



THE JOURNEY TO INDEPENDENCE

Assistive Conference of New England

Warwick, RI

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<https://oakhillct.org/NEAT-Center>

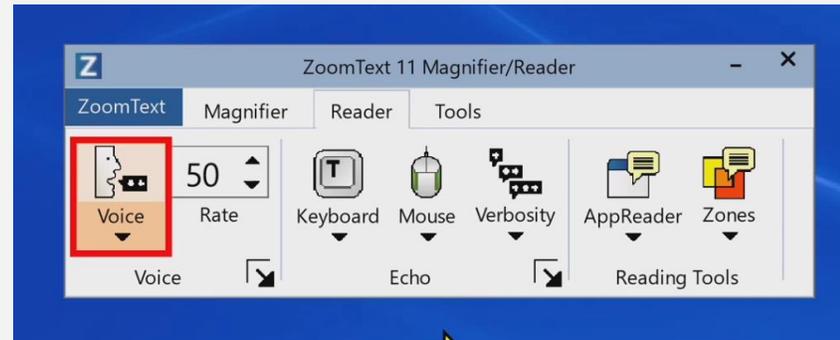


WANDA'S AT EVALUATION

- Was working as a grant writer for Yale Univ. but became too difficult with loss of vision. Very emotional transition.
- High blood pressure caused vision loss as an adult. Some physical concerns but those were not conveyed.
- Seeking part-time employment; AT referral from the CT Bureau of Rehabilitation Services.
- Her major concern included typing and the difficulty remembering keyboard shortcuts.
- She requested a one device solution.

WANDA'S AT SOLUTIONS

#1 Laptop with ZoomText Software



Why?

- White text on black background contrast for screen display.
- 2X-3X magnification for easier visual access; depending on program in use.
- Giant, green mouse pointer.
- Speech output turned off when navigating laptop but found the AppReader feature helpful when reading documents or web pages.

WANDA'S AT SOLUTIONS

#2 ZoomText Keyboard



Why?

- Bold, black letters.
- ZoomText feature keys located across the top of the keyboard were helpful in navigating the software without memorizing shortcuts.

WANDA'S AT SOLUTIONS

#3 Dragon Naturally Speaking (DNS) Software



Why?

- *Self proclaimed as a poor typist and inadequate keyboarding skills.*
- *Wanted to be able dictate.*

WANDA'S AT SOLUTIONS

#4 Ruby: Handheld Electronic Magnifier



Why?

- *Wanted to be able to quickly identify items on the fly.*
- *Not a smartphone user.*

WANDA'S AT SOLUTIONS

#5 AT Training

Why?

- Training is imperative for individuals to learn to integrate the technology into their daily life and become more confident with their skill sets.
- After working with Wanda for 5 weeks (2 hrs. once a week) she discovered strengths and weaknesses, began to generalize learned skills and became more comfortable utilizing the technology. Even discovered she preferred Windows built-in voice recognition to DNS.

WANDA TODAY

- She is now employed at a new job site 8-10 hrs. per week and is happy as she was only seeking part-time.
- She is updating her technology.
- Feels like an active part of society, the community and workforce.
- Sent a letter of appreciation about how technology has impacted her life...

Dear Steve:

I write to thank you, immensely, for your wonderful work in providing me computer training. As a person diagnosed with low vision and, without having been previously trained in Zoom Text, I arrived my first day of training somewhat down-trodden. As training progressed and came to an end for this period, I had a new found sense of worth and empowerment.

This transformation, in terms of thinking for me was largely due to your professionalism and your encouraging demeanor. Your expertise with Zoom Text and the computer in general is phenomenal. Moreover, you helped me to embrace a profound sense of independence, as it relates to communication and technology.

Again, thank you. May GOD continue to bless you as you provide great service to the community.

Sincerely,

Wanda H.

