Leading the Way to Excellence in AT Services

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Speaker Disclosure

The speaker is co-author along with Gayl Bowser of a text: Leading the Way to Excellence in AT Services: A Guide for School Administrators, published by CAST Professional Publishers. Purchase of this text is not required in order to benefit from the presentation. However, compensation from sales is received.
What is your description of “Excellence” in AT Services?
What are your greatest challenges in implementing AT in your district?
A Story about Breakdown

- Kindergarten student successfully using AAC
- Navigates multiple pages, requires few trials to learn new buttons
- Core boards that match pages provided to teacher
- Asked her to model the word “go”
- Boards disappeared
- Teacher states she cannot support this student
- Asked for him to be placed in Sped or have 1:1 aide
- AAC “not her job.”
Why Focus on Leadership?

Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins (2008) noted that almost all successful leaders draw on the same set of basic leadership practices. They organized these into four categories:

- building vision and setting directions;
- managing the program;
- understanding and developing individuals; and
- redesigning the organization.
A Snapshot of Leadership and its impact on Excellence

Administrators know who the AT leaders are in the agency and work with them directly to develop, maintain, and improve AT services. They:

- help staff, students, & families develop a vision of AT use and communicate it widely.
- support staff in using AT to improve education of students with disabilities.
- develop a culture where AT is valued and used.
- facilitate collaboration between departments.
Assigned Leaders and Emergent Leaders

- Some individuals are leaders because of the assigned administrative position that they fill (e.g., school principal, special education director).
- Other individuals may become leaders in changing AT services because of their knowledge of AT devices and services or the way others in the group respond to them.
- Northouse (2016) labels these two types of leaders as *assigned leaders* and *emergent leaders*. 
Developing a vision about AT Services:

What population of students are you expecting to serve and how will you serve them?

Let’s do the math……
Estimate the total number of all students in the schools, campuses, or districts you serve?

Example: 50,000 students
Who do you serve?

Students who receive special education

- <1% Low incidence disabilities
- 10%- 15% Receiving special education services

Who is in your target population?
Who do you serve?

If you are charged with serving all struggling students, you can add:

- 13% = ESOL
- 5 - 10% unidentified, but disengaged (lack of interest in school, behavioral)
- TOTAL target can be as high as 25-30% of total population

Does your target population include all struggling students?
What percentage of students in your target population may need AT?

100% ?
50% ?
25% ?
Let’s do the math……

1. Multiply the total number of students by the percentage of targeted students
2. Divide by 2 (50% need AT)

Example:
- 50,000 students X .10 = 5,000
  (10%=students with IEPs)
- x ½ = 2,500 may need AT
How Many Specialists are Needed?

If all specialists have 50 students on their full time case loads, how big a team would you need to provide service delivery using an expert model, given your target population

Divide number of students who need AT by 50

- Example: 2,500 ÷ 50 = 50

You would need 50 AT specialists to minimally serve your targeted population
Expert model-One student at a time

Formal AT evaluation request

Staff must carry out the expert’s recommendations

AT expert makes prescriptive recommendations

Equipment and supports tied to the assessment

Formal AT evaluation (little school team involvement)

Formal reporting
Agency-wide Capacity-building Model

1. **Request for support is sent to the AT team**
2. **The AT team member confers with the case manager from the school team to determine next steps**
3. **Assessment is a shared process conducted with the school team**
4. **Collaborative assessment data can be recorded on the SETT form under “Student”**
5. **The School Team and the AT Team member collaborate to make informed decisions of what tools to try**
6. **Results of AT trials are shared with the AT Team member by the school team. Effectiveness and next steps are documented**
Sample vision: One student at a time

- Students with disabilities use the AT devices and services they need and show increased benefit from FAPE because of them.
Agency-wide vision

- How can AT help struggling students perform better?
- How does AT fit into overall school improvement goals?
- What is each person’s role in AT use?
Developing a realistic vision

Courageous conversations and healthy debate:

Expect that there will be viewpoints discussed about upholding the status quo.
Attitude

One of the things we discovered early on was our supervisors’ attitudes had to match what we were asking our employees to do or this process would not work.

