

Assistive Technology Introduction

The **Assistive Technology Assessment Guidelines** were developed by a group of assistive technology specialists from around the state. They met during FY94 and FY95 as part of the Assistive Technology in Education Council (AsTEC) to develop an assessment process that looked at a more streamlined way to think about assessments and the selection of assistive technology.

The guidelines were developed because agencies and school districts wanted to avoid the pitfalls of specialists recommending the same devices or school districts and/or parents purchasing inappropriate devices. The guidelines encourage that all options for technology be looked at from no-tech to high-tech. They provide a way to document what choices and strategies are being recommended and why they were selected prior to the device being purchased. Regardless of possible changes in the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), schools will still need to do appropriate assessment and use their resources effectively. Staff will continue to be held accountable on the IEP for the outcome of the assessment and the recommendations made for technology.

It is important that parents be included in this process from the beginning, working side by side with the student and the school. Parents need to remain involved in the entire process and see how their child can or cannot access the curriculum. When they are involved from the beginning, they will see the importance of the assessment process, selection of a device(s) based on feature match, trial use, training and intervention of the appropriate technology.

The following individuals developed Assistive Technology Assessment Guidelines:

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Assistive Technology Assessment Guidelines



Identify the need for assistive technology

- ❖ *State the current levels of functioning to include concerns about the student's disability that restrict educational access.*
 - √ Look at how the student is currently accessing education. Is there a problem? If so, what are the unmet needs? Are there barriers that preclude the student's access?
- ❖ *Identify the areas of the curriculum that are impacted.*
 - √ Do an ecological inventory of the student throughout their day and determine the specific areas, if any, that are affected. What are the other students doing? What are the expectations for this student?
- ❖ *Document what has been and is being tried and its effectiveness in educational access.*
 - √ Document the history of the student's use of technology if it has not already been done. What technology is currently being used? Is it successful? What has been tried? For how long? Did it work? If not, why? What strategies were tried?
 - √ If access is being met, document on the IEP that "the team has considered assistive technology and it is not needed at this time."
- ❖ Address how assistive technology strategies (low tech to high tech) might provide appropriate educational access.
 - √ The team would systematically look at strategies and possible technology solutions that might provide access. List the possibilities, strengths, and limitations of each. Using this list, the team may want to go back and try the strategies that have not been tried before moving on in the process.

Identify on-site team member(s) who will coordinate the development of assistive technology options for evaluation.

- ❖ Designate the assistive technology resource person(s) within the team.
 - √ It is important that a member of the team be designated to compile information, contact resources, and coordinate the assessment. Everyone on the team does not have to be an expert, but collaboratively they can be effective and make responsible decisions.
- ❖ Utilize assistive technology resources both within or outside the district for additional assistance as needed.
 - √ The team needs to know where to get information if they do not know about assistive technology. They need to be resourceful and refer to existing resources and information that is available. Eventually, the team will need to make sure they "have done their homework" and what they are recommending is appropriate.

Investigate the types of assistive technology to be used. The team needs to go back to the documentation of previously used and potentially successful assistive technology and begin to rule out things that do not work and pull together things that do. After an assessment they should be able to identify features of devices that may be appropriate for further assessment.

- ❖ *Identify method(s) of access the student uses.*
 - √ Refer to the assessment for this information. What access methods can the student use? Consider the different environments they are in. It is possible that there will be several “best” access methods.
- ❖ *Describe the probable features of the assistive technology necessary for student access.*
 - √ Refer to the assessment for this information. Look at the areas that will influence a match between the student’s skills and the technology. Take into consideration information that has been gathered during the assessment, answers to questions asked, and previous knowledge. Refer back to the “Assessment Questions to Consider” and “Feature Match”
- ❖ *List appropriate assistive technology (low tech and high tech) that will provide educational access.*
 - √ Make a list of devices that may be a match or "good fit" with the student's skills. If unsure of the technology that is available, go to an assistive technology database or matrix for assistance. Additional resources may include visiting a lending library or contacting other professionals for assistance. Consider the compatibility or need to interface the device with other systems.

