

AT ALERT

September 29, 2021



Thomas County Schools Assistive Technology Newsletter

In this issue:

- Giving Thanks
- OrbitDocs
- Formative Accessibility

Giving Thanks

As we approach the Thanksgiving season I have been reflecting on how fortunate we are in Thomas County to have so many assistive technology tools available for our students. Our system's commitment to blended learning and providing devices to all students PK-12th grade has led to a more universally designed learning environment. The availability of

devices has made the use of AT less complicated and easier to obtain. It was only a few years ago that we were using portable word processors which had to be hooked up to a teacher PC by a USB cable in order to operate and touch screen monitors were attached to rolling computer workstations for students to have access. Each of our students, from self-contained to general education, now have powerful tools at their fingertips. Having the tools isn't enough, we have to make sure students know about them and are able to utilize them. If you are wanting to learn more about what is available or want to dig deeper into using the tools we have, please take time to visit the AT website. You will find a link to our inventory list (which includes product descriptions and photos) as well as product guides for the Chromebook extensions, archived AT Alert newsletters, and other helpful resources. I am also happy to schedule time to meet with teachers or students to support AT use. I'm here to help! - Alison

AT website: www.thomas.k12.ga.us/content/assistenttechnology



Every student with an IEP has the OrbitNote extension on their chrome browser. This extension works similarly to Kami and allows students to annotate PDFs, save them, and submit the annotated document back to the teacher. One major difference is that OrbitNote has the built in screen reader and OCR reader from the Read&Write toolbar whereas Kami requires students to utilize a separate extension for these functions. This is a great tool for students who struggle with handwriting, spelling, or organization (keeping up with papers). More information is available on our AT website or at www.texthelp.com.

Features at a glance



Text to Speech:

Reads words, passages, or whole documents aloud with easy-to-follow dual color highlighting.



Shapes Drawing:

For creating circles, rectangles and lines with customized lines and fill color.



Text:

Lets you type text on top of the PDF.



Text and Voice comments:

For collaboration, showing understanding and giving feedback



Pushpin:

Ideal for making notes or adding instructions or other helpful hints to a PDF assignment.



Highlighters:

Collect highlights from text in documents or the web for summarizing research and to create bibliographies.



Freehand Drawing:

To scribble and draw on your PDF to complete assignments or highlight important information.

Maximizing Accessibility in Formative



This program was purchased with the intent to focus on student learning, not just assessing. It can be used as a teaching tool in addition to a testing tool. If you have used Formative in your classroom and have ideas or suggestions, please send them to me. I would love to hear how it is working for our students and teachers and share that information with others.

One concern when any new program is introduced is the accessibility. The most common accessibility concern is for the material to be read aloud. There are several options for this:

- Text to Speech - The Read&Write toolbar works with the program. For standard items that have been typed or entered directly into Formative the standard read aloud feature works.
- OCR - If images, PDFs, or other inaccessible text is added into a Formative and the standard screen reader button does not work, the Screenshot Reader can export the text and read it.



- Audio Recording - Teachers can record their own audio for questions and content. Just click the plus sign on the right side of the question box, select "Audio," then use the microphone to record. Although the standardized test will use a screen reader you can still use this human voice audio for classroom tests.

Other accessibility ideas:

- Allow students to submit audio or video responses. This is a good option for students with weak spelling and writing skills to show their knowledge of the content.
- Embed resources and support material into the Formative. (multiplication chart, formula sheet, mnemonic or memory cues, calculator, etc)
- Clone and modify assignments. It is simple to make copies of a Formative. Once you have copied it you can modify the number of problems, answer choices, question type, etc.

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