Information about the Texas Assessment Program can be found on the Student Assessment website.

Texas Educator Committees
The Texas Education Agency encourages highly qualified educators to apply to participate in educator committees for the Texas Assessment Program. Click the link or scan the QR code for more information.
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Overview

Purpose
The goal of State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) accessibility is to ensure that each student can interact appropriately with the content, presentation, and response modes of the state assessments. In order to meet this goal, STAAR accessibility features and designated supports are designed to allow all examinees to demonstrate their knowledge of the content being assessed without the format of the assessment, the non-tested language, or the type of response needed to answer the questions being barriers. The various accessibility features and designated supports made available on STAAR online and paper assessments are also designed to be the same as or similar to the designated supports commonly used during classroom instruction.

For STAAR, including STAAR Spanish, accessibility falls into three categories: accessibility features, locally-approved designated supports, and designated supports requiring Texas Education Agency (TEA) approval. It is important to refer to the individual designated support policy documents in the Accommodations section of the District and Campus Coordinator Resources for comprehensive information about the procedures and materials in each category.

Accessibility Features
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 a state assessment. District or campus 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 assessment in a separate setting to eliminate distractions to other students and to ensure that the security and confidentiality of the assessments are maintained.

Locally-Approved Designated Supports
Locally-approved designated supports include designated supports that may be made available without TEA approval to students who meet eligibility criteria. The decision should be based on the eligibility criteria and aimed at addressing a student’s consistent academic struggle in a specific area even after intensive instruction and remediation. Eligibility is determined by the appropriate team at the campus level 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 should take into consideration the student’s needs and whether the student routinely receives that designated support during classroom instruction and classroom testing. This does not mean that the designated support must be used every day.
during instruction, but that:

- the student has used the support often enough during classroom instruction and testing that the student can use it independently during the state assessment (independent use applies to some designated supports [e.g., Calculation Aids] but might not apply to others [e.g., Oral Administration]); and

- 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**

For designated supports requiring TEA approval, district personnel must submit an Accommodation Request Form through the Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE) under the Administration and Security Forms module. Accommodation Request Forms must be submitted to TEA in a timely manner to allow committee members the ability to process and review requests, as well as to communicate to district personnel the appropriate procedures for administering a TEA-approved designated support. Requests should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the individual student's testing window. For circumstances that require a designated support request but occur after this time (e.g., newly enrolled student; medical emergency; updated admission, review, and dismissal [ARD] committee decision), the district coordinator should contact the Student Assessment Division at (512) 463-9536 and ask to speak to a member of the Accommodations Task Force for further instructions. This type of support must be documented in the student's paperwork as “pending TEA approval.”
Test Participation Decisions

A student should be designated as eligible for a special paper administration of an online assessment only if a required accommodation documented in the student’s individualized education program (IEP), individual accommodation plan (IAP), or section 504 plan paperwork cannot be delivered in an online format. Careful consideration should be given to whether the paper mode offers the supports necessary to allow the student to successfully demonstrate their understanding of the tested content. If the student has previous experience receiving instruction or taking assessments online (e.g., STAAR Interim Assessments), it may be more appropriate to maintain consistency by providing the student with an online administration.

Some supports, such as Mathematics Manipulatives or an Oral or Signed Administration, can be provided to students taking either an online or a paper test.

Due consideration should be given to the mode in which various designated supports can be offered. A mathematics or science braille test can be provided only with a paper form; however, a reading language arts (RLA) or social studies braille test can be provided online using a refreshable braille display.

Refer to the Special Administration of an Assessment page of the Coordinator Resources for more information.
Accommodations

Online Accessibility Features

Accessibility features are available to all students taking STAAR and STAAR Spanish assessments. Some of these features are embedded in the online system, while others (e.g., individual test administration, general reminders to stay on task) are not. Students can practice using the online accessibility features by accessing STAAR Online Practice Tests on the Practice Test Site. The following figures describe the accessibility features that are embedded in the online system and provide their associated icons. These features are available automatically on all STAAR assessments (i.e., mathematics, RLA, science, and social studies) and do not need to be activated in the online system. Refer to the Accessibility Features page of the Coordinator Resources for more information on available accessibility features.

