



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA  
Department of Education

January 9, 2015

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT: AIM-VA Resources for Students with Print Disabilities**

In June 2013, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) issued [Superintendent's Memo #174-13](#) to clarify the requirements for students to be eligible to receive free alternate formats of textbooks and other instructional materials from the Accessible Instructional Materials Center of Virginia (AIM-VA). The information in that Memo remains current. The VDOE is providing additional information to further clarify the eligibility requirements for students who are identified with a reading disability due to an organic dysfunction to receive free accessible instructional materials through AIM-VA.

Organic dysfunction means the cause of the reading disability is physically based and it does not include reading difficulties that are caused by social or environmental factors, or educational deficiencies. Examples of an organic dysfunction may include conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, and aphasia. The requirement for a physician's certification as indicated in Superintendent's Memo #174-13 could include the physician's review of a student's educational record that provides documentation from assessments that show characteristics of the above conditions, such as dyslexia.

The [Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia](#), January 25, 2010, (Virginia Regulations) include dyslexia as a condition under the category of Specific Learning Disability.

Dyslexia is distinguished from other learning disabilities due to its weakness occurring at the phonological level. Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team should consider the student's need for accessible instructional materials in alternate formats when considering a student's need for accommodations and/or assistive technology (AT). The IEP team may refer to the [VDOE Assistive Technology: A Framework for Consideration and Assessment](#) and the [Virginia Assistive Technology Resource Guide](#) to facilitate the discussions about goals and objectives, areas of difficulty, and whether AT devices or services are needed.

School divisions are strongly encouraged to utilize the free accessible instructional materials through AIM-VA and its partnering resources, Learning Ally, Bookshare, Don Johnston for eligible students. For example, students who require the read aloud accommodation during instruction and assessment may also need accessible instructional materials to access the general education curriculum that can be provided through AIM-VA. AIM-

VA recently launched an online advertising campaign to raise awareness among educators and parents of its services. As an incentive, new users of AIM-VA will receive a free download of Don Johnston's Read:Outloud software. Read:Outloud software is also available to currently registered users as an immediate download on the [AIM-VA portal](#). School divisions are reminded that they are required to provide accessible instructional materials to students determined to need them even if they are not eligible for services and resources through AIM-VA.

Information for teachers, parents and students is available at the AIM-VA Web site [www.aimva.org](http://www.aimva.org). Please share this information with your Directors of Special Education and AIM-VA Division Administrators. If you have questions, please contact either Wanda Council, education specialist, VDOE, at (804) 371-4059 or by e-mail at [Wanda.Council@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Wanda.Council@doe.virginia.gov) or Joyce Sharp, AIM-VA, at (540) 407-1147 or by e-mail at [JSharp1@gmu.edu](mailto:JSharp1@gmu.edu).

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