Working with students with LDs for accommodations for the SAT and ACT

By John Cadenhead
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Testing Accommodations for Students with Diagnosed Disabilities

Our notions of disability have been evolving over time
Milestones in disability legislation

1973
**Federal Rehabilitation Act (504 plans)**

1975-1990
**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**
- Individualized Educational Program (IEPs)
- Free and Appropriate Public Education
- Least Restrictive Environment

1990
**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

2008
**ADA Amendments Act**

- fulfills Congressional intent to restore the broad scope of the ADA (post Supreme Court limitations) by making it easier for individuals to establish that they have a disability.

Students with disabilities are afforded protection under 3 distinct civil rights statutes, IDEA, ADA, section 504 of the Rehabilitation act.
For testing, ADA is moving to center stage.
Defining Disability

The ADA defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities when compared to most people in the general population.

IDEA lists individual disabilities which warrant special education and related services, e.g., mental retardation, hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, visual impairments, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, specific learning disabilities.

https://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm
http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/root regs,300,A,300%252E8,
Some background on IEPs and Section 504 Plans

- Public schools, not private, receive federal funding for abiding by IDEA
- IDEA compares students to grade-level peers to determine presence of disability
- IDEA guarantees a right to equal access to education through grade 12.

- Section 504 is an antidiscrimination, civil rights statute that prohibits discrimination based upon disability.
IEPs and 504s continued

• Private schools are bound by Section 504 and cannot discriminate against a child with a disability and might be responsible for providing modifications, accommodations, and access to educational opportunities.

• 504 Plan will follow you to college, but an IEP, with K-12 criteria, will not. In this manner, 504 may be more efficient.

• Some advocates are insisting that their child receive a 504 plan in order to get a testing accommodation, but this may not be necessary. A formal school-based plan, Response to Intervention (RTI) or otherwise, should be adequate.
DOJ, civil rights division, is responsible for enforcing ADA and is getting more involved in issues of testing and accommodations.
DOJ civil rights division has been investigating complaints that students with disabilities are denied ACT & SAT accommodations

- Complaints that ACT and CB are rejecting many requests for accommodations that are routinely provided by schools
- This is particularly tough for students with state-mandated SAT or ACT testing.
- Students who cannot secure accommodations can
  A) take the test without accommodations and risk a low score
  B) insist upon accommodations, but receive a score that is not “College-Reportable.”

September 2016 DOJ issued new guidance for testing accommodations. Final rule went into effect October 11, 2016.

These guidelines, if faithfully implemented, could make it significantly easier to secure testing accommodations.
New ADA guidelines could help the “twice exceptional” students

• ADA will accept the discrepancy between a student’s potential, measured by cognitive assessments, and performance, measured by achievement tests and grades, as evidence for an accommodation.

• Gifted students are more likely to qualify for accommodations through ADA guidelines than through IDEA.
ADA Amendments Act will benefit

Students with ADHD and learning disabilities who could request and receive accommodations, including extra time on exams at postsecondary institutions and on national exams.

https://www.ada.gov/regs2016/final_rule_adaaa.html
How does The ACT manage accommodations?
Massive shift to an online accommodations process, catching up with the College Board
Requesting Accommodations - Students and Parents

- Create or log in to an existing account
  - Register for the ACT test
  - Indicate need for accommodations
  - Select the type of accommodation you need

Upon completion of your registration, you’ll receive an email with instructions on how to work with your school to submit a request for accommodations. Forward this email to your school official along with a completed Consent to Release Information to ACT form. This email initiates the process.

- Your school official will submit your request to ACT. ACT will review the request and email the Accommodations Decision Notification to your school official. Your school official should contact you within two weeks of submitting your request.

Note: The basic fees and registration deadlines for accommodated testing are the same. Refer to **View Test Dates** for registration deadlines.

