleviate stress for their children. Clarification of language wording and cues to attend to task were also mentioned as effective ways to accommodate but these are not allowed per state guidelines. They indicated that their children were familiar with accommodations used in the classroom and remained unaffected or benefited by the ability to use accommodations such as small group, extended time, and read aloud. Yet they said that the OAT assessment made their children nervous, produced anxiety, and made them feel “dumb”.
Parents also expressed some frustration with the OAT as a means of determining the “level” of their child. They explained that the accommodations used in order for their children to be successful made them feel as if it was a false sense of ability. Parents thought the progress towards IEP goals with the help of specialized education gave a more accurate assessment of the grade level their child could actually read on. Further views included regarding the test as one measurement that should not determine if their child had made enough progress. They said that if the state really wanted to assess how much progress and ability level their child was at they needed to look at a combination of IEP progress notes, assessments on the child’s actually reading level, and documented observations from the teacher. The OAT was regarded as an important tool used for students without learning disabilities but for the students who are “already carved out” it is not sufficient or valid. A sense of faith in the intervention teacher’s ability to assess and teach their children was conveyed. Further communication and giving the parents a platform to speak their views was necessary and the parents thanked me for the opportunity to discuss these issues.

Intervention teachers and testing proctors thought that the students were aware they were taking the test differently form their peers but that they remained unaffected emotionally from the differences. This finding comports with the students with disabilities and parents of students with disabilities believing that there is some awareness of the accommodations causing a change in routine from the typical day but the students are not affected negatively. Conversely, students were eased by the ability to have extended time, questions read aloud, and small group placements because they were aware of the emphasis to do well on the OAT.
Research Question 3

Do key stakeholders believe that a full scribe (allowable) or partial scribe (not allowed) would yield more valid results for the writing assessment or enhance the response of the student? The Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) 3301-13-03 offers four criteria, which the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) uses to specify and guide allowable accommodations from. A partial scribe conflicts with criteria 4: The accommodation cannot change or enhance the student’s response. From personal conversations with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) personnel, I have learned that using two different handwritings (see scribe example B in Appendix G) is viewed as an “enhancement” and a “change” in the student’s response. The four main criteria have further been adopted in most part nationwide and serve as guidance to multiple states. However key stakeholders in this study believe that a partial scribe is a better indication of the skill we are assessing when writing because it clarifies the writers’ content without “enhancing” the writers’ performance. When a person writes everything for the student you can not see student writing ability only their ability to verbally convey a response is revealed. While that accommodation remains necessary for some it does not fit all.

Students perceived the full dictation scribe as “easy and quick”. Students thought that in some cases the full dictation method of scribing was considered “cheating”. They also revealed that their teacher might only scribe for them completely when they do not have enough time to complete their work. The students in this study said that the teacher scribes for them sometimes by writing the correct word above what they wrote so that it could be read on daily assignments. This finding is important because the accommodations used in the daily classroom environment and district wide assessments are designed to mimic the accommodations used for the OAT. However because the guidelines used do not allow for the partial scribe, teachers are adapting
their accommodation to fit the guidelines of the test instead of the individual being allowed to use what he or she would need to show the best construct validity. This finding implies the need for future research to examine the construct validity, enhancing factors, and overall usefulness of the partial scribe and full scribe for any state currently following the same criteria as the Ohio Administrative Code.

Parents perceived the partial scribe as the best way to assess the writing skills of the student with a specific learning disability. Having personal experiences with their own children they went on to say that it depends on the child as to whom would benefit but in speaking of their own children they believed the partial scribe would be the best accommodation in keeping with the validity of the writing assessment. They further explained that if you want to truly see the student’s ability regarding content, organization, and mechanics that it would be best if the student wrote but the teacher rewrote illegible words in order to read content, verb tense, writing mechanics, etc. One parent questioned the use of a scribe for the math section of the OAT stating, “My son is really strong in math but you can’t read his explanation to save your life! He has fine motor issues and well… the teacher wants to write for him so that they don’t count off for not being able to read it but then she said he has to tell her how to work out the math problems cause he can’t write the answers. How’s that gonna work? He needs to write down the numbers to solve his own problems.” This finding is yet another implication for research regarding the usefulness and effectiveness of the scribing accommodation not only for the writing assessment but also for the math assessment.

