

Accessible Instructional Materials 101

Questions & Answers

Q: Do students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders who are struggling readers fall into the Organic dysfunction category?

A: There is certainly not a categorical exclusion of any group of students, but there are categorical inclusions. It's important to know that no disability category is excluded from the possibility of being a student with a print disability.

Q: Where can I find material to place in a letter to publishers requesting accessible instructional materials?

A: A large amount of information is available at www.aim.cast.org and www.nimas.cast.org.

Q: The biggest struggle we are still having is getting materials to students who have SLD in reading. Getting medical documentation for these children is a DAUNTING task (that we have not even approached yet). Would LOVE if publishers would just start offering accessible formats that we could purchase... even if they didn't include the photos that are in the original text...

A: Try asking the publishers. Many times the publishers will share accessible formats with you if you have purchased those particular books. The other thing to think about, too, is that some students with specific learning disabilities are actually considered under the physical category. If, indeed there is a physical reason for a format, you may make a case for a student. Historically, motor disabilities are a part of the physical category. The key is being able to justify why you do what you do.

Q: Do doctors' statements need to have specific mention of the word ORGANIC or PHYSICAL as it relates to a print disability. A physician recently wrote a note indicating that the student had a "reading disability" without additional information.

A: In general, it is best to have the note say something in addition to the identification of the disability – something along the lines of, "I recommend that a student have digital copies, accessible materials, etc." See www.aim.cast.org for commonly used language surrounding the topic.

Q: Are IEP teams making the PHYSICAL determination for LD?

A: This depends on the school, district, and team. In some cases yes, and in some cases no.

Q: Do school districts need to pay for the doctor appointment for accessible instructional materials certification?

A: This is up to the policy of the school district, though there is certainly a precedent for the school paying for this appointment. Most recommend that the school pay because otherwise you are not providing special education at no cost to the student. The certification needs to be made only once, so investing in this appointment is a good idea.

Q: What if you ask permission and you are denied for a specific student? But you have materials for another student, then what?

A: I've rarely seen a publisher say no. They often tell the teacher to actually get it from the NIMAC. On the whole, however, if you can help the publisher understand the situation, it hasn't been a problem. If you run into a problem, contact Chuck Hitchcock: chitchcock@cast.org.