



How Assistive Technology (AT) Affects Self-Esteem

Listeners' Guide

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This podcast features a one-on-one interview with Chad Downes, Assistive Technology Advisor at Amethyst Demonstration School, one of the provincial schools for students with severe learning disabilities (LDs), in London, Ontario. In this podcast, Chad discusses how students at Amethyst School use various types of assistive technology (AT) to become successful learners, which in turn has a positive impact on their self-esteem.

This listeners' guide provides you with the opportunity, both individually and as a group, to reflect on your thoughts and practices relating to the relationship between AT and self-esteem, for students with LDs. The listeners' guide includes the following sections:

- *Self-esteem & LDs* is a pre-listening activity designed to focus the listeners' attention to the issues associated with LDs and self-esteem.
- *Guided Questions = Key Takeaways* is a listening activity; listeners will complete a 4-section graphic organizer to capture key information discussed in the podcast, in the following areas:
 - Challenges associated with AT in the classroom
 - Benefits of using AT in the classroom
 - Types of AT that may be used in the classroom
 - Implications for classroom practice
- *Matching Student Needs and AT Tools* is an application activity to pair software to assessed student need and/or curricular expectation.
- *BYOD – A Good Idea... or Not?* is a post-listening activity that provides listeners with an opportunity to engage in discussion on the pros and cons of bring your own device (BYOD).



Self-Esteem & LDs:

Pre-listening Activity

For students with LDs, struggling to stay current with assignments, requiring assistance from teachers, peer mentors, tutors and parents, coupled with the frustration of not being in control, can (and often does) contribute to feelings of helplessness and negatively impacts self-confidence and self-worth.

AT can be very effective in boosting students' positive self-image and helping to empower them to compensate for specific limitations associated with their LDs.

Read the following statements and respond to the question by listing three examples:

Students with learning and attention issues are at risk for low self-esteem; what might low self-esteem look like for students with LDs?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Students develop self-esteem by experiencing repeated success; how might AT support the development of positive self-esteem?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



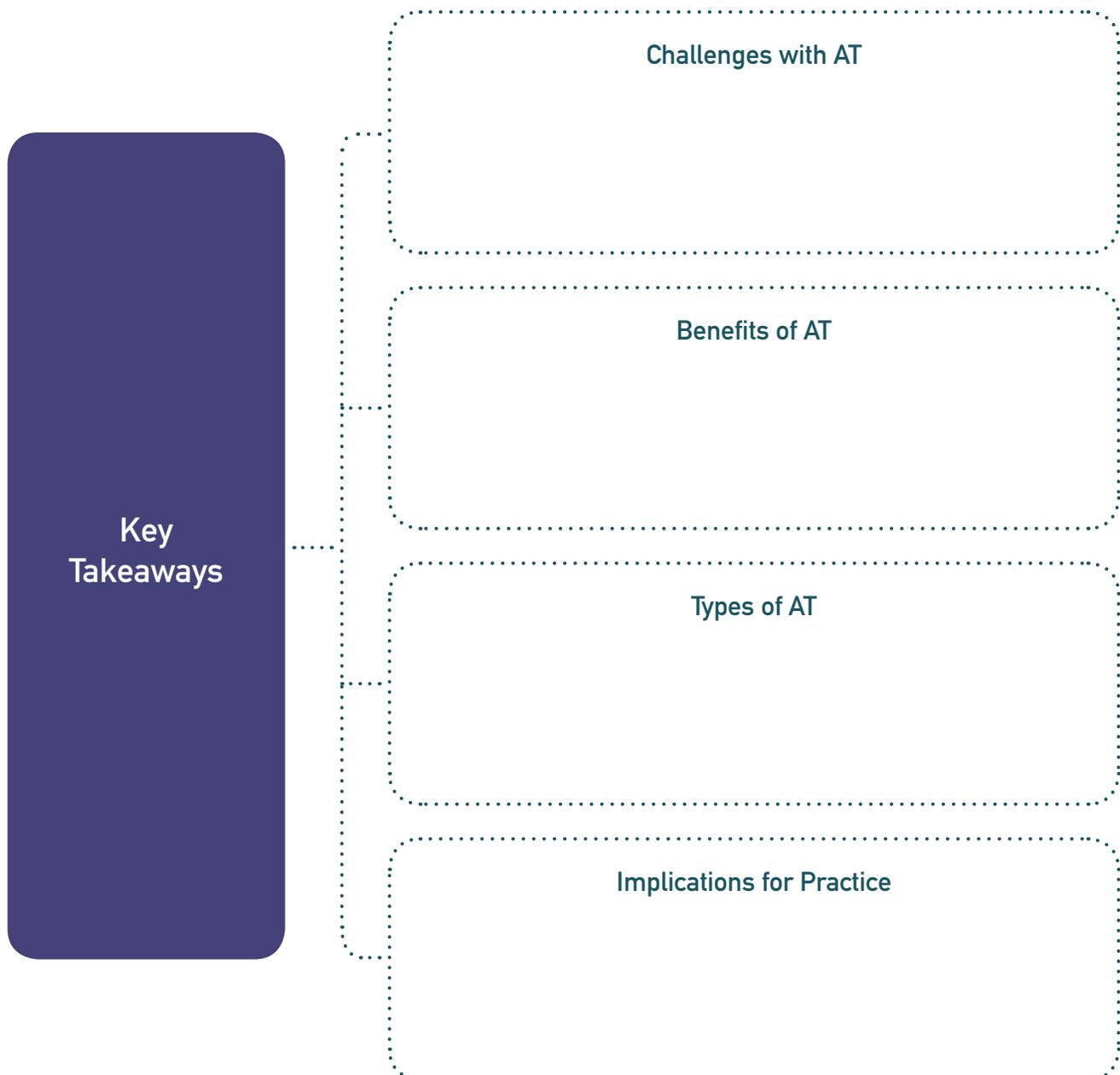
Guided Questions = Key Takeaways:

