



The LATI News

LOUISIANA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE

INCLUDING PARENTS IN ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY DECISIONS

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One purpose of an IEP team is to develop goals and objectives for the individual student as well as outlining services that would benefit the individual based upon his/her needs. One area that is gaining notoriety is that of Assistive Technology (AT).

Each team member including parents/guardian is "supposed" to have input into making decisions involving the student's IEP. However, some members are more involved than others, and some members are involved less or even unintentionally excluded. One particular area where some parents are reluctant in making decisions or contributing could be in the area of AT.

Technology advances and changes on a daily basis. Some parents may be limited, for various reasons, in their knowledge of what is actually available that could assist their child and be helpful in addressing the curriculum. Technology is overwhelming to most individuals and teachers; so, imagine what a parent of a special needs child must experience when making decisions or asking questions concerning AT.

Schwab Learning partnering with greatschools.org has attempted to streamline this issue and offers a resource for parents that could help them and the IEP team make smarter decisions with regards to technology and the student. This resource can be obtained by visiting the following link:

http://www.greatschools.org/pdfs/e_guide_at.pdf?date=3-13-06&status=new.

This document explains the purpose and potential of technology to help assist students with learning disabilities. This guide consists of a collection of articles, checklists, and worksheets that will help parents increase their awareness of what AT tools are available and how the resources and/or devices can help the student address the curriculum and allow them to participate in activities with their non-disabled peers.

This resource could be one way of educating parents in the area of Assistive Technology, encouraging parents to take a more active role in the IEP process.



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Contacts

LA Department of Education

Dr. Jackie Bobbett

Donna Broussard

225-342-3730

Region 6 LATI Center

Charlotte Ducote

337-234-7187

District AIM Liasons

District Competent Authorities



Miranda

Plaquemines Parish

Teachers:

Shannon Diket and Rhonda Riley

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Miranda is a seven year old student at Belle Chasse Primary School who possesses a strong academic record. After earning "A" Honor Roll for four quarters while in first grade last year, Miranda continues to work hard to meet second grade level expectations. Reading test questions, supplying answers, spelling words, and calculating math problems are tasks required of all second graders in Louisiana. Miranda requires the presentation of curricular materials in "specialized formats" in order to access content that is identical to that of her classmates due to her visual impairment. Because Miranda uses her fingers to read Braille embossed materials, reading materials must be delivered in the Braille "alternate format." To complete written tasks, Miranda uses the Mountbatten Braille, an electronic Braille writer, note taker and embosser complete with a digital speech feature that guides student use and reinforces learning. Having mastered *Literary Uncontracted Braille*, the most basic format for the *Literary Braille Code*, last year for reading and writing, Miranda is presently learning *Literary Contracted Braille*, the universal standard form that enables Braille users to read, write, and comprehend content more efficiently. Additionally, Miranda is learning to use the *Nemeth Braille Code for Mathematics* simultaneous to learning the same content and skills expected of all second grade students!

Teachers Shannon Diket and Rhonda Riley work together to ensure appropriate and successful implementation of Miranda's AT across the curriculum. Miranda is a shining example of how assistive technology supports access to and mastery of grade level expectations... despite the presence of a visual impairment that prohibits access to traditional tools typical of the second grade classroom.

Thank you to the Plaquemines Parish School System and Rhonda Riley for nominating this outstanding student!



Navigating a worksheet with the
Mountbatten

Reading Braille embossed worksheet



Congratulations Miranda, Shannon, and Rhonda!!!

AT AND SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES

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Specific Learning Disability (SLD) is a neurological disorder that affects the brain's ability to receive, process, store, and respond to information. Students with SLD lack skills in many areas of learning, including reading, writing, spelling, math, listening, and oral expression, that are needed to succeed in school. These students are of at least average intelligence but process information in their own special way. SLD is not the result of poor teaching, laziness, or lack of motivation. Below we have outlined problem areas in writing and reading for students with SLD, as well as possible assistive technology supports.

