

# Student Supports for the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) and Early Learning Assessment (ELA)

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Supplemental Guidance for Students with Disabilities  
and Multilingual Learners

Division of Assessment and Accountability

June 2025

## MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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## Section 1: Introduction

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This publication has been developed to serve as a supplement to the [Maryland Assessment, Accessibility, and Accommodations Manual \(MAAAM\)](#) to provide additional guidance for the appropriate administration of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) and Early Learning Assessment (ELA). All recommendations in this document should be used in conjunction with the policies and guidance set forth in the MAAAM.

MSDE recognizes that there are special considerations that must be made for the assessment of students in prekindergarten and kindergarten. This publication has been developed to ensure that:

- Participation of all students in early childhood assessments is consistent in all Maryland programs, schools, and local education agencies (LEAs)
- Accessibility features and accommodations are provided to all eligible students; and
- Accessibility features and accommodations used in early childhood assessments are appropriate for the learning needs of prekindergarten and kindergarten students.

This guidance document presents special considerations for prekindergarten and kindergarten students in the selection and administration of assessment accessibility features and accommodations for general education students, students with disabilities, and Multilingual learners for the KRA and the ELA. The information in this guidance document is applicable to kindergarten and prekindergarten students:

1. who benefit from Universal Design for Learning and accessibility features;
2. who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP);
3. with a Section 504 Plan;
4. who are or may be identified as Multilingual learners (MLs); and
5. Multilingual learners with disabilities. These students receive accommodations to address both their disability and language needs.

This guidance document also summarizes the requirements of the KRA and the ELA. The information and requirements described in this manual apply to students in all public schools and to students placed in non-public special education schools by the local education agency.

This manual addresses Maryland specific policy regarding assessments, accessibility features, and accommodations, and should not be confused with, or substituted for any specific assessment's accommodation/test administration manual.

## Section 2: About the KRA and ELA

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### OVERVIEW

MSDE recognizes the importance of early childhood development and a strong educational foundation for our youngest learners. Therefore, MSDE provides an Early Learning Assessment (ELA) for prekindergarten students and a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) for kindergarten students. The purpose of these assessments is to provide a well-rounded picture of each student's academic and social development to aid teachers and caregivers in supporting their continued growth.

### KINDERGARTEN READINESS ASSESSMENT (KRA)

As set forth in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (the Blueprint) and COMAR 13A.08.01.02-3, all kindergarten students in Maryland must participate in a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment that is racially and culturally unbiased; may include an evaluation of language and literacy skills, academic knowledge, and physical and social development; and allows educators to develop a holistic picture of each child's readiness for kindergarten and prepares the school to support the child's development.

To meet these goals Maryland has adopted a KRA that includes three components:

- A direct, computer adaptive assessment of early literacy skills (Star Early Literacy)
- A direct, computer adaptive assessment of math skills (Star Math)
- An observational screener of social and behavioral development (SAEBRS)

All schools are required to administer the KRA to all kindergarten students during the first few weeks of the school year. Schools also have the option to continue using the KRA as a progress monitoring tool throughout the remainder of the school year.

### EARLY LEARNING ASSESSMENT (ELA)

MSDE provides an **optional** assessment of early learning for prekindergarten students in Maryland LEAs and private prekindergarten settings such as Head Start, childcare centers, or family childcare centers. The purpose of the ELA is to provide a holistic picture of each child's development across a multitude of domains and allow for longitudinal growth tracking as students transition from prekindergarten to kindergarten.

To meet these goals Maryland has adopted an ELA that includes two components:

- A direct, computer adaptive assessment of early literacy skills (Star Early Literacy)
- An observational assessment for monitoring growth in six domains: Social and Emotional, Language and Literacy, Cognitive, Physical and Motor, Approaches to Learning, Creativity and the Arts (ProLADR)

### GUIDANCE PROVIDED

The guidance in this document is intended to support the administration of the direct, computer adaptive assessments, Star Early Literacy and Star Math, that account for a portion of the KRA and ELA. The accessibility features and accommodations discussed in this document are specific to these assessments. The guidance is not applicable to the observational assessments, SAEBS and ProLADR, that account for the remainder of the KRA and ELA. While completing ProLADR, prekindergarten teachers will have the opportunity to document how a child performs different skills, including the adaptations and supports provided.

## Section 3: Access for All Students

### OVERVIEW

The recommendations in this section of the guidance document are intended to be used in conjunction with “Section 3: Student Supports in Assessment” of the [MAAAM](#). The purpose of this section is to highlight the universal accessibility features within the KRA and ELA and provide recommendations about their effective use to support prekindergarten and kindergarten students.

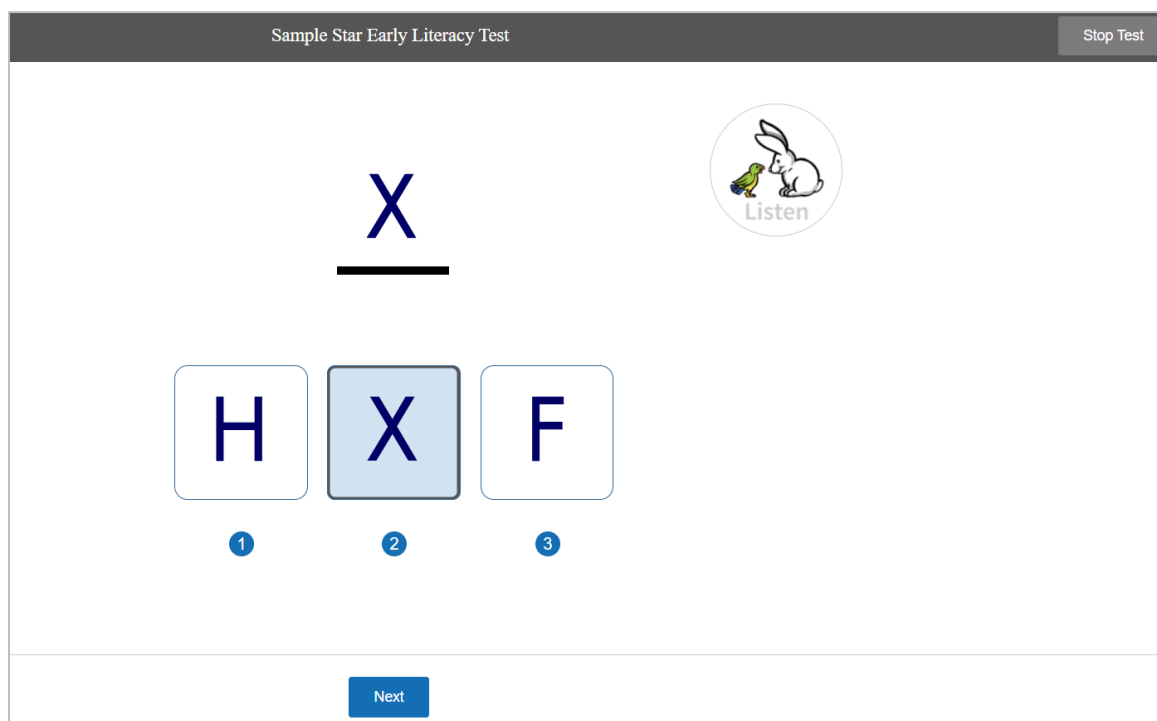
### OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTICE

MSDE recognizes that prekindergarten and kindergarten students might need opportunities to practice taking an assessment on a computer or tablet in order to be successful. Therefore, the Star Early Literacy (KRA and ELA) and the Star Math (KRA only) assessments have multiple opportunities for practice.

