



Inclusive Media for Education

This e-course is produced The Multimedia Unit of the Learning Resources Section *in collaboration with the Mabel Walker Professional Development Institute of the Department of Education, MOETVT.*

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Introduction to Inclusive Media for Education

Welcome to Introduction to Inclusive Media for Education. This self-paced course is the first in a series of videos created by the Learning Resources Section of the Department of Education, which aims to improve the delivery of educational material to our students across the archipelago. My name is Miss Johnson, Education Officer for Multimedia at the Learning Resources Section.

During this mini course, we will introduce you to the most basic ways to make the content you create for the students you teach and reach more accessible. The course will include video lectures, questions that require responses, and more. At the end, you will receive a confirmation that you've completed the course.

If you are interested in any of our other courses like audio production, video production, Canva for layout and design, visit our website at lrsbahamas.com to register. Now, let's begin.

Today, we're going to discuss a few tips that will expand the reach of your educational content, making your digital flyers and slides, videos, and sound recordings more inclusive and accessible for our students of

all ages and abilities. Why does this matter? Well, think about the diverse students we teach. Some might have hearing or vision impairments, learning disabilities, or other challenges that make traditional content difficult to engage with. According to the PRCA accessible communications guidelines of spring 2022, over 400 million people in the world have severe hearing loss, nearly 300 million people are visually impaired, and nearly 200 million people have a cognitive disability. Considering that our aim is to have indigenous learning content available for and accessible to students across the archipelago and ultimately the world, these statistics paint a clear picture for the need to ensure that no student is left behind.

This overview on how to create inclusive content is in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and speaks to Goal 4, which is, "to ensure inclusive and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Our aim today is to explore how we can create media that removes those barriers and makes learning accessible for everyone.

What is Inclusive Media?

Inclusive media content is any type of digital media that ensures accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This means going beyond just presenting information, we need to consider how students experience it. For example, if a student has a visual impairment, a text heavy resource might not be helpful. But if that same content is available in an audio format or screen reader compatible version, suddenly it becomes accessible. Inclusive content ensures equal access to learning. Every student deserves to engage with lessons in a way that works for them. It also fosters diversity, equity, and participation. When students feel included, they're more likely to be engaged, confident, and independent in their learning journey. And let's not forget, creating a learning environment where every student, regardless of their age or abilities, can thrive, is key to lifelong learning in an ever-evolving society.

There are several formats designed to ensure accessibility:

- **Braille and large print** help visually impaired students access text.
- **Audio formats**, including spoken word and descriptive audio, provide an alternative to written content.

- **Easy Read** simplifies text using clear language and images for students with cognitive disabilities.
- **Sign language interpretation** ensures that deaf students can fully engage with video and live content.
- **Captions and subtitles** benefit not just those with hearing impairments, but also English language learners.
- **Screen reader compatible documents** allow visually impaired users to access text through assistive technology.
- **High contrast text** improves readability for those with low vision.
- **Tactile graphics** and **accessible ebooks** ensure that visual and digital learning materials can be used by all.

We won't be addressing each and every one of these forms of media today. Some require more explanation that I am not qualified to explain. However, we do have additional videos in development that will address these in the future.

Our scope for this series includes four major categories that we anticipate will be most immediately addressed based on the resources that are most likely available to educators. They include font choices and formats, graphic design, video capture, and audio design.

Font Choice

A font is a type of text lettering. In my day, we only had one and the one that came from the typewriter and it only came in one size. With the advent of the computer, Times New Roman became the standard type face and 12-point font was the standard size used. Now, there are almost a million type faces and a number of sizes that can be used, but that doesn't mean that they should all be used.

Let's talk about font choices and why they matter for accessibility. I'll begin by explaining the types of fonts that exist. First, we have three main font types to consider.

1. **Sans serif** fonts like Arial or Verdana are clean and easy to read, making them ideal for body text.
2. **Serif** fonts like Times New Roman or Cambria have small decorative strokes at the ends of letters which can be harder to read on screens.
3. **Script** fonts like brush script are decorative and should only be used sparingly as they can be difficult to read in large paragraphs or sections.

4. **Decorative** fonts like Varsity are special and made up of unique shapes and characters.

