

Statewide AT Planning for the Year Ahead



In the Summertime, When the Weather Is Hot... AT Planners Are at Work

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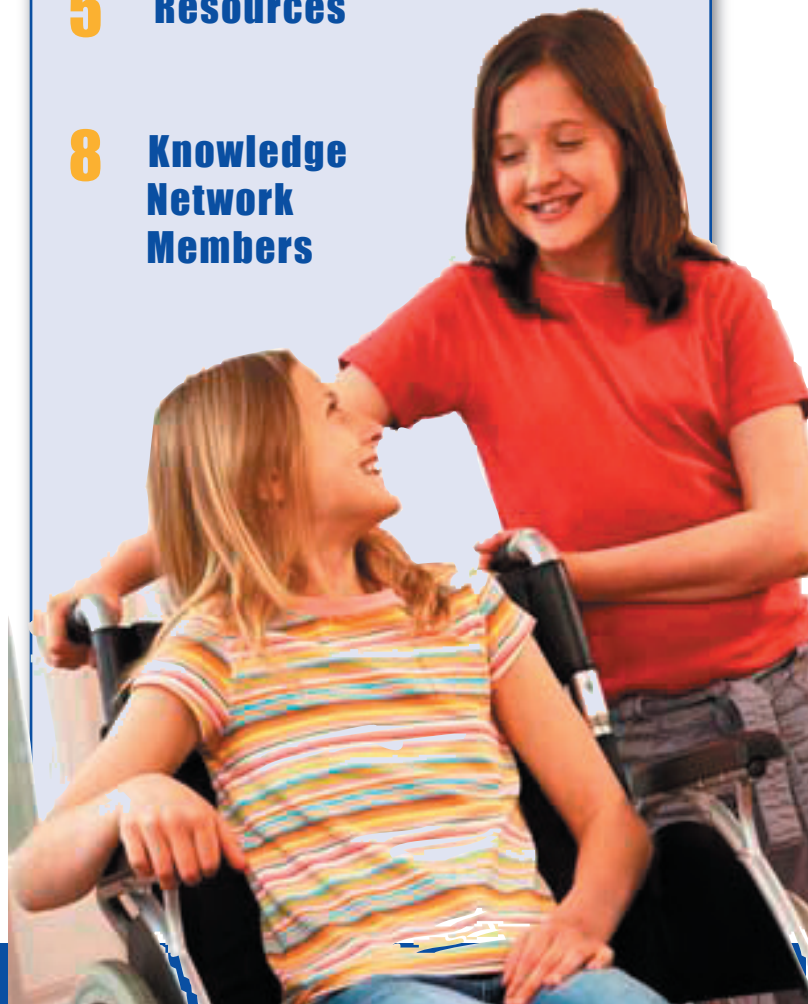
*In the Summertime when the weather is hot
You can stretch right up and touch the sky*
Mungo Jerry, 1970

While others bask in summer's vacation sunshine, many state and local school officials responsible for assembling assistive technology-related budgets are hard at work planning for the year ahead, finding ways to stretch tight budgets to ensure AT accessibility for the children and families in their states who need it.

In many states, the state AT Act project draws up and executes the plan. In other states, the department of education appoints a lead state agency to fulfill the task. In still other states the chore is handled inside the state education department. Plans are often developed in three-year cycles, with the capability to make needed adjustments on an annual basis. In any case, with a bow toward the Minnesota State AT Plan 2007, each generic statewide k-12 AT plan often consists of the following ingredients:

- Training for state employees, AT professionals, education professionals and consumers; training sessions range from an overview of AT in the classroom to sessions focusing on the use of specific devices and software as well as strategies teachers can utilize to implement AT in their classrooms
- Training for information technology professionals in creation of accessible computer-based tools and web design
- Training for families and the general public; topics can include AT and disability awareness, access to information and future trends

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- Technical assistance
- Transition training for students
- Public awareness activities

This issue examines the AT planning process at the state level, featuring the State of Ohio as an example.

