

Special Considerations for Administering the Smarter Balanced Assessments through the Braille Interface

For 2015-16, both the Smarter Balanced Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) assessments will be available through the Braille Interface for students who read Braille. However, there are some important considerations that test administrators should keep in mind when preparing students to take the Smarter Balanced assessments through the Braille Interface.

Considerations for the Smarter Balanced Mathematics Assessment

The Braille interface for the Smarter Balanced assessments does not include an equation editor. A Braille-accessible equation editor simply does not currently exist. AIR is in the process of developing one, but this endeavor is at least one year from completion and will not be available during the 2015-16 testing window.

For those test items on the Smarter Balanced Mathematics Assessment that require the student to enter an equation as part of their response, students testing through the Braille Interface will enter their response in a text box, and the answers will be scored by human scorers. Scorers will be trained to accept any comprehensible rendering of the answer, for example, “ $4+3 = 7$ ”, “four plus 3= seven,” etc.

ODE strongly encourages that TAs provide students with ample opportunity to practice using the Smarter Balanced Mathematics Practice Test to ensure they are comfortable with this response mode. As students practice, please keep the following tips in mind:

- Students should use parentheses to group terms together where the standard order of operations is not what they intend. For example $(4+3)*2$ is different than $4+3*2$.
- Students can use the word “over” to indicate fractions. For example $\frac{x+y}{z}$ can be expressed as “(x+y) over z.”
- Trigonometric functions can be represented in their usual way, for example “sin(x),” though scorers will be trained to accept “sine of x” as well.
- We have made every effort to facilitate direct entry by the student.

To the greatest extent possible, the Braille Interface is designed to facilitate direct entry by the student. However, consistent with Smarter Balanced policy, the [Oregon Accessibility Manual](#) (OAM) offers the non-embedded designated support of a scribe for those individual students who would benefit. As described in Table 4 SB: Non-embedded Designated Supports, this designated support allows students to dictate their responses to a human who records verbatim what they dictate. Please refer to the OAM for full details around scribe training and qualification requirements and scribe protocols that must be followed during test administration.

In addition, when taking the Smarter Balanced Mathematics Assessment, consistent with the OAM, Students with visual impairments who are unable to use the embedded calculator for calculator-allowed items will be able to use the calculator that they typically use, such as a braille calculator or a talking calculator. Test administrators should ensure that the calculator is available only for designated calculator items denoted by a calculator icon on the test screen. (Note: the embedded calculator is not accessible through the Braille Interface). For more information, please refer to Table 6 SB Non-embedded Accommodations of the OAM.

Considerations for the Smarter Balanced ELA Assessment

New for 2015-2016, the Smarter Balanced English Language Arts (ELA) assessment will include a text-to-speech audio component for items delivered through the JAWS screen reader. Text-to-speech for ELA passages is available through the JAWS screen reader as an accommodation. Students must use JAWS 16 to take advantage of this new feature.