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Assistive Technology and Accessible Educational Material Supports – Role of School Leadership

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Hello today we are going to discuss assistive technology and accessible educational material supports for students disabilities. We will focus on the importance of these supports as students as they access the curriculum, participate and make progress in academic activities. Finally, we will discuss the role of leadership as it pertains to ensuring that students have theses supports in place as they engage in classroom activities.

Objectives

- This web module will highlight
 - The role of assistive technology (AT) and accessible educational materials (AEM)
 - The significance of documenting AT & AEM
 - The role of administrators in supporting and implementing AT & AEM

The purpose of this web module is three fold it will highlight a) the role assistive technology and accessible educational materials play in accessing the curriculum, b) significance of documenting AT & AEM in the IEP and, c) the role of administrators in implementing AT & AEM

Technology and Assistive Technology

Technology can become
the “wings” that will allow
the educational world to
fly farther and faster than
ever before—if we will
allow it.

-Jenny Arledge

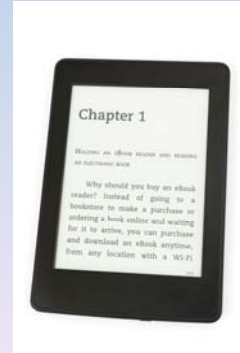
Just think of the quote in this slide “Technology can become the ‘wings’ that allow the educational world to fly further and faster than ever before – if we will allow it”. Two aspects of the quote really point to our roles as educators ‘allowing the educational world to fly further’ and of more significance is the reference to the ‘will of educators’. Educators, today have no choice but to embrace technology. But, it is their believe in equity that will guide them to implement technology for students.

Technology and Assistive Technology

Any technology
that **assists** is
assistive
technology

Just pause for a second and think, any technology that assists is assistive technology. Think of your or your family's use of technology.

Consider Your Use of Technology



Pause for a second and think how you are using technology everyday. Do you use a smart phone? Do you use GPS navigation when you drive? Do you use speech to text to send messages? Do you listen to audio books? Can you think how your lives would be without the use of some of these technologies.

Students and Technology Use

- Most students are already using technology for
 - Recreation
 - Communication
 - Organization



As educators it is important for us to consider that students are already using technology before and after school. Most students use technology for communication, recreation and organization. Students are using to communicate with their friends, organize their social lives and entertain themselves.

Technology and Assistive Technology

The challenge is to use Technology and AT consistently and uniformly across environments



The challenge for educators is to use technology, implement it consistently to promote access and participation

Assistive Technology & Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

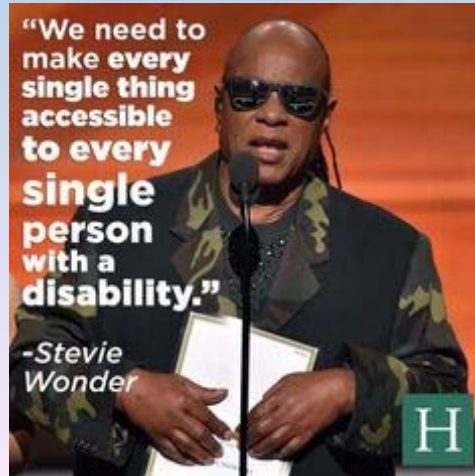
- AT Devices
- AT Services



When it comes to assistive technology, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) stresses on both AT devices and services.

IDEA defines Assistive Technology **Device** “as 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 functional capabilities of a child with a disability.” (20 USC 1401). Assistive technology services must also be considered an integral part of providing AT. AT services include evaluation, purchasing and selection, coordination of services, and providing training to all stakeholders.

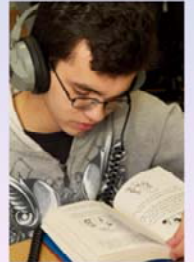
Accessible Educational Materials



Now let's talk about accessible educational materials. This quote by Stevie Wonder highlights the importance of accessible educational materials. Students who are unable to interact with print must have access to the curriculum via other mediums such as digital, graphic, audio, video

Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)

- Accessible Educational materials (AEM)
 - Are materials that are designed or converted in way that making them usable across the widest range of student variability regardless of format
 - Are transformed into the specialized formats
 - Braille
 - Large print
 - Audio
 - Digital text.