All accommodation requests should be submitted by your school official by the published registration deadlines for your preferred test date. *See below for further information.*

DOWNLOAD ACCOMMODATIONS CHECKLIST ➔
Students/Parents initiate the request and then pass the baton

- Student registers for a specific test date and submits request for accommodation, specifying National extended time or special testing.
- ACT emails instructions to student explaining how they will work with testing coordinator to complete the request.
- Student or parents must notify testing specialists to get things moving.
- Test Coordinator will submit and manage the request and any resubmission.
- The answer to the request is sent to the Testing Coordinator, who must communicate the decision to the family.
ACT Online Process puts testing Coordinator at the center

Parents/student initiate process by registering for a test and informing the test coordinator

- **Testing coordinator** logs into TAA and submits request with documentation

- ACT sends Accommodations Decision Notification via TAA

- **Testing coordinator** requests reconsideration, attaching new documentation and evidence

- ACT reviews updated request and returns new Acc. Decision notification
Testing Coordinator is at the helm

1) Selects the Test and future test date

   ACT: June, 2017

2) Selects the Radio button besides all diagnosed disabilities that apply:

   Learning Disability

   - Reading Disorder/Dyslexia – DSM 315.00
   - Math Disorder – DSM 315.1
   - Disorder of Written Expression – DSM 315.2
   - Speech/Language Disorder – DSM 315.39
Testing Coordinator selects the formal testing plan already in place

Select the radio button beside one of the following plans:

- IEP
- 504
- Official Accommodations Plan
  Exceptions Statement

How many years has the plan been in place?

- less than one year
- one year or more

This is a big deal for the ACT. One year or more really expedites the process and helps the odds
Testing Coordinator selects the desired accommodation

Select the radio button beside one of the Timing Accommodations.

- TC 1 – standard time (one session, one day)
- TC 2 – double time (over multiple days)
- TC 3 – triple time (over multiple days)
- TC 5 – stop the clock breaks (one day)
- TC 5 – standard Time (over multiple days)
- TC 6 – time-and-a-half, self-paced (one session, one day)
- TC 7 – time-and-a-half (over multiple days)
- TC 8 – extended time on essay/constructed response only
Testing Coordinator Uploads documentation

Select the Choose File button to upload documentation for the following categories:

- IEP, 504, or official accommodations plan
- Qualified professional diagnosis
- Psychoeducational/neuropsychological evaluation
- Other documentation

If you do not upload the necessary documentation, you are stopped dead in your tracks:
Qualified Professional Diagnosis is Required
Status of requests is much easier to manage for the testing coordinator

- incomplete
- in review
- partially approved
- approved
- not approved

It’s also much easier to apply for renewed accommodations on other tests in the future
More than a shift from paper to online, ACT’s evaluation process has changed

- ACT is aligning with new ADA guidance: “ACT approves accommodations for examinees with disabilities in accordance with the ADA.”
- Verbiage lines up directly with ADA guidance.
- ACT also appears ready to accept more informal accommodations offered in schools (without the 504 or IEP) aligning with the ADA.

https://www.ada.gov/regs2016/final_rule_adaaa
Testing Coordinator Feedback on the process

- It takes more time for counselors to scan and upload all the documentation, which is particularly tough for under-resourced public counselors.
- Once everything is scanned subsequent requests are much easier.
- TCs Like having a database of students, like for the CB, to see all the decision letters in one place.
- Learning Specialists like that they can now communicate with ACT, which wasn’t always the case.
- Approval can be really quick with the TAA if all documentation is provided, literally decisions in 5 days.

