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FCTD Institute on Assistive Technology



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Family Center on Technology and Disability

Academy for Educational Development

1825 Connecticut Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20009

202-884-8068

fctd@aed.org | www.fctd.info



Assistive Technology and Transition

Introduction

In the disability community, the term “transition” has traditionally referred to the period of time during which a child is prepared to leave high school and move into a post-secondary school, job, or community living. The actual age at which school systems have been legally required to design transition plans for students with disabilities has ranged from age 14 to 16. (Current federal law requires that such plans are in place by age 16, but many professionals continue to urge earlier transition planning.)

In this discussion, we have chosen to take a much broader approach, to include all of the significant points of transition in the life of a child with disabilities. That might begin as early as taking the child home from the hospital and certainly includes transition from the home environment to day-care or pre-school. Other key transition points include the move from elementary school to middle school and then on to high school.

At each of these times, AT assessments need to be made; often accompanied by evaluations of previous equipment trials. New people need to be integrated into a child’s support team and information will need to be transferred from those who previously worked with her. New procedures and even new agencies may be in place and thus there is a lot to learn!

Transition points are often times of particular stress for families. Just as they thought they had a plan in place, were familiar with the people and places that were important in their child’s life,

those things change. Often the assumptions on which a child's AT equipment had been issued are challenged by those in the new environment and parents find themselves having to start all over, providing medical documentation and other paperwork. Even when everyone is of good will and eager to make the transition a smooth one, bureaucratic rules, funding limitations, and lack of inter-agency communication can create significant setbacks.

In this discussion, we'll share best practices that can make all the difference between a successful and a frustrating transition. We'll identify the elements that tend to be common among transition phases and discuss their impact on securing and/or maintaining appropriate AT devices and services. (During transitions, AT services can be critically important.) We'll also look at transition plans and what should go into them.

Welcome to the discussion!

Expert's Corner

Expert's Bios

Joan Breslin-Larson

Joan Breslin-Larson is the Assistive Technology Specialist for the Minnesota Department of Education. She has provided assistive technology services for more than twenty years. She currently focuses her work on developing and supporting collaborative practice in assistive technology for children and students receiving services under IDEA. She facilitates the Minnesota State Assistive Technology Leadership Team, an interagency group that supports the state Department of Education in developing and supporting assistive technology and universal design for learning practices. Joan is an active member of the Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology (QIAT) Consortium and speaks nationally on collaborative decision making in assistive technology.



Joan brings a unique perspective to the FCTD AT Winter Institute, coming from an advocacy background as well as representing a large education organization. Prior to working for the state education agency she founded and ran an independent AT consulting firm.

Sean Smith

Sean J. Smith holds the rank of Associate Professor of Special Education at the University of Kansas and is an Associate Researcher with the eLearning Design Lab (<http://elearndesign.org/>), an affiliate of the Center for Research on Learning. Dr. Smith also serves as the Assistive Technology Facilitator for the Kansas Infnitec Coalition, the State of Kansas's preK-12 Assistive Technology initiative involving over 85% of Kansas School Districts.



Dr. Smith has a background in the area of special education and technology, specifically towards the integration of technology across teacher preparation programs. He has authored and presented a number of articles and papers dealing with special education technology. At present, he is a Project Director on several US Department of Education program initiatives seeking to further the integration of technology components across teacher preparation programs and into the lives of students with disabilities (see <http://www.specialconnections.ku.edu>). For example, a US Department of Education Steppingstone's Project is focusing on the development of a virtual social skill training experience for students with Aspergers.

Dr. Smith has served as an associate editor for the Journal of Special Education Technology and authored a quarterly column on technology and teacher education for this publication. He is the current Publication's Chair for the International Society for Technology in Education Special Interest Group on Special Education and also Chair-Elect for the State of Kansas's Special Education Advisory Committee. He serves on the Editorial Board 's for a number of technology publications including the Journal of Special Education Technology and Assistive Technology Outcomes and Benefits. He is also the proud parent of four young children, one having Down syndrome.

Brian Wojcik

Brian Wojcik is Coordinator of the Special Education Assistive Technology (SEAT) Center at Illinois State University. He has degrees in Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Elementary Education and a masters degree in LD/BD with emphasis on teaching students with multiple disabilities. During his professional career, he has worked in a variety of capacities with individuals with disabilities, including sign language interpreter, postsecondary transition specialist, and a public school teacher for seven years. He has taught children receiving special education services in every eligibility category from preschool through adulthood, and is actively involved in professional organizations on both the state and national level. He has been involved in innovative AT service delivery for 14 years and holds the Assistive Technology Practitioner credential from RESNA.



Expert's Perspectives

Joan Breslin-Larson

Hello. I am very happy to see that there are many new participants in this year's on-line institute. I am also very happy to participate again as a faculty member.

I have a sincere passion for this year's two topics- assistive technology for individuals with autism, and for AT and transition (particularly transition to post secondary life) . Although I will focus on the transition topic, I suspect I will also check in with the other strand as well, because that conversation will also be fascinating!

My interest in supports for transition goes back to one experience I had when I worked directly with clients in the field. I supported a young man in his use of assistive technology. We worked very hard together to find appropriate technology to support his time in high school as he learned work readiness skills.

We were successful, and developed a system that allowed him to act as a messenger in his high school, in preparation for his work in a real work setting after graduation. I was able to modify his wheelchair tray so that he could take written messages, books and other items around the school, his AAC device was set up so he could access it easily and could still safely navigate. His job coach found him a terrific job where he could be a messenger in a building with indoor passages (a big deal in Minnesota), accessible doors and elevators, a lunch room where specific dietary needs could be met. I thought we had it all in place, and was pretty complacent that I had done my work.

Until- he graduated and went to his work in that large plant. I stopped to visit and asked how it was going. "Not so hot." "Why not? We looked at making sure all the pieces were in place. What's wrong?" He looked at me, sighed, and pressed a button on his device. "Do you have any attendance slips for me?"

In our search for all the things he needed to be a good worker, we forgot about the services that he would need as an adult, outside the school system, without the services and supports provided by his school system. There was no one to program his device, no one to make sure his vocabulary was that of a working man rather than that he used as a student. There was no one to support him in maintenance and repair, to act as a trouble shooter.

So- over our time together, I will be returning to lessons I learned from my time as an AT consultant. I will be referencing what quality supports for transition and assistive technology might look like, and what the roles there might be in making transition to adult life- or to any new stage in life- successful.

We will want to think about and talk about how to prepare students to be effective self advocates for

their use of assistive technology. What should adults be able to know, do, or have supports in as they graduate? Who are potential service providers? What funding might be available? I look forward to the conversation.

Sean J. Smith

The term “transition” in its most basic context means change, or “a passing from one condition or place to another” (Webster’s New World Dictionary, p. 635). Transitions from one life stage to another occur throughout one’s life and are characterized as times of stress, conflict, redefinition, and sometimes dysfunction. In special education, the term is used to describe a systematic passage from school to adult life for students with disabilities. Transition, in this sense, is seen as a bridge between the security of school and home and the risks and opportunities of adult life (Morningstar, Kleinhammer-Tramill & Lattin, 1999).

This is all well and good, however; if we are to wait until the student’s high school experience to begin planning for this transition, we are doing the student, his/her parents, and the overall community a disservice. Instead, efforts should be ongoing throughout the student’s educational experience if we are to appropriately prepare the student for the skills needed in the post secondary setting. Now, how does it connect with assistive technology (AT) and the issues surrounding transition and AT?

Increasingly, AT devices are being seen as critical supports in assisting in the development of skills necessary for self-determination and overall empowerment across the life span. Universal features of many technology-based applications offer individuals with disabilities use of accessible software and hardware tools that increase independence (and thus choice) in the community, work, and home-based settings. Unfortunately, if we are left to consider these devices during the high school and post secondary years, we are limiting the choices in the types of supports that the individual will be capable of using. That is, without the appropriate identification, implementation, and evaluation across the student’s educational experience, opportunities for technology use will be limited. For example, if the student does not have the necessary skills to interact with a device by the time they are in high school, consideration in the use of this device will be limited. Then again, if students, parents, and educational professionals consider AT solutions early in the student’s development, opportunities for implementation, evaluation, ongoing re-consideration, and similar options will be available.

Over the next two weeks, I hope to visit on these issues as well as issues relevant to the numerous transitions that occur across a student’s educational experience. These transitions, when AT is considered, offer a need for effective planning, group collaboration, and ongoing consideration.

Recommended Resources

Person-Centered Planning: A Tool for Transition

This article, published by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, is about the importance of focusing transition planning around the individual with disabilities who is actually going through the transition process. They discuss how the plan should reflect the student's interests and preferences, current accomplishments and skills, what they still need to learn, as well as what they want to do in life. Through this type of planning, the student's individual goals should be developed so that the planning team has an idea of what they need to incorporate into the transition process. This article pulls the language about transition from the IDEA piece of legislation. They also list four steps that should be taken during the person-centered transition process. The article goes into depth about the four steps, which include: Choosing a Facilitator, Designing the Planning Process, Holding the Meeting: Implementing the Person-Centered Planning Process, and Planning and Strategizing at the Follow-up Meetings. After identifying the steps, the article discusses each person's role in the process. Finally, at the end of the article, there is a list of resources where people can go for more information on person-centered transition planning.

<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=1431>

Age of Majority- Preparing Your Child for Making Good Choices

This article discusses how to prepare your child for making good decisions once they reach the age of majority. The age of majority is the legal age established under state law at which an individual is no longer a minor and, as a young adult has the right and responsibility to make certain legal choices that adults make. As parents, your role is to help your children to become comfortable making their own decisions and capable of making good choices. This article outlines fourteen great strategies for teaching your child with disabilities to make good decisions.

<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=318>

Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology Transition

This resource, which was updated by QIAT in 2005, provides six quality indicators for assistive technology as well as common errors that sometimes occur during the transition process.

http://natri.uky.edu/assoc_projects/qiat/documents/6%20QIAT%20QIs%20Transition.pdf

Transition Requirements: Beginning at Age 16

This brief fact sheet, published by the Colorado Department of Education, discusses the importance of starting early when planning for a transition. They say that early and long-range planning are critical in order for the student to receive many post-school programs or services whether they include support services in college or residential services from an adult provider. Once a student reaches age 16, or earlier, planning should begin to focus on transition services. The fact sheet goes into the education system's roles and responsibilities and also gives a brief description about how parents should participate in the process. The most useful part of this fact sheet is the checklists at the end which

tell you what you should be doing two to three years before leaving school and what you should be doing one year before leaving school..

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/download/pdf/FF-TransitionB16.pdf>

Transition Planning: What-Why-How?

This fact sheet, published by the Colorado Department of Education, gives a brief overview of every aspect of the Transition Process. It begins by emphasizing the importance of starting the process early. They say that the concept of transition is simple and generally has three major components: 1) Coach every student, along with his or her family, to think about goals after high school and to develop a long-range plan that will get them there, 2) Design high school experiences to ensure that the student gains the skills needed to reach his or her desired post-school goals, and 3) Identify and link students and families to any needed post-school services, supports or programs, before the student exits the school system. After this fact sheet outlines the different aspects to the transition process, it discusses what parents should be doing during the years in high school and how the process should be included in the IEP. At the end, there are various checklists for parents to know what they should be doing at certain times during their child's high school career.

<http://www.cde.state.co.us//cdesped/download/pdf/FF-TransPlan.pdf>

Transferring Assistive Technology from School to Work

This article, published in 2005 by United Cerebral Palsy, describes the barriers that individuals with disabilities face when they try to take the AT they were using in high school with them into their place of employment or into vocational rehabilitation. Some of these barriers include: lack of involvement of rehabilitation counselors, lack of information by rehabilitation counselors about AT, burdensome rules imposed on school districts regarding disposition of equipment, no established buy-out method to enable the vocational rehabilitation agency to purchase AT from school districts, and lack of communication/planning between agencies during transition planning. According to this article, the federal regulations do not prohibit the transfer of equipment from school to work and work-related activities. With this being said, they list a variety of strategies for making equipment transfer a reality.

http://www.ucp.org/ucp_channel/doc.cfm/1/17/107/107-107/736

Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology

The QIAT website has two main purposes. First, it provides access to the work of the QIAT Consortium in the form of Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology Services in School Settings. Second, it provides forums for participation in the work of the Consortium and engagement in collegial conversations around the work.

http://natri.uky.edu/assoc_projects/qiat/

Transition-Related Planning, Instruction, and Service Responsibilities for Secondary Special Educators

This fact sheet, published by the Division on Career Development and Transition, summarizes the practices that have emerged through research for which secondary special educators should be re-

sponsible. The practices are organized into five categories and are from the foundation for transition-related skill development for secondary special educators. The fact sheet lists the various tasks that each of the five practice categories should be doing. The five categories are: Student-Focused Planning, Student Development, Interagency Collaboration, Family Involvement, and Program Structures. http://www.dcdt.org/pdf/transit_plan.pdf

It's More than Just a Law: People Make it Happen

This article, published by Transition Coalition, defines the roles of the various people involved in a young adult's transition process from high school into their post-secondary education or into the workforce. Before they go into the roles, they give a brief overview of the major transition requirements according to IDEA. According to Transition Coalition, there are nine main roles defined in the transition process, and they go into detail about what each group is suppose to be doing to make sure that the transition goes as smoothly as possible. The nine groups are: community members, peers and friends, advocates, school support staff, administrators, postsecondary education personnel, community service providers, family members, and the students themselves. If each of the people within these groups do their part, the student will most likely experience a successful transition out of the public education system.

<http://www.transitioncoalition.org/~tcacs/new/files/peoplemakeithappen.pdf>

Enhancing Academic Achievement and Transition Outcomes Using Technology

This article, published by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, discusses how educators can align transition goals with the current system of standards-based education. Before the article goes into strategies to intersect the standards, careers, and technology; the authors discuss a standards-driven, computer-based curriculum for students with disabilities in grades 8 through 10 that was designed by the Nisonger Center at Ohio State University. Its curriculum emphasizes three essential skills, which include: reading competencies needed to pass standardized assessments, information literacy skills needed to conduct research using the Internet, and career planning needed to gain successful post-school education. Next they discuss the three main strategies/practices for helping students with disabilities meet academic standards and attain the skills needed for positive in-school and post-school outcomes are discussed. They are: 1) Integrate technology into the classroom to increase standards-based achievement and developing marketing skills; 2) Integrate learning supports into computer-based and traditional instruction to enhance outcomes; and 3) Integrate critical-thinking, career decision-making, and transition planning skills into a technologically enhanced general curricula.

<http://ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=2472>

Cooperative Services Handbook for Youth in Transition

This handbook, developed by the Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, was designed to assist DVR staff, educators, students and their families in the delivery of transition services. The handbook is broken up into the

following sections: what transition is, who may receive transition services, what the roles and responsibilities are for each system in the process, how to plan for transition services, where can the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and the schools collaborate in service provision, what policies and practices may affect transition, and a list of local offices for the people of Colorado. Throughout the handbook, there are different stories about people who have gone through the transition process and what worked and what didn't work for them.

http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/download/pdf/CoopSvcsHndbk_YouthTrans.pdf

Transition Planning: A Team Effort

This guide was put together by the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY). It discusses what the law says concerning transition services, transition teams, how to create a transition plan, how to find resources in your community, and community level transition. They provide some great tables throughout this guide. There is a table listing the common community agencies that provide transition services and along with each agency they give the examples of the employment services offered, examples of the postsecondary education services offered, and examples of adult and independent living services that are offered. Another table they have provides a list of potential consultants to the transition team and how they can help with the transition services. Planning is essential for a successful transition. NICHCY does a great job highlighting the different aspects of planning by providing charts for: Planning for Employment, Planning for Education after High School, and Planning for Living Independently. Finally, they list additional resources and organizations that may help you in the planning for transition process.

<http://www.nichcy.org/pubs/transum/ts10.pdf>

Websites

The following websites belong to organizations that focus on the Transition Process. These websites include additional resources and information. Many of them also provide local places where you can go for assistance.

- **National Early Childhood Transition Center**
<http://www.ihdi.uky.edu/nectc/>
- **National Center on Secondary Education and Transition**
<http://www.ncset.org>
- **Technical Assistance on Transition and the Rehabilitation Act (TATRA)**
<http://216.17.45.167/tatra/tatra.htm>
- **TransAccess**
<http://www.transaccess.org/>

Transcript: 2007 AT Institute - Transition & AT

- **Welcome by Jackie Hess [SI Faculty]** on Oct 07, 2007
As always, I'm pleased to welcome you to the Family Center on Technology and Disability's Online Institute on Assistive Technology. This year we have close to 600 registered participants, so the discussions should be lively! Our moderators, all AT experts, are eager to hear your concerns and to respond to your questions. We're also anxious to hear your stories and experiences. This is an opportunity to explore issues in depth, to think about how the field is evolving, and to meet colleagues from across the country. I hope you'll take full advantage of the experience. Welcome to Day One!
 - **Re: Welcome by Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 07, 2007
I join Jackie in welcoming you. As a faculty member for this institute, I am aware that there is a breadth and depth of knowledge in the field, and from the fabulous list of institute participants, that I hope will be reflected in these conversations.
As Brian, Sean and I prepared for this experience, we agreed that we will ask questions, respond to each other and to you. We have points that we think are important to raise, and resources to share. But, I wonder... What brings you to this conversation? What do you hope to gain? What resources- and stories- do you have to share? I am looking forward to our time together, and remind you that the experience is richer with greater participation.
 - **Re: Welcome by Kelly Bell** on Oct 08, 2007
I am a vision itinerant for preK-21. I think that one of my concerns with AT is a lot of people really do not understand what it entails. Some of the districts that I work in do not understand why some of my students need so much (\$\$) equipment.
 - **Re: Welcome by teresapinder@yahoo.com** on Oct 08, 2007
Yep, that's an issue I think everyone has, but your population is one that AT was invented for!!! Thank goodness for the IEP process.....
 - **Re: Welcome by Leanne Grillot** on Oct 08, 2007
I am also a TVI for the PreK-22 population in a rural district in Florida. I have lived in other states and been in over 100 schools in the past 16 years. Many places I had to fight for the AT equipment my students need. This new position, in FL, I waited two years for the first embosser (just ordered) with two Braille students. I wrote a position paper and submitted it to everyone. That seems to help explain what it does. I also included the least expensive model and the most expensive model (the \$12,000.00 one) to let them know I wasn't asking for the top model.

I am now in charge of our Local Assistive Technology Specialists for the county (we are small so many hats are worn by all). Maybe I can change what my students get out of the AT closet???
 - **Re: Welcome by Sharon Fairchild** on Oct 08, 2007
Hi everyone! I am a fourth-year teacher of students with severe disabilities and have the youngest students in our program, so I often deal with students who are transitioning from the home environment to the school environment. I am also a member of our school's AT team and am working on a graduate certificate in AT, so I'd like to get as much insight and information I can to best assist my students.
 - **Re: Welcome by teresapinder@yahoo.com** on Oct 08, 2007
Little ones can be soooo much fun!! Sometimes just learning to be a student is a challenge for our most medically fragile, severe disabled students. Are you past the "needing ear plugs stage"?? LOL

What kinds of AT (hard ware and software)are available to your students???

- **Re: Welcome** by **Sharon Fairchild** on Oct 09, 2007
Lol...I have one student who has a great set of lungs :) I design a lot of low-tech stuff on a day by day basis. As far as higher tech, I use Intellitools and Intellikeys...I just wish I had more time to design activities and overlays. We also have some tech-fours and tech-eights. I use the MeVille to WeVille curriculum with switches and step by step communicators. I have used Boardmaker with SD pro with students in the past.

- **Re: Welcome** by **jcriger** on Oct 08, 2007
My journey to this point has been circuitous, but always in education. I have taught general ed pre-k, k, 2, 3, and 4. Then SpEd K-6, and as a member of the district's behavioral intervention team member k-12. Back to GenEd helping teachers integrate technology and the Internet into their everyday curriculum. Now as an AT facilitator...a position I got because no one knew what it was, but I had such a varied history, admin thought I could do it. (I disagreed at the time, but am glad they held their ground. I love this field!)

The district I work in currently has a large population of students on the Spectrum. I'm always looking for technology they'll find helpful enough to bother with. (And, I'm *constantly* searching for ideas that help the staff 'get the picture' and want to learn more in order to support our learners.)

Looking forward to meeting and learning from all of you. - Jacquie

- **Re: Welcome** by **teresapinder@yahoo.com** on Oct 08, 2007
I have found that most of the "AT facilitators", "AT Team Leaders", or whatever name the district gives to the "go to person" position has inherited the position because administration-who did not really what the job was-thought they could deal with it. I glad you fell in love with the field and will be willing to continue working and supporting staff and the students in your district. I see many districts start "at the beginning" each year or two because the AT position is passed on.
I work in many classrooms through out the week with students and staff to facilitate access and support learners.
- **Re: Welcome** by **J. Long** on Oct 08, 2007
I joined this conversation as a Special Education Teacher of 36 years and I am always amazed at how Special Education has changed.
I have used AT since 1991 in one form or another. I live in a very rural south, central Florida district. Even though we are rural we have access to almost anything we need when it comes to AT.
I hope to gain some more insight with regards to Transition in the School system. I think this is an area where our District could use suggestions.
- **Re: Welcome** by **teresapinder@yahoo.com** on Oct 08, 2007
I have worked in public school district for 20 years as an Occupational Therapist in rural central Florida, 12 of those years as part of an AT team and the past 3 years as a Regional AT Specialist covering 7 small and rural districts in central Florida. Sooo it is nice to hear you have access! I find Transition is defined in a differently in each of the districts I serve. I am looking for insight and suggestions also!
- **Re: Welcome** by **Carol Leynse Harpold** on Oct 08, 2007
Greetings! As an OT and AT Coordinator of a small school district I am looking

forward to gleaning information on transition (and autism too!) from such an experienced group. One of my goals is to provide tools, AT to students at all levels but especially at the middle and high school levels to equip them with strategies for post high vocational or academic possibilities. Some students seem to be advocates for themselves and then other students just seem to avoid or reject use of tools despite the availability of them. I am really concerned about those students who don't seem to want to advocate for themselves or take advantage of tools available to them, especially when there is so much available. I am looking forward to hearing from others on ideas and successes with this age group to make transitions to work or school better and how to "hook" those students to use the tools available to be successful!

▪ **Re: Welcome** by **HeatherB** on Oct 08, 2007

Hello! My name is Heather and I am a K-6 school teacher, currently substitute teaching here in Anderson, Indiana, while raising our three small children - our six year old daughter with Down Syndrome and 4 year old twins. Our oldest has limited verbal capabilities and has had numerous speech therapists working with her over the years - a very good thing. Two years ago, we purchased a hand held device and the Gus Overboard pictures for her to use as a backup form of communication and asked our school district speech therapist to help us in training her to use this device. We were told not to send it to school - They did not want the liability of it! I now home-school my children and I am taking all the classes I can get my hands on so that I can personally train her myself and help her transition with this device throughout each and every phase of her life as necessary!

I guess part of my concern with AT devices is not only are school districts saddled with funding issues, which in our case they did not have to worry about, but what about teacher training - Do the teachers really know how to use the device adequately and support the students as they attempt to use them? As a parent, I often feel like I don't know what I am doing with the device. How can we better support the kids using AT devices while not overloading the adults around them? There is so much to know about these devices, but only so much time in my day. From a teacher's perspective - how many devices should the teacher be required to be trained on?

▪ **Re: Welcome** by **ehale** on Oct 11, 2007

Heather,

As a teacher of students like your daughter, I am appalled the school would not want the device at school. I currently have about half of my students with a device of some sort and one who has been expecting to get one since early August (the agency involved has yet to deliver it). Most of the time, I feel overwhelmed. I wish I could be taught how to imbed device usage into my daily curriculum. Staff at our school was supposed to be trained in this but weren't and we are at a loss of how to implement usage throughout the day. The next problem we face is keeping the devices in working order. Any suggestions from you would be appreciated.

▪ **Re: Welcome** by **HeatherB** on Oct 11, 2007

I have the same issue here at home, unfortunately. Our hand-held device loses its memory if we don't keep it plugged in. We just recently moved and the device was packed by our moving company, by mistake. So it has been unplugged all summer. I now have to go back and painstakingly reprogram everything we had in it, then make sure that we keep it plugged in all the time. I wish there was a way to program it on my PC and just copy the files over, but GUS is not capable of doing that. My husband is a computer programmer and is completely frustrated by the way the Gus program was written and

how time consuming it is for me! So our back up system, and it works quite well for us, is a PECS notebook! No programming needed there! Very low tech, but it works - all the time! For us to keep up the communication with our daughter, we realized we needed two forms of AT devices - one High Tech and one Low Tech - so that when one is not working right, we have another to fall back on. Then I rely very heavily on my computer programmer husband, who can fix and repair anything computer oriented! Probably doesn't work so well in a school situation! Wish I had a better suggestion on keeping devices going.

That all being said, I have found that our local state universities with Ed Programs are usually very helpful with AT devices, provided they have a Special Ed department. They have bailed me out several times when I have been totally overwhelmed with how to get our device programmed and functioning.

- **Re: Welcome** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 12, 2007
Contingency plans for when AT does not work as it is expected, are extremely important.

Have you looked at the Cyrano Communicator (<http://www.cyranocommunicator.com/>)? I believe it has the ability to be programmed at the computer...

- **Re: Welcome** by **minwookok** on Oct 09, 2007
Hi. I am studying LD/BD (master program) at the University of Texas at Austin. I came from South Korea 1 year ago for study. I have a great interest in AT for helping students who need special needs. I also want to study AT and LD together for doc degree.

It is exciting for me to learn more about AT because it is sort of brand new area in my home country. Thus.. I hope I could contribute to improving this area in my home country after graduation. I am looking forward to learning lots of things from discussion with participants and professionals and from resources!!

- **Re: Welcome** by **Kimberly Fields** on Oct 15, 2007
I am Kimberly Fields and currently work as the SPED Coordinator/Assistant Professor at Albany State University in Albany, Georgia. I became a faculty member, with major responsibilities for shaping future SPED teachers, because I had many experiences with poor teachers who did not motivate students or believed that they could excel. When I first came to postsecondary education from working with high school students, I found many of the kids with exceptionalities had been handicapped by their school experiences and were not prepared to advocate for themselves.

Therefore, I join this discussion to learn information and strategies that will help me produce SPED teachers who fully equip their students with the skills they need to make future transitions.

- **Re: Welcome** by **Marc Sherman** on Oct 08, 2007
I am an Independent Living Advocate for the disabled population in Indianapolis. Also, due to an automobile accident I had in 1995, I broke my neck. With my spinal cord injury (SCI), I now am a C5-C6 quadriplegic. Regardless of the physical challenges I continually deal with, I returned to college and graduated with honors earning a Bachelor's in Social Work. I plan to soon go back and earn a Master's degree in Social Work. In addition, since my SCI, I have gotten married, have two children, and purchased a home.

I bring this to your attention with several purposes. First, self-advocacy has been my

greatest tool when it comes to how to do something better or easier. Throughout my therapy, no one taught me anything about AT. I simply learned basic living skills (i.e. feeding myself, writing, brushing my teeth, etc.). Once I left the security of the hospital, I had to learn how to function as a contributing member of my family, community, workforce, and community. In other words, prior to AT being introduced to a person's life, I strongly believe a person needs to know what they want, when they want it, and how to get it.

Second, transitioning from school to secondary school, employment or new stage of life is definitely a pivotal portion of how a person not only functions in the next chapter of their life, but also how they feel about themselves. I commend FCTD for bringing this topic to discussion. It empowers a person when they have independently achieved a goal. I know when I was able to turn on a light switch for the first time after my SCI, the gratification I felt was enormous. Since I no longer had to ask for help, it was a feeling of success. Therefore, I give my clients the resources they need and encourage them to make the needed calls and advocate in their own behalf. However, if there is a task of any nature where there is too much complication or not enough understanding, my ears are always willing to listen, door is open, and I am more than happy to assist.

Third of all, one of the biggest obstacles I have faced in not only assisting clients, but myself as well is funding. Not to purposefully stereotype or generalize, but I have found the majority of disabled lack enough funding to purchase assistive technology, let alone anything besides daily living expenses. Therefore, one of the reasons I joined this discussion group is gather resources and hopefully learn something I did not know, especially about benevolent funding and the likes of.

I look forward to this opportunity in discussing important, pertinent, and relevant topics. I hope to use this as a valuable learning process. FCTD, thank you kindly for hosting such an event!

- **Re: Welcome** by **teresapinder@yahoo.com** on Oct 08, 2007
I agree with you in all points. Self advocacy is where I always start with the ADULTS no matter what age the student is. Being able to advocate for your self means choices and independence. Also, Funding is what will be the most limiting thing and always takes away choices !!
 - **Re: Welcome** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 08, 2007
I know Brian, Sean and I will explore funding with all of you as we look at the issues being raised. This is a challenge, as the rules change from state to state, and what I know in MN may not apply to your state. We will, however, talk about what resources are available, and strategies.
- **Re: Welcome** by **Leanne Grillot** on Oct 08, 2007
Marc,

Point well made. Funding seems to be running me in circles at the school level. Often, it seems, who is going to pay for the equipment (which department) gets put into a circle and never gets answered. I hope to hear how other schools handle funding for the equipment as well as transitioning the equipment to the student when they graduate.

Leanne

- **Re: Welcome** by **johnsongw** on Oct 09, 2007
Hi Leanne, Funding is such a "Hot Potato". Sometimes people have such few resources and sometimes the costs are so high- but sometimes families have the financial resources and just need guidance on what will be the proper

device for their child/family member. Do you discuss devices without funding to back it up?

- **Re: Welcome** by **Jo Windholz** on Oct 09, 2007
I also work at a Center for Independent Living. I started about a month ago in the position of AT Coordinator. Prior to this job, I worked forever for the state welfare, long enough that I actually retired from there. So I know about Medicaid funding, both individual and LEA funding that is available to the school districts. At least LEA is the acronym used in Kansas. I took the job with the CIL to locally coordinate an equipment exchange program. It is available for people of all ages and all disabilities. Of course, the problem is getting AT equipment donated. And in my short time in this job, I have found the needs overwhelming and the available equipment falls short of the needs. And I am learning a lot about the various types of AT equipment available. But what works for one person doesn't necessarily work for the next. What a lot I still have to learn!!!!
- **Re: Welcome** by **johnsongw** on Oct 09, 2007
Do you have Craigs List available? Post requests for free. Call the ads in the newspaper and ask them to donate if the item doesn't sell in 2 weeks. I've had a person with quadriplegia tell me he's got a room full of AT he doesn't use. Things didn't work but he can't personally dispose of either. Best wishes for the new job! - Gary
 - **Re: Welcome** by **Marc Sherman** on Oct 10, 2007
What exactly is "Craigs List" and what does it consist of? Where is it located and can it be used out of state?

