



Guide for IEP/504 Teams Considering the Text-to-Speech (TTS) or Read Aloud (RA) State Test Accommodation (August 2021)

The Text-to-Speech (TTS) and Read Aloud (RA) state test accommodation policies only apply to the **Reading Passages** component of the **Computer Adaptive Test English Language Arts** (ELA-CAT) interim and summative assessments, including the paper fixed form for the ELA-CAT summative test. Additional guidance on assigning the TTS or RA state test accommodation can also be found in the [Guidelines for Choosing Text-to-Speech or Read Aloud Accommodations for Smarter Balanced Summative and Interim Assessment Reading Passages for Students with Disabilities in Grades 3-5](#).

TTS and RA are also available at the designated support level across content areas. For the ELA state tests, TTS and RA as designated supports allow the audio or oral delivery of test directions, questions, and answer options (all parts of the ELA state tests **except the Reading Passages**). For the math and science state tests, TTS and RA as designated supports allow the audio or oral delivery of the entire test- stimulus, directions, questions, and answer options. Additional information about the three levels of accessibility supports—universal tools¹, designated supports², and accommodations³—can be found in the [Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium: Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines \(UAAG\)](#).

This document contains guidelines for the Text-to-Speech and Read Aloud state test accommodations for the reading passages and is organized into four sections: (I) general principles; (II) legal foundation; (III) critical considerations for teams; and (IV) decision guidance for teams.

Section I: General Principles Regarding State Test Accommodations

The state assessments are designed to measure student proficiency and growth over time, school performance and, potentially, to inform changes in curriculum and instruction. Tests are aligned to standards for learning adopted by the Board of Education. In Hawai'i, these are the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and mathematics and the Next Generation Science Standards for science. State assessments measure our students against those standards and the grade-level expectations for achievement found there.

The purpose of state test accommodations is to enable students with disabilities to participate “with adjustments that do not alter the assessed construct” and that are “applied to test

¹ Universal tools - available to all students based on student preference and selection. Universal tools are access features of the assessment that are either provided digitally as part of the test system (embedded) or separate from the test system (non-embedded). **Note for Test Coordinators: non-embedded universal tools must be available on site to ensure equitable testing conditions and comparability of results.**

² Designated supports - features that are available for use by any student for whom the need has been indicated. Educators, parents/guardians, students or educator teams may be used for decision-making.

³ Accommodations - available only to those students with IEP/504 Plan documentation of need.

presentation, environment, content, format (including response format), or administration conditions” (*Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, 2014*). State test accommodations are intended to remove obstacles to student demonstration of knowledge and skills resulting from student disability. State test accommodations are not intended to reduce expectations for learning, modify the curriculum, or artificially inflate a student’s test score. **The key for appropriate accommodation provision during statewide assessments is to ensure that the student’s individual needs are met and the assessed “construct” (what a test measures) is not modified or altered.**

Additionally, state test accommodations should:

1. *Not be confused with instructional accommodations that support student learning.* Instructional accommodations may be provided to support emerging skills or to reinforce the acquisition of new skills; however, these accommodations are frequently adjusted or strategically removed in the classroom to monitor and/or assess student progress. Removal of the instructional accommodation during classroom assessments, in many cases, is the only way to obtain an accurate measure of the student’s current skills and the impact of interventions.
2. Be shown to be effective in overcoming a student’s disability. The student should have used the support with success in both classroom assessments and interim assessments that are measuring the same skills (construct). *This evidence should be documented under the Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEP) in the student’s IEP/504 Plan.*
3. Be assigned only when supported with substantial evidence of need. Documentation of student disability mediation and classroom use during tests of the same construct must be found in the IEP/504 record. *This evidence should be documented in the “Services or Accommodations and Related Services” and the “Statewide Assessment” pages of the student’s IEP/504 Plan record.*

State test accommodations are different from *modifications*. Modifications are allowances made for IDEA students that provide for adjustment(s) to the curriculum or assessment that change what is to be learned or what is to be measured. Examples of testing modifications that reduce expectations for learning and affect the construct of the test include: 1) simplification, clarification, or explanation of test questions or items; 2) use of spell-checking devices on a test of the student's spelling skills; and 3) use of a calculator on a test of the student's computational skills. While modifications may be used with caution during instruction to support students as they develop their knowledge and skills over time, they are not used in the general summative test.

