

i-Ready: Accessibility and Accommodations Update

Curriculum Associates | August 2023

Overview

To make *i-Ready* accessible to the widest population of students, we offer a range of accessibility supports that can also meet the requirements of a number of student accommodations. This accessibility update is designed to provide educators with information about *i-Ready*'s current accessibility supports, insight into our vision, and plans for future enhancements.

Dedicated to Creating Accessible Experiences

At Curriculum Associates, we believe every student has the potential for educational excellence. That's why we're dedicated to creating accessible materials that maximize usability for students with disabilities. We strive to ensure that accessibility and accommodation support considerations are incorporated into our product development process from the very beginning, and we've developed a continuous improvement approach to accessibility that ensures we're always improving and learning.

Always Improving Accessibility

Opportunities and expectations are continually evolving. To meet the needs of the students and districts we serve, we engage in ongoing work to evaluate and improve our educational tools and resources. We have developed a systematic approach to accessibility that includes:

- The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework guiding our accessibility efforts
- An internal team of access and equity, curriculum, assessment, policy, and research experts who are dedicated to finding new ways for our educational tools and resources to be used by a diverse range of learners
- A rigorous review process that involves outside accessibility experts to ensure our thinking and approach reflect established and evolving best practices
- Guidance and feedback from the school districts and educators we serve

In addition to the above, we have enlisted the help of student testers to evaluate the effectiveness of our accessibility enhancements. Our commitment to and work toward increased accessibility is ongoing. All of our accessibility efforts and enhancements are offered to educators at no additional cost as part of Curriculum Associates' Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model.

i-Ready's Accessibility Supports and Accommodations

The table on the following page contains information about accessibility features and support for accommodations in *i-Ready Personalized Instruction*, *i-Ready Diagnostic*, *i-Ready Growth Monitoring*, *i-Ready Standards Mastery*, *i-Ready Personalized Instruction* in Spanish, *i-Ready Assessment of Spanish Reading*, *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Mathematics in Spanish, and *i-Ready Growth Monitoring* for Mathematics in Spanish. Supports and accommodations may not be available across all content areas, grades, and products.

***i-Ready's* Accessibility Supports and Accommodations**

Universal Supports	Designated Supports	Accommodations
Available to all students, regardless of their disability status or any other type of documented need	Available for use by any student as determined by an educator familiar with the student's characteristics and needs	Available to students in accordance with their IEPs/504 plans
<p>Embedded Embedded universal supports available within the <i>i-Ready</i> interface that require no additional configuration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Audio support</i>¹ • <i>Audio description tracks</i>² • <i>Keyboard access</i>³ • <i>Calculator</i>[*] • <i>Color contrast</i>⁴ • <i>Closed captioning</i>⁵ • <i>Digital Math Tools</i>⁶ • <i>Glossary definitions and Spanish translations for academic vocabulary and key terms</i>^{**} • <i>Presentation of material for age-appropriate pedagogy and legibility</i>⁷ • <i>Scaffolded support (lesson-specific, interactive elements)</i>^{**} 	<p>Embedded Audio support for Diagnostic items for Mathematics for Grades 6+ are available as a designated support as of September 2021. Educators need to enable this feature. To learn more about designated audio support in our Diagnostic, please refer to the Feature Overview: Audio Support. All other traditionally embedded designated supports are available universally to students in <i>i-Ready</i>, requiring no further configuration by educators.</p>	<p>Embedded At this time, traditionally embedded accommodations are handled through universal and designated supports or through non-embedded accommodations.</p>
<p>Non-embedded Non-embedded universal supports outside of the <i>i-Ready</i> interface include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Audio amplification</i> • <i>English dictionary (when appropriate)</i> • <i>Noise buffer (e.g., earmuffs, audio aids)</i> • <i>Scratch paper (i.e., blank paper)</i> • <i>Thesaurus (when appropriate)</i> 	<p>Non-embedded Educators can make the following non-embedded designated supports available to students outside of the <i>i-Ready</i> interface:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bilingual dictionary</i> • <i>Magnification device</i>⁸ • <i>Native language translation of directions</i> • <i>Student reads test aloud.</i> 	<p>Non-embedded Non-embedded accommodations are available to students outside the <i>i-Ready</i> interface:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Abacus</i> • <i>Alternate response options</i> • <i>Calculator</i> • <i>Extended time breaks and flexible scheduling</i> • <i>Graphic organizer/reference sheet/checklist</i> • <i>Human reader</i> • <i>Human signer</i> • <i>Multiplication table</i> • <i>Scribe</i> • <i>Screen readers</i>⁹ • <i>Tactile graphics</i>¹⁰

*= *i-Ready Diagnostic* only **= *i-Ready Personalized Instruction* only

¹ **Universal audio support** (i.e., pre-recorded human-voiced audio of text) is currently available in *i-Ready Personalized Instruction* either automatically or on demand by pressing audio buttons to support most of the text on screen across lessons. The Assessment of Spanish Reading includes universal audio support in Phonics items for Grades K–3, Vocabulary items for Grades K–1, Phonological Awareness items for Grades K–1, and Comprehension items for Grade K. In the other *i-Ready* assessments (not including Standards Mastery), audio support is provided for Grades K–5 Mathematics items, Grades K–3 English Language Arts and Vocabulary items, and Grade K Comprehension items.

