



Consideration and Referral

For each student with a disability who uses assistive technology, there is a starting point. Because IDEA requires that every IEP team consider whether a child who needs special education requires assistive technology devices and services (34 C.F.R. § 300.324 (Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1414 (d)(3) and (4) (B) and (e))), consideration during an IEP meeting is the most typical time that the need for AT is first discussed. For students with disabilities who are not eligible under IDEA or are currently being evaluated for special education eligibility, the process is slightly different. The first *Education Tech Point: Consideration and Referral* addresses both of these situations and describes the actions teams can take as they begin to think about whether a student needs assistive technology.

STUDENT CENTERED QUESTIONS

- What areas of student performance are of concern?
- Does the student's disability present barriers to performance that restrict the ability to acquire or demonstrate knowledge and make progress in the general education curriculum?
- Does the student need accommodations or assistive technology in order to have access to the general education program?

ACTIONS FOR THE STUDENT'S TEAM

- Identify areas of concern in student performance.
- For a student already eligible for special education, consider the student's need for assistive technology during every IEP/IFSP meeting.
- For a student newly referred for special education, determine whether assistive technology should be addressed as part of the initial eligibility evaluation.
- For a student receiving services under Section 504, determine whether assistive technology could improve access to the general education curriculum.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISTRICTS

- All staff need awareness level training about assistive technology including what assistive technology exists and how it can help students.
- District guidelines for initiating access to AT should include AT for students in special education, AT for students with disabilities served under Section 504 and struggling students being referred for special education evaluation.
- Resource materials must be available when initial questions of assistive technology arise.

EDUCATION TECH POINT #1: CONSIDERATION AND REFERRAL

The term Assistive Technology (AT) describes a diverse range of items that are used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capability of a child with a disability. The federal definition is quite broad and includes all tools from low-tech to high-tech AT devices. Even pencil grips and specially lined paper are considered AT under this definition, as are calculators, portable word processors, mobile technology devices and computer software. The most effective way to understand assistive technology is to think about the task(s) that are difficult or impossible for a student because of a disability. For most students, there are tools that can be used to help with every type of academic task, such as reading, writing, and math. There are also tools that can help to overcome students’ barriers for virtually every functional skill area including mobility, vision, hearing, self-help tasks, using a computer, and communicating.

While some of these tools are readily available and frequently used in many classrooms, when they are needed by a child with a disability to increase, maintain, or improve function, they are considered to be assistive technology. Assistive technology may function in one of three ways, it can augment or support the way a student does a task. It can help a student completely bypass the need to do a task if the student cannot do it, or it can help a student compensate for a disability by offering a different way to do a task. The ways a tool is used and the barriers that are addressed in the educational program determine whether AT is used to augment existing skills, bypass missing skills, or compensate for a barrier imposed by the disability. Figure 1 offers examples of how assistive technology can be used to augment, bypass or compensate for disabilities.

Example for Reading	Example for Communication	Example for Writing
Augment -Using digital text, decoding is supported so that a student with a learning disability can click on a word to hear it, if he cannot decode and comprehend the word independently.	Augment - A student with cerebral palsy that impairs her speech uses a spelling board or communication device to support communication breakdowns when her speech is not sufficiently understandable.	Augment – A student with fatigue due to muscular dystrophy uses a special recording pen that captures all of a lecture as an audio recording to supplement the few key words he is able to write.
Bypass -A student who cannot clearly see the text due to vision impairment can listen to the entire text using an audio file.	Bypass -A student who is not able to speak uses a voice output communication device for all communication.	Bypass -A student, who is not able to access a computer with her hands, uses voice recognition software to dictate all written work.
Compensate -Using digital text, a student with a learning disability can listen to all of the text using text-to-speech so that he sees the words highlighted as they are spoken. Seeing the highlighted words has improved his decoding ability at the same time, it allows him to learn the content.	Compensate -A student with a speech disability is able to be understood in many instances, but uses a speech generating device when her own speech is not adequate due to a noisy environment, a need to speak for an extended period of time, or complex vocabulary.	Compensate -A student with a learning disability in the area of writing and fine motor difficulties, uses talking word processing and word prediction software for all assignments longer than five words.