Figure 1. Sticky Notes (available in English and Spanish)

The Sticky Notes tool allows a student to enter notes about a question. The notes can be accessed from the question for which the note was created.

The student can drag the Sticky Notes tool to different parts of the test page using the Sticky Notes headers.

The student can cut, copy, and paste text to and from the Sticky Notes. The remaining number of characters that can be entered is displayed at the bottom of the text area.

After entering the notes, the student must select the Save and Close button to save the note and close the Sticky Notes.

To open the Sticky Notes tool, the student opens the Context Menu by right-clicking or by selecting the Context Menu icon and then selecting Sticky Notes.

The student can use the resize handle to resize the Sticky Notes.
The **Notepad** tool allows a student to enter notes that can be accessed from any test page.

To open the **Notepad** tool, the student selects Notepad from the **Global Tools** menu.

The student can drag the **Notepad** to different parts of the test page using the **Notepad** header.

The student can use the resize handle to resize the **Notepad**.

After entering the notes, the student must select the **Save and Close** button to save the note and close the **Notepad**.

---

The student can open the **Color Setting** dropdown menu on the Choose Settings page to select from eight different color settings. When the student selects a color setting, the option is applied to the screen for the student to preview.

If the student wishes to apply the selected color scheme to all the pages of the test, the student clicks the **Select** button.
Figure 3a. Color Setting (available in English and Spanish)

The student can choose the color scheme he or she prefers and click the Ok button to apply the selected color scheme to all pages of the test.

To change the color setting the student chose on the Choose Settings page, the student can select the System Settings button to choose a different color scheme.

Figure 4. Line Reader (available in English and Spanish)

The student can use the Line Reader tool to highlight a selected line of text in a passage or question.

The student can move the Line Reader to different lines using the cursor or the keyboard.

The Line Reader tool helps a student focus attention on a specific line of text. When the tool is selected, it appears orange, as shown. To turn off the Line Reader tool, the student must select the tool again.
The student can select the **Zoom Out** button on the top of the screen to reduce the size of the text and images displayed on the screen.

The student can select the **Zoom In** button on the top of the screen to enlarge the size of the text and images displayed on the screen.

After selecting the text to be highlighted, the student can open the **Context Menu** by right-clicking or by selecting the **Context Menu** icon. The student then selects the **Highlight Selection** option and the highlight color to be used.

To remove highlighting from specific text, the student can select the required text and select the **Remove Highlight** option.

To remove all highlights on the page, the student can select the **Reset Highlighting** option.
NOTE: The student cannot change the selected mouse pointer option after the test starts.

**Online Designated Supports**

Designated supports are available to students who meet the eligibility criteria as determined and documented by the appropriate team at the local level. Some of these designated supports are embedded in the online system, while others are not. More specific information can be found in the individual policy documents on the [Locally-Approved Designated Supports](#) page of the Coordinator Resources.

Non-embedded designated supports may be made available to students testing online as well as to those testing on paper. The test administrator will provide the supports to the student on test day. For example, a student needing supplemental aids will need to use the type of assistance he or she uses in the classroom (e.g., grade-appropriate grammar and mechanics rules, mnemonic devices), since supplemental aids are not embedded in the online system.

Some designated supports are also available as embedded online designated supports. For example, a student needing reading support can receive an oral or signed administration of the test using text-to-speech (TTS) or American Sign Language (ASL) videos.

Content and language supports are available as embedded online designated supports. These include pop-ups, rollovers, supplementary materials, and prereading text. The delivery of an online assessment offers an opportunity to provide these types of supports in a standardized way to students who use similar designated supports in the classroom and find the online test to be the most appropriate and accessible for them. These supports are applied only to particular passages and test questions based on expert judgments about which designated supports are likely to make a question more accessible to students.

Students should practice using the online designated supports by accessing STAAR Online.
Practice Tests on the Practice Test Site. The following figures describe the embedded designated supports in the online testing system.

**Figure 8. Calculator (available in English and Spanish)**

The *Calculator* tool must be set as a designated support in TIDE for grades 3–7.
Figure 9. Text-to-Speech (available in English and Spanish)

Students who have the TTS designated support can listen to text being read aloud. The text is highlighted as it is read aloud.