Teachers and testing proctors confirmed that they perceive the partial scribe useful for students with specific learning disabilities in written expression, fine motor delays, processing disorders, and many other individuals’ needs. The teachers in this study had used the partial
scribe for Ohio Proficiency tests many years ago therefore were able to offer their perspective on this accommodation during that time. They preferred the use of a partial scribe over the full scribe accommodation 10-1 for their students due to the ability to gain an accurate student level of written expression in all areas such as content, organization, and mechanics. Teachers reported a desire to give the most accurate results to the state department. They further expressed the concern and worry they had due to the enhancing properties of the full dictation method. According to the participants, writing everything for the students is automatically enhancing to the student’s performance because they may not know how to spell typical words such as “said, they, because”, however the scribe proctor only asks the students to spell more challenging words and tends to spell high frequency words correctly for the students. The participants explained that they do not ask the students to spell every word because it becomes monotonous, distracting, and simply damaging to the usefulness of the scribing accommodation.

The allowable scribing accommodation from the participants’ perspective may provide a higher chance to enhance student work and/or restrict appropriate accommodation needs for individuals with disabilities. The teachers in this study prefer to have the student write his or her responses then ask the student to clarify the information he or she wrote. The teacher will write the correct spelling or information added by the student above the student work in pen. They do this for four reasons (1) allows for students to showcase their writing ability, (2) allows students to practice writing, (3) exhibits student content knowledge, (4) provides evidence of grammar, spelling, and format awareness.

The teachers in this study have witnessed students taking the OAT with the full dictation scribe. At times it is enhancing and other times it hinders their ability to visualize the format of the student’s work. A participant provided this example, last year a student in the fourth grade
began to write a letter by telling the teacher what to write. He never once told her how to indent, write the greeting, salutation, address, and body. He was very familiar with the format of a letter but because he did not have the pencil in his hand he did not write the correct format of the letter. But if he did have the pencil in his hand, he would have written the correct format but his writing would have been unintelligible, leaving the person scoring to decipher content validity. If a partial scribe accommodation had been used the test would have offered a better sense of the student’s ability. What this finding warrants is the substantive examination of whether the scribing accommodations used meet the needs of all students who have qualifying disabilities or are there ways considered “not allowable” that could produce effective and valid results so as not to enhance the student work.

The issues studied in the past have revolved around teachers choosing accommodations based upon their personal knowledge instead of research and evidence to support accommodations used. Package accommodations have been studied suggesting that teachers choose as many accommodations as possible in order to produce the best results. This research poses a new assumption to explain the accommodations chosen, the accommodations typically used in class and evident to work are not allowed to be used for the OAT therefore teachers use accommodations that “look like” the ones they prefer to use for individuals. The explanation from the CEC offers no empirical evidence to support the claim that the partial scribe enhances the student’s work. Only OAC criteria 4 were cited to lay claim to explain the reason for what is allowed and not allowed. The teachers in this study claim that with the experience, trial interventions, and trial accommodations used the partial scribe accommodation reveals a higher level of accessibility to student knowledge without the added implications of enhancement that are suggested. Contrary to this, they believe that it is the full scribe dictation method that leaves
room for enhancement of student work in the way of (1) how to spell words, (2) cues to put punctuation, (3) where to indent, and (4) how to format.

