

Orchestrating a Comprehensive AT View: A Psychologist Looks at AT



In this Issue...

They are members of their school's IEP teams. Their responsibility includes the emotional and social evaluation of students with disabilities. Some psychologists go beyond their assigned roles, however. On their own they have developed a deep knowledge of technology and technology's growing role in securing the education of all children, including those with disabilities, ensuring that the technology is accessible, appropriate and that its use is maximized. This issue examines the integrative role of school psychologists who have made themselves expert in classroom technology.

Leonard Pisano, Ph.D., Speaks

"Sixteen years ago I was a school psychologist working with two kids with cerebral palsy. These children had no way to write. Somehow we got a technology expert to help them. I watched the expert work with the kids and my interest and curiosity were piqued. Even then I saw the potential of technology and the direction my professional future would take, if not the exact destination."

Today, Dr. Leonard Pisano remains a school-based psychologist in District 31, Staten Island, New York – while also serving as coordinator of AT services. As a psychologist he is involved in direct and indirect consultation with staff, parents, students, and administration, providing psychological evaluations and school-based counseling. Wearing his AT hat he develops an AT referral process, provides

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staff development, and conducts ongoing, specialized AT evaluations for K-12 general and special education students. Wearing both hats he is a member of district IEP teams.

“As a psychologist,” Dr. Pisano remarks, I bring a different and perhaps more comprehensive orientation to my role as an IEP team member. I look at a student’s total profile, whereas other IEP team participants view the student’s profile from their individual perspectives as specialists, as educators. Their objectives by necessity are more focused. When they consider AT devices and services they are looking for where their expertise can be applied, which is as it should be.”

School psychologists, he adds, assume a more expansive perspective. “They employ their integrative ability, with an awareness and understanding of all the options offered to a student. I don’t have to be an expert in all the areas under discussion but I have to be able to appreciate the importance of what the other participants’ viewpoints and then come up with a plan that encompasses all of them.”

On the IEP team, he continues, the psychologist is the district representative, “the person who knows about the programs in the school and district, who knows where a student perhaps ought to be placed in order to find a more level playing field.”

In a situation in which all participants wear their separate hats, the psychologist may not know all the answers but should be able to ask the right questions, he observes. He views himself, he explains, “as the conductor of a sizeable orchestra whose task is to facilitate the members of the orchestra, represent the student and develop a plan.”

It is as an AT consultant, however, that Dr. Pisano expands the customary role of the psychologist. “I look for ways to develop and fine-tune a child’s goals and the implementation of services, including AT.”

However, he adds, “we know that just because tech-

nology is included in an IEP does not mean that the technology will be effective.” Matching technology to a student’s needs, he reminds, is an evolving process that begins, not ends, when the equipment is acquired.

“Let’s remember,” he cautions, “that once the student has acquired the technology she must then learn to maximize its benefits. She may already be struggling with tasks like writing or reading and now we have added yet another task, learning to use the device that will help her become more proficient in both tasks – and she has to do this on the fly because her world does not stop. She has to do everything simultaneously.”

His favorite expression, he says, is “the curriculum never stops.” His responsibility and that of educators, he notes, is to help the student take advantage of her technology.” Doing so while she continues to cope with classroom challenges, he adds, requires IEP team members and others, including parents, to find answers to the following questions:

- “How do we help the student to continue to be remediated in specific areas?”
- “How do we help the child to survive and be a fully engaged participant in the classroom?”
- “How do we help staff work with the student?”
- “Who works with the student?”
- “When, where and how do we begin to implement these approaches?”

Concludes Dr. Pisano, “this is a huge task, but if we adopt a collaborative, supportive posture, we will hopefully enjoy an improved success rate and will develop a better model to predict what the student’s needs will be.”

Supporting our interview with Dr. Pisano are resources aimed at examining the role of the school psychologist in the selection and use of assistive and instructional technology. We also feature members of our Knowledge Network. The members spotlighted this month focus on the psychologist’s role in AT evaluation and IEP team participation. We invite you to contact these members for fur-

ther information. Please share this newsletter with other organizations, families and professionals who may benefit from it. We invite you to visit us at <http://www.fctd.info>. We welcome feedback, new members and all who contribute to our growing knowledge base.

**The FCTD December
Online Discussion
has begun!**

**Parent Advocacy and
Family-School Partnership**

December 1 - 30, 2008

**Joining us as moderators,
we are pleased to welcome**

**Lon Thornburg,
Veteran Teacher and
Assistive Technology Specialist**

and

**Charles DiPietro,
Parent Advocate**

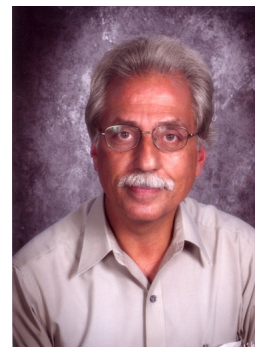
Effective parent advocacy takes time and effort, but has proven to result in superior educational outcomes for children with disabilities.

