

Accessibility

Enhancing the Use of Technology to Implement Inclusive Systems

No matter where the learning is occurring, the adoption of inclusive technology strategies and tools creates empowerment and belonging for many learners, but for some, access to these tools is a civil right. When learning experiences are accessible, students with and without disabilities have the opportunity to gain the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as students without disabilities with substantially equivalent ease of use. [U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education](#).

Four Compelling Steps to Address Accessibility

1. Cultivate an inclusive culture:

An inclusive culture starts with a shared belief that all students can learn at high levels and ensuring inclusion becomes just the way business is done. Encourage an accessibility mindset so that educators think in terms of how they ensure that all learning is accessible by providing accessible educational materials (AEM) and assistive technologies (AT), to meet the needs of each student. Demonstrate accessibility in your communications.

2. Stay current with federal and state legislation:

Advancements in technology are consistently reshaping how students can engage with educational materials and learning environments. To stay in line with regulations, educational institutions must ensure that all educational tools are accessible as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Additionally, examine the accessibility policies of your state, other school systems and consider appointing an accessibility coordinator or training in-house staff to provide support for all students.

3. Develop an accessibility policy including guidelines for purchasing:

Establish and clearly convey policies regarding the accessibility needs of students with disabilities to guarantee they receive the necessary support. Furthermore, such guidelines should cover the acquisition of technology tools, content, and programs. A variety of accessible formats should be available based on need including braille, large print, tactile graphics, audio, and digital text.

4. Prioritize professional learning:

Accessibility is a shared responsibility and a system-wide commitment. Professional development programs, along with regular updates will contribute to the capacity of staff and faculty to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to learn and participate in the educational environment. Building staff capacity not only serves students and staff but also helps protect the school system from liability.

Learn More:

The [Center for Inclusive Technology and Education Systems at CAST](#) provides a framework including action steps for inclusive technology practices and supported the development of this resource. CoSN is a CITES sustainability partner.

Learn more: cosn.org/accessibility

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