

# Accessible Instructional Materials

## Project Background



The principle of **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** facilitates the creation of educational environments that are flexible and responsive to the needs of all students, including those with disabilities, by using technological tools to support all aspects of the curriculum: goals, methods, materials and assessments. Providing materials that students can effectively use is an essential component of a universally-designed classroom.

For many students with disabilities, print-based curriculum materials, especially textbooks, raise barriers to access, and therefore to learning. These students need specialized formats – **Accessible Instructional Materials** - to be successful.

For the past year, representatives from associations and stakeholders in Maine have been participating in the **Accessible Instructional Materials Community of Practice (AMI-CoP)** for the purpose of facilitating the development of a system that assists schools and classrooms to achieve this increased flexibility for all students and to provide high quality accessible instructional materials in a timely manner.

The **National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS)** requirement of the 2004 **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** is a critical component of a universally-designed classroom. This mandate helps to focus attention on the importance of Accessible Instructional Materials for students who cannot manage traditional print.

*“Just recently, I used an audio (format) for a book called Gilgamesh. (Audio books) have really improved how I can understand how and what the book is about. It has also made it easier to visualize the events that happen.”*

~ Joseph, age 16,  
Mount Desert Island HS

NIMAS guides the production and distribution of digital source files of textbooks and other instructional materials so they can be more easily converted to specialized formats, including Braille, audio, large print and digital text.

The IDEA - NIMAS requirements place responsibility on states and school administrative units to adopt the NIMAS and to provide high quality accessible versions of K-12 textbooks and related core instructional materials to students with print disabilities in a timely manner.

Maine is one of 15 states working to establish baseline data on schools current practices that will help to guide development of a system that will assist schools to select, acquire, and use accessible instructional materials.

## Glossary

The following glossary is designed to help introduce the terms and vocabulary of Accessible Instructional Materials

### ***AIM - Accessible Instructional Materials***

Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) are specialized formats of curricular content that can be used by and with students with print-disabilities. AIM include Braille, audio, large print, and digital text.

**Braille** is "a series of raised dots that can be read with the fingers by people who are blind or whose eyesight is not sufficient for reading printed material... Braille is not a language. Rather, it is a code by which languages such as English or Spanish may be written and read" (Source: American Foundation for the Blind).

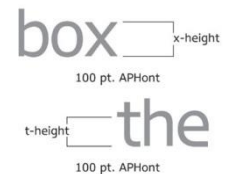
**Audio** refers to auditory alternatives to printed text. Examples of formats include CDs, audiotapes, MP3 files, and software programs that convert digital text-to-speech output, and other auditory alternatives to printed texts.

**Large Print** is generally defined as print for text passages that is larger than the print used by that segment of the population with normal vision. Large print for use by the low vision population is print that is eighteen points in size or larger. (Source: American Printing House for the Blind - APH)

**Digital text** or "e-text," is what appears in common word processing or text editing programs. Digital text is malleable and transformable because it can be formatted (e.g., font, size, color) and converted to accessible form (e.g., read aloud by speech synthesis).

### ***NIMAC - National Instructional Materials Access Center***

The National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) is an acquisition system for specialized formats of textbooks and related core instructional materials sold after July 18, 2006. The NIMAC is also a national repository of electronic files of textbooks and core instructional materials that are submitted directly by publishers. These files, once downloaded from the NIMAC, are then available to be converted to any of four specialized formats (Braille, digital text, audio, or large print).



Although the process of downloading files is limited to authorized individuals, the NIMAC is freely searchable by anyone.

### ***NIMAS - National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard***

The National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) is a technical standard used by publishers to produce source files of their textbooks and related core instructional materials. A single file based on the NIMAS is built once and then, upon download from the NIMAC, rendered many times in multiple formats. The NIMAS and NIMAC significantly reduce the amount of time it takes to get specialized formats of core instructional materials to the students who need them.

### ***Print Disability***

For this survey, a “print disability” is defined as: "A condition related to blindness, visual impairment, specific learning disability or other physical condition in which the student is unable to gain information from printed materials at an anticipated level for their grade, and needs alternative access or a specialized format (i.e., Braille, Large Print, Audio, Digital text) to access that information."

### ***Timely Manner***

“Timely manner” means that school administrative units (SAUs) will ensure that students who are blind, and other students with print disabilities, will have access to specialized instructional materials (Braille, audio, large print, digital text) at the same time all other students receive their instructional materials.

### ***UDL - Universal Design for Learning***

UDL is a framework that can help turn the challenges posed by high standards and increasing learner diversity into opportunities to maximize learning for every student.

Drawing upon new knowledge of how the brain works and new technologies and media now available for teaching and learning, UDL frames a systematic approach to setting goals, choosing or creating flexible materials and media, and assessing students accurately.

