

Assistive Technology Training Online

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USDE# H324M980014
<http://at-training.com>



Project Abstract

U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Special Education Programs: 1998-2002

As students of all abilities are learning together in increasing numbers in public schools, the use of technology as an instructional, learning and supplementary aid is changing the way teachers teach and children learn. Although computer technology is increasingly available, students with disabilities, especially those in inclusive education programs, often cannot access it or lack appropriate training to benefit fully from technological innovations to educational programs. Computer technology used with assistive devices (such as special keyboards, switches, electronic head pointers, and speech synthesizers) frequently provides the only means for students with disabilities to increase their independence in achieving educational goals. However, this independence is strongly related to the knowledge and information levels of IEP team members. Unless their parents, professionals and para-professionals are trained, the effective use of assistive technology and its potential will remain unused.

This project proposes to develop, implement, evaluate and disseminate a model program that will address the diverse, multi-level needs for AT training by exploring the potential of web-based instruction on the Internet to create virtual workshops. The training model will focus on the use of adapted computer technology to facilitate the educational process and inclusion strategies of students with disabilities in inclusive elementary (K-5) classrooms. By combining proven training materials with interactive and interconnective properties of the Internet, we look to address the deficiencies associated with traditional AT training workshops and improve training access and application.

Four objectives are associated with this project, which address curriculum development activities, the model's impact on members of IEP teams, families, and student outcomes. Project objectives will be supported by the participation of national AT experts as well as input from members of IEP teams, including parents, from four local school districts. With this emphasis on the use of assistive technology to support student educational performance in inclusive elementary education environments, the Assistive Technology Training ONLINE Project can make a difference for students with disabilities, their families, other IEP team members, and para-professionals across the nation.