## Evaluating a Student and Choosing the Right Technology

Classrooms are evolving to become digital classrooms with 1:1 devices, digital textbooks/materials, on-line assignments and on-line statewide assessments. In recent years, many mainstream devices now include built-in accessibility features adding more options to the traditional devices created just for students with visual impairments/blindness. Here is a list of things to consider when evaluating a student’s technology needs:

1. Consider *all* the current tasks that a student will need to accomplish with technology. Will one device efficiently do all the tasks or will multiple devices be necessary?
2. Consider what tasks the student will need to do in the next several years – what technology will best suit the longer-term needs and goals of this student?
3. Consider the student’s next transition and what technology will best fit those needs. \*
4. Consider what type of 1:1 technology is being used within the student’s classroom. Ideally, the student will use the same mainstream device *and software/apps* that his/her peers and teachers are using.
5. Consider the student’s current abilities. (Example: A student may struggle with physically producing gestures on a tablet; but, he/she is able to use - or learn to use - the Bluetooth keyboard or braille display.)
6. Consider the student’s acuity, visual prognosis and efficiency. If a student has to scroll the text or has to lean over/hold the device close in order to read the text, or if the student’s reading speed (print or braille) is slower than his/her peers, then a screen reader evaluation/training is strongly recommended.
7. Consider the staff’s knowledge (TVI, classroom teachers, therapists, family members and potentially peers) about the device and if the student needs staff support to successfully use the device.
8. Consider the amount of training - and who will provide training - on the device for the student, TVI, staff and family.
9. Consider if a student has a strong like/dislike for a particular type of device. (Example: A student with low vision may be able to accomplish the same task with a CCTV and a tablet: he/she may strongly dislike using a bulky CCTV may think a tablet is cool.)
10. Consider the portability/physical requirements of each device. Does the device need to be close to an electric outlet? Does the student have to sit in a preferred seat in order to use the device? Does the student need to transport the device; if so, can the student safely and independently transport the device from classroom to classroom?
	1. Can the student safely and independently transport the device to/ and from school or will a second device be needed at home?

\*Transitions:

In many school districts, transitions from elementary to middle and middle school to high school mean a school-wide change in devices, as many elementary schools are using tablets while the middle schools and/or high schools often use computers.

* 1. Transition from learning to read/write and reading/writing to learn. Students are taught the mechanics of learning to read/write through third grade (typically visual text or braille text); after third grade, the goal changes to efficiency, speed and the ability to independently do the same work at the same pace as his/her peers (at some point changing to auditory as the primary mode of learning).
	2. Transition from elementary school to middle school.
	3. Transition from middle school to high school.
	4. Transition from high school to college/work force where students/workers typically do not have support of the VI staff and materials are typically not available in braille.

Additional Resources:

<http://www.teachingvisuallyimpaired.com/conducting-an-at-assessment.html>

(Includes a detailed student assistive technology evaluation form and a simple student data collection form.)

<http://www.perkinselearning.org/ccss/assistive-technology-assessment>

<http://www.perkinselearning.org/ccss/assistive-technology-visual-impairments>

Webcasts:

<http://www.perkinselearning.org/videos/webcast/assistive-technology-assessment>

<http://www.perkinselearning.org/videos/webcast/accessible-instructional-materials-in-the-digital-classroom>