Assistive Technology at WCS

"Assistive technology refers to the devices and services that are used to increase, maintain, or improve the capabilities of a student with a disability," (LD@school). "For people *without* disabilities, technology makes things easier. For people with disabilities, technology makes things possible." (National Council on Disability)

Investigating whether or not an individual student might benefit from assistive technology solutions is an ongoing process that involves working as a team (teachers, learning strategists, parents) to gather information, assess needs and try various solutions. In Student Services, we always ask the question: "What needs to be in place so that teachers and others can help this student do the tasks necessary to accomplish their goals?"

Some of the most commonly used types of Assistive Technology used at the school include:

- *Low Tech*: Pencil grips, slant boards, scribes, readers
- *Higher Tech:*
  - *Audiobooks:*
    - Introduce students to books above their reading level
    - Model good interpretive reading
    - Teach critical listening
    - Highlight the humor in books
    - Introduce new genres that students might not otherwise consider
    - Introduce new vocabulary or difficult proper names or locales
    - Sidestep unfamiliar dialects or accents, Old English, and old-fashioned literary styles
    - Provide a read-aloud model
    - Provide a bridge to important topics of discussion for parents and children who can listen together while commuting to sporting events, music lessons, or on vacations (adapted from readingrockets.com)

- *Speech to text:* voice to speech recognition software that takes a student's spoken words and converts them to typed words on a computer or other digital device. Also called voice-to-text, it was originally developed as an assistive technology for the hearing impaired but has become invaluable as a tool for a student with LD's.

- ***Text to speech:*** programs convert text into spoken output. The program reads aloud digital text found on computers, smartphones, and tablets. Text to speech is used to read back a student's original work, scanned or downloaded worksheets as well as textbooks. Text to speech was originally developed as an assistive technology for the sight impaired but has become an invaluable tool for students with LD's.

- ***Rocket Notebooks:*** Notes taken in these notebooks are (with the accompanying App), uploaded to various cloud services such as Google Drive, Dropbox and more, using a smartphone or tablet. This helps students to organize their work and create a digital portfolio.

- ***Smart Pens:*** use audio recording technology and special notebooks to record the teacher's lecture allowing students to take minimal notes. It is helpful for students that struggle to listen and write notes at the same time.

- ***Scanning Pens use OCR technology:*** They are used to read aloud text from worksheets, textbooks, and novel studies. Scanning pens give students (especially student with dyslexia) greater independence allowing them access to content that cannot always be delivered in a digital format.

- ***Ipads:*** User-friendly, intuitive, visual, extensive capacity for various educational apps to support executive functioning needs and skill development.

**Note: Some of these devices are available through the Student Services department and others are

Resources:
Infusing Assistive Technology for Learning into the IPP Process, Alberta Education, 2006.
Assistive Technology for Students with Learning Disabilities, LD@school (www.ldatschool.ca/assistive-technology/), 2018