

## **Tactile textbooks that fit...**

Students with visual impairments using mainstream schoolbooks

**Dedicon Netherlands**

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Slide 1. Title of presentation and names of speakers

Slide 2. Dedicon is a Dutch organization that makes information accessible to people with a print disability. Find us at: [www.dedicon.nl](http://www.dedicon.nl)

Slide 3. Dedicon Educational focusses on the accessibility of textbooks.

Slide 4. In the Netherlands, the law on appropriate education was introduced in 2014. Schools have to offer all students an appropriate place. This implicates that 75-80% of the students with a visual impairment frequent regular schools. Student and teacher receive extra support from an expert teacher for a few hours a week. There is no mentor who is constantly at their side. The students are in mainstream classes, using the same course materials as other students.

Slide 5. These materials are provided by a many commercial publishing companies in a competitive market. Schools choose the course material that fits their preferred pedagogy. Sometimes teachers also make their own materials.

- The task of Dedicon Educational is to make mainstream textbooks accessible for visually impaired students, on demand, with government subsidy.

- In this presentation we focus on making textbooks accessible for primary school students who read braille.

Slide 6. Primary school textbooks are usually very colourful, to make them look appealing to children. They are full of images, puzzles and such. Students use a variety of techniques: draw lines, colour, encircle, draw and underline text parts with various colours... These tasks intend to limit the amount of reading text, by undertaking other activities

Slide 7. Simply converting these textbooks into braille is not sufficient, especially for primary school students who are not yet experienced braille readers and computer users.

- They would have to find their own solution or they would have to skip the exercise.

In a mainstream class, they are often required to work independently, without constant one-to-one support.

Slide 8. Some years ago Dedicon did a research project called EDDA (Expertise Centre for Didactical and Digital Adaptations), together with other Dutch centres of expertise. We experimented in adapting textbooks. These adaptations were received very positively by students and teachers.

- As a result of this project, we have invested extra time in adapting primary school text books. We call these 'didactical adaptations'.

Slide 9. Some examples

- We: -describe images

- offer additional explanation or clarify information

- repeat information avoiding a search on previous pages

- rearrange text into a more logical order

- announce what the student is going to do

- adapt exercises to a more workable form

- replace images by tactile drawings

- Our aim is to stay close to the original book and the didactical aims of the authors. In this way the student can team up with his classmates, participate in group discussions and work independently. We only alter the accessibility.

Slide 10-16. Three examples of didactical adaptations - original exercise with short explanation in English + the accessible version on the next page.

Slide 17. Conclusion:

- Adapting materials takes a lot of time, but we managed to produce about 225 titles with didactical adaptations for primary education in 2016.

- This year we also started adapting some titles for secondary education. These adaptations are less radical.

- We built a website to advise teachers about creating accessible materials.

- The reactions we receive are few, but what we hear is positive. An important aim for this year is to visit more schools in order to see student and teachers at work in the classroom and to discuss their experiences.

We would like to find out:

- Are visually impaired children included in mainstream education in other countries? How does this work?

- Who is responsible for adapting the course material?

- Do you adapt course material in the same way we do?

I hope to meet some colleagues from other countries in order to exchange experiences in adapting textbooks for children. If you feel challenged, please do not hesitate to address me at some point during the conference or email me at

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