Marc
 - **Re: Welcome** by **Jo Windholz** on Oct 10, 2007
Thanks for the suggestions. Any and all will help. I had not thought of watching the ads in the paper. Thanks. - Jo
 - **Re: Welcome** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 10, 2007
Believe it or not, I have a number of friends who are assistive technology users themselves and have found many products on EBay.
- **Re: Welcome** by **prodriguez** on Oct 15, 2007
What is LEA?
 - **Re: Welcome** by **Kelsie Onyango** on Oct 15, 2007
Local Education Agency, generally a school district.
- **Welcome** by **johnsongw** on Oct 09, 2007
Your thought processes make you my kind of people. When you've "been there" your thoughts and opinions really matter to me. I wanted to add a perspective on funding. I have a learning disability, as does my son. Kurzweil 3000 would have helped immensely but was never even mentioned as an option by our public school system. We spent many thousands of "out of pocket" dollars on tutoring and the school also spent many hundreds of hours of resource time on my son. We certainly appreciate those efforts and they made a difference. But-Kurzweil 3000 had what he really needed and after 12 years of school he's tired of input from experts who haven't dealt with the base problem that he is an auditory learner.

My story and point is that as financially capable parents we were never given AT options-even if we had to fund them ourselves. We spend so much time dealing with students/families that have few financial resources that we don't provide info to

those that can privately fund. I know the concept is to provide AT when it is required, but parents search for whatever will best help and assist their children's education and if their child has an iPod they can have Kurzweil 3000 or many similarly priced AT devices. That leaves more funding for others and gets more AT in the classroom and allows other students to learn by osmosis.

- **Re: Welcome by Marc Sherman** on Oct 10, 2007

John, Thank you kindly for sharing your personal and professional trials. However, I have one question with what you have disclosed. What kind of AT is Kurzweil 3000 and exactly what type of functions can it assist?
--- Marc ><>

- **Re: Welcome by kcweg** on Oct 08, 2007

Thank you for the welcome. I am new to the field of special education so I am looking forward to learning as much as possible. I am also looking forward to "meeting" others in the field and learning about the different perspective each brings to the discussion.

Kathy

- **Re: Welcome by amber** on Oct 08, 2007

I am also new to the field of special education and look forward to learning as much as possible in order to help my students become productive members of society. I currently teach in a self contained high school class for emotionally disabled students

- **Re: Welcome by Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 08, 2007

You both have found a great place for mentoring and learning skills that will benefit your students. I hope you visit this resource often!

- **Re: Welcome by MarciaJ** on Oct 08, 2007

Hello to everyone

Reading all the introductions I know I will be spending my time constructively during the next several weeks. Like many of you my background is varied. In 1976 I started my career in Early Childhood Special Education as a home instruction teacher (there were very few center based programs) in west central Iowa. I subsequently moved on to Northeast Iowa where I continued in the same role and added the role of ECSE Consultant for the center based programs. I believe my exposure to the concept of AT occurred long before there was even an official term as little ones were always needing materials modified for access and success. I was a "Charter" member of my agency's AT team (started in the 80's), went off the team but remained the unofficial go to person in my primary service area. Then three years ago I had the opportunity to take over the position of AT Resource Coordinator for my agency.

So many issues have already been mentioned but I would like to highlight a couple areas I am particularly interested in at this time. 1) Advocating for AT as an important aspect of Birth to 3 services and ensuring that it continues for children 3 to 5 and on up (once in place ensuring that appropriate transition occurs). 2) Self advocacy yes it starts before high school 3) Gaining a better understanding of the similarities/differences between IDEA & ADA (the k-12 to college transition).

- **Re: Welcome by Sarah Winn** on Oct 08, 2007

Hi! I have been an OT in the public schools since 1983. AT has always been my passion, and I am currently providing the AT services for our district. I work with Early Childhood through high school age students. I would like to learn more about how to transition HS students to college or tech school and what I should be doing to make that transition go smoothly. I also work with many severely challenged students who use switches for leisure, computer, work related activities, etc. but once they graduate these skills are not used in the sheltered workshops that they attend. Any ideas of how to get that going in those settings?

- **Re: Welcome** by **pvangeem@gmail.com** on Oct 08, 2007
I am an assistive technology consultant to teachers of the visually impaired in the state of Texas. The agency I work for is the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Outreach Department in Austin, Texas. I want to understand a little more about AT for students with other disabilities just because I know so little about what is out there. This could make me a better consultant in my field and I also hope to help other colleagues with their tech needs for students with visual impairments.
 - **Re: Welcome** by **Leanne Grillot** on Oct 08, 2007
Great to have another with vision issues in the mix! I love your school, by the way. TSBVI has excellent resources for the TVI's of the USA. I happen to currently be a lone TVI in a rural county of Florida. I also get to wear the hat of Teacher of the Hearing Impaired Contact Resource and the hat of Local Assistive Technology Specialists Coordinator.
Welcome! - Leanne
 - **Re: Welcome** by **pvangeem@gmail.com** on Oct 09, 2007
Wow... I bet you're busy. My hat is off to you. How many students do you serve?
- **Re: Welcome** by **Michael 52** on Oct 08, 2007
Well hello everyone. I work at a University where I've been involved in classroom teaching, direct AT service delivery, research, and professional development training to a 6 state area here in the Midwest since the early 1980s in environments including: independent living, schools, and work environments. I do like to keep abreast of what others are doing from places across the country however, and look forward to hearing all the questions and answers provided through this format.
 - **Re: Welcome** by **teresapinder@yahoo.com** on Oct 08, 2007
I was having babies in the early 1980's, although I was working as an OT in a school district and just beginning my AT journey. I kept trying to find answers for some of the most physically involved students I served. I am happy to say that two of the students(that I still have contact with) are fully employed, one owns his own small business, the other works from a work station at home. I think of all they taught me that I now share in my current position as a Regional AT Specialist.
 - **Re: Welcome** by **prodriguez** on Oct 15, 2007
Hi, I have a question. How do you work with AT at University level?
- **Re: Welcome** by **rgriffin** on Oct 08, 2007
My name is Ray Griffin and I am the AT specialist for MN Rehabilitation Services (DEED). As the only specialist for our agency, you can imagine that I get spread pretty thin. We are in the process of providing training opportunities to our staff to help better utilize AT in our caseloads. There is currently a re-emphasis on students in transition in our agency, and so I am working on jump starting the AT knowledge base as it applies in those situations. We are contracting with an advocacy group to provide an overview of AT in transition during the coming next several months. The training won't stop there, so I am eager to get input from the educator's perspective on how to proceed. Don't be shy about offering advice and making suggestions.....
 - **Re: Welcome** by **teresapinder@yahoo.com** on Oct 08, 2007
I too am the "lone ranger" in many of the small and rural districts I serve. I am assuming you serve mostly adults???
 - **Re: Welcome** by **rgriffin** on Oct 08, 2007
Yes, 16-80 or so...

- **Re: Welcome by Carol Leynse Harpold** on Oct 08, 2007
Ray, I would be really interested in what the population is that you service and what your plan is for AT knowledge base. I will be looking forward to hearing more about the overview of AT in transitions since it could be very different for different populations (low incidence vs. high incidence groups).
 - **Re: Welcome by Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 08, 2007
And- may I mention that Ray is doing a great job. I am proud to be able to work with him!!
 - **Re: Welcome by Brian Wojcik** on Oct 08, 2007
There is a good point made here. There are differences in how AT transitions from educational phase to phase depending on the path a student takes. Different agencies have different rules on what qualifies as AT and who assumes the responsibility of funding the AT. What experiences have people had in moving across different educational phases (e.g., high school to post secondary education, early intervention services to K-12 education, etc.) with regards to how AT transitions between those phases?
 - **Re: Welcome by rgriffin** on Oct 16, 2007
I'm sorry that I am so late in responding, I have been on the road since last Monday. It's a big state! Our agency works with all disabilities where a visual impairment is not the primary disability. We work with ages 16 to retirement, although we may have some cases started between 14 and 16 on occasion. We are starting to emphasize working with school to work transition, and that population has common AT needs more in the areas of academics and communication. These are areas not as commonly looked at in vocational rehabilitation of older individuals, where AT is often a specific job accommodation. My challenge is twofold. I need to help our field staff become knowledgeable of possible AT accommodations in the school setting, and I need to help school staff to champion long term use of AT solutions by students rather than to focus on solutions that get the student through graduation. The rough plan is to educate our staff in advocating for sustainable AT accommodations while the student has all of the supports available in the public school setting. I know that this makes herding cats look easy, but we have to start somewhere. This discussion group is giving me a lot of ideas.

- **Re: Welcome by BarbaraBrown** on Oct 08, 2007
I am looking forward to participating in this online institute. I currently work with early childhood special education students in a public school.
- **Re: Welcome by Leanne Grillot** on Oct 08, 2007
I am a Teacher of the Visually Impaired for a small rural district in Florida. Being small, the district has put me in charge of all Hearing Impaired students as well. Discovering that my previous positions in New York and California had trained me well in Assistive Technology I became the Local Assistive Technology Specialists Coordinator as of August of this year.

I am looking forward to this class so that my 'third' hat continues to learn new ways of helping students. Transition for my VI population is much easier due to the Division of Blind Services in all the states I have lived. I am interested in how other disabilities receive their equipment and who pays for what.

I am also looking forward to the ASD discussion since we seem to be having an increase in those numbers in our rural schools, more so than any other disability.

My first worry is going to be reading all of these posts each night! How will this be possible without making the class last hours each night?

Leanne

- **Re: Welcome** by **prodriguez** on Oct 15, 2007
Hi. What is ASD?
 - **Re: Welcome** by **Kelsie Onyango** on Oct 15, 2007
Autism Spectrum Disorder

- **Re: Welcome** by **Sandra Callahan** on Oct 08, 2007
Hi all,
I provide OT services to the Transition program within my Special Ed co-op, SEDOL, in Lake County IL. I am also a member of the AT team. I look forward to giving and gaining info!
Sandra
 - **Re: Welcome** by **teresapinder@yahoo.com** on Oct 08, 2007
A fellow OT!!! By "transition program" do you mean just older students who are leaving the public school(s) or at all age levels??
 - **Re: Welcome** by **Pamela Evans** on Oct 10, 2007
Hello.
I was a teacher for the SEDOL Transition Program for 10 years. Sandra and I worked very closely. The Transition Program is a Community Life Skills program for students who are 18-22. The philosophy is that they complete four years of high school and need more functionally life skills. We serve about 114 students ranging the spectrum of disabilities. We are located in store fronts out in the community. Majority of our students have a "cognitive" disability. We are in the middle of doing training for the Lake County school districts on transition issues.

- **Re: Welcome** by **Jennifer C** on Oct 08, 2007
Thank you. I am really excited about this opportunity to learn more about Assistive Technology.

- **Re: Welcome** by **Paula Rodríguez** on Oct 10, 2007
Hi, I am from Puerto Rico and I work at college level. I want to learn more about transition and how can we make an easier process to those students who will leave the school and assist to a university.

- **Re: Welcome** by **Stephen** on Oct 11, 2007
I am a social worker and I have the pleasure of being a Surrogate educational parent for a child with disabilities. I always seems to be fighting with school systems to include AT for the children I work with. It is my hope that I will learn ways in which I can work the system to get children evaluated and provide AT.
 - **Consideration Issues** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 11, 2007
As I am reading many of these posts, it occurs to me that, almost before we can look at transition and long term planning with AT, there needs to be some discussion about the initial consideration process. Several of the posts have mentioned the need to find ways to work with school systems in order to allow assistive technology to be integrated into a student's program.

What issues are people facing in this process?

- **Re: Consideration Issues** by **HeatherB** on Oct 11, 2007
When we first began asking for an AT device for our daughter, I was not even

sure I knew what I was asking for. I am a certified teacher for general education K-12. This by no means makes me qualified to make decisions or even to teach special education because there are so many specialized concepts to know. AT devices and their uses is one of those concepts. As a parent, I had to go out and research for myself what kind of devices were available, how they might be used, and how much they would cost. I needed to know if insurance would help offset the cost of the device if it was deemed medically necessary and how would we go about the evaluation process. In the meantime, I began to talk with the school district about what they had available for AT devices and how we would get an evaluation done for our daughter so that it could be written into her IEP for her use in her Speech Therapy sessions. It was at this point that her speech therapist at school told me that she did not believe in using AT devices ever because they do not enable communication, but instead become a crutch for students.

I was overwhelmed as a parent at the sheer volume of information to gather, where AT devices, insurance costs, medical necessity, and IEP and school funding were concerned. However, as a parent and my child's number one advocate, I pressed forward and we ended up purchasing the device and the picture system to go on the device, ourselves. Another concern we had was that the device be applicable to her as she outgrew the pictures and began to type or spell or even speak in sentences - so we purchased additional software that would enable the device to do all of this for her as well! Upon returning to the school district, and now a different school in this district, we were told not to send the device to school due to liability issues. At this point, I really was not sure what my rights were as a parent, or even what my child's rights were.

- **Re: Welcome** by **bluejean** on Oct 18, 2007

Hi and thanks to everyone here for their experiences. I am the parent of a 23 year old son with significant CP and I also work at a regional assistive technology center.
Jean Isaacs

- **Hello and Welcome** by **Sean Smith** on Oct 07, 2007

Greetings and Welcome to the Fall Institute on Transition and Technology.

As you can see from our Bios and Introductions, we have varied experiences and perspectives when it comes to transition and technology and actually, assistive technology (AT) in general. We are looking forward to the next couple of weeks and learning about your questions, concerns, experiences, and overall use of AT in the lives of individuals with disabilities.

We thought to get things started we would inquire amongst the participants as to what questions/concerns/issues individuals might have concerning the topic. While we have particular issues we would like to share, we are also very interested in learning about and hopefully addressing concerns from participants. Of course, the structure of the Institute is to have ongoing interaction and questions are always welcome, we thought getting a sense from day one might help us all. So, if you have any particular concerns/questions, we would love to hear from you here in the next day or two as we get started. Thanks and let the Institute begin!

- **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **Bruce Kennedy** on Oct 08, 2007

It was difficult to simply choose a place to jump in and say hello. So here it is!! I have spent the past 14 years as a Rehabilitation Counselor in Northern rural Arizona and many of my clients were moving from high school to the world of employment either through direct job placement, vocational training or post-secondary education. So "transition" happened for my folks generally after high school was over. I worked with a number of individuals who required AT in various forms on the scale from light to high tech.

I have recently moved from the Rehabilitation Svcs. Administration to the Dept. of Education (now employed as an AT-Specialist)

What I am most interested in knowing about is how the local education agencies are working with their state education departments in building capacity within the local schools and districts to increase capacity among staff to consider and implement AT.

And....how are the local education agencies at the high school level coordinating with "voc-rehab" to assist in the transition of kids from school to "post-high school" and what is Voc Rehab doing to support that transition?

Looking forward to hearing from everyone.

- **Re: Hello and Welcome by Marc Sherman** on Oct 08, 2007

Bruce...I am a Social Worker & Independent Living Advocate for IRCIL (Indianapolis Resource Center for Independent Living). I serve a total of 9 counties in central Indiana. I am also a C5-C6 Quadriplegic from an automobile accident I had in 1995. I do not have enough knowledge or experience with education agencies. However, I do have some experience with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) in Indiana.

VR provided much assistance for me. When I got out of the hospital in 1995, VR funded and found the resources for me to have a wheelchair lift installed in my van, ramps, automatic door openers, roll-in shower, assessable door hands and faucets in my home, tuition for my BSW, and wheelchair transportation to and from my home to Indiana University when I attended there. Once I graduated, VR purchased an assessable computer with Dragon Naturally Speaking 8.0 (voice-activated typing program which I am currently using) and they assisted with finding me my current job. If I needed any vocational training, they were more than willing to provide the services. I am in the process of developing the funds to purchase a new van, since my current van is 14 years old. After I make the purchase, VR will fund the required AT (wheelchair lift and hand control devices) for me to drive. VR will also pay for the training necessary for me to use the new driving AT. All of this was provided for me to transition independently into the work force. I am extremely thankful for all the services that VR has rendered. If you visit <http://www.in.gov/fssa/> then you will be able to see a more in depth view of what VR will do in Indiana. Also, if you visit <http://www.de.state.az.us/rsa/vr.asp> then you will be able to read what VR will do in your state, Arizona. Please let me know if any of this helps.

Marc

- **Re: Hello and Welcome by johnsongw** on Oct 09, 2007

Hi Marc,

Thanks for telling the story behind your successes. I'm sure you personally contributed a lot to the equation. VR does an incredible job but it still comes back to personal initiative and vision and mentoring. If I had a similar disability I'd want you for my counselor/mentor.

- **Re: Hello and Welcome by Marc Sherman** on Oct 10, 2007

John,

I appreciate the compliment. However, with my position as an independent living advocate I aid, empower, advocate and transition any and all disabilities. I do not single my efforts toward people with a SCI. Yes...VR definitely will do an incredible job...but only if you advocate for yourself or have an awesome counselor. I have personally and professional witnessed VR not working up to its potential.

- **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **johnsongw** on Oct 09, 2007
Hi Marc,
Thanks for telling the story behind your successes. I'm sure you personally contributed a lot to the equation. VR does an incredible job but it still comes back to personal initiative and vision and mentoring. If I had a similar disability I'd want you for my counselor/mentor.
- **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **Bruce Kennedy** on Oct 11, 2007
Hey Marc,
Thanks for the response and explaining your particular situation as well as the links to VR sites. I was a VR counselor for 14 years before taking my current job as an AT Spec. with the AZ Dept. of Ed., so I'm familiar with VR services in Arizona. I'm more interested in knowing what VR is doing with high school kids in other states to move those kids out of school and in to the world of work.

I'm glad that VR was a big help for you, and you obviously must be employed, and it sounds like your're doing great.

- **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 09, 2007
Bruce,

Thanks for the thoughtful questions and the excellent introduction. I am currently facilitating a statewide project here in the state of KS on AT for the preK-12 so have several thoughts on this topic and will share along with Joan and Brian shortly. Again, thanks for the questions and trust things are beginning to cool off in AZ.

Sean

- **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **Anne Z** on Oct 08, 2007
I am a school-based occupational therapist who works with PreK-21. Some of the students I work with will be transitioning to post secondary education. I begin training students to use assistive technology pertaining to written work. My concern is how to teach students to advocate for themselves. (i.e. understand that in post secondary education settings they will need to be able to explain their disability to their post secondary education teachers and ask for the assistive technology they need.)
 - **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **teresapinder@yahoo.com** on Oct 08, 2007
I agree that self advocacy is one, if not the most, important issue. Being able to advocate for your self = independence.
 - **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **Carol** on Oct 08, 2007
Welcome, I am an occupational therapist working k-21 in rural Minnesota. We have used AT for some time, but are striving for new AT tools to meet the new employment needs of our transitioning high schoolers. I look forward to reading what others have tried and what new tools are being found useful.
 - **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 09, 2007
Thanks Carol,

Joan, of course, would be a great contact for you there in MN. I wonder what types of challenges are you seeing in way of job skill development, community-based adaptive skills, and the like specific to the students you are working with? How are you currently considering AT for the students on your case load? Just curious.

Sean

- **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **cdavis@austin.k12.mn.us** on Oct 09, 2007
One of our greatest challenges is expanding the job opportunities beyond packaging and shredding. Skill development is significantly challenged when the student is not interested in these jobs. We have recently developed a new program for our 18-21 year old population. I anticipate (hope) this will increase community awareness and opportunities. AT needs have been identified primarily through observations and then trial and error. We are beginning to explore a more standardized evaluation tool and using data to assist with AT decision making.

Carol

- **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **johnsongw** on Oct 09, 2007
What's your population being exposed to for employment opportunities? Job carving and self employment resources abound.
- **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 08, 2007
Ann- thanks for raising an important point. Brian, Sean and I do plan to talk about this, as it is a big concern for students in the "Big T!" Research has shown that students entering post secondary education are not able to talk about their disability, and do not know what they used as an accommodation in high school, and their ability to be an effective self advocate is poor. We will talk about some strategies to support students to improve this outcome.
I will look forward to hearing your thoughts as we get to this.
- **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **Carol Allen** on Oct 08, 2007
Great, this is a definite need at the community college where I work.
Carol Allen
 - **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 09, 2007
Carol,

Thanks for the thought. I am wondering does your college has an Office for Disability Services? Or, who coordinates the Section 504 requirements for your institution? Also, what state are you in?

Thanks for answering these questions. I have a few ideas based on what you share. - Sean
 - **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **prodriguez** on Oct 15, 2007
What dos section 504 says?
- **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **amber** on Oct 08, 2007
I agree, I teach special ed in the high school setting and have found my students are not effective self advocates. We are working on improving this. It would be great to get some ideas
 - **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 09, 2007
Great, I'd also suggest visiting the Transition Coalition at (<http://www.transitioncoalition.org>) for some general self-advocacy ideas as we get started with the AT consideration and related discussion. Good information there o the process as well as suggestions for self-advocacy. - Sean

- **Re: Hello and Welcome by prodriguez** on Oct 15, 2007
Wonderful! I need that information. I want my university to be friendly with students with disabilities.

- **Re: Hello and Welcome by Kimberly Fields** on Oct 08, 2007
I work in the post secondary environment training SPED teachers, after having worked with high school students with disabilities. Many students, nor teachers, realize the big change expected of students regarding advocating for their own rights when they enter a college or technical school. Also, many are delusional about the "transition" from IDEA to ADA and the implications for the student's accommodations.

You are right on target with your concern.

- **Re: Hello and Welcome by Sean J Smith** on Oct 09, 2007
Kimberley,

Thanks for the thoughts. I'm curious, what type of coursework do your students receive related to transition preparation at the graduate or undergraduate area? I ask because it seems most (if not all states) do not require this as a area of concentration. I know my colleague Mary Morningstar here at the University of KS works with a number of states on transition issues because we don't have enough program supports out there for preparation. I've shared the <http://www.transitioncoalition.org> with several respondents and wonder if you have used these modules in your teaching? There are several modules that allow for independent learning for current teachers, related service providers, and well as those preparing for the field.
- Sean

- **Re: Hello and Welcome by Sean J Smith** on Oct 09, 2007
Anne,

Thanks for the introduction and the topic. Yes, self-advocacy is a critical issue and self-determination at this step in one's development is critical. As we get started with some of the AT issues, I'd urge you to visit the [transitioncoalition.org](http://www.transitioncoalition.org) website. This website offers modules as well as some wonderful general information about transition, tips to know, and issues (with suggested strategies to use) relevant to the transition process. It is not AT specific but might be a wonderful resources for Mom and Dad, the rest of the Team, and the student you are working with. - Sean

- **Re: Hello and Welcome by prodriguez** on Oct 15, 2007
Hello. What you think that I have to do in my university to be ready to receive this students?

- **Re: Hello and Welcome by Dawn Bly-MN** on Oct 08, 2007
Hello- I work part-time for Arc Headwaters and seem to be taking a role in AT. As an area coordinator for the 11 counties we serve I will be able to make suggestions at IEP/IFSP/IIP meetings as well as do trainings about AT and transition. I am excited to learn from everyone and hope I have something to offer. Thanks and I ready for the opportunity.
- **Re: Hello and Welcome by mmoore** on Oct 09, 2007
I am very interested in using AT to provide age appropriate transition assessments to develop postsecondary goals.

Thanks.

- **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **mmoore** on Oct 09, 2007
i hope to learn more about using AT with students who have TBI.
 - **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **prodriguez** on Oct 15, 2007
What is TBI?
 - **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **Kelsie Onyango** on Oct 15, 2007
Traumatic Brain Injury
 - **Re: Hello and Welcome** by **tanton** on Oct 13, 2007
I provide unpaid work experiences and community based instruction for students with various disabilities. I would like to learn more about experiences people with disabilities have had after transitioning into the work place and the assisted technology used to solve their barriers.
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- **Classroom Procedures and Transitions** by **LuAnn M** on Oct 08, 2007

Hi everyone,

Like all of you, I am excited to learn more of what your successes are and where you or your students struggle. I know, someone always has a wealth of information that can be used to support both students and staff.

I work with high school students with intellectual disabilities. Like every year I have a great group of students. We have been busy but now we can stop to take a look at our instruction and our learning.

My students really struggle with classroom procedures being different in each of the classes they attend as well as the part of the lesson where we are stopping one activity and moving to the next, especially with our students using any assistive technology or require a variety of supports.

The other question I have is do you have AT devices/supports in all classes or do students carry what they use. With our group it can be a problem carrying everything that is needed.

I welcome all of your ideas. Thank you for the support. Have a great day.

- **Occupational Therapy Student** by **Summer44** on Oct 08, 2007

Hello, my name is Summer and I am a first year student in the masters program at the University of Pittsburgh, PA. I'm a Special Olympics volunteer and I also volunteer at Clelian Heights which is a school for people ages (2-21) who are mentally challenged. Ever since my experience with these children, I have been interested in becoming an occupational therapist in a school setting or outpatient setting working with children who are mentally challenged and/or have learning or developmental disabilities. In class, we have started to learn about adaptive technology, but I am interested to learn more here!

- **Welcome and Transitions** by **JPittard** on Oct 08, 2007

My name is Judy Pittard and after 19 years with the school system, much of it as their Assistive Technology Coordinator, I am back working with children birth to three years of age. My big "T" is having equipment in place as they go to the school system. Recent changes in North Carolina funding will change the way equipment can be ordered when state funds are used. We can no longer authorize equipment that children will 'grow into' but it must be equipment that can be functionally used during their Infant-Toddler time. For some, this is a big change and is affecting

when referrals can be made and completed. I look forward to learning more about transitions at all ages. Judy

- **Re: Welcome and Transitions** by **amber** on Oct 08, 2007
That sounds difficult to be able to do, they grow so fast, by the time you get the equipment they must be ready for the next level
- **Re: Welcome and Transitions** by **debbied** on Oct 08, 2007
My name is Debbie Drennan, and I am an AT Specialist working for a non-profit agency (Parents Helping Parents iTech Center in California). I work with our TIP program (Technology for Infants and Preschoolers), and I am concerned, because most of our referrals come when the kids are just about ready to enter the school system (2 1/2 y/o). For me, this seems a bit late, especially when you are working with children who are non-verbal. Many of the families of the kids we see have not had any training in communication strategies/tools. The other concern I have for this age group is when they do transition to the school, suddenly the schools become the payor, and if a tool is not determined to be educationally necessary, it is not covered (ie, a switch for a light which provides environmental access. I'm curious how others have worked the systems in their states for a smooth transition, and earlier use of AT.

- **Re: Welcome and Transitions** by **marie** on Oct 20, 2007

Hi Debbie,

I was a parent of a child with severe disabilities who also received services from similar agencies in our state when he was preschool age. Also, later on after he passed away I began working at a non-profit agency providing services to individuals of the same age group.

My son was non-verbal and many of the kids I worked with were also non-verbal. One thing to keep in mind, is that there's some form of communication already established between these children and their families when they are referred to your agency. I found that as a service provider, the main object of my goal in providing communication strategies/tools originated in identifying the existing form of communication (whether it be gestures, eye-contact, body movement or whatever) and matching the "skills" involved to a communication device. Sometimes...easier said than done, but still I felt it was good to have as a main goal. I tried to be knowledgeable about what skills, both physical and developmental, were needed for each communication device to be used and watched for potential signs from the client that indicated they could use a particular device and with training could become very successful.

I understand also that justifying an environmental access device through educational funding can be tough. As a parent, I had it written into his IEP that I wanted ECUs (and switch-operated toys) for the purpose of developing skills needed for future communication devices. Those skills being: ability to hit a switch (or target), understanding and developing timing skills, understanding cause and effect, etc. As a service provider, you could also justify their use with the same purposes.

Both as a parent and service provider, I tried to build on any skills that were already evident and also tried to foster new skills.

Hope this helps.

-
- **Hello** by **srg11** on Oct 08, 2007
Hello I am srg11. I am currently a student at the University of Pittsburgh. I am going for my Masters in occupational therapy and I am interested in learning more about AT and autism. I am

currently interning at an outpatient clinic that sees many children with autism. I am really interested and I am excited to learn more.

- **Re: Hello by Bridget** on Oct 08, 2007
Hi everyone! I spent the past three years as a therapist for children with autism outside of Pittsburgh, PA. I am now the Children's Services Manager for United Cerebral Palsy Land of Lincoln in Springfield, IL. We have an AT program where we loan out materials such as computers and software for families to try out. I am new to AT and appreciate anything I can get from this course!
-

- **Hello by ML** on Oct 08, 2007
Hi, I am a special educator as well as an AT Specialist. AT is so new to our town that it is overwhelming to be called in to do an AT evaluation when you are just given a name and the direction "___ needs an AT eval.". There is no knowledge of referral questions and such - so, I have a lot of leg work to do. However, I'm up for the challenge (with a lot of help along the way!). My first challenge is that we have numerous children on the autism spectrum referred to me to determine how AT can help them access their curriculum in their upper elementary classrooms. Our challenge is the lack of hardware at this time - some classrooms do not have computers in them. Staff also have limited experience with software that is out today - so, my hope through this experience is to narrow down how I can quickly help our staff to begin to incorporate universal design in their classrooms and meet the needs of our children on the autism spectrum. The second part of my hope is I do have a few children on the severe end of autism that need basic recommendations, but again the challenges of limited hardware (computers) and teacher experience are present. Looking forward to this experience! ML

- **Re: Hello by Jackie Hess [SI Faculty]** on Oct 08, 2007
ML,

Thanks for your post. I've taken the liberty of adding it to the discussion strand on autism. You should look at that strand for responses as well.

