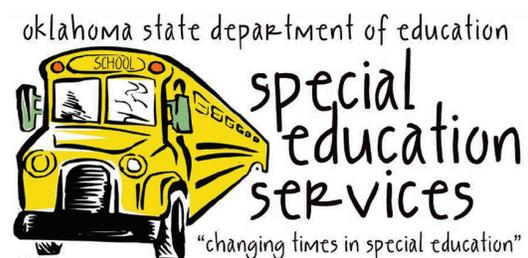


**Janet Barresi**  
**State Superintendent of Public Instruction**  
**Oklahoma State Department of Education**  
**Special Education Services**

**Technical Assistance Document**  
**Oklahoma Procedures for**  
**Providing Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM)**



Oklahoma State Department of Education  
2500 North Lincoln Boulevard  
Oklahoma City, OK 73105  
Phone: 405-522-3248 [www.ok.gov/sde](http://www.ok.gov/sde)

It is the policy of the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, or disability in its programs or employment practices as required by Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Civil rights compliance inquiries related to the OSDE may be directed to the Affirmative Action Officer, Room 111, 2500 North Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105-4599, telephone number (405) 522-4930; or, the United States Department of Education's Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. Inquiries or concerns regarding compliance with Title IX by local school districts should be presented to the local school district Title IX coordinator.

# Table of Contents

Background.....	1
What is a Print Disability.....	1
Accessible Instructional Materials and the Law.....	2
National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard .....	2
Decision Process for Accessible Instructional Materials.....	3
Determining Student Need for AIM.....	3
Selecting Specialized Formats.....	4
Acquiring AIM.....	4
Sources of AIM .....	5
Oklahoma AIM Providers .....	5
Supports Needed for AIM.....	6
Training Supports .....	7
Examples.....	8
Steps to Promote AIM.....	9
Additional AIM Resources.....	9
Verification of Eligibility Form.....	10
AIM Flow Chart.....	11

## Background

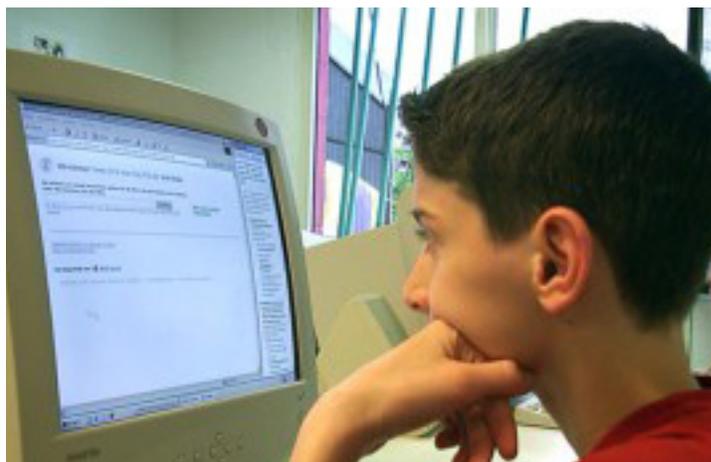
Some students with disabilities have difficulty reading and accessing standard print learning materials such as textbooks and supplementary materials. A student with a visual impairment, for example may not be able to read a standard print textbook and would likely require larger print or braille to read independently. A student with a physical disability, who is unable to hold and turn the pages of a standard textbook, may benefit from having an audio or digital version of a textbook. A student with a reading disability may better comprehend information that is displayed on a computer or a tablet while the text is read aloud by a computer voice.

To be successful in school, these students and others like them need learning materials in specialized formats. When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized in 2004, it included a requirement that elementary and secondary school students with disabilities who need print instructional materials in an accessible format receive them in a timely manner. This means that school districts must take reasonable steps to provide accessible instructional materials (AIM) to eligible students with disabilities without delay, typically at the same time as other students receive instructional materials.

### **This guide was created to explain:**

- The process for making decisions about AIM;
- Why a student may need AIM;
- What types of specialized formats are available;
- How AIM are acquired;
- What supports are necessary to effectively utilize AIM; and
- What can be done to promote the use of AIM for students.

With this knowledge, school districts, educators, and families can ensure that students with disabilities have access to the materials they need to participate in class and achieve academically.



### **What is a Print Disability?**

“Print disability” is used by U.S. copyright law to determine who is eligible to receive specialized formats of print materials under the provisions of the 1931 Act to Provide Books to the Adult Blind, as Amended. Under this Act, individuals with a print disability are those who have been certified by a competent authority to be unable to read or use standard print materials because of:

- Blindness,
- Visual impairment,
- Physical limitations, or
- Reading disabilities resulting from an organic dysfunction such as dyslexia.