Join our experts and colleagues throughout the country in sharing strategies for productive parent advocacy and family-school partnerships.

<http://www.fctd.info/webboard/index.php>

“The Curriculum Never Stops”

*An Interview with Leonard V. Pisano, Ph.D., School
Psychologist and AT Consultant*



“The school day and all the responsibilities and tasks associated with it do not stop because a child has to learn how to get the most out of his technology,” declares Dr. Pisano. “He has to do everything at once and it is very stressful for him, but he has to do it. He needs help in accessing the right technology and maximizing its benefits. That’s where I as a school psychologist come in and where I can double as a psychologist who is also an AT consultant and an IEP team member.”

Dr. Pisano says that in performing his dual duties he tries to integrate as many viewpoints as possible when it comes to children and technology. “A psychologist is responsible for understanding education, curriculum, learning problems and issues and disorders, for being able to help diagnose or classify students in terms of what their identified disabilities are and how those disabilities relate to development and learning issues.”

His is a very different perspective from the other professionals with whom he collaborates, he notes. “Other specialized professionals look at the technology match, occupational therapy and learning issues, for example, but they are analyzing those issues under a microscope that’s very different from mine.”

The Psychologist and the IEP Team

Viewed from Dr. Pisano’s perspective, IEP team members must develop a more comprehensive sense of the IEP’s function and technology’s place and value in it.

“I’ve often seen IEP teams shy away from technology. Team members sometimes say, ‘We’re not the

[technology] expert. We don't know what to do. We don't know how to approach the issue of technology.' They then opt to leave everything to the technology consultant or specialist, whoever is doing the evaluation. That is not the best way to handle the situation."

Educators, parents, therapists, and other IEP team members, he insists, "have to understand that every person is bringing a level of expertise to the table. All are contributing in an integrative fashion. That's my first consideration when I examine teams and how they operate in order to develop guidelines for an effective team."

The goal of such active collaboration, Dr. Pisano maintains, is to go "beyond compliance with existing statutes and address the individual needs of the student."

Unfortunately, he says, "school systems are under a lot of pressure and they might visualize technology as another piece of an IEP for which responsibility ends after equipment is purchased." In fact, he asserts, the purchase marks the beginning of the responsibility, not the end. "The facilitator of the team is the person who has to take the team past the equipment purchase. The facilitator has to attract support from team members and parents and then develop a document that has to represent an evolving process."

The document, he explains, "has to present a way to build continuous monitoring into the IEP goals and management needs, including a provision that the team be reconvened if necessary by the appropriate team members. The team has to work at this. Otherwise they won't know what will happen in terms of how accessible and useful the purchased AT will be to the student."

The AT Evaluation: "Equalizing the Playing Field"

An AT evaluation should occur, says Dr. Pisano, when a student in general or special education, with or without an IEP, develops a pattern in which she

has not been able to compete in regular activities, including writing homework, tapping into information, writing responses, reading materials, doing math and organizing. "We have to try to understand and appreciate what that student is going through in the classroom. Has the child's teacher tried differentiated instruction or accommodations? Has the teacher encouraged the student to write less or to provide oral responses? If those supports have not shown an ability to help make that student successful in the classroom, then we have to determine what factors are impeding the student's ability to respond to daily routines and the typical activities in which students are expected to be proficient: reading, writing and math."

An AT evaluation should be part of a solid, comprehensive student evaluation, he notes. Dr. Pisano recommends the SETT framework as a general model that takes into consideration the student's abilities, environment, the technology that has been assigned to the student and the tools necessary to help the student. "This is an excellent model with which to critically analyze technology, student strengths and weaknesses, the demands of the program, the approach to remediation, accommodation and differentiating instruction. All of these factors frame where AT fits in. It equalizes the playing field."

[Ed. note: For more information on the SETT Framework, developed by Dr. Joy Zabala, see the Family Center's Online Discussion Archive, which includes a transcript of our month-long discussion of SETT, moderated by Dr. Zabala.]

Beyond the Evaluation: Ongoing Support is Critical

Technology acquisition is only the first step, he notes, "the first brick in the foundation." Ongoing support for the student and follow-up, he adds, are also part of the foundation. "If such a foundation is not in place, the student will become frustrated as will school staff who do not see a fast enough turnaround in a child's performance. They see competing issues around curriculum, management and the need for the student to pass state tests. When

these factors are taken into consideration, technology often takes a back seat.”

As part of his job as a consultant for the New York City Board of Education, Dr. Pisano interviews children whose relationship with their technology is not working.

