

Accessibility in K-12 Education: Understanding the Why Behind the What

A Practical Guide for Educators
Presented by the CAHELP Virtual Compliance Team
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Facilitator

Accessibility;
Multimedia; Graphic
Design; Podcast;
Print & Publications





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FACILITATOR (2)

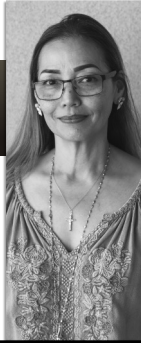
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FACILITATOR (3)

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LCAP Priorities

Local Control Accountability Plan

Basic Services	Course Access	Implementing State Standards	Other Pupil Outcomes
Parent Involvement	Pupil Achievement	Pupil Engagement	School Climate



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Learning Objectives

Today's Goals

- Understand what digital accessibility is and why it matters in K-12 education.
- Learn the fundamentals of accessibility and inclusion.
- Explore upcoming accessibility requirements impacting schools.
- Identify practical steps educators can take today.
- Recognize that accessibility is a shared responsibility, not just an IT issue.



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Understanding Digital Accessibility

Digital accessibility, refers to designing and developing digital content, websites, applications, and technology in a way that ensures people with disabilities can perceive, navigate, interact with, and contribute to them. It involves making digital resources usable for individuals with a range of disabilities, including visual, auditory, motor, and cognitive impairments.

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Who is Responsible?

Leadership / Project Managers	Ensures everyone learns about the importance of accessibility and understand the legal and financial responsibilities related to digital accessibility.
Designer	Follow core rules, including providing text alternatives, ensuring high color contrast, and supporting keyboard navigation.
Developer	Build compliant, structured, and interactive digital products that work flawlessly with assistive technologies.
Content Creator	Required to format text, media, and links so that information is clear and usable for everyone.
Purchaser	Must buy software, hardware, and services that meet legal digital accessibility standards.

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Why is it Important?

Equal Access

- Digital accessibility is essential for creating an inclusive campus where everyone can participate fully in academic and social activities.

Compliance

- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require that state and local governments, including K12 public schools, provide equal access to services, activities, and programs.

Enhanced User Experience

- By making our digital content accessible, we ensure that all users, regardless of their abilities, can access and engage with our resources.

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Types of Digital Content

- **Web content:** Ensuring that web pages are navigable and understandable by users with disabilities.
- **Documents:** Making PDFs, documents, presentations, and other formats accessible with proper formatting and tags.
- **Multimedia:** Providing captions, transcripts, and audio descriptions for videos and audio content.
- **Software and Applications:** Designing software interfaces and mobile apps that are operable by users with different abilities.
- **Online Forms:** Creating forms that are easily navigable and usable with assistive technologies.

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WCAG

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

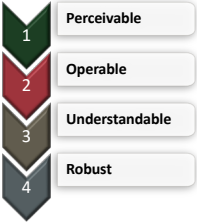
Comprehensive guidelines for accessibility, with practical and actionable information. It consists of guidelines with testable success criteria. WCAG version 2.2 maintained by the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), a part of the Worldwide Web Consortium (W3C), evolves with technology and this is the latest version.

- **Starting April 26, 2028**, institutions serving populations under 50,000 (like public schools, colleges, and government entities) are held to WCAG 2.1 Level AA under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

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The 4 Core Principles of Accessibility

Digital accessibility is built on four key principles that ensure websites, applications, and digital content are usable by everyone, including people with disabilities. The **POUR** principles, as outlined by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), highlights what your web content needs to be.



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Perceivable

Students must be able to perceive the content, meaning that information and user interface components must be presented in ways that all users in ways they can perceive.

This means that users must be able to perceive the information being presented (it can't be invisible to all of these senses. This includes providing:

Text alternatives for non-text content (e.g., alt text for images)

Captions and transcripts for multimedia

Flexible presentation options, such as adjusting text size and color contrast

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Operable

Students must be able to navigate and interact with a website or application. Content should be designed to accommodate different input methods and avoid barriers. User interface components and navigation must be operable. This means that users must be able to operate the interface (the interface cannot require interaction that a user cannot perform). Key considerations include:

Keyboard accessibility for users who cannot use a mouse.

Enough time to read and interact with content.

Avoidance of content that triggers seizures (e.g., flashing animations)

Clear and consistent navigation.

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Understandable

Content and interfaces should be clear and predictable so users can easily comprehend and navigate them. This means that users must be able to understand the information as well as the operation of the user interface (the content or operation cannot be beyond their understanding). To enhance understandability, technology and content must be:

Readable text with clear language and structure (5th-8th Grade per WCAG)

Predictable navigation and interface behavior.

Input assistance, such as form field instructions and error messages.

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Robust

Content must be accessible to a variety of users, including those using assistive technologies. This means that users must be able to access the content as technologies advance (as technologies and user agents evolve, the content should remain accessible). A robust website or application should:

Support assistive technologies like screen readers.

Regularly update to remain compatible with evolving technologies.

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What Does Accessibility Look Like in Practice?