IEC feedback on TAA system- putting counselors/admins at the center of the process can be a liability if they are not fully informed/prepared to skillfully complete and submit the application.
ACT deadlines: roughly 3 weeks before the test date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016-2017 ACT Test Dates</th>
<th>Request Deadline</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep-10-16</td>
<td>Aug-19-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-22-16</td>
<td>Sep-30-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec-10-16</td>
<td>Nov-18-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb-11-17</td>
<td>Jan-20-17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr-8-17</td>
<td>Mar-20-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-10-17</td>
<td>May-19-17</td>
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How does the CollegeBoard manage accommodations?
CB: Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD)

- Each school designates an SSD Coordinator who requests access to SSD Online.
- Parent signs consent form and gives it to SSD coordinator.
- SSD Coordinator opens a request for accommodations.
- After the request is submitted, SSD Online displays a message stating whether documentation must also be submitted.
- SSD Coordinator assembles documentation, checks it against the criteria for the particular disability and for the requested accommodations, and uploads it for review by CB staff or external reviewers (e.g., specific medical experts).
- SSD Coordinator can view the status of the request at any time.
- Student and SSD Coordinator notified of decision by email.
- If request is granted, student will receive an SSD eligibility letter containing an SSD code to be used for all future testing.

Sound familiar? It should be. College Board’s online SSD system was the model for the ACT’s new TAA system.
College Board spells out what it wants

In general, students approved by SSD for College Board testing accommodations meet the criteria discussed below:

1. Student has a documented disability
2. Participation in a CB exam is impacted
3. Requested Accommodation is Needed
4. Accommodation is Received on School Tests

Requests are typically rejected for lack of adequate documentation or insufficient evidence that the accommodation is warranted: the documentation doesn’t support the requested accommodation.

https://www.collegeboard.org/students-with-disabilities/eligibility
College Board wants 4 months of accommodation use in school

Student has a documented disability

Participation in a CB exam is impacted

Requested Accommodation is Needed

Accommodation is Received on School Tests

Some testing coordinators anticipate an auto-deny if accommodations in school have been used for less than 4 months. More than 4 months- less of an issue.

https://www.collegeboard.org/students-with-disabilities/eligibility
March 2016 CB changes to accommodations

- Accommodations given for specific sections, not necessarily the entire test. Math-based learning disability will not yield a test-wide accommodation; ADHD or reading disability will.

- Students approved for extra time will automatically get extra breaks (5 minutes between sections).

- Students may request a 4-function calculator for the no-calculator section. (for students who have a disability that impacts their ability to perform mathematic calculations; a specific learning disorder with impairment in mathematics, or dyscalculia)
CB deadlines: roughly 2 months before the test date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016-2017 SAT and CB Test Dates</th>
<th>Request Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-Oct-16</td>
<td>12-Aug-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSAT Oct 15, 19 and Nov 2</td>
<td>30-Aug-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Nov-16</td>
<td>16-Sep-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Dec-16</td>
<td>15-Oct-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-Jan-17</td>
<td>2-Dec-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Mar-17</td>
<td>20-Jan-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSAT 10 April 3-14, 2017</td>
<td>13-Feb-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APs: May 1-5, 8-12, 2017</td>
<td>17-Feb-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-May-17</td>
<td>17-Mar-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Jun-17</td>
<td>14-Apr-17</td>
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Are the odds of securing an accommodation better on one test?
Different perspectives on the relative accessibility of accommodations from the SAT and ACT

The ACT is more frugal with granting accommodations for our population of higher performing kids. The SAT is significantly easier.

Our students only take the ACT, and all of them, with their long history and documentation, readily receive accommodations.

The ACT has always been more lenient with our students. If the College Board granted an accommodation, the ACT was sure to follow its guidance.
Relative difficulty of securing an accommodation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of requests granted (claimed)</th>
<th>Percent of test-takers receiving accommodations (2013)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>85%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-92%</td>
<td>5% (4% extra time)</td>
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ACT has been historically easier to secure accommodations, though this has not been the experience of all individuals, particularly for counselors at selective private schools.
Perception that ACT is tougher with a late diagnosis. While CB trusts the diagnostic scores, ACT wants a longer history of school accommodations

- “ACT loves the student diagnosed in 1st-2nd grade with a full evaluation, reevaluated in 8th, has current documentation, and is using the accommodation in school for at least a year.”

- ACT has greater reservations for a sophomore who is diagnosed with a reading disorder. “Under a year is more of a headache. It will take longer to review and sometimes come back denied.”

