Family Center on Technology and Disability

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Technology Voices

Advice to School Districts: Want Your AT to Be Used? Build the Infrastructure First!

"We have assistive technology in our classrooms – but no one uses it!" This is a refrain heard often in school districts that have invested in assistive technology that frequently sits dormant while children with disabilities, especially those with learning disabilities, do without. What's the solution? According to Lorianne Hoenninger, an AT consultant on New York State's Long Island, home to some of the nation's largest suburban school districts, the solution is: "Build the AT infrastructure first."

Even in an era of severe fiscal constraints, creating such an infrastructure is simpler than it appears, according to Ms. Hoenninger, who provides AT-related services in districts throughout Long Island's two counties. For classroom AT to be used and useful, she explains, infrastructure can consist of the following basic but essential ingredients:

- Printer access on laptops
- Student possession of USB flash drives in order to bring work home from school
- Access to Google Docs so that students can access their work from any location
- Ink

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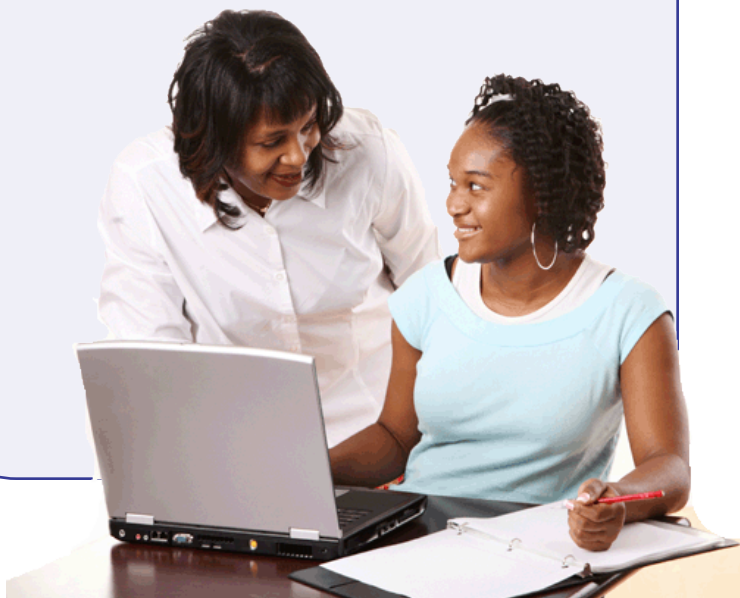

"Ink, for example, is more important than it seems at face value," she remarks. "If there's no ink for the printer how can a child present her work?" As elementary as these essentials are, however, "someone has to take the responsibility for overseeing their implementation day to day in order to make access to and operation of the equipment seamless."

Sometimes, she adds, a single talking word processor in a classroom is the only device that's necessary – as long as the infrastructure is in place to support it. The value of such a device is maximized, she points out, "if all the students in the class, and the teacher, become proficient in its use."

Lorianne Hoenninger, MS, ATP-RESNA, Speaks

Assistive technology made a lasting positive first impression on Lorianne Hoeninnger when she went to work for United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) in the early 1970s after earning a Masters degree in autism studies from Adelphi University.

"I was a special education teacher at UCP when computers and AAC devices were just beginning. My class consisted of very bright but physically challenged kids for whom there was no alternative to AT. We collected deposits on soda cans to raise money for communication devices."

While at UCP she developed a program called "We Are!" which featured adapted toys, Apple computers, engineered environments and homemade communication equipment to help keep her students actively engaged in their education.

Later she became an AT consultant "but there was very little need for consultants for students with multiple disabilities, but lots of need for AT and consulting for students with learning disabilities who also needed to be actively engaged in their education, but with different tools. I use the same approaches when I work with talking word processors and scanners that I used with adapted toys and switches."

Today Ms. Hoenninger is CEO and owner of Accessible Learning Technology Alternatives, a small Long Island-based agency that supplies AT evaluations, services and staff development to Long Island school districts and agencies while also providing special education services for home-based students with multiple disabilities.

