

See What's Possible: An Update: Using AI as Assistive Technology for Neurodiverse Learners

WISER
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Welcome fellow WISER members!

I'm excited to speak with you about the world of AI and suggest a ways to use it to support neurodiverse learners

Already dabbling? Great! Please share in chat so we can learn from you too!



What is one task that regularly
creates an unnecessary barrier for
the students you support?

Potential barriers

- Reading dense text
- Getting started
- Remembering steps
- Expressing ideas
- Following spoken information
- Organizing schoolwork
- Understanding expectations
- Taking notes



It's nice to meet you! A bit about me:

- Founder of [Innovative Speech Therapy](#) (1993)
- Love learning about emerging technologies and AI to help people of all ages and abilities
- Speech-language pathologist
- Assistive Technology Specialist
- Founder of the [Tech Life Inner Circle](#)
- Creator of courses- [Google, Set, Go!](#), [Tech for College Success](#), [Tech Possibility Academy](#)
- It makes my day to help others improve life with tech!



Want a copy of the slides?

<https://bit.ly/wiseraiasat>

SCAN ME



New Tech Mindset



"How can current technologies and AI help improve outcomes?"



"Which AI tools are the easiest to use, readily available and will have the most beneficial impact?"

Go for the "lowest hanging fruit" first!



Joan's core beliefs

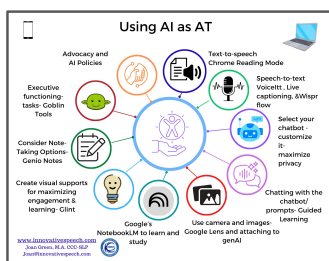
"AI is not going to replace you. But a professional who supports neurodiverse learners and knows how to use AI well can be more effective, more efficient, and more creative than one who doesn't."

"Most of the AI tools can be used in different ways to meet a wide variety of needs."

"AI has enormous potential to help all students- especially those with disabilities."

"We need to be sure that AI is empowering, but doesn't impede learning."

Today's Agenda



What is Assistive Technology?

"Any item, equipment, or product system used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of an individual with a disability."

- May be commercially available, modified, or customized
- Can be low-tech, high-tech, built in, or AI-powered
- Includes the services and training needed for successful use

Adapted from the Assistive Technology Act, 29 U.S.C. § 3002

What Is Artificial Intelligence?

Technology that enables computers to perform tasks that usually require human intelligence—such as understanding, learning, problem-solving, predicting, and creating.

- Traditional AI recognizes patterns, predicts, or automates tasks.
- Generative AI creates new text, images, audio, video, or other content in response to instructions.

We already use AI

- **Typing help** with predictive text and autocorrect
- **Maps** with traffic predictions and smart rerouting
- **Personalized recommendations** for shows, music, videos
- **Voice features** like dictation and live captions
- **Email tools** for spam filtering and smart replies



Image created by Gemini

Frameworks to maximize intervention results

- **Universal Design for Learning**- Start with amazing built-in features- mainstream free solutions
- **SETT Approach**- Person centered- match needs to features- (Student, Environment, Tasks, Tool)

The first step is to explore what's possible!



Choosing the Right Assistive Technology



- **Barrier**: What is getting in the way?
- **Task**: What does the person need to do?
- **Function**: What support or feature could reduce the barrier?
- **Fit**: Is it easy to learn, affordable, available, compatible, and practical in the real environment?
- **Support**: Who will provide training, practice, troubleshooting, and follow-up?
- **Safeguards**: What privacy, accuracy, consent, or policy concerns apply?

The best tool is not the most advanced one—it is the one that meets the need and will actually be used.

AI may function as assistive technology when it helps a person:

- Access information
- Express knowledge
- Communicate
- Organize and initiate
- Participate more independently
- Reduce a disability-related barrier

But not every use of AI is assistive technology.

We need to remove barriers but not reduce the learning!

1. Read Text Aloud



Text-to-Speech

All devices can read aloud for free!

