

Assistive Technology Awareness for College-Bound Students with Learning Disabilities

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LD Resources Foundation, to develop a program supporting our 12th grade, college-bound students, to provide these students with specific knowledge of Assistive Technology programs, features and equipment, as well as substantial hands on practice with that technology in a classroom setting at Churchill. As a result, the students would be able to effectively advocate for appropriate support when they are in a college setting. Our school was felt to be an ideal place to initiate this program, as almost all of its graduates go on to a two or four year college program.

Although the school does an excellent job of educating students, most of whom have New York State IEPs, fulfilling its mandate with almost 100% graduation rate, there has been concern about how these students will fare in the very different world of college. In High School, if a student has an IEP, the burden is on the school to provide appropriate educational supports and adjustments to the student, which the school does. In college, however, the burden is on the student to advocate for these accommodations, and know precisely which accommodations they need. Receiving appropriate accommodations as an adult is a matter of civil rights.

Accordingly, during the course of the program with LD Resources Foundation, we:

1. Designed and implemented activities to familiarize students with available Assistive Technologies:

- Provided students with an introduction to a variety of assistive technologies.
- Brainstormed about challenges they will face in college.

2. Developed a variety of activities focused on using Assistive Technology within the “regular” school environment

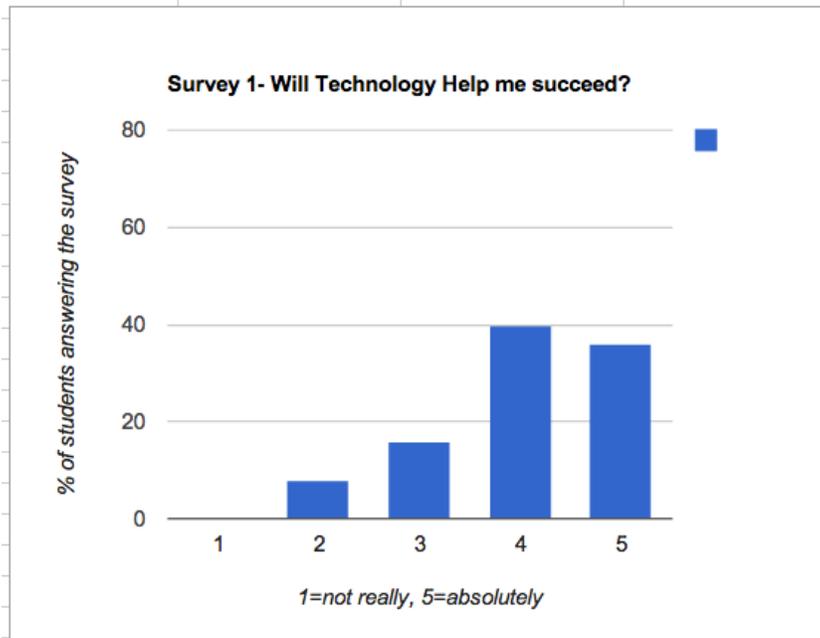
- class assignments in which students were required to advocate for the teacher to allow them the use of some assistive technology or in which part of the grade was based on the student using a piece of assistive technology (chosen by the student) to complete the task
- post-assignment interviews and discussions with small groups and individual students about the technologies they used, which they found useful (or not) and why.

3. Have students self-advocate by

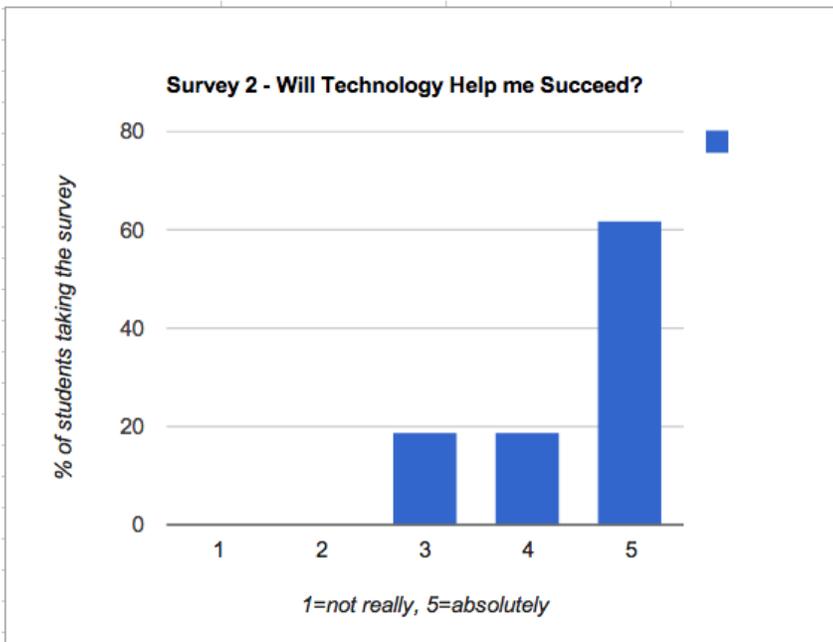
- Applying to LD Resources for Assistive Technology that they found useful
- Developing a written cloud-based plan (google doc, pencast) listing resources that they found useful including specific technical language and specifications to take with them to college.
- Role play discussions/situations with professors, or Guidance Department in order to rehearse technical discussions and requests.

During these activities, the school worked with LD Resources Foundation to collect data, mainly through student surveys and interviews, showing the results this training among students with learning disabilities. There was an increased awareness of the importance of assistive technology among the students. The results of the surveys are summarized below.

Survey administered March 2011:



Survey administered May 2011:



As a result of this pilot project in Spring 2012, the school has enacted several new initiatives. Rather than have a concentrated assistive technology awareness program for

seniors, the school has decided to encourage the use of assistive technology throughout MS and HS. This was facilitated through a one to one laptop program in the high school, and, more recently, a one to one iPad program in 7th and 8th grade. Additionally, the school has hired an instructor whose primary goal is to train teachers and students to use assistive technology on a regular basis. Looking at the results of a survey about assistive technology use by teachers in 2011 and comparing it to 2014, there are some marked improvements.