Following our interview with Ms. Hoenninger are resources that we hope will be of use to you as you begin the 2011-2012 school year. We've also included information about a few of the organizations in our database of those that serve families of children with disabilities. We invite you to share this information with your own networks and to let us know what other newsletter topics would be useful and interesting to you. If you have an upcoming event or recently published resource that you would like us to include in a future edition, please let us know that as well. Our new email address is: fctd@fhi360.org.

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AT Rethought

An Interview with Lorianne Hoenninger, MS, ATP-RESNA, independent AT consultant, CEO/Owner, Accessible Learning Technology Alternatives

Lorianne Hoenninger, MS, ATP-RESNA

Dave Edyburn lit the spark. Lorianne Hoenninger fanned the flames.

Ms. Hoenninger, a Long Island special education teacher and AT consultant, was inspired by a 2004 landmark article written for Special Education Technology Practice by AT guru Dave Edyburn. Entitled "Rethinking Assistive Technology" (https://pantherfile.uwm.edu/edyburn/www/RethinkingAT.pdf), the Edyburn article took a fresh look at many accepted AT precepts and AT-related definitions that had become gospel in the 15 years following passage of the Tech Act. In 2010, after re-reading Dr. Edyburn's treatise, Ms. Hoenninger prepared a web-based Powerpoint presentation based on Dr. Edyburn's earlier effort and titled it, "Rethinking How We Use AT to Support RTI and NCLB" (http://www.slideshare.net/accessiblelearning/rethinking-assistive-technology-1617725).

Her presentation, and the thoughts on which it was based, form the basis for her updated view of the AT consultant's professional role. In that role, she says, AT professionals encourage and/or advocate for:

- the relationship between district administrators and special education departments,
- the vital importance of infrastructure in support of AT integration,
- the benefits of AT use for response to intervention (RTI),
- the nature and scope of AT consideration on an IEP,
- the potential for improved collaboration between special education departments and IT teams,
- the necessity and difficulty of gathering reliable AT data, and
- the continuing feasibility of AT evaluations and accommodations in an era in which fast-evolving classroom technology may erode their conventional application.

"We're using an Old-Fashioned Model"

According to Ms. Hoenninger, "The gist of Dave's premise was that we as a field often use an old-fashioned model for AT evaluations. IDEA 2004 mandates that AT must be considered for every student with an IEP, but that consideration must consist of far more than simply marking a checkbox. It should be a meaningful part of the IEP process, streamlining AT evaluations and, in some instances, making AT evaluations unnecessary."

A traditional outlook on accommodations, she continues, may result in a school overlooking a common-sense approach that substitutes widely available technology for costly individual interventions. There is a way, she says, to avoid IEP team resistance while still providing needed AT through a child's IEP. Her personal approach, which has proven successful in several Long Island school districts, was born of trial and error.

When she began her consulting career, she recalls, "I recommended not only training, but monthly follow-up visits aimed at gently spurring AT integration." That approach, she admits, "rarely worked, and if home access to the software was not provided, parents were unable to support software use."

Over time, she says,"I learned that if a district purchases SOLO or Kurzweil literacy software, or a talking word processor/word prediction suite, and installs that software throughout the district for use by all students, the presence of these tools is no longer perceived as 'extra work' by IEP team members but instead is seen as a benefit for all."

This change in practice, she notes, is particularly beneficial for special needs students "who then no longer feel 'odd' about using software that is available to special and general education students.

AT Consideration Made "Easy" via Infrastructure Support

Infrastructure support is the linchpin of successful AT integration, according to Ms. Hoenninger.

With the integration of AT into the classroom structure, and with teachers modeling its use, "AT consideration becomes easy," Ms. Hoenninger says. "During the IEP team meeting the student's teacher might remark, 'Reading every worksheet aloud to this student requires too much of my time. Instead, let's scan his worksheets into the computer so he can be more independent.' AT can be considered because the team is already familiar with the AT tool in question. A lengthy evaluation process in this case is therefore not needed – and the student can immediately use the AT. This is a better outcome for everyone involved in the IEP process, especially the student, who often can remain in a general education environment."

