



2 Evaluation

Once eligible for special education, IDEA specifically states that a student’s need for AT may be evaluated as a separate stand-alone inquiry. AT needs may also be a component of an initial evaluation of the student’s eligibility for special education services. Within an eligibility evaluation there may even be questions about a student’s functional abilities that can only be answered by using assistive technology during the evaluation.

If district eligibility evaluators are capable of addressing questions about the need for AT, they should do so as part of the overall evaluation process. If district evaluators are unable to collect the information needed to help the team make an AT decision, assistive technology needs can be addressed by other team members or specialists who join the team to help evaluate the student’s needs for AT. This chapter will address evaluation of the student’s need for AT during initial eligibility, evaluation of need for AT in response to Consideration of a student’s need for AT in the IEP process, and evaluation of need for AT for a student being served under Section 504.

STUDENT CENTERED QUESTIONS

- What is the task that the student is unable to do or is unable to do at an acceptable level?
- What types of AT tools might enhance the student's educational performance?
- Are the services of a specialist needed?
- Is a trial period with AT needed?

ACTIONS FOR THE STUDENT’S TEAM

- Review information that is already available and determine what additional information is needed to make an appropriate decision about assistive technology need.
- Complete the steps of an evaluation.
- Make decisions based on information gathered.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISTRICTS

- Ensure that all staff including eligibility evaluators, special education teachers, and general education teachers are aware of IDEA and 504 requirements for assistive technology.
- Develop and disseminate information about the district’s system to provide AT evaluations.
- Ensure that all staff understand how to get help with making decisions about the need for AT.
- Ensure that AT assessments are completed within reasonable timelines as indicated by IDEA or district operating guidelines.
- Provide professional development to ensure those who work with students in all disability categories are knowledgeable about commonly used AT devices.

EDUCATION TECH POINT #2: EVALUATION

One of the assistive technology services that IDEA lists is an “assistive technology evaluation”. If, as a part of initial eligibility or during consideration, the IEP team determines that a child may need AT, an assistive technology evaluation may be required. Assistive Technology Evaluation is the second Education Tech Point. It is the point at which IEP teams look at a range of possible AT devices and services and, based on evaluation information, make decisions about which ones to try.

The terms *evaluation* and *assessment* are often used interchangeably. The Federal Register (1993) defined *evaluation* as a group of activities conducted to determine a student’s *eligibility* for special education and *assessment* as a group of activities conducted to determine a student’s *specific needs*. (Italics added for emphasis). What this means for assistive technology is that when the question of student’s need for assistive technology is raised for the first time, the activities that the team performs (formal testing, informal testing, observation, interview, etc.) are an evaluation. However, after assistive technology has been included in the IEP/IFSP there will be many times that the team will want to complete the same types of activities to ensure that the AT devices and services continue to meet the student’s unique needs. This is assessment. The procedures may be the same, however, the question is different. When providing an evaluation the question is, “Does this student need this new service in order to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). When the team completes an assessment, the questions are “How is the AT working? Is it continuing to meet the student’s unique needs?” It is important to distinguish between evaluation and assessment because the procedural safeguards are different. When a team is completing an evaluation that includes the needs for AT, parental permission is required and state mandated timelines for completing evaluations apply. In contrast, assessment should be ongoing and completed frequently in response to student performance data and changes in the setting or environment. Throughout this manual, we will predominately use the term “evaluation”, however the same action steps and guidelines apply to AT assessment.

Evaluation of AT need as part of the Evaluation for Eligibility for Special Education

Many school districts have specific staff members who are designated to complete special education evaluations for eligibility. These may include intellectual, academic and behavioral evaluations. Depending on the needs of the student in question, evaluation teams might include a school psychologist, the building special education teacher, a behavior specialist, a speech and language pathologist, an occupational therapist and/or physical therapist or a specialist in hearing or vision.

