**Five Quick Tips for Families on Using Assistive Technology to Support Instruction at Home for Students with Disabilities**

1. *My child’s school uses an online learning platform for instruction between school and home. Can my child use her typical assistive technology when accessing this learning platform?*

Online learning is completely different from the face to face instruction offered in classrooms.  Assistive technology and instructional strategies used in the classroom are selected and designed to match the needs of a specific task and learning environment.  Now that the child’s learning environment and activities have changed, it’s important that families and teachers work together to modify or identify new AT and instructional strategies. Use the [SETT Framework](http://joyzabala.com/uploads/Zabala_SETT_Leveling_the_Learning_Field.pdf) with your child’s teacher or related services providers to prompt discussions and identify new tools and strategies for home.

Most online learning platforms have some accessibility features built in, but they will vary depending on the online learning platform used. Some learning platforms will work with existing AT too.  Reach out to your child’s teacher to determine which accessibility features are built into your school’s online learning platform and for information on how to use her devices during online instruction.

As teachers and students adjust to distance and online learning platforms, there will be a learning curve for everyone. Frequent communication with your child’s school team provides an opportunity for brainstorming and collaboration to design effective strategies to use in your home. The added benefit is establishing a trusting, support system during these times.

Resources:

[Tips for Staying Connected through Technology During COVID-19](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ta4G7sjpW5WGAcxgiBDoP-U9UYpjHDvNksOfs3nXMmw/edit?usp=sharing)

[Using the SETT Framework to Level the Learning Field for Students with Disabilities](http://joyzabala.com/uploads/Zabala_SETT_Leveling_the_Learning_Field.pdf)

1. *My child is struggling with some of his school assignments.  Are there some*

*assistive technologies or special strategies that might help him at home?*

The IEP or 504 plans will contain information related to the accommodations and assistive technology your student uses to access instruction. To find information about accommodations and supports, look in the present level of performance, goals, and the accommodations page. Talk to your child’s teacher or case manager about the specifics of these strategies and how you can incorporate them or modify them for home instruction.

Resource:

[Center on Technology and Disability, Assistive Technology 101, Are you a parent new to assistive technology?  Start learning the basics.](https://www.ctdinstitute.org/audience/at-101)

1. *My child’s teacher uses technology at school that we don’t have at home. What*

*else can I use at home to replace this technology?*

Talk to your child’s teacher or case manager about devices, materials or strategies that are used in the classroom that may not be listed in the IEP. Teachers structure their lessons and classroom space to support students and instructional activities. There may be devices or items that help your student succeed that are available to all students in the classroom that may not be listed in the IEP. Talking to your child’s teacher may help identify some additional effective resources and strategies you can use at home.

1. *What if I don’t know how to use the assistive technology my child uses?*

First, ask your child to show you how to use his or her technology.  Often our children can demonstrate this AT for us. Your child’s teacher or related services specialist may also be able to provide a virtual tutorial.  In addition, most manufacturers of assistive technology products offer short video tutorials that can easily be found online. Use Google to find these online tutorials.

Resource:

[Assistive Technology Tutorials](https://www.understood.org/pages/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/assistive-technologies-basics/)

1. *Home instruction is hard! Teachers have a bag of tricks that I don’t have to keep*

*my child focused during online instruction. What can I do to make home instruction more effective for my child?*

Most families are supporting their children using a combination of online learning, one-on-one instruction and independent practice.  Instruction at home is not the same as instruction in a school environment. Accommodations, including AT, are used to address a specific need identified in the classroom. Accommodations and supports that are effective in the classroom may not be as effective or practical during online instruction in the home. For example, teachers often roam the classroom to provide “teacher proximity” as a way to remind students to keep working, that time is almost up, or to praise the student for hard work.  During online instruction at home, your child’s instructional needs may change and other replacement strategies or AT may work better, such as using timers, shorter work sessions or fun activities to work toward (for example, break, snack, time outside). Here are some questions to consider asking your child’s teacher:

* How can I set up a learning area at home for my child?
* What helps my child be successful in your class?  How can I adapt these ideas for use at home?
* How can I help my child be more independent?
* How can I encourage my child to use her communication system?

Resource:

[Simple Ideas for Families](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1yI5vB5qLR4JZ_jOWHAeFGclqSmHOEZhP8eo9o21t1qQ/edit)

Be patient. This is a new experience for everyone involved. Many teachers are learning how to shape their effective classroom strategies into a new style of instruction. Some are learning to navigate these new online learning platforms. Families are also doing their best to be flexible and to learn new ways to support their child’s instructional needs at home. Students are also working hard to adapt to changes in their home and school routines and adjust to new instructional practices.