However, she cautions, "this approach doesn't work if the district does not agree to build infrastructure. The support logistics must be addressed if AT implementation is to be successful."

Remove the Fear Factor

Given current fiscal constraints at the district level, the word infrastructure has the potential to incite fear among hard-pressed district administrators. Lorianne Hoenninger acknowledges the existence of the fear factor but says that constant communication can reduce apprehension.

"I do many presentations on Long Island. I belong to several professional organizations that include directors of special education with whom I remain in touch. In every report that I write for a school district I list all of my recommendations, so the report reads like a recipe. I'm very specific. After a couple of AT evaluations a district becomes very familiar with my approach. When I make an evaluation and recommend a product for district-wide use, I try to stick with that product if possible. That way the staff only has to learn one piece of software for which we can purchase licenses and can install throughout the district. This approach is much easier for the district tech department, which no longer has to install various software programs. Success is much more likely to occur if you keep the process simple and streamlined. This concept neutralizes the fear factor and the money factor as well."

Ms. Hoenninger is uncertain whether her approach would be effective in districts that are countywide, however. "The countywide administrative mechanism is bigger and the infrastructure issue would loom larger and might not be doable. For other districts, though, yes, it would work. There should always be a talking word processor and a couple of basic products available on all computers. Home access is absolutely essential. This approach will not work unless there is home access."

"Frequency of Use Builds Fluency"

"Frequency of use builds fluency," she continues. Fluency is the key word. I recommend to teachers and parents that they think of an activity each day for which students need a computer, such as a 'do-now' which can be typed as soon as a student enters the classroom. This gets students in the habit of using the computer every day. Sometimes I have students produce their agenda book on the computer instead of handwriting the information in their planner, because their handwriting is too big for the boxes, I put a template on the computer, especially for elementary school students.

Once computer use becomes a daily habit, she explains, it can be expanded. "This is the only logical alternative to performing several tasks, including new tasks, simultaneously and yet instilling habit change away from multitasking; multitasking produced unsatisfactory outcomes for children with disabilities.

"Pati King DeBaun at Closing the Gap always says that a new task for teachers has to take 30 seconds or less. Therefore, the tasks I recommend to teachers require 30 seconds or less to complete."

Communication and Flexibility: Always Key Components

It's a consistent message among AT specialists: communication among members of the education team – general and special education teachers, administrators, tech support staff, and consultants – is essential to building a strong technology infrastructure that is useful to, and used by, teachers and students in the classroom and at home. Flexibility on the part of each can greatly enhance a system's efficiency and effectiveness while its lack can hamper both. From her years of watching both successes and failures, Ms. Hoenninger offers the following suggestions:

Technology consultation should occur prior to making purchases to ensure that proposed new special education software can be run on the existing IT system. "Likewise, the tech department needs to consult with its special education counterparts before making major changes."

The tech department needs to relax some control. "It should be possible, for example, for the educational team to enlarge the mouse cursor or slow the double-click speed for a student without having to submit a tech ticket and endure a substantial post-submission waiting period. It should also be possible to save to a USB flash drive so students can take their work home. Often, the computers are so locked down for fear that the students using the computers for recreational purposes will damage the system that the equipment becomes nearly unusable. Also the physical location of the jacks and the computers should be discussed. Why do all computers have to face the back wall? Unfortunately, some IT staff remain inflexible about moving equipment to accommodate student needs."

Accessibility and special needs factors should be considered by the IT department before software programs or hardware are purchased. "Some districts purchase computers without sound cards or hide the sound control panel from students. Other districts do not provide student access to computers in the classroom, only access for teachers. Yet others use software that erases the computers every night. This tactic may be effective in fending off computer viruses but it is incompatible with word prediction or voice recognition software, for example – that 'learns' from student use. Select programs

should be exempted from this approach."

