

General Instructions for Administering Braille Versions of State Assessments

Introduction

Braille versions of the STAAR® assessments in English are available to eligible students. The decision to provide a student with a braille test booklet should be made in accordance with specific accommodation policies located on the Accommodation Resources webpage at <http://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/accommodations/>. This set of instructions provides general information about how to administer the braille version of STAAR. District testing coordinators receive this document in the braille kits.

Test Materials

Braille materials must be ordered online and will arrive in a separate shipment no less than one week prior to testing. The braille test booklets have single-sided pages and single spacing of braille lines. The booklets are not sealed; instead each subject-area test is presented in a separate booklet.

Braille tests are available in both contracted and uncontracted braille. Uncontracted braille tests may be ordered only for students who use uncontracted braille materials routinely during classroom instruction. Orders for braille tests must be submitted at least three weeks prior to testing. A corresponding print test booklet will be included in all braille kits. If a student taking a braille test is eligible for an oral administration, the test administrator should use the print test booklet included in the braille kit.

A student may have a vision impairment that requires the use of two types of test materials. For example, a student may need to use a braille test booklet in conjunction with a large-print test booklet. In this situation, the print test booklet included in the braille kit will need to be photocopied. To do this, an Accommodation Request Form to photocopy secure test material must be submitted so that specific instructions can be provided to the district.

Specific Braille Instructions

Specific braille instructions supplement the appropriate test administrator manual and are designed to help a test administrator understand and meet the needs of a student taking a braille test. Specific braille instructions are included in each braille kit. Unless otherwise stated in these instructions, the directions contained in the test administrator manual should be followed.

After the braille kit arrives, but prior to the day of testing, the test administrator should read the specific braille instructions to determine which materials or procedures a student may need for testing.

Specific braille instructions are divided into three sections:

- **General Information:** This section gives the test administrator information about the braille test booklet and how it compares to the print test booklet. Instructions on how to transcribe the student's responses onto the answer document are also included.
- **Specific Instructions:** This section provides information for the test administrator about how a particular braille test differs from the print version. This includes related administration instructions and information about test questions that have been altered to ensure that the test is accessible to a student who reads braille. For example, test questions with a visual element that cannot be rendered in braille will include a description of what is depicted in the print version of the test. Although such descriptions are provided in the braille booklet, the test administrator may read them aloud from the specific braille instructions at a student's request. This section also informs test administrators of any manipulatives (e.g., a braille ruler or three-dimensional geometric figure) that a student will need in order to complete the test.
- **Test Administration Directions:** This section includes general and specific information about the braille test that should be read to the students (e.g., whether special symbols or standard braille codes are used on the test). Any information that is on the Transcriber's Notes page in the braille test booklet is also provided in this section.

Training

Districts should plan appropriately to ensure that individuals who are administering the braille version of the assessments have received training in these procedures and special instructions prior to testing.

Campus testing coordinators are responsible for issuing the test materials to the appropriate test administrators. It is important that test administrators be given their test administration materials, including the specific braille instructions, in time to prepare for testing. Campus testing coordinators are also responsible for monitoring administrations to ensure that they are conducted, to the greatest extent possible, in the same manner as the administration of regular-print tests.

Student Response Procedures

The test administrator and the student should determine the best method for the student to respond to the test questions. Review the Basic Transcribing accommodation policy for response mode options. Special consideration should be given to the type of paper that a student will need to generate a response for the written composition and open-ended items. The student's response in its entirety must fit onto the lined pages and/or spaces for each written composition and/or short answer reading question on the answer document. STAAR answer documents contain a 26-line page for each written composition and 10 lines for each short answer.

- 26 lines of handwritten text is approximately 1,750 typed characters (including spaces) or 3–4 braille pages (depending on the size of braille paper)
- 10 lines of handwritten text is approximately 675 typed characters (including spaces) or 2–3 braille pages (depending on the size of braille paper)

Students with a vision impairment may need to test in a separate setting in cases where their methods of response might distract other students. Any student responding verbally must receive an individual administration, which is an allowable test administration procedure per the Allowable Test Administration Procedures and Materials document on the Accommodation Resources webpage.