Jackie

- **Hello by robinp** on Oct 08, 2007
Goodness! I had no idea there would be so many people taking this course. I am a high school special education teacher in a rural district in northern Idaho. I have been teaching for 30 years but generally have students with mild to moderate learning disabilities. I am looking forward to learning more about creative assistive technology and also learning from others in my field. This is my first post so hope it gets through.
-

- **Hello by Carol Allen** on Oct 08, 2007
I am Carol Allen. I have worked with GED and Basic Skills students for the past 20 years. We have so many students who have learning difficulties, but no documentation to support accommodations.

Currently I am the Career Readiness Certification Director at a community college. I work closely with employers who hire individuals with a High School diploma or GED. We provide some basic skills training, computer, math, reading, locating information, etc.

I have a special interest in AT for these individuals. I am currently enrolled in AT certification classes.

I look forward to learning much from each of you.

Carol

- **Re: Hello by amber** on Oct 08, 2007
I also teach GED and basic life skills classes. We in this district are currently on an alternative certificate from high school. There is no alternative certificate in South Carolina. I would be interested to hear about the Career Readiness Certification you have.
-

- **Hello by vicki** on Oct 08, 2007
Hi everyone. I am a special education teacher in a rural district in northcentral MN. I have a wide variety of students on my caseload. I have students using AT for communication as well as some using it as a tool for learning. I am looking forward to learning more on the subject. I want to thank the AT Institute for hosting this discussion. I learned a lot from last year's discussion.
-

- **Hello! by teresapinder@yahoo.com** on Oct 08, 2007
It took me a while to get to the bottom of the page!!! I worked in a school district as an OT for 20 years, 12 as part of a AT team. The last three years as an AT Specialist in 7 small and rural districts as part of a state grant. I have the privilege of being directed to those students who need access (AT) to communication, classroom curriculum, self care, etc.... and assisting the classroom staff, district administrators in whatever it takes for these students to learn. I have worked with all age levels and across all areas of disability. There are several students I began K5 with and they now hold college degrees, are full time employment, but mostly they are now friends!!! AT is a life long process which includes learning new skills and facing different challenges along the way just like any other life skill.
-

- **Hello by KathyOT** on Oct 08, 2007
Hi, I am a COTA who has worked in the public schools for 15+ years. My position is now evolving into OT/AT, half time in each. Our concern with transition is currently with the year to year transition of students using devices. We find that some times if a teacher does not "buy into" the need of the device, it is not fully implemented. Do we do more training, teach self advocacy skills, or.... I am looking forward to getting to know all of you! Kathy
 - **Re: Hello by rgriffin** on Oct 08, 2007
Advocacy is the way to go. Without support, the chances of having an AT plan continue after school go way down. Some teachers are tough though.....
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- **Hello by sellis** on Oct 08, 2007
I am currently teaching elementary students with multiple disabilities in a small Southwest Virginia city system. In addition to teaching duties, I am a member of the LEA Assistive Technology Team. This team was formed last year and we are still in the infancy stage. It is my desire to use information from this Institute to enhance my skills as the team addresses the AT needs of students. (I am also scheduled to teach a college class, within the coming year, on transition to aspiring special education teachers. Will be looking for resources/information to use as I teach this class).
-

- **hello by pmills** on Oct 08, 2007
Hi, I am an adapted physical education teacher in a large district in Dublin, OH. I am becoming more and more interested in how every adaptation made to help students access equipment, games, classes, etc. is considered AT. I want to learn how to increase my understanding of AT and how it relates to physical education accessibility. Can't wait to learn more!
-

- **Hi everyone by damaelisa** on Oct 08, 2007
My name is Damaris Sanchez, I am an OT and AT Specialist working for the Puerto Rico Department of Education, Special Education Program. I have a wide variety of students referred to me to determine how AT can help them access their curriculum in their classrooms. My goal is to improve my knowledge from this course and learn more from your experiences.
-

- **Hello and Welcome! by bwwojci** on Oct 08, 2007
I add to the welcome comments from Jackie, Joan, and Sean. I look forward to sharing perspectives, investigating questions together and exploring this topic. Let's get started!
-

- **Hello by Sharon** on Oct 08, 2007
I am teaching special ed in a very small rural school, with limited resources. I teach students mainly identified as mildly learning disabled, and feel very out of touch with AT. I am hoping to gain great new insight and knowledge on the subject!
 - **Re: Hello by nyles@pbc-sc.net** on Oct 08, 2007
My name is Natasha Lyles and I am the founder and president of Parents of Bipolar Children in South Carolina. Through PBC I work as a parent partner for the members with special education. I started studying the field of AT for three reasons. My son in addition to having an affective disorder also has a written expression learning disability, I needed to further my knowledge of AT in order to help other parents, and I have a mother who is a quadriplegic. It is my hope to be able to utilize the information from this institute to help me personally as well as help me assist the families I serve.
 - **Re: Hello by Marc Sherman** on Oct 08, 2007
Hi Natasha! My name is Marc Sherman. I am a social worker for IRCIL in Indianapolis and I am also a quadriplegic. If you do not mind, may I boldly ask a few questions? How did your mother get her SCI? How long has she been a quadriplegic? Is she employed? Does she drive? What sort of adaptations and AT does she use? How did she obtain her adaptations, who funded them, and what resources might she have?

By the way, I applaud you for founding PBS in SC. Also, there is a computer program called Dragon Naturally Speaking that can write as you speak into a headset microphone. I am not sure what your son's capabilities are, but maybe this program could assist him with writing his expressions. Since my hands are paralyzed, I use this program on a daily basis at my job and for personal use. If you would like to learn more about me, I invite you to visit my personal website at <http://www.marc-carey.com>.

Marc

- **Re: Hello by nyles** on Oct 09, 2007
My mother was in an accident that involved a three wheel motorcycle. It hit a bump in the road and started shimmying, then through her off into a barbwire fence. Her head hit the fence post. The accident did not break her neck, but

pulled her nerves loose from the spinal column. She is a C6-C7 quad. She has been a quadriplegic for 27 years now. I was three when she had her accident, so I do not remember her walking. She is not employed, she was always told that it would not be feasible for her to go to work, even though she is a higher functioning quad. She does drive. Her van is equipped with hand controls, zero effort braking and steering, and of course a lift. She drives from her wheel chair so it also has an easy lock. She has chamber lift which helps her aid in getting her up. She also has an electronic door opener on the house door so that she can get in and out of the house. Oh! she does have a power chair. SC has a head and spinal cord medicaid waiver which has paid for most (<http://www.state.sc.us/ddsn/hsci/hsci.htm>) . This paid for the van adaptation, PCA, etc

I started looking at other devices she could use when I started researching AT for my son. The problem with my mother on a lot of things is that she is not from the computer generation and I think the thought of learning something new at this point in her life seems pointless. I am slowly working on this with her.

I have been looking into Dragon Naturally Speaking, I am having a hard time convincing the school that this can be used in a school setting. I have done some research and another school in our area is not just using it in the school setting but they are also using it with the written portion of the MAP test.

- **Re: Hello** by **Marc Sherman** on Oct 10, 2007
Natasha,

Thank you for willingly sharing about your mother. I find it extremely disheartening your mom has been told she would not be an asset so-to-speak in the work force. When being told such a thing, it could either weaken a person's drive to achieve goals or inspire the person to prove such a reply wrong by going above and beyond what is expected. Regardless, it is "never" to late to teach an old dog new tricks. I do not know what your relationship is like with your mother but I encourage you to continue encouraging your mother toward more independence.

As for the MAP test, what type of test is this? Is it for your son? How successful are people accepting the use of Dragon Naturally Speaking? Even though I am rather partial, I highly recommend this program's use. Depending on how frequently it is used, in approximately 3-6 months a person's voice is practically understood and there less mistakes to correct. I have been using it for about 4 years.

Marc ><>

- **Re: Hello** by **nlyles@pbc-sc.net** on Oct 11, 2007
MAP is the testing that SC schools use to measure student growth. Our school district is not using Dragon Naturally Speaking yet. They are looking into it. I am hoping to learn more about how this program is working with students and the regular education setting. It is very helpful to know that you have been using for four years with success.

Thank you

- **Re: Hello by prodriguez** on Oct 15, 2007
Keep in mind that Dragon Naturally also allow students to control the computer and programs. It is a wonderful tool for computer acces.
 - **Re: Hello by Brian Wojcik** on Oct 08, 2007
A large part of my career has been working in the rural areas. I can completely relate to your position and feeling of being disconnected. The rural aspect of AT service delivery with respect to transition poses some interesting challenges that we can explore in the days ahead.
-

- **Self-Advocacy by Jackie Hess [SI Faculty]** on Oct 08, 2007
Self-advocacy is one of those topics that always comes up (and should). During our last AT Institute I posted the following excerpt from an advocacy guide written by Dr. Scott Crouse and made available through ldpride.net. While it was written specifically for students with learning disabilities, it has widespread applicability. Here it is again:

Ten steps to becoming an effective self-advocate:

Step 1: Accept your disability:

Before you can advocate for yourself, you have to admit to yourself that you really do have a learning disability. You aren't dumb. You aren't lazy. You have probably worked very hard to hide your learning problems (even from yourself). Now is the time to admit to yourself that you have some difficulties and may need some special help in order to be successful.

Step 2: Admit your disability to others:

You cannot be a successful self-advocate if you continue to hide your difficulties from others. Naturally, you can't expect teachers to provide appropriate accommodations if they don't know about your disability. But it is just as important to be able to admit your difficulties to your friends. When you can really be honest about your learning disability, you will find that you no longer feel so ashamed and embarrassed about your learning difficulties. You will be able to relax a bit more in school and spend more energy learning than hiding.

Step 3: Understand your learning style:

Hopefully, you now have a pretty good understanding of how your brain works and how your processing difficulty interferes with your education. School psychologists and teachers can offer you some ideas that they have about your learning disability, but only you can decide what makes the most sense to you. If the ideas offered in this course don't make sense, ask for help in understanding better. Or ask for other ideas about information processing that might "fit" you better. If you don't understand how you learn, you can't ask for accommodations that you really need.

Step 4: Realize how "other issues" might interfere with your self-advocacy:

You have learned about the common effects of a learning disability including low self-esteem, communication difficulties, and attention problems. Think about how these issues might interfere with your ability to advocate for yourself. Are you too shy and withdrawn to ask for help? Do you get angry and aggressive when embarrassed or frustrated? Are you able to communicate your needs or do you need to ask someone (teacher, parent, friend) to help you ask for accommodations? Are you impulsive and tend to say or do things that you latter regret? As with your learning disability, you need to be open and honest about any of these related problems before you can be an effective self-advocate.

Step 5: Know what you need:

Do the accommodations listed in this course meet all of your possible needs? Which ones do you think will be the most useful for you? Can you think of other accommodations that may be better? It is not possible to anticipate all of the needs which your learning disability will cause for you. You will need to constantly rethink the accommodations and possibly come up with some ideas of your own.

Step 6: Anticipate your needs in each class:

Don't wait until the final exam to start thinking about accommodations. Right from the start of each class you should be thinking about how you might be able to learn the material better. Maybe the teacher has a style that confuses you. Maybe there are too many distractions in the room. Maybe assignments aren't presented clearly. Begin talking with your teachers about accommodations as early as possible.

Step 7: Know your rights and responsibilities:

You have learned about your legal rights to an appropriate education and appropriate accommodations to meet your needs. But are you really prepared to argue your rights with a teacher that may be "reluctant" to provide appropriate accommodations? Do you know where to turn for support when your needs are not being met? And remember, accommodations are intended to counteract the negative effects of your learning disability, not just make school easy for you. Don't take advantage of your right to accommodations by requesting things you don't really "need".

Step 8: Be willing to compromise:

Some teachers will bend over backwards to "accommodate" for your special learning needs. Others will be less "flexible". Be ready to compromise in order to get at least some accommodation. You may also need to "prove" to some teachers that you really need help and are not just being "lazy". Maybe make a "deal" or "contract" with a teacher. If you do this, be sure to follow-through with everything you have agreed to do. This helps to build trust.

Step 9: Know where to go for support:

Sometimes even an effective self-advocate needs support. Maybe to help with a "difficult" teacher. Maybe to provide advice when you get "stuck". Or maybe just so you don't feel isolated and alone. Find someone who understands your learning disability and can provide support (or can even advocate for you) when needed.

Step 10: Plan for the future:

Many LD students just try to survive one day at a time and don't think too much about long-term goals. But to really advocate for yourself you need to think about where you want to be in one, two, five, or ten years. What kind of work do you want to do after your education? Do you want to go to college? When you have a very clear plan for the future, you will be better able to see the reason for your education today.

- o **Re: Self-Advocacy by Jackie Hess [SI Faculty]** on Oct 08, 2007
I've taken the liberty of re-printing the following posts on self-advocacy from a participant in last year's Institute. Talk about success!

Self-Advocacy by Jeanne S. on Dec 15, 2006

My daughter has a disability and the single most important goal we had on her IEP was "self-advocacy". At first there was concern about making it an "IEP" goal since it did not seem to fit in with any curriculum standards - but once everyone bought into to, it worked.

By the time my daughter was a senior in high school, she was solely responsible for making sure all parts of the IEP team were providing her with what was agreed upon. She knew who to contact when computer software failed, when books on tape did not arrive in a timely manner, etc. At first it seemed like too big of a responsibility to put on her shoulders, after all we had people in the school district paid to coordinate this stuff - but it was well worth it. She is now a sophomore living on campus at Kent State University and easily handles (relatively speaking) the challenges of getting her needs met. She is not intimidated by professors (well most professors!) deals with scheduling repairs for her power wheelchair, and works with Student Accessibility Services to make sure all technology is in place for the next semester. Knowing her needs are met frees me up to advocate for others! I frequently work with parents who say "that's the school's job" or "my child can't do that". Right now one of my "advocacy" projects is getting some type of a program for students on IEPs to address their self-advocacy needs. Wish me luck!

Re: Self-Advocacy by Jeanne S. on Dec 15, 2006

One thing we started early on with my daughter is having her attend EVERY IEP (yep - she was sitting there in kindergarten - thought it was a party just for her!) I am hoping that I modeled some form of "effective advocacy" each and every time we met. Usually problem issues were discussed and resolved long before we sat down at the table (although not always) - so what she saw was people collaboratively working together for her. I think this helped make her feel comfortable and not worry that every request was going to be met with a "fight". As she got older (in middle and high school) I would often involve her in some aspect of an issue that had become "heated" and explain when I would use a letter, versus a phone call, versus a personal visit - and how to decide that something simply "was not worth fighting about." She is a quiet kid and likes to avoid conflict - and I used to worry about her (still do!) - but she continues to impress me. So bottom line - start early with self-advocacy, build in some successes, have high expectations, and grit your teeth and let them do it even when your instinct is to jump in and fight for them. - (isn't this how we teach a student most things?)

- **Re: Self-Advocacy by Sara Mobley** on Oct 08, 2007

I am a 5th and 6th grade special education inclusion teacher. I fully agree that students need to be involved in their IEP planning and meeting. I think it is beneficial to sit down with the student and discuss possible goals. This gives me an idea of what they are seeing as their strengths and weaknesses. It is amazing how much insight a student can share with you when you just sit down and talk with them about school and their future!

I also love self-advocacy in students. I especially love it when a student is advocating for things that will lead to a more independent life rather than dependency. I agree that parents modeling advocacy is the first step to a student being advocates for themselves.

- **Re: Self-Advocacy by anitaswan** on Oct 18, 2007

I am the Parent Educator Coordinator for a Parent Resource Center in a school division. I strongly agree that "parents modeling advocacy is the first step to a student being advocates for themselves." When I present workshops for parents, I used the Self-Advocacy steps discussed here, but I geared them to steps for parents/family members learning how to advocate for their children/family members. It is so important that we have informed parents who can be effective and successful members of the planning process for children. When the students participate along with their parents, the students feel more empowered to speak up for themselves, and share in the planning of their programs.

- **Re: Self-Advocacy by Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 08, 2007

These are powerful posts, Jackie. Thanks for sharing.

Let's tackle self advocacy right off the bat, since this is a big stream in our conversation.

Jackie shared some stories of effective strategies to help students become effective self advocates. One was a story about a child starting in kindergarten- what a great strategy! One of the things we have learned is that students entering college or work after high school do not know what they need- or even are able to explain why they need it. In the K-12 setting- and for the sake of discussion, let's assume it works- the IEP team plans for, and the school staff implements the plan to meet the student's needs. Once s/he graduates, there are no protections from IDEA to support that student. No one will look for the student and identify what he needs. The student needs to go to the employer or the student support office, and declare his/her disability and BE ABLE to describe what is needed to have access to education. The protections of IDEA are gone, and ADA becomes the legislation that drives the process. But, most educators in higher ed or employers are not knowledgeable about being proactive in meeting needs.

When do we begin to support a student in becoming a self advocate? What should a student be able to say about his or her needs? When does the student begin talking for himself about his needs? And- without practice, how can he go out into that big world to fend for himself?

I have had that "grit your teeth and let them do it" moment time after time with my own children. I know it is necessary, yet it is frightening. How much harder when the student faces the additional challenges of disabilities?

In MN, we have proposed that students need to be active and aggressive self advocates in learning how to talk about their disability, and about their use of assistive technology. I will share some resources that we have developed later this week.

First, I want to link you to the Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative (<http://wati.org/products/freematerials.html>) They have a great, student friendly guide to using assistive technology called "Hey- Can I Try That?" (also available in Spanish) that gives a student a voice in talking about AT.

I would love to hear some feedback on that resource, and then we will look at others.

Thanks for a VERY busy first day of the institute!

- **Re: Self-Advocacy by Carol Leynse Harpold** on Oct 08, 2007
Joan, I have used "Hey! Can I Try That?" with some high school students and it has been a successful resource to use with them, again some students seem to engage and make choices with that process and then some do not. How early, at what age/grade is this recommended to be used? Perhaps we are not using the tool early enough for those students who need more time for reflecting, trialing and processing these issues. Another method of identifying tools perhaps more than advocacy is through the use of "Personal Choices" which focuses on low and mid tech tools, published from Onion Mountain Technology, Inc (I believe it is from their website for free). It covers many aspects of customizing features of technology for student success.

- **Re: Self-Advocacy by Sean J Smith** on Oct 09, 2007
Carol,

Thanks for the suggestions. Another couple of resources for consideration are:

GPAT - <http://www.gpat.org/> - GA Project on AT
TX - <http://www.texasat.net> - TX AT Network

GPAT has some great consideration resources while TX has created some wonderful modules, in collaboration with AT experts from across the country, that deal with a number of the issues we have been sharing.

- **Re: Self-Advocacy** by **HeatherB** on Oct 08, 2007

I really enjoyed looking through the AT guide "Hey- Can I Try That?" I wish that when we were purchasing all of the components for our daughter's device a couple of years ago, someone had pointed me in the direction of the parent portion of this guide! I do think they need to make a guide that is useful for those of us who are searching for AT devices for our young children!

As for when students begin to have a voice in talking about AT, for us, it began with our daughter attending every IFSP and IEP, from the moment she was born! But I knew we needed a better form of communication when she began screaming, crying, and having tantrums everyday at school (which was her favorite place to go!) She began to hate going to school, refusing to get up, get dressed, and get on the bus in the mornings. It did not take too much for me to put two and two together and figure out that just because I could anticipate her needs and desires at home, that was not happening at school and she was frustrated. Something needed to change fast and she was letting us know in the only way she knew how! Talk about having a voice in asking for AT! I am grieved that it took taking her to extreme frustration to receive the AT device! I wish less verbal children had a better way of voicing their need for AT, or is it that maybe we as adults need to be better at listening!

- **Re: Self-Advocacy** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 09, 2007

I remember the seminal moment in my life when I realized that behavior was communication- and how it FINALLY allowed me to honor the communicative intent. It also lessened the behavior. I had a client in a group home where I worked who would scream and cry when directed to perform a certain task. I rigged up a communication device (this was REALLY a long time ago) using an Apple][computer, an Echo speech device and a Dunamis PowerPad. One of the messages would say- "Not now- I am busy." The staff agreed to honor her vocalizing through the device. She deferred the task till she was ready, and behaviors dropped extensively. That was what got me really HOOKED on AT. So- point to a long story- we need to be aware of our role in honoring communication, and in giving our students, children, family members or clients a chance to be effective communicators. Technology is one strategy that will do that. My concern is that we still do not have enough awareness across the country about how important this is. This is a big challenge!

- **Re: Self-Advocacy** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 09, 2007

Joan and others,

I was just out in Garden City, KS with 80 plus educators and many paraprofessionals, related service folks, and teachers were talking about behavior issues. As we discussed and shared, almost each behavior issue appear to have a connection with communication challenges. While the day-to-day grind often limits our ability to reflect, when we get that

chance it often allows us to connect the dots.

For example, my son has Down syndrome and as a result has communication issues. While he can generally communicate his needs and wants, as the day goes on his energy level is impacted. As his energy level is impacted, his speech is challenged, and his behaviors appear to escalate. In the midst of all this my wife and I are generally frustrated. But when we reflect on the common occurrence of the daily repetitions to this and the related challenges, we put two and two together. Yes, very common sensical (is that a word) and yes, has taken a great deal of work with our team to address these challenges and plan for them in a manner that is effective for the other three siblings as well as the after school activities we are trying to engage him in.

Sean

- **Re:Self-Advocacy** by **prodriguez** on Oct 15, 2007
Communication devices could make a huge difference in people's lives. Sometimes kids turn violent just because they couldn't tell people what they want or think. I want to share this thought with you. "Speech is the most important thing we have. It makes us a person and not a thing. No one should ever have to be a thing."

Dorene Joseph

- **Re: Self-Advocacy** by **amber** on Oct 09, 2007
I agree with encouraging self advocacy early on. The group of high school students I work with are unaware they can speak up at a meeting. I have discussed several times that the meeting is for them and they need to let us (IEP team) know what is going on and what they want. I have found that students have been overlooked in this IEP process. How can we make responsible decisions without input from the most important person?
 - **Re: Self-Advocacy** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 09, 2007
"How can we make responsible decisions without input from the most important person?"

This is an excellent point! I know for many of the students that I worked with when I started teaching, their IEP and the related IEP process were both very disconnected for them. I have used and continue to recommend a resource from NICHCY entitled, "A Student's Guide to the IEP" (<http://www.nichcy.org/stuguid.asp>). This, in combination with the "Hey! Can I Try that?" publication from WATI offer a powerful resource to helping a student understand the process and advocate for his or her needs.
- **Re: Self-Advocacy** by **Pamela Evans** on Oct 10, 2007
I am a mother of son who has a learning disability in writing. I was also a Special Ed teacher and now I have moved on to administration in the area of Transition. My son was not born with a lot of confidence and some sensory issues as well as the above mentioned disability. I have always been very upfront about his struggles. I have explained them to him and we discuss not just the struggle areas but his strengths as well. I have been fortunate to know about Self Determination and have applied that knowledge in regards to my situation. My son, at nine years old, has a very strong sense of himself and is more comfortable and confident than most kids his

age. He is able to articulate his difficulties and explain his disability so that others understand. He never uses it as a "crutch" instead he tries harder to show people that just because something does not come easy it does not mean you give up. Those are the words he uses with the school staff. He is beginning to practice some higher level advocacy skills now. For example, he asked his LD resource teacher if there was any technology that could help him learn better sentence structure, punctuation and grammar. He told her that he felt that because he has difficulty writing he never learned how to end a sentence well.....Pretty impressive aye? His latest question was if he could go and talk to other teachers and explain to them what it is like to have ADHD and a writing disability..... It is a work in progress but he is amazing!

- **Re: Self-Advocacy by Brian Wojcik** on Oct 11, 2007

It is wonderful that your son is able to speak about his disability and advocate for himself! Those are skills that help him throughout his life.

What do you think has helped him develop these skills?

- **Re: Self-Advocacy by Pamela Evans** on Oct 11, 2007

I think just being open and accepting about disabilities in general. I ask him questions and we talk. We have what we call "safety zones" and that means he can ask questions or tell me things without judgment or consequence and in confidence(unless he is unsafe). These safety zones have been beneficial because they have elicited some great barrier free conversations. He just asks for one and then we start talking. I figure it will come in handy as he gets older. Also, I don't make a big deal about his disability. I am pretty matter of fact about it and I educate him. We talk about famous and successful people who have disabilities. I explain not cover or excuse. Choices are a part of it to.

He has a great analytical mind and he is very sweet. I'm unbiased of course!!!

I plan with his educational team, how to explain what the outcomes of his meetings are so that he doesn't feel "stupid". We start with the strengths and introduce the areas of concern between conversations of his strengths.

- **Re: Self-Advocacy by Brian Wojcik** on Oct 12, 2007

What a wonderful way to promote the development of self advocacy skills!

- **More self-advocacy tips by Jackie Hess [SI Faculty]** on Oct 08, 2007

Here's an excerpt from an article on self-advocacy by C. Amber Havens, posted on the National Center on Accessibility website, <http://www.ncaonline.org/monographs/14self-advocacy.shtml>. The focus of the article is on recreational settings, but the advice is universal.

"Now that you know your rights as a person who has a disability, here are some ideas to help you achieve your goal of becoming your own advocate and taking charge of your recreational pursuits.

Assert Yourself: This is the hardest part!

- a. Practice what you will say.
- b. Speak clearly
- c. Maintain eye contact

- d. Take your time when talking
- e. Ask for time to think if you need it
- f. Rephrase what you hear to be sure you understand
- g. Be respectful
- h. Be careful of your body language (do you look angry?)
- i. Use I statements (i.e. "I feel that" not "You have to")
- j. Be flexible (you might have to compromise)

Ask For Change: What have you got to lose?

- a. Start at the top. Always talk to someone in charge. This will keep you from having to explain your situation over and over again.
- b. Make clear, specific requests with rationale for the requests
- c. Don't make personal insults, accusations, or get into arguments - Remember you want to make positive change.
- d. Put it in writing (always document your request - you never know when you might need documentation)
- e. Encourage others to join your efforts

Follow-up: Make change happen.

- a. Always follow-up
- b. If action was taken send a Thank-you note
- c. If nothing has changed - contact the appropriate authorities (U.S. Department of Justice) - Remember there are laws in place to protect you!
- d. Make sure and document all contact with the agency or program you are trying to access.
- e. Keep trying!"

o **Re: Self-Advocacy** by **Carol W** on Oct 09, 2007

I work for Vocational Rehabilitation and often meet with students for the first time who are seniors in high school preparing for college.

Most of them are not even aware of accommodations that they are receiving in high school. They cannot identify the problems they have with school or what helps them. I am often relying on their mothers to tell me what they need. It is difficult to advocate for yourself when you are not sure what to ask for.

Maybe if students were involved in advocating for themselves from early on, they would be more aware of their strengths and weaknesses and would be better prepared to discuss their needs.

- **Re: Self-Advocacy** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 09, 2007

AMEN!

- **Re: Self-Advocacy** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 09, 2007

I could not agree more. As a person who worked in postsecondary support services for students with disabilities, I had very similar experiences. Often times, as my role was to facilitate the transition into the postsecondary setting, I would work with the incoming student to read his or her IEP and really note the type of services they were receiving. It was interesting to note that, not only were they unaware of the services that they were receiving, but they were unaware of the reason they were receiving each service. This compounded issues when we started looking at AT needs because the students had difficulty articulating why various AT (that they were using) were necessary. Starting that conversation at a younger age could definitely help!

- **Re: Self-Advocacy** by **Sandra Callahan** on Oct 09, 2007

We recently had two members of our district complete grad courses and the

national test to be a Certified Transition Specialist. This had brought many new and innovative approaches into our Transition department. Self-advocacy is embedded in all we do now, along with new ways to support parents for exiting the program without PANIC!

Pam..can you elaborate more about the LTC process you developed?

Sandra

- **Definition of Long Term Coordination Meeting (LTC) by Pamela Evans on Oct 10, 2007**

LTC stands for Long Term Coordination Meeting. It is a process of creating a relaxed environment where the family, student, educational team, and any other people who are a part of the students support system, meet and "dream", problem solve and create visions for the post-secondary goals. This is the first step in the process of developing a multi-year, transition plan. This process has been extremely beneficial for several reasons. Students and families have the opportunity to talk about their dreams and WE (the educational team)listen. I compare it to the family/student being in the driver seat and the ed team is navigating how to get where they would like to go. This process has diffused some potential problem situations between the families and the ed team. It is a nice way to start the year out with a new student. Again, there is no IEP brought out at this meeting. It is a discussion and problem solving atmosphere. The families have provided some positive feedback in our survey.

- **Re: Definition of Long Term Coordination Meeting (LTC) by sharon on Oct 11, 2007**

I like the idea of the LTC, but when would you begin a process like this? I have trouble even finding time to gather all the necessary people together for an IEP meeting at the same time, due to schedule conflicts, etc., and parents struggle getting off work to make it to those.

- **Re: Definition of Long Term Coordination Meeting (LTC) by Stephen on Oct 11, 2007**

I like This problem solving process ,after these LTC meeting, do you find the IEP process less stressful over all and more productive for the student?

- **Re: Definition of Long Term Coordination Meeting (LTC) by Pamela Evans on Oct 11, 2007**

The IEP meeting is a lot less stressful for everyone and it has a better flow, focus and stronger outcomes. Everyone is "on the same page". We have been able to defuse several situations by the LTC. It also seems to help with getting the families re-invested. The student also becomes more involved in this process.

- **Re: Self-Advocacy by amber on Oct 19, 2007**

I am a special education teacher for high school students. I agree with you some of the high school students are unaware of their accommodations, even when they are present at the IEP meeting when this is discussed. It causes problems in the high school setting when the student is not doing well and the special ed teacher discovers the accomodations have not been followed, the student is unaware the accomodations have not been followed. On another note, however, I have found some special ed students do not want to call attention to themselves therefore do not speak up if accomodations are not being followed.

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- **WOW! Thanks for the Questions and the Posts** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 09, 2007

Hello all,

Thanks everyone for the initial postings and such wonderful questions. I know Brian and Joan have been busy with replies and I will join in as well. Now, please know (and your questions show this) that from your postings we have a variety of topics to cover. Considering the time we have, we hope to sequentially discuss these issues and hopefully build upon the various postings. That way, by the end of the experience we have covered the issues that everyone has provided as well as perspectives we have wanted to share.

Sean

- **Re:WOW! Thanks for the Questions and the Posts** by **mmoore** on Oct 09, 2007
I would also like to learn more about the AT options to be used in employment settings as well as for independent living.