The tech department staff should receive training in the use of the special education software. "In addition to providing teacher support, the training will enable technicians to understand the capabilities of software programs and to learn whether or not the programs are functioning properly upon installation. Such training can compress the traditional extended waiting time between software purchase and successful operation."

If teachers are considering putting a software program on their school, or district, computer server, she continues, "they should encourage the IT department to try it first to make sure the program won't jeopardize the system. If the IT team insists the program won't work, teachers and IT team members ought to explore ways to achieve a level of comfort."

She advises against singling out a single member of the IT team as a regular collaborator. "If the special education department comes to rely on a single member of the IT team to do favors for teachers or consultants, the system will eventually be negatively impacted and that team member will be held accountable. The fallout from such a scenario will be unpleasant for all."

Progress, she maintains, "should be made one piece of software at a time." An information exchange, in the form of special education department presentations to IT teams, is a foundation builder. General presentations to IT departments can be effective and 'non-threatening' forums. Then, when AT consultants visit the teams' respective districts, team members will already be well-acquainted with the pertinent issues. For instance, she notes, "Maybe students in a district – or special education teachers -- need to have access to the control panel in order to provide sound for certain programs. If the IT team members are made aware of that need, through the years they'll find ways to provide access to sound."

UDL Best Practice: Should AT Be Available to Non-Classified Students?

In theory, aspects of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), when implemented, provide a way to keep many special needs students, especially those with learning disabilities, in general education classrooms. However, there are many at-risk children who have not yet been classified as special needs students, Ms. Hoenninger says, who might also benefit from UDL best practices. To aid non-classified at-risk students along with those with special needs and general education students as well, Ms. Hoenninger recommends the following measures:

- There should be a universal AT software tool available for home and school use.

- Print materials should be available in a variety of formats. "Every district should be enrolled in Bookshare.org (http://www.bookshare.org/). It's free. Students with special needs and 504 can use it. Students with reading delays who are not eligible for Bookshare can use the universal AT tool to help with reading worksheets and the Internet. School libraries can purchase audio tape versions of commonly read books and/or high school students can record themselves reading books aloud for younger students."

- Training is critical. "Staff should be trained in

software use and should model the software tools for all students, as part of their practice. In order to better support their children, families are urged to attend school-based training before the software is sent home. In my districts I provide a weekly after-school class for parents. I vary the time and the building to accommodate everyone, and I encourage parents to take the class more than once if necessary. In some districts we set up after/before school extra help 'clubs' in both keyboarding and technology use for students who need support."

- Establish a support structure before instituting a districtwide UDL initiative. According to Ms. Hoenninger, the following questions must be addressed in order to lay the foundation for the appropriate support structure:
  - Does the district have a practical high-speed scanner?
  - Who will do the scanning?
  - Where will the scanned materials be virtually stored? "The limitations sometimes imposed by schools on hard-drive space hinders the ability to scan and store textbooks."
  - If iPads, laptops, netbooks or AlphaSmarts are utilized, where will these devices be stored? Do these devices have printer access? How will the devices be signed out?
  - Is there sufficient ink for the printers?
  - How will the materials be inventoried? Where will the materials be stored over the summer? Who will be responsible for their return?
  - What is the school's policy for integrating AT into the IEP's? "The policy wording should be consistent."

- Include local administrators as part of the support structure. "All district principals must be involved so that they will expect technology integration to be implemented by their classroom teachers. I provide awareness-building presentations to all school administrators. Department heads purchasing textbooks should be aware of the UDL initiative so that they will seek out materials in digital format."