- **Writing** - Struggling writers often have difficulty with motor and information processing skills possibly due to **dysgraphia**. It can lead to problems with spelling, poor handwriting, putting thoughts on paper, and organizing letters, numbers, and/or words on a line or page. **Dyspraxia** affects motor skill development and is characterized by having trouble planning and completing fine motor tasks.
- **Reading** - Most students with reading difficulties can be taught reading and strategies for success in school. When students' reading problems are identified early, they are more likely to learn strategies that will raise their reading to grade level. Struggling readers often have difficulty in one or more of the following areas: **phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and/or fluency**

Assistive Technology can offer powerful tools to students with learning disabilities by providing remedial or compensatory support in the classroom and for independent learning. It can reduce a student's reliance on others and help in the transition to independence. Below are the most common tools and software used by students with SLD.

Low Tech Solutions: uses common office supplies. Post-it Notes, highlighter pens or tape, hefty tabs, and removable page flags can help sort and prioritize thoughts. Colored transparency sheets or folders can be used as reading filters and raised lined paper or pencil grips can help with handwriting.

Word Processors: allows users to express themselves and focus on the meaning of their written expression without being preoccupied with the mechanics of writing. It includes built-in features like spell check, abbreviation expansion, zooming the display and changing colors of the background and fonts. Many word processing programs include an outlining program.

Portable Word Processors: less expensive than computers, durable and lightweight. Many run on batteries which make them very portable. There are fewer distractions on the screen, auto-saving features, alternate keyboard layouts, keyguards, and adjustable key sensitivity.

Spell Checkers: pocket-sized tools that allow users to enter phonetically spelled words, then produces the correct word. Many offer dictionaries, thesauruses, and speech.

Text-to-Speech Programs: allow the computer to read aloud the text on the screen. Many programs use highlighting to follow words in sequence across the screen as they are read aloud.

Word Prediction: helpful to students who struggle with spelling. They work within word processors by providing a list of possible words. Some of these programs use text-to-speech to identify the words in the list.

RESOURCES

The following is a list of websites with examples of the tools described above. If you need further assistance, contact your Regional AT Center.

Web Toolboxes for Educators www.ed.sc.edu/caw/toolboxvendors.html

Georgia Project for Assistive Technology www.gpat.org/

UDL Technology Toolkit <http://udltechtoolkit.wikispaces.com/>

Classroom Assistive Technology Devices www.edb.utexas.edu/ATLab/Labinventory/Classroom/devices.php

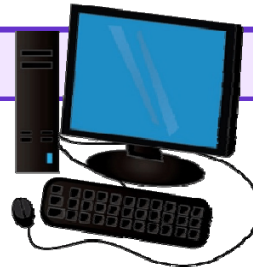
Assistive Technology Tools, Tips and Tricks www.nsnet.org/atc/tools/contents.html

Georgia Tools for Life www.gatfl.org/LearningDisabilitiesGuide.aspx

Learning Disabilities Checklist www.ncl.org/images/stories/Publications/Forms-Checklists-Flyers-Handouts/ldchecklistcolor.pdf

FREE TEACHER WEB RESOURCES

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Webmath- <http://www.webmath.com/>

Webmath is a math-help site that generates answers to specific math questions and problems, as entered by a user, at any particular moment. The math answers are generated and displayed real-time, at the moment a web user types in their math problem and clicks "solve." In addition to the answers, Webmath also shows the student how to arrive at the answer.



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An App A Day

WORD WIZARD



\$2.99 iPad, iPhone & iTouch

"Discover the first educational app that fully exploits natural sounding text-to-speech voices to help kids learn word building and spelling. Kids can now build any word or sentence using a Movable Alphabet and immediately hear the text they wrote, as well as verify spelling using the built-in spell checker."

<http://tinyurl.com/3rB4ty>

AUTISM APPS



Free iPad, iPhone, iTouch

This app is a comprehensive list of apps being used with and by people with autism, Downs syndrome and other special needs. The apps are divided into thirty categories, and descriptions are all searchable.

SEE. TOUCH. LEARN



Free iPad

Create lessons with high-quality images and track performance using a flash card approach. With the free download, you get a starter set of 32 pictures. All other picture libraries will cost from \$.99, to \$3.99

Find instructional videos here:

<http://tinyurl.com/5vov5i8>



GCF Learn Free-

<http://www.gcflearnfree.org/>

This interactive site offers tutorials for every aspect of life from career planning to reading to Microsoft Office. All tutorials are free and can be used with an interactive white board.



