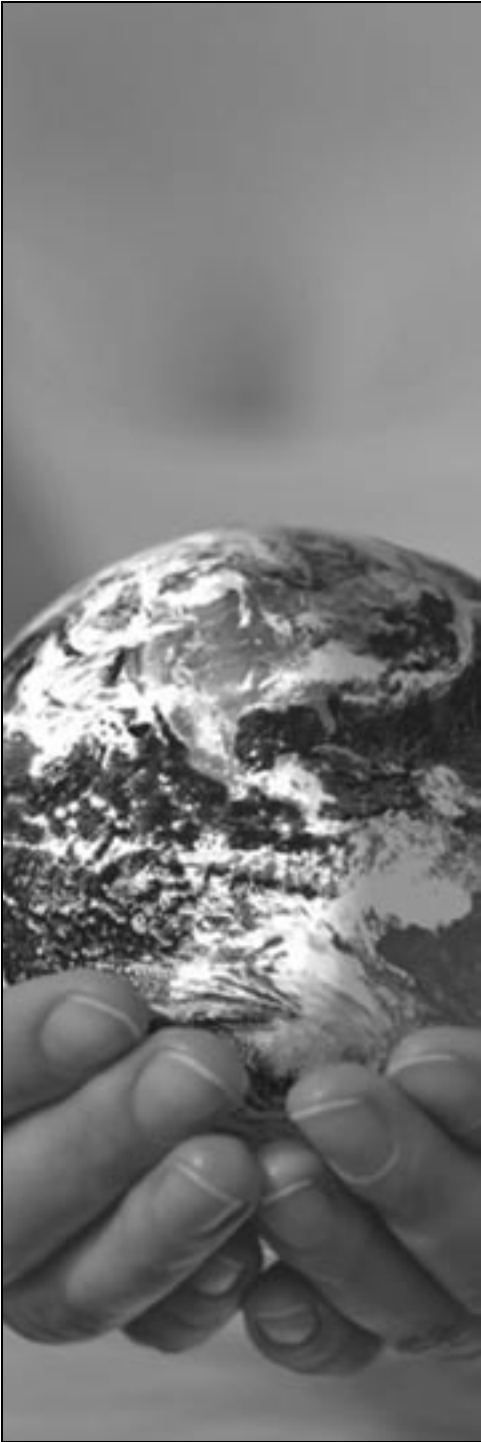




# Section 4: Quick Questions & Tips



# Quick Questions & Tips

## Quick Questions

**Where can I learn more about the range of assistive technology devices and services that might help my child?**

Ask the professionals who work with your child at school about assistive technology options and resources. Many of the Alliance for Technology Access (ATA) community technology centers offer hands-on learning opportunities through demonstration and equipment loan programs. Contact information for 37 ATA centers is available at [www.ataaccess.org/community/centers.lasso](http://www.ataaccess.org/community/centers.lasso) or from the main office at (707) 778-3011.

In every state there is at least one Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) and/or one Community Parent Resource Center (CPRC) that provide families with a range of disability-related information and support, including AT information. Contact information for the PTI/CPRC network can be found at [www.taalliance.org/Centers/index.htm](http://www.taalliance.org/Centers/index.htm).

The Family Center on Technology and Disability offers a database of articles, guides, websites, videos and other AT materials that is searchable by subject and disability. We also provide a database of AT organizations (including PTIs, CPRCs and ATA centers), many of which provide hands-on and/or web-based information on the range of AT options. Both can be accessed at: [www.fctd.info](http://www.fctd.info) or request a copy of our AT Resources CD-ROM by calling (202) 884-8068 or emailing [fctd@aed.org](mailto:fctd@aed.org).

Commercial organizations that provide product-specific information include ABLEDATA, AbleNet, and EnableMart. A non-profit site that offers a great deal of product information, searchable by function and product type is [assistivetech.net](http://assistivetech.net). Contact information for all of these organizations is listed in the Resources section.

**Are schools required to provide assistive technology for every child with a disability in a special education program?**

The special education program is administered under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which requires that school systems provide students with disabilities a "free and appropriate public education (FAPE)." If an AT device or service is determined to be necessary to meet a student's educational goals, and is documented in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), the school district is required to provide it for the child at no expense to the parents.

### **Can parents ask the school for a formal assessment of their child's assistive technology needs for school?**

Yes. An evaluation of AT needs may be part of the overall evaluation that a school system conducts to determine a child's eligibility for special education services or it may be part of a subsequent evaluation conducted as part of the IEP process. If an assessment of AT needs has not been included in such evaluations, parents have the right to request a specific AT assessment. The school system may use school personnel to conduct the assessment or it may contract with an independent professional. If parents disagree with the assessment obtained by the district and the district fails to show that the evaluation was appropriate, parents have the right to request another, independently-conducted AT assessment, at school expense. However, if the second assessment agrees with the one provided by the school system, parents may be liable for the cost of the second assessment.