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- **Self-Advocacy** by **Pat M** on Oct 09, 2007

I also work for Voc Rehab and agree with Carol W's comments. In my role as a vocational evaluator, I often recommend learning self-advocacy and accommodations of the Americans with Disabilities Act for students who plan to attend college. The challenge is that there may not be anyone to guide them in developing self-advocacy once they have completed high school. The voc rehab counselor and disability services coordinators at the college have limited time for this.

- **Re: Self-Advocacy** by **suggiano** on Oct 09, 2007
That is why all teachers at every level should be teaching self-advocacy. By the time a student is in college or voc rehab, the skills should all ready be in place. I teach middle school students and require them daily to advocate for themselves.
 - **Re: Self-Advocacy** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 09, 2007
Do you have specific tools, tips or strategies to help kids become good self advocates? It would be interesting to develop some ideas.
- **Re: Self-Advocacy** by **mmoore** on Oct 09, 2007
I would add that students need self-determination and self advocacy is just one of the skills falling under the larger umbrella of self determination.

I suggest that the skills be learned early, while students have plenty of time to practice the skills.

It is hard to find the opportunity to practice these skills.

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- **Tourettes & AT** by **Sara Mobley** on Oct 09, 2007

I currently have a middle school student who uses a couple different types of AT. He has a program called Dragon Naturally Speaking, which is a speech to text program. He also has Read & Write Gold, which is a program that reads scanned books or textbooks to him through the computer. He has these programs to help him complete his schoolwork even when he is having tics. This is such great technology! I can see this easily being used for students who are non-verbal or have other communication difficulties.

- **Re:Tourettes & AT by Anne Z** on Oct 10, 2007
Hi, Does he have these software programs on a lap top which is dedicated to him and he can take with him to various settings or is it on a "general use" computer which he has to wait his turn to use? I too have students use Dragon Naturally Speaking with students who have difficulty with written output and am searching for the most efficient means for student access.
- **Re: Tourettes & AT by nlyles@pbc-sc.net** on Oct 10, 2007
I am very interested in how dragon naturally speaking is working in the classroom setting. Is this being used in a regular education classroom or just self contained?
 - **Re: Tourettes & AT by Brian Wojcik** on Oct 10, 2007
Speech recognition is an exciting technology and I am seeing it pop up more and more with the students I work with at the postsecondary level. There have been a few places that have started to work, in earnest, with speech recognition technology (e.g., George Mason University, the Call Centre). Below is a link to some great guides for using speech recognition in the classroom:

http://callcentre.education.ed.ac.uk/Research/speech_recog_pra/speech_recog_pra.html
 - **Re: Tourettes & AT by Marc Sherman** on Oct 10, 2007
Thank you for sharing this link. It is quite resourceful and gives a starting point for a few of my clients. Since I am a quadriplegic, I personally use Dragon Naturally Speaking 8.0 for my job, personal life and posting messages on such forums as this one. However, I know it is not compatible for everyone. Therefore, thank you again for this link.

Marc ><>
 - **Re: Tourettes & AT by nlyles@pbc-sc.net** on Oct 11, 2007
Thank you for the link. This has lots of useful information

- **Cross-post: Tip for accessing the discussion by Jackie Hess [SI Faculty]** on Oct 09, 2007
As the number of posts increase, I know it can be daunting to keep up. You might try reading the discussion in transcript mode first. It takes a bit longer to appear on your screen, but is much faster for scanning messages. Then, when you're ready to respond to a comment or question, or to post one of your own, you can re-enter the discussion in "post mode."

After the first week, we'll "clear the slate," giving you a link to the Week One discussion, but creating a fresh screen for Week Two. (We may do this even sooner if necessary.)

- **Hello Everyone!** by **Lindy** on Oct 09, 2007
As a new AT Coordinator (started in June 2007), I want to gain more knowledge of AT and the resources available. I work for Central Coast Center for Independent Living that serves the counties of Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito in California. I haven't had a chance to work with children or teenagers transitioning, but I thought this course would be beneficial to me because I could learn about other people's struggles and successes in obtaining AT, and the processes that they followed in case I ever do work with this population. I look forward to reading everyone's posts and learning more!

- **AT in all life's transitions** by **Jamie Karam** on Oct 09, 2007
I work for Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network (LATAN), am a former SILC member, VR consumer, and have central vision loss.
I have always worked with people of all ages and all disabilities.
Transition at any time of life is difficult, but can be made easier with supports, services, and AT.
My quest during this institute will be to find out how to make sure AT is introduced at an early age, but also to those missed it at that age or are just now needing it; how the person can transition into the next phase of their life without losing their AT; and what high schools and universities (or the government?) could be doing better in regard to helping the transitioning student gain job training, jobsite accommodations, and keeping their AT throughout their journey or making it more available to them. Kind of a tall order, huh? ;))
- **Re: Hello Everyone!** by **Andrea DeVito** on Oct 09, 2007
I am a new AT Specialist in Delaware. I am very excited to learn more about AT and the resources that are available. I hope to learn more about resources, products and the implementation of AT in the community and schools. One area that I have a strong interest in is getting the awareness/education to the masses. This is a great learning tool!
- **Re: Hello Everyone!** by **Laticha Sotero** on Oct 09, 2007
As we face new emerging technologies, it is important that we not only look at instructional and informational technologies, but rather examine the universal application of technologies. AT is one area that needs to be included when we engage in an educational technology discussion. Our special needs children will one day become a part of our "working" society. Thus the skills they need to survive in a 21st Century economy need to be strengthened.

As an instructional technology specialist, it is important for me to build my knowledge of all the available tools for student assistance. As I learn more about the available options, I can adequately inform educators on the appropriate vehicles needed for effective technology integration. I am happy and excited to be involved in this on-line discussion. I hope to learn about the challenges teachers face with struggling special needs students and how technology has made these struggles less of a challenge.

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- **Hi by Hector Jose** on Oct 09, 2007
I'm very excited to being participating in this online course. I hope that all of us learn many interesting things, so we could help better people with impairments.

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- **Self Advocacy Resource- small cost** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 09, 2007
I have seen the result of students not being able to speak for themselves. I have looked at resources that are available. WATI, which I mentioned earlier, has a student transition portfolio available for purchase. This includes a small manual with a sequence of steps in using forms included in the portfolio. The forms will help the student plan for their use of AT and understand what they have.
I think this is a really good tool, and worth the charge for it (\$15.00)
 - **Re: Self Advocacy Resource- free** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 09, 2007
Another resource is one that is free, and I was involved in developing. The Minnesota Manual for Consideration of Assistive Technology is available on line at http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Learning_Support/Special_Education/Evaluation_Program_Planning_Supports/Assistive_Technology/AT_Resources/index.html.

The manual is designed to assist an IEP team in talking about AT. It is (hopefully) parent

and student friendly. It includes a section of forms, including two forms related to transition. One is a transition planning checklist, which supports a team in helping the student in developing more self advocacy skills throughout the transition period, including assisting the student in being able to identify their disability, and the impact on their learning. There is also a form that students should use to identify their AT and the adult supports that may be necessary in supporting, repairing, etc the AT the student uses. I recommend that a 3 ring binder be established for AT devices that can be used to store all records regarding AT- which will include these forms, repair receipts, contact information for adult providers, etc. It is a simple solution, but can be very helpful!

- **Re: Self Advocacy Resource- free by HeatherB** on Oct 09, 2007

I have been looking through the links provided on this discussion for AT and have been marveling at the way that many of the Midwest states provide answers for self-advocacy and AT devices. There seems to be a better awareness of disabilities and long range needs where AT devices are concerned, even if there is a lack of funding, in the Midwest and eastern states that was not as evident in certain pockets of the western states. As a parent, living in one of those pocket areas, how would you self advocate if you could not even get your hands on the resources you need? In our current area, we have a lending organization which allows you to experiment with the type of AT device you think you might want to purchase before you actually go out and spend the money on it. This type of organization is not available in all areas, though. AT devices are expensive and not all devices are suitable for every child in every situation.

- **Re: Self Advocacy Resource- free by Sean J Smith** on Oct 09, 2007
Heather,

Thanks for the posting and the question. First, please know that there are some wonderful AT and transition services located in all states. However, at times with certain resources shared (like we have on our postings) it does appear to be pockets. Not sure if you are aware of your State AT Center. The following URL offers a connection to all 56 State and Territory Resources that are part of the National Assistive Technology Technical Assistance Partnership <http://www.resna.org/taproject/at/statecontacts.html>

Now, I would offer these resources as a place to begin to learn about what is available in your state. They are probably not going to be the one stop shopping in that they will probably not have all the answers, however; they should be an excellent resource on where to begin. For example, I believe Joan (one of our moderators) is not directly connected with the State of MN's AT center, but instead, works out the MN State Department of Education (Joan can certainly clarify). Regardless, the State AT Center is probably very aware of the resources available and how parents and educators can access assessment, trial AT devices, and similar supports.

Sean

- **Re: Self Advocacy Resource- free by HeatherB** on Oct 09, 2007
Sean,

Thank-you for the URL link. We now live in a state that has excellent resources to offer, but I have many contacts where we moved from that I would love to pass this information on to!

Also, I was relating quite well to your post about your son with Downs and his energy level decreasing throughout his day as well as his communication and how that impacts not only his behavior, but you and your energy and ability to communicate as well. I have a six year old daughter with Downs, and though she has some communication capabilities, as the day wears on, her energy level decreases and her behavior tends to go downhill as her communication decreases and frustration increases! We have four year old twins, as well, and by the time that I split myself between the children and their various needs throughout the day, I am exhausted and not sure how to deal with my Downs child and her lack of energy and communication at the end of the day! We continue to love her and encourage her to use her communication device no matter how tired she is, but at that point I think it comes down to a battle of the wills - she can be so stubborn sometimes (I was told when she was born that Downs kiddos tend to be more stubborn than the typical kids. I don't know if this is true, but at moments like the one I am describing, I tend to blame it on the Downs and try to get her in bed as quickly as I possibly can - for my own sanity, of course!) It is always nice to hear that I am not the only one struggling with this issue!

- **Re: Self Advocacy Resource- free by Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 09, 2007

Heather- anyone parenting 3 children as young as yours needs to be looking out for your sanity (I am also the mother of 3)! You are doing a great job finding resources by logging onto services like this institute. I hope you can find some tools to help with your family.

- **Re: Self Advocacy Resource- free by Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 09, 2007

I believe that we are successful in AT practice in MN because we are able to collaborate well with other programs. As Sean says, I work for the state department of education as a supervisor in special education services. I do work closely with the state tech act program (MN STAR Program) and with other state agencies (Ray Griffin who is on this conversation is a work buddy). Rather than compete for being the "state experts" many state agencies collaborate in MN to provide good service. We have, in fact, presented at national conferences on collaborative practices.

We also have a strong history in MN of parent advocacy. PACER in MN is nationally known as a parent advocacy center, and I am a proud long time Arc member- an organization with deep roots in MN. Although we certainly are not perfect, we know that through collaborative practice we are able to better serve the students and clients who are the focus of our work. Perhaps we do have some sort of mid-west nice thing going on, but I strongly believe, and try to model, that our collective and individual work is better. This also means that, for example, when the state ed department wants to develop a publication on AT, we have other state agency staff who will review it and help us see where we can provide points of collaboration and common interest. Or, when our state VR staff wants to provide a training on transition, we have built in relationships to show how collaboration can happen.

It is not always easy, and interestingly enough, may depend solely on

good people agreeing to do good work- and being willing to allow someone else to take the credit. And- most importantly, the important this is to agree that collaboration is a priority and commit to continue to work on it!

- **Re: Self Advocacy Resource- free** by **mmoore** on Oct 09, 2007
I agree. Being able to work well with other agencies, especially VR, is the key to providing good and seamless transition.

Do you ever work with Mike Patrick?

- **Re: Self Advocacy Resource- free** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 10, 2007
I don't think I've ever worked with Mike, but on the other hand... memory is just not what I would want it to be. Need a memory aid!
- **Re: Self Advocacy Resource- free** by **Marc Sherman** on Oct 10, 2007
I strongly believe that networking/collaborating is a key element toward successfully finding the resources needed and learning from each other. I reckon you would easily agree. Otherwise you would be taking part, let alone moderating, this current discussion. During my education as a social, many of my professors concurred in creating an extensive book of contacts to network with.
 - **Re: Self Advocacy Resource- free** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 10, 2007
We do better together than individually, so I really try to focus on collaboration!
- **Re: Self Advocacy Resource- free** by **Brenda Scott** on Oct 21, 2007
I wish other states would use Minnesota as a model. In my state, agencies are attempting to collaborate (and that is a good first step), but unfortunately it is a slow process. I think having good parent advocates is key also. I subscribe to your PACER newsletter and I am constantly amazed by what you have to offer.
- **Re: Self Advocacy Resource- free** by **Marc Sherman** on Oct 09, 2007
Thank you very kindly for the Minnesota Assistive Technology Handbook. I have printed it and found what I have reviewed thus far to be extremely resourceful.

Marc

- **Re: Self Advocacy Resource- free** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 10, 2007
Glad it is helpful. I am proud of the team that wrote it!

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- **HELLO** by **María Torres Irizarry** on Oct 09, 2007
Hi everyone. I am special education teacher from Puerto Rico. I'm looking for new information of AT. Thanks for the opportunity.

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- **Hi everyone!** by **grelaine** on Oct 09, 2007

Im interested to learn more about techniques and innovation technology to help children with autism. I'm a Speech-Language Therapist.

- **Follow-up to the Thoughts Shared** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 10, 2007

Thank you all for your thoughts, excellent questions, introductions (including areas of expertise from which to provide information), and similar postings over the past three days. As we have reviewed these postings, it appears that there are three specific strands that have emerged as areas of interest/concern and we have included them below:

AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings

AT and Transition to Vocational and Independent Living Settings

AT and Transition in the Early Years

While there are a number of other issues that have been presented (e.g., funding, knowledge development, self advocacy, advocacy, etc.), we would like to try to tackle these issues within the strands noted above. With this in mind, we thought we'd begin by addressing the first issue (AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings) and then tackling the others in a somewhat structured manner. That way, we can avoid missing vital information and also ensure that we are addressing the issues you all wanted addressed and allowing for thoughts and input from all participants.

Of course, please know that we do not want to limit any and all questions, thoughts, and the like. So, please share questions, thoughts, and issues (regardless of topic) throughout the Institute. The strand thought was to assist participants in connecting with a topic, being able to follow the flow, and to not miss vital thoughts from all.

- **Re: Follow-up to the Thoughts Shared** by **sharon** on Oct 10, 2007

I'm not sure where the post is on self advocacy anymore, so I'll just write here! Anyway, I agree so much with the part that states being a self advocate, but not taking advantage and asking for something that isn't really necessary. I am working with a student who is doing just that - or should I say, the parent is doing just that. Some very expensive equipment was obtained and this child is not using it at all. However, the parent wanted to prove a point and demand that her rights be followed. How do we handle a situation like that, except go along with it??

- **Re: Follow-up to the Thoughts Shared** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 10, 2007

Often times in these scenarios where people come to the table with a specific device in mind, there are underlying issues that are driving these agendas. These may include issues of trust, funding, turf wars and sometimes, just a lack of open communication. The sad part is that it takes the focus away from the child.

In my experience, this is the time to pull out a decision making framework. Decision making frameworks, like SETT, allow the people at the meeting to maintain some structure to the process. Also, it allows everyone at the table a venue to voice their concerns. Through most decision making processes, issues of justification come up...many of which can be answered by developing questions that can be answered with data. I have often found that doing things in this way helps underlying issues to come to the surface and be dealt with.

In the scenario above, there seems to be two areas of concern. First, there seems to be some issues that drove the device selection. Most likely the issues are not directly related to the device itself. Second, is the issue of the abandonment of the device.

Since it is after the fact, I am not sure much can be done. Is the device something that the student can use? Is the device something another student can use?

- **Re: Follow-up to the Thoughts Shared by Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 10, 2007

I am always sad when a particular person drives the IEP team process rather than a collaborative decision being made that will support the student. Brian referenced the SETT Framework, which I completely agree with. In an earlier post, I referenced the forms included in the Minnesota Department of Education AT handbook. There are an in-depth set of forms designed to be used during an IEP meeting when there needs to be collaborative actions in AT. The forms are based on the SETT Framework, and has questionnaires to be answered from a variety of viewpoints about the student's need for AT. There are forms for educators, parents and for the child. If the forms are used, they will guide the team to making a decision that can be endorsed by all.

One question in the forms asks the parents "What are your child's feelings about using technology?" as we have been aware of situations where the parent does not realize how firmly the student will NOT consider using something which is not like his typically developing peer. By the same token, there is also an opportunity for the parent to showcase some specific technology strategies that have worked well for the student in settings outside the school- where perhaps the educators are not seeing the successes possible for the student. Feedback from teams using these forms is generally quite positive.

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- **AT and Transition by carmen duran** on Oct 10, 2007

Hello! I already posted my introduction on the Autism thread. I am still engaged to read your comments. I have worked with students from the DCPS with learning disabilities and visual and hearing impairments. I have found a proliferation of software for students to use. The problem that I see is having a comprehensive AT evaluation of the needs of the student, including a functional capacity evaluation. An AT evaluation is different from selecting an AT device. Selecting or fitting, or adapting an AT device is done after the evaluation. Same situation with providing training for the student, teacher and family members. We work with the students in transition from high school to post secondary education. All the services needed are stated in the IEP and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is part of the team. When the student comes to receive Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the Individualized Plan for Employment is done (IPE) listing all the services, AT devices needed, and which agency is going to pay for that. The agency is the DC Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) now, under the Department on Disability Services. Many students come without the AT evaluation. Some have been using devices for Universal Access in their classrooms. Then, students going to colleges will request the appropriate accommodations. There are several Transition Specialists on board.

- I want to say that AT is not the only answer for students with learning disabilities. AT provides the tools to make the student independent throughout his/her life. It is not the tool or the device but what the student is able to do now and could not do before. For example, the student is able to do...this and that... using this device.

- **Re: AT and Transition by fgsfd** on Oct 10, 2007

Thanks for sharing...

In your experience, how important is having an AT evaluation when requesting AT for the postsecondary level?

- **Re: AT and Transition by Jamie Karam** on Oct 10, 2007
I believe an AT evaluation is very important to the student's enhanced abilities as a result of using the device. At the very least, the student needs to "try before they buy" the device in the environment and for the purpose in which they will be using the device. This reduces delay time, frustration, and needless expense on everyone's part. This opinion stems from my experience of being an AT user.
 - **Re: AT and Transition by sandra callahan** on Oct 14, 2007
I agree! My AT team loans equipment/software to ED teams/students for 6-8 weeks (on average) to use to assess if it is a workable tool for the tasks required of the student to meet the curricular demands. AT is also assessed for assisting the student in the workplace and in the community. I see so much unused AT within our districts because the SETT process was not used or someone saw something that looked "cool" and was cheap!
Sandra
- **Re: AT and Transition by Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 14, 2007
I want to throw a little cautionary note in here. Remember that under IDEA, there is a specific definition of evaluation. Once a student is in a post secondary setting, the requirements for evaluation change, and the rigor, depending on the practitioner may also change.

But- in all circumstances, I agree that equipment trials are a HUGE need when selecting AT. And, for many individuals 6 - 8 weeks is a minimum period of time for trying something out.

I suggest to teams that they need to be aware of the learning curve for an individual, and how they react to something new. Does the learner take awhile to warm up to new technology and has a slow, gradual increase in skill? Does the learner understand the uses and limitations quickly and use with effectiveness right away? Or- does the learner learn a strategy quickly, then get bored with it almost as quickly. I jokingly call this the "treadmill rule." Be aware if a user is absolutely in LOVE with technology for the first few months, and then it becomes something like my treadmill- a really good laundry hanger.

- **Re: AT and Transition by Paula Rodríguez** on Oct 10, 2007
I agree with you in the point about the AT. I think that AT enhances the abilities of the student but must work with other things. I think that all professors should know about Universal Design for Learning and good practices for education. Every professor should know about factors that can interfere and affect the learning process.

- **AT and Transition to Vocational and Independent Living Settings by Sean J Smith** on Oct 10, 2007
AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings
As many of you shared, there are a myriad of issues related to transition to the postsecondary for students with disabilities. Self-advocacy is a significant issue and one in which we have begun to share ideas and some resources. There is also the issue of team planning and identifying the skills needed on the part of the individual, the identification of the resources needed to support the transition, the identification and inclusion of the personnel from school, community, and work-based settings, and similar issues.

Now, in respect to technology, I believe and have witnessed the use of technology as a universal tool that is not seen as an add on but instead part of the transition process. That is, instead of a separate meeting or consideration for assistive technology, I have seen IEP/ITP Teams tackle the issue of transition (based on what Dr. Gary Clark writes about in his book – Transition Education

and Service for Students with Disabilities – this is a Pro-Ed publication – see their website at <http://www.proedinc.com/> and AT as part of their overall planning.

Now, while there is a great deal to be said about transition and the steps needed to assist students with disabilities in this process. I'm going to refrain from this discussion for the moment. I want to concentrate on the AT component of this process and while we'll need to reflect on transition within this discussion, I want to limit my focus to the tech and assume some of the basics of transition are understood or folks are reviewing resources like the Transition Coalition (see <http://www.transitioncoalition.org>) for in depth explanation of the transition process.

Back to the joint planning for AT within the transition consideration. Let me share an example of a young lady in the KC area. This young lady (who is now almost 25), has an intellectual disability and the Team was working with her in an 18-21 program. This program is located in an actual house to offer the students exposure to adaptive skill development in a "real" setting rather than a traditional school-based setting. Here, they worked on a variety of skill development and hopes for transfer.

For this young lady (I'll call her Bridget), they were working on cleaning, cooking, movement across community setting, following directions, transportation needs, money management, and the like. They were also working with her and the Team to best identify the type of employment opportunity that would meet her needs as well as the needs of her family. As the team worked together (and the team involved vocational rehabilitation staff, a community group she was involved in, a member of her Church (where she was an active member), school staff, mom and dad, and of course, Bridget) they started to identify that Bridget really liked fashion, hairstyles, and I guess the overall topic would be beauty. With this in mind, a neighbor and close friend of the family was brought into the Team because she owned a local beauty salon. The salon was actually in a strip mall adjacent to Bridget's neighborhood. She was willing to consider Bridget as an employee and had a need in an area of general towel cleaning and distribution that connected with some skill sets Bridget had. As the Team worked with Bridget and the salon, skills were identified, a plan was developed, and work was underway within the 18-21 program to assist in Bridget's potential transition to this employment. This also worked well within plans for living in that she could remain at home where the plan was one of her sisters (and her husband) were going to purchase the family home (within the next three-to-five years) and thus, Bridget would remain with them for much of her future. Thus, finding employment in an area close to the home would be ideal.

OK, so as the team approached the skills needed and worked with VR staff on supports available to assist in her work at this setting, it was concluded that a job coach would be needed. The job coach was to assist Bridget in working through the numerous steps needed to contribute as an employee. One of these functions was to take the clean towels from the laundry, sort them (by color and station), fold them, and deliver them to the right station throughout the workday. Now, this involved at least 6 steps and the job coach was very helpful in assisting Bridget in breaking down this process and having her learn what was needed and when. Unfortunately, this required some memory skills and the learning of particular sequences. Like any sequence, there were always exceptions and so these had to be planned for as well. Now, as time went on as part of the 18-21 program and the subsequent overlap into adult services, the job coach had only been successful in skill development in particular areas. Bridget was still limited and needed the job coach in order to function appropriately within the demands of the position. The salon owner was very accommodating and yet, was running a business and could only be so flexible. At the end of the day (so to speak), it was becoming clear that the job coach would need to be present (or someone in that capacity) for a period of hours that exceeded the VR support. It was looking as if Bridget would not be able to retain this position. Now, this was disappointing in that it was very close to her home and also part of strip mall where she liked to spend time shopping (the Dollar store was one of her favorites) and eating (there was a Family-owned Mexican restaurant where she liked to have lunch and was becoming very much part of this extended family...invited to parties, the movies, and the like). Leaving this job would have a negative impact beyond the components of the job.

OK, so as the Team (now the school was no longer officially part of this process but the transition coordinator still had a special interest in Bridget) reviewed options, one of the members brought up the consideration of an AT solution. While AT had been considered for Bridget previously, her abilities did not seem to necessitate any particular device when they reviewed her needs and reviewed consideration forms. However, this intense offered a specific need and that was offering the supports the job coach offered. They concluded that an electronic job coach would be the perfect solution and wondered if anything existed in this realm. Considering many of the Team members used a Palm or a PDA, they started looking to see if a handheld was an option. That is, the PDA offered a touch screen, audio output, colored pictures, and similar universal supports that Bridget could use to follow sequences. Sure enough, with a little investigation they came upon Able Link Technologies (see <http://www.ablelinktech.com/>). This company focuses on the development of software for individuals with intellectual disabilities (it was like they were developed just for Bridget).

So, as they investigated the company, they learned that AbleLink offered several handheld solutions (as they are referred to) (see <http://www.ablelinktech.com/handhelds/>). One of these is the Visual Assistant. The Visual Assistant provides powerful task prompting support by including digital pictures along with custom recorded audio messages to provide step-by-step instructional support. This allows caregivers to set up instructional tasks by recording instructions and incorporating pictures of each step - preferably of the user performing the step in the real-world environment - to provide multi-modal cues for task completion.

In Bridget's case, the Visual Assistant could be pre-programmed with the visual steps needed to accomplish the towel folding process. With audio prompts that described the steps and also reminded Bridget to press the picture for the next step, Bridget had a support that could walk her through her steps without the need of a Job Coach (that is to be present every minute of the day). With some training, Bridget soon had a Visual Assistant that told her what towels to fold, what cart to place the towels in, where to roll the cart, where to place the towels, and the subsequent steps that the Salon required. It took some time but Bridget is still employed there and continues to use the Visual Assistant for her work. Her Job Coach is currently a consult (I believe) and she is now using the Visual Assistant to help her make coffee in the morning, learn the steps to walk to and from work, and also to complete some chores around the house that Mom and Dad used to have to be with her every step of the way to complete.

To learn more about the Visual Assistant, please visit the URL - <http://www.ablelinktech.com/handhelds/visualassistant.asp>. Here, you'll see a picture of the product and a get a general overview of how the product works. They also have several other HandHeld solutions, which can be found at - <http://www.ablelinktech.com/handhelds/>. These include the Pocket Coach - <http://www.ablelinktech.com/handhelds/pocketcoach.asp>. This solution is perfect for individuals who need verbal prompting only; with Pocket Coach, you can record a series of personalized step-by-step audio instructions for virtually any educational, vocational or independent living task. Users then use one of three simple interfaces to play back instructions: by tapping a single Play button consecutively; by using the Play/Done mode to indicate step completion; or the To Do List mode for non-sequential tasks. Pocket Coach is ideal for community situations to smoothly fade the assistance of a job coach or independent living instructor.

The Schedule Assistant - <http://www.ablelinktech.com/handhelds/scheduleassistant.asp>. Schedule Assistant is a multimedia scheduling application for individuals with significant literacy challenges that prohibit the effective use of mainstream text-based scheduling systems. Any number of appointments or events can be entered into the system by recording an audio message and designating the day(s) and time for the message to activate. A relevant digital picture or icon can also be displayed when the message displays. The combination of time-based audio messages and picture cues are ideal for meeting bus schedules, medication reminders, taking work breaks, maintaining classroom schedules or morning routines, and more! Schedule Assistant can be tightly integrated with AbleLink's Pocket Discovery Desktop.

The neat thing about these solutions is that they use a product (the PDA) that can be purchased at

any Office Depot or the like. It is a Universal product in that it can be used by a variety of individuals for a variety of tasks. The neat thing about the PDA is that it continues to develop and get better. It is actually like a new car in that as soon as you purchase it and walk out the store there is already something better available. This changing technology is wonderful for individuals with disabilities in that they continue to add to the features, which increasingly assist multiple users with particular needs.

OK, so that example was to show how within the framework of the transition planning a need was identified and a number of things were considered including technology. More important, the AT device was the solution that allowed Bridget to maintain the position. A position that had a number of factors that had to be considered. That is, it was ideal in location to home and the overall living plan for Bridget and her family. She had a network of friends that surrounded the business and only meant positive outcomes for the future. It offered great access to the community from which she lives and thus, something she wanted to maintain. I'll stop for now and hope this got us thinking about AT and postsecondary transition. Thoughts, comments, questions, and/or other stories would be great.

- o **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 10, 2007

I'd like to offer another scenario.

I had an opportunity to work with a student...we can call him Matt. I started working with Matt when he was 17 years old. Matt was a very sharp student (ended up graduating as one of the valedictorians of his class) and had ambitions of a career in aeronautical engineering. Matt had cerebral palsy with affect all four of his limbs and his speech. He used a power wheelchair for ambulation and a Dynavox as a mechanism for communication. Most who knew Matt could understand him but as the day moved on, he would fatigue and his speech became less understandable. Matt also had difficulty with extended reading due to some eye motor issues. Matt was an avid user of assistive technology, both in and out of school. Matt's parents were able to provide a house that was fairly accessible to Matt. In his home, he was able to attend to most personal care independently. At school, in addition to his communication device and power wheelchair, Matt used a combination of speech recognition, alternate keyboards and mouse controls, and his Dynavox to access the computer to complete assignments. He also accessed audio book resources (i.e., Recordings from the Blind and Dyslexic)and, within the last year, he had started using Kurzweil 3000 as a means of accessing print.

Starting at 14, Matt participated in the development and review of his transition plan on an annual basis. The year I started working with Matt, he was a junior in HS. I suggested, as he had already identified a set of colleges to which he wanted to apply, that he and his family take some time to visit each college and not only investigate the program but the support services offered for students with disabilities. One day Matt came into my class and told me that he would probably not be going to college. When I inquired as to the reason, he told me that he did not think he could make it. Further questioning revealed that several realities occurred to Matt during his visits. First, he was going to be living 'on his own' in an environment in which was very different than the accessible house where he grew up. While the dorms met ADA code, some environments in the dorm were not accessible to meet Matt's individual needs. Another issue included that many of the technologies which he had been using during his school career were no where to be found on the campuses he visited.

Well, after getting all of his concerns out, we decided that his transition plan needed to be 'ramped up' to include some dimensions that were not previously addressed.

