

What You Need to Know About  
**National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS)**  
and  
**Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM)**

A GUIDE FOR  
***CURRICULUM COORDINATORS***  
**WHAT ARE ACCESSIBLE INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS (AIM)?**

In general, AIM refers to accessible, specialized formats such as Braille, large print, audio, and digital text. In digital form, AIM can be: read with text-to-speech software; modified with regard to font size; navigated by unit, chapter, section, and page number, etc.

- Images include alternative text and long descriptions when appropriate.
- Math equations are provided as images with text descriptions.
- Order of content, levels, and headings are appropriately formatted.

**CURRICULUM COORDINATORS/COMMITTEES MAKE VITAL DECISIONS**

Curriculum coordinators/committees have a unique opportunity to influence education through textbook adoption practices. Curriculum committees can help ensure compliance with legal obligations today, and also need to be proactive about shaping future practices. Textbook adoption committees should:

- Include accessibility as a factor in decision-making rubrics and consider preference to publishers who offer accessible versions for sale.
- Include a broad range of educators on the curriculum committee, including from special education.
  - ◊ Assistive technology specialists play a vital role in determining the level of accessibility and the supports that may be necessary. They can also determine file compatibility with existing, district purchased assistive technology.
- Request sample materials prior to purchase to determine the degree of accessibility (not all digital materials are accessible).
- Obligate publishers to submit NIMAS source files to the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) in their purchasing agreement (required: see sample contract language).
- Include language in publisher contracts that promotes the purchase of alternate format accessible materials for use by any student regardless of eligibility.
- Purchase accessible materials or secure rights to make materials available. This will:
  - ◊ Eliminate eligibility criteria.
  - ◊ Align with existing educational initiatives, including Response to Intervention (RtI), Differentiated Instruction, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

- ◇ Allow teachers to spend their time on instruction versus creating accessible materials.
- ◇ Promote engagement.
- Request embedded supports, including:
  - ◇ Table of contents with links to appropriate location within the body of the text.
  - ◇ Vocabulary supports with links to glossary.
  - ◇ Comprehension supports-prompts and scaffolds for applying reading strategies.
  - ◇ Optional highlighting of crucial features.
  - ◇ Opportunities to interact with the content.
  - ◇ Embedded prompts, hints, and models to support responding by learners.

## **LEGAL OBLIGATIONS**

Several federal mandates require districts to provide accessible instructional materials (AIM) to eligible students with disabilities, including:

### ***Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004***

- Ensures students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum and receive a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).
- Ensures students with disabilities who need instructional materials in accessible formats receive those materials in a timely manner.
- Adopts the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS).

### **Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act***

- Protects the civil rights of individuals with disabilities in any program or activity receiving federal funds.

### ***Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)***

- Protects civil rights and serves as a national mandate to fully integrate individuals with disabilities into the mainstream.

## **QUESTIONS LEAS SHOULD ASK PUBLISHERS BEFORE PURCHASING TEXTBOOKS:**

Local Education Agencies are also required to ensure that students with print disabilities who may not qualify for specialized formats are provided with accessible instructional materials. **Preference should be given to publishers that are able to provide instructional materials in both print and accessible digital formats to include all of the materials text and images.** Ask publishers to respond to the following questions when purchasing textbooks and core related instructional materials.

1. Are you able to provide fully accessible\* digital formats for purchase?
2. Do these digital formats include all of the images that appear in the textbooks?
3. Which digital formats are available for purchase (e.g. html, tagged PDF, etc.)?
4. How are the digital formats delivered (on CD, by download, by Web access, etc.)?
5. Do any of the accessible formats include additional learner supports \*\*?
6. Do you recommend a player for your digital formats?
7. Is the user interface of the player accessible?
8. If the instructional materials are not available as accessible digital formats, do you provide permission for LEAs to create their own accessible versions for students with print disabilities?

\* **What is meant by “fully accessible”?**

- All text is digital and can be read with text-to-speech, modified with regard to font size and navigated by unit, chapter, section and page number (or other appropriate segments).
- Images include alternate text and long descriptions when appropriate.
- Math equations are provided as images with alt text or in the content file using MathML.
- Content reading order, levels and headings are determined by publisher tagging.

\*\* **What is meant by “additional learner supports”?**

- Table of contents with links to appropriate location with the body of the text.
- Vocabulary supports with links to a glossary.
- Comprehension supports such as prompts and scaffolds for applying reading strategies.
- Optional highlighting of critical features such as big ideas within the content.
- Opportunities to interact with the content.
- Embedded prompts, hints and models to support responding by learners.

**SAMPLE NIMAS CONTRACT LANGUAGE**

Local school districts **must** require publishers to send NIMAS filesets to the NIMAC. Note that there is no additional charge to the local school districts. The following paragraph should be inserted in textbook purchasing contracts.

By agreeing to deliver the materials marked with "NIMAS" on this contract or purchase order, the publisher agrees to prepare and submit, on or before \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_ a NIMAS fileset to the NIMAC that complies with the terms and procedures set forth by the NIMAC. Should the vendor be a distributor of the materials and not the publisher, the distributor agrees to immediately notify the publisher of its obligation to submit NIMAS filesets of the purchased products to the NIMAC. The files will be used for the production of specialized formats as permitted under the law for students with print disabilities. Please note that the delivery of print versions should not be delayed in cases where the NIMAS fileset has yet to be validated and catalogued by the NIMAC.

### **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY**

It is the policy of the Iowa Department of Education not to discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, gender, disability, religion, age, political party affiliation, or actual or potential parental, family or marital status in its programs, activities, or employment practices as required by the Iowa Code sections 216.9 and 256.10(2), Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d and 2000e), the Equal Pay Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 206, et seq.), Title IX (Educational Amendments, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681 – 1688), Section 504 (Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12101, et seq.). If you have questions or grievances related to compliance with this policy by the Iowa Department of Education, please contact the legal counsel for the Iowa Department of Education, Grimes State Office Building, Des Moines, IA 50319-0146, telephone number 515/281-5295; or the Director of the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, Citigroup Center, 500 W. Madison Street, Suite 1475, Chicago, IL 60661, telephone number 312-730-1560, fax 312/730-1576, e-mail: OCR.Chicago@ed.gov

#### **Iowa's True AIM**

<http://trueaim.iowa.gov/>

#### **NIMAS Technical Assistance:**

[http://aim.cast.org/learn/policy/federal/what\\_is\\_nimas](http://aim.cast.org/learn/policy/federal/what_is_nimas)

#### **NIMAC:**

<http://nimac.us/>

#### **Iowa Department for the Blind**

<http://www.IDBonline.org>

#### **Bookshare**

<http://www.bookshare.org>