A potentially effective step is to educate students, their parents, and school staff about the current research and evidence the state has found regarding specific accommodations used but are not allowed for the OAT due to OAC criteria. Because all accommodations could be considered “enhancing” to student performance it is important to clarify specific denial of accommodations typically used in the daily classroom. Without a deep understanding of the research behind allowable and not allowable accommodations teachers may choose a package of accommodations that are more generalizable than specific to the needs of their students. Parents also expressed confusion, frustration, and anxiety for their children because a lack of understanding for assessing them on their current grade levels instead of their maturation level. Information conveyed to these key stakeholders is crucial to understanding and acceptance of policy implemented in the NCLB reform.

Research Question 4

What knowledge do key teachers and multidisciplinary teams possess to determine individual accommodation needs? Previous studies have been conducted to determine how teachers and multidisciplinary teams choose testing accommodations. Several studies suggest that accommodations are not based on research but on teachers’ perceptions and experience. One study surveyed 64 general education teachers and found that teachers are more likely to choose accommodations that would maintain the construct of the test and would require little individualization in the general classroom (Gajria, Salend, and Hemrick 1994). Another survey study found that 43 special education teachers had little knowledge of allowable accommodations for students with learning disabilities for standardized tests. All of the teachers
surveyed in this study misidentified 11 testing accommodations as allowable (Siskind, 1993). Fairness and practicality of testing accommodations was found to be important in another survey of 118 educators, although the need to increase their knowledge of allowable accommodations was evident (Gilberston, Schulte, Elliot, Kratchwill, 2000).

This study found, that contrary to previous studies, teachers were very aware of accommodations allowed for students with learning disabilities during standardized tests. Further, because intervention teachers are trained to identify interventions that work through empirical evidence they not only knew what the state allowed for them to use but they also offered different ways they deemed both acceptable and beneficial. Teachers were more aware and disturbed by accommodations they were not allowed to use but deemed fair and reasonable to assess certain constructs measured, specifically writing. The ten intervention specialists and testing proctors interviewed in this study stated that they used the partial scribing method in their classrooms even though it is not allowed by the state. Three teachers explained that they had collected multiple work samples to analyze the effect the partial scribe accommodation had on the construct validity of assessment as well as differential boost it may have given students with specific learning disabilities. Although the use of the partial scribe is the preference of the teachers interviewed in this study it is only their educated judgement based on experience and tested accommodations used for the students they have worked with. An official empirical study to determine if the partial scribe method would be useful in the way of providing students with learning disabilities access to written expression of content so as not to “enhance” their work is necessary. Previous studies have implied that states need to “refine” accommodation policies but this study suggests that states need to allow for individualized accommodations that may not be currently allowed in order to provide what is best for the students.
Implications for Practitioners and Policy

Overall, the current research holds several implications that are related to a central theme—consideration and direction for accommodation policy consistent with those received in classroom instruction and assessment. The findings highlight continuing issues of (a) addressing and accessing practitioner knowledge for individual accommodation needs, (b) policy clarification to specify factors and considerations for allowable aspects of the scribing accommodation, and (c) multidisciplinary team investment in providing accurate and evidence based accommodations ensures that they would be able to provide justification for accommodations used (d) communicating accommodation needs and standardized testing goals to parents.

The current system is placing teachers in the awkward position of enacting a set of predetermined, legally binding guidelines with the intention of providing the support needed for their students to succeed. First, the practitioner knowledge and experience related to the accommodations used during classroom instruction and assessment is readily available to students on a daily basis. However, this study has found that these accommodations, especially the scribe accommodation, often differ from the accommodations that are allowed by the state on statewide testing. After speaking to representatives of the Council for Exceptional Children regarding these issues it was found that the reason the partial scribe accommodation is viewed as an “enhancement” and therefore not allowed is because two different handwritings would be placed in the testing booklet (B. Nelson personal communication January 15, 2009; W. Brown personal communication January 19, 2009). Although this finding clarified why the state has not allowed the partial scribe accommodation, the teachers in this study believe the partial scribe does not enhance the students work but allows a more appropriate way to assess the construct
validity of the student’s written work. Yet the partial scribe accommodation also allows for accessing the student’s content knowledge. Teachers that used the full scribe accommodation for this study felt that they may have inadvertently enhanced student work because they did not clarify enough with the students they tested for the OAT. The need for further clarification and research to assess which scribing accommodation is best to assess the content for each individual is evident in this study.

