Technology at Your Fingertips

Explore the technology available for children with visual impairment and multi-sensory needs while learning your rights for getting your child assessed and equipped with the right tools.

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ABBREVIATIONS TO KNOW
- TVI (or TSVI)- Teacher for the Visually Impaired (Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments)
- O&M; COMS- Orientation & Mobility; Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist
- AT - Access Technology (or Assistive Technology)
- ECC - Expanded Core Curriculum
- APH - American Printing House for the Blind
- IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- FVA/LMA - Functional Vision Assessment/Learning Media Assessment
- IEP - Individual Education Plan
- 504 - A plan for providing accommodations

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the piece of American legislation that ensures students with a disability are provided with Free Appropriate Public Education that is tailored to their individual needs.

IDEA states assistive technology 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 child with a disability. The term does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted, or the replacement of such device.”

The Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) is the program developed to ensure that a student with a disability, who is attending school, receives specialized instruction and related services. This is tailored to the needs of the student and relies on the collaboration of the whole team including teachers, family, related service providers and the student.

The 504 plan is similar to the IEP in specifying necessary accommodations, but not determining services.
The Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) is a curriculum developed to address skills that often require specialized instruction with students who are blind or visually impaired in order to compensate for decreased opportunities to learn incidentally by observing others. The nine areas of the ECC are: Assistive Technology, Career Education, Compensatory Skills, Independent Living Skills, Orientation and Mobility (O&M), Recreation and Leisure, Self-Determination, & Sensory Efficiency.

Assessments:
By law, students should be assessed in “all areas related to the suspected disability, including, if appropriate, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities”

What does an assessment provide?
After completing an assessment, service providers will suggest accommodations, recommendations, and/or service delivery to be included in a child's 504 or IEP

When does an assessment take place?
“Initial” assessments
“Three year re-evaluation”
Parents and teachers may also request an evaluation at any time if something has changed

How do you get the equipment that was recommended from an evaluation?
Technically, the school district is responsible for purchasing equipment. However, there are other options to receive and trial devices. Some examples include:

- APH Quota Funds - Check with your child’s TVI to see if they are eligible to purchase equipment from APH using federal quota funds (items may include JoyPlayer, magnifiers, Jaws/ZoomText, Lightbox, slant board, “vision specific” items)
- State Commissions for the Blind
- State Assistive Technology Loan Libraries
- Local charities and organizations

The Three A’s:

- **Acknowledge** - The first step to your child being successful is acknowledging that your child needs disability-specific tools for them to access all areas of the ECC, including academic curriculum.
- **Advocate** - Now that you’ve seen some examples of AT and what your rights are as a parent or caregiver, we hope your advocate to your child’s team the need for specialized equipment
- **Assess** - In order to drive instruction, get recommendations, and justify equipment purchases, your child should be assessed in all areas related to their disability
Resources:

- [https://sites.ed.gov/idea/](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/)
- [www.APH.org](http://www.APH.org)
- [https://www.perkinselearning.org/videos/webinar](https://www.perkinselearning.org/videos/webinar)
- For MA residents: (each state has their own version of these companies)
  - [https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-commission-for-the-blind](https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-commission-for-the-blind)
  - [https://www.massmatch.org/find_at/borrow.php](https://www.massmatch.org/find_at/borrow.php)
  - [https://nelowvision.com/](https://nelowvision.com/)