

# Assistive Technology and High School Education: A Basic Resource Guide

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## INTRODUCTION

Without access to quality computer-based assistive technology (AT), many students with disabilities can spend 4–6 hours a day doing homework. This can prevent them from participating in extracurricular or other fun activities, which in turn, can negatively impact their overall happiness. The purpose of this brochure is to provide helpful basic resources to high school students, school personnel, and parents to help ensure that all students with disabilities in public schools throughout Massachusetts get the AT and support they need to succeed.

## MY RESEARCH PROJECT

This guide is the product of a year-long research project about the lack of quality, computer-based AT and support within public schools. For my project, I surveyed high school students with disabilities, teachers and school personnel who work with students with disabilities, and parents across Massachusetts. I asked participants about the use of AT in public schools, their awareness of AT, and their knowledge of how to use AT. Additionally, I asked students how the use of AT impacts them.

The following guide will:

- 1) share key findings from my research and,
- 2) offer a set of AT resources for students, teachers, and parents.



## **Finding #1: Students using quality, computer-based AT experienced increased independence.**

Here is some information about basic AT tools designed to help students become more independent and efficient in their schoolwork:



### **RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS**

#### **[Voice Typing and Dictation Video](#)**

This short video shows you how to enable and use a speech-to-text software called Voice Typing in Google Docs.



#### **[iPhone Dictation Feature](#)**

This article explains how to use the Dictation feature on iPhones.



#### **[Google Translate](#)**

This is a language translation software called Google Translate.



#### **[Screen Readers](#)**

This American Foundation for the Blind article provides general information about screen readers.



## **Finding #2: Although schools placed a high priority on getting AT for students, many appear to fall short on training teachers and school personnel on how to use this technology.**

The following resources provide information about online AT training.



### **RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL**

#### **[The Assistive Technology Training Association Learning Center](#)**

The Assistive Technology Industry Association's Learning Center is a catalog of online AT training courses.



#### **[Professional Development for Assistive Technology - Tennessee Association for Assistive Technology](#)**

This webpage from the Tennessee Association for Assistive Technology provides a list of organizations offering AT training.



### **Finding #3: Out of the three groups surveyed, parents appeared to be the least knowledgeable about AT in public schools.**

Here is a list of resources designed to educate parents about what their children are entitled to on their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) as well as information about special education training sessions and workshops regarding a new IEP form.



## **RESOURCES FOR PARENTS**

### **[Know Your Rights to Access Assistive Technology](#)**

This article explains what children on IEPs are entitled to regarding AT access.



### **[Schools Must Include Assistive Technology in IEPs](#)**

This article explains how AT must be included in the IEP according to the Department of Education.



### **[Assistive Technology Devices and Services for Children with Disabilities Under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#)**

The Office of Special Education programs recently published this guidance related to children who need AT for school, including free access to an AT webinar.



### **[The New IEP Form – Massachusetts](#)**

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education offers the new IEP form in English and 16 other languages, including Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Spanish.



### **[A Fact Useful for Everyone](#)**

This factsheet is about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Full Funding of 2023.

The IDEA states that 40% of special education funding is supposed to come from the federal government. Currently, only 14% of special education funding comes from the federal government. This largely prevents students from gaining access to the AT and support they need to succeed. However, the passage of The IDEA Full Funding Act of 2023 would help to change this.

Remember, while AT can be overwhelming at times, experts are available for consultation.



### **[Assistive Technology Regional Centers](#)**

Easterseals of Massachusetts offers Assistive Technology Regional Centers. They provide AT consulting across the state.



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**UMass  
Boston**



**Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston**

[www.communityinclusion.org](http://www.communityinclusion.org)

**Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center, UMass Chan Medical School:**

<https://shriver.umassmed.edu/>

**The Disability Law Center**

[www.dlc-ma.org](http://www.dlc-ma.org)

**Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council**

[www.mass.gov/mddc](http://www.mass.gov/mddc)

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