

# TECHNOLOGY & LEARNING

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Review

By Marc Bainbridge

## Test Talker

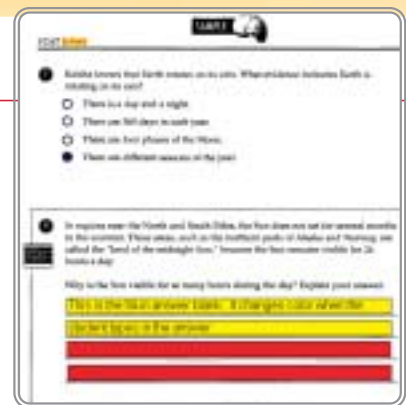
**Emphasis:** Special Education/Struggling Students

**Grade level:** 4–12    **Platform:** Win CD

**Price:** \$399; Lab packs and site licenses are available.

**Publisher:** Freedom Scientific LSG, (888) 223-3344;

[www.freedomscientific.com/lsg](http://www.freedomscientific.com/lsg)



According to NCLB and the Individuals with Disabilities Act, reading standardized test materials out loud for students who cannot read or properly see the questions is a standard modification, and no longer just the special ed teacher's problem. Freedom Scientific aims to make accommodation easier with Test Talker, which allows teachers to scan printed test and worksheet material and administer assessments electronically using text-to-speech technology.

The program uses a digitally synthesized voice to read the content aloud. Test answers are input via keyboard or mouse and recorded on a computer file. Students will have little trouble working with the technology. Teachers will need access to a scanner and headphones or decent speakers. Some technical expertise will probably be required to get the program up and running, but once installed, it is very intuitive.

In my test drive, TestTalker handled every scanned test and worksheet quite well, with high-quality visual reproduction and accurate text to speech.

However, a big issue for schools intending to use the software for high-stakes tests is copyright. Many standardized test publishers bar unauthorized reproduction of test materials, and it's not yet clear whether this new technology constitutes authorized use. Freedom is currently working with CTB McGraw Hill and ITBS on a resolution.

Regardless of this issue, Test Talker is certainly valuable for use with other teacher-made or published tests. ■

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