Second, even though it was made clear that the intent of the scribe accommodation was only for students without the full function of their arms or hands, factors such as auditory processing dysfunction, poor handwriting, or poor fine motor skills may be somewhat acceptable to qualify for the scribe accommodation according to the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). Teachers often feel that many other factors should be considered when deciding if a student needs a scribe to show his/her true ability. Not only was there concern for whom should receive the scribing accommodation but also the technique or presentation of the scribe accommodation should be analyzed. The state of Ohio only recognizes the dictation method and the word processing method without spell check for the presentation of the accommodation. This study has revealed several other possible ways teachers scribe for students from the practitioners’ point of view and experience. Consideration for this scribing differentiation must take place when reviewing handbook procedures in order to consider the best possible support for student participation and test validity (IDEA,612a16,1997).

Finally, it was found that this school district invests time, money, and effort into systematic planning for each child with an IEP based on the multidisciplinary review process. The IEP Team develops accommodations based on experience and knowledge of the individual’s needs. Best practice would suggest the IEP accommodations listed should contribute to the
research the state uses to produce allowable accommodations that will provide the most valid results. Implementing these recommendations will allow for teachers to use the best of their experience and judgement. As it stands, IEPs may not be serving the purpose for which they were designed if classroom teachers are not implementing their recommendations consistently. A detailed empirical study is recommended to investigate the variations of scribing suggested by teachers in this study. Although the parents did suggest forming a different way to assess all students with learning disabilities in order to determine the level of their children, other research has suggested the reform of “including” students with learning disabilities has increased since demanding participation in the OAT.

Limitations

An issue of concern is that of common misconceptions related to the lack of information provided by the state to indicate research that has proven or disproved the allowable accommodations used for statewide assessments. Only OAC #4 was cited stating that the partial scribing method would subjectively “enhance” student work, but this is not founded with any other research information from the state. If this information was readily available, teachers may have an increased understanding about the reasoning behind the two allowable ways to scribe for a student, even though there are clearly other ways based on results from this study. Furthermore, the terms and information used in the questioning of the interview process may have been improved with the use of evidence based research the state has used to determine appropriate accommodations, so as not to add to or reinforce any misconceptions.

I was a single researcher interviewing and interpreting the data. This provides limitations to the results of the study because my bias during the analysis may be interpreted differently from another perspective. To safe guard against personal bias I did request the input from
participants in this study to make sure their voices told an accurate depiction of their story. The feedback from participants was beneficial however I only received feedback from 7 participants.

A consultant for the Ohio Department of Education working in the Office for Exceptional Children has been a good resource to help locate information regarding research support for the list of allowable accommodations, but as stated previously only one source has determined why the partial scribing method is not allowed. While the partial scribe is considered an “enhancement” of student work because two handwritings would be present, the participants in this study would find that statement subjectively argumentative and needs to be speculated through evidence.

Last, this study only investigated thoughts and perceptions about accommodations used and did not use any empirically based assessments to determine appropriate accommodations. Using several examples of student work to determine enhancement factors numerically may lend to the empirical research that is needed. Findings from teacher, student, and parent input will help determine accommodations that should be investigated, such as the scribing accommodation variations found in this study.

