

Steps To Providing AIM For Students With Disabilities

Maine AIM Program

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Presenter

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Objectives

Participants will understand

- Why Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) are in Maine’s IEP form;
- How a student’s need for AIM is determined;
- From where to acquire AIM;
- What resources and supports are available to schools, students, and families.

AIM in Maine’s IEP Form

Maine’s IEP form, effective 8/1/2014, includes questions related to the terms “print disability” and accessible instructional materials.” Specifically, Section 3 (Considerations-Including Special Factors) asks, “Does the child have a print disability that requires accessible instructional materials (AIM) to access the curriculum?”

[Follow this link to the Maine IEP form](#)

[Follow this link to the The Maine State IEP Procedural Manual](#)

What Are AIM?

In relation to IDEA, the term AIM specifically refers to print instructional materials that have been converted into a specialized format for use by learners who are unable to use standard print. The four specialized formats of AIM are:

- Digital text
- Audio
- Large print
- Braille

[Follow this link to the National Center on AEM for more information about specialized formats](#)

“AIM Simply Said”

This YouTube video, produced by the National Center on AIM in collaboration with the PACER Center, provides a basic introduction to AIM:

[Follow this link to the video, "AIM Simply Said"](#)

AIM vs. Modified Content

AIM are sometimes confused with modified curriculum materials. The terms are not interchangeable and a crucial difference exists. AIM are the same materials that were purchased for a curriculum but they are provided to qualifying students in a different format. That is, if a school or district purchases a textbook in standard print format for use by all students, AIM are the specialized formats of that material (i.e., digital text, audio, large print, or braille). Modified materials, on the other hand, address the same topic as the textbook selected for the class, but are modified in a way that a student can understand the content. For example, a material with a lower Lexile level may be required. A modified material may or may not be in the format of the standard version selected for the class.

AIM in the IEP: The Provision in IDEA

AIM is a provision of IDEA '04. The law states that State Education Agencies (SEAs) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must provide textbooks and other core instructional materials in specialized formats to students with print disabilities in a timely manner. "Other core instructional materials" refers to print resources that publishers bundle with curriculum packages, such as workbooks and laboratory manuals.

[Follow this link to information about the AIM provision in IDEA '04](#)

Timely Manner

"Timely manner" means that students who need AIM receive their materials in the required specialized format at the same time that their peers receive the same material in the standard format.

[Follow this link to information about Maine's definition of "timely manner"](#)

Print Disability: History of the Medical Perspective in Copyright Law

The term "print disability" originates in copyright law. The AIM provision in IDEA '04 was built on a 1996 amendment to the U.S. Copyright Act, commonly known as the Chafee Amendment. This amendment allowed authorized entities to convert print materials to specialized formats for the exclusive use of individuals who have a condition that qualifies as a print disability under the 1931 "Act to provide books for the adult blind." The Library of Congress (LOC) issued regulations that described eligibility categories and descriptions. These evolved until 1974 and have remained essentially unchanged since then:

- Blind persons
- Visual disability
- Physical limitations
- Reading disability resulting from organic dysfunction

In addition to the categories, the LOC regulations specify that an individual must be certified by a "competent authority" as meeting the eligibility criteria. A wide range of professionals, including "social workers, case workers, counselors, rehabilitation teachers, and superintendents", can certify the first

three categories of print disability. The fourth category, however, can only be certified by “doctors of medicine who may consult with colleagues in associated disciplines.”

Print Disability: Today’s Educational Perspective in IDEA

The medical perspective reflects the research at the time the LOC regulations were issued, as opposed to today’s educational perspective that is reflected by the term “specific learning disability” in IDEA. Indeed, IDEA works under a team model as opposed to a doctor’s certification when determining a student’s eligibility for services. Consequently, the LOC regulations have complicated the provision of AIM in schools over the past decade.