Section II: Legal Foundation for State Test Accommodations

Under the IDEA, the State has the responsibility to:

- Ensure that children with disabilities are provided appropriate accommodations on state tests (Title I, Part A assessments) where necessary, as determined on an individualized case-by-case basis by their IEP/504 team.

- Develop guidelines for the provision of appropriate accommodations. Under 34 CFR §§300.160(b)(2), the State’s guidelines must identify only those accommodations for each assessment that do not invalidate the score; and instruct IEP teams to select, for each assessment, only those accommodations that do not invalidate the score.

These State guidelines apply to the provision of appropriate accommodations under the IDEA on regular and alternate assessments (34 CFR §300.160 (a)).

Section III: Critical Considerations Before Assigning the TTS or RA State Test Accommodation for Reading Passages

Decisions about assigning the TTS/RA state test accommodation should be based on the general principles and laws governing state test accommodations presented in Sections I and II and the specific TTS/RA guidelines found below.

Purpose of Text-to-Speech (TTS) or Read Aloud (RA) State Test Accommodation

Frequently, the TTS/RA accommodation is used during instruction to assist students in the acquisition of decoding and fluency skills. Teachers, parents, or peers read along with the student who needs support. This helps to develop the emerging readers’ skills and aids in their comprehension of grade-level text. *However, in a state test setting, the TTS/RA accommodation would not be used when the purpose of the test is to measure a student’s reading level. For state tests that measure a student’s reading ability, the student is asked to read independently.*

The purpose of the Smarter Balanced ELA tests is to obtain measures of the student’s skills in reading, writing, research, and speaking/listening comprehension. Reading comprehension is not specifically measured. Instead, a reading score is generated when students are asked to close read increasingly complex text. **The reading score on state tests encompasses decoding, fluency, and comprehension.**

Construct Measured by the ELA Reading Strand

A test construct is what a test measures. The Reading construct for the ELA state tests combines three fundamental components of reading — decoding, fluency, and comprehension—into one score.

Documented Need for the TTS or RA State Test Accommodation

Based on guidance provided by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and the Department’s Exceptional Support Branch, students with a reading-based disability means that for these students, there is strong evidence of the persistence of the disability despite targeted instruction. Documentation of the approaches that have been taken to strengthen the student’s decoding, fluency, or comprehension skills is an important step in determining whether a text-to-speech or read aloud test accommodation is needed for state testing.

The TTS/RA state test accommodation should only be recommended for verification when supported with substantial documented evidence of need. It is necessary to show *in the student's IEP (Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEP), Services, Standards and Goals, and Statewide Assessment)*:

1. The student cannot see the text or utilize braille; e.g., a recently blind student who is unfamiliar with or not yet proficient in braille;
2. The student exhibits such difficulties as difficulty learning letters or letter sounds, difficulty in learning sight words, and difficulty in phoneme blending; or
3. The student has exhibited extremely limited to no growth in decoding and fluency skills over time despite extensive, repeated interventions that have been undertaken and implemented over several years to remediate the reading disability. (These interventions must be shown to have been intensive and varied with modifications over time if shown to be ineffective. In other words, if one intervention is ineffective, other interventions should have been attempted.)

Section IV: Guidance for IEP/504 Teams for Verifying the Need for TTS or RA State Test Accommodation for ELA Reading Passages

This section provides IEP/504 Teams a tool with a set of questions to help guide the TTS/RA state test accommodation decision-making process. The questions are intended to support team discussion and to help frame criteria that can serve as supporting evidence when considering student TTS/RA state test accommodation needs. These questions and the answers that are generated may be used to determine when and if there is sufficient evidence of student need supporting the provision of the TTS/RA state test accommodation. The intent is for IEP/504 Teams to use the questions found in Table 1 as a starting point from which to engage in dialogue, examine evidence, record data, and indicate the team decision based upon knowledge of the student and the evidence found in the student's IEP/504 Plan. A preponderance of evidence as well as care should be used when making this team decision. (Table 1 is not intended to be a tally sheet.)