  – private school learning specialist

ACT checks the box for one year of school accommodations (it used to be multi-year). CB checks the box for 4 months
ACT appears to be tougher than CB on less specific diagnoses

- When it comes to a learning disorder not otherwise specified (NOS) - a retired category from the DSM IV or an unspecified neurodevelopmental disorder, ACT is typically less amenable, seeking a specific DSM code.

- CB does have a checkbox for LD NOS, although it’s no longer in the DSM, many kids are in that category with functional limitations through processing, retrieval, visual-spatial processing, etc.

LD NOS has been replaced in the DSM V with Specific Learning Disability (SLD), which can incorporate processing speed deficits and other disabilities.

– private school learning specialist

Providing the evidence that an accommodation is necessary
Testing companies need to know the What, How and Why of the request for accommodation

**What**
What is the nature of the specific diagnosed disability? What is the specific diagnosis?

**How**
How does the disability impact and functionally limit the student, particularly in the domains of standardized tests?

**Why**
Why is the particular accommodation requested necessary to create equal access for the student?
A Clear Accommodations Request

1) Clearly identifies the disability

2) Demonstrates the student’s functional limitation

3) Specifies an accommodation to address the disability
Documentation

Current Test Accommodations
- IEP
- 504 Plan
- Official Accommodations Plan

Psychoeducational/Neuropsychological Evaluation
- a Qualified Professional Diagnosis
- a Complete Evaluation

Other Documentation
- e.g., a letter from a teacher discussing specific ways in which conditions affect daily classroom functioning

A well-written evaluation will help the reviewers give the student what he/she needs

- I’d write my reports to answer the question: So what?
- The Reviewers are clear: Write to us in English, describe your student, what’s it like to be with them? what’s their functional limitation? How will this accommodation give them equal access from this test?
A skilled practitioner could make the difference

An experienced psychologist/neuropsychologist who is familiar with providing a thorough history, who documents the course of the learning issues developmentally, ties it together with the referral question and evaluation and connects it with the test data to provide a sound basis for requesting accommodations.

Source: Joan Wittan IEC
Good evals and requests

• Are supported by a student’s academic performance

• Clearly evaluate the student’s academic history, the functional limitation, and the impact of received accommodations

• Explain how the functional limitations will impair performance on the specific assessment

• Reference student scores and percentiles from assessments (e.g. processing speed or working memory scores).
Teacher Observations
Teacher Evaluations can help

- May strengthen an application, but cannot replace a diagnosis or stronger evidence.
- Sometimes a letter from the teacher can make the specifics come to life, the narrative of the disability and accommodation.
- Teacher observation forms must show the academic impact of the accommodation: how did the performance change after receiving the accommodation? And without it?
### Extended Timing accounts for 74% of all requested accommodations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Testing AccommodationsRequested</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50% extra time</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 50% extra time</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra/extended breaks</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternate text format</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditory or visual assistance</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustments in testing environment</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GAO, *Higher Education and Disability: Improved Federal Enforcement Needed to Better Protect Students' Rights to Testing Accommodations*

Our data

Our SAT students who received extended timing accommodations started 106 SAT points (3 section) lower than their unaccommodated peers and ended up with score increases 56 points greater. Our ACT students with extended time started 3.2 ACT points behind, but attained 1.6 points greater.

Accommodations are in fact helping to level the playing field for our students with disabilities.
Should I apply to both SAT and ACT?

• apply for accommodations on both tests and then evaluate the differences in granted accommodations to determine which test to take.

• If both come through, we can compare performance on an extended time practice ACT and SAT and make an evaluation regarding the better assessment for the student.
Appeal
Appeals

- Most reviewers come back and focus on the documentation and up-to-date testing. Not the 504, but current testing.
- I have made a call to the reviewer and gone over the data as well as asked what further information they might be looking for – sometimes this is just a conversation with the reviewer, sometimes we also get a letter from the school, sometimes they just want one more measure – it all depends.

