



aimswebPlus: Reading Comprehension (RC) and Text-To-Speech (TTS) Functionality

Overall Summary

The aimswebPlus Reading Comprehension (RC) measure is receiving updates to its Text-to-Speech (TTS) functionality, as part of our initiative to enhance accessibility for a wider range of students. While completing the RC measure via TestNav, students will have the option to have the TTS feature read aloud the multiple-choice questions. This feature will be limited to reading only the text of the questions and answer options and will remain disabled for reading the passages. The implementation of this feature across all grade levels of RC will continue over the next few school years, with the most significant changes occurring in the 2025-2026 school year, starting with Grades 2 and 3.

Rationale

This development represents the initial step in our ongoing commitment to incorporating additional accessibility features into aimswebPlus measures. Our objectives are to ensure that RC scores accurately reflect students' reading comprehension abilities, while also supporting those with unique needs and removing barriers to assessment participation.

The TTS features for RC in aimswebPlus are designed to improve accessibility for all students. Consistent with the TTS options available in the Vocabulary and Concepts and Applications measures, this feature will be provided as an optional support tool. This initiative aligns with universal design principles, ensuring a uniform testing experience while permitting students to enable TTS when needed. This strategy reflects a commitment to inclusivity and the promotion of accessible learning environments. Educators are encouraged to consider how this feature may address their students' specific needs.

Enabling TTS for only the questions and answer options and leaving the feature disabled for passage text is essential to preserve the validity of the RC measure and national norms. Keeping TTS disabled for passage text ensures RC will continue to evaluate students' comprehension of the passages and their ability to demonstrate a variety of reading skills (e.g. identifying details, summarizing the passage, analyzing the passage structure, and connecting ideas to make novel inferences). RC is not

intended to measure students' abilities to read the text of multiple-choice questions. The questions prompt the student to demonstrate their understanding of the passage and cannot be answered by reading the question alone. This is why the wording of the questions and answer options is intentionally kept simple. Making items easy to understand, through simple text or TTS options increases our confidence students understand the reading skills they need to demonstrate.

Updated TTS Functionality for 2025-2026 Reading Comprehension Forms

During the 2025-2026 school year, the option for students to use TTS for questions and answer options will be enabled for grades 2 and 3 on scored multiple choice questions. In Grade 3, there may be some technology-enhanced items which are not supported with TTS. This means that some Grade 3 students may occasionally encounter questions where the feature is not yet enabled. For grades 4 and above, TTS is not yet available on any scored questions. However, all new field test questions across all grade levels will include the TTS option. This means that students in grades 4 and up will encounter one set of questions with TTS enabled, but their responses to these questions will not affect their final score. Please refer to the table below for information on which grade levels will have TTS enabled on Computer Adaptive and Fixed forms.

Table 1: TTS Implementation Across Grade Levels

Grade Level	Computer Adaptive	Fixed Form
2	All scored questions and field test questions (not scored) will have the TTS option enabled.	All scored questions will have the TTS option enabled.
3	<i>Nearly all</i> scored questions and all field test questions (not scored) will have the TTS option enabled. However, <i>some</i> students may encounter questions at the end of the form without this feature enabled.	All scored questions will have the TTS option enabled.
4 -12	No scored questions will have the TTS Option enabled, but field test questions (not scored) will have TTS enabled.	No scored questions will have the TTS Option enabled

*Scored questions are questions that count towards the student's final score.

Demonstration of TTS Features in TestNav

The TTS feature is positioned on the right-hand side of the testing window. Students can click the play button at the top to activate it. They have the ability to toggle the audio, jump back, or skip ahead as needed. The final button is for TTS settings, which allows students to adjust the speed and volume of the feature.

