

Rhode Island and Vermont Multi-State Science Assessment

2020–2021

Volume 5: Test Administration



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1. TEST ADMINISTRATION

1.1 TESTING WINDOWS

The 2020–2021 Multi-State Science Assessment (MSSA) testing windows spanned approximately one month for the summative assessment in Rhode Island and two and a half months in Vermont. The paper-pencil fixed-form tests for summative assessments were administered concurrently during the online summative windows for each state.

1.2 TEST OPTIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES

The Rhode Island Next Generation Science Assessments (RI NGSA) and the Vermont Science Assessments (VTSA) are administered primarily online. To ensure that all eligible students in the tested grades were given the opportunity to take the 2020–2021 summative assessments, a number of options were available to accommodate students' needs. Table 1 lists the testing options that were offered for the 2020–2021 administration. Once a testing option was selected, it applied to all tests in the content area.

Table 1. Summary of Tests and Testing Options in 2020–2021

Assessments	Testing Options	Test Mode
Summative	English	Online
	Braille	Online
	Spanish (Toggle)	Online
	Paper-Pencil Large Print Fixed-Form Test*	Paper-Pencil
	Paper-Pencil Braille Fixed-Form Test*	Paper-Pencil
	Paper-Pencil Fixed-Form Test*	Paper-Pencil

Note. For the paper-pencil fixed-form tests, all student responses were entered into the Data Entry Interface (DEI) by test administrators.

To ensure standardized administration conditions and that teachers (TEs) and test administrators (TAs) follow procedures outlined in the *Rhode Island Next Generation Science Assessment Test Administration Manual* (TAM) and the *Vermont Science Assessment TAM*, TEs and TAs must review the TAM prior to the beginning of testing to ensure that the testing room is prepared appropriately (e.g., removing certain classroom posters, arranging desks). Make-up procedures should be established for any students who are absent on testing day(s). TEs and TAs follow required administration procedures and directions and read the boxed directions verbatim to students, ensuring standardized administration conditions.

1.2.1 Administrative Roles

The key personnel involved with the test administration for the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) are District Administrators (DAs), School Test Coordinators (SCs), TEs, and TAs. The main responsibilities of these key personnel are described in the following subsections.

More detailed descriptions can be found in the TAM provided online at this URL <https://ri.portal.cambiumast.com/resources>.

The key personnel involved with the test administration for the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) are DAs, District Test Coordinators (DCs), SCs, TEs, and TAs. The main responsibilities of these key personnel are described in the following subsections. More detailed descriptions can be found in the TAM provided online at this URL: <https://vt.portal.cambiumast.com/resources>.

District Administrator

The DA may add users with DC roles in the Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE). For example, a director of special education may need DC privileges in TIDE to access district-level data for the purposes of verifying test settings for designated supports and accommodations. DAs have the same test administration responsibilities as DCs. Their primary responsibility is to coordinate the administration of the RI NGSA and VTSA in their district.

District Test Coordinator

The DC is primarily responsible for coordinating the administration of the VTSA at the district level in Vermont. In Rhode Island, the activities listed in this subsection are the responsibility of the DA for the RI NGSA.

DCs (Vermont) and DAs (Rhode Island) are responsible for the following tasks:

- Reviewing all RI NGSA and VTSA policies and test administration documents
- Reviewing scheduling and test requirements with SCs, TEs, and TAs
- Working with SCs and Technology Coordinators (TCs) to ensure that all systems, including the CAI Secure Browser, are properly installed and functional
- Importing users (including SCs, TEs, and TAs) into TIDE
- Verifying all student information and eligibility in TIDE
- Scheduling and administering training sessions for all SCs, TEs, TAs, and TCs
- Ensuring that all personnel are trained on how to properly administer the RI NGSA and VTSA
- Monitoring the secure administration of the tests
- Investigating and reporting all testing improprieties, irregularities, and breaches reported by the TEs and TAs
- Attending to any secure material according to RIDE and VT AOE policies

School Test Coordinator

The SC is primarily responsible for coordinating the administration of the RI NGSA and VTSA at the school level and ensuring that testing within his or her school is conducted in accordance with

the test procedures and security policies established by the RIDE and VT AOE. SC responsibilities include the following:

- Establishing a testing schedule with DAs, DCs, TEs, and TAs based on test administration windows
- Working with technology staff to ensure timely computer setup and installation
- Working with TEs and TAs to review student information in TIDE to ensure that student information and test settings for designated supports and accommodations are correctly applied
- Identifying students who may require designated supports and test accommodations and ensuring that procedures for testing these students follow RIDE and VT AOE policies
- Attending all district trainings and reviewing all RIDE and VT AOE policies and test administration documents
- Ensuring that all TEs and TAs attend school or district trainings and review online training modules posted on the portal
- Establishing secure and separate testing rooms if needed
- Downloading and planning the administration of classroom activity with TEs and TAs
- Monitoring secure administration of the tests
- Monitoring testing progress during the testing window and ensuring that all students participate, as appropriate
- Investigating and reporting all testing improprieties, irregularities, and breaches reported by the TEs and TAs
- Attending to any secure material according to RIDE and VT AOE policies

Teacher

A TE who is responsible for administering the RI NGSA and VTSA must have the same qualifications as a TA. TEs also have the same test administration responsibilities as TAs. TEs are able to view their own students' results when they are made available. This role may also be assigned to teachers who do not administer the test but will need access to student results.

Test Administrator

A TA is primarily responsible for administering the RI NGSA and VTSA. The TA's role does not allow access to student results and is designed for TAs, such as technology staff, who administer tests but do not have access to student results.

