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15 Tech Resources That Support Kids With Learning and Attention Issues

Find the right app or online tool for that assistive-technology job

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Surveying the results of recent studies, the jury still seems to be out on the question of whether technology in the classroom is helpful or harmful to children. That may be because the correct answer is more nuanced than a simple "yea" or "nay." Using technology effectively (https://www.parentmap.com/article/tech-tsunami-facing-education) in education may be more a matter of finding the right tool for the job. This is perhaps especially true when it comes to assisting kids with learning disabilities or attention disorders — comprising at least 11 percent (https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/for-some-washington-students-with-special-needs-diagnosis-comes-too-late/) of schoolchildren in Washington state — for whom the right app or program could make a world of difference.

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Here are several tech-based resources that could provide just the tool to help your kid achieve more success and mastery in school this year.

Learning apps

Auditory Workout (https://www.virtualspeechcenter.com/App/auditory_workout_app)

Developed by a certified speech and language pathologist, Auditory Workout is an app for children ages 4–10 who have auditory processing disorders, receptive language disorder or autism. The app focuses on improving auditory attention, memory and the processing of verbal directions. It includes hundreds of audio instructions and allows users to set background noise levels for added challenge.

Brain Focus (https://brainfocus.io/)

It doesn't always work to just take distraction-prone kids' phones away when it's time to do homework, because so much coursework needs to be done online nowadays. Brain Focus blocks apps and quiets notifications so phone distractions are not a factor during class or other dedicated learning times, such as for reading and homework.

Ghotit (https://www.ghotit.com)

There are a lot of spelling and text-editing apps out there, but Ghotit seems to be the most powerful — and the one most specifically designed to aid kids with dyslexia and dysgraphia. The app corrects significantly misspelled words, confused words, homophones, grammar and punctuation, and offers advanced word prediction with grammar- and phonetics-awareness capabilities.

Motion Math (http://motionmathgames.com/)

Make a game out of K–6 math skills and number sense with Motion Math. Kids work at their own pace on games with adaptive content; adults track student usage and mastery.

Popplet (https://popplet.com)

Equally valuable for kids who have trouble organizing ideas and for visual learners, Popplet is a mind-mapping tool that allows kids to insert words, images and their own drawings. Terms of service prohibit kids younger than 13 from creating accounts, but do allow adult-controlled accounts to be used by kids.

Read&Write (https://apps.apple.com/us/app/id934749270?ign-mpt=uo%3D4)

Texthelp's Read&Write app uses an alternative keyboard with integrated features to assist with writing through "speak as I type" technology and specially formulated dyslexia-focused word prediction features and dictionaries. Students can check for errors by touching a word, sentence or passage to hear it read out loud.

SnapType (http://www.snaptypeapp.com/)

SnapType provides kids with dysgraphia a way to keep up with their regular coursework. Students take a photo of homework worksheets and then type their answers into the digitized worksheets instead of writing them on the originals. The ability to draw lines facilitates the completion of matching problems, and students can zoom to the size that's easiest for them. No printer is necessary — completed worksheets can

be sent to the teacher digitally.

Socratic (https://socratic.org)

Powered by Google AI and using text and speech recognition, Socratic is a newfangled homework helper. Students take and share a photo of a problem and get instant explanations, videos and step-by-step help. Reviews recommend it most highly for math at the high school level, but other supported subjects include science, history, literature, social studies and more.

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The Zones of Regulation (http://www.selosoft.com/zones.html)

The Zones of Regulation teaches emotion-management strategies based on a cognitive behavioral approach using colored zones to represent emotions. Activities help students recognize when (and why) they are in uncomfortable emotional zones and how to get back to the right one.

Time Timer (https://www.timetimer.com/)

It's easy to lose track of time during a break or to feel like 20 minutes of reading must have taken an hour already. Setting a timer for breaks or tasks can help kids stay on track and prevent arguments about whether they've been working "long enough." A simple red circle replaced by white as time counts down makes it easy for even little kids to understand how time elapses.

Tools and devices

Livescribe (https://www.livescribe.com/site/)

Livescribe smart pens look like a regular pen, but they can be used to digitize handwriting, making it easier to go back and study hastily scribbled notes. They also record audio for students who can't keep up with the pace of a lecture. And, in a particularly useful bridge to competent note-taking, the notes you write down while recording are linked to the audio time stamp. Students can write down keywords and phrases during a lecture while recording — rewriting the words will automatically skip to the matched time stamp in the recording, allowing students to listen to key points again, without having to replay the entire recorded lecture.

Wizcomtech Reading Pen (https://wizcomtech.com/)

The Wizcomtech reading pen is not actually a pen. It's a pen-shaped scanner designed to boost vocabulary, phonemic awareness, fluency and comprehension of printed text. When the reader scans a word in text, the device provides readers with pronunciation and definitions of the "highlighted" words. (There's also a headphone jack for use in the classroom.)

Additional learning resources

LD OnLine (http://www.ldonline.org/)

LD OnLine provides accurate, up-to-date information about learning disabilities and ADHD. The website features hundreds of articles, videos and essays, as well as a comprehensive resource guide, very active forums, and a referral directory of professionals, schools and products. Although most of the site is geared toward parents and educators, the Kids' Voices section features artwork and stories by children with learning disabilities and specialized book lists for kids, grouped by topic.

Washington Assistive Technology Act Program (http://watap.org/)

The mission of the Washington Assistive Technology Act Program (WATAP) is to help Washingtonians with disabilities make informed decisions about assistive technology and to provide alternative means of acquiring the assistive technology they need. WATAP has a device loan program that allows people to test devices for usefulness before committing financial resources to buying them. The program can help find assistive technology for memory and organization, sleep aids, anxiety reduction, and reading and writing assistance.

Center on Technology and Disability (https://www.ctdinstitute.org/)

The Center on Technology and Disability provides free, high-quality resources and events relating to all aspects of assistive technology. Although funding for the project ended in May 2019, the webinars and downloadable reports on the center's resource-rich website will be available through 2021.

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Seattle-based freelance writer Gemma Alexander focuses on the

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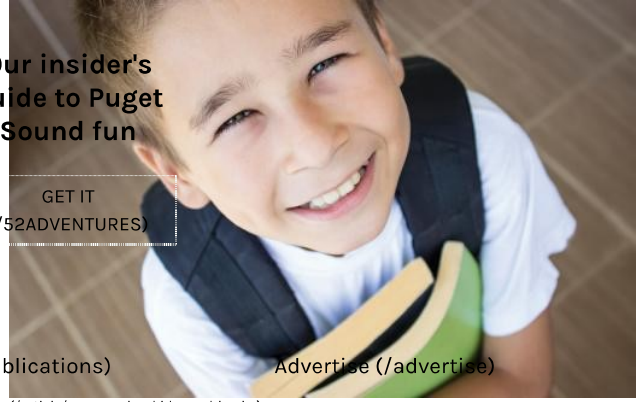(/article/childrens-books-that-share-the-true-stories-of-native-peoples-in-america)

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