QIAT-PS – Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology in Post Secondary Education

By Russ Holland, Bryan Ayres, Janet Peters and Dawn Wilkinson

THE NEED

A person with a disability that uses or needs assistive technology and enters post secondary education can face a number of very real challenges and barriers and it becomes critical that self-advocacy skills are well established. Research has demonstrated that students with disabilities complete considerably less college preparatory coursework than their non-disabled peers and face increased frustration in managing their support needs in the post secondary environment.[i] Often in the high school setting, parents, special education and general education teachers, counselors and other school personnel work together to ensure that accommodations and assistive technology are in place. In a very rapid transition, the student leaves high school and enters an environment where strong self-advocacy skills that are self directed become very important. Independent decision making, strong communication skills, the ability to understand one's disability and their rights and responsibilities under a different set of laws is critical. The ability to communicate and negotiate with college disability resources staff, professors and other post secondary personnel directly contributes to success in the post secondary environment. A strong ability to utilize technology literacy can also assist in managing a successful experience in the post secondary settings.

During 2009, a survey was developed and distributed nationwide to former students with assistive technology needs in post secondary settings or students with current assistive technology needs.[ii] The results indicated that there was indeed a prescribed need for post-secondary education settings to improve their service delivery but also that the student, the consumer of these services, bears a great level of responsibility for the quality and

effectiveness of the integration of the use of assistive technology in the higher education setting. This further demonstrated the need for the principal investigators in this project to pursue tools and guides to provide support for improving self-determination and self-advocacy efforts, both from the students' perspective and from the viewpoint of the post-secondary setting.

THE MODEL

If you've been involved with Assistive Technology for any length of time, you may recognize some of the "QIAT" (Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology) language.[iii] The QIAT-PS project is modeled on the successful grass roots effort of over 10 years to create benchmarks for assistive technology service provision in public K-12 education, as it became a legal mandate to consider assistive technology in the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1997.

This effort has generated some remarkable work, including a conceptual framework of quality provision of assistive technology services that is very well respected, validated and used by school assistive technology teams, administrators, districts and states to improve services and plan needed supports. QIAT develops and supports guidance documents, a very active list serve and an active group of contributors to the improving practices of assistive technology.

THE PROCESS

Building on the success and impact of the QIAT process, some within the QIAT Leadership Consortium, such as Joy Zabala and Gayle Bowser, and project consultants Russ Holland, Bryan Ayres, Janet Peters, and Dawn Wilkinson have devoted considerable time and effort to facilitating the consideration of a "QIAT-like" model of indicators that could support success in

post secondary education. The ideas associated with QIAT as a model for additional adult environments has been discussed in several successive summits over the past two years. This initiative has been funded by the DBTAC:Great Lakes ADA Center and the DBTAC, Southwest ADA Center.[iv]

One of the categories of Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology (QIAT) in K-12 is Transition, which deals with the factors related to assistive technology that are involved any time a student changes environments, i.e., elementary to middle school. As discussed by Gayl Bowser here in the October/November, 2009 issue of Closing The Gap, the transition that is perhaps one of the greatest changes in environment, however, is that from public to post-secondary education environments.[v] Not only is it a drastically different environment with different teaching styles, student expectations and often living arrangements, but the rules also change. IDEA provides an entitlement law that guarantees similar procedures for all students and the standards of FAPE (free and appropriate education) and LRE (least restrictive environment), for which the QIAT scaffolding was built. Post-secondary education on the other hand, responding to the civil rights legislation of the ADA and sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, and a competitive marketplace, is basically dealing with an eligibility law based on self-disclosure and driven by self-advocacy.

The development of the QIAT-PS indicators and guidelines has been open-source collaboration, with hundreds of professionals participating in face-to-face presentations and collaborative input sessions, including the QIAT Summits in Minneapolis, ATIA in Orlando, CSUN, an Ohio AT Conference and the New Mexico AT conference. A literature review was conducted that included the Association for Higher Education and Disabilities (AHEAD) and Assistive

Technologists in Higher Education Network (ATHENS) organizations, as well as the work from Do-It at the University of Washington and a number of other disabilities services organizations.

As noted, we not only needed to be looking at the colleges and the environments they were providing, but also the role and responsibilities of the student to bring their own technology skills and tools, as well as appropriate self-disclosure and self-advocacy abilities, to the table. Therefore, the project added and focused on a new category of Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination in addition to the original eight QIAT indicators for the post-secondary environment.

