Educator Guide

to Accessibility within the STAAR Program

2017 Calendar Year
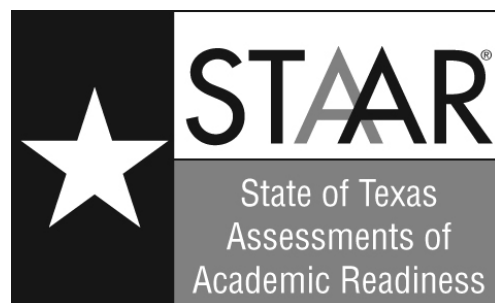
STAAR®
State of Texas
Assessments of
Academic Readiness

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Accommodation Resources

Purpose of This Guide

This guide is provided to familiarize educators with features and supports that make the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) accessible to all students. General information outlining updated accommodation policy is available in this guide. In addition, specific examples of the online features and supports offered on STAAR are provided. All information in this guide, as well as additional resources about accessibility on STAAR, can be accessed online through the link in the NOTES column on this page.

Icons

The icon shown below is used throughout the guide. This icon is located in the NOTES column.

This icon indicates additional information that is available online. The text located below the icons links to specific online resources.

Understanding STAAR Accessibility

The goal of STAAR accessibility is to ensure that each student can interact appropriately with the content, presentation, and response modes of the state assessment. In order to meet this goal, the STAAR accessibility features and designated supports are designed to allow all test takers to demonstrate their knowledge of the content being tested without the format of the assessment, the non-tested language, or the type of response needed to answer the questions being barriers. The various features and accommodations made available on STAAR paper and online tests are also designed to be the same or similar to those accommodations commonly used during classroom instruction.

STAAR is available on paper and online as indicated for the grades and subjects listed below.

Program	Grade	Subject	Paper Available	Online Available
STAAR	3–EOC	all	√	√
STAAR Spanish	3–5	all	√	
STAAR Alternate 2	3–EOC	all	√	

Accessibility within the STAAR Program

For STAAR and STAAR Spanish, accessibility falls into three categories: accessibility features, locally approved designated supports, and designated supports requiring TEA approval. It is important to refer to the individual policy documents on the Accommodation Resources website for comprehensive information about the procedures and materials within each of these categories.

Accessibility Features

Previously referred to as "Allowable Test Administration Procedures and Materials," accessibility features may be provided to students based on their needs. In general, these procedures and materials are available to any student who regularly benefits from their use during instruction; however, a student cannot be required to use them during testing. Coordinators are responsible for ensuring that test administrators understand the proper implementation of these procedures and use of these materials. In some cases, a student may need to complete the test in a separate setting in order to eliminate distractions to other students and to ensure that the security and confidentiality of the test are maintained.

Locally Approved Designated Supports

Previously referred to as "Type 1 accommodations" or "linguistic accommodations," locally approved designated supports include accommodations that may be made available to students who meet eligibility criteria. The appropriate team of people at the campus level determines eligibility as indicated in each policy document. The decision to use a designated support during a state assessment should be made on an individual student

basis and take into consideration the needs of the student and whether the student routinely receives the accommodation during classroom instruction and classroom testing. This does not mean that the accommodation must be used every day during instruction. Routine accommodation use, as defined by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), means that the student has used the accommodation often enough during classroom instruction and testing that he or she is able to use it independently during the state assessment. (Independent accommodation use is applicable to some accommodations [e.g., calculation aids] but not to others [e.g., oral administration].) In addition, the accommodation has been proven to be effective in meeting the student's specific needs, as evidenced by student scores or teacher observations with and without accommodation use.

Designated Supports Requiring TEA Approval

Previously referred to as "Type 2 accommodations," these designated supports require the submission of an Accommodation Request Form to TEA. The appropriate team of people at the campus level as indicated in each policy document determines whether the student meets all of the specific eligibility criteria and, if so, submits an Accommodation Request Form to TEA. Accommodation Request Forms must be received by TEA according to the posted deadlines. Late requests will **NOT** be processed unless circumstances involving the student change after the deadline (e.g., newly enrolled student, medical emergency, updated ARD committee decisions). The request must be approved by TEA before a student can use the designated support on the state assessment. This type of support must be documented in the student's paperwork as "pending TEA approval." In the event that a request is denied, the campus should be prepared to meet the student's needs with accessibility features or any of the locally approved designated supports.

