



Special Access Accommodations for the Human-Read Aloud or Text-to-Speech (TTS) on MCAS ELA Tests

Background

Special access accommodations on MCAS tests are intended for use by a very small number of students whose disability severely limits or prevents them from performing the skill in question, and students with significant delays in word decoding/reading, writing, or performing basic numerical calculations who would not be able to access the test without special access accommodations. IEP and 504 teams must exercise caution when considering whether a student requires a special access accommodation, since these accommodations alter part of what the test is designed to measure.

In response to comments from the field, this document offers specific guidance on the criteria for the special access accommodations for text-to-speech on the MCAS ELA tests (SAA 1.1) and human read-aloud on the MCAS ELA tests (SAA 1.2).

As described in the [MCAS Accessibility and Accommodations Manual](#), students must meet all of the following criteria to receive SAA 1.1 or SAA 1.2:

- demonstrate substantial reading deficits (not simply reading below grade level) as evidenced by performance in the low range/extremely below benchmarks on administered assessments
- be considered a functional nonreader (e.g., the student cannot read basic text independently)
- receive ongoing intervention to learn the skill of reading
- use this accommodation routinely (except during instruction in learning to read)

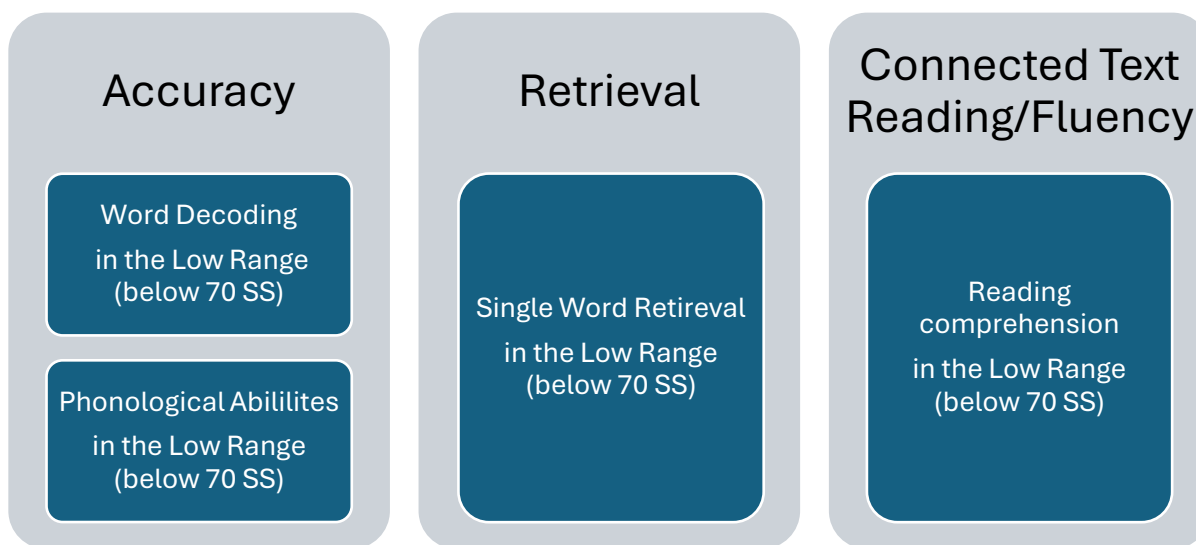
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Case Examples

1. An elementary-school student who meets the criteria for a human read-aloud/TTS special access accommodation on the MCAS ELA test

Student A is in grade 4 and has been receiving IEP services since grade 1. The IEP team recently determined that Student A meets the criteria to receive the special access accommodation read-aloud/TTS accommodation on the MCAS ELA test. The student's evaluation team found the student eligible for IEP services under the Specific Learning Disability Category due to dyslexia, as described in the [Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidelines](#). Included in Student A's IEP are reading goals that address phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, and vocabulary. Student A receives direct services for these reading goals daily.

Despite these reading intervention IEP services, the student continues to demonstrate substantial reading deficits. In the student's daily academic instruction, all classroom text is provided to the student orally or in a digital format that allows the student to use TTS. For instance, when Student A is given a classroom worksheet, they are supported with read-aloud or TTS to access the text. The evaluation team collected and reviewed current (within the last 12 months) comprehensive literacy data in the following chart. (Note that SS refers to scaled score.)

