

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Central VT Supervisory Union



Assistive Technology (AT) At a Glance

Assistive technology is any device, software, or equipment that helps people work around their challenges. Some examples of **assistive technology** are text-to-speech and word prediction. **Assistive technology** includes low-**tech** tools, too, like pencil grips.

**Assistive Technology Tools
to Meet Student Needs
in the Classroom**
Featuring Sharon Plante

Accessibility features
that can empower students
to be independent in
completing required tasks



AT Basics

AT is any device, software, or equipment that helps people work around challenges so they can learn, communicate, and function better. A wheelchair is an example of AT. So is software that reads aloud text from a computer. Or a keyboard for someone struggling with handwriting.

These tools can help people work around their challenges, while also playing to their strengths. This is especially important for kids who struggle with learning—whether in reading, writing, math, or another subject. AT can help these kids thrive in school and in life. And that can help grow their confidence and independence.

There are lots of myths about AT. Some wrongly believe that using AT is “cheating.” Others worry that kids who use AT may become too reliant on it.

While AT has many benefits, keep in mind that it can’t “cure” things like dyslexia or ADHD. It can’t replace good teaching and instruction, either.

Examples of AT Tools

Not all AT tools are “high-tech”. Examples of low-tech tools are highlighters, organizers, and pencil grips. Even a paper clip can be a low-tech AT tool.

However, many AT tools are high-tech. Examples of high-tech AT tools include text-to-speech (TTS), dictation (speech-to-text), and word prediction. But there are hundreds of AT tools that can help with learning challenges. Some of these tools are free and some are available on all laptops/tablets and smartphones.

Examples of Assistive Technology

No Tech

- ✓ Pencil Grip
- ✓ Post-it Notes
- ✓ Slanted surfaces
- ✓ Raised lined paper
- ✓ Covered overlays
- ✓ Tactile letters
- ✓ Magnifying bars
- ✓ Weighted pencils



Low Tech

- ✓ Buzzers
- ✓ Portable word processors
- ✓ Talking Calculator
- ✓ MP3 players
- ✓ Electronic organizers
- ✓ Switches/Buzzers
- ✓ Lights



High Tech

- ✓ E-Readers
- ✓ Touch screen devices
- ✓ Computerized testing
- ✓ Speech Recognition Software
- ✓ Word Processors
- ✓ Text-To-Speech (TTS)
- ✓ Progress Monitoring Software



SETT Framework

IEP, 504, or other student data teams in CVSU utilize the SETT Framework for making decisions about AT tools. SETT stands for Student, Environments, Tasks, and Tools (both devices and services).

Student	Environment	Task	Tools
S	E	T	T
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•What are the student's current abilities?•What are the student's special needs?•What are the functional areas of concern?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•What activities take place in the environment?•What activities do other students do that this student cannot currently participate in?•What assistive technology does the student have access to or currently use?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•What specific tasks occur in the environment?•What activities is the student expected to do?•What does success look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Are the tools being considered on a continuum from no/low to high-tech?•Are the tools student centered and task oriented and reflect the student's current needs?•What are the training requirements for the student, family and staff?

When to Consider AT?

For students who are eligible for special education, AT should be discussed at each annual review of the IEP. Our special education regulations (2360.2.7) state, "Each LEA shall ensure that assistive technology devices or assistive technology services, or both, as those terms are defined in Rule 2361.1(3), are made available to a student with a disability if required as part of the student's: (i) Special Education services under Rule 2360.2.12; (ii) Related services under Rule 2360.2.16; or (iii) Supplementary aids and services under Rules 2361.1(35). There are further regulations related to students with print disabilities.

Certainly, tools that are useful for students with disabilities are potentially useful for all students!

CVSU Supports and Services

CVSU is fortunate to have Brucie Donahue on our staff to provide support and consultation to students, teachers, parents and other service providers. Ms. Donahue will begin working with IEP and other student teams in each of the schools during the 2020-21 school year to provide evaluations, modeling and training to students, teachers, and parents on the full continuum of communication and technology supports.