Conclusion

Accommodations recommended and used by intervention specialists appear to be critical for the better assessment of students with learning disabilities for standardized testing. The results suggest that the allowable full scribe dictation method create an enhancing factor just as suggestively indicated of the partial scribe accommodation method. The teachers, students, and parents in this study consistently perceived the partial scribe accommodation as appropriate to meet the criteria suggested in the OAC, (a) the partial scribe does not change what the test is
intended to measure and (b) the partial scribe does not enhance the student’s response (c) the partial scribe allows for the exposure of what the student can do while clarifying what the student knows. Because accommodation decision making is critical to the validity of school comparisons across school districts and states (Fuchs et. al. 2000; Hollenbeck et al., 1998, Kopriva, 2000) it is important for any state restricting the use of the scribing methods to review and analyze the benefits of the partial scribing method. These results provide an in-depth review of the accommodation procedures practiced on a daily basis and for the OAT. The need to examine through additional empirical support for assigning the partial scribing accommodation as well as the individual needs of the student must be considered. Additionally this study shows support that the students felt positively about the testing accommodations used to help them succeed.
Appendixes

Appendix A

University of Cincinnati

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

College of Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services

Title of Study: Engaging Positive Accommodation Perceptions into the AYP Conversation

Investigator

Ashley Sokol, Principal Investigator
University of Cincinnati
(513)255-4000
sokolae@email.uc.edu

What is the reason for this study?

Before you agree to participate in this study, we want you to know the reason for the study. We would also like you to know exactly what to expect if you decide to participate. Being a part of this study is entirely your choice. You are free to stop at any time. There are no penalties. Feel free to ask questions about anything you do not understand.

The reason for this study is to understand what parents, teachers, and students think about their experience (i.e. the accommodations received such as setting, time, response, and presentation) with the achievement test they have taken. Your feedback may be used to improve accommodations and communication for teachers, families, and students.

Introduction:
You are invited to give your opinion regarding acceptable and useful accommodations given to students during the Ohio Reading and Math Achievement Test. Please read the following explanation carefully and ask questions about anything you do not understand.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to collect and describe patterns of responses among students, teachers, and parents regarding usefulness and acceptability of accommodations as listed per Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for students with specific learning disabilities.

Duration:
Your participation in this interview will last for approximately 30 minutes during the month of November or December 2008. If you would prefer to write your responses to these questions that option will be made available to you.

Procedures:
You will respond to the questions about your attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of the current testing accommodations used for students with Individualized Education Plans.
Risks/Discomforts:

There is a minor potential risk that you may feel as if you are divulging information that could potentially be perceived negatively by the community. If at any time you feel uncomfortable or want to exit the interview, please say stop. No reason or explanation for your desire to stop the interview has to be given. No record of your participation will be acknowledged.

Benefits:

No direct benefits will result from your participation in this interview. Indirect benefits may lead to better reliability checks of the accommodations listed per IEP used in the classroom and during standardized tests. This study may lead to generalizable information to be disseminated to the state regarding acceptable and useful accommodations that should be considered allowable.

Alternatives:

You may write your responses to these questions instead of orally responding to decrease anxiety or to process your thoughts before responding.

Confidentiality:

Your responses to the questions will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the investigator's home. Only the key investigator will have access to your data. The data from the study may be published; however, you will not be identified by name. However, be advised that others who share in that experience may recognize specific details or experiences.

Offer to Answer Questions:

If you have any questions about study-related activities, you may call Dr. Anne Bauer, my mentor professor at 513-556-4537. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the Program Manager of the Institutional Review Board to direct your question at 513-558-5784.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw your participation at any time for any reason.

Legal Rights: Nothing: in this consent form waives any legal right you may have nor does it release the investigator, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

Agreement:

By signing this form you are acknowledging that you have read this consent form and understand your rights as a participant in this study.

Signature of Participant ___________________________ Date ________________

Signature and Title of Person Obtaining Consent ___________________________ Date ________________
Please print a copy of this information sheet for your records.

Appendix B

University of Cincinnati
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
College of Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services

Name of the study: Engaging Accommodation Perceptions into the AYP Conversation

Ashley Sokol would like to ask you questions about the Ohio Achievement Test (OAT) that you have taken. The questions are about the help you need when you take the test so that we can understand what you think is working good and what is not working.

