

# **Developing an Institutional Approach to Section 508 Accessibility for Online Courses**

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## What is Section 508?

- Part of larger piece of legislation that ensures equitable **ACCESS** to information and technologies for persons with disabilities
- 508 Amendment defines minimum design criteria that content must meet in order to be considered reasonably **ACCESSIBLE**
  - **SS 1194.22 for Web-based content**
  - **SS 1194.24 for audio-video content**



# Why is Accessible Design Important?

- Breaks down barriers for people with disabilities who cannot access web content without the use of adaptive / assistive technologies
  - Screen readers (text-to-speech)
  - Screen magnification
  - Closed captions
  - Keyboard-only navigation

# Why is Accessible Design Important?

- **Reduces barriers for sensory or processing challenged users who have difficulty...**
  - **Differentiating color**
  - **Reading tiny print**
  - **Distinguishing fine details**
  - **Controlling mouse with precision**
  - **Hearing the audio clearly**
  - **Processing the text accurately**


# Why is Accessible Design Important?

- **Reality:** Accessibility law is largely driven by lawsuits against entities that provide necessary information and services which are inaccessible to people with disabilities
  - 508 compliance helps avoid chance of costly lawsuits
  - The cost/benefit of accessible design far outweighs the cost /risk of lawsuits

# Ramifications for Virtual Schools

- **Virtual education is increasingly attracting special needs students**
  - **Evidence from charter schools indicates parents of special needs children are increasingly viewing virtual schools as viable educational alternative**
  - **The remote and computer-based nature of virtual schooling is ideal for serving many special educational needs**

# Ramifications for Virtual Schools

- **As the special needs student demographic grows, so will demand for accessible course content**
  - **As trend continues, failure to meet 508 compliance guidelines will invite lawsuits**
  - **The cost/benefit of accessible design far outweighs the cost /risk of lawsuits**
  - **Accessible design is easier and less costly to provide than individual accommodation**
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# Common Misconceptions

- ***“Sec. 508 is part of ADA”***
  - **NO...** part of U.S. Rehabilitation Act of 1975
  - Amended in 1998
- ***“ALL government funded entities must comply with Sec. 508”***
  - **NO...** the law only requires federal Agencies and federally funded entities to comply
  - Degree of state and district level compliance is typically determined by state law
  - Many states require some compliance and others are increasingly moving in this direction



# Common Misconceptions

- ***“Sec. 508 compliant design requires lots of extra work”***
  - Can require some extra work, but if accessibility tools and design principles are incorporated into standard workflows, is very manageable
- ***“Sec. 508 compliant design conflicts with good web design principles”***
  - Not necessarily... it just requires a bit more thought and awareness when designing content
  - Accessible alternatives can be provided when conflicts cannot be resolved

# Common Misconceptions


- *“Sec. 508 compliance benefits such an insignificant number of people, that its really not worth the effort”*
  - **NO...** average of 8 –13% of population has disability needing some form of accessible design
  - Typically, 40 – 50% of general population also derive benefits from accessible design

## **Develop a “Sec. 508 Approach”**

- 1) Develop an approach document that defines strategies for compliant instructional web design**
  - 2) Provide designers with appropriate opportunities for training**
  - 3) Provide designers with appropriate tools and resources**
  - 4) Designate 508 “point-persons”**
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# Develop a “Sec. 508 Approach”

