



**Family Center on  
Technology  
and Disability**

## **FCTD Conference Series: SETT Framework**

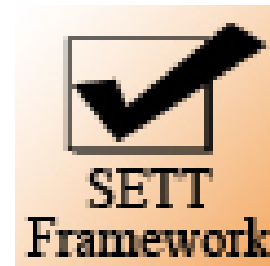
November 29 – December 25, 2004

# SETT Framework

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## EXPERT'S CORNER

- [Introduction \(pg. 2\)](#)
- [Expert Perspective \(pg. 2\)](#)
- [Expert Bio \(pg. 5\)](#)



## CONFERENCE

- [Conference Transcript \(pg. 6-29\)](#)
  - [Recommended Resources \(pg. 29\)](#)
- 

## EXPERT'S CORNER

### Introduction

It's not that families and educators don't know that there's technology out there that can help a child with disabilities learn more independently and successfully. The problem is knowing how to think about the technology - how to assess an individual student's needs, how to select the right piece of equipment or software, and how to best implement and evaluate the AT program. For years the field has struggled with those issues. It's little surprise then that many educators, therapists, and parents have welcomed the introduction of the SETT Framework. The Framework, developed by educator Dr. Joy Zabala, offers a methodology for assessment, implementation, and evaluation of AT. It gives educators and families more confidence as they negotiate the often confusing AT universe. For the next month, Dr. Zabala will answer your questions about the SETT Framework and will share with you the experience that she and others have had with it. As always, we remind you that there is no such thing as a stupid question and that the discussion is only as good as you make it. We hope you'll join the discussion often during the month.

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### Expert's Perspective

#### Welcome, Overview, and Expectations

Greetings, my name is Joy Smiley Zabala and I am honored to have this opportunity to have this conversation with you about the assistive technology and the SETT Framework. In the next few pages, I would like to provide you with a few thoughts about the development of the SETT Framework, the purposes and elements of the SETT Framework, and perhaps most important, some thoughts and suggestions about our upcoming conversation.

**How the SETT Framework Came to Be** I've been in education and assistive technology support for quite a while, including over many years in general education, more than 20 years in special education from one perspective or another. In attempting to provide assistive technology services that "worked" for a variety of students in diverse settings with differing levels of support, I often pondered why things "worked" sometimes and failed so miserably at others. Over time I realized that if MY dreams, expectations and goals for my students - no matter how lofty and well-intentioned - were not aligned with those of the students, their families, and the variety of

professionals who were working with them, there would be disappointments and, often, the assumption that the responsibility for success or failure lay with someone else! This lack of alignment, and no clearly understood means to work toward it, often meant that enormous effort was made toward cross-purposes with no lasting positive results for students. There had to be a better way!

As I thought about this and discussed it with students, families and colleagues interested in these issues from personal and/or professional perspectives, a pattern of "what worked" emerged - collaboration, based on a shared vision, at every phase of the process: shared identification of concerns; shared solution-seeking; joint responsibility for planning and implementation; and, always, the mutual respect and trust that celebrated steps forward and tolerated false starts and redirection.

Building a shared vision upon which to base all phases of assistive technology service delivery required that teams develop a shared understanding of: the functional needs, strengths and challenges of the student who would use the technology; the supports and challenges of the various environments in which the student would use the technology; and the specific tasks for which technology tools and strategies would be required. Thus, the SETT Framework - an acronym for Student, Environments, Tasks, and Tools - was developed as a means to help students, families, and professionals with varied experience and expertise to use their individual knowledge, skills, experiences to build shared knowledge about the student, the environments, and the tasks that could be used to guide effective selection, acquisition, and use of assistive technology devices and services.

### **A Brief Overview of the Elements of the SETT Framework**

The SETT Framework is an organizational tool to help collaborative teams create Student-centered, Environmentally useful, and Tasks-focused Tool systems that foster the educational success of students with disabilities. The SETT Framework is built on the premise that in order to develop an appropriate system of assistive technology devices and services, teams must first gather information about the student, the customary environments in which the students spend their time, and the tasks that are required for the students to be active participants in the teaching/learning processes that lead to educational success. It is believed that the elements of the SETT Framework, with minor adjustments, can also be applied to non-educational environments and service plans.

Critical Elements of the SETT Framework

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Multiple Perspectives
- Pertinent information
- Shared Knowledge
- Flexibility
- On-going Processes

It must be remembered that SETT is a framework, not a protocol. The questions under each section of the SETT Framework are expected to guide discussion rather than be complete and comprehensive in and of themselves. As each of these questions is explored, it is likely that many other questions will arise. The team continues the exploration until there is consensus that there is enough shared knowledge to make an informed, reasonable decision that can be supported by data.

### **The Student**

- What is the functional area(s) of concern? What does the student need to be able to do that is difficult or impossible to do independently at this time?
- Special needs (related to area of concern)
- Current abilities (related to area of concern)

## **The Environments**

- Arrangement (instructional, physical)
- Support (available to both the student and the staff)
- Materials and Equipment (commonly used by others in the environments)
- Access Issues (technological, physical, instructional)
- Attitudes and Expectations (staff, family, others)

## **The Tasks**

- What SPECIFIC tasks occur in the student's natural environments that enable progress toward mastery of IEP goals and objectives?
- What SPECIFIC tasks are required for active involvement in identified environments? (related to communication, instruction, participation, productivity, environmental control)

## **The Tools**

In the SETT Framework, Tools include devices, services and strategies... everything that is needed to help the student succeed. Analyze the information gather on the Student, the Environments, and the Tasks to address the following questions and activities.

- Is it expected that the student will not be able to make reasonable progress toward educational goals without assistive technology devices and services?
- If yes, describe what a useful system of assistive technology devices and services for the student would be like.
- Brainstorm Tools that could be included in a system that addresses student needs.
- Select the most promising Tools to implement in the natural environments on a trial basis.
- Plan the specifics of the implementation (expected changes, when/how tools will be used, cues, etc.)
- Collect data on effectiveness.

It is expected that the SETT Framework will be useful during all phases of assistive technology service delivery.

With that in mind, it is important to revisit the SETT Framework information periodically to determine if the information that is guiding decision-making and implementation is accurate, up to date, and clearly reflects the shared knowledge of all involved.

## **What to Expect in this Conversation**

It is delightful to have each of you as a participant in this conversation. We are located all over the United States and possibly beyond, yet here we are together, pondering critical issues in assistive technology: determining the need for assistive technology for an individual student; developing a system to address identified needs in a way that is student-centered, task-based and environmentally useful; and, developing strategies which promote increases in competence, confidence and independence for system users through increased communication, participation and productivity. Our sessions together will address these issues by exploring the big ideas and intricacies of the SETT Framework as a collaborative decision-making and design process which invites effective participation by all. However, the conversation will be totally guided by the questions, concerns, and comments of the participants. I am very comfortable with the conversation moving in any direction that is helpful. I say this with the greatest confidence that each person who participates in our conversations will do so with respect for the differing assistive technology perspectives, experiences, interests, and responsibilities of others who are involved in the conversation. It is my hope that each of you will jump right in and make the conversation richer and more fruitful as we go through the time we have together.

To assure that each of us has a productive, enjoyable learning experience regardless of the perspective and "expertise" each of us bring to the session, I suggest the following ground rules for participation:

- 1) Enter discussions with high expectations and an attitude of possibility. We are synergism in action! Each of us has a valued role in this process.

2) Participate actively and often.

Say what's on your mind! Make statements. Ask questions. Remember that, in this environment, your fingers must do talking... speaking, facial expressions, head shaking, gestures, and other non-text communication cannot be attended to by your fellow participants as it would be if we were face to face.

3) Say what's on your mind in a way that encourages active participation and deeper thought, and demonstrates mutual respect.

It is critical to express your thoughts, but two things must be remembered...

a) all contributions are important and will be honored as such; and, b) this communication is available to anyone who happens to tap into it on the World Wide Web.

4) At this point, don't sweat the small stuff!

Keep in mind that everything posted here is a "work in progress" developed to increase our ability to move toward effective decisions in a variety of instances! Your contribution to continuous improvement is encouraged and expected!