- Providing alt text for images
- Making PDFs accessible
- Offering captions on videos
- Providing screen reader compatibility
- Allowing keyboard navigation
- Offering text-to-speech supports
- Designing content with appropriate contrast and readability
- Color contrast

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Practices Explained

Alt Text for All Images

- Provides a textual description of images for users who rely on screen readers.
- Should clearly convey the purpose of the image, whether it is decorative, informative, or functional. Avoid vague descriptions like "image123" and instead describe key details relevant to the content.

Proper Use of Color

- Should not be the only way information is conveyed.
- Ensure sufficient contrast between text and background to improve readability for people with low vision or color blindness. Use alternative indicators like text labels, patterns, or symbols alongside color coding.

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More Best Practices

Use of Descriptive Links

- Hyperlinks should be meaningful and provide context.
- Instead of generic text like "Click here" or "Read more," use descriptive language such as "Download the accessibility guide" or "Learn more about inclusive design." This helps users with screen readers navigate more effectively.

Readability

- Content should be easy to read and understand. Use clear, concise language, avoid jargon, and break up text with headings and bullet points. Choose fonts and sizes that enhance readability and provide an option for text resizing without loss of functionality.

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More Best Practices (2)

Semantic Structure

- Refers to the use of proper HTML elements to organize content in a meaningful and hierarchical way. This helps both users and assistive technologies understand the relationships between different parts of a webpage.

Tables

- Tables should be used for data, not for layout design.

Videos (Captions & Audio Description)

- All video content should include captions for users who are deaf or hard of hearing. Captions should be accurate, synchronized, and include speaker identification and sound effects when relevant.

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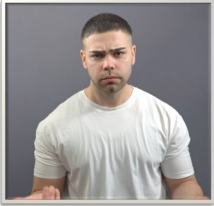



Why Accessibility Matters More Than Ever

Technology is Everywhere!

- Learning Management Systems (LMS)
- Digital assignments
- Websites and parent portals
- Online assessments
- Educational apps
- AI-powered learning tools

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The Educator's Role

"But I'm not a web developer."

Educators can:

- Create accessible documents (e.g., writing/formatting content; assigning headings to organize content; creating links to related content; adding alt text).
- Caption videos, transcripts (audio/video)
- Use structured headings
- Select accessible digital resources
- Report accessibility barriers
- Advocate for inclusive practices

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Getting Started Tomorrow

"But I'm not a web developer."

Six High-Impact Actions

1. Use document headings
2. Add alt text to images
3. Caption videos
4. Use descriptive links
5. Use Sufficient Color Contrast
6. Check accessibility before sharing materials

CHECKLIST

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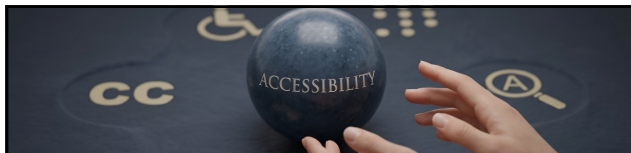
REMEMBER



Getting Started...

You do not have to fix everything overnight. Progress is more important than perfection.

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Key Takeaways

When digital tools are accessible:

- Students participate independently.
- Families engage more easily.
- Educators reduce barriers to learning.
- Schools move closer to equity for all.

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The question is no longer "Do we need accessibility?"
The question is "How can we build accessibility into everything we create?"

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Tips: Google Docs

- Does not offer an in-application checker. To run an accessibility check in Google Docs or Sheets, you will have to install a Chrome add-on called Grackle Docs or Grackle Sheets.
- Grackle functions in much the same way as the Microsoft checker, and you'll receive a digest of all the things the programs can automatically check that require attention.

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Regions Served

DESERT MOUNTAIN SELPA

- Academy for Academic Excellence
- Adeleante Elementary School District
- Apple Valley USD
- Baker Valley USD
- Bartlow USD
- Bear Valley USD
- D/M Operations
- Excelsior Charter School
- Excelsior Corona-Norco
- Health Sciences High & Middle College
- Holmdale Elementary SD
- Hesperia USD
- Lucerne Valley USD
- Needles USD
- Norton Science & Language Academy
- Oro Grande SD
- San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools
- Silver Valley USD
- Snowline JUSD
- Tromps JUSD
- Victor Elementary SD
- Victor Valley Union High SD

CHARTER SELPA

- Alligance STEAM Academy - Fontana
- Alligance STEAM Academy - Thrive
- ASA Charter School
- Aveson Global Leadership Academy
- Aveson School of Leaders
- Ballington Academy for the Arts & Sciences
- Ballington Academy for the Arts & Sciences San Bernardino
- Desert Trails Preparatory Academy
- Elite Academic Academy - Lucerne
- Incare Jr./Sr. High School
- Julia Lee Performing Arts Academy
- LaVerne Elementary Preparatory Academy
- Leonardo da Vinci Health Sciences Charter
- OSC-South (Odyssey Charter)
- Odyssey Charter School
- Options for Youth
- Pasadena Rosebud Academy
- Pathways to College
- Southern California Elite Academy
- Taylton High Desert Academy

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Thank You!





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