Assistive Technology Advocacy for Teachers

A Resource Guide

Prepared by Dave Edyburn, Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
For additional information, contact: edyburn@uwm.edu

Insight #1

• Parents and educators often worry that providing assistive technology too early will remove the motivation for learning a task. However, there is no research indicating any adverse effects from using assistive technology. Fears about providing assistive technology too soon are unfounded and simply delay opportunities for learning. This is particular true in the areas of alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) and mobility but also extends to technologies that support cognitive tasks like reading, writing, and problem solving.

Learn More

Dunst, C. J., Trivette, C. M., Hamby, D. W., & Simkus, A. (2013). Systematic review of studies promoting the use of assistive technology devices by young children with disabilities. *Practical Evaluation Reports, 5*(1), 1-32. Asheville, NC: Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute. (Obtain the PDF report here.)
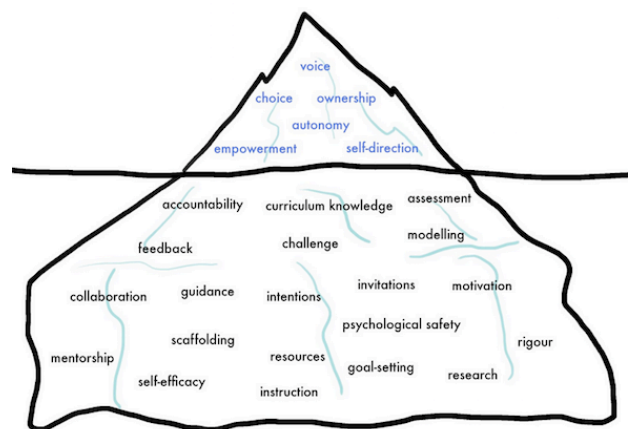
Insight #2

• Many students with disabilities approach new learning tasks with considerable baggage about previous academic failure. "I can't read" becomes internalized as "I can't learn." Struggles with math computation unduly limits their interest in advance math and the bigger issue of mathematical reasoning and problem solving. Often, they perceive themselves as failing even before the begin a task! At the outset, we can never make a learning task too easy! It is essential that the initial learning opportunities be provided with sufficient supports such that the student experiences success: "I can do that!" "That was easy!" "Can I do that again?"

Strategies

• As illustrated in the Figure (right), all students need to learn fundamental behaviors associated with Learner Agency (above the waterline of the iceberg). As a result, it is essential that teachers model these skills in order to develop effective independent learners. However, it is critical to recognize that many students with disabilities will need explicit instruction in order to master the principles of Self-Advocacy that are part of learner agency (below the surface of the waterline).

Supporting Learner Agency

voice
choice ownership
autonomy
empowerment self-direction

accountability curriculum knowledge assessment
feedback challenge modelling
collaboration guidance intentions invitations motivation
scaffolding psychological safety rigour
mentorship resources goal-setting research
self-efficacy instruction

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• While special education often expects instruction to be individualized, within the general education classroom it is necessary to think about the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). That is, planning for the special needs of diverse learners before they enter the classroom. A practical means of thinking about UDL is the story of Goldilocks. That is, teachers are responsible for planning the choices and students are responsible for examining the various choices and determining which option is "just right" for them.

• The Figure below illustrates an example of an equalizer developed for a unit on Shakespeare based on a Common Core English Literacy Standard. The equalizer providers four options ranging from easiest to hardest (left to right) for accessing the text of one of his plays and tools for understanding the language. Teachers could suggest a starting point for each student, or they could direct students to explore the options and select the resource/format that is "just right."

Unit	Understanding Shakespeare			
Standard	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.			
Selected play	*Romeo and Juliet*			
Text	*Romeo and Juliet* SparkNotes https://www.sparknotes.com/ shakespeare/romeojuliet/	No Fear Shakespeare https://www.sparknotes. com/nofear/shakespeare/ romeojuliet/	OpenSourceShakespeare http://www.opensourceshake- speare.org/views/plays/play- menu.php?WorkID=romeojuliet	*Romeo and Juliet* Compre- hensive Storyform http://dramatica.com/analy- sis/romeo-and-juliet
Vocabulary	No Sweat Shakespeare https://www.nosweatshake- speare.com/ebooks/romeo- juliet-kids/	Understanding Shake- speare's Language: Part 1 https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=tncNNdVTQI	List of Phrases Shakespeare Invented https://www.thoughtco.com/ list-of-phrases-shakespeare- invented-2985087	Shakespeare's Language http://www.bardweb.net/lan- guage.html

• One search strategy for finding new tools is to explore web sites curated by educators to help busy teachers efficiently navigate the educational technology marketplace. Two favorites:

Educational Technology and Mobile Learning
https://www.educatorstechnology.com/

Two Thousand Categorized "Best" Lists from Larry Ferlazzo's Blog
http://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org/about/my-best-of-series/

To access a parent resource guide:
http://uwm.kbd.on-rev.com/summer22/arcpa/resources/parents.pdf

To access a student resource guide:
http://uwm.kbd.on-rev.com/summer22/arcpa/resources/students.pdf