

Coordinating with the NIMAC for Timely, High-Quality Accessible Formats

JENA FAHLBUSH: OK. It is 2 o'clock on the dot Eastern time. We welcome you all to our session today. And as somebody who is really passionate about accessibility for students with disabilities, I'm really thrilled to be hosting this joint webinar with the NIMAC, or the National Instructional Materials Access Center.

My name is Jena Fahlbush. I'm a technical assistant specialist with NCADEMI. And we appreciate you taking some time to join us for coordinating with the NIMAC for timely, high-quality, accessible formats.

And there was a note put in the chat to introduce yourself with your role and your location and the reason you chose to join this webinar. So keep those coming in. I see some people have already started responding, which is great and appreciated.

To support your webinar experience today, I'd like to introduce you to Natalie Cardenas, our program assistant. She is available to troubleshoot any webinar issues you might be experiencing. And you can reach out to her through the chat.

You'll also find captions provided by 3Play Media in the options of your Zoom toolbar. And today's slide deck and resources can be found at a shortened Bitly. And that's bit.ly/nimac-webinar-2026.

And we'll get that link put in the chat for you as well, or you can even scan the QR code on the right-hand side of the screen. A recording will be posted to that same resources page within 24 to 48 business hours, so you can always revisit this or send it out and share it with your community and your colleagues.

For today's communication, we encourage you to ask questions along the way using the Zoom chat, so we'll keep an eye on the Zoom chat. You can also use the React button in your Zoom toolbar to raise your hand and ask any clarifying questions as we go. We will do our best to answer questions that fit naturally into the discussion as we can, and we'll return to the rest of the questions at the end.

Now, I'd like to introduce you to Nicole Gaines and Liz Schaller. Nicole is the NIMAC project director and Liz is the NIMAC manager. And we'll get to hear from them soon because they're going to be answering some of the most common questions about the NIMAC and coordinating with their center.

I'd also like to welcome a very special guest to our webinar. Crystal Patrick is joining us from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. She is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA consultant for visual impairment and the NIMAC state coordinator for North Carolina.

She is leading efforts in the provision of accessible educational materials for all students, and she has some really great insights based upon these efforts that she'll share with us in a little bit.

We do have four learning objectives for you today. And the first one is to define NIMAC and NIMAS. The second is to identify the NIMAS questions in the annual IDEA Part B application.

The third is to describe how coordinating with the NIMAC directly improves access to accessible materials through sources such as state instructional materials and resource centers, Bookshare, and the American Printing House for the Blind, or APH.

And lastly, we'd like for you to be able to identify two strategies for improving the provision of accessible formats of print materials for disabilities. Or for students, excuse me, for students with disabilities. Got ahead of myself there.

Now to fire up the conversation, we'd like for you to reflect on your knowledge of NIMAS and working with the NIMAC. So we're going to, in a moment, launch a poll. And on a scale of 1 to 4, we would like for you to select 1 if you have no knowledge of NIMAS or the NIMAC today. A 2 if you're somewhat familiar, a 3 if you're experienced, and a 4 if you are an expert. So let's launch that poll.

So what we have here is 25% with no knowledge today. We have over 50%, so the majority of you are somewhat familiar. And we have a few that are experienced and even one that is an expert. So that's terrific. We have a great range of participants today.

So with that in mind, in thinking about your level of expertise, I really want to help you all just begin by grounding today's conversation about accessibility to the curriculum for all students in accessibility in your purchasing decisions.

So what we're thinking about today is that because we know all students with disabilities deserve access to the curriculum at the same time as their peers without disabilities, we have to start with accessible materials.

So in order to do that, I want you to be thinking about the fact that it's essential to require NIMAS files, which are a special file type, to be sent to the NIMAC, which is a file repository when you purchase print materials. This is something that's required under IDEA. And it's

going to make your life really a lot easier when a student needs an accessible format of a print material. And this is what we're going to learn about today.

And then when you add that to the need to require accessibility compliance under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, or the ADA, when you're purchasing and procuring digital materials, you get the foundation for providing equal access to the curriculum for all students. And that's really important to today's discussion. In fact, we'll actually circle back to this very nicely at the end.

