

**EL**  
English Learners

# M-STEP Guide for Teachers of Students Who are English Learners (EL)

Everything (or almost everything) Teachers of  
Students Who Are English Learners  
Need to Know About M-STEP

- **Overview**
- **Assessment Structure**
- **Universal Tools, Designated Supports, and Accommodations**
- **ELs with Low English Proficiency or Students in Bilingual Programs**
- **Trying Out the Online Universal Tools, Designated Supports, and Accommodations**
- **Individualized Needs**

# Overview

This guide addresses some of the major questions teachers might have related to the kinds of Universal Tools, Designated Supports, and Accommodations that are allowable for students on the M-STEP assessments.

**Note:** Much of the information in this document can be found in the [Supports and Accommodations Guidance Document](#).

You are encouraged to read this document in its entirety.

# Assessment Structure

The M-STEP is composed of the following content areas and language domains in the corresponding grade levels:

**Mathematics – Grades 3-7:** Reading is required to answer a variety of question types which include graphs, diagrams, charts.

**English language arts (ELA) – Grades 3-7:** Reading is required to answer a variety of question types. Typing (or Writing) is required to answer some constructed response questions. Listening is required to answer content provided via audio.

**Science – Grades 5, 8, 11:** Reading is required to answer a variety of question types which include using diagrams, charts, and photographs.

**Social Studies – Grades 5, 8, 11:** Reading is required to answer a variety of question types include using diagrams, charts, maps, and photographs.

The default mode for testing is online. However, a student may take the paper/pencil form of the assessment if necessary.

The default language for all content areas is English. However, the content of the mathematics, science, and social studies tests can be translated for students who need a word, phrase, or an entire test translated. None of the content of the M-STEP ELA test can be translated for students taking that assessment.

# Universal Tools, Designated Supports, and Accommodations

## Intermediate to Nearly Proficient English Learners

### Paper-based Bilingual Word-to-Word Dictionary

This support is intended for students who use such paper-based dictionaries on a regular basis in the classroom to aid in their understanding of content in their core subject areas. It is likely that even students who are at the low English proficiency levels might use such a dictionary/glossary every day in their class work.

However, students using this support during testing are expected to be actually literate in the target language and have literacy skills in English. Giving this support during testing to a student who is not literate in the target language or in English will likely result in a negative impact on the student's performance on the test.

Students may use this Designated Support when they are taking the paper/pencil or online M-STEP mathematics, science, or social studies assessments. Note: Students may not use electronic or online bilingual word-to-word

dictionaries during testing, since this would be a potential test security issue.

Students who are considered to be a recent arrivals (that is, being enrolled in schools in the United States for less than 12 months) might be eligible for a first-year exemption from the M-STEP ELA test. For information on this, refer to the section on this topic in the Supports and Accommodations Guidance Document on the M-STEP website.

This Designated Support is best suited for intermediate to near/proficient EL students, because of the time-consuming nature of using it during testing. Students with lower English proficiency might attempt to look up every single word within a test question. Always be aware that EL students may need significantly more time to take the test than most other students.

## Glossaries

Students may benefit from using these glossary options that provide an efficient way to access selected words from the mathematics assessment. This Designated Support is best suited for intermediate to near/proficient EL students because of the limited nature of the words available in these glossary options.

### L1 Glossary - Paper/Pencil Mathematics Only

These translated glossaries are provided for selected construct-irrelevant terms in the mathematics assessment. This support is only available for the paper/pencil assessment, because the glossary lists words that are specific to each test question. The regular online M-STEP mathematics test is a computer adaptive assessment, so the L1 glossary cannot be used.

### Embedded Arabic or Spanish Glossary - Online Mathematics Only

A student can have the Arabic or Spanish Glossary enabled for them in the online testing engine. This support provides students with an

option to view words that have been translated in the target language for a select set of questions and words.

## Test Timing

EL students using additional supports such as a bilingual word-to-word dictionary or the L1 glossary will likely need additional time to complete the assessments, because of the additional time it takes for students to use these tools. The good news is that the M-STEP assessments are not timed, so students can take as long as they need to complete the test, provided the time they spend falls within the appropriate testing window. Refer to the [M-STEP Important Dates](#) document for more information about the testing windows.

## Text-to-Speech

There are two types of text-to-speech (TTS) options for students taking the online M-STEP assessments. Both options provide an English synthesized voice for students. A very small percentage of ELs may benefit from using this type of support. Some EL students may need to have an in-person human reader, because they find the synthesized voice of the TTS is distracting or it provides a negative experience. In these cases, refer to the section of this document related to using in-person human readers.

