

Accessibility in Education

*Tips and strategies on creating inclusive
learning environments for all students*

Creating an Inclusive Classroom

For many teachers and school administrators across North America, the role of educator has looked a little different over the past year as they worked to support the needs of students in remote, hybrid, and in-person classrooms (or, in some instances, a little bit of each).

Virtual classrooms was the buzzword of the '20-'21 school year as students of all ages adapted to new learning environments, whether it be in socially distanced classrooms or via streaming video platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, Adobe Connect, Vimeo, or ON24.

In today's online environment, it's increasingly important to provide students with as many resources as possible.

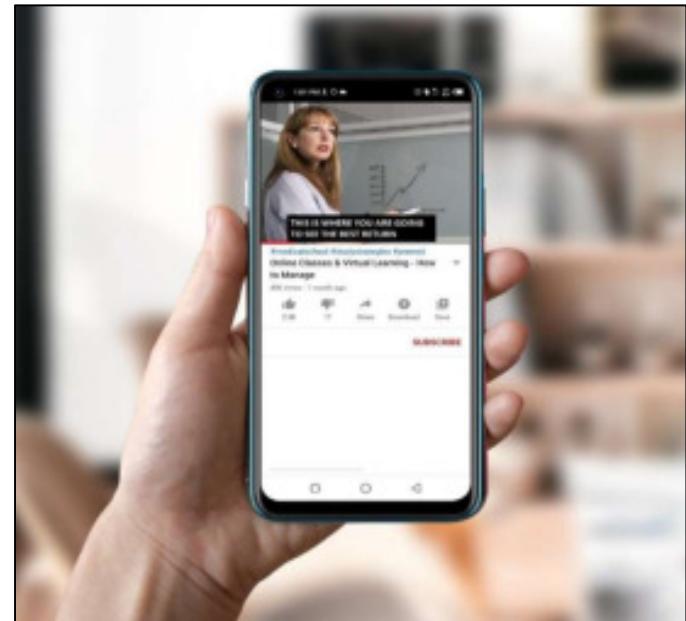
Thankfully, in many schools, technology has found a home in the classroom over the last decade. Gone are transparencies and overhead projectors and in their place are student laptops and interactive smart boards.

Regardless of how or where teachers are teaching, engaging with students and keeping their attention always is a challenge.

VITAC Can Help

For more than three decades, VITAC has worked with a wide variety of education clients to provide federally mandated and legally required accessibility services for those in the deaf and hard-of-hearing and blind and low-vision communities.

We are a full-service provider of realtime and offline captions for live and prerecorded events and content. We also provide audio description services and a host of multi-language offering, such as captions and subtitles created by expert translators in more than 50 languages, including, but not limited to, English, Spanish, French, Italian, German, Portuguese, Chinese, Arabic, Japanese, and Russian, Polish, and Hebrew.



National universities, community colleges, local school districts, online lecture providers, and educational video producers rely on our wide range of services to make their content more accessible and satisfy legal requirements.

Our solutions include:

- **Live captioning** for classroom instruction and streaming and broadcast video, including non-broadcast sporting events and graduation ceremonies.
- **Offline captioning** for online lecture platforms and prerecorded classroom video content for students of all ages.
- **English and Spanish subtitles** for educational and training programs funded by the federal government.
- **Audio description** services so that students who are blind or with low-vision can participate in the same manner as their sighted peers.

You can rely on our knowledge, and trust that our experience and accessibility solutions will move you to the head of the class.

Accessibility Benefits All Students

Classrooms across North America have been anything but routine over the past year. Though the environments in which students learn may have changed, the accessibility of those learning spaces should not.

Accessibility aids such as closed captions and audio description help make classrooms and course materials more inclusive to all students. Below are just a few ways schools and educators can make for more accessible classrooms.

Closed Captions

Captions can be a valuable tool for teachers in addressing the diverse learning needs of all students and are helpful for instructors looking to differentiate their lessons.

There is no doubt that captions are crucial for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, but they have been proven to benefit others as well. Studies have shown that adding captions to digital content can help both visual and auditory learners, and improve comprehension, engagement, retention, and the overall learning experience for all students and not just those requiring accessible content.

With VITAC, it's simple to include captions in the physical and virtual classroom. We provide a wide variety of customer-specific processes and solutions – all just a quick phone call or mouse click away.

Teachers can integrate **realtime captions** into their live content with just three simple steps:

1. Provide us with an audio source. Our captioners can either dial in to your audio, or you can provide us with a link to your remote class.

2. Let us know how you'd like the captions to be displayed. Captions can be integrated into some players (like Zoom and Webex), embedded in others (like On24), or viewed in a separate URL via our responsive player.