TAs are responsible for the following:

- Completing RI NGSA and VTSA test administration training

- Reviewing all RIDE and VT AOE policy and test administration documents before administering any RI NGSA and VTSA assessments
- Viewing student information before testing to ensure that a student receives the proper test with the appropriate supports and reporting any potential data errors to SCs and DCs, as appropriate
- Administering the RI NGSA and VTSA assessments
- Reporting all potential test security incidents to the SCs and DCs in a manner consistent with RIDE, VT AOE, and district policies

1.2.2 Online Test Administration

Within Rhode Island’s and Vermont’s testing windows, schools can set testing schedules, allowing students to test in intervals (e.g., multiple sessions) rather than in one long test period, minimizing the interruption of classroom instruction and efficiently utilizing its facility. With online testing, schools do not need to handle test booklets and address the storage and security problems inherent in large shipments of materials to a school site.

SCs oversee all aspects of testing at their schools and serve as the main point of contact, while TEs and TAs administer the online assessments only. TEs and TAs are trained in the online testing requirements and the mechanics of starting, pausing, and ending a test session. Training materials for test administration are provided online.

To start a test session, the TE or TA must first enter the TA Interface of the online testing system using his or her own computer. A session ID is generated when the test session is created. Students who are taking the assessment with the TE or TA must enter their State Student Identification Number (SSID), first name, and session ID into the Student Interface using computers provided by the school. The TE or TA then verifies that the students are taking the appropriate assessments with the appropriate accessibility feature(s) (see Section 5 for a list of accommodations). Students can begin testing only when the TA or TE confirms the settings. The TA or TE then reads the text in the *Administer the Session* section in the Rhode Island TAM or the *Directions for Administration* section in the Vermont TAM aloud to the student(s) and guides them through the login process.

In Vermont, skipping questions is not permitted. Once an assessment is started, the student must answer the test question presented on a page before proceeding to the next page. In Rhode Island, students are not required to respond to all test questions on a page before proceeding to the next page. For online assessments, students are allowed to scroll back to review and edit previously answered items, as long as these items are in the same test session and this session has not been paused for more than 20 minutes. Students may review and edit responses they have previously provided before submitting the assessment. During an active online test session, if a student reviews and changes the response to a previously answered item, then all items that follow to which the student already responded remain the same. If a student changes the answers, no new items are assigned. For example, a student pauses for 10 minutes after completing Item 10. After the pause, the student goes back to Item 5 and changes the answer. If the response change in Item 5 changes the item score from wrong to right, the student’s overall score will improve; however, there will be no change in Items 6–10.

The summative assessment is delivered in two separate sessions. The online assessment must be completed within 45 calendar days of the start date or the assessment opportunity will expire.

During a test session, TEs or TAs may pause the test for a student or group of students to take a break. It is up to the TEs or TAs to determine an appropriate stopping point; however, to ensure the integrity of test scores and testing, the online test cannot be paused for more than 30 minutes. If that happens, the student must restart a new test session, which starts from where the student left off. The viewing and editing of previous responses are no longer available.

The TAs or TEs must remain in the room at all times during a test session to monitor student testing. Once the test session ends, the TAs or TEs must ensure that each student has successfully logged out of the system. Then the TAs or TEs must collect any handouts or scratch paper that students used during the assessment and send these materials for secure shredding.

1.2.3 Paper-Pencil Test Administration

The paper-pencil versions of the RI NGSA and VTSA are provided as an accommodation for students who do not have access to a computer and for students who are visually impaired.

The DA (Rhode Island) or DC (Vermont) must order the accommodated test materials on behalf of the students who need to take the paper-pencil test via TIDE. Based on the paper-pencil orders submitted in TIDE, the testing contractor ships the appropriate test booklets and the Paper-Pencil TAM to the district.

After the student has completed the assessment, the TEs and TAs enter the student responses into the DEI and return the test booklets to the testing vendor. The tests submitted via the DEI are then scored.

1.2.4 Braille Test Administration

The fixed-form braille test is available with the same test blueprint in science.

The braille interface is as follows:

- The braille interface includes a text-to-speech (TTS) component for mathematics consistent with the read-aloud assessment accommodation. The Job Access with Speech (JAWS) screen-reading software provided by Freedom Scientific is an essential component that students use with the braille interface.
- Science items are presented to students in Unified English Braille (UEB) Contracted with Nemeth Braille Code.

Before administering the online summative assessments using the braille interface, TEs or TAs must ensure that technical requirements are met. These requirements apply to the student's computer, the TE's or TA's computer, and any supporting braille technologies used in conjunction with the braille interface.

2. TRAINING AND INFORMATION FOR TEST COORDINATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

District Administrators (DAs), District Test Coordinators (DCs), and School Test Coordinators (SCs) oversee all aspects of testing at their schools and serve as the main points of contact, while teachers (TEs) and test administrators (TAs) administer the online assessments. The online TA Certification Course, webinars, user guides, manuals, and training sites are used to train TEs and TAs in the online testing requirements and the mechanics of starting, pausing, and ending a test session. Training materials for test administration are provided online.

2.1 ONLINE TRAINING

Multiple online training opportunities are offered to key staff.

2.1.1 TA Certification Course

CAI's online TA Certification Course is available as an optional course to any user in the Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE). This web-based course is about 30–45 minutes long and covers information on testing policies and steps for administering a test session in the online system. The course is interactive, requiring participants to start test sessions under different scenarios. Throughout the training and at the end of the course, participants are required to answer multiple-choice questions about the information provided.

2.1.2 Practice Site

In October 2018, a practice site was opened for TEs, TAs, and students. TEs and TAs can practice administering assessments and starting and ending test sessions on the TA Training Site, and students can practice taking a short online assessment on the Student Practice and Training Site. The Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) assessment practice tests contain the same item types (e.g., stand-alone items, item clusters) students will encounter on the Rhode Island Next Generation Science Assessments (RI NGSA) and Vermont Science Assessments (VTSA) summative assessments. The practice tests are designed to provide students and teachers with opportunities to quickly familiarize themselves with the software and navigational tools they will use for the upcoming summative assessments. Practice tests are organized by grades (i.e., grades 5, 8, and 11).

A student can log in directly to the Student Practice and Training Site as a guest without a TA-generated test session ID, or the student can log in through a practice test session created by the TE or TA.

