

Accessible Materials and Assistive Technology Resources

The rapid pivot to emergency remote learning exposed many inequities in our communities, including barriers to student use of technology. In some cases, the lack of availability of devices and connectivity in students' homes is the barrier. For many students with disabilities, an additional potential barrier is the lack of accessibility of the materials and technologies selected for remote learning. We are reaching out to offer guidance on best practices and resources for providing accessible materials and technologies in a timely manner. This information is intended to support your district's provision of special education and related services through distance instruction, as outlined by the [U.S. DOE March 21st Supplemental Fact Sheet](#).

Because the success of providing accessible materials and technologies to all learners who need them is dependent on effective collaboration, we are encouraging cross-functional coordination between general and special education at the state and local level.

What is meant by accessible digital materials and technologies?

Many digital materials and technologies are designed without attention to learner variability. This results in barriers for students with physical, sensory, and learning disabilities who use built-in accessibility features and assistive technology (AT). In order for students with disabilities to have a barrier-free digital learning experience, both the material (content in the form of ebooks, video, etc.) and the technology (delivery systems such as learning management systems, video players, etc.) must be accessible to them. The standards used to measure the extent to which products are accessible include the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#) and [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act](#).

What can our district do to improve the likelihood that digital materials and technologies are accessible?

In your **LEA's procurement process**, include accessibility in policies, guidelines, and vendor contracts. You can also refer to [SETDA's DMAPS database](#) for Utah's information. The National Center on Accessible Educational Materials for Learning (AEM Center) at CAST provides the following resources to guide the purchase of accessible digital materials and technologies:

- [Best Practices for Communicating Digital Accessibility Requirements in Procurement Policies & Guidelines](#)
- [Five Things Educators Can Do to Buy Accessible](#)

In your LEA's **selection process**, include accessibility in the list of criteria for quality instructional materials. As stated by the State Educational Technology Directors Association

(SETDA) in its [Guide to Quality Instructional Materials](#): "With any adoption of instructional materials, whether purchased or free, internally or externally reviewed, educators should ensure that the instructional materials align to standards, address educational goals and are accessible across the widest possible range of students, including those with disabilities." The AEM Center provides a supportive guide for evaluating the accessibility of digital materials, which can be added to your review criteria:

- [Is It Accessible? Questions to Ask Before Selecting Educational Materials](#)

In the **creation of materials** by teachers and other staff, include accessibility as an expectation of documents, videos, and other learning resources for student and family use. The AEM Center provides the following resources for creating accessible documents, slide decks, and videos:

- [Designing for Accessibility with POUR \(Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, Robust\)](#)
- [Creating Accessible Documents \(and slide decks\)](#)
- [Creating Accessible Video](#)

What is available for creating accessible math notation in digital learning environments?

Math content and instruction can be made more accessible with supports such as text to speech for reading math expressions aloud, handwriting recognition, and sonification of graphs. The AEM Center provides the following resource:

- [Teaching with Accessible Math](#)

Utah Assistive Technology Teams (UATT)

Utah Assistive Technology Teams (UATT) support school LEAs and IEP teams to evaluate, acquire, and manage assistive technology for students with disabilities. They support and coordinate with multi-disciplinary educational and rehabilitation teams to train students, caregivers, educators, and service providers in the use of assistive technology in education and in the major life functions of students with disabilities.

See [UATT](#) for referral forms and the list of local UATT teams.

Charters schools in Southern Utah can contact [Clarissa Draper](#) (clarissa.b@aggiemail.usu.edu) to arrange for assessments at 801-725-6813.

USBE is working on contracting with an individual to work with charter schools in Northern Utah and will disseminate that information as soon as a contract is finalized.

Utah State Instructional Materials Access Center (USIMAC)

[USIMAC](#) partners with Utah K-12 schools to create and provide accessible materials which enable students who are blind, visually impaired, or otherwise qualified to succeed independently in their education. USIMAC is a repository and lending works center for accessibility materials.

National Technical Assistance Centers

The [AEM Center](#) provides resources and services to support states, districts, educators, and families with selecting, acquiring, and using accessible materials and technologies. The AEM Pilot is a self-assessment and progress monitoring tool for districts. [CITES](#) provides guidance on best practices for developing and sustaining inclusive technology ecosystems, including coordination between educational technology and assistive technology personnel.

Bookshare

Bookshare provides digital text and braille-ready formats of standard print textbooks and related print curriculum materials. See [Bookshare for Schools](#) for information. Contact your local UATT team for access to Bookshare accounts.

Thank you for the hard work you are doing on behalf of all students and their families. We realize that the needs of students with disabilities are among many unique challenges that your LEA is solving at this unprecedented time.

Contacts

For more questions about accessibility, please contact [Lavinia Gripentrog](#) (lavinia.gripentrog@schools.utah.gov) or [Tracy Gooley](#) (tracy.gooley@schools.utah.gov).

For questions about Digital Teaching and Learning instructional materials, contact [Amber Wright](#) (amber.wright@schools.utah.gov).