These features and supports are intended to make STAAR accessible to students for a variety of reasons. Some of them can be administered on paper, online, or in both modes. A student may take STAAR online for one subject and on paper for another, depending on appropriateness and/or accessibility. Accessibility features, locally approved designated supports, and designated supports requiring TEA approval are available on paper and online as indicated on the next page. It is important to refer to the individual policy documents on the Accommodation Resources webpage for the applicable grade levels, subjects, and eligibility criteria.

Accommodation Resources

	Paper	Online
Accessibility Features		
Bilingual Dictionary	√	√
Color Overlay/Color Setting	√	√*
General Reminders to Stay on Task	√	√
Highlighter, colored pencil, etc.	√	√*
Individual Administration	√	√
Minimize Distractions (e.g., stress ball, headphones, music)	√	√
Place Marker/Guideline	√	√*
Read Aloud Writing Prompt to Student	√	√
Read Test Aloud to Self	√	√
Scratch Paper	√	√
Signing Test Directions	√	√
Small Group	√	√
Third Grade Math Reading Assistance	√	√
Translating Test Directions	√	√
Magnifying Devices/Zoom	√	√*
Designated Supports		
Amplification Devices	√	√
Basic Transcribing	√	√
Braille	√	
Calculation Aids	√	√
Content Supports		√*
Dictionary	√	√
Extra Time	√	√
Individualized Structured Reminders	√	√
Language and Vocabulary Supports		√*
Large Print	√	
Manipulating Test Materials	√	√
Math Manipulatives	√	√
Oral/Signed Administration/Text-to-Speech	√	√*
Projection Devices	√	√
Spelling Assistance	√	√
Supplemental Aids	√	√
Designated Supports Requiring TEA Approval		
Complex Transcribing	√	√
Extra Day	√	√
Math Scribe	√	√
Other	√	√
Photocopy	√	

* These features and supports are embedded within the online system. All other accommodations are administered independent of the online system.

WWW

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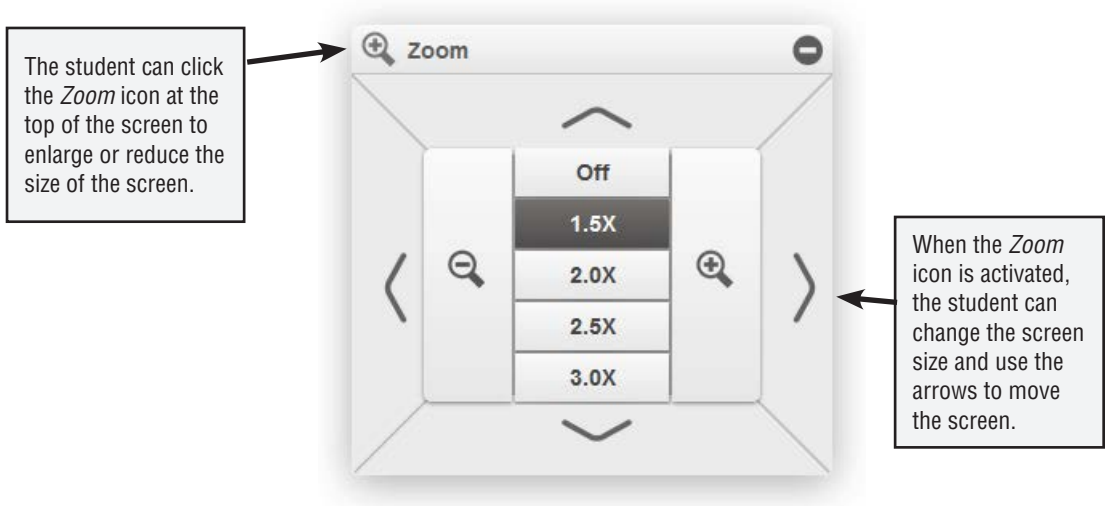
Considering Paper Versus Online

In addition to making decisions based upon individual need, due consideration should be given to the mode in which an allowed or approved designated support is offered. Designated supports may require a student to take STAAR in a certain mode. For instance, if a student requires a braille assessment, then they must receive a paper form since an online assessment is not provided in braille. A student eligible for content supports and language and vocabulary supports will take STAAR online, as these are embedded online accommodations. On the other hand, decisions about supplemental aid eligibility can be based solely on individual need since this support is provided locally and is not part of the assessment mode.

