Assistive Technology Plans Ease Student Transitions

Managing and communicating the infinite number of details of exactly how a student with a multiple disability uses his or her assistive technology can be a daunting task for any school team. How does the student access the device and equipment? What is it used for? How is it programmed, serviced, and maintained?

And then add to this the fact that students' needs are ever-changing. What works in middle school no longer works in high school. What works in school does not meet the student's needs at home or in the community.

If we're committed to helping students use assistive technology as they move from one environment to another and from one developmental stage to another, a written Assistive Technology Plan and Portfolio can be very helpful.

An AT Plan ensures that the supports that have helped the student in the past to access the curriculum, communicate, or be more independent are not abandoned in a changed environment—the introduction of a new classroom teacher, the transition to a new school, etc. Of course, the new team or school will bring new ideas and expertise to the student's AT Plan, but until they become more familiar with the student's needs, the AT Plan bridges that gap.

AT Plans fit into the larger transition process for students when moving from familiar environments to ones with new people, tasks, and expectations.

The following is a list of important information to consider including in your students' Assistive Technology Plans:

- Description of the student's current technology use—objectives, equipment list, and photos of set-up.
- About Me Section—written from the student's perspective, details interests and help needed.
- Product Information—user manuals and support documents, where purchased, maintenance requirements.
- Required skills to support the student, program the device(s), and make further adaptations.
- Available training and ongoing support opportunities.
- Emergency plan with contact information including AT loan and repair information.

If you have questions about this article or related assistive technology issues, please contact Julie Haggerty, PGCS Assistive Technology Program Coordinator at 973-829-8484 or haggertyj@chambersschool.org