FIGURE 1: USES OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (BOWSER & REED, 2011b)

Teams that plan for students who receive special education services are required to consider the need for assistive technology at every IEP meeting. This means that the team reviews the student's educational needs and determines whether there is any AT that would “increase, maintain, or improve the student’s functional capability.” This consideration activity is not unlike the consideration of any other appropriate educational materials or strategies that would enable a student to achieve an IEP goal or make progress in the educational curriculum.

When teams think about a child’s use of assistive technology, it is most effective if they examine a continuum of interventions starting from the least intensive through the most intensive. Teams should also think about strategies that provide increased independence. For example, while having an adult or peer read difficult text to a student may be a common way to compensate for a reading disability, it does not offer a student the opportunity to gain greater academic skill and independence. Teams need to consider the range of possibilities for intervening including both strategies and tools and choose those that match the needs of the student and the educational environment. One of the most effective possibilities may be assistive technology.

One of the concerns that sometimes hold back a team from choosing to suggest assistive technology is the fear that it will prevent the student from developing needed skills. However, research actually shows that the use of AT facilitates the development of needed skills in all areas of function (Bouck, Doughty, Flanagan, Szwed, & Bassette, 2010; Silio & Barbetta , 2010; Stetter & Hughes, 2010; Watson, Ito, Smith & Anderson, 2010). It is valuable for all educational teams to know about assistive technology and how it can help students with disabilities.

STUDENT CENTERED QUESTIONS

The group that addresses initial questions about assistive technology varies depending on the student’s educational placement and status as a student with a disability. It may be an IEP team, an IFSP team, a Child Study Team, a Response to Intervention team, etc. Regardless of its title, the student’s educational team can use the following questions as they initiate an investigation of the student’s need for assistive technology.

- What areas of student performance are of concern?
- Does the student’s disability present barriers to performance that restrict the ability to acquire or demonstrate knowledge and make progress in the general education curriculum?
- Does the student need accommodations or assistive technology in order to have access to the general education program?



TERRY • Difficulty with Writing

Terry's resource room teacher became concerned because Terry had suddenly stopped turning in her written assignments. Two of Terry's general education teachers reported a sudden drop in her grades which was directly related to missed work. Terry's case was brought to her IEP team and the rest of her seventh grade teachers were invited to attend. They also reported that Terry was not turning in her work. This was particularly puzzling to the resource room teacher because she was sure that Terry had completed many of these assignments with help from an instructional assistant during her study period.

During the IEP team discussion, it was mentioned that Terry had recently begun to express embarrassment about the quality of her handwriting. Some members of the team felt that it might be a good idea for Terry to get direct instruction in handwriting and were interested in obtaining an evaluation from an occupational therapist who might make recommendations about the kind of instruction that would be most valuable to her. Other team members suggested that it might be time for Terry to try other writing tools and felt that a computer would be the best solution to the writing problem. Terry's mother expressed concerns about letting Terry use a computer in their classroom when no one else had one. She was concerned that other students might make fun of her.

The team decided to make a referral to the district evaluation center. On the referral for evaluation form they listed the following question "Terry and other team members are concerned about the quality of her handwriting. She expresses a desire to make her written work more legible and mature looking. What strategies could we use to help her with this goal?" In the section of the form where specific evaluation tools were described, the team listed occupational therapy evaluation, assessment of the use of alternative writing tools and assessment of a computer as an assistive technology tool for writing.

ACTIONS FOR THE STUDENT'S TEAM

The actions of the student's team at this first Education Tech Point are critical. Someone on the team must be aware of the law and of the team's responsibility to fairly and equitably address the need for assistive technology. The very first action of identifying the area of concern in the student's performance lays the groundwork for all future steps.



Identify areas of concern in student performance: Action items for the student team at the point of Consideration and Referral center around defining the barriers to learning that the student is encountering. The more clearly the problems are identified, the more likely that proposed solutions will be effective. Thinking about the need for assistive technology is just one aspect of thinking about all of the tools and strategies that might help a student.

The team for each child will complete the following steps.

1. **Frame questions around Student Needs:** This will include problems for which assistive technology might be a solution as well as those which might require other

specially designed instruction or accommodations and modifications. If specific assistive technology solutions, such as use of a computer, are to be tried, it is crucial that the barriers that this proposed solution will address, are clearly defined. It may be necessary to reframe the initial question. For example, sometimes the team's initial question is "Does J.D. need a computer?" The team will be better able to answer a question that identifies the problem such as "Is there assistive technology that would help J.D. write more quickly and legibly."