The two different text-to-speech options that can be enabled by your district's test coordinator are:

- **Text-to-Speech (TTS) – Designated Support**
  - Available for M-STEP mathematics, science, social studies, and English language arts; available for students at all assessed grade levels
  - Reads aloud the test questions, passage-based writing readings, and answer options
  - Students can replay the audio as many times as they would like

- **Text-to-Speech Passage (TTS Passage) – Accommodation**
  - Available for M-STEP English language arts, only for students in grades 6-7 whose IEP or Section 504 Plan indicates this need
  - Reads aloud the test questions, passaged-based writing readings, answer options, and reading passages
  - Students can replay the audio as many times as they would like

## In-Person Human Reader

An in-person human reader (reading in English) can be used for any of the content areas. However, there are some differences between such use for the paper/pencil test and for the online test.

**An in-person human reader can be used with students who may:**

- strongly need to have the test administered by someone with whom they are familiar (that is, their daily instructor)
- have a difficult time understanding the synthesized voice produced by the online system's text-to-speech

**An in-person human reader (reads aloud text in English, not another language) can be used in the following ways for the M-STEP:**

- **Mathematics:** Can be used with online or paper/pencil testing; must be administered in a one-on-one setting for online testing; the Read-Aloud Guidelines in the [Supports and Accommodations Guidance Document](#) must be used
- **ELA:** Can be used with online or paper/pencil testing; must be administered in a one-on-one setting for online testing; the Read-Aloud Guidelines in the [Supports and Accommodations Guidance Document](#) must be used
  - read-aloud for questions and answer options (Designated Support)
  - read-aloud for questions, answer options, and reading passages (Accommodation) – only for students with IEPs or Section 504 Plans in grades 6-7 whose plans identify the need for this Accommodation
- **Science and Social Studies:** Can be used as a support only for the paper/pencil testing; the reader must use the **Reader Script**, which is only available for the paper/pencil test (if you are administering the M-STEP assessment and you do not have the Reader Script, obtain it from your Building or District M-STEP Coordinator); the assessment can be administered to an individual student or in a small group of no more than 5 students of the same grade level and content area

# ➤ ELs with Low English Proficiency or Students in Bilingual Programs ➤➤➤

## Full On-the-Fly Oral Translations

This Designated Support is intended for use with students who are fluent in a language other than English. It is intended to be used by students who in bilingual programs or

who might have more fluency in their native language than in English. Use of this support assumes that a student is better able to show his or her knowledge of the content in a language other than English. Use of this support with students whose fluency in a language other than English is low may result in less valid assessment results.

**Note:** Do not provide an oral translator for students just for the purpose of taking the state assessments. If you are not providing this service to students on a regular basis in the classroom, you should not provide this Designated Support for the test.

This Designated Support is only available for M-STEP mathematics, science, and social studies. It is not available for ELA because that assessment assesses the student's language arts knowledge within the English language.

The use of this support may result in the student needing additional time to complete the assessment.

Schools that want to provide oral translations in one language to multiple students may do so using the paper/pencil assessment (in small groups of no more than five students), or they may provide the support as an individual test administration for online test-takers.

For the M-STEP science and social studies assessments, test administrators must use the Reader Script to provide an oral translation if a paper/pencil assessment and corresponding videos are not used (Arabic USB and Spanish USB). Note: Reader Scripts are not available for all assessments and content areas.

## Spanish and Arabic On-the-Fly Translations of the M-STEP Mathematics Assessment

District and building coordinators should ensure translators being used for the M-STEP Mathematics assessment have reviewed the M-STEP Spanish Read-Aloud Guidelines or the M-STEP Arabic Read-Aloud Guidelines available in the [Supports and Accommodations Guidance Document](#).

## Full Text Spanish Translation – Stacked Spanish

Students with written Spanish fluency may take the full text Spanish form of M-STEP mathematics or social studies assessment only. Mathematics is available for online and paper/pencil testing. Social studies is available for online testing only. Whether online or paper/pencil, the student will see the test questions and answer options in Spanish and in English.

Ideally, students using this support are proficient in Spanish and have high Spanish literacy skills. Use of this support will increase the student's reading and cognitive load during testing.

## Important Spanish Audio Note

Students who take the online form of the Stacked Spanish mathematics M-STEP will now hear a Spanish audio track along with each test question. The audio will play automatically for students who can repeat the audio as many times as they would like. The audio will read aloud all the Spanish questions and the Spanish answer options.

Because the audio plays automatically, students will need headphones. Students who do not need or want the audio can have the audio on their computer disabled or the volume turned down before the INSIGHT testing program is launched.

