

Supporting Children's Everyday Learning

Everyday experiences are the building blocks for child learning. The more opportunities a child has to participate actively in everyday classroom activities, the more learning will occur. Children with disabilities sometimes need extra supports in order to participate in these activities. Assistive Technology (AT) may help. AT devices can be low-tech or high-tech. Low-tech support can be something as simple as wrapping textured tape around a pencil to make it easier for a child to grasp. High-tech support can include equipment and items such as an augmentative communication device, a tablet computer, or a power wheelchair.

Watch a video of this Learning Guide

Learning Guide: Assistive Technology

- Observe children during everyday classroom activities. Is there a child having a difficult time participating in an activity? What aspect of the activity is going well for him? What is challenging? How could he be more actively engaged in the activity?
- What AT could be helpful? How will the AT be used to help the child participate in the everyday activity? Consider the child's strengths and how she will use the AT. For example, a child who is non-verbal, but able to move her fingers, might benefit from using a switch device to press a button to communicate with you.
- Consider the child's preferences when selecting AT. For example, if a child prefers to lie down during an activity, selecting an AT that allows him to participate while in that position may do the trick. Determine the child's interests and think about how those might be used to motivate him to participate in the activity. For example, a child who enjoys lights may be more motivated to use an augmentative communication device that lights up when he presses a button to communicate.
- How will you know if the AT is supporting the child's participation? Use the AT with the child during an everyday activity and observe the child. Is the child more actively participating and learning in the activity? Are there still challenges or barriers to her participation in the activity? Think about how the AT was used and whether more instruction is needed to support the child in using it. Perhaps a different AT device is needed.
- After determining that the AT is promoting the child's participation in an everyday activity, think about how it might be used to support his participation and learning in other classroom activities. Continue to observe the child during activities to determine when he has become more independent and no longer needs the AT. At that time, reduce or eliminate the use of the AT.

A Quick Peek

Christian is a young preschooler who does not use any words to communicate. He has a simple adaptive communication device that says words or simple phrases when a switch is touched. He likes to have his teacher, Ms. Cara read him stories. Christian's device is set so he can make it say "yes," "turn the page," and "read more." Christian brings Ms. Cara the device and book when he wants her to read a story. Ms. Cara has also determined that she can record phrases from favorite group time stories onto the device. Now during group time, Ms. Cara reads a book and Christian can press the switch to join his peers in responding with phrases like, "Jump Frog, Jump!"



You'll know the practice is working if ...

- The child is engaged for longer periods of time in the everyday classroom activity.
- The child participates in the activity over and over again.
- The child asks to do the activity.

Learn more about AT to support young children's learning:

- [Simply Said](#) video
- [PACER Center](#) website
- [Tots-n-Tech](#) website
- [Assistivetech.net](#) website

ECTA Center

© 2017 Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

<http://www.ectacenter.org/decpr/>