Jeff McCormick Speaks

He's the technology and low incidence administrator for OCALI, the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence disabilities, an organization formed by the Ohio legislature and entrusted by the state's special education director, Greg Maloney, as the lead state agency for year-to-year statewide school assistive technology planning. Jeff's task is a daunting one: Ohio's student population is among the nation's largest, with 1.85 million students overall, including 255,000 in special education.

An adherent of Universal Design for Learning in the state's classroom's, Jeff has served as a special education teacher in public and alternative schools. Before joining OCALI he managed state projects and grants in assistive and education technology for nine years at the Ohio Resource Center for Low Incidence and Severe Handicaps (ORCLISH). He has been active in special education since 1986.

OCALI, Jeff's current employer, facilitates AT loans, oversees AT-related professional development (training), supplies AT teaching resources, maintains relationships with AT vendors, and generates AT-focused webcasts.

Jeff responds this month via email to a series of questions posed by the FCTD Newsletter.

Supporting our interview with Jeff McCormick are resources to assist planning administrators in locating in-state organizations that provide access to assistive technology. We also feature members of our **Knowledge Network**. The members spotlighted this month focus on various aspects of AT access and planning. We invite you to contact these members for further information.

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

A Framework for Statewide Annual Assistive Technology Planning

An Interview with Jeff McCormick, Technology Administrator, and Kathy Staugler, AT Consultant from the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI)



Q: In Ohio, who is primarily responsible for assistive technology planning?

A: At the state level, the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI) coordinates planning and activities in collaboration with the regional State Support Teams.

Q: When does the statewide AT planning process for the year ahead begin?

A: At the state level in Ohio, AT planning is defined by support to regions and districts on best practice that can be applied at the local level. Through OCALI, an AT Network builds collaborative projects and professional development. This planning process is ongoing with activities occurring from September through June. Each of the 16 state support teams have personnel who have expertise in assistive technology and conduct local planning and support to the districts in their respective region.

Q: What are the key elements of the planning process?

A: The State Support Teams work with OCALI to support the use of technology at each tier of support to maximize accessibility to early learning content standards to enhance learning. Our joint efforts are to support students with disabilities by designing and delivering professional development and supports related to the appropriate selection and use of technology/assistive technology that allows greater access to and progress in the general curriculum.

Additionally, at the state and regional level, equipment is budgeted and acquired for loan libraries. This equipment is made available to districts so that they can conduct assessment and trial use with students.

Five years ago, the state implemented a \$9.4 million dollar grant that was utilized to provide AT for individual students based on an assessment process. This was a tremendously beneficial process as a way to build aware-

ness of assistive technology, and it supported local school districts in the provision of AT devices and systems.

Q: How do you incorporate local needs into statewide planning?

A: State level planning, whether for projects, professional development, loan equipment libraries or regional support, must be based on the current needs at the local district level. In many instances, the regional state support team is able to evaluate the current practices for individual students and report this at the state level of networking. Future planning is then based on the reporting from the regional level.

Q: What role do you play beyond planning, for instance, in conducting AT initiatives?

A: OCALI coordinates activities in collaboration with the regional AT Network members from the State Support Teams. Regional activities vary depending on the specific needs of a region. Over the years, many statewide projects have been conducted, such as the Software Solutions Project and Universal Design for Math Project. These are just a few examples of statewide efforts to infuse assistive technology into the general curriculum.

Q: How do you address the need for AT training, which should include not only teachers, but parents, para-professionals and other school-based professionals?

A: Needs assessments are conducted for in-service training. At the state level, identified professional development trainings focus on a train-the-trainer model, where members of the regional AT Network participate in training that can be replicated at the regional level, or that can build capacity to develop local projects related to AT. At the regional and local level, needs assessments are also conducted to obtain input from educators and parents on the specific needs for training.



Additionally, OCALI and the Ohio AT Network provide workshops and demonstration areas at the State Technology Conference each year.

