ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (AT)

When a learner is struggling in any area of life and nothing seems to help, both parents and professionals often turn to technology as a solution. Using what is called assistive technology (AT), a toddler can color with an adapted crayon, a teenager can use word prediction software to become a successful writer, and an adult can use speech-to-text technology to be gainfully employed. While it is clear that some children with disabilities can benefit from AT, parents need to be proactive about seeking services for their child and become familiar with the law that ensures AT services are provided by public schools. Technology is rapidly advancing, sometimes on a daily basis. New technology changes not only how we learn and engage with the world, but how we function in daily life. Despite the fact that technology can help children achieve their dreams, students with disabilities are not systematically evaluated to see if they would benefit from AT services. Anecdotal evidence suggests that students only 3 to 5 percent of students with disabilities have assistive technology written into their Individualized Education Program (IEP). Although sometimes students use AT even though it is not included in their IEP's, a large percentage of students who would benefit from AT are not receiving services. That's why it's important for parents to proactive and to make sure AT services are considered for their children. While AT is a relatively young field, the laws that govern it are not new. Schools must consider the use of AT at least annually for every student who has an IEP and may benefit from it. Assistive technology includes the devices, software and services a student needs to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE), which is guaranteed by a federal law called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). AT should also be considered to help a student be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE), also ensured by IDEA. Today's rapidly advancing technology can open new worlds for children with disabilities, but parents must proactively look for AT solutions. Learn more about AT options at Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN), 26 Corporate Hill, Little Rock, AR. 72205, phone 1-800-828-2799 or on the web www.ar-ican.org

ICAN AT4ALL is Arkansas' statewide assistive technology program designed to make technology available and accessible for everyone who needs it. Assistive technology (AT) is any kind of device or tool that helps people learn, work, communicate and live more independently. AT can be very simple and inexpensive, like a modified knife and fork, or it can be very sophisticated and costly, like a computerized speech device. ICAN AT4ALL offers a number of services to help Arkansans of all ages find the AT they need for home, school, work and getting around in the community. Our services include: Information and Referral; Equipment Loans; Equipment Recycling; Equipment Exchange; Equipment Demonstrations; Training on devices and issues related to accessibility and AT; Presentations about ICAN and the benefits of technology; Exhibits of AT; Tours of the ICAN AT4ALL Clearinghouse; Information resources like this website and our newsletter; and Technical Assistance to employers, service providers, educators, and others.

ON-LINE RESOURCES

- **www.closingthegap.com**
- **www.pretrom.com**