#### Practice Before the Assessment

Teachers are encouraged to show the Star Early Literacy demonstration video(s) to their students. The videos will help students understand what to expect when taking an assessment on a computer or tablet and demonstrate how to answer questions. The videos are available in both English and Spanish on the [Renaissance website](#). Additionally, the KRA and ELA Test Administration Manuals (TAMs) will provide scripts and images of the assessment that teachers can use to prepare students for testing.

Students will also have the opportunity to practice using a computer or tablet to take the Star Early Literacy and Star Math Clickable Sample Tests prior to their formal assessment. Students will have the opportunity to practice listening to assessment questions and using a touchscreen, mouse, or keyboard to answer questions. The Clickable Sample Tests are available on the [MSDE website](#).



**Image 1:** Star Early Literacy Clickable Sample Test

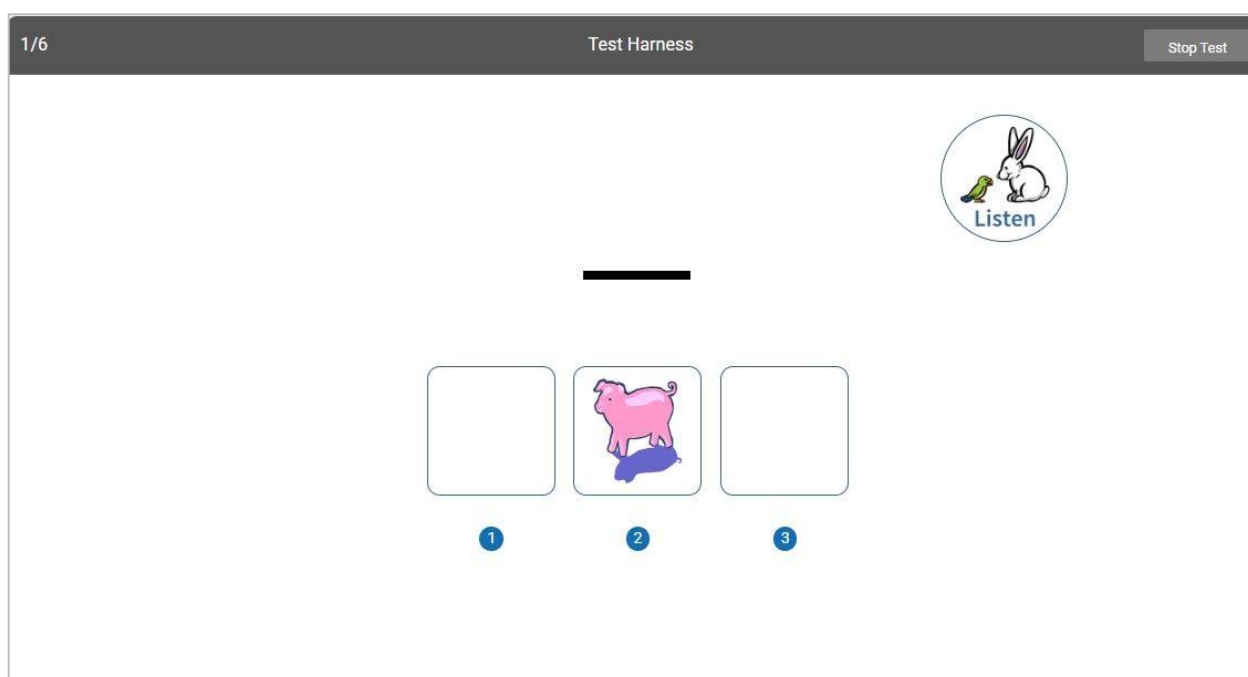


Teachers are encouraged to complete a Clickable Sample Test with their students. This will allow students to feel more comfortable and confident during their formal assessment. It will also allow teachers the opportunity to identify students who need additional practice using a computer or tablet to answer assessment questions. Teachers can provide modeling and guided support until students are able to answer assessment questions independently.

### Practice Built into the Assessment

In addition to the Clickable Sample Tests available on the [MSDE website](#), there are several layers of practice built into the assessment. When a student takes the Star Early Literacy assessment, the student will begin by watching the demonstration video. The video will help the student understand what to expect when taking an assessment on a computer or tablet and demonstrate how to answer the questions.

Next, the student will be asked a series of Hands-On Questions. These questions will only have one possible answer. The purpose of the Hands-On Questions is to ensure that the student can use a touchscreen, mouse, or keyboard to answer assessment questions and click the “Next” button. A student must select the answer to three questions in a row to move on. If a student does not answer the questions, an alert will pop up on the screen to indicate that the student needs additional help.



**Image 2:** Hands-On Question

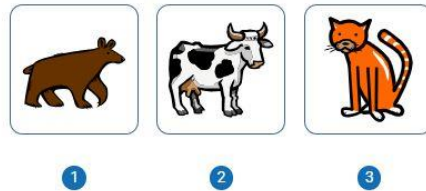
After successfully completing the Hands-On Questions, the student will be given Practice Questions. The Practice Questions will have several answer options, mirroring the format of the formal assessment. The student must answer three questions correctly to move on to the formal assessment. If a student does not answer three questions correctly, an alert will pop up on the screen to indicate that the student needs additional help.



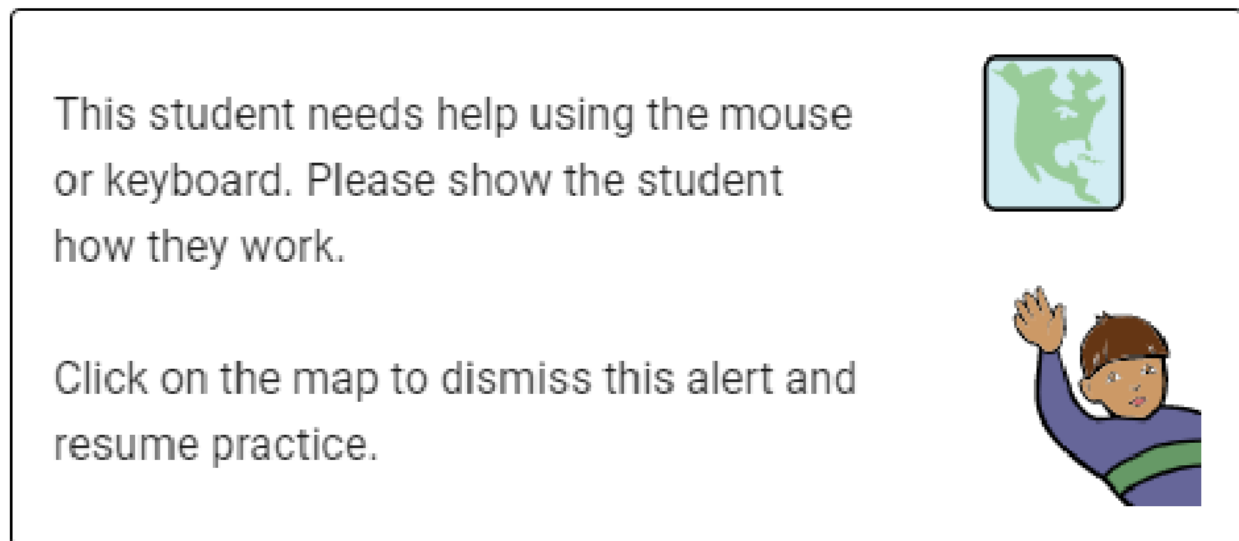
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Test Harness

Stop Test



**Image 3:** Practice Question



**Image 4:** Alert to indicate that the student needs additional help.

The Star Math assessment does not have an introductory video or Hands-On Questions. Therefore, it is recommended that kindergarten students complete the Star Early Literacy assessment before the Star Math assessment. Star Math does include Practice Questions.