5) Enjoy yourself!

Take pleasure in the opportunities we have to explore and discuss these issues and ideas in such an interesting format and with such limited immediate consequences! No question is too "simple" and no suggestion without value.

Again, welcome! I look forward to our time together. Let's get started right away and make the most of it.

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## Expert's Bio



Dr. Joy Smiley Zabala is a professional developer and consultant who provides assistive technology and leadership support to school communities, universities, professional associations, and individuals across the nation and abroad. She was a general educator for more than 10 years before becoming involved in special education, technology, and professional development and training over 20 years ago.

Joy is the developer of the SETT Framework, a collaborative problem-identification and solution-seeking model for students, parents, and multi-disciplinary professionals (<http://www.joyzabala.com>). She is a founding member of the QIAT Consortium, a grassroots national group which has developed Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology Services, and serves as the facilitator of the QIAT List (<http://www.qiat.org>) which has over 850 international participants.

Joy is a faculty associate at Johns Hopkins University, an online mentor for the Commonwealth Center for Instructional Technology and Learning at the University of Kentucky, and a researcher with the ATSTAR Project at Knowbility, Inc., in Austin, Texas. She serves on the advisory boards of several national projects including the National Assistive Technology Research Institute at the

University of Kentucky and the Assistive Technology Outcomes Measures System at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee.

Joy is the president-elect of the Technology and Media (TAM) Division of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and represents TAM on the Organizational Board of the European Schools Project. She is also co-chair of the Technology Desk of DICES, the international division of CEC.

A native of Daytona Beach, Florida, Joy holds a Bachelor of Education from the University of Florida, a Master of Education from Florida Atlantic University, a doctorate in special education and leadership from the University of Kentucky. She has completed additional graduate studies in language acquisition and technology. Joy lives in Lake Jackson, Texas, with her husband, Adrian, and their pug, Lili. She is the mother of two wonderful daughters, and is Gramma Joy to Amanda, Jacob, and Sophie, her world's most precious beings!

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## CONFERENCE

### Transcript: SETT Framework

- **family engagement in the process** by **Joan** on Nov 29, 2004  
Hi, Joy and all- I certainly look forward to this discussion. I want to jump in by asking Joy about family engagement in using the SETT Framework. From my experience both as the Mom in the IEP meetings as well as the professional, it seems that there is more information and resources on the professional side. What are strategies to support parents and the student contributing to the discussion and be active participants? What perspectives will the family provide?
  - **Re:family engagement in the process** by **Jackie Hess** on Nov 29, 2004  
Excellent question Joan. As we try to get a little more structure and analytical rigor into the AT assessment and evaluation process, it's important to strike the right balance with respect to parent and student input. Their perspectives are critical to making good AT choices. We need a structure that's not off-putting to families, that has the flexibility needed to capture a wide range of individualistic information, but that still maintains some semblance of being a "system".
    - **Re:family engagement in the process** by **Joy Zabala** on Nov 29, 2004  
Right, Jackie. We all need to work together. In my view, the SETT Framework requires a systematic approach to gaining, organizing, and using a great of information from a variety of sources. Such information can be VERY helpful in guiding effective discussions and decisions about consideration of need, selection, acquisition, and use of assistive technology.
  - **Re:family engagement in the process** by **Ginny Kime-Wan Zaid** on Nov 29, 2004  
True- fortunate are the few who are both parents of children with special needs and professionals, so we have more opportunities for advancing our skills and knowledge. Would parents be able to join this group, for example? I am from Massachusetts and there are Parent Advisory Councils (PACS) in most districts and a state level PAC. I'm on their listserve -could an announcement be made on such a listserve to invite parents to participate?

Ginny in Braintree, MA.

- **Re:family engagement in the process** by **Joy Zabala** on Nov 29, 2004  
While it is Jackie who could best address your question, Ginny, I would think that it would be VERY appropriate and desirable for parents to participate in discussions. I know that family members are very welcome on most web-based discussions. When conversations involve people with a variety of perspectives, it helps us all be our "best selves" as we talk together as "we" rather than as "them" and "us", which is rarely helpful and not good practice for communication in the "real world".
- **Re:family engagement in the process** by **FCTD: Ana-Maria Gutierrez** on Nov 30, 2004  
Ginny,

We always welcome participation from parents in our discussions. This gives them an excellent opportunity to pose questions to experts to whom they would have not previously had access. Please send me an e-mail to [fctd@aed.org](mailto:fctd@aed.org) and we can talk further about what you'd like to send out.  
Thanks, - Ana-Maria

- **Re:family engagement in the process** by **Jackie Hess** on Nov 30, 2004  
I want to echo Ana Maria's welcome to parents. We're always pleased to have participation by parents, extended family, neighbors, and anyone who shares the life of a child with disabilities. Given parents' motivation and professionals' time constraints, sometimes the best information originates with parents and is then shared with professionals.
- **Re:family engagement in the process** by **Joy Zabala** on Nov 29, 2004  
Hi, Joan. This is an excellent question. You are quite right that many resources and sources of information are designed with professionals in mind, however, many of them - especially those that are web-based - are also readily available to families. However, families may need assistance in finding them, as professionals sometimes do, too, and I think one valuable strategy is to provide people with websites, links, and other sources of information.

In my view, perhaps, the most valuable "strategy" is creating an atmosphere in which it is clear that the information, skills, observations, and thoughts that each person brings to the discussion is valued and respected by all others. EVERYTHING goes better when families and professionals work together - where there is an attitude of possibility, and mutual trust that whatever is said and done is well-intended and open to discussion and possible change.

In my view, effective use of the SETT Framework is a strategy that invites collaborative work between families and professionals in such an atmosphere. One of the most important purposes behind the SETT Framework is to enable all involved - regardless of perspective (individual, family members, professionals) and experience with AT to participate actively and with confidence in assistive technology decision-making. As we look at each part of the SETT Framework - Student, Environments, Tasks, and Tools - there are parts of the Framework that have the greatest amount of information and experience. They are very likely to be the more knowledgeable about their child - the student - than others present, except possibly their child him/herself. They, along with classroom teachers and, in some cases, classroom assistants, are also very knowledgeable about the environments in which the student spends time, and often the tasks that a student needs to be able to do or learn to do for educational participation and achievement. Many parents are also very knowledgeable about assistive technology tools and strategies, but they do not HAVE to be knowledgeable about tools to contribute very valuable information to any

decision-making about tools and strategies and their use.

Joan, I know this is a very general response, but I appreciate the opportunity to provide some of the underpinnings of the SETT Framework and its use as a strategy for inviting and supporting effective collaboration. Perhaps you can continue this conversation with some of the specific strategies you have found helpful when using the SETT Framework. I have some more ideas, but think this message is getting long.. apparently, I am long-winded even in writing! :)

- **Re:family engagement in the process by Joan** on Nov 30, 2004  
One strategy that I have found that is very powerful is framing statements about the student in positive terms. I had many experiences with this with my son. Unlike me, my son is quiet spoken. The general statement in his IEP meetings was "Joe is quiet and shy. He never has much to say." One meeting, his speech therapist said "Joe is reserved and introspective. He does not waste time in idle chatter. When he does talk, you better listen, because it will be worth waiting for." WOW- what a positive message that was- yet the content was similar... And- the team began to look at Joe as introspective (having a strength) rather than shy (not such a good thing)

There are other ways to frame a message about a student in positive terms- "Joe finds ways to communicate frustration through body language" rather than "Joe puts up a barrier when he is angry."

Identifying what a student can do rather than what he cannot is important, and that is what that speech therapist taught me to bring to discussions about all the kids I cared about- my own and those with whom I worked. The discussion about the student is an excellent opportunity to present a positive impression of the child.

