



Family Engagement Newsletter

Assistive Technology and Virtual Learning

By Wendy Overturf

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines an assistive technology device (AT) as “any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a student with a disability,” not including a medical device that is surgically implanted or the replacement of such a device. IDEA requires that IEP teams consider several “special factors” that impact the development of the student’s individualized program. The need for AT devices and/or services is one of these factors. The IEP team must consider whether the student requires AT devices and/or services and document that decision in the IEP.

When shifting from face-to-face to online learning due to COVID-19, the types of assistive technologies that are needed may vary or change. IEP teams should review how AT was used by students in school and determine whether additional or alternative forms of assistive technology are needed for virtual learning.



To determine how best to meet a student’s specific needs during virtual and/or distance learning, many of the same rules and strategies from classrooms apply. Consider the following guiding questions:

- ◆ What is the assistive technology that is currently available for the student? Is it operational?
- ◆ How does the student’s disability impact access to the learning environment?
- ◆ What specific element or elements of instruction are inaccessible to the student that they were previously able to access in the brick and mortar setting?

When creating or providing online learning for students, the technical requirements of AT devices should not interfere with learning activities. These requirements are considered during instructional planning and explained to the teacher, student, and family, as appropriate. Consider the following questions:

- ◆ Does the instructional content allow students with disabilities who use assistive technology devices to readily navigate the lesson?
- ◆ Can the student navigate through graphics, images, and tables with a keyboard only?
- ◆ How does the AT device interact with any technology platforms to allow for student participation and, when necessary, collaboration with peers?

Students and families may not be versed in using AT devices in the home. In this instance, consider the following guiding questions to support family and student:

- ◆ How is the purpose of the AT device explained to the family to support actual use in the home setting?
- ◆ Do families know who to contact at school if there is a question about the use of an AT device or the implementation of a particular AT service?
- ◆ Are expectations clearly explained about how AT devices and/or services support the student in different types of learning activities?

If a student with a disability under IDEA did not previously use AT when at school, IEP teams should now consider whether such a device or support might be needed in a virtual learning environment. If you believe your child might benefit from AT, you can request an IEP meeting to discuss this.

* Article excerpted from this [website](#).

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has a [dedicated page](#) related to AT that may also provide valuable information.

Statewide Events

[2 Day Virtual Training in Collaborative & Proactive Solutions with Dr. Ross Greene](#)

This is the empirically supported model Dr. Ross Greene describes in his influential books *The Explosive Child*, *Lost at School*, *Lost & Found*, and *Raising Human Beings*. The CPS model has transformed thinking and practices in countless families, schools, inpatient psychiatry units, and residential and juvenile detention facilities throughout the world, and has been associated with dramatic reductions in adult-child conflict, challenging behaviors, disciplinary referrals, detentions, suspensions, restraints, and seclusions.

Date: September 17-18, 2020

Location: Zoom Video Conferencing

[Wisconsin Self-Determination Conference](#)

This event is for people with disabilities and the people who support them. Learn how to live more independently, participate more in your community, and direct your public funds efficiently.

Date: October 26-28, 2020

Location: This will be a virtual conference.



WI DPI UPDATES

[COVID-19 Special Education Question and Answer Document \(Rev 8/06/2020\)](#)

New Community of Practice: Supporting Students with IEPs During COVID-19

The DPI Special Education Team is offering a Community of Practice beginning in August for professionals who are supporting students with IEPs. The purpose of these meetings is to provide ongoing guidance from DPI as well as opportunities for participants to collaborate and share ideas and resources. Upcoming topics will be based on participant feedback. Goals for the meetings include staying connected, collaboratively share ideas, listen and explore concerns, seek answers to questions, and to support students with IEPs. The meetings will take place approximately twice a month, are free, and available to anyone interested in learning and sharing best practices to support students with IEPs during COVID-19. Registration for each meeting is available on [this flier](#).



At Home Learning Strategies

[Family Guide to At-Home Learning](#)

This guide has practical strategies that work for helping children of all ages who may be struggling with an at-home learning task.

These six strategies include: model, clear directions, support, staying on task, specific feedback, and goal settings. Parents can also explore additional resources with the links provided. Families may find these strategies useful when helping their children complete various reading, math, and/or behavioral tasks at home. [This guide is also available in Spanish](#). You also can access this guide, and more examples/tips, on an Amazon Alexa device by saying "Alexa, enable Home Learning."