So, Liz, I think you're up first. We have a question for you. Can you please tell us what exactly is the NIMAC?

LIZ SCHALLER: I'd be happy to. Thanks, Jena. My name is Liz Schaller. As Jena, mentioned, I manage the day-to-day operations of the NIMAC, or the National Instructional Materials Access Center.

The NIMAC was created by IDEA 2004, and it serves as the national source file repository for K through 12 textbooks and instructional materials. So we are a repository of files that are used to produce the accessible formats that your students use.

We receive digital files directly from publishers in a special format called NIMAS. And Nicole's going to tell you a little bit more about that here in a minute. And our registered users log in and they can either download those files or assign them to an accessible media producer as needed to produce formats like braille, large print, or digital text on behalf of eligible students.

The primary goal of the NIMAC and of the NIMAS file format is to support that timely delivery of accessible formats to students by preventing any delays at the start of accessible format production. So when a need for a format is identified, ideally, the source file will be already in the NIMAC repository and an accessible media producer can immediately download that file, and their work can begin to produce the format that the student needs.

Today, the NIMAC works with over 220 educational publishers, and we've received over 89,000 source files. And the NIMAC has over 500 authorized users and accessible media producers registered across all 50 states and the eligible territories. NIMAC users have downloaded files over 59,000 times for use in the first-time production of one or more accessible formats.

JENA FAHLBUSH: All right, thank you so much for sharing that. And I think what I'm hearing you say, again, that the nimac is what collects that special type of K to 12 textbook and instructional material directly from publishers so that then accessible formats of those

materials, like braille or digital text versions, can be provided to the students who need them in a timely manner.

But to access those files, you must actually be an authorized user or an accessible media producer that would be under the authorized user. Is that correct?

LIZ SCHALLER: So yeah, the authorized users are designated by the state, and then an accessible media producer doesn't have to be designated by a state. But they can only download files assigned to them by that state designee, the authorized user.

JENA FAHLBUSH: Got it. That's really helpful. So then they're the ones that can log in and, like you said, download the files needed to produce the accessible format or formats that would be needed by a student.

And what's cool is that because the NIMAC currently houses so many files, like almost 90,000 files, it's likely that it will already contain the source file for the textbook or the instructional material needed, or we hope so so that the conversion can begin as soon as possible and there's no delays.

LIZ SCHALLER: Exactly.

JENA FAHLBUSH: Great. So my next question is for Nicole. Can you talk to us then about this special file format called NIMAS?

NICOLE GAINES: Sure. Happy to. So basically, the NIMAS format, it actually stands for the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standards. So NIMAC, C is for the Center, S is for the Standard or the file format. And so, again, as Liz mentioned, IDEA created not just the center, the repository, but also the file format for the materials that we receive.

Probably the most important thing to know about the NIMAS format is it is not a format that is distributed directly to students. It is, as Liz mentioned, a source file format, and what that basically means is that it's a digital file that is meant to be turned into something else using a conversion process.

So in the case of NIMAS, for example, the real advantage to having this national file format is that this one type of file, we can receive it from a publisher one time, and then users in the states can use that same file to produce braille, or large print, or DAISY text, or EPUB, a variety of formats for use by students.

And, Jena, did you have any question about that before I switch to student eligibility?

JENA FAHLBUSH: No, not yet. I'll let you go ahead and finish.

NICOLE GAINES: OK, great. So one of the other things that is in the legislation with regard to NIMAS is the criteria for eligibility for materials that are produced from the files that we receive.

Basically, the way that IDEA handles this is it points directly to the National Library Service eligibility criteria in terms of the disability criterion, which includes students who have print disabilities such as dyslexia, students who are blind or low vision, or students who may have a physical disability that prevents them from working with regular text.

The other criterion is that students do have to have an IEP to qualify for NIMAS source materials, and that's simply because it is IDEA. And so it's a part of that whole ecosystem.

JENA FAHLBUSH: All right, so that's helpful. So what I've heard so far are that the NIMAS files themselves are not actually the usable files, but those have to be converted first, which I think is really helpful to understand that the file has to be converted and that then it's not just for our students who are blind or low vision. Because I think that's a question we get a lot or that that's a common understanding that these files are only for that population.

