

INTERIM STUDY PROPOSAL 2025-077

REQUESTING THAT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL REFER TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION A STUDY TO EVALUATE THE EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ALLOWING STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED LEARNING DIFFERENCES TO USE TEXT-TO-SPEECH ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY DURING STATE ASSESSMENTS IN ARKANSAS.

WHEREAS, approximately twenty-three percent (23%) of Arkansas public school students are identified as having learning differences and are supported through Individualized Education Plans or 504 Plans; and

WHEREAS, assistive technologies such as text-to-speech programs, including without limitation tools like Read&Write and Equatio provided by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, are already in use in many classrooms as part of students' daily instruction; and

WHEREAS, the Arkansas Teaching, Learning, and Assessment System (ATLAS) is designed to assess students' mastery of state standards but currently does not allow the use of text-to-speech technology on reading assessments, even for students who utilize the technology as part of their individualized education plans; and

WHEREAS, national data and peer-reviewed research demonstrate that text-to-speech technology improves reading comprehension and assessment performance among students with learning differences, including students with dyslexia, ADHD, autism, and visual impairments; and

WHEREAS, thirty (30) states currently allow the use of text-to-speech accommodations on state reading assessments for students with documented learning differences, demonstrating a growing national consensus around equitable assessment practices; and

WHEREAS, a misalignment between classroom accommodations and testing conditions may create inequities, inaccurate assessment data, and unnecessary stress for students and may limit the ability of educators to effectively use

assessment results for instructional decision making; and

WHEREAS, providing consistent access to assistive technologies during both instruction and assessment may promote academic achievement, student confidence, and long-term economic benefits by reducing the need for costly interventions and enhancing educational equity; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly needs to understand the potential fiscal, academic, and operational impact of adopting policies that allow for the use of text-to-speech accommodations on statewide assessments,

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT PROPOSED BY THE Arkansas Legislative Council OF THE NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

THAT the Legislative Council refer to the House Committee on Education a study to evaluate the academic, policy, and economic impact of allowing students with documented learning differences to use text-to-speech technology on state assessments.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the study shall:

(1) Examine the effectiveness of text-to-speech technology in improving reading comprehension, assessment performance, and student engagement;

(2) Review implementation practices in other states where text-to-speech accommodations are permitted on state reading assessments;

(3) Analyze the economic implications of expanded access to assistive technology, including potential savings from reduced remediation, special education referrals, and grade retention;

(4) Evaluate the impact on instructional planning, teacher effectiveness, and the alignment between accommodations in instruction and assessment;

(5) Solicit input from educators, school administrators, parents, and disability advocacy organizations;

(6) Identify operational, fiscal, and training requirements to implement the assistive technologies statewide; and

(7) Include findings and recommendations, including potential policy or legislative changes, no later than December 15, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Kendra Moore

District 23

Prepared by: CRH/CRH