Steve Copp, President and CEO
Trans Coil Industries
Leadership: Actions for AT Leaders

- Report regularly to your administrator about your service model and service provision,
- Collect, analyze, and share data about the AT activities of staff.
- Discuss goals and activities with your administrator to identify how you can support each other in leading AT services.
- Suggest outreach activities that may encourage collaboration with other parts of the agency.
Leadership: Actions for Administrators

- Assess your AT services and review results.
- Make a list of the questions about AT use in your building or program.
- Identify opportunities where advocating for AT use might be appropriate and effective.
- Identify barriers to collaboration with other parts of the agency and initiate outreach efforts to those groups.
Management and its impact on Excellence in AT Services

- Identify internal processes and operating guidelines
- Ensure AT services are legal, efficient, equitable, and cost-effective.
- Ensure that all appropriate employees know how to respond to a parent’s request for AT.
- Require that staff use data to make AT decisions.
- Make funds, human resources, and planning time available for the provision of AT services.
- Monitor AT services
Management and Operating Guidelines

Answers to questions about...

- Referral
- Assessment
- Consideration
- Documentation
- Implementation
- Other AT Issues
Management: Actions for AT Leaders

- Gather and maintain data about AT used by students throughout the district.
- Maintain a list of AT devices needed by the district based on current and future student needs.
- Establish a system for tracking, distribution, and management of equipment.
- Research and organize volume licensing and bulk purchases.
Management: Actions for Administrators

- Develop (or review) processes and operating guidelines for AT services.
- Allocate physical, personnel, time, and monetary resources
- Ensure accountability for AT services by working with the AT leader to use cost-effective acquisition strategies.
- Identify opportunities that you typically have where advocating for AT use might be appropriate and effective.
Supervision and its impact on Excellence in AT Services

- Assess staff AT knowledge, performance, and training needs.
- Recruit individuals with AT skills.
- Ensure that all staff have needed understanding of AT to fulfill their role in supporting AT use.
- Demonstrate interest in making AT usable.
- Ensure that all who serve child implement IEP.
- Foster environment with low level of conflict.
What everyone needs to know:

- Definition of AT devices and services,
- School district’s responsibility under the law,
- Factors that indicate a student might need AT,
- How to participate effectively in AT consideration,
- Who to contact within the building or district,
- Agency process to refer for AT,
- Strategies to determine when AT is working.
Provide training in Coaching to AT staff
Monitor staff performance in relation to AT

- Listen for knowledgeable discussions,
- Be alert to negative comments & address them,
- Listen to discussions during AT Consideration,
- During classroom observations look for signs that AT is available and being used,
- Look for and respond to red flags: Cursory AT consideration, no mention of AT when problem solving, teachers unaware of AT in IEP, etc.
Supervision: Actions for AT Leaders

- Alert your administrator to opportunities to celebrate the successes of children and educators who are using AT well.
- Provide information about needed AT skills.
- In consultation with the administrator, identify professional development topics and opportunities to provide it.
- Report to administrators when students are not making progress at anticipated rate.
- Develop and implement a system inform administrator about which students have AT in their IEPs, what task the AT is used for, and expected performance change.
Supervision: Actions for Administrators

- Identify the AT knowledge needed by each staff member.
- Identify the AT leaders who can help you better understand AT and your staff needs related to it.
- Use the results of your self-assessment to support teams by providing structure and clear expectations.
- Review hiring practices to find where AT fits into job announcements, application forms, and interviews.
- Review forms used during staff evaluations to determine where AT is appropriately addressed.
- Determine how existing conflict management practices can be applied to AT issues.
Advocacy and Program Improvement

- Advocate for AT services and resources at all opportunities.
- Develop, implement, and monitor a long range, system wide AT plan.
- Use research based program improvement strategies.
- Conduct ongoing evaluation of AT services.
- Integrate AT into strategic plans, tech plans, and other improvement efforts.
Improvement Science

Two types of knowledge are needed to change how things are done in a program:

- **Basic knowledge** - comes from experimental research,
- **Profound knowledge** - includes organizational specific knowledge about how things work in a particular setting.

