

TO: Directors of Special Education and Division Directors of Testing

FROM: John M. Eisenberg, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services

SUBJECT: Use of the Virginia Modified Achievement Standards Tests (VMAST) for Eligible Students with Disabilities served under a 504 Plan

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform school divisions that eligible students with disabilities identified under Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* who are pursuing a Standard Diploma with credit accommodations may participate in the Virginia Modified Achievement Standards Tests (VMAST). The VMAST are tests approved by the Board of Education as an alternate pathway for students with disabilities to earn verified credits.

In the past, the VMAST was a part of Virginia's accountability system and federal mandates prohibited the participation of students with disabilities identified under Section 504. Only a small group of students with disabilities identified under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004* were allowed to participate. Since VMAST scores are no longer included in federal accountability calculations, beginning with the spring 2015 test administration, eligible students with disabilities served under 504 plans who are pursuing a Standard Diploma with credit accommodations may participate in VMAST Algebra I and VMAST End-of-Course (EOC) Reading.

Students with disabilities served under 504 plans must meet the same eligibility requirements to participate in VMAST Algebra I and VMAST EOC Reading as students with disabilities served under Individualized Education Programs (IEP). The 504 Committee must determine eligibility using the updated VMAST participation criteria as well as the following credit accommodation eligibility criteria adopted by the Board of Education in the [Guidelines for Standard Diploma Credit Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#):

- a. Student must have a current IEP or 504 plan with standards-based content goals.
- b. Student has a disability that precludes him or her from achieving and progressing commensurate with grade level expectations, but is learning on grade level content.
- c. Student needs significant instructional supports to access grade level Standards of Learning (SOL) content and to show progress.
- d. Based on multiple objective measures of past performance, student might not be expected to achieve the required standard and verified units of credit within the standard time frame.

Additionally, to take the VMAST for verified credit purposes, students must pass the course and score 374 or below following two attempts at the corresponding Standards of Learning End-of-Course test. The passing score on VMAST remains at 400; the score may not be used to determine if a student may receive a locally awarded verified credit.

The Virginia Department of Education will be working to update all relevant technical assistance materials to reflect this policy guidance. If you have any questions regarding credit accommodations, please contact Dr. Samantha Hollins, director, Special Education Program Improvement, at Samantha.Hollins@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 786-2900. Questions regarding the VMAST should be directed to student assessment staff members by e-mail at Student_Assessment@doe.virginia.gov, or by telephone at (804) 225-2102.