Here's our suggestions on using decorative fonts. Use script and decorative fonts for large titles and headers. Serif fonts are best suited for headers and subheaders. Sans serif fonts are perfect for body text but can be used for anything as it is the most versatile.

Most fonts can be enhanced to be bold or slanted into italics. However, we often see the use of bold lettering for emphasis. Here's a best practice. All caps or all capitals should only be used for emphasis because blocks of capitalized text can be harder to process. Italics are traditionally used to denote the titles of books or articles or to show emphatic expression in written documents, scripts or novels.

Here's another best practice. Avoid italics for large paragraphs as they can distort letter shapes and make reading difficult, especially for individuals with dyslexia or visual impairments. Now that I've explained the what and a bit of the why, I'd like to take a moment to demonstrate some common mistakes made in design using fonts, then show how to improve them to make them more inclusive.

This is an example of a paragraph that is difficult to read because of the font size choice, the font style choice and the size of the font. We're

going to begin by taking a look at it and realizing that this font is a serif font and it's in italics. So, we're going to highlight the entire paragraph to begin with and we're going to change it from italics. This has made it a little bit easier to read, but this font choice, this type face, is still a bit narrow and the characters are pretty close together. We're going to choose a Sans serif font, which is a font that doesn't have any tags at the end of the letters. The font that we're choosing is Monsterrat, which is easy on the eyes to read. It always prints at a very good size and it is compatible with any device that you are using for reading.

The next thing we're going to do is we're going to try to make some sense of this paragraph. There seems to be what is supposed to be a title or header and a subtitle or byline. So, we're going to separate those. And then we're going to add the additional line just to give this some space between the header, the subheader, and the other paragraphs.

We're also going to, for the sake of this demonstration, separate this into two paragraphs and a concluding line. The next thing that we're going to do is, we're going to adjust the size of this font type or font style. It's currently at 32, but it doesn't need to be at 32. We took it down to 16, but 16 is just a bit too small. And now we have it at 18. Now, we need to pull these margins in because there's no white space, but also if this is

something that we're sending to print, there would be no bleed space, or an area for the eyes to rest.

Additionally, we're going to change this header. I would like to use a script font or a handwriting font simply because it would be fun. And notice even though this is a handwriting or script font, it is easily recognizable. And as we increase the size of the font, it's clear that this is a header. The next thing that we're going to do is we're going to increase the size of the subheader and change the font.

Just for the sake of the demonstration, I'm going to switch it to Times New Roman. And then we're going to make some grammatical adjustments to the subheading because capitalization matters. We are now going to increase the size of this font obviously because we want it to stand out from the paragraph.

Now that our heading and our subheading are complete or adjusted, let's do some realignment with this body text. So, what we prefer is that the content is left aligned except for headers or subheadings simply because it's easier to read. Now, let's increase the line spacing. Anywhere between 1.5 and 2.0 spaces for body text is the ideal space. Try to avoid having writing that is too cramped by using one line spacing or too large using 3.0 and larger line spacing which makes it difficult to read. And here's the final product. Let's continue to the next module.

Layout Tips

Now, let's talk about layout. We want flyers made for education to be attractive, informative, and legible. But sometimes, in our excitement to have something filled with information that is colorful, and engaging, we end up sacrificing accessibility. This is white space, otherwise known as negative space. It's the empty space left deliberately that creates balance and gives the eyes and mind a place to rest. White space should be used effectively.

Common mistakes include cramming too much information into one space. This makes reading the flyer overwhelming. When information is cramped, large amounts of text accompanying bright and busy graphics can be overwhelming for persons with cognitive disabilities.

Consider the purpose of the media. If the media is a poster or flyer intended for print, messages should be short and intentional with supporting graphics placed strategically to support the content. Then, tiny text. If it's important, it needs to stand out. Tiny text makes it difficult for persons with visual impairments to read the content.

Needless to say, if the purpose of the media is for important information to be communicated, using an appropriately sized text style

and font size is essential. Another problem we see is too many decorative elements. Enhance visual interest, but don't inhibit reading. It's important to ensure that decorative elements contrast text colors so that they are easy to read. A rule of thumb is to decorate, but don't overdo it.