- **Re:family engagement in the process by Joy Zabala** on Dec 01, 2004  
This is a very, very powerful strategy, Joan, as you illustrate so well with the comments that were so thoughtfully made about Joe. Although this strategy is ESPECIALLY useful when communicating about our treasured children, it is also very useful for us adults with different perspectives and experiences to use we communicate with other adults, especially in stressful times. Thanks so much for sharing this.
- **Re:family engagement in the process by Meher Banajee** on Dec 08, 2004  
One of the strategies we have used in early intervention is to ask parents for their priorities especially regarding small children. As an interventionist we need to respect the priorities of the families we work with and look at them as equal partners in the process so if they are not vested in the process, there is little chance that technology will be included in daily routines. Families know best when technology will work for them.
- **Re:family engagement in the process by Tom Nurse** on Dec 16, 2004  
Family center practices always pays rewards. And it always is helpful when the families are informed/aware of options. My intense focus on AT is a direct result of a

sense that if I didn't learn all I could about AT (and there is still plenty to know) the opportunities for my daughter to develop successfully would slip through the cracks of time.

I think the key is respectful partnerships because for many families just the day to day can be quite overwhelming at times. We need caring professionals who can help us learn while valuing where we are now. Joy has been one of those wonderful professionals in my life!

- **Re:family engagement in the process** by on Dec 01, 2004  
My passion for assistive technology is based on the powerful positive impact assistive technology continues to have on my child, my family, and those professionals who work with my daughter Shelby

Without question the involvement of the student and family are critical to effective identification and implementation of assistive technology.

Without the perspectives of life outside the school building the IEP team can be very limited in identifying function skills that AT can help create. As a parent I have always worked hard to create a link between what is learned in school that can be utilized at home and in the community.

The knowledge specific to the child's non-school environments and skills comes mostly from families, when asked or encouraged to share this information. I have always felt that school is a critical opportunity to prepare children for life after school and all the years while in school should be used to build those cross environment opportunities to utilize AT.

SETT has proven to be an excellent tool for facilitating discussion that is meaningful and specific. Independent living skills, and effective forms of communications are not just school but for everyday and all environments.

I appreciate the FCTD's welcomed encouragement in this process because together we (students, families and professionals) can have far greater outcomes for our children and students.

Thanks, Tom Nurse aka "Shelby and Jordan's Dad"

- **Re:family engagement in the process** by **Joy Zabala** on Dec 01, 2004  
I am so glad to hear that the SETT Framework has been useful in supporting powerful family involvement in AT processes, Tom. Home/school collaboration was main purposes of its development. You are so right that "education" does not take place only in the environment of the classroom and we are so much better when we are all working together! :)

Joy

- **NEW IDEA Authorization and SETT by Ginny Kime-Wan Zaid** on Nov 29, 2004  
It seems that the language of the latest Federal IDEA re-authorization gives more opportunity for the implementation of AT for special needs children. How can we advocate so that when it trickles down to the specific state legislation that the interpretation will maximize this opportunity?
    - **Re:NEW IDEA Authorization and SETT by Joy Zabala** on Nov 29, 2004  
Ginny, can you tell us all a little bit about the specific parts of the reauthorization you are speaking of. The language has been strong some some time - first in 1990, then strengthened in 1997 - but the trickle-down to implementation has been slow in spite of the efforts of many, many people to help that happen. I would like very much to continue this thread.
      - **Re:NEW IDEA Authorization and SETT by Audrey** on Nov 30, 2004  
Ginny and Joy,
 

There seems to be a bit of strengthening in IDEA 2004 for the use of accessible IT. One area that comes to mind is the greater emphasis on transition. I see it as a way to encourage earlier and more total-life enhancing AT, since the emphasis is supposed to be on results, not process.

I also see great synergy with the Assistive Technology legislation that was passed and signed into law in October 2004. Theoretically, at least, there will be more reliable money for AT because the sunset provision was waived. The law also requires states to spend the bulk of the funds on direct services for people with disabilities and less on "State leadership activities," which are more administrative.

The "trickle-down to implementation" has been very slow indeed. Many of us know that a tremendous amount of effort has been made. I've had a few thoughts about why progress remains slow and would love to hear some reactions.

#1: There's still such a stigma around disabilities that solutions get ignored along with the people and their potential. And we, as a society, continue to segregate people with disabilities from community life, so others don't see enough of the possibilities.

#2: Most people, including most school board members, administrators and many teachers, believe that assistive technology is very very expensive. Money perceptions are huge barriers to further discussion.

#3: Most educators and parents don't have a good idea of what can actually be done with assistive technology. Even when they do they sometimes confine its use to school and learning issues and ignore the rest of life.

#4: We who know about it have not done a good enough job of getting the word out. Are we talking to ourselves too much? Speaking in edutalk jargon too often? Using the same delivery mechanisms again and again, even when we acknowledge they haven't worked?

#5: Parents and people with disabilities are still left out of the equation and off of the team.

I think SETT is especially useful for bringing a meaningful team together, obtaining information about numerous options, and - best of all - focusing on the person first, not the technology.
- **Re:NEW IDEA Authorization and SETT by Ginny Kime-Wan Zaid** on Dec 03, 2004

Well put, Audrey. I guess I am wondering how, since we are at a crucial point when Bush has signed the IDEA re-authorized Bill and the next stage will be at the state level, what resources can we give to our state reps to help them make more informed decisions and more directed language to address AT appropriately? Is there an FCTD in every State? Or at least a few knowledgeable AT people in each state whom we can help to connect with the state level officials who will be writing these laws?

- **Re:NEW IDEA Authorization and SETT by Madeline** on Dec 05, 2004

Hi,

I believe that all of these are valid reasons why there is a low trickle of Assistive Technology being implemented.

Many teachers, students, etc. think that technology equates with laptops-but there are many inexpensive ways to use technology to help students with disabilities. However, many schools have not taken the initiative to implement a technology program.

As a special educator, I know there is so much that technology can do to level the playing field for students. However, there is not a lot of training for teachers in this area and school administrators are slow to implement an assistive technology committee.

We are just about to have some training in our school-long overdue.

- **Re:NEW IDEA Authorization and SETT by Joy Zabala** on Dec 06, 2004

Certainly you are right that when many people hear the words "assistive technology" they leap to the high-tech end of the continuum of AT devices, particularly laptop computers and high-end voice output communication aids. There is such a need for "basic training" that helps people understand the function of AT in school - supporting the educational participation and achievement of students with disabilities - and the understanding of AT as "ANY ITEM" that increases, improves, or maintains the functional capabilities of students with disabilities. Fortunately, there are many people working together to increase the capacity of IEP (Individualized Educational Program) planning team members to consider assistive technology and, like this session. Additionally, there is an ever-increasing body of information that is available online, which is very helpful to some people and in some areas.

There is a lot more to say about this that I am afraid my get lost so deeply imbedded in this strand on IDEA, so I am going to post a message just below that is titled.. the principle of the least complex intervention...

Best,

Joy

- **Re:NEW IDEA Authorization and SETT** by **Joy Zabala** on Dec 06, 2004

Certainly you are right that when many people hear the words "assistive technology" they leap to the high-tech end of the continuum of AT devices, particularly laptop computers and high-end voice output communication aids. There is such a need for "basic training" that helps people understand the function of AT in school - supporting the educational participation and achievement of students with disabilities - and the understanding of AT as "ANY ITEM" that increases, improves, or maintains the functional capabilities of students with disabilities. Fortunately, there are many people working together to increase the capacity of IEP (Individualized Educational Program) planning team members to consider assistive technology, like this session. Additionally, there is an ever-increasing body of information that is available online, which is very helpful to some people and in some areas.

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Best,

Joy

Joy

- **Re:NEW IDEA Authorization and SETT** by **ginnywanzaid** on Dec 03, 2004  
FYI- The new IDEA was signed today 12/03/04 - if anyone cares to read the President's message. Here is the website. No mention here of AT, but there are provisions - Audrey mentioned the specifics in her reply.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/12/20041203-6.html>

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- **Welcome to the SETT Framework Discussion** by **Joy Zabala** on Nov 29, 2004  
Greetings to each of you! I am very, very pleased to have this opportunity to talk with you about one of my favorite and most passionate topics - families and professionals working together to support the learning and growth of students with disabilities!