If it is okay for her to ask you questions, please write your name at the bottom of this paper.

If it is not okay, then say “no.” No one will make you be in this study so say “no” if you do not want Ashley Sokol to ask you questions.

You may ask Ashley Sokol any questions you want. She will answer them for you.

Your name

**********************************************************************************************************************************************

FOR RESEARCHER USE ONLY:

Parent name ____________________________ Permission received? ___________

Signature of research team member confirming permission/assent __________________ Date
Title of Study: Engaging Positive Accommodation Perceptions into the AYP

Investigator

Ashley Sokol, Principal Investigator
University of Cincinnati
(513)255-4000
sokolae@email.uc.edu

What is the reason for this study?
Before you agree to participate in this study, we want you to know the reason for the study. We would also like you to know exactly what to expect if you decide to participate. Being a part of this study is entirely your choice. You are free to stop at any time. There are no penalties. Feel free to ask questions about anything you do not understand.

The reason for this study is to understand what parents, teachers, and students think about their experience (i.e. the accommodations received such as setting, time, response, and presentation) with the achievement test they have taken. Your feedback may be used to improve accommodations and communication for families and students.

Conversation Introduction:

You are invited to give your opinion regarding acceptable and useful accommodations given to students during the Ohio Reading and Math Achievement Test. Please read the following explanation carefully and ask questions about anything you do not understand.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to collect and describe patterns of responses among students, teachers, and parents regarding usefulness and acceptability of accommodations as listed per Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for students with specific learning disabilities.

Duration:
Your participation in this interview will last for approximately 30 minutes during the month of November or December 2008. If you would prefer to write your responses to these questions that option will be made available to you.

Procedures:

You will respond to the questions about your attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of the current testing
accommodations used for your child with an Individualized Education Plan.

**Risks/Discomforts:**

There is a minor potential risk that you may feel as if you are divulging information that could potentially be perceived negatively by the community or the school. If at any time you feel uncomfortable or want to exit the interview, please say stop. No reason or explanation for your desire to stop the interview has to be given. No record of your participation will be acknowledged.

**Benefits:**

No direct benefits will result from your participation in this interview. Indirect benefits may lead to better reliability checks of the accommodations listed per IEP used in the classroom and during standardized tests. This study may lead to generalizable information to be disseminated to the state regarding acceptable and useful accommodations that should be considered allowable.

**Alternatives:**

You may write your responses to these questions instead of orally responding to decrease anxiety or to process your thoughts before responding.

**Confidentiality:**

Your responses to the questions will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the investigator's home. Only the key investigator will have access to your data. The data from the study may be published; however, you will not be identified by name. However, be advised that others who share in that experience may recognize specific details or experiences.

**Offer to Answer Questions:**

If you have any questions about study-related activities, you may call Dr. Anne Bauer, my mentor professor at 513-556-4537 or Primary investigator, Ashley Sokol at 513-255-4000. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the Program Manager of the Institutional Review Board to direct your question at 513-558-5784.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Your participation is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw your participation at any time.

**Legal Rights:** Nothing in this consent form waives any legal right you may have nor does it release the investigator, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

**Agreement:**

By signing this form you are acknowledging that you have read this consent form and understand your rights as a participant in this study.