### **What are Print Instructional Materials?**

“Print instructional materials” include printed textbooks and related print core materials that are written and published primarily for use in elementary and secondary school instruction and are required by a state or local education agency (LEA) for use by students in a classroom. Such materials often include workbooks and other supplemental materials packaged with the textbook by the publisher.

## Accessible Instructional Materials and the Law

NIMAS is a standard file format established by IDEA that was created to make it easier for students with disabilities to access learning materials in the formats they need as quickly as possible. Electronic files of books created using the NIMAS format are designed to be easily converted into specialized formats including braille, large print, audio, and digital text. States must ensure that students with disabilities who need AIM receive them “in a timely manner.” Each state has the responsibility to define “in a timely manner.” Oklahoma has defined it as “at the same time as other students or to the greatest extent possible.”

Oklahoma coordinates with the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) as a means to provide specialized formats to qualifying students in a timely manner. IDEA mandated the establishment of the NIMAC. The NIMAC is a national repository for publisher source files of textbooks and related core printed materials that are created according to the NIMAS technical specification.

Purchase orders made by state and local education agencies should include language that requires publishers to submit NIMAS-conformant files to the NIMAC, or provide assurances that they have already done so, for each specific title purchased. Contract language must also ask publishers to use the MathML3 Structure Guidelines recommended by the NIMAS Center when requesting NIMAS files. MathML3 structure increases the accessibility of math and science textbooks. By doing this, the education agencies obligate publishers to submit source files to the NIMAC, ensuring that all students with print disabilities receive appropriate accessible versions of instructional materials in a timely manner. Sample contract language can be found at [okabletech.okstate.edu/AIM.html](http://okabletech.okstate.edu/AIM.html). For more information about MathML3 and NIMAS formats visit [www.aim.cast.org](http://www.aim.cast.org).

### The National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC)

The National Instructional Materials Access Center is the national library of files developed according to the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS). To receive specialized formats created with NIMAS source files from the NIMAC, a student must:

- Have an IEP. This means the child has undergone an evaluation and is or will be receiving special education services under IDEA, and
- Be certified by a competent authority as having a “print disability” as defined by copyright statute.

Students eligible for materials created from NIMAS files from the NIMAC will not receive them directly. Authorized users designated by states and registered with the NIMAC access these files for creation of student-ready materials in braille, large print, audio and digital text formats. In Oklahoma, ABLE Tech, Bookshare, Learning Ally, Liberty Braille, the AIM Center at the Oklahoma Library For the Blind and Physically Handicapped, and the Oklahoma School for the Blind are authorized users of the NIMAC.

### Who is Qualified to Receive NIMAS Textbooks?

Access to NIMAS textbooks is limited to individuals who qualify for an exemption to copyright law due to print disability. The Chafee Amendment (17 U.S.C. § 121 [1]) allows authorized entities to reproduce or distribute copies or phonorecords of instructional materials in specialized formats exclusively for use by “blind or other persons with disabilities.”



A **competent authority** certifies students as having a print disability. For students who are blind, have a visual impairment, or have physical limitations, this can be a doctor or other medical professional, a social worker, or a school official such as a school psychologist or special educator. Students with reading disabilities resulting from organic dysfunction must be certified as having a print disability by a medical doctor.

## Decision Process for Accessible Instructional Materials

There are four decision-making steps members of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team should take to ensure that students receive specialized formats that are needed for educational participation and achievement. The IEP team should:

1. Establish need for instructional materials in specialized formats.
2. Select which type of specialized format(s) are needed by the student.
3. Determine how to acquire needed formats in a timely manner.
4. Consider what supports are needed for effective use of the specialized formats by the student.

### Determining Student Need for AIM

Students with a variety of disabilities may need AIM. Students who can understand the textbook content but are unable to read or use standard print materials can access that content through specialized formats, which include braille, large print, audio, and digital text.

An IEP team should consider a variety of factors when determining whether a student needs materials in a specialized format. First, the IEP team should consider whether the student can read and use the standard print-based materials used by the other students.

- If the answer is “yes,” specialized formats would not be needed at this time, and the team should continue with the development of the IEP.
- If the answer is “no,” the team should then determine if the student needs exactly the same content in one or more specialized formats or if the student needs modified content or alternative materials.

