# Free and Inexpensive Resources for Accessible Educational Materials

Recent research data from two national vendors of free and inexpensive Accessible Educational Material (AEM) reveal Maine schools are clearly underutilizing these services for their students with Print Disabilities. In this presentation we will review these findings, discuss the resources and offer ideas on how directors and their IEP Teams can improve their services to students with Print Disabilities.

Presenter: John Brandt, M.S.Ed.

## Welcome

## Who Am I

John Brandt, Training Coordinator

Maine CITE and Maine AEM Program

## Who Are You?

## Agenda

* Definitions: What is AEM?
* What is the data and what does it mean?
* Free and inexpensive services

## What is AEM?

* Accessible Educational Materials, formerly known as Accessible Instructional Materials

## Early History of AIM/AEM Program

* IDEA 2004 – NIMAS/NIMAC
  + AIM focus on materials for students with “print disabilities.”
  + Print disabilities: students with blindness/low vision and students with physical disabilities (including dyslexia).
    - Braille, hardcopy
    - Large print, hardcopy
    - Digital book, were new and rare
    - Audio books, were books on tape, books on CD

## Finding Resources for AEM – the early years

* Initially, there were few resources available
* Focus on getting schools to “deposit” the texts they were using with the NIMAC so there would be accessible versions available for other districts/schools.
* Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic has a small collection of audio versions for textbooks.
* Braille and Large Print had to be produced and took many months.

## Things improved

* RFBD – expanded and ramped up, re-naming themselves Learning Ally
* Bookshare - In 2007, 2012, 2017 received five-year grants from Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to offer their digital books free of charge to all students in the US. Over a million books have been downloaded.

## What data? How did we sample?

* 2008 and beyond: Annual “opt in” for NIMAS on annual assurances statements from districts.
* 2009: Usage of materials at ESBVIC’s Instructional Materials Center
* 2010: Survey of superintendents and special education directors
* Various years: Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic/Learning Ally membership
* Various years: Bookshare accounts and books downloaded

## What did the baseline data show?

* First, there is relatively little data – but this tells us something.
* We initially surveyed superintendents and special education directors in 2009 with a response rate of 33% (n=57).
* The number of students with a Print Disability reported in the survey was 380 across all grade levels. An average of ~ 7 students per district.

## Changes across time

* Difficult to find data. MDOE did not want us sampling districts each year.
* Data collection: Unable to get data added to MEDMS
* Changing resources: Bookshare – federal funding to provide free materials. Learning Ally still a fee-based service
* Changing instructional landscape: Move to digital materials and more “teacher made” resources

## Latest data

* Used Bookshare and Learning Ally data (k-12 and Post Secondary)
* Bookshare: 2016-17 AY
  + K-12: Total Students listed under institutional accounts = 2,856
  + Post-Secondary: Total Students listed under institutional accounts = 179
* Learning Ally: 2016-17 AY
  + K-12: Total Students listed under institutional accounts = 179
  + Post-Secondary: Total number of Learners identified under the institutional members = 67

## Findings

* Hard to say what this all means…
* No consistent metric, but it seems clear there are still relatively few
* Schools are not using free services of Bookshare; even fewer using Learning Ally

## Why?

* Because they choose not to?
* Because they don’t know about them?
* What do you think?

## What Maine Schools Are Missing - Bookshare

* Free membership in Bookshare - <https://www.bookshare.org/cms/>
  + **Institutional Membership** – U.S. Educators can create FREE Bookshare memberships for K-12 public and private schools, colleges and universities, trade schools, Perkins School for the Blind, and Hadley School for the Blind to support students with reading barriers.
  + **Personal Memberships** - Qualified US students can also sign up for free personal memberships.
* Digital Books – Allow students to:
  + Listen to books
  + Read anytime, anywhere with devices like computers, Chromebooks, tablets, smartphones, or assistive technology devices.
  + See text and follow along with word-level highlighting
  + Adjust reading speed, font, and color
  + Enlarge font size
  + Read in braille
  + Add bookmarks and notes
  + Take advantage of partners apps and study tools

## What Maine Schools Are Missing – Learning Ally

* Low cost membership in Learning Ally - <https://learningally.org/>
  + Audiobooks - Our human-narrated audiobooks provide
    - The text of the book
    - Descriptions of important maps, charts, and diagrams.
    - Extensive collection of K-12 books including popular fiction, classic literature, textbooks, test prep and study aids are a download away.
    - The ability to listen on mainstream devices using accessible technology with page-level navigation, text highlighting and speed adjustments.

## Other Resources

* **Maine State Library Service** - The Maine State Library Service’s Talking Books Program is a loan service provides audiobooks for individuals with qualifying print disabilities. Patrons have the choice of audiobooks in cassette or digital format. Membership is at no cost to Maine residents. <https://www.maine.gov/msl/outreach/lbph/talkingbooks/>
* **Books Aloud, Inc.** - hosts a Reading by Listening loan service for individuals with qualifying print disabilities. Audiobooks are shipped via standard cassette tape. Membership is free. <https://www.booksaloud.org/>
* **Free OnLine Collections – see https://maine-aim.org/selectionacquisition-of-aim/acquiring-audio-aim/**
  + Assistive Media
  + Curriki
  + Free Classic Audio Books
  + LearnOutLoud.com Free Directory
  + LibriVox
  + Lit2Go
  + LoudLit.org
  + MIT OpenCourseWare
  + OER Commons
  + Online Audio Stories
  + Podcasts at the iTunes Store
  + Signed Stories (audiobooks that are also signed)
  + TeachOutLoud

## Maine AEM Program - AEM for Educators

* K-12 - <https://maine-aim.org/aim-for-educators/>
* Higher Ed - <https://maine-aim.org/aim-for-higher-education/>