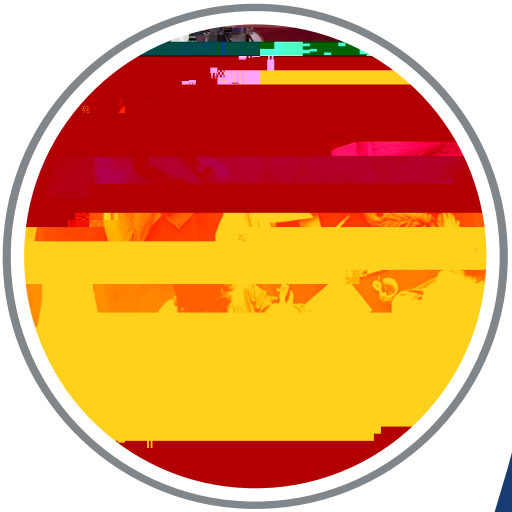
# Br[redacted]Barriers



AccessIT

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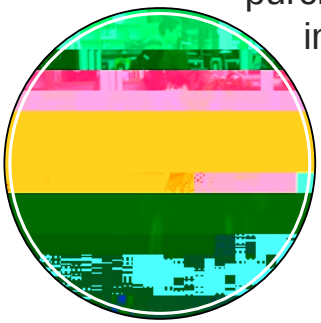
Hannah, who is blind, has a computer equipped with text-to-speech technology at school. She goes to the computer lab to do a Web assignment with her class. Her text-to-speech system reads aloud all of the text presented at the Web site. The Web site's designer, however, neglected to include text descriptions of the content presented within graphic images; therefore, this content is not accessible to her. Even with her impressive computer system, Hannah is stuck. She sits on the sidelines, surrounded by the enthusiastic chatter of her classmates working together.

Too often, Hannah and other students with disabilities cannot access Web content or operate educational software because of its inaccessible design. They do not have full access to the general curriculum and are in danger of failing to meet state learning standards and the goals of No Child Left

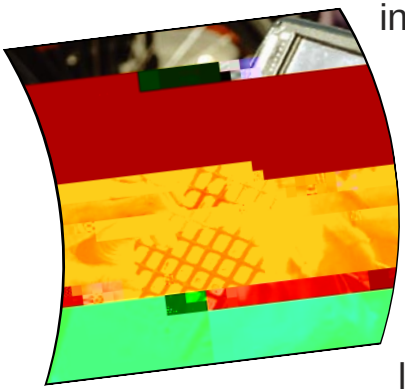
keyboards, hands-free interfaces, and the text-to-speech software Hannah uses.

***Information technology*** (IT) includes computers, software, Web sites, telephones, CDs, videotapes, calculators, and other electronic devices. Many IT products, like the Web site Hannah tried to access, are designed in such a way that they are inaccessible to people with disabilities, even to those who have AT.

***Universal design*** refers to the design of products and environments so that they are usable by everyone, to the greatest extent possible. A teacher is applying universal design when he purchases curriculum with built-in, multiple, and flexible methods of presentation, expression, and engagement. The manager of a computer lab is applying universal design when he purchases adjustable tables in anticipation of students who are small or large in stature or who use wheelchairs.



***Accessible information technology*** is created when producers consider the needs of people with disabilities in the process of designing information technology. More accessible products minimize the need for AT; they are also com γ A ה ĤM m ’



individuals with and without disabilities. For example, captioning on videos benefits students who are deaf as well as those whose first language is not English or who are learning to read.

**What can educators do?**

Building accessible information systems in our schools requires the concerted effort of policy makers, information technology support staff, assistive technology specialists, teachers, parents, and students. Creating accessible information systems requires a close collaboration between those who teach students with disabilities and those who make information technology decisions, approve purchases, and provide technical support.

Educators should anticipate the enrollment of students with a wide range of abilities regarding learning, seeing, hearing, moving, and communicating; purchase accessible products; and apply universal design principles as they develop facilities and

activities. A student with a disability should not be treated as an exception. Rather, curriculum should have built-in flexibility and educators should work together to:

- Educate themselves on how technology is used in their school. What software is used? What Web sites are used? What types of assignments are given?
- Identify barriers children with disabilities face or are expected to face in technology-enhanced instructional activities. Are computers, software, Web sites and other technology accessible to them?
- Develop a district-wide policy that clearly states a commitment to the purchase and use of accessible information technology.
- Implement procedures to ensure that accessibility is considered in all stages of technology planning, development, purchase, and support. Examples of taking a proactive approach to accessibility include the purchase of a few adjustable tables for the computer lab, provision of trackballs as well as mice, placement of handouts where they can be reached from a seated position, purchase of flexible curriculum, and use of Web sites that are accessible to people with disabilities.

- Sign Language Poster
- Barrier Free Computing Poster
- Educator Guide Booklet
- Educator Guide Folder
- Parent Guide Booklet
- Educator CD-ROM

You may order items listed above from your ADA and IT Centers.
Call 1-800-949-4232 or go to www.accessibleIT.org to order.

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