

History of SWAAAC

In the mid 1980's, twenty-five related service providers and educators, in collaboration with the Colorado Department of Education, developed and fostered a model of Assistive Technology (AT) service delivery. Their model combined professional development, technical assistance, a tiered intervention system and access to technology for trial through a statewide loan bank. The group adopted the name SWAAC (Statewide Augmentative Alternative Communication). These SWAAC members traveled to schools, completed evaluations, and made recommendations to IEP teams for implementation.

With rapid advances in technology options, the name SWAAC was modified in the early 1990's and an additional A was added. The acronym now represented Statewide, Assistive technology, Augmentative Alternative Communication (SWAAAC) teams.

Over the past twenty years, this initial group of twenty-five has expanded to over 700. Currently, 460 educational professionals (occupational and physical therapists, speech language pathologists, educators, psychologists, regular and special education teachers, nurses, etc) are identified as assistive technology service providers in Colorado schools. These individuals form district level multidisciplinary teams led by 63 team coordinators. The team coordinators serve as the primary interface with the state office and have storefront access to the loan library of AT devices, software and resources.

Utilizing established university infrastructure, the SWAAAC project provides a wide variety of cost effective, readily accessible support services. Those services are delivered via the Interlibrary Consortium, phone and email, a regularly updated website, a yahoo discussion forum, regular telephone conferencing, WebEx meetings, tele-rehabilitation, AHEC distance training, and on-site training and consultation at the three Assistive Technology Partner offices (Denver, Colorado Springs and Grand Junction). The ability of the project to capitalize on university infrastructure allows the project to reach out to all corners of the state and provide high quality professional development and just-in-time support services.