Table 1: Questions to Guide IEP/504 Team Discussions about the Need for TEXT-TO-SPEECH (TTS) or READ ALOUD (RA) State Test Accommodation

The purpose of this table is to guide IEP/504 team discussions about student accommodation need and help generate appropriate decisions and recommendations regarding the TTS or RA state test accommodation. The completion of this table is optional.

Questions	Team Response	Evidence/ Comments
1. Is there evaluative information indicating that, even after intensive, targeted instruction, the student’s disability severely limits the student’s ability to decode and comprehend print?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
2. Has the student been provided research-based reading intervention(s) over an extended time period, typically years, in order to improve decoding and comprehension skills?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
3. Is the student blind or visually impaired (BVI)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
4. If the student is BVI, is he/she proficient in reading a sentence in braille?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	
5. If the student is blind or has a significant visual impairment, has it been determined that his/her disability severely limits his/her ability to access and/or develop proficiency in braille?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
6. Does the student always use the TTS/RA accommodation during classroom assessments of reading, including Reading Grade Equivalencies, Lexile scores, or other similar metrics in reading, found in the IEP/504 record or other documentation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
7. Is there evidence that the student’s access to and/or performance on print-based tasks improves when information is presented to the student in auditory formats?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
8. Is the student provided instructional materials in auditory formats? If yes, in what content areas?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes/ELA <input type="checkbox"/> Yes/Math <input type="checkbox"/> Yes/Science <input type="checkbox"/> No	
9. Is there an expectation that the student will need audio or oral delivery of text passages and presentations of text when pursuing post-secondary career opportunities and/or higher education?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	
10. Has the student provided input or stated a preference for having TTS/RA provided for classroom instruction?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes/TTS/RA <input type="checkbox"/> No	
11. Are there additional considerations for recommending TTS/RA test accommodation for this student, specific to his/her unique disability-related needs? If so, explain.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Select the IEP/504 team recommendation(s) below that are decided to be most appropriate for the student.

TTS or RA should be recommended for this student at the **accommodation level** with the ELA Reading Passages audio delivered.

TTS or RA should be recommended for this student at the **designated support level**, so that all sections of state tests **except the ELA Reading Passages** will be read to the student.

More information is needed before making this decision.

Please list the names and titles of the IEP/504 team and other persons who were part of the state test accommodation decision-making team for the student (use the back if needed).

Name	Title	Date

Follow-up on this decision-making meeting by documenting any selected state test accommodations in the student’s IEP or 504 record, which is stored in the [electronic Comprehensive Student Support System](#) (eCSSS). Refer to the [eCSSS Directions](#) for documenting evidence to support the need for state test accommodations.

If the IEP/504 team makes the decision to recommend the TTS or RA state test accommodation for a student, then the School Testing Coordinator (TC) should consult the “Hawaii State Test Accommodations Identification and Request Process for Test Coordinators and School Assessment Teams” document available on the [Accessibility and Accommodations resources page](#) on the [AlohaHSAP.org](#) portal website for guidance to submit state test accommodation requests.

In addition to the documented evidence in the IEPs/504 plans and the consultations with the Exceptional Support Branch and the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Design, the Assessment Section verifies state test accommodations in accordance with the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). As stated in 34 CFR §300.160(b)(2):

The State’s guidelines must identify only those accommodations for each assessment that do not invalidate the score; and instruct IEP teams to select, for each assessment, only those accommodations that do not invalidate the score.

The Assessment Section recommends that [test accommodation verification requests](#) be submitted one month prior to the opening of the test window. In all cases, state test accommodation requests should be submitted to the Assessment Section no later than 14 days prior to state (interim or summative) testing.

If you have any questions, please email Elaine Lee at Elaine.Lee@k12.hi.us or call the HIDOE Assessment Section at (808) 307-3636.