Back To School:
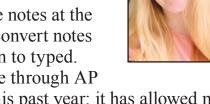# Apps That Help Low Vision Students Maximize Success

By Olivia O'Connell

It's officially Autumn and you know what that means–it's time to go back to school! Well, at least virtual school. With all the uncertainty engulfing our nation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important for students to have some stability. For me, virtual school, while not always easy, has kept me feeling productive during a time when it is difficult to get anything done. As a student with albinism, I have struggled over the years to find apps that are helpful for me but not too complicated to work with. Today, I share three of my favorite iOS apps that have helped augment my potential at school and at home.

Read2Go: one of my favorite apps for reading. This app supports any size font, color text, or speed that you like. Read2Go is connected with BookShare.com, a website with thousands of picture books, chapter books, and even textbooks for all ages. Read2Go allows you to highlight text, mark important pages, and even listen to your book being read aloud. I highly recommend the app for anyone who wants to try a new way to read.

Notability is the ultimate writing resource for high school students who like to use a stylus or Apple Pencil to take electronic notes. The app provides thousands of color options to write or type in, as well as many different insertable features that can help you create charts or graphs. You can divide your notes by subject, view and write on multiple notes at the same time, and convert notes from handwritten to typed. Notability got me through AP World History this past year; it has allowed me to view my notes and complete my assignments in an accessible format.

Genius Scan is very helpful if, like me, you have issues with contrast. Most of the time, I like my assignments to have stark black on white contrast, and Genius Scan is super helpful with this. All you need to do is take a picture of the assignment in front of you, and the app will increase the contrast to make it look like it was typed up in a magazine! You can then transfer the scanned document to another app, such as Notability, where you can write or type on the assignment. From Notability, I can then e-mail my assignments to my teachers or print them out.

I hope that these app suggestions will be helpful for you and your family as school starts up again. Online school is often difficult and hard on the eyes, but there are ways to make it a bit easier. There are so many other amazing apps for low vision students, so if you don't find the right one among these suggestions, keep searching! It took me a long time to find out what was right for me.