### Additional Support

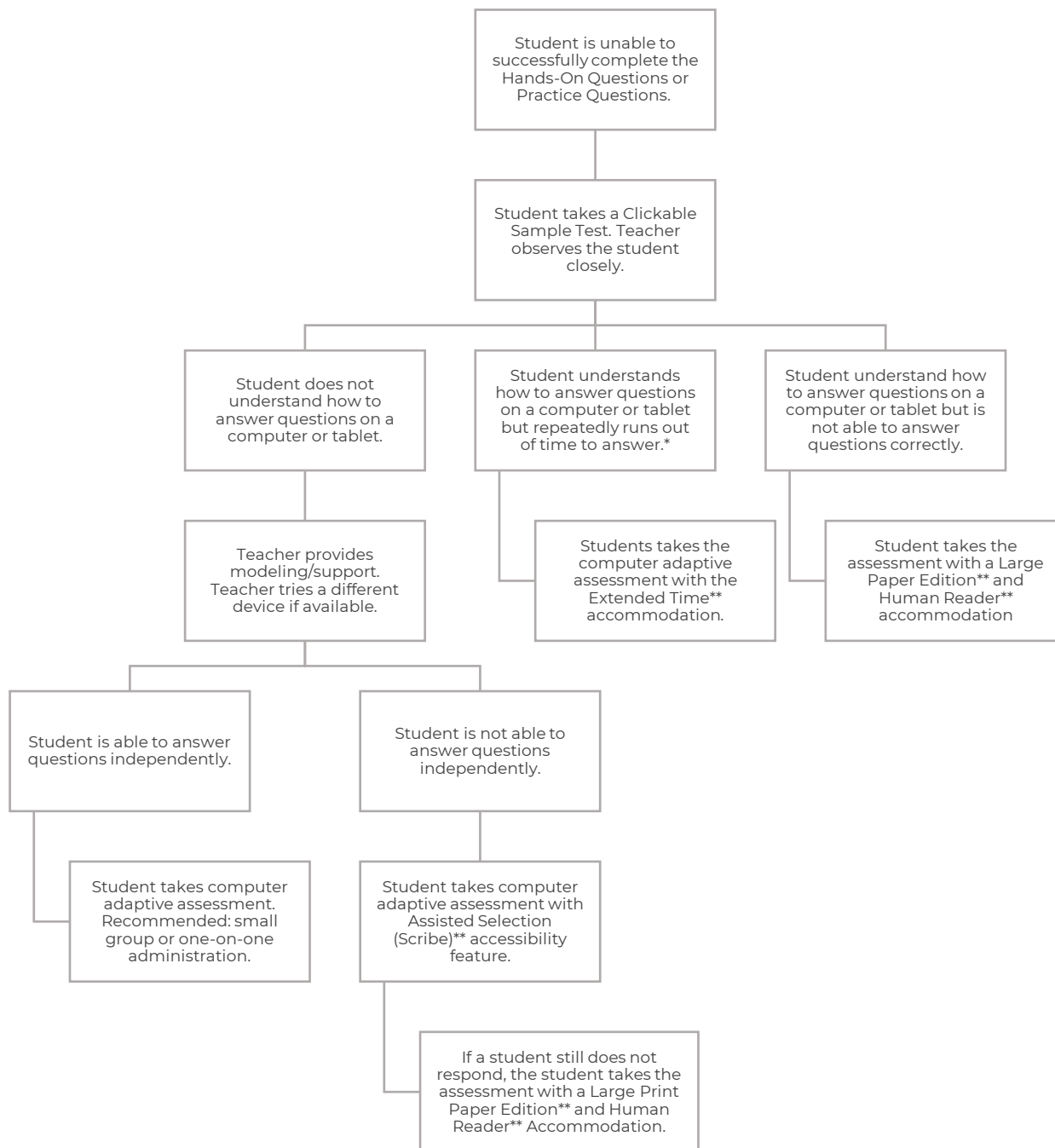
If a student receives a pop-up message indicating that they need additional help during the Hands-On Questions or the Practice Questions embedded in the formal assessment, the teacher should have the

student try the Clickable Sample Test available on the [MSDE website](#) (see Practice Before the Assessment) and carefully observe the student.

- If the student does not understand how to answer questions on a computer or tablet, provide modeling and guided support until the student is able to answer assessment questions independently.
- If the school has different types of devices (tablets, laptops, desktops, etc.), provide the student with the opportunity to practice on a different device to determine which device best meets the needs of the student (see Table 1: Accessibility Features).
- If the student still does not understand how to answer questions on a computer or tablet after modeling and guided support, this may indicate that the student would benefit from having a Test Administrator click for them (see Assisted Selection (Scribe) in Table 1: Accessibility Features) or taking a paper form of the assessment (see Large Print Paper Edition and Human Reader in Table 2: Accommodations).
- If the student understands how to answer questions but keeps running out of time on the Practice Questions or needs more than two-and-one-half minutes to select an answer on the Clickable Sample Test, this may indicate that the student would benefit from an Extended Time accommodation (see Extended Time in Table 2: Accommodations).
- If the student understands how to answer questions but keeps giving incorrect answers on the Clickable Sample Test or the Practice Questions, this may indicate that the student would benefit from taking a paper form of the assessment in a one-on-one administration setting (see Large Print Paper Edition and Human Reader in Table 2: Accommodations).

After a student successfully completes an additional Clickable Sample Test, it is recommended that the formal assessment is administered to the student in a one-on-one setting. The Additional Support Decision Tree provides another representation of this information.

## Additional Support Decision Tree



\* The Clickable Sample Test is not timed. If a student repeatedly ran out of time on the Hands-On Questions or the Practice Questions and continues to need more than two-and-one-half minutes to answer questions on the Clickable Sample Test, the student is eligible to take the assessment with the Extended Time accommodation.

\*\* The supports described in this decision tree – Assisted Selection (Scribe), Extended Time, and Large Print Paper Test with Human Reader – can be provided to any student who demonstrates a need for them based on the steps of this decision

tree, regardless of their IEP, 504, or ML status. The recommendations in this decision tree are **only** applicable to the KRA and ELA and cannot be used to make decisions on any other MCAP assessment.

## ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

The administration of Star Early Literacy (KRA and ELA) and Star Math (KRA only) is intended to be flexible and to fit easily within the existing structures of a kindergarten or prekindergarten classroom. When making decisions about when and how to administer the assessments, teachers should consider the time of day and the physical environment in which students are most likely to be focused and successful.

### Group Size

Star Early Literacy and Star Math can be administered to the whole class, small groups, or individual students. Teachers should consider their capacity to manage technology, monitor students, and provide support when making decisions about group size for testing. Teachers can be flexible with their groupings, opting to assess some students in larger groups, other students in smaller groups, and still others individually based on student need. Teachers might consider factors such as distractibility and proficiency with technology when making these decisions.

### Time of Day

Star Early Literacy and Star Math can be administered at any time of day. Teachers should consider choosing a time when students are likely to be alert and focused, such as in the morning or after a short break. Teachers who choose to administer the assessments to smaller groups may also consider administering the assessment during the time of day already designated for small groups and learning centers.

### Specified Area or Setting

Star Early Literacy and Star Math can be administered in any location with an internet connection. Teachers should consider assessing students in a location that best meets their learning needs. Locations could include a student's regularly assigned seat, a small group table, a private setting such as the library, or any other location that supports the student's ability to focus.

### Adaptive or Specialized Equipment or Furniture

Star Early Literacy and Star Math can be administered with the use of specialized equipment. A student can be provided with specialized equipment or furniture needed for a successful testing environment (e.g., slant board, low lighting, adaptive seat).

### Frequent Breaks

Star Early Literacy and Star Math can be paused to allow students to take breaks as needed for medical reasons, to use the bathroom, or otherwise to take short stretch breaks. Teachers can pause and resume a test by following the instructions in the Test Administration Manual.

## ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES

The accessibility features outlined in this section are available to all students (with or without an IEP, 504, or ML plan). Many of the accessibility features are also available to students on the grades 3-8 and high school MCAP. In those cases, the accessibility code for MCAP is included in the table for reference. Other accessibility features are specific to the KRA and ELA and will not have an MCAP code. Some

accessibility features need to be identified in advance of testing. When that is the case, it has been indicated in the table.

**Table 1: Accessibility Features**

Description of Accessibility Feature	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<b>Opportunity to Practice</b>  Students can practice taking an assessment on a computer or tablet prior to the formal assessment.	<b>Before Testing:</b> All students should be provided with an opportunity to take a Clickable Sample Test.  <b>During Testing:</b> All students will be presented with Practice Questions at the beginning of the assessment. Students must answer three questions correctly to move on to the formal assessment.	
<b>Use of Preferred Device</b>  The student takes a computer adaptive assessment on the device that is most familiar to them.	<b>Before Testing:</b> Student is offered the opportunity to practice using multiple devices (laptop, tablet, etc.), <b>if available.</b>  <b>During Testing:</b> Student takes the assessment on the device that is most familiar to them, <b>if available.</b>	
<b>Response Masking</b>  The student can block or cover answer choices.	<b>Before Testing:</b> The Response Masking accessibility feature must be identified in advance for the feature to be activated within the platform.  <b>During Testing:</b> To enable Response Masking the student clicks the “Response Masking” icon. The student can click on any answer option to mask it. The student clicks the “Response Masking” icon again to disable Response Masking and a select an answer.	1a.
<b>Audio Amplification</b>  Some students may require the amplification of materials, and/or the use of personal amplification devices, to increase clarity.	<b>Before Testing:</b> Teachers ensure that personal amplification devices are properly connected to the testing device prior to starting the testing session. Teachers may want to demonstrate for students how to adjust the volume on the device.  <b>During Testing:</b> The content of the assessment will be read aloud to all students automatically. Students must be tested in a separate setting if unable to wear headphones.	1b.

Description of Accessibility Feature	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<b>Color Contrast</b>  (Background/Font Color)	<p><b>Before Testing:</b> The Color Contrast accessibility feature must be identified in advance for the feature to be activated within the platform.</p> <p><b>During Testing:</b> Alternate on-screen background and/or font color is enabled based on need or preference. A teacher or test administrator may assist a prekindergarten or kindergarten student in enabling the Color Contrast features.</p>	<b>1d.</b>
<b>Blank Scratch Paper</b>	<p><b>Before Testing:</b> Test Administrators must supply at least one page of blank scratch paper (i.e., either unlined, lined, or graph) per student on the Star Math assessment. Students with visual impairments may also use braille paper, raised line paper, bold line paper, raised line graph paper, bold line graph paper, abacus, or Math Window.</p> <p><b>During Testing:</b> The student uses blank scratch paper (i.e., lined, un-lined, or graph) to work through items during testing. Additional pages may be provided as needed. Students are not required to write their names on scratch paper.</p> <p><b>After Testing:</b> Test Administrators are responsible for collecting ALL scratch paper after testing is completed to be securely destroyed. Scratch paper must be securely shredded if it has been used.</p>	<b>1e.</b>
<b>General Directions Clarified</b>	<p><b>During Testing:</b> The Test Administrator <b>clarifies</b> general administration directions only. No passages or test items may be clarified. The test administrator should not just reread the directions but instead use different wording to help clarify the directions for the student.</p>	<b>1g.</b>
<b>General Directions Read Aloud/Repeated as Needed</b>	<p><b>During Testing:</b> The Test Administrator reads aloud the general administration directions only. A student may raise their hand to request the directions be repeated.</p>	<b>1h.</b>

Description of Accessibility Feature	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<p><b>Line Reader</b></p> <p>A line reader, like other visual organizers, is a way for a student to maintain focus on specific sections of an assignment or on an assessment.</p>	<p><b>Before Testing:</b> The Line Reader accessibility feature must be identified in advance for the feature to be activated within the platform.</p> <p><b>During Testing:</b> The student selects the "Line Reader" icon. The student uses an on-screen tool to assist in reading by raising and lowering the tool for each line of text on the screen. The Line Reader can be resized, and the size of the reader window can be adjusted. The student may disable this feature by selecting the "Line Reader" icon again.</p>	<p><b>1k.</b></p>
<p><b>Magnification/Enlargement Device</b></p> <p>Some students will need access to print material for near and/or distance by enlarging the print by using a magnification device.</p> <p>These may include handheld magnifiers, desk top magnifiers, and electronic magnification devices. Text on a computer can be enlarged through computer system/browser access tools or tools built into a testing platform.</p> <p>For students for whom these tools do not provide enough magnification, they will need to use screen enlargement software. (See presentation accommodations: 3a – Assistive Technology).</p>	<p><b>Before Testing:</b></p> <p>Browser/Device Magnification: Magnification options can be set in accessibility/display settings for the computer.</p> <p>The Font Size/Zoom accessibility feature must be identified in advance for the feature to be activated within the platform.</p> <p><b>During Testing:</b></p> <p>Font Size/Zoom: To enable Font Size/Zoom, click the "Accessibility" icon then click "Font Size." Select the appropriate font size: Small 75%, Normal 100%, Large 125%, Extra Large 150%, or Huge 175%. A teacher or test administrator may assist a prekindergarten or kindergarten student in setting the Font Size/Zoom feature to the appropriate size.</p> <p>Browser/Device Magnification: Magnification options can be set in accessibility/display settings for the computer. The teacher can assist a student in using keyboard shortcuts (e.g., Ctrl + for PCs, Command + for Macs) or pinch/zoom for tablets to magnify what's displayed on the screen (while preserving clarity, contrast, and color).</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Magnifying beyond 300% may affect heading formatting and may cause text wrapping, and therefore it is not recommended.</p>	<p><b>1l.</b></p>



