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## **Department Brochure Helps Parents of Students With Disabilities** *Purpose is to explain options for taking high school exit exam*

The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development has prepared a brochure that explains the options for students with disabilities in taking the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination.

The agency distributed the brochure in late July to every high school, high school principal and school district special education director. Parents with children who are on individualized education programs and 504 plans should check with their local high school to receive a copy.

The brochure also is available on the department's web site at  
<http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/HSGQE/Fall05/9thgradebrochure.pdf>

Special-education students may be eligible for accommodations when they take the high-stakes exit exam, or they may be able to take a modified exam or a nonstandardized exam.

The brochure lists samples of accommodations and modifications, gives parents tips on how to help their child do well on the exit exam, and defines key terms.

Accommodations are changes in the testing situation so that the test measures the student's ability, not the disability. Examples are allowing frequent breaks during the test, administering the test in a separate location, and allowing students to ask for clarifications of the test directions.

The accommodations must be part of the students' individualized education program as developed by teachers, specialists and parents. They don't require prior approval by the state Department of Education. Students can use accommodations the first time they take the exam.

Modifications change the setting, timing, presentation or response format of the tests. They don't change the questions, or the number of the questions, or the score needed to pass. Special-education students can take a modified test only after they have failed the test without modifications. The state Department of Education must approve modifications on a case-by-case basis.

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