But we also want to include students with reading disabilities like dyslexia because they are also eligible for certain formats. And that could be EPUB, digital audio, or whatever makes sense for them.

And before you move on, I just want to note that that really resonates with me because something, again, we hear too often is that accessible formats are really only being considered for visual and physical disabilities when we know that accessible formats should be considered for all students with IEPs. We could even have a student with autism as maybe their primary eligibility.

But then we also recognize through our data and all of our observations and evaluations that there is a reading disability present as well, for which accessible formats could be needed for them to access their grade-level content. So I know it's just really important for our audience to understand today that IEP teams should be considering accessible educational materials or accessible formats for all of their students with IEPs.

NICOLE GAINES: Right. And just one case in point, to piggyback on that is that when we think about Bookshare, for example, a lot of folks on the call may be familiar with Bookshare as a national provider of digital formats for students in K-12, and they are a major user of the NIMAC.

They use a lot of NIMAS files to create the digital formats that they distribute. And their estimate is that 85% of the students that they serve are not students who are blind or low

vision, they are students with those other print disabilities. And so that is a really important thing to be aware of is that the students who are served under NIMAS and with accessible formats is much broader than students who are blind or low vision.

JENA FAHLBUSH: Yeah, that's interesting. That's a great statistic to share. So thanks for that.

NICOLE GAINES: And, actually, we've heard the same from Learning Ally, the main provider of digital. They provided that same 85% figure several years back.

So moving on to talk a little bit more about NIMAS and IDEA, under the legislation, states are not required to coordinate with the NIMAC, but they are required to adopt the NIMAS source file format. So this is a little quirky, but basically, what Congress said in IDEA is that NIMAS is really valuable in terms of helping to create accessible formats.

So everybody has to use it. Everybody has to ask for NIMAS from publishers, but you can either work with the NIMAC, or you can just go directly to publishers and get NIMAS files directly from publishers. So that's basically the option that is provided to SEAs.

So as you might imagine, there's not really a lot of benefit to saying, oh, we'd rather just use our resources and our time to go directly to publishers and get NIMAS files. We'll work with the repository.

So we are really pleased that all 50 states, as well as the eligible territories and DoDEA have coordinated with the NIMAC and continuously for at least the past 15 years. Some folks came on board as early as they possibly could. That would have been in early 2007, but we are just really pleased at that continuous coordination that we have seen.

JENA FAHLBUSH: I'm glad you pointed out that coordination because it does sound like if school districts or states go it alone, it's more work, probably, to directly reach out to the publisher. And I can see just more headache there than to use you all and the resources that you provide to schools when it comes to accessing these files and getting materials to students in that timely manner, which you know is so crucial.

NICOLE GAINES: Right. I mean, it absolutely avoids a lot of duplication of effort and expense to just have one place where files can be.

JENA FAHLBUSH: Awesome. So I think this is going back to you, Liz. Can you talk to us about what it means for a state in more detail to coordinate with the NIMAC?

LIZ SCHALLER: Absolutely. So there are three primary components to NIMAC coordination for each state. The first is that the state would designate a state coordinator. And they are

responsible for adding and removing those authorized users who have access to the repository, the folks we talked about earlier.

Typically, there are around five or fewer authorized users in each state. So the state coordinator is responsible for managing those. They're also responsible for ensuring that the SEA requires publishers to submit files to the NIMAC as part of any instructional materials procurement process or contract. And Nicole's going to talk a little bit more later about sample contract language for those procurement contracts.

And then that third piece is to abide by the NIMAC eligibility criteria that Nicole outlined, as well as the limitations of use in terms of copyright restrictions as outlined in the NIMAC Coordination Agreement.

Under IDEA 2004, there's no blanket requirement for publishers to submit files to the NIMAC. This is a really important piece of how the NIMAC works because as I mentioned earlier, the ideal scenario is that when the need for the accessible format is identified, we already have the file in the repository.

So this procurement piece is extremely important for timely delivery. And the only mechanism to require NIMAS from the publisher is in that adoption contract or purchase agreement that's entered into by the SEA or LEA. So including that NIMAS language in all contracts is essential to ensuring that the NIMAC will receive the files that students need.

