



Successful Transition to College: The Role of Assistive Technology- Part I & II

This Question and Answer resource distills the issues discussed in the Center on Technology and Disability (CTD) webinar [Successful Transition to College: the Role of Technology-Part I and II](#). Led by Assistive Technology (AT) Specialists Bryan Ayres and Janet Peters, the discussion provided students and their parents and teachers with practice guidance designed to help students acquire and successfully use AT devices and services after they leave high school and enter college. Many students and families approach that important transition without realizing that the assistive technology roles played by the public school system, in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), will not be played by their colleges and universities. Those roles include: awareness, advocacy, assessment, acquisition, maintenance and troubleshooting, replacement, and evaluation.

Prior to leaving high school, a student's IEP team, including the student and family, needs to develop a transition-specific plan. This is not only good planning; it's the law!

1 – Why is it important to include students with disabilities in the development of their IEP transition plans?

Student involvement in the IEP process (to the greatest extent possible) builds critical self-determination skills. It also promotes the development of decision-making skills regarding the student's assistive technology devices and services. This involvement helps students learn to advocate for themselves and avoids abandonment of the AT device. Student involvement in the IEP process is a key factor in that student's making a successful transition, with existing and/or new AT, to post-secondary environments – at college, work, and/or independent living.

2 – What are some relevant resources available to IEP teams and students that can help assess a student's ongoing need for AT devices and services?

Among the many resources available are:

- **"Hey, Can I Try That?"**, a handbook designed to help teams during the process of choosing and using assistive technology. The forms are easy to access and use. They offer a great way for the IEP team to include a student in the AT process: <http://www.educationtechpoints.org/manuals-materials/hey-can-i-try-that-1>
- **Teaching Self-advocacy**, an excellent resource with video examples and additional links: <http://teachingselfadvocacy.wordpress.com>
- **Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology (QIAT)**, includes a web-based self-assessment tool for students using AT: <http://qiat-ps.org/tools/guide-getting-started/>

3 – What are some suggestions for students that can enhance their use of AT at the college level?

- Learn to use the features of your AT devices, including customization
- Take care of your devices properly; have available technical information about each device, including contact information for its vendor
- Understand the environment in which you will use your supportive devices as well as the tasks on which you require their use; this will help ensure that you have a strong user-feature match
- Practice trouble shooting and problem solving on an ongoing basis
- Have back-up plans for when the device is not available, not working, or cannot be used for some other reason
- Work on specific areas from your self-assessment and/or transition plan that you feel need improvement (such as self-awareness, self-advocacy, evaluation and problem solving)

4 – How can students using AT build a network of support?

Once a student graduates from high school, s/he no longer has the technical support of an AT team. Therefore, it can be very helpful to connect with other students who use assistive technology in post-secondary environments. Those connections can help to build a supportive learning community where students share experiences and exchange technology tips and suggestions. To join or build such a group:

- Get involved in the AT selection process as you prepare for and go through the transition from high school to college; your active involvement lays the ground work for building an ongoing network of support
- Get to know a technical support person at the company that makes the device or software that you use
- Get connected with the Disability Services (DS) office at your college. Besides supporting your academic needs, the DS office can assist you in networking with other students using similar supports
- If there isn't an existing student network, consider building your own!

It's important to recognize that at the college level, not every counselor, teacher or support person has the same level of expertise or approachability. Professors may not provide the same flexibility that a student with a disability had in high school. Therefore:

- Know your rights and responsibilities under the law and under the policies of your college or university
- Identify support resources as early as possible, ideally before the school year begins
- Negotiate the accommodations you need as soon as possible; do not wait for performance problems to arise
- As discussed above, build and/or expand your network of contacts among other students who use assistive technology
- Use social networking channels in an appropriate way to help build your network
- Think ahead to the future and get familiar with tools that can help your job search at the end of college. One example is Punch-in, an online resource

designed to help students with disabilities in their employment efforts
<http://punch-in.org/>

Effective collaboration skills are important for students to develop as they plan for and transition to college. Such skills facilitate effective networking and include:

- Active listening
- Polite manners
- Positive and respectful attitude
- Ability to remain focused on a topic
- Social Awareness
- Problem solving

Collaboration skills are learned through natural social interaction and from explicit teaching and modeling. Students with disabilities and the families and teachers who support them should look for opportunities to provide both types of experience.

Resources

CTD webinar and Powerpoint, *Successful Transition to College: the Role of Technology-Part I and II*: <http://www.ctdinstitute.org/library/2015-05-11/part-1-successful-transition-college-role-technology-webinar>

Punch-In website: <http://punch-in.org/>

QIAT: www.qiat.org

South Carolina Assistive Technology Program: <http://scatp.med.sc.edu/>



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