



Assistive Technology for Writing

What is Assistive Writing Technology?

- Augments or is alternative to the pen/pencil
- Supports the formation/organization of ideas
- Typically produces a hard copy
- May need to be portable
- A tool to allow student to meet the writing requirements of the curriculum

What Assistive Writing Technology is NOT:

- A computer-aided instruction
- Not the only tool to be considered
- Not the answer to all writing/situations/needs

Assistive Writing Technology may provide support in the area of

- Prewriting
- Drafting
- Reviewing
- Editing
- Sharing or publishing

Dr. Mel Levine identified the areas that students struggle with in writing:

Graphomotor: the ability to use muscles in the fingers and hands to form letters legibly and to maintain a comfortable grip on a writing instrument. The students have thoughts but can't get them onto the paper

Attention: writing demands considerable mental energy and focus over long periods of time. Writers must not only preview what they want to convey as they put their ideas on paper, but also continually self-monitor to stay on track.

Language Production: the essential ingredient of writing. The ability to recognize letter sounds, comprehend words and their meanings, understand word order and grammar to construct sentences and describe or explain ideas

Memory: the rate at which students generate ideas must coincide with their retrieval of necessary vocabulary, spelling and prior knowledge. When organizing essays, writers must be able to think about a topic, draw upon facts and concepts and sequence ideas and facts in the right order.

Higher Order Cognition: in upper grades, writing relies on functions of generating original and creative ideas while integrating spelling, grammar and

punctuation rules. Written assignments demand critical thinking skills and conceptual ability such as evaluating opposing arguments and drawing conclusions.

As you evaluate your students, there are some questions you will want to ask yourself.

- What are their strengths in the areas of senses, cognition, language and motor?
- How do they learn best? Visual, auditory, both?
- What level of participation is expected during this activity?

In our district, we have the ability to provide you with supports for your students as they write. The first person you should contact if you see a student truly struggling with the writing process is your Occupational Therapist. However, if they say that the writing is not a motor deficiency, then assistive technology may be able to offer you more support.

Here are some internet resources that provide supports on the 6+ traits:

www.eduplace.com/tales/index.html Wacky Web Tales site (AKA mad libs)

<http://www.eduplace.com/kids/sv/> A spelling and vocabulary web site that allows students some creative learning through crosswords, web word finders, word builders, etc.

www.kimskorner4teachertalk.com Scroll down to writing to lead you to lesson ideas on each of the traits of writing. It also had ideas for grammar and reading lessons

www.ga.k12.pa.us/curtech/powerwk.htm This site has a “step by step” list of directions for using PowerPoint

www.ga.k12.pa.us/curtech/WEBQPRE/assesspp.htm This is a sample rubric to use for grading a PowerPoint presentation

www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lessonview.asp?id=195 This is a lesson that allows students to create a comic strip. It has a comic strip creator, planning sheet and grading rubric. Excellent and fun!

These websites are provided as information only. Assistive Technology is an IEP process which is a team decision. If something here makes you think that a student may benefit from the product or website, please go to the IEP team with your thoughts before implementing. Although I reviewed all the websites prior to posting here, please understand that links are often changed without notice. If something here no longer applies, please contact pkeeling@ccusd93.org and advise her that the website no longer reflects the topic being considered.

These are only some of the resources I have for helping you to help students develop writing skills and helping them to find motivation for writing. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me!