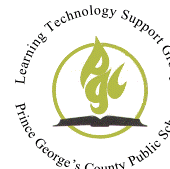




TECHNOLOGY INCLUSION FOR ALL (TIFA)

COMAR and Accessibility Considerations

Operating Systems, Software and Online Resources:



COMAR regulations have changed to ensure that all students have equivalent access to computer-based instructional technology. These revisions align with Section 508 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act, "Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Standards."

It is important to be aware of the following points when evaluating software and hardware operating systems for accessibility and usability. For additional information please see: <http://www.pgcps.org/~tifa>

Navigation

Keyboard: Students who are unable, or have difficulty, using a mouse must use the keyboard to perform program functions. There are also special devices that will perform mouse functions; some operating systems or programs may not be compatible with them.

Input Focus: Blind and other vision-impaired students often have difficulty seeing the "I" (insertion) bar, or mouse pointer; these focus points must be changeable, either through magnification or altered through contrast or color. Screen readers and magnification programs require software to contain special program features so they communicate about the focus point placement to the student.

Personal Operating System Settings must allow customization in these areas:

If a software program or web site disables or disrupts any of these features it is considered inaccessible:

font sizes	screen magnification
background color choices	"sticky keys"
contrast and other color choices	toggle keys
filter keys	text to speech options

- Windows and MAC operating systems allow for these customizations.

Graphics and Sounds

Images and graphs, graphics and other visual icons: should include text to explain their functions. The text may be invisible until the mouse moves over the image.

- Graphics should be used consistently and should not be the only way to present information, indicate program actions or prompts.

Color: should not be the only way to present information, indicate program actions, prompts or otherwise distinguish visual elements.

Flashing and blinking text, images and animation: should be easily disabled.

- Flickering can stimulate seizures in sensitive individuals so they must fall within a specific range; see the MARTEC Glossary for further clarifications.
- Information that is conveyed through animation, such as push-button's on web pages, should also be conveyed in a non-animated form.

Other Compatibility issues:

Web Pages: Should be written so they are easily readable by an assistive device.

- Should allow users to customize the way they are viewed and should not override user preferences.
- Special coding should be added to web page tables, frames, style sheets, PDF, PowerPoint and other documents to enable assistive devices to read them.
- Navigation bars should be available to provide easy access. However navigation bars located at the top of the page should be easily disabled to avoid undue repetition when read by assistive devices.
- Link phrases and image descriptions should make sense when read out of context.
- There should be a consistent style among web pages on the same site.

Search Features: Should allow different types of searches to accommodate different types of skill levels.

Electronic Forms: An assistive device must be able to correctly identify the type of information required or response required.

For concise definitions of accessibility concepts and terms see the MARTEC Accessibility Glossary:

<http://129.32.108.4/swcatalog/508glossary.asp>