The following sections highlight those accessibility features and designated supports provided in the online system. For information about the remaining features and supports, see the appropriate policy documents located on the Accommodation Resources webpage.

Online Accessibility Features

Accessibility features are available to all students taking STAAR on paper or online. Some of these features are embedded in the online system, while others (e.g. individual administration, general reminders to stay on task) are not. The figures below describe the accessibility features embedded in the online system and provide their associated icon.
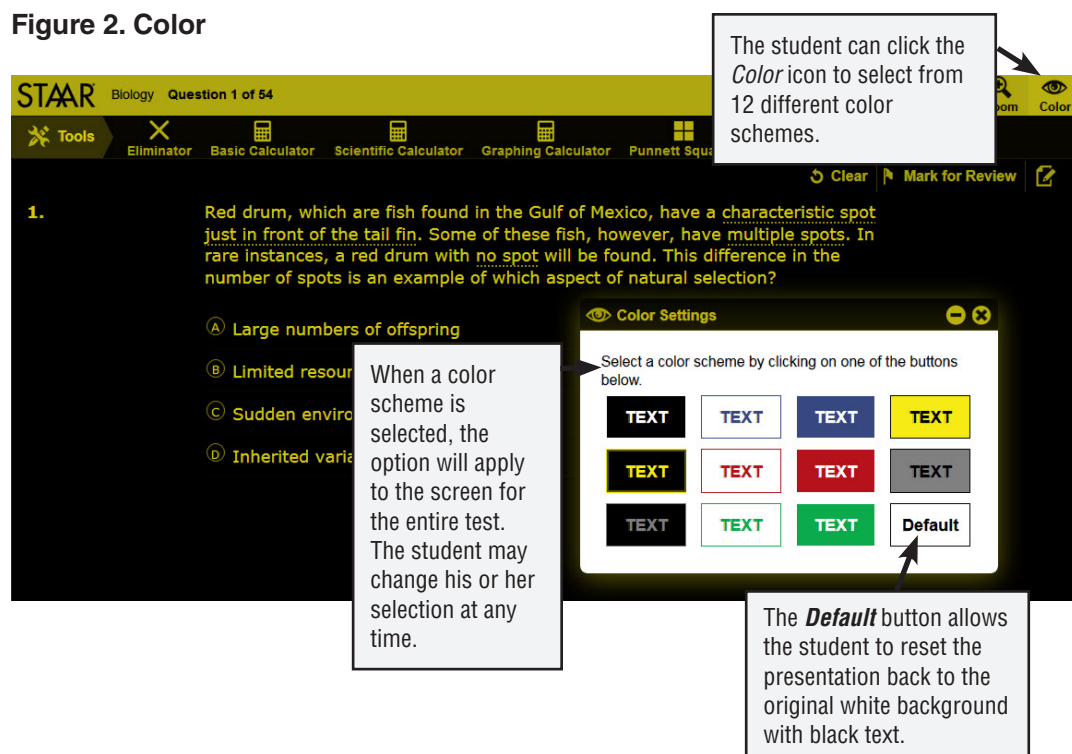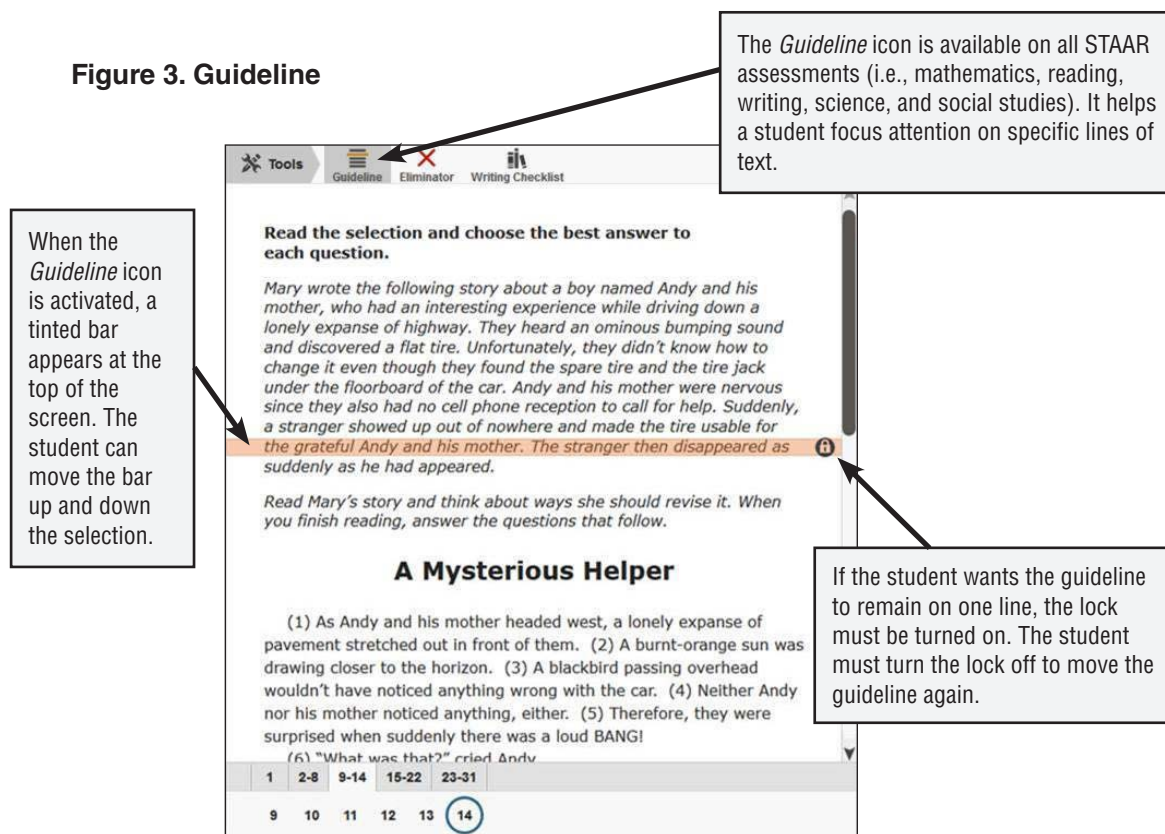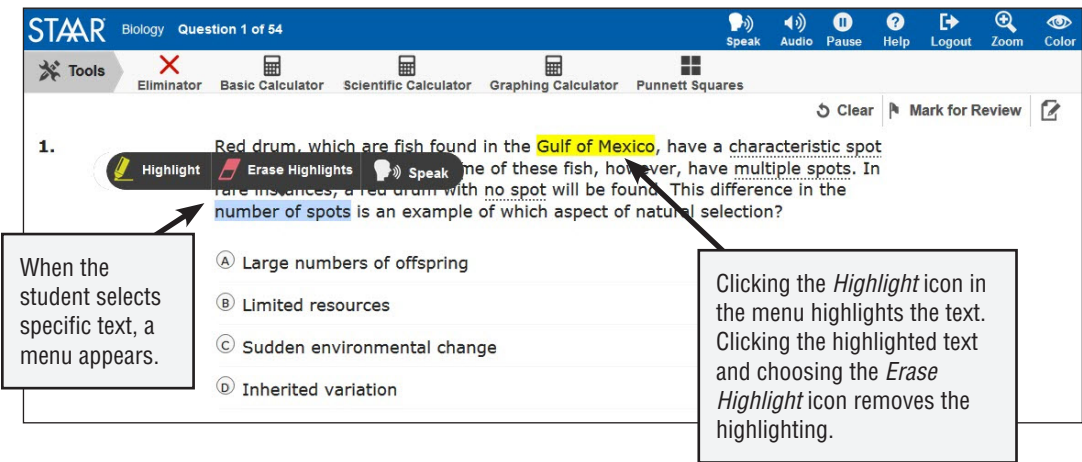
Figure 1. Zoom