“I try to determine what has gone wrong. I usually find two causes: first, that device, with this student, is not sufficient for performing the task for which it was designed, that the ability of the child to interface with the curriculum has not expanded enough; second, the tool itself, which might be a multi-layered software package with many features, has not been fully exploited by the student. In other words, despite the tool’s versatility, the student continues to use it in a one-dimensional way, as a word processor for instance, or as a standard talking text.” This second problem, says Dr. Pisano, is caused by insufficient communication among providers, students and teachers. Minus an integrated approach, the student receives inadequate instruction about the device or software tool and its use is not fully effective.

According to Dr. Pisano, it is important for a student to experience a sense of accomplishment and independence, and to learn that the work required to learn to use the device is worthwhile. In order to do that, he stresses, the student needs ongoing support.

For example, an occupational therapist (OT) might take some activities the student is performing in class, like writing sentences, work on them in the OT therapy room, or at home and, at the same time, teach keyboarding skills. “If we can find a way for the student to show some sense of mastery, you can say to the student, ‘Look what we did. We edited a whole page. It took us much less time, it was much easier and you don’t have to rewrite anything by hand!’”

Dr. Pisano suggests that students should ideally receive weekly, perhaps twice weekly, help with

the technology, with the goal of expanding the student’s use of it in creative ways throughout the entire curriculum.

Their Technology Makes Them “Different”

There is another issue that students often are unprepared to face regarding their equipment, Dr. Pisano says.



“At first they are excited about the equipment’s potential for changing their life for the better. Then they are faced with the fact that having and using this equipment in a classroom makes them different. These students need ongoing counseling and support to get through this. I often role-play with kids. I ask them, ‘What are you going to say to someone who asks you, ‘Why are you using this equipment?’ I try to help them develop a response.”

Dr. Pisano works with children who are in general education classes but have been identified as dysgraphic due to the illegibility of their writing. “Maybe they can write legibly for five minutes at a time but after that their writing becomes illegible to them and to others.”

Via role play Dr. Pisano teaches students to reply to classmates who ask why they are now using a laptop in class. “I use it because I write like chicken scratches,’ the technology users can reply. If they are asked if they are able to use the laptop, or if the laptop helps them, they can respond, ‘Absolutely.’ It’s an advantage that helps them show what they know.”

Using this equipment helps these students bypass their learning issues, he says, “which encourages the students to continue using the device in the classroom without feeling marginalized because they are ‘different.’”

“Learning How to Use Technology Is Hard Work”

“From a psychological perspective we have to get involved more in having students be part of the solution, to participate in problem-solving, goal-setting, to own the responsibility of having some say in how their technology will be used,” declares Dr. Pisano. For example, he says, “a student might say to me, ‘Remember how you showed me those keystrokes? Well, they don’t work for me. I’d rather use the icons on top,’ or ‘Why can’t I just use the right click on my mouse?’”

If students are going to use this technology, they need a sense of commitment and responsibility, he continues. “They need to have a sense of empowerment when using it.” From my perspective as a psychologist and AT consultant, he adds, “the issue goes beyond learning techniques. Instead I prefer to talk to the student about the techniques that are meaningful to her. In other words, my understanding of a student’s abilities and motivation helps me teach her techniques that take into consideration that knowledge and employ the student’s strengths.”

He is convinced that “we need to take that approach because, frankly, learning how to use a new tool is hard work, especially for students with overlapping disabilities. Whereas learning keyboarding might seem a relatively easy task, it is anything but easy for students who have little awareness of what their fingers are doing. They might need other ways of learning, perhaps via an on-screen keyboard.”

In concept and in theory, he notes, it is important to say, “I recognize what your learning problems are; the technology will support you and will give you feedback, which is a very important feature for many kids with reading and writing problems.”

But that is not enough, he adds, “because it puts students in the same mode where they still have to somehow organize their thoughts, they have to learn in sequential order and respond to assignment questions, to what they will be graded on.”

All these can be part of their disability, he notes.

“In terms of understanding, we have to know how they are going to utilize the technology, apply it and integrate it and make it part of themselves because they are more than students we are trying to compensate for; they are students with a multitude of other issues that might be impacting.”

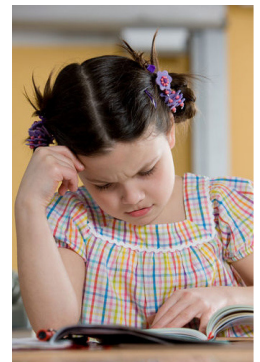
That, he says, is why he emphasizes an integrated approach. “The technology person with whom the student works – an OT or a para[professional] – must understand the student and how the student perceives the usefulness of the technology so it will be maximized. What we are saying is, ‘Work hard with this tool and it will become viable for you in the future.’”

“Educators are sometimes the best therapists that kids ever have,” he claims. “They know their kids. They see the stress. They know their kids’ strengths. They know to say to them when frustration overtakes them, ‘Hold on, let’s take a look at what you’ve accomplished.’”

