KANSAS STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

FAQ

Text-to-Speech Passages and Graphics Accommodation

It is very important before beginning the application for approval that the IEP or 504 team has met and the student meets all of the criteria listed on the TTS Fact Sheet flowchart. If all questions on the flowchart cannot be answered with a 'YES', the student does not qualify for the TTS Passages and Graphics and the application should not be completed for approval. All TTS Passages and Graphics Applications must be submitted by the district test coordinator to TTSpassages@ksde.gov by January 31st.

Will TTS be approved without an IEP or 504?

- No, the student must have an IEP or 504 plan in place and meet all criteria from flowchart.

How does this play into students with Dyslexia or a specific learning disability?

- A student identified as requiring special education due to a specific learning disability does not mean the student will qualify for TTS passages and graphics. If the student meets the requirements on the application and has data to support the student having an issue with accessing printed material, they may qualify.

We have students with dyslexia that are not on an IEP or 504, however, their SIT plans use TTS in the classroom. Will they quality for TTS for ELA passages without having the IEP or 504?

- No, only students with an IEP or 504 plans will be approved.

Is the TTS passages and graphics accommodation available for students in 3rd-5th grade?

- Yes, the TTS passages and graphics accommodation is available for students in grades 3-8, 10 and 11th grade. TTS: Passages & Graphics (P&G) reads the same content as TTS: Questions & Responses (Q&R), but it also reads ELA passages and provides a detailed description of visual elements.

What are Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)?

- Accessible educational materials, or AEM, are print- and technology-based educational materials, including printed and electronic textbooks and related core materials that are designed or enhanced in a way that makes them usable across the widest range of learner variability, regardless of format (e.g., print, digital, graphic, audio, video). (aem.cast.org)
- If the student is using read aloud enabled on their Chromebook and are using textbooks online with read aloud, this is exactly what AEM is. Bookshare is also a form of AEM.
    - Considerations for Accessible Educational Materials



TEXT-TO-SPEECH FOR PASSAGES AND GRAPHICS ACCOMMODATION

Can a student who only has a human reader accommodation use the TTS passages and graphics accommodation?

- No, students must be using TTS or a screen reader as the primary means for accessing grade level text. A human reader is different than the digital voice that the student would hear from TTS. Only accommodations that the student is using in the classroom for instruction and assessment should be selected for use on the state assessment.
- KSDE understands that a student may occasionally have to have tests or assignments read to them, but only using a human reader isn't enough for the TTS setting for state assessments. If the student isn't using TTS to access text outside of English Language Arts (ELA) class, they probably don't need TTS. Access is something that students need throughout their school day not just for ELA.

What is meant by multiple years of evidence-based instruction?

- Students who have been receiving evidence-based instruction in reading (science of reading) for multiple years - at least 3 years. If the student comes from another KS district and had been receiving instruction in reading for 3 years you could assume they have received instruction that was evidence-based. If the student has been homeschooled or hasn't been in a public school, you can't assume that

What about students who are visually impaired or blind?

- For students who are visually impaired or blind and require AEM in the form of TTS or a screen reader, the team should complete the TTS passages and graphics application. KSDE must have a Lexile score without the use of TTS or a screen reader. If that is not possible due to the student not being a braille reader, please indicate that on the form. We no longer have a question on the application asking if the student is blind or visually impaired. KSDE also needs the results from the Protocol for Accommodations in Reading (PAR). All questions on the application must be completed for all students for approval.
- While the braille PNP setting is not technically an "embedded" tool for students, it is essential for those who need a braille accommodation. Selecting braille on a student's PNP ensures that the student is assigned a test form consistent with the braille booklet. The computer-based form and the braille booklet are identical, allowing students to listen to the Text to Speech (TTS) accommodation if needed. Once you select braille on a student's PNP, contact KAPAccommodations@ku.edu to order the student's braille booklet.
    - Note: An additional use of the braille Personal Needs Profile (PNP) setting is to assist students with low vision who require a screen reader, such as JAWS or NVDA, to interact with student portal. By selecting braille on a student's PNP, the test form assigned will be compatible with external screen readers, making it easier for the student to access the content.