When thinking about a student’s possible need for specialized formats, the IEP team might consider, along with other factors, the student’s sensory, physical, and cognitive capability; reading level (decoding, word recognition, comprehension, and fluency skills); grades; classroom performance; and levels of academic proficiency in all subject areas.

## Specific Questions the Team Might Ask Include:

- Can the student see the material well enough to read the information on a level comparable to other classmates?
- Can the student physically manipulate the material without a lot of effort?
- Does the student have the necessary stamina to read standard printed materials for extended periods of time?
- Does the student have the decoding, fluency, and processing skills needed to gain information from grade-level printed materials?

Answering “no” to any of these questions might indicate that a student needs the instructional materials in specialized formats. If there are cognitive concerns as well, the student may need modified or alternative materials.

### Specialized Formats vs. Alternative Materials

- Specialized formats include the same content as a printed textbook or other instructional material but change the way the content is presented to the student. No information is added or removed.
- Alternative materials address the same educational goals as the standard print document, but the content is modified (usually made less complex) so that the student can better understand it. Some students may need alternative materials in specialized formats in order to access them.



## Selecting Specialized Formats

If the IEP team determines that a student needs AIM, the next step is to select which specialized format would be most appropriate. The four types of specialized formats are braille, large print, audio, and digital text:

- **Braille** is a tactile system of reading and writing made up of raised dot patterns for letters, numbers, and punctuation marks. This format is used almost exclusively by people with visual impairments or blindness. Braille may be either embossed (a permanent printed document) or refreshable (electronically generated and accessed via a braille display device).
- **Large print** is generally defined as 18 point or larger font size. A document produced in large print format usually has more white space and may not look like the original document, but it contains the same information. Large print may be printed on pages that are the same size as a standard textbook page or on pages of a larger size.
- **Audio formats** present content as sound with no visual component. Audio formats include recorded human voice or synthesized electronic speech.
- **Digital text** provides electronic content that is delivered on a computer or another device. Electronic content may be changed in many ways (e.g., size, contrast, read aloud) to accommodate the needs and preferences of a student. How content is presented to a user depends upon the technology being used and student needs.

Students may require different formats depending on their needs, the instructional material, and the environments in which it will be used. For example, a student may use a digital format at school, an audio format at home, a large print book for math, and a digital text for history. The IEP team will select the formats that are needed for each print instructional material that must be available in an accessible form. In making the decision, the team should consider which format will best enable the student to:

- Access information contained in the printed materials,
- Work as independently as possible,
- Develop literacy skills, and
- Participate in educational activities.

The student's preferences, language, vision, memory, listening skills, tactile skills, and English proficiency

should also be considered. A student will typically need a trial period with different formats to determine which are most effective and preferred in different environments for various reading tasks. Oklahoma AIM service providers listed on page 5 provide free short-term assistive technology loans to help students and teachers determine the right fit.

## Acquiring AIM

AIM can be acquired from a variety of sources; however, not all students are eligible to receive materials from each of the sources. U.S. copyright laws require individuals to have a certified "print disability" in order to receive specialized formats of copyrighted materials from some sources. However, if an IEP team has determined that a student needs accessible instructional materials in order to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE), the school must provide specialized formats even if the student does not have a print disability as defined by copyright statute.



## Sources of AIM

AIM can be acquired from the following common sources:

- National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC)
- Accessible media producers (AMPs)
- Publishers
- Other sources
- Locally created

continued on page 5

*The following providers are available to help with AIM services and assistive technology. The organizations with asterisks are NIMAC authorized users and can download textbooks and related instructional materials on behalf of Oklahoma students as well as provide the appropriate specialized format, often at no cost to the school:*

- \*Oklahoma ABLÉ Tech (AIM and Assistive Technology Center) 800.257.1705 or 405.744.9748 [www.okabletech.okstate.edu/AIM/](http://www.okabletech.okstate.edu/AIM/)
- \*The AIM Center at the Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped 800.523.0288 or 405.521.3514 [www.library.state.ok.us/aim/](http://www.library.state.ok.us/aim/)
- \*Bookshare [www.bookshare.org](http://www.bookshare.org)
- \*Learning Ally [www.learningally.org](http://www.learningally.org)
- \*Liberty Braille 800.920.3369 or 405.562.3996 [www.libertybraille.com](http://www.libertybraille.com)
- \*Oklahoma School for the Blind for in-house students. 877.229.7136
- Oklahoma Assistive Technology Center (OATC) 405.271.3625 or 800.700.6282 [theoatc.org](http://theoatc.org)

## Sources of AIM

There are numerous free and commercial sources for accessible materials. Some of the sources are for textbooks and other books. Items with expired copyrights and in the public domain are typically available free of charge.

