

LEARNING IDEAS

Accessing and Implementing Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM): Tips for K-12 Educators



How do students benefit from accessible instructional materials? Diedrich (2009) explains:

With today's classrooms more diverse than ever before, grade level content expectations more rigorous, and the expectation that ALL students achieve at high levels, educators face great challenges. If we continue to rely on printed text as the main, and often only, source for delivering educational content, then we risk failing many of our students. A struggling reader who does not have efficient access to printed text may be unable to participate in classroom discussions or complete assignments. In addition, students may "tune out" due to lack of engagement. Every student has a different learning style; accessible instructional materials afford the flexibility to meet the needs of a broad range of students. (p.2)



What are examples of alternate formats?

- Audiotapes, CDs, MP3 files, software programs, or other auditory enhancement
- Talking books, calculators, clocks and watches
- Braille code
- Large print – typically 18-point font size or larger
- Digital text – via visual, tactile, or auditory display on a computer or other assistive device
- Electronic formats such as disk, email, electronic databases/bulletin boards

How do students qualify to receive alternate formats of copyrighted materials?

Students with print disability status can obtain specialized formats of copyrighted materials under a copyright law exemption.

- Print disability is determined by a qualified professional (i.e. an ophthalmologist, neurologist, educational specialist).
- For a student receiving services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), print disability is determined by the IEP team and documented on the IEP.
- For students receiving services under Section 504, the determination is documented on the 504 plan.

This certification is not necessary for use of public domain materials or other non-copyrighted sources.



How do I choose the best format for accessible instructional materials?

Try AIM Navigator! This is an interactive guidance tool that helps teachers and teams make decisions about accessible instructional materials for their students. There are four steps in using AIM Navigator: 1) determine the student's need; 2) select the best format for the material; 3) acquire the format; and 4) select supports for using the format so the student can access the material.

[A sample AIM Navigator student summary](http://aim.cast.org/experience/decision-making_tools/aim_navigator) is available at http://aim.cast.org/experience/decision-making_tools/aim_navigator.

Where can I find accessible instructional materials?

Accessible media producers are agencies, companies or individuals who produce fully accessible, student-ready instructional materials in specialized formats (Braille, large print, audio, or digital text) for students with print disabilities. For the [AIM Guide to Accessible Media Producers](#), please visit this website: http://aim.cast.org/learn/practice/acquisitiondistribution/aim_amp_guide.

NIMAC (National Instructional Materials Access Center) is a national repository for electronic files of textbooks and core instructional materials that are submitted directly by publishers. [For more information about how teachers can acquire accessible instructional materials from NIMAC, please visit the Frequently Asked Questions page](#) at: http://www.nimac.us/faq_teachers.html.

Bookshare.org provides digital books, textbooks, and periodicals to members with print disabilities. All U.S. students with print disabilities and educational institutions, including K-12 schools, qualify for free memberships through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). [For more information about Bookshare](#), please visit their website at <http://www.bookshare.org>.

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May I reproduce or alter copyrighted materials for students with print disabilities?

- You MAY reproduce and distribute copyrighted materials "in formats exclusively for use by blind or other persons with disabilities." (Title 17, Sec 121(a) US Code).
- You MAY NOT use these same alternate format materials with students who do NOT have documentation of a print disability.

You MAY NOT alter the content (i.e. change wording to present content at a lower reading level): this is also copyright infringement.

Where may I learn more?

Learning Ideas Tipsheet, [Understanding Accessible Instructional Materials \(AIM\) and Their Use \(PDF\)](#). Available online at <http://ccids.umaine.edu/files/2013/05/LI-AIM-Use-040813.pdf>.

References

Diedrich, Jeff. (2009). "Students can benefit from accessible instructional materials (AIM)." Focus on Results, 7(2), 2.



What should I consider for a student who needs accessible instructional materials?

- Have I ordered the student's textbooks or trade books in an alternate format from the publisher, public domain site, or other source?
- Have I allowed sufficient time to get accessible materials so that the student will receive them at the same time as their peers without a print disability?
- Have I provided an accessible format to support student engagement in all learning activities and assessments?



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