Notification to Parents

- ❖ *Notification of intent to evaluate the appropriateness of assistive technology.*
 - √ Notification of intent to evaluate the appropriateness of assistive technology.

Select and use assistive technology with the most appropriate features.

- ❖ *Establish a timeline and use identified assistive technology to determine appropriateness.*
 - √ At this point the team will select a device or possibly several devices to tryout on a trial basis. Establish a time line and begin to document the effectiveness of the device and strategies used. The device should be borrowed from a lending library or rented for the trial period. Keep in mind that the most productive system, whether low-tech or high-tech will be the one the student likes and is most functional.
- ❖ *Describe how identified assistive technology will be used to access the curriculum.*
 - √ Go through the student's schedule to determine when and how the technology will be used. Look at how the device(s) will be integrated into the student's day and who will be available to support and train the student and staff to use the technology.
- ❖ *Document the effectiveness of assistive technology, strategies used and student abilities.*
 - √ The team needs to determine how they will implement and document the effectiveness of the device. Baseline data may need to be taken. The team needs to set realistic expectations for the trial period.
- ❖ *Student preference(s) should be considered.*
 - √ The student must be actively involved in the entire process from the initial selection to the final determination of the device to purchase. Their willingness and motivation to use the device is essential.

Write the IEP following the identification of the assistive technology

- ❖ *Document on the IEP, under Present Level of Performance, the student's use of assistive technology. Example, "tell what was used."*
 - √ Assistive technology is identified as the tool the child is already using in the educational program. List a description of the adaptations and modifications that are used.
- ❖ *A descriptive statement of the features of the identified tool(s) and/or device(s) must be documented on the IEP under Accommodations, Modifications and/or Assistive Technology.*
 - √ Identify the device(s) and other technical interfaces by its features and functions. It keeps flexible the options for technology from low-tech to high-tech and will alert the team to realize that other pieces of technology with the same features may be appropriate for an individual.

Evaluations are ongoing - the process should continue over time.

- ❖ *Continue to readdress the student's abilities and preferences and the effectiveness of assistive technology for educational access.*
 - √ The assessment process may go on and go for a long time. The student's skills and capabilities will continue to change. The team needs to continue to address the effectiveness of the technology. It is unrealistic to think that one piece of technology will be with the student until they are 22 years old.

Assistive Technology Assessment Guidelines

Working Document

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Identify the need for assistive technology

State the current levels of functioning to include concerns about the student's disability that restrict educational access. _____

Identify the areas of the curriculum that are impacted. _____

Document what has been and is being tried and its effectiveness in educational access. _____

Address how assistive technology strategies (low tech to high tech) might provide appropriate educational access. _____

2. Identify on-site team member(s) who will coordinate the development of assistive technology options for assessment.

Designate the assistive technology resource person(s) within the team. _____

3. Investigate the types of assistive technology to be used.

Identify method(s) of access the student uses. _____

Describe the probable features of the assistive technology necessary for student access. _____

List appropriate assistive technology (low tech and high tech) that will provide educational access.

4. Select and use assistive technology with the most appropriate features.

Establish a timeline and use identified assistive technology to determine appropriate-ness. _____

Describe how identified assistive technology will be used to access the curriculum. _____

Document the effectiveness of assistive technology, strategies used and student abilities. _____

Student preference(s) should be considered. _____

5. Write the IEP following the identification of the assistive technology

Document on the IEP, under Present Level of Performance, the student's use of assistive technology. Example, "tell what was used." _____

A descriptive statement of the features of the identified tool(s) and/or device(s) must be documented on the IEP under Accommodations, Modifications and/or Assistive Technology. _____

Additional Resources

American Speech-Language and Hearing Association (1997) . *Maximizing the Provision of Appropriate Technology Services and Devices for Students in Schools* - Technical Paper. ASHA Product Support (800) 888 498-6699

Beukleman, D. & Mirenda, P. (1998). *Augmentative and alternative communication*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Zabala, J.S. (1995) *The SETT Framework: Critical areas to consider when making information assistive technology decisions*.