Once the area(s) of concern are identified, teams can begin to list specific required tasks in that area which are difficult for the student to accomplish at an appropriate level of achievement and independence. One effective strategy is to brainstorm every opportunity that the student has in a day to use this skill. In that process of brainstorming, the team can identify multiple ways to help the student do each task.

As the team discusses the barriers the student is experiencing, some basic assistive technology solutions might be identified. Adapted pencils and pens, calculators, spell checkers and alternative writing tools such as portable word processors are often available in the regular classroom setting. When these tools are tried with the student, such a trial could potentially help to solve the child's difficulty without any additional services or might provide additional diagnostic information that could be helpful in whatever the next step will be to help this student.

2. **Discuss current strategies:** The team identifies strategies that work for the student for tasks in the area of concern including any current use of assistive technology devices. Teams members use data to decide if they are effective where they are being used.



For a student already eligible for special education, consider the student's need for assistive technology during every IEP/IFSP meeting: The typical way that students in special education receive assistive technology is during the required IEP/IFSP consideration of special factors, which includes consideration of the need for assistive technology. Often, during this conversation, someone on the team may report on technology strategies that have been tried with the student in the course of daily instruction. Some students benefit greatly from common items such as calculators and spell checkers. Classroom computers with appropriate software can be used as assistive technology to overcome barriers to reading, writing, math and other academic tasks. When the team agrees that tools such as these are necessary for a student to overcome learning barriers, they can be included in the IEP without further evaluation.

Consideration of a student's need for AT is a problem solving process. The purpose of the process is to make decisions about possible AT tools and other strategies that might help a student do a task more effectively or more independently.

Questions that guide the consideration procedure such as these from The Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative can be helpful during the IEP/IFSP meeting.

1. What task is it that we want this student to do, that s/he is unable to do at a level that reflects his/her skills/abilities (writing, reading, communicating, seeing, hearing)? List tasks.
2. Is the student currently able to complete tasks with special strategies or accommodations? If yes, describe for each task.
3. Is there available assistive technology (either devices, tools, hardware, or software) that could be used to address this task? If none are known, look at a resource such as WATI's AT Checklist or the AT Consideration Checklist from the Georgia Assistive Technology Project (GPAT). If any assistive technology tools are currently being used (or were tried in the past), describe them.
4. Would the use of assistive technology help the student perform this skill more easily or efficiently, in the least restrictive environment, or perform successfully with less personal assistance? If yes, include in IEP/IFSP. (WATI, 2002)

Knowledge about the types and cost of the tools available is helpful as this part of the process is being completed. IEP/IFSP teams that are not familiar with a broad range of AT tools may be fearful of suggesting the use of these tools because they wrongly believe that all AT is expensive. In fact most AT tools are readily available in most classrooms. Calculators, computers with productivity software and many other technology options can be used as assistive technology if they increase, improve or maintain a child's ability to perform necessary tasks. The rapidly developing field of free web based tools and inexpensive apps for various tablets and other portable technology are making a wide range of assistive features available for little expenditure.

If IEP team members need ideas about the kind of tools that can be used to address a specific task, a resource such as the AT Resource Guide in the consideration section at www.gpat.org can be very helpful. It provides a framework for identifying relevant tasks within instructional areas and then thinking about appropriate classroom tools, accommodations, modifications, and technology tools.

In addition to knowledge about tools, the team needs a process to efficiently guide their discussion. The Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative's *Assistive Technology Consideration Guide* and the Georgia Assistive Technology Consideration checklist can help. A student's team can use either of these resources to facilitate their consideration discussion and document that it occurred. Figure 2 shows a portion of a completed WATI AT Consideration Guide. Additionally, the *ABC's of Effective AT Consideration* (Bowser & Reed, 2011a) can be used to pinpoint specific areas of concern during consideration.

WATI Assistive Technology Consideration Guide

Student's Name Karen Douglas School Fir Grove Middle

1. What task is it that we want this student to do, that s/he is unable to do at a level that reflects his/her skills/abilities (writing, reading, communicating, seeing, hearing)? Document by checking each relevant task below. Please leave blank any tasks that are not relevant to the student's IEP.
2. Is the student currently able to complete tasks with special strategies or accommodations? If yes, describe in Column A for each checked task.
3. Is there available assistive technology (either devices, tools, hardware, or software) that could be used to address this task? (If none are known, review WATI's AT Checklist.) If any assistive technology tools are currently being used (or were tried in the past), describe in Column B.
4. Would the use of assistive technology help the student perform this skill more easily or efficiently, in the least restrictive environment, or perform successfully with less personal assistance? If yes, complete Column C.

Task	A. If currently completes task with special strategies/ accommodations, describe	B. If currently completes task with assistive technology tools, describe.	C. Describe new or additional assistive technology to be tried
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motor Aspects of Writing	Student has a scribe for all written tasks longer than 2 sentences	None	Use of laptop computer at her desk with standard word processing software
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer Access			
<input type="checkbox"/> Composing Written Material	Discussion with Scribe before developing content	Mind mapping software and story starters for planning content	
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication			
<input type="checkbox"/> Reading	Text is read to her during study periods in the resource room.	Textbooks in MP3 file format for listening on the bus and at home	Digital files of textbooks with text-to-speech software in classroom

FIGURE 2: A SECTION OF COMPLETED WATI ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATION GUIDE

Consideration is the typical way to initiate student use of AT and the IEP/IFSP team is fully empowered by IDEA to make all decisions about a child's individual educational program including the use of AT. However, the IEP/IFSP team may also request a referral for an AT evaluation. When team members feel that they do not have enough information to effectively consider a student's need for AT, they may ask for outside assistance from people more knowledgeable about technology solutions for students with disabilities. When school based teams submit a referral to a district level team or an outside source for an assistive technology evaluation, it is an effective practice to assign a case manager to monitor the progress of the referral and be the point of contact for its completion. Assigning a case manager early in the process assures that the action items really do get completed. If team members make a referral the form(s) should identify specific questions to be addressed in evaluation including questions about a student's ability (e.g. assessment of receptive language ability) or questions about the use of specific assistive technology tools (e.g. assessment of use of a particular device or piece of software). They help everyone on the team understand what will be addressed in a formal evaluation.

If the team has never thought about AT and the question of AT need is raised for the very first time in the IEP/IFSP meeting, team members may not be adequately prepared to appropriately “Consider” the child’s need for AT. Unfortunately when this happens it often results in a hasty, poorly thought out response of “No, he must not need it.” A more effective approach is to use a procedure that includes training staff and parents about AT and how it can work for students with disabilities so that they are prepared to complete meaningful AT consideration in the IEP/IFSP meeting. If this has not been done, it may be better to fill out a referral for an AT evaluation rather than do a poor job of consideration that leaves the parents or staff frustrated and confused (Reed & Bowser, 2000).



For a student newly referred for special education eligibility, determine whether assistive technology should be addressed as part of the initial evaluation: If a student services team determines that a referral for evaluation for placement in special education is needed, the possible need for assistive technology might be listed as part of the plan for evaluation. When students are referred for eligibility evaluation, parents must give permission to evaluate. When assistive technology is part of initial evaluation, parents are informed that team members are considering that the child might benefit from the use of assistive technology. Referrals that include assistive technology should include specific information about the area of concern, the specific tasks that are difficult or impossible for the student, and any strategies and assistive technology that have been tried to resolve the problem. The *Education Tech Points website* includes a *General Referral Form Sample* in the *Consideration forms section*.



For a student receiving services under Section 504, determine whether assistive technology could improve access to the general education curriculum: Students with disabilities who do not need specially designed instruction are not eligible for special education but may receive assistive technology services under the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Office for Civil Rights). For example, a student with moderate vision impairment may need large print or a text to speech tool in order to get information from textbooks and other core instructional materials. The education agency has a responsibility to ensure that the student has the accommodations and assistive technology needed to participate with students in the general curriculum. Under Section 504, there is no required schedule for planning or consideration of needs, however, when a student does need access to overcome barriers posed by a disability, a referral for an AT evaluation can be made.

Responsibilities of Team Members During Consideration and Referral

The responsibilities for team members, at the point of Consideration and Referral, involve general awareness of assistive technology options and an understanding of the roles that AT can play in the education of students with disabilities.

While no one team member should be expected to know all the kinds of assistive technology that are available, all team members should be aware of the types of assistive technology that might be useful to the students they commonly serve. For example, teachers who serve students with high incidence disabilities like learning disabilities and developmental delays would need to know about assistive technology that can be useful for barriers in reading, writing, and math. In contrast, speech and language pathologists should have an understanding of the range of augmentative communication devices that might be useful to their non-speaking or poorly understood students.

Team members should know how to respond appropriately when a question of assistive technology is raised. Assistive technology questions should always be addressed by the full IEP/IFSP team, but it is common that the first request for assistive technology comes during a conversation with a parent or other team member. Everyone who participates in IEP/IFSP team planning should know the district’s process for initiating an assistive technology evaluation/assessment and how to document the response to such requests.

Team members should be aware of the role that assistive technology has played for the student in previous settings. Records about assistive technology that has been used by the child in the past should be kept, reviewed and updated periodically to ensure that students make steady forward progress in their use of assistive technology.

Districts that develop procedures for referral, evaluation, plan development and implementation of assistive technology devices and services make those procedures generally available to team members. Each team member has a responsibility to know and follow these procedures to ensure that all students with disabilities have access to effective, equitable assistive technology services.



SHAR • Framing a Communication Question

The instructional assistant who worked with Shar began to notice that she was socially isolated in the lunchroom. Because she speaks softly and is difficult to understand, the other students were not talking with her even when they sat at the same lunch table with her. The instructional assistant brought this problem to the child study team and asked for suggestions of ways that she could help Shar to be more a part of the social scene at lunch.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISTRICTS

Action items for special education programs center around making sure that each individual who participates in the child study team is aware of the assistive technology requirements of IDEA and the possible solutions that might be thought about during the consideration and referral process. Programs should also make sure that each team member is aware of the steps to take in making a referral that involves an assistive technology question.

Awareness. Not everyone needs the same level of assistive technology expertise. However, every educator who works with a child who uses assistive technology must have a basic level of knowledge. School districts have found that it is essential for teams within each school building to be aware of assistive technology as a requirement under IDEA and Section 504. At the building level, staff should receive awareness level training in assistive technology. Such training would include definitions of assistive technology devices and services and an overview of the types of devices and services available to students with differing needs. It should emphasize the use of technology as a tool to meet educational goals. The Resources section of this chapter provides a listing of materials that might be used for awareness level training.

Figure 3 contains continua for reading, handwriting, studying/ information management, and communication. This figure does not include all areas of AT. For information about tools for vision, hearing, seating/positioning, mobility, math, composition, computer access or recreation/leisure follow up with other sources to find more specific information.

<p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapted books for access (e.g. page separators) • Picture symbol supported text • Modify text: size, color, spacing • Tracking aids-Reading windows/cutouts • Talking electronic dictionaries • Podcasts to summarize or highlight reading • Handheld scanners/readers (e.g. ReadingPen TS) • Audio books, MP3 player • Digital e-Readers (e.g. Kindle, ClassMate Reader) • Scan and Read handheld (e.g. Intel Reader) • Digital books w/ text highlighted as read • Digital books w/ adapted text (e.g. Start-to-Finish) <p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication board/book with pictures/words • Eye gaze board/frame • Single message Speech Generating devices (SGD) (e.g. BIGmack, Put Em Arounds, CheapTalk One) • Simple SGD (e.g. CheapTalk, GoTalk) • Simple SGD for sequencing (e.g. Step-by-Step) • SGD with levels (e.g., Tech Speak) • SGD with icon sequencing (e.g., Vanguard, Chatbox) • SGD with dynamic display (e.g., Dynavox, BoardMaker w/Speaking Dynamically Pro on laptop) • SGD using keyboarding (e.g., LightWriter) • SGD with Eye gaze (e.g., Tobii, Dynavox) • Mobile device with communication apps (e.g., Proloquo2go, TapToTalk, Touch Chat) 	<p>Studying/Information Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper Sticky Notes, Sticky Tabs (e.g. Post-it) • Highlighters (e.g., markers, Highlight Tape) • Low tech aids to locate information (e.g., index tabs, colored folders) • Recorded material (e.g., books on tape, taped lectures with number coded index) • Electronic bookmarks and voice notes • Auto Summary in word processing programs • Electronic organizers • Electronic reminders • Hand-held scanners/readers (e.g. ReadingPen TS) • Recording/bookmarking pen (e.g. LiveScribe Pen) • Software for organization of ideas and studying (e.g., Inspiration, Draft Builder, PowerPoint) • Online search tools (e.g. Nettekre, Thinkfinity) • Online web trackers • Online sorting file tools (e.g. delicious.com) • Online animations, interactives, or tutorials <p>Handwriting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence strips/pre-written phrases • Regular pencil or pen with adaptive grips • Adapted paper (e.g., raised line, highlighted lines) • Slantboard to create slanted writing surface • Portable word processor (e.g. Fusion, Neo) • Word processing software • Voice recognition software
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FIGURE 3: (ADAPTED FROM BOWSER, G, & REED, P., 2011b). THE ABC'S OF UNDERSTANDING AT DEVICES.

Guidelines. District guidelines for initiating access to AT should include directions for students in special education, for students with disabilities served under Section 504 and for struggling students being referred for special education evaluation. Operating guidelines and procedures identify the actions that people should take in response to recurring problems or events. Written operating guidelines and procedures include questions that can only be answered at the program level. That is because many local factors such as personnel resources, geography, educational practices, and financial resources differ between districts and between buildings within a district. To be useful and effective, AT referral procedures must have a good fit with local resources and local practices. However, the guidelines don't have to be complicated or separate from other procedures and processes. (Sample guidelines are included on the *Education Tech Point* website in the *Pulling it All Together* section).

Assistive technology teams need a process that can apply to initial access to AT for every student. If each student team uses a different decision making process, the provision of AT will be inconsistent. Inconsistency can create problems of equity across classrooms, grade levels, and programs. The initial access to AT processes an agency develops will help its teams make decisions in a consistent and ethical way. At the point of referral, processes should address questions like the following:

1. **What should be done when someone requests an assistive technology evaluation for a child?** When a parent or other advocate requests an assistive technology evaluation, either formally or informally, educators must know how to address the request in a legal and timely manner. An initial request for an assistive technology assessment is similar to other requests for services such as speech therapy or transportation, and assistive technology requests should generally be treated in the same way. Everyone on the IEP team should know what forms should be completed, who they should be sent to, and what will happen next. A responsive process at this stage sets a tone that indicates that assistive technology is an important topic that will be addressed in a complete and professional way.
2. **What should members of a child's IEP team do before they ask for help with an AT assessment?** Many education agencies include informal trials using a variety of tools and supports in their pre-referral processes. If the tools a child needs are commonly used in classrooms, an IEP team may be able to assess that child's need for assistive technology without outside help. Almost anyone can help a child try a calculator or a portable word processor and collect data about its effectiveness. Operating guidelines can help teams identify appropriate pre-referral activities to engage in before a formal request for help with an assistive technology assessment is made.
3. **If an IEP team feels the need for additional information, what are the district's resources to help with assistive technology evaluations?** Outside help may be necessary if a team needs information about a particular kind of tool or if the tools a child needs are

complicated. Administrators can help teams understand what help is available within the district and who might provide the needed information.

If an agency does not have the kind of resources the team needs within the district, administrators can identify outside resources that can be used. These might include education service agencies, the state education agency, or private centers or clinics. Once resources are established, processes also can be established for internal and external referrals. Most education agencies have processes in place for using outside assessment services. These same processes often can be applied to assistive technology needs as well.

Resource Materials. Resource materials are critical at the point of Consideration and Referral. They need to be readily available when initial questions about assistive technology arise. These materials can take the form of written materials, websites or banks of common assistive technology tools available to teams in the initial stages of problem identification and device exploration. The Resource Section at the end of this chapter includes several excellent materials and websites. Introducing this information to all staff members who serve on IEP/IFSP teams can help them be adequately prepared to address the need to AT when it arises. An excellent starting point that could be accessed and discussed during one or more staff meetings is the AT Training Module at the Iris Center (<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/AT/>)







Quality Indicators for Consideration

Consideration of the need for AT devices and services is an integral part of the educational process contained in IDEA for referral, evaluation, and IEP development. Although AT is considered at all stages of the process, the Consideration Quality Indicators are specific to the consideration of AT in the development of the IEP as mandated by IDEA. In most instances, the Quality Indicators are also appropriate for the consideration of AT for students who qualify for services under other legislation.