Please note that TTS uses the local device’s native accessibility voice packs. Please make sure that a Spanish voice pack has been activated and tested prior to the administration of an assessment with Spanish TTS.
For students who have the TTS designated support, a System Settings icon is displayed on each test page.

When the student selects the icon, the System Settings menu is displayed, and a gray shield is placed over the entire page.

To listen to a portion of text, the student can select the text to be read aloud and then right-click and select Speak Selection for the question or passage. The student can stop TTS while the text is being read aloud by selecting Stop Speaking.

The student can use the sliders to adjust the volume, pitch, and rate at which the text is read aloud. To apply the selected settings, the student selects the Ok button. To revert to the original settings, the student selects the Cancel button.

District personnel should test the device’s audio settings prior to launching the application to ensure that the sound is on and working as expected.
Figure 10. Auto Text-to-Speech (available in English and Spanish)

For a student who has an Auto TTS designated support, test content on the page is pre-read to the student when the student first accesses a page.

A gray shield appears at the top of the test page, and a student cannot perform any action apart from pausing the test until the text is read in its entirety. Text is highlighted as it is read.
Figure 10a. Auto Text-to-Speech including the five second countdown timer (available in English and Spanish)

A five second timer appears at the top of each page counting down to the beginning of the Auto TTS reading of the page's content. Auto TTS only reads the content of a test page the first time a student accesses it.

Figure 11. Speech-to-Text (STT) (available in English and Spanish for constructed-response questions)

Test administrators should ensure that the microphone on the device used for testing is turned on and configured properly prior to launching a test that includes constructed-response questions.

Students eligible for the STT tool can select the Microphone icon to activate STT functionality. When STT is enabled, all other text editing tools are unavailable. To edit or insert text manually, students can disable STT, point the cursor to the desired location where manual edits are to be applied, and use the text editor tools as needed.
When the Microphone icon is selected, the icon appears highlighted. This is to indicate that STT has been activated.

Students should speak clearly and at a normal volume and pace. As the student speaks, the words are transcribed into the response area. While the text is being transcribed, dots appear in the response area to indicate that the transcription is in process.

The Microphone tool is available for Sticky Notes. As the student speaks, the words are transcribed into the text area. While the text is being transcribed, dots appear in the text area to indicate that the transcription is in process.
**Figure 11c. Speech-to-Text (available in English and Spanish on Notepad)**

![Image of Notepad with microphone and note-taking interface.

Microphone is available on Notepad. As the student speaks, the words are transcribed into the text area. While the text is being transcribed, dots appear in the text area to indicate that the transcription is in process.

**Figure 12. Word Prediction (available in English and Spanish except for Mathematics)**

When Word Prediction is enabled, students automatically receive word suggestions as they type answers for questions with written responses. This is used to meet the accommodation need of spelling assistance.

![Image of a question with word prediction suggestions, including 'quick', 'quickest', 'quiet', and 'question'.

If a student is eligible for spelling assistance, a Spell Check button is provided.

In this example, students can use the mouse to select a word (as highlighted in the image) and then click the number associated with the word to select that word.

If students need to enter a numeral as part of their response, they should select 123 in the corner of the pop-up. A list of numerals appears. Students can select a numeral or select abc to return to the list of suggested words.
Figure 13. Spell Check (available in English and Spanish)

If a student is eligible for spelling assistance, a Spell Check button is provided.

When the student selects the Spell Check button, misspelled words are underlined and appear in a different color. The student can select the underlined word to view suggestions for replacements and select a replacement from the list.

Figure 14. ASL Videos (available in English)

Students who have ASL as a designated support can watch videos that translate test content into ASL.

To view ASL videos, the student selects the American Sign Language button.
The student can maximize the window and then reset it to the default size by selecting the Maximize or Minimize icon.

The student can drag the ASL window to different parts of the test page using the header.

The student can adjust the video speed, turn on or turn off closed captioning using the CC button, and adjust the volume as necessary.

The student can play, pause, and replay ASL videos.

The student can go back and review specific answer choices as needed by selecting the chapter number from the list or clicking that chapter in the progress bar.