The new AI voices are much better.

Helpful for :

- Small print
- Low vision or visual perceptual challenges
- Attention or memory challenges
- Reading difficulties



Read-aloud options

It can be tricky to streamline the approach!

Browsers

- Microsoft Edge- [Immersive Reader](#)
- Chrome- [reading mode](#) Right click on website- select "open in reading mode"

Devices

- "Enable/ Turn on" in settings of computers, tablets and phones

Documents

- PDFs may require a special app

Books

- Learning Ally, Bookshare, AudioBooks, Libby, Hoopla

Cross Platform

- [Speechify](#)

Reading Mode in Chrome

- Optimize the view and listen to text read aloud from websites
- Access Reader Mode:
 - On your computer, open Chrome.
 - Go to a website with text that you'd like to read.
 - Right-click the page.
 - Select Open in reading mode.
- Customizable Side Panel: Adjust font type, size, and background color.
- Resizable Panel: Drag to enlarge or reduce the reading area.
- Press play for read aloud



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2. Speech Recognition



Speech-to-text

- Helpful when typing is difficult.
- It's a feature on all current computers, phones and tablets for free!
- Whenever there is a cursor blinking, you should be able to enter text with your speech.
- The process depends on the device, operating systems and format of the material.
- Mobile devices- look for microphone in keyboard
- Google Docs- Tools> Voice Typing
- Dictation in MS Word 365 and Word for Web



Voiceitt



- <https://www.thebabelgroup.com/voiceitt/>- can get a free trial!
- Speech recognition for nonstandard speech
- Learns the speaker's voice and helps them be understood across devices, when dictating and when speaking with others!
- Integrations: ChatGPT, Zoom, Teams, WebEx, and a Google Chrome Extension.
- Envisioning Access 501c3 nonprofit may provide direct donations toward the purchase of Voiceitt for those who can't afford it.
- Monthly subscription - \$49.99

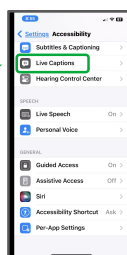
Live Captions

Enable the captions for in-person conversations or to use while having a phone call!

- On most smartphones and browsers go to
- Settings
 - Accessibility
 - Live Captions (toggle on)

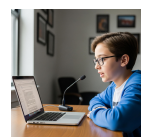
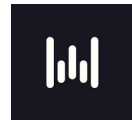
iPhone-(need at least iOS17)

Android phones- (need at least Android 10)



An alternative to voice typing

- [wisprflow.ai](https://www.wisprflow.ai)
- AI- powered dictation tool
- It works everywhere you can type
- Fixes grammar and punctuation
- Can verbalize corrections and it will adapt
- Private- HIPPA ready when BAA signed
- Available on MacOS, Windows, iOS and Android
- Built on OpenAI's Whisper model, trained on neurotypical speech



How do you get started?

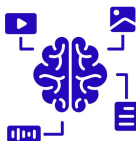
- Free for two weeks
- Students- 3 months free and 50% off Pro plan
- Pro- \$15/ month per user (\$12/ month if billed annually)
- Free- weekly caps
- 2000 words on desktop
- 1000 words on iOS
- unlimited words on Android (limited time)
- <https://wisprflow.ai/pricing>



Who can benefit from it?

- Everyone who knows what they want to say but loses momentum when typing or using other dictation tools
- Other dictation methods require lots of corrections - spend too much time self-editing
- You want to be able to dictate by whispering in a noisy environment or in shared quiet spaces
- People with dysfluent speech who want to dictate
- People with mild dysarthria who want to dictate
- People who speak many different languages
- Everyone who wants to be hands free or can't type well

3. Generative AI



Most popular generative AI tools

- ChatGPT- <https://chatgpt.com> - Click "sign up" in top right
- Gemini (Google)- <https://gemini.google.com/> - Use your Google account
- Claude (Anthropic)- <https://claude.ai/> Sign up with email
- Perplexity- <https://www.perplexity.ai/> - no account required for basic features
- Copilot (Microsoft)- <https://copilot.microsoft.com/> Use microsoft account
- Duck.ai - <https://duck.ai> (more private but limited in what it can do)
- Grok- <https://grok.com/>



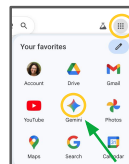
Gemini

- It's embedded in Google for Education and Google Workspace
- Gemini can process text, images, audio and video in a single prompt.
- Can connect to Google Apps to interact with the content
- Offered to all graduating HS students and college students for free.



