

Assistive Technology: Addressing the Needs of Students with High-Incidence Disabilities

Est. Time: 1 Hour

Objective

Learn about various assistive technology (AT) devices available for students with high-incidence disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities, ADHD).

Overview

Students with disabilities often have difficulty accessing the general education curriculum due to barriers related to their disability. These barriers can often be addressed through the use of **assistive technology (AT)**. Assistive technology encompasses both devices and services.



Devices — Pieces of equipment or technology that facilitate work, communication, mobility, or other aspects of daily life (e.g., text-to-speech software, dictation software)

Services — The supports or services necessary to use those devices appropriately (e.g., training, repairs)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)—the law that guarantees students with disabilities the right to a free appropriate public education in the least-restrictive environment—requires educators to consider these two interdependent aspects of AT to aid students with disabilities in meeting their IEP goals and objectives. When AT is appropriately integrated into the general education classroom, it improves the functional performance of students with disabilities. When this occurs, students are better equipped to complete work and meet their educational goals. However, without the assistance of appropriate AT, these students often continue to struggle academically. Although many students with disabilities can benefit from the use of assistive technology, it tends to be underutilized by students with high-incidence disabilities (e.g., LD, ADHD).

Activity

Read the student scenarios below and complete the following questions.

Cassie, who has ADHD, is a 6th-grader at a rural middle school. She is often distracted by her peers in large classes and becomes easily overwhelmed when she has limited time to complete her assignment. In fact, her math teacher has noticed that she can only complete about one third of the math problems as her peers during independent practice. Other teachers have observed that when Cassie is allowed to work among her peers or given more than two directions at a time, she often cannot complete the tasks in the time given or she completes the tasks incorrectly.

Nate, a freshman in high school, has a language impairment. He generally enjoys school and works hard in all subject areas. Nate does well in most of his classes, but he is having difficulty in freshman English. He eagerly participates in class discussions and completes all of his required readings. Though Nate has thoughtful ideas for writing assignments, he focuses so much of his time on his spelling and grammar that he does not organize his thoughts and ideas into a coherent composition.

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Activity [CONT]

Connor is a popular 4th-grader with a specific learning disability. Although Connor is able to quickly and accurately read sight words, his approach to sounding out multi-syllabic words is letter-by-letter, rather than using prefixes, suffixes, and root words. This affects Connor's ability to read fluently and comprehend text.

Questions

Based on the information in the scenarios, answer the following questions for each student.

1. List at least two devices that could help address the student's barriers.
2. Describe how each device will help the student.
3. What services might this student (or the teacher) need to effectively implement the AT?