

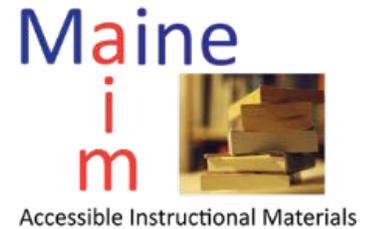
Print Disability and Accessible Instructional Materials

Maine Department of Education Listen & Learn

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Presenter

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Objectives

Participants will understand the

- Purpose of AIM in the IEP.
- Meaning of the term “print disability,” particularly in relation to the category of “specific learning disability” under IDEA.
- Considerations for determining if a student needs AIM.
- Resources available to acquire AIM for students who need them.

About the Maine AIM Program

The Maine AIM Program was established in 2007 out of a Federal grant project designed to provide technical assistance and training to Maine educators and families. We serve schools through the Maine AIM Community of Practice, which is administered by the Maine CITE Coordinating Center on behalf of the Maine Department of Education.

[Follow this link to the Maine AIM Program](#)

Contact the Maine AIM Program via email: info@maine-aim.org

Contact the Maine AIM Program by phone: 207-621-3195

What's on your mind?

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](#)

Why AIM in the IEP?

AIM is a provision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 04). A major impetus behind AIM legislation was the delay that students with disabilities historically

experience in receiving textbooks and other curriculum materials in formats they can use. The AIM provision mandates that students who need AIM receive them in a “timely manner,” which Maine defines as “at the same time as their peers who don’t need AIM.” The IEP documents a student’s need for AIM to access the general education curriculum, thereby effectively participating and making progress.

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 AIM for more information about the specialized formats of AIM](#)

“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. Alternative Materials

AIM is sometimes confused with alternative materials. They are not interchangeable and a crucial difference exists. AIM are the same materials that were purchased for a curriculum but 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). Alternative materials, on the other hand, address the same topic as the textbook selected for the class, but are modified in a way that the student can understand them. For example, a material with a lower Lexile range may be required. An alternative material may or may not be in the format of the standard version selected for the class.

The AIM 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

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.” This 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). The Maine Department of Education has accepted this position, as well (personal communication, Cindy Bernstein, Maine Department of Education). 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:

[Timeline and Overview of “An Act to provide books for the adult blind”](#)

[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?](#)

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*. 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 at or near grade level?

Can the student read with fluency at or near grade level?

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 AIM: Who Needs AIM?](#)

[National Center on AIM recorded webinar series – see “Navigating Your Way to AIM in the IEP”](#)

The Student Needs AIM: What Next?

Determining a student’s need for AIM is the first step in a series of four steps to successfully providing AIM:

1. Determine the student’s need for AIM.
2. Select the appropriate specialized format(s).
3. Acquire the material in the selected format(s).
4. Support the student, teachers, and family in the use of the format(s) with assistive technology (AT).

The Maine AIM Program has guidance and resources for each step:

[Follow this link for information about selecting specialized formats](#)

[Follow this link for information about acquiring material in specialized formats](#)

[Follow this link for information about the use of AIM with AT](#)

AIM Navigator

The AIM Navigator, developed and published by the National Center on AIM, 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 AIM.

[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 they are a provision in IDEA and a consideration for ensuring that students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum.
- AIM are print instructional materials that have been converted into a specialized format for use by learners who are unable to use standard print: digital text, audio, large print, or braille.
- A special education teacher may provide certification of a student’s print disability.
- Once your team has determined that a student needs AIM, resources are available to guide you through the remaining steps of providing AIM to that student.

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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