Getting started with Gemini

- Either go to gemini.google.com on your computer or download / open the Gemini app on mobile
- Sign in with your Google account (Gmail)
- Education accounts are more secure
- I don't connect Gemini to my personal account
- I do connect Gemini to my workspace account- configure it not to train the AI model



Gemini on computer

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ChatGPT Privacy Settings

Open Settings

- Click your **profile picture** or **initials** (bottom-left on desktop, top-right on mobile)
- Select **Settings**
- Data Controls** - **turn off** **improve the model for everyone**

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Claude Privacy: What you should know

Your conversations are not shared with other users — no one else can see your chats

Anthropic does not sell your personal data to third parties

By default, Claude may use your conversations to help improve its AI — you can turn this off anytime in Settings (click on your picture or initials) → Privacy → Help Improve Claude

When in doubt, use Incognito mode for anything private or sensitive

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Duck.ai

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Prompts

Be specific. **Protect privacy.** **Check everything.**

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4. Interacting with genAI

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Prompting Do's

- **Describe the goal clearly**
Include the learner's age or level, the task, and the type of support needed.
- **Ask for scaffolding—not just answers**
Try: "Ask one question at a time," "Give me a hint," or "Offer choices."
- **Set useful boundaries**
Specify reading level, length, tone, format, and what the AI should not do.
- **Review and revise the response**
Check accuracy, bias, appropriateness, and whether it matches the learner's needs.
- **Keep the human in charge**
Treat AI output as a draft, suggestion, or starting point.

Prompting Don'ts

- **Don't enter personal or confidential information**
Avoid names, birth dates, school names, diagnoses tied to identity, IEPs, medical records, or legal documents.
- **Don't assume the answer is correct**
AI can invent facts, sources, quotes, or details.
- **Don't ask AI to replace professional judgment**
It should not diagnose, determine eligibility, write final legal or clinical decisions, or select services independently.
- **Don't remove the learner's thinking**
Avoid prompts that complete graded work or speak entirely for the learner.
- **Don't use the first response automatically**
Refine the prompt, ask follow-up questions, and edit the result.

Breaking down an assignment

- Type a homework assignment or project and ask it to break it into steps
- Then ask, "what should I do first?"

Sample prompt for social stories

"Please help me create a script and discussion prompts for a 7th grade autistic boy who wants to interact with others on the playground, but ends up getting aggressive and rejected by others. Ask clarifying questions"

"Write a short social story for a 9-year-old with autism about how to ask a classmate to play at recess. Make it warm, simple, and at a 2nd grade reading level. Ask clarifying questions"

Prompt ideas to help with writing

"I need help organizing my ideas. I've attached a document with my ideas. Please ask me one question at a time to help me continue."

"I need your help lightly polishing my reports. Please do not make changes, but suggest changes to me one at a time and share why they would be helpful."

"Please suggest ideas to help me be more persuasive with this argument."

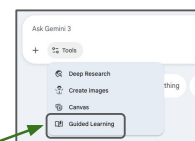
Guided Learning

Gemini 3 - Guided Learning

ChatGPT 5.2 - Study and Learn

Claude Opus 4.1 - Learn

- Enter the topic, question, or problem.
- Add a file or image when useful.
- Tell Gemini exactly how the student would like to be guided.
- Guided learning can adjust the pace, language, questions, examples, and feedback—while keeping the learner actively involved.