² **Audio description tracks:** Students can enable audio description of what is happening visually in the Diagnostic Introductory Videos for Grades 3–5 by selecting the AD button. This is the first in a series of ongoing releases to add audio descriptions to Diagnostic videos.

- ³ **Keyboard access** is currently available with documented exceptions in *i-Ready* assessments. In *i-Ready Personalized Instruction*, it is available in all Comprehension lessons in Grades K–8, in most Grades 3–5 Phonics and Vocabulary lessons, and in most Grades 3–5 Mathematics lessons. Additional domains and grades will be added on an ongoing basis. Please refer to the [Feature Overview: Keyboard Access](#) to learn about relevant exceptions.
- ⁴ **Contrast requirements:** In *i-Ready Assessment*, we are compliant with WCAG 2.0 AA requirements with documented exceptions. All *i-Ready Personalized Instruction* lessons created after July 2019 adhere to WCAG 2.0 AA requirements for contrast. For lessons created before July 2019, we are compliant with WCAG 2.0 AA contrast in many places, but the exceptions have not been extensively documented. For the majority of lessons, global lesson navigation controls (i.e., buttons for backward/forward, pause, settings, and the progress bar) now adhere to WCAG 2.1 AA requirements for contrast.
- ⁵ **Closed captioning** is available on most Diagnostic Interactive Tutorials for Grades K–2, the Diagnostic Introductory Videos for Grades 3+, and in all Diagnostic and Growth Monitoring videos embedded in passages. In *i-Ready Personalized Instruction*, closed captioning is available in English for English lessons and in Spanish for Spanish lessons. 100 percent of My Path lessons for Grades K–8 have closed captioning and/or text on screen. A small percentage of extra lessons (i.e., lessons that can be assigned by teachers but never show in the automated My Path queues) will still have closed-captioning exceptions. To learn more, please refer to the [Feature Overview: Closed Captioning](#).
- ⁶ **Digital Math Tools** are available on specific items or lessons.
- ⁷ **Presentation of material for age-appropriate pedagogy and legibility** includes the use of clear, concise, chronological directions, student-friendly fonts, easily legible formatting, graphic organizers, and pacing/engagement controls such as chunking of texts, and “slow down” timers.
- ⁸ We have not tested the use of third-party built-in operating system **magnification software** extensively for compatibility across browser platform combinations. Educators may find the following documents helpful: [For PCs](#) | [For Macs](#)® | [For iPads](#)® | [For Chromebooks](#)™
- ⁹ **Screen-reader support is available for all Comprehension lessons in English for Grades 3–8.** Please reference additional [information about i-Ready Personalized Instruction screen-reader support](#) and refreshable braille displays. In most *i-Ready* assessments, screen readers can be used to respond to most items with documented exceptions. In *i-Ready Diagnostic*, *i-Ready Standards Mastery*, and *i-Ready Growth Monitoring*, exceptions include some tech-enhanced item types, and students may require additional assistance when they encounter items with complicated visual stimuli such as graphs and figures. When taking these assessments in Spanish, screen-reader users will encounter some screen-reader labels and announcements in English. In *i-Ready Standards Mastery*, alt text is now available in the majority of items with images or graphics. In the *i-Ready Assessment of Spanish Reading*, alt text is available where needed.
- ¹⁰ There are some instances when a student may request or require a **tactile graphic** to access a test item enhanced by alt text. Because the *i-Ready Diagnostic* is a computer-adaptive assessment, notification about the need for a tactile graphic cannot be provided to teachers before the assessment is administered. This [guidance brief](#) offers information about how to create tactile graphics on demand.

i-Ready and the WCAG

Your account manager or educational consultant will be happy to provide you with up-to-date information on *i-Ready* and WCAG. Please contact them for details.

i-Ready Assessment: Always Improving Diagnostic

Our top priority is to design and develop our assessments to be free of characteristics that could interfere with students' test-taking experiences. This is essential not only from the perspective of the student, but also to ensure that educators are provided with validly obtained assessment data to make informed inferences about student performance.¹¹

Assessment Item Development Process

Although educators and students are most likely to notice the *i-Ready* accessibility features used during the administration of an assessment, evidence of our commitment to accessibility begins long before students sit down to take the assessment. Specifically, *i-Ready* assessments are built from the ground up to incorporate key characteristics that make the assessments accessible. Our team incorporates industry-standard design principles throughout every step of the assessment development process.