More recently, the Ohio AT Network has focused on the development of web-based information and resources that can be integrated into district level training. The web-based information will focus on assistive technology, AT and the law and Universal Design for Learning. Each focus area will have accompanying web-cast vignettes that introduce the topic. We are also exploring using Webex to further our efforts in addressing professional development at the local level.

Q: At the state level, how do you support the school-based IEP process, which is where AT needs are often identified?

A: Local school districts are responsible for AT consideration, assessment, decision-making and acquisition of AT for individual students. This is all documented through the IEP process. Since local school districts are responsible for providing the assistive technology needed for a student as identified in the IEP, the means to fund these devices vary. School districts may explore outside options, such as Medicaid, health insurance, etc. as long as these do not reduce the benefits to the student or family. Some districts take advantage of their Part B Special Education monies to provide AT for individual students. State and regional AT Network members are available to support local districts in understanding the variety of funding options that may be available.

Q: What is the role of parents in the planning process? How do you get parents involved as stakeholders?

A: Again, the regional level of networking from the State Support Teams is the most reliable source of the local and district level needs. Since the parents are active members of the IEP team, their input comes indirectly to regional members who can bring this viewpoint to the state level networking process.

Q: How do you balance the needs of the many with the AT needs of a few in a time of tight budgets?

A: Districts need to be creative. School districts may explore outside options, such as Medicaid, health insurance, etc. as long as these do not reduce the benefits to the student or family. As I mentioned earlier, some districts take advantage of their Part B Special Education funds.

In one area of the state, a collaborative effort between school districts and the West Central Ohio Special Education Advisory Board of the State Support Team Region 6 and the Auglaize County ESC Governing Board established a program which provides assistive technology equipment to students who require specialized adaptations and equipment to achieve their educational potential.

Participating school districts support this program by paying an annual fee. Through an assessment and application process, these school districts may apply for specific assistive technology identified for a student with disabilities.

Since the beginning of the ATC program in 1992, over \$340,000 has been spent to acquire AT devices for 104 students.

Q: How has the process changed during the past five years?

A: The Ohio AT Network has been a strong planning group for many years. The change in recent years has gone from providing funds to regions where the regional teams proposed projects that would be completed in their respective region, to a more statewide effort, where the network works collaboratively on developing a consistent message on all aspects of technology and assistive technology to increase student achievement. There is also a more expanded need to address technology/assistive technology from the perspective of student achievement within the general curriculum.

Q: Why has it changed?

A: The mandates of NCLB and IDEA emphasized the need to build capacity at the local and district level, and to focus on student achievement within the general curriculum. These are probably the most influential factors for change in planning at the state level. Consideration of AT for individual students must be addressed as part of the response to intervention as well as within the IEP process for students who have been identified with a disability.

It also becomes more apparent that statewide collaborative efforts are more effective than individual efforts at the regional level.

Q: What are your most important challenges as you set the process in motion and then see it through each year?

A: Educators at the district level are being met with an increasing number of educational initiatives: standards-based instruction, formative assessment, curriculum based measurement, differentiated instruction, etc. The greatest challenge is finding ways to help teachers and administrators realize the ways that technology/assistive technology can be integrated into these other initiatives. Integration with ongoing initiatives is necessary or else the technology/assistive technology will only become a secondary focus.

Q: How do you overcome those challenges?

A: First of all it is important to understand the other initiatives in education, then it will be necessary to plan ways to support these initiatives with resources related to technology and assistive technology that can be managed within the other ongoing processes with a school district.

In today's world, more and more people are using the Internet as the newest wave for gaining information on topics. Creating reliable web-based information, training and resources is one viable option for getting information out to districts in a format that can be readily accessed, and presents a statewide consistent message.



Q: If you had a wish list to refine the process, what would it contain?

A: Additional funding is always a need, particularly to give local districts a way to have technology and assistive technology hardware and software available to them.

Q: What changes in the process do you see occurring five and 10 years down the road? For instance, do you see the effects of universal design in your school system? Will those effects become more pronounced? Do you see AT being used in general education classrooms to support students in “least restrictive environments?”