Matt had ideas about the technology that he needed. However, he was unsure which technologies he owned and which he would need to pursue. He, as well as his parents, only knew about the technologies to which he was exposed. We decided that we would need to explore options beyond those technologies to which he was exposed so that he could have

multiple tools in his arsenal for use. Another thing that was discovered, though several meetings with individuals from the support services for students with disabilities was that, on several campuses, different units provided various tools on campus (e.g., the library had different technology for print access) that were not always well known to everyone on campus. We brought in individuals from the local Center for Independent Living to address issues of living in the dorm and working with the campus to set up various AT Systems for Matt. We continued to work collaboratively with the VR counselor looking at ways in which the VR system could support Matt.

In this case, the transition process included aspects of AT consideration that were not readily apparent at the beginning of this process. Matt needed to consider technologies that could meet his needs in different environments, including those to which he had yet to be exposed. In other words, he needed to learn to become a consumer of assistive technology. This was perhaps the largest lesson of this process. Matt needed to explore unfamiliar AT, evaluating his needs and the features of the assistive technology. Once the AT was chosen, Matt had to assume responsibility for the care and upkeep of the AT (which was typically done by others in his environment). He needed to develop contingency plans for when the AT failed. Matt also needed to learn the rules and roles different agencies played in the process of providing AT (or at least the funding of the AT).

- **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 11, 2007
Brian- one of the things that strikes me in Matt's story ties into the quality indicator that I posted yesterday. There need to be people in the new setting who are knowledgeable about the AT, and their role in supporting it. Matt needed to be a very active self advocate in finding the right players in his new setting to be his support system. It is great for him that he had the good resources to call upon to support him in making this change. I wonder how other students make this transition and how they can build their own support team?
- **Re: AT and Transition to Vocational and Independent Living Settings** by **Carol Leynse Harbold** on Oct 11, 2007
Sean, thank you for sharing. This was a great example. Just last week I was discussing the possibilities of handhelds for step by step directions for some of our MS students with cognitive impairments with their teacher and forwarded on the info on these devices to her. I am excited to be able to share this info with her on specific examples of student use! This is very helpful application info! Do you know of any freeware shareware to use on standard PDA's or palms, or just use photo for sequencing?? How have you dealt with sound on PDA's Any ideas or resources you might suggest?
- **Re: AT and Transition to Vocational and Independent Living Settings** by **Carol W** on Oct 12, 2007
There is another device that I have seen, called the Cyrano, that is a PDA with additional software. It was designed as a communication aid by a company that usually has nothing to do with AT or AAC devices. It can be used as a sequencer with picture and video prompts.

They have added some ability through portable speakers, I think, to amplify the voice. They also include synthetic voices for communication that are pretty good.

The website for this is: www.cyanocommunicator.com.
I do know that the company will send a loaner device out for trial at no cost.
- **Re: AT and Transition to Vocational and Independent Living Settings** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 12, 2007
Carol,

This is great and I am not familiar with the company but will take a look. I also just added a few thoughts as I try to reflect on other options.

If others are aware of visual assistants using handhelds or other applications, I'd love to hear. The empowerment component impresses me a great deal in that it offers options and independence to a degree unheard of without the technology support.

- **Re: AT and Transition to Vocational and Independent Living Settings by Marvin_Williams on Oct 18, 2007**

I have a Palm TX, and I've been able to use PowerPoint on it well. My TX also can play mp3 files so sound is not an issue. One possible solution would be to use any photos and wanted supporting text in making a power point presentation for the activity. Using a piece of freeware called Audacity, you can record and edit the verbal portions of the slide and save them as MP3's. Attach the mp3's for each slide to the slide to finish off the presentation. Now, using software included on the Palm cd that comes with each unit, install Documents to Go. This will allow you to open and view/play power point presentations on your palm device. I have not tried this with attached MP3's, but I will and report back to the group. Just another take on a popular idea.

- **Re: AT and Transition to Vocational and Independent Living Settings by Sean J Smith on Oct 12, 2007**

Carol,

Thanks for the note and the questions. A couple of general thoughts and then an attempt to try to answer your questions. First, I know of several districts that have gone the mid-tech route and used hand held tape recorders to assist students/individuals with verbal prompts and reminders. Either they record these prompts in a manner so that each time the student presses play on the hand held tape recorder, it offers a prompt or more specific directions so that the user is turning it off and on when necessary. For example, they are about to make their bed and they need to be reminded about the steps to take in making the bed. They may have a visual chart with pictures and then they are reminded to turn on the tape recorder to begin the process. I've seen several families use with small digital recorders that are a bit easier to use and that store more information than a traditional tape recorder. The visual is often laminated and it is held in a notebook (for school of work related activities) and housed in a the specific room of the house where the activity takes place.

Now, I should add that some friends are trying this audio prompt system with the iPod. They have gone with the iPod because there son wanted one and thought it was cool. Since they made the investment, they began to think about ways to use it. So, for chores around the house, they have recorder audio directions and prompts for their son and then added these to his iPod. He is expected to use these directions and this is a condition of him keeping the iPod. I just got off the phone with them and they said they recorded a series of directions to get him out the door in the morning. They have been using a visual support system to get him out of bed and to offer the visual connections in what to do in the morning. They now have created an audio file to support this effort. They actually followed him around several days to record the time it should take for each task and to note the type of reminders they often have to use. They then recorded these directions as one 15-minute file. They said they have been using it with him. For example, they have hi get out of bed and head to the bathroom to go to the bathroom. He often does not flush, he leaves his under wear o the floor and generally wastes time singing in the bathroom to where

he is rushing the rest of the morning to catch up. So, they recorded directions to get to the bathroom and then they have pauses where the audio recording is playing but no sound (figuring he is doing his business) but then after a period of time, they start to remind him about what he needed to do next (e.g., flush the toilet, make sure you take your dirty laundry to the hamper). I am not sure of the success but it is an interesting way of using a technology he is very interested in using for multiple purposes.

In terms of your question about freeware software for the PDAs. I am a Palm user and have used the Freeware for the Palm site to download a few applications for my Palm. I am not familiar with creating something similar to the Visual Assistant with freeware but know that - <http://www.freewarepalm.com/graphics/graphics.shtml> - offers a number of free graphic applications that could be used to get images on the Palm and then allow you to record audio with the images. Not sure if this answers your question entirely but thought it might help.

- o **Re: AT and Transition to Vocational and Independent Living Settings** by **mjbmilller** on Oct 11, 2007

I enjoyed this article and saved the Able Link site to my favorites. I work with a student who is a junior in high school that requires consistent verbal prompts and touch cues to complete tasks. We have used a digital camera to make picture schedules, recipes, and to sequence prevocational and community skills tasks. The visual assistant seems to be a great option for increased independence. My concerns are the expense and acquiring a hand held device to try out before committing to that particular AT device. I wish I had a supply of AT options to "try on for size" before committing to the expense.

- **Re: AT and Transition to Vocational and Independent Living Settings** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 12, 2007

Yes, it would be great to be able to access these types of equipment and try them before we then purchase it. One thought is to work with your district and/or VR representative to find the resources in your state that have an AT loan library or a relationship where they can access AT for trial purposes. For example, the State of KS offers some AT for loan via the AT for Kansans (<http://www.atk.ku.edu/>) Project. Here, districts as well as parents can access equipment for trial purposes. This is generally free for use for a specific period of time. Now, it is not perfect but it does offer access to some equipment. If they don't have a relationship with the developer, they generally are a good one to interact with the company.

Now, the listing for the other state AT projects can be found at <http://www.resna.org/taproject/at/statecontacts.html>. This is at least a place to start to see what agencies or other resources exist within the state that could assist in getting access to equipment for loan purposes.

- **Re: AT and Transition to Vocational and Independent Living Settings** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 12, 2007

I would also like to add that many companies have (or are starting to) have device loan programs where a device is either sent for a period of time or can be 'rented' for a period of time. These programs are great for trial implementations of different products. However, these programs are not always advertised. I have had the experience of working with a company that did not have such a program in place, but after describing what I was trying to do, the company worked with me and sent a loaner to use with my student. It never hurts to ask!

- **Re: AT and Transition to Vocational and Independent Living Settings** by **mjbmiller** on Oct 15, 2007

That's a good point, I like that idea. It never hurts to ask.

- **Re:AT and Transition to Vocational and Independent Living Settings** by **Marvin_Williams** on Oct 18, 2007

I am an AT Specialist for my state's Tech Act Project. I would highly encourage you to contact your state tech act projects as they may have the equipment you would like to try available for free loan. My state is Delaware, but I do know that the federal government is looking to have all of the tech act groups provide equipment for trial use and/or loan. If you do follow the link to the RESNA listing, you can find the group in your state and contact them.

As an aside, we have a Visual Assistant in each of our centers, and they are very nice pieces of equipment. They can be a little pricey, but they do a nice job. Another thing to take into consideration is the environment in which the device will be used. Our visual assistants do not have much for a protective casing, so if it could be dropped and broken, you might want to look for something else. I have had people use talking photo albums as an inexpensive means to provide sequential instructions. The capacity isn't as large as that for the virtual assistant, but in a tight situation, it can do the job.

- **Re: AT and Transition to Vocational and Independent Living Settings** by **mjbmiller** on Oct 15, 2007

Thanks for the great links. There is so much information and posts to read in this forum that it is almost too much! It is very helpful to have the most pertinent information.

- **Re: AT and Transition to Vocational and Independent Living Settings** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 11, 2007

Sean- Bridget's story had lots going for it, and there are so many places where things fell into place well. One important point is that there was a new consideration for AT at this new point in Bridget's life. This is such an important point! As her tasks changed, the need for technology was re-evaluated and a new need was identified. And, as her skills increased, new opportunities for using that technology were added (making coffee) to increase her independence. What a great example of re-SETTING!

I also like all of the natural supports that were included in her plan. This meant that people with a genuine interest in her became involved. We all know that we do more for people for whom we care. The family, friends and church all became integral to Bridget's success, and as I think about it, probably to all our successes also.

- **Re: AT and Transition to Vocational and Independent Living Settings** by **jthompson** on Oct 11, 2007

I teach a TMD self contained teacher class and as professionals we tend to leave out people in the community and focus only on what the school can offer. The church has been a great resource for job training and employment. The visual assistant looks to be a wonderful tool to use with all levels of disability. It looks like it is time to look for some grants dealing with AT.

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- **AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 10, 2007
One of the themes from the wonderful introductory posts seems to revolve around the transition

from high school to various postsecondary academic environments. These environments may include technical, community college and/or 4 year university settings.

As noted in the discussion, there are a number of factors that either facilitate or detract from this transition process. The move from K-12 to postsecondary shifts the nature of how services, and subsequently, AT is provided. In K-12, there services are provided by a team of individuals and are coordinated through a legally mandated process. In postsecondary settings, the emphasis shifts to the student who bears the responsibility of disclosing his or her disability, providing necessary documentation of his or her disability, and negotiating and accessing the services within that environment. The issues become more compounded when there is a perceived cost (which may, in reality, is highly variable) associated with those services.

There is a great article by Amy Dell entitled "There are no IEPs in College"

(<http://www.tcnj.edu/~technj/2004/transition.htm>), which is included in our resources for this strand that talks about the difference between how services are provided under IDEA and ADA.

To jump start this conversation, I pose these questions to the group:

What does a student 'need to know' in order to be successful in a postsecondary academic setting?

What are common issues students with disabilities need to grapple with when they arrive in a postsecondary setting?

How do students access assistive technology in postsecondary education?

I look forward to hearing the experiences and perspectives on these questions as well as sharing my own.

- **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **Paula Rodríguez** on Oct 10, 2007
 1. I think that students need to know about the services that the college provides. In addition, they need to know about the trainings that the faculty receives about the students with or without disabilities.
 2. Unfortunately in college students do not count with AT unless Vocational Rehab provides it or they have it. Most of the Universities do not have a variety of AT equipment for most disabilities. Students arrive at the college and begin to ask for equipment.
- **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 10, 2007
Paula- you raise some great points, and your experience mirror that which I had when I worked at a college. What questions should students have prepared when they visit a college? When should they have these questions asked and answered? And- how will they know when the answer they get is a good one that will meet their needs? (I feel a questionnaire brewing)
- **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **hogla** on Oct 11, 2007
The needs of service in AT and transition is most important, maybe make the difference in the whole life. But the reality is other, not received the importance, the professional don't believe, if you don't believe, no it's important.
- **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **Bruce Kennedy** on Oct 11, 2007
Paula,
Each university and college I am familiar with has a student support services office of some kind, and those offices frequently link students to various types of assistive technology in order to assist them accessing the curriculum.
- **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **Marc Sherman** on Oct 17, 2007
I am a quadriplegic and graduated from Indianapolis campus of Indiana University

(IU). At IU, there was a program called Adaptive Education Services (AES). With the professors approval, which was never declined for me, AES provided an adaptive room at the university library for me to take my exams. There were accessible desks and computers with the program you needed. For the blind and/or visually impaired, there were monitors with magnification. If a person was not able to write, type or see, AES would provide a person perform the needed tasks. If accommodations were needed in the classroom, AES would be sure to provide there as well. In addition, AES would provide a person to take notes for a person if needed. I found IU a pleasure to attend and went above and beyond to meet the disabled population's desire for AT to be as equal and productive as possible. Finally, there was not one building, floor or sidewalk I could not access with my power wheelchair because of the automatic door openers, elevators and ramps.

Marc ><>

- **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **prodriguez** on Oct 18, 2007

Nice to meet you! Im glad about your spirit. I'm working in a Project to sensitize professors about special needs. It's nice to hear about a person who use services on campus.

- **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **Marvin_Williams** on Oct 22, 2007

One of the things I often tell parents and students who are making the move to college is to consider the institution's willingness to help or accommodate them as part of the decision of "where to go." One thing I have found in working with different schools trying to accommodate students is the lack of knowledge of what is available and what is possible. Once they learn both, they seem pretty willing to help individuals.

- **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **Carol W** on Oct 12, 2007

I think that the most important thing a student needs to know when going to a college disability services office is what he/she needs. So many of the students at this age do not have any idea of what accommodations they have used in high school and how that might relate to college life. For example, they do not realize that Mom reading their textbook to them was an accommodation. And they do not realize that Mom is not going to be able to read all of their college texts to them (in most cases).

In Kentucky, I feel that most of our public colleges and technical schools have a good feel for technology, but the students coming in do not. This is probably the most common issue that we see. So many students are having to learn and grapple with new technology, as well as dealing with the new environment and expectations of technology.

Since I work for Voc Rehab, it is my impression that most of the technology that students use in college comes through Voc Rehab. But I don't ever see anyone who hasn't come through VR, so I can't really say. I'd be interested to hear from a college's standpoint where the technology is coming from.

- **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 12, 2007

I agree completely...

I would also add that it is important for students to know the difference between the ADA/504 Coordinator and the Disability Support Services offices. Many students do not know that there are 'checks and balances' within many postsecondary institutions which they can access as part of their self-advocacy.

Furthermore, there are often times other services (outside the two mentioned above) that can prove helpful to students. For example, there are three services to which I direct many of the students with whom I work at my university. One is the University Center for Learning Assistance (UCLA for short...or is that copyright infringement?) which helps with general study skills. We have a writing lab to help students who struggle with writing papers. Then we have a math lab for students who need extra assistance with math. These services are not tied to either of the aforementioned services and are not always discussed when a student visits campus, yet they are highly useful.

I have found that if we are able to hook potential students with existing students, many of these resources tend to be shared.

- **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **Kimberly Fields** on Oct 15, 2007
The students should also note the differences between services provided under ADA as opposed to IDEA, the differences in accommodations opposed to modifications.
- **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **Kimberly Fields** on Oct 15, 2007
The students should also note the differences between services provided under ADA as opposed to IDEA, the differences in accommodations opposed to modifications.
- **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **pmcclure** on Oct 15, 2007
As a teacher at the high school level, I see it as part of my job to explain these services to our students prior to their exit from high school. We can not always rely upon the high school guidance counselors or the receiving institutions to relay this information. Any suggestions on how to find out each university's plan for serving students so we can give them more of this information before they hit campus.
 - **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **Kimberly Fields** on Oct 15, 2007
Have students and families, along with teachers, visit the campus on campus visitation or other times, so the student gets a feel for the environment, students, faculty, and staff. Usually within the student services division there is an accommodations counselor who has the information you are seeking.
 - **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 15, 2007
I would underscore the need to visit the campus as well as some comments that Sean made a few items below this one regarding the need for the postsecondary institution to be involved during the student's senior year, investigating resources available to all students, etc.

As a former postsecondary disability support services person myself, to offer another perspective, I know that many individuals who are working at the postsecondary level in the area of disability support services would love to have more AT across the campus. However, they are often constrained to what is 'reasonable'. The Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) serves as a professional organization that connects disability support service providers around topics. including AT, related to postsecondary education and serving students with disabilities. In searching their site, I came across a FAQ

from a subgroup within AHEAD whose focus is on technology for postsecondary students with disabilities and thought I would share it. It gives some perspective from a postsecondary standpoint on the issue: <http://www.ahead.org/about/SIGs/technology/faq.htm>

- **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by amber on Oct 19, 2007

I would like some more information on this also. I teach special education high school students. The population I serve need services at postsecondary level. I have found that the smaller colleges and 2 yr technical schools are more open for our population. They seem to have a plan and services in place to support the special education student in post secondary education.

- **Re: AT and Transition to Postsecondary Academic Settings** by Kimberly Fields on Oct 15, 2007

Students need to know what they need to know! They should enter postsecondary educational settings after having researched and found out the requirements of them participating in this environment.

Once they have this information, they need to know the appropriate manner to go about getting their needs met. Who is responsible for assisting them with the provided accommodations? This person should be identified and a relationship forged.

How will the professors know the needs of the student? What is the mechanism for transferring information? To help clarify written words on the pages sent to faculty, the student should be able to articulate his/her needs and offer suggestions on how the professor can assist them to be successful in the class.

OK, I'm in college now. I actually am in the position of choosing the who, what, when, where of my classes and studies. How will I manage all of this? What are my time management skills like? How do I juggle the fun elements of college with the academics?

I tried my best, but I still don't understand this class. What can I do if I am in jeopardy of failing, or have failed a class? Are there tutors available? How do I withdraw? Is there a repeat policy in place?

All of these are questions and reactions I have had personal experience with at my university. Students do not know what they need or how to get it. They must be a self-advocate to experience success.

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- **What do quality transition services look like?** by Joan Breslin Larson on Oct 10, 2007
I am lucky enough to be associated with a group of fabulous professionals in assistive technology who collaborate across the country to promote quality services in assistive technology. This group- the QIAT Community works on many projects, including the development of Quality Indicators in Assistive Technology. One of the projects developed by this group is a set of quality indicators in eight separate areas of AT. One of these areas is quality indicators for assistive technology transition- what should happen when there is a successful transition of AT for a student from one setting to another? (all sections in quotes are taken directly from the QIAT website qiat.org)
"Transition plans for students who use assistive technology address the ways the student's use of assistive technology devices and services are transferred from one setting to another. Assistive technology transition involves people from different classrooms, programs, buildings, or agencies working together to ensure continuity. Self-advocacy, advocacy and implementation are critical issues for transition planning."

There are six separate indicators in transition. Let's look at one tonight and the intent statement that accompanies it-

"1. Transition plans address the assistive technology needs of the student, including roles and training needs of team members, subsequent steps in assistive technology use, and follow-up after transition takes place.

Intent: The transition plan assists the receiving agency/team to successfully provide needed supports for the AT user. This involves the assignment of responsibilities and the establishment of accountability."

So- in developing a plan, a major consideration needs to be that the location to which the student is transitioning is ready to accept, use and be capable of supporting the AT use. This might mean, depending on the student and the setting, having someone who can help set up the technology, transfer the technology, take down the technology, program the technology, repair the technology, etc. When we support students in moving from setting A to setting B, do we look at all the considerations that come into play to effectively use the technology, and have we prepared either the student or an aide of some sort to be a responsible part of the plan?

How do you see this indicator impacting service? What strategies need to be put into play for effective practice? I'd love to hear your thoughts!

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- **Classes on college campuses** by **msebu** on Oct 11, 2007
I work for an intermediate school district-we help plan and implement school programs for students that their local school district might not have available for them (ages 16-26). For the past 6-7 years (at least) we have classrooms located on two college campuses-Eastern Michigan University and Wastenaw Community College. The students have more involved cognitive impairments(used to be considered trainable or more impaired), some more affected by severe autism and some other disabilities. The class at EMU starts with a meet and greet-students may come in to work on their Picture schedules with staff and then go off to events on campus, work with college students or have some fun and utilize community transportation to get to jobs and home. It is pretty amazing to see what they can do. They are working on having a blog to note their activities.

We have found that AT needs to be cheap, efficient and easy to use-can't cost too much in case it gets lost or broken. We have students using more complicated pieces of equipment, too-but generally there is a lot of problem solving to keep it simple. We want to make sure that anyone they meet could interact with them, without a lot of training.

- **Re: Classes on college campuses** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 12, 2007
Its interesting that you bring up the need for readily accessible and low cost assistive technology. Sean and I, along with another colleague, Kathleen McClaskey, worked together to develop a presentation for NECC (National Education Computing Conference) this passed June which focused on different technologies that can be used to differentiate instruction and support students with diverse learning needs. The driving force behind this presentation was that, if the technology is easily available, it can be widely deployed and used. For this presentation, we focused on Reading, Writing and Math. The URL for the site of the presentation is <http://differentiatingnecc2007.wikispaces.com>. Feel free to visit and look at the resources.

Ok...shameless promotion alert. We are expanding this presentation at NECC 2008 across two days to focus on Reading, Writing Math, and Content Areas (Science, Social Studies, etc.).

- **Re: Classes on college campuses** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 12, 2007
Brian,

Not a shameless promotion at all. Thanks for remembering to share this site. I often forget the resource we created.

- **Re: Classes on college campuses** by **prodriguez** on Oct 18, 2007
I have a question. Those students take classes on the campus? Are they included on courses of their interest or do you have special classes for them?
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- **Classes on college campus** by **msebu** on Oct 11, 2007
for more information contact Dawn Keith, John Rose or Nancy Frushour-
www.wash.k12.mi.us
-

- **Hello** by **mjbmilller** on Oct 11, 2007
Hello everyone. I'm an Occupational Therapist working for a special ed co-op. I serve students from 3-21 yrs. I work in 3 school districts over 3 counties in a very rural area. I don't have enough experience with AT and both topics--autism and transition are interesting and applicable to me. I've been frustrated with knowing I have students that there must be more out there for them but not knowing where to begin. I've been lurking around and reading posts, checking out recommended resources. Wow! I don't even know where to jump in; so far I have been completely occupied by trying to keep up with all of you!
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- **Hi all** by **hcblair** on Oct 11, 2007
I'm currently working for voc rehab assisting customers with SSI/SSDI in understanding the impact of earnings on their benefits and using work incentives. Many of the people I do benefits planning with are transition-aged. Sometimes work incentives can help someone purchase needed AT and I'm always interested in learning more.

I worked for many years in residential and vocational services for people with developmental disabilities, then began working at a Center for Independent Living before becoming a benefit specialist. I have a personal passion for AT, low-tech or high-tech.

- **classes on college campuses-student portfolios** by **msebu** on Oct 11, 2007
We have several classes for students with severe cognitive disabilities and other disabilities such as deaf or aspergers that are located on college campuses. There is a need to find the most effective and usually cheapest way to use AT. The students work with the staff to start building a daily schedule with pictures and add most advanced tech. as needed. The cell phone has been a great tool, too.

Students build ongoing portfolios using power point. It is pretty cool to have them share their power point with employers as a way to say this is all that I can do.

- **Re: classes on college campuses-student portfolios** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 11, 2007
I'm curious...what is the nature of the program on your campus?
- **Re: classes on college campuses-student portfolios** by **HeatherB** on Oct 11, 2007
I can't say that I am familiar with much about this portion of our discussion at this point. I am reading along and learning a lot! I find it so encouraging that so much more is available to our special needs students today. We have a very high functioning child with Down's Syndrome and I have told my husband many time that I could see her going on to college someday, but her speech and slow cognitive recall may impede her. He has indicated that

colleges would not take her because of that. I figured I would just have to attend with her to help her take notes and communicated effectively. It is nice to know that AT devices are used and that transitions plans can be written to most effectively enable student achievement and success, no matter what they do in life - college or just daily living! Obviously, we have a lot to learn over the next 12 years or so, but at least I am getting a jump start here! Keep the ideas going! I am going to keep reading!

- **Re: classes on college campuses-student portfolios** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 12, 2007
Heather,

We have a son with Down syndrome and in terms of where he is at in terms of development, not certain. We are working at it and he is in first grade so not sure what things are going to look like upon his completion of a High School program. However, I am hopeful with what a number of colleges and universities are doing in this regard.

For example, East New Mexico State University and the University of Southern Maine (among some that I know of) have created programs that offer programs for individuals with disabilities that would not be seen as traditional students. Instead, these students with disabilities have more significant needs and generally would not succeed in the traditional environment (with or without AT supports). The programs though, are focused on transition type activities (focuses on adaptive skills development with ongoing academic learning opportunities) and are located on the college campus. As a result, the student gets to live and interact on the college campus similar to that of his peer and/or his/her sibling. The Chronicle of Higher Education had a nice write up on such a program and the title of the article was:

From Special Ed to Higher Ed By PETER SCHMIDT and it appeared 2/18/2005.

I don't have a current subscription to the Chronicle but if one does, they can access this article at the Chronicle's website - <http://chronicle.com> - do a quick search using the term Down syndrome and you'll see that it is the third link for the results.

I share this with everyone in that these programs exist (and I'll try to offer some direct links when I can contact some at the respective institutions...trouble finding resources on the web at the present) and my hope and expectation is that they will be growing as more and more individuals are looking for such an opportunity. The universities I have read about have seen this as a niche from which to serve others, but also a way to recruit students.

- **Re:classes on college campuses-student portfolios** by **Jackie Hess [SI Faculty]** on Oct 12, 2007

Thanks, Sean. I wasn't able to find links to information on those specific programs on either school's website; however, the University of Southern Maine does have a few interesting online resources that address transition from high school to college. One of the more useful ones, I thought, was a document entitled "Interviewing the Disability Service Provider." It offers a list of questions that students and parents should ask as they consider different schools. The link is <http://www.usm.maine.edu/~oassd/prospective/transition/interviewdss.htm>

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- **Thinking about this strand...** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 11, 2007
I was excited to read the number of posts from people who have been working with children with

disabilities in the early years! It is an incredible topic area...

I have been fortunate enough to work on a project that involves looking at the use of assistive and instructional technology at the early childhood level, mainly in the area of developing written expression and emergent literacy. The students involved in this project are students who have been identified for special education services or who are 'at risk'.

One of the first questions we needed (and are still currently) to deal with was (is), "What does assistive technology for a young child look like?" Assistive technology, by its nature, is compensatory. In other words, AT allows a person to do a task that without that AT, the person could not do the task at the expected performance level. When looking at the young child, we constantly were comparing the students' actual and expected developmental levels and assessing the need for AT. However, we found that we needed to take into consideration the development patterns of the child. There was a balance between what the child needed...in that moment...and what the child would need in the short term and long term future.

Have any of you had similar experiences? If so, how did you handle some of these decisions?

- o **Re: Thinking about this strand...** by **HeatherB** on Oct 11, 2007

I am going to pose a question back on this one. It is in regards to my daughter. If you look at AT allowing her as a now six year old to speak - something she could not do when she was 4 years old; the AT device has been a success. However, we still have a shortcoming that I cannot figure out how to solve and I am beginning to get the idea the an AT device would help her here too, but is another device really cost effective, or should I be looking into programming our existing handheld to speak to her when I or even she touches the screen? Madyson cannot remember and follow simple two and three step directions, which at times can interfere with daily living skills. I am thinking this is something that can be easily trained, short term goal that applies to the long term future and is developmentally appropriate! If it worked for speech and reading/literacy skills, then might it work for memory and following direction skills as well? Less frustration for her and me, and anyone else who happens to be dealing with her!

- **Re: Thinking about this strand...** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 12, 2007

I am not sure if this will help or not, but let me relay some experiences I have had in working with students at this age...

Many of the students in the ECE class where I worked used some sort of communication system. Some used devices, some used sign language (these students were deaf), and some used different printed communication systems. The students in the class were between 4 and 6 years of age. Many of the students, like your daughter, had difficulty with following 2+ step directions. This was due, in part, to their developmental level and, in part, to their disability. I found that loading them with more personal devices, in general, which they needed to carry around and for which they were responsible was not necessarily the answer. I found that engineering the environment was a better solution. Visual strategies and audio cue devices were used all around the classroom to support students through routine multi-step tasks. For example, near the sink, we would have a visual task list that showed the steps of washing hands. We would also have a device that would provide audio cues for the students who were better supported through the audio channel.

While Linda Hodgdon (<http://www.usevisualstrategies.com/>) is the 'guru' when it comes to visual strategies and resources for thinking about and creating visual strategies (many of her products are 'must haves' in my book), there are some sources on the net that can assist. One such source is <http://www.pattan.net/files/instruction/visualstrat.pdf> and another is <http://mcesa.k12.mi.us/Documents/AI%20Tip%20sheets/Visual%20Strategies.pdf>.

For auditory aids, there are many products out on the market from simple picture

photo frames that have the ability to record a message to products like the Step by Step from ablenet

(<http://www.ablenetinc.com/SearchByKeyword.aspx?word=step%20by%20step>).