2.1.3 Manuals and User Guides

The following manuals and user guides are available on the Rhode Island and Vermont portals, respectively: <https://ri.portal.cambiumast.com> and <https://vt.portal.cambiumast.com/>.

The *Test Coordinator Manual (TCM)* provides information for DAs, DCs, and SCs regarding policies and procedures for the 2021 RI NGSA and VTSA summative assessments.

The *Test Administration Manual (TAM)* provides information for TEs and TAs administering the RI NGSA and VTSA online summative assessments. It includes screenshots and step-by-step instructions on how to administer the online tests.

The *Assistive Technology Manual* provides technical specification information and additional configuration instructions for assistive technology tools that can be used by students with special accessibility needs for online testing. It includes information for testing with Predictive Text tools, Alternative Computer Input tools, Assistive Keyboard tools, Screen Magnifier tools, Voice Packs, and braille technology.

The *Quick Guide for Setting Up Online Testing Technology* acts as a “driver” document for technology coordinators to set up TA and student workstations and configure network and assistive technologies.

The *TIDE User Guide* is designed to help users navigate TIDE. Users can find information on managing user account information, student account information, student test settings and accommodations, appeals, and voice packs.

The *TA User Guide* is designed to help users navigate the Test Delivery System (TDS), including the Student Interface and the TA Interface, and help TEs and TAs manage and administer online testing for students.

The *Reporting System User Guide* provides instructions and support for users viewing assessment performance reports in the Reporting System.

All manuals and user guides pertaining to the 2020–2021 online testing were available on the portal, and DAs, DCs, and SCs used the manuals and user guides to train TAs and TEs in test administration policies and procedures.

2.1.4 Brochures and Quick Guides

The following brochures and quick guides are available on the Rhode Island and Vermont portals, respectively, <https://ri.portal.cambiumast.com> and <https://vt.portal.cambiumast.com/>.

How to Access the Data Entry Interface: This brochure describes how to access the Data Entry Interface (DEI) to submit the RI NGSA and VTSA paper-pencil tests.

User Role Permissions for Online Systems Brochure: This brochure outlines the user roles and permissions for each secure online testing system used to administer the online assessments for Vermont. These systems include: TIDE, the TA Interface, the DEI, the Assessment Viewing Application (AVA), and the Reporting System.

Understanding and Creating Rosters: Rosters are groups of students associated with a teacher in a particular school. Rosters typically represent entire classrooms in lower grades, or individual classroom periods in upper grades. This document provides instructions for how to create, view, and modify rosters in TIDE and in the Reporting System.

2.2 DISTRICT TEST COORDINATOR TRAINING WORKSHOPS

DA training workshops were held on November 2-6, 2020, in four different online webinar sessions for Vermont. A test coordinator training webinar was held on February 3, 2021 for Rhode Island. Training was provided for the administration of the RI NGSA and VTSA assessments. During the training, DA and DCs were provided with information to support training of the SCs, TEs, and TAs.

3. TEST SECURITY

All test items, test materials, and student-level testing information are considered secure materials for all assessments. The importance of maintaining test security and the integrity of test items is stressed throughout the webinar trainings and in the user guides, modules, and manuals. Features in the testing system also protect test security. This section describes system security, student confidentiality, and policies on testing improprieties.

3.1 STUDENT-LEVEL TESTING CONFIDENTIALITY

All secure websites and software systems enforce role-based security models that protect individual privacy and confidentiality in a manner consistent with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other federal laws. Secure transmission and password-protected access are basic features of the current system and ensure authorized data access. All aspects of the system—including item development and review, test delivery, and reporting—are secured by password-protected logins. Our systems use role-based security models that ensure that users may access only the data to which they are entitled and may edit data only in accordance with their user rights.

The following are the three dimensions related to ensuring that students are accessing appropriate test content:

1. *Test eligibility* refers to the assignment of a test to a particular student.
2. *Test accommodation* refers to the assignment of a test setting to specific students based on needs.
3. *Test session* refers to the authentication process of a teacher (TE) or test administrator (TA) creating and managing a test session, the TE or TA reviewing and approving a test (and its settings) for every student, and the student signing on to take the test.

FERPA prohibits public disclosure of student information or test results. The following are examples of prohibited practices:

- Providing login information (username and password) to other authorized Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE) users or to unauthorized individuals
- Sending a student's name and State Student Identification Number (SSID) number together in an email message; if information must be sent via email or fax, include only the SSID number, not the student's name

- Having students log in and test under another student’s SSID number

Test materials and score reports should not be exposed to identify student names with test scores except by authorized individuals with an appropriate need to know.

All students, including homeschooled students, must be enrolled or registered at their testing schools in order to take the online, paper-pencil, or braille assessments. In Rhode Island, student enrollment information, including demographic data, is generated using a Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) file and uploaded nightly via a secured file transfer site to TIDE. In Vermont, it is the responsibility of the District Administrator (DA) to enter student information into TIDE.

Students log in to the online assessment using their legal first name, SSID number, and a test session ID. Only students can log in to an online test session. TEs, TAs, proctors, or other personnel are not permitted to log in to the system on behalf of students, although they are permitted to assist students who need help logging in. For the paper-pencil versions of the assessments, TEs and TAs are required to affix the student label to the student’s answer document.

After a test session, only staff with the administrative roles of DA, District Test Coordinator (DC), School Test Coordinator (SC), or TE can view their students’ scores. TAs do not have access to student scores.

3.2 SYSTEM SECURITY

The objective of system security is to ensure that all data are protected and accessed appropriately by the designated user groups. It is about protecting data and maintaining data and system integrity as intended, including ensuring that all personal information is secured, that transferred data (whether sent or received) is not altered in any way, that the data source is known, and that any service can be performed only by a specific, designated user.