### NIMAC (NIMAC.us)

Provides core instructional textbooks and materials for K-12 students.

### Bookshare (Bookshare.org)

Bookshare creates and provides files that can be used by students with print disabilities who need materials in digital text, audio, or braille formats. Materials are free for students with print disabilities.

- American Printing House for the Blind: [aph.org](http://aph.org)
- Audible: [www.audible.com](http://www.audible.com)
- Audio Editions: [www.audioeditions.com](http://www.audioeditions.com)
- Blackstone Audio, Inc: [www.blackstoneaudio.com](http://www.blackstoneaudio.com)
- Learning Ally: [www.learningally.org](http://www.learningally.org)
- LibriVox: [librivox.org](http://librivox.org)
- Louis Database: [louis.aph.org](http://louis.aph.org)
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped: [loc.gov/nls](http://loc.gov/nls)
- NetLibrary: [www.netlibrary.org](http://www.netlibrary.org)
- Online bookstores: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com), etc.
- OverDrive: [www.overdrive.com](http://www.overdrive.com)
- Project Gutenberg: [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)

## “Open Source” Instructional Materials

Open source materials can be acquired, customized, and used with any student free of charge, or for a very small fee, depending on the source. The IEP team will need to verify that an open source material is accessible. The CK-12 Foundation ([about.ck12.org](http://about.ck12.org)) has additional information on this source.

## Locally Created

Although specialized formats are increasingly available through accessible media producers and commercial sources, the “do-it-yourself” method of creating materials - often by scanning the material or by creating it on a computer and saving it as digital text - remains a way to meet the needs of some students for certain materials. For example, teacher-made materials will almost always need to be created in this manner.

When an accessible version of a published, copyrighted material is created in this way, copyright law must still be respected. The safest approach is to ask permission from the publisher.



## Publishers

Upon request by a state or local education agency (LEA), a publisher may be willing to provide a digital file or grant permission to copy and scan materials that are not available from another source. When publishers provide these files, it is usually with the understanding that use of materials created from the file will be limited to students certified as having a print disability. This is especially helpful when the material is no longer sold and has no NIMAS source file. These materials are called “legacy materials.”

Some publishers also provide digital versions of instructional materials that can be purchased along with or instead of the printed books. This can be very useful if the digital version contains the same information as the printed book rather than supplementary material. Just because a material is in a digital format, however, does not necessarily mean that the material is accessible to all students. For example, perhaps the text cannot be read aloud, highlighted, or otherwise changed.

### Why Aren't More Instructional Materials Available for Purchase in Accessible Formats?

Some publishers have said that few educational agencies are asking for accessible materials for purchase, but that may be because people do not know they exist.

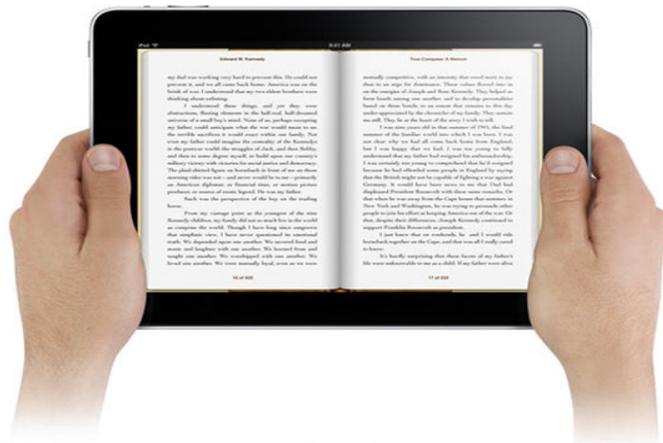
To increase the availability of AIM for purchase, school staff and parents are encouraged to contact publishers to ask for accessible versions of textbooks that can be purchased. This is extremely important because a purchased textbook in any format can be used by any student, rather than by only students who meet certain qualifications.

In addition, if the accessible material is coming directly from the publisher of the printed material, it is likely that both formats will be delivered at the same time.

## Supports Needed for AIM

The IEP team should determine whether any of the following supports are needed for a student to effectively use the selected AIM:

- Technology
- Training
- Instructional strategies
- Support services
- Accommodations or modifications



### Technology

After selecting the specialized formats and determining how to acquire them, the team should decide what types of technology or tools are needed for a student to use the accessible materials. Information about the specific formats and features needed by the student along with how and where the student will use the accessible materials can be helpful when choosing among the various technology tools that might be used to deliver the specialized formats.

