

# Questions and Answers

## CMAS ELA/CSLA Auditory/Sign Language Accommodation Policy Updated to Align with Colorado Academic Standards and Expectations



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

This document focuses on the Colorado Academic Measures of Success (CMAS) English Language Arts (ELA) assessment auditory/sign language presentation accommodation policy. This state assessment is administered to students in grades 3-8.

- 1. Are accommodations allowed on state assessments?** Yes, accommodations are allowed on the general and alternate state assessments. However, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that only accommodations that do not invalidate a score may be considered as accommodations on the state assessments (34 CFR § 300.160). As such, depending on what an assessment is intending to measure, not all instructional adjustments may be allowed on the general assessment. An example of an allowable accommodation for CMAS is extended time because none of the CMAS assessments are intended to be measures of speediness or fluency.
- 2. Are modifications allowed on state assessments?** Modifications produce scores that cannot be interpreted through the same lens as, compared to, or aggregated together with results from other modified or non-accommodated assessments. Beginning in spring 2022, the modification of Auditory/Sign Language Presentation will result in an invalidation of the student's ELA/CSLA test score.
- 3. What is the underlying construct of the CMAS English Language Arts Test?** The CMAS ELA assessment measures the reading and writing components of CAS. The reading component of CMAS ELA measures the students' ability to read (decode a printed or tactile code) and comprehend (make meaning of) literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

### Key Vocabulary

#### **Accommodations:**

Adjustments to instruction or standardized testing materials or procedures which allow students to demonstrate their learning without changing the instructional content or what assessment intends to measure. Accommodations maintain the expectations and rigor of the content of instruction or assessment. They do not change what is to be learned during instruction or measured by the assessment.

**Modifications:** Adjustments to the instructional content or the administration of an assessment that change what the student learns or the assessment measures. Modifications change the construct being learned or assessed. Modifications in the administration of an assessment fundamentally change the assessment's intended measure and, therefore, do not result in valid scores.



4. **What are the updates to auditory/sign language presentations of the CMAS ELA Assessment?** The 2020 Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) expect students to read (decode a printed or tactile code) and comprehend (make meaning of) literary and informational texts independently and proficiently. In accordance with the full implementation of the 2020 Reading, Writing, and Communicating CAS in the 2020-2021 school year, Colorado Measures of Academic Standards (CMAS) will mirror the standards' expectation that students combine their phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and text comprehension reading skills to demonstrate mastery of the 2020 CAS independent reading expectations. Assessment administration adjustments that change this expectation, such as reading the text from the CMAS English language arts assessment to the student, should not be used and will result in an invalid administration starting in the spring 2022. Students may continue to use accommodations that do not change this expectation.
5. **Why is there a policy update?** Providing an auditory or sign language presentation of printed or brailled text changes the CMAS ELA's assessment's focus from reading and comprehension of text to listening and comprehension of text. As such, both presentations are considered modifications.
6. **Does the policy change impact all grade levels of the CMAS ELA Assessment?** Yes, this change impacts all grades of the 3-8 CMAS ELA assessment, including CSLA in grades 3 and 4.
7. **Does this impact other content areas of the CMAS Assessments?** No, auditory or sign language presentations are allowable for the CMAS regular Math, Science, and Social Studies assessments. These assessments do not measure the construct of reading (decoding a printed or tactile code)
8. **What are the expected timelines of this policy change?** Schools and districts may transition to the updated policy during the 2020-2021 school year. CDE recommends that where possible, the Assessment section of student IEPs should be updated prior to the Spring 2021 assessment administration. Auditory or sign language presentation on ELA will result in invalid scores beginning in spring 2022.
9. **Who can continue with the auditory or sign language presentation for the Spring 2021 CMAS ELA assessment administration?** While districts are strongly encouraged to meet with IEP team to reconsider the use of auditory/sign language presentation for the spring 2021 assessment, especially for students who have never tested with this type of presentation on CMAS, students who do not have this modification removed may continue to use the adjustment for this year. District Assessment Coordinators (DACs) should contact the Assessment Division to receive information on how to complete the Modification Verification Submission process for these students. This process is separate from the UAR process.
10. **If a student uses an auditory or sign language presentation for the Spring 2021 CMAS ELA assessment administration, what do DACs need to do to ensure necessary materials/forms are ordered?** District Assessment Coordinators (DACs) may complete the modification verification form for cases in which a student's IEP is not updated and indicates auditory or sign language presentation for use in Spring 2021. These records will be coded to ensure the student has access to the appropriate online or paper materials.



- 11. Does this policy change auditory or sign language presentation for instructional purposes?** This policy does not change the availability of using auditory or sign language presentation for instructional purposes that do not include reading (decoding) (i.e., the focus may be narrowed to vocabulary, setting descriptions, sequencing, character comparisons, etc.) This accommodation may be used in instructional practices for activities that do not include decoding and should be paired with explicit decoding instruction with the objective of English reading proficiency.
- 12. How does this impact the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP)?** Consistent with IDEA requirements and following state guidelines, IEP teams must identify the assessment in which a student will participate. The Colorado state assessment system includes the following choices: general assessment, general assessment with accommodations, or, for students who qualify, alternate assessment. The IEP team must select only valid accommodations or those accommodations that do not invalidate the score (34 CFR § 300.160). These requirements for the IEP team have not changed.
- Districts are encouraged to have a conversation with student IEP teams if the student’s current IEP indicates that either the auditory and/or signing presentation is currently planned for the 2021 ELA Assessment. As of spring 2022, these options will no longer be allowable adjustments. Given the cancellation of spring 2020 testing and the restart in 2021, IEP teams are encouraged to revise, as appropriate, any current IEPs that were written without taking this policy update into consideration. This will allow for increased comparability and potentially support growth calculations between 2021 and 2022, especially for students in lower grade levels.
- 13. What updates are happening to the CDE State IEP system?** CDE is working with the current state IEP vendor to adjust the State Assessment Accommodations drop down menu to reflect the policy update to CMAS ELA Unique Accommodation Requests (UAR), Colorado Spanish Language Arts UAR and ACCESS for ELLs UAR. The updates to the Enrich IEP are anticipated this fall.

**Contact Information for More Information**

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