Sample prompts with Guided Learning

"I am a ninth-grade student learning about photosynthesis. I understand that plants need sunlight, but I am confused about how they turn it into energy. Teach me one small step at a time using simple language and a real-life analogy. Ask me a question after each step to check my understanding. Do not give me a long explanation all at once."

"Help me solve this problem, but do not give me the answer: A shirt originally costs \$40 and is on sale for 25% off. Ask me one question at a time. Give me a small hint if I get stuck, and ask me to explain my reasoning before we move to the next step."

5. Use genAI with Documents & Images

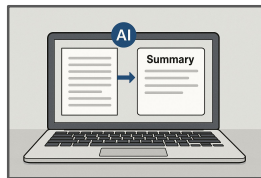


Use AI to summarize information

LLMs now offer a feature so you to attach documents and images.

You can then interact with the information, get summaries, quizzes, and sometimes mindmaps!

Be specific with the instructions to only include information from included text.



Text leveling prompt for Gemini and other LLMs

"Please rewrite this content at a 5th grade level"

"Please summarize this content in 10 bullet points"

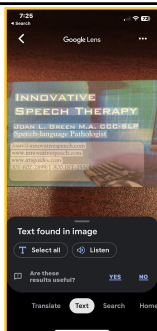
"Please create an infographic with the main ideas from this content."

Google Lens



- This app uses the camera on a tablet or smartphone
- On iOS use the Google app and tap on the Lens icon.
- Take a picture of text in environment (a sign, book, handout)
- Tap on the highlighted words and it reads it them out loud immediately!
- It can also translate and copy and paste.
- On computer in Chrome it can help with visual search and much more!
- Free

[How to use Google Lens](#)



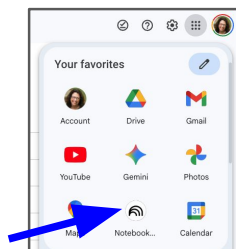
6. Create study tools and interact with resources you select



Google's NotebookLM

Free: NotebookLM app

<https://notebooklm.google.com/>



NotebookLM

- **Grounded in uploaded content only** - does not pull from the internet; reduces "hallucinations"
- **Powerful Studio tools** generate audio and video overviews, slide decks, infographics, and mind maps, and reports to support different ways to learn the information.
- Flashcards, quizzes and the ability to chat about the content support an active learning approach



7. Create visual supports for communication and learning



Glnt to create images for activities

<https://nerchat.com/su/INNOVATIVESPEECH>



- Web based
- Works on all devices
- Many templates
- 2 week free trial (if use Joan's link get the trial with pro features)- need to create an account
- Free- generate up to 10 boards each month- no plan required
- Individual monthly plan- \$18 a month- limited time pricing
- Pro plan- approx. \$150 a year- limited time pricing

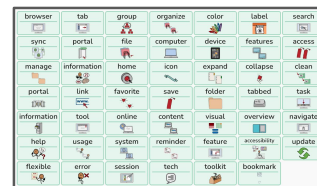
Templates

- Simple grid- Fringe communication board
- Social story to explain a situation or event
- Task analysis- steps in a task
- Flipbook- multi-page book with multiple grids
- Daily schedule
- Checklist
- Wh-questions
- Minimal Pairs
- Sentence strips



Upload files or URLs to turn into visual supports

- Upload documents or links to YouTube videos
- Instantly create a grid with supportive vocabulary
- Edit as needed



I uploaded a Tech Life Inner Circle Tech Talk about browsers and bookmarks

8. Consider Note Taking Options



Using tech to help students with taking notes

- Start with free mainstream solutions
- Use specialized tools when required to meet a student's needs
- What will help process and learn the information?
- Does writing or typing help or hinder learning?
- Will access to written information help to guide learning?
- Would an audio recording help?
- Would previewing the information help?
- How will the notes be used to help with learning?
- Is it important to be able to refer to the notes in the future?