In response to the complexity of the confluence of the U.S. Copyright Act and IDEA, organizations that are leading the provision of AIM in schools have taken the position that students with learning disabilities qualify under the category of physical limitations, based on research indicating that learning disabilities are intrinsic and have physiological bases. The U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has vetted the eligibility requirements used by these organizations (personal communication, Kristina Cohen, Benetech, and Jennifer Dougherty, Learning Ally (February 2015)). The Maine Department of Education has accepted this position, as well (personal communication, Cindy Bernstein, Maine Department of Education (February 2015)). Under this framework, competent authorities include special education teachers.

The following links will take you to additional information about U.S. Copyright Law, the Chafee Amendment, “print disability,” and eligibility for AIM:

[NLS Factsheet: Copyright Law Amendment, 1996: PL 104-197](#)

[Analysis of the Term “Reading Disability Resulting from Organic Dysfunction” and its Relationship to the IDEA Category of “Specific Learning Disability”](#)

[Why doesn’t Bookshare follow Special Education Law in determining eligibility for services?](#)

Steps to Providing AIM for Students Who Need Them

1. Determine the student’s need.
2. Select the appropriate format(s).
3. Acquire materials in the selected format(s).
4. Support the student and team with use of the AIM.

Determining A Student’s Need for AIM: The Team

First and foremost, determining a students’ need for AIM is a team decision-making process. The team should include all individuals who can contribute evidence of the extent to which the student can learn and gain information from standard print instructional materials. Examples of relevant team members include:

- Classroom teacher

- Special education teacher
- Occupational therapist
- Speech and language pathologist
- Physical therapist
- Learning disability specialist
- School psychologist
- Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI)
- Assistive Technology (AT) specialist
- Parent
- The student

Determining A Student's Need for AIM: The Considerations

As the team considers a student's need for AIM, It is important to remain focused on AIM being *the same material but in a different format*. The key question for the team to consider is:

Can the student gain information and learn from the standard print materials chosen for the use of all students?

Here are three options that the team can consider (from AIM Navigator, 2010, page 5):

Option 1: The student can use the standard-print instructional materials used across the curriculum by other students.

The team agrees that the student will make adequate progress reading and gaining information from grade-level print materials.

Option 2: The student requires exactly the same content in one or more specialized formats.

The team agrees that the student cannot use standard print-based instructional materials effectively at this time. Adequate progress will be made if exactly the same information is presented in one or more specialized formats (digital text, audio, large print, or braille).

Option 3: The student requires modified or alternative materials.

The team agrees that the student cannot use standard print-based materials because of a disability that impacts comprehension of information. Alternative materials address the same educational goals as standard print materials but the content is modified so that the student can

better understand it. Examples of modification include materials at a lower Lexile level. Some students may need alternative materials in specialized formats.

Another series of questions that the team may ask itself:

Can the student read traditional grade level print instructional materials?

Can the student read grade level print instructional materials with adequate comprehension to complete academic tasks with success, relative to same-age peers?

Can the student do the above independently, across environments and tasks?

-Based on Zabala & Carl, 2014

If the team's answer to the above series of questions is "yes," then the student does not need AIM or modified or alternative materials.

If the team is still undecided about the student's need for AIM, some questions that target functional abilities to use print-based materials may be helpful (AIM Navigator, page 7):

Can the student see the material well enough to read the information?

Can the student physically manipulate the material without undue effort?

Does the student have the necessary physical stamina (e.g., sitting upright, alertness) to read for extended periods of time?

Can the student decode letters and words?

Can the student read with fluency?

Again, "yes" answers indicate that the student does not need AIM and the team can continue without further consideration. If, however, the team determines that the student needs AIM, documentation of that need should be included in the student's file.

For more information about determining a student's need for AIM, please refer to the following links:

[National Center on AEM: Need for AEM](#)

[National Center on AEM: Need for AEM FAQ](#)

Next Step: 2. Select the Appropriate Specialized Format(s)

The team has four specialized formats to consider for a student: digital text, audio, large print, and braille:

- Digital text, also known as etext, can be read aloud by synthetic speech on a computer, tablet, or smartphone.