A Hierarchy of Control: As described in Section 2.2, District Test Coordinator Workshops, all DAs, DCs, SCs, TAs, and TEs have defined roles and levels of access to the testing system. When the TIDE testing window opens, the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) and RIDE provide a verified list of DAs to the testing contractor, who uploads the information into TIDE. DAs are then responsible for selecting and entering the DC’s and SC’s information into TIDE, and the SC is responsible for entering TA and TE information into TIDE. Throughout the year, the DA, DC, and SC are also expected to delete in TIDE any information for staff members who have transferred to other schools, resigned, or no longer serve as TAs or TEs.

Password Protection: All access points by different roles—at the state, district, school principal, and school staff levels—require a password to log in to the system. Newly added SCs, TAs, and TEs receive separate passwords assigned by the school through their personal email addresses.

Secure Browser: A key role of the Technology Coordinator (TC) is to ensure that the CAI Secure Browser is properly installed on the computers used for the administration of the online assessments. Developed by the testing contractor, the Secure Browser prevents students from accessing other computers or Internet applications and from copying test information. The Secure Browser suppresses access to commonly used browsers, such as Internet Explorer and Firefox, and prevents students from searching for answers on the Internet or communicating with other

students. The assessments can be accessed only through the Secure Browser and not by other Internet browsers.

3.3 SECURITY OF THE TESTING ENVIRONMENT

3.3.1 Duties of Testing Personnel

The SCs, TEs, and TAs work together to determine appropriate testing schedules based on the number of computers available, the number of students in each tested grade, and the average amount of time needed to complete each assessment.

Testing personnel are reminded in the online training and user manuals that assessments should be administered in testing rooms that do not crowd students. Good lighting, ventilation, and freedom from noise and interruption are important factors to consider when selecting testing rooms.

TEs and TAs must establish procedures to maintain a quiet environment during each test session and recognize that some students may finish quicker than others. If students are allowed to leave the testing room when they finish, TEs or TAs are required to explain the procedures for leaving and where students are expected to report once they leave without disrupting others. If students are expected to remain in the testing room until the end of the session, TEs or TAs are encouraged to prepare some quiet work for students to do after they finish the assessment.

If a student needs to leave the room for a brief time during testing, the TAs or TEs are required to pause the student's assessment. For the online test, if the pause lasts longer than 20 minutes, the student can continue with the rest of the assessment in a new test session, but the system will not allow the student to return to the items answered before the pause. This measure is implemented to prevent students from using the time outside of the testing room to look up answers.

3.3.2 Room Preparation

The room should be prepared prior to the start of the test session. Any information displayed on bulletin boards, chalkboards, or charts that students might use to help answer test questions should be removed or covered. This rule applies to rubrics, vocabulary charts, student work, posters, graphs, content area strategies charts, and other materials. The testing personnel's and students' phones must be turned off and stored in the testing room out of sight. TAs are encouraged to minimize access to the testing rooms by posting signs in halls and entrances in order to promote optimum testing conditions; they should also post "TESTING—DO NOT DISTURB" signs on the doors of testing rooms.

3.3.3 Seating Arrangements

TEs and TAs should provide adequate space between students' seats. Students should be seated so that they will not be tempted to look at the answers of others. Because the online test is linear-on-the-fly (LOFT), it is unlikely that students will see the same test questions as other students; however, through appropriate seating arrangements, students should be discouraged from communicating with each other.

3.3.4 After the Test

At the end of the test session, TEs or TAs must walk through the classroom to pick up any scratch paper that students used and any papers that display students' SSID numbers and names together. These materials should be securely shredded or stored in a locked area immediately.

For the paper-pencil versions, specific instructions on how to package and secure the test booklets to be returned to the testing contractor's office are provided in the *Paper and Pencil Test Administration Manual*.

3.3.5 Test Security Violations

Everyone who administers or proctors the assessments is responsible for understanding the security procedures for administering them. Prohibited practices as detailed in the *Rhode Island Next Generation Science Assessment Test Administration Manual* and *Vermont Science Assessment Test Administration Manual* are categorized into the following three groups:

1. *Impropriety*: This is a test security incident that has a low impact on the individual or group of students who are testing and has a low risk of potentially affecting student performance on the test, test security, or test validity (for example: student[s] leaving the testing room without authorization).
2. *Irregularity*: This is a test security incident that impacts an individual or group of students who are testing and may potentially affect student performance on the test, test security, or test validity. These circumstances can be contained at the local level (e.g., disruption during the test session, such as a fire drill).
3. *Breach*: This is a test security incident that poses a threat to the validity of the test. Breaches require immediate attention and escalation to the RIDE or Vermont AOE. Examples may include such situations as exposure of secure materials or a repeatable security/system risk. These circumstances have external implications (for example: administrators modifying student answers, or students sharing test items through social media).

District and school personnel are required to document all test security incidents in the test security incident log. The log serves as the document of record for all test security incidents and should be maintained at the district level and submitted to the RIDE or VT AOE at the end of testing.

4. STUDENT PARTICIPATION

4.1 ELIGIBILITY

All students (including retained students) currently enrolled in grades 5, 8, and 11 at public schools in Rhode Island and Vermont are required to participate in the Rhode Island Next Generation Science Assessments (RI NGSA) and the Vermont Science Assessments (VTSA), respectively. Students must be tested in the enrolled grade assessment; out-of-grade-level testing is not allowed for the administration of summative assessments.

4.2 HOMESCHOOLED STUDENTS

Students who are homeschooled may participate in the RI NGSA and VTSA assessments at the request of their parent or guardian. Schools must provide these students with one testing opportunity for each relevant content area, if requested.

4.3 EXEMPT STUDENTS

Students who have a significant medical emergency are exempt from participating in the RI NGSA and VTSA assessments.

5. ONLINE TESTING FEATURES AND TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

In Rhode Island, the *Rhode Island State Assessment Program (RISAP) Comprehensive Accessibility and Accommodations Manual* is intended for school-level personnel and decision-making teams, including Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Section 504 Plan teams, as they prepare for and implement the Rhode Island Next Generation Science Assessment (RI NGSA). The *Manual* provides information for classroom teachers, English language development educators, special education teachers, and instructional assistants to use in selecting and administering universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations for those students who need them. The *Manual* is also intended for assessment staff and administrators who oversee the decisions that are made in instruction and assessment.