TEXT-TO-SPEECH FOR PASSAGES AND GRAPHICS ACCOMMODATION

If a student has the read aloud (TTS) accommodation for assessments on their IEP and KSDE denies the TTS passages and graphics application for state assessments for the student, would the IEP need to be amended? What are examples of how to word the accommodations in the IEP to eliminate having to amend the IEP?

- If changes to the IEP are needed, then yes, there would need to be an amendment made to the IEP. If the accommodation indicates "if approved by KSDE" "or "when it does not invalidate the constructs of the assessment" an amendment would not be necessary. KSDE does not recommend removing accommodations that students are using for classroom instruction and assessment. KSDE does have two model examples that won't require an IEP amendment if KSDE doesn't approved an application. As far as district assessments are concerned, the district makes those decisions and should be using the accessibility features allowed by that specific assessment.
    - Example 1: Consistent with the accommodation that Sean is using in the classroom, he will receive the following accommodations on statewide assessments: Simultaneous visual and auditory access to text through the independent use of text-to-speech for all allowable parts of the assessment.
    - Example 2: The district will apply for approval of TTS for passages and graphics on the state assessment. If TTS for passages and graphics is approved the student would receive TTS for the ELA passages, if it is not approved, the student would receive test questions and answer choices through TTS when allowed (grades 6-10)
- Resources:
    - Examples of Frequency, Location, and Duration for Accommodations & Modifications (PDF)
    - Assuring the Documentation of Frequency, Location, and Duration of Accommodations on the IEP (PDF)
    - Documenting Frequency, Location, and Duration of Accommodations and Modifications on the IEP during the school year (PDF)
- If an application is disapproved and the IEP team determines the text-to-speech passages and graphics accommodation is best for the student, the district may request the accommodation even though the student does not meet all criteria for approval. The test will be given a special code (SC-35) to show the accommodation was used, a student report will be provided, and the score will not be considered valid when used for building accountability.
    - See 34 C.F.R. 300.160, stating that, under state guidelines, IEP teams are instructed to select only those accommodations that do not invalidate the score.



TEXT-TO-SPEECH FOR PASSAGES AND GRAPHICS ACCOMMODATION

Is it a requirement for students with IEPs to have Assistive Technology on their IEP if they are using a TTS accommodation for the state assessment?

- Every IEP team is required to consider whether a student with disabilities needs assistive technology (AT) devices and services to benefit from a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Assistive Technology is any item, piece of equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. Accessible educational materials (AEM) are print- and technology-based educational materials, including printed and electronic textbooks and related core materials, that are designed or enhanced in a way that makes them usable across the widest range of learner variability, regardless of format, for example, print, digital, audio, or video formats (National Center on Accessible Educational Materials, 2021). AT and AEM work together to provide access, learning opportunities, and independence for students with disabilities.
- For a student to be approved for the TTS passages and graphics, the student's IEP/504 plan must indicate the student requires Accessible Educational Material (AEM) or a screen reader in the form of Text to Speech to access grade level text. There are multiple ways to document AT services in a student's IEP. For this reason, each agency should determine and outline how AT services will be documented within the required sections of an IEP document. The TTS or screen reader does need to be listed in the student's accommodation and must state when the student uses the accommodation. For approval it needs to include state assessments, classroom assessments and classroom assignments.
- Resources
    - Kansas Assistive Technology Guidance (external link)
    - USDE-O.S.E.P. Office of Special Education Programs
        - Assistive Technology (External Link)
        - Assistive Technology Dear Colleague Letter (PDF)
        - Myths and Facts Surrounding Assistive Technology Devices (PDF)
        - More to the Myths and Facts: Addressing AEM in the 2024 Assistive Technology Guidance

Is there a baseline Lexile recommendation when considering whether to complete and submit a TTS passages and graphics application?

- KSDE will not approve applications for students with 500 Lexile or above.

Is the Protocol for Accommodations in Reading (PAR) required for the TTS passages and graphics application?

