Managing Technology Over the Summer: Part One

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Technology, including television, cell phones, the internet and social media, has become a mainstream part of everyday life for most parents and children. Today, I am focusing on technology for special education students because it can both benefit and interfere with education. Next week I will address some strategies to manage technology during the summer. For many children, summer represents a break from the structure and educational component of the school year. Yet, the reality is that many parents work during the summer and need to provide care for their children. It is important to manage your child's access to technology because it is easy to rely on it as a tool to keep kids distracted.

Technology can be a tremendous asset for special education students and their parents to compensate for learning disabilities. A former resource program high school student, who was an English as a second language learner, was diagnosed with dyslexia. He always struggled with reading, spelling and written language, yet was extremely bright and verbal. Nearly thirty years ago, voice recognition devices were just being introduced to the public. I went to the local Fry's to purchase one of the early Dragon Speaking applications. Although it didn't work well initially, many years later I ran into this student at a nearby Safeway where he had worked his way up to a managerial position by relying on his strong verbal skills and memory to compensate for his difficulties with written language. He relied on his cell phone to communicate and the computer to track his stock purchases, which supplemented his income enabling him to purchase a condo.

Here are several ways in which technology can support special education students:

Homework Management: Most schools now have an on-line updated calendar of assignments to help students track their assignments, due dates, and grades. Check with your local school on gaining access either through a parent or guest login. Email your child's teachers with any questions on your child's progress

Assistance with Written Composition: Most word processing programs automatically provide self-correction of spelling and grammar. The internet provides an array of multimedia expositions that are

very engaging for students. Internet sites that
eliminate plagiarism (i.e. www.turnitin.com) can be used
by students to submit their compositions to teachers for
homework assignments.

Reinforcement of Math and Reading Skills and SAT/ ACT
Test Taking: Internet sites that can provide added
support in math includes www.khanacademy.org/
or www.ixl.com/Math. Reading support can be provided at
www.freerice.com/ andSAT/ACT assistance can be provided
at https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org.

Happy technology!

Karen