



Inclusive Learning Series

Research Insights from the Ally Community



An Impact on Inclusive Education Across the Sunshine State

Colleges and universities throughout the state of Florida serve a diverse population of students with a variety of learning needs and abilities. More accessible digital course content delivered in a variety of file formats helps ensure students have access to learning materials that work better with assistive technologies, mobile devices, and study tools. Blackboard Ally integrates into four major Learning Management Systems (LMS) to help institutions address accessibility barriers with course content, increase instructor awareness about accessible content authoring, and improve how students engage with their course materials.

Institutional Report

View overall accessibility trends in the LMS over time. Focus at the issue level or course level for strategic planning and benchmarking. Analyze detailed usage data of Ally tools

Alternative Formats

Machine learning algorithms automatically generate eight unique file formats from the instructor original. Improve accessibility and usability of course files for all students. Increase learner flexibility and options for engagement

Instructor Feedback

Accessibility indicators next to course files raise awareness and prompt engagement. Guidance helps faculty address issues and develop authoring skills. Course Accessibility Report provides actionable insights to faculty.

Ally Adoption in Florida



16 Colleges and Universities currently using Ally in the LMS



268,686 Students benefiting from Ally (based on full-time enrollment)



2,550,532 Files checked for accessibility in Fall 2019 courses



1,732,153 HTML items checked for accessibility in Fall 2019 courses



184,437 Alternative Formats downloaded through Ally in one year



32,482 Files improved through the Instructor Feedback in one year



Institutional Report Data

The “Overall Files Score” in the table represents the average accessibility scores of files (PDFs, Word, PowerPoint, Images) in Fall 2019 LMS courses. For the five accessibility issues listed, the table includes the average number of files affected by the issue, and the percentage of files with the issue out of the total number of files that could be affected by the issue in Fall 2019 courses.

Accessibility numbers in Florida reflect national averages. Given the volume of files with critical issues, require a scalable, data-informed approach to address. The Institution Report allows administrators and campus leaders to proactively identify problem areas, allocate resources strategically, collaborate across various campus units such as the library, and benchmark progress on key issues and courses.

Alternative Formats Usage

While all 16 institutions have yet to enable the Alternative Formats in all courses, since the start of 2020, an average of **3,157 students have downloaded 2.3 formats per week**. The average 2020 unique weekly downloaders represents a 79% increase from Fall 2019, and a 388% increase from Spring 2019. The different formats downloaded highlight several important use cases. Low-income students accessing content on devices without MS Office or who need a smaller file size can download a **Tagged PDF** format, while those who rely on mobile devices can download their files in a responsive **HTML format**. The **ePub and BeeLine** reader formats can help students with dyslexia and focus challenges read more effectively. The **MP3** format allows students to review content on-the-go, while pairing the MP3 with text can support English Language Learners and students with processing challenges.



Instructor Feedback Usage

In the past year, **50% of indicator clicks resulted in an attempt to fix the file** through the Instructor Feedback (5 points higher than the national average) and **84% of attempted fixes resulted in an improved accessibility score**. Consistent with national data, images were the most commonly fixed file type (64% of all files fixed in Florida). Images were followed by PDF (23%), Word Docs (8%), and Presentations (5%).

Providing instructors with feedback and guidance within their course workflow on accessible content authoring helps institutions scale professional development and make a sustainable impact on inclusive education.

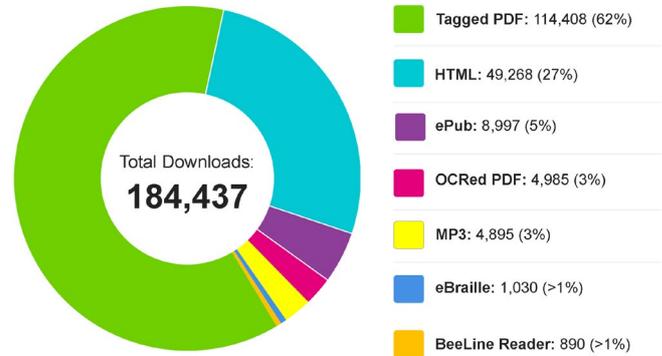
Avg. Accessibility Scores and Critical Issues: Fall 2019

File Score and Issues	Small	Medium	Large
Overall Files Score	48.4%	44.2%	43.8%
Scanned PDFs (% of Total PDFs)	2,149 (14%)	5,188 (15%)	12,924 (13%)
Untagged PDFs (% of Total PDFs)	5,188 (39%)	16,009 (46%)	44,932 (44%)
Docs Missing Headings (% of Total Docs)	10,979 (31%)	16,263 (24%)	48,078 (25%)
Images Missing Description (% of Total Images)	15,199 (93%)	28,629 (89%)	80,196 (82%)

Small = 700 - 7,500 FTE (5 institutions); Medium = 9,000 - 19,999 FTE (6); Large = 20,000 - 50,000 FTE (5)

Alternative Format Downloads by Type: 12 months

*BeeLine Reader was available in a limited number of courses



Engagement with Instructor Feedback by Term

Includes first three months of each term.

“Files altered and improved” are limited to files uploaded through Ally. Additional fixes may be made directly through the LMS