JENA FAHLBUSH: OK, so coordination is meaning that states have to require the publishers to submit the NIMAS files right to the NIMAC as part of those purchase agreements and their contracts. Otherwise, then there's really no way for the state or the school district to even hold the publisher accountable for submitting those files. And like you said, we need to build up the database so that those source files are available right away.

That also makes me think that, again, having to contact the publisher after the fact and without any contract language could probably be a little tricky to get certain ones, especially huge publishers to respond and to attend to that request to get the NIMAS file added to the repository--

LIZ SCHALLER: Absolutely.

JENA FAHLBUSH: --or for them to even get the NIMAS file themselves to then convert.

LIZ SCHALLER: Right. Yeah, we do field several hundred requests each year from our users where there wasn't a file already in the repository. And we do have a very high success rate for getting files for most of the publishers who we already work with, but that's definitely adding on at least a few weeks, maybe a month or more to the overall timeline for accessible format production. So it's not ideal by any means.

JENA FAHLBUSH: Yeah.

NICOLE GAINES: And this is Nicole, just to chime in on that because NIMAS is this special digital format, it's not a format that publishers have on hand. They actually have to specially produce it.

And so as Liz mentioned, it's like when that doesn't happen as a part of a procurement process and isn't built into their timelines, it can take several weeks or even up to a few months for those files to be produced. And so it just really helps to underscore why that procurement piece is so essential to the timely delivery aspect.

JENA FAHLBUSH: That makes me think it probably is wise to even put the request in, request for proposals or request for information so that when school districts are maybe working with vendors, they're putting that out there in advance so that the vendor knows what they will be agreeing to so that they can start that process right away since those files aren't readily available.

NICOLE GAINES: And some states do that for sure.

JENA FAHLBUSH: Yeah, which is fantastic. We want more and more states to follow their lead. So then for the next question, can you talk a little bit more about why it's beneficial for states to coordinate with the NIMAC?

LIZ SCHALLER: Yeah, absolutely. So the overarching benefit, of course, is that you'll have continuous access to all of the NIMAS files in our system, over 89,000 files at this point. We receive many thousand each year in response to those procurement contracts.

And it really speeds up the process quite a bit. Rather than having to find the correct contact at the publisher and work with them directly, you can just come to the centralized place and access the files that you need at any time.

It's also great because many hundreds of accessible media producers already have accounts with the NIMAC, so it is more than likely that the AMP that you're working with for braille production or large print production already has an account in the NIMAC, and you can easily just assign that file and they can get started right away.

JENA FAHLBUSH: Sounds like, yeah, you have some good relationships with accessible media producers. And that's another benefit, is just like your long-standing history in this field.

LIZ SCHALLER: Absolutely, yeah. So on the screen here, you can see the IDEA assurances. We have a screenshot of the ones that pertain to the NIMAC. Those are 23a and 23b. And

23a relates to that first piece that we mentioned earlier about adopting NIMAS as the source file for accessible format production for every state.

So that's one that every state would mark yes because that is a requirement. And then 23b gets into that second piece that Nicole mentioned, which is whether or not your state is choosing to coordinate with the NIMAC.

And so 23b 1 indicates, yes, your agency is coordinating with the NIMAC and then 23b 2 would be if your state has opted out of coordinating with the nimac and instead chooses to go directly to publishers to obtain NIMAS files and maintain some sort of repository or system within your state to manage that.

JENA FAHLBUSH: So states historically have been coordinating with you, which means they should be indicating yes on both of these questions. And it is an easy way, for your state to opt in on this form when they fill out this application, which will be coming out pretty soon.

So we're hoping that this webinar would be really timely for those that we'll be completing this application. And if you're not the person at your state, there are some LEA assurances that we'll talk about as well, I know. But right now, this leads us to our guest speaker.

And, again, I want to say thanks for joining us, Crystal, and being willing to share your top recommendations for providing accessible formats to students in your state of North Carolina, based upon your years of experience coordinating with the NIMAC and upon the lessons you've learned from your time in the field. So thanks again for being here.

