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Assistive Technology Newsletter

Tech Talk

Helping children learn to their full potential

District Name: _____
Assistive Technology Team: _____

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AT for Reading

Assistive reading tools

Students with identified reading needs or print disabilities may benefit from the use of a wide range of assistive technology (AT) tools to increase their reading competence. AT tools facilitate a student's reading by assisting with phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and print processing. The tools range from low tech solutions such as colored overlays to high tech solutions such as electronic applications that read text aloud.

What is a print disability?

Not all students who have difficulty reading are identified as having a print disability. According to the National Center on Accessible Education Materials, a print disability is defined as "Blindness or other disability that prevents the effective use of printed materials." Students with print disabilities include those on IEPs who are blind/visually impaired or have a physical or reading disability.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) includes a requirement that students who have a print disability receive their textbooks and core material in specialized formats at the same time and identical in content to that of their nondisabled peers.

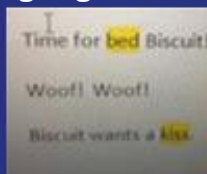
Accessing AT in School

Bookshare.org and Learning Ally are common sources of textbooks and other books in specialized formats. Tools used to access learning materials include scanning, large print, braille, audio books, text to audio applications, text to speech applications, and optical character recognition. AT tools are important in school because they help students perform reading tasks more independently. Assessment tools such as the SETT framework help IEP teams consider AT solutions when learners are not making progress or doing independent reading tasks.

To learn more about how your child might benefit from AT to support reading, contact your child's IEP case manager.

Using AT at Home

Highlight words



Help with comprehension

Visual Bookmark with Stuck Strategies



Include a child's cueing system on a bookmark to foster independence

Screen Reader



Reads aloud the content of a webpage for child

Parent Question

How do I know if my child needs assistive technology for reading?

AT needs should be discussed at all IEP meetings, but parents may contact their child's case manager anytime with questions. The SETT process is a diagnostic tool IEP teams may use to assess the student's AT needs for reading. When a student with a disability has difficulty reading, there are many tools that can help him or her complete reading tasks more independently. One such tool reads single words, phrases or even an entire document to the child.

Factors to consider when evaluating AT tools for your child include:

- What are your child's specific reading needs and challenges?
- What are your child's strengths? AT can capitalize on your child's abilities to help compensate for a reading disability.
- What is your child's interest, skill and experience in using technology?
- In what situations will your child use AT tool(s)? AT can help a child with a reading disability function better across environments.

AT for Reading: Definitions

Digital text:

An alternate form of text used on a computer or other device by individuals with print disabilities

Text-to-Speech (TTS):

An alternate form of speech synthesis that converts digital text into digitized voice output

Text Reader:

A software tool that reads digitized text aloud

Ebook:

An electronic format of a printed book that can be read on a computer or handheld device with an application designed specifically for this purpose.

Audio Book:

A recorded reading of a printed book

Graphic Novel:

A story that is presented in comic-strip format and published as a book

Accessibility Feature:

Option within a support product that allows for adjustments for personal needs.

Parent Question

How can I assist my child to read at home using assistive technology tools?

Talk to your child's case manager about how you can coordinate home supports with school supports. Consistent use of assistive strategies and tools at home and at school will help your child develop confidence and competence with their use.

Engaging a child who is struggling to read is key to building reading success. Offer books in fun formats and steer toward topics of interest. Comic books, graphic novels and recipes are engaging formats that present text in smaller chunks and use pictures to make it easier to follow the action or instruction. Joke books spark a child's interest through humor. They also give developing readers a reason to re-read a passage to perfect the retelling.

eBooks, text readers, and audiobooks provide text supported by audio, which can engage many reluctant readers. Public and online libraries provide talking magazines, newspapers, books and articles to offer another way to support students in developing independent reading skills. After the child reads text supported by audio, talk about it together.



RESOURCES

Ebook/Audio Book Libraries

- Bookshare www.bookshare.com (Read with Bookshare Web Reader or dedicated app)
- Learning Ally www.learningally.org/
- National Library Services for the Blind and Physically Impaired www.loc.gov/nls/ (Read with BARD Reader)
- Bookflix
(check with your local library for access instructions using your library card)
- Project Gutenberg www.gutenberg.org
- Accessible Book Collection www.accessiblebookcollection.org
- Tarheel Reader <https://tarheelreader.org/>
- Unite for Literacy <http://www.uniteforliteracy.com>
- Storyline Online <https://www.storylineonline.net>
- TumbleBooks <https://www.tumblebooks.com> (check local library)
- Epic Books <https://www.getepic.com>
- Newsela: <https://newsela.com>
- Wonderopolis <https://wonderopolis.com>
- RB Digital <https://rbdigital.com> (check local library)

Tools

- Low-Tech Supports:
- Reading windows
- Bar magnifiers
- Colored acetate reading helpers
- Colored highlighters/highlighting tape

High-Tech Supports

Accessibility Features:

- Text reading: TTS (Text-to-speech software that reads digital text aloud)
- Pdf reader
- Visual highlighting printed word while it is being spoken
- Digital bookmarks
- Colored digital highlighters
- Scanning
- Optical Character Recognition (OCR): locates and recognizes characters such as letters, numbers and symbols from a digital image
- Text leveling (simplifies challenging text)
- Summarization
- Translation
- Ad free content
- Distraction free mode: display of web content as simple text
- Zoom
- Text/background color change
- Screen masking: partial screen cover to spotlight reading focus
- Coordinated writing supports

Apps/Extensions

- Read&Write (Chrome, iOS, Android)
- ClaroSpeak (Chrome, iOS, Android)
- VoiceDream Reader: (iOS/Android)
- CapturaTalk: (iOs, Android)
- WebReader: (Android)
- KNFB Reader: (iOS, Android, Windows 10)
- Rewordify: (web app)
- Join.Me (Chrome, iOS, Android)
- Splashtop: (Chrome, iOS, Android)
- BeeLine Reader (Chrome, iOS, Android)

Reading Pen

C-Pen: camera and OCR technology in a pen that recognizes text and reads it aloud