Assistive Technology Conversation and Resources

Background

***Assistive technology* is equipment, devices, software, or tools that help a person with a disability do a task or activity that otherwise might be difficult or impossible. These technologies can range from simple items, like magnifying glasses or canes, to complex systems such as voice recognition software, screen readers, or advanced prosthetics.** It can be specially designed or be off-the-shelf technology built into other devices such as in most cell phones or computers. The main goal of assistive technology is to enhance the functional capabilities of people with disabilities, enabling greater independence, participation, and quality of life.

People with various types of disabilities—whether physical, sensory, cognitive, or developmental—can benefit from assistive technology in everyday life, education, employment, and social interaction. For example, a student with a visual impairment might use braille displays or audio textbooks, while someone with limited mobility could rely on powered wheelchairs or environmental control systems to manage daily activities. These tools are often tailored to meet specific individual needs and may require training or customization to be used effectively.

As awareness and technology continue to advance, assistive devices are becoming more sophisticated, affordable, and accessible. Emerging innovations like artificial intelligence, wearable devices, and smart home integration are transforming how people with disabilities interact with their environments. **By reducing barriers and promoting inclusion, assistive technology plays a crucial role in creating a more inclusive society where all individuals have the opportunity to thrive.**

To learn more, visit:

[Assistive Technology Industry Association](#)

[An Overview of Adaptive and Assistive Devices for People with Disabilities](#)

Conversation Guide

When speaking to children about assistive technology, it is important to convey the key concepts to them in language or terminology that is meaningful to them. Here is a sample suggestion of how this might be done.

What is assistive technology?

Assistive technology is anything that helps a person with a disability do something easier. It can be something simple, like a pencil grip that helps someone hold a pencil, or something high-tech, like a tablet that talks for someone who has trouble speaking. People of all ages use assistive technology to help them learn, move around, communicate, and do everyday things.

How Does Assistive Technology Help?

Assistive technology can help in many different ways. For example, a student who is blind might read using a book written in Braille, a special kind of writing you read with your fingers. Someone who has a hard time hearing might use a hearing aid to make sounds louder. Other students might use computers that turn spoken words into written ones or use special chairs that help them sit comfortably. These tools give everyone a chance to show what they know and do their best work!

Assistive Technology in the Classroom

In school, assistive technology helps students learn just like everyone else. You might see a classmate using a communication board to answer a teacher's question or wearing headphones that help them hear better. You might even use assistive technology yourself without realizing it—like a calculator, or captions on a video, or speech-to-text app! These tools make sure that every student, no matter what challenges they have, can learn, share ideas, and have fun with friends.