The student can click the *Zoom* icon at the top of the screen to enlarge or reduce the size of the screen.

When the *Zoom* icon is activated, the student can change the screen size and use the arrows to move the screen.

Figure 2. Color

The student can click the *Color* icon to select from 12 different color schemes.

When a color scheme is selected, the option will apply to the screen for the entire test. The student may change his or her selection at any time.

The **Default** button allows the student to reset the presentation back to the original white background with black text.

Figure 3. Guideline

The *Guideline* icon is available on all STAAR assessments (i.e., mathematics, reading, writing, science, and social studies). It helps a student focus attention on specific lines of text.

When the *Guideline* icon is activated, a tinted bar appears at the top of the screen. The student can move the bar up and down the selection.

If the student wants the guideline to remain on one line, the lock must be turned on. The student must turn the lock off to move the guideline again.

Figure 4. Highlight

When the student selects specific text, a menu appears.

Clicking the *Highlight* icon in the menu highlights the text. Clicking the highlighted text and choosing the *Erase Highlight* icon removes the highlighting.

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Online Designated Supports

Designated supports are available to students who meet the eligibility criteria as determined and documented by the appropriate team of people at the local level. Some of these supports are embedded in the online system, while others are not. More specific information can be found in the individual policy documents on the Accommodation Resources webpage.

Supports not embedded in the online system may be made available to students testing online as well as to those testing on paper. The test administrator will provide the support to the student on the day of the test. For instance, a student needing spelling assistance while responding to a writing prompt will need to use the type of assistance he or she uses in the classroom (e.g., frequently misspelled word list, handheld spell checker), as spelling assistance is not embedded into the online system.

Some designated supports that are available to students taking a paper test are also embedded online accommodations. For instance, a student needing reading support can receive an oral administration of the paper test booklet from the test administrator or can take the test online using text-to-speech.

Content supports and language and vocabulary supports are available only as embedded online accommodations. In order to receive these accommodations, a student must test online. The delivery of an online assessment offers an opportunity to provide these types of accommodations in a standardized way to the students who use similar accommodations in the classroom and find this type of assessment to be the most appropriate and accessible for them. Both content supports and language and vocabulary supports have similar accommodations to those previously provided on STAAR A and STAAR L (e.g., pop-ups, rollovers, supplementary materials, prereading text). These accommodations are only applied to particular selections and test questions based on expert judgments about which accommodations are likely to make a question more accessible to students needing either content support, language and vocabulary support, or both.
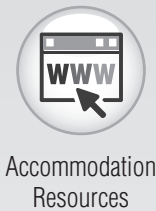
The figures below describe only those designated supports embedded in the online testing system.

Figure 5. Text-to-speech

When the student selects a specific group of text, a menu appears. The selected text is read aloud when the student clicks the *Speak* icon in this menu.

The student can click the *Speak* icon to open a panel of audio controls including the **Play** button and the **Click Word** button.

The student can click the *Audio* icon to open a panel of audio controls including the volume and speaking rate.

When the **Play** button is activated, the question and answer choices are highlighted as they are read aloud in their entirety or until the student stops playback.

The **Click Word** button allows the student to hear only one word at a time.

The rate at which the audio is read can be increased or decreased by moving the *Speaking Rate* slider.

The student can increase or decrease the volume of the audio by moving the *Volume Slider* icon.

Figure 6. Pop-ups

When a *Pop-up* is clicked, a window appears above or below the dotted underline or dotted box. Clicking the "X" closes the *Pop-up* window.

Pop-up windows may appear as content supports or language and vocabulary supports depending on the way the information is accommodated. Refer to the "Accommodation Guidelines" section of this document for more specific information about the differences between each.

For students who have text-to-speech as an embedded support, the *Speak* icon will appear in all pop-ups. The student can click the *Speak* icon to hear the text in the pop-up read aloud. (Note: text-to-speech may not be able to read aloud some text, such as labels, that render as art.)

Figure 7. Rollovers

Clicking the *Rollover* icon when the small arrow is pointing towards words or phrases opens a rollover.

Figure 8. Rollover

Rollovers may appear as content supports or language and vocabulary supports depending on the way the information is accommodated. Refer to the "Accommodation Guidelines" section of this document for more specific information about the differences between each.

For students who have text-to-speech as an embedded support, text in the rollover can be read aloud. The student can click the *Speak* icon at the top of the screen to open the audio controls. When the **Play** button is activated, the student can hear the entire question and answer choice, including text in the rollover, read aloud. (Note: text-to-speech may not be able to read aloud some text, such as labels, that render as art.)

A rollover covers the original text. Clicking the *Rollover* icon again closes the rollover.

