Transcription of sound bite:

How Assistive Technology Can Improve Students’ Self-Esteem

[Lawrence – Okay, so let’s fire off Chad and let’s start. Obviously the title of this podcast is the link between assistive technology and a student’s self-esteem. So let’s start with the broad question Chad of what links do you see between assistive technology and growing a student’s self-esteem?]

[Chad – The biggest link here is that students are able to be successful when they use their assistive technology. So that really – once you’re able to be successful, it really highlights your abilities and takes away from the disability part. With students who have learning disabilities, a lot of times throughout their school careers they’ve had difficulty with their reading and mathematics. As they use the technology it helps enhance their self-esteem because they’re able to be more successful.]

[Lawrence – Chad, tell me what are the benefits of incorporating assistive technology within the classroom for students with LDs and what are the benefits for all of the students in the classroom – not just those that have LDs when we talk about a broader environment.]

[Chad – Alright, using the technology again for and with self-esteem is the fact that students are being more successful and independent. There is a big push for students to become self-advocates in their use of the technology, but some of the things that we see in our classrooms is rather than students who have difficulty with writing is that they can just take pictures of their homework board. And then they have all of the information written down in the right way. They have OCR the Optical Character Recognition. All of these devices in the classroom make them equal to their peers, and some of the hardships that we’re seeing with students is that they don’t like to stick out with the SEA equipment that they’re getting – having a big laptop, which is twenty year old technology, that they are not equal with their peers. So what we’re aiming to do is if we can provide technology...]

Learning Module:
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for twenty-first century learning skills to all students with these affordable Chrome Books and other types of accessible technology, then students can use the tools that they need.]

[Lawrence – Yeah, I guess and I can relate to that, Chad because as a parent, I had a boy and when he was in that grade six/seven/eight when peer pressure is an issue, he had the dreaded laptop and a lot of the time he just wouldn’t use it because of that desire not to be labeled as different within the classroom.]

[Chad – That seems to be our number one challenge with the technology in these formative years.]

[Lawrence – So let’s talk about and obviously we can’t talk about a specific students, but let’s talk about some of the successes you see that raises students’ self-esteem that are based in technology. Chad, can you talk about some of them without names, just some of the broad cases of students you have seen when they’ve come to you and you’ve fitted them out with new AT package, so to speak and you’ve looked in three months down the line and they’re a completely different kid. What impact does that have on the student?]

[Chad – Yeah, it’s really remarkable in the environment that I get to work in here. We see students come in to Amethyst with a really great sense of learned helplessness. They’ve never been able to be successful or do things on their own. And once they’re using the technology, they use it in an innovative ways, they’re able to be very independent and they’re using it in appropriate ways that are outside of even the ways that myself and the teaching staff have shown them, because it works best for them. Another great success that we see here is a lot of our students when they go back to their school boards, they become the technology leads within the school. So they’re helping out other students, which really gives them a great sense of, self-esteem and because they are now experts in something when they’ve never felt that way in a school environment before.]