IEC with LD focus
Appeals process

If you need to appeal, you need to submit new information. We looked at this and made or decision. Appeal is an opportunity to add something else. It’s an insult if you don’t send something new. Updated testing or additional teacher reports - sometimes tutor reports - anyone who can observe who has credibility who can speak with authority to the issue at hand. We rarely lose with the ACT.

Disabilities specialist, public school
Save something for the appeal

• You have to add something when you appeal. So don’t send *everything* now. Send what they ask for; if denied, we build on to that. Save a letter form teacher, from a parent, from the student. Strategically withhold some documentation: don’t dump it all on the front.

• Appeal only once. Give it one more shot and give it everything we have. Then we move on to the other test if this is a dead end.

Learning Specialist- Private School
The Luck of the appeal

• There is some luck of the draw, some randomness regarding who conducts the review.
• There’s also some element of the “Squeaky wheel” factor.

Learning Specialist- Private School
Sometimes you get something other than what you requested

• Ask for time and get breaks as needed.
• Parents have the right to appeal these decisions

Excuse me, but I ordered the lasagna.
Your students
Your students may have concerns about using accommodations

- Will there be a stigma?
- Are accommodations a crutch?
- Am I cheating? Is this fair?
- Issues of pride or identity
- How about when I enter situations where accommodations will not be available (e.g., work)

You may need to address these issues directly with students. I don’t fault students for refusing their accommodations if they can manage without them.
If students plan on using an accommodation

• They should approach all preparatory activities in light of that accommodation.

• If a student will receive 50% or 100% extended time on the assessments, all homework and practice tests should be carried out replicating the testing conditions the student will experience.

Structure practice to simulate anticipated testing conditions
Timelines for Accommodations
Add in time for new diagnostic testing if you might need it

- Professional reports can take 3-6 weeks.
- Talk to the examiner- can the person meet the deadlines? Be mindful of his/her time too.
Start super early to fend off stress!

• If you want accommodations for the SAT, get them for the sophomore PSAT. That means apply in the spring of freshman year or fall of sophomore year for the April PSAT 10.

• Same with ACT and PreACT, applying at the end of freshman year makes everything later so easy.

• The early-birds, those students who secure accommodations for the sophomore PreACT or PSAT, will have a greatly expedited process securing accommodations for the SAT or ACT.
College Board and SAT timing

- Students seeking accommodations for their junior PSAT or fall SATs should submit their request by spring of sophomore year.
- The College Board will respond seven weeks from the last piece of documentation submitted.
- The clock resets if a single document is submitted late.
- If an accommodation is granted, a student will receive a Services for Students with Disability (SSD) number from the College Board, good for accommodations on all College Board tests, including the PSAT, SAT, and AP exams.
- Know that appeals will require an additional 7 weeks
ACT timelines

- For the ACT you must apply for a specific test date to start the process. Register for the ACT well in advance of your test date.
- ACT can be really quick (2-3 weeks) if the student checks all the boxes- testing, plan and long-standing accommodations- but build in time to an appeal (6 weeks) as insurance.
- By the end of sophomore year: Talk to testing coordinators at school, determine if all documentation is current
- September-October: Coordinate with Testing Coordinator at school
- October: Apply for testing accommodations
- November-December: Receive response
- December: Resubmit with new documentation if necessary
Key Takeaways

• Early is best for accommodations.
• Engage your students about accommodations early on, talking about testing, evaluations and the use of accommodations in college.
• Talk students through SAT and ACT accommodation differences, encourage students to apply to both agencies.
• Remind students to save something in case there is an appeal.
• Remind families to save all educational reports and documents- from middle school on.
• Tell students about changing coming down the pike from the ADA and DOJ. Things should get easier if the guidance is followed.
• Encourage students to self-advocate, begin to build that muscle.
Also called “Learning Disabilities”, Learning Differences are any conditions that hinder acquiring the same knowledge and skills at the level expected of those of the same age, especially when not associated with a physical handicap.

