Why Buy Accessible?

Far too frequently those who are charged with purchasing instructional materials and content delivery systems for schools mistakenly assume that a digital purchase is an accessible purchase. Of course, digital does not automatically equate with accessible materials. Digital materials need to be created to be accessible from the start. Further, not only does the content need to be accessible, but also the delivery system.

Although digital content has the potential to positively impact all students’ learning, it also has the potential to deny students with disabilities full participation in the education process. Despite advances in technology, many instructional materials are inaccessible and this has significant implications for purchasing in education. Every school and district should ensure that both the content and the delivery systems they are purchasing are accessible from the start.

Benefits of purchasing digital materials that are accessible from the start

- **Supports inclusion**: Purchasing accessible materials helps provide students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum using the same instructional materials, provided at the same time, to all students.
- **Benefits all students’ learning**: Many of the supportive features and scaffolds available in accessible materials can be of benefit to a wide range of students.
- **Benefits teachers**: It is easier to plan instruction when all students use the same accessible and flexible materials rather than when individual students use different materials.
- **Reduces complexity**: When accessible materials are purchased, complex questions around copyright, timely delivery, and student eligibility are reduced.
- **Reduces costly accommodations**: Schools don’t have to provide different sets of materials or provide accommodations for inaccessible materials, which can consume valuable fiscal, human, and infrastructure resources.

Additional resources:

DOJ/OCR Guidance

References:
The Promise of Accessible Technology: Challenges and Opportunities, HELP Committee Testimony by Eve Hill, Senior Counselor to the Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C., February 7, 2012.

Full Committee Hearing Video (with captions)

National Center on Accessible Educational Materials