### **Can my child use assistive technology purchased by the school at home?**

On a case-by-case basis, the use of school-purchased AT devices in a child's home or in other non-school settings is permitted if the child's IEP team determines that the child needs access to those devices at home in order to receive a free and appropriate education.

### **If the school pays for an AT device, to whom does it belong?**

If the school pays the entire cost of an AT device, then the school owns the equipment. If a parent pays for any portion of the cost of the equipment, then the family owns the device. Regardless of who owns the equipment, if it is required for the student in order to get a free and appropriate public education and is written into the IEP, the school is responsible for repairing or replacing it if needed.

### **Can my family get help with funding AT devices and services?**

Options for funding assistive technology vary from state to state and family to family. Ask the professionals who work with your child about different funding options that apply to your situation. Common funding sources for families include private insurance, state and federal programs, community organizations and nonprofit agencies. Most funding sources have their own specific requirements. Success in securing funding is frequently dependent on the applicant's ability to address each agency's unique requirements in a funding request. Refer to the Funding section of this guide for information about school, government, and organizational sources of funding.

### **My child is in a private school. Will s/he have access to assistive technology?**

This can be a little complicated as it depends on a number of variables. Children with disabilities who are placed by their parents in private schools are entitled to special education services but at a cost that is limited to a proportionate share of federal IDEA dollars. So if 10% of a district's school children attend private school, then 10% of its special education budget must be spent on those private school students. If the district places a child in a private school, then the district is responsible for 100% of the cost of AT devices and services that have been specified in the child's IEP. However, there are a number of exceptions to this rule, so parents are advised to get advice from a knowledgeable source before assuming that AT will be provided by the public school system.

### **What can parents do if the school doesn't provide the assistive technology documented in the IEP?**

If the school is not providing the AT devices and/or services written in your child's IEP, then you may choose to take further action. When differences arise, try to resolve them informally first. If you can't work out a solution that is satisfactory, you can take more formal steps that may involve mediation, a due process hearing, or filing a formal complaint. A variety of sources of information about mediation and due process are included in this guide.



# Quick Tips from Parents Who Have Been There

## The Big Picture

- ▶ Make the effort to keep up with new technology developments by attending conferences and workshops, joining an AT listserv, or finding AT resources in your community.
- ▶ Start preparing for your child's future technology needs well in advance. For example, start planning for high school and college while your child is still in grade school.
- ▶ Talk with other children and adults who use assistive technology, not just professionals, to gain a user's perspective.
- ▶ Try out different devices in your child's typical environments, such as school and home, before settling on one device.
- ▶ Participate in a parent advocacy organization or parent support group to learn advocacy skills and to find additional information resources.
- ▶ The Internet is a good tool for learning about assistive technology and locating funding resources. Skillful use of search tools, such as Google and Yahoo, can produce a wealth of information. If you do not have Internet access or feel limited in your use of search tools, try your local library. An increasing number of libraries make Internet use available and resource librarians can offer assistance in targeting your search. Also make use of the Family Center's online databases at [www.fctd.info](http://www.fctd.info), as all materials have been reviewed by AT professionals and blurbs are provided.
- ▶ Acquiring assistive technology is an ongoing process. Your child's AT needs will change as s/he grows, physically, cognitively, and emotionally.
- ▶ No assistive technology is perfect. Even so, it opens doors to inclusion and independence and is worth the effort.



## Communicating Effectively with Your Child's School

- ▶ Keep in touch with your child's teachers through frequent telephone calls, notes, or personal visits. Talk with them about what your child does well and how your child learns best. Ask questions about anything you don't understand.
- ▶ Attend all meetings concerning your child's education. Take notes and be an active, interested parent.
- ▶ Be a good listener. Encourage the staff to keep you informed about your child's progress, relationships with other children, and any problems or concerns they may have. Listen to their professional opinions about your child. Remember that school personnel can also be good advocates for your child!
- ▶ When differences of opinion arise, talk about them. Look for ways to reach a solution, but keep your child's needs uppermost in your mind.

## Advocating Effectively for Your Child

- ▶ Know your rights.
- ▶ Make notes on telephone conversations and meetings.
- ▶ Date and save all notes, report cards, IEPs and notices from the school regarding your child's education and progress.
- ▶ Jot down questions you want to ask or information you want to share before you attend meetings.
- ▶ Put all requests in writing and keep copies of all correspondence.
- ▶ Ask your child for information and include the child in meetings whenever possible. Help your child become an effective self-advocate.
- ▶ Meet other parents of children with disabilities – if there isn't an active parent group in your area, organize one.