How to develop an accessible technology policy

1. Make sure that all stakeholders--including potential students, instructors, and other staff members with disabilities--are represented as policies, procedures, and standards are being developed.
2. Review what policies and procedures currently exist for the procurement, use, and development of electronic and information technology, and consider how accessibility issues might be incorporated within existing policies and procedures.
3. Consider at what level the policy should reside--for example, at the school, district, or state level--and be sure to involve decision makers at the appropriate levels in policy development.
4. Consult with your school's or district's legal counsel to determine what legal issues apply in this policy area.
5. Review policies and guidelines that have been created by other organizations, including those for distance-learning courses developed by the California Community Colleges (http://www.htctu.fhda.edu/publications/guidelines/distance_ed/disted.htm), the software access guidelines developed by Oregon State University (http://www.washington.edu/accessit/articles?169), and the web accessibility policy developed by the University of Wisconsin (http://www.washington.edu/accessit/articles?140). Incorporate good ideas into your own policies and procedures.
6. Develop a broad policy statement that commits your school or district to making all programs, services, and resources accessible to students and employees with disabilities.
7. List potential access challenges that students and employees with disabilities might face within the programs, services, and resources offered using electronic and information technology at your school or district.
8. Consider the Section 508 standards (http://www.access-board.gov/508.htm) used by the federal government as a model for your own accessibility standards.
9. Assign a person or a department within your school or district to be responsible for updating disability-related program-access policies and guidelines and for assuring compliance.
10. Develop a plan to phase in compliance with program-accessibility guidelines for previously developed courses and resources, with a date by which all electronic products will be compliant.
11. Disseminate your accessibility policy, guidelines, and procedures throughout your school or district. Make it clear that the policy has high-level endorsement.
12. Provide regular training and support for accessibility issues, policies, and guidelines to educators, students, and other stakeholders.
13. Regularly evaluate progress made toward the use of accessible electronic and information technology in your school or district.
14. Develop procedures for responding quickly to requests for disability-related accommodations when electronic and information technology that is used in your school or district is not accessible to a student or employee. Applying accessibility policies, procedures, and standards will assure that such requests are kept to a minimum.