



Student Reading Success Through Research and Collaboration

Working With Schools and Area Education Agencies on Providing Your Child Assistive Technology

What Is the Role of the Area Education Agency Regarding Assistive Technology?

Your regional Area Education Agency (AEA) provides expertise and consultation to school district personnel in order to maintain and expand the expertise of educators about assistive technology devices and services. AEAs also provide technical assistance and professional development to district personnel. AEA personnel assist districts in finding appropriate assistive technology devices and services for students as well as purchasing assistive technology devices where appropriate.

If you do not know in which AEA region your child's school is located, you can use the Iowa AEA's "Find My AEA": iowaaea.org/find-my-aea/

How Can You Communicate With Your School and AEA About the Assistive Technology You Have Tried at the Iowa Reading Research Center?

When it comes to assistive technology and other disability issues, it is best to keep a positive working relationship with the school and AEA personnel. If you believe there is a problem or that more should be done for your child, it is best to talk to your child's school personnel first as those educators see and work directly with your child on a daily basis. However, AEA special education consultants can provide important support, expertise, and resources for meeting your child's needs.

These web pages may provide helpful information about discussing assistive technology with school and AEA personnel.

- Strategies for respectfully communicating with schools about assistive technology: wrightslaw.com/info/at.strat.edyburn.htm
- Questions you may ask to help make sure your child gets the most appropriate assistive technology: understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/finding-an-assistive-technology/checklist-what-to-ask-the-school-before-choosing-a-tool-or-device

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How Can You Contact the AEA That Serves Your Child's School?

The following list contains links to all of the assistive technology webpages for each AEA. In general, these pages will guide you to resources and contact information for AEA staff who work with assistive technology.

Central Rivers AEA centralriversaea.org/special-education/student-family-services/assistive-technology/

Grant Wood AEA

gwaea.org/educators/special-education/special-ed-services/assistive-technology/

Great Prairie AEA

gpaea.org/services/assistive-technology/

Green Hills AEA

sites.google.com/a/ghaea.org/ghassistive-technology/home

Heartland AEA

heartlandaea.org/special-education/special-education-services/assistive-technology/

Keystone AEA

keystoneaea.org/educators/special-education/special-education-services

Mississippi Bend AEA

sites.google.com/aea9.k12.ia.us/mbaeaatdept

Northwest AEA

nwaea.org/educators/special-education-services/assistive-technology-services/

Prairie Lakes AEA

sites.google.com/a/plaea.org/plaea-at/

Additional Information to Keep in Mind

If it is found that your child has an educational need for assistive technology, your child's team consisting of family members, school personnel, and AEA representatives should include it in the individualized education program (IEP) or 504 plan. The IEP or 504 plan should specify what assistive technology the school needs to provide your child, under what circumstances it should be provided (e.g., when reading any texts for content area instruction), and times when the assistive technology may not be used (e.g., during reading intervention class).

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Unfortunately, schools may not provide the particular assistive technology you or your child desire. If there is a device that has approximately the same capabilities as the technology you are requesting but is less expensive or already a part of the school's resources, the school may fulfill the assistive technology requirement with a reasonable alternative to your request. If you believe the assistive technology provided by the school is not benefiting your child, you should be prepared to articulate to school and AEA personnel what the limitations are and how a different form of assistive technology would better meet your child's educational needs.

For information about overall preparation for an IEP meeting, please refer to these blog posts from the Iowa Reading Research Center:

- iowareadingresearch.org/blog/preparation-iep-meeting
- iowareadingresearch.org/blog/developing-individualized-education-program

This web page includes additional articles discussing assistive technology that may be helpful while in the process of exploring options or requesting assistive technology for your child:

- understood.org/pages/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/

The Iowa Department of Education Assistive Technology web page also provides information and resources for assistive technology such as federal regulations and funding sources.

- educateiowa.gov/pk-12/special-education/special-education-programs-services/assistive-technology

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