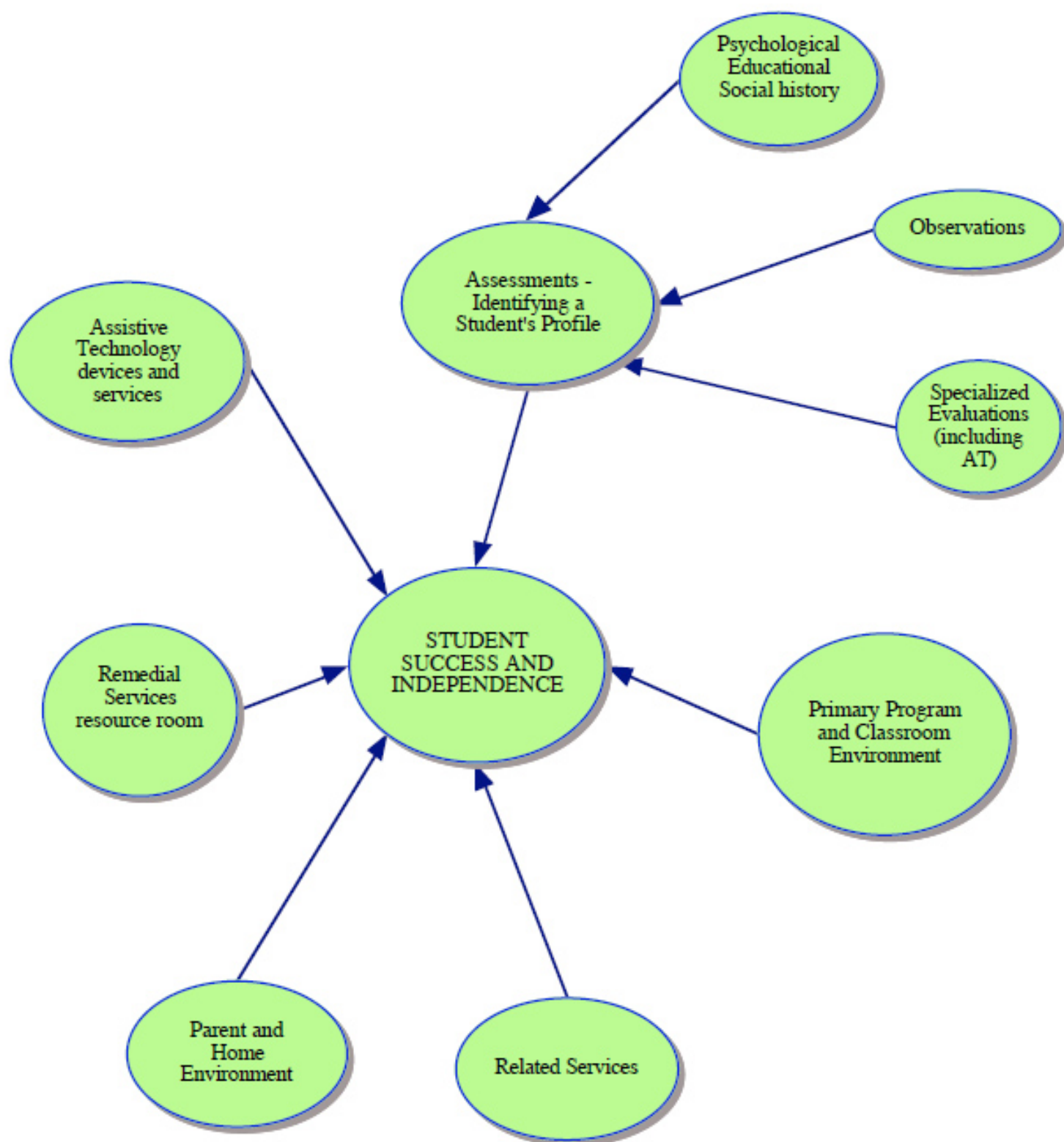
Technology Tool Selection Must Recognize the Whole Student

Children’s learning needs may be complex, depending upon the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral issues they face. He cites students with Asperger’s Syndrome as an example. “These students have learning needs. They might have dys-graphic issues and writing issues. Their skills are good. You could perhaps match them with a word processor. They are bright kids. They have high achievement levels, high intellect. But you have to understand that these kids have a syndrome that produces problems with transition, making adjustments and requiring visual/verbal confirmation in terms of routine and instruction.”

They need to have very clear goals and expectations, he declares. “Technology is not going to support them if they are overwhelmed, stressed



Key Elements to Formulate a Comprehensive Integrated Plan



and anxious due to the program itself and how it is conducted. Even the instruction of technology for these students is sometimes a problem because they are creatures of routine. They become adamant and anxious and caught up in their own issues. It's very important to understand the LD profile of the students or their syndrome or disorder, how it relates to each individual student, to their learning needs and to their classroom work and learning a new skill."