I view the SETT Framework as a useful tool to help students, families, professionals, and interested others contribute actively to assistive technology selection, acquisition, and use. I look forward very to talking with you about it and any other topic you might want to pursue during the next month.

Please do jump right in! Those who know me know in other settings know that if there is anything that is irresistible to me it is a message, so you can be sure that I will respond as soon as I am able. Sometimes I will reply within minutes and while other times my responses may appear late at night because of work during the day. Please check back often.

I look forward to hearing from you about whatever is on your mind!

Warmest regards,

Joy

- o **Re:Welcome to the SETT Framework Discussion by Joy Zabala** on Nov 29, 2004  
AND, those who know me in other settings also know that sometimes I do not proofread as thoroughly as I should (as in a similar sentence near the end of the last post that has an extra "know"!) For that typo and all future typos I will post, my apologies. I hope that you will not let proofreading, or lack thereof, on my part or your interfere with our spirited collegial conversations.

:) Joy

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- **Realistic AT decision making by Annette Cerreta** on Nov 30, 2004  
How much should the skill of the support staff in a student's environment play a role in AT decision making? As an AT consultant, I have observed school staff who work with a student decide to purchase a more expensive and less appropriate device because they felt it was easier for them to learn how to operate. I think this is the right choice in some ways because it is more likely to get used. On the other hand, the less expensive device with more suitable features would have benefited the student more, so it would have been a good choice as well.

Any thoughts on how to sort out all the factors using SETT?

- o **Re:Realistic AT decision making by Joy Zabala** on Dec 01, 2004  
Dear Annette,

In my view, the skill of the staff who are supporting the student play a large role in assistive technology service delivery and planning and, to some extent, in the choice of device. The needs, strengths, and challenges of the student are central to device consideration and selection. However, keeping in mind that Tools in the SETT Framework go beyond devices to include everything the student needs to succeed - services, support for staff, etc - an understanding of environmental factors such as staff familiarity and experience with AT are critically important to the development of the system of tools that support student participation and achievement. For example, if the staff is familiar with the AT under consideration or similar AT and has experience integrating AT into the instruction programs of students, it may be that the system of tools does not need to include much training. On the other hand, if the staff has little or no experience with device operation and integration, a significant amount of ongoing training and support for staff may be required.

I believe that when we use the SETT Framework to really look carefully at the needs and abilities of the student, and the customary environments in which the student would need to use AT - including but not limited to the knowledge, skills, experience, and attitudes of the staff who will be providing support to the student - and the tasks that the student is expected to do, we can use all of that information to make the most useful decisions about the system of AT Tools (devices, services, support for staff, training for student, staff, and family, etc.) that are needed.

Thus, when selecting devices, the first thing to do is to be sure that the devices

being considered are student-centered (address student needs and build on abilities) and task-focused (able to be used for the tasks that the student needs to do or learn to do). If there is more than one device that the student might use to do the tasks, then such factors as staff familiarity with devices, ease of training, cost, etc. be considered as a way of deciding between the possible devices. The important thing is that these factors can only be considered for the devices that appear to actually be likely to be useful to the student - We cannot use our familiarity with certain devices - or the fact that we have them available - to limit our CONSIDERATION of possible tools that would be useful to the student, but CAN use those factors once a range of possible tools have been identified IF all other things are more or less equal.

I hope this has helped and not just seemed even more confusing.

Joy

- **Re:Realistic AT decision making by Annette Cerreta** on Dec 02, 2004  
Hi Joy,

I agree that all environmental factors need to be thoroughly considered when selecting an AT device, though the student-centered perspective helps us remember what comes first - the student, not the device, or staff preferences.

Your explanation within the SETT framework does help to clarify the issues for me and helps me better understand how to utilize the SETT framework in my decision making process.

Annette

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- **SETT Framework for Employment by Janet Peters** on Dec 01, 2004  
Is there any equivalent to the SETT process for employment situations? What are the "best" practices people are using from transition to employment?

- **Re:SETT Framework for Employment by Joy Zabala** on Dec 01, 2004  
Dear Janet,

Many people have found that the SETT Framework is useful in decision-making about services at ANY level of service provision and it is often used in adult services, possibly with some slight modifications. Because the SETT Framework was initially developed to support AT decision-making in schools, the S for Student was appropriate, however, when applying the principles of the SETT Framework to adult services, Student would seem less appropriate. Although, I can make a case for us all being life-long learners, the way I typically use the SETT Framework when working with adults is to call the S, SELF and begin the process something like this... "Ms. Smith, as we begin to work together on determining you AT needs for employment, what would you like to be sure that we all know about yourSELF." (I also use this opening phrase with students whenever possible.) The Environments, of course, would be the work environments, and the tasks, what the worker is expected to do as an employee and also the tasks that are part of being in the workplace (such as self-care, communication, mobility, etc.)

They key is getting the individual with disabilities as actively involved as possible in

all phases of decision-making right from the beginning.

Could anyone else who has used the SETT Framework in adult services chime in with your experiences?

Joy

- **Re:SETT Framework for Employment by Joan** on Dec 02, 2004  
You know- I have used SETT only once in adult services, and it worked as well as it does in other service delivery models. I agree with Joy that while it is traditionally thought about as an educational tool, it can be far more flexible. It worked well to support the one adult with whom I worked- we had to talk in a different way about the environment, but since I was the only person in the discussion with experience in using SETT, no one else had the hangups I was having!

I have also used a similar model for other decision making. Two years ago, I was asking a statewide leadership team to help me decide what steps the state department of education should take to improve AT services- so we looked at the State (our strengths, deficits, barriers to success, opportunities for growth) the Environments where the DOE could make changes (and that list was far more extensive than I had thought), Tasks that needed to be completed (legal mandates), should be completed (best practice) and maybe could be completed (my dream goals- many of which were reached because the team bought into them) and finally Tools and strategies to bring those goals to fruition. As I said- the buy in from the TEAM made these achievable goals for me- they supported me in developing strategies to reach them, redirected me when needed (which the team wisely decided was a useful strategy!) The support from the team- the collaboration and joint decision making that happens with students in using the SETT framework is part of what made the similar process for statewide decision making state work.

- **Re:SETT Framework for Employment by Tom Nurse** on Dec 05, 2004  
The SETT Framework approach is great across ages and environments because it is so person-centered. The critical message of SETT, to me, is that we must consider the person first, the environments (i.e. work, home community) second, tasks (functional expectation) and then finally the technology. Building the vision from the person out seems to make a lot of sense to me and it has been my experience that it also increases the chances of successful implementation

- **Re:SETT Framework for Employment by Joan** on Dec 06, 2004  
Boy, Tom, that implementation piece is the most important in my mind! I have reviewed the cases in my state that have gone to complaint regarding assistive technology. More frequently than not, they involve implementation of AT rather than providing AT. From what I have heard at conferences that this is true nationwide. One of the beauties, as you say, of SETT is that by obtaining input from multiple viewpoints- thus increasing ownership of the solution- the implementation will increase.

- **Re:SETT Framework for Employment by Joy Zabala** on Dec 06, 2004  
Yes, Joan and Tom, I agree that USE is the important thing. If we have really explored the Tasks that the student needs to do

or learn to do that are currently difficult or impossible and select tools that are not only student-centered, but also useful in the environments in which the student is expected to do the tasks, I believe that it is the LOGICAL next step to focus the supports and services on intervention that enables the student to work toward mastery of the identified tasks.

Joy

- **Re:SETT Framework for Employment by Joy Zabala** on Dec 06, 2004

Yes, Joan and Tom, I agree that USE is the important thing. If we have really explored the Tasks that the student needs to do or learn to do that are currently difficult or impossible and select tools that are not only student-centered, but also useful in the environments in which the student is expected to do the tasks, I believe that it is the LOGICAL next step to focus the supports and services on intervention that enables the student to work toward mastery of the identified tasks.

Joy

- **Re:SETT Framework for Employment by Joy Zabala** on Dec 06, 2004

I was just thinking... since this was in the SETT Framework for Employment strand, perhaps it would be more useful to some of you if I put it this way...

