Assistive Technology in the Classroom

Assistive technology is any item, piece of equipment, or product system (app) that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of a person with a disability. Some assistive technology ideas are specifically designed for students with brain injury; other technologies can be used following proper assessment of student needs.

The needs of students with brain injury can change dramatically, especially during the first two to three years following the injury. Unfortunately, cognitive skills and memory often take a long time to heal and may remain areas of challenge for students with TBI. The student with brain injury may not recognize the need for assistive technology or other forms of intervention.

Assistive technology needs to be strategically taught to the students and practiced in the environment where it will be used. As with any assistive technology, most students may depend heavily on people in the environment at first. Then, the student should be taught to take more and more control of the technology over time, if possible. For students with brain injury (as well as other students), effective assistive technology tends to have the following characteristics:

- It is minimally intrusive, not overly cumbersome or unwieldy and does not intrude too much on the student's life, (e.g., does not prevent the student from interacting with others).
- Assistance without unnecessary control on the student's day-to-day activities
- It requires skills the student has. The student is not overwhelmed by the device or strategy and has the background to use it easily.
- Universally accessible or at least accessible to a majority of other people.
- Doesn't make the individuals using it feel different or that they stand out when using it.
- Has built in prompting, which can decrease over time as the student's independence increases.
- Supported by the environment; people around the student understand how to use the technology and can help the student when needed.

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