- **Re: Thinking about this strand...** by **HeatherB** on Oct 12, 2007
Thank-you so much for the advice! I am willing to look into anything right now that will help us with 2+ step directions and memory recall! I felt like saddling us with another AT device was going overboard! But pictures and talking picture frames using our existing pictures system just might be a great answer! I also want to poke around Linda Hodgdon's website a little more. I have heard of her, but never actually seen her products! Thanks for the weblink! I am sure my house is going to be full of picture poster schedules and talking frames! Never a dull moment, but it is all worth it!
- **Re: Thinking about this strand...** by **MarciaJ** on Oct 11, 2007
I too have a particular interest in the area of AT and ECSE as well as AT and EI. Most of my career has been in the field of ECSE with AT as a strong interest area. When I changed my primary career emphasis to AT I was surprised to find out what little understanding there was about the nature of ECSE/EI services and what makes the area some what unique as noted in your concluding comment "...balance between what the child needed...in that moment...and what the child would need in the short term and long term future". Over the years (serving my own caseload) I found the answer was not always apparent. Now I find the need to educate colleagues in the field about the relevancy of AT to Early Childhood services. To this end I have used materials found at the Let's Play Project <http://letsplay.buffalo.edu/> and the Center for Best Practices in Early Childhood <http://www.wiu.edu/thecenter/onlineworkshops.php> In addition to increasing awareness among the direct service providers about AT options there is the need to help families with the concept of advocacy to ensure that all aspects of their child's program are included as transitions are made between settings.
 - **Re: Thinking about this strand...** by **mjbmilller** on Oct 19, 2007
Thank you for those links you posted. I am an OT working in the schools and I recognize that there is a need for AT at that level. Through this forum I have come to realize that the more I learn the less I know! I don't have the training or support to implement AT. At least I am now gaining enough knowledge to form intelligent questions and opinions about accessing AT evals and advocating for my students.
- **Re: Thinking about this strand...** by **msebu** on Oct 14, 2007
I think people short change students in terms of what they can do-think of the phrase, "Not being able to talk, is not the dame as not having anything to say". I learned to expose children to as many ways to communicate as possible and as easily as possible, hoping they will be able to show me the path to take in the short term-this leads to a better selection for the long term. Good question.

Look at how fast sign language for babies has taken off. AT can help speed up learning, socialization, and so on.

- **Re: Thinking about this strand...** by **Kimberly Fields** on Oct 15, 2007
I, too, work with a project involved in providing services for infants and toddlers with disabilities, Project SCEIs <http://education.gsu.edu/sceis/>

SCEIS provides
Training for BCW personnel and parents
Higher Education Consortium
Continuing Education
Credentialing
Parent Education
Minority Personnel Recruitment

Evaluation Process

- **Re: Thinking about this strand...** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 15, 2007
Interesting...

What kinds of assistive technologies are you seeing the most at that age level? Or are you seeing AT?

- **Re: Thinking about this strand...** by **Marjory** on Oct 17, 2007
I'm in charge of a 4 county AT lending library in North Carolina for the birth-5 population, although the agency only directly serves birth-3 yrs. We loan out items as diverse as positioning, mobility, cause & effect, voice output, computer access, ADL, etc. It supposedly is a "try before you buy" program but for some families, a short term loan is all the child needs. Our age range for purchasing equipment using state funding lowers from 3rd birthday to prior to 33 months on 1-1-08 so that the child will benefit while in the Infant-Toddler program. That's going to be a big transition as many have waited until as close as possible to 3rd birthday before ordering so the child will have what they need for preschool. We've been informed this will no longer be acceptable.
- **Re: Thinking about this strand...** by **hollygg** on Oct 19, 2007
I was really glad to see transition for EC being a topic in this discussion.

The Early Intervention program I was working for was looking for ideas to help children moving from our EC Autism program (and other children in our developmental preschool who were using some form of communication system or equipment) into surrounding school districts. We had found that the strategies, devices and/or modifications could easily get lost in the move. As a school-based OT for 20+ years I also found that when students moved from even one classroom to another it was a bit overwhelming for the receiving teacher to connect the new equipment, adapted materials, strategies, etc... with the curriculum, classroom routine and classroom support. I had wondered if seeing the child using these supports would help integrate them easier.

One site that I discovered was Circle of Inclusion (<http://circleofinclusion.org/>). They have a section called Accommodations, Accessibility and Awareness. In that area is Alternative Assessment ~ Nicholas's Portfolio ~. We used this portfolio as a model to develop a Transition Portfolio for our students. Initially it was time-intensive and we still have some bugs to work out b/c we have also tried to include some short video clips, but it seemed to present another picture of how the child was able to participate with different types of supports in a variety of activities. We also felt that it was another way to share information with the child's physician. It's still a work in progress.

Has anyone else come across similar programs or transition portfolios they have found useful?

Holly

- **Re: Thinking about this strand...** by **Brenda Scott** on Oct 21, 2007
I work as an AT specialist and have to cover all ages, but preschool and early elementary (K-2) children with developmental delays are my special area of interest. It is a time when children are developing at very different levels and very different rates so there can be no cookie cutter approach. We focus our AT efforts on language and social development, tying that into emergent literacy by using some of the Adapted Stories done by Patti King DeBaun. We find that works well.

- **AT & Learning Disabilities** by **carmen duran** on Oct 12, 2007

For students in Transition from HS to Postsecondary education:

1. the State AT center is a good resource as well as the Recycling Program and the Equipment Exchange for the acquisition of AT devices and equipment.
2. students in Transition who are clients of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA in every state) receive AT services and equipment as stated in their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

Comments: Thanks to Jackie for the 10 steps to becoming an effective self-advocate. May I have your permission to translate it into the Spanish Language for our Spanish speaking clients/families?

Speaking about self-advocacy: in order to respond to the questions posed by Brian. The services are different under IDEA & ADA. ADA doesn't specifically address assistive technology. However, it extends civil rights protection to postsecondary students with disabilities. Furthermore, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act as amended, mandates access to adaptive computer technology systems and services; mandates accessibility to postsecondary education for "otherwise qualified" students with disabilities. Allowing students with disabilities to use such aids is considered making an academic adjustment or reasonable accommodation.

Importance of self-advocacy: the responsibility for initiating provision of services and accommodations falls to the individual student. Preparation for assuming this role in postsecondary settings should begin at the secondary level. It is pretty much a role of the initiator. Students need to be comfortable using AT services and devices before going to college. Furthermore, knowing which accommodations work best for them so they can make their requests. One benefit that we have now is that AT is simpler, less expensive and more available at institutions of higher education. Also, companies are constantly developing new amazing products.

Self-advocacy will help the students to ask for the workplace accommodations when needed. Will better prepare the students for the workplace.

- **Transitioning Keyboard Skills** by **Jackie Hess [SI Faculty]** on Oct 12, 2007

There was an interesting interchange in our online discussion of AT and Early Childhood, moderated by Sue Mistrett and Lisa Johnson. I've copied below Sue's advice re: transitioning a child from one type of keyboard (ABC layout) to another (QWERTY) as this seemed to me to be an AT transition issue.

Hi Sue,

I have heard conflicting information about the most appropriate age or developmental level to introduce keyboarding skills to young children - I am curious to hear what your thoughts are about when and how keyboarding skills should be introduced. I know so much of this depends on the individual child, but many times there is such a discrepancy about what is and isn't advisable, it becomes rather confusing.

Re: How soon is too soon to introduce the keyboard by Sue Mistrett

When I was growing up, the typical time of learning typewriting skills was sometime in the freshman or sophomore years of high school! Of course with computers now being used by even very young children- this issue has come up time and time again. The answer to "when to introduce keyboarding" is somewhat based on development and somewhat on "it depends". Developmentally, keyboarding is most successfully learned when a child has well developed eye-finger/hand coordination; typically around 4th grade. Before this age, children do not have the required dexterity or hand size to reach all the keys on the keyboard. "It depends" refers to the coordination issue as well as to the purpose of using a computer keyboard at all.

If the purpose is to locate individual letters or control keys to type out words or interact with a

computer game, then locating the desired keys by the most efficient means possible may be the best answer. For this skill level, some argue that providing a keyboard with keys in ABC order supports a child to more quickly find the key she wants as its layout is based on what she already knows (alphabet/song). Another approach is to highlight needed keys.

As a child's writing needs change to forming sentences and paragraphs, the emphasis shifts to efficiency in locating letters to quickly form words. The amount of written work increases significantly by the 4th grade when a child may have sufficient hand coordination to use all fingers. This combination may be why keyboarding is often taught in 4th grade. Some teachers introduce the qwerty keyboard and keyboarding at this same time. Keyboarding skills should be introduced somewhere between 4th and 6th grade as students may be expected to be fairly proficient by the time they attend Junior High School. In a recent review of technology standards and keyboarding- the majority of the states include keyboarding as expectations for 4th and 5th grade students.

There are some very good typing tutor programs available to help teach these skills.

- **Re: Transitioning Keyboard Skills** by **sandra callahan** on Oct 14, 2007
Most of my students have poor fine motor coordination so standard keyboarding classes do not work for them. I have had limited success in getting the typing teacher to let them students use the fingers that work best for them...not just the traditional home row placement. Some of these students can type as many WPM as the touch typers do, with no increase in errors.
Just something to keep in mind.....
Sandra
- **Re: Transitioning Keyboard Skills** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 15, 2007
Sandra,

I'm with you in that I am a two-finger typist and have been for years. I am pretty good at it as well but increasingly have been frustrated in my limited speed as well as the fact it interferes with my ability to get my thoughts out in a manner consistent with the way I think. I have tried several typing programs and have found Sunburst's Type to learn the best (<http://store.sunburst.com/>). This is an application that can be used from preK-Adulthood and offers a nice interface with administrative privileges allowing us to manage what we want the student interacting with.

Now, while I have benefited from this application, I am also spending more time with Dragon's Naturally Speaking (<http://www.nuance.com/naturallyspeaking/>), which is allowing me to bypass my typing limitation. It is not perfect but it is allowing me to enhance my speed and get away from the fine motor issues that I face but also those that I see other students face. If you do consider this, it is critical that we take the time to train with it and make certain it knows our speech patterns.

Just a few thoughts. Of course, IntelliTools and applications like that (intellitools.com) offer a whole other arena for keyboarding access for users. There are also built-in sticky keys and the like very applicable to the learner.
- **Re: Transitioning Keyboard Skills** by **pmcclure** on Oct 15, 2007
Not having an unlimited budget in my classroom, I decided to google keyboarding sites to use with students. I found many interesting sites available in a variety of formats. Right now some of my students with autism are enjoying Dance Mat Typing- a free program in a gamelike format.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/typing>

- **Re: Transitioning Keyboard Skills** by **mdover** on Oct 15, 2007
Thank you for this resource. The school system I work for is always looking for free software that can meet the student's needs.
- **Re: Transitioning Keyboard Skills** by **Brenda Scott** on Oct 21, 2007
Oh, that's way cool. Thank you for the reference!
- **Re: Transitioning Keyboard Skills** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 15, 2007
We often face the question of "Should the student handwrite or type?" Both pathways have their own pros and cons.

However, in making that decision, there is an excellent resource by Denise DeCoste entitled Assistive Technology Assessment: Developing a Written Productivity Profile (http://www.donjohnston.com/products/teacher_resources/assistive_tech_assess/index.html).

I like this assessment and evaluation tool because of several reasons. It is easy to use. It is very pragmatic. It is data oriented. Most research on typing, especially for students with disabilities, differentiated between functional speeds and efficiency speeds. Functional speeds are defined as the speed that is the minimal speed a person needs to demonstrate in order to allow typing to be a significant means of producing print. The literature states that functional speeds, from what I have seen, tend to be between 10-15 wpm. Efficiency is defined by the nature of the task. However, in this same literature, I do not believe that these speeds were constrained by the need for implementing typical 'home row' typing methods. The DeCoste tool mentioned above takes all of this into consideration and guides the assessor to answering that question...to type or write.

- **NECC Website-NICE!** by **msebu** on Oct 12, 2007

Brian,

Thanks for the website. I would be a shameless self promoter, too, if I had information like that. Will there be a place to access the future areas you mentioned?

I think one of the best things about this Institute-aside from knowing all these other people are in this, too, is the resource sharing. Thanks

- **Re: NECC Website-NICE!** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 12, 2007
We will have the NECC 2008 information online as well...but that is a work in progress, so there is not much to share...yet.

I am fortunate to work with two very talented colleagues on this project!

- **AT - Transition - Universal Design for Learning - Want to make Sure we are All on the Same Page** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 12, 2007

Hello all,

As I have read many of the posts affiliated with this Institute, I am being reminded that a number of things being shared are truly universal in nature. That is, while they employ components of the AT Considerations Process and/or Good Transition Planning; they are also taking advantage of universally designed applications and employing them into the lives of individuals with disabilities. Now, I apologize for the review for some but wanted to ensure that everyone was on the same page when it came to the idea of Universal design for learning and how technology lends itself as an excellent application to support this framework.

Many of you are familiar with the concepts of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). That is, when we provide flexible and versatile learning environments for all of our students, we are utilizing the concepts of Universal Design. CAST (see <http://www.cast.org>) a leader in research and implementation of universal design for learning talks about three “key dimensions” which should be included in any universally designed curriculum. These include:

- Providing multiple representations of content;
- Providing multiple options for expression and control; and
- Providing multiple options for engagement and motivation.

In the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, the term “universal design” was officially defined within the federal law governing special education:

The term universal design has the meaning given the term in section 3 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998.

Assistive Technology Act of 1998’s definition of Universal Design is:

The term universal design means a concept or philosophy for designing and delivering products and services that are usable by people with the widest possible range of functional capabilities, which include products and services that are directly usable (without requiring AT) and products and services that are made usable with AT.

For more information please see - <http://www.cast.org/research/udl/>

Another good resource is - <http://www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent>

Now, an example of some recent efforts that are UDL and IDEA related has to do with the recent news that came out from the US Department of Education. That is, they just awarded 32 million dollars to Bookshare (bookshare.org) to expand upon the already 33,000 plus digital books already available on this site. The site was originally developed to assist those with visual impairments get access to text in a format from which it can be easily altered for access. Now, the beauty of the digital format is that it is flexible to be used for those with reading challenges. That is, I can easily bring this into a text-to-speech application (e.g., readplease.com) and have the text read to me. I can also alter the text to summarize it and/or modify it for the reading needs of the learner. So, the point here is that digital text has a variety of flexible uses and can be structured in a manner applicable to the needs of the individual. This is a brief example but hopefully gets us thinking within the realm of UDL and technology.

Let me take this further into the transition and technology world.

Alexander (Alex for short) is a young man with Aspergers who has wonderful decoding and vocab skills but struggles with comprehension. Bringing things together and making sense of the reading is difficult. Yet, Alex is quite bright and so he spend s fair amount of time in some honor classes and will soon be in the positions to consider AP classes. However, he struggles in areas of these classes and his grades are clearly not representative of his abilities. Likewise, the time it takes Alex (and his mom and dad) to get through this work is incredible. They have hired a tutor and they spend countless hours trying to empower him with the strategies that he can use to succeed in this curriculum. Some might argue Alex should take an easier load, to which Mom would reply, he is capable, he is very interested, and he wants to take these courses. Alex just needs the right supports.

So, as mom and dad looked for things that worked they found Inspiration. Dad found it online and thought it was great for him in organizing his day and visually connecting dots he often missed (yes, dad might be on the spectrum although he has never sought testing). Anyways, they began using Inspiration at home and saw that with the right concept maps, Alex was able to break down the reading, understand the important parts, and thus, study the critical issues. As a result, Mom and dad asked that Alex use this in school. Of course, like many school districts throughout the

country, Alex's school had access to this program but just wasn't using it. They began to use it and it is one of a number of strategies that are really making the difference. At present, this is not listed as an AT consideration but instead, listed as an accommodation (yes we could discuss the plusses and minuses for this) on his IEP. The point I'm trying to make is they took something available on the classroom and general society, and used it for his specific need. It has components of UDL in its application but also, is simply a resource that goes beyond a particular focus (e.g., AT).

Now, as Alex is getting ready to transition into a postsecondary academic setting, he has use of a tool that will make the difference in his understanding, studying, and applying information. This will not be seen as an AT device and will not need the supports from the Office of Disability Services at some two-or four year college. However, it will be critical to his success and something he can use for varied purposes throughout his life.

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- o **Re:AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Page** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 13, 2007
Sean- this is a great story that exemplifies concepts of UDL. It is essential that as we include more kids with a wider range of abilities in the classroom that educators become more aware of the potential of teaching in a UDL manner. It does benefit more kids.

You did reference in passing whether Inspiration should have been included in the IEP as AT. I know that many schools will suggest to a family that when a tool is commonly available to other students, it does not need to be added on the IEP as a necessary tool. As a state department of education (former) specialist in AT, I have always told educators and parents that I want EVERYTHING necessary for access to a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) included on the IEP. To not include it presents a range of risks, particularly

if the student moves, a new teacher enters the picture, etc.

And- I used to use Inspiration a lot in my world- I had a boss who was very linear in her thinking, while I am more visual. We could not communicate effectively, as I was literally looking at the big picture I made with Inspiration, and she could not tell where I was starting. So- as I developed my plans, I would continue to make my big picture of what I was thinking of, then use the features of Inspiration to present her with a printed outline. We finally were able to meet and talk about the same thing at the same time.

- **Re: AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Pa** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 15, 2007

Joan,

I'm with you in wanting to include everything in a student's IEP. I have my son's in front of me right now and am reviewing to ensure we have the right information documented for his needs. However, I am running into more and more districts reluctant to note AT under the AT Considerations section of the IEP. I'm not certain of the philosophy but find it frustrating. Yet, I am increasingly seeing things I would note as AT, included under the Accommodations list of an IEP. As a result, the student still has access to the software (and it is generally software) but possibly not to the training and support having the information noted under AT Considerations.

Are others seeing similar things in where schools are willing to note the AT? If yes, are there reasons stated for the change?

- **Re: AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Pa** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 15, 2007

One of the things we run into in MN is that there is no place on the state recommended forms where AT is supposed to be included. When I provide professional development or parent training in this state, I tell them I want it ANYWHERE- as long as AT is in the IEP. Each district in our state is able to develop their own IEP forms, as long as it meets the minimal legal standard as set by the state education agency. Despite being part of that state agency, I do not get to write or change the forms. (darn it!)

I have heard several educators tell me that they are told on the district level to list AT only in the accommodations section of the IEP. However, as Sean says, this limits how we include the related services and supports necessary to make the AT work.

One of the things I have learned from reading complaints in my state (and others) is that schools typically do well in providing AT devices. Where there are complaints or issues is in providing the necessary supports. If what Sean experiences is valid in many places (and I suspect it is) what strategies would you have for people like me who are in a position to make (or at least try to make) some sort of systems change?

- **Re: AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Pa** by **HeatherB** on Oct 15, 2007

When we were looking into getting AT for our daughter, I looked into having the school district put AT into her IEP. I was told that it was a lengthy process to go through - much paperwork and a good 6 month wait for the evaluation from the Assistive Technology Team. Then, it would be another lengthy process while we waited to see if a device and funding were available. After that, they would meet again to write AT into her IEP, but it would take another month before training would go into effect for the teacher and the student. All in all, we were

looking at a one year process before we could get a device and all of the hesitancy on the part of the district seemed to be around the part of how to write it into the IEP in a timely manner! I do remember asking if I could purchase the device and software, could it be written into the IEP any quicker, but the answer was a resounding NO! There was still the problem of getting the AT team out to train the teacher, plus the team would need to go through training on our device and software, just to familiarize themselves with it!

- **Re: AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Pa** by **mjbmilller** on Oct 15, 2007
If no one in the school is trained or has experience with AT then the wheels can turn slowly. If your daughter is already using the AT then it should not be a long, drawn out process to add it to the IEP. If the school relies on an outside agency to evaluate and try different options, then it could take a while. Are you sure you know the best option for your daughter if you were to purchase it? Maybe on a regular school in-service day you could provide training to all the mentioned staff.
- **Re: AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Pa** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 16, 2007
Heather,

This is the format I am seeing put into place in district after district and the process, not the desire for AT, appears to get in the way. That is, I have seen the AT Consideration Process be seen as something for a separate AT team, AT Assessment, and a series of additional steps beyond the duties and the responsibilities of the IEP Team. While I'm all for gathering data and having folks that understand the unique features of a device involved in the process, I am struggling with the process that many districts and cooperatives have created that limit access to the AT device.

For example, here in KS we have some wonderful AT teams that seek to support the needs of students with disabilities. However, these teams are limited in time, ability to get to particular geographic regions (especially in western KS where special education cooperative cover hundreds of miles), and expertise (e.g., a speech pathologist trying to serve as the expert on word processing application specific to writing). While the idea of an AT Team is excellent, what I am seeing is that the IEP Team defers to the AT team and thus, does not truly consider AT. Instead, they see AT Consideration involving a significant process and thus, only consider AT for those students with significant communication, physical, or cognitive needs. For the majority of students with attention and/or learning challenges, they move ahead thinking that the AT team is too busy, the needs of the child aren't that extensive to require such a process, and/or similar reasons. So, the process appears to be getting in the way of the AT Consideration. Now, as a parent, I wouldn't be volunteering my child for such an extensive process (like Heather has shared) unless I really have run out of options.

Unfortunately, these AT teams are allowing IEP Teams to ignore the SETT Framework and other supports that have been developed and are available (FOR FREE) that allows the IEP Team to use their expertise. That is, they know this child and know what he or she can and cannot do. They have this information and with the right framework, can make some judgments and considerations for AT. Now, this does not mean the AT Team might not be involved in device selection, assessment, and ongoing evaluation, however; it also means that the IEP Team is not dependent upon the AT Team.

So, with all this rambling I am repeating things heard earlier and in other Institutes but believe it is critical in that we can't allow the process to get in the way of the Consideration. Honestly, I just met with my son's teacher and special education teacher yesterday to brainstorm on alternative ways to convey his thoughts as he works on his handwriting (1st grader and delayed in his handwriting and overall fine motor skills). We could go the extensive AT Consideration route but for now, we are problem solving as a small group with the larger team, in the wings. I don't want to get Nolan into a device (which is what the AT process in his district generally results in) until we have a better understanding of his needs and the options available.

- **Re: AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Pa** by **HeatherB** on Oct 16, 2007

Yes! Thank-you so much for posting it in a way that was understandable! I was having a difficult time putting it into words last night! I knew what I was seeing and hearing! I am not really sure what a workable solution to this issue would be for our children. It seems like such a vicious cycle for those who don't have significant communication, physical, or cognitive needs. Yet, I know that without the device we purchased and currently use, my daughter would not be communicating and doing as well as she is doing today! I tend to force issues I full heartedly believe in and I don't back down very easily, unless I am given other more suitable options! What about parents who don't have that understanding of their rights or their options?!

- **Re: AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Pa** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 16, 2007

I really like the way that Sean framed this issue.

I'd like to underscore that teaching, itself, is a process of analysis, implementation of good practices, assessment, evaluation, problem solving and even a little trial and error. AT is just another means of meeting a student's needs in much the same way as teaching a student a specific strategy or providing a specific accommodation.

In the area where I primarily work, I have seen certain well AT decision making processes and tools be turned into bureaucratic gateways in the provision of AT services. These gateways developed through the rationale that AT should be carefully considered and selected for an individual student based on his or her needs and abilities. The thought was that if a team went through the prescribed AT decision making process...complete with standard forms...that a solution would be reached. In the beginning, it looked like this solution worked. However, as time went on several 'back steps' occurred. Teams that plunged into using AT with their students became quite savvy at the consideration process over time and naturally incorporated the components of the process in their teaching and therapy. Through natural day to day teaching, the teams engaged in trying, implementing and evaluating different technology solutions with individual students. When the IEP rolled around and AT recommendations were made, the recommendations were often rejected, despite data presented by the team, because the AT decision making forms were not filled out in the approved manner.

In other cases, especially with teams who were made up of inexperienced teachers or therapists or those who had a disposition that was not technology friendly (perhaps due to a phobia of technology, real or perceived, or the belief that technology was too complex or would make the student dependent... (ps...these are all statements I have heard from folks on these teams)), the mandated AT decision making process became a way to stall, hide and defer the consideration of AT. Many of these teams would cite the process as too lengthy or would state that they simply needed to wait until the local cadre of "AT experts" would be able to come and 'do their thing' which allowed the team to abdicate any responsibility to consider AT and defer to the experts.

I point these scenarios out because, in doing so, I think we begin to understand some reasons for AT service delivery breakdown and can begin looking for ways to change the system. Many teacher preparation programs have little assistive technology training incorporated into them. While there is a mandate for AT consideration for all students with IEPs, there is no mandate that those working with students with IEPs know anything about assistive technology.

Coming to the process of programming for a student, as Sean stated in his post, as part of a general problem solving process, that may or may not include AT but where AT is always a possibility on the table, is a great way to start. It's just good teaching.

- **Re: AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Pa** by **Marvin_Williams** on Oct 18, 2007

I've been fortunate in that my son's school districts have been willing to approach AT and give it consideration. My son has an IEP, and I do make sure that AT is definitely part of the discussion. While it has never been mentioned, I'm sure that my work as an AT Specialist does not escape the school and it's approach of making sure that AT is indeed discussed at least in his meeting. However, I have heard from other parents that a good number of the schools here do discuss AT in the IEP meeting beyond just giving it a cursory nod.

Another thing to take into consideration is the state test. I know here in Delaware, as it probably is everywhere else, a student cannot have an accommodation on the state test that they do not have available for regular classroom instruction. Keeping that in mind, there are listed acceptable accommodations for our state test, such that if the necessary accommodation is not approved, it may not be available for use on the test. A different accommodation may be necessary which then causes problems with the requirement that accommodations for the state test also be used by the student in regular classroom instruction. So while your child may benefit from using Math Pad for regular completion of assignments, it is not a listed accommodation (at least here in DE), and cannot be used for the math portion of the exam. A different accommodation will need to be used. This can complicate the considerations of and for AT usage. On our IEP form, Kurzweil is actually named as an acceptable accommodation. While that seems nice, the problem becomes if your the student is proficient in using Wynn or some other text-reader which is named in the student's IEP. Come test time, the only approved text-reader is Kurzweil. If the school has not purchased it, that could be a problem for the student in taking the test. And just think about how great that child will perform on the test using brand new software if the school can get it at all. While I'm happy that DE is embracing AT, I do hope that some evolutionary changes can come to its policy that would be more inclusive of all of the tools students need to level the playing field.

- **Re: AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Pa** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 15, 2007
Interesting topic...

We, at the SEAT Center, have had the fortune of working with a number of teachers who are working toward an advanced certification in technology and special education. In our work with these teachers, one question that we have repeatedly asked is "With regard to 'best practice', where in the IEP should AT be documented?" After a number of conversations, the consensus seems to be the following (albeit, this is a work in progress):

1. Present Levels of Performance - this should list any AT that is

currently being used by the student, how and when it is being used, and how the AT enhances the student's performance.

2. Goals and Objectives - this area addresses AT in two different ways. If new AT is being added to the student's program, there needs to be goal and objectives designed to help the student reach operational competence with the particular AT so he/she is able to use the AT to enhance his/her performance. The other area looks at existing AT, or AT in which operational competence has already been achieved. In this scenario, AT is part of the condition under which an objective is to be set (e.g., Given a portable word processor, the student will...).

3. Supplemental Aids and Services/Accommodations - this is the section (different places do this section differently) that list those supports needed for the student to receive FAPE in his or her program...the needed AT should be listed here.

4. Related Services - if necessary, specific statement about related services should be made with respect to the frequency and nature of the supports needed for the AT to result in enhanced performance on the part of the student (i.e., assistive technology services as stated in IDEA)

5. "Other Considerations" - most of the time there is a section of the IEP that is a 'catch all' for things that don't fit into the other sections of the IEP. This is a good section to document training, implementation plans, contingency plans for when the AT fails, and so forth to ensure that the AT integration is successful.

The follow up to this that we often ask is "Why is this not occurring?" One teacher responded by stating that AT is still considered an 'add on' to the instructional plan for students. Another teacher noted that AT is not yet (paraphrasing on my part) a standard of practice.

I would be curious what others think on this topic and, as Joan has already posed, how can we move towards systems change?

- **Re: AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Pa** by **mjbmillier** on Oct 15, 2007

On the IEP form that we use there is a space on the first page that asks if the student requires or uses AT devices or technology and asks for an explanation. However, the space is small. It does not address who will be responsible for the AT or training staff. It doesn't ask how the AT will be implemented or in what settings. It's a great discussion so far because understanding how the system can be incomplete or fail allows me to be a better advocate for students and parents. I'm also more aware of questions we need to ask and actions we need to take to meet and support students needs.

- **Re: AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Pa** by **jeffst** on Oct 16, 2007

I too believe this is a perplexing and mysterious phenomenon. In the school districts that I work closely with it is a matter of first changing the mindset of those in charge of the all mighty pen and integrating AT throughout so that it is woven into the

main fabric of the academic goals and objectives. This takes plenty of time, patience and professional sharing and implementation of AT in the classroom.

- **Re: AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Pa** by **msebu** on Oct 17, 2007
I think part of the reason for this is financial-It seems to give people time to look at a range of equipment and ideas, without commitment to a specific thing. When the team works well and are knowledgeable it is o.k.. But when the team doesn't have the knowledge or expertise it can be pretty vague and not as useful.
- **Re: AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Page** by **Brenda Scott** on Oct 21, 2007
I can understand why commonly available classroom tools may not be listed on the IEP under AT, however, could they not be referenced in the "goals" section of the IEP? For example, if the student is using Inspiration for visual organization for writing purposes, could that not be referenced under his/her writing goals? That would make sense to me. I believe we "try" to do that in our system, versus just listing out what the student is using we try to state how they are using it to obtain a goal.
- **Re: AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Pa** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 22, 2007
Hmmm...interesting point...

I guess I get concerned about the term 'commonly available classroom tools' because this term is relative. The tools may be common in one setting but completely unavailable in another setting. This, therefore, seems to have a major impact on transition, regardless of the type of transition. For an entity who is receiving a newly transitioned student, if the tools are not documented clearly on the IEP, it would be difficult for that entity to know the supports the student needs.
- **Re: AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Page** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 23, 2007
I think it is a great idea to list AT as a strategy to achieve a goal, rather than just listing in the accommodations. In this state (MN) there is typically not an "AT section" in the IEP. Rather, I suggest that AT be infused throughout the plan where it is most appropriate- I just included this in a class lecture tonight, and we talked about AT in goals and objectives, in the present level of educational performance, in assessment (testing), in special education services, related services, transition, accommodations. I have asked our special education monitors for the state to be attuned to AT being infused in the IEP as a strength that means a school is really striving to do well. And- in my opinion, I do not as much care WHERE in the IEP AT is listed, as long as it is listed. It still carries the weight of needing to be implemented.
- **Re: AT - Transition - Universal Design of learning - Want to Make Sure we are All on the Same Page** by **msebu** on Oct 24, 2007
This is something that I am going to do with more intention. I was talking to an OT yesterday to find out what they have in their school district and how I could help this student use Kidspiration. We had a good conversation about which was the goal-functional writing or depth of understanding of the curriculum. I want the student to be able to have a grasp of the curriculum. So maybe I should suggest goals that say the student will use_____ in curricular areas? Like for

research-and writing a paper? It makes more sense and it is less likely it will be ignored or watered down in some way.