I agree that USE is the important thing both in schools and in employment and other life situations. If we have really explored the tasks that a person needs to do or learn to do to perform their job and determine which parts of those tasks are currently difficult or impossible, tools can be selected that are not only useful to the individual, but also useful in the environments in which the individual is expected to do the tasks. I believe that it is the LOGICAL next step to focus the intervention supports and services on enabling the student to work toward mastery of the identified tasks needed to do the job at a satisfactory level.

Joy

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- **A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE SETT FRAMEWORK** by **Joy Zabala** on Dec 01, 2004  
This weekend and next week I will go more deeply into each of the areas of the SETT Framework - Student, Environments, Tasks, and Tools. In the meantime, if you are new to the SETT Framework, you might be interested in this brief introduction.

The SETT Framework is an organizational tool to help collaborative teams create Student-centered, Environmentally useful, and Tasks-focused Tool systems that foster the educational success of students with disabilities. The SETT Framework is built on the premise that in order to develop an appropriate system of assistive technology devices and services, teams must first gather information about the student, the customary environments in which the students spend their time, and the tasks that are required for the

students to be active participants in the teaching/learning processes that lead to educational success. It is believed that the elements of the SETT Framework, with minor adjustments, can also be applied to non-educational environments and service plans.

#### Critical Elements of SETT

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Multiple Perspectives
- Pertinent information
- Shared Knowledge
- Flexibility
- On-going Processes

It must be remembered that SETT is a framework, not a protocol. The questions under each section of the SETT Framework are expected to guide discussion rather than be complete and comprehensive in and of themselves. As each of these questions is explored, it is likely that many other questions will arise. The team continues the exploration until there is consensus that there is enough shared knowledge to make an informed, reasonable decision that can be supported by data.

#### The Student

- What is the functional area(s) of concern? What does the student need to be able to do that is difficult or impossible to do independently at this time?
- Special needs (related to area of concern)
- Current abilities (related to area of concern)

#### The Environments

- Arrangement (instructional, physical)
- Support (available to both the student and the staff)
- Materials and Equipment (commonly used by others in the environments)
- Access Issues (technological, physical, instructional)
- Attitudes and Expectations (staff, family, others)

#### The Tasks

- What SPECIFIC tasks occur in the student's natural environments that enable progress toward mastery of IEP goals and objectives?
- What SPECIFIC tasks are required for active involvement in identified environments? (related to communication, instruction, participation, productivity, environmental control)

#### The Tools

In the SETT Framework, Tools include devices, services and strategies... everything that is needed to help the student succeed.

Analyze the information gather on the Student, the Environments, and the Tasks to address the following questions and activities.

- Is it expected that the student will not be able to make reasonable progress toward educational goals without assistive technology devices and services?
- If yes, describe what a useful system of assistive technology devices and services for the student would be like.
- Brainstorm Tools that could be included in a system that addresses student needs.
- Select the most promising Tools for trials in the natural environments.
- Plan the specifics of the trial (expected changes, when/how tools will be used, cues, etc.)
- Collect data on effectiveness and make adjustments as indicated by data.

It is expected that the SETT Framework will be useful during all phases of assistive technology service delivery. With that in mind, it is important to revisit the SETT Framework information periodically to determine if the information that is guiding decision-making and implementation is accurate, up to date, and clearly reflects the shared knowledge of all involved.

I will be looking more closely at the Student, the Environments, the Tasks, and finally, the Tools, very soon. In the meantime, keep those questions and comments coming!

Joy

- o **Re:A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE SETT FRAMEWORK** by Janet Peters on Dec 06, 2004  
Joy,

Have you run into any issues with the time-lines for assessment and follow-up with an IEP using the SETT framework. It seems there may be times that a team under the proverbial gun, would short cut some crucial steps. Have there ever been legal challenges to it?

Janet

- **Re:A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE SETT FRAMEWORK** by Joy Zabala on Dec 06, 2004  
Dear Janet,

Since the use of the SETT Framework is to support ONGOING processes - not limited to assessment, but also useful for assessment - timelines could be whatever the needed to be for an individual student and the surrounding guidelines or requirements that applied to assessments. Although it sometimes sounds as though processes guided by the SETT Framework would be lengthy, that is really not the case. When needs are simple and focused, using the SSETT Framework can also be simple and focused. When needs are complex or there is a concern about aligning expectations and services, whatever is done will take more time, whether SETT is being used or some other assessment strategy. The important thing to remember is that SETT is a FRAMEWORK, not a protocol. The SETT Framework is a "container" of sorts for all of the information that is gathered in an assessment so teams are able to "see" clearly what they already know (and have added to SETT) and what they still need to find out during additional assessment activities(which will then be ADDED to the SETT).

When timelines are short - or even when they are not legally short - it may be important to write periodic reports that tell what has been done and what still needs to be done. For example, during the initial evaluation activities, data is gathered, additional activities are conducted, and a short list of promising tools - devices, services and supports - is identified. At that point, it may be necessary to write a report about the assessment thus far and include in the report that trials will be conducted with the tools in natural environments for XYZ period of time and then a final decision will be made about the most promising tools.

To answer your question about legal challenges, the only one I am aware of was in PA many years ago. What was challenged was not the process, but

rather the outcome. The team went in with the data that was in their SETT Framework and were able to explain how the decisions were made and point out the elements in the data that supported each part of the decisions. Their decision was upheld.

I can say more about this if you wish.

Joy

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- **I want to get information** by **janak katrodiya** on Dec 06, 2004  
I suffering from polio with to legs.so very dificulty in walking.  
I always use of calipers in to legs and handstreeck in my right hand.  
so i can not easily work  
I want discuss this metter  
please help me

- **Re:I want to get information** by **Joy Zabala** on Dec 06, 2004  
Dear Janek,

Where are you located? Perhaps we can connect you with some people who are near you who could be of assistance.

Thanks for writing.

Joy

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- **SETT and AT Compatibility with School IT** by **annette cerreta** on Dec 06, 2004  
Hi Joy,

I was just wondering if you have ever addressed issues of AT incompatibility using the SETT framework? For instance, let's say the school purchases a scan and read program for a student but the school's scanner isn't compatible with the program. How would you work these kinds of issues from the SETT perspective?

- **Re:SETT and AT Compatibility with School IT** by **Joy Zabala** on Dec 06, 2004  
Dear Annette,

Well, first, I hope that use of the SETT Framework to aid in tool selection would be a PREVENTATIVE measure that would make it less likely that such incompatibilities would occue. One of the issues to explore within the environments would be "What tools are currently being used in these environments?" If some tools are already there such as the scanner, it might be useful to try, to the greatest degree feasible, to seek additional tools that would be compatible with existing tools IF the tools that could be added could appropriately match the students needs, abilities, and tasks. However, if tools (such as the scan and read program) that were compatible with existing tools did NOT adequately address the student's needs , abililites, and tasks, then it would be necessary to identify programs that WOULD meet the student's needs and then, if necessary, acquire the other parts (such as the scanner needed to import text into the scan and read program) needed to complete the system that would work for the student.

If it happened that incompatible tools were already in place because compatibility issues were overlooked, valuable resources are likely to be wasted.. Money spent on items that may need to be replaced, time spent waiting for the arrival of the correct tools, and, most importantly, the irretrievable resource of student time that could have been spent learning if the whole system were up and running.

As a retrospective, reactive tool, using the SETT Framework to think about why a system of tools is NOT working for a student is very useful. When assistive technology tools do not seem to be helpful in creating the changes that were expected and planned for, the "natural" inclination is to say, "This tool is not working" and change the tool. Unfortunately, unless there is a systematic exploration of why something is not working, it is possible to change tools over and over again and still see no difference in the result. Using the SETT Framework, teams can say to themselves, "The Tools that are in place are not leading to the expected achievement. What needs to be changed? Are these tools not student-centered (Are they usable by a student with these needs and abilities)? Are these tools not environmentally-useful (For example, do the people supporting the student know how to use them and what to expect? Are these tools not compatible with others the student is using?, etc.)? Are the tools not Task-focused (For example, do the "pieces" work together? Does the student know how to DO the task or does he need more instruction?, etc.)