- Nurture a culture of technology use among all professionals.
  - Encourage teachers to use online free tools, such as Spelling City (http://www.spellingcity.com/) for practice with spelling words and Quizlets, (http://quizlets.com/), a system of flashcards designed to enhance vocabulary memorization. "By placing links to their vocabulary lists on their class webpage, all students can access these supports. Creating the lists/flashcards does not need to be time consuming as it can be a shared task. If, for example, the entire fifth grade uses the same science textbook, each week a different classroom can create a vocabulary list for the science words, and put the link online for all the fifth graders."
  - Discover which online subscriptions are available in the district and/or via the local public library; encourage their use by the teams. "For example, in one of my districts, the public library subscribes to Tumblebooks (http://www.tumblebooks.com/), an ebook library for children. The district students can log in at school for independent literacy experiences, at no cost to the district."
  - Explore online subscriptions for use at home and school, such as Vocab Videos (http://www.vocabvideos.com/) or Discrete Trial Trainer (http://www.dttrainer.com/). "These subscriptions are not expensive and help engender the necessary culture of technology use."

- Use educational software in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) classrooms for students with autism; "do not limit students to the use of a computer or an IPad only for reinforcement."

- Establish an expectation of independence for all students. "Provide tests in a format that allows students to be more independent, instead of relying upon a reader or scribe."

"Thin Client" Servers Emerge

Although technology refinement is often beneficial to AT classroom integration and efficiency, the recent emergence of "thin client" servers for classroom computers often has the opposite effect, Ms. Hoenninger contends. In contrast to traditional "fat client" servers," which enable computers to simultaneously take on multiple tasks, thin client servers depend heavily on other computers to perform the same functions.

"Most AT doesn't work on thin client servers," Ms. Hoenninger declares. "The thin client has one hard drive and six monitors attached to it." As she sees it, the lone advantage of thin servers is financial. "For the price of one tower six students can work on the computer simultaneously. This is much cheaper for the district and much easier for the tech department to manage. But the special education software usually does not work on these servers because of licensing issues and preferences."

Intemperate computer use by students is another stumbling block. "Many districts now lock down their computers, which prevents teachers and others who work with students from saving a preference file, which means that [the program] won't remember what the students did that day -- and the word prediction won't improve because it's erased every night. As a result, rather than teaching students school-appropriate computer use, some districts simply shut down the computers.

"Smart Boards are the 'in' technology now. Also, districts purchased many iPads this year, although the current iteration of the iPad is not learning disability student friendly in that the appropriate apps don't yet exist – although they may exist a year from now -- and printing remains a problem."

However, she comments, "iPads are very autism-friendly, and many of the district purchases on Long Island are ticketed for the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) program."

A Study in Black and White

In her opinion, perhaps the most significant obstacle inhibiting full integration of AT into classrooms and the attainment of a more UDL-friendly classroom environment is a 20th century standby: the black and white composition notebook.

"In districts where notebook use remains dominant, it won't be possible to even contemplate UDL implementation." An iPad, however, might eventually serve as a replacement for the black and white notebook, she says. "Using the iPad would nudge some teachers into the 21st century."

Unfortunately, competing pressures on teachers "leave no time for consideration of UDL alternatives to traditional teaching methods," she points out. For teachers, she says, "creating a Powerpoint presentation likely requires more time than writing out the presentation in longhand on sheets of paper."

"We're not teaching children that technology is

used for work. They're being taught, unintentionally, that technology is used for play. Classroom time is for notebooks; home is where kids play on their computers. We as teachers have implied to them, 'Use your computer for amusement; use your black and white notebook for serious work.' We need to change that equation."

"Computer Literacy for All Special Needs Students Is My Goal"

In the districts she serves, she says, "computer literacy for all special needs students is my goal." To help teachers achieve a higher level of computer literacy she favors Quizlet, a free online program that enables teachers and students to create vocabulary lists "so that the kids can practice their vocabulary in a game format." Sound and pictures can be added to Quizlet, "which makes it disability-friendly because it's not print-only. If a teacher makes a Quizlet set for a chapter it's good for all the kids in the class, not only those with special needs."

