i-Ready®

Accessibility and Accommodations Update

Curriculum Associates | January 4, 2021

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.

Curriculum Associates' Commitment to Access and Equity

Curriculum Associates fundamentally believes that all students deserve access to high-quality, equitable educational resources. As such, we strive to ensure that all learners, regardless of disability, cultural identity, economic status or circumstance, and linguistic background, can engage with and see themselves reflected in our materials.

Always Improving

Accessibility opportunities and expectations are continually evolving. To meet the needs of the students and the 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:

- 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

- Guidance and feedback from the school districts and educators we serve

- A rigorous review process that involves outside accessibility experts to ensure our thinking and approach reflect established and evolving best practices

- Appropriate adherence to the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework

In addition to the above, we have enlisted the help of student testers to evaluate the effectiveness of our lesson 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

This table contains information about accessibility features and support for accommodations in: *i-Ready Personalized Instruction*, *i-Ready Personalized Instruction* lessons in Spanish, *i-Ready Diagnostic, i-Ready* Growth Monitoring, *i-Ready Standards Mastery, 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.

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.
Embedded Embedded universal supports available within the *i-Ready* interface that require no additional configuration: • *Audio support[1]* • *Keyboard access[2]* • *Calculator** • *Color contrast[3]* • *Closed captioning[4]* • *Mathematics tools[5]* • *Glossary definitions and Spanish translations for academic vocabulary and key terms*** • *Presentation of material for age-appropriate pedagogy and legibility[6]* **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)* • *Scaffolded support (lesson-specific, interactive elements)***	**Embedded** At this time, traditionally embedded designated supports are available universally to students in *i-Ready*, requiring no further configuration by educators. **Non-Embedded** Educators can make the following non-embedded designated supports available to students outside of the *i-Ready* interface: • *Bilingual dictionary* • *Magnification device [7]* • *Native language translation of directions* • *Student reads test aloud*	**Embedded** At this time, traditionally embedded accommodations are handled through universal and designated supports or through non-embedded accommodations. **Non-Embedded** Non-embedded accommodations are available to students outside 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 reader*[8]*

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

[1] **Audio support** (pre-recorded 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. In *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] **Keyboard access** is currently available with documented exceptions in *i-Ready* assessments. In *i-Ready Personalized Instruction*, it is available in most Grades 3–5 Mathematics lessons and most Grades 3–8 Reading lessons. Additional domains and grades will be added on an ongoing basis.

[3] **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 2.0 AA requirements for contrast.

[4] **Closed captioning** exceptions for *i-Ready* assessments include introductory videos for Grades K–2 and items containing video or audio. In *i-Ready Personalized Instruction*, most lessons have closed captioning and text on screen. There is a small subset of exceptions. To learn more, please contact your account manager or educational consultant.

[5] **Mathematics tools** are available on specific items or lessons. Examples of embedded tools include calculator, protractor, and number lines.

[6] **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.

[7] 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™

[8] In *i-Ready Assessment*, **screen readers** can be used to respond to most items. Exceptions include some items with visual stimuli, such as complicated graphs and tables, items that contain images in *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Mathematics in Spanish, and *i-Ready* Growth Monitoring for Mathematics in Spanish. In *i-Ready Standards Mastery*, exceptions include items or tables with images or graphics, graphing data, graphing tools, shading, drag-and-drop, and short-response mathematics formula question types.

> ## *i-Ready* and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (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

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.[9]

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 will include:

- **Adding supports** to *i-Ready Assessment* to further enhance usability. For example, we are planning to expand keyboard access and screen-reader support to additional *i-Ready Diagnostic* item types.

- For WCAG criteria that currently have documented exceptions, we will be **reducing and/or removing documented exceptions**. For example, we will be adding closed captioning to Diagnostic items that include video content.

- We are actively looking into **options for supporting read-aloud accommodations** in *i-Ready Diagnostic* for students with documented needs where universal audio support is not already available.

- **Exploring compatibility** with third-party plugins and assistive technologies (e.g., text-to-speech, refreshable Braille displays, and switch devices).

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

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. Thus far, our accessibility efforts have been focused in enhancing our extensive collection of existing lessons. As we move forward, we are excited to design new activities with keyboard navigation, closed captioning, and visual design from the get-go. We are in the process of defining our strategy for supporting users who are blind or have low vision.

Universal Design for Learning

The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) defines 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 UDL's key principles of providing students with appropriate options for engagement, representation, action, and expression.[10]

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 (e.g., 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 2.0 criteria for minimum contrast for the majority of lessons.
- **Keyboard access** will expand to additional grades and domains on an ongoing basis throughout 2021–2023.
- **Closed captioning exceptions** in the older Mathematics and Reading lessons in students' personalized paths, including all Grade 8 Mathematics lessons, will be replaced or removed by 2022.

In everything we do at Curriculum Associates, our award-winning educator support 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 account manager, and they will be happy to forward your ideas to our product team.

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

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