

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PLANNER

PUTTING RESEARCH INTO THE HANDS OF PRACTITIONERS



FROM IEP CONSIDERATION TO CLASSROOM IMPLEMENTATION

Assistive technology (AT) is critical to the academic and social success of many students with disabilities across all disability areas (Quinn, Behrmann, Mastropieri, Bausch, Ault, & Chung, 2009). Thorough planning, development, implementation, and evaluation are critical to ensuring that students are provided with appropriate AT that helps them access and progress in the curriculum and participate fully at home and in the community. There are a number of service delivery models for planning and implementing AT with students (e.g., formal AT team, district specialist with building representatives, collaborative agencies serving multiple districts, regional AT centers serving multiple districts, and districtwide teams serving students with specific needs). In some districts, there also are school- and/or district-based professionals with expertise in AT to provide assistance. However, teachers and parents often are expected to make sure that students use AT effectively. In fact, teachers and parents are key members of individualized education program (IEP) teams that make decisions about AT for individual students. They are on the front line in supporting students in implementing AT in classrooms, at home, and in the community.

During the years 2001-2006, researchers at the **National Assistive Technology Research Institute (NATRI)** at the University of Kentucky were awarded a federal grant (Cooperative Agreement #H327G000004 from the Research to Practice Division, Office of Special Education Programs, U. S. Department of Education) to investigate quality AT services and promising practices in schools. A major activity of the institute involved disseminating research findings and information in ways that assisted school personnel in developing and/or improving AT policies and practices for students with disabilities.

HELPING SCHOOL PERSONNEL ENSURE QUALITY AT PRACTICES: WHAT RESEARCHERS FOUND

When NATRI researchers asked teachers what school districts could do better in helping them plan and implement AT, 37% indicated that they needed more training, especially as it related

to developing a general awareness of AT. While teachers appreciated the expertise of the experts in their districts, they also felt they needed more training in order to implement AT effectively with their students. Only 8% of teachers interviewed indicated that they used a plan to ensure quality AT implementation, even though validated quality indicators stipulated that such a plan was needed (Bausch & Ault, 2008). Further, teachers said they did little or no data collection to measure the effectiveness of the AT.

After analyzing these data, NATRI researchers determined that a product was needed to guide the multiple professionals, administrators, and parents through the implementation process in their schools. This led to the development of the **Assistive Technology Planner: From IEP Consideration to Classroom Implementation** (Bausch, Ault, & Hasselbring, 2006). It is designed to support teams of administrators, families, and professionals as they work in collaboration with other IEP team members.

Because individuals serving in different roles often need different knowledge and skills, the **Assistive Technology Planner** has



separate but complementary booklets for teachers, families, and administrators. There also is a user's guide that contains a reproducible implementation planning form and directions for completing the form. This is a vital component in quality AT service delivery (Bausch & Ault, 2008).

WHY DOES THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PLANNER WORK?

The **Assistive Technology Planner** works because it provides relevant information for all involved in making AT decisions for students in schools:

- Administrative involvement is one key component in ensuring that students have access to the technology they need and in empowering professionals and parents to meet student needs. The administrator booklet provides specific information on providing leadership on AT issues.
- Parental involvement is another component needed to ensure the effective implementation of technology. The parent booklet shows parents how to work with teams to advocate for their child, to ask the questions that ensure delivery of quality services, and to effectively embed their child's use of technology in the school, home, and community.
- Teachers must be able to make decisions related to effective AT implementation, including consideration, selection, implementation, and monitoring of effectiveness. The teacher's booklet guides teachers and other professionals through these processes.

The implementation form provides a step-by-step method for teams to use to ensure correct and effective implementation and monitoring of progress so that adjustments can be made if needed.

These three booklets, along with the AT implementation form, provide each member of the IEP team with the information he or she needs to deliver AT services to students in schools. Armed with this information, team members can work together to ensure that AT is considered for each student with an IEP; to document that the full range of AT services is provided (Bausch, Ault, Evmenova, & Behrmann (2008); and to ensure that the team properly implements the AT, monitors its effectiveness, and makes adjustments as needed.

NATRI REFERENCES

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For additional information on the research go to the NATRI website at <http://natri.uky.edu>



The **Assistive Technology Planner** has been awarded the following top honors:

- Gold MarCom Creative Award (2006)
- Gold Spotlight Award (2006)
- Named in the Top 100 Communication Materials (#36) by the League of American Communication Professionals (2006)
- Gold Hermes Creative Award (2007)
- Honorable Mention Communicator Award (2007)
- Gold Millennium Award (2008)