

## Why Accessible Instructional Materials?

Textbooks and other print materials are a primary means of accessing curriculum in schools. Many students with disabilities have difficulty with these standard materials, seeing them, manipulating them or perhaps decoding or comprehending them. These students need accessible instructional materials (AIM) in order to access the general education curriculum. Provisions within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) require that textbooks and related core instructional materials in specialized formats be provided to students who need them in a timely manner.

*Learn more about AIM at the [Center for Applied Special Technology \(CAST\) Accessible Instructional Materials](#) website.*

## What are NIMAS and NIMAC?

To make this easier for schools, IDEA 2004 also established a standard file format that all publishers of K-12 textbooks will provide upon request when textbooks are ordered. The National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (**NIMAS**) is intended for use in the preparation of electronic files suitable for efficient conversion into specialized formats. Further, the National Instructional Materials Center (**NIMAC**) was established as a repository for those files. When LEAs order texts for all students, they will request that a NIMAS file be deposited in the NIMAC for later conversion into specialized formats needed by individual students using that text.

*Learn more by reading the [OSEP Topic Brief on NIMAS](#) or by visiting the [NIMAC website](#).*

## What do we mean by specialized formats?

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

- Digital Text or E-text (electronic text) include files produced by word-processing programs, rich-text files (RTF), ASCII, HTML and Digital Talking Books. Such files can be transformed into multiple accessible forms by using varied font size and colors, text-to-speech tools, and other text enhancements that provide access to the text.
- Braille is a series of raised dots that can be read tactually by people who are blind or whose eyesight is not sufficient for reading printed material. Braille materials provide the content as standard print, embossed on specialized paper or, when provided digitally, through specialized refreshable displays.
- Large Print format provides content as standard print, in larger, often simpler font type or page sizes to enable those with visual impairments to read more easily.
- Audio formats include tapes, CDs, MP3 files, text-to-speech programs, and other auditory alternatives to printed texts.

What should schools do now to provide Accessible Instructional Materials to students who need them to access the curriculum or meet IEP goals?

### **What should schools do when ordering textbooks?**

**When ordering textbooks from publishers**, LEAs should include the following language in the purchase order to ensure that a NIMAS file is deposited into the NIMAC.

*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 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 immediately notify 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; This is page \_\_ of \_\_ of this contract or purchase order.*

### **What should IEPs teams do to make sure that the need for AIM is considered?**

**When IEP teams meet to review current data**, teams should identify whether a student requires accessible instructional materials and, if so, in what format. Teams may review learning media assessment data (for students who are blind or visually impaired) as well as data from assistive trials, including use of digital text features (such as text to speech) in the context of meaningful text comprehension tasks.

*To learn more, see the NIMAS/CAST web page on [Accessible Instructional Materials in the IEP](#).*

### **How do teams obtain textbooks in Braille format?**

**To obtain materials in braille format**, LEAS are encouraged to contact [PaTTAN AIM Center](#). Staff in Production Services can assist LEAs in identifying conversion options for NIMAS and other files.

### **How do teams obtain textbooks in alternate formats other than Braille?**

**To obtain materials in other alternate formats**, LEAS are encouraged to explore the services available from national-level accessible materials producers and distributors such as

- [Bookshare.org](#) for electronic texts. (Note that Bookshare is free to students with IEPs.)
- [Learning Ally \(formerly RFB&D\)](#) for human voice audio texts.
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### **What disabilities qualify a student to be served with NIMAS-derived accessible textbooks?**

IDEA 2004 includes a definition of students who may be provided with accessible textbooks created with NIMAS-conformant files from the NIMAC. The definition used within the legislation is "*blind or other persons with print disabilities.*" This means children served under IDEA who may qualify in accordance with an earlier act entitled, "An Act to provide books for the adult blind," approved March 31, 1931 (2 U.S.C. 135a; 46 Stat. 1487) to receive books and other publications produced in specialized formats [674(e)(3)(A)].

*For more information on NIMAS eligibility, see the NIMAS at CAST [Who Qualifies?](#)*

**IDEA 2004 requires that LEAs provide AIM in a timely manner to students who need these materials. What is meant by timely manner?**

As required by IDEA 2004, Pennsylvania has defined timely manner in the recent update to PA special education law. Chapter 14 states that Agencies act in a timely manner in providing instructional materials if they take all reasonable steps to ensure that children who are blind or other persons with print disabilities have access to their accessible format instructional materials at the same time that students without disabilities have access to the instructional materials. §14.106, §711.45(c)