

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT



Massachusetts schools choose Kurzweil 3000 to aid students with learning disabilities

Kurzweil Educational Systems, Inc., announces that the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) has expanded the use of Kurzweil 3000 as an approved accommodation for the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests to include Grades 6-8 and 10. Starting with the Spring 2004 MCAS tests, the DOE will allow students in Grades 6-8 and 10, who are already using Kurzweil 3000 in the classroom as specified in their Individual Education Plan (IEP), to use the technology as an accommodation when taking their grade-specific MCAS tests. Kurzweil 3000 is comprehensive reading, writing and learning software for individuals with learning disabilities, which also allows students to take tests independently.

Last year, the Massachusetts DOE approved the use of Kurzweil 3000 for only Grade 10 students taking the Mathematics and English Language Arts MCAS tests. However, due to an increasing demand for the technology accommodation, and a desire to make the MCAS tests accessible to all students, the Massachusetts DOE is working with Kurzweil Educational Systems to extend the accommodation to other grades. To date this year, over 20 schools and collaboratives throughout Massachusetts, including schools in Amherst, Braintree, Cambridge, Fitchburg, New Bedford and Springfield have requested MCAS tests in Kurzweil 3000 format on

behalf of 170 students scheduled to take the tests this spring.

“Over 25 of our 7th grade students have been using Kurzweil 3000 for the past two years and we’ve seen a dramatic improvement in their ability to comprehend written materials, and so we were elated that the DOE approved the use of this accommodation for additional grades,” said Sheryl Stanton, special education teacher, Kiley Middle School, Springfield, MA. “We’ve requested the MCAS test in Kurzweil 3000 format for kids whose IEPs already specify the need for reading and writing accommodations, so they can read and respond to questions on the MCAS without teacher assistance. That takes the burden off the teacher who no longer needs to read each and every question aloud to 25 different students. More importantly, it gives individual students the opportunity to easily reread a question as many times as needed to understand what it is asking. And it gives them the chance to possibly score additional points on questions they might otherwise simply skip.”

“This is good news for students in grades six to eight who need this commonly-used instructional accommodation for their spring MCAS assessments,” said Dan Wiener, Student Assessment Services, Massachusetts DOE, in a published announcement to schools in Massachusetts. “Accommodations such as Kurzweil 3000, which are identified

for each student, must be consistent with those used during routine instruction and assessment in the classroom.”

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has put added pressure on schools to track and improve the performance of all students, including those with special needs. In addition to its test-taking capabilities, Kurzweil 3000 helps struggling students prepare for the MCAS tests by helping them develop active learning and study skills and increase their comprehension of class materials.

Kurzweil 3000 presents printed or electronic text on a computer screen, enabling students to see text as they hear it being read out loud. They can also see and hear words that they type while they work. This multi-sensory approach allows students faced with learning challenges to read tests and write their answers independently. Teachers can also customize Kurzweil 3000 to accommodate an individual student’s learning style or the testing environment as appropriate. For example, if a test requires a student to provide the definitions of vocabulary words, the dictionary feature in Kurzweil 3000 can be turned off and locked.

Massachusetts’s educators are advised to contact the Massachusetts Department of Education to request MCAS test materials in Kurzweil 3000 format for future grade 6-8 and 10 MCAS tests and retests. Requests

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must be made at least three to four weeks prior to the test date and only if these are already in use by the student. For more information on the MCAS exam, visit <www.doe.mass.edu/mcas>.

Samples of released MCAS tests are available in PDF format on the DOE Web site at <<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testitems.html>>. Samples of released Grade 10 MCAS tests in Kurzweil 3000 format are available on the Kurzweil Educational Systems' Web site at <www.kurzweiled.com/proof_educator_sampletest_mcas.asp>. These tests are available to teachers and students for practice purposes for upcoming MCAS tests.

For more information, contact Kurzweil Education Systems, 14 Crosby Drive, Bedford, MA 01730-1402; Phone: 800-894-5374; Fax: 781-276-0650; Web site <www.kurzweiled.com>; E-mail <info@kurzweiled.com>.