- Yes, KSDE will not approve applications that do not have PAR results. The TTS passages and graphics accommodation requires approval yearly. Even if the student was provided with the accommodation last year, approval is given annually. If the team can answer yes to all the questions on the flowchart, the application will need to be submitted for approval again this year. The Kansas Accessibility Manual page 23 talks about the importance of evaluating the accommodation a student is using on a regular basis. **Accessibility support must be selected based on the individual student's needs, be used consistently for instruction and assessment,**

and phased out at the appropriate time to promote independence. Collecting and analyzing data on the use and effectiveness of accessibility supports are necessary to ensure the meaningful participation of students in districtwide and statewide assessments. This data may reveal questionable patterns of the use of some accessibility supports and inform decisions about the continued use of those supports.

- Start at the student's grade level and administer the Text Reader with the PAR passage. Record the percentage the student received on the comprehension questions after listening to the PAR text with a text reader. The student must score 75% at grade level or within two grade levels below. The percentage the student received on the comprehension questions after listening to the PAR text with a text reader or screen reader needs to be recorded on the application. The application will not be approved if 75% is not achieved within two grade levels below.
- The PAR (free version) or uPAR (paid version) can be used. The PAR can be downloaded for free here. All information to administer the PAR is in the PAR manual. There are now multiple-choice questions available that match those presented to students for each passage on the uPAR. These quizzes are located in the KS copy uPAR Stories fall 2024 pdf. No special training is required.
- PAR in Action – 4 min video on how to administer the PAR

Is consent needed before using the PAR with a student?

- Consent is not necessary for administering the PAR – the PAR is a system of collecting data to confirm appropriate accommodations. Consent is needed to add an accommodation for a student who previously did not have the accommodation. We do recommend giving parents notice at a minimum with an opportunity to meet if they have questions and want to view the PAR protocol before administering it. This could be a letter that is provided to any student who the district is considering using the PAR with.

Would a 6th grader whose Lexile is below 500 and PAR results show comprehension at above 68% on the 4th grade passages qualify?

- While the Lexile and PAR results would demonstrate the student has an issue with accessing print material and the student could qualify, the rest of the requirements must also be met for approval for TTS Passages and Graphics on the state assessment. Please refer to the flow chart on page two of the TTS Fact sheet. All questions must be a yes on the flow chart to qualify.

Do DLM students need to be given the PAR?

- No, students with a most significant cognitive disability who qualify for the DLM may receive TTS or a human reader for the entire DLM assessment if that is an accommodation on the student's IEP.



TEXT-TO-SPEECH FOR PASSAGES AND GRAPHICS ACCOMMODATION

Why is there no TTS questions and responses accommodation for students in grades 3-5?

- With the new enhanced ELA assessment this year and the focus on the science of reading, KSDE worked with our national technical advisors to provide guidance for the appropriate accommodations needed for the ELA assessment.
- The focus in grades 3-5 is on learning to read. The ELA standards in grades 3-5 contain decoding, fluency, and comprehension. The assessment integrates the ability to read and the ability to understand what was read. Allowing students to use TTS on the questions and responses does not give an accurate report on what the student can do. Using TTS invalidates the construct of the test. Providing TTS on the assessment can also have negative consequences for instruction. If the student is no longer receiving instruction on decoding and fluency skills and uses TTS instead, the opportunity to read during the day may not be given to the student.
    - Research: Accommodations Toolkit | Text-to-speech (Computer Generated Voice): Research | Institute on Community Integration Publications (umn.edu)
- The team worked extensively on insuring that the new enhanced assessment is written at the correct text complexity for each grade. This includes all text including passages, questions and responses. With the previous assessment, the Personal Needs Profile (PNP) was applied to all subjects. The only way to ensure students had the TTS they needed for math was to have the TTS for questions and responses. KSDE made TTS a universal feature for math for the 2025 assessment for all students.
    - The TTS Fact Sheet goes into detail on the TTS accessibility features available.
- With the TTS changes this year, the only TTS available for ELA for elementary level students is the passages and graphics. You will need to follow the guidelines on the TTS fact sheet and TTS passages and graphics application for students who might need the TTS passages and graphics setting.

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