To supplement the online and face-to-face collaborative opportunities, QIAT-PS launched a wiki www.qiatgrowsup.pbworks.com in February 2008 with an invitation through various list serves and other networks to participate that generated not only generic indicators, but a number of suggestions for specific applications of the generic indicators to be applied to post secondary.

THE PRODUCT

In addition to the Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination Indicators, we also developed guidelines, both for the students and colleges. In each case, the indicators are augmented by related questions that might be asked, as well as suggested possible tasks to support successful transition.

The QIAT-PS *Student Guidelines* are intended as a tool for students and families as they consider the transition from public school to the college environment. They correspond to the *College Guidelines.* The intent of the Student Guidelines is to help students prepare for transition to post secondary environments while still in high school, as well as help those working in the college environment guide prospective students considering the transition. The Student Guidelines are complementary to Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology Transition Area in K-12, since many of the noted student skills ideally need to be developed prior to arrival at college. (Please see table on page 14)

The QIAT-PS College Guidelines are intended as a tool for college personnel as they consider their accessibility and accommodations for the entry of students with disabilities. They correspond and are complementary to the Student Guidelines. The intent is they are useful tools in the development, articulation and implementation of policy and procedures that contribute to successful transition and inclusion of students with disabilities in all areas of college life. (Please see table on page 15)

NEXT STEPS

Open source work on all nine categories of QIAT indicators and guidelines is ongoing. All are invited to contribute on the wiki at www.qiatgrowsup.pbworks.com and the Web site www.qiat-ps.org.

In addition, the Great Lakes ADA Center and Southwest ADA Center DBTAC have expressed an interest in similar work in the area of Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation. To join in the QIAT-PS discussion or express interest in the area of indicators for employment or vocational rehabilitation, please contact Janet Peters, Consultant at the Great Lakes ADA Center, DBTAC at jpete@uic.edu.

REFERENCES

[i]Finn, D., Getzel, E., & McManus (2008). Adapting the Self-Determined Learning Model for Instruction of College Students with Disabilities. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals. Vol. 31, No. 2, 85-93

[ii]Peters, J. (2009) Assistive Technology and Your College Experience Survey Results, Retrieved October 15, 2009 from www.qiat-ps.org.

[iii]Zabala, J. (Ed), (2007). Quality indicators for assistive technology services. Retrieved September 15, 2009 from www.quat.org.

[iv]Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers are a national network of ADA centers and provide services for information on the Americans with Disabilities Act for businesses, employers, governmental entities, service providers and individuals with disabilities.

[v]Bowser, G. (2009) Transition Planning + Self Determination = AT for Independence. Closing the Gap v.28 No.4 (pp.30-34). Henderson, MN: Closing the Gap

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Quality Indicators in Assistive Technology – Post Secondary (QIAT-PS)
Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination Indicators and Student Guidelines

Indicator	Student Question	Related Task
1. Self-awareness - The student is aware of the various factors of their disability and is knowledgeable about their needed accommodations	Can I accurately describe my disability and its impact on my educational process, including educational achievement and participation in academic and campus life activities?	Participation in IEP and involvement of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.
2. Self-advocacy - The student understands that under ADA and other applicable federal and state laws, they must be responsible for disclosure of their disability that requires accommodations in order to gain access to the curricula and materials.	What do I want to disclose about my disability, and to whom?	Participation in IEP and researching current information on disability laws and regulations.
3. Communication - The student is able to utilize communication and interpersonal skills to communicate with faculty concerning how to ensure confidentiality, documentation, evaluation and grievance procedures.	Can I communicate my needs to the appropriate people in a timely manner?	Learning how to approach teachers concerning handouts, tests, etc. before asking another adult/consultant to intervene.
4. Self-Advocacy and Leadership - The student uses a process to make a self-advocacy plan and to guide staff and supporters in the provision of AT and accommodations that allow access to the curriculum and aid independence.	Do I understand the difference between my use of AT for daily living and AT for academic use, and what the college will legally provide?	Student develops a wish list of technology with regard to future goals and is able to justify each piece of technology as an essential part of achieving a particular goal.
5. Self-evaluation and self-determination - The student evaluates personal performance using AT and makes adjustments to their goals when necessary, including justification and acquisition of any new technology devices needed.	Do I understand the difference between my use of AT for daily living and AT for academic use, and what the college will legally provide?	Student develops a wish list of technology with regard to future goals and is able to justify each piece of technology as an essential part of achieving a particular goal.
6. Student Initiative and Decision Making - The student independently chooses the appropriate AT for each situation and makes long-term decisions about assistive technology device acquisition and supports.	Is the assistive technology I need, or have been using, different than what the college provides?	Given a list of possible tasks, the student will identify the most practical technology approach for performing each task and justify these decisions.
7. Assistive Technology Problem Solving - The student identifies problems with AT use and is able to identify the needed AT supports and services to solve AT problems and communicate these solutions to disability services and their instructors.	Problems that may arise?	Routine maintenance installations, use documentation and tutorials, and utilize technical support independently when technology issues arise.