[Early Literacy Activity Calendar: September 2020](#)



Fall is in the air, and it is a great time for children and parents to get outside and enjoy some early literacy activities. Get inspired to celebrate Teddy Bear Day, play restaurant, and go on observation walks with your child.

[Children's Activity Calendar: September 2020](#)

September is Library Card Sign-Up Month. It is also a month with unique celebrations like Self Improvement Month, the Good Manners Month, and National Good Neighbor Day. Parents will also find fun activities, book suggestions, craft projects, and more to help cultivate a love of reading in your child.

[Labor Day-September 7, 2020](#)

Labor Day is a day to celebrate working people and the contributions they have made to our society. It became a national holiday in 1894 and is celebrated on the first Monday of September each year. Labor Day has often been celebrated with parades. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic most of these have been cancelled. You can still teach your children about community helpers.



Community helpers are the workers in a neighborhood or town who help the people who live there. This includes police officers, fire fighters, doctors, nurses, sanitation workers, postal workers, and more. Check out "Who Am I - Community Helpers - Riddles for Kids" - [Learning Video for Preschoolers](#). This [template](#) would make a great activity to help your child write a thank-you card to a community helper.



[Tips for Helping Your Child Feel Comfortable Wearing a Mask](#)

[Outdoor Fall Activities for Kids: 11 Ways to Play with Leaves](#)

With the leaves starting to fall, now is a great time to check out these fun activities to do with your children.



[Fun with Apples Recipes](#)

Apple recipes and fall go hand and hand. Cooking with your child is a great way to practice reading and measuring skills.



Online Resources

[Center for Parent Information and Resources \(CPIR\)](#)

The website offers three pages of resource links related to assistive technology. It also has links to checklists that IEP teams can use when considering assistive technology.

[Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction \(DPI\)](#)

This website has resources related to Assistive Technology. It also has federal and state requirements that address assistive technology as it relates to the development of IEPs and implementation of special education.

[Center on Technology and Disability \(CTD\)](#)

Since 2013, the CTD team has been pleased to provide a wealth of free, high-quality resources and events on all aspects of assistive technology. A U.S. Department of Education-funded project, CTD ended in May 2019. However, the resource-rich website will be available through 2021.

[National Center on Accessible Educational Materials \(AEM\)](#)

This site focuses on how schools can serve students who are unable to read or use standard print materials through the use of specialized formats (braille, audio, large print, and digital text). There are articles and research about effective practices, technical information, tutorials, webinars, and online forums. There are also resources related to remote learning during COVID-19.

[Bookshare](#)

An online library of more than 170,000 digital books for children and adults with qualifying disabilities. Schools can download textbooks, books, and periodicals, which their students can access on computers or mobile devices using software or apps that read the text aloud. For students with visual impairments, schools can also download files for use with braille devices. Bookshare is also FREE for U.S. Students with qualifying reading barriers. Students 18 years and over can sign up on their own; parents can sign up students under 18 years of age.

[SETT Framework](#)

Student, Environments, Tasks, and Tools—all of which need to be fully explored when assistive technology tools are considered or selected. The website offers a set of forms for collaborative decision making.

[Free Assistive Tech Tools Make Learning Accessible to All](#)

This website has a long list of tools and articles related to assistive technology. It also includes links to tools to support Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL is an educational framework based on research in the learning sciences, including cognitive neuroscience, that guides the development of flexible learning environments that can accommodate individual learning differences.

[Reading Rockets](#)

This link will introduce parents to the role of AT in helping their children with a learning disability. Parents will learn how to choose AT tools that are reliable and to select technology that is tailored to the child's individual needs, abilities, and experience.



WI FACETS

Webinars
Trainings
Workshops

Event title links to information & registration for WI FACETS FREE workshops & webinars:

By phone, Sandra: 877-374-0511

All webinars 12:00—1:00 PM
(unless otherwise noted)

[Dual Exceptionality – Gifted and Disabled](#)

Presenter: Mark Schwingle, WI DPI

Date: September 2, 2020

[Lo que Necesito Saber sobre la Educación Especial](#)

Presenter: Nelsinia Ramos, WI FACETS

Date: September 10, 2020

To register **contact Nelsinia Ramos (414) 374-4645, nramos@wifacets.org**

[Section 504- What Parents Need to Know](#)