ALEXIE'S AT EVALUATION

- 20 year old, petite young lady in her last year of public high school.
- She is blind and reads Braille.
- Cerebral Palsy limits the use of her hands and her mobility is severely compromised. She utilizes two canes for balance when walking.
- She was completely dependent of school staff and family to navigate the environment and complete classroom assignments.
- Seeking more independence in academics and independent living skills.
- AT referral from the public school system but initially requested by parents.
- Prior to evaluation, she owned an iPad and Perkins Brailier.

ALEXIE'S AT SOLUTIONS

#1 Laptop with JAWS Screen Reader Software

Why?

- *Has no usable vision so she needed access to the computer so that she could research on the Internet, complete assignments within Microsoft Word and email her teachers.*

ALEXIE'S AT SOLUTIONS

#2 OpenBook Software with the PEARL Reading Camera



Why?

- *Access to printed material that couldn't be found electronically.*
- *Portability between home and school.*
- *Lightweight is important because of Alexie's petite frame and her motor difficulties.*

ALEXIE'S AT SOLUTIONS

#3 Focus 40 Braille display



Why?

- *Works with JAWS and OpenBook to provide flexibility so that the student can read in Braille.*
- *This allows her to read at her own pace and not rely on auditory output.*
- *Privacy*
- *Teaches mechanics of the English language including spelling, sentence syntax and grammar.*

ALEXIE'S AT SOLUTIONS

#5 AT Training

Why?

- Training is imperative for individuals to learn to integrate the technology into their daily life and become more confident with their skill sets.
- After working with Alexie, her parents, and school staff throughout the school year, Alexie's skills developed and strengthened. The support of having her team learn along side of her was important to help Alexie generalize her new skill set and become more comfortable utilizing the technology.

ALEXIE TODAY

- Alexie audited a Sociology course at Tunxis Community College. She received a C on her first exam.
- This was the first time she ever took an exam on her own with no assistance from anyone.
- Through her connection with NEAT, Alexie was introduced to another Center of Oak Hill called Chapter 126 Adaptive Recreational Center.
- Here she participates in adapted sports and is actively engaged in the community as well as building independent living skills.

MICHELLE'S AT EVALUATION *PART 1*

- Michelle was born deaf.
- She is currently married and has two children.
- She taught herself to read and write Braille.
- AT referral from the CT Access Through Technology Program (CT Tech Act Project) to provide Telecommunications.
- The first part of her AT evaluation was conducted several years ago when she had some usable vision but was fearful of losing her vision completely. She was originally recommended the BrailleNote Apex and an iPad so that she could communicate with others while continuing to learn Braille. This was important to her.

MICHELLE'S AT EVALUATION *PART 2*

- The BrailleNote Apex and iPad were successful for supporting Michelle's telecommunications.
- She wanted to now expand her skills to the computer because CT's Bearu of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) hired her to teach other Deaf Blind individuals to learn to read and write Braille.
- She then attended classes at the Helen Keller Center in Long Island, NY to develop her teaching skills.
- The second part of her AT evaluation was requested to support her now job, in teaching others.

MICHELLE'S AT SOLUTIONS

#1 BrailleNote Apex and an iPad



Why?

- Communicate with others while continuing to learn Braille

MICHELLE'S AT SOLUTIONS

#2 and 3 Laptop with JAWS Screen Reader Software and Focus 40 Braille Display

Why?

- *Although she is deaf, JAWS is the bridge to accessing electronic content through her Braille display.*
- *Because JAWS and the Focus are created by the same company it provides ease of access for Michelle, especially when troubleshooting.*

MICHELLE TODAY

- Training was not a necessity for Michelle as she took to the technology comfortably and confidently.
- She has since lost her vision and is now communicating through the use of tactile sign language.
- She is now teaching other deaf/blind consumers to read and write through Braille.
- She has been added as a vendor to the CT state contract so that she can be a mentor and teacher to other deaf/blind consumers.



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**Thank
you for
your
time!**