

Obtaining Alternate Format Textbooks and Core Instructional Materials for Wyoming Students with Print Disabilities

Background

In the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, there is a requirement that students have access to the general education curriculum. This means that the students who need materials in alternative formats (Braille, large print, audiobooks) must be provided with those formats using the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) and the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC). NIMAS outlines a set of consistent and valid specifications for document source files created by K-12 curriculum publishers or other content producers that can be used to create accessible specialized formats of print and audio instructional materials. Curriculum materials covered by NIMAS include printed textbooks and printed core materials that are written and published primarily for use in elementary and secondary school instruction and that are required by a state or school district for use by students in the classroom.

School Districts' Responsibilities

Each school district in the state of Wyoming has the option of participating in NIMAC. Whether a district does or does not participate in NIMAC, the district will be responsible to ensure that each student who requires instructional materials in an alternate format will receive it in a timely manner and in a format that meets NIMAS standards.

The Wyoming Department of Education, Special Education Unit, recommends that school districts choose to participate in NIMAC, because this national effort to centralize the distribution of instructional materials in alternate formats will help guarantee timely provision of such materials to students. In coordination with the State Department, the Wyoming INstitute for Disabilities (WIND) has hired a NIMAS Coordinator who will assist districts in meeting the IDEA requirement for alternate format provision.

For local school districts that choose to participate in NIMAC, **contracts with publishers executed on and after December 3, 2006** for textbooks and other printed core materials *must* include a provision that requires the publisher to produce NIMAS files and send them to the NIMAC (this will not add any cost to the contract). Curriculum publishers have been involved in discussions relating to NIMAS and are aware of its requirements. Sample contract language is included below:

“By agreeing to deliver the materials marked with “NIMAS” on this contract or purchase order, the publisher agrees to submit a valid NIMAS source file set to NIMAC at the American Printing House for the Blind, Inc. (APH). 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 NIMAC. This is page ___ of ___ of this contract or purchase order.”

In lieu of, or in addition to choosing to participate in NIMAC, schools may contract with curriculum publishers directly to purchase accessible, student-ready versions. In most cases, however, publishers will not have such versions for sale.

Who has Access to NIMAC?

Three groups will be able to obtain access to the contents of the NIMAC: 1) The school districts and the State Authorized Users; 2) publishers of curriculum content; and 3) the AMPs (alternative media producers). Publishers upload the files, AMPs download and convert the files, and schools distribute the specialized format to the NIMAS qualified student.

Alternative Format Determination

NIMAS source files are a set of raw files containing images, text, charts, tables, graphs, maps, illustrations, specific textbook information, and cover pages. The files are *not* ready for student consumption until a conversion process is applied, which assembles and integrates all elements into a usable product. Depending upon the individual needs of the student and a consideration of accessibility, location of use, portability, and search capabilities, this conversion process may generate a Braille book, a large print edition, a digital audio book with navigable structure (DAISY), or a basic audiobook with no built-in structure for moving through the content. The instructional personnel working directly with the student will need to determine the most appropriate format. If the student has an Individual Educational Plan (IEP), language should be included that documents the need for alternative format materials. In whatever way the instructional personnel elect to pursue curriculum materials in an alternative format, *the student should be directly involved in the process* to ensure compatibility and to identify the best match of student to curriculum tools. Providing alternative materials is a direct assistive technology service, and is subject to the same issues of abandonment as are assistive technology devices. Psychoeducational reports, academic tests, or learning styles inventory results may provide insight in this identification process.

Understanding AMPs

There are many Accessible Media Producers (file conversion companies) that exist on the Internet. Each of these are capable of converting NIMAS source files into an alternate format; however, not all can convert files into the various formats that may be requested. Some produce DAISY books exclusively, some are turnkey operations that require the same company's software or devices to access the converted files, and some require a "subscription" to access services and files for individual students. (See NIMAC AMP Assignment Forms.) There are presently three primary sources from which districts are accessing alternate format materials: Recordings for the Blind & Dyslexic, BookShare, and the American Printing House for the Blind (APH). Districts are not restricted to these sources; they are only offered as suggestions for starting points.

Definitions

- A “textbook” is defined as the principal tool of instruction used in the classroom. It is a printed book or series of books that contains most, if not all of the academic content a student needs to learn to meet the State or local education agency’s (SEA or LEA) curriculum requirements for that subject area.
- “Related core materials” are printed materials, other than textbooks designed for use by students in the classroom in conjunction with a textbook and which, together with the textbook, are necessary to meet the curriculum requirements for the intended course. The materials should be directly related to the textbook and wherever possible they should be published by the publisher of the textbook. Related core materials do not include materials that are not written and published primarily for use by students in the classroom (e.g., trade books not bundled with the textbook, newspapers and reference works) nor ancillary or supplemental materials that are not necessary to meet the curriculum requirements for the intended course.
- “Curriculum requirements for the intended course” refers to relevant curriculum standards and requirements as established by the SEA or LEA.
- “DAISY” (Digital Accessible Information SYstem) is the “next generation” audio format, providing a higher quality, fully navigable talking book experience for readers. DAISY books are replacing the standard analog audiocassette recordings held by many libraries and resource centers. DAISY is a global standard, and may include various multimedia elements, depending on the format requested.

Steps for Coordinating with NIMAC – Feedback, please

1. Contact NIMAS Coordinator at the Wyoming Institute for Disability (NIMAS@WIND) at 888-989-9463 or through email: NIMAS@uwyo.edu.
2. The NIMAS Coordinator enters the request into the NIMAS@WIND Database.
3. The NIMAS Coordinator will check available databases (including NIMAC) and advise the school district on the availability of the alternate format book.
4. The NIMAS Coordinator will give information to the district on how to obtain the requested format.
5. If the book is unavailable, the NIMAS Coordinator will assist the school district in incorporating new contract language into its purchase order with the publisher. When the original purchase order is prepared and submitted to the publisher, a copy of the purchase order should be sent to the NIMAS Coordinator for tracking and support purposes.
6. The publisher prepares a NIMAS file set and sends it to NIMAC.
7. NIMAC validates, catalogs, and provides secure access to the NIMAS file set.
8. The NIMAS Coordinator and the identified Accessible Media Producer (AMP) are notified electronically that the NIMAS file set is ready for conversion.
9. The identified AMP downloads the NIMAS file set and converts the book to the alternate format.
10. The AMP ships the alternate format book to the school district and notifies the NIMAS Coordinator that the order is complete.
11. The AMP submits information about the book to the Louis Database of Accessible Materials for People who are Blind or Visually Impaired.
12. A follow-up call to the district is made by the NIMAS Coordinator to ensure that the alternative format book was received and is being used by the student. (Check to see which device or software program the student will use.)
13. The database record is “closed.”