In the case you mention where device-compatibility within the system is the issue, it is hoped that teams will be increasingly able to prevent such issues by thinking carefully before tools are selected. ALL parts of a system needed by a student must be available, either by combining things that are already available or acquiring what is needed. The better we are at taking all this into account before tools are purchased, the better we will be at supporting students in a timely manner and being good stewards of public funds and resources.

Joy

- **Re:SETT and AT Compatibility with School IT** by **Tom Nurse** on Dec 15, 2004

It is also important to see that the purchasing department does NOT for example, substitute one scanner for another, without first checking to see will it still work. I have personally seen the impact of this communication breakdown. Needless to say it cost both time and energy along with wasting \$\$\$\$\$. That is one reason the term "product system" is part of the AT definition.

Tom

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- **Changing the environments and tasks in employment** by **Joan** on Dec 08, 2004  
I was thinking this morning about a student with whom I used to work. He had terrific tools (an AAC device) in place in his school setting. He used his voice with effectiveness, and all was wonderful. After he transitioned on to a new post high school setting- work for him- that tool was no longer effective- not because he could no longer use it, or because it did not have the potential to meet his needs, but because the environment and tasks had changed. The supports that were so wonderfully provided in his school were no longer there.  
My point is- and this is a new thought for me, so be patient as I ramble- without considering what tasks are required, the appropriate tool will not work. So- we are not selecting a tool,

but adapting to the change in environment and tasks. I think I finally get what Joy says when she says that SETT is an ongoing process!

- **Re:Changing the environments and tasks in employment** by **Joy Zabala** on Dec 10, 2004  
Bravo, Joan! You are so right! The "right" system of tools (those that remove more barriers than they create and enable communication, participation, and productivity), even when they match the needs, abilities, and interests of the individual, may not be "effective in all environments and for all tasks."

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- **Student, Family and and School Collaboration** by **Joy Zabala** on Dec 10, 2004  
One of the primary beliefs that led to the development of the SETT Framework was that collaboration between individuals with disabilities, family members, and school personnel was essential and that collaboration means thoughtful sharing by all and respectful consideration of all that is shared. I have a strong belief that everyone brings different gifts, observations, information, and suggestions to the table and that all must be included and valued. When all perspectives are invited, expressed and honored, we have a much better chance of really addressing the issues that need to be addressed and aligning our actions to best support the student - or if beyond school-aged, the individual - with disabilities.

I would like to pick your brains a bit... I am going to send three more message right after this one asking about what you consider to be important for others to do to encourage collaboration. Please answer the question that most applies to you, or for which you have the most passion. If, as many people are, you have are an individual with disabilities or a family member AND also work in schools, feel free to answer in each place.

I think this discussion can be really helpful to all of us and really look forward to your replies. - Joy

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- **The Student/Individual Perspective** by **Joy Zabala** on Dec 10, 2004  
As an individual- school-aged or otherwise - with disabilities, what are the 5 things that you think are most important for people (family members and school personnel) to do to support your full participation as a collaborative partner? Also, are there things that they should avoid doing(up to 5)?

- **Re:The Student/Individual Perspective** by **Joan** on Dec 19, 2004  
Although not a person with a disability, I recently spent some interesting time advocating and trying to provide services to my brother who had a significant disability. Here is what he told me was important-
  1. Assume capability. Although my brother's body became profoundly disabled, his ability to think and reason was unimpacted. However, many people treated him as if he was only his body- talking about him, making decisions without consulting him. Bob had an important perspective about what he needed and wanted.
  2. Provide services- don't just provide the tools.
  3. Look at multiple environments for what tasks can be completed.
  4. Look at multiple solutions. Sometimes there is more than one right answer.
  5. Sometimes what seems to be the best solution will not work. Do not force something on me if I don't want it.

Hmmm- looks like I crossed dos and don'ts in that list. But- as I learned with Bob, the BIG DEAL was to assume competence.

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- **The Family Perspective by Joy Zabala** on Dec 10, 2004  
As a parent or other family member of a student with disabilities, what are the 5 things that you think are most important for school personnel to do to support your full participation as a collaborative partner? Also, are there things that school personnel should avoid doing (up to 5)?
  - **Re:The Family Perspective by Debi** on Dec 13, 2004  
Something that has driven me crazy at the beginning of several school years is when my son's new teacher makes up her mind about him before getting to know him, based on what the previous year's teacher said. That doesn't allow for the possibility that he matured over the summer or that some of the problems he experienced in a given year were partly (or more) caused by that particular teacher's response to him. When we've had a teacher who gave him a chance, and who worked well with the special education teacher and therapists, it's made all the difference in the world. At the beginning of each year I meet with the teacher (who is sometimes difficult to schedule an appointment with, that's always a first clue as to how the year will go). I tell her about my son's strengths and the things he can contribute to a class. I can always tell if the teacher's really listening and is interested or if she's just checking off a "met with the parents at their request" box in her head.
    - **Re:The Family Perspective by Joy Zabala** on Dec 14, 2004  
This is an excellent point, Debbie. I think that, as the parent of two grown daughters, that this was much the same as what I wished was the case for them each year. I tried to keep that in mind in my role as teacher when I met with the parents of my students.
    - **Re:The Family Perspective by Tom Nurse** on Dec 16, 2004  
I couldn't agree more. Attitude is 90% of the difference between a good year or a rough year. Over the years the difference sometimes has been painfully clear or wonderfully rewarding!
  - **Re:The Family Perspective by Tom Nurse** on Dec 15, 2004  
Do:
    1. Respect our vision of the future and help expand it!
    2. Teach us how things work and be willing to learn from us
    3. Be honest and open. Put it on the table.
    4. Be willing to try and even fail, because through "failure" we gain success. Celebrate the success with others.
    5. Think about the long term positive impact of success for the student when they have greater skill because of AT and get going NOW!  
Don't
    1. Don't close your mind to innovation, be willing to learn new things. It's sad if a teacher is unwilling to be taught!
    2. Don't just think a kid is "special ed," they are all also students who can access general ed supports and resources (ie instructional tech, media centers, the internet)
    3. Don't be afraid to "invest" in a student's future by buying the appropriate software, hardware and other items NOW
    4. Don't think you can do it all your self, collaborate!!!
    5. Don't think learning and access to AT is a "School thing"

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- **The Professional Perspective by Joy Zabala** on Dec 10, 2004  
As a provider of services to students with disabilities (teacher, SLP, OT, PT, psychologist, administrator, etc.), what are the 5 things that you think are most important for families to do to support your full participation as a collaborative partner? Also, are there things that families should avoid doing (up to 5)?
    - **Re:The Professional Perspective by Vasanthi** on Dec 11, 2004  
In a school setting, a few things family members could do to support full participation as a collaborative partner would be:
      - 1) Release the student's medical/health record upon request
      - 2) Take the student to an ENT or audiologist or neurologist when recommended, then share the test results with the requested professional in a timely manner
      - 3) Encourage the members of the IEP team to escalate the evaluation process

A few things family members should not do:

      - 1) Ignore the communication needs of their child
      - 2) Embrace the myths on people with disability
    - **Re:The Professional Perspective by Joy Zabala** on Dec 11, 2004  
Can you share a little more about "embracing the myths"? I think that would apply to all perspectives.
    - **Re:The Professional Perspective by Joy Zabala** on Dec 11, 2004  
Can you share a little more about "embracing the myths"? I think that would apply to all perspectives.
      - **Re:The Professional Perspective by Vasanthi** on Dec 12, 2004  
There are many myths on AT/AAC users.  
  
Myth 1: People who use AT/AAC can not enter the working world.  
  
Myth 2: Students who use AT/AAC will not be successful in school.  
  