Plan, Do, Study, Act

- **Plan**: Make a plan using the information from the self-assessment.
- **Do**: Implement the plan.
- **Study**: Check the results by reviewing the progress made by students using AT and input from participating staff.
- **Act**: Make any changes needed based on the results. Repeat.
Advocacy and Program Improvement
Actions for AT Leaders

- Help identify individuals to serve on a planning committee.
- Help disseminate and collect self-assessments.
- Help review and analyze self-assessment data.
- Participate in developing, implementing, and monitoring the AT improvement plan.
Advocacy and Program Improvement
Actions for Administrators

- Create a planning committee to identify program needs for AT.
- Complete a self-assessment.
- Work with committee to create a plan to improve services.
- Design a system to regularly evaluate AT services.
- Review strategic plans, technology plans, and other improvement plans and policies, looking for opportunities to align efforts and leverage resources.
Looking at AT Leadership

- Consider assessing your performance and setting goals for improvement.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership for AT Services</th>
<th>Self-Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know what AT is and how it can benefit students with disabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Know who the AT leaders are in the agency and work with them directly to develop, maintain, and improve AT services.</td>
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<td>Know the legal definitions of AT, the requirements to provide AT for students with disabilities, and the implications for my program.</td>
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<td>Help staff, students, and families develop a vision for AT use and communicate that vision widely.</td>
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<td>Support faculty and staff in using AT to improve the education of students with disabilities.</td>
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<td>Develop a culture where AT devices and services are valued and used.</td>
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<td>Facilitate and support collaboration between departments to improve learning for student with disabilities through the use of AT.</td>
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<td>Ensure equity of access to AT devices and services for students of all ages, disabilities, and school placements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MANAGEMENT FOR AT SERVICES</td>
<td>SELF-RATING</td>
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<td>Develop, implement, and monitor policies and written operating guidelines for providing AT services.</td>
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<td>Ensure that written guidelines include processes for AT consideration during the IEP meeting, AT assessment, and implementation of AT plans.</td>
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<td>Ensure that all appropriate employees know how to respond to a parent’s request for AT.</td>
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<td>Require that staff use data to make AT decisions.</td>
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<td>Make available planning time, funds, and human resources for the provision of AT services.</td>
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<td>Upgrade the AT inventory as needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitor AT services to ensure they are provided in a cost-effective and efficient manner.</td>
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<td>Supervision for AT Services</td>
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<td>Assess staff AT knowledge, skills, performance, and training needs.</td>
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<td>Recruit individuals with AT skills.</td>
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<td>Ensure that all staff, including general education teachers, have the necessary understanding of AT to fulfill their role in supporting the use of AT by students with disabilities in their classes.</td>
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<td>Demonstrate interest and support for making AT available and usable by students as part of staff evaluation and supervision.</td>
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<td>Ensure that all staff members who serve a child with a disability implement the IEP, including any use of AT, in a legal and ethical manner.</td>
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<td>Foster a school environment that has a low level of conflict and assist in conflict resolution, including conflict about AT.</td>
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<td>Support teams as they work to make AT available to students with disabilities by providing structure and clear expectations.</td>
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<td>ADVOCACY AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT FOR AT SERVICES</td>
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<td>Advocate for AT services and resources at school board meetings, administrative staff meetings, community forums, parent organizations, and in professional organizations.</td>
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<td>Develop, implement, and monitor a long-range and system-wide AT plan.</td>
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<td>Use research-based program improvement strategies, including the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle.</td>
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<td>Conduct ongoing evaluation of AT services in the same way as other services are evaluated.</td>
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<td>Integrate AT into strategic plans, technology plans, and other improvement plans and policies to align efforts and leverage resources.</td>
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Assigned leadership and emergent leadership working together

- Identify ways to directly support programs that encourage and sustain students’ and educators’ AT use.
- Create and share a vision of your agency’s AT services.
- Manage resources, in a way that helps provide an efficient, ethical, and cost-effective system for AT.
- Support educators in integrating the use of AT into the educational programs of students with disabilities.

AND

Regularity assess current AT services and identify strategies to improve the current model.
Baby steps!!!!!

Extraordinary results come from taking ordinary steps every day in the right direction.

Baby Steps Move Mountains

Grace-Marshall.com/40days