All of the LDs we’ll talk about appear in the DSM-V (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders).
Common LDs

1. ADHD (ADD is now categorized as a form of ADHD)
2. Dyslexia (Includes Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia)
3. Autism Spectrum
4. Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)
5. Executive Functioning and Organization
ADHD

What is Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?

ADHD is a mental disorder that causes above-normal levels of hyperactive and disruptive behaviors. People with ADHD tend to have difficulty concentrating, sitting still, paying attention, staying organized, following instructions, remembering details, and/or controlling impulses.

So what does this mean?

Students who have ADHD have trouble filtering stimuli. They treat each sensation or distraction with equal importance. They cannot give greater importance to a teacher writing on a white-board than a bird flying outside the classroom window. It may be caused in part by an imbalance in chemical messengers that affect behavior, though the exact cause is unknown.
ADHD

This can manifest itself into the 3 types of ADHD:

Predominantly inattentive students:
- Are easily distracted.
- Miss details and have trouble following instructions.
- Have difficulty organizing and getting their work in on time.
- Don’t seem to listen when spoken to.

Predominantly hyperactive students:
- Have trouble sitting still and are highly impatient.
- Talk nonstop and are constantly in motion.
- Touch and play with everything in a room.

Predominantly impulsive students:
- Are very impatient.
- Act without regard for consequences.
- Show their emotions readily.
- Interrupt conversations or activities.
Dyslexia

What is Dyslexia?
Dyslexia is often characterized as a reading disorder and is a difficulty with decoding the meaning of symbols as in letters, words, and numbers (dyscalculia). Dyslexia has no bearing on intelligence, but can be very frustrating and de-motivational for students.

So what does this mean?
Dyslexia isn’t a vision issue; students with dyslexia see letters correctly, but they can’t interpret them easily or quickly.
Dyslexia

- Students can flip letters and numbers
  - P is interpreted as b, W is interpreted as M, 2 is interpreted as 5, > is interpreted as <.
- Students can misidentify whole consonant clusters or syllables that they recognize and count on to reveal the word they are a part of. Less common words are read as easier/more common ones that the student encounters more often.
  - The “cmmnt” in “communicative” is interpreted as “community”
  - The “inf” in “inference” is interpreted as “int” in “instance”
  - The “furter” in “further” is interpreted as “future”
- The can switch negations and affirmations.
  - “I will go to the store” becomes “I won’t go to the store”.
- Can switch articles and prepositions.
  - “The cat” becomes “A cat”.
  - “in the process of” becomes “of the process of”

This kind of misinterpretation can lead to not only slower reading but incorrect reading comprehension and difficulty correcting grammar.
Autism Spectrum

What is Autism and Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and Autism are both general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development. These disorders are characterized, in varying degrees, by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication and repetitive behaviors.

So what does this mean?

Autism doesn’t necessarily affect intelligence, though some students with Autism can have low cognitive functioning. It is a social disorder with many symptoms.
Autism Spectrum

Students with Autism:

- Have trouble interpreting social cues.
- May seem awkward or rude, but this is unintentional.
- Have difficulty empathizing.
- Have trouble with eye contact and understanding personal boundaries.
- Can have obsessive behaviors or hobbies/fascinations.
- Require routine.

Autism comes from Autos, which means “self” and focuses on self-absorption, leading to a loss of contact with external reality. Some medical professionals theorize that Autistic behaviors have a route in overstimulation. Some children with Autism prefer to be alone or are upset by loud noises or bright lights.

Students with Autism need very clear and concrete instruction. They do not do well with surprises or changes without warning.
Executive Functioning

*What is Executive Functioning?*

Executive functioning is an umbrella term for the management (regulation, control) of cognitive processes including working memory, reasoning, task flexibility, and problem solving as well as planning, and execution. People with strong executive functioning processes are able to see the big picture and sort through details. Some students have trouble with these processes which can translate to testing.

