

## VI. MCAS Accessibility and Accommodations for ELL Students

In addition to the universal and designated accessibility features listed elsewhere in this manual that are available to ELLs, several additional accommodations are also available to ELLs. Table 6 describes which accommodations may be used by ELLs, while Table 7 describes the relative suitability of each accommodation for students at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of English proficiency.

### A. Individuals Involved in Selecting Accessibility Features and Accommodations for ELL Students

Decisions about universal and designated features, and accommodations for ELL students should be made by an informal group of educators familiar with the student; the group will identify the appropriate features and accommodations for each ELL student. The decisions of the informal decision-making team should be documented using either the sample form for **Documentation of MCAS Accommodations for an ELL Student** provided in Appendix B, or using a similar, locally designed form.

Individuals involved in the decision-making process may include any of the following:

- the student him- or herself
- the student’s English as a Second Language (ESL) educator
- school administrator (principal/assistant principal)
- general educator (content area teacher)
- special educator (if appropriate)
- parent or guardian

Decision-making teams are encouraged to determine and assign features and accommodations to ELL students as early as possible in the school year to ensure that the student is familiar with their use. The student should not be introduced to an accessibility feature or accommodation on the day of the assessment. Appropriate features and accommodations are intended to allow ELL students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills more effectively.

### B. Guidelines for Selecting Appropriate Accessibility Features and Accommodations for ELL Students

Because a student’s level of English language proficiency is transitional and the student’s linguistic needs will differ from one year to the next, universal and designated accessibility features and accommodations should be examined and revised annually as the ELL student makes progress toward English proficiency.

#### 1. Decision-Making Procedures

The following procedures can be used to make appropriate decisions regarding selection of features and accommodations for ELL students:

1. While examining the range of supports allowed on MCAS tests that may help the ELL student access the curriculum and take assessments more effectively, the student’s classroom teacher should ask him- or herself the following questions:
  - *Has a particular feature and/or accommodation been used successfully in the past to assist*

*students in similar situations and at similar English proficiency levels?*

2. While trying out the selected supports during routine instruction to determine whether they meet the student's needs, the teacher should ask him- or herself the following questions:
  - *Does the feature and/or accommodation help the student overcome the barrier posed by his or her developing English language proficiency?*
  - *Is the student comfortable using the feature or accommodation?*
3. The teacher should observe the student in the classroom (or if possible, across different classrooms and school settings) using the feature or accommodation and inform members of the decision-making team which features or accommodations seem most appropriate and effective.

Based on the feature(s) and/or accommodations listed in this manual and used successfully in the classroom, the teacher can select the appropriate features and/or accommodations for use on the MCAS tests.

4. The teacher should document the final decisions either on the sample form provided in Appendix B, or use a similar locally designed form, and maintain this information in the student's file.

## **2. Involving Students in Selecting and Using Accommodations**

The more an ELL student is involved in the accommodation selection process, the more likely the accommodations are to be accepted and used by the student. Also, as students' English proficiency increases, and especially as students reach adolescence and the desire to be more independent increases, students will help determine when the support is no longer useful. Students are likely to increase their self-advocacy abilities over time and ensure that the selected supports are provided during testing. Teachers and other adults can play a role in assisting students to advocate on their own behalf regarding their need for and use of accessibility features and accommodations.

It is important to introduce the use of selected features and accommodations as early as possible in the school year to familiarize students with their use and determine their effectiveness. Accommodations should never be provided for the first time on an assessment.

## **3. Process for Evaluating the Effectiveness of Accessibility Features and Accommodations**

Accessibility features and accommodations should be evaluated over time for their effectiveness. Observations conducted during test administration, interviews with test administrators, and talking with students after testing is likely to yield data that can be useful in guiding the evaluation of the use of features and accommodations at the school, district, and student levels.

The following questions can guide decision-making regarding the effectiveness of the selected accessibility features and accommodations.

- Was the student familiar with the feature or accommodation prior to testing?
- Does the student use the feature or accommodation routinely?
- Was the student comfortable using the feature or accommodation?
- Does the student's performance on the assessment improve when the feature or accommodation is used?

## C. Accommodations for Students Who Are English Language Learners (ELLs)

In addition to universal features and designated features available to all students, the following accommodations are available to ELLs, either with or without disabilities, on MCAS tests.

**Table 6. Accommodations for Students Who Are ELLs**

#	Accommodations for ELL Students
EL1 (PNP)	<p><b>Paper-based editions</b> of the grades 3–8 Mathematics or Science and Technology/Engineering tests may be administered to a first-year ELL student (i.e., a student in his or her first calendar year of enrollment in a U.S. school) with a low level of English proficiency or who has little or no familiarity with technology.</p> <p>(Note: Administering the ELA test to a first-year ELL student is <i>optional</i>)</p>
EL2	<p><b>Approved Bilingual Word-to-Word Dictionary and Glossary</b> (English/Native language)</p> <p>(Note: this accommodation is also available to former ELLs)</p>
EL3.1 (PNP) and EL3.2 (PNP)	<p><b>Text-to-speech (TTS)</b> (EL3.1) for Mathematics and/or Science and Technology/Engineering tests; or</p> <p><b>Human read-aloud</b> (EL 3.2) for Mathematics and/or Science and Technology/Engineering tests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If administering the paper-based test with a human reader, the test must be read word for word in English, exactly as written. The test administrator may not provide assistance to the student regarding the translation or meaning of words. The test administrator should read with emphasis only when indicated by bold or italicized text.</li> <li>• If a human reader is used, the test must be administered in a separate setting either <b>individually</b> or to a <b>group of 2–5 students</b> all of whom are receiving the human reader accommodation.</li> <li>• If the TTS-enabled English-only edition of the computer-based test is read aloud to a student using headphones, students may be tested in a typical-size group. If not using headphones, then student must be tested in a separate setting.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Reading aloud <b>selected words</b> on the Mathematics and/or Science and Technology/Engineering tests is a universal accessibility feature (UF10). See Table 1.</p>
EL4.1 (PNP) and EL4.2 (PNP)	<p><b>Scribe</b> for the Mathematics and/or STE tests, using either</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a <b>human scribe</b> records student’s responses verbatim <i>at the time of testing</i> (EL4.1); or</li> <li>• student dictates responses using <b>speech-to-text</b> or other external communication device, with subsequent transcription by an adult, either onscreen or in the student’s answer booklet (EL4.2)</li> </ul>
EL5	<b>Read aloud/repeat/clarify general administration directions in English</b>
EL6	<b>Read aloud/repeat/clarify general administration directions in student’s native language</b> (if native language speaker is available)