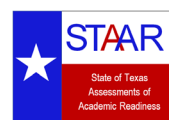# Testing Accommodations

Tools, features, and supports for students with special learning needs

The STAAR assessment is designed so that all children can show what grade-level skills and knowledge they have learned over the course of the school year. For some students the test offers accommodations, which are features and supports that are designed to allow all children to show their knowledge of the content being tested, despite facing barriers that other students don't have to face. For example, a student who is still learning the English language may use a dictionary as an accommodation to help them understand the test questions. The accommodations made available on the STAAR test are similar to those commonly used in the classroom throughout the school year. It is important that the student has used the accommodation often enough that he or she is comfortable using it on the day of the STAAR test.

There are three categories of accommodations that can be used during testing.

1 Accessibility Features

Accessibility features are testing procedures and materials that may be used by any student who regularly uses them in the classroom – things such as prompts being read aloud, taking tests in a separate room, or having access to bilingual dictionaries. These resources help students access the content of the test but would not help other students who do not need them. For example, some students can take a test with a large group or a small group. The size of the group does not affect their performance on the test.

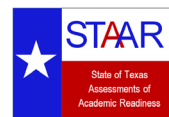### 2 Locally-Approved Designated Supports

Locally-approved designated supports are testing procedures and materials that are available only to students who meet specific eligibility requirements. Campus staff must verify that the student meets the requirements in order for the student to receive the support. These supports include tests printed in braille, calculation aids, dictionaries, spelling assistance, extra time, and other aids that the student normally uses in the classroom.

3 State-Approved Designated Supports

State-approved designated supports include accommodations such as transcribing a student's math calculations and an extra day of testing. These are rare and require advance approval from the Texas Education Agency. A student must be unable to effectively use any accessibility feature or locally-approved designated support to address his or her need. Campus staff must review the eligibility criteria and then send in information to support the requested accommodation.

For all accommodations, it's important to coordinate with campus staff about the level of support your child may need to be successful in school.

Online Testing Accommodations

A detailed look at online supports for students with special learning needs

The STAAR assessment includes accommodations to help certain students show their knowledge and skill levels. Some of these accommodations are only available on the paper test, such as a braille test, which requires special printing on paper, but many of the accommodations are available online.

The online version of the STAAR test may include supports such as visual aids, graphic organizers, reference words, clarification of unfamiliar words, and text-to-speech options (this is where the computer reads the words on the screen to the student). These tools are intended to help some students access the content of the test, including students with disabilities and English language learners.

Five Accessibility Features in the Online Assessment Available to All Students

Zoom allows students to click on a button at the top of the screen to make the words on the screen bigger. If your child has difficulty seeing the words on the screen, he or she can make them bigger so the words are easier to read.

Color allows students to click on a button at the top of the screen to select from twelve different color schemes for their screen display. For example, if your child works better with a yellow screen and black words, he or she can choose that color scheme.

Guideline allows students to click on a button to help them focus on specific lines of text during the test. If your child uses a bookmark to help track his or her place while reading, he or she can use guideline.

Highlight allows students to click on a button when selecting text to highlight content for later reference. If your child uses a highlighter for schoolwork, he or she can use a highlighter on the test.

Pencil allows students to click on a button to circle and make notes on the test questions. If your child marks and makes notes on schoolwork, he or she can do that on the test with pencil.

Four Additional Online Accommodations Available to Students Who Qualify

Text-to-speech allows the computer to read aloud the words on the screen to students. The computer can read the entire question aloud or just the words or phrases the student chooses. Students can adjust the volume and speaking rate to suit their needs while the text is read aloud.

Pop-up windows will appear when students click content with a dotted underline or in a dotted box. The pop-up window may contain content or language supports. For example, the window may show a picture of an unfamiliar word, such as "gerbil."

Rollover icons appear as small arrows pointing toward words or phrases in a question. Students can click to open a rollover box with content or language supports, such as rewording a sentence.

Supplementary materials are available depending on the subject and student eligibility. For example, the writing test can include a writing checklist.

For all accommodations, it's important to coordinate with campus staff about the level of support your child may need to be successful in school.