- **Hello** by **Marie** on Oct 13, 2007

Hello,

It's very interesting to read about everyone's background. I am an Assistive Technology Practitioner. I was a parent of a child with severe disabilities that resulted from a brain injury when he was a year old. One diagnosis of his physical abilities was spastic quadriplegia - cerebral palsy. He passed away when he was six years old and I then started my work in the assistive technology field working with a non-profit agency in our region providing services to individuals with disabilities.

One of the greatest challenges in transition that I experienced as a parent of a child with a disability was when he was transitioning between toddler and pre-school ages (around 3 years old). He had outgrown his current wheelchair that he received at about 1-1/2 to 2 years of age and needed a new one to support his new growth. Our insurance, as with most insurance policies, purchased wheelchairs for use through a seven-year period of time. Getting a new chair purchased by our insurance company before that seven years ended became a major obstacle that members of our health team repetitively justified by documentation before we were able to accomplish that goal and need.

In my AT work with other individuals, I again experienced cases where funding/support guidelines narrowed the resources available for a particular individual and in essence created such challenging barriers that many who were involved experienced frustration and despair.

I look forward to hearing about the different challenges others have experienced and how they dealt with them.

- **Indicators 2 & 3- What do we need for support?** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 14, 2007

I'd like to provide more information on the quality indicators for AT in transition by referring to 2 more indicators. These indicators are very related.

2. Transition planning empowers the student using assistive technology to participate in the transition planning at a level appropriate to age and ability.

Intent: Specific self-determination skills are taught that enable the student to gradually assume responsibility for participation and leadership in AT transition planning as capacity develops. AT tools are provided, as needed, to support the student's participation.

3. Advocacy related to assistive technology use is recognized as critical and planned for by the teams involved in transition.

Intent: Everyone involved in transition advocates for the student's progress, including the student's use of AT. Specific advocacy tasks related to AT use are addressed and may be carried out by the student, the family, staff members or a representative.

As the QIAT Community meets and works together over time, practitioners from around the country meet to gather and share resources to help educators and others provide students with excellent services.

Are you aware of any documents, check lists or other resources that demonstrate how to support students in being self advocates and in helping the student and her support team in having appropriate advocacy services and skills?

- **Re:Indicators 2 & 3- What do we need for support?** by **Hmored** on Oct 21, 2007
One resource for helping students with self advocacy that I like is "Student Led IEPs" by Marcy McGahee, Christine Mason, Teri Wallace, and Brenda Jones and published by CEC (http://cec-live.2rad.net/bk/catalog2/student-led_ieps.pdf).
- **Re:Indicators 2 & 3- What do we need for support?** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 23, 2007
I am not aware of that resource, but I will check it out. Thanks!
- **Re:Indicators 2 & 3- What do we need for support?** by **msebu** on Oct 24, 2007
We have a transition team that interfaces with the people across the state-They do trainings on student-led IEPs, etc. If you are in Michigan try the website at www.wash.k12.mi.us. Our AT people will help do this on an as-needed basis.

The Local Community College puts on a workshop for students in Middle School.
www.wcc.net

Our local Community Advocacy also puts on workshops. (They are the ARC in this area.)
www.waca.org

- **What do students need** by **msebu** on Oct 14, 2007
I think students with Autism/Aspergers need a variety of options to help them process information and handle life in a flexible manner. There is the tendency to take things so literally that I have found student using a thesaurus to help them figure out the directions to a task. Tech. also sets up a way to be social without all of the vague communication from a verbal stand point. Look at the success of Face Book. Things don't have to be so "special" because of UDL.

- **AT and Postsecondary - Planning and 504** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 15, 2007
Just wanted to add a few thoughts to this strand along the lines of preparing for the AT transition to the postsecondary environment. First, want to speak to this from the eyes of someone in the area of transition. That is, my colleagues here at the University of Kansas (Drs. Gary Clark and Mary Morningstar) continue to preach (through scholarship and direct service – see transitioncoalition.org) that we must “update” our student’s IEP before his/her transition to the postsecondary setting. This often means advocating for a series of assessments to provide up-to-date information on the student’s strengths and weaknesses. Noting what they need assistance in and why. Sharing, in a documented manner, what strategies have been successful and how they have been applied to the student for his/her recent success. If AT has been part of their life, then an update on this AT, its need, its use, and related information would be critical. This is just good planning and I know part of what the QIAT Framework has offered as good preparation for the postsecondary setting. Again, as much documented information you can have updated to share with the institution he/she is heading, the better the student can advocate for his/her needs. If it not updated, too often, the student is left figuring out the system the institution has developed in order to access services and supports.

Next, Drs. Morningstar and Clark advocate for getting the postsecondary institution involved in the student’s senior year. This could be in planning with the college/university/training school at their site but could also have a representative from the office of Disability Service (or whatever this office is called at the college level) come to the high school for transition meetings. We do this with VR staff and community-based supports but don’t appear to ask institutions to send their staff. I know here at the University of Kansas (and I’d argue KU is about average in the supports they provide – not bad but then again, not cutting edge either) they have staff willing to attend IEP meetings and other planning meetings for students here across the state that have been accepted to KU and are a=planning on attending. By meeting with the student’s HS staff, they get a great sense of the environment and the supports that have made this student successful during their HS

years. It also allows the staff to better connect with what KU has in place to continue this success, and/or what we need to put into place for the student's success. This has included AT and visual supports to assist those with vision impairments, the use of Inspiration for those with learning disabilities, and the like. It is not perfect but it is a good transition step that can also include the planning for AT.

Another recommendation that I have been reading about and seeing put into practice is identifying the resources on campus (during the school visits and orientation) that in place for all students. For example, KU (like most schools) has a writing center. This Center is open to all students and faculty. I have witnessed students identified with disabilities connect with this Center from day one and rely on them for writing support throughout their years here. The Center has also been able to connect the students with the necessary supports to continue the accommodations needed beyond the Office of Disability Services. That is, connecting students with the technology support office on campus to gain access to university owned software available for download by all students. For instance, all students can have access to Inspiration (inspiration.com) and Endnotes (endnote.com/) for free. They just need to download the software in a manner determined from the university. These types of supports are available to all students but it is finding the resource and getting access to it that generally takes the time. While Disability Supports can help, my point is to find other resources early and see where and how they can support the student.

Finally, AT, while not applicable under IDEA supports, is still something students on the college campuses can access for free. That is, via Section 504 supports as well as the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act (especially in two-year colleges and training institutes). I'd urge a HS team to work with a school designated Disability Staff (or however it is referred to) to see what they have in place or what they need to have in place for AT considerations. Back to the comment in an earlier post on UDL, the AT might be more mainstream technology but regardless; it would offer supports to the user.

I'll finish up for the moment and would love to hear other thoughts from folks involved with postsecondary institutions, the resources they have accessed, from whom, and the like.

- **Re: AT and Postsecondary - Planning and 504** by **msebu** on Oct 17, 2007
Sean, you had asked about the program that I thought was good. I think you can find it via www.wcc.net and then scroll to the Learning Center.

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- **planning and the 504** by **msebu** on Oct 15, 2007
It is important to get a good evaluation prior to leaving HS, if there has been a person or team that has worked well for the individual.
Wastenaw Community College has a great learning center and they have been both helpful and up to speed on the best ways to help students. I think that Michigan Rehab. Services has helped pick up the cost to AT, but I am not sure how it will work, with the budget so cut to shreds.
 - **Re: planning and the 504** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 16, 2007
Hey, thanks for the mention of a program as a good example. Do you have an URL for the learning Center or particular characteristics that you find make this an excellent center? Just a thought.

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- **Full Life Ahead?** by **msebu** on Oct 15, 2007
Has anyone used the document-Full Life Ahead? It is a good place to begin for Middle School Students.

- **Re: Full Life Ahead?** by **pmcclure** on Oct 15, 2007
Can you give us a way to access this document? I would be interested in looking at it.
 - **Re: Full Life Ahead?** by **Annie Czapp** on Oct 15, 2007
Here is the Full Life Ahead website: <http://www.fulllifeahead.org/>
Their publications and handouts are available here.
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- **Hi** by **pennywoody** on Oct 15, 2007
My district has been on fall break so I have some catching up to do! I have been a special education teacher in a K-5 program for the past 14 years serving students with severe and profound disabilities. This year I am serving as our first Transition Leader in a rural district in southeast Tennessee. I am anxious to learn all I can about transition and how I can use AT to link these students/young adults to a variety of jobs.
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- **IEP and the AT plan** by **msebu** on Oct 15, 2007
I, too, no longer see specific mention of a particular type of AT device, etc. We list an AT plan under supplemental aids and services. This carries the same weight as mention of a specific item, I am told. So far, it has worked for parents and students. Anyone else see this, too?
 - **Re: IEP and the AT plan** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 15, 2007
I am not sure what is included- does it simply say there is an AT plan? Or, does it include language like "Tim will have access to assistive technology such as a portable notetaker to take class notes in each class setting." or something more detailed? Tell me more, please.
 - **Re: IEP and the AT plan** by **Heather** on Oct 17, 2007
Unfortunately, we have been in the moving process for the last three months. So it took me a while to hunt down my daughter's IEP. However, what I found regarding your question was intriguing! Towards the end of the IEP is a page called the Adaptations/Modifications Checklist. Nine Categories are listed: Pacing, Environment, Presentations of Subject Matter, Materials, Assignments, Self Management/Follow Through, Testing Adaptations, Social Interaction Supports, and Motivation and Reinforcement. Under each of these categories is a list of items that can be checked that the student may need to enable them to learn and function in a typical classroom or school setting. AT devices were actually listed as special equipment under the materials category. But I did find other categories where AT may have been as simple as tape recording directions to a student, use visual sequences, utilize manipulatives, use a visual daily schedule, or allow a student to type their assignment. All of these could be argued as AT. However, if it was not checked as an AT device - requiring hardware, software, training, upkeep, and an AT plan, checked under the materials category and on the final page of the IEP to signify that a case conference must be held to develop the Assistive Technology Plan, then AT is not deemed necessary and not written into the IEP.
 - **Re: IEP and the AT plan** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 18, 2007
I have to admit- this throws me. Not all AT needs this level of support. While there should be a process for all AT selection, simple technologies are still regarded as AT and should be in the IEP. Interesting...
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- **Hello** by **eaustin@paraquad.org** on Oct 15, 2007
The successful transition of youth with disabilities requires planning and understanding resources available. Understanding and weighing the facts for cost and necessity of any Assistive Technology

devices also enhances a smooth transition process. I look forward to the discussions on the many AT tools' uses.

- **Transition and Readily Accessible Technologies** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 15, 2007
I've been mulling this question over in my head for some time now: "How does the recent proliferation of 'readily accessible technologies' impact the transition process?"

Let me explain...

Readily accessible technologies are those technologies that can be accessed easily and deployed widely to meet the needs of diverse learners. In the past 7 years or so, we have seen many readily accessible technologies developed and gain popularity with those who are either consumers of AT or providers of AT. Perhaps one of the most widely known tools in the category is ReadPlease 2003 (<http://www.readplease.com>) which is free tool that allows text to be read to the student. It has the capability of adjusting font size, font color, background color, the font itself along with providing different voices (even voices for non-English languages) and different speeds for the voices to read the text. It highlights the words as they are read. All for free. Pairing this tool up with any one of the free e-text sites (e.g., Project Gutenberg) and now a students who is unable to access or process text in a typical fashion is able to read different genres of literature. All for free.

Here's another example...

There is an open source product called WordTalk (<http://www.wordtalk.org.uk/>). WordTalk is a plug-in for MS Word. It allows a student who is writing in MS Word to have a talking word processor, as well as a talking spell check. Now a student who needs additional support in the drafting, revising, and editing processes of writing can get that support...for free.

There are many other example that encompass supports for reading, writing, math, communication, memory, organization, etc., etc., etc. Each tool can be used to support multiple students in multiple ways. And, since they are free, they can be easily accessed and used.

So, here are some of my questions:

Is there a role for readily accessible technologies in the transition process? If so, what? If not, why?

To what extent are readily accessible technologies known by the students, parents, educators and others involved in the transition process?

I look forward to feedback and any discussion on this...

- **Re: Transition and Readily Accessible Technologies** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 15, 2007
Boy, Brian- good question! I have the opportunity to go around my state and talk about easy to use technologies, and this is the type of think I like to promote for students and adults. You have mentioned easy to use, great cost (love that free!). Typically, although I may be talking to sophisticated audiences, they have not heard of these programs or add-ons. Some concerns I hear is "you get what you pay for- if it is free, it can't be worth much" or..."we can't load it on our computers because of firewalls." So- I continue to promote these, and am trying to find ways to share the great opportunities with IT folks at schools rather than just the AT folks so that students get access and the school IT folks cooperate rather than fight the programs.
I really would prefer that students have access to these tools and are taught how to use

them effectively prior to leaving the K-12 setting and are out in the workforce or post secondary school which typically will have lower levels of supports.

- **Re: Transition and Readily Accessible Technologies** by **HeatherB** on Oct 15, 2007
I have heard of ReadPlease, only because of my teaching background. As for the other program, I am afraid that I have never even heard of it as a parent or an educator. Then I find my reaction to be very similar to what Joan is describing - "Oh, no! I don't know if I want a free program. What if it doesn't function well?" Like my husband just reacted - "halfbaked" programs aren't worth our time and energy, we would rather spend the money and know what we are getting into! So the moral of the story is: keep promoting! Promote loudly! We're listening! I clicked on the link, but tell me what makes the program so great?!
- **Re: Transition and Readily Accessible Technologies** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 16, 2007
Hmmm...like you, I really do have some mixed reactions...and I'm not sure there is a right answer that can be universally applied...

On one hand, as was stated by another participant in a subsequent post, these technologies, whether built into an operating system or readily available via download and install, are 'always there'. This ever presence should offer some value. I often think about areas of 'contingency plans'...what happens when the primary assistive technology has gone down or is simply unavailable in the moment in which it is needed. Are some of these technologies considered 'worthy' to be known or available to assist in these cases? With regard to transition, especially when the responsibility may shift onto the individual to provide the assistive technology or when the individual may need access to the assistive technology in multiple environments...should these technologies not be considered?

I agree, many commercial tools have many benefits. Commercial tools often have a plethora of features...they are more robust than free programs. Many commercial tools come with support provided by the company or reseller. Commercial tools also come with a warranty.

However, these same characteristics of commercial tools can have downsides as well. Many features can make a tool too robust or bloated rendering the tool inoperable or, at least, setting a pretty significant learning curve for someone who may only need to use a fraction of the features. Features, company provided support, and warranties also add to the base cost of a tool. In some cases, the cost is warranted. In others, it may not be if there is a readily available tool that can be used to meet the needs of the student. Let's talk about support...specifically response time. If a commercial tool goes down, is the 'fix' through the company instantaneous? How long does a student have to wait for the 'fix' to be applied? Perhaps these readily accessible tools have a place during the down time for a student.

Another scenario for consideration...

Firefox, a web browser, is a program that is 'extensible'. In other words, one can download small 'add ons' or 'extensions' to modify the way that Firefox works. There are three add-ons that I would like to note. First is Click Speak (<http://clickspeak.clcworld.net/features.html>) which enables Firefox to add text to speech capability to any web page that has text. The second is Accessibar (<http://accessibar.mozdev.org/>) which allows a user to modify the appearance of any web page by giving the user control over the font, font color, background color, font size, font spacing, and several other things. The

third is the Hawking toolbar (<http://www.oatsoft.org/Software/hawking-toolbar/view>) which enables a switch user to access and navigate the world wide web through Firefox. Each of these toolbars are free and readily available. If Firefox and these three add-ons were installed on every computer in a school, a college, and place of employment and people knew of their availability and function, could they be used to meet the needs of a number of people and serve as a back up for existing AT users when that AT (e.g., a commercially based web browser with text to speech support) went down?

So, I guess the question for me is do both commercial tools and readily accessible tools have a place in considering a student's transition plan with regard to AT? If so, how? If not, why?

- **Re: Transition and Readily Accessible Technologies** by **hmored** on Oct 23, 2007

I think that both commercial and readily accessible tools do have a place in considering a student's transition plan. One difficulty we experience in transitioning students from school to adult life is if the school district has purchased technology for them, that technology does not transition with them once they are out of the school system. However, if the student has been using readily accessible technologies, then they will have no difficulty accessing the technology they need where and when they need it. However, commercial tools are also important since many individuals need sophisticated systems that aren't available as free ware or as an add on.

I recently connected an IEP team with a readily accessible onscreen keyboard with word prediction and onscreen mouse emulator. The team will try it for a few weeks to see if it meets the student's needs. If it does, he can use the same system at home, at his grandparents' house and at his best friend's house, etc. If it doesn't meet the student's needs, the team will need to look for a commercial option that is more sophisticated and we will have to address AT funding in the student's transition plan.

Now my question is, what is the best way stay up to date with this type of AT option? I was able to find the onscreen keyboard by doing a Google search but it took a while to find the right search terms and sift through irrelevant websites.

- **Re: Transition and Readily Accessible Technologies** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 16, 2007

Word Talk is an add on to MS Word that allows MS Word to have text to speech capability. We know from research that students with writing disabilities often benefit from having a word processor with text to speech (TTS) capability. In drafting, TTS allows the student to confirm that what he or she is typing is what is actually being put on the paper. In editing and revising, TTS serves as the equivalent of reading the paper aloud to make sure that the student's writing 'sounds right'. It influences things like grammar error identification and correction and word choice.

- **Re: Transition and Readily Accessible Technologies** by **mjbmillier** on Oct 19, 2007

All of these free downloads available and I never knew of any of them. I look forward to a printed version of these boards so that I can highlight areas of interest to me. Then I plan on sharing this information in all the schools I serve in the special ed co-op, whether they have asked me to or not, just because everyone in education should have a glimmer of what is available,

especially the free downloads. What could it possibly hurt to try some of these tools? I look forward to learning more even after this forum is completed.

- **Re: Transition and Readily Accessible Technologies** by **dawn Bly-MN** on Oct 18, 2007
Wow-
I am so impressed at the knowledge of this group. As an advocate, teacher and parent I was not aware of this technology. I will be happy to spread information and support about these technologies.
 - **Re: Transition and Readily Accessible Technologies** by **mjbmillier** on Oct 19, 2007
I'm with you. Impressed and somewhat overwhelmed. I hope some of this can become second-nature to me, I truly recognize the need in the schools I serve.
- **Re: Transition and Readily Accessible Technologies** by **rgriffin** on Oct 16, 2007
It is important to become as familiar as possible with the basic assistive tools available in Windows and Mac OS X as well. They may not be perfect solutions, but they are always there
 - **Re: Transition and Readily Accessible Technologies** by **rgriffin** on Oct 16, 2007
Here they are:

<http://www.apple.com/education/accessibility/technology/>

<http://www.microsoft.com/enable/training/windowsvista/>

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/accessibility/default.mspx>
 - **Re: Transition and Readily Accessible Technologies** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 16, 2007
Thanks, Ray- these are great FREE resources, and many folks are not aware of them. Thanks for sharing.
I have worked with many individuals for whom these were all the adaptations needed for computer access!
- **Re: Transition and Readily Accessible Technologies** by **Carol W** on Oct 19, 2007
I think that it is great to use free, readily available technology when it meets the needs of the student. I would say that typically freeware is not as robust as commercial software and this can be good and bad. Many students won't use the full capabilities of commercial software and so there are a lot of extras that can make the interface confusing and the software hard to learn to use. For students whose needs match the freeware, having software that does one thing makes it easier to use.

Many students, though, could benefit from some of the "extras" included on commercial software. Or they may want to use more than one tool and it is easier to have integrated products than several different free tools.

Another issue is having some software available on "all" computers. This might be more important on college campuses where you can't control which computer is going to be available for use. Although, with so many colleges requiring students to have their own laptops, maybe this is not an issue.

- **Re: Transition and Readily Accessible Technologies** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 22, 2007

So- we need to carefully analyze what it is that needs to be done by the student (and that WE includes with student input) and make sure that the best SYSTEM of AT tools is available to him or her. If we can use "free" products with the student achieving at an appropriate level, how great! If, however, a more robust system is required for that broad based set of tasks, then the commercial product is called for. The trick is in analyzing what needs to be done, and to continue to look at the tasks as work changes and the situation changes. AT is not a one time deal!

- **www.fullLifeAhead.org** by **msebu** on Oct 15, 2007

Here is the website for the Full Life Ahead transition guide and Information. Check it out and let me know what you see there!

www.fullLifeAhead.org

- **Team work , Collaboration and AT** by **jeffst** on Oct 16, 2007

This month's FCTD newsletter was amazing and arrived just in time to help a school base team with whom I am working. We have been coming together for the past month trying to write up IEP goals for a wonderful 16 yr old with significant challenges. The team hit a wall last week in establishing communication goals and the criteria for measuring the goals. John Castellani did a wonderful job in making us take a step back and look at what the team was trying to do. If you haven't read it...do so. It provides a real approach to what is happening in today's schools. As always Dr. Castellani provides straightforward resources and solutions. Thank you FCTD for providing such a useful newsletter!

- **Re: Team work , Collaboration and AT** by **BarbaraBrown** on Oct 17, 2007

I agree with you about the newsletter. The information in it is very useful. We are looking at utilizing the electronic IEP and it was helpful to read about its benefits. I understand that it is expensive. We are a very small school division. Is there funding available to assist with this expense? I would appreciate feedback from anyone on this subject.

- **AT Evaluations** by **carmen duran** on Oct 16, 2007

One of the problems that I have seen with AT Evaluations is that there is not sufficient training and there are not standardized practices or procedures. What I call an AT evaluation may sound different to someone else. Furthermore, there are many service delivery models. Many people will prescribe a tool or a device. To me, this is not an evaluation. From I have read, evaluation should be an ongoing process in AT service delivery and should be periodically reviewed. I don't see that happening. I see AT evaluations focusing more on the equipment, particularly computers and software. Perhaps because of the influence of high technology and the desire to have a quick fix. I know there are several AT evaluation tools and approaches currently in use such as the SETT Framework, the WATI, the University of Kentucky Assistive Technology Toolkit and the Georgia Project for Assistive Technology among others. The issue of training for the students, teachers and families is a separate chapter. Monitoring the use of technology, its usage and problems. Any thoughts about this topic of AT Evaluations?

- **Re: AT Evaluations** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 16, 2007

Carmen- You raise a really important point. I agree that unless there are specific processes in place for an evaluation in a district we are opening a pandora's box!

And you have given me an opportunity to link (once again!) to the quality indicators in assistive technology. There are 8 specific areas in which indicators have been developed.

We have been talking about 1- AT and transition. The other 7 are:
Consideration of AT
Evaluation (assessment)
Inclusion in the IEP
Implementation
Evaluation of Effectiveness
Administrative Support
Professional Development

You can learn more about each of these areas on the QIAT website (qiat.org) As has been referenced, there is also an on-line conversation with Joy Zabala about QIAT archived on the FCTD site. Joy is a member of the QIAT Leadership Team and moderates the wonderful QIAT listserv. And- if anyone is at CTG, come to the presentation on QIAT on Thursday (I think the afternoon- but haven't looked at the schedule lately)

The Quality Indicators have been developed by practitioners from across North America. They are based on best practice and the legal standard in special education. Six of the eight areas have been validated by doctoral research by Joy Zabala (two were not written at the time of the validation study).

The QIAT community works on an ongoing basis to develop resources to support the use of the indicators. I know we have used them in MN to determine needs for professional development among special educators. They are a wonderful resource to the field. Carmen, I know this does not answer your question directly, but the QIAT Area of assessment does speak to your need. I would happily switch gears and talk about assessment/evaluation if that is what folks want, but I have tried to stick to the topic of transition. Obviously, however, without a good, valid assessment, we are unsure that a student has access to appropriate AT.

- **Re: AT Evaluations** by **jeffst** on Oct 16, 2007
There is no doubt that AT assessments and transition go hand in hand. Especially since in most cases there is a change in environments and tasks. We teach an interdisciplinary team approach to assessment in our AT certificate program (100% online) at East Carolina University. It is team taught by our Special Education and Occupational Therapy Departments. It is powerful to get multiple perspectives and AT models. When transitioning into different environments (e.g. Home, workplace, community based program) it will determine which model deems most appropriate. Dave Edyburn wrote a great article in Special Education Technology Practice March/April 2001 that highlights 8 different models. In addition, we teach our assessment students the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure COPM. It opens the door to functional everyday tasks that goes beyond academics. I just wished that there was a good textbook or guide on AT assessments that puts everything in one place. Does anyone know of such a thing?
 - **Re: AT Evaluations** by **Kelly C** on Oct 25, 2007
Check Joy Zabala's website www.joyzabala.com for resources...college textbooks are also available but can become outdated quickly as the technology changes.
- **Re: AT Evaluations** by **kb** on Oct 18, 2007
I know that in a lot of the districts that I am in basically anyone who is willing becomes part of the AT team. Many of them do not have sufficient knowledge of AT and this leads to much confusion and the students not actually getting the equipment or services that would benefit them the most.

- **Re: AT Evaluations by Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 20, 2007
While many of us became AT specialists because of an interest and passion, it is important to have team members with skills and knowledge. I have just come home from the wonderful Closing the Gap conference. I know Sean and Brian (the other faculty members for this strand) are also there. It is essential for practitioners to maintain skills through ongoing training. The support of school administrators in allowing this to happen is key. They are also responsible for seeing that AT Team members have the skills necessary to perform the critical elements of this practice. I usually direct folks interested in knowing how administrators need to support the work of QIAT to one of two references- the QIAT Indicators in administrative support, and the wonderful monograph written by Gayl Bowser and Penny Reed titled An Administrator's Desktop Guide to Assistive Technology. Hopefully, if the guidelines in these support materials are followed, better AT practice will occur.

- **What is a State Performance Plan?** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 16, 2007
What is a state performance plan (spp) and what is it doing in this conversation? Every state department of education is required to submit a state plan to the federal office of special education. In the plan, the state sets targets on how they intend to perform on pre-determined indicators (which the feds set). In our state, our director refers to the SPP as our IEP- our plan on what we want to do in the next year to five years.
There are multiple indicators in the plan, and range from services in Part C (birth on), due process, education in the least restrictive environment, transition supports and post secondary outcomes. What awareness is there regarding SPPs in other states? I would like to talk about our initiatives here in MN to support the use of AT in transition, but would like to get a sense of knowledge from the participants.
 - **Re: What is a State Performance Plan?** by **HeatherB** on Oct 16, 2007
Wow! I had to go out and do a search on SPP's in our state. I did not even know that such a thing even existed, and I am an educator and a parent of a special needs child! I feel so out of the loop on this one! I could only find one reference to AT in the entire SPP (and it is a 100 page document that I did a search on in Adobe). That reference was very vague and general as to how a child would be accommodated in our state testing in the third grade. I came away with one major question, though! It appeared as though a private agency was doing statistical analysis for the state. Who keeps the state accountable for meeting their goals on the SPP and who helps them write measurable goals for the SPP?
 - **Re: What is a State Performance Plan?** by **Jackie Hess [SI Faculty]** on Oct 17, 2007
The following description of State Performance Plans is from the Department of Education's website and is written in Washington legalese. I'll try to find something a little more "on the ground useful" for you, but in the meantime....

The reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), signed on December 3, 2004, became PL 108-446. In accordance with 20 U.S.C. 1416(b)(1), not later than one year after the date of enactment of the reauthorized IDEA, each state is required to have in place a performance plan evaluating the state's implementation of Part B and describing how the state will improve such implementation. This plan is called the Part B State Performance Plan (SPP) and is required to be posted on the state's web site. The IDEA Part B, Sections 611 and 619 formula grant programs assist states in providing a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for children with disabilities ages 3 through 21.

In accordance with 20 U.S.C. 1416(2)(C)(ii) each state shall report annually to the public on the performance of each of its local educational agencies according to the targets in its SPP. The state also shall report annually to the Secretary on its performance according to its SPP targets. This report is called the Part B Annual

Performance Report (APR). The Office of Special Education Programs' responses to the States' SPP and APRs will be posted on this page as letters are issued.

The website page is: <http://www.ed.gov/fund/data/report/idea/partbspap/index.html>

- **Re: What is a State Performance Plan?** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 18, 2007
While every state is required to meet the same indicators, it is up to the individual state as to what is included in their plan. For example, in the MN plan, there is language regarding AT in supporting indicators 5 & 6 (regarding free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.) We also have technology strategies in other places. Now, it does help that MN has a passionate AT advocate in their department of education (me). Thus, it is part of our work to support achievement of goals through the strategies we support. Whether other states have the same type of needs and strategies will vary. But- it is certainly worthwhile to talk about how the use of AT is a strategy to support schools in moving towards SPP indicators.
 - **Re: What is a State Performance Plan?** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 20, 2007
State performance plans are for special education, so it will not be found under general education. I do not know how other states organize their work, so am not a help in telling you how to find your state's plan. The letter from the federal office of education is, no doubt, the response from the federal office to the state office responding to the plan submitted by the individual state. It will provide feedback on the state's plan and provide input on areas where improvement or perhaps a different way of submitting data is required.
 - **Re: What is a State Performance Plan?** by **Marjory** on Oct 17, 2007
I googled the topic and found a letter dated 6-15-07 that the feds. mailed to the former director of our department (NC) on this issue. I briefly scanned the letter, and found it difficult to understand. I'll print it out so I can refer to it later.
 - **Re: What is a State Performance Plan?** by **msebu** on Oct 17, 2007
I do not know about the plan for Michigan. Is it under Special Education or is it under General Education?

