10 Things Everyone Needs to Know about Assistive Technology

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1. What is Assistive Technology?
Assistive Technology is a legal term.

2. Assistive Technology in Federal Statute
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Tech Act (Assistive Technology Act)
- Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

3. Assistive Technology Device
... any item, piece of equipment or product system... that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

Public Law 105-17, Section 602(1)

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Assistive Technology Service

... any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.

Public Law 105-17, Section 602(2)

Big Ideas about AT

• Assistive Technology is essentially a legal term related to use and need, not to specific items
• Includes a broad range of possible devices and services
• Not always something to be acquired

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Amendments of 1997

✓ IDEA ensures FAPE
✓ FAPE is defined by the IEP
✓ AT required to implement the IEP must be provided at no cost to the family

Functional Skills

• Reading
• Written Expression
• Math
• Problem-solving
• Communication
• Recreation
• Daily organization

• Seating/Positioning
• Hearing
• Seeing
• Self-Care
• Mobility
• Behavior
• Specific task-related skills

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Assistive technology may be applicable to all disability groups and in all phases of education.

How can I make good decisions... and be a good steward of public funds?

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Assistive Technology service provision follows a student-centered process that requires a team approach.

A Team Approach is Required.

Big Ideas about Teams

- The student is always the center of the team
- Focus is on the common interest in individual achievement and aligning thoughts on how to best foster it

Big Ideas about Teams

- Team membership is flexible and based on the needs of the individual
- Multiple perspectives are vital
- Team members bring different gifts - knowledge, skill, observations, ideas, suggestions
* Assessment and intervention form a continuous, dynamic process.
* Systematic problem analysis and solving are essential.

The SETT Framework

• Student (Self)
• Environments
• Tasks
• Tools

The Goal of SETT Framework

… to help collaborative teams create Student-centered, Environmentally-useful, and Tasks-focused Tool systems that foster the educational achievement of students with disabilities

Student (Self)

• Areas of concern
• Strengths
• Current achievement
• Expectations
• Evaluation information

Environments

• Conditions within customary environments
  – Barriers
  – Supports
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Environments
- Arrangement
- Support
- Materials and Equipment
- Access Issues
- Attitudes and Expectations

Tasks
- The specific things that the student needs to be able to do to reach expectations and make progress that are difficult or impossible at present

Tasks are a part of being actively involved in learning environments
- Communication
- Instruction
- Participation
- Productivity
- Environmental Control

Tools
- Whatever is needed by the student and others for the student to do the tasks in the environments in order to meet expectations

Tools
- Strategies
- Accommodations
- Devices
- Supports
- Services
- Modifications
- Etc.

Critical Elements of the SETT Framework
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Multiple Perspectives
- Pertinent Information
- Shared Knowledge
- Flexibility
- On-going Processes

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When a team can describe the student, the environments and the tasks, they can describe the tools that are needed to support success!

8 *

The least complex solution that will remove barriers to achievement should be a first consideration.

9 *

AT does not eliminate the need for instruction in skills pertinent to the tasks. (social, academic, vocational, recreational, or other)

Big Ideas – Decisions and Stewardship

• View technology is part of a SYSTEM of tools!
• Recognize that assistive technology can BE a barrier
• Try to determine tool systems that remove more barriers than they create

Big Ideas – Decisions and Stewardship

• Avoid device abandonment and underutilization
• Try before you buy
• Plan for implementation
• Identify expected change
• Evaluate effectiveness
• Think Return on Investment (ROI)

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There are many ways to do it right!

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Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology Services in Schools

Purpose of QIAT

• NOT competencies for service providers, but require the preparation and availability of competent service providers.
• Tool to guide in the improvement of AT services in order to improve student results.

Assumptions for ALL QIAT Areas

• Are legally correct according to the mandates and expectations of federal and state laws and are aligned to district policies
• Involve on-going collaborative work by teams which include families and caregivers, school personnel, and other needed individuals and service agencies

Beneficiaries of QIAT

• school districts - quality AT services
• service providers - continuous improvement
• consumers - integrated AT services
• universities - competent service providers
• policy-makers - judicious policy
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Collegial Conversation...

QIAT Web Site
http://www.qiat.org

QIAT Listserv
- collegial conversations
- new information and updates
- handouts and feedback

What IS Assistive Technology?
What is it for?
How can I help make good decisions?
How can I be a good steward of public funds?
How do I know if I am doing it right?

What were those stars?*


Freda Adler

“We measure progress not only by the questions we have answered, but also, by the questions we are still asking ...or have just begun to ask... for knowledge alters what we seek as well as what we find.”

In summary...

A CALL TO ACTION!

Make Connections!
Make It Happen!
Spread the Word!

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Make Connections!

Understand what AT is for!
- A support for overcoming barriers to achievement

Make Connections!

• Understand what AT is not!
  - Not replacements for instruction in academic, social, vocational or other skills
  - Not just a device

Make Connections!

• Understand what AT is
  - Legal term related to use and need, not specific items
  - Any item that enhances capabilities and removes barriers to performance

Work Together to Make It Happen!

• Think first about what a student needs to do and where it needs to be done, THEN seek useful tools
• Develop tool systems that remove more barriers than they create.
• Use what you have, but go beyond when you need to!

Work Together to Make It Happen!

• Don’t forget the services!
• Plan for change!
• Evaluate Effectiveness!

Spread the Word!

• Participate in the conversation
• Influence policy
  - Ask questions
  - Contribute evidence of change
  - Contribute evidence of continuing need
• QIAT List at http://www.qiat.org

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Jerome Bruner

...Where there was once an observer, let there now be a participant...