

Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM)



In most schools, print-based instructional materials are a prime way of delivering curricular content. This system works fine for many learners. But for others -- those who struggle to read because of physical, sensory, cognitive, or learning differences -- such materials may not be appropriate for learning.

These students need accessible instructional materials (AIM) in order to access the general education curriculum. This access is guaranteed in federal education statutes, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as well as other federal and state statutes.

What are AIM?

Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) are specialized formats of curricular content that can be used by and with learners with print disabilities. They include Braille, audio, large print and electronic text.

- ★ **Braille** is “a series of raised dots that can be read with the fingers by people who are blind or whose eyesight is not sufficient for reading printed material. Braille is not a language. Rather, it is a code by which languages such as English or Spanish may be written and read.” (Source: American Foundation for the Blind)
- ★ **Audio** refers to auditory alternatives to printed text. Examples of formats include CDs, audiotapes, MP3 files, and software programs that convert digital (written text to spoken words) output, and other auditory alternatives to printed texts.
- ★ **Digital text**, also known as “electronic text” or “e-text,” is what appears in common word processing or text editing programs. Examples of file formats include Rich Text Format (.rtf), ASCII, HTML, Microsoft Word (.doc), and Digital Talking Books. Digital text can be formatted (e.g., font, size, color) and converted to accessible form (e.g., read aloud by speech synthesis). Such files can be transformed into accessible form by the user by varying font size, using text-to-speech tools, etc.
- ★ **Large print** is generally defined by the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) as “print for text passages that is larger than the print used by that segment of the population with normal vision. APH takes the position that large print for use by the low vision population is print that is **eighteen points in size** or larger.”

What is a Print Disability?

“A condition related to blindness, visual impairment, specific learning disability or other physical condition in which the student needs an alternative or specialized format (i.e., Braille, large Print, Audio, Digital Text) in order to access and gain information from conventional printed materials.”

Who Determines If A Student Has A Print Disability?

For students eligible for Special Education services, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team is responsible for determining a student's educational supports and services including whether the student has a Print Disability and qualifies to receive services. The determination is based upon the individual student's instructional needs and the Print Disability determination is made by the IEP team.

For students receiving accommodations under a Section 504 plan, the school's 504 compliance officer assumes responsibility for determining the type of specialized formats required and how those materials will be acquired and by whom.

How Are These Materials Provided?

Here is a limited selection of the major Accessible Media Producers:

- ★ [American Printing House for the Blind](#) produces books and periodicals in Braille, human-recorded audio, large print, and digital text on disc.
- ★ [Bookshare](#) provides books and periodicals in digital text (includes DAISY, digital text, HTML, and Braille Digital Format). Currently, Bookshare memberships for U.S. schools and qualifying U.S. students of all ages are free.
- ★ [National Library Service](#) offers books and periodicals in Braille and human-recorded audio on disc and cassette formats.
- ★ [Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic](#) provides human-recorded audio on disc format.

When Will AIM Be Provided?

School Administrative Units (SAUs) need to provide instructional materials in accessible formats (i.e. Braille, audio, digital text, large print) to children with print disabilities in a timely manner.

The State of Maine requires that children with print disabilities receive specialized instructional materials at the same time as students without print disabilities.

Helpful Websites

Maine AIM website: <http://aim.maineite.org>

CAST's AIM website: <http://aim.cast.org>

Bookshare: www.bookshare.org

American Printing House for the Blind: www.aph.org

Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic: www.rfbd.org

National Library Services: www.loc.gov/nls

Source: Maine AIM website



For more information related to the needs of children with disabilities, write to Maine Parent Federation at PO Box 2067, Augusta, ME 04338, email parentconnect@mpf.org, or call 1-800-870-7746 (statewide) or (207) 623-2144.