

Accommodations Research on the SAT Reasoning Test

Since 1939, special testing accommodations for the SAT have been available for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who require accommodations on the SAT make up 1.5% of all examinees (Cahalan, 2000). Eligibility for special test accommodations is individually determined based on the severity and documentation of the disability.

Data on score reliability and validity have not shown dependable differences in precision between students with disabilities and those without (Bennett, Ragosta, and Strickler, 1984). Other studies investigated the validity of SAT scores for examinees with and without disabilities (Bennett, Rock, and Kaplan, 1985;) have suggested that SAT scores are generally equally reliable and valid for predicting the performance of students with and without disabilities.

Students with specific learning disabilities comprise approximately 90% of examinees who request accommodations on the SAT (Camara & Schneider, 2000). Recent studies have focused on students with specific learning disabilities who take the SAT with extended time to determine the impact that providing extra time may have on performance. Research by Ragosta and Wendler (1992) established that comparable testing time for students with disabilities was between 1.5 and 2 times that for students without disabilities. These time limits assured that approximately equal percentages of students from both groups would complete each section of the SAT. A recent study by Cahalan-Laitusis et al. (in press) using observational studies of the supports these guidelines for the SAT Reasoning Test.

Additional studies on the SAT and students with learning disabilities have found that allowing students to retest using extended time does lead to SAT score improvement, but the amount of improvement is modest and have provided evidence that scores from the SAT are a valid tool for helping admissions officers select students with specific learning disabilities (received extended time accommodations) for college admission. (Camara and Schneider, 2000; Cahalan, Mandinach, and Camara, 2002). Morgan and Huff (2002) compared the reliability and dimensionality of the SAT Verbal and Math sections for examinees tested under standard timing conditions and examinees tested with an extended time accommodation. The results produced no evidence to suggest that the scores on the SAT have different interpretations when the examinees have an extended time administration compared to the standard time administration.

Research on the SAT and students with disabilities is conducted on an on-going basis to ensure the validity of scores. The official College Board accommodations on the SAT have been thoroughly researched and are determined on an individual basis to ensure that the most appropriate accommodation for each student is authorized thereby protecting the validity of the score.

References

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