Description of Accessibility Feature	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<p><b>Redirect Student</b></p> <p>Students may need reminders to stay on task and remain focused during assessments.</p>	<p><b>During Testing:</b> The test administrator redirects the student's attention to the test without coaching or assisting the student in any way. There is no limit to the number of times a Test Administrator can redirect a student back to the test.</p> <p>Examples: Providing reminders to stay on task and focused during the assessments; Providing a visual cue to the student to remain on task.</p>	<p><b>1o.</b></p>
<p><b>Audio</b></p> <p>The content of the assessment will be read aloud to all students automatically.</p>	<p><b>Before Testing:</b> Audio is built into Star Early Literacy and automatically enabled for Star Math. School Testing Coordinators should ensure that Audio remains enabled when adding other accessibility features or accommodations in the testing platform for Star Math.</p> <p>Test Administrator prepares the classroom with headphones for all students and ensures the headphones are functioning and set to an appropriate volume prior to starting the testing session.</p> <p><b>During Testing:</b> The student uses headphones to access embedded audio of test questions read aloud. Students may connect personal amplification devices to the testing device (see: Audio Amplification). No Bluetooth headphones should be used. Students must be tested in a separate setting if unable to wear headphones.</p>	<p><b>1r.</b></p>

Description of Accessibility Feature	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<p><b>Spanish Version of Computer Based Assessment</b></p>	<p>Students who have Spanish indicated as the response to two (2) questions on the Home Language Survey should take the Star Early Literacy and Star Math assessments in Spanish.</p> <p>Additionally, all students must be presented with the Star Early Literacy assessment in English. If a student who speaks Spanish as their home language is unable to pass the Practice Questions in English, the student is not required to take the full assessment in English.</p> <p>Students who speak Spanish as their home language are not required to be presented with the Star Math assessment in English. However, schools can decide to assess the child in English to better understand the student's knowledge, skills, and abilities if needed.</p> <p>Students receiving bilingual instruction in English and Spanish should be assessed in English and Spanish in both the Star Early Literacy and Star Math assessments.</p> <p>In any case where a student will be taking Star Early Literacy and/or Star Math in both English and Spanish, it is recommended that the student take the assessment in their primary language first followed by their secondary language on a different day. If a student is unable to pass the Practice Questions in their secondary language, the student is not required to take the full assessment in that language.</p> <p>See "Section 5: Guidance for Multilingual Learners" for more information.</p>	<p><b>1w.</b></p>
<p><b>Bluetooth Hearing Aids</b></p> <p>Students that wear hearing aids may connect Bluetooth hearing aids directly to the testing platform</p>	<p><b>Before Testing:</b> The school team must complete an infrastructure trial to determine if the device (Bluetooth hearing aids) can be connected to the testing platform. This accessibility tool will not need to be identified in the testing platform or file. However, there should be documentation at the school level that the student requires use of hearing aids (IEP, 504 plan, medical plan, etc.).</p>	<p><b>1x.</b></p>

Description of Accessibility Feature	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<p><b>Assisted Selection (Scribe)</b></p> <p>Assisted Selection (Scribe) can be used for computer adaptive or paper-based assessments. A student indicates their answer choice by pointing, eye gaze, or other method of nonverbal communication. The Test Administrator records the student's selection.</p> <p>The scribe for a student should be familiar with the student's means of communication.</p>	<p><b>Before Testing:</b> Assisted Selection (Scribe) is appropriate for students who have difficulty using a computer or tablet to answer questions independently. If a student is unable to complete the Hands-On Questions or Practice Questions independently, the Test Administrator should consider Assisted Selection (Scribe). It is also appropriate for students who use the Large Print Paper Edition or the ASL Paper Edition of the assessment.</p> <p><b>During Testing:</b> Computer or Tablet: A Test Administrator sits next to the student. The student listens to the assessment through headphones. The student indicates their selected answer by pointing, eye gaze, or other method of nonverbal communication. The Test Administrator clicks the indicated response for the student and clicks the "Next" button.</p> <p>Paper-based: Test Administrator acting as a Human Reader/Human Signer for a student taking a paper-based assessment records the responses of the student who indicates their choice by circling, pointing, eye gaze or other method of nonverbal communication. See the Directions for Administration for instructions on recording student responses.</p> <p><b>Must be administered in an individual setting.</b></p> <p><b>Please refer to Appendix B of the <a href="#">MAAAM</a>:</b> Protocol for the Use of the Scribe Accommodation</p>	<p><b>4g.*</b></p>

Description of Accessibility Feature	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<p><b>Electronic Device for Medical Purposes</b></p> <p>Some students may have medical conditions that require the use of an electronic device including a phone. (e.g., student with diabetes may need to monitor blood sugar on their phone during testing).</p>	<p><b>Before Testing:</b> A student's medical disability must be disclosed to the school testing coordinator (STC) if a medical device or electronic device will be used during testing. The STC should work with the student, family, school nurse, and/or the IEP or 504 team to determine and document a plan for use of the device during testing. This plan should include how the student will be monitored when using the electronic device during testing.</p> <p><b>During Testing:</b> The test administrator should be aware of the plan in place for the use of the electronic device. Monitoring should be provided when the student is using the medical or electronic device.</p>	<p><b>1y.</b></p>

\* Human Scribe is an accommodation on other MCAP assessments. Assisted Selection (Scribe) is an accessibility feature for KRA and ELA because the primary purpose is to support students in overcoming any barriers presented by technology, not barriers presented by disability or language.

## Section 4: Accommodations

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### OVERVIEW

The recommendations in this section of the guidance document are intended to be used in conjunction with “Section 3: Student Supports in Assessment” and “Section 4: Making Decisions About Accommodations” of the [MAAAM](#). IEP Teams for prekindergarten and kindergarten students are expected to follow the five-step process for making decisions about accommodations presented in the MAAAM:

- Step 1: Expect students to achieve grade-level standards
- Step 2: Learn about accommodations for instruction and assessment
- Step 3: Identify accommodations during instruction and assessment
- Step 4: Administer accommodations in instruction and assessment
- Step 5: Evaluate the use of accommodations in instruction and assessment

The following sections provide guidance that IEP Teams for prekindergarten and kindergarten students should consider in addition to the five-step process.

### PREKINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

#### Considerations for Administering the ELA

The ELA is an optional assessment that is used for instructional purposes only. The purpose of the assessment is to provide accurate information about a student's knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as their areas for growth. This information allows prekindergarten teachers to make instructional decisions to support student growth and learning. Due to the instructional nature of the assessment and the substantial need for guidance and support demonstrated by all prekindergarten students, it is appropriate for teachers, special educators, and IEP Teams to be flexible when selecting accessibility features and accommodations for use on the ELA.