Signature of Participant ________________________ Date ________________________

Signature and Title of Person Obtaining Consent ________________________ Date ________________________

Please print a copy of this information sheet for your records.
Appendix D

University of Cincinnati
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
College of Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services

Title of Study: Engaging Positive Accommodation Perceptions into the AYP Conversation

RE: #07-12-28-09E Engaging Positive Perceptions of Useful and Acceptable Accommodations into the AYP Conversation (expires 2-21-09)

Interview Questions for Teachers

1. Do any of your students receive the scribe accommodation?

2. Are they aware they are taking the test differently from their peers?

3. What are your thoughts regarding the scribing accommodation allowable by the state?

4. Please view the 3 different work samples of the scribing accommodation.
   Which way do you think shows the students true writing ability?
   a. Full dictation Scribe
   b. Partial Scribe
   c. Word Processor Scribe

5. Of those scribing accommodations, which ones do you think help your student the most? Least?

6. Do you utilize the scribing accommodation differently in the classroom environment versus the statewide test?

7. That concludes all of my questions. Please share with me any other comments or concerns you may have on this topic at this time.

Thank you for your time. If you would like to provide me with your phone number so that I can clarify your intended thoughts after I have written them please do so. It is very important to me that I give an accurate depiction of my results.
Appendix E

University of Cincinnati
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
College of Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services

Title of Study: Engaging Positive Accommodation Perceptions into the AYP Conversation

RE: #07-12-28-09E Engaging Positive Perceptions of Useful and Acceptable Accommodations into the AYP Conversation (expires 2-21-09)

Interview Questions for Parents

1. What is the setting in which your child takes the test? (i.e. different room? Different teacher? Ect.)

2. Are they aware they are taking the test differently from their peers?

3. How do they feel about the test setting?

4. What accommodations does your child receive for the test?

5. Of those accommodations, which ones do you think help your child the most? Least?

6. Do they receive the same accommodations at school? Differences you are aware of?

7. One accommodation some students are able to receive is called the “scribe” accommodation. Please view the 3 different work samples of the scribing accommodation. The following examples were created by the Principal Investigator for the use of this study only.

Which way do you think shows the students true writing ability and why?

d. Full dictation Scribe

e. Partial Scribe

8. That concludes all of my questions. Please share with me any other comments or concerns you may have on this topic at this time.

Thank you for your time. If you would like to provide me with your phone number so that I can clarify your intended thoughts after I have written them please do so. It is very important to me that I give an accurate depiction of my results.
University of Cincinnati  
Consent to Participate in a Research Study  
College of Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services  

Title of Study: Engaging Positive Accommodation Perceptions into the AYP Conversation  

Student Interview questions  

1. Do you take the test in a differently (i.e. different room, teacher, teacher writes for you, small group, questions read to you, ect.) from the other kids in your class?  

2. How do you feel about taking the test differently (i.e. in a different room, with a different teacher, other)?  

3. Do you like it when the teacher writes the answers you tell him or her to write? Why or Why not?  


5. What helps you take the OAT test?  

6. What helps you complete your work in the classroom?  

7. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?  

Thank you so much for your time. Would it be ok with you if I wrote down your answers and talked with you again to make sure I wrote down your responses correctly? If yes, I will come back to your school and talk with you.
Writing Directions

Write a report about these sharks. Keep looking at your note cards to help you write your report.

Look at the Revising Checklist and Editing Checklist on Page 25 as you write and again after you finish writing. The checklists will help you write a complete report.

I am writing a report about sharks. The whale shark has hundreds of teeth in its jaw. It is also the largest fish in the world. Another shark is called the great white shark. It is powerful and fast, and has hundreds of teeth in its jaw. It has excellent sense of smell and can swim very fast. That is the end of my report.
Writing Directions

Write a report about these sharks. Keep looking at your note cards to help you write your report.

Look at the Revising Checklist and Editing Checklist on Page 25 as you write and again after you finish writing. The checklists will help you write a complete report.

The whale shark is 60 feet long. It is not dangerous to people. It eats small fish and it is the biggest in the world. Dogfish are 3 feet long. Scientists study this shark people eat this shark. Great White Shark powerful jaws hundreds of teeth and fast.
References


Polloway, Edward; Bursuck, William, Jayanthi, Madhavi; Epstein, Michael; Nelson, Janet (1996). Treatment acceptability: determining appropriate interventions within inclusive classrooms. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 31*, 133-144


