Assistive Technology Evaluation

While working with Mrs. Ramsey-Knight and Mr. Gysei on the Assistive Technology Module I got a chance to learn a great deal about how technology can impact our special education students. When I first read through the module I chose to work with a student that had similar disabilities as my son. My son’s speech is currently delayed and he participates in special needs Pre-K program. With this program we have seen such an improvement with his speech and cognitive goals. The student I chose to work with was Valentin Morrison-Ramos fondly known as Lito. Lito’s disabilities effect his communication and language development, social/personal skills, cognitive abilities, motor and self-help skills. All areas of the general education curriculum are adapted for him to participate appropriately. His difficulties in the area of communication make it difficult for him to respond to academic questions across all content areas. This also makes it difficult for him to express his wants and needs to adults and peers in the school environment.

While reading over his IEP, I noticed that Lito already has several AT tools in place. He was currently using the adapted Twist and Write pencil, the laptop to complete his writing tasks, and the Avaz app for communication. His teachers were also helping him with organizing his words and spacing with the help of his graphic organizer and markers. Lito has been working with the Avaz app at home and his mother felt that this tool could have a great impact also at school. He has been working with this app since December 2015 and he seems to enjoy this product. The Avaz app is a full featured picture language system. When I questioned Lito about this tool he bashfully would not respond to me. I spoke with his paraprofessional, Mr. Gysei, and he mentioned that Lito really enjoys electronics and this tool has a lot of capabilities to encourage his communication skills. His paraprofessional did mention that when Lito leaves his tablet at home he struggles throughout the day with sharing his thoughts and needs. He still has to be encouraged to initiate communication and attend to his individual table activities, but they are seeing an improvement with his responses. During his AT plan review I mentioned that maybe the system should purchase a copy of the app, so he would always have it accessible at school.

When I observed Lito during his Lucy Calkins writing session he used the Twist and Write pencil very well. He did struggle with staying on task, but his paraprofessional was available to redirect him quietly and quickly. I did notice that once his teachers mentioned that he could type up his written assignment this seemed to motivate him to complete his work. Lito’s writing goal before using the laptop to complete his writing task was at a 65%, with his objective being at 85% mastery. The laptop and the new organization training gave Lito the extra motivation and ability to complete his writing, which increased his goal to 73%. His communication goals have also increased as well. Before the Avaz app was introduced he was performing at 42% accuracy with an 80% mastery goal. After using the app he has increased his performance to 66%. In my opinion both the use of the assistive technology and the support of his teachers and parents has made a great deal in his success. While working with his teachers I noticed that they are a very dedicated and supportive group, always looking and applying strategies that are best for their students.