Figure 9. Additional Supports

Supplementary materials are content supports. The student can click on the icon for the writing checklist and use as needed. Punnett Squares are available for the biology test.

For students who have text-to-speech as an embedded support, the *Do Not Read* icon indicates to the student that text-to-speech is not available for that portion of the assessment. This icon will appear on reading selections, editing selections, and editing test questions since reading aloud these portions of the test is NOT allowed.

Prereading text prior to reading and writing selections is a language and vocabulary support. For students who also have text-to-speech as an embedded support, prereading text can be read aloud by text-to-speech using the *Speak* icon.

Accommodation Guidelines

The Accommodation Guidelines specify how STAAR selections and test questions were accommodated for language and vocabulary supports and content supports in a standardized manner while maintaining the integrity of the knowledge and skills being assessed.

Accommodation Resources

Language and Vocabulary Supports

Pop-ups

- define or clarify construct-irrelevant words, phrases, and sentences using plain language, synonyms, definitions, examples, and consistent language
- provide a visual representation in the selection, question, answer choices, or in the writing prompt by adding graphics, photographs, or animations

Rollovers

- reword complex question or answer choices to condense text
- reorganize and simplify historical excerpts

Pre-reads

- preview text before reading to activate prior knowledge, draw conclusions, and set a purpose for reading. Available for reading, writing, English I, and English II assessments only.

Content Supports

Pop-ups

- isolate specific information in a question that corresponds to each answer choice
- isolate specific text or information in a selection that is referenced in the question or answer choices
- isolate specific information in a graphic or list that is referenced in the question
- define literary terms, social studies terms, or science terms
- apply an allowable supplemental aid (e.g., graphic organizer, place-value chart, t-chart, graphic of scientific concept, timeline, map) to specific questions or answer choices
- include the formula from the grade-specific Reference Materials when the question specifies the measure or conversion to be performed
- direct student attention to parts of the grade-specific Reference Materials
- provide clarifying information for a graphic organizer, political cartoon, or map
- provide a visual representation in the selection, question, answer choices, or in the writing prompt by adding graphics, photographs, or animations

Rollovers

- bullet or separate steps in a process (e.g., multi-step problem, sequence of events)

Supplementary Material

- blank Punnett squares (biology only)
- writing checklists (writing, English I, and English II only)

Classroom Accommodations and the Link to Language and Vocabulary Supports and Content Supports

The use of accommodations occurs primarily during classroom instruction as educators use various instructional strategies to meet the individual needs of each student, thus allowing each student to maximize his or her academic potential. Language and vocabulary supports and content supports available online on STAAR offer new opportunities for students to meaningfully access the required state assessment.

TEA policies indicate that decisions about designated supports that will be used during a statewide assessment should

- be made on an individual basis,
- consider the needs of the student, and
- be routinely used during classroom instruction and testing.

Although students likely will not routinely use the computer-based supports during classroom instruction, they may use variations of them as illustrated in the table on the next page. This list is not exhaustive; it includes examples of classroom accommodations that may correspond to the embedded online supports on STAAR.

Educators, parents, and students must understand that accommodations provided during classroom instruction and testing might differ from designated supports allowed for use on state assessments. Instruction comes first and can be customized to meet the needs of each student. Unlike instruction, state assessments are standardized to provide a reliable comparison of outcomes across all test takers. Certain accommodations used in the classroom would invalidate the content being assessed or compromise the security and integrity of the state assessment. For this reason, not all accommodations suitable for instruction are allowed during the state assessments. However, the policies for accommodation use on state assessments do not limit an educator's ability to develop individualized materials and techniques to facilitate student learning.

In order to make accommodation decisions for students, educators should have knowledge of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and how a student performs in relation to them. Educators should also collect and analyze data pertaining to the use and effectiveness of accommodations (e.g., assignment/test scores with and without the accommodation, observational reports) so that informed educational decisions can be made for each student. By analyzing data, an educator can determine whether the accommodation becomes inappropriate or unnecessary over time due to the student's age or changing needs. Likewise, data can confirm for the educator that the student still struggles in certain areas and should continue to use the accommodation.

