

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS IN ALTERNATIVE FORMATS
FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

This policy pertains to students with disabilities who are currently enrolled within the District or who enter the District and have the need for instructional materials in an alternative format as identified on that student's Section 504 accommodation plan or Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Basic Principles of Operation

The District staff may follow the principles below to ensure that instructional materials and other information resources are accessible and usable by students with disabilities. These principles reflect the intent of the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) and its regulations.

1. If it is difficult or unreasonably expensive to provide the material in the requested medium by the time it is needed, the District may provide it in another medium that would be equally effective given the needs of the student who needs the accommodation.
2. To determine if a proposed alternative format would be equally effective, it should be compared to the format originally requested in terms of accuracy, timeliness or delivery, the "shelf-life" or longevity of the material, and the extent to which the medium is appropriate to the needs and abilities for the student for whom the request is made.
3. Teachers of students with disabilities are encouraged to review all existing instructional materials on an annual basis to determine whether modifications are required to ensure access for students with disabilities. The Supervisor of Pupil Services may also appoint appropriate staff to review and revise instructional materials used in each course as necessary.
4. The District recognizes that instructional materials and other information resources must be accessible to students with disabilities and that this responsibility must be shared by the special and general education staff.

To implement the above principles, the District, appropriate classroom teachers, the Supervisor of Pupil Services or his/her designee may consider the following questions when determining a student's need for instructional materials in alternative formats:

1. Will the student realistically need to use the instructional material in the completion of course assignments that are used to evaluate the student?
2. Would it be difficult or impossible for the student to achieve his or her educational objectives without access to the particular instructional material?

The District may utilize the following steps as a general guide to analyze and respond to requests for materials in alternative media. This is not a comprehensive or definitive outline of how to handle every conceivable situation that may arise. Ultimately, it will be necessary to apply the

legal principles of IDEA to the particular facts of each case and the respected judgment of the student's instructors to decide what form of accommodation is most appropriate.

1. First, whenever possible, preference is given to the student's choice of media.
2. If the student wants material in audio format, the request will be considered because this medium may be the most appropriate approach. Such requests can be satisfied by ordering recorder books which may already be available, by arranging to have that book recorded by an outside organization, or having material read aloud and, where appropriate, recording it on a cassette tape or some other storage medium.
3. The District may grant requests for Braille or large print, so long as:
 - a. The student has the training and tactile or visual acuity to efficiently use the requested material; and
 - b. The material is already available or can be produced through a contract supplier in a timely manner.
4. If the student wants material in Braille or large print that cannot be provided in a timely manner, then it would be appropriate to try to identify an equally effective substitute through collaboration between the Supervisor of Pupil Services and the student's teacher.
5. To determine whether a proposed alternative format would be equally effective, the proposed alternative should be compared to the format originally requested in terms of accuracy, timeliness of delivery, and the extent to which the medium is appropriate to the significance of the message and the abilities of the individual making the request. Methods which are adequate for short, simple or less important communications may not be equally effective for longer, more complex, or more critical material.
6. In deciding whether a given format would be appropriate for the needs of a particular student, factors to consider include the student's learning style (tactile, auditory, visual, or multimodal), the student's proficiency in working with the format (e.g. knowledge of Braille) and, for electronic text, the extent to which necessary hardware and software is readily available.
7. If E-text is already available or can be easily obtained, it may be a good alternative to large print or hardcopy Braille. However, in order to ensure that E-text will provide an equally effective alternative, the following may be taken into account:
 - a. A partially sighted student may need a computer with software permitting print magnification.
 - b. A blind student who is a Braille reader may need a computer or note taker having a refreshable Braille display. Assuming the student has such equipment, E-text may be an equally effective alternative to hardcopy Braille, except in situations where spatial orientation or format is important, since such information is not readily conveyed by a refreshable Braille display.

- c. For simpler materials, or where format, punctuation, spelling or technical detail is not crucial, a blind person may be able to use E-text with speech output as a substitute for Braille. This may even be a better alternative if large volumes of information must be read quickly and the student will not be required to master or frequently refer to details in the text.
 - d. Many students with learning disabilities will benefit from using E-text with software that reads the text aloud while highlighting it on the screen.
8. In some limited instances, use of a reader or materials in a recorded audio format may be an equally effective alternative to either E-text, hardcopy Braille or large print. Normally, this is only true where the material does not contain complex formatting (e.g. literature, history, business, etc.) and a general understanding of the material is sufficient. In such cases, audio may even be a superior format when compared to hardcopy Braille, where large volumes of material must be covered quickly.
9. An audio recording may not be an equally effective alternative to E-text or hardcopy Braille or large print when:
 - a. The material is complex or technical in nature.
 - b. The student is expected to achieve detailed mastery of the information to complete a course or participate in a program or activity.
 - c. The student is expected to quickly review material and provide an immediate response.
 - d. The material must be used in class or as a frequent reference source outside class.

Implementation Checklist

The District's various Committees on Special Education will identify needs of students with disabilities who are enrolled in District programs for instructional materials in alternative formats and convey the student's need for instructional materials in alternative formats to the individuals ordering instructional materials. For each student the following checklist may be followed (*write date completed for each step*):

1. _CSE acknowledges student need for materials in alternative format.
2. _CSE specifies accommodations for the individual student in the IEP and includes related instruction and/or assistive technology devices as needed.
3. _CSE provides the Supervisor of Pupil Services with a copy of student IEP.
4. _Supervisor of Pupil Services shares student needs information with classroom teacher.
5. _District classroom teacher, or his/her designee, reviews IEP or Section 504 accommodation plan of student and conveys to Supervisor of Pupil Services:

- a. Courses in which the student will be enrolled;
 - b. State and District-wide assessments in which student is expected to participate;
 - c. Type and specifications of format(s) needed (e.g. font size for large print); and
 - d. Name of student whose need for alternate format materials may not have been identified by District CSE.
6. _If classroom teacher/designee is not sure which type of format is needed, he/she may make a request for one of the following to the Supervisor of Pupil Services:
- a. Specific or instructional resources from the District.
 - b. An assistive technology assessment conducted by District staff or other providers, as appropriate.
7. _If teacher finds there is a problem with the alternative media, he/she will notify the Supervisor of Pupil Services to resolve the concern.
8. _The Supervisor of Pupil Services will adhere to district policies for making materials available to the student, depending on the child's needs, availability of resources in the District, and/or the District's program.

When procuring materials for classroom instruction, the District shall give a preference to those vendors who agree to provide those materials in an alternative format. Preference will be given to suppliers with the technical means to deliver curricular, instructional, and assessment materials in alternative formats that will be used for students with disabilities.

Reference: Chapter 377 of the Laws of 2001
Education Law §1604
Education Law §1709
Education Law §2503
Education Law §2554

Adopted: April 6, 2004