Using Assistive Technology in the Classroom
Professional Development Session Plan

Topic & Audience
Topic: Using Assistive Technology (AT) in the Classroom
Audience: 6-8 building para-educators who work with students that have a disability on a daily basis in general education classrooms (inclusion)
- The para-educators have some experience with assistive technology as they have used it some while working with special education students in general education classrooms, but some of the technologies that they will be introduced to through this PD session are new

PD Session Goals
The goals of the *Using Assistive Technology in the Classroom* professional development session are:
- Para-educators will learn or revisit what assistive technology is.
- Para-educators will be able to identify assistive technology at use.
- Para-educators will revisit assistive technologies already at use in the building/school, as well as be introduced to several new technologies. This included hands-on experience with the actual technologies.
- Para-educators will be able to use digital voice recorders and MP3 players, AlphaSmarts

Topics to be Covered
- What is assistive technology?
- The law and assistive technology
- Students who can benefit from assistive technology

Activities with PowerPoint® Presentation
PowerPoint® Slide 1
- Presenter, Dawna Kilgore, will introduce herself and the participants
- A brief description of the agenda and goals for the professional development session will be described (see goals above and activities that continue)

PowerPoint® Slide 2
- Each of the following questions from the slide will be discussed as a group
  - What do you think assistive technology is?
  - What are types of assistive technology that you know of?
  - What types of assistive technology are available for student use in this school?
  - How can a student benefit from assistive technology?

PowerPoint® Slide 3
- The actual definition of assistive technology as described by the U.S. Department of Education and IDEA will be discussed

PowerPoint® Slide 4
- We will view the video clip "Assistive Technology: Enabling Dreams" (http://www.edutopia.org/assistive-technology-enabling-dreams-video)

- As a group we will discuss our reactions to the video—what was surprising?

PowerPoint® Slide 5
- A more simplified definition of assistive technology will be shared—*assistive technology is any tool or device that a student with a disability uses to do a task that he or she could not otherwise do without it or any tool the student uses to do a task more easily, faster, or in a better way*

PowerPoint® Slide 6
- What students would/will benefit from the use of assistive technology?
    - *Any student with a disability, be it mild or severe, may benefit from the use of some form of assistive technology*
    - *The need for assistive technology is evaluated as a part of the IEP process—students receive AT through their IEP*

PowerPoint® Slide 7
- The school district's responsibility—*school districts are mandated by state and federal law (IDEA) to provide assistive technology to all students with disabilities if it is required for them to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE)*

PowerPoint® Slide 8
- Types of AT used in the Classroom
    - Writing—*pen/pencil grips, adapted paper, templates, word processors, software, spelling/grammar checker*
    - Reading—*electronic books/texts, word scanners, talking electronic devices/software*
    - Learning/Studying—*highlighters, sticky notes, recorded materials, hand-held scanner, electronic organizers, print or picture schedules*
    - Math—*Number line, enlarged worksheets, calculators, voice output measuring devices*
    - Vision—*Eyeglasses, magnifier, large print books, Braille*
    - Hearing—*pen and paper, signaling devices, closed captioning, hearing aids, sound system*

PowerPoint® Slide 9
- View 2 "I Can Soar" video clips—2 students, Sean (http://www.nationaltechcenter.org/index.php/2007/03/05/sean/) and Stacey (http://www.nationaltechcenter.org/index.php/2007/03/04/stacey/), describe their experience and the important role assistive technology plays in their lives/education
- As a group we will discuss our reactions to the videos—what was surprising?
- Discuss the similarities and differences that Sean and Stacey share

PowerPoint® Slide 10
- Help a student learn (of importance to para-educators working in the classroom)
- *Make things easier to turn on*
- *Hold things steady or in place*
- *Make playing or recreational activities possible*
- *Allow or improve communication*
- *Help a student see or her better*

PowerPoint® Slide 11

- Let's Practice—BREIFLY introduce the 4 types of assistive technology that we will look at as a part of the professional development session

PowerPoint® Slide 12

- Fearing technology—we will view the "I Can Soar: Why Fear Technology?" video clip (http://www.nationaltechcenter.org/index.php/2007/03/11/why-fear-technology/)
- After the video we will discuss our own fears about technology and its use in the classroom with students that have disabilities

I do not have access to the 4 types of assistive technology described below—if I did in "real-life" for this PD session, I would become an "expert" using each of the technologies and I would create "How To" documents that participants would be able to take with them after the PD session.

PowerPoint® Slide 13

- Digital voice recorders and MP3 players
    - Materials needed—*digital voice recorders, MP3 players, text to read/record, computers*
    - Where/when used?
    - Participants will get hands-on experience working with this equipment after a brief tutorial from the presenter
    - Participants will receive a "How To" manual to take with them when they leave

PowerPoint® Slide 14

- Screen reading software
    - Materials needed—*screen reading software (JAWS), computers*
    - Where/when used?
    - Participants will get hands-on experience working with this software after a brief tutorial from the presenter
    - Participants will receive a "How To" manual to take with them when they leave

PowerPoint® Slide 15

- Reading pens
    - Materials needed—*reading pens (Readingpen®), text to scan*
    - Where/when used?
    - Participants will get hands-on experience working with this equipment after a brief tutorial from the presenter
    - Participants will receive a "How To" manual to take with them when they leave

PowerPoint® Slide 16

- AlphaSmart®
    - Materials needed—*AlphaSmart®, computers*
    - Where/when used?
    - Participants will get hands-on experience working with this equipment after a brief tutorial from the presenter
    - Participants will receive a "How To" manual to take with them when they leave

Evaluation of PD Session

- At the conclusion of the PD session, participants would use the AlphaSmart® to answer and submit some evaluation-type questions:

- o Of the information you learned today, which will be of most use to you?
- o Was it helpful to have actual hands-on experiences?
- o Do you still have other questions that were not answered today?
- On a weekly to bi-weekly basis I would communicate with the PD session participants about their experiences with these assistive technologies in the classroom. I would address any questions as they arise.

Sources of Information

Edutopia, Assistive Technology: Enabling Dreams Video
http://www.edutopia.org/assistive-technology-enabling-dreams-video

"I Can Soar" Videos
http://www.nationaltechcenter.org/index.php/category/ncti-videos/

Jaws for Windows
http://www.freedomscientific.com/products/fs/jaws-product-page.asp

AlphaSmart®
http://www.renlearn.com/neo/neo/

Readingpen®
http://www.wizcomtech.com/eng/catalog/platforms/01/default.asp?pCat=3&PlatformID=7

A Resource Guide for Teachers and Administrators about Assistive Technology
http://www.ideal-group.org/initiatives/access-tomorrow/AT_resource_guide_for_teachers_and_administrators.pdf