Positive Thoughts about Universal Design

"I have lots of positive thoughts about Universal Design," Dr. Pisano says. "I've tried with my school district to propose a model in which we would have a technology learning environment in general education that would offer everything from a Smart-board, which enables students to get information easily via a big screen, to a sound field system that can enhance the ability of students to attend, if they have problems with attention. We talked about a mini-lab that would feature programs to help students for whom we provide technology. It also would help at-risk students, students who are struggling. We said, 'If we have this enriched technological environment everyone wins.'"

Such a Universal Design-based facility becomes very cost-effective, he remarks, "because even those students not identified [as needing special education services] also get benefits. Maybe this approach will help keep struggling children in a general ed classroom if we enhance some of the instructional base and some of the outlets where they can obtain information. For example, we have a second grade class with a youngster who is not yet proficient enough in reading to do silent reading and then talk about it. Maybe the child needs headphones to listen to an audio book or an electronic book so that he can participate with his peers."

Children do not develop evenly, Dr. Pisano emphasizes. "This is a way to balance and fine-tune needs and expectations, to give children experiences in which they can be more independent, where they can learn and be part of the classroom dynamic.

"If a lesson says, 'Read and then talk about what you have read,' the child who is unable to read the material cannot participate in the discussion. If the classroom goal is to comprehend the material and then talk about it as a group, let the child hear the content. The child should not be penalized for hearing the content rather than reading it. Hearing it is far worse than the alternative – humiliation -- because the child can't read the material and now can't talk about it."

According to Dr. Pisano, universally designed materials motivate kids with learning difficulties. "In a UD classroom there are no losers; everyone wins. 'Everyone' includes staff. But the catch is that staff members have to immerse themselves in the possibilities that technology offers in the areas of instruction and education."

Immersion, he insists, will provide teachers a learning forum and will offer a rich learning environment to students across a range of abilities, from those needing help to others who use the technology as an enrichment tool. "There is no downside to the implementation of universal design in the classroom. Nobody loses."

"No Student Has to Leave the Classroom"

The challenge to Universal Design implementation, despite its obvious benefits for all children, is equally obvious: funding in a time of acute scarcity.

"My school system's recommendation to me and another colleague who espoused Universal Design was to obtain a grant and the school system would be very happy to undertake classroom conversion to a Universal Design format. The school system knows, as we knew, that implementing Universal Design is a far more productive alternative to today's classroom environment for many kids with learning disabilities who are often taken from the classroom and placed in a resource room." With Universal Design, he emphasizes, no student has to leave the classroom; supports are pushed into the classroom.

Despite the increasingly severe funding difficulties confronting all school systems “what is encouraging is that so many school systems understand that technology is beneficial and that Universal Design is desirable. There are more Smartboards in schools, along with other technological innovations.” But lack of funding continues to keep real Universal Design on the backburner, Dr. Pisano notes.

Future Trends: “We Must Manage What We Have”

When assessing emerging trends in an immediate future shaded with economic duress, Dr. Pisano has already put his idealism on the backburner. “I know the real world. It’s the world I work in. My idealism aside, in the near-term future we have to take a step back and become even more adept at managing what we have right now versus managing the ideal.”



As a psychologist and consultant in a school system, “I’d like to see an accelerating trend in schools to locate the key players vis-a-vis technology and children, a trend organized around those teachers who have shown an interest in classroom technology that a child with learning issues might benefit from, a teacher who has made the effort to help that child.” Such a teacher, he adds, “might be a technology teacher who teaches in general ed or the teacher who instructs kids in word processing or who introduced technology and educational software to students.”

Such individuals should be folded into a team approach that involves the appropriate, available players in a given school. “Get those individuals on board, try to offer them support – and hope – and work with the parents as well as the student. The objective is to maximize the positive impact of the assets we already have. The next step would be to try to organize monthly meetings involving these individuals. It would also be desirable to have ac-

cess to individuals familiar with the repair and maintenance of the technology who could be notified about repair issues and respond quickly.”

“Maximize the Possible”

“The idea,” says Dr. Pisano, “is to have enough minds at work on the issue of technology in a school to provide us a glimpse of what ought to be done in specific situations. We have to maximize the possible, capitalizing on what we can do and accept what we are unable to do at this time.”

A positive aspect of today’s reality, he adds, is that technology is becoming less expensive and thus schools are more open to acquiring it. “Some software programs are becoming easier to operate and more user-friendly, which is beneficial for students and for staff members responsible for student users.”

The software vendor is another resource, he points out. “Vendors will visit a school to answer questions and work with the staff – and the students, too. Vendors are a great source of information about the versatility of the technology. There is not enough training available for staff, not enough vision about the possibilities of the technology, and vendors can help in both these areas.”

He cautions, “I’m not criticizing staff. I’m an AT consultant and even I can’t keep track of technology’s bells and whistles.”