A: The Ohio AT Network is currently focusing on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) at an awareness level. This will certainly have a strong influence on the future. As districts plan for increased technology in their schools, they need to realize the benefits that universally designed features will have on their potential to differentiate instruction, thus meeting the needs of many more students without the necessity to include assistive technology. It becomes an issue of having the needed flexibility already available, and not just retrofitting into a system that does not currently provide for individual differences. Universal Design for Learning has the potential to improve the outcomes for all learners through the use of flexible learning materials.

RESOURCES

Articles

Planning for Successful Implementation of Assistive Technologies

By Glenna Gustafson

VSTE Journal

Virginia Society for Technology in Education
2004

Ms. Gustafson announces, “Today over 95% of students with disabilities are working in general education classrooms and the majority of these students utilize assistive technologies to be more successful and independent.” General education teachers and special education teachers need to know how to implement the use of assistive technology in the classroom, the author asserts. Unfortunately, she adds, “the majority of educational professionals, both special and general education, have had no or limited training in the selection and use of assistive technology.”

Using the QIAT Consortium guidelines as a benchmark, the author addresses the need for a school division to develop a plan to make the selection and delivery of AT services successful for all students.

Specifically, she lists quality indicators for:

- Administrative support
- Assessment of AT needs
- Documentation in the IEP
- Implementation of AT
- Evaluation of effectiveness
- AT Transition
- Professional development and training in AT

http://www.vste.org/publications/journal/attach/vj_1802/vj_1802_03.pdf

Planning and Training Tools

Assistive Technology Planning Tools for Educators:
Including ALL Students in Any Activity

AbleNet

This tool helps educators facilitate inclusion and is designed for ease of navigation by Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams. For each activity, planners address the following questions:

- Which of your state’s educational standards can be addressed by this activity?
- What is the learning objective?
- What related IEP goals will be addressed?
- What activity steps are required to complete this

activity?

- List the ways all students can participate and communicate while engaged in this activity
- What materials and assistive technology will be needed?
- How will the instructors/facilitators collaborate in conducting this activity?

<http://ablenetinc.com/downloads/atplanningtool.pdf>

Assistive Technology – The New Power Tools

Tools for Schools
2006

Adapted from Closing the Gap as training tools for school systems in New York State, this resource is a compilation of handouts and overhead documents that can be used for training teachers and administrators in assistive technology and its uses. Because the documents highlight general concepts as they suggest ways to address curriculum issues while incorporating the use of AT, they may be useful in jurisdictions nationwide. The handouts cover the following topics:

- Tools for schools
- Responsive leadership
- On-going staff development
- Engaging curriculum
- Flexible resources
- Supportive involvement of parents and community
- Comprehensive planning
- Assistive technology: the process of enhancing learning
- Assistive Technology: from low tech to high tech
- Assistive technology planning steps
- State guidelines for assistive technology
- Benefits of assistive technology

<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/sate/assistechandouts.pdf>

Books

Education Tech Points

By: Gayl Bowser and Penny Reed
Coalition for Assistive Technology in Oregon (CATO)
2006

Education Tech Points is a system that “has the advantage of including everyone on the IEP/IFSP team in a familiar process that assures that assistive technology will be considered in all the aspects of the child’s educational program.” The system helps identify the times when AT-related questions should be asked and provides support to existing educational teams as a way to effectively select AT and implement related services. Each Educational Tech Point identifies the specific

times within the planning and provision of specially designed instruction at which the need for AT should be considered. It serves as a way to integrate AT into the thinking of the IEP/IFSP team and the management system that each school district uses to ensure provision of appropriate services to children with disabilities. Cost: \$50, check or money order only. To obtain this 450-page book contact:

Coalition for Assistive Technology in Oregon

P.O. Box 431

Winchester, OR 97495

http://www.wati.org/AT_Services/edutech.html

Videos

Assistive Technology Coordinators: Wisdom Shared

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, Learning Point Associates

2007

The questions that form the spine of this video are aimed at “helping school personnel start conversations about planning and integrating assistive technology into systemic school change.” Interviewees and responders are teachers, administrators and technology staffers.