The *Manual* applies to all students. It emphasizes an individualized approach to the implementation of assessment practices for those students who have diverse needs and participate in large-scale content assessments, focusing on universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations for the RI NGSA. At the same time, the *Manual* supports important instructional decisions about accessibility and accommodations for students who participate in the RI NGSA.

The summative assessments contain accessibility features and accommodations in both embedded and non-embedded versions. Embedded resources are part of the computer administration system, whereas non-embedded resources are provided outside of that system.

State-level users, District Administrators (DAs), and School Test Coordinators (SCs) have the ability to set embedded and non-embedded designated supports and accommodations based on their specific user role. Accommodations must be set in the Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE) before starting a test session.

All embedded and non-embedded accessibility features will be activated for use by all students during a test session. One or more of the pre-selected accessibility features can be deactivated by a teacher (TE) or /test administrator (TA) in the TA Interface of the testing system for a student who may be distracted by the ability to access a specific tool during a test session.

For additional information about the availability of accessibility features and accommodations, refer to the *Manual* for complete information at: https://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Instruction-and-Assessment-World-Class-Standards/Assessment/Accommodations/RISAP_AAF_Manual_2021-22.pdf?ver=2021-08-17-132052-037.

In Vermont, the *Vermont Science Assessments (VTSA) Accessibility Guide* is intended for school-level personnel and decision-making teams, including IEP and Section 504 Plan teams, as they prepare for and implement the VTSA. The *Guide* provides information for classroom teachers, English language development educators, special education teachers, and instructional assistants to use in selecting and administering universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations for those students who need them. The *Guide* is also intended for assessment staff and administrators who oversee the decisions that are made in instruction and assessment.

The *Guide* applies to all students. It emphasizes an individualized approach to the implementation of assessment practices for those students who have diverse needs and participate in large-scale content assessments. The *Guide* focuses on universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations. At the same time, the *Guide* supports important instructional decisions about accessibility and accommodations for students who participate in the VTSA.

The summative assessments contain universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations in both embedded and non-embedded versions. Embedded resources are part of the computer administration system, whereas non-embedded resources are provided outside of that system.

State-level users, DAs, District Test Coordinators (DCs), and SCs have the ability to set embedded and non-embedded designated supports and accommodations based on their specific user role. Designated supports and accommodations must be set in TIDE before starting a test session.

All embedded and non-embedded accessibility features will be activated for use by all students during a test session. One or more of the pre-selected accessibility features can be deactivated by a TE or TA in the TA Interface of the testing system for a student who may be distracted by the ability to access a specific tool during a test session.

For additional information about the availability of accessibility features and accommodations, refer to the *Guide* for complete information at: https://vt.portal.cambiumast.com/-/media/project/client-portals/vermont/pdf/2021/vtsa_accessibility_manual_final.pdf.

5.1 ONLINE ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES UNIVERSAL TOOLS FOR ALL STUDENTS

Universal tools and accessibility features are access features of an assessment or exam that are embedded or non-embedded components of the test administration system. Universal tools and accessibility features are available to all students based on their preference and selection and have been pre-set in TIDE. In the 2018–2019 test administration, the following features of universal tools and accessibility features were available for all students to access. For specific information on how to access and use these features, refer to the *Student Interface User Guide* for the Test Delivery System (TDS) at this URL for Rhode Island: <https://ri.portal.cambiumast.com/> and the *TA User Guide* at this URL for Vermont: <https://vt.portal.cambiumast.com/>.

5.1.1 Embedded Accessibility Features for Rhode Island

The following are embedded accessibility features for Rhode Island assessments:

Answer Masking: With this feature, students may block off content that is not of immediate need or that may be distracting. Students can focus their attention on a specific part of a test item by

masking. Masking allows students to hide and reveal individual answer options, as well as all navigational buttons and menus.

Breaks: With this accommodation, the number of items per session can be flexibly defined based on students' needs. Breaks of more than 20 minutes will prevent students from returning to items already attempted unless an appeal for a "test re-open" is requested by the DA. There is no limit on the number of breaks that students might be given. The use of this universal tool may result in the students' needing additional time to complete the assessment.

Calculator: This is the Desmos Calculator, which is available for all students taking the RI NGSA in grades 5, 8, and 11. Students may use a hand-held calculator (per the calculator descriptions stated in this manual) as a non-embedded universal tool.

Color Contrast: This feature is available because students may adjust screen background or font color based on needs or preferences. This may include reversing the colors for the entire Student Interface or choosing the color of font and background; options include Black on White; Yellow on Blue; Medium Gray on Light Gray; or Reverse Contrast.

Digital Notepad: Students may use this tool to make notes about an item. The digital notepad is item-specific and is available through the end of the test segment. Notes are not saved when the student moves on to the next segment or after a break of more than 20 minutes.

Expandable Passages: With this feature, students may expand passages or stimuli so that they take up a larger portion of the screen.

Highlighter: Students may use this tool to mark desired text, item questions, item answers, or parts of these with a color. Highlighted text remains available throughout each test segment.

Keyboard Navigation: With this tool, students may navigate through the test by using a keyboard. Students are provided with a document titled *Keyboard Commands for Students* that explains the various keystrokes.

Line Reader: With this tool, the student uses an onscreen universal tool to assist in reading by raising and lowering the tool, allowing the student to focus on a single line of text on the screen.

Magnification: Students may use this tool to enlarge text or graphics in a window or frame. The default size for all tests is 14-point font. Students can enlarge text and graphics using the Zoom In button or return to the default size using the Zoom Out button. The Zoom feature changes the size of text and graphics on the current screen only. To increase the default print size of the entire test (from 1.5X to 3.0X default size), the print size must be set for the student in TIDE prior to the start of the test. This is the only feature that TAs can set. The use of this universal tool may result in the students needing additional time to complete the assessment.

