

## Using Assistive Technology to Support Learning

Assistive technology for learning (ATL) helps students work around learning challenges and build on their strengths.



### Key understandings

- Some educational technologies (such as word prediction, text-to-speech or speech recognition) are available for everyone as part of everyday life.
- A small number of students will need additional assistive technologies and specialized supports to more fully participate in learning.
- The SETT framework (Student – Environment – Task – Tools) provides key questions to help make decisions about which specialized tools and related strategies will make a difference for a student's learning.
- A trial use of selected technology by the student is an opportunity to collect information on its effectiveness and fit for the student's strengths, needs and preferences.
- The long-term success of the chosen assistive technology will depend on sufficient training and support, meaningful integration into learning activities, student willingness and motivation to use the technology and a commitment by the school team to support the use of technology for a sustained period of time.
- Assistive learning technology choices and use will evolve throughout a student's school career and beyond.

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*For people without disabilities,  
technology makes things easier.  
For people with disabilities,  
technology  
makes things possible.*

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*National Council on Disability*

### Questions for discussion

- The SETT framework is intended as a guide for an information gathering process. What are some ways school teams might collect this information?
- How can we ensure that students have continued access to the learning technologies and supports they need as they move from classroom to classroom or from school to school?

### Research

Abbott, C., Brown, D., Evett, L., Standen, P., & Wright, J. (2011). Learning difference and digital technologies: a literature review of research involving children and young people using assistive technologies 2007–2010. In *ESRC Seminar Series: Researching Assistive Technologies*.



## Taking the Pulse

at the school and authority level...

- How is data being used to inform the selection, implementation and evaluation of assistive technology for learning at the classroom, school and authority level?
- What expertise and resources are available to support implementation of assistive technology for learning?
- How is your school authority supporting professional development needs of staff related to ATL?

Adapted from *A Guide to Support Implementation: Essential Conditions* [www.essentialconditions.ca](http://www.essentialconditions.ca)

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*The success of technology has more to do with people than machines.*

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S. Berkeley & J. H. Lindstrom

## For more information

- *Learning Technologies: Information for Teachers* provides information on how technologies can provide support and flexibility in how students access content, demonstrate learning and overcome barriers to learning. [www.learningtechnologiesab.com](http://www.learningtechnologiesab.com)
- *Making a Difference: Meeting Diverse Learning Needs with Differentiated Instruction*—This Alberta Education resource provides information on selecting and using assistive technology. [http://education.alberta.ca/media/1234045/makingadifference\\_2010.pdf](http://education.alberta.ca/media/1234045/makingadifference_2010.pdf)
- Joy Zabala, developer of the *SETT framework*, provides information and making decisions about the selection of ATL. [www.joyzabala.com](http://www.joyzabala.com)
- *The Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative (WATI)* ([www.wati.org](http://www.wati.org)) offers a downloadable student handbook for choosing and using assistive technology. [www.wati.org/content/supports/free/pdf/HeyCanITryThat08.pdf](http://www.wati.org/content/supports/free/pdf/HeyCanITryThat08.pdf)
- *Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology (QIAT)* offers resources to support the use of ATL for student success. <http://indicators.knowbility.org>

## Alberta Examples

The following Alberta school authorities are among those who have developed staff resources on assistive technology for learning:

- *Chinook's Edge School Division*—This webpage offers ATL philosophy and FAQs, SETT framework links, apps and technology tutorials. [www.chinooksedge.ab.ca/Assistive%20Technology.php](http://www.chinooksedge.ab.ca/Assistive%20Technology.php)
- *Golden Hills School Division*—This comprehensive webpage provides many ideas for ATL based on a student's specific area of need. [www.ghsd75.ca/ESTT.php#.php](http://www.ghsd75.ca/ESTT.php#.php)
- *Wolf Creek Public Schools*—This webpage defines ATL, provides information on decision making and best practices, and offers many links to other sources of ideas. [www.wolfcreek.ab.ca/ATL.php](http://www.wolfcreek.ab.ca/ATL.php)