Oklahoma's AIM service providers help schools, students, parents, and guardians determine which device(s) and/or software will be most effective with the specialized format used by a student. As Oklahoma's Assistive Technology Act Program, ABLE Tech offers device loans for up to six weeks for trial purposes. After the loan term is complete, it is the responsibility of the local education agency (LEA) to purchase equipment listed in a student's IEP. Liberty Braille, the AIM Center, and OATC offer short term assistive technology loans. Bookshare and Learning Ally also offer specialized assistive technology for use with specialized formats free-of-charge, for purchase or loan.

## **Training**

The amount of training required for the student to use AIM will vary according to the complexity of the technology or tool selected to access the specialized formats. For example, use of a large print book would not require much training. However, if a student is using text-to-speech software or a screen reader to access digital text, he or she may need to learn more advanced skills. Teachers, other school staff, and families may also need training in order to support the child at home and school.

Students may also need additional types of training, such as when to use a particular format or tool for a specific learning task or how to ask for needed supports when they are not readily available.

## **Instructional Strategies**

Educators may need to use various instructional strategies to support students using specialized formats and supporting technologies. When a student first begins using these tools, instruction should include multiple opportunities for the student to understand the purpose, benefits, and outcomes of using the tools. It is helpful to start by providing opportunities for the student to use the tools to successfully complete familiar learning tasks (possibly in a single environment). Gradually building on early successes and slowly introducing the complexity of the tools will enable the student to master them and work as independently as possible on learning goals in a variety of environments. Educators and families will need to work together to support the student's use of accessible materials and to monitor the change in the student's participation and achievement.

## **Support Services**

A student's IEP should describe any support services needed for effective use of various specialized formats and who is responsible for providing them. Different support services may be needed for different formats. For example, a student using braille may require specialized instructions from a qualified teacher of the visually impaired, and a student with a physical disability may need the support of an occupational or physical therapist. Additional supports such as case management, classroom organization and arrangement, equipment management and maintenance and file acquisition may also be needed.

## **Accommodations and Modifications**

The use of AIM may require accommodations or modifications to a student's education program. For example, a student may need preferential seating or additional time to complete tasks due to the time required to use a specialized format. A student may need frequent breaks to avoid fatigue. Some students may need to provide responses orally rather than in writing. The team should consider which accommodations or modifications will be necessary when writing the IEP.



## Examples

The following examples are provided to illustrate how AIM can be used with various students:

- A ninth-grade student with a visual impairment is enrolled in Oklahoma History, English Literature, Physical Science, Algebra I, and French. His IEP team has determined that he needs digital text for Oklahoma History, Physical Science, and French; audio for English Literature; and embossed braille for Algebra I. The student will also need audio versions of several novels required for English Literature.

School personnel could contact ABLE Tech or Liberty Braille to facilitate the acquisition of specialized formats and to borrow assistive technology such as screen reader software or text-to-speech software on a computer or a tablet, if needed for decision making purposes.

ABLE Tech will coordinate with Bookshare or the NIMAC for digital versions of the Oklahoma History, Physical Science and French textbooks, Learning Ally for the audio version of the English Literature textbook and additional novels, and Liberty Braille for an embossed copy of the Algebra I textbook. The school may also contact these AMPs individually for assistance.

Oklahoma AIM service providers will also help schools set up organizational accounts and individual memberships for students with AMPs such as Bookshare and Learning Ally.



- A second-grade student with a reading disability from organic dysfunction may need his materials for reading, science, and social studies in a digital format. The school would contact ABLE Tech to help with getting digital textbooks from Bookshare or the NIMAC and to borrow assistive technology if needed. The school may also obtain an organization membership with Bookshare and assist the student in getting an individual membership to have access to additional reading materials.



- The IEP team has determined that an eleventh-grade student who has been diagnosed with emotional disturbance needs instructional materials in digital format to be read with text-to-speech. Since he does not have a qualified print disability, this student is not eligible to receive NIMAS materials. However, the school is still required to provide AIM. In this case, school personnel may request a digital copy from the publisher or permission to copy and scan this student's materials into electronic text.



