

Obtaining Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM): A Quick Guide for Local Education Agencies

About Accessible Instructional Materials

Federal and state special education statutes require that students with print disabilities be provided with textbook and other materials in accessible formats. Such materials are referred to as Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) and include digital (electronic) text, braille, audio, and enlarged print.

The following information is excerpted from *Pennsylvania's Guidelines for the Provision of Accessible Instructional Material*, which was issued by the Pennsylvania Bureau of Special Education in January 2010 and is available at www.pattan.net. The guidelines provide local education agencies with direction for identifying, locating, and providing AIM.

Local Education Agency (LEA) Responsibilities

- **Include language in all contracts and purchase orders for textbooks or other print instructional materials requiring the publisher to submit files in National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) format to the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Center (NIMAC).**

Recommended language from PennLink issued May 13, 2009:

"By agreeing to deliver the instructional materials on this contract or purchase order, the publisher agrees to prepare and submit, on or before the delivery of the materials, a NIMAS file set 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 notify immediately the publisher of its obligation to submit NIMAS file sets of the purchased products to the NIMAC. The files will be used for the production of alternate formats as permitted under the law for students with print disabilities."

- **Maintain textbook purchasing practices that support the provision of AIM in a timely manner.** Timely manner is defined in Pennsylvania Chapter 14 as "at the same time as students without disabilities receive their textbooks and core related instructional materials."
- **Maintain appropriate documentation of digital rights management.** This includes developing local process and designating appropriate staff to monitor/document student eligibility and provision of copyright-protected AIM.
- **Identify local procedures and supports** for assisting teams in determining need and providing AIM for students who need them to make progress in the general education curriculum.
- **Determine potential sources of AIM.** This may include establishing accounts or membership with national, state, and commercial sources, as well as preparing for local production of AIM as needed.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team Responsibilities

- **Determine need for instructional materials in specialized formats.** Does the student have difficulty reading standard texts at a sufficient rate and with adequate comprehension in order to independently complete academic/curricular tasks with success?
- **Select appropriate specialized formats** (Braille, digital, audio, and/or enlarged print) needed for the student to access the general education curriculum and meet IEP goals.
- **Identify textbooks, related core materials, and other print materials needed.**
- **Identify any assistive technology, training, and supports needed** for effective use of specialized formats, and document these in the student's IEP.
- **Determine and document eligibility** for copyright exemption, using procedures defined by the LEA.

AIM Acquisition Sources

Once the student's IEP team determines the format that the student needs and can use, AIM may be acquired from a variety of sources. Note that sources may have eligibility criteria and require documentation for enrollment.

- **Textbook Publishers** (for materials in appropriate formats available for purchase)
- **National, federally-funded repositories and programs:**
 - **BookShare** www.bookshare.org (for digital text files)
 - **Learning Ally** (formerly Recordings for Blind & Dyslexic) www.learningally.org (for digitally recorded audiobooks)
 - **American Printing House for the Blind (APH)** www.louis.aph.org (for Braille, enlarged print, audio, and digital files)
- **Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) AIM Center** www.pattan.net (for Braille and enlarged print and to request NIMAS files for conversion to other digital file types for eligible students with print disabilities). The PaTTAN AIM Center is also a source for technical assistance in locating, converting, and using AIM for LEAs in Pennsylvania.
- **Other sources of e-text**, including public domain sites and scanned materials created locally.

Resources for Learning More About AIM

National Center on Accessible Instructional Materials <http://aim.cast.org/>

This site serves as a resource to educators, parents, and others interested in learning more about and implementing AIM. Resources at this site include:

- **The AIM Navigator:** an online application that facilitates the process of decision-making about accessible instructional materials for an individual student by IEP or other decision-making teams
- **AIM Explorer:** a free, downloadable simulation tool that enables teams to explore various settings of features found in text readers and supported reading software