



Assistive Technology Is a Part of Everyday Life: Education

#ATAwarenessDay

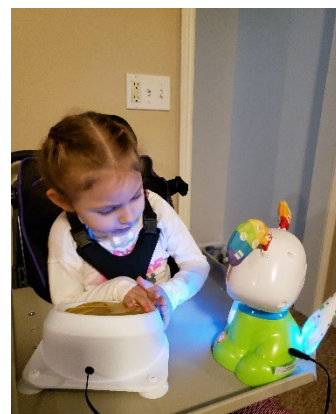
March 1, 2023, is National Assistive Technology Awareness Day! Congress has designated this day to recognize the role of assistive technology (AT) and AT services in the lives of persons with disabilities. Celebrate AT!

What is Assistive Technology (AT)?

AT is any item, device, or software used to maintain or improve the independence and functioning of persons with disabilities and older adults. AT devices can be “low tech,” such as a built-up handle on a spoon to improve the ability to grasp, to “high tech,” such as computers controlled with eye gaze. AT includes the services necessary to get and use the devices, including assessment, customization, repair, and training.

What Services Do State and Territory Assistive Technology Act Programs Provide?

AT Act Programs assist individuals with disabilities of all ages (including veterans and older adults) to identify and acquire AT that supports their independence, safety, and personal goals. Programs serve AT-users directly and their family members, caregivers, educators, therapists, and employers. Anyone with a reason to learn about AT is welcome.



A busy client of the Montana AT Act Program.

AT Act Programs provide opportunities to learn about and try out AT. Visitors can compare the functions and features of a range of devices through hands-on exploration. These equipment demonstrations often lead to device loans that help inform future purchase decisions or fulfill a short-term equipment need.

AT Act Programs do not sell new AT. Instead, they may provide funding counseling and financing to obtain or purchase AT. Visitors are not pressured to choose any particular product or vendor. AT users learn about devices from AT professionals who may use assistive technology themselves. AT Act Programs also support the reutilization of gently-used devices to provide free or affordable equipment. [Learn more at AT3Center.net](https://www.at3center.net).

How Does Assistive Technology Support Education?

For students with disabilities, AT can be necessary for providing access to the curriculum. Students with dyslexia or a visual impairment, for example, can hear text read aloud (text-to-speech), benefit from a reading ruler or other common adaptive tools such as blocks and tactile graph paper for math. Students with writing challenges may get their ideas down with speech-to-text, the right pencil grip, or alternative computer access such as a dynamic braille notetaker. There is AT to support students with ADHD to concentrate and speech-generating

devices for students with complex communication needs. AT is also the durable medical equipment necessary for students to participate in their classroom or eat in the cafeteria. AT is so essential for education that it is a requirement for consideration in every Individual Education Plan (IEP) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

A Story from Virginia



When the COVID-19 pandemic shut down schools in the spring of 2020, a mother found herself managing virtual schooling for her four kids. One of her children uses a wheelchair and was without the stander he has at school. Insurance denied this equipment for home use. The mother needed something to make it easy for her to move her son in and out of standing during his “school day” at home. She reached out to the Children’s Assistive

Technology Service (CATS), a contractor of the Virginia Assistive Technology Act Program (VATS). CATS was able to provide her with an Easy Stand Evolve. This gently-used device helped this mom and son participate in his educational program and be comfortable while learning from home.

A Story from Guam

A speech language pathologist (SLP) with the Guam Department of Education was searching for a device accessory for David, a student with cerebral palsy and multiple disabilities, to provide easier access to his communication device. She arranged a demonstration with the Guam AT Act Program (GSAT) for a gooseneck mount kit, articulating arm mount, and a table suction mount to consider for use with David’s device. After GSAT staff demonstrated each accessory, she selected the table suction mount. The table mount was sturdy and gripped David’s device securely. It also made it possible for David to maintain eye contact by keeping his head as close to eye level with his peers and instructors, allowing for more effective communication. David’s SLP was pleased to have three devices to review. The demonstration of three mount options meant she could be sure she was making an informed decision and was meeting David’s unique needs.

Examples of AT for Education:

- captioned or audio-described video
- magnification devices
- wheelchairs and standers
- tactile graph paper
- weighted vests
- communication boards
- literacy software
- smart pens
- slant boards
- tablet computers with specialized apps
- talking calculators with haptic feedback