CRYSTAL PATRICK: Yes, absolutely. Thank you for having me. And I am a huge proponent of coordinating with the NIMAC. Not only are the materials there and ready, if we have it set up in the procurement language so that when students need those, we can get them out to students. North Carolina is a large state, and we used to have a state textbook system, but we have moved to local adoption.

So when we started a coordinated system to establish so that the districts could request the materials they needed, we knew that this was going to move to more individual districts having to coordinate.

And so having a large public school units of over 300 in North Carolina, we established a system so that districts, LEAs can go online and complete a form that feeds directly into me as the state coordinator. Yes, I am also the consultant for visual impairment, but I am also the NIMAC state coordinator. And I try to get it out that it's not just for students with visual impairments, but any student who requires AIM.

And so we have our coordinated system where the district leads know how to complete the form, how to send it in. If it is in NIMAC, we have seen an increase in timely delivery

because it can take-- in addition to the time that it takes for the publisher to ready the NIMAS file, in addition to that, if you're printing or embossing a braille copy, you're looking at three to six months at least for lead time.

So a coordinated system helped ensure that students were getting the materials in a more timely manner. And we have a lot of data to help support that.

We also launched-- and my number two recommendation is to train accessible media producers. A lot of states-- I know every state's different. Some states have instructional material centers. We do not have a true center in North Carolina that produces the materials.

But what we do have are right now about 10 AMPs. So if you went into the NIMAC and looked up AMPs, you would see some of our North Carolina School districts who are producing large amounts of braille for their students. And so they are AMPs. They send the form into me. I verify the IEP and verify the need.

As an authorized user, I can download it to that AMPs account so that They Can convert and emboss on site so that we are increasing the time for the students to get their materials. So we're not delaying, but we're actually speeding it up and increasing it by having trained AMPs, that was Accessible Media Producers, in the PSUs, Public School Units, also LEAs.

Also, one of the biggest recommendations that I can give anybody on this call is to make sure that the procurement guidance is ensuring that the publishers are coordinating with the NIMAC. I don't know how many times it's been said, but it is so much easier to do that on the front end.

And sometimes that procurement guidance needs to get to the chief academic officers, the curriculum and instruction specialist because while EC, Exceptional Children, special education are the ones who are actually going into the IDEA and agreeing to coordinate and agreeing for those assurances, the people who are making the purchasing decisions and the procurement decisions, there needs to be a coordinated system between those two entities as well.

Because if they're purchasing and they're not requiring it, then it's going to cause a delay for the students who need it. And we know that students with disability, time is of the essence. If a student with a disability is delayed and we're not offering FAPE, then we're not only putting that student behind, but we're putting our whole system behind.

So my top three recommendations, get a good coordinated system. Even if you have an instructional materials system, make sure that every LEA, district knows that when a

student needs it and it's on an IEP, how they can access it. Train more accessible media producers. Maybe those media producers are looking at Bookshare and audio formats, not just the braille.

And please, if you can do anything in your state, provide guidance around the procurement language so that when those purchasing decisions are being made, that people at the table are knowledgeable about accessible educational materials and having the NIMAC language in the contracts.

JENA FAHLBUSH: Thanks, Crystal, and you did a great job summarizing your key points. That was excellent.

I think one last takeaway that I would point out is just your number three here and how crucial it is to get that transfer of information, from the people who say yes on the assurances to the people at the purchasing table and making sure that they're the ones who really understand this need and that they're ensuring this is part of all those contracts and any of their procurement processes.

CRYSTAL PATRICK: Yeah, absolutely. And like I said, we're a large state and over 300 LEAs. And if we can try to keep it coordinated, I'm sure this can happen.

JENA FAHLBUSH: Yeah, super great advice. That's very valuable.

CRYSTAL PATRICK: Yes, thank you. If anyone has any more questions about our system, feel free to reach out. I'll be glad to share anything. And if you want to know the data, we've got some data now because when we went through our AIM quality indicators, that was one piece that was lacking. And so having the coordinated system to ensure students are getting accessible materials was a huge top priority for us.

JENA FAHLBUSH: Yeah, that data sounds super interesting. In fact, I would love to see that data if you're willing to even to share with me as well because that is something that is so important, yeah, to the procurement. OK, now back over to another question for the NIMAC. And we would like to know what it means for a district now to opt in to the IDEA assurances.