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¹¹AERA, APA, & NCME. (2014). *Standards for education and psychological testing*. American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, National Council on Measurement in Education.

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For example, in our test development process, content editors follow meticulous steps to create accessible, non-biased items. All content editors are trained not only on bias and sensitivity guidelines, but also on how bias may be revealed in embedded field testing and data resulting from differential item functioning analysis. This cycle of field testing and review is critical, as it allows content editors to evaluate assessment items for bias at multiple points in the process. Curriculum Associates also enlists the help of experienced teachers to review assessment items. Teachers who support this process have firsthand experience working with diverse student populations and have received training materials on bias and sensitivity guidelines. Finally, we employ a series of cognitive labs to gain a deeper understanding of the cognitive processes students use when responding to assessment items.

Moving Forward

We are committed to ongoing improvements to accessibility features and accommodations across our assessment products, and we will be releasing them on a rolling basis. These efforts include:

- Adding supports to *i-Ready Assessment* to **further enhance usability**. For example, we are working to add embedded designated support/accommodations for audio support in the Diagnostic for Reading where universal audio support is not already available. We plan to add reporting that will flag when these embedded designated supports or accommodations have been enabled for specific students. This is currently targeted for the beginning of the 2024–2025 school year. An additional improvement scheduled for the beginning of the 2024 school year is a new student setting that will allow the bypassing of foundational skills domains when they aren't appropriate for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or have low vision.
- For WCAG criteria that currently have documented exceptions, we will be **reducing and/or removing documented exceptions**. For example, we are adding audio description tracks to our Diagnostic videos. This work began in December 2021 and will continue on a rolling basis.
- We are actively looking into **options for supporting read-aloud accommodations** in *i-Ready Standards Mastery* for students with documented needs.
- **Further usability updates to the Diagnostic** will be informed by our partnership with Perkins Access, other accessibility and UDL advisors, and our internal Usability Testing team. Upcoming work includes exploring compatibility with particular assistive technologies such as refreshable braille displays.

i-Ready Personalized Instruction

Consistent with our approach to *i-Ready Assessment*, we have an ongoing vision for *i-Ready Personalized Instruction* that includes continual evaluation and application of research-based principles. Our focus is on improving our collection of existing lessons and on proactively creating new lessons with accessibility features such as keyboard navigation, closed captioning, and visual design from the get-go.

UDL

The Center for Applied Special Technology defines the UDL as a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn. The framework was designed to “change the design of the environment rather than to change the learner,” and the curriculum designers of *i-Ready Personalized Instruction* are guided by the UDL's key principles of providing students with appropriate options for engagement, representation, action, and expression.¹²

¹²CAST. (2020). *Frequently asked questions*. UDL Guidelines. <http://udlguidelines.cast.org/more/frequently-asked-questions>.

Moving Forward

Our goals for enhanced accessibility supports are outlined below. Please note that these are forecasts of future work. Given the extensive level of interactivity, volume and variety of lessons, unique question types, and level of instructional support, accessibility improvements to online lessons are on a multiyear timeline. While we always do our best to present accurate information, the planning and content of our accessibility timeline may be subject to change.

- **Visual design enhancements:** Our design team will continue to apply WCAG visual design requirements (i.e., for minimum contrast and use of color) from the start in all new lesson development, as they have since fall 2019. Additionally, we have updated our global navigation controls (i.e., forward/backward buttons, etc.) to meet WCAG 2.1 AA criteria for minimum contrast for the majority of lessons.
- **Keyboard access** will expand to additional grades and domains on an ongoing basis.
- In our **efforts to meet the WCAG 2.1 AA criterion for reflow, we have engaged our partners at Perkins Access** to help us think through the instructional design and pedagogical challenges of ensuring content is presented in an age-appropriate and consistent way, while allowing for reflow where possible.

In everything we do at Curriculum Associates, our award-winning Educator Success team is at the foundation of our success. If your district has any suggestions or product enhancement ideas for how we can improve our accessibility efforts, we would love to hear from you. Please contact your district's partner success manager, and they will be happy to forward your ideas to our product team or answer any questions you have about our existing offerings.

For more information about *i-Ready's* accessibility features and accommodations, including the documented exceptions that apply to some features, please contact your partner success manager or educational consultant.