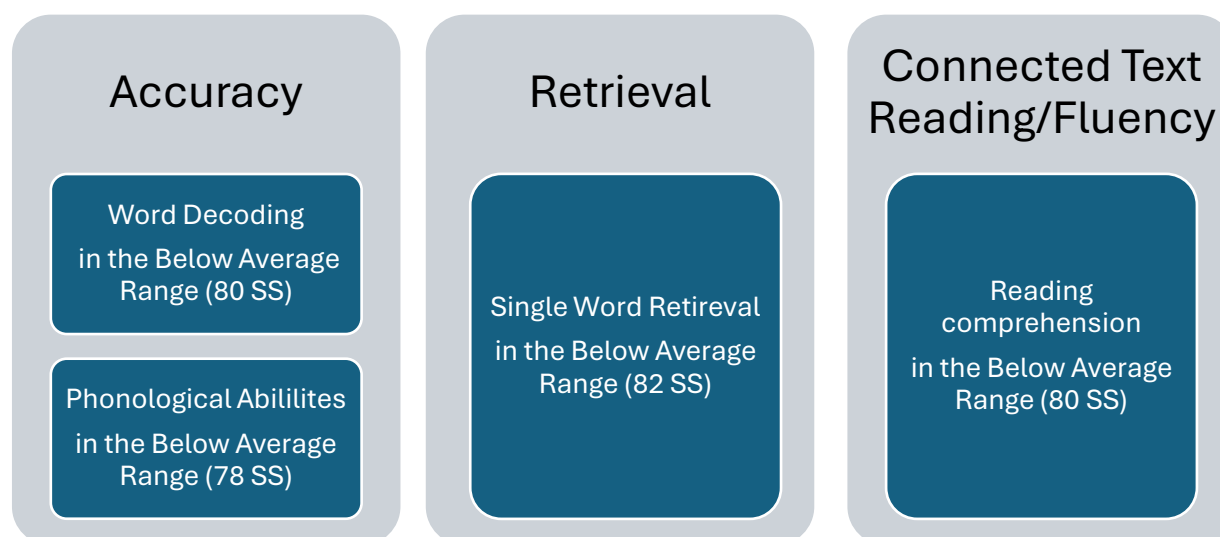


2. An elementary-school student who does NOT meet the criteria for a read-aloud/TTS special access accommodation on the MCAS ELA test

Student B is in grade 5 and has been receiving IEP services since grade 2. At Student B's IEP meeting, one of the team members suggested the upcoming MCAS ELA test should be read aloud because Student B's reading skills are delayed and the student is eligible for IEP services under the Specific Learning Disability Category due to dyslexia, identified and described in the [Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidance](#).

Student B's IEP includes reading goals that address, phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, and vocabulary, and Student B receives direct services for these reading goals three times per week.

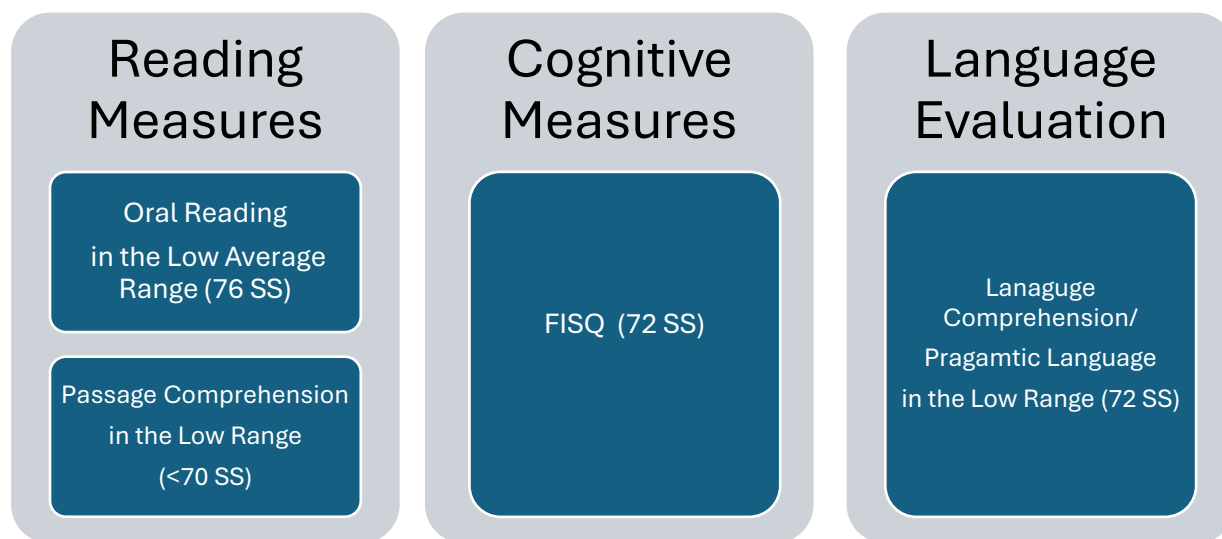
Despite these reading intervention IEP services, the student continues to demonstrate reading deficits and is performing below their age-related peers in reading. When given a classroom assignment, Student B is able to read high frequency words and access the text, although with occasional support. Student B's educators will modify reading assignments, but the student is generally able to perform reading tasks independently and does not need direct reading support for text. The evaluation team collected and reviewed current (within the last 12 months) comprehensive literacy data in the following chart.



3. A middle- or high-school student who meets the criteria for a read-aloud/TTS special access accommodation for the MCAS ELA test

Student C is in grade 8 and has been receiving IEP services since grade 1. Currently, Student C receives instruction from special education providers daily, totaling over 15 hours per week out of the general education setting. The special education service hours and setting of instruction indicate a high level of need. Student C has a special education eligibility classification of Autism. Goals are provided in communication and social skills, as well as other academic areas of reading and mathematics. Accommodations in the classroom include support for reading and responding to written text. Substantial delays have been recorded in Student C's expressive and receptive communication.

The IEP team concludes that Student C demonstrates substantial delays in reading skills and is unable to functionally read prolonged text independently. In the student's daily academic instruction, text is provided to the student orally or in a digital format that allows the student to use TTS applications. The evaluation team collected and reviewed current (within the last 12 months) evaluation data in the following chart.



4. A middle- or high-school student who does NOT meet the criteria for a read-aloud/TTS special access accommodation for the MCAS ELA test

Student D is in grade 10 and has been receiving IEP services since early intervention support services. Although instruction is provided in both general and special education settings, Student D receives most daily instruction in special education settings.

The IEP evaluation team determined that Student D meets the special education eligibility classification of [Intellectual Impairment](#). The student's IEP lists goals in reading, mathematics, study skills, and life skills. Accommodations include the use of spell-check, text-to-speech, and calculation devices. Modifications are provided for reduced complexity of reading text and length of assignments. In the student's daily academic instruction assignments, Student D needs periodic support to read longer text, but generally the student does not use TTS or a human read-aloud for the majority of text-based reading assignments.

The evaluation team collected and reviewed current (within the last 12 months) evaluation data in the following chart.