She adds: "Students can take turns each week creating Quizlet sets and those sets can be posted on the teacher's website. If there are multiple teachers in a grade teaching the same course material, their classes can take turns creating Quizlet sets each week. This isn't much work, and by year-end the students have produced a Quizlet set for every chapter in the textbook – and the classes have had fun." The result, she says, "is an overall increase in classroom technology use. UDL, then, is more likely to happen because as teachers and students become more technology-fluent, less time is required to get them up the learning curve."

Proving Intervention Efficacy: Data Collection Tools

School districts define outcomes and collect data to measure the efficacy of technology interventions. Data collection, Ms. Hoenninger declares, "is tough but necessary because districts won't continue to spend money on technology unless they see that it's effective." What will be meaningful to districts, she remarks, "is if their state assessment scores rise, if the money they spend on paraprofessionals decreases, and if the number of parents suing or writing letters to the board of education decreases. Some of these changes will be due to improved instruction, not just because of AT, but I think these are the measurable outcomes most important on a district-wide level. Informally, I try to procure pre- and post- intervention writing samples for student portfolios that show improvements in student writing when AT support is provided."

In terms of student-specific outcomes, she comments, "I am often looking for improvements in student independence, as reported by families and teachers. Though largely subjective, evidence of improvement is partially measurable by a decrease in the need for one-on-one aides to read and write for students."

Increasing student iPad use, she insists, may result in an overall increase in independence. Equipped with an IPad "a child can take a photo of a page of text and that page almost immediately appears on the [device.] For students who do not need content read to them, who are just dysgraphic, the iPad is an effective tool."

"It's Worth the Effort"

Ms. Hoenninger quotes Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates as saying, "Technology won't be there until it's like a light switch; you turn it on and assume it will work." At this point, she says, "Nobody assumes a computer

will work. Not yet. But my job as a special educator and AT consultant is to do what I can to help turn on the light switch."

One way to speed that process, she says, is through active awareness and advocacy efforts. She points to the close relationship between state education authorities based in Albany, New York State's capital, and groups like the Long Island Association of Special Education Administrators (LIASEA). "When the state makes policy LIASEA is aware of it and discusses that policy as a group. LIASEA is constantly inviting officials from Albany to update the membership on policy." The result, she says, is that the organization has input into any policies emanating from Albany or under consideration by Albany. "Because we are involved in the statewide special education policymaking process from the outset, there is very little contentiousness, which means the policy is much more likely to be accepted.

"I try to meet with as many groups as possible to talk about AT and elicit feedback from them. This approach is like running product commercials. When an advertiser runs them often enough, the target audience becomes familiar with the content and the product. It's the same for policy formulation and for an AT consultant's strategy as well. I recommend this approach. You have to set people up. You have to invite the people to whom you're selling to participate in your thought processes -- while I participate in theirs – to find a mutual comfort level."

Recently, she concludes, "I've been reading up on a concept called 'destructive innovation' in which innovation destroys the former order and replaces it with a new model. I don't want schools to have to endure an experience as wrenching and disorienting as destructive innovation must be. In my small

Lorianne Hoenninger's FASTTRAC System

Ms. Hoenninger has developed a form for use by the educators with whom she works. Its acronym is FASTTRAC and it provides a structure for AT consideration. In the first four steps, the team defines the student's need. In the second four, they define the technology intervention and identify both the support needed and the individuals responsible for providing the support. Throughout, Ms. Hoenninger advises team members to be specific in establishing goals and identifying tasks.

- **Functional Outcome** to be achieved
- **Accommodation/modification** to be faded as a result of successful AT intervention
- **Site(s)/ environment(s)** where the AT will be used (home/school/particular classrooms)
- **Tasks** that will be performed utilizing the AT intervention
- **Technology tool(s)** to be explored
- **Rationale** for the technology
- **Actions** and steps to implementation
- **Criteria** for success

RESOURCES

ARTICLES

Rethinking Assistive Technology

By Dave L. Edyburn, Ph.D.