The primary goal is to ensure that all students can access the assessment fully and accurately demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

#### Considerations for Prekindergarten IEP Teams

In many cases, it is not the practice of IEP Teams to identify assessment accommodations for prekindergarten students in the “Participation in Assessments” section of the IEP. Instead, many IEP Teams include all needed supports in the “Supplementary Aids and Services” section of the IEP.

MSDE recommends that prekindergarten IEP Teams update this practice. In the final IEP Team meeting before a student transitions from prekindergarten to kindergarten, the IEP Team should consider any assessment accommodations that will be necessary for a student to participate in the KRA and add those accommodations to the “Participation in Assessments” section of the IEP.

## KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

### Considerations for Administering the KRA

The KRA is administered between August 1<sup>st</sup> and October 10<sup>th</sup> of each school year. For many students, kindergarten is their first experience in a formal school setting, and it takes time to acclimate. For this reason, the administration of the KRA is intentionally flexible with many opportunities for practice and accessibility features available to all students. Teachers, special educators, and IEP Teams should carefully review the section “Section 3: Access for All Students” before administering the KRA.

The KRA is also administered at the same time that many students who come from homes that speak languages other than English are being screened for English Language Development (ELD) program eligibility. Teachers, ELD teachers, and IEP Teams should carefully review the section “Section 5: Guidance for Multilingual Learners” before administering the KRA.

### Considerations for Kindergarten IEP Teams

As noted in the section “Considerations for Prekindergarten IEP Teams,” MSDE recommends that prekindergarten IEP Teams update their practices to consider any assessment accommodation that will be necessary for a student to participate in the KRA and add those accommodations to the “Participation in Assessments” section of the IEP during the final IEP meeting before a student transitions from prekindergarten to kindergarten.

Updates in practice take time to be implemented fully and uniformly. During this transition, MSDE recommends that kindergarten IEP Teams consider information from both the “Participation in Assessments” and the “Supplementary Aids and Services” sections of a student’s IEP to make decisions about appropriate accommodations for participation in the KRA.

MSDE also recommends that kindergarten IEP Teams discuss the student’s use of and response to KRA accommodations during the next review of the student’s IEP, adjusting the “Participation in Assessments” section of the IEP as necessary.

There are cases in which kindergarten students who have not been identified as having a disability will demonstrate the need for additional support on the KRA. Teachers, special educators, and IEP Teams should make use of the “Additional Supports Decision Tree” on page 10 of this document to best support these students. The supports described in the decision tree – Assisted Selection (Scribe), Extended Time, and Large Print Paper Test with Human Reader – can be provided to any student who demonstrates a need for them based on the steps of this decision tree, regardless of their IEP, 504, or ML status. The recommendations in this decision tree are **only** applicable to the KRA and ELA and cannot be used to make decisions on any other MCAP assessment.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

The purpose of this section is to provide a detailed explanation of the Presentation Accommodations, Response Accommodations, and Scheduling and Timing Accommodations available to prekindergarten and kindergarten students who take the Star Early Literacy (KRA and ELA) and Star Math (KRA only) assessments.

### Presentation Accommodations

Presentation accommodations allow students to access instruction and assessments in ways that do not require them to visually read standard print. Students who benefit most from presentation

accommodations are those with print disabilities, defined as difficulty or inability to visually read standard print because of a physical, sensory, or cognitive disability. Many of the accommodations are also available to students on the grades 3-8 and high school MCAP. In those cases, the accommodation code for MCAP is included in the table for reference.

**Table 2: Presentation Accommodations**

Description of Accommodation	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<p><b>Assistive Technology (Non-Screen Reader)</b></p> <p>This accommodation includes all assistive technology devices that aid in the auditory and/or visual presentation of the test material.</p> <p>Assistive Technology (AT) “is used to maintain, increase, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.” (29 U.S.C. 3002)</p> <p>AT which would fall under the 3a accommodation includes but is not limited to specialized mounts or arms which hold the computer monitor (or printed copy) in a unique viewing position, screen enlargement software, specialized headphones, or induction loop systems.</p> <p>This accommodation is also appropriate for students for whom computer system or platform enlargement tools do not magnify enough to meet their visual needs and will need to use screen enlargement software.</p>	<p><b>Assessment:</b> Students may use a range of assistive technologies in assessment, including devices that are compatible with the online testing platform and those that are used externally on a separate computer.</p> <p><b>Before Testing:</b> Please consult the specific vendors’ technical approved devices for more information on the compatibility for specific assessments. Prior to testing, STCs should administer an Infrastructure Trial with the assessment platform to confirm compatibility. Speller/grammar checker, word prediction with topic specific dictionary functions, Internet and stored files functionalities must be turned off during state assessments.</p> <p>Audio auto-play should be disabled in the testing platform if the assistive technology would impact the audio experience of the student. The user will manually click the audio of each item to play it, rather than the audio playing automatically.</p>	<p><b>3a.</b></p>



Description of Accommodation	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<p><b>Screen Reader Version</b></p> <p>Screen readers are primarily used by students who are blind or have low vision. A screen reader provides audio output for all information shown on a monitor. The software will provide audio output for desktop icons, keystrokes, menus and text.</p>	<p><b>Before Testing:</b> Screen Reader software should be tested during an Infrastructure Trial with the testing platform.</p> <p>Audio auto-play should be disabled in the testing platform. The user will manually click the audio of each item to play it, rather than the audio playing automatically, to prevent the screen reader and the item audio from playing at the same time.</p> <p><b>During Testing:</b> Due to technical limitations, some online tools may not be available for use with the Screen Reader Version. This accommodation should only be used in administering the assessment to students who are already skilled in using a screen reader.</p>	<b>3b.</b>
<p><b>Refreshable Braille Display</b></p> <p>Refreshable Braille displays are primarily used by students who are blind or have low vision. Refreshable Braille displays provide access to information on a computer screen by electronically raising and lowering different combination of pins in Braille cells.</p> <p>A student who is blind or low vision generally uses a Refreshable Braille display in conjunction with his or her Screen Reader software.</p>	<p><b>Before Testing:</b> A Refreshable Braille display should be tested during an Infrastructure Trial with the testing platform. The student must also be registered for Screen Reader Version.</p> <p><b>During Testing:</b> Due to technical limitations, some online tools may not be available for use with the Screen Reader Version and Refreshable Braille Display. This accommodation should only be used in administering the assessment to students who are already skilled in using a Refreshable Braille Display.</p>	<b>3c.</b>
<p><b>Hard Copy Braille Edition</b></p> <p>A Hard Copy Braille Edition of Star Early Literacy and Star Math will be available in <b>August 2026</b>. Maryland uses Unified English Braille Code for literary material and Nemeth Code within UEB Contexts for transcribing mathematical material.</p>	<p>Students who require a Hard Copy Braille Edition are excused from participating in the Star Early Literacy and Star Math portion of the KRA during the 2025 administration.</p> <p>Further guidance for the use of the Hard Copy Braille Edition will be available in the summer 2026 update of this document.</p>	<b>3d.</b>