Students who take the paper/pencil Stacked Spanish test can have the test questions and answer options read aloud to them in Spanish (on-the-fly translation). This Spanish read-aloud support, offered small groups of no more than five students, may be provided for the paper/pencil assessment only.

## Arabic and Spanish Videos

This support is only available to students taking the paper/pencil M-STEP science and social studies tests. It is intended for use with students who are fluent in Spanish or Arabic. Moreover, it is intended for use by students in bilingual programs or whose native language fluency is greater than their English fluency, with the assumption that the student is better able to show knowledge of the content in a language other than English. Use of this support with students with lower fluency in a language other than English may result in less valid assessment results. Also, the use of this support may result in the student needing additional time to complete the assessment. This support may be used in an individual setting or for a small group of no more than five students.

The videos come on a USB and are designed to be used with a screen large enough for one student to view or for a small group of no more than five students to view. Video USBs correspond to a Form 1 test booklet (even though a school may be taking another form of the test).

As students watch the video, they will be presented with each English test question on the screen as it appears in their test booklet. However, students will hear the test question and answer options read aloud to them in Arabic or Spanish.

## Recently Arrived Students

Some students who are considered to be recent arrivals (that is, being enrolled in schools in the United States for less than 12 months) might benefit from taking the paper/pencil M-STEP tests. Educators may order paper/pencil tests during the material order windows. While these students are not required to take a paper/pencil test, educators may use their knowledge about what is best for student when deciding to administer the test in the paper/pencil or online forms.

## Translator Qualifications

Not every educator is qualified to administer the test for a student with an on-the-fly translation. Refer to the Recommended Qualifications for Translators section of the [Supports and Accommodations Guidance Document](#) for more information.

## Tips for On-the-Fly Oral Translators: To Monotone or Not to Monotone

The Read-Aloud Guidelines found in the [Supports and Accommodations Guidance Document](#) say that readers should “strive to communicate in a neutral tone and maintain a neutral facial expression and posture.” This does NOT mean that readers have to read in a monotone voice without any inflection. It does mean that readers should not overexaggerate words/phrases/sentences/punctuation in a manner that would provide an unnecessary emphasis on any part of the test.

Similarly, the Guidelines indicates that readers should “avoid gestures, head movements, or any verbal or non-verbal emphasis on words not otherwise emphasized in text.” Again, the point of this guidance is to ensure that readers are not exaggerating movements that might give away answers. Remember that the tests are designed to show what the student knows, not what the reader knows.

## Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education

Students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) are a heterogenous group of students. Not only do they have assessment needs related to their varying levels of language abilities, but because of possible gaps in social skills and knowledge around



school culture, or even their emotional needs, additional considerations should be made to help ensure a positive testing experience.

The following considerations should be made:

- Ensuring students are able to practice in advance of the test day
  - Although providing all students with practice opportunities is recommended, ensuring SLIFE students are able to practice is incredibly important. As previously noted, these students may have possible gaps in how to effectively use technology and that should not be discovered on test day.
- Additional time spent helping the student understand the expectations of the test
  - Providing an interpreter or translation of what the test is and

how the student should behave during the test is important for students' understanding.

- Additional time for testing
  - The M-STEP assessments are untimed. However, these students should start testing early in the testing window and provided with as much time as they would like for productive testing.
- Provide one-on-one testing
  - Educators should discuss the helpfulness of one-on-one testing with the student and other educators the student may be working.
- Provide a paper/pencil form of the test
  - Educators may order a paper/pencil form of the assessment for students whose limited understanding of technology will likely negatively impact their testing experience.

## Trying Out the Online Universal Tools, Designated Supports, and Accommodations

The only way that you and students can determine if a tool meets their needs is to have them try out the tools. You can try out all of the online Universal Tools, Designated

Supports, and Accommodations by following the directions to access the Online Tools Trainings (OTTs) at [Online Practice for M-STEP ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies](#).

## Individualized Needs

Because of the very individualized needs of many of your students, you may come across a scenario that doesn't fit neatly into the areas described in this document. When those situations arise, contact Jen Paul at the Michigan Department of Education for help in determining what might work best. Send an e-mail to [mde-oaaa@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-oaaa@michigan.gov) to ask your question or to set up a time to talk.

The [M-STEP web page](#) provides additional helpful resources for educators. Consult your District's Assessment Coordinator for further information and resources. If you feel the the district coordinator is not adequately addressing all aspects of the M-STEP test—including making sure your students' needs are being met during testing—become your own advocate for your students.