

Accessible Textbooks for Students with Print Disabilities

As required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, local school districts are responsible for ensuring that students who are blind and print disabled receive their textbooks and related core instructional materials in specialized formats including braille, audio, digital, and large print in a timely manner. This requirement is also included in the proposed Georgia Rules and Regulations for Special Education. School districts should take all reasonable steps to ensure that children with print disabilities have access to their accessible format instructional materials at the same time as students without print disabilities. This memorandum contains background information on the provision of accessible materials and critical information about the steps that your district needs to take in ensuring that materials are produced and available to your students at the start of the school year. If you need additional information about the provision of accessible core instructional materials, please contact Kim Hartsell at 404-463-4451 or khartsel@doe.k12.ga.us.

Background Information:

In order to facilitate the timely provision of these accessible instructional materials, a national standard was established for publishers to use in creating source files of textbooks and other core instructional materials. This standard, which is referred to as the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS), describes a set of consistent XML-based source files that are created by publishers of K-12 print instructional materials to be used in the production of accessible specialized formats (i.e. braille, audio, digital, large-print, etc.). NIMAS-conformant files are not student ready and require enhancements based on the particular specialized format that will be used by the student. The NIMAS applies to those core instructional materials published after July 2006.

NIMAS files will be maintained at the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC), which is located at the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville, Kentucky.

Publishers will deposit NIMAS-conformant files within the repository to be cataloged in a web-based database. Authorized users such as the Georgia Instructional Materials Center (GIMC) will be able to search the database and access files for the purpose of producing accessible specialized formats (i.e. braille, audio, digital, large-print, etc.) for students. For additional information about NIMAC, visit <http://www.nimac.us/>.

The Georgia Department of Education has chosen to coordinate with the NIMAC to assist school districts in their efforts to provide these materials in a timely manner. School districts are strongly encouraged to cooperate with the NIMAC when purchasing instructional materials for students who require specialized formats. School districts that selected to coordinate with the

NIMAC will require publishers to prepare and deliver the contents of the print instructional materials in a NIMAS format to the NIMAC on or before delivery of the print instructional materials. Authorized users, such as the Georgia Instructional Materials Center, can then access these files for the purpose of producing specialized formats

The GIMC will continue to work with districts in acquiring core instructional materials in accessible formats for all school districts including those systems that do not coordinate with the NIMAC. *Districts that do not coordinate with the NIMAC will only be eligible for materials that are currently available in the GIMC.*

Challenges for the 2008-2009 School Year:

The 2008-2009 school year presents some unique challenges for local districts in terms of being able to provide instructional materials in a timely manner. In addition to English/Language Arts and Reading, this is a 9-12 Mathematics (Mathematics III and IV) adoption year in Georgia and the production of math materials in alternate formats is a difficult process. For example in the area of braille, materials must be transcribed by a Nemeth certified transcriber and there are less than 20 in the entire country. In other format areas, the technology that is being used to convert these NIMAS files into student-ready accessible materials is just in the process of being developed. In addition, due to the substantial changes in the math curriculum based on the new math standards, Georgia math books are significantly different than instructional materials used in other states. This means that authorized users such as the GIMC will not be able to use the national edition of textbooks in the production of accessible format materials.

Another complicating factor is that many of the larger school districts are adopting off the State Textbook Adoption List or outside of the adoption cycle. In the past, the GIMC has been able to meet these off-adoption purchases, but this policy is currently under review. Moreover, the GIMC Materials Depository will be moving to the Georgia Academy for the Blind in the early part of the summer. Center staff have worked diligently to plan the move to minimize the effect on the shipment of materials to school districts.

Action Steps for School Districts:

In order for accessible instructional materials to be provided to students in your district, the following action steps are requested.

If your district did not choose to coordinate with the NIMAC, please consider amending your Consolidated Application to indicate that you will coordinate with the NIMAC. There is no charge to local districts for submitting files to the NIMAC.

If your district is coordinating with the NIMAC, include information about submitting electronic files to the NIMAC in all purchase orders or contracts for materials published

after July 19, 2006. Please submit your book orders to the publishers as quickly as possible to ensure that the NIMAS file can be deposited in the NIMAC. The NIMAS language is included below:

By agreeing to deliver the materials marked with "NIMAS" on this contract or purchase order, the publisher agrees to prepare and submit, on or before ___/___/_____ a NIMAS file set to the NIMAC that complies with the terms and procedures set forth by the NIMAC. 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 the NIMAC. The files will be used for the production of alternate formats as permitted under the law for students with print disabilities. If a publisher has already submitted a NIMAS conformant file of the material, it should provide documentation to the LEA that the file has been deposited in the NIMAC.

Please submit all orders for accessible instructional materials to the GIMC. All braille book orders must be received by April 15, 2008 and large print by May 15, 2008. The GIMC's on-line ordering process should be used, but if you are ordering books as a part of a new adoption (math or any other content area), please send an email message to this effect to Jim Downs at jdowns@doe.k12.ga.us. When submitting book orders, please pay careful attention to the ISBN making sure that you are providing the ISBN for the student version of the textbook, not the teacher's addition.

Please return all unused books to the GIMC that will not be renewed for next school year. Books that are not currently being used should be returned immediately to the GIMC at the Georgia Academy for the Blind (Attn: GIMC) at 2895 Vineville Avenue, Macon, GA 31204.

The GIMC and the Georgia Project for Assistive Technology (GPAT) are working with vendors such as the Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic and Benetech to assist districts in obtaining accessible versions of textbooks in audio and digital formats. Districts will be responsible for assuming any costs of purchasing these files from these non-profit organizations. Information about Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic is available at www.rfbd.org and information about Benetech BookShare.org is available at www.bookshare.org. As you are developing budgets for next year, it will be important to allocate funds for purchasing these materials.

Conclusions:

It is important to remember that school districts must provide specialized format instructional materials to students who are blind and other print disabled. The process of providing these materials in a timely manner can be facilitated by following the above action steps. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Kim Hartsell at 404-463-4451 or khartsel@doe.k12.ga.us.