NICOLE GAINES: OK, well, in terms of how the NIMAC works with districts, it differs from how we work with states because local education agencies don't submit a coordination agreement to the NIMAC, only states do. But they do indicate their opt-in status in the IDEA assurances that they send to the SEA.

And just to be clear, the NIMAC does not receive those assurances. We do not have the information about which districts have said they're opting in, which ones have said they have not. But, obviously, we strongly encourage all LEAs to coordinate.

And basically, it's similar to the SEA coordination. We know that it's really important for LEAs to have access to accessible formats that are produced by state or national or regional organizations that produce accessible formats. And so we would not want to deny them access to any NIMAS source materials by choosing not to coordinate.

But the more important piece, echoing what Crystal said, is that the procurement piece, there's so much procurement that happens at the district level. A lot of purchasing decisions for instructional materials, they're happening at that district level. And we need to ensure that we have NIMAS files for those materials.

So while there might be some purchasing or state-level adoptions that would involve that level of decision making, it's really a critical piece that the LEAs are not only indicating in their assurances, yes, I'm coordinating with the NIMAC, but that they understand what that actually means in practice, which is that it's vital to make that requirement in their purchasing contracts for print instructional materials so that we will have the files.

And, again, part of what is important to emphasize with all of this is that for states that coordinate, for districts that coordinate, it is a legal obligation of the legislation to include that NIMAS language in the textbook purchase agreements. It's not an optional thing. It is actually required.

But what we have seen and what we understand from talking with folks in the field is that there can often be a breakdown between communication between SEAs and LEAs related to what that means. Like the LEA may be indicating that they choose to coordinate with the NIMAC, but not necessarily understanding that there is that obligation side, which is related to complying with the procurement requirement.

One of the things that is wonderful and will make life easier whether you are an SEA or an LEA is that there is sample contract language available on the NCADEMI website that you can just plunk into any contract, and you have met that obligation, and you can ensure that the publisher meets their obligation to provide those files so that they will be available in the repository when an accessible format is needed by one of your students.

And so just encourage you to take a look at that. It is available whenever you need it. And, again, it's just a simple copy/paste to make sure that provision is included in any of your contracts.

JENA FAHLBUSH: Yeah. And before we jump to this question, I'll just say, as you were talking there, I heard something important, which is there is sometimes a gap between LEA understanding and the SEAs.

And so it's really crucial that LEAs too understand that they need to say yes on their assurances to the state because, otherwise, they might unintentionally limit the access to these NIMAS source files that need to be converted into the accessible formats for eligible students.

And that language does have to be included. The NIMAS language does need to be in all those textbook purchase agreements. And like you said, here is a copy/paste to do that, which hopefully makes that a little lighter of a lift for local districts and for states even.

NICOLE GAINES: I will call out that Cynthia made a good point in the chat, which is that be sure to insert the deadline into the text after you do the copy/paste because there is a place there, that deadline, and making sure that there's a timeline is a really important piece of that as well.

JENA FAHLBUSH: Yeah, [INAUDIBLE].

NICOLE GAINES: Thank you for noticing that, Cynthia.

JENA FAHLBUSH: Yeah, so thinking you that opportunity for states to lead districts, we are curious to know and to hear from you all in the audience about whether or not your state provides any guidance to you in a district or at the district level on the NIMAS procurement requirement in IDEA. So we'll launch that poll, and you can reply yes, no, or unsure.

We do have a little over half of you that have replied. So we have 27% have said yes. And 73% of you have said unsure.

So it sounds like a good opportunity to connect with your state if you have somebody that has a good connection there or to check out web resources and see what could be available in your state to better understand that procurement requirement at the local district level.

There we go. There was those results in case they didn't get shared quite long enough.

So now that will lead us into another question for the NIMAC, which is-- oh, excuse me-- about whether or not the NIMAC receives digital instructional materials because earlier, Nicole, I heard you talking about printed materials, but what about digital materials?

NICOLE GAINES: Right. And this is actually a really good question. Since its inception, the NIMAC has primarily been a resource for print-based instructional materials, and we continue to primarily be a resource for those materials.

