

The impact of B.Y.O.T. (Bring Your Own Tech) on assistive technology in schools.

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Summary of Presentation by Chris Swaim, Assistive Technology Facilitator, Forsyth County School System, Georgia USA, at the ATIA 2013 Conference on Assistive Technologies.

B.Y.O.T. has been implemented across all 36 schools in Forsyth County in Georgia, USA. This means that students are encouraged to bring in their own Laptops, phones, tablets, e-books and even portable games consoles! Tech is provided for those students who don't have their own. The rules are simple: only use your tech for educational purposes, and put it down when you're asked to. This method is shifting the role of the teacher even further from the "source of all knowledge" to a "facilitator of the learning process", and is having great success in their county. Chris also discussed the impact of B.Y.O.T. on the use of assistive technology:

- Students needing assistive technology no longer stand out as much, and feel more confident to use their tech around others.
- All students are encouraged to invent and share learning strategies using their tech. This means that students are showing off their assistive technology to their peers, who sometimes end up using it too, if it fits with their learning style.
- There is sometimes a mismatch between the assistive technology that has been agreed upon and supplied to the student, and the technology that they want to use. Often the assistive technology has been chosen because it helps the student tackle specific issues, whereas the B.Y.O.T. devices are preferred because they're the latest trend. This can cause friction, and there were different views in the room about who should have the final say: the disability professional? The parents? The student?

All students, including those with disabilities, were empowered to demonstrate their technology and strategies to the teacher. Some teachers found this daunting and some were fascinated to see their students so engaged.

References:

[Handout for Chris' presentation.](#)

[Handouts for most sessions.](#)

E.A. Draffan noted that Claire Swaim asks everyone to "keep in mind that the latest and greatest are really 'cool tools'; however, you still need to consider:

1. What does the 'cool tool' provide that we are not already providing?
2. Is the 'cool tool' being used for instructional strategies or for compensation?
3. Can the student get the same results using Assistive Technology tools that are already in place or that can be provided?"