Quality Indicators in Assistive Technology – Post Secondary (QIAT-PS)
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Indicator	Student Question	Related Task
1. Self-awareness - The student is aware of the various factors of their disability and is knowledgeable about their needed accommodations.	Are our intake counselors, recruiters and referral sources trained to work with students with disabilities and assistive technology needs to assist in defining their disability and determining their accommodations?	University staff members are trained to facilitate exploration of individual students disabilities and assisting them in understanding their need for and types of accommodation.
2. Self-advocacy - The student understands that under ADA and other applicable federal and state laws, they must be responsible for disclosure of their disability that requires accommodations in order to gain access to the curricula and materials.	Does college have a campus culture of inclusiveness that facilitates self-advocacy and provides professional development to staff to enable student faculty collaboration regarding accommodations and assistive technologies?	Staff are trained to support diversity, including disability. Staff are familiar with and follow appropriate legislation and policy that influences access to course curriculum and school activities. Staff are open to communication regarding student needs, and work collaboratively with students and disability services to develop appropriate accommodations.
3. Communication - The student is able to utilize communication and interpersonal skills to communicate with faculty concerning how to ensure confidentiality, documentation, evaluation and grievance procedures.	Are our college and university marketing materials, course catalogs, procedures and Web resources accessible and assessed frequently regarding their appropriateness and staff and services have open communication policies?	Materials are accessible and clearly delineate procedures for students, including grievance policies. University policy committees encourage and accept student input. Student support services, such as counseling, nursing, health, food service, law enforcement, etc. understand and participate in accessible service delivery and make efforts to communicate with students.
4. Self-Advocacy and Leadership - The student uses a process to make a self-advocacy plan and to guide staff and supporters in the provision of AT and accommodations that allow access to the curriculum and aid independence.	Do we promote an inclusive campus culture and encourage and actively seek student with a disability input in assistive technology planning, implementation and support on the campus, on campus living environments, and online/distance learning environments?	University administration and disability services staff lead by example in promoting accessibility, and assistive technology use on campus. The university uses peer mentoring, tutoring for self-advocacy and other methods to improve student involvement in their self-advocacy efforts.
5. Self-evaluation and self-determination - The student evaluates personal performance using AT and makes adjustments to their goals when necessary, including justification and acquisition of any new technology devices needed.	Do we work with the student to make timely changes to assistive technology supports and accommodations that may be necessary for different academic tasks and environments?	Disability services staff monitor student performance and use of assistive technology and accommodations, but allow the student to lead or guide self-evaluation and delivery of adjustments to assistive technology devices and services.
6. Student Initiative and Decision Making - The student independently chooses the appropriate AT for each situation and makes long-term decisions about assistive technology device acquisition and supports.	Do we support the integration of personal assistive technology into the classroom and labs when appropriate, collaborate in professional development on this integration of student owned assistive technology and integrate appropriate university support devices and services in a timely manner?	Student owned assistive technology supports are integrated into the curricular and extracurricular activities of the university when appropriate. Procedures for using school owned assistive technology are clearly communicated to the student and faculty. The university arranges opportunities for professional development for staff members working with the student with a disability when requested through the planning process.
7. Assistive Technology Problem Solving - The student identifies problems with AT use and is able to identify the needed AT supports and services to solve AT problems and communicate these solutions to disability services and their instructors.	Do we promote collaboration between the student, various support services and faculty in solving AT challenges and problems?	Systematic procedures for collaboration, planning, problem solving and coordination are used by instructional and support personnel of the university in identifying assistive technology challenges and solving problems.