

**Citation:** Fichten, C.S., Asuncion, J.V. & Barile, M. (2002). Guidelines for student success: Best practices in the use of educational technologies for learners with disabilities. Dawson Student Success Newsletter, 1(3), 2. (Abstracted by EDUCAUSE No. CSD1546 <http://www.educause.edu/asp/doclib/abstract.asp?id=csd1546>).

## Guidelines for Student Success: Best Practices In The Use Of Educational Technologies For Learners With Disabilities

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November, 2001

The best practices listing that follows is based on findings from our empirical studies of the computer technology needs and concerns of more than 800 Canadian postsecondary students with disabilities. For more information, visit our bilingual Adaptech Project web site:  
<http://omega.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/adaptech>

Designing for accessibility for all learners, including those with disabilities, from the beginning results in more useful and cost effective solutions than retrofits.

Plans and policies addressing IT integration on campus need to be reviewed and updated, if necessary, to ensure that they include provisions for access by persons with disabilities.

People with disabilities and those who provide disability-related supports to them on campus need to be included in discussions/committees related to the selection of campus wide educational technologies.

Faculty training workshops on technology integration in the classroom need to address the issue of accessibility by learners with disabilities.

Accessible and inclusive design considerations should be used when new learning and computer technologies are adopted and implemented on campus.

Those responsible for providing IT/computing services and programs to their postsecondary institutions need to learn more about what is involved in providing technology that is accessible to the whole campus community, including learners with disabilities.

When conducting evaluations of technology-based learning, learners with disabilities should be included whenever possible.

As a matter of course, subject matter experts in the area of accessibility need to be drawn into the instructional design process from the analysis straight through to the evaluation phase.

Authorware and courseware tools with built-in accessibility features (e.g., WebCT, Blackboard) should be given greatest consideration when choosing to adopt a campus-wide web authoring tool.

Use free web-based tools, such as Bobby and A-Prompt, which evaluate web pages for their accessibility and provide suggestions for making appropriate improvements. In addition, free software MAGpie (Media Access Generator) provides the facility to add captions to QuickTime, SMIL, and SAMI formats, and to incorporate audio descriptions into SMIL presentations.

When using PDF files, provide a non-PDF alternative (e.g., Word, HTML-based) or follow the guidelines for creating accessible PDF files (see <http://access.adobe.com>)

Teaching and online resources should be compatible with adaptive technologies as well as with slow and low end computers

Dealing with accessibility for learners with disabilities by replacing a technology rich computer based learning experience with one that does not use technology defeats the purpose of providing an opportunity to develop technology literacy skills for these learners

Faculty are encouraged to put course information on the web well before the beginning of term, to make course materials available in alternate formats (e.g., online, diskette), and to allow students to submit assignments in alternate formats (e.g., online, diskette)

It is important to note that our data suggest that providing good access to computer technologies for students with disabilities is beneficial for ALL students