Description of Accommodation	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<p><b>Large Print Paper Edition</b></p> <p>(Available in English or Spanish)</p> <p>All paper-based assessments will be in large print. Any student who requires a paper test or a large print test should have the Large Print Paper Edition accommodation. Large print materials are produced in size 27-point font.</p>	<p>A Large Print Paper Edition is appropriate for students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require large print</li> <li>• Require a paper assessment</li> <li>• Require a Human Reader or Human signer <i>or</i></li> <li>• Have difficulty using a computer or tablet to answer questions independently. If a student is unable to complete the Hands-On Questions or Practice Questions independently <b>and</b> does not respond to questions using the Assisted Selection (Scribe) accessibility feature (see Table 1), the Test Administrator should consider administering a Large Print Paper Edition.</li> </ul> <p><b>Before Testing:</b> Large Print Paper Editions must be ordered in advance. Students who use a Large Print Paper Edition will need a Human Reader or Human Signer to administer the assessment to them.</p> <p><b>During Testing:</b> See the Directions for Administration for instructions on recording student responses. All paper-based tests with Human Reader/Human Signer should be administered in a one-on-one setting.</p> <p><b>After Testing:</b> Large Print Paper Editions contain secure item content and should be handled as secure test materials. Test Administrators should return materials to Test Coordinators. Test Coordinators must securely dispose of the materials.</p> <p><b>Spanish:</b> Test Administrators providing this accommodation should ideally be literate and fluent in English and in Spanish, or may be assisted by an interpreter, if available, since test administration directions will be read to the student in Spanish. See “Spanish Version of Computer Based Assessment” in Table 1 and “Section 5: Guidance for Multilingual Learners” for more information and eligibility for assessment in Spanish.</p>	<p><b>3f.</b></p> <p><b>3g.</b></p>

Description of Accommodation	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<p><b>ASL Paper Edition</b></p> <p>Some Deaf and Hard of Hearing students are not appropriately assessed using auditory assessment items that cover phonics and phonemic awareness skills such as letter sounds or rhyming words.</p> <p>The ASL Paper Edition is a paper-based version of the Star Early Literacy assessment that removes items that are not appropriate for students who do not access information auditorily. <b>The ASL Paper Edition will be field tested in October 2025.</b> The field test will result in an adjusted test blueprint and scoring procedures for school year 2026-2027 and beyond.</p>	<p><b>Before Testing:</b> ASL Paper Editions must be ordered in advance. The kit will include the ASL Paper Edition, a Large Print Paper Edition of the Star Math assessment, and specific directions and videos for Human Signers. Students who use an ASL Paper Edition will need a Human Signer to administer the assessments to them.</p> <p><b>During Testing:</b> See the Directions for Administration for instructions on recording student responses. All paper-based tests with Human Signer should be administered in a one-on-one setting.</p> <p><b>After Testing:</b> ASL Paper Editions contain secure item content and should be handled as secure test materials. Test Administrators should return materials to Test Coordinators. Test Coordinators must securely dispose of the materials.</p>	<b>3q*</b>

Description of Accommodation	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<p><b>Human Reader/Human Signer</b></p> <p>The purpose of the Human Reader/Human Signer accommodation is to accompany the Large Print Paper Edition (English and Spanish) and ASL Paper Edition of the assessment.</p> <p>Any student registered to take one of the paper-based editions of the assessment will need the assessment read to them by a Human Reader or Human Signer.</p>	<p><b>During Testing:</b> A qualified person (as defined by the Directions for Administration) may be provided to read orally or sign to students who require the Human Reader/Human Signer accommodation.</p> <p>Human Readers/Human Signers must follow the protocols and guidelines listed in the following appendices of the <a href="#">MAAAM</a>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Appendix E:</b> Test Administration Protocol for the Human Reader Accommodation for ELA/L Assessments, and the Human Reader Accessibility Feature for Mathematics, Science and Social Studies Assessments</li> <li>• <b>Appendix J:</b> Human Signer Guidelines</li> </ul> <p>A student should have the option of asking a human reader to slow down or repeat text. All paper-based assessments with the Human Reader/Human Signer accommodation should be administered in a one-on-one setting.</p> <p>Students who use the Human Reader/Human Signer accommodation will also need the Extended Time and Assisted Selection (Scribe) accommodations.</p>	<p><b>3k.</b></p>
<p><b>Unique Accommodations</b></p> <p>Unique accommodations not specifically mentioned above may be used for instruction. A unique accommodation may be proposed by the LAC, Section 504 staff, or Special Education staff.</p>	<p>Unique accommodations used for state assessments must be approved by MSDE Division of Assessment and Accountability. The unique accommodation must be submitted to MSDE by the LAC at least six weeks prior to testing to ensure a final MSDE response is received before testing begins. Determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with MSDE. Refer to <b>Appendix F</b> of the <a href="#">MAAAM</a> for the unique accommodation form.</p>	<p><b>3q.</b></p>

\* For the 25-26 school year, ASL Paper Edition will be considered a Unique Accommodation in the IEP and follow the Unique Accommodations guidelines.

### Response Accommodations

Response accommodations adapt the way that students demonstrate their learning on activities, assignments, or tests. They may include alternative ways of answering questions and tools to structure tasks and information. Response accommodations can benefit students with physical, sensory, or learning disabilities (including difficulties with memory, sequencing, directionality, alignment, and organization). Many of the accommodations are also available to students on the grades 3-8 and high school MCAP. In those cases, the accommodation code for MCAP is included in the table for reference.

**Table 3: Response Accommodations**

Description of Accommodation	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<p><b>Assistive Technology</b></p> <p>By definition, Assistive Technology (AT) “is used to maintain, increase, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities (29 U.S.C. 3002).”</p> <p>Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is a method of communication, which can consist of gestures, pictures, symbols, words, or a combination of all of these. It can range from simple picture communication symbols to a sophisticated computer system with voice output. Input can be done by pointing or using switches, voice recognition systems or eye gaze systems. The methods of AAC will vary and be personalized to meet the needs of the individual.</p> <p>AT which would fall under the 4a accommodation includes, but is not limited to switches, specialized keyboards, eye gaze interfaces, or communication devices.</p>	<p><b>Assessment:</b> Students may use a range of assistive technologies in assessment, including devices that interface with the online testing platform and those that are used externally on a separate computer.</p> <p><b>Before Testing:</b> Please consult the specific assessment’s Test Administrator Manual for more information on the compatibility for specific assessments. Before testing, School Test Coordinators should administer an Infrastructure Trial with the assessment platform to confirm compatibility. Any devices with word prediction, topic specific dictionary functions, Internet and stored files functionalities must be turned off during state assessments.</p> <p>Students will also require the Assisted Selection (Scribe) accessibility feature.</p>	<p><b>4a.</b></p>

Description of Accommodation	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<b>Unique Accommodations</b>  Unique accommodations not specifically mentioned above may be used for instruction. A unique accommodation may be proposed by the LAC, Section 504 staff, or Special Education staff.	Unique accommodations used for state assessments must be approved by MSDE Division of Assessment and Accountability. The unique accommodation must be submitted to MSDE by the LAC at least six weeks prior to testing to ensure a final MSDE response is received before testing begins. Determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with MSDE. Refer to <b>Appendix F</b> of the <a href="#">MAAAM</a> for the unique accommodation form.	<b>40.</b>

### Timing and Scheduling Accommodations

Timing and scheduling accommodations change the allowable length of time to complete assignments, tests, and activities, and may also change the way the time is organized. Timing accommodations give students the time and the breaks they need to complete activities, assignments, and tests. Other changes may include the particular time of day, day of the week, or number of days over which a particular activity, assignment, or test takes place. Many of the accommodations are also available to students on the grades 3-8 and high school MCAP. In those cases, the accommodation code for MCAP is included in the table for reference.