<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/methods/technology/te7wisdom.htm>

Websites

Assistive Technology State Plans

This link on the U.S. Department of Education website provides access to each state’s Assistive Technology Plan as a Word document or pdf form. It also provides links to portions of the Department’s website that have been organized specifically for students, parents, teachers, and administrators .

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/atq/state-plans/2006/index.html>



Register now for the
2007 FCTD Institute
on Assistive Technology

October 8 –24, 2007

- Earn continuing education units (CEUs)
- Expand your knowledge of AT devices and services
- Meet disability professionals throughout the country
- Have in-depth discussions with national AT experts

Join Dr. Sean Smith, University of Kansas
and a faculty of AT experts as we explore:

Transition and AT
&
Autism and AT

You can register at:
<http://www.fctd.info/institute/oct2007/register.php>

Questions may be sent to:
fctd@aed.org

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs,
The FCTD's annual AT Institute is FREE to participant.

We look forward to seeing you online!



KNOWLEDGE NETWORK MEMBERS

New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP)

NMTAP offers a variety of free ser-



VICES to New Mexicans with disabilities to help them obtain the assistive technology services they need. NMTAP works closely with schools, agencies, and counselors so that they are able to identify and try out appropriate technology accommodations for the individuals with whom they work. The ABLE Device Loan Program is the NMTAP service that offers teachers, therapists, case managers and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) counselors the opportunity to try out assistive devices and software with students/clients prior to purchase.

In addition to its loan program, NMTAP also offers a device demonstration program, designed to help AT users make informed decisions about the best AT support at the best value. NMTAP offers this program to individuals and to small and large groups. After having participated in the device loan and/or demonstration programs, families may select to purchase AT. They may then use NMTAP's financial loan program that connects them with local banks to obtain affordable loans. New Mexico AT users can also obtain equipment through NMTAP's second chance computer donation program. The organization operates an active computer donation program that places "gently used" systems in the homes and offices of New Mexicans with disabilities.

For more information on NMTAP, please contact:
New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP)
435 St. Michael's Drive, Building D
Santa Fe, NM 87505
Phone: (800) 866-2253 (toll free)
Fax: (505) 954-8608
<http://www.nmtap.com>
Contact: Andy Winnegar, Director
Email: andy.winnegar@state.mn.us

Minnesota STAR Program

The Minnesota STAR (System of Technology to Achieve Results) Program is the state's Assistive Technology Act Program. Housed in the Minnesota Department



of Administration, STAR aims to help state residents with disabilities gain access to AT. To that end, they operate the Minnesota Assistive Technology Loan Network (MATLN), a loan library containing over 50 augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, and more than 200 non-AAC items. MATLN lends devices to any state resident regardless of age or disability for a 30-day trial period. When a consumer settles on equipment that meets his/her needs, STAR can aid them in obtaining the device through the STAR Technology Exchange (STARTE), an online classified ads service that promotes the reutilization of AT. This is a user-driven database with entry, edit, delete and search capabilities. The Exchange cannot be used by vendors or distributors to sell their products.

Minnesota's two alternate financing programs are run by STAR's community-based partner, Assistive Technology of Minnesota. These programs provide low-interest loans for the purchase of AT devices and related services. One of the two programs, the Telework Program, provides loans for AT devices and services that will lead to employment.

Minnesota STAR operates a robust website with a great deal of useful AT information for state residents.

For more information on the STAR Program, please contact:

Minnesota STAR
50 Sherburne Avenue, Room 309
St. Paul, MN 55155
Phone: (651) 201-2640; (888) 234-1267 (toll free);
MN Relay at 711 or toll-free at (800) 627-3529
Fax: (651) 282-6671
<http://www.admin.state.mn.us/assistivetechology/>
Contact: Kim Moccia
Email: kim.moccia@state.mn.us

Assistive Technology in New Hampshire

Assistive
Technolo-
gy in New
Hamp-
shire



Assistive Technology in New Hampshire
ATinNH.org

(ATinNH) is a public resource that was established to increase access to assistive technology services and devices in the state. In order to meet the needs of the residents of New Hampshire with disabilities, ATinNH has partnered with ATECH Services, North-east Passage, NH Vision and Hearing Network, UNH Occupational Therapy Department, and TD Banknorth.

