Assistive Technology Reflection

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EEX 4070 Integrating Exceptional Students in General Education Settings

Assistive Technology Reflection

Name at least three items that could be considered AT and describe how those devices could support a student with a disability in the classroom.

* The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) defines an assistive technology device as “any item, piece of equipment, or product system, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child and specifically excludes a medical device that is surgically implanted or the replacement of such device.”
* Specialized writing tools are considered AT as they reduce frustration for students when writing, while increasing their writing speed and movement. Specialized writing tools are used to develop gross-motor and fine-motor skills such as pencil control or pencil grasp. Also, for students with low muscle tone or immature pencil grasp patterns, pencil grips can be included to assist students while writing.
* Audio books allow students to listen to recorded versions of books or other texts on an audio device, such as a CD player or MP3 player.
* Manual wheelchairs provide mobility to students who are unable to walk safely or functionally. Movement around the classroom will be easier for these students, as long as the classroom teacher provides accommodating and safe pathways.
* Word processing software can be used to support students who have difficulty writing, especially while editing during the writing process, by allowing them to easily change letters, words, and sentences. Including word prediction software will allow students to decrease keystrokes while increasing the accuracy of a student’s spelling, grammar, and word selection.

Explain two reasons why it is necessary to consider AT for students with disabilities.

* Traditional classroom instruction and materials may not make the general education curriculum accessible to students with disabilities. Assistive Technology is any device or service that helps a student with a disability to meet his or her individualized education program (IEP) goals and to participate in the general education setting to the greatest possible extent.
* Assistive Technology (AT) improves the functional performance of a student with a disability. Students can utilize assistive technology to communicate, perform academic tasks, participate in social and extracurricular activities, move or travel around the school, use proper seating and positioning or access materials. In this way, students are equipped with multiple means to complete their work and meet their educational goals.

Why is it important to consider both AT devices and services?

* Assistive Technology comes in the form of devices and services, which are interrelated to support students with disabilities in the classroom. Student success is dependent on having access to a device, as well as having the support and services needed to use it effectively. Assistive technology service is defined by IDEA (2004) as “any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.” These services include, but are not limited to, evaluating student need for a device, buying or leasing the device, and providing training or technical assistance to the student, family, teachers, or other stakeholders involved in the student’s life.

Describe three responsibilities of the Implementation Team.

* The Implementation Team includes those who will be most directly involved in the actual implementation of the Assistive Technology, as prescribed by an IEP team. This team is usually a sub-group of the IEP team. First, the Implementation Team develops a plan to guide AT implementation and to ensure that activities related to AT are completed, including addressing how AT will be used across home, school, and community environments. The Implementation Team is responsible for determining what AT devices and services should be used, how the students, parents, and teachers will be trained, and how the devices will be monitored and evaluated. The Implementation Team then executes the plan. The team monitors and troubleshoots the AT device’s use to ensure that the student receives maximum benefit from the AT.

List three outcomes the Implementation Team can determine by evaluating a student's assistive technology.

* Evaluating a student’s AT device allows the Implementation Team to determine whether the AT is providing adequate support, if additional training is necessary, if product adaptation is needed, or a new device should be identified. If the AT devices or services are working, the Implementation Team can decide whether to purchase the device. If the AT is not working, the team will determine if the poor results were due to inadequate training or a mismatch between the student and device. The team would then problem-solve to find appropriate Assistive Technology.

Imagine you are a seventh-grade general education language arts teacher and a student in your class has an upcoming IEP meeting. What types of information should you gather ahead of time to contribute to the discussion of the student's AT needs? Name at least four.

* In order to ensure that all students have access to a free and appropriate public education, educators should consider Assistive Technology for all students with disabilities. The teacher should provide evidence of the student’s level of functioning in Language Arts, strengths and areas of need in reading or writing, successful or failed strategies and accommodations provided, and information about the student’s use of AT devices and services. This could include assessment comparisons with and without AT, student work samples when using the AT, the student’s progress toward IEP goals, and how often the student uses the AT.

During the meeting suggested in the example above, the IEP team recommends AT for the student. As a general education teacher, describe your role in the AT implementation and evaluation processes.

* The teacher will likely be a part of the Implementation Team. To maximize student’s success with Assistive Technology, the teacher should understand student needs, encourage AT use, and collaborate or communicate with knowledgeable individuals, the student’s family and the IEP team. Understanding student needs involves identifying student strengths and weaknesses, attending IEP or AT team meetings, and allowing the student time to practice with a new device. The teacher should be aware of the environment’s effect on the AT, as well as making observations to ensure correct use of AT in their classroom. The teacher implements AT for students in the classroom and should be aware of resources and supports that are available. To encourage AT use, the teacher should incorporate AT into the regular school day, set up the AT in easy-to-access locations, and familiarize the entire class with the AT. The teacher should communicate regularly with stakeholders to discuss what is and is not working for the student and AT.
* During the evaluation process, the classroom teacher would provide performance data to determine whether the AT helps the student perform the intended task(s) and make observations to establish whether the student uses the AT and appears engaged and interested in using the device. AT evaluations should be measured using classroom-based content related to the student’s expected performance. If the AT has been proven to be beneficial, ongoing monitoring will be necessary to determine whether the assistive technology is used routinely with continued success, is only used intermittently, or has been abandoned.

References

Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (2004).

The IRIS Center. (2010). Assistive Technology: An Overview. Retrieved from http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/at/