

Technology helps remove learning barriers



COMMENTARY

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Easter Seals Inc. recognizes BHS teacher for work with assistive technology

Computer technology, including online access to information and software applications, has significantly impacted education and the way students learn.

It has also influenced the way instruction is delivered in many classes. For most people, using technology has become a part of the culture. Learning appropriate uses of computers, cell phones, tablets and other electronic devices that have online access is critical in helping all students prepare for life within and beyond high school.

But for some students, it is even more vital to learn how technology can be used to assist in their learning. Imagine being in high school and struggling daily to learn or to read information that your peers seem to move through at a much faster rate. That is the case for some students. But struggling to learn should never be a reason for giving up.

Brockton High School has several safety nets to support students based on their needs to navigate through rigorous academic courses and state mandated testing, such as MCAS.

There are many kinds of assistive technology. For example over the last five years, BHS has adopted and implemented the use of electronic text

readers, which make students more independent learners by eliminating the need to rely on others to read or interpret text for them. Electronic text readers can read aloud, highlight text as it is read and have built-in comprehension breaks. These functions make it possible for students to work at their own pace and increase their rates of fluency while building comprehension skills.

The power of this type of learning has increased opportunities for students with disabilities to access grade-level content material and succeed in classes and on exams that may have been insurmountable obstacles in the past.

Recently, Easter Seals Inc. recognized a Brockton High teacher for her work with helping students use assistive technology in reading classes. Linda Goldberg has been the lead educator at BHS for the implementation of assistive technology in the classrooms.

As she stated in a recent speech at an Easter Seals Inc. event, "Those specialized text readers and word processors enable my students to have equal access to textual information and the ability to produce well-written papers. In other words, their barriers to learning have been removed."

Ms. Goldberg, working with assistive technology specialists Bob Tucker and Katrina Parker, has helped to improve the education experiences of several BHS students. As she stated, "No longer do my students lack the ability to keep up with their peers. No longer do they feel, as one of my students put it, weak and dumb."

Beyond, the academic advances, the use of assistive technology has improved self-efficacy. Those students realize that with hard work, appropriate supports and the right mindset they can attain their academic goals and leave BHS prepared for the opportuni-



ties that await them.

Now imagine being that same struggling student who, through the use of assistive technology, reads for pleasure and feels empowered as a learner.

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