## Steps to Promote AIM

The requirement for providing AIM to students is a relatively new provision in IDEA. Teachers, school officials, parents, and advocates can help facilitate the use of specialized formats by:

- Sharing information about AIM and available supports;
- Using a decision-making process during the development of the IEP to determine if students need AIM;
- Learning about the process for obtaining materials from the NIMAC, accessible media producers and other sources;
- Communicating with IEP teams and school administrators about accessible materials that are often available to eligible students free of charge; and
- Collaborating with local and state education agencies to urge publishers to offer accessible versions of textbooks for purchase.

AIM can help students with disabilities access the same content as their peers and be successful in school. Because of new provisions in IDEA, specialized formats are more readily available to students who cannot read or use a standard textbook.

Reading this booklet, learning more information and sharing it with others are important first steps to ensuring that students with disabilities have access to accessible materials needed for their school participation and achievement.



## Decision-Making Tools and Supports

Interactive tools from the National Center on Accessible Instructional Materials can be used by teams to help with decisions about accessible instructional materials.

The **AIM Navigator** facilitates the process of decision-making about AIM for an individual student by IEP or other decision-making teams. The four decision points in the process include 1) determination of need, 2) selection of format(s), 3) acquisition of formats, and 4) selection of supports for use. The Navigator provides support for decision-making at each point by providing guiding questions, resources, and links to other tools. The AIM Navigator collects information and creates a summary “to do” list. [www.aim.cast.org/navigator](http://www.aim.cast.org/navigator).

The **AIM Explorer** is a free downloadable simulation tool that combines grade-leveled digital text with access features common to most text readers and supported reading software. Settings for magnification, colors of text and background, text-to-speech, text highlighting, and layout options can be manipulated to help educators, families, and struggling readers decide ways in which these supports can be configured to help with access to and understanding of text. The AIM Explorer collects information and prepares a summary that can be printed or saved to a local computer. [http://aim.cast.org/experience/decision-making\\_tools/aim\\_explorer](http://aim.cast.org/experience/decision-making_tools/aim_explorer)

## Additional AIM Resources

National Center on Accessible Instructional Materials:  
[www.aim.cast.org](http://www.aim.cast.org)

National Instructional Materials Access Center:  
[www.nimac.us](http://www.nimac.us)

NIMAS Information from the U.S. Department of Education, IDEA Part B: [idea.ed.gov/explore/home](http://idea.ed.gov/explore/home)

United States Department of Education Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): [idea.ed.gov](http://idea.ed.gov)

Accessible Instructional Materials Technical Guide for Families and Advocates, National Center on Accessible Instructional Materials at CAST:  
[www.pacer.org/publications/stc.asp](http://www.pacer.org/publications/stc.asp)



AIM SERVICES BY PRINT DISABILITY

**Physical Impairment**  
Suggested Format: **Digital**  
Optional: **Audio**

**Learning Disability**  
Suggested Format: **Digital**  
Optional: **Audio**

**Low Vision**  
Suggested Format: **Digital**  
Optional: **Large Print, Audio**

**Blindness**  
Suggested Formats: **Braille, Digital, Audio**

Which format do you desire?

Digital

Audio

Braille

Large Print

Call Oklahoma  
ABLE Tech  
800-257-1705

Call Learning Ally 325-260-3911 or  
Call Oklahoma ABLE Tech  
800-257-1705

Call Liberty Braille 405-562-3996  
or Call AIM Center OLBPH  
405-521-3514

Call Liberty Braille 405-562-3996  
or Call AIM Center OLBPH  
405-521-3514

ABLE Tech searches  
textbook  
repositories:  
Bookshare & NIMAC  
if applicable.

For refreshable braille, digital format with a short-term Assistive Technology (AT) loan can be obtained from ABLE Tech.

ABLE Tech can provide short-term loans of AT to access digital & audio formats including laptops, tablets, MP3 players, DAISY readers, screen readers, and refreshable braille displays. Call 800-257-1705

If digital is an option, Liberty Braille may refer to ABLE Tech for an iPad trial.

If books **can** be found in repositories, ABLE Tech downloads digital books, and puts them on recommended pieces of assistive technology (AT).

If books **cannot** be found in repositories, one option is to send the original textbook to Bookshare for them to chop and scan using OCR.

If trial is successful, Liberty Braille will supply the student with an iPad for the 2012-2013 school year.

If large print or braille is needed, Liberty Braille will provide these formats as well.

Oklahoma Assistive Technology Center (OATC) provides AT consultations, evaluations, training, and technical assistance for IEP teams. Call 800-700-6282 or visit [theoatc.org](http://theoatc.org)