



## AT Consideration Series: Beyond the Checkbox

### Unpacking Accessible Educational Materials

#### About OCALI

- Vision – Why We Do What We Do  
People with disabilities have the opportunity to live their best lives.
- Mission – What We Do  
OCALI inspires change and promotes access to opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Action – How We Do What We Do  
OCALI informs public policy and develops and deploys practices grounded in linking research to real life.

#### About the AT&AEM Center

The AT&AEM Center is a centralized, responsive resource center that empowers individuals with disabilities by providing accessible educational materials, access to assistive technologies and highly specialized technical assistance and professional development support.

<https://ataem.org>

#### Session Objectives

1. Participants will be able to define Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)
2. Participants will be able to define eligible persons for AEM
3. Participants will be able to describe the decision-making process for determining AEM

#### AT Decision-Making Tool

- Identify the Task
- Current Use of AT
- Universal Tools
- AT Assessment
- **Accessible Educational Materials**
- Additional Areas of Focus



## What are Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)?

Print- and technology-based educational materials, including printed and electronic textbooks and related core materials that are designed or enhanced in a way that makes them usable across the widest range of learner variability, regardless of format.

### Two types of AEM

- Accessible Formats (Previously referred to as specialized formats)
  - Audio
  - Braille
  - Large Print
  - Tactile Graphics
- Accessible Digital Educational Materials

### Why AEM Matters?

- Provides access to the same information
- Eliminate learning barriers
- Promote student independence and more engagement
- Required under IDEA, Section 504, and ADA

### Legal Compliance

- IDEA 2004
  - ...printed textbooks and related printed core materials that are written and published primarily for use in elementary school and secondary school instruction and are required by a State educational agency or local educational agency for use by students in the classroom. (20 U.S.C. § 1474(e)(3)(C), 2004)
- ADA Title II (2024 Update)
  - New rule (April 2024) requires digital accessibility for public entities, including SEAs and LEAs
  - Covers websites, digital textbooks, LMSs, apps, videos, etc.

### Who is Eligible for AEM?

The student (eligible person) is an individual who regardless of any other disability:



1. is blind (also see braille provision in IDEA).
2. has a visual impairment, or perceptual or reading disability that cannot be improved to the same degree as a student without an impairment or disability.
3. is otherwise unable, through a physical disability, to hold or manipulate a book or to focus or move the eyes to the extent acceptable for reading.

### How are Assistive Technology (AT) and AEM Connected?

- AT is the tool that helps students interact with content
- AEM is instructional content in an accessible format

### Decision-Making Process for AEM

1. Determine the student's need for an accessible format
2. Select appropriate accessible format(s)
3. Acquire accessible format(s) from sources
4. Supports the use of accessible formats by the student, educators, and family

### Resources

- [ATIM Navigating Accessible Educational Materials: Accessible Formats](#)
- [Advocating for My AEM Workbook](#)
  - Free download
  - Both a digital, fillable PDF and print versions, and brf braille ready file
  - Developed by the Oregon Technology Access Program AEM Cohort
  - For students to use as they begin to learn to advocate for the accommodations and accessibility features
- [OSEP Myths and Facts Surrounding Assistive Technology Devices and Services](#)
- [CAST CITES Myths and Facts Graphics](#)
- [NCADEMI More to the Myths and Facts: Addressing Accessible Educational Materials in the 2024 Assistive Technology Guidance](#)

### Case Scenarios

#### Connor

Connor, a 13-year-old student, can access writing tools and a computer to complete assignments. However, because of severe spelling and grammar errors, most of his



production of written work is not equal to the quality expected at his grade level, despite explicit instruction in these areas. Connor is still expected to spell and use grammar at the level of same-age peers.

- Step 1 - Identify the Task: Connor has difficulty with spelling and grammar in order to produce written work.
- Step 2 - Current Use of AT: Connor has access to a laptop and text-to-speech
- Step 3 - Universal Tools: Connor is not using any universal tools at this time and will need additional tools and/or services
- Step 4 - AT Assessment: The team determined that Connor may need AT, therefore an AT assessment will be documented in the IEP
- Step 5 – Accessible Educational Materials: Connor’s task does not focus on reading and therefore does not indicate a requirement for accessible formats. Conor also does not meet any of the three options for being an eligible person for AEM.
  - For step 5 of the ATDMT, column 3, indicating that the student does not need accessible formats for the identified task, should be marked.

## Lupita

Lupita, an 8-year-old student, is having difficulty viewing the text in her second-grade books because the text is too small for her to see. Her peers read the text aloud to her but are not always available. The team, including a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI), suspects Lupita has a visual impairment.

- Step 1 - Identify the Task: Lupita is having difficulty viewing the text in her second-grade textbook
- Step 2 - Current Use of AT: Lupita is not currently using any AT
- Step 3 - Universal Tools: Lupita is not using any universal tools at this time and will need additional tools and/or services
- Step 4 - AT Assessment: The team determined that Lupita may need AT, therefore an AT assessment will be documented in IEP
- Step 5 – Accessible Educational Materials: Lupita’s task does focus on reading, and the team has identified Lupita as an eligible person due to her visual impairment.



- For step 5 of the ATDMT, column 2, indicating that the student does need accessible formats, but they have not yet been determined, should be marked.

### Key Takeaways

- The tool can be used each year during the IEP process to support ongoing student needs.
- Students with visual impairments, vision and learning needs may change overtime. As a result, their accessible formats may also change.
- AEM help ensure all students have equal access to the curriculum.
- Teams can follow the decision-making process to determine the need for AEM and type of accessible formats.