Features to consider for capturing info

- Speak-to-type
- Speech-to-audio
- Real-time transcription
- Timestamp/sync audio to text and images
- Share and collaborate
- Scan text
- Organize and store
- Outline and summarize
- Convert handwriting to text
- Concept mapping/mindmaps



Need to interact with the content to actively learn

- Just reviewing notes is typically not a good way to learn the info!
- Use doodles, pictures and diagrams, colors – whatever works; it all helps reinforce learning
- **Review, revise and add to notes after class**
- **Need to engage with the information, not just passively review it**
- Create summaries, quizzes, and flashcards
- Try teaching the content to someone else



Genio (Formerly Clean)



GenioNotes

- AI-powered web based audio note-taking app
- Designed for students with learning differences
- Records lectures and automatically breaks audio into sections
- Interactive transcripts
- Tag key moments, generate summaries, and add written notes
- Add notes, PDF of slides and images
- Great for active listening and reviewing
- Generate quiz and interact with AI
- Can't share the recording - just the notes
- 30 day free trial
- \$14.49/month, from \$152 a year
- Less natural for heavy handwriting or sketching

9. Using AI to support Executive Functioning



Goblin.Tools



- Free - no need to log in
- Web based - free
- **Magic ToDo** - Helps break down tasks automatically into manageable steps
- Adjust "spiciness" level for desired task detail.
- Android & iOS app- about \$1
- [Privacy Policy](#)



10. Advocacy and AI Policies



School AI policies in the DMV- July 2026

- The direction is shifting from "ban AI" to "teach responsible use"- emphasize human-centered use, verification, privacy, and responsible decision-making.
- Always check the state, district, school, teacher, and assignment-level expectations. They may not say the same thing.
- Maryland enacted the Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act, effective June 1, 2026. It requires MSDE to provide guidance, best practices, professional development, and tools for evaluating AI products.
- MCPS revised its educational technology policy in May 2026 to address emerging technologies, equitable access, safety, and responsible use. It is also adding mandatory AI training for employees during the 2026–27 school year.

School AI policies in the DMV- July 2026 Cont'd

- Virginia provides statewide guidelines, but individual school divisions make many implementation decisions.
- DC has state-level AI policy work underway through OSSE, while DCPS has already incorporated AI into its January 2026 acceptable-use policy.
- DCPS prohibits submitting AI-generated work as a student's original work or using AI to answer assignment or test questions unless the teacher directs the student to use it. Fairfax similarly states that generative AI is not inherently an honor-code violation; students must follow the teacher's directions and cite its use when appropriate.

AI Guidance and Policies: Eric Curts

<https://www.controlaltnotachieve.com/2026/01/notebooklm-ai-guidance.html>



It's complicated!

Is the AI doing the thinking—or removing a barrier so the student can do the thinking?

Equal access to AI

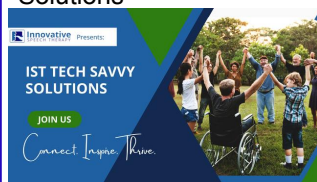
A strong policy should address:

- accessible, district-approved tools;
- alternatives for students who cannot or do not wish to use AI;
- training for students, families and educators;
- equitable access outside school;
- bias and inaccurate outputs;
- age requirements and privacy;
- IEP and 504 considerations;
- explicit expectations for disclosure and citation.

Final Thoughts

“Good AI policy should protect students from harm without preventing students with disabilities from accessing tools that increase understanding, communication, independence and participation.”

Free Private Facebook Group- IST Tech Savvy Solutions



Let's help each other.
Everyone is welcome to join!!

Just answer a few questions

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ISTTechSavvySolutions/>

Tech Life Inner Circle Membership

- Stay on top of emerging tech, build confidence, and get the support you need!
- Weekly 10-15 min Tech Talks
- Weekly 45 min Tech Support with Q&A
- Robust video recording library
- You're invited to join us once as my guest to check it out!
- Members get access to [past Tech Talk Recordings](#)
- www.techlifeinnercircle.com



Let's stay in touch!

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