Educational Freeware- <http://www.educational-freeware.com/>

This free site finds and reviews high-quality free educational software and websites - mostly for kids, but also for grown-ups. It contains a large selection of web-based software, as well as Windows-based educational software to download.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY TIPS

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Adapting Books

There are many different ways to adapt books. Here are a few suggestions when modifying or adapting for students who exhibit the following challenges:

low vision – enlarge the size of the book pages by scanning pages on the computer before printing.

drooling and/or tearing pages - place the scanned/printed pages in Ziploc bags or sheet protectors, then staple together. Use tape over the staples to protect from getting cut.

difficulty grasping one page to turn – secure page fluffers such as foam, glue dots, or paint puff to separate the pages.

difficulty turning pages – place objects such as ponytail holders, clothespins, or popsicle sticks to the right side pages for easier turning.

difficulty reading – place pictures above the text to represent the words they are trying to read.



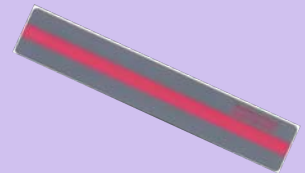
Color Filters



Color filters are low tech assistive technology tools which may help students with a variety of disabilities. After being assessed to determine if “color” is appropriate, some students report that “the letters stopped moving” while reading or “the letters are not fuzzy anymore.” Some students need color to decrease eyestrain and improve attention to the page/screen.

Check out:

http://www.donjohnston.com/research/articles/using_colors.html to see what color tendencies are seen in certain disability groups.



ONLINE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES



Are you dedicated to staying current on the latest AT tools and strategies but your district has limited your leave requests for professional development? If so, you may be interested in participating in the upcoming Math Module being offered online. We adapted the three day course into a three week online course to allow participants the flexibility to participate without losing valuable classroom teaching time. Participants will learn about a range of assistive technology devices that can be used to support students with disabilities who are struggling in the area of math. Lessons will include topics such as evaluating text-to-speech programs to be used with math, free internet resources covering a variety of math skills, and several make-and-take activities to engage your students while having fun learning.

For more information, call Anissa Fontenot or Kay Bolen (Region V) at 337.217.4120, Charlotte Ducote (Region IV) at 337.234.7187, or Danna Bouey (Region II) at 225.687.5400.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES & STATE TRAININGS.....

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October 15	Region V TNT (Teaching aNd Technology) Lake Charles, LA For more information visit: http://www.cpsb.org/tnt/
October 10 - 14	29th Annual Closing the Gap Conference Sheraton Hotel Bloomington, MN For more info visit: www.closingthegap.com/conference
October 19 - 21	2011 LATM Conference: Learning, Applying, and Teaching Mathematics Monroe Civic Center, Monroe, LA For more information visit: www.lamath.org/
October 20 - 21	SPALS 2011 Conference Baton Rouge, LA For more information visit: www.spals.org
October 21- 22	Families Helping Families Weekend Conference Shreveport, LA For more information contact Region 7 at: 318-549-6113
November 2-4	LAHPERD Annual Convention Crowne Plaza Hotel & Convention Center, Baton Rouge, Louisiana For more information visit: http://www.lahperd.org/convention.html
November 4-5	Stepping Forward for Autism Marriott Hotel and Convention Center, Baton Rouge, Louisiana For more information visit: http://support.autism-society.org/site/Clubs/club_id=1168&sid=16580&pg=event
November 3 - 5	ATIA 2011 Chicago Renaissance Schaumburg Hotel & Convention Center, Schaumburg, Illinois For more information and to register visit: www.atia.org
November 17 - 19	2011 ASHA Convention San Diego, CA For more information and to register visit: www.asha.org
November 28 - 30	27th Annual LACUE Conference New Orleans For more information and to register visit: www.lacue.org
December 7-8	Inclusion Matters Conference Cajundome Convention Center, Lafayette, Louisiana