While technology is gaining more acceptance, the pressing realities of budget issues, the pace of instruction and the demands of No Child Left Behind, including intense testing and accountability, constrict its wider implementation, Dr. Pisano observes. “However, even though we recognize today’s imperative, frontline practitioners, psychologists and consultants have to continue to raise the bar of expectation. It is not enough to supply the equipment and some beginning goals.”

School systems need to be convinced that the students using this technology require follow-up, he

declares. “Schools need to release some of their technology staff to conduct follow-up training and investigation. Not enough expertise is utilized. For example, in my school district I’m only one of two professionals who do what I do. We have technology teams, OTs, speech and language pathologists and physical therapists who specialize in technology. They do a good job, but they go through formal training typically once with the student and that’s all.”

“Technology Is a Tool that Works”

In the future, Dr. Pisano says, “we have to continue to push the concept that technology is a tool that works given the right supports. Universal Design is a big step in that direction. Right now it’s a difficult situation. Many teachers, paras and OTs, for example, have little understanding of the technology and how it can benefit a student. It’s like starting from scratch. It is very, very difficult when a teacher turns to me and says, ‘I have 25 other kids.’ Teachers have to be made aware that technology not only helps kids, it helps teachers as well.”



Fifteen years ago, soon after his first exposure to a technology expert, Dr. Pisano embarked on a research sabbatical. “I took on three questions: How do we support the student with disabilities through specialized services and supporting services, which then became supplemental aids and services? How do we use them and how do we also expand the hope that these services are out there, because they were not being used by the resource room teachers, special ed or general ed teachers? A decade and a half later we are still seeking the answers to those questions.”

In terms of his colleagues 15 years ago, he says, “Not many psychologists caught the ‘Wow!’ factor back then. As a staff psychologist I conducted some staff development groups in technology. Some showed interest, but no one jumped on the technology bandwagon. Even today, in the field I work in,

I know one other psychologist who is an AT consultant. The others have backgrounds in education, speech and language or occupational therapy.”

For Dr. Pisano, his “second” (AT) job has resulted in additional professional pursuits; “I’ve always attended technology conferences. I hang around the AT experts who come to the school. I love learning about and talking about technology. There is much potential to be gleaned from technology in an educational setting. It’s needed everywhere in education and it is here to stay. The challenge is, How do we get technology to be more effectively utilized?”

For 15 years, he concludes, “I have been advocating for finding ways to add extras that can help kids who are behind get into the game. With retirement looming for me now, I am convinced that they have been 15 years well spent.”

RESOURCES

Articles

What Happens When Assistive Technology Doesn't Work?: The Need for an Integrated Approach

By Dr. Leonard V. Pisano - LD Online (2002)

According to the author, a practicing school psychologist and AT coordinator, "the critical problem and recurring theme is that AT has not been successfully integrated into the student's school program (both in and out of school.)" When AT has not made a difference in student performance, he notes, it is important to identify key elements of the [IEP] plan, such as how it was developed, implemented, monitored and integrated. According to Dr. Pisano, AT-related complaints by students, parents and teachers often include the following:

- The student does not know how to use the equipment independently.
- School staff believes that workload and curriculum imperatives prevent the student from using the equipment.
- Teachers do not know how to use the equipment.
- The student is frustrated by her inability to use the equipment.
- Parents are unfamiliar with the equipment.
- Student equipment-related frustrations hamper his ability to do homework, thus resulting in frustration by parents and teachers as well as the student.

In his article Dr. Pisano recommends learning strategies designed to help cope with these obstacles to learning and teaching and suggests appropriate adaptations.

<http://www.ldonline.org/article/6235>

The Role of Psychology in Assistive Technology

By Stephanie Johnson

American Psychology Association (2008)

According to the author, AT is garnering increased attention on the part of applied psychological

science. Development of successful AT products, she notes, requires a careful analysis of the goals, functional capacities and social environments of intended AT users. AT for cognition (ATC), aimed at meeting the needs of persons with cognitive disabilities, is becoming a prominent area of AT research, Ms. Johnson writes. Experts have discussed methods for designing wireless, interactive computer technologies compatible with the cognitive capacities of individual users, such as the use of a microcomputer as a support device for patients with cognitive deficits or a computer assisted interactive vocational task used for cognitive rehabilitation. Researchers have developed other ATC products, including adapted word processors, personal information managers and reminder systems within cell phones.

http://www.apa.org/science/psa/jan08role_prnt.html

What's the IDEA about Assistive Technology and Services?

American Society for Deaf Children (2006)

This three-page article explains the rights of students to AT consideration under IDEA and the IEP, specifically the standing of cochlear implants in deaf students' IEPs. According to the writer, "The regulations specifically exclude cochlear implants from the definition of related services and exclude the optimization of the implant's functioning." However, the author continues, regulations do not limit the child with cochlear implants from receiving related services, nor do they prevent routine checking of an external component of a cochlear implant to make sure it is functioning properly.

