Writing Supports and Accommodations for Students with Autism

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At the end of today’s webinar, we ask that you please take a moment to complete our survey:

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A Research Approach to AAC Solutions for Individuals with Autism
September 25
3:00pm to 4:00pm
Dr. Ben Satterfield

GATE Seminar
Friday, December 5, 2014
Georgia Tech Student Center

Visit www.gatfl.org for the full schedule to sign up for the TFL mailing list to receive our webinar announcements.
• AT Lending Library
• AT Evaluations & Training
• AT Demos
• Resource and Assistance
• AT Funding Assistance
• DME Reuse
Today’s Goal:

Through the use of Classroom Resources, Visual Supports, Accommodations, and Assistive Technology, we hope to minimize frustration, increase independence and time on task, and maximize the abilities of individuals with autism.

The GPAT Consideration Checklist is based on the SETT Framework for Considering AT. For each student, we think about:

- Student
- Environment
- Tasks
- Tools
All students are unique, but...

- Sensory Issues
- Visual Learners
- Need for Structure
- Resistant to change
- Areas of strength and areas of weakness
- Problems with executive functioning and writing
- Difficulty with empathy and social interactions
- Some hyper-focus or perseveration
- Meltdowns with frustration
Before we start thinking about accommodations, what works for all students?

- Brain-based strategies
- Sound Instructional Strategies
- Sound Classroom Management
- Technology Tools
UDL Example: Graphic Organizers

- **Pre-writing**
  - Low tech organizers (Thinking Maps)
  - Computer based tools – Inspiration, Kidspiration App – Popplet

- **Vocabulary Development**

- **Organization of information**
  - Science – make processes or procedures visual
What Does the Research Tell Us about Students with Autism and Writing?

Considerations:
- Sensory Issues
- Language Processing
- Executive Functioning, Organization
- Motor control
“One of the classic pictures of children with autism is they have their hands over their ears. We believe that one reason for this may be that they are trying to compensate for their changes in sensory function by simply looking at one sense at a time. This may be a strategy to minimize the confusion between the senses.” Mark Wallace, Ph.D., director of the Vanderbilt Brain Institute.

http://news.vanderbilt.edu/2013/04/autism-robot-helps-children/
“Individuals with autism have trouble segmenting incoming speech into meaningful word units.”

“...one word runs into the next seamlessly; there are no little silences between spoken words the way there are white spaces between written words. We simply hallucinate word boundaries when we reach the end of a stretch of sound that matches some entry in our mental dictionary.”

"Most students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) hate to write... Even a simple writing assignment can trigger a major meltdown. The process of writing requires much more than the ability to form pretty letters. The writing process involves skills in language, organization, motor control and planning, and sensory processing: four areas that are problematic for many individuals with ASD. It is essential that parents and teachers consider how each of these areas may be affecting a student's aversion to the writing process."

Writing Supports in the General Ed Classroom

- Handheld Dictionary
- Portable Word Processor
- Alternate Keyboard
- Low Tech Writing Tools
- Timers
Low Tech Tool Kit

Increase focus, reduce frustration
• Pencil grips and alternate pencils and pens
• Alternate papers

Low Tech AT Tool Kit for each school
Writing without a pencil

- Word Processing with Auditory Feedback
- Word Prediction
- Spelling and Grammar Support
- Voice to text
- Word Banks
Advanced Reading & Writing Aids

Writing Features:
- Writing Organization Support
- Talking Word Processor
- Talking Spell Checker & Thesaurus
- Word Prediction
- Editing Checklist

Some Examples:
- Kurzweil 3000
- SOLO
- Read & Write Gold
- Wynn
- Premier

Writing features support current writing strategies
iReadWrite

- Text-to-Speech with Dual Color Highlighting
- Contextual Word Prediction
- Phonetic Spell Checker
- Sounds Like and Confusable Word Checker
- Text and Picture Dictionary
- Customizable Background and Text Colors
- Choice of Voices and Fonts
- Import Documents
- Share, Print, and Export Documents
Co:Writer

- Word prediction.
- Topic dictionaries
- Spelling support
- Grammar support
- Speech support
- Store and export writing
Ginger

- Free app (lite) also PC
- Pay for premium version
- Grammar and Spell checker
- Personal Assistant
- Use it to correct text messages, Gmail and Outlook emails, and even social media apps such as Facebook
Dragon Dictation

- Speech Recognition
- Free App on iTunes & Android Play Store
- PC product (Premium)
- Speech recognition feature on Win PC
- Dragon Dictate – Mac PC
- Dictate notes, emails, Twitter, and Facebook
- Cut, Copy, Paste
Writing with Whole Words

- IntelliKeys and Overlays
Writing with Whole Words

- Clicker 6
- First Author
Writing with Visual Supports

Typing words and getting pictures

- Boardmaker
- Symwriter
- Pixwriter
Minimizing Frustration, Increasing Independence

- Sensory concerns
  - Lights – colored filters
  - Noise level – using hand signs instead of auditory cues for attention
  - Classroom audio system
  - Build in sensory timeouts – study carrel, area to swing or rest
  - Use weighted vest or lap weight
  - Fidgets, Chair cushion
  - Timers
  - Desktop icons to represent “I need help” or “I need a break”,

![Icons for I need help, I need a break, and look](image)
Minimizing Frustration, Increasing Independence

- Make language visible
  - Classroom routines
    - Expectations during circle time, lunch, recess, walking in line, media center, music
  - Schedule for the day – anticipate changes and make students aware
  - Lunch Menu – choice
Other Ideas

- Vocabulary – graphic organizers allow students to construct understanding of new words, context for the word, synonyms and antonyms, graphic representation

- Current Events – News-o-matic, News-2-You
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