

How the Originators of Universal Design for Learning Are Helping Districts Meet the Title II Deadline

CAST has spent 40+ years solving the problem schools are now legally required to address

LYNNFIELD, MA, UNITED STATES, August 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When the U.S. Department of Justice updated Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, it set a clock ticking for every public school district in the country. By April 2027, larger districts must bring all digital content — curriculum systems, grading platforms, parent communication tools, online assessments, and third-party instructional materials — into compliance with WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards. Smaller districts follow in April 2028. For most, the question is the same: where do we start?

[CAST](#) has an answer. The nonprofit education research organization has been building it since 1984.

CAST originated Universal Design for Learning, the evidence-based framework now embedded in federal education policy and practiced in schools across 47 countries. Accessibility has been central to that work from the beginning. Long before compliance was a legal requirement, CAST was treating accessibility as the foundation of effective teaching, not a feature to add later, but the condition that makes learning possible in the first place.

"CAST has been building the infrastructure for accessible learning since before most districts had a digital footprint," said Lindsay Jones, CEO of CAST. UDL makes learning work for every student. It doesn't require technology to implement, but you do need UDL to use technology effectively. Title II gives this mission a deadline."

"If you can't perceive the content, how are you going to make sense of it?" said Dr. Luis Pérez, Senior Director of Disability and Accessibility at CAST. "Accessibility is the floor. UDL builds from there."

A 30-Year Head Start

In 1996, the organization launched Bobby, the first web accessibility checker aligned with what would become the WCAG standards now required under Title II. In 2003, CAST convened and chaired the National File Format Technical Panel, a group of 40 experts including educators, publishers, technology specialists, and disability groups. Together, the panel developed the

National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) in 2005, which established how publishers must format educational materials to support students with disabilities. In 2020, NIMAS was updated to include core digital learning materials, and CAST continued to support this work. CAST supports administrators, educators and solution providers via a variety of resources including a community of practice, contract services, and the Center on Inclusive Technology and Systems, which has built a national community of educators, technology leaders, and families who collaborate to create more inclusive technology systems by sharing promising practices. Six CAST team members hold certifications from the International Association of Accessibility Professionals.

UDL has accessibility built into its core. The framework is grounded in a straightforward premise: a single format of instruction will not reach or engage every learner. Students who cannot navigate a digital environment, interact with an assessment, or access content in a format that works for them cannot demonstrate what they know. Compliance with Title II is not a workaround or an accommodation. It is the baseline from which genuine learning can begin. CAST authored the [UDL Guidelines™](#) to translate that framework into practice; the current version, published in 2024, reflects 40 years of research.

"Teachers have a lot on their plate," Pérez said. "We need systems in place that can provide educators with the capacity to implement UDL so it's integrated in their work rather than one more thing added to their plate. But it has to come from both directions. Leadership sets the vision. Teachers implement it and provide feedback on what works in the classroom. Those two have to meet in the middle and work together to make accessibility a reality for all learners."

For experienced districts or those just beginning that process, CAST offers guidance, tools, and resources cast.org.

About CAST

CAST is a nonprofit education research and development organization that works to expand learning opportunities for all individuals through Universal Design for Learning. Founded in 1984, CAST originated the UDL framework and continues to lead its research, development, and application globally. Learn more at cast.org.

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