<http://www.deafchildren.org/resources/31/What's%20the%20IDEA%20-%20AT.pdf>

Tools for Evaluation: Assistive Technology Toolkits

National Center for Technology Innovation; Center for Implementing Technology in Education
LD Online (2006)

In emphasizing the importance of AT evaluations, this article describes several AT toolkits that when used as part of a systematic evaluation process can help identify skills and needs that aid in matching an individual with the most appropriate AT. Evaluation models discussed include the SETT framework, Tech Points, Has Technology Been Considered? and the ATCoplaner model. The five tool kits, to which links are provided, are:

- A computer-based Dyscalculia Screener designed specifically for 6-14 year old students.
- Custom Typing which provides an online assessment tool to compare alternate input methods for typing/text entry for a user. The software also provides a variety of reporting formats. Users can learn how to type at this site.
- The Functional Evaluation for Assistive Technology (FEAT), an assessment protocol appropriate for individuals with learning disabilities.
- The Georgia Assistive Technology Project (Tools for Life), which features a screening tool and assessment protocol for individuals with learning disabilities.
- The Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative (WATI), which spotlights a variety of assessment tools and protocols available for free download.

<http://www.ldonline.org/article/6240>

Assistive Technology Consideration Tools

By Matthew Press

Assistive Technology Education Network; ConnSense Bulletin (2005)

This ConnSense Bulletin article is aimed at helping AT planners choose AT evaluation options based on criteria that include team skill level, student age group and the type of information collected. Each tool is listed with its source link. Evaluators can read summaries of the specific tools and scan a quick-comparison table outlining the basics of each evaluation tool and the as-

sociated method. This reference, which allows an at-a-glance series of options for AT teams, features neutrality and ease of use for a variety of team formats and student needs.

<http://www.connsensebulletin.com/atenconsider.html>

Guides

Special Needs Technologies: An Administrator's Guide

By Terry Lankutis - Tech-Learning (2004)

This article is written from the perspective of a team that is responsible for designing and implementing a plan for a child's academic career. The author describes an IEP team and explains how that team should work together to devise an IEP and determine the most appropriate technology. The author shares techniques for implementing an IEP evaluation, maintaining information and designing an AT program that will prove successful for the child and the school. She delineates the difference between high-tech and low-tech solutions. The article includes a list of resources for purchasing AT as well as a list of local resources. It also includes a section on pre-purchase equipment trials.

<http://www.techlearning.com/story/showArticle.php?articleID=47204593>

Books

Assistive Technology Planner

National Assistive Technology Research Institute (2005)

This planner highlights the tools needed to design an AT component in an IEP. The planner contains separate sections for teachers, administrators and families. A user guide features a reproducible AT implementation form. When completed, the form includes the names of all IEP team members, the team member ultimately responsible for implementation, the equipment and how it relates to the IEP outcomes, a list of tasks for the AT, and training information. A section covers AT use at home as well as at school. The

teacher and administrator books each contain information on AT products and vendors, legislation, organizations and other resources to support the use of AT, IDEA student classroom supports and a searchable database. The parent book defines AT and describes its uses, provides information on IDEA, and discusses the functional approach of AT use for children with disabilities. Cost: \$12. The planner is available for purchase at The Council for Exceptional Children, Technology and Media Division.

<http://natri.uky.edu/atPlannermenu.html>

Blogs

TechPsych

This blog was created by Lynn Marentette, a school psychologist, interactive multimedia and usability consultant, for psychologists, teachers and related professionals, parents, and technologists interested in employing technology more effectively.

<http://techpsych.blogspot.com>

The Assistive Technology Blog: Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)

This blog is maintained by the Virginia Department of Education's Training and Technical Assistance Center at VCU for AT providers in two Superintendent Regions.

http://blog.vcu.edu/ttac/assistive_technologies/

KNOWLEDGE NETWORK MEMBERS

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)

NASP represents more than 26,000 school psychologists nationwide and abroad. The organization assists school psychologists and their schools in implementing assessment and intervention for learning and behavior problems established under IDEA 2004, advocates for enhanced school-based mental health services, improves culturally responsive services from diverse cultures, expands reliance on research-based programs and trained professionals, increases the number of school psychologists available to meet growing demand and facilitates collaboration between schools, community services providers and parents. For further information on NASP, contact:

National Association of School Psychologists
4340 East West Highway, Suite 402
Bethesda, MD 20814

Phone: (301) 657-0270; (866) 331-NASP (toll free); (301) 657-4155 (TTY)

