



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Directors of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services
FROM: Isabelina Rodriquez, Ed.D. 
Chief, Bureau of Special Education
DATE: April 29, 2015
SUBJECT: Smarter Balanced Assessment: Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

In an effort to provide feedback to schools on the new Smarter Balanced Assessments, the Bureau of Special Education and the Academic Office have collected data on the number of special education students who are registered on the [Accommodations Data Entry Web site](#) to receive the accommodation of text to speech on the English Language Arts (ELA) reading assessment. In the [March 11, 2015 Student Assessment Newsletter](#), we discussed the addition of this accommodation for grades 3-5. We also detailed the requirements for identifying students for whom this limited accommodation is intended. The student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) should clearly indicate the need for a reading accommodation that impacts all of the student's classroom assignments across all subject areas. This should be indicated on page 8 of the IEP, *Program Accommodations and Modifications*.

In reviewing accommodation data, we are finding that a much larger percentage of middle school special education students, grades 6-8, are receiving this accommodation than the recommended average of approximately 2% of all special education students for this standardized assessment. **Please take the time, to review the appropriateness of providing this accommodation. Confirm that each student's IEP documents the need for text to speech on the English Language Arts (ELA) reading assessment. Please be advised that the use of this accommodation without such documentation on the IEP may render the test as invalid.**

To ensure proper adherence, please review the accommodations within each student's IEP to determine whether or not it clearly indicates the use of reading supports on a regular basis. **If there is not clear documentation of the need for reading support for ELA reading passages, then the IEP does not have supporting documentation for text to speech as an accommodation and it must be removed from both the [Accommodations Data Entry Web site](#) and [TIDE \(Test Information Distribution Engine\)](#).** If text to speech should be an accommodation provided to a student for the ELA reading assessment on the Smarter Balanced Assessment, but the need for this accommodation is not clearly documented, an amendment to the IEP would be required.

Finally, be advised that once the 2015 Smarter Balanced Assessment testing is completed, the CSDE will be analyzing the data regarding special education students who were provided with this accommodation to create better guidance for schools and to ensure that only those students with the appropriate IEP documentation were allowed to use the text to speech accommodation on the ELA reading assessment.

If you have any additional questions, please contact:

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cc: Ellen Cohn, Interim Chief Academic Officer
Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer