

AUSTIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the world of assistive technology and special education in the Austin Public Schools! This year, a district-wide committee was formed to deal with assistive technology. We have put together this manual to help you address this important issue. This manual that we have put together will not replace the Minnesota state manual, but should be used to help clarify and support those efforts. The Minnesota state manual can be found at <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Learning_Support/Special_Education/Evaluation_Program_Planning_Supports/Assistive_Technology/AT_Resources/index.html> . Each special education coordinator also has a hard copy available for viewing. As a committee we looked at many state manuals for assistive technology as well as a variety of sources. We hope that you will find this material helpful.

# DEFINITION

Assistive technology is defined as both a “device” and a “service,” as outlined in IDEA 04.

*Assistive Technology Device—*The term assistive technology device means “any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability.” (34 C.F.R. 300.5)

ISD #492 would add to this definition that the device needs to help the student make educational progress. Also the district would state that through an individual evaluation we will determine which device would be appropriate for the student.

*Assistive Technology Service –* The term assistive technology service means any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. This term includes:

(A) the evaluation of the needs of such child, including a functional evaluation of the child in the customary environment

(B) purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of assistive technology device by such child;

(C) selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, or replacing of assistive technology devices

(D) coordinating and using other therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices, such as those associated with existing education and rehabilitation plans and programs;

(E) training or technical assistance for such child, or, where appropriate, the family of such child; and

(F) training or technical assistance for professionals (including individuals providing education and rehabilitation services), employers, or other individuals who provide services to, employ, or are otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions of such child.” (34 C.F.R. 300.6)

Evaluation Process

1. Develop a plan for evaluating student needs
   1. Determine appropriate checklists (from tools below)
   2. Determine team members
   3. Develop Evaluation Plan (see sample below)

Sample Evaluation Plan:

Top of Form

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Order | Area | Materials & Procedures | Evaluators | | 1 | Assistive Technology | The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_checklist and observation in NAME’s natural environment and consultation with parents will be used to determine the needs for assistive technology. | Team Membership :  *Sample membership below*   * Special Education Teacher, * General Education Teacher, * Occupational Therapist, * Speech-Language Pathologist, * Physical Impaired, * Vision Impaired, * Deaf/Hard of Hearing * Physical Therapist * DAPE teacher |   Bottom of Form |

Tools:

1. Selected Checklists from the WATI AT Consideration Guide
2. Selected Checklist from the MN Assistive Technology Manual
   1. AT Checklist
   2. Parent/Student Worksheets from SETT process
3. Miami/Dade County Pre-K Sped Assistive Technology Implementation Plan
4. Saint Paul Public Schools Assistive Technology Guide

Format for Writing Up Evaluations:

Case Manager distributes and complies information. Please refer to the example below for a sample of how to write up an evaluation in the SETT process.

*Student*

*The student’s* current needsare mostly core academics: reading, writing, and math at a higher level. *The student’s* strengths are his/her handwriting and the fact that he/she is a nice student who tries hard in school. His/Her needs include lack of ability to attend and low academic skills. Strategies and accommodations which have worked well with *the student* include a behavior reinforcement program with a token economy and small group instruction at his/her instructional level.

*Environment*

*The student* currently works in two environments. In the regular classroom, paraprofessional support is provided during math class in the large group setting. In the Resource Room, *the student* works at tables in a small group (3 students) for reading, spelling, and language arts. Teacher and paraprofessional support are available in this setting.

*Tasks*

In the regular classroom, the paraprofessional assists with modifications and assists with difficult academic tasks in the area of mathematics. In the Resource Room, *the student* completes academic tasks corresponding to his/her academic goals and objectives.

*Tools*

Since language arts is an academic area in which *the student* demonstrates a high level of need, development of written expression skills through use of technology in place within the resource room setting (word prediction and voice output software) would seem to make sense for *the student*. Reading is a key area of concern in *the student*'s education. It may be beneficial to explore technology-based reading enhancements, such as Living Books and phonetic games.

The Consideration Process for IEP Development:

This is a brief process, done in every IEP meeting by the team, with at least one person having awareness/knowledge of assistive technology.

Outcomes of Consideration

There are four possible outcomes from consideration:

1. The first is that current interventions (whatever they may be) are working and nothing new is needed, including AT.

* Example for IEP accommodation section: Presently *the student* is able to access his/her curriculum and environment without assistive technology.

1. The second possibility is that AT is already being used (or there has been a trial with AT) so that we know that it does work. In that case, the IEP team writes the specific AT into the IEP to insure that it continues to be available for the student.

* Example for IEP accommodation section: Presently, *the student* is using a trackball mouse (Kid Trac) and an alternative keyboard (BigKeys) which allows him/her to access the curriculum, district computerized assessment tools, and complete written tasks.  These devices need to continue to be available to him/her so that *the student* is able to complete writing tasks in a more independent, legible and timely manner, and to be able to access his/her environment in a more effective manner.

1. The third possibility is that the IEP team may conclude that new AT should be tried. In that case, the IEP team will need to describe in the IEP the type of AT to be tried and what will determine whether or not if it is successful.

* Example for IEP accommodation section: Presently, *the student* is using a word prediction program and writing software, but it is not effective.  Further options need to be explored so that he/she can be more successful with writing.  Voice activated software, such as Dragon Naturally Speaking 9.0, should be explored to determine if this type of assistive technology will improve the quality, quantity, and speed of writing assignments.

4) The last possibility is that the IEP team will find that they simply do not know enough to make a decision. In this

case, they will need to gather more information. That could be a simple process of contacting the district’s AT

Committee, or seeking out other resources.

* Example for IEP accommodation section: Presently, *the student* is unable to complete reading tasks, despite assessment results that indicate he/she is more capable than what he/she is producing in class.  The team needs to gather more information from district resources and personnel to determine if specific devices of assistive technology can improve this (for example, scanned text, audio books, etc).

3. Extended Trials

Extended trials refer to a trial period with one or more assistive technology devices in the child’s customary environments.

During extended trials, several technology solutions may be used to determine which one is the most effective. Data is collected in the extended trial process to help the team choose appropriate assistive technology based on actual performance of specified tasks by the student in the chosen environments. An extended trial period of any reasonable length should be written into the educational plan to allow for appropriate, well planned, and documented trials with a range of potential solutions. The results of these trials can be documented in the periodic review for that student.

An IEP teams meets and determines that the student may need assistive technology. This is documented in Present Levels of Performance (PLEP), Adaptations, and/or Goals & Objectives. The team discusses possible solutions. Usually, low-tech solutions are tried before turning to high tech. The team then determines what assistive technology should be tried. Before the trial begins, the things that should be decided upon include: type of device, the length of trial, type of documentation, and criteria for success, and person responsible for the trial. The IEP team will provide requested the device needed for trial, working with their building special education coordinator, if needed. Then the trial is conducted. The team reconvenes to review the data and determine if the trial was successful. If it was successful, then request purchase from the building special education coordinator. If the trial was not successful, then try another solution.

DATA COLLECTION

1. Deciding What Data is Needed
2. Recording Data
   1. Anecdotal recording – a written record of what occurred during the production of the product
   2. Event recording – noting each time a specific event occurs is a good way to document exactly what happened

III. Variables That Can Be Measured

1. Measuring Speed – how many times something occurred and over what period of time
2. Measuring Accuracy – how many attempts the student has to make before getting something correct – the number of mistakes, erasures, and overwrites will need to be counted
3. Measuring Spontaneity – documenting the number and types of opportunities to initiate a request that were actually available to the student
4. Measuring Duration – observing or some computer programs can document a student’s ability to maintain interest, attend to an event, or persevere with a task
5. Measuring Latency – to gather information about latency it will be necessary to note when the opportunity began, when the action occurred, and possibly, how long it lasted.

IV Reviewing the Data

V Making Decisions

VI Follow Through to purchase or try another solution

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ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Danielle Theis, Director of Special Services

Sheri Willrodt, Special Education Supervisor

Jessica Cabeen, Special Education Supervisor

Jennifer McIntyre, Special Education Supervisor

Tiffany Syverson, Occupational Therapist

Carol Davis, Occupational Therapist

Erin Schoen, Special Education Teacher

Heather Ruzek, Special Education Teacher

Lyndsey Hoppe, Special Education Teacher

The assistive technology committee will:

* Review assistive technology equipment and referral requests, if necessary
* Help staff research hardware, software, and equipment that may meet

student assistive technology needs

* Tracks special education assistive technology items purchased by the district through the AT Inventory
* Assist staff with repairs and replacement of assistive technology, if needed
* Provides in-service to staff and students on how to use assistive

technology

* Work with the Director of Special Services regarding assistive

technology budgets and expenditures

Please refer to the Austin Public Schools Special Services Due Process Manual for additional materials.