Mark Question for Review: Students may use this tool to flag items for future review during the assessment. Markings are not saved when the student moves on to the next segment or after a break of more than 20 minutes.

Mouse Pointer (Size and Color): With this feature, students may request that the size and color of the mouse pointer be changed. A TA sets the size and color of the mouse pointer before testing.

Streamline Mode: This accommodation provides a streamlined interface of the test in an alternate, simplified format in which the items are displayed below the stimuli.

Strikethrough: With this feature, students may cross out answer options. If an answer option is an image, a strikethrough line will not appear, but the image will be grayed out.

5.1.2 Embedded Universal Tools for Vermont

The following are embedded accessibility features for Vermont assessments:

Breaks: With this accommodation, the number of items per session can be flexibly defined based on students' needs. Breaks of more than 20 minutes will prevent students from returning to items already attempted unless an appeal for a test-reopen is requested by the DA. There is no limit on the number of breaks that students might be given. The use of this universal tool may result in the students' needing additional time to complete the assessment.

Desmos Calculator: This tool is available for all students taking the VTSA in grades 5, 8, and 11. Students may use a hand-held calculator (per the calculator descriptions stated in this manual) as a non-embedded universal tool.

Digital Notepad: Students may use this tool to make notes about an item. The digital notepad is item-specific and is available through the end of the test segment. Notes are not saved when the student moves on to the next segment or after a break of more than 20 minutes.

Expandable Passages: With this feature, students may expand passages or stimuli so that they take up a larger portion of the screen.

Highlighter: Students may use this tool to mark desired text, item questions, item answers, or parts of these with a color. Highlighted text remains available throughout each test segment.

Keyboard Navigation: With this feature, students may navigate through the test by using a keyboard. Students are provided with a document called *Keyboard Commands for Students* that explains the various keystrokes.

Line Reader: With this tool, the student uses an onscreen universal tool to assist in reading by raising and lowering the tool, allowing the student to focus on a single line of text on the screen.

Mark a Question for Review: Students may use this tool to flag items for future review during the assessment. Markings are not saved when the student moves on to the next segment or after a break of more than 20 minutes.

Strikethrough: Students may use this tool to cross out answer options. If an answer option is an image, a strikethrough line will not appear, but the image will be grayed out.

Zoom: Students may use this tool to enlarge text or graphics in a window or frame. The default size for all tests is 14-point font. Students can enlarge text and graphics using the Zoom In button or return to the default size using the Zoom Out button. The Zoom feature changes the size of text and graphics on the current screen only. To increase the default print size of the entire test (from 1.5X to 3.0X default size), the print size must be set for the student in TIDE prior to the start of

the test. This is the only feature that TAs can set. The use of this universal tool may result in the student's needing additional time to complete the assessment.

5.1.3 Non-Embedded Accessibility Features for Rhode Island

The following are non-embedded accessibility features for Rhode Island assessments:

Breaks: With this accommodation, breaks may be given at predetermined intervals or after completion of sections of the assessment for students taking a paper-pencil test. Sometimes, students are allowed to take breaks when individually needed in order to reduce cognitive fatigue when they experience heavy assessment demands. The use of this universal tool may result in the student needing additional overall time to complete the assessment.

Extended Time: With this accommodation, students should be allowed to continue testing as long as they are working productively.

Note Pad or Scratch Paper: With this accommodation, scratch paper may be provided to make notes, write computations, or record responses. Line, unlined, graphing paper, or other blank paper may be provided to any student.

5.1.4 Non-Embedded Universal Tools for Vermont

The following is the non-embedded accessibility feature for Vermont assessments:

Breaks: With this accommodation, breaks may be given at predetermined intervals or after completion of sections of the assessment for students taking a paper-pencil test. Sometimes, students are allowed to take breaks when individually needed in order to reduce cognitive fatigue when they experience heavy assessment demands. The use of this accommodation may result in the student needing additional overall time to complete the assessment.

5.2 DESIGNATED SUPPORTS

Designated supports for the VTSA are features available for use by any student for whom the need has been indicated by an educator (or team of educators with parent/guardian and student input). Scores achieved by students using designated supports will be included for federal accountability purposes. It is recommended that a consistent process be used to determine these supports for individual students. All educators making these decisions should be trained on the process and should understand the range of designated supports available. Vermont has identified digitally embedded and non-embedded designated supports for students for whom an adult or team has indicated a need for the support.

5.2.1 Embedded Designated Supports for Vermont

The following are embedded designated supports for Vermont assessments:

Color Contrast: This feature is available because students may adjust screen background or font color based on needs or preferences. This may include reversing the colors for the entire Student Interface or choosing the color of font and background; options include Black on White; Yellow on Blue; Medium Gray on Light Gray; or Reverse Contrast.

Masking: With this tool, students may block off content that is not of immediate need or that may be distracting. Students can focus their attention on a specific part of a test item by masking. Masking allows students to hide and reveal individual answer options, as well as all navigational buttons and menus.

Mouse Pointer (Size and Color): With this feature, students may request that the size and color of the mouse pointer be changed. A TA sets the size and color of the mouse pointer before testing.

Permissive Mode: With this feature, students can use accessibility software, such as screen readers or magnifiers, during testing.

Spanish Presentation (Toggle): This accommodation makes Spanish translations, a language support, available for select Spanish-speaking students. The item is presented in Spanish, but there is a button students can select that will enable them to toggle to the English version of the item translation. For students whose primary language is not English and who use dual language supports in the classroom, the use of the translation may be appropriate. This support should be used only for students who are proficient readers in Spanish but are not proficient in English.

Streamline: This accommodation provides a streamlined interface of the test in an alternate, simplified format in which the items are displayed below the stimuli.

Text-to-Speech: With this accommodation, students may have the text read aloud via embedded text-to-speech (TTS) technology. The student can control the speed, as well as raise or lower the volume of the voice via a volume control.