Figure 1: View of TTS buttons on TestNav forms of Reading Comprehension

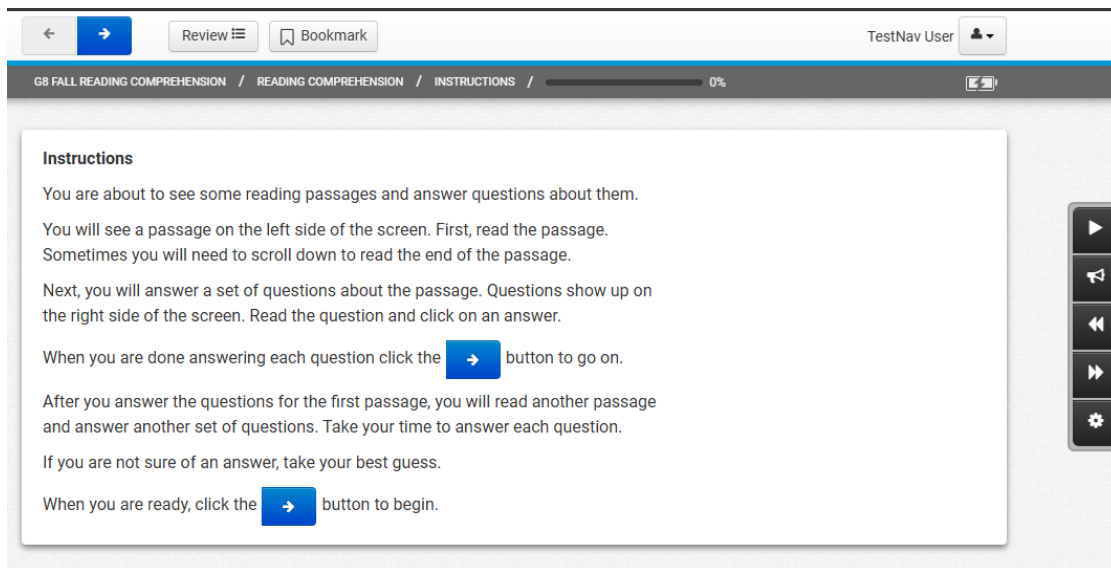


Figure 2: Click-to-hear Button Reading Text Selected by the Student

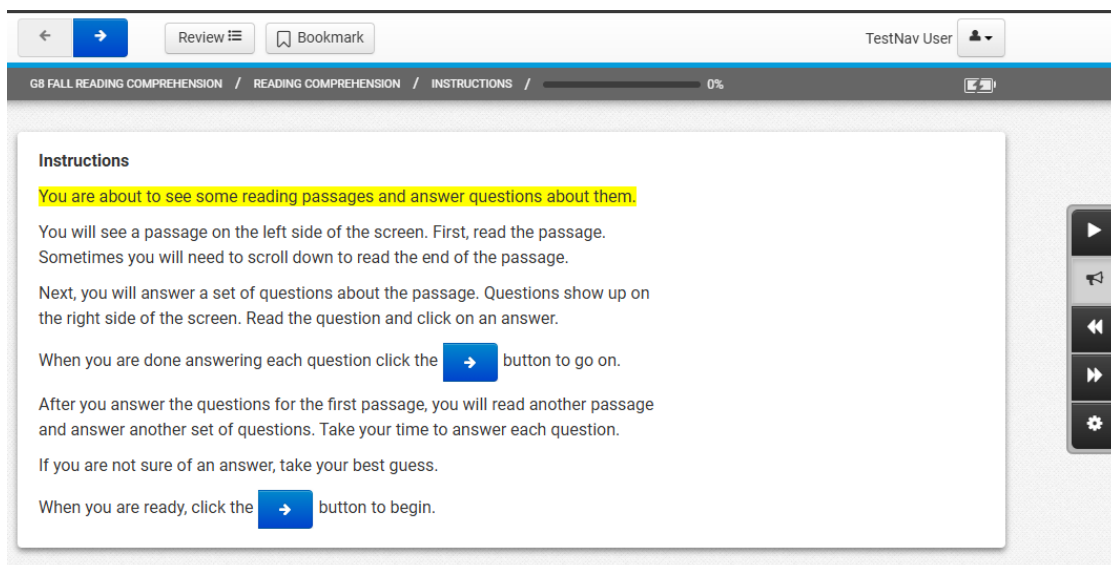
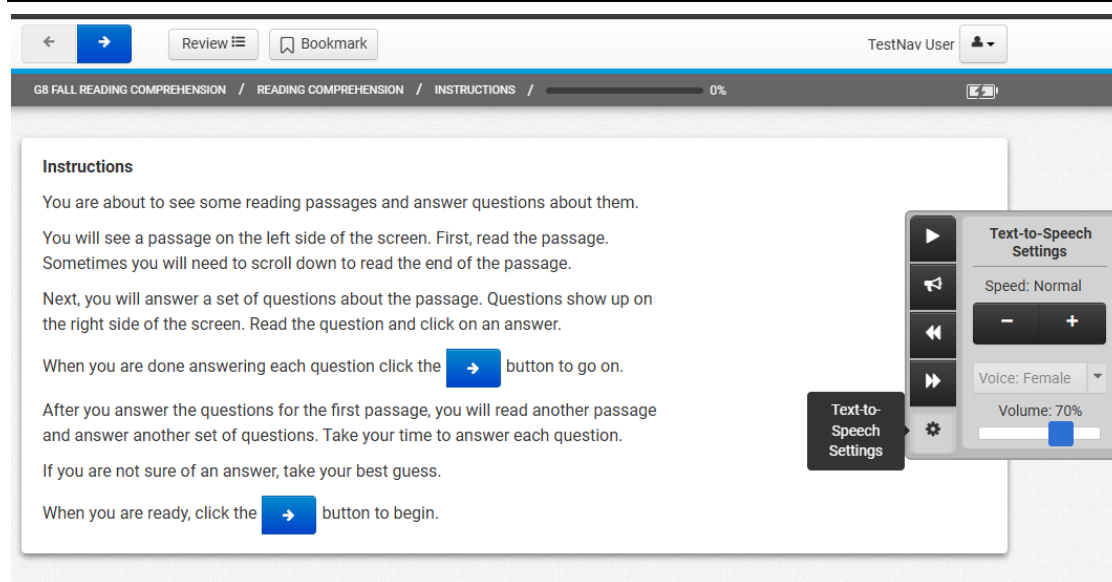