FREE TRAININGS

OCTOBER


6	Make the LEAP for Success with Read & Write Gold v. 10 Differentiate with Apps News-2-You/Unique Learning Systems	Region 1 Region 2 Region 6
11	Trash to Treasure	Region 3
12	Boardmaker	Region 5
13	Interactive White Boards in the Classroom	Region 4
18	Tools to Support Universal Designs for Learning Organization and Study Skills 3 Day Module Intellitools	Region 1 Region 6 Region 5
20	Digital Curriculum Materials	Region 7
24	WebCan: Using Webcams in the Special Education Classroom Ready, AIM, Read with Don Johnston AT Math Module (Oct. 24-Nov. 11)	Region 5 Region 3 Region 2
25	Ready, AIM, Read with Don Johnston	Region 1
26	Ready, AIM, Read with Don Johnston	Region 2
27	Unique Learning AT Apps for the iPod Ready, AIM, Read with Don Johnston	Region 4 Region 7 Region 8
28	Ready, AIM, Read with Don Johnston	Region 7

NOVEMBER

10	Literacy-AIM-AT: Students with Low Vision and/or Blindness	Region 1/2
15	AT Tools for Writing Webinar Flip Cameras in the Classroom	Region 3 Region 6
16	3R's "Reading," "Riting" and "Rithmetic" – AT Resources UDL Module – 3 day training Accessing the Access Guide	Region 2 Region 4 Region 8
17	Interactive Boards in the Classroom Creating Age Appropriate Text for the Middle/High School Student	Region 6 Region 7

DECEMBER

6	Classroom Suite 4	Region 4
7	Free AT from A 2 Z Fun with Foldables and Pocket Mods	Region 7 Region 8
8	Literacy Make-n-Take Kurzweil - 3000	Region 3 Region 6
14	Differentiate with Apps Clicker 5 with Clicker Paint	Region 2 Region 6
15	Support for the Struggling Writer	Region 4
16	AT and RTI	Region 4

 AT Regional Centers provide these free services:
Professional Development, Consultations & Technical Assistance

The Assistive Technology Centers are a project funded by the Louisiana Department of Education. Reference in this printed material to any specific commercial products, process, service, manufacturer, or company does not constitute its endorsement or recommendation by the Louisiana DOE.

REGION 1

Katherine Shea kshea@ppsb.org
8342 Hwy 23
Belle Chasse, LA 70037
www.region1at.com
504-595-6071
504-394-1431 (fax)

REGION 2

Danna Bouey dannabouey@ipsb.net
58060 Plaquemine St.
Plaquemine, LA 70764
www.region2at.org
225-687-5400 ext. 183
225-687-7390 (fax)

REGION 3

Sharon Edwards sharon.edwards@apsb.org
Kristie Stapler kristie.stapler@apsb.org
611 N. Burnside Ave.
Gonzales, LA 70737
www.lati3.com
225-391-7278
225-391-7279
225-391-7205 (fax)

REGION 4

Charlotte Ducote charlotte@atanswers.com
Tammy Dupre tammy@atanswers.com
N. P. Moss Annex
801 Mudd Ave.
Lafayette, LA 70501
www.atanswers.com
337-234-7187
337-234-7188 (fax)

REGION 5

Kay Bolen kay.bolen@cpsb.org
Anissa Fontenot anissa.fontenot@cpsb.org
1724 Kirkman St.
Lake Charles, LA 70601
<http://bb.lati.cpsb.org>
337-217-4120 ext. 1023
337-217-4121 (fax)

REGION 6

Charlotte Ducote charlotte@atanswers.com
DeWayne LaCaze dewayne@atanswers.com
LA Special ED Center
5400 Coliseum Blvd.
Alexandria, LA 71306
www.atanswers.com
318-487-5488
318-487-5511 (fax)

REGION 7

Kristie Sheffield kristie.sheffield@bossierschools.org
Karrie Bennett karrie.bennett@bossierschools.org
2500 Viking Drive
Bossier City, LA 71111
www.region7atc.com
318-549-6113
318-549-6163
318-549-6126 (fax)

REGION 8

Amanda Tull amanda.tull@r8at.com
Jessica Wingard jessica.wingard@r8at.com
1206 Marion Hwy.
Farmerville, LA 71241
www.r8at.com
888-368-9727
318-368-9727
318-368-9774 (fax)