Turn Off Any Universal Tools: With this, students can ask the TA to disable any universal tools that might be distracting, that students do not need to use, or that students are unable to use while they are testing.

5.2.2 Non-Embedded Designated Supports for Vermont

The following are non-embedded designated supports for Vermont assessments:

Bilingual Dictionary: This language support provides a bilingual/dual language word-to-word dictionary. For students whose primary language is not English and who use dual language supports in the classroom, use of a bilingual/dual language word-to-word dictionary may be appropriate. Students participate in the assessment regardless of the language. The use of this support may result in the student's needing additional time to complete the assessment.

Color Contrast: With this feature, the test content of online items may be printed with different colors. Students with attention difficulties may need this support for viewing the test when digitally provided color contrasts do not meet their needs. Some students with visual impairments or other print disabilities (including learning disabilities) may also need this support. Choice of colors should be informed by evidence of those colors that meet the student's needs.

Color Overlay: With this feature, color transparencies may be placed over a paper-based assessment. Students with attention difficulties may need this support to view test content. This support also may be needed by some students with visual impairments or other print disabilities (including learning disabilities). The student must have the print-on-demand accommodation or

use a large print test booklet in order to use this designated support. Choice of color should be informed by evidence of those colors that meet the student’s needs.

Magnification: With this tool, the size of specific areas of the screen (e.g., text, formulas, tables, graphics, navigation buttons) may be adjusted by students who use assistive technology devices. Magnification allows the student to increase the area size to a level not supported by the Zoom universal tool. Students who are used to viewing enlarged text, graphics, or navigation buttons may need magnification to comfortably view content. This support also may meet the needs of students with visual impairments and other print disabilities. The use of this designated support may result in those students’ needing additional time to complete the assessment.

Medical Device: With this accommodation, students may have access to an electronic device for medical purposes (e.g., glucose monitor). The device may include a cell phone and should support the student only during testing. Educators should follow local policies regarding medical devices and ensure that students’ health is the highest priority. Device settings must restrict access to other applications, or the TA must closely monitor the use of the device to maintain test security. Use of electronic devices may require a separate setting to avoid distractions to other test takers and to ensure test security.

Noise Buffer: With this accommodation, students may use ear mufflers, white noise, WhisperPhone, or other equipment to block external sounds. A student (not groups of students) may wear equipment to reduce environmental noises. Students may have these testing variations if they regularly use them in the classroom. Students who use noise buffers will need headphones unless they are tested individually in a separate setting.

Read Aloud: With this accommodation, text is read aloud to students by a trained and qualified human reader who follows the *Vermont Science Assessment Test Administration Manual (TAM)*, security procedures, and *Read Aloud Guidelines*. All or portions of the content may be read aloud. Students who are struggling readers may need assistance gaining access to the assessment by having all or portions of the assessment read aloud. This support also may be needed by students with reading-related disabilities or by students who are blind and do not yet have adequate braille skills. If not used regularly during instruction, this support is likely to be confusing and may impede the performance on assessments. Readers must be provided to students on an individual basis, not a group of students. Students should have the option of asking a reader to slow down or repeat text. The use of this support may result in one or more students needing additional time to complete the assessment, and they will need to be tested in a separate setting.

Read Aloud in Spanish: With this accommodation, Spanish text is read aloud to the student by a trained and qualified human reader who follows the *Vermont Science Assessment Test Administration Manual (TAM)*, security procedures, and the *Read Aloud Guidelines*. Human readers must be provided to students on an individual basis, not to a group of students.

Scribe: With this accommodation, students dictate their responses to a human who records verbatim what they dictate. The scribe must be trained and qualified and must follow the administration guidelines provided in the *Scribe Guidelines*. Students who have documented significant motor or processing difficulties, or who have had a recent injury (such as a broken hand or arm) that make it difficult to produce responses may need to dictate their responses to a human, who then records the students’ responses verbatim. The use of this support may result in the student needing additional overall time to complete the assessment.

Separate Setting: With this accommodation, students who are easily distracted (or may distract others) may need an alternative location to be able to take the assessment. The separate setting may be a different room that allows the students to work individually or among a smaller group, or in the same room but in a specific location (e.g., away from windows, doors, pencil sharpeners, in a study carrel, with a WhisperPhone, near the teacher’s desk, in the front of a classroom). Some students may benefit from being in an environment that allows for movement, such as being able to walk around. In some instances, students may need to interact with instructional or test content outside of school, such as in a hospital or their home. A designated adult, employed by the school and trained in a manner consistent with the *TAM*, including security procedures, may act as test proctor (i.e., TA) for the student. Some designated supports or accommodations require students to be assessed individually. These students would also require a separate setting. Examples include students who gain access to the Read Aloud designated support or accommodation, scribe, or speech-to-text (STT).

Simplified Test Directions: With this accommodation, the TA simplifies or paraphrases the test directions found in the *TAM* according to the *Simplified Test Directions Guidelines*. Students who need additional support understanding the test directions may benefit from this resource. This designated support may require testing in a separate setting to avoid distracting other test takers.

5.3 ACCOMMODATIONS

Accommodations are changes in procedures or materials that increase equitable access during the RI NGSA and VTSA. Assessment accommodations generate valid assessment results for students who need them; they allow these students to show what they know and what they can do. Accommodations are available for students with documented IEPs or Section 504 Plans. The RIDE- and VT AOE-approved accommodations do not compromise the learning expectations, construct, grade-level standard, or intended outcome of the assessments.

5.3.1 Embedded Accommodations in Rhode Island

The following is the embedded accommodation for Rhode Island assessments:

Braille Type: With this accommodation, access to braille (Unified English Braille [UEB] Contracted with Nemeth), in conjunction with other technologies, is available through the online Test Delivery System (TDS) when Permissive Mode is set to YES in the student’s test settings in TIDE. Technology, such as refreshable braille devices or the use of a braille embosser, is available on the RI NGSA for students who use them.