## 1) Develop documentation defining institutional strategies for accessible instructional web design

FLVS 508 Approach Document <span style="float: right;">(4/23/08 10/20/09)</span>			
<i>This document outlines the FLVS approach to standards that apply to Web-based internet information and applications in order to maintain compliance with Section 508 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act</i>			
Subsection 1194.22 Web-based intranet and internet information and applications and WSC Priority 1 Checkpoints.			
Paragraph	Approach	Specific Rationale	Overall Rationale
(A) A text equivalent for every non-text element shall be provided (e.g., via "alt", "longdesc", or an element content)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every image has an alt tag that clearly conveys the content of the image without repetitive information (picture of, image of, etc.).</li> <li>Complex images such as graphs and charts are accompanied by detailed text descriptions either as part of the content of the page or in a <a href="#">longdesc</a> link or <a href="#">dlink</a>.</li> <li><a href="#">Blank</a> alternative text pages are designated with a <a href="#">dlink</a> graphic: </li> <li>Decorative or repeating element graphics are assigned an empty alt tag (alt="").</li> </ul>	<p>Avoids redundancy because screen readers and text-only browsers already identify images when they are encountered.</p> <p>Provides sufficient, additional space for detailed text descriptions of complex images beyond the 256 character limit imposed by Alt tags.</p> <p>Consistent graphic images for low vision and consistent alt tags for images that can indicate alternative format information.</p> <p>Causes a screen reader to silently skip graphic elements that have no semantic content and are not to be processed.</p>	<p>When users read web pages using a screen reader, text-only browser, or a browser with images not loaded, images are problematic. Unless some additional "alternative" markup is used to describe that image, the only information that will be conveyed by and image is the word "image". However, by using image markup attributes such as "alt", "longdesc" (long description) or "dlink" (descriptive link), users of such adaptive technologies can access local that provides more detailed information about that image.</p>

**508 Approach Matrix**

Florida Virtual School 508 Accessibility Checklist			
Yes	No	N/A	Item to Check
<b>Priority 1</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Graphics have a complete and descriptive ALT tag or a long description ( <a href="#">longdesc</a> ) page as appropriate, or a blank ALT tag for repeating or non-content graphics <sup>1</sup> .
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Graphic used as an image map includes appropriate ALT tag as well as an appropriate ALT tag for each hot spot region.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Text equivalents or alternate activity are provided when appropriate (United Streaming, Flash, etc.).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Index page includes working links to all modules and a link to a text equivalent page <sup>2</sup> .
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	All information conveyed with color is also available without color <sup>14</sup> .
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pages view correctly when CSS is turned off <sup>3</sup> .
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No "flicker" elements of a frequency greater than 2 Hz or lower than 55 Hz are used.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Table headers (TH) are used for all data tables.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pages using scripting languages (such as JavaScript) are either made directly accessible or an alternate is provided (such as text).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	All plug-ins (including PowerPoint and PDF files) and the content within them are accessible to assistive technologies, or there is an alternate means of providing the content.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	When a page requires a plug-in or applet, a link to the plug-in or applet must be provided <sup>4</sup> .

**508 Design Checklist**

# Develop a “Sec. 508 Approach”


2) Provide designers with appropriate opportunities for training in accessible design

- Online training resources
- Books
- Courses



508.htm.lnk


## **Develop a “Sec. 508 Approach”**

- 3) Provide designers with appropriate tools and resources**
- Authoring tools (LIFT for DW)**
  - Text-to-speech tools (Browsealoud)**
  - Captioning tools (magpie)**
  - Accessibility tools for Flash**
  - WCAG & WAI Websites**
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## **Develop a “Sec. 508 Approach”**

- 4) Designate 508 “point-persons”**
  - Someone knowledgeable in 508 accessibility and approach, who can answer questions, provide guidance**
  - Outside accessibility checker, can be volunteers with disabilities in community who have access to assistive technology**

## **Benefits of an Institutional Approach to 508 Accessibility for Virtual Schools**

- **Minimizes risk of accessibility lawsuits**
  - **Makes courses accessible to a broader audience including special needs students**
  - **Establishes consistent design guidelines into a few clear documents**
  - **Provides developers with appropriate tools & resources**
  - **Easier to implement than after-the-fact revisions**
  - **Easier / less costly to provide than individual accommodations**
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## Useful Info & Resources

- [www.Section508.Gov](http://www.Section508.Gov)
- **State-by-State statutes matrix**
  - <http://accessibility.gtri.gatech.edu/sitid/stateLawAtGlance.php>
- **Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI)**
  - <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>
- **Skills for Access**
  - <http://www.skillsforaccess.org.uk/>
- **Adobe Flash Accessibility Page**
  - <http://www.adobe.com/accessibility/product/flash/?trackingid=BLDJZ>

# Useful Info & Resources

- **Book:**  
**“Accessible XHTML & CSS  
Web sites”**



- **ITTACT Web Accessibility Course**
  - <http://www.ittatc.org/training/webcourse/WAWCCourseIndex.php>

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