

Chapter 8

Strategies to Successfully Implement Assistive Technology for Post-Secondary Education Programs and Beyond

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ABSTRACT

This chapter outlines the strategies that can be used to help implement assistive technology devices and services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities at the post-secondary education level. A brief background sets the stage for outcomes of using assistive technology in post-secondary education programs. The authors then discuss how educators can prepare students during the transition process for post-secondary education success with assistive technology. The bulk of the chapter focuses on matching individual students' needs and abilities with a variety of assistive technology devices and services. The goal of the chapter is to give students, practitioners, and researchers resources and tools to implement and use in their particular setting that will help students to become independent lifelong learners using technology.

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INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusive post-secondary education (PSE) programs are a growing part of higher education that are opening new opportunities for students with disabilities. Postsecondary education programs, generally, are any type of educational experience that students complete after their secondary experience. The Higher Education Opportunity Act has opened the door to many more PSE experiences for individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ID). Students who have participated in PSE programs have higher rates of employment (Grigal et al., 2019) and make nearly twice as much per hour as students who did not attend a PSE program (Whittenburg et al., 2018). Not to mention there are also outcomes for students who attend PSE programs in terms of independent living (Ross, J. et al, 2013). With the success that participating in a PSE program can provide, there also comes support within the programs to allow the students to obtain employment and live independently. One of the supports that can help the individual achieve these goals is with the use of assistive technology.

Assistive technology can help students navigate each of the different facets of college life, academics, life skills, and functional skills. This book chapter will go into detail addressing how different tools can address specific needs for students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities who attend PSE programs. The chapter starts with an overview and background on assistive technology and postsecondary education programs. It then discusses the transition process for students who are using AT from K-12 to PSE. The next section matches student needs with different accessibility features, devices, and tools. Finally, the chapter then highlights some of the personal experiences with AT with the PSE program that the authors are all associated with. The chapter details how students can learn to become independent with these tools with the supports and scaffolds from the staff, and how to use these tools after their graduation from the PSE program. The purpose of this chapter is to give students, practitioners, and researchers resources and tools to implement and use in their particular setting that will help students to become independent lifelong learners using technology.

Under IDEA 2004 the definition of assistive technology (AT) is “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” (IDEA, Sec. 300.5). As a practitioner you have likely come across students with disabilities in the classroom. Not only do these students have specific learning needs but they may be accompanied by AT. This could be something small like a pencil grip, or something that stands out a bit more like a communication device. The following chapter will help you better understand these devices and help those who use them feel included

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