*So what does this mean?*

Students who do not have proper Executive Functioning processes understand what tasks they are supposed to accomplish but don’t know the step to get to the end goal. Think of having a map to a treasure that has many different paths, but the print is fuzzy and not sure which path is the right one.

These students can have a hard time because people think they are lazy or unmotivated when in fact they get easily overwhelmed by anything that requires multi-tasking or deadlines. Many students give up rather than face the pressure of these seemingly monumental tasks.
Students who lack strong Executive Functioning processes suffer in five areas:

- **Goals:**
  - Figuring out personal goals
  - Chunking large goals into smaller doable steps (becoming a doctor requires a pre-med undergraduate track, then medical school, then a residency, etc.)

- **Prioritizing:**
  - By time (I have to study Wednesday and Thursday for my test Friday)
  - By importance (It is more important that I work on Science than English because my Science average is a C, but my English average in an A)

- **Organization:**
  - For subjects (my Algebra Folder is separate from my Chemistry Folder)
  - Taking effective and coherent notes

- **Timing:**
  - Assignments that will take more than a day to complete
  - Which assignments are due when

- **Flexibility:**
  - Can be thrown off by a switch in subject or a switch in schedule
  - Difficulty multitasking and get overwhelmed with too many tasks
What is Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)?

Oppositional Defiant Disorder is a disorder in which a young person will display sustained anger and defiance that surpasses normal and healthy levels over a long period of time.

So what does this mean?

Every child exhibits normal levels of defiance as part of testing their boundaries growing up, but when defiance and anger are sustained for over six months and seem to have no cause, psychologists consider that this child might have ODD.

Students with ODD are frequently considered “just bad kids” but psychiatrists have recently begun to suspect a chemical imbalance that causes anger and may be exacerbated by the child’s environment. At the very least, when these children feel anger, they cannot regulate the emotion in a healthy or productive way.
ODD

ODD typically manifests in a combination of 3 symptoms:

- **Angry and irritable mood**:
  - Often loses temper
  - Is often touchy or easily annoyed by others

- **Argumentative and defiant behavior**:
  - Often argues with adults or people in authority
  - Often actively defies or refuses to comply with adults' requests or rules
  - Often deliberately annoys people
  - Often blames others for his or her mistakes or misbehavior

- **Vindictiveness**:
  - Is often spiteful or vindictive
  - Has shown spiteful or vindictive behavior at least twice in the past six months
Learning Differences Success Stories!

Who has Dyslexia?
- Steven Spielberg: Director
- Charles Schwab: Businessman, Investor
- Orlando Bloom: Actor
- Whoopi Goldberg: Actor, Comedian, Talk-show host
- Jay Leno: Talk-show host
- Keira Knightley: Actor
- Vince Vaughn: Actor and comedian
- Muhammad Ali: World Champion Heavyweight Boxer
- George Washington: American President

Who has ADHD?
- Justin Timberlake: Singer and Actor
- Michael Phelps: Olympic Gold Medalist
- Adam Levine: Singer
- James Carville: Political Analyst and Commentator
- Terry Bradshaw: Super Bowl Champion and NFL Commentator
- David Neeleman: Founder and CEO of JetBlue Airlines

Who has Autism?
- Albert Einstein: Physicist
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Composer
- Tim Burton: Director
- Andy Warhol: Artist
- Dan Harmon: Creator and Writer of “Community”
- Lewis Carroll: Author
- Dan Aykroyd: Actor
Common SAT and ACT Accommodations

- Time and a Half single-day
- Time and a Half multi-day
- Double Time multi-day (only issued in conjunction with other accommodations)
- 300% extra time multi-day (only issued in conjunction with other accommodations)
- Frequent Breaks
- Computer Based Essay
- Record answers in test book
- Large print materials
- Reader/Scribe (300% extra time)
- Preferential seating
- Distraction Free Environment
- Use of extra instruments (colored paper, highlighters, etc.)
Our National and International Services

- SAT & ACT prep
- SAT Subject and AP prep
- HS subject assistance
- Study Skills