1. Assistive technology devices and services are considered for all students with disabilities regardless of type or severity of disability.
2. During the development of an individualized educational program, every IEP team consistently uses a collaborative decision-making process that supports systematic consideration of each student's possible need for assistive technology devices and services.
3. IEP team members have the collective knowledge and skills needed to make informed assistive technology decisions and seek assistance when needed.
4. Decisions regarding the need for assistive technology devices and services are based on the student's IEP goals and objectives, access to curricular and extracurricular activities, and progress in the general education curriculum.
5. The IEP team gathers and analyzes data about the student, customary environments, educational goals, and tasks when considering a student's need for assistive technology devices and services.
6. When assistive technology is needed, the IEP team explores a range of assistive technology devices, services, and other supports that address identified needs.
7. The assistive technology consideration process and results are documented in the IEP and include a rationale for the decision and supporting evidence.

Action Items for Systems Change

Improving the way in which the initial discussion of assistive technology is carried out in the entire system involves training and the development and/or dissemination of procedures.

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Provide awareness level training about assistive technology mandates and definitions: This training may take many forms. In addition to dedicated assistive technology training, information may be included in procedures manuals, staff handbooks and district newsletters. References to print materials, websites and multimedia presentations should be readily available.
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Provide awareness level training about a variety of assistive technology devices and services: This type of training should be more targeted to individuals who would be most likely to need it. For example, speech and language pathologists may receive overview training in speech generating augmentative communication devices while educators may learn about devices that help with written communication and reading print materials.
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Ensure that district procedures are in place which help staff address initial assistive technology questions: In order to be included in staff handbooks and training, procedures have to be planned, developed and field tested to insure that teachers understand them and that they serve the intended purpose.
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Provide awareness level training in procedures for assistive technology referral: It is not enough to develop the procedures. They should be reviewed with all staff at least once a year but as frequently as other procedures are reviewed.

STEVE • Initial AT Referral



In November, Steve's IFSP team met to discuss what his needs might be as he made the transition from preschool to his neighborhood public school. The vision specialist who worked with Steve was particularly interested in identifying the tools Steve would need as he began to develop literacy and writing skills. Steve's mother was concerned about how he would learn to be independent in the new school environment and whether he would be safe on the playground and in the halls. Steve's preschool teachers worried that the new teacher would not realize how bright Steve was despite his vision impairment and would not require the high level of achievement they knew he could produce. Steve's team decided that there were so many questions about how things would go when he went to Kindergarten that a full evaluation from the district's assessment team was needed. On the referral form, they described Steve's disability and then asked that Steve be given a formal IQ test as well as achievement tests in language and basic academic skills. They requested that a vision specialist assess Steve's skills for learning Braille and learning to use computers and other low vision aids. Finally it was requested that an Orientation and Mobility (O&M) specialist see Steve to determine what additional skills he might need to learn to find his way around the new school building.

REFERENCES

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RESOURCES

Alliance for Technology Access. (2004). *Computer Resources for Persons with Disability*. Fourth Edition, Alameda, CA, Publisher: Hunter House, Inc, www.hunterhouse.com/shopexd.asp?id=402

In addition to the introductory material in the first section, the book includes a Technology Toolbox chart that can help local district teams understand what technology might be useful for a student with a specific difficulty. Following the Technology Toolbox section, is a reference section that provides information on all of the products mentioned in the toolbox including a brief description, who might use it, price range, and common vendors.

Bowser, G., & Reed, P. (2011). *The ABC's of Effective AT Consideration*. Winchester, OR: Coalition for Assistive Technology in Oregon. Order from www.educationtechpoints.org

The AT Consideration Quick Sheet provides specific steps for AT Consideration with tips, prompts, questions and resources to help you improve each step of the process.

Bowser, G., & Reed, P. (2011). *The ABC's of Understanding Assistive Technology Devices*. Winchester, OR: Coalition for Assistive Technology in Oregon. Order from www.educationtechpoints.org

One of a series of six one-page Quick Sheets, it provides a simple framework for understanding the broad range of AT devices and includes a series of continua of typical AT tools.

