

PC 978: Additional Requested Time (“Optional Time”) for TCAP Assessments

Guidance & Frequently Asked Questions

Overview

[Chapter 978 of the Public Acts of 2022 \(PC978\)](#), codified at Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-6015, allows for the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) to be administered in a timed format. The law, as amended, requires the Tennessee Department of Education (the department) to establish the Required Time limit for each TCAP test, as well as an additional “Optional Time”, (as known as Requested Time), period that Test Administrators (TAs) at Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and public charter schools may add to the Required Time limit for each test if requested by a parent or student.

Implementation of additional “Optional Time” does not supersede the obligation of LEAs and public charter schools to comply with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.), or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. § 794). Additional time requested, therefore, **should NOT** take the place of an extended time accommodation outlined in a student’s individualized educational program (IEP), individualized learning plan (ILP), and/or Section 504 plan.

Further, “Optional Time” may **NOT** be added to portions of the test where additional time would invalidate the results of the test, including the construct being assessed (such as fluency). These portions of the tests are notated in the testing timing documents.

“Optional Time” must be used consecutively to the required time limit for each test and is not allowed to be added on a different day.

LEAs and public charter schools must adhere to all test security measures and testing procedures.

Required and Optional Time Limits Established by the Department:

Table 1: Example Testing Times

- **Required Time:** Standardized testing times provided by the department that must be provided to all students to ensure standardized testing procedures.
- **Optional Time:** The allowable optional time that may be added to the required time provided for a TCAP test, if requested by a parent or student, as outlined in Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-6015. Shown in testing timing documents in parenthesis.
- The Required Times posted for the TCAP tests were developed to represent the testing time appropriate for at least 95% of students. TAs may add the requested optional additional time, up to the amount listed in the department’s published testing timing documents.

Grade	Math
Grade 8	Subpart 1: 40 min. (8 min.) Subpart 2: 35 min. (7 min.) Subpart 3: 50 min. (10 min.) Total: 125 min. (150 min.)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Is a district or school required to offer the “Optional Time?”

The addition of the optional, requested time is permissive, not required. The law says additional time *may* be added *if requested*. If no students or parents request additional time and the test administrator monitoring the test notices all students have sufficiently completed their assessments, the “Optional Time” is not required to be offered.

However, in order for this option to be equally accessible to all students and to avoid disruption during testing time, LEAs are encouraged to make parents and students aware of this option prior to testing time so that requests can be made in advance. Additionally, TAs are encouraged to offer the option on testing day in accordance with the Test Administrator Proctor Scripts (TAPS).

Is a parent required to submit a written request to obtain the “Optional Time” for their student?

No. The law does not require requests to be made in writing and requests should not be denied on the sole basis that they are not made in writing. However, to support consistent implementation, LEAs and public charter schools may adopt a policy regarding the preferred process for submitting requests, including encouraging parents and students to submit requests in writing in advance of the testing window.

If Optional Time is requested, is a student required to sit for the entire additional time allowed?

No. The additional time is completely optional and is meant to allow students to finish the assessment to the best of their ability. If a student completes the assessment, they are not required to sit for any remaining additional time (past the Required Time published by the department).

If a test administrator offers Optional Time to a group of students and one student requests it, are the rest of the students in the group required to sit for the additional time as well?

No, this is not required. However, LEAs and schools may develop local implementation policies for the “Optional Time” that are reflective of their available staffing, scheduling, and physical space considerations in order to maintain test security and student safety. In some cases, the available Optional Time is short (i.e. 5-10 minutes), and it may be in the best interest of the school to keep students grouped together during this time. If the school or LEA decides to keep students together during the Optional Time, all local and state policies on test security must be followed (i.e. students are allowed to do academic work not associated with the test being administered). If staffing and space are available, schools and districts may decide to release students who have completed the Required Time while students who have requested the Optional Time remain in the secure testing environment.

May an LEA provide the Optional Time to all students?

If an LEA or public charter school decides, based on local context for testing schedules, staffing, and physical space for testing, that it will build testing schedules with the Optional Time included for all students, the LEA or public charter school may do so in accordance with its local policies. However, if an LEA or public charter school chooses to provide this time for all students, it must be clear with TAs that the Optional Time is already included in the testing schedule and give clear guidance and training to TAs on the local policy for handling subpart timing and the conclusion of testing to avoid a TA giving more time than is permitted. Additionally, students are not required to sit for the Optional Time, so TAs can end testing at the conclusion of the Required Time if all students have completed the assessments.

If Optional Time is requested, can it be less than what is shown on the testing times table?

Yes. The additional Optional Time is meant to allow all students to complete the test to the best of their ability. Therefore, if a student completes the assessment, they are not required to sit for any remaining Optional Time (past the Required Time published by the department).

If a parent requests the Optional Time, and the student finishes the test before the end of Required Time, do you have to give the additional time?

LEAs and public charter schools are encouraged to develop local policies to address implementation of the law that would address situations such as this. The requested additional time is optional and at the discretion of the TA, in accordance with any applicable test security procedures and local policies. Test administrator proctor scripts (TAPS) will provide guidance to test administrators to offer the Optional Time to students if requested. Students are not required to sit for the Optional Time if an assessment has been completed.

Does PC978 also apply for students who already have extended time, where those students could get an additional 20% of their already extended time?

Any student or parent may request additional time.

Optional Time allowed by Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-6015 does not supersede a Local Education Agency (LEA) or public charter school's obligation to comply with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.), or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. § 794). Optional Time, therefore, should **NOT** be provided as a replacement for an extended time accommodation already outlined in existing IEP, ILP and/or 504 plans.

This law, as amended, allows for students who do not already have an extended time accommodation to finish the assessment completely to the best of their ability. Students who have an existing individual educational program (IEP), individualized learning plan (ILP), and/or Section 504 plan should already have a clear expectation for the amount of time their support team feels is necessary for them to be able to complete the assessment to the best of their ability. Parents and/or students who have an existing IEP, ILP, and/or 504 plan and do not feel their current plan adequately provides the extended time needed by the student should request a meeting of their team to evaluate their existing accommodations. Nevertheless, a request for additional time should not be denied on the basis of a student already having an extended time accommodation in their IEP, ILP, or Section 504 plan.