- Audio is a human-narrated recording.
- Large print is a hard copy of the material in 18-point text size or larger.
- Braille is a tactile writing system, commonly used by blind students.

To determine the most appropriate format(s), the team should consider:

- What are the print materials used across the curriculum?
- What are the student’s skills, needs, and preferences?
- What are the environments in which the materials will be used?
- What are the tasks the student needs to complete?
- What are the tools the student may already be using to access the curriculum?

As the team considers these questions, it’s important to understand that more than one format may be appropriate for the student.

For more information about selecting appropriate specialized formats, please refer to the following links:

[National Center on AEM: Selecting AEM](#)

[AIM Explorer](#)

Next Step: 3. Acquire Materials in the Selected Format(s)

Acquisition of materials depends on the format selected.

For digital text, [Bookshare](#) is the largest provider of K-12 materials.

For audio, [Learning Ally](#) is the largest provider of K-12 materials.

For large print and braille, [Catholic Charities Maine](#) is our state’s provider.

Next Step: 4. Support the Use of AIM

In order to access specialized formats of materials, students will need [assistive technology \(AT\) devices and services](#). All of the organizations listed in step 3 provide reading tools that are compatible with a wide range of computers, smartphones and tablets:

- Mac
- iOS
- Windows PCs

- Android
- Chrome

But to be successful with AIM, students, teachers, and families also need training and technical assistance on how to properly use the technology for various purposes and across multiple contexts and settings. Continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of the technology is also required.

“On-demand” AIM

Built-in access:

- [Mac OS X Yosemite](#)
- [Mac OS X El Capitan](#)
- [iOS 8](#)
- [Jonathan Wylie: How to Use Text to Speech on the iPad \(10/3/15\)](#)
- [Windows 10 \(a no cost option may be preferable for some students\)](#)
- [Google Text-to-Speech](#)
- [Samsung Galaxy](#)

No Cost/Low Cost:

- [Voice Dream Reader \(iOS and Android\)](#)
- [Capti Narrator \(Windows, Mac, iOS, Firefox, Safari\)](#)
- [Natural Reader \(Windows and Mac\)](#)
- [IVONA Text-to-Speech HQ \(Android\)](#)
- [SpeakIt! \(Google Chrome extension\)](#)
- [Read&Write for Google Chrome](#)
- [ClaroPDF \(iOS\)](#) and [Filling out worksheets on the iPad using ClaroPDF and Google Drive](#) (from QIAT)

Commercial

- [Texthelp](#)
- [Kurzweil 3000](#)
- [WYNN](#)

Scanning Technology with OCR

For large scale scanning projects:

- [Abby FineReader](#)
- [OmniPage](#)

For individual student use with smartphone or tablet:

- [Genius Scan \(iOS, Windows, Android\)](#)

- [Snapverter add-on for Read&Write for Google Chrome](#)
- [ABBY TextGrabber \(iOS and Android\)](#)
- [Prizmo \(iOS and Mac\)](#)
- [Text Detective \(iOS and Android\)](#)

AIM Navigator

The AIM Navigator, developed and published by the National Center on AEM, is designed to guide teams through the four steps of providing individual students with AIM. Not a screening or evaluative tool, it's described as a "process facilitator." It's available in several formats and accompanied by supplemental resources at the web site of the National Center on AEM:

[Follow this link to the AIM Navigator](#)

Key Points

The key points to take away from this webinar are:

- AIM are in Maine's IEP form because considering a student's need for AIM is mandated by IDEA 04;
- The need for AIM is determined by a student's ability to gain information and learn from standard print;
- Schools acquire AIM from national and state organizations that specialize in the format needed by the student;
- Implementation of AIM is a team process and includes continuous evaluation of the student's success with using the technology to access the curriculum.

Thank You

On behalf of the Maine AIM Program and the Maine DOE, thank you for attending this webinar. If you have questions or would like to speak with someone about AIM implementation in your school district, please contact the Maine AIM Program

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