

## Identifying the PAAP Levels of Assistance

As you listen to this presentation, you may want to review pages 27 and 28 of the *2008-09 PAAP Manual*.

Students who participate in state assessments through the Personalized Alternate Assessment Portfolio, or PAAP, may need varying degrees of support in order to complete the required academic tasks. In this presentation, we will be discussing the modes of support that are acceptable when administering a PAAP – their definitions, and how they affect the scoring of a PAAP.

There are three types of support permissible when administering a PAAP:

- Accommodations – selected from approved lists of standard support mechanisms used for other state assessments
- Flexibility in the method of presentation and student response which is included within the PAAP directions for task administration, and
- PAAP Levels of Assistance

**Accommodations** are changes to the standard timing, setting, mode of presentation, or means for a student to respond to the test items. They do not change *what is being assessed*, nor do they change the *scoring formula* for the assessment.

Accommodations level the playing field, so to speak, so that all students using them have a fair opportunity to demonstrate what they know and are able to do.

An example of an Accommodation would be the teacher reading a math problem aloud to a student who has a reading disability. The teacher is not changing the target of the assessment; instead, the student is being given the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in an assessment where his or her disability might otherwise present a roadblock to an accurate assessment of knowledge and skills.

Students participating in the PAAP may use any of the accommodations that have been sanctioned by the Maine Department of Education without having their use recorded on any PAAP form. Complete lists of approved Accommodations for the Maine Educational Assessment (MEA), the Maine High School Assessment (MHSA), and the PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) are available online, in the Policies and Procedures documents for each assessment. To access these documents, visit [www.mecas.org/paap](http://www.mecas.org/paap) and click on the link for **Materials and Tools**.

The directions for administering a PAAP task include supports not listed among approved Accommodations for the standard assessments. Because of the nature of the PAAP as an alternate assessment, and the population for whom the PAAP is intended, some **flexibility in the method of presentation** is necessary. These additional accommodations will always be included on the Task Description page of the PAAP task being administered.

Remember: the use of these support mechanisms does not affect the PAAP scoring formula. They do not change what is being measured in the task.

If a student needs supports beyond those provided through approved accommodations or the flexibility that is part of every PAAP Task Description, the opportunity to use individualized **Levels of Assistance** is provided. Supports classified as Levels of Assistance are *teacher-developed* support mechanisms that, while not modifying the content being measured, assist a student in completing the task or retrieving the answer to a particular question, without actually providing that answer to the student.

Levels of Assistance are divided into two categories: **Task Specific** and **Not Task Specific**. The difference is simple: for Task Specific Assistance, *the support the teacher provides is related specifically to the content of the task* – it is individually tailored, with the intention of helping the student retrieve the answer to a particular question. Assistance that is Not Task Specific is general in nature and in no way directly related to the content of a particular task.

For an example of the difference between Task Specific and Not Task Specific Assistance, let's look at a scenario involving a question from Math-A2-Rubric Level 2-LoC1. "Tyler has \$30 in his wallet. He spends \$17. How much money does Tyler now have in his wallet?"

To correctly respond to this question, the student must know that the answer is found by subtracting 17 from 30. And that is the purpose of the question, as stated in the PAAP Rubrics: *Students can use procedures to add and subtract whole numbers with up to three digits.*

"What is Tyler doing with his money?" the teacher asks, "Is he getting more? Or is he going to have less?" This is Task Specific Assistance: it is related specifically to the content of the task, directly addressing the issue of determining how much money Tyler has, and how the student might discover that amount.

"Pay attention now. Read the question again. I know you can do this one." These are examples of assistance that is Not Task Specific. General statements such as these could easily be applied to any question, and won't help the student with either the operation or the answer itself.

A special field is provided on the Task Description where detailed Information regarding the Level of Assistance for that particular task is recorded. The teacher administering the task must first check the appropriate box indicating the category of assistance needed by the student: *Task Specific* or *Not Task Specific*. Once one of the check boxes has been marked, details regarding how the assistance was given must be written in narrative form.

If *Task Specific* is checked, the teacher should give the exact words that were used to prompt the student's knowledge of the task at hand. For example, if the teacher used a question such as, "What is Tyler doing with his money?", those words would be written in the space. If a template was used, that would be noted along with information about the components of the template.

If *Not Task Specific* is checked, the following phrases, or similar phrases, would be appropriate for inclusion in the Level of Assistance section of the Task Description:

- “student completed work independently”,
- “student used only approved accommodations”,
- “task was administered using steps specified in directions on Task Description”,  
and
- “teacher provided encouraging remarks to keep the student focused on the task”.

It’s vital that information regarding the Level of Assistance be recorded on each of the Task Descriptions within an Entry. This information is essential to the scoring of the PAAP. If such information is not provided, a score of “ZERO” may result.

The Level of Assistance is one of the three variables used to compute a student’s score on the PAAP. In order to ensure reliable scoring of this variable, it is vital that the guidelines provided in this presentation and in the PAAP Manual are followed.

For more information about Levels of Assistance, or any aspect of the PAAP process, please visit us online at [www.mecas.org/paap](http://www.mecas.org/paap), or contact Kim Schroeter – email [kimberly.schroeter@maine.gov](mailto:kimberly.schroeter@maine.gov), or by phone as 207-624-6774.

Thank you.