The student can use the resize handle to resize the window.
Figure 15. Refreshable Braille Display (available on English versions of RLA and social studies)

For students who are eligible for Braille, the Presentation setting on the Test Attributes page will be set to "Braille." In this setting, the test is displayed in Streamline mode.

Figure 15a. Refreshable Braille Display (available on English versions of RLA and social studies)

In Streamline mode, elements such as stimuli and questions are displayed in a single column. As students navigate to specific elements or regions, the screen reader says the element or region name aloud, simplifying navigation and increasing comprehension.

NOTE: Refreshable Braille Display will not function with all the supported devices used for testing. Refer to the Minimum System Requirements page of the Coordinator Resources for supported systems and requirements.
Content and Language Supports Guidelines

These designated supports are available on STAAR and STAAR Spanish assessments in the form of pop-ups, rollovers, prereading text, and supplementary materials. Although STAAR Spanish uses the same guidelines for content and language supports as the English version, some of the accommodations in the pop-ups and rollovers may not be identical due to linguistic differences.

Rollovers

- Provide a visual representation in the passage, question, answer choices, or constructed-response questions by adding graphics, photographs, or animations.
- Define or clarify construct-irrelevant words, phrases, and sentences using plain language, synonyms, definitions, examples, and consistent language.
- Bullet or separate steps in a process (e.g., multi-step problem, sequence of events).
- Reword complex questions or answer choices to condense text.
- Reorganize and simplify historical excerpts.

Figure 16. Rollovers (available in English and Spanish)

For students who are eligible for content and language supports, certain test questions include a small Rollover arrow pointing toward words or phrases. Clicking this arrow opens a rollover containing simplified text.
**Figure 16a. Rollovers (available in English and Spanish)**

A rollover covers the original text. Clicking the Rollover arrow again closes it.

For students who have the TTS designated support, text in the rollover can be read aloud. To listen to the rollover, the student clicks the text-to-speech button and then selects the Speak Question or Speak Option option.

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**Prereads**

- Offer text before the reading and editing passages (for RLA).

**Figure 17. Preread (available for RLA)**

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question.

Read the selection to learn more about virtual-reality field trips and what advantages they offer to students.

For students who are eligible for content and language supports, certain questions include text about the passage in the question.

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**Supplementary Materials**

- Include blank Punnett squares for Biology.
- Include writing checklists for RLA.
Figure 18. Supplementary Materials (Punnett Squares available in English)

For students who are eligible for content and language supports, Punnett Squares are available. Punnett Squares can be selected using the References button.

Figure 18a. Supplementary Materials (Writing Checklists available on English and Spanish versions of RLA)

For students who are eligible for content and language supports, Writing Checklist is available. Writing Checklist can be selected using the References button.

Pop-Ups

- Isolate specific information in a question that corresponds to each answer choice.
- Isolate specific text or information in a passage 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.
- Apply an allowable supplemental aid (e.g., graphic organizer, place value chart, t-chart, graphic of a scientific concept, timeline, map) to specific questions or answer choices.
• Include the formula from the grade-specific reference material 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 passage, question, answer choices, or constructed-response questions by adding graphics, photographs, or animations.
• Define or clarify construct-irrelevant words, phrases, and sentences using plain language, synonyms, definitions, examples, and consistent language.

Figure 19. Pop-Ups (available in English and Spanish)
The Link to Content and Language Supports

The use of designated supports occurs primarily during classroom instruction as educators use various instructional strategies to meet the students’ individual needs, thus allowing those students to maximize their academic potential. Content and language supports available for STAAR assessments offer opportunities for students to access the required state assessments meaningfully.

To make designated support 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 designated supports (e.g., assignment and test scores with and without the designated support, observational reports) so that informed educational decisions can be made for each student. By analyzing data, an educator can determine whether the designated support 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 designated support.

Decisions about designated supports used during a statewide assessment should:

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

Although it is unlikely that students routinely use the computer-based content and language supports during classroom instruction, they may use variations of them as illustrated in the table that follows. This list is not exhaustive but includes examples of classroom designated supports that may correspond to the embedded content and language supports on STAAR.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom Designated Support Examples that Link to STAAR Content and Language Supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher introduces a new book to a struggling reader prior to it being read aloud or independently. The topics discussed might include major concepts, difficult words, setting, characters, or prior knowledge of the subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher points out the meaning of a word in a dictionary or a synonym in a thesaurus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher isolates specific information to focus the student on the core concept being taught.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher acts out or has the students role-play newly introduced vocabulary or difficult concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher simplifies difficult vocabulary and then reformats complex word problems by bulleting or spacing out each step required to solve the problem.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

The teacher provides the formulas needed to solve a problem.

