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The South Dakota Department of Education is asking for further documentation for text-to-speech or read aloud accommodation requests for the ELA reading passages for students in grades 3-5. The information requested is related to the individual needs of the student(s). The position of the department is that students in grades 3-5 are still learning how to read and it is important this accommodation is used only for the limited situations in which students cannot access print. Situations where students are still acquiring reading skills or read at a slow pace and fluency are examples when accommodations should not be used.

Attached is a copy of the Guidelines for Choosing Text-to-Speech or Read Aloud for Smarter Balance ELA Summative and Interim Assessment Reading Passages for Students with Disabilities in Grades 3-5. They can also be found in the [SD Accommodations Manual](#) and the [SD Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidance document](#).

Please fill out the last page for each student that text-to-speech or the read aloud accommodation for the requested ELA reading passages and send to the department for authorization. The document should contain enough description to demonstrate why the student cannot access print. Guidance for the questions is found in the previous pages of the document.

In designing the *Smarter Balanced* assessments, states agreed on the claims that the assessments were to address. The reading claim, Claim #1, is:

Students can read closely and analytically to comprehend a range of increasingly complex literary and informational texts.

For students in grades 3-5, the Smarter Balanced ELA reading claim integrates the ability to read and the ability to understand what was read. Providing ELA reading passages via text-to-speech or a human reader to students who do not meet specific criteria means that these combined skills are not being assessed, and no conclusions can be reached about the student's skills in these areas.

All students should have the opportunity to learn to read independently and demonstrate their ability to read.

If you have any further questions and to submit documentation, please contact Beth Schiltz at 605-773-4257 or Beth.Schiltz@state.sd.us