The parents who embrace these myths will indirectly limit their child's opportunities to succeed in life.
    - **Re:The Professional Perspective by Joy Zabala** on Dec 14, 2004  
Yes, there ARE many myths. I think it would be wise for ALL to avoid those myths.
  - **Re:The Professional Perspective by Rudy** on Dec 13, 2004  
I think there is a huge need for more training of both teachers and families. As both

a teacher and the parent of a child with a disability, I find that teachers are woefully unaware of the signs to look for that might indicate a cognitive (or other) disability. Of course, in many states, teachers are prohibited from suggesting to parents that their child might have a particular disability. That's considered diagnosis and beyond the teacher's realm. But if the parents have never heard of dyslexia, or dysgraphia, or a dozen other disabilities, how do they know to look for "appropriate" diagnostic help? I've always felt limited in my role as a partner with the family, if I can't suggest that they might want to have their child evaluated for specific problems. Of course, I've told parents that a child with a severe writing problem might want to have an evaluation for the reasons behind gross motor delays. But unless you tread very, very lightly, the parents flip out and think you're assigning their child to a life of special education (about which they have a laundry list of prejudices). I also think the medical profession needs to incorporate more training about early identification of disabilities, especially the so-called "invisible" ones. As a parent, it was difficult to find a doctor who was at all knowledgeable about Asperger Syndrome. Perhaps we would have had an earlier diagnosis if our family doctor had had a clue. The signs were all there, but none of us knew how to recognize them. Until medical schools and teacher training colleges integrate a much heavier dose of information about kids with disabilities into their programs, I'm afraid it's going to be slow going.

- **Re:The Professional Perspective by Joy Zabala** on Dec 14, 2004  
You know, Rudy, you have a very interesting point here - really several points. You are so right that the more ALL of us know about early recognition of possible concerns, the more able we will be to work together to be sure that the student, the family, and school personnel have access to the information and support they need to help the student move forward. And yes, there are both individual issues and systemic issues that can create barriers to this happening. As you mentioned, sometimes expressing a concern can cause strife and sometimes, as you mentioned, and as was also mentioned in an earlier post, people - parents and school personnel alike - associate potential concerns with the myths that a student with disabilities of any sort may not be able to learn and live well. I think one of the hardest things I had to deal with as a general ed teacher - and later as a special ed teacher - was discussing any concerns I had about a student's learning. As a general educator, I believe that was partly because I was not particularly knowledgeable about the range of barriers that might have a negative impact on student achievement and how to recognize them and deal with them. I was, however, generally able to recognize quite readily that a student was having difficulty and that both the student and I needed some kind of help. I did, as a general educator, feel free to speak with families although, like you, I was cautious about how I spoke, because I had more questions than answers but primarily out of respect for the student and the parents. In retrospect, I think there were times when I was TOO cautious about mentioning concerns and, in my caution, may not have been as helpful to the family in seeking additional assistance as I could have been. I think many general educators are still in this situation. We know that help is needed but are unsure what to do. When I was a new special educator, it seemed like a whole new ballgame to me. Although I was very experienced as a general educator, the switch brought about some new awarenesses and new concerns. First, there were - and are - all sorts of legal implications about suggesting outside assistance, not the least of which are financial responsibilities in some situations. As a person new to sp.ed., this was really "scary" to me, and I must confess, it still is sometimes! I think that one of the most important reasons that collaboration is so important is that, by working together in ways that build trust between parents and school personnel that the main interest of each is the educational achievement and personal growth

of the student. The more comfortable we are that we are all aligned toward helping the student, the more comfortable and sensitive we will be about how to talk about possible concerns and really work together to be sure that students and families and school personnel get the help they need. This often begins with knowing who to ask.

- **Re:The Professional Perspective by Renee S.** on Dec 14, 2004  
I've had the same concerns as Rudy expressed about broaching the topic of a potential disability with parents. I've tried to stay focused on what the student could or couldn't do. Unless there's an older sibling in the family with "typical" development, the parents often have no means of comparison. If you show them other students' work, trying to put their child's work in context, that can produce a defensive reaction. Is there a way to use the SETT Framework as a tool to have these discussions with parents in an objective way that leads them to the conclusion that perhaps they should have the student evaluated?

- **Re:The Professional Perspective by Joy Zabala** on Dec 17, 2004

Dear Renee,

That is an interesting question. I think that the framework offers the opportunity for a good discussion about the student and the tasks that are difficult or impossible for her at this time... Then it is possible to look at the environments and what sorts of supports can be accessed in those environments. If the supports that are available have not been enough to support the achievement of the student, then we could have a look at how to access additional supports.. and that could lead to the consideration of an evaluation to see if the student qualified for the additional supports available under special education.. or also under a 504 plan which is a general education initiative for students who do not qualify as a child with disabilities under IDEA but, nonetheless, who require additional supports to reach expected achievement. The key thing here, I think, is focusing on the supports available and how to get more if needed... NOT focusing on what is "wrong" with the student. Just a thought.

Joy

- **Re:The Professional Perspective by Sharon Nichols** on Dec 17, 2004  
To support:
  1. The family needs to share ALL concerns, ideas, and opinions, no matter how trivial, because their student will be influenced.
  2. Families benefit most by attending the technology trainings concerning their student's device, not to then be able to train the student on how to use the device, but to understand what the device, strategy, or software is capable of assisting and how to access resources.
  3. No matter whether the technology is low tech or high tech, training (in my opinion) is the most important aspect of implementing the technology in the student's life. Without proper training, which would involve responsibilities, resources, and future tech determinations, there might not be the "buy in" required to make the device or strategy work. I like to think of technology implementation as the team's best educated guess with the knowledge at hand. It might not be the permanent solution, but the team has to start somewhere.
  4. Families need to remember that the child they see at home, may not be the same

child we see at school. The parents or guardians information is extremely valuable in gaining a balanced assessment of the student's needs.

5. Training, training, training!

To avoid:

1. Please do not think that the device, strategy, software will be THE answer. We are all working with the best intentions for the student, but sometimes it takes more than one try to get things right. This is definitely a process.

2. Don't think what you have to offer the team is any less important. We all have ideas!

3. Don't forget to be patient with all involved, we all want the best for the student, but sometimes that takes longer than we appreciate.

o **Re:The Professional Perspective by Joan** on Dec 19, 2004

As I have mentioned, I have sat on several sides of the IEP team table, and have seen this discussion from multiple perspectives.

So- from the professional's perspective (and I will wear an administrator's hat for this portion!)

1. Trust that the representatives from the school have the student's best interest at heart. Yes- I know there are occurrences where this is not true, but- hey- call me Pollyanna- I think it is more true than not!

2. Allow us the opportunity to talk about the multiple tasks that are important for the student in all the environments. We each bring different perspectives, and all need to be heard.

3. Trust that I (the administrator) have studied the law and that I will help the team in identifying what is educationally necessary.

4. Understand that a new school year brings new opportunities.

What I ask parents not to do...

1. Come to the meeting with a decision made in which I could not participate. This could be a tool, a strategy, etc.

2. Not share information about events in the child's life that will impact performance- surgeries, accidents, etc.

3. Not participate in the discussion, then blame the school when it does not go well.

4. Not be willing to share resources that are appropriate for the child's best interests. (This happens rarely- but in truth does happen!)

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• **Considering AT Needs During the Development of the IEP by Joy Zabala** on Dec 14, 2004

I am wondering what procedures are used to consider AT in the IEP where you are? While consideration is generally relatively brief and may not require an in-depth process guided by the SETT Framework, it is my thought that using the SETT Framework as a way to THINK ABOUT (consider) what a student needs is important. If we are going to make a decision about whether the student requires (or in the new reauthorization - "needs") assistive technology, do we not have to think about the student, the environments in which he is expected to function and the tasks that will be required of him so that we can correctly determine if there are tasks for which AT is required and, if so, what sort of AT system would help him successfully address the tasks so that he can reach goals that have been set? Just wondering how often it happens like that...

Joy

o **Re:Considering AT Needs During the Development of the IEP by Tom Nurse** on Dec 15, 2004

I can't wait to see the open consideration of AT be a active part of a EVERY child's IEP. It does happen sometimes, but not routinely. Short term/sighted fears about money, the skills needs, & time prevent too many folks from openly discussing AT based on functional expectations.