**Table 4: Timing and Scheduling Accommodations**

Description of Accommodation	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<p><b>Extended Time</b></p> <p>Decisions regarding extended time must be made on a case-by-case basis. Timing accommodations are most helpful for students who need more time than generally allowed to complete activities, assignments, and tests.</p> <p>Teachers and Test Administrators must make certain that the extended time accommodation is selected when using other accommodations, such as Large Print Paper Edition or ASL Paper Edition with Human Reader/Human Signer, since those accommodations may increase the time needed for the student to respond.</p> <p>If a student is unable to complete the Hands-On Questions or Practice Questions because the student is repeatedly running out of time to answer question, the Test Administrator should consider the Extended Time accommodation.</p>	<p>Time is allotted by item on the Star Early Literacy and Star Math assessments. On Star Early Literacy, students will have 2 minutes and 30 seconds to answer each item before being moved to the next item. On Star Math, students have 4 minutes to answer each item before being moved to the next item. On both assessments, the student will receive a visual warning when 15 seconds remain.</p> <p>For Star Early Literacy, extended time is available. The extended time accommodation increases the time per item to 7 minutes and 30 seconds (triple the standard time).</p> <p>For Star Math, extended time and unlimited time are available. The extended time accommodation increases the time per item to 8 minutes (double the standard time). Unlimited time increases the time per item to 15 minutes. School teams may choose between the extended time or the unlimited time accommodation.</p> <p>Each student's IEP or 504 Plan must document the amount of extended time typically required for assessments. IEP or 504 Teams should determine the routine for providing extended time to students.</p> <p>For students taking the Large Print Paper Edition or ASL Paper Edition with a Human Reader/Human Signer, the test administrator does not need to time each item. The student can take as much time as is needed to answer the question. If a student is not responding, the test administrator should prompt the student by repeating the question and allowing at least another minute for the student to answer. If the student still does not respond or says, "I don't know," the test administrator should select No Response and move on.</p>	<p><b>5a.</b></p>



Description of Accommodation	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<b>Unique Timing and Scheduling Accommodation</b>	Unique accommodations used for state assessments must be approved by MSDE Division of Assessment and Accountability. The unique accommodation must be submitted to MSDE by the LAC at least six weeks prior to testing to ensure a final MSDE response is received before testing begins. Refer to <b>Appendix F</b> of the <a href="#">MAAAM</a> for the unique accommodation form.	<b>5b.</b>

## Section 5: Guidance for Multilingual Learners

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### OVERVIEW

The recommendations in this section of the guidance document are intended to be used in conjunction with “Section 5: The Six-Step Process for Accommodating English Learners (ELs)” of the [MAAAM](#). MSDE recognizes that there are specific considerations that must be accounted for when accommodating MLs in prekindergarten and kindergarten. The purpose of this section is to provide guidance to Maryland schools about how to best accommodate prekindergarten and kindergarten students on the ELA and KRA.

MSDE uses the term multilingual learners (MLs) for students often referred to as English learners (ELs). MLs are defined as students with a primary or home language other than English who are progressing in English proficiency and enrolled in an English language development program. The term multilingual learners underscores an asset-based approach, highlighting students' diverse linguistic and cultural strengths, skills, and talents.

### IDENTIFYING MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

#### Process for Identifying MLs

The Home Language Survey (HLS) must be administered to all new students in Maryland schools. On the student enrollment form, each LEA asks three consistently worded HLS questions to determine which language other than English, if any, is spoken in the home and by the student. Certain responses to these questions indicate that the student may be an ML. The next step is to test the student using the English language proficiency screener to determine his/her eligibility to participate in the English Language Development (ELD) program.

#### Additional Considerations for Prekindergarten

There is currently no single, standardized statewide process for identifying MLs or determining access to ELD services for prekindergarten students in Maryland. For these students, educators should consider a combination of information about the student's home and preferred language(s) and gather additional insights through informal means, such as conversations with the child and their caregiver. This information can support decisions about whether to administer the Star Early Literacy assessment in English and/or Spanish, and to determine the need for appropriate ML accommodations.

#### Additional Considerations for Kindergarten

The process for identifying MLs takes place over the first few weeks of the school year in most Maryland schools. This is the same period as the administration window for the KRA (August 1<sup>st</sup> – October 10<sup>th</sup>). Most students who speak languages other than English in the home will not be formally designated as eligible to participate in the ELD program in time to develop and implement the accommodations from an ML Plan on the KRA. Therefore, the primary determination of eligibility for ML accommodations on the KRA will be the Home Language Survey. Students who have a language other than English indicated as the response to two (2) questions on the Home Language Survey are eligible for ML accommodations on the KRA.

### ACCOMMODATIONS FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

Accommodations address the linguistic and sociocultural needs of the student by reducing barriers caused by language rather than by the content being assessed, which will help ensure that instruction

and assessment are more likely to focus on the content being taught and assessed rather than on English language proficiency. Many of the accommodations are also available to students on the grades 3-8 and high school MCAP. In those cases, the accommodation code for MCAP is included in the table for reference.

**Table 5: Accommodations for Multilingual Learners**

Please see “Spanish Version of Computer Based Assessment” in Table 1 and “Large Print Paper Edition” in Table 2 for more information about assessments in Spanish.

Description of Accommodation	Administration Guidelines	MCAP Code
<p><b>General Administration</b>  <b>Directions read aloud and repeated in Spanish</b></p> <p>Students who have Spanish indicated as the response to two (2) questions on the Home Language Survey are eligible for this accommodation.</p>	<p><b>Test Administrator Training:</b> Test Administrators or other qualified interpreters providing the general administration directions in Spanish must review the directions in advance in order to provide consistent trans adaptations. Test Administrators providing this accommodation will ideally be literate and fluent in English as well as in Spanish, or they may collaborate with a local translator, if available.</p> <p><b>During Testing:</b> The Test Administrator or other qualified interpreter reads aloud the general administration instructions in Spanish. The student may request that directions be repeated. The student must be tested in a one-on-one setting.</p>	<b>7e.</b>
<p><b>General Administration</b>  <b>Directions Clarified as Needed in the Student's Native Language</b></p> <p>Students who have a language other than English indicated as the response to two (2) questions on the Home Language Survey are eligible for this accommodation.</p>	<p><b>Test Administrator Training:</b> Test Administrators providing this accommodation should be literate and fluent in English as well as in the student's native language, or they may collaborate with a local translator, if available.</p> <p><b>During Testing:</b> The Test Administrator clarifies general administration directions only in the student's native language. Test Administrators or other qualified interpreters providing this accommodation should ideally be literate and fluent in English as well as in the student's native language, or they may be assisted by a translator who speaks the language of the student, if available.</p>	<b>7f.</b>