Creating an Environment for Effective AT Implementation and Use

Penny Reed, Ph.D.
pennyreed@charter.net

Snapshot

+ What are your concerns and frustrations with implementation?

TARGETing Success

+ Talk their language
+ Address their concerns
+ Refer to the law
+ Get their supervisor on board
+ Establish ownership and context
+ Train, train, train
Talk their language

+ “Research Based Interventions” not “Evidence Based Practice”
+ “Differentiated Instruction” not “UDL”
+ Avoid acronyms
+ Know the research about AT

Differentiated Instruction

+ Planning and delivery of instruction that addresses the varied levels of readiness, learning needs, and interests of each student.
+ Guided by principles such as...
  + Ongoing assessment
  + Timely Adjustments
  + Respectful tasks
  + Flexible grouping

Differentiation Based on Student’s...

+ Readiness
+ Interests
+ Learning Profile
Teachers can Differentiate:

- Content
- Process
- Product

Use language that makes sense

- Individuals at different stages of the Technology Adoption cycle are focused on totally different issues and interests
- What appeals to one does not appeal to someone in the next group

Address their concerns

- It is important to know:
  - That people have real concerns about any new idea or innovation,
  - That those concerns cannot be ignored, and
  - What those concerns are, in order to respond to them appropriately!

Reed, P. (2008). Implementing AT
Misconceptions = Barrier

+ AT = Computer
+ Use of AT will prevent “normal” skill development

Focus on typical activities and routines

+ Identify a typical activity/routine
+ Make a list of each step all students will take
+ Review the task steps
+ Identify any special procedures needed by the AT user
+ Identify the steps in these procedures
+ Identify tools and supports the student needs

Refer to the law

+ IDEA 2004
  + Def of AT devices & services
  + Requirement for services
  + Requirement for services based on peer reviewed research
  + Requirement for AIM
300.105 Assistive Technology

Each public agency shall ensure that assistive technology devices or assistive technology services or both, as terms are defined in §§300.5 and 300.6 are made available to a child with a disability if needed as part of the child’s

1) Special education under §300.36
2) Related services under §300.34, or
3) Supplementary aids and service under §300.38 and §300.114(a)(2)(ii).

300.5 AT Device

Any item, piece of equipment or product system whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability.

IDEA 2004 added:

EXCEPTION: The term does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted, or the replacement of such device.

IDEA, 2004 P.L.108-446, Section 602(1)(b)
300.6 AT Service

AT Service:
Any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the:
- Selection
- Acquisition, or
- Use of an AT Device

From Final Regulations

300.320 (a) (4) A statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided to enable the child--

Comment on Final Regulations

From Federal Register August 14, 2006:

"300.320 (a) (4) requires special education, related services and supplementary aides and services to be based on peer reviewed research to the extent possible. The act does not refer to "evidence based practice" or "emerging best practice" which are generally terms of art that may or may not be based on peer reviewed research."
IDEA Section 300.172

Provisions within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 require that textbooks and related core instructional materials be provided to students with print disabilities in specialized formats in a timely manner.

What are “Specialized Formats”? 
+ Braille
+ Audio
+ Digital text
+ Large print

For use exclusively for use by blind or other persons with print disabilities

Do all students who have reading difficulties have print disabilities?
+ Students with "print disabilities" under the Chaffee Amendment to the Copyright Law are those who have been certified by a competent authority as unable to read printed materials because of:
  + A visual impairment or blindness
  + Physical limitations
  + An organic dysfunction
+ Not all students with reading difficulties meet the criteria for "print disabilities" under the Chaffee Amendment.
Get the supervisor on board

- Administrators are the Key to Successful AT Use
  - Reinforcement
  - Monitoring of progress
  - Access to Resources

Leadership and AT

- Set example
- Lead visioning activities
- Reinforce desired behaviors
- Advocate when opportunity arises.

Management and AT

- Develop written operating guidelines and policies
- Ensure that AT services are responsive to the school’s constituency (parents and students)
- Ensure equity of access
- Ensure that AT services are cost effective and efficient
Policies and Procedures Should Address:

- Referral process for AT devices and services
- Process for AT Assessment
- Procedures for Consideration of AT Need
- Guidelines for documenting AT in IEP
- AT Services available to students in private schools
- Procedure for AT that is sent home and damaged

Supervision and AT

- Ensure that IEPs which include AT are implemented in a legal and ethical manner
- Ensure staff have appropriate levels of AT knowledge to fulfill their role.
- Foster environment with low level of conflict
- Address AT as part of staff evaluation

Administrator must know:

- What AT is currently being used by students.
- In what situations those students might be expected to use their AT.
- How the AT is expected to change the student’s performance.
- Who in the district can provide training.
- Who in the district can trouble shoot problems with the AT.
Program Development and AT

- Conduct ongoing evaluation
- Plan for program improvement
- Include in professional development
- Allocate resources
- Integrate AT into strategic plans

Defining Quality AT Services

+ Quality Indicators of AT Services (QIAT)
+ www.qiat.org
+ Consideration, Assessment, Documentation in the IEP, Implementation, Evaluation of Effectiveness, Transition, Administrative Support, and Professional Development

The education agency has:

+ Written procedural guidelines to ensure equitable access to AT
+ Broadly disseminated policies and procedures
+ Job descriptions that include responsibilities for AT
+ Personnel with competencies to provide AT
+ AT included in tech planning and budgeting
+ Opportunities for ongoing learning about AT
+ A systematic procedure to evaluate AT services.
Establish ownership

- Develop shared goals through active participation in-
  - AT assessment
  - IEP development
  - Action Plan development
  - Assign clear responsibilities

Importance of Participation

- No sustainable change can be accomplished without core people struggling through the anxieties of complex problem solving toward a shared solution.
- In other words the main role of policy makers is not to implement clarity, but to allow people to discover it.
  - Fullan (2003)

Address context

- Changes behavior
- Reason for addressing culture not individual cases
Train, train, train

- Educators, family, student
- Emphasize functional, strategic, and social skills, not just operational skills
- Focus on level of participation

Operational Skills

- Technical skills required to operate the technology tool
- Includes skills to use the access methods, if needed
  - Light; Bowser

Functional Skills

- Mastery of the specific knowledge or skill for which the technology tool was chosen (e.g., writing, comprehension, expressive language, etc.)
Strategic Skills

+ Ability to decide when to use a technology tool
+ Ability to choose the most appropriate technology tool to use for a specific activity in a specific environment
  - Light; Bowser

Social Skills

+ Ability to use the technology tools in an environment when others are present
+ Ability to use the technology tools with other people
+ Ability to help others understand the technology tool
  - Light; Bowser

Levels of Participation

+ Competitive
+ Active
+ Involved
+ None

Beukelman & Miranda
Ten minutes before the party is no time to be learning to dance!

TARGET
Talk their language
Address their concerns
Refer to the law
Get their supervisor on board
Establish ownership and context
Train, train, train

Create groups
+ Especially important for women
+ Need to “tend and befriend” when under stress
  * Taylor, et al.
Effective Systems Change

+ Always addresses two components:
  + Personal capabilities
  + Agency capacity
+ Requires you to think globally and act locally—this means identifying individuals in each school, district, and region
  --Wellman & Garmston

Putting the Pieces Together

+ Review the ideas you targeted, notes, and shared ideas.
+ Highlight the ones you want to use
+ Plan to implement.

A vision without a task is but a dream. A task without a vision is drudgery. A vision with a task is the hope of the world.

Inscription in a church Sussex, England, 1730