

HOT TOPICS

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Presented by Parent Network of WNY - July 2016

What Might Help with Learning? Communicating? Managing & Enjoying Life?

The Answer May be Assistive Technology (AT)!

Assistive technology is the wording used to describe tools that help you in some way - and can be simple or complex. They may take a lot of time and effort to learn or be quick and easy.

For some individuals with disabilities an evaluation will be necessary to find the best fit. It is important to consider all options to be sure money is well spent as many tools can be expensive.



Types of Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology is generally divided into two groups.

Low-Tech – devices or equipment that don't require much training and may be less expensive. Examples include adapted scissors, hand held magnifiers, and reachers/grabbers.

High-Tech – A complex, specialized system or device. Examples include voice to text software (you speak - it types), software and apps, communication boards, power wheelchairs and large button switches.

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What Assistive Technology is a Good Fit?

To best determine assistive technology needs, an assessment or evaluation should be done.

- School, an independent agency, or an individual consultant can do this evaluation.
- Evaluations can take place in a center where high-tech devices are available for trial or where the person spends their time, in their home, school, and community.

It is important that the evaluator looks at the person's strengths as well as challenges. Think about the individual's personal goals and the skills needed to achieve those goals.

The assessment should include:

- current abilities
- strengths
- interests
- learning styles
- likes and dislikes

Family members and professionals often have valuable information to share to complete the picture in order to make a recommendation for a tool and any training that might be necessary.

DID YOU KNOW?

That more than 80,000 educational apps exist in iTunes alone? Because the number of AT tools has grown by leaps and bounds, it's hard to stay current. You may need to find an expert or a "media mentor" and do some research on your own.



Parent Network is expanding services to include "media mentoring" through its "Time to Tinker with Tech" initiative.

We assist our community in learning about a sampling of technology tools resulting in informed decisions about "good fit" and use for people with diverse needs.

Call 1 on 1 support at 716-332-4175 for details on the next event that will include a "Tinker with Tech" Table or ask to speak with a media mentor.

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What Does this Mean for My Child?

If your child has an **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires your child's IEP team determine whether AT is needed for your child to receive a "free and appropriate public education."

IDEA also states the school district is responsible for choosing and purchasing the technology. This includes training for staff and the person to use it.

For a child with a **504 plan**, the law is less clear about assistive technology. However, Section 504 encourages accommodations for students with disabilities, and AT falls into that category. The school isn't responsible for recommending, purchasing or training your child to use AT, but they must be willing to consider it as an accommodation.



USEFUL WEBSITES

www.abledata.com

www.understood.com

www.assistivetech.net

<http://www.specialeducationguide.com/pre-k-12/tools-and-research/7-apps-to-use-as-assistive-technology/>

<http://www.rehabtool.com/at.html>

Resources

www.Understood.com

www.Disability.gov





“Disabled people need more invested in their education, housing, job training, transportation, assistive technology, and independent-living facilities. Governments earn back this investment - and more - by making people with disabilities economically productive citizens.”

---Jesse Ventura