Presenter: Matthew Zellmer, WI FACETS

Date: September 15, 2020

[Celebrating Differences: Teaching Children About Special Needs and Disabilities](#)

Presenter: Rebecca Michelsen,

Penfield Children's Center

Date: September 16, 2020

[Navigation Special Education Resources](#)

Presenter: Cheri Sylla,

Family Engagement Coordinator WSPEI

Date: September 23, 2020

[Serving on Groups \(Section 1 & 2\)](#)

Presenter: Jan Serak, Serak Consulting

Date: September 24, 2020

Learning
Opportunities

[Transition Parents in Partnership](#)

(TPIP) trainings can prepare families for the transition process for their youth with disabilities ages 14-21 in the areas of employment, education, living and health. Trainings will take place virtually via Zoom beginning this fall.



ABLE Accounts and your Family's Special Needs Financial Planning

An ABLE account is a qualified savings account that enables people with disabilities to save for disability-related expenses without jeopardizing their public assistance eligibility. ABLE accounts allow for broader spending power – like for food and housing. Earnings are tax-free, and individuals can manage their own money. Also, Special Needs Trusts can allow distributions to fund an ABLE account, which offers a unique planning opportunity to use both vehicles together.

ELIGIBILITY: Age Requirement¹- Person may be eligible at any age if their qualified disability occurred before age 26.

Severity of disability¹ – (1) Person meets the disability requirements for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits. **(2) Person** receives a Disability Certification signed by a physician, attesting to a diagnosis of a severe and limiting physical or mental impairment or a condition that has lasted or is expected to last for at least 1 year.

OWNERSHIP: An eligible individual, or a personal representative (Parent, Guardian, Power of Attorney) can create and manage an ABLE account. In either case, multiple individuals may contribute to any person's ABLE account.

TAXES: Contributions to an ABLE account are made with post-tax dollars, so ABLE programs and distributions for qualified disability expenses are generally exempt from federal taxation. ABLE account earnings are tax-free.

COSTS: An ABLE account requires low or no startup costs. You will not need an attorney or a trust administrator—only a minimal opening deposit. Costs will vary by State, so check with each ABLE plan for details.

WISCONSIN: Wisconsin residents can participate in out-of-state ABLE programs if allowed by that state. Find Wisconsin's statement on ABLE accounts here: www.revenue.wi.gov/Pages/FAQS/ise-ABLEAccounts.aspx. For additional details, explore the ¹ABLE National Resource center: www.ablenc.org.

Questions? Joel Dettwiler, a Chartered Special Needs Consultant (ChSNC), can be reached at jdettwiler@quantumplanners.com

Research to Read

Students with Special Educational Needs and Assistive Technologies:

A Literature Review

Erdem, Raziye. "Students with Special Educational Needs and Assistive Technologies: A Literature Review." Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology 16 (2017): 128-146.

Article Link

The term assistive technology refers to the equipment, devices and apparatus, and the services, systems, processes, and adaptations made to the environment that support and facilitate their functions, used by persons with special education needs. This study is a literature review of the use of assistive technologies in the education of students with special educational needs. To compile the works related to this subject, electronic databases, journals, and other relevant sources were curated. The applicable information found within these sources was then analyzed under two general themes: a) the use of assistive technologies, and b) assistive technology implementation models. The results of this study show various types of assistive technology are used in special education and the use of assistive technologies generally have a positive effect on the students with special education. The results are discussed within the framework of the use of assistive technologies in special education and model implementations with the aim of contributing to the current assistive technology implementations presented in the literature.

This monthly update is provided by the Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support (WI FACETS) to share statewide information regarding parent leadership and family involvement. *If you would like to receive this monthly update or if you would like to have your name removed from the distribution list, contact: Wendy Overturf at woverturf@wifacets.org.*



Contributions to the Newsletter

Upcoming newsletter topics: October: Learning Disabilities

November: Emotional Behavioral Disabilities

December: Communication

To submit contributions of articles, events, or resources, you may use the attached word document. Send submissions to woverturf@wifacets.org. If unable to access form, you may send information in an email.

Material appropriate for the monthly newsletter include web links to sources of family involvement/parent leadership resources, advertisements for statewide trainings for parents, youth or parent/educator audiences, information about statewide parent agencies, recent research pertaining to family engagement, and family engagement success articles.

***The WI FACETS Family Engagement E-Newsletter
can be found online at:***

<https://servingongroups.org/resources>



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