



High Expectations and Assistive Technology: Empowering Your Child

Parents and professionals serving young children with disabilities often face difficult challenges in their efforts to help children succeed. To overcome these challenges, they need the right tools and approach to help children grow and reach their full potential. This tip sheet will explore the role that assistive technology (AT) can play in helping a child meet high expectations.

Having High Expectations

Having high expectations as a parent or professional is very important. We can use assistive technology to remove barriers and help children reach their full potential.

What High Expectations Mean to You as a Parent

It is important to think positively about a child's skills. It means teachers and parents need to find a way to help children show what they know or what they can do.

A mother cried as her daughter made something work for the first time. They were visiting the Simon Technology Center to explore options. During the process, the AT specialist working with the family noticed that the little girl could move her foot. The specialist took a toy and a switch and set it up for the little girl to try. The little girl smiled as she made something move for the first time using her foot. High expectations and assistive technology helped remove the barriers and opened the door to possibilities.



Here are some ideas to consider that can help you find the right balance of expectations for your child:

- Think, “Yes they can!” Don’t believe they can’t or won’t do something if they haven’t been given an opportunity to show their abilities.
- Be involved as a parent in providing your young children with opportunities and challenges that will help them grow. Parents have tremendous insight into their child’s strengths, abilities, and personality, and need to use this information to help the child.
- Give the child more time to develop his or her skills using assistive technology. Time and opportunity are essential in helping determine if a tool is appropriate and for the child to master the tool.
- Be open to trying something new (e.g., a new parenting strategy or type of assistive technology) for a set amount of time, and measure the progress your child makes.

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- Listen when others share their goals and hopes for the child.
 - Consider using video to document new skills mastered and progress made. This is an easy and impactful way to demonstrate and document a child's use of technology.
 - Consider AT as an option when a child faces new challenges. Assistive technology can make the difference between being able to do or learn something.

Assistive Technology: Tools of opportunity

Having high expectations for children with disabilities is important, but so is providing them with the tools to succeed. In many cases, assistive technology can provide a child with tools to complete tasks in unique ways that use his or her strengths and abilities. Consider these examples:

- A young child with autism may struggle to follow the verbal instructions for a classroom activity but can follow along independently with the support of pictures that show the process step by step.
- A child with fine motor impairments might have difficulty using a paper book, but could read the book

on a computer and turn the pages independently with a large button that is easier to use.

- A young child who has a hard time dressing independently could complete this task using larger grips attached to zippers and buttons.

These are just a few of the many different skills assistive technology can help with so children can meet high expectations. AT can range from simple adaptations (e.g., zipper grip) to more advanced tools, (e.g., electronic book). Once parents and professionals learn more about assistive technology, they are often surprised by the positive impact it can have and the doors it can open for children with disabilities.

High expectations, together with assistive technology, can provide children with the support and tools they need for meaningful growth. Parents and professionals can lead the way by establishing those high expectations and finding the right assistive technology to meet the child's needs. While there may be challenges along the way, watching children with disabilities be successful makes the journey well worth the time and effort involved.