For more information on AT in NH, please contact:
Assistive Technology in New Hampshire (ATinNH)
c/o Institute on Disability/UCED
340 Commercial Street, 2nd Floor
Manchester, NH 03101
Phone: (603) 628-7679
Fax: (603) 628-7679
<http://atinnh.org/>

Contact: Sonke Dornblut, Program Coordinator
Email: sonke.dornblut@unh.edu

Kentucky Assistive Technology Services Network (KATS)

The KATS
Network
was one
of the first



projects spawned by the Assistive Technology Act of 1988 because Kentucky was one of the first states funded under the provisions of that legislation. The Network works under its lead agency, the Office for the Blind, Education Cabinet and consists of a state-wide network of organizations and individuals dedicated to enhancing the availability of AT and AT-related services.

The KATS Network consists of four regional Assistive Technology Resource Centers: the Bluegrass Technology Center in Lexington, Enabling Technologies (enTECH) at Spalding University in Louisville, the Western Kentucky AT Center (WKATC) at Wendell Foster Campus in Owensboro, and the Redwood AT Center in Ft. Mitchell.

For more information on the KATS Network, please contact:
Kentucky Assistive Technology Services Network
c/o Charles McDowell Center
8412 Westport Road

Louisville, KY 40242

Phone: (502) 429-4484; (800) 327-5287 (toll free)

Fax: (502) 429-7114 (toll free)

<http://www.katsnet.org>

Contact: Chase Forrester, Director

Email: Chase.Forrester@ky.gov

Maine CITE

The Maine CITE Coordinating Center is the statewide program designed to help make assistive and universally designed technology more available to the children and adults with disabilities in



Maine. The Coordinating Center is funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Education through the Maine Department of Education. The Center has four main goals: 1) Broaden understanding and increase the availability of assistive and universally designed technology; 2)

Provide ways for families to obtain the technology; 3) Encourage those with disabilities to help shape public policy promoting assistive and universally designed technology; and 4) To establish Maine as a state where individuals with disabilities have ready access to the technology they need.

For more information on Maine CITE, please contact:
Maine CITE

University of Maine System University College
46 University Drive
Augusta, ME 04330

Phone: (207) 621-3195; (207) 621-3482 (TDD)

Fax: (207) 621-3193

<http://www.mainecite.org>

Contact: Kathleen Powers, Program Director

Email: iweb@doe.k12.me.us

Michigan's Assistive Technology Program at Communities of Power

Michigan's Assistive Technology Program at Communities of Power implements the current three-year State Plan for Assistive Technology that has been funded since December 2005. The plan focuses on device reutilization, device demonstration, state financing activities, and state leadership activities.



Michigan's device reutilization program, AT Xchange (ATX) provides a way for AT users to sell or give away their devices. Vendors may also use the AT Xchange to list equipment.

The AT program sub-contracts with local organizations to provide device demonstration centers. Their goal is to expand the number and reach of the centers to ensure that traditionally under-served communities have access to AT demonstrations as well. State-wide training is sub-contracted to organizations that provide public awareness and training sessions on a range of AT topics.

The state's AT Loan Fund supplies low-interest loans to help families and individuals purchase AT equipment. Currently the fund is operated by United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan.

For more information on Communities of Power, please contact:
Michigan Disabilities Rights Coalition
780 West Lake Lansing Road, Suite 200
Lansing, MI 48823
Phone: (517) 333-2477; (800) 760-4600 (toll free)
Fax: (517) 333-2677
<http://www.copower.org/At/index.htm>
Contact: Norm Delisle, Executive Director
Email: ndelisle@prosynergy.org

Here at FCTD we always welcome
your suggestions for newsletter and
discussion topics.

If there is something you would like
to see discussed, please contact us
at
fctd@aed.org

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