

# Quarterly Newsletter

September 2025



## The Different Perspectives of Print Access

By Meriah Cory, Grant Coordinator for the Alaska Center for Accessible Materials (AKCAM)

When looking at creating access to curriculum from a print perspective, there are several viewpoints to consider in order to support students who have print access challenges. Some are just best practices, while others are laws relating to ADA Title II and Copyright law.

**Built-in vs. Assistive Tech/Format Supports:** Built-in supports are those included with the curriculum to help students and teachers access printed content without having to create or add additional supports to make the material accessible. Assistive technology/alternative formats can be used with digital materials or with printed curriculum, but require additional technology or formatting. Either form of support helps individuals with print disabilities have equitable access to content as individuals who do not have a print disability. Considerations to think about when looking at curriculum to determine if it is accessible are or not and to help select appropriate tools to supply print access are:

### **Student Viewpoint:**

Universal Considerations:

- When using the accessibility features, does the student look different from peers?
- How much time is added to tasks when using the accessibility features?
- When can the student have access to the accessibility features?  
<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/acc/cresource/q2/p03/>
- Can the student access the accessibility features/tools at home, or is it only available at school?
- How intuitive are the tools, and how much training does the student need to be given to be independent in using the tools?
- Will these supports be available after graduation, or will skills be learned to the point where the supports are no longer needed?
- Does an implementation plan need to be written to help write when and how supports are going to be incorporated? <https://qiat.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Guiding-Document-for-Assistive-Technology-Implementation.pdf>

Built-in support:

- If text-to-speech is used, does highlighting accompany it, and can the voices be changed? Do just the directions and stories have access to text-to-speech, or can this feature be used with all content?

Assistive Tech Support:

- Students often will not advocate for their needs; instead, they will refuse to do the work. Here is a tool to help them take ownership of their needs.  
[https://s3.amazonaws.com/scschoolfiles/3040/digital\\_advocating\\_for\\_my\\_aem\\_final\\_hz59h7t.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/scschoolfiles/3040/digital_advocating_for_my_aem_final_hz59h7t.pdf)

### **Educators Viewpoint:**

Universal Considerations:

- Do the digital materials used in the classroom follow the POUR (Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, Robust) model? <https://aem.cast.org/acquire/vetting-accessibility>
- Does using these features require more prep and planning time?
- Do the features meet the needs of my class and individual students?
- What training is provided/needed on the tools?
- Do the accessibility features work with the classroom tech?

#### Built-in Features:

- Does the curriculum offer text-to-speech options for all or some of the content?
- Does the curriculum offer built-in magnification or resizing?
- Does the curriculum offer highlighting, and are the colors modifiable?
- Does the curriculum offer closed captions for videos?
- Does the curriculum offer alternative navigation for students who cannot use a traditional mouse?
- Are the settings to turn on and off the accessibility features intuitive?

#### Assistive Tech Support:

- When printed materials are reproduced, can the sizing, spacing, or contrast be changed?

#### **Administration Viewpoint:**

##### Universal Considerations:

- First and foremost, if it is a digital material, does it meet WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.1 level AA or higher? This is important because this is the first check-in to make sure that basic access is provided and that the district is compliant with ADA Title II. <https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>
- Has there been an outside evaluation of the content's accessibility?
- Is it compatible with the platforms/software the district uses?
- Did the vendor provide a report based on the Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT®)? <https://www.itic.org/policy/accessibility/vpat>

#### Built-in Features:

- More information can be found at National Center on Accessible Digital Educational Materials & Instruction (NCADEMI) <https://ncademi.org/events/webinars/edtech-procurement/>

#### Assistive Tech Support:

- Does it work with the outside assistive technology the district already owns?

It takes a team to set up a culture of accessibility, and while support can be put in place for any of the three viewpoints, it is not until they all work together that the culture and mindsets change, making it easier to support access to all school environments and limit workload for individual team members.

#### Tools to Consider for adding accessibility features to classrooms easily:

1. Bookshare is a free library of textbooks, bestsellers, children's books, career resources, and more for people with reading barriers, with over 1,224,355 titles. <https://www.bookshare.org/>
2. Read & Write offers a range of powerful support tools to help you gain confidence with reading, writing, studying, and research, and is a Google Chrome extension. <https://www.texthelp.com/products/read-and-write-education/>
3. The Anne Freitag Library at SESA is a library that can be accessed by anyone in the state of Alaska. It includes assistive technology, books, and a curriculum. <https://sesa.org/library/>
4. Chrome Accessibility is a built-in accessibility feature for the browser and Chromebooks. <https://developer.chrome.com/docs/accessibility>
5. Apple Accessibility is a built-in accessibility feature within iOS and OS. <https://www.apple.com/accessibility/>

For support with braille, large print, audio, digital text, or adapted materials, or for help understanding what a print disability is and what tools best fit students' needs, please feel free to reach out to **AKCAM** at any time. We are here to provide support with access to print for students with complex needs.

Meriah Cory, AKCAM Coordinator

Email: [akcam@sesa.org](mailto:akcam@sesa.org)