Colors may be pretty, but when there isn't enough contrast, persons with visual impairments may not be able to see it clearly, defeating the entire purpose of the media. The next problem, overlapping text and designs. The question is, what's more important? What is meant to be read or the decoration? When text and decorative elements overlap or are not properly structured, the reader may skip important sections or read them out of order. Hence, critical information is missed unintentionally.

Let's take a look at these two flyers. Throughout this module, I've demonstrated common issues in flyer number one. The italicized writing, paragraphing, and choice of font, and font size are not only poor, but they also overlap the graphics. Can you see why this flyer is not well done? Flyer 2 emphasizes the text by shortening it and uses a sans serif font in a large enough size to be seen. It also ensures that no elements overlap and prioritizes the flamingo as the graphic over the rest of the decorative elements. Again, this is not the only way to make a flyer or poster accessible. It's simply used to show the principles of good layout in action. Now, let's move to the new module.

Contrast and Color Tips

This module is about color and contrast. Color choices play a large role in the development of accessible content. Let's take a look at this red apple. For persons without visual impairments, like one of the types of color blindness, one may see a red apple. But let's consider what it would look like to someone with color blindness. Those apples seen through their eyes are not red. Why is this important? If you were to write a question that requires the student to identify the red apple to get the answer correct, that student by way of the disability will not likely return a correct response.

Let's consider another case. Perhaps a word or phrase is highlighted in red for emphasis. To the colorblind student, this may be seen as gray or yellow. A better way to emphasize text is to use italics for specific words or phrases, bold print or underscoring. Other options include highlighting with a lighter contrasting color, adding an asterisk, using the abbreviation NB, which means note carefully, or establishing a symbol that for your class or content means pay attention.

Now, let's talk about high contrast writing because color choices matter when designing slides, posters, or digital content. For individuals

with color blindness or visual impairments like a stigmatism, poor contrast can make text nearly impossible to read.

When referring to color, contrast places two different colors together to create a clear distinction. This distinction is key to visual interest and legibility. However, some trends intended to make a graphic or digital asset pretty or pleasing sacrifices function in preference of beauty. The aim should be maintaining both. Poor contrast can strain the eyes, especially for those with a stigmatism. It's very difficult to see important text or diagrams when the words or images are not separated visually.

So, how do we make adjustments? Use dark text on a light background or light colored text on a dark background. If the background or design elements are dark, the text should be light and vice versa.

That's not the only consideration. Color combinations are key. Let's take a look at some of the ones that work and those that do not work. and note carefully. Even monochromatic layouts, those that use the same color in different hues, shades, and tint, can be balanced in contrast.

When choosing photos, try to choose those that show the subject is well lit and standing out from the background. Let's take a look at these photos. The kitten on the left is clearly visible, well lit, and distinguishable

from the background. In the photo on the right, the kitten is harder to see and less distinguishable from the background. Keep in mind, especially for digital content, people will be viewing the resources you create on various devices.

Finally, if you would like to check to see whether your design is well contrasted, render or print a version in grayscale. If the image can be clearly read while in grayscale, it is high contrast. A pixel or pixel element is the smallest unit of programmable color on a computer display or image. It is a square of color. Each square has its own color and when pulled together they create an image. The more pixels an image has, the clearer the image. So this is what we call resolution. Low resolution images or videos have less pixels and high resolution videos are the opposite.

Look at this example. We often see this in video when a person's identity is being obscured or hidden. Let's look at another example. The strawberry on the left is an example of a grainy or pixelated image. Simply explained, there are not enough pixels or squares of color to make it look smooth. This image is low resolution. The strawberry on the right is an example of a high resolution or unpixelated image. Why is this important? Poor resolution is another factor that affects visibility or legibility.

Pixelated images can make it difficult for persons with visual impairments to see an image clearly.

Here are a few tips that you may find helpful. When choosing content elements like pictures or videos, try not to screenshot. It's always best to ask permission to use the content or image where possible or to download a highresolution image. Just remember that if you're using anything you download from the internet and social media in your classes to properly attribute the capture and follow the rules of copyright.

If you'd like to learn more about copyright, go to lrsbahamas.com to access our crash course on Bahamian Copyright for Educators. If you are creating content from scratch, try to capture clear images to use in your content.

