

SETTS AT TIPS FOR TEACHERS: EDITOR, DENNIS DEEDS, PSUSD  
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## **ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY IN YOUR CLASSROOM**

### **WHAT CAN TECHNOLOGY DO FOR YOU?**

The short answer to the question is that it can make your job as a classroom teacher easier. But, more importantly, it can help the kids in your classroom make a better connection with their curriculum.

Just so we're all 'on the same page' when it comes time to consider Assistive Technology (AT) at every IEP meeting, let's do a little review. AT includes the services and devices that are used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. IDEA spells it out in more detail, but for our purposes, the short definition will do.

When many of us hear about AT, we think in terms of the "Gee Whiz" talking computers, complicated mega-bucks software CDs, and other high tech gadgets. While those are AT, so are fat pencils, raised line paper and colored highlighters. Technology comes in all shapes, sizes, and price ranges. Being aware of the options and how to apply them is the key to student success and, as mentioned earlier, it will make your job easier.

### **SO, HOW DO YOU FIGURE OUT WHAT'S BEST?**

Your district's Assistive Technology specialist, or team, can observe, consult, and assess in an effort to find AT solutions for the students on your caseload. As a result, there may be more effective ways to use the technology you already have or there may be suggestions for introducing new services and/or devices to the students at your site.

### **USING GRANTS TO ACHIEVE THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CLASSROOM**

*By: Keran Hoover,  
Central School District  
San Bernardino County WESELPA*

With the aide of grants, a special education and first grade teacher at Coyote Canyon School in Central School District are moving their classrooms into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In the fall, Keran Hoover and Mary Marine received a district Medi-Cal grant to share an Interwrite™ Pad. This Bluetooth™ wireless pad enables them to teach interactive lessons from anywhere in the classroom. They can hand the pad to a student to answer questions from their desks for the whole class to see.

In February, they won a Best Buy Teach Award™. With this grant, they purchased a projector, camera, printer and photo software for each classroom. This will enable them to more effectively integrate technology into everyday lessons.

The premise for both grants was to increase engagement by using a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) model that enables children of all abilities and language backgrounds equal access to the curriculum.

Both teachers have been using the district provided desktop computers and TVs in their classrooms to teach lessons on PowerPoint® this year and have seen a dramatic increase in engagement.

# SETTS Assistive Technology



## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

Here's a nifty freebie for those of you with a PC in your classroom – sorry, Mac users, this won't work for you.

More than likely, your PC has Windows XP as the operating system. And even more likely, there's a copy of Microsoft Office installed. Part of MS Office is MS Word. If this is the case with your computer, read on.

Most of us just 'scratch the surface' of MS Word's capabilities when we use it as a word processing program. But, did you know it's also a program capable of turning speech into text?

Students who have difficulty with the physical act of writing with a pencil on paper or typing on a computer, can benefit by being able to **dictate** their ideas to the computer and see them turned into text in MS Word. To be successful at this, the student should have about a 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading ability in

order to go through the dictation process that trains the computer to recognize the individual's speech patterns. You'll also need a headset microphone that costs under \$30 at any of the local office supply or electronics stores.

Getting the student started and ready to dictate takes less than half an hour. As soon as the set up tutorial is complete, the student is ready to go.

Getting comfortable with the dictation process can take a bit more time. But, with an hour or two of practice, a non-writer can become an accomplished 'writer'.

This AT can be used for completing Language Arts writing assignments, essay tests in any subject, or any other assignment that requires getting words on paper.

A quiet workplace free of extraneous noise is needed to assure outside sounds aren't picked up during dictation.

## AT WEBSITES

Some websites that have been helping with AT needs:

<http://storylineonline.net/>

Members of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) read aloud picture books with or without captions. Must be watched as streaming video, can not be downloaded for later use. Stories range from ~ 5-10 minutes.

<http://www.connsensebulletin.com/csbpodcasts/>

Dr. Chauncy Rucker of U of CT, longtime AT advocate, writes a newsletter and creates podcasts about the field of AT. If you can't visit a major AT event, this is a great way to 'visit' with the 'movers and shakers!'

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18504117>

Cell Phone Reads to the Blind. A cell phone that takes a picture of text then reads using Kurzweil software. <http://www.knfbreader.com/>

## SETTS

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YOUR LOCAL SETTS CONTACT IS:

GREGG LEGUTKI

[GLEGUTKI@CTAP10.ORG](mailto:GLEGUTKI@CTAP10.ORG)

909.386.2686