Members of the evaluation team are trained to select and use both standardized and informal evaluation instruments that address the specific skills and performance levels of students with disabilities. Some children, however, are unable to complete standard assessment tasks in the usual way. For example, a student with a vision impairment could not see the test protocols when the school psychologist administered an intelligence test. In order to do testing, the school psychologist needed to use both accommodations and modifications to the standardized tests. In another example, a student who cannot communicate verbally may need to point with her eyes at selected responses or have access to a speech generating device (SGD) in order to show the evaluator what she knows. Thompson, Morse, Sharpe & Hall (2005) define accommodations for testing:

Accommodations are practices and procedures in the areas of presentation, response, setting, and timing/scheduling that provide equitable access during instruction and assessments for students with disabilities... Accommodations do not reduce learning

expectations. They provide access. However, modifications or alterations refer to practices that change, lower, or reduce learning expectations. (p.15)

While modified testing instruments can give valuable information to educators, they cannot be considered standardized for the purpose of obtaining a score. For example, a student who cannot speak may need to nod to indicate when the evaluator has read the correct answer while other students might be stating a response. If the testing instrument being used is to test the child's knowledge of the topic, then the changes made for the student would be considered an accommodation. But if the test is a reading test, this would be considered a modified test administration because the nature of the task has changed. For a reading test, changing the student's mode of presentation would be considered a modification. Care should be used in determining the use of assistive technology in standardized assessment, to insure that it is used as an accommodation and not a modification.

There are many accommodations that can be used during standardized assessment including a variety of assistive technology devices. They include changes in the way material is presented, changes in the way a student responds, as well as the location, time of day or length of time of the test. An accommodation is virtually any change in an assessment that is intended to maintain the measurement goals of the assessment but at the same time, make the assessment tasks accessible to the student. Accommodations are used to offset a distortion in score that might be caused by a disability. The use of the accommodation decreases or eliminates the effect of the disability on the child's performance.

The use of assistive technology in testing can be challenging in that in some instances it might also be used as a modification. For example, using a computer to speak the text of a test of math problem solving would be an accommodation, but using it to speak the text of a test of reading ability would significantly modify the task. A modification, including some uses of AT, changes the content. It changes what the test measures. Other examples might include shortening the test or giving a student more than one chance to respond.

Evaluators who are considering allowing the child to use assistive technology during the evaluation might use the following questions to guide them.

- Can the student be accurately evaluated with standard assessment instruments and procedures?
- Does the use of AT as an accommodation during testing offset the effect of the student's disability?
- What types of assistive technology solutions would enhance the student's educational performance without changing the nature of the test?
- Are the services of a specialist needed to assist the assessor or the student?

AT Evaluation for a Student Already in the Special Education System

IDEA requires that an evaluation of a student's need for assistive technology be completed if the IEP team thinks it is needed or if a written parent request is submitted. The law specifies that the AT evaluation should include a "functional evaluation in the customary environment". In other words, the AT must be tried in the school, home, or agency setting where it will be used. At least part of the evaluation must involve using the AT to complete functional tasks.

The need for an AT evaluation may be identified as part of the AT Consideration process during the IEP meeting or it may arise anytime throughout the year when a parent or service provider raises the question of whether AT could benefit the student with a disability. An AT evaluation is not required for every student with a disability. The IEP/IFSP team is fully empowered by IDEA to make all decisions about a student's individualized educational program including the need for AT. If the IEP/IFSP team decides, during the consideration portion of the IEP meeting, that they know all they need to know in order to include (or exclude) AT in the IEP/IFSP, that is all that is necessary. But if the team is not sure about what AT exists or feels more information about some aspect of the child's performance is needed, they may decide to implement an AT evaluation.