However, several years back in May of 2020, the Department of Education did publish what they call a Notice of Interpretation that permits the NIMAC to accept NIMAS files for some

digital instructional materials. Some digital instructional materials are being submitted to the NIMAC. It's a relatively small number overall in terms of that 89,000 files that we have.

But one of the things that is important to note is that because of some technical considerations with regard to digital instructional materials and what that content is like, only a subset of digital instructional materials can actually be turned into a NIMAS file set. So that's one limitation.

And then another thing that I want to point out is that under that Notice of Interpretation, digital instructional materials that meet the WCAG AA-- at that time it was 2.0, now it's 2.1-- but meet that WCAG AA accessibility criteria were categorically exempt from NIMAS requirements.

So in other words, what the department said is if your digital instructional materials are already accessible out of the box, you, the publisher, doesn't have to submit NIMAS for it, even if the customer asks for it. And so that's what was the situation back in 2020.

As you guys are probably well aware at this point, ADA Title II has come along since then with the requirement that digital materials come conform to WCAG 2.1 AA. And so really, what we really encourage at this point is that SEAs and LEAs require publishers to comply with that new ADA Title II reg requirement and require those digital materials be accessible when they are delivered directly from the publisher.

And so one easy way to think about this again-- and it hearkens back to what Jena shared early on-- is we can think of it in terms of under IDEA, we have NIMAS as your really essential accessibility strategy for print-based materials. And then we can think of ADA Title II as our real, strong foundation for ensuring that those digital instructional materials are accessible.

JENA FAHLBUSH: Yeah. Thanks, Nicole. I was thinking the exact same thing and that this is how it comes full circle, is that those are the two critical pieces that we need in place when we're thinking about our procurement to better ensure that our students with disabilities have equal access to the curriculum. So it's they go right hand in hand together.

If anybody today has any more questions, because they might be processing the information and come back and think, oh, I do wonder more about the procurement language or about how to convert these files, how can an DEA or an LEA learn more? I don't know if one of you want to jump in, or I can share your--

NICOLE GAINES: Oh, do.

JENA FAHLBUSH: --information too. It's up to you.

NICOLE GAINES: Sure. Yeah, well, I would say that we welcome folks to definitely reach out if you need more information about working with-- if you're wanting more information on how is your state working with the NIMAC, if you want to know who your state coordinator is, we have that link earlier. But we can also put you in touch with your authorized users for your state if you're interested in that information.

One of the things that can be a little challenging for the NIMAC is we're a resource that is generally operating behind the scenes. We're not distributing material directly to teachers and students. And we don't have that presence directly in the classroom.

But I will just emphasize that if you are an SEA in the USA, your state is working with the NIMAC, and your students are benefiting from NIMAS-sourced instructional materials. And so if you have any questions about the NIMAC, we're always happy to help. You're welcome to email us, nimac@aph.org. We also have an 800 number, which is 877-526-4622.

And then we also on our informational website, nimac.us, we have a lot of resources there that go into a lot of detail in terms of how we work with publishers, how we work with states. And so we invite everybody to take a look at our website if you have not visited in the past.

JENA FAHLBUSH: Thanks. And I'll also share that you can also reach out to us at NCADEMI for broader digital accessibility technical assistance beyond NIMAS and NIMAC. So we're going to be here to help you as a school and to help states and families improve accessibility of digital educational materials and instruction from preschool through high school graduation.

And our contact information has been shared in the chat as well as the NIMAC's information, and you can find all of our resources at ncademi.org or email us at ncademi@usu.edu.

And we recommend following us on LinkedIn or signing up for our newsletter to stay up to date on our latest offerings such as webinars or our latest technical assistance through one pagers, and videos, and however we might connect with you.

So before we move into our Q&A section, I just want to say thanks, again, to Nicole and Liz for answering all these questions and continuing to be here for Q&A, as well as thank you to Crystal for sharing your insights from your work in North Carolina.

And before we get into that Q&A, we do want to promote the survey to gain your feedback because your feedback really does matter to both of our centers. And completing the survey will take less than five minutes of your time.