Often times, pixelation is the result of poor lighting or poor resolution of the device that you're using. We'll discuss this in the next module.

Video Tips

When creating videos for educational content, visual quality plays a huge role in accessibility. Let's start with lighting. Why is this important? Good lighting ensures clear visibility of instructional, decorative, and storytelling elements. Poor lighting can create shadows or glare, making it difficult for viewers to focus on details. High contrast between the speaker and the background helps maintain clarity, especially for students with visual impairments.

Now, let's talk about framing. How much of a person should be in the frame when speaking? For individuals who read lips, the speaker's face, mouth, and upper body should be clearly visible. Avoid extreme close-ups or framing that cuts off the chin or mouth. Positioning the camera at eye level ensures a natural and engaging look.

Now, what about camera angles and background choices? Avoid backlighting like standing in front of a bright window as it makes the speaker appear in shadow. Choose a neutral, uncluttered background to keep the focus on the speaker. Minimize distractions. A messy or overly busy background can take attention away from the message.

Poor lighting, bad framing, and distracting backgrounds can create barriers to learning, making it harder for students to engage with the content. But by making a few simple adjustments, we can ensure that our videos are clear, inclusive, and effective for all learners.

Audio Tips

Most often creators have the policy that one should prioritize audio over video. The reason is that more persons listen to content as opposed to watch content. However, in the case of educational content, there should be a distinct balance between the two, especially when creating inclusive content. Clear audio is the key to great comprehension but too often, poor recording choices create barriers for listeners.

Let's start with clarity. Muffled, distant, or echoing audio makes it difficult to understand speech, especially for students who rely on audio cues or assisted listening devices. Here are some ways you can combat that. Use a good microphone and ensure the speaker is close enough to be heard clearly. Avoid recording in large, empty rooms that cause echoes. If recording at home, consider recording in a room that has lots of carpeting, drapes, and soft surfaces that absorb sound and mitigate echoes.

Next, let's talk about background noise and unnecessary sounds. I have the air conditioning on in the background of this video, but it's on quiet because I'm wearing a jacket and it's hot. But sometimes recording in a natural environment is important for the content. That does not mean

one should not be in control of how that audio sounds as far as possible. Distracting sounds like loud air conditioning, traffic, or rustling papers can reduce comprehension. If you're outdoors, wind noise can drown out speech, so be mindful of the environment.

Overly sharp or loud sounds can be overwhelming for neurodivergent learners or those with sensory sensitivities. It's always best to use a microphone to record content, especially when one is in an environment that they do not control. Even the inexpensive microphones are better than no microphone at all. The caveat; if one is recording the environment to provide ambient sound that is the only time that background noise should be prioritized. However, a voice over should be added in post production to control the volumes.

And finally, music selection matters. Music should enhance, not compete with the speaker's voice. Avoid instrumentals with sharp staccatoto beats or overly complex rhythms as they can make it harder to focus. Keep volume balanced. Background music should never overpower speech. If what is being said is most important, then lower the background music. If the music or ambient sound is more important, it should be emphasized. If they are equally important, then they should be balanced.

By ensuring clear audio, reducing distractions, and selecting appropriate sound elements, we make learning content engaging, accessible, and easy to follow for all students. If you want to know more about audio production, please view our offerings on lrsbahamas.com.

Conclusion

Creating educational content isn't just about making it look and sound good. It's about making it accessible to everyone. We've covered the importance of fonts and text styles for legibility, the value of clear visuals from high contrast text to well structured layouts, creating and choosing clear photos and videos, and how proper lighting and framing improve video clarity, especially for those who read lips, and the role of high quality audio free from distractions to ensure that every student can engage effectively.

By following these simple but impactful guidelines, you're not just making better content, you're making education more inclusive for all learners. Want more tips on creative and inclusive education? Follow the LRS YouTube channel and click the link in the description to explore our website for more resources.

I'm Education Officer Miss Johnson from the Multimedia Unit of the Learning Resources Section. Thank you for your time.

Resources:

[PRCA Accessible Communications Guidelines, Spring 2022](#), PR Council

[United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030](#)

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