5.3.2 Embedded Accommodations in Vermont

The following is the embedded accommodation for Vermont assessments:

Braille Type: With this accommodation, access to braille (UEB Contracted with Nemeth), in conjunction with other technologies, is available through the online TDS when Permissive Mode is set to YES in the student’s test settings in TIDE. Technology, such as refreshable braille devices or the use of a braille embosser, is available on the VTSA for students who use them.

5.3.3 Non-Embedded Accommodations in Rhode Island

The following is the non-embedded accommodation for Rhode Island assessments:

Alternate Response Options: This accommodation allows for alternate response options. Alternate response options include, but are not limited to, adapted keyboards, large keyboards, StickyKeys, MouseKeys, FilterKeys, adapted mouse, touch screen, head wand, and switches. Students with some physical disabilities (including both fine motor and gross motor skills) may need to use the alternate response options accommodation to gain access to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) Assessments. Some alternate response options are external devices that must be plugged in and must be compatible with the assessment delivery platform.

5.3.4 Non-Embedded Accommodations in Vermont

The following are the non-embedded accommodations for Vermont assessments:

Alternate Response Options: This accommodation allows for alternate response options. Alternate response options include, but are not limited to, adapted keyboards, large keyboards, StickyKeys, MouseKeys, FilterKeys, adapted mouse, touch screen, head wand, and switches. Students with some physical disabilities (including both fine motor and gross motor skills) may need to use the alternate response options accommodation to gain access to the VTSA. Some alternate response options are external devices that must be plugged in and must be compatible with the assessment delivery platform.

Braille Booklet: This accommodation is a fixed-form test booklet that provides all content in braille (UEB Contracted with Nemeth). It is typically used by students who have visual disabilities. Contracted or non-contracted forms of braille may be selected.

Calculator: This tool is a non-embedded calculator for students needing a special calculator, such as a braille calculator or talking calculator. A specialized calculator may also be used for those students who gain access to calculators by using assistive technology devices.

Large Print Booklet: This accommodation is a fixed-form test booklet that provides enlarged content. It is typically used by students who have visual disabilities.

Print-on-Demand: This accommodation for the provision of print-on-demand requires the Special Accommodations Procedure. Some students with disabilities may need paper copies of either passages/stimuli and/or items. A very small percentage of students need this accommodation. The use of this accommodation may result in students needing additional time to complete the assessment. Permissive mode must be indicated within TIDE to gain access to this accommodation.

Speech-to-Text: This speech-to-text (STT), or voice-recognition software accommodation, allows students to use their voices as input devices to the computer, to dictate responses, or to give commands (e.g., opening application programs, pulling down menus, saving work). Students may use their own assistive technology devices, which generally include a microphone and headphones. Typically, students who have motor or processing disabilities (such as dyslexia) may use this accommodation and find it beneficial. Students need to be familiar with the software and have had many opportunities to use it during instruction. STT software requires that students know writing

conventions and that they have reviewing and editing skills; thus, experience with this accommodation prior to testing is essential. When students use their own assistive technology devices, all assessment content must be deleted from these devices after testing, for security purposes. Permissive mode must be indicated within TIDE to gain access to this accommodation.

Word Prediction: This accommodation allows students to begin writing a word and choose from a list of words that have been predicted from word frequency and syntax rules. Word prediction is delivered via a non-embedded software program. The program must use only single-word prediction. Functionality, such as phrase prediction, predict ahead, or next word, must be deactivated. The program must have settings that allow only a basic dictionary. Expanded dictionaries, such as topic dictionaries and word banks, must be deactivated. Phonetic spelling functionality may be used, as well as speech output built into the program which reads back the information the student has written. If further supports are needed for speech output, see TTS or read-aloud policies. Students who use word prediction in conjunction with speech output will need headphones unless they are testing individually in a separate setting. Students may use their own assistive technology devices.

Table 2 presents a list of accessibility features and accommodations that were offered in the 2020–2021 administration for Rhode Island.

Table 2. Rhode Island 2020–2021 Accessibility Features and Accommodations

Accessibility Features	Accommodations
Embedded	
Breaks Desmos Calculator Digital Notepad Expandable Passages Highlighter Line Reader Mark a Question for Review Strikethrough Magnification Answer Masking Color Contrast Mouse Pointer (Size and Color) Streamline Mode Turn Off Any Accessibility Features	Braille Text-to-Speech Spanish Presentation (Toggle) Permissive Mode Print-On-Demand
Non-Embedded	
Breaks Scratch Paper Adaptive or Specialized Furniture Auditory Supports Familiar Test Administrator One-to-One Administration Read Aloud Selected Words Separate or Alternate Test Location Magnification Color Overlay Noise Buffers	AT/AAC Devices Bilingual Word-to-Word Dictionary Braille Edition Large Print Edition Paper Edition Read Aloud in English Read Aloud in Spanish Translated Test Directions Scribe Sign-Language Interpreter Simplified Test Directions

Accessibility Features	Accommodations
	Speech-to-Text Word Prediction

Table 3 presents a list of universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations that were offered in the 2020–2021 administration for Vermont.

Table 3. Vermont 2020–2021 Universal Tools, Designated Supports, and Accommodations

Universal Tools	Designated Supports	Accommodations
<i>Embedded</i>		
Breaks Desmos Calculator Digital Notepad Expandable Passages Highlighter Keyboard Navigation Line Reader Mark for Review Strikethrough Zoom	Color Contrast Masking Mouse Pointer (Size and Color) Permissive Mode Spanish (Toggle) Streamline Mode Text-to-Speech Turn Off Any Universal Tool	Braille Print-on-Demand
<i>Non-Embedded</i>		
Breaks Scratch Paper	Bilingual Dictionary Color Contrast Color Overlay Magnification Medical Device Simplified Test Directions Noise Buffers Read Aloud Read Aloud in Spanish Separate Setting Scribe	Alternate Response Options Braille Booklet Large-Print Booklet Paper Booklet Calculator Speech-to-Text Word Prediction