Braille test booklets have braille cells that correspond to the number of boxes on the answer document for griddable questions. The braille kits include mathematics and science reference materials that match the format provided in the print test booklets. If a student has written on the reference materials, the materials must be destroyed after testing.

Student Materials and Accommodations

All materials and equipment needed by the student, including allowable testing accommodations, should be furnished before testing begins. Refer to each specific accommodation policy for student eligibility criteria and special instructions.

- The test administrator should have available braille paper, typing paper, bold-lined paper, pens, crayons, pencils, 20/20 pens, markers, placeholders, and any manipulatives or reference materials required by the specific braille instructions. Special consideration should also be given to lighting conditions for students with low vision.
- Students who take the braille version of the tests at any grade level may use slate and stylus, electronic note-takers, word processors, projection or low-vision devices such as a closed-circuit television (CCTV), braille rulers, a Cranmer modified abacus, or speech-output calculators.
- Students taking the braille version of the grade 8 science assessment may use a periodic table that is routinely used in the classroom in addition to the Periodic Table of the Elements included as a reference material in the test booklet.
- Students taking the braille version of the grade 8 mathematics assessment, Algebra I assessment, or Algebra II assessment may use the audio-graphing calculator (AGC). Other programs that perform graphing functions may be used EXCEPT for those that include a computer algebra system (CAS).

If a student needs an accommodation not described on the Accommodations for Students with Disabilities webpage, contact TEA's Accommodations Task Force at 512-463-9536.

Students Requiring More Time to Complete Testing

Students with visual impairments who take a braille test may require considerably more time to complete the test than students without a visual impairment. If the student typically requires more time than is allotted for testing, refer to the STAAR accommodation policies that address Extra Time and Extra Day.

Transcribing

Student responses for all braille tests must be transferred to the student's answer document. If this is not done, the student's test cannot be scored. Refer to the Basic Transcribing accommodation policy for more information. If the student has a TEA-approved accommodation request for Complex Transcribing, guidelines for this type of administration will be provided.

An answer document is provided with each braille test. The instructions for completing the student identification information and the FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY section of the answer document can be found in the test administrator manuals.

Transcribing may be done by the test administrator during or after testing. The student's responses should be transcribed as follows:

- Transcribe the student's responses onto the regular-print answer document exactly as indicated by the student.
- Write "Transcribed by (NAME) because student used the braille version" at the top of the answer document on the page where the student identification information is located.
- All transcriptions must be done in No. 2 pencil.

If a student uses a word processor to generate a written response (e.g., written composition or short answer), the document may be saved periodically while the student is completing the response. However, the response must be deleted after the test administrator has transcribed it onto an answer document. All special features (e.g., spell check, word predictor) must be disabled unless the student meets the eligibility criteria outlined in the Spelling Assistance accommodation policy.

The braille (BR) bubble must be marked in the ACCOMM. field on the student's answer document. If a student had access to other accommodations in addition to taking the braille test, the corresponding bubble(s) should also be marked in this field. This information can be found in the *District and Campus Coordinator Manual*.

Returning Materials

All braille materials, including handwritten, typewritten, or brailled responses, must be returned to the district testing coordinator. All answer documents onto which students' responses have been transcribed should be returned in the shipment of scorable materials. The answer documents for students taking braille versions of the tests will be processed in the same manner as all other answer documents.

The braille booklets, all print test booklets, and specific braille instructions should be returned in the nonscorable shipment. Any brailled, typewritten, or handwritten responses on scratch paper that include student notes, answers to multiple-choice questions, written compositions, or responses to short answer reading questions must be destroyed after testing. For additional information about what to return in the nonscorable shipment, refer to the *District and Campus Coordinator Manual*.

Contact TEA's Student Assessment Division at 512-463-9536 if you have any questions regarding the administration of braille tests.