



Assistive Technology in Schools Your Children's Rights

Have you been told:

- “Your child can only use technology that is supplied by the school/school board.”
- “All of our LD students use Chromebooks with Read & Write.”
- “We don’t support iPads here.”
- “You can’t bring your own device to school - we will supply you with a Chromebook or another device.”

This is akin to being told:

- “We only allow grey wheelchairs in this school - students find the colourful ones to be too distracting.”
- “Since our teachers don’t know how to use FM systems, we don’t use them here. Your child will just have to pay better attention in class.”
- “You can’t bring your prescription glasses to school - we will supply you with a pair of readers that we give to all of our students with impaired vision.”

Your children's rights:

- The delivery of appropriate accommodations and assistive technology tools is each student’s right. According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s (OHRC) Policy on accessible education for students with disabilities (2018), denying students use of their prescribed tools (whether or not prescribed by a school employee) is a human rights issue. The OHRC trumps the Education Act and all other documents outlining school policies in Ontario.

Furthermore, the OHRC’s Policy on accessible education for students with disabilities (2018) states that all schools have a:

Duty to Accommodate (Section 8)

8.1.2 Individualization

*“There is no set formula for accommodation. Each student's needs are unique and must be considered afresh when an accommodation request is made. At all times, the emphasis must be on the individual student's needs and not on the type of disability. **Blanket approaches to accommodation that rely solely on categories, labels and generalizations are not acceptable.** Accommodations may need to be revisited over time to make sure they continue to meet a student's needs appropriately.*

***Although many accommodations will benefit large numbers of students with similar needs, an accommodation solution that meets one student's requirements may not meet the needs of another.** Students sharing the same condition often experience it in very different ways, with different symptoms, limitations and prognoses. For example, while some students with visual impairments read Braille, many do not. **Different effects of a disability and different learning styles may call for different approaches.**”*

8.3.1 Accommodation Process, Basic Principles

“...The way an education institution provides and implements an accommodation is subject to human rights standards.”



8.4.1 Appropriate Accommodation, Basic Principles

“The most appropriate accommodation is one that most:

- *respects the student’s dignity*
- *responds to the student’s individualized needs*
- *best promotes inclusion and full participation*

...Ultimately, to be considered appropriate, accommodation must provide meaningful access to education.”

- Nowhere in the OHRC does it state that the most appropriate accommodation is the one that is exclusively provided by the school, nor does it suggest that students can only use technology that is provided by their school.

If it is our children’s right to use their own assistive technology at school, why is the school telling us otherwise?

- More likely than not, it is their fear of the unknown.
- In most cases, once students show teachers their tools and how they can be used to support them with their school work, teacher’s fears are alleviated and they become interested in learning more about their student’s tools.
- Students learning to use assistive technology tools at SLP4ALL become highly independent in the use of their tools and transfer their knowledge from their training sessions to their classrooms with relative ease and independence (don’t forget, today’s youth are society’s digital natives!).
- Student technology can be sorted into three distinct categories, each of which requires a different approach to application:

1) Educational Technology

Educational technology is meant to teach skills such as numeracy, reading, printing, science concepts, etc. Educational technology will change as skills develop.

2) Classroom Technology

Classroom technology is that which is used by all students in a classroom to access the school’s Course Management System (e.g., Google Classroom), engage in research, writing or other digital/online activities. Individual access needs are not necessarily taken into account when schools are choosing classroom technology.

3) Assistive Technology

Assistive technology is intended to help level the playing field for students with diverse learning needs by providing individual students with the means required to participate fully in educational life. There is no ‘one size fits all’ solution when it comes to assistive technology. As each student’s needs manifests differently in the school setting, it is essential that their technology is chosen based on their individual needs. Limiting students to what a teacher is comfortable with or to what ‘the school uses’ is denying students of their right to an individualized approach to accommodation.

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