Maybe if we just folks to start asking how COULD Johnny do sometime as quickly as folks say he CAN'T we'd see more AT implementation. Believein the possibilities!

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- **Weighting of factors by Richard** on Dec 15, 2004

I understand that the SETT Framework is not a protocol, but have you found in your experience that certain factors are weighted more or less than others?

- **Re:Weighting of factors by Joy Zabala** on Dec 15, 2004

Yes. Teams tend to pay a lot of attention to student needs, strengths and sometimes (not often enough)interests and then attempt to match assistive technology tools to what they know about the student. While it is appropriate and central to focus on the student and match tools to the student's needs and disabilities, it is just not enough, otherwise we would not have the continuing high levels of underutilization and abandonment that we see all over the country. Although many teams are becoming increasingly aware that it is important to think about the environments and the tasks that are required on the student in those environments, many teams only take a cursory glance at those areas. It is a bit frustrating to me when a discussion guided by the SETT Framework describes the environments are "4th grade classroom" (for example). There is SO MUCH more to the environments that that! How many students? What is the physical layout? How much support is available from and to staff? What materials and equipment are being used by other students? Are there physical access issues? What services are being provided? What are the attitudes and expectations of others in the environments? AND, certainly, the student does not LIVE in the 4th grade classroom... What about other school environments like the cafeteria and the playground? What about home environments in which the student may need to use technology? What about community environments in which the student may need to practice skills that will assist in mastery of goals?

And the tasks, too, are often not addressed as completely as I like to see them. The tasks are the actual activities that take place so that the student can achieve educational goals. Tasks are different than the functional areas of concern related to the student (for example, reading, moving about, communicating, seeing, etc.) Tasks are what is actually HAPPENING - the specifics of the functional demands for each particular environment. An example of a functional areas of concern might be "reading" (for example) and the goal might be to "read of grade level". But when it comes to tasks, nobody ever says, "All right students,its time to read on grade level." The tasks are what EXACTLY what students will need to do IN THE SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTS to learn to read on grade level. The reason this is important is that although goals may be similar from environment to environment, there may be quite a wide range of tasks that will take place to help students reach the goals.

There is another example I really like to use to explain the importance of tasks. Let's say there are two students who have written productivity issues caused by the same fine motor issue that impedes their ability to hold a pencil securely over a period of time. If all we looked at were the students and the tools, we might conclude that the same tools would be required for each student. However, what if one of the students was in the first grade and the other was a junior in high school? Clearly the written

productivity TASKS are immensely different for the two students. The first grader has to fill in blanks, draw lines, write words and letters and, over the year, an increasing number of sentences and short paragraphs. This student's needs may be met with an appropriate pencil grip and some pacing of tasks. He may also benefit from getting familiar with keyboarding and word processing through the occasional use of the classroom computer that he shares with other class members. The high school student, on the other hand, is likely to have a significant number of lengthy writing tasks throughout his day. Each of those tasks may require more endurance than the student has. Although the pencil grip would also be an important part of this student's tool system, he would very likely need frequent access to a keyboarded device (or devices) that he could use in multiple environments to complete his written assignments.

I know it was a LONG answer, but I hope it helps!

Best,

Joy

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- **Holiday Greetings and an Invitation by Joy Zabala** on Dec 19, 2004

Although we still have a few days to go on this discussion session, I know that preparing or participating in the activities of the holidays of your choice make this a very busy season for many of you. Although I hope that people will continue to participate in the discussion this week, just in case you are one of the ones who will not have a chance to log on again until after the holidays, I want to thank you for the opportunity to share in this discussion with you and especially, for your participation. In addition, I would like to extend you an invitation to join the QIAT List. QIAT is an acronym for Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology Services and the QIAT List has become a wonderful, wonderful place for people with a vast variety of interests and responsibilities in assistive technology meet via email to discuss literally anything and everything that might relate in some what to the development and provision of assistive technology services of high quality. There are currently almost 1000 people on the list, so the dicussions are lively and interesting and filled with practical, creative ideas. We would love to have you as a part of the ever-growing QIAT Community. To find out more about QIAT and to join the list, visit the QIAT website at <http://www.qiat.org>.

I will be around all week and will check in often to talk further with those of you who are as passionate about the ongoing conversation as I am! I hope to see you here.. AND I also hope that you will take part - as I will - in what is sure to be a lively conversation on this site next month co-hosted by my friend and colleague Tom Nurse.

And to each of you... I wish you the peace, joy and love that is a part of this season from whatever perspective it is celebrated. I ask on your behalf that your world and those in it be safe and happy now and in the year to come and much longer.

Warm regards,

Joy

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- **Thank you Joy by Jackie Hess** on Dec 25, 2004

On behalf of the Family Center on Technology and Disability I'd like to thank Joy and all of

the participants for a very interesting and informative discussion. The discussion will be archived so that others can benefit from the observations and information shared. It will also be made available on our annual Assistive Technology Resources CD-ROM.

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## Resources

Bowser, G. and Zabala, J. S. (2004) SETT and Re-SETT: **Concepts for AT Implementation**. ConnSENSE Bulletin. Downloaded November, 2004  
<http://www.connsensebulletin.com/reset.html>

Zabala, J. S. **SETT Framework: Information, Forms and Resources**  
<http://www.joyzabala.com>

Zabala, J. *LDOonline: **Get SETT for Successful Inclusion and Transition***.  
[http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/technology/zabalaSETT1.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/technology/zabalaSETT1.html)

Zabala, J.S., & Korsten, J.E. (1999). *Assistive Technology Implementation and Evaluation Plan*. Making a measurable difference with Assistive Technology: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Assistive Technology. <http://sweb.uky.edu/~jszaba0/ZabalaImplePlan2001.PDF>

Online Resources that Include the SETT Framework

- Assistive Technology Training Online (ATTO) Project, *AT Decision making Module: The SETT Framework* <http://atto.buffalo.edu//registered/ATBasics/Foundation/Assessment/sett.asp>
- ATSTAR Project, Austin, Texas: *ATSTAR Assessment Module* <http://www.atstar.org>. Contact ATSTAR staff to ask about the ATSTAR online curriculum for AT Assessment.
- Farmakidis, G. *Assistive Technology: A Teacher's Guide*.  
<http://www3.uakron.edu/education/refocustweb/Assistive%20Technology/scenarios.htm>
- Georgia Project for Assistive Technology, Assistive Technology Consideration Checklist, Assistive Technology Resource Guide with Video Links to Tools [http://www.gpat.org/GPAT\\_Resource\\_Topic\\_Pages/GPAT\\_Resource\\_Main\\_Page.htm](http://www.gpat.org/GPAT_Resource_Topic_Pages/GPAT_Resource_Main_Page.htm)
- Gustafson, G. *Choosing the Right Tools: The SETT Framework*. Downloaded November, 2004, from <http://tac1.elps.vt.edu/~gsgustaf/select/Chap2a.htm>
- Michigan's Assistive Technology Resource (MATR), Assistive Technology Tutorials.  
[www.cenmi.org/matr/](http://www.cenmi.org/matr/)
- Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning. Student, Environments, Tasks Worksheet <http://www.isd194.k12.mn.us/se/tech.shtml>
- Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, Planning and Implementation Summary, <http://www.isd194.k12.mn.us/se/tech.shtml>
- Minnesota STAR Project. (2004). *Joy Zabala Discusses The SETT Framework. Online Videos and Transcript*. Scroll down to titles then download from <http://www.admin.state.mn.us/assistentechonology/starpoint/ondemand.htm>

- Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology (QIAT) Website <http://www.qiat.org>
- Southeastern Ohio Special Education Regional Resource Center *The Assistive Technology Process..* <http://www.seo-serrc.org/ATprocess.htm>
- Texas Assistive Technology Network, *AT Assessment: A Team Perspective*. Training Module ([www.texasat.net](http://www.texasat.net))
- Valdosta State University and Georgia Project for Assistive Technology (GPAT), Teacher Resource Bank ( <http://www.teacherresourcebank.com> ), video resources: <http://coefaculty.valdosta.edu/spe/ATRB/Educators.htm>