KANSAS STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

GUIDELINE

THE CONSIDERATION FOR ACCESSIBLE EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS

Teachers traditionally rely upon printed materials as the main tool for teaching students. However, for eligible individuals, it can be difficult or impossible to access this type of instruction. **An eligible individual is unable to gain information from standard printed materials at an anticipated level for their grade and needs alternate access to the information.** This may be in the form of braille, large print, audio, or digital text. Print disabilities commonly affect individuals with blindness, visual impairments, specific learning disabilities (dyslexia), and physical disabilities. Students with visual impairments or blindness can't read standard print from a textbook. Students with physical disabilities may have difficulty holding a textbook or turning the pages. Students with severe learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, have a difficult time processing written text.

Text-to-Speech (TTS) removes the barriers for students who struggle with decoding and understanding printed words on a page by providing them access to the text. This accommodation is appropriate for students whose IEP or 504 plans explicitly indicate the student's primary mode of accessing printed materials is through text-to-speech. Despite receiving evidence-based instruction in reading for several years, there is strong evidence suggesting the reading disability will persist despite intensive, targeted instruction. The intent isn't to make up for being a slow reader.

Accessible Educational Materials and Assistive Technology

Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams and 504 teams are responsible for determining a student's educational supports and services. **Consideration of the need for accommodations including assistive technology (AT) or Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) is required for all students with disabilities.** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that student evaluations cover all areas of a suspected disability, use a variety of assessment tools and strategies and obtain information to assist the team in developing an IEP. The team should determine what type of accommodations are required. Key considerations for AEM are the student's functional ability to use and learn from standard print materials. Teams should consider the extent to which a student can:

- See text on a page.
- Hold and turn pages of a book.
- Read for required lengths of time without fatigue.
- Decode letters and words and read with fluency.

The consideration and use of accessible educational materials help eliminate the most frequent barriers that eligible individuals encounter when accessing the general education curriculum and enable them to gain access to and progress in the general education curriculum. AEM and AT help students gain independence and access to grade-level material, which transforms learning for eligible individuals. The Protocol for Accommodations in Reading (PAR) or (uPAR)[1] and the AEM Navigator[2] guide the work of a team as they work through an individual student's need for specialized formats of printed instructional materials.

1 Protocol for Accommodations in reading. (2014). Retrieved from https://www.everway.com/products/upar/

2 AEM Navigator. (2015). Retrieved from https://aem.cast.org/get-started/resources/2021/aem-navigator

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Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

Consideration of Accommodations

Consideration of accommodations for students who need AEM and AT to access the general education curriculum is necessary to ensure students continue to receive the appropriate accommodations not only in the classroom but also on district and state assessments.

If a student uses accessible educational materials as the primary mode of accessing text, taking these accommodations away for district and state assessments prevents the student from being able to communicate what they know.

Eligible individuals may be allowed to receive TTS accommodations for all state assessments, including English Language Arts (ELA) passages. TTS for passages and graphics should only be requested for students who have a specific documented disability that severely limits or prevents his or her ability to decode text, even after multiple years of evidence-based reading instruction.

To qualify, the student must have an IEP or 504 plan identifying the student as requiring Accessible Educational Material (AEM) to access text. The student's IEP/504 plan must explicitly indicate the student uses TTS or a screen reader as the primary mode of accessing text. These students may have membership in organizations like Bookshare or Learning Ally.

The purpose of TTS accommodations should be because it was determined that the student will lack access to important information because of significant barriers to decoding and fluency. If students aren't accessing TTS accommodations as the primary mode of accessing text during instruction, they shouldn't be provided TTS during assessment.

Continued reading instruction should strive to increase a student's independent reading. TTS for ELA passages allows students with disabilities that have limited ability to access print the opportunity to demonstrate content knowledge in all subject areas by mitigating the effects of the disability. Text-to-speech for passages and graphics requires the approval of the Kansas State Department of Education and results in a valid test score once approved. Districts should complete the TTS for Passages and Graphics Checklist and submit it to TTSpassages@ksde.gov for approval by Jan. 31 each year.

Sample Profiles of Students Appropriate for TTS (Passages and Graphics)

SAMPLE 1:

John is a student with a learning disability. He is in eighth grade. John has been consistently receiving evidence-based, specially designed reading instruction since kindergarten. He has made slow progress as evidenced by progress monitoring on IEP goals. Recent evaluation results indicate his decoding and fluency skills are at a kindergarten to 1st grade level. TTS is John's primary mode of accessing text. His IEP indicates he receives TTS for all classroom assignments and assessments, as well as for district and state assessments. He is also a member of Bookshare. When provided TTS accommodations in class, he can comprehend grade-level content knowledge.

SAMPLE 2:

Amaya is a sixth-grade student who is blind. She has been identified as a student with a disability and is receiving instruction in braille. However, she isn't yet proficient in braille, as her blindness resulted from an accident she experienced over the summer. She requires auditory accommodations to participate in instruction and assessments involving print. She is currently using a screen reader as her primary mode of

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