Listening Activity

While listening to the podcast, participants should think about students with LDs who may be at risk for low self-esteem and consider the following:

- What are the potential challenges associated with AT in the classroom?
- What are the potential benefits of using AT in the classroom?
- What kinds of AT could be used in the classroom?
- What are the implications for classroom practice?

Then complete each corresponding section of the following graphic organizer:



Matching Student Needs and AT Tools:

Application Activity

Essentially, AT compensates for a student’s skills deficits, needs and/or area(s) of disability. The key to effective AT is finding the right match between the AT tool, the LDs, and the task. Finding the right tool may not be an easy task and may require a trial and error approach. Students with LDs will most often require AT that assists with reading, language, organizational skills, and processing information.

The goal of this application activity is to match the area of need in column A with an appropriate AT tool in column B. Participants should complete the activity on their own, then share and discuss their ideas with an elbow partner.

Note: more than one type of AT tool may address an area of need.

Column A – Area of Need	Column B – AT Tools
Organizational skills	Text-to-speech, e.g. Kurzweil
Expressive language weakness	Word predication, e.g. Word Q
Written language difficulties (dysgraphia)	Speech-to-text, e.g. Dragon
Math computational difficulties	Paper-based computing platform, e.g. Livescribe Smartpen
Weak working memory	Natural language voice commands, e.g. Siri
Reading disabilities (dyslexia)	Graphic organizer, e.g. Inspiration or Kidspiration
Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)	“Talking” calculator
Language-based learning disabilities	Talking word processor, e.g. Write OutLoud
Executive functioning difficulties	Sound amplification, e.g. an FM system
Other Areas of Need?	Other AT Tools?
Other Areas of Need?	Other AT Tools?



BYOD – A Good Idea... or Not?

Post-listening Activity

In the podcast, Chad Downes mentions that some school boards in Ontario encourage students to BYOD, which refers to Bring Your Own Device to school. Numerous school boards across the province have embraced BYOD, including the Peel DSB; here is a blurb from Peel's website:

Today's students are already technology leaders. They want to take the technology they use in their daily lives and make it a normal part of their classroom experience. Research tells us that if we reflect this in their learning experiences, we will increase engagement, which leads to improved student success.

However, opponents of BYOD are critical of the initiative, citing issues such as equipment inequity, distraction and "mine is better than yours" syndrome.

In small groups or with a partner, brainstorm and create a list of the pros and cons of BYOD. Select the top three most compelling pros and cons to share.



Pros



Cons

Reflective question: How might my students with LDs benefit from BYOD? How might they be disadvantaged?

Relevant Resources on the LD@school website

- ▶ **Click here** to access the article, “Assistive Technology for Students with Learning Disabilities: Information, Tools and Resources for Teachers”, by Cindy Perras (www.LDatSchool.ca/technology/information-tools-and-resources).
- ▶ **Click here** to access the webinar, “The Evolution of Assistive Technology: Mobile Learning in a Digital World”, presented by Michael Kerr (www.LDatSchool.ca/technology/the-evolution-of-assistive-technology-mobile-learning-in-a-digital-world).
- ▶ **Click here** to access the evidence-informed summary, “Assistive Technology for Students with Learning Disabilities”, by Dr. Gabrielle Young and Dr. Jeffrey MacCormack (www.LDatSchool.ca/technology/assistive-technology).
- ▶ **Click here** to access a list of mobile assistive technologies, by Michael Kerr (www.LDatSchool.ca/technology/mobile-assistive-technology-activities-strategies-and-tools-for-all-learners).
- ▶ **Click here** to access a comparative chart, “Comparing Assistive Technology Features for Android, Windows and Apple”, developed by Geoff Courneya (www.LDatSchool.ca/technology/comparing-assistive-technology).
- ▶ **Click here** to access the article, “A Guide to Choosing Educational Apps” (www.LDatSchool.ca/technology/a-guide-to-choosing-educational-apps).
- ▶ **Click here** to access the article, “Mobile Assistive Technology for Learning in a Digital World”, by Michael Kerr (www.LDatSchool.ca/technology/mobile-assistive-technology-for-learning-in-a-digital-world).

Thank you for listening to this podcast, as well as for using this listener’s guide.

Here is an opportunity to help out other educators!

Do you have any information on the tiered approach that you would like to share with LD@school? Or do you know of a specific strategy, practice or approach that has worked well in supporting the needs of students with LDs at school?

▶ **Click here to send your ideas to info@LDatSchool.ca.**

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