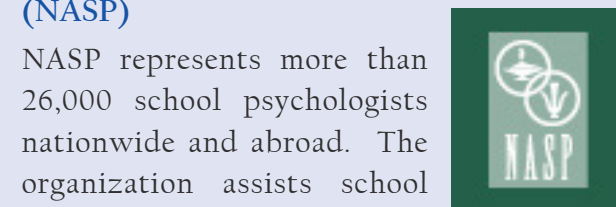
Fax: (301) 657-0275

<http://www.nasponline.org/membership/index.aspx>

Learning and Developmental Disabilities Evaluation and Rehabilitation Services (LADDERS)

LADDERS.ORG
LEARNING & DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
EVALUATION & REHABILITATION SERVICES

LADDERS evaluates and treats children and adults with disabilities. The organization provides clinical, social and support services to those diagnosed with autism, pervasive developmental disorders and other developmental disabilities. LADDERS services and



therapies include: diagnostic evaluations; medical, cognitive and behavioral interventions; occupational and physical therapy and psychological evaluation and counseling; parent skills training and family empowerment; and referral support for additional medical and educational resources at locations near patients' homes. For additional information on this organization, contact:

LADDERS

65 Walnut Street

Wellesley, MA 02841

Phone: (781) 449-6074

info@ladders.org

<http://www.ladders.org/index.html>

Center for Psychological and Educational Assessment

The center provides multidisciplinary clinical psychological, educational/achievement and speech/language



evaluations for children birth-age 21 with developmental disabilities and behavioral problems. Assessments are integrated into a personalized profile of strengths and weaknesses as well as specific interventions. The center offers assessments for learning and attention difficulties, autism spectrum disorders, behavioral problems, developmental delay, social/emotional concerns and speech/language delay. For further information on the center, contact:

Center for Psychological and Educational Assessment

54 South Avenue

Marietta, GA

Phone: (770) 352-9952

Fax: (770) 919-0145

Contact: Melissa C. Lang, Ph.D.

info@atlantachildpsych.com

<http://www.atlantachildpsych.com/>

The Special Kids Company, Inc.

The Special Kids Company, Inc. provides



comprehensive diagnostic, intervention and consultative services for children who are at-risk, are just beginning the special education process, have an IEP or Section 504 plan or who have been identified with a range of cognitive and/or emotional disabilities. The organization offers advocacy, behavioral, assessment and educational services. Educational services may include school planning and consultation, educational testing, home consultation, and IEP analysis. Behavioral services include behavioral intervention plans and reinforcement systems, crisis prevention intervention training, home consultation, and school planning and consultation. For additional information on Special Kids, contact:

Special Kids Company, Inc.

3618 Underoak Drive

Ellicott City, MD 21042

Phone: (410) 418-5590; (410) 215-2185

Contact: Andrea Bennett, M.Ed., Co-founder

abennett@specialkidscompany.com

<http://www.specialkidscompany.com/about.html>

The Disability Programs Resource Center: San Francisco State University (SFSU)

Students with mobility, hearing, visual, communication,



psychological, systemic (HIV/AIDS, environmental illness, etc.) and learning disabilities are encouraged to attend SFSU. The Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC) is available to promote and provide equal access to the classroom and to campus-related activities. Students are provided assistance in coordinating support services. The DPRC also provides eligible stu-

dents with help understanding and managing DPRC services, campus-wide access, attitudinal barriers, other campus resources and disability civil rights. The Center provides an Adaptive Technology Program with adaptive hardware and software. For further information on the DPRC, contact:

The Disability Programs Resource Center
San Francisco State University
1600 Holloway Avenue
Student Services Building, Room 110
San Francisco, CA 94132-4046
Phone: (415) 338-2472
Fax: (415) 338-1041
dprc@sfsu.edu
<http://www.sfsu.edu/~dprc/welcome.html>

Mountain Regional Services, Inc. (MRSI)

M R S I
provides
services to
individu-
als with



developmental disabilities. The organization's service menu includes child waiver services, assessment, targeted case management, occupational therapy services and psychological and psychiatric services. MRSI is a leader in the use of assistive devices and recently opened the state-of-the art PARC Assistive Technology Center where those served by the program can access the Internet, send e-mail, or use a variety of specialized programs. For more information on RSI, contact:

Mountain Regional Services, Inc.
P.O. Box 600550 Allegiance Circle
Evanston, WY 82931
Phone: (307) 789-3710
Fax: (307) 789-0823
Contact: Terry White, Chief Operating Officer
<http://www.mrsi.org/>

Explore our
AT Resource Reviews Database
for more information on
assistive and instructional technologies.

Within our database, you can find more
than 900 reviews of
articles, fact sheets, books, guides, and
more!

Our database is
easily searchable
by assistive technology category, mate-
rial type, disability type or by keyword.

[http://www.fctd.info/resources/search.
php](http://www.fctd.info/resources/search.php)

Funding provided by the US Department of Edu-
cation under grant number H327F080003

Project Officer: Jo Ann McCann
Project Director: Jacqueline Hess
Newslettter Editor: Thomas H. Allen
Design and Distribution: Ana-Maria Gutierrez



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