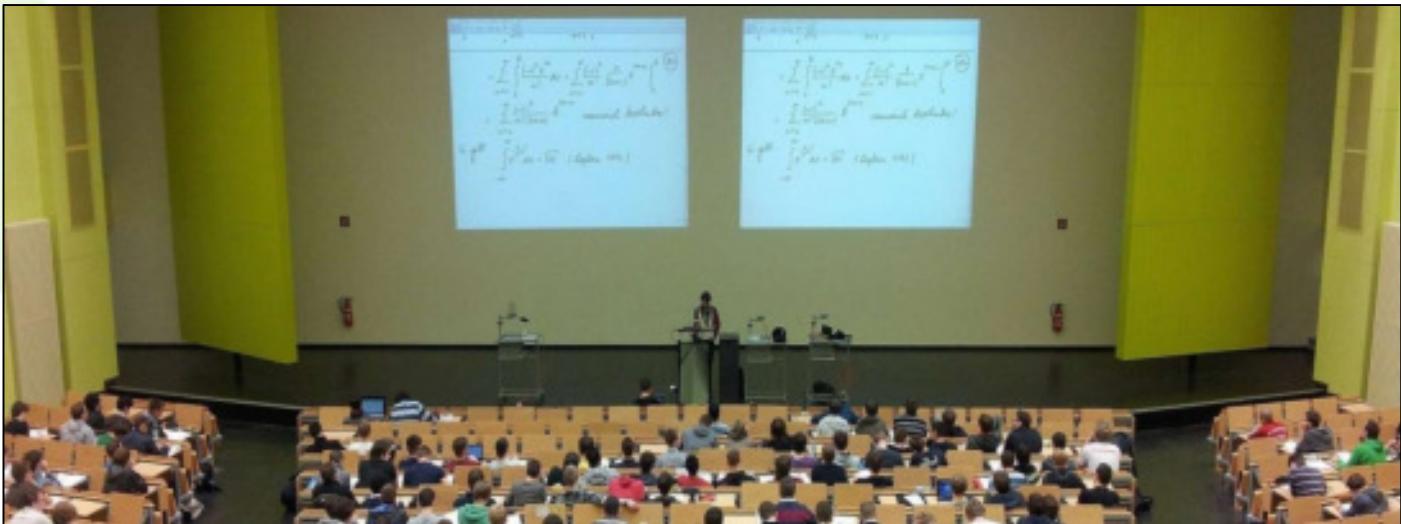
3. Share prep materials with us. Preparation materials help our captioners ensure that their dictionaries include the lessons and subject matter that will be discussed. This includes proper names, places, and unique terms that may pop up in class.

CART Captioning

Another popular accessibility solution is CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) captioning. **CART captioning** is the real-time display of verbatim speech-to-text for anyone who needs communications access.

CART and captions often are used synonymously in the classroom environment,

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Captions, Audio Description Enhance Learning

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with CART being described as a one-to-one service, and captions a one-to-many service.

CART captioning can be offered either remotely or in-person. VITAC offers remote CART services to hundreds of universities across the country.

Remote CART captioning involves a captioner joining the class along with the student, listening via IP audio (such as Zoom) and quickly sending captions to a dedicated URL. The captions then can be viewed by the student on an Internet-connected device like a tablet, laptop, or smartphone. Our most popular method of delivering captions is through our [Internet Captioning Services \(ICS\)](#), a streaming service that allows users to view captions on a separate window or screen.

Offline Captions

We also work with schools and educators to create prerecorded, **offline captions** for classroom lectures and informational programs. Universities also have used captioned video to improve their recruitment goals by adding captions to campus tour and student orientation videos, sample lecture clips, and other promotional materials, ensuring that all potential students feel welcomed.

Subtitles

Like captions, subtitles allow you to reach a greater number of students. Whereas captions generally

refer to a textual representation of all on-screen audio, including sound effects, music, song lyrics, or any other sound heard on the audio track, subtitles are a translation of a video's audio for viewers who might not understand the language.

Subtitles have been shown to boost student engagement and comprehension (a real perk for classroom and training videos) and enable students to more easily follow along with the dialogue, especially if it contains accented speech, jargon, technical terms.

Audio Description

Much in the same way that captions provide a visual way for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals to experience sound, audio description provides an audio means for people who are blind or with low vision to experience video.

Our audio description professionals insert audio-narrated descriptions of a video's key visual elements, such as onscreen actions, characters, costumes, and text appearing in graphics in the video, into natural pauses between the program's dialogue.

And also like captions, adding audio description to video course materials can provide an additional resources to students, help them focus on the material, increase in-class engagement, and offer another way for teachers to connect.

Study: Captions Engage all Students, Boost Grades

Captions help students focus, clarifying a video's muffled or distorted audio, dialogue – particularly accented speech – and technical terms and jargon. They also help students better retain information.

A study conducted by San Francisco State University provided video learning materials with captions to one group of students and the same video materials without captions to another. The students given the captioned materials were found to be more engaged and responsive to questions and demonstrated an improvement of one full grade point versus those students who did not view the captioned content. Another survey showed a nearly 10% increase in recall accuracy in students viewing captioned content versus those learning without captions.