Figure 3: TTS Settings to Adjust the Speed and Volume



Guidance for Test Administration

The administration procedures for RC will not change with the expanded availability of TTS for test questions, as the functionality is the same as the existing TTS feature used on the instruction screens.

Test administrators will continue to use the existing Administration Directions presented in the Reading Administration and Scoring document. The first section of these directions addresses the use of TestNav features to have measures read aloud.

Today, you'll be taking a reading test on the computer. You'll need to wear your headphones to hear the test directions. When there are words that can be read to you, you'll see a play button on the right side of the screen. Just click on the play button if you want to hear the words.

The existing directions align with the intent of making the TTS feature an optional tool for students, without making it mandatory or restricted. Test administrators can use their discretion to decide whether to clarify which content will have the read-aloud option.

To prepare for administering RC with the increased availability of TTS, the following table provides guidance on scenarios you may encounter. This guidance is intended for the standard administration to the general student population. Consult the new Testing Best Practices chapter of our comprehensive manual for detailed guidance on supporting students with documented accessibility needs that require additional accommodations, including modified test forms.

Table 2: Recommendations for Addressing TTS Functionality

Scenario	AW+ Recommendation for Administration
The test administrator wants to say more about the TTS feature while reading the general test directions aloud.	The current directions for test examiners to read aloud before students complete TestNav measures already inform students about the play button, which they can click to hear directions aloud, and indicate that the button will also appear when there are words that can be read aloud.
A student's computer does not have headphones and tests are being given in a group setting.	It is recommended, but not required, that students have headphones and the option to hear the instruction screens read aloud. If this is not possible, mute all computers to avoid distractions during group administration.
The student asks if they can click the play button to hear TTS while completing items on the test.	Assure them that they are allowed to use the feature if they find it helpful, but it is not required.
A student asks how to turn on TTS for the passages.	Clarify that TTS will only read the items and answer options, and that the student needs to read the passage on their own.
A student finds the TTS distracting.	Clarify that students are never required to have TTS read the items or answer options. Students have the option to choose whether to select the TTS feature.
A student in Grade 3 asks why some items on their RC-CAT form do not offer TTS, unlike other parts of the test.	Prompt the student to try their best on that portion of the test by reading the item text themselves. You may explain that this feature is not available for some parts of the test.
A student in Grade 4 or up asks why a passage on the RC-CAT form has a TTS option that was not available for other passages.	Prompt the student to continue the test. You may explain that some parts of the test have this feature added.
A student asks if they can change the TTS settings (talking speed).	Administrators may allow students to modify their TTS settings but should make note to check in on the student and make sure they are making adequate progress through the test.

FAQ

Does the new TTS feature on RC tests make it more of a listening comprehension test than a measure of reading?

The RC test is designed to evaluate students' understanding of the passages, not their ability to read the questions. Therefore, TTS is disabled for the passages to ensure that students engage in active reading. The questions are crafted to require a thorough reading and comprehension of the passage to select the correct answer. It is not possible to confidently answer any question by reading the question alone.

Will this change make the test significantly easier?

Allowing students to use the TTS feature for questions does not simplify the task of reading and understanding the passage itself. While the new feature might make certain aspects of the test experience more accessible, its primary goal is to reduce confusion and testing errors unrelated to assessing reading comprehension skills. For instance, aimswebPlus RC questions and answer options are already crafted in simple and clear language to ensure students can easily understand them. By minimizing misunderstandings about what a question is asking, we can be more confident that a student's answer truly reflects their comprehension of the passage.

Are the new Reading Comprehension norms still valid with the new TTS feature?

Yes, the new Reading Comprehension norms remain valid with the inclusion of the TTS feature. Based on the test design, the wider availability of TTS for reading test questions should not significantly impact the overall trends in RC scores on which the new norms are based. Our team will continue to closely monitor scores throughout the school year for any statistically significant impacts.

Can we disable the TTS feature for our general education students?

At this time, the aimswebPlus RC measure does not provide an administrative option to disable the TTS feature for all students' forms. If you do not want students to utilize the feature, we recommend directing students to not use the feature at the beginning of the test session.