Special Education Technology Practice (2004)

Although it dates to 2004, Dr. Edyburn's groundbreaking reexamination of AT precepts remains a dynamic template for assistive technology researchers and professionals looking to take a fresh look at accepted AT definitions and best practices.

https://pantherfile.uwm.edu/edyburn/www/RethinkingAT.pdf

Rethinking How We Use AT to Support RTI and NCLB

By Lorianne Hoenninger, MS, ATP-RESNA

Slideshare (2010)

This online PowerPoint presentation by Long Island-based AT consultant and Technology Voices August 2011 interviewee Lorraine Hoenninger is designed to serve as an updated version of Dave Edyburn's article Rethinking Assistive Technology.

http://www.slideshare.net/accessiblelearning/rethinking-assistive-technology-1617725

Assistive Technology: A Framework for Consideration and Assessment

Virginia Department of Education (November 2008)

This template for AT consideration in Virginia public schools includes definitions, laws, consideration guidelines, and a process for assessment.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/iep_instruct_svcs/assistive_technology/framework_assistive_technology.pdf

Assistive Technology Consideration Checklist

Assistive Technology Training Online/University of Buffalo (2010)

This document produced by the University of Buffalo features a sample AT checklist for a child's IEP.

http://atto.buffalo.edu/registered/ATBasics/Foundation/Assessment/GPATConsideration.pdf

The Assistive Technology Evaluation

By Penny Reed, Ph.D.

MyChildWithoutLimits.org; Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative (WATI) (2011)

Authored by WATI director and noted AT authority Penny Reed, this article details the AT evaluation process.

http://www.mychildwithoutlimits.org/?page=the-assistive-technology-evaluation

GUIDES

Assessing Students' Needs for Assistive Technology: A Resource Manual for School District Teams, Fifth Edition

Jill Gierach, Editor

Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative (WATI) (June 2009)

This handbook helps IEP teams comprehensively assess student AT needs, providing teams with directed, collaborative tasks. Using the SETT Framework (Student, Environment, Tasks and Tools), each chapter systematically guides teams through the evaluation process, explaining each step and highlighting important considerations for all aspects of an assessment. Chapters conclude with topic-specific lists of AT resources. http://www.wati.org/content/supports/free/pdf/ASNAT5thEditionJun09.pdf

FACT SHEETS

AT Data Collection Tools

Allegheny (PA) Intermediate Unit (2010)

This advisory produced by the Allegheny, PA Intermediate Unit spotlights examples of data collection tools that may be used during AT trials.

http://www.aiu3.net/Level3.aspx?id=3860

TECH TOOLS (cited by Lorraine Hoenninger in this issue's interview)

Quizlet

Quizlet is a system of flashcards designed to enhance vocabulary memorization. Links to students' vocabulary lists online facilitate their use of the lists.
http://quizlet.com/

Brainshark.com

Brainshark lets students and teachers transform static content such as PowerPoint® documents into voice-enriched online and mobile video presentations for on-demand access. Registration cost: free; upgrade is subscription based.
http://www.brainshark.com/mybrainshark

IEP Direct

IEP Direct specializes in state-specific, district configurable Internet-based special education management and IEP software. Tasks performed and features include: IEP drafting; evaluations and eligibility determination; meeting schedules and invitations; tracking and compliance; due process and procedural safeguards; state special education requirements; state data warehouse reports; confidentiality of information. Cost: fee- and subscription-based.
https://www.iepdirect.com/iepdotnet/hub/index.html

VocabularySpellingCity

Designed for use by schools and consumers, this site, founded in 2008 as SpellingCity.com, features engaging vocabulary mastery and spelling activities. Students and teachers can provide their own words or use vocabulary lists provided by the program. It's a great, free resource. A premium membership is also offered.
http://www.spellingcity.com/

Tumblebooks

This ebook library for children features animated talking picture books. The books are created from existing picture books, with animation, sound, music and narration added.
http://www.tumblebooks.com/

Discrete Trial Trainer (DTI)