Castellani, J., Reed, P., Zabala, J., Dwyer, J., McPerson, S., & Rein, J. (2005). *Considering the Need for Assistive Technology Within the Individualized Education Program*. Reston, VA: Technology and Media Division of the Council for Exceptional Children, www.tamcec.org,

A resource for IEP teams as they consider assistive technology for students with disabilities. It contains essential information on IDEA 2004.

Closing the Gap. (2011). *Closing the Gap Resource Directory*, Henderson, MN: Closing the Gap, www.closingthegap.com

The Closing the Gap magazine is published six times per year. The resource directory is the February/March issue of the yearly subscription and provides a comprehensive listing of computer hardware, software and augmentative communication devices as well as vendors and organizations associated with assistive technology.

Georgia Project for Assistive Technology. *Assistive Technology Resource Guide*. Download from www.gpat.org/resources.aspx?PageReq=GPATConsider#guide

One of the most helpful tools for IEP teams new to Consideration of AT. It provides a framework for thinking about the specific tasks within an instructional area and the types of strategies and tools that can help students.

Education Tech Point #1

Minnesota Department of Education. (2006). *Involving All Students: Tools for Reading, Writing, and Math*. www.education.state.mn.us or contact Kurstendubbels@state.mn.us

Developed by the Minnesota Department of Education, this DVD contains a video overview of technology tools to support reading and writing and math.

Special Education Technology-British Columbia. (2010). *Assistive Technology Considerations for Students*. Download from www.setbc.org/setbc/curriculum/atconsiderations.html

This collection of guides provides support for teams considering assistive technology as a solution to support their students' educational program. Each guide has important questions to consider and possible solutions to meet specific student needs in a number of areas.

Technology and Media Division (TAM) of the Council for Exceptional Children. (2007). *TAM Technology Fan: Assistive Technology Considerations for Academic Success*. Order from www.tamcec.org

Discover new ways to support students with disabilities to participate and progress in the general curriculum. Developed by national experts the TAM Technology Fan provides IEP team members and practitioners with a sampling of assistive technology devices that may help a student succeed academically.

Texas Assistive Technology Network. (2009). *Texas 4 Step Model for Considering AT in the IEP Process*, www.texasat.net

Download from a downloadable set of presentation documents and participant documents about considering AT in the IEP Process. It provides training materials that support IEP teams in making informed AT decisions. It provides an introduction to the AT consideration process that must occur for all students with disabilities in accordance with IDEA.

Texas Assistive Technology Network. *Considering AT in the IEP Process* (video). Download from www.texasat.net/default.aspx?name=trainmod.consideration

Shows the consideration process in action and includes very meaningful footage of students talking about their AT usage. It is an excellent training tool.

Website

Iris Center – www.iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/at

The IRIS Center for Training Enhancements offers free online interactive resources that translate research about the education of students with disabilities into practice. The materials cover a wide variety of evidence-based topics, including behavior, RTI, learning strategies, and progress monitoring. The assistive technology module offers an overview of assistive technology (AT) and explores ways to expand students' access to it in the classroom.



in the

AT CONSIDERATION SECTION

on the Education Tech Points Website

For Use with Students

For Districts/Agencies

Assistive Technology Checklist (Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative). The WATI AT Checklist provides continua of AT tools for all areas of function.

IDEA 2004 Assistive Technology Citations. For use in awareness training regarding IDEA mandates

Assistive Technology Consideration Guide (Oregon Technology Access Program). OTAP's form to guide the IEP team through a

Referral for AT Evaluation Form. A generic referral form that can be used to request assistance with assistive technology assessment or consideration.

Assistive Technology Consideration Guide (WATI). This two page form guides the IEP team through the steps of a consideration process.

Sample AT district procedure. A one-page document that guides teams initial assistive technology discussions.

For Use with Students (cont.)

General Referral Form Sample. An example of a general referral form that has been completed to request help from the

district assessment center. The questions include questions about the use of assistive technology.

Student Concerns Questionnaire. This form is designed to be completed by each individual team member. Results are compiled in order to assist with assistive technology

consideration or referral.

Worksheet Framing the Assistive Technology Question. Worksheet to be used by a team to identify areas of concern.

Education Tech Point #1