Classroom Accommodation		Embedded Support
The teacher introduces a new book to a struggling reader prior to reading it aloud or independent reading. The topics discussed might include major concepts, difficult words, setting, characters, or prior knowledge of the subject.	➡	Language and Vocabulary Support
Using a dictionary or thesaurus, the teacher points out the meaning or synonym of a word.	➡	Language and Vocabulary Support
The teacher isolates specific information to focus the student on the core concept being taught.	➡	Content Support
The teacher acts out or has the students role-play newly introduced vocabulary or difficult concepts.	➡	Language and Vocabulary Support
The teacher simplifies difficult vocabulary and then reformats complex word problems by bulleting or spacing out each step required to solve the problem.	➡	Language and Vocabulary Support
The teacher provides the student with a specific supplemental aid (e.g., chart, table, graph, checklist, map, timeline) applicable to the question being posed, the assignment, or the task.	➡	Content Support
The student receives reading support.	➡	Text-to-speech
The teacher provides the formula(s) that is needed to solve a problem.	➡	Content Support
The teacher provides visual aids (e.g., demonstrations, photographs, art) to identify people and/or places.	➡	Content Support
The teacher provides visual aids (e.g., demonstrations, photographs, art) to define or clarify vocabulary.	➡	Language and Vocabulary Support
During classroom discussions, the teacher clarifies or rewords complex text or questions using simpler language.	➡	Language and Vocabulary Support
The teacher directs the student (e.g., highlight, bold, point to, flag the information) to the specific part(s) of the selection, diagram, map, or figure that is being discussed.	➡	Content Support
The teacher presents parts of a complex concept one at a time.	➡	Content Support

Special Situations for Content Supports and Language and Vocabulary Supports

Because language and vocabulary supports and content supports are embedded accommodations presented in an online format, replicating these features in a paper or braille version is not always possible. Technology-based accommodations enable most students to test online; however, in instances in which the use of an accommodation is not feasible or appropriate, or if the administration of an online test is inappropriate due to a student's particular disability, a special request may be made to TEA for approval to administer a paper test booklet. The paper administration request document can be found on the TEA's Coordinator Manual Resources webpage.

Braille versions of STAAR with language and vocabulary supports or content supports will not be made available. For students who are eligible for these accommodations but who require a braille version of the assessment, contact TEA's Student Assessment Division at 512-463-9536 to discuss student options. It is possible to order a special paper version of the assessment for this particular situation; however, special instructions may apply.

Deaf or hard-of-hearing students eligible for oral administration and language and vocabulary supports or content supports need to take STAAR online to access these embedded accommodations. However, since these students are unable to access the text-to-speech function, a signed administration is allowed for those parts of the test that can be read aloud. Test administrators should be trained using the Oral/Signed Administration Guidelines and also read the specific guidelines for signing test content included in the General Instructions for Administering State Assessments to Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing document. Both of these documents are located on the TEA's Accommodation Resources webpage. In addition, proctor codes will be available to district testing coordinators in the Texas Assessment Management System to download and distribute to test administrators providing a signed administration of an online STAAR test.

Planning for Testing

Careful review of state accessibility policy is required so that students receive only those accessibility features and designated supports that are allowed or approved by TEA for use on state assessments. Testing coordinators, test administrators, and other campus personnel involved in state testing must consider the following questions related to ensuring accessibility for students on test day.

- Which students receive accessibility features or designated supports on test day?

- What special arrangements need to be considered for students who will use accessibility features and designated supports on test day? For example, ensuring that calculators and other equipment have sufficient batteries or choosing separate settings for students who use certain supports requires advance planning.

- What staff training is needed to properly provide certain testing accommodations? For instance, transcribing a student's response onto an answer document or providing an oral administration requires advance training.

- What campus and district procedures are in place to ensure test security, especially if the student is using technology as a support?

- What procedure is in place and who is responsible for recording accommodation use on the answer document or in the Texas Assessment Management System for online tests?

- Have students taking STAAR online had the opportunity to practice interacting with the tools and features in the online testing system? It is important that students have used the online tutorials and released tests to become familiar with selecting answers, using the online tools, moving through the test, submitting the test, etc.

- What special arrangements need to be considered for students taking different versions of STAAR with different accommodations? For example, should students taking STAAR online without designated supports be grouped with students taking STAAR online with designated supports? Should students taking STAAR on paper and STAAR online be grouped together?

- Are computers prepared for online testing according to the *STAAR Online Testing Platform Technology Guide* available online at www.TexasAssessment.com/technology/?