<http://aim.cast.org/learn/accessiblemedia/allaboutaim/what>

Accessible Educational materials (AEM) are materials that are designed or converted in a way that makes them usable across the widest range of student variability regardless of format (print, digital, graphic, audio, video). Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) specifically focuses on accessible formats of print instructional materials. In relation to IDEA the term AEM refers to print Educational materials that have been transformed into the specialized formats of braille, large print, audio, or digital text.

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Who Needs AEM

- Students who are unable to read
 - At grade level
 - At a sufficient rate
 - Read with adequate comprehension
 - Independently across environments and tasks



If any student is unable to read traditional grade level printed Educational materials at a sufficient rate and with adequate comprehension to complete academic tasks with success, relative to same-age peers, or cannot do this independently, or cannot do this across environments and tasks, then the student may need accessible educational materials.

Role of Planning and Placement Team

- It is the responsibility of the planning and placement team (PPT) to
 - Identify students who may print related disabilities
 - Determine if the student qualifies to receive AEM



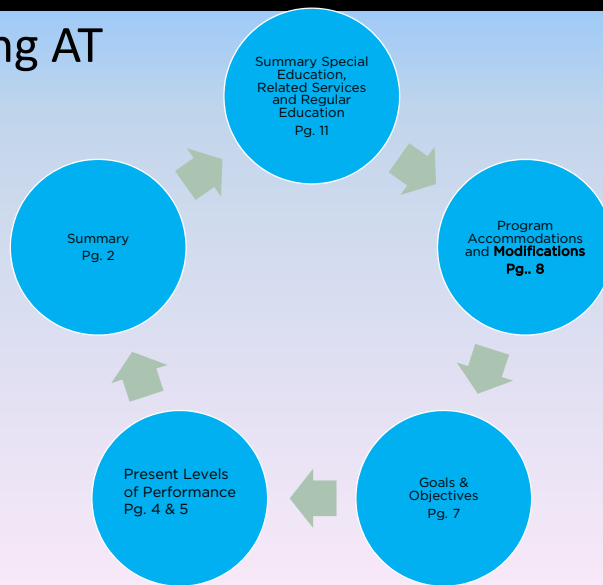
If a student is identified by the **planning and placement team (PPT)** as having a print-related disability (e.g., blindness, visual impairment, physical limitations and specific learning disability in reading), which impacts the student's ability to access curriculum. The PPT may determine, **as the competent authority**, that the student qualifies to receive AEM produced in specialized formats as delineated on the individualized education program (IEP) through an accessible media producers

Documenting AT & AEM



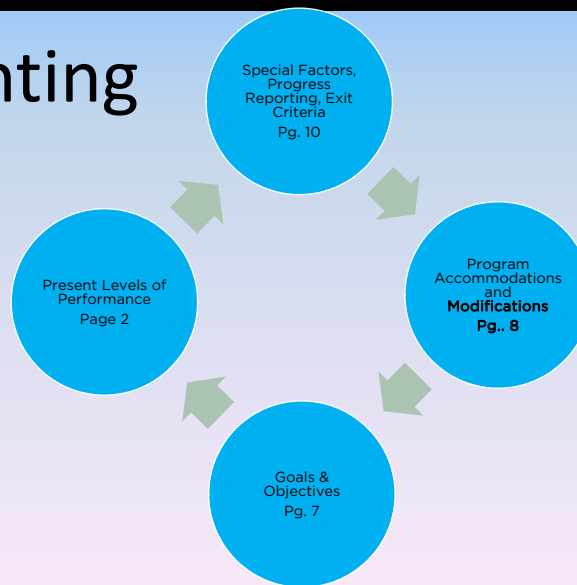
Assistive technology and accessible educational materials must be documented through out the IEP to ensure that they are implemented with fidelity.

Documenting AT



From the administrators perspectives it is important to consider that AT should be documented on pages 11, 8, 7, 4 and 5, and 2 in the IEP. For more details and information on documenting AT please refer to the SERC module Documenting assistive technology in the IEP documenting assistive technology (AT) and accessible educational materials (AEM) in the individualized educational program (IEP) (<http://bit.ly/2vGwhnt>) .

Documenting AEM



From an administrators perspectives it is important to consider that AEM should be documented on pages 10, 8, 7 and, 4 and 5, the IEP. For more details and information on documenting AEM please refer to the SERC module Documenting assistive technology in the IEP documenting assistive technology (AT) and accessible educational materials (AEM) in the individualized educational program (IEP) (<http://bit.ly/2vGwhnt>) .

