i-Ready: Accessibility and Accommodations Update

Curriculum Associates | July 2024

Overview

To make *i-Ready* accessible to the widest population of students, we offer a range of accessibility and English Learner 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 and English Learners. 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:

- Using the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework guidance from the English Learners Success Forum (ELSF), and the accessibility and accommodations manual of the Council of Chief State School Officers to inform 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, English Learner supports, 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.

*Throughout this document, the term "*i-Ready Personalized Instruction*" refers to both *i-Ready* lessons and *i-Ready* Pro's Essential Lessons unless distinctions are explicitly named.

i-Ready's Accessibility Supports and Accommodations

Universal Supports	Designated Supports	Accommodations
Available to all students, regardless of their disability status, English proficiency level, 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 and/or EL plans
Embedded Embedded universal supports available within the *i-Ready* interface that require no additional configuration: • *Audio support[1]* • *Audio description[2]* • *Keyboard access[3]* • *Calculator** • *Color contrast[4]* • *Closed captioning[5]* • *Digital Math Tools[6]* • *Glossary definitions and Spanish translations for academic vocabulary and key terms[7]* • *Presentation of material for age-appropriate pedagogy and legibility [8]* • *Reflow[9]* • *Scaffolded support (i.e., lesson-specific, interactive elements)***	**Embedded** Audio support is available for the Diagnostic for Mathematics Grades 6+ items. As of July 2024, audio support will be available for Diagnostic for Reading items where universal audio support is not available. In both Reading and Mathematics, audio support is available as either a designated support or an accommodation.[10] Educators need to enable this feature. To learn more about audio support in *i-Ready Diagnostic*, please refer to the [Feature Overview: Audio Support](#).	**Embedded** Audio support is available for the Diagnostic for Mathematics Grades 6+ items. As of July 2024, audio support will be available for Diagnostic for Reading items where universal audio support is not available. In both Reading and Mathematics, audio support is available as either a designated support or an accommodation.[10] Educators need to enable this feature. To learn more about audio support in *i-Ready Diagnostic*, please refer to the [Feature Overview: Audio Support](#). Educators have the ability to manually exempt students who are blind, low vision, deaf, or hard of hearing from foundational reading domains, such as Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and High-Frequency Words, due to the domains' dependence on audio or visual content.*
Non-embedded Non-embedded universal supports outside of the *i-Ready* interface include: • *Audio amplification* • *English dictionary (when appropriate)* • *Noise buffer (e.g., earmuffs, audio aids)* • *Scratch paper (i.e., blank paper)* • *Thesaurus (when appropriate)*	**Non-embedded** Educators can make the following non-embedded designated supports available to students outside of the *i-Ready* interface: • *Bilingual word-for-word dictionary* • *Magnification device[11]* • *Native-language translation of directions* • *Student reads test aloud.*	**Non-embedded** Non-embedded accommodations are available to students outside of the *i-Ready* interface: • *Abacus* • *Alternate response options* • *Calculator* • *Extended time breaks and flexible scheduling* • *Graphic organizer/reference sheet/checklist* • *Human reader* • *Human signer* • *Multiplication table* • *Scribe* • *Screen readers[12]* • *Tactile graphics[13]*

*= Only in *i-Ready Diagnostic* **= Only in *i-Ready Personalized Instruction* (Includes *i-Ready Pro*'s Essential Lessons)

1   **Universal audio support** (i.e., editorially vetted 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. Audio descriptions are also available in all Reading Comprehension lessons for Grades 3–8 in which screen-reader support is available. 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 Grades K–8 Comprehension lessons, in all Grades 3–5 Phonics and Vocabulary lessons, in Spanish Grades K–1 Phonological Awareness lessons, in most Grades 3–5 Mathematics lessons, and in Grades 6–8 Mathematics lessons. Keyboard navigation is also available in *i-Ready Pro*'s Essential Lessons in Grades 6–8. 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. In *i-Ready Pro*'s Essential Lessons, backward/forward buttons aren't used.

5   **Closed captioning** is available on all Diagnostic interactive and non-interactive tutorials for Grades K–2, the tutorials and 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   **Glossary definitions and Spanish translations** for academic vocabulary and key terms are available in *i-Ready Personalized Instruction* lessons except for *i-Ready Pro*'s Essential Lessons. Sometime in the 2024–2025 school year, we plan to release glossary support for *i-Ready Pro*'s Essential Lessons in core numeracy, and we anticipate they will support both English and Spanish definitions. This feature is not available in *i-Ready Assessment*.

8   **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, pacing/engagement controls such as chunking of texts, and "slow down" timers.

9   **Reflow** applies to *i-Ready Standards Mastery* and *i-Ready Pro*'s Essential Lessons.

10 Due to differences in state and local policies related to audio support, we offer **read-aloud support** nationally as both a designated support and an accommodation. Educators can enable it for students in the platform. Educators should reference a student's 504, IEP, or EL plan to determine what accommodations are appropriate and/or use other documented needs to determine what designated supports are appropriate. For both documented supports and accommodations, educators should ensure they are referencing and adhering to their state and district policies around the provision of that support or accommodation. Reports will indicate whether read-aloud support was made available to a student, but *i-Ready* will not track/indicate if it was used as a designated support or an accommodation.

11 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™

12 **Screen-reader support** is available for all Comprehension lessons in English for Grades 3–8, in Vocabulary Context Clue lessons in English for Grades 3–5, and in *i-Ready Pro*'s Essential Lessons for Mathematics and for Reading in Grades 6–8. 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.

13 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. We are actively engaged with the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) to improve our delivery of tactile graphics to support students who are blind or have low vision.

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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.[13]

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.

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 exploring ways to approach meeting remaining WCAG 2.1AA and WCAG 2.2AA criteria, including reflow.
- 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.
- Using approaches that we've implemented in other products, we are **actively working on adding read-aloud support** for *i-Ready Standards Mastery*.
- **Further usability updates to the Diagnostic** will be informed by our partnership with Perkins Access, the Center for Assessment, other accessibility and UDL advisors, and our internal Usability Testing team. Additionally, we are actively engaged with the APH to improve our delivery of tactile graphics to support students who are blind or have low vision.

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i-Ready and the WCAG

Your partner success 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.

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

i-Ready Personalized Instruction: Always Improving

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.[14]

English/Multilingual Learners

Our *i-Ready* curriculum supports English Learners in acquiring language through reading. Guided by recommendations from ELSF, Curriculum Associations creates our content taking into consideration whether students are newcomers to US schools, students with limited or interrupted formal education, or long-term English Learners.

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 and screen-reader support** will expand to additional grades and domains on an ongoing basis. For example, we're planning on adding screen-reader support to the remaining Vocabulary lessons for Grades 3–5 on an ongoing basis beginning in fall 2024.
- We will continue to **engage with our partners at Perkins Access** to help us consider the best ways to balance pedagogical needs with developing technology to ensure content is presented in an age-appropriate and accessible way. The influence of this partnership is evident in our new *i-Ready Pro* lessons, which include reflow, and we are now exploring ways to apply this approach to other grades and domains.

In everything we do at Curriculum Associates, our award-winning Partner 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 visit www.CurriculumAssociates.com/iReadyAccessibility or contact your partner success manager or educational consultant.

[14]CAST. (2020). *Frequently asked questions*. UDL Guidelines. http://udlguidelines.cast.org/more/frequently-asked-questions.