Designed as an instructional tool for children with mild to severe cognitive and developmental disabilities, including autism, DTI is an evidence-based instructional software program consisting of curriculum content programs, motivating reinforcers and data tracking assessment features.
http://www.dttrainer.com/

BLOGS

The Pursuit of Technology Integration Happiness

This educational technology blog deals with the use of technology tools in special and general education classrooms. The blog is written and maintained by Michael Zimmer, a school technology specialist, whose blog entries are divided by core subjects, elective subjects, tutorials, articles and Web 2.0 resources. Popular posts include "10 Alternatives to Powerpoint", "Tricider - Brainstorming and Decision Making" and the link to Mr. Zimmer's free two-volume "Tools for the 21st Century Teacher" e-book. http://www.edutechintegration.com/

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KNOWLEDGE NETWORK MEMBERS

Assistive Technologies, Inc. (ATI)

Oregon-based ATI, a non-profit, specializes in conducting assistive technology evaluations, technology training services and ergonomic risk assessments for government, business, education, health service organizations and individuals. ATI also offers device demonstrations, device reutilization, and an AT loan library. For more information, contact:

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http://www.accesstechnologiesinc.org/

Texas Center for Learning Disabilities (TCLD)

With a staff of researchers from the University of Houston and the Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts, TCLD investigates the classification, early intervention, and remediation of learning disabilities. Its projects include:

- An examination of Response to Intervention (RTI) with at-risk readers in grades 1-2
- RTI research in grades 6-7
- An examination of how RTI should be measured and interpreted
- Employment of brain scan technology to determine how processing patterns differ in students who do and do not respond satisfactorily to reading intervention; this examination is conducted at the University of Houston only.

For further information, contact:
Texas Center for Learning Disabilities
University of Texas, George Sanchez Building, TX
Phone: (512) 471-7145
Contact: Dr. Jack M. Fletcher, Principal Investigator
Email: jwexler@mail.utexas.edu
http://www.texasldcenter.org/

Community Alliance for Special Education (CASE)

Founded in 1979, CASE aims to protect the educational rights of children with disabilities by fostering implementation of IDEA and state special education law. CASE advocacy staff trained in special education law aid families and school districts in the collaborative design of appropriate special education programs for students with disabilities. To that end, CASE provides these services:

- Technical assistance consultations
- Direct representation at IEP meetings, due process meditations and administrative hearings
- Training on special education rights and services to parents

For additional information, contact:
Community Alliance for Special Education
1550 Bryant Street Suite 738
San Francisco, CA 94103
Phone: (415) 431-2285
Fax: (415) 431-2289
http://www.caseadvocacy.org/

Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts (VGC)

VGC technical assistance, research and professional development supports elementary or secondary reading and special education teachers, administrators and faculty members who prepare future teachers in reading and/or special education. VGC translates research into practice and provides online professional development. The center focuses on scientifically based research aimed at improving instruction for all students, especially struggling readers, English language learners and special education students. VGC collaborates with The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk (MCPER) (http://www.meadowscenter.org/) as combined organized research units within the College of Education at the University of Texas at Austin.

For additional information, contact:
Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts
College of Education SZB 228
The University of Texas at Austin
1 University Station D4900
Austin, TX 78712-0365
Phone: (512) 232-2320
Fax: (512) 232-2322
Email: info@texasreading.org
http://www.meadowscenter.org/vgc/

Coalition for Independence (CFI)

Equipped with the region's largest AT department, which includes augmentative communication devices and adaptive equipment for computers, CFI advocates for individuals with disabilities and provides the following additional services:

- Information and referral
- Independent living skills training
- Peer support, advocacy and self-advocacy
- Community integration
- Case management

For more information, contact:
Coalition for Independence
4911 State Ave.
Kansas City, KS 66102
Phone: (913) 321-5140; (913) 321-5216 (TDD)
Fax: 913.321-5182
Contact: Clark Byron, Executive Director
Email: cbyron@cfi-kc.org
http://www.cfi-kc.com/cfi/

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