The teacher provides visual aids (e.g., demonstrations, photographs, art) to identify people and places.

The teacher provides visual aids (e.g., demonstrations, photographs, art) to define or clarify vocabulary.

During classroom discussions, the teacher clarifies or rewords complex text or questions using simpler language.

The teacher directs the student (e.g., highlight, bold, point to, flag the information) to the specific parts of the passage, diagram, map, or figure that is being discussed.

The teacher presents parts of a complex concept one at a time.

Educators, parents, and students must understand that designated supports 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 each student's needs. Unlike instruction, state assessments are standardized to provide a reliable comparison of outcomes among all examinees. Certain designated supports used in the classroom would invalidate the content being assessed or compromise the security and integrity of the state assessment if used during testing. For this reason, not all designated supports suitable for instruction are allowed during state assessments. However, the policies for accessibility on state assessments do not limit an educator's ability to develop individualized materials and techniques to aid student learning.

### Special Situations

Because content and language supports are embedded designated supports presented in an online format, replicating these features in a paper or braille test version is not always possible. Technology-based supports enable most students to test online; however, in those instances in which the use of an embedded support is not feasible or the administration of an online assessment is inappropriate due to a student’s particular disability, a student may be tested using a paper test booklet. Additional information can be found on the Special Administration of an Assessment page of the Coordinator Resources.

For students who take a braille test (including students who use the screen reader support for Refreshable Braille Displays) and are eligible for content and language supports, district personnel should ensure that student eligibility is correctly marked in TIDE in order to receive a STAAR with Embedded Supports paper test booklet and place an order for braille materials in TIDE. Once materials are received, the test administrator will use the secure test instructions to provide access to the content and language supports in the specific test being
administered. The secure test instructions will provide picture descriptions of content and language support images and graphics (e.g., charts, tables, graphs) that may be reproduced for accessibility (e.g., brailling graphics; pairing graphics with tactile symbols, texts, or objects; enlarging or projecting).

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing and eligible for oral or signed administrations and content and language supports must take STAAR online to access these embedded supports. However, since these students are unable to access the TTS function, a signed administration is allowed for those parts of the test that can be read aloud. ASL videos are offered as an online option for a signed administration.

ASL videos allow a student to independently select and change the level of signing support during the test administration by selecting chapters to review specific parts of the videos as needed. However, it is important to note that ASL videos are available only for test questions and revising passages in English and are not offered on Spanish tests or for content and language supports (e.g., pop-ups, rollovers). In these instances, test administrators may sign test content in the same way they do for paper tests. Test administrators should be trained using the Accommodations section of the Coordinator Resources and should 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 page of the Coordinator Resources.
Planning for Testing

Careful review of the state accessibility policies 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. District and campus 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 will receive accessibility features or designated supports on test day?
- What special arrangements need to be considered for students who 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 designated supports? For example, entering a student’s responses in the Data Entry Interface (DEI) or providing an oral or signed administration of a paper test 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? Please refer to the Technology Guidelines for the Texas Assessment Program page and the Technology Resources section of the Coordinator Resources.
- What procedure is in place and who is responsible for recording designated supports in TIDE?
- Have students had the opportunity to practice interacting with the tools and features on the Practice Test Site? It is important that students have used the online practice tests to become familiar with selecting answers, using the online tools, moving through the assessment, and submitting the assessment.
- What special arrangements need to be considered for students taking different versions of STAAR with different designated supports? 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 students taking STAAR online be grouped together?
- Are computers prepared for testing? For guidance on the Test Delivery System (TDS), refer to the Setting Up TDS Workstations webpage.
- If students are using the Refreshable Braille Display embedded online support, are the computers prepared for testing according to the guidelines laid out in the Setting Up TDS Workstations webpage?

For additional information, contact TEA using the Student Assessment Help Desk or call (512) 463-9536.