Role of Leadership in Implementing AEM & AT

Its all about **access,**
participation and
progress



The leadership and administration in schools and districts play a vital role in implementing AT & AEM as these supports can be instrumental in assisting students with disabilities as they access the general education curriculum and participate along side their peers. School administrators must recognize

Ensuring Access to AT & AEM: Role of Administrators

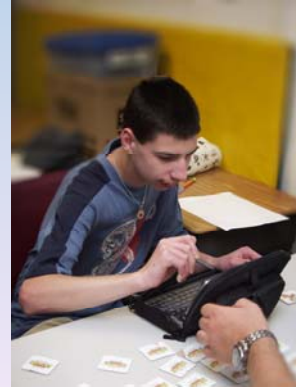
- Guidelines to provide services
- Support Implementation
- Ensure that the school/district has policies to provide equitable services



It is the responsibility of the administrator to keep the team focused, to understand the nature of change, to facilitate teams, and their relationships, to assist with the building of knowledge, and to develop a clear message in terms of AT services and delivery (Fullan, 2001).

Guidelines to Provide Services

- Develop procedural guidelines
- Promote the use of AT and AEM
- Describe the knowledge, skills and responsibilities of educators



It is the responsibility of administration develop a vision and procedural guidelines to provide AT and AEM services, promoting the use of AT and AEM as a means of access, participate and progress in the general education curriculum as well as describing the knowledge, skills and responsibilities of educators implementing AT services to ensure teacher accountability and student progress

Support Implementation

- Develop a plan for AT & AEM implementation
- Ensure that evidence based measures are used to provide AT & AEM services



The school and district leadership should develop a plan for AT & AEM implementation at the district, school and student level. The plan should specify how AT & AEM will be considered, implemented and their impact evaluated. It should also outline the responsibilities of staff who will support and implement AT and AEM. Ensure that evidence based measures are used to provide AT services i.e., use of data to make all decisions

Support Implementation

- Support the implementation of AT & AEM by providing
 - Time for collaboration
 - Resources
 - Allocation of resources for purchase and maintenance of AT



Planning is crucial to implementing AT & AEM. School administration should ensure that educators have the time and resources to plan together so that AT and AEM are implemented seamlessly through out the school day and students with disabilities have the supports in all classrooms and subject areas. Facilitation of collaboration between general and special educators is vital so that AT is used to enable students to access, participate and make progress in education

Professional Development

- Continuous professional development
- Support to 'practice and try out' technology



Ensure that educators are continually developing their knowledge and skills regarding AT assessment, evaluation and use Implementation AT is dependent upon teacher knowledge and skills as there is evidence to suggest that teacher knowledge and skills constitute 44% of the impact on student learning (National Staff Development Center (NSDC), 2006). According to Sparks(2006) only 7% of schools have teachers who are skilled enough in the use of AT. In spite of this obvious need, Lawless and Pellegrino (2007) report that 36% of schools provide no professional development for AT and another 29% provided only 1-14 hours of training per year.

“Technology is not just a tool. It can give learners a voice that they may not have had before.”

George Couros

This quote summarizes the significances of technology and assistive technology for students with disabilities. Assistive technology and accessible educational materials can empower students with disabilities to be independent within their limitations and be contributing members in their communities both at home and in schools. But this can only be a reality if the leadership educational institutions embrace AT & AEM and consider them to be assets rather than financial inconveniences

References

- Barnard-Brak, L., Thompson, S., Wei, T., & Richman, D. (2014). Assistive technology as a predictor of general or alternate assessment among elementary-aged students with autism spectrum disorders, *Assistive Technology* 26, 14-35
- Kearns, J., Towles-Reeves, E., Kleinert, H., Kleinert, J. & Thomas, M. (2011). Characteristics of and implications for students participating in alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards. *Journal of Special Education*, 45(1), 3-14.

For more information on implementing AT & AEM in your schools please contact Sean Kavanaugh at kavanaugh@ctserc.org, 860 635 1485 ext 370 and/or Smita Worah at worah@ctserc.org, 860 635 1485 ext 319.

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 - Professional development materials for staff

Thank you for attending our webinar on assistive technology and accessible educational material supports the role of school leadership
Please feel free to contact us or to visit our Library if you need further resources.