The Myriad Benefits of Captioning

In addition to providing accessible classrooms to students who need it, captions and audio description have a few other important benefits.

Transcripts as Study Guides

Captions provide the added benefit of transcripts. Teachers can share a transcript of the captioned video, enabling students to read along in class, take notes, and have a printed study guide handy to review later or share with friends who missed the class.

On-the-Go Studies

Captions enable students to take their online video homework anywhere. Walk into a busy coffee shop and café and you're likely to find students working on their laptops. These typically aren't the most quiet of environments, but adding captions to online course materials mean that students can study and learn (or, let's be honest, watch the latest viral cat video) in even the noisiest of locations.

English Language Learners

Captions also are beneficial to English Language Learners (ELL), or students who are learning the English language in addition to their native

language or any other languages they may speak. Captions give ELL students the opportunity to review confusing materials or reference difficult or complex terms that they may have had trouble translating without a written reference.

It's the Law

The Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require most educational videos to be captioned or otherwise accessible to ensure effective communication.

Section 504 states that no individuals with a disability should be excluded from or denied the benefits of any program, institution, or activity that receives Federal financial assistance, like many colleges and universities do.

The ADA and Section 504 apply to a broad range of school programs, services, and activities, including lessons, board meetings, extracurricular programs, teacher conferences, recreational activities, social and cultural activities, adult education, and summer school.

This equal access may include interpreters, assistive listening devices, and captioning.

We take your security and confidentiality needs seriously

VITAC applies a high degree of importance to our management and protection of client information and data. We design our networks, workflows, and applications to meet high security standards, and continuously work to improve our systems and practices to provide the most secure environment.



We work closely with clients – from the nation's largest universities to neighborhood school districts – to address individual security needs and concerns, and take any steps necessary to deliver enhanced security to those who want additional protection.

We go the extra mile to make sure that you are covered and maintain an active security awareness training program for all of our employees.

Though our current measures are second to none in our industry, we always are looking to bolster our security, and remain committed to updates and improvements to protect client data.

Money Matters: Budgeting for Accessibility

Disability-led non-profit organization Mobility International USA offers a few suggestions for planners looking to add accessible and inclusive solutions into their budgets.

- Plan for the cost of disability-related accommodations in all funding requests and organizational budgets.
- Add a “disability-related accommodations” line-item to program and administrative budgets, and incorporate costs into the total request.
- Estimate 3-5% of the total program costs for mainstream programs (i.e. a program that is geared to the general population, which includes disabled and non-disabled people).
- Estimate 2-3% of the total administrative costs for organizational investments (e.g. disability accommodations for staff and volunteers or making websites accessible).

And just like with all budgetary items, there will be schools that have available funds for accessibility needs, and schools that need to find other alternatives to fund inclusion. This might include devoting a specific portion of tuition fees each year specifically for accessibility; finding line items in existing budgets that can be used for captioning and audio description, such as the technology, education supplies, or special services budgets; initiating a private funding campaign with local organizations and businesses; or applying for grants to offset costs.

Schools, colleges, and universities can apply to several federally funded grants through the U.S. Department of Education to help pay for accessibility costs. The department's Educational Technology, Media, and Materials program is a primary source of support for accessible technology and media-related activities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The program supports two broad categories of activities – accessible technology and educational media and materials.

Reach Further with VITAC

Creating an inclusive classroom experience can be complicated, but we can help.



VITAC's industry exclusive “Reach Further Program™” is dedicated to helping you connect with a larger learner base.

Our program features include:

- **Expertise** from people who set the standards
- **Accuracy** on all your captioning needs
- **Compliance** with ADA, Section 508, and Section 504 regulations
- **Responsiveness** to be there when needed, with a real person ready to help
- **Depth of Services** with live, prerecorded, multi-language, audio description, transcription, and more.

Other grants, like the California Community Colleges' Distance Education Captioning and Transcription (DECT) grant, help California Community Colleges obtain funding for live and prerecorded captioning and transcription for all students in distance education courses.

VITAC is recognized under the DECT grant as an approved vendor for live captioning, which includes realtime captioning of classes, lectures, and podcasts that are delivered live via webcast, broadcast, Internet TV, and other means.

Click [here](#) for more information or details on how to apply for California Community Colleges' Distance Education Captioning and Transcription grant.

Ready to Make Your Classrooms More Accessible and Inclusive?

For 35 years, VITAC has been the leader in media and communications accessibility, featuring the most professional, highly skilled employees, 24/7 client support, and a secure, technically sophisticated infrastructure.

When you choose VITAC's services, you can be assured that you will receive the highest quality product with unmatched customer service. Whether you need audio description, live or prerecorded captioning, translation, subtitling, or all of the above, you can count on us for all your accessibility solutions.

[Talk To Us](#)



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