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- **assessment for post-secondary accommodations** by **Pat M** on Oct 16, 2007
For those of you who are parents and teachers, I highly support the need for you to advocate that the assessments be updated before the student leaves high school. Many of the high schools in my area rely upon assessments that are several years old when they develop the IEP. Then, when the student tries to arrange for accommodations in college, the assessments are outdated and the college/training program wants assessments normed on adults. The college can't pay for this and voc rehab generally can't pay just for assessments which are not linked to a vocational goal, so the family is at risk of having to assume the expensive costs.
 - **Re: assessment for post-secondary accommodations** by **rgriffin** on Oct 16, 2007
I second that! You would be well served to have a representative from VR involved in those planning meetings too. While the costs are very important to the family, continuity of services may be even more important.
 - **Re: assessment for post-secondary accommodations** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 16, 2007
Ray- I wonder if you can talk about what the process is from your state's viewpoint on the rehab counselor getting involved? Knowing that this will vary state by state

and year by year, are there general guidelines that will help IEP teams and parents in knowing when and how to bring in VR and what role we can expect the counselor to play?

- **Re: assessment for post-secondary accommodations** by **rgriffin** on Oct 18, 2007

Sure Joan. Please understand that my comments are not the "official word" from the State of Mn. We are heavily involved in becoming a presence in the transition process. You are right, things do vary a lot from year to year, but more so from school district to school district, IEP team to IEP team and RS counselor to RS counselor. The problem is complicated by the fact that educational services are mandated through 18 or 21, but such services are not universally mandated in adult programs such as VR. The consumer must demonstrate interest in our services by applying for them. If the potential consumer is not aware of the scope of VR services before leaving the educational system, the likelihood of timely provision of VR services goes way down. My recommendation is that VR be brought in as part of the planning process as early as possible during high school. The counselor can explain what services may be available in the community post HS and contribute to the team process in planning for that. VR can not spend a great deal of money on the case while the consumer is still in HS. Teams often take this to mean that VR counselors have nothing to contribute. That is a big mistake for assisting with planning for future needs. Teams and parents should request and expect VR to play an active role in transition at a time when VR's expertise can be helpful in planning for life after HS.

- **Re: assessment for post-secondary accommodations** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 18, 2007

Thanks- I appreciate your input. It is important that VR be an integral part of the transition team for many students, and I know it has benefited many of the clients with whom I used to work.

- **Re: assessment for post-secondary accommodations** by **Carol Leynse Harpold** on Oct 19, 2007

I agree, as an OT/AT in a school district and an AT evaluator that works with DVR clients, the involvement of DVR early on and at transition is so important and also can supply wonderful support for students with disabilities. That at least is what I have seen in WI.

- **Re: assessment for post-secondary accommodations** by **Connie Ferency-Viars** on Oct 24, 2007

In the school district I recently left, VR was not typically involved at all until I came along. Once I got the VR Counselor involved with students, even I was surprised by the range of services that my students were eligible for. Definitely get them involved as early as you can in the student's high school career so the family is aware of the services offered and can advocate for their son or daughter after graduation.

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- **IEP and the AT plan** by **msebu** on Oct 17, 2007

There is only mention of "AT Plan". That is pretty vague. The task of the IEP team is to then work on the plan. The plan, I am told, carries the weight of an IEP. (I had a difficult time getting on yesterday-sorry for the delay.)

- **AT and post secondary-Voc. Reh.** by **msebu** on Oct 18, 2007
We invite a representative from Voc. Rehab to the IEP a year or two before the student graduates. This gives the team input as to what plans need to be made and who to connect with. Voc. Rehab. can help do investigation and planning (such as what AT devices might be needed and who can fund it.) It is very helpful to have as many post school resource people available as possible to help with this process and to proceed with transition in a smooth manner.
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- by **sharon** on Oct 18, 2007
Is this the Indicator 13 that I have been hearing about then?? It is becoming the "hot" topic at in-services but I have yet to attend one, so it's all new yet.
 - **Re:** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 20, 2007
Yes- our Indicators are our current "buzz words" and it is what all state departments build their work around!
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- **Resource for Michigan** by **msaboer** on Oct 18, 2007
wasn't sure that the message board was the appropriate place, but I still would like to let those who might be interested know that the Flat Rock MSRP still has openings. The child must live within the Flat Rock Community School District.

Thanks,

Kara

Here is some basic info...

Michigan School Readiness Program (MSRP)

FREE preschool for 4 year olds

Focuses on building skills for the transition to kindergarten

The program provides:

Trained and certified staff

Classes 4 days per week (Monday - Thursday)

Limit of 16 students and 2 staff members per class

Age appropriate curriculum Nutritious snack provided

This program is funded by a grant from the Michigan Department of Education and children must meet eligibility guidelines. For more information, please call Flat Rock Community Education Department at (734) 782-5173 or 734-535-6562.

- **Using AT in post-secondary settings** by **carmen duran** on Oct 19, 2007
The most common AT that I have seen in my agency is AT to help students with learning disabilities in the area of writing. Many of the Transition students that we have, began to use these tools in the schools, since writing is essential to school success. In fact many will carry their AT tools and devices to colleges. Besides the word processing features and software, I have seen students with graphic organizers. All equipment is portable, which means they can take it anywhere (the main advantage). Clearly, the teachers and the students have been trained in using these tools and the AT was integrated into their curriculum. In my opinion, it has been successful. I am not only talking about the mechanics but also the student's attitude about writing. Feeling more successful in the writing area because of using AT. As I mentioned above, they continue to use the

AT tools they had here when they move to college. AT writing tools for students with disabilities support their individual writing needs.

- **Re: Using AT in post-secondary settings by msebu** on Oct 22, 2007
I have had that experience as well. It seems like it is more accepted by faculty and others-maybe because it isn't that one has to write faster or something-just more creative. The Palm used to have a lot of free resources that I used with college students. I was cleaning out some papers form about 7 yrs. ago-so I hesitate to suggest something in particular. My doctor uses one of the slate type laptops-she can write on it and it reads her writing-very nice.
- **Re: Using AT in post-secondary settings by Sean J Smith** on Oct 23, 2007
Being on a college campus, I see a variety of resources available to students that could interact nicely with what has been shared. That is, the Office of Disability Services is the first place to stop for a student with a disability. This is where they can share the information they have concerning their disability and work with staff to ensure supports are identified and in place to enhance their experience. Of course, a representative from the VR would be great and having meeting prior to the beginning of the year is always recommended (and something shared earlier by many of the folks posting).

However, the Office of Disability Services is not the end stop. Instead, there are a variety of places to go where students can get assistance. For example, I believe I shared earlier in how the writing center on most campuses is set up to assist students in their writing needs. Here at the University of Kansas, all students have access to this Center and those with specific needs (identified or non-identified) can actually be assigned a writing coach. The Writing Coach is either a staff member, undergraduate student, and/or graduate student who will work with that student for the entire school year. If he or she is returning the next year, they would continue with that student as long as need. The collaboration would involve strategy development, writing for development, writing for assignments, editing, the identification of technology that might be helpful, and similar supports. Again, this is available to all students but this Center works closely with the Office of Disability Services to ensure success for those identified with specific needs.

The Center also works closely with the library and the technology center. For example, a student that might need assistance with structuring their assignments, organizing their ideas, and the like might find Inspiration quite helpful. As a result, the Center would get in touch with the Technology Center to ensure the student gets access to a free copy of this software. Similarly, the Tech Center offers free workshops on these applications and thus, the student can get training on how to use this technology. Similarly, the library can identify applications that might be helpful in the writing process. Everything from online databases and how to use them as well as applications like Endnotes that can be critical to the writing process.

Again, these are all services available to all students but with the right support, very available to those with disabilities.

- **Re: Using AT in post-secondary settings by Carol W** on Oct 23, 2007
Well said!

I think that we are really looking at Universal Design when we have some of this equipment available to all students.

One of our challenges with Voc Rehab is getting a referral for a student who is starting college in a few weeks and needed some assistive technology. We

always try to work with Disability Services at their school, but I often feel like the training on the technology is lacking. The student does not really have time to learn it before school starts and doesn't have time after classes start either. It's great to hear about a Disability Services program that has the ability to provide (even through other entities) training on the software.

- **Re: Using AT in post-secondary settings** by **Carol Leynse Harpold** on Oct 24, 2007

What great services for typical and individuals with challenges, wish I had that available when I was in college!

In my state I have seen voc rehab services not only purchase equipment, whether hardware or software, but also secure training for the students on the applications so they are familiar with how to use the software and or hardware they will need to use. It might be worth exploring that service with DVR if not currently available.

- **Transition – Planning – Technology Considerations** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 20, 2007

Some previous posts have discussed the need to think about technology across the educational experience of the student. I am in total agreement and wanted to add some additional thoughts to this as we try to build upon the need to examine transition needs throughout the student's educational experience.

For example, we earlier visited about the need to recognize some of the realities in place in an elementary setting and how significant time and planning are needed as a child prepares to leave this wrap-around supportive (and most would say very nurturing environment) environment and move to a junior high school setting. Now, if we reflect on what generally happens for a child on an IEP, transition efforts usually begin the spring before the move to 6th or 7th grade (whenever the district moves from elementary to junior high school). This may come in the form of periodic visits to the new school, planning meetings between the two teams, and the like. However, because of time and other day-to-day challenges, we generally do not have the time to invest in significant transition planning to enhance the success of this move. More important, we often aren't thinking about the transition process as it connects to overall academic and adaptive skill development and how this interconnects with outcomes hoped to be achieved by the end of the secondary experience. Instead, the planning is focused on the move from one setting to another.

The move from the elementary to the middle school setting offers great opportunity to plan for and build upon transition efforts. That is, instead of looking at the April, May and June and wondering how we will complete everything needed in the remaining weeks while also getting the student over to the junior high and giving them meaningful opportunities to experience the challenges this setting offers (i.e., locker, schedules, structure of classes, new supports, wrap around no longer available); we need to be thinking about how this movement fits within the transition goals we have in place across the elementary years. For example, as adaptive goals are considered, how are we connecting these with community-based activities for the child and his family? Nolan, my son with a disability, has specific goals and objectives but we are also trying to begin to engage his team in conversations in how we can further develop adaptive skills for community opportunities. These opportunities involve speech as well as fine/gross motor development for successful access. We are looking for the immediate need but also wanting to engage Team members in planning for subsequent opportunities (e.g., a local swim program for exercise). How do we plan for this within the scope of the IEP? How can the efforts in adaptive PE assist? What speech and language skills does she need to follow the direction of the swim coaches and to interact with his peers in the water? These and similar questions are really general planning issues that could fall under the Transition umbrella. By asking and attempting to answer these questions, we should structure this within the framework of transition planning that we generally wait to do until the secondary years.

If we engage the Team in some of these planning activities, we can also begin to address future school-based needs and do so much earlier than the spring before they leave the elementary

setting. In so doing, many of the technology consideration questions should, and in this framework are often, asked and hopefully answered. I share this transition and AT connection in that the more I review what Transition experts suggest, the more in line they are with QIAT efforts and what Joan has been suggesting within a separate strand. If we can get the Team looking at Goals, Benchmarks, and contextualize the discussions as a long range planning effort; it would appear that AT considerations would be an essential component of the process. Thus, we would be addressing two issues simultaneously. The more we can bring AT discussion within planning for reading, writing, transition, etc; the further down the path we go in getting AT integrated, in a meaningful manner, into the student's life. In the meantime, we also effectively plan for transitions and not limiting these efforts to a few weeks at the end of the 5th or 6th grade year and/or the efforts we put forth at the age of 16.

- o **Re: Transition – Planning – Technology Considerations** by **faithp** on Oct 23, 2007
I totally agree with this mindset as a parent, but it can sometimes be difficult to get the professionals on board. My daughter just started her first year in high school this year. When she was about to transition to middle school I wanted to make sure both she and the school were fully prepared. We began when at her team meeting in the end of 4th grade I had it put onto her IEP that we would start working on her transition to middle school in 5th grade. The team was very resistant but agreed to put it on the IEP because they hosted a class trip to middle school in April and saw this as fulfilling what I wanted on the IEP.

I first visited the new school myself on a tour with school personnel where I also started a list of concerns I found. I then planned with the middle school a series of trips (in Nov.) after hours, and during school hours (we were worried that she might have a problem with the bells) where we took her to the school. During these tours we found so many more issues that she had problems with (ex. opening the heavy wooden doors with her physical disabilities) and then could brainstorm solutions. She did attend the tour with the rest of the class and met some of the teachers she would have the next year. She felt very comfortable in the new school and was extremely successful there.

When she was in 7th grade we did a very similar thing and visited each of the high school options for her (there were 3). We toured them with school personnel so that she and I could see what each had to offer and how they worked with kids with special needs in their school. This was essential to do at this time because one school we needed to apply for in winter of 8th grade. In 8th grade we made a decision of where she would like to go so that we could use that year for more visits and things to enhance her transition. Again the new school was very prepared for her and this year is going very well so far. Right now she just started school but it is a vocational, technical school so that she will come out of there with some work related skills.

As far as a community connection she also started last year volunteering at the local elementary school with the after-school program. This taught her some great work related skills as far as being there when she was supposed to and responsibility. She had a great time and was planning on continuing this year until a conflict in timing arose.

The next step will be once she settles into this school starting her transition planning for the future. I do know that throughout the whole process I needed and probably still need to push others to look at future planning early.

- **Re: Transition – Planning – Technology Considerations** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 23, 2007
You bring up a good point that the transition process is different for every student. Some students need an early start to transitioning to a new environment well before the actual transition happens while others may not. It's great that your daughter has you as such a strong advocate!

- **Re: Transition – Planning – Technology Considerations** by Jackie Hess [SI Faculty] on Oct 24, 2007

Now that's transition planning and advocacy!! I'm impressed!

- **How specific do we get?** by Brian Wojcik on Oct 20, 2007

I'm sitting at Closing the Gap and having some wonderful conversations with people who work in many different facets of assistive technology. In a few of the discussions, a specific topic arose that I thought I would bring into this discussion. While this topic often comes up with regard to assistive technology consideration and documentation, it can have direct impact on the area of AT and transition.

Here we go...

When an IEP team considers assistive technology, one of the results is usually a list of features needed from a 'tool' that is necessary for the student to use in his or her educational program. These features are then used to evaluate multiple tools and then select a specific tool (or specific tools) that best match the features that were identified during the consideration process. However, here is where the debate begins...

On the IEP, how is the assistive technology documented? There seems to be two schools of thought on this matter. One is to document the features of the tool (e.g., the student needs a yellow round switch at least three inches in diameter). The other is to document the specific device (e.g., the student needs an AbleNet Yellow Medium Jelly Bean Switch).

As I was engaging in this conversation, I began wondering how people are handling this issue across the country. Furthermore, I started to think about the pros and cons of these two documentation methods as students transition across the educational experiences (e.g., ECE to Pk-12, Elementary to High Schools, moving across districts, moving beyond high school, etc.)?

Any thoughts?

- **Re: How specific do we get?** by Joan Breslin Larson on Oct 20, 2007
Brian- this is a great question. I will look forward to hearing how other folks weigh in. While I have some opinions, I want to hear what others say- and I also suspect that having been at CTG this week, you may have some thoughts on this after the trips to the vendor hall!
- **Re: How specific do we get?** by Hmored on Oct 21, 2007
In my school district, the current guidelines are to document the essential features of the device and then identify the device the student is currently using. The essential features would include those features that are necessary for the student (e.g. if the student could only access switches that were at least 3" in diameter and needed auditory feedback when the switch was activated, those would be listed as essential features; if color didn't make a difference, then color wouldn't be included). On the IEP, it might look like this: the student needs a switch that is at least 3" in diameter and provides auditory feedback on activation (student is currently using a Big Red Switch). That way, if the student transfers to a different setting, the team would know what specific device was used successfully but also have the flexibility to use equipment they already have on hand that might be a different brand or configuration. We would also include positioning of the switch and student if that was important (probably in the Present Levels section).
- **Re: How specific do we get?** by Carol Leynse Harpold on Oct 21, 2007
In my school district the procedure also is to indicate the features necessary of the AT not the brand. As aforementioned, if the student was moving to another district, or if another product that was a better fit for the need came on the market the student could be provided a tool with the features needed not just the brand name. Being as thorough as possible on the IEP with the descriptions would also ensure

that the student would receive the services and devices if they should move to another district.

- **Re: How specific do we get?** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 22, 2007
I agree that this should be appropriate. As new devices are developed, if you state that the student should have access to a Brand X device, when a better device comes on the market, it will be harder to have access to it. If you list features, then any device which matches those features will work. I do want to stress that sometimes features like color, amount of pressure to activate, positioning, etc seem overkill. However, if inadequate information is provided, then we run the risk of someone getting something just not quite enough. Particularly as a student is moving on to a more challenging setting as happens during transitions, providing a tool that is not quite enough can be the tipping point that leads to failure.
 - **Re: How specific do we get?** by **msebu** on Oct 24, 2007
I agree. I am seeing students tackle more challenging tasks and with success. A better fit can be made with a more appropriate tool and it doesn't have to be more complex or more expensive.

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- **Transition from Elementary and Middle/JR HS** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 20, 2007
Some Facts to Consider on Elementary to Middle School Movement.

Elementary is the first and Middle School is the second.

One teacher one class ⇒ Multiple Teachers & Multiple Buildings
One desk or space ⇒ No Central Desk of Space + Locker Challenges

Elem - Teacher Serves as the Central Reminder Throughout the Day
JR HS -  Independent Planning and Studying

Elem - Teacher decides what is studied and Often When
JR HS -  Individual Planning, Study Habits, Move Independently Among Learning Centers, Using Time Wisely, Time Challenges

Elem - Class Performance - Group Interventions (Reading, Graphic Organizers, etc)
JR HS -  Individual Performance

Just the Facts – We know that students who are considered “typical” have what is called double jeopardy concerns. That is, there is documented achievement loss from elementary to middle and middle to high school - Double Jeopardy (Sideman & Colleagues). Similarly, Just the Facts – There have been conversations about “Crossing the Great Divide.” That is, there is evidence that indicates there is at least Two Years of Planning for Successful Movement to Middle.

Again, for students who are considered typical we often classify them at this stage of development as the Hurried Child & Miniature Adult, the Unfocused Kids, and of course, throw in the issues pertaining maturation and Physical Development.

These are all things we need to factor in when preparing for the movement out of Elementary School and also keep in mind when we plan for the AT movement beyond the Elementary setting.

- **Re: Transition from Elementary and Middle/JR HS** by **msebu** on Oct 22, 2007
Well you are right on the money. I think it is critically important for parents not to give up a this point and to urge using some framework like SETT. I think it is a time to plan more, not less.

- **Transition Considerations -- Additional Thoughts on Transition** by **Sean J Smith** on Oct 20, 2007

Transition Considerations

I thought I'd add to my earlier postings with a few thoughts specific to considerations we must be aware of and factor in when preparing for transitions for the elementary to the middle school environment. I have been spending attention on this area because of the fact that for many individuals we have begun, and in many cases, identified and integrated AT tools for students with disabilities before they move onto the middle school or junior HS setting. Yet, we often forget that the actual setting, expectations, and the like are quite different in the two settings impacting how the student is supported, taught, and in relation to AT, how this is continued to be used in a meaningful manner for the individual with a disability. With this in mind, I thought I'd share a few things we all know and yet, I believe if we truly factored in, we would begin transition efforts much earlier than the last few weeks/months before the child leaves the elementary setting.

Reality Shift – Things that are taking place for ALL students as they move from the elementary to middle/junior HS setting:

Time of Day

Often Elementary School Programs begin an hour after MS programs.

- Issue of Sleep Pattern – school begins earlier and thus, the sleeping pattern for many children is shifted. Also, children are maturing and their body is altering their need for sleep, the pattern, and other considerations.
- Getting to school on time – with the change in time Mom and Dad are not having to alter their plans that they have gotten used to over the past 5-6 years.
- Released earlier in the day – this becomes an issue for many families in what I do with this time in these situations. This is further complicated for the family that have children in multiple spots and thus multiple time issues.
- Impact on Family – these all impact the family. Add into the fact that most families have returned to dual incomes by this point in time (according to research) and thus, complicating already challenges presented by the new school.

Elementary - Wrap Around Services

One teacher or one set of core teachers responsible for:

Development and Implementation of the IEP – Yes, teachers change but often the school culture, the process followed, the administrator, and the like are consistent and there is a comfort zone that many families need and of course, get accustomed to.

Critical for Communication – the chain of command and the manner in which they interact is understood.

Related Service Personnel – this is generally the same team and thus, we know each other, we are often comfortable in asking questions, we know how to interact...

Teachers – these teachers interact and are part of a climate that allows and fosters continuity that we can thus benefit from.

Parents – the parents have learned the system (so to speak) and it is the only system that they have learned from the perspective of the school. They have had an opportunity to get comfortable with this system for at least 5 years, if not, possible 7 years. This makes a difference!

Elementary - Wrap Around Services

One teacher or one set of core teachers responsible for:

Collaborative Relationships in Place

- Smaller Team
- Building Environment Promotes Collaboration
- Early Release days
- Professional Development

Here are a few things to consider and I just list them out:

Elementary - Wrap Around Services

One teacher or one set of core teachers responsible for:

Minimal Movement

- Generally No Lockers
- Usually One Desk or Central Desk
- Minimal Movement throughout the day - based on 6 years of experience.

Family Shifts

- Work responsibilities and Expectations
- Divorce Rates Tend to Rise as the Child moves to the MS or JR HS.
- Relationship with Siblings – They are now becoming more aware of social issues and challenges.
- Time of Day

o **Re: Transition Considerations -- Additional Thoughts on Transition by Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 21, 2007

Boy, Sean- are these important factors! I remember how this transition changed life for my children without disabilities, and can only imagine and see from the professional perspective the impact for children with unique needs and their families.

More than ever, the need for communication among team members and the need for a perspective from all team members that this is a student who CAN be successful with the right supports is essential. I encourage IEP teams in MN to use the SETT framework to consider AT. One important factor when the student moves to those multiple new settings in middle school is that we have to look at multiple environments which will impact the use of AT- all of those things Sean has mentioned and even more.

Good transition supports means being aware of the new environments, new challenges, new opportunities for growth and independence. Pretty exciting times!

• **What is in MN's Performance Plan by Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 22, 2007

I thought it might be helpful to reflect on what is in the State of MN's Performance Plan as an example of what can be found in another state's plan. I think MN's plan is good- certainly, as in all areas, more can be done, but we are making progress!

We contract with a Center for Independent Living to provide self advocacy training.

We contract with PACER to do specific training in the 5 areas of transition.

We provide technical assistance for transition specialist.

We support a transition leadership team to help direct state level activities.

We have had a unique electronic portfolio designed for students in transition to allow them to document their plans, goals and activities.

We support an online planning tool for students to use in planning their transition. You can see this at <http://www.c3online.org/>

Now, none of this is specific to transition with AT. However, the skills and self advocacy awareness are essential to supporting the use of AT in post secondary settings.

This is part of one state's plan. You should be able to find information on your state's plan on the state's education webpage.

o **Re: What is in MN's Performance Plan by msebu** on Oct 24, 2007

The web page is nicely laid out. The whole issue with AT not being addressed directly is that sometimes it is not addressed at all, especially if people are not as knowledgeable or assertive. I think I already posted this. I applaud the parents who have been a part of this and their willingness to look for resources, etc. It is tough to meet the day to day needs and try to get this all organized.

- **AT and Post Secondary settings** by **carmen duran** on Oct 23, 2007
I want to bring this issue to our discussion: the Colleges with strong support services for students with learning disabilities. In my opinion, a successful program for students with disabilities in college should have a combination of appropriate AT and Tutoring services. I have seen that and students really made it! Tutors are essential part in helping with the instructions, training and software provided to the students. For students with learning disabilities, the computers and software are essential for writing assistance, note taking, organization, and overall productivity. A tutor may assist the student with the AT equipment and software. In fact, many college tutors "specialize" in tutoring students with learning disabilities. I don't want to downplay the AT but the human factor is crucial. A new student with a wonderful AT equipment but no "support" can we as lost as the student with no AT at all. I want to repeat that, not all schools and colleges have the budget and the human capital enough to assist all students with disabilities. So, creativity and mindful use of resources is a must.
Final comment: I am not familiar with the Peterson's Guide for Colleges for Students with Disabilities". I heard many colleges listed are very expensive. I would like to hear your comments. Thanks.
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- **AT and Post Secondary settings** by **carmen duran** on Oct 23, 2007
Colleagues: thank you for responding to my comments. I am printing everything to do a follow-up later. I got the information on Assessment of Post Secondary Accommodations and the Quality Indicators in Assistive Technology.
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- **Transition from college to the "real world"** by **scarder** on Oct 23, 2007
This discussion has had some ideas regarding transition into college that have been very helpful. I am a PT currently working with a young man with muscular dystrophy who will soon graduate from college. What resources are available to help college students move into the work environment? This man is currently involved in VR and I have counseled him to contact his college career center to explore jobs in his field of study that he can physically perform. Is there any other resource that others have used to help with the transition to work?

- **Re: Transition from college to the "real world"** by **Jackie Hess [SI Faculty]** on Oct 23, 2007

If you haven't already, I'd suggest taking a look at the following URL:

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/youth/> It's the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) website page that features links to a number of resources, including:

"Entering the World of Work: What Youth with Mental Health Needs Should Know About Accommodations"

"National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability/Youth" (Their website -

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/> - has quite a few resources as well.)

The link to "Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences" includes further links to the Workforce Recruitment Program (an ODEP-sponsored summer internship program for youth with disabilities); "Career Voyages" (a website providing information on high growth, high demand occupations and the skills needed for them); "Youth Rules" (provides info on federal and state labor laws that apply to youth, including those with disabilities); "Youth to Work Coalition" (assists businesses in creating internships and mentoring programs for youth with disabilities); and "Public Service Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities" (for college students with disabilities who are interested in working for the executive, judicial, or legislative branches of the government in Washington, DC during the school year).

There are too many resources to list here, but I'd suggest puttering around on the ODEP website.

Hope this helps.

- **Re: Transition from college to the "real world"** by **Brian Wojcik** on Oct 23, 2007

Thank you to Jackie for linking to the wonderful resources!

I would add that larger companies often have units that are designed to work with individuals with disabilities with regard to accommodations, including assistive technology. Several former students of mine have found linking to these units to be beneficial.

Also, in addition to VR, connecting with the local Center for Independent Living (a listing of centers can be found here: <http://www.ilusa.com/links/ilcenters.htm>) can open supports from within the community to support the transition to the 'real world' as well.

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- **Thanks for a great institute** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 24, 2007

I have very much enjoyed this opportunity to act as faculty for this institute. Thanks to Jackie Hess, Sean Smith and Brian Wojcik for their excellent facilitation and skills. Thanks to all of you for your interest in doing good things for kids.

I want to make a few points at the end- the first is that transition is not a single event- it is a series of steps, and that a student/child/person needs to continue to grow and assume more responsibility at each step.

Every step also requires a different level of support. The advocates for a student in a transition need to be aware of what is happening in each new environment. Is the AT in place adequate? Has the environment(s) changed so much that existent AT no longer is effective? Have the tasks changed enough that a new strategy is called for?

Are there informed supports in the new environment ready to support the student?

AT evaluation is ONGOING. We really are never done with this work, and we need to constantly look and see what has changed, what new opportunities there are for growth and successes.

This is an exciting journey.

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- **Future access to the Institute transcripts - cross post** by **Jackie Hess [SI Faculty]** on Oct 24, 2007

Thank you all for your participation in our 2007 AT Institute. We hope you found it interesting and informative. In a few days you'll receive an evaluation form asking for your comments about the experience. We'd greatly appreciate any comments you can offer.

We'll be archiving the discussion transcripts for future reference and including them on our 2008 Assistive Technology CD-ROM. You'll be able to access them at any time by going to our website and following the link to "Online Discussions."

If you're not currently on our listserve and would like to receive the Family Center's monthly newsletter, please send us an email at fctd@aed.org.

Again, thanks, not only for sharing your knowledge and experiences, but for everything you do for young people with disabilities.

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- **post school college** by **msebu** on Oct 24, 2007

A colleague has sent two of her children with severe learning disabilities to Northwood College with great success. She said they had struggled in gen. ed. and traditional college. Northwood is a business school and focuses on what sounds like more UDL concepts-projects, group work, presentations. The tech they use is naturalized; everyone else uses it!

- **November discussion of technology tools - cross post** by **Jackie Hess [SI Faculty]** on Oct 24, 2007

Throughout the month of November, the Family Center on Technology and Disability (FCTD) will host "Teaching Digital Natives - Technology Tools for the Classroom." The discussion will be co-moderated by Kirk Behnke and Scott Marfilus.

Kirk Behnke has worked all over the country in various AT roles. Along with Dr. Harry Murphy, he designed and implemented the "Assistive Technology Applications Certificate Program (ATACP)" through California State University, Northridge (CSUN). He holds a Master of Education degree from Temple University and a certificate in Assistive Technology Applications from the University College in Dublin, Ireland. He is also a RESNA-credentialed Assistive Technology Practitioner and Assistive Technology Supplier. Kirk is particularly interested in accessible curriculum design, universal design and the use of web-based tools.

Scott Marfilus has been working with individuals with disabilities for the past 26 years, the past 20 of which have involved AT implementation. His teaching certifications are in Early Childhood Handicaps, Cognitive Disabilities, Emotional Disabilities, and Learning Disabilities. Scott works with universities, helping them infuse technology throughout teacher preparation programs. He consults with individuals and businesses to determine adaptations that are needed in workplace settings. Scott also teaches in the CSUN Assistive Technology Applications Certificate Program. His AT focus areas include computer access, and technologies that assist those with cognitive and learning disabilities.

The November discussion will look at the emerging use of handheld computers, podcasts, online textbooks, wikis, blogs, wireless access to the Internet, virtual reality and other leading edge technology as effective tools in the classroom.

Unlike our online institute, you don't need a special URL to access the month-long discussion. Simply visit the FCTD website - www.fctd.info - and follow the link to "Online Discussions." We hope to see you there!

- **Re:November discussion of technology tools - cross post** by **Joan Breslin Larson** on Oct 24, 2007

These are two fabulous resources- I hope everyone can participate. I know I learn from both Scott and Kirk whenever I get to listen to or talk with them. Great opportunity!

- **AT and Transition services** by **carmen duran** on Oct 24, 2007

My final comment at the end of the Institute:

I tried to stay "outside the box" for Learning Disabilities but it was hard since most of the students referred from the DCPS are diagnosed with Learning Disabilities. I also printed all transcripts to make several folders for future references. So much to learn! Thanks for the numerous resources and websites recommended. Thanks for the AT Institute! Gracias!