



NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Catherine Truitt, *Superintendent of Public Instruction*

www.dpi.nc.gov

TO Exceptional Children Administrators

FROM Dr. Carol Ann M. Hudgens, Senior Director, Office of Exceptional Children
Dreama McCoy, Section Chief, Supporting Teaching and Related Services

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Learning Ally Memberships – Guidance for Accessing the NCDPI Contract

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) has created a source of funding for a limited number of Learning Ally memberships to support students with print disabilities with access to audiobooks that cannot be secured through other free, low-cost alternatives.

In order to be included in the Learning Ally memberships funded by the NCDPI, the following criteria must be met:

- The student has a documented print disability, including visual impairments, learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, or physical disabilities that impede the ability to manipulate a book or access standard print in some way;
- Audiobooks are required as a documented accommodation through an individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan in order to access the general education curriculum;
- Free, low-cost alternatives to audiobooks (i.e., digital text-to-speech books, screen reader technology, etc.) are not available or appropriate for the student; and
- A local public school unit (PSU) representative has certified that the above conditions are met. *It is highly recommended that certifications are based upon the “Essential Questions to Assist with Appropriate Enrollment” resource included with this memo.*

While the NCDPI Learning Ally memberships are limited and prioritized to support PSUs in fulfilling the obligation to ensure a free, appropriate, public education is made available to students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, PSUs may secure its own Learning Ally memberships outside of the NCDPI state contract. Individual PSUs will need to contact Learning Ally in order to secure an independent contract.

Given the limited nature of the NCDPI Learning Ally state contract, memberships must be carefully monitored. Should challenges occur with the use of memberships, the NCDPI reserves the right to discontinue its Learning Ally partnership with a PSU.

Two technical assistance resources are included with this memo:

- Sources for Free Audiobooks
- NCDPI Learning Ally Memberships – Essential Questions to Assist with Appropriate Enrollment

For information on enrollment in Learning Ally, see the [Learning Ally/North Carolina funded membership flyer](#).

OFFICE OF EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

Sources for Free Audiobooks

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| Bookshare | Free to eligible students with a print disability | Over one million titles and books are available in eBooks, audio, braille, large font, and more. Information specific to North Carolina on Bookshare is available to PSUs. |
| NC Kids Digital Library | Free with library card | eBooks for reading device or reading app. |
| Libby The Library Reading app | Free with library card | eBooks, Audiobooks, and more available to read, listen, and access offline across devices. Features include adjustable text size, background color, playback speed, bookmarks, and highlights. |
| OverDrive | Free with a library card | Books available online, through download, or borrowed through multiple devices. Works in collaboration with public or school libraries. Works in collaboration with other library apps |
| LibriVox | Free | Free public domain of audiobooks with over 17,000 titles read by volunteers. Works on a computer or through a downloadable app. |
| Tar Heel Reader | Free | Collection of free, easy-to-read, accessible books. Each book can be speech enabled and accessed using multiple interfaces, including touch screens, IntelliKeys with custom overlays, and 1 to 3 switches |

NCDPI Learning Ally Memberships

Essential Questions to Assist with Appropriate Enrollment

