

Assistive Technology & Transition Planning

Essential Questions & Expert Answers

Assistive technology (AT) plays a critical role in preparing students for life after high school. When thoughtfully integrated into transition planning, AT supports education, employment, military pathways, and independent living. This guide answers common educator questions and provides practical guidance for ensuring AT supports carry beyond graduation.

How can we identify when a student might benefit from assistive technology as part of their transition plan?

Assistive technology is not a checkbox decision. It requires thoughtful discussion about the student, the environments they will enter after graduation, the tasks expected in those environments, and the barriers that may impact performance.

Consider:

- Current AT use in high school
- Organization and time management challenges
- Reading, writing, or communication barriers
- Physical access needs
- Independent living routines

The SETT Framework (Student, Environment, Tasks, Tools) provides a structured process for guiding these conversations.

Resource

▶ [Virginia Assistive Technology Network](#)

What are some low-cost or free assistive technology tools that support students in adult environments?

Start with tools students already use and build from there. The goal is independence, not complexity.

Examples include:

- Smartphone alarms and timers
- Calendar reminders with location-based alerts
- Built-in accessibility features on phones and computers
- Digital books and text-to-speech tools
- Visual schedules and time timers
- Environmental controls such as smart speakers

Resource

- ▶ [Fast Fact: From Paper to Pixels: Modernizing AT Transition Portfolio Development](#)

How can we ensure assistive technology use in high school carries over into adult environments like college or the workplace?

Successful carryover requires intentional practice across school, home, and community settings. Students must have opportunities to trial, refine, and take ownership of the tools they use.

Key strategies include:

- Gradual release of responsibility
- Student understanding of what the tool is and why they use it
- Explicit instruction in self-advocacy
- Family collaboration and consistency

Resources

- ▶ [Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services \(DARS\): Assistive Technology](#)
- ▶ [Virginia Department of Education: Assistive Technology](#)

Students should also understand their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to request reasonable accommodations.

What role should student self-advocacy play in selecting and using assistive technology tools?

Students should be at the center of AT selection and implementation. They must be trained not only in how to use a device, but also how to explain its purpose, troubleshoot challenges, and request support.

Healthy struggle builds independence. Assistive technology includes services such as training and problem solving, not just the communication devices.

Resource

- ▶ [TTAC Online: Students Advocating their own AT Needs](#)

Are there specific transition assessments that help evaluate assistive technology needs?

There is no single required assessment. Instead, use structured problem-solving approaches and consult division AT specialists and occupational therapists.

The Virginia Assistive Technology, Tools, and Strategies (VATTS) Consideration Guide can support teams in determining whether further exploration is warranted.

Resources

- ▶ [Virginia Assistive Technology, Tools, and Strategies: Consideration and Assessment Guidance Document](#)
- ▶ [VATTS Consideration Guide](#)

Conclusion

Assistive technology is not about devices. It is about access, independence, and preparing students for adult life. When AT is considered early, practiced consistently, and reinforced across school, home, and community settings, it becomes a bridge rather than a barrier.

Effective transition planning requires teams to move beyond compliance and toward intentional implementation. This includes listening to student voices, promoting self-advocacy, allowing healthy struggle, and ensuring students understand what tools they use and why. AT should not end at graduation. It should evolve with the student and follow them into college, employment, military service, and independent living.

When educators, families, and community partners collaborate, assistive technology becomes a powerful tool for dignity, autonomy, and long-term success.