Working closely with Schools, IECs, and their students since 2001
SAT V ACT

SAT
• More generous with timing
• Science scattered through all sections
• Emphasis on algebra

ACT
• Faster paced
• Separate science section
• Greater spread of math topics, more geometry
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>SAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td>3 hours (or 3 hours and 40 minutes with the Essay)</td>
<td>3 hours (or 3 hours and 50 minutes with Essay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>4 Sections</td>
<td>4 Sections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 45-minute English section</td>
<td>• 65-minute Reading section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 60-minute Math section</td>
<td>• 35-minute Writing section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 35-minute Reading section</td>
<td>• 25-minute No Calculator Math section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 35-minute Math section</td>
<td>• 55-minute Calculator Math section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Optional 40-minute Essay</td>
<td>• Optional 50-minute Essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scoring</strong></td>
<td>36 Total Composite (each section out of 36, and composite is the average)</td>
<td>1600 Total (Reading/Writing combine to create a score 200-800; Math score 200-800)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guessing Penalty</strong></td>
<td>None.</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The College Board allows more time per question, backing off of processing speed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>Old SAT</th>
<th>New SAT</th>
<th>% Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td><strong>33 %</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td><strong>43 %</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td><strong>40 %</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extended time SAT over ACT!
SAT reading borrows heavily from the ACT

- 5 long passages from the domains of Science, Literature, and Humanities/Social Studies
- The SAT added ACT Science-style charts, graphs, and figures into its science passages.
- SAT textual complexity varies greatly by passage, with some passage as difficult as those found on the SAT Literature test or AP English test.
We’ve seen an extremely hard passage on each SAT test, not so for the ACT.

Students need to be prepared for the spikes in difficulty on the SAT. ACT is more consistent in its passage difficulty.
SAT Reading is also really long!

A few students have complained about the challenge of staying focused on a reading task for over an hour without a break: mental endurance now trumps speed on the SAT.
Writing/English Section

Both are similarly set up and look almost identical

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Old SAT</th>
<th>New SAT</th>
<th>ACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard English Conventions</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Ideas/ Rhetorical Skills</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>55%*</td>
<td>49%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Essays

Both the SAT and ACT have changed their essays in the past 2 years.

They both are optional, come at the end of the test, and are not required by most schools.

The ACT essay is an argumentative essay.

The SAT essay is an analytical essay.
## Math

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Algebra</th>
<th>Geometry</th>
<th>Arithmetic/Data Analysis</th>
<th>Trigonometry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old SAT</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New SAT*</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Word problems are a big deal on the SAT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Contextual</th>
<th>Conceptual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old SAT</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New SAT</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The College Board made a Common Core math test emphasizing conceptual understanding

• Interpreting trumps solving.
• Understanding how to build and manipulate functions and equations.
• It’s more of an applied math test, gauging fluency and understanding, rather than systematic solving.
• No more immediate roadmap to an answer, students must be more discriminating and find a path to an answer.
• Overlapping content with fewer items assessing a solitary concept.
The No Calc section primarily tests algebraic concepts in the abstract. It emphasizes some challenging hand calculations. Of any section, this presents students with the greatest pacing challenges.
Science

• Science is its own section on the ACT
• No background in science is needed to solve problems, just a skill in interpreting data off graphs and charts
• Problems go in depth into interpreting data from charts

• Science shows up “everywhere” on the SAT
• Paired with reading and writing, as well as math
• Problems focus on finding a data point that is relevant to the particular conversation
Big Takeaways

SAT

Students who like the SAT are comfortable with Algebra, struggle with the speed of the reading on the ACT, and are “afraid” of science

ACT

Students who like the ACT struggle with Algebra, burn-out doing an hour of reading, find the language of the questions in the reading section of the SAT harder to answer, and are more comfortable with how the ACT feels more like a school test
Which test should a student try first?

• Both, ideally, to establish dual baselines

Two-Step Analysis:
1. Start with your **STRENGTH**.
If none,
2. Prep to your **PREFERENCE**.