An AT Evaluation is not a "test" or "exam" rather it is a process of gathering information about the student and the difficulties he or she is experiencing. There are no AT devices or tools that work for everyone or for any specific placement, label or disability category. Rather, AT tools are selected based on the task or tasks that are problematic for the student. A student may have difficulty producing legible writing regardless of the nature of the disability or the cause of his fine motor difficulties. AT evaluation looks at the needs of the student, the characteristics of the environment, and the requirements of the necessary tasks that must be completed, then identifies the features of a tool such as size, portability or durability that might address all of these aspects. Once a comprehensive list of features is identified, potential AT tools are identified, prioritized, and selected. Generally the last component of an AT evaluation is a period of trial use to determine which, if any, work for the student in the necessary environments. AT evaluations should be completed by a team that includes the parents and the student, as much as possible, in the information gathering and decision making

AT Evaluation for Student being served under Section 504

Students with disabilities who are not eligible for special education services under IDEA may still need assistive technology as an accommodation. Assistive technology can be part of the accommodations that a school district team decides are appropriate to help students served under Section 504 to access their curriculum. While they may use assistive technology for access, they do not need specially designed instruction (i.e. special education). Students with disabilities served under Section 504, have a right to an AT evaluation. Determination of the type of AT that an individual student needs is based on the nature of the difficulties the student is experiencing and what is needed to provide an equal opportunity to participate with non-disabled peers in the general education curriculum.



TERRY • Evaluation of AT Needs

When Terry was referred to the district's evaluation center for assessment of her writing skills and strategies to help her improve them, the educational evaluator was aware of several different assistive technology tools for people who have difficulty with written work and asked the question "Are there assistive technology tools that would enhance Terry's writing performance?" The evaluator briefly tried several items from the district's pool of loan equipment and began to formulate some recommendations for future actions. Because she was not sure whether Terry had a motor problem that was affecting her writing she answered "yes" to the question "Are the services of a specialist required?" She initiated a referral to the district's occupational therapist (OT).

Once the OT was scheduled to do a motor assessment, the evaluator asked her to include the use of several writing tools during the assessment and give her professional opinion about how they might benefit Terry. She also expressed her concerns about Terry's fine motor functioning and asked whether the OT could determine the reasons Terry was having so much difficulty.

During the assessment, the OT determined that Terry had significant weakness in her dominant hand and that this was causing her writing difficulties. Terry had to hold the pencil so tightly that she experienced muscle fatigue within two minutes of starting a writing task. Following her assessment, the OT suggested the use of some type of electronic keyboard for written tasks that are longer than two sentences.

Both the OT and the educational evaluator wondered if Terry's performance during the isolated testing situation would be the same if she were in a regular classroom environment. They decided to discuss with the team the possibility that Terry might try a portable word processor and a computer with word processing software in the classroom and the resource room for a period of time before the IEP meeting.

ACTION ITEMS FOR THE STUDENT'S TEAM

The actions of the student's team at the point of Evaluation involve the steps of carrying out an evaluation of that student's need for assistive technology. These begin with identifying the team's knowledge and ability to complete those steps. If the student's team does not feel they have the necessary skills, this is the time to bring in an additional team member to help or to refer to another source for the evaluation.

The actual steps of the evaluation process are described below. During the decision making step, the team decision making guidelines described in the *Teams* chapter are used.



Complete the steps of an AT evaluation: Individual districts generally define their own processes to take best advantage of their resources of equipment and personnel. The following steps based on the work of the Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative (WATI) (Gierach, 2009) are widely used to complete assistive technology evaluations and assessments.

- 1. Gather existing data about the student:** This can be done by one individual or several members of the team with particular expertise, depending on the needs of the student. Reviewing the student's IEP/IFSP, cumulative files, recent report cards and samples of student work are all part of this step. Many times the same concerns are mentioned over and over, but new solutions have not been tried. If the student has the same IEP/IFSP goal year after year, or the same difficulties described in year end reports, it is time to think about AT as a solution. The Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative's (WATI) *Student Information Guide* (see *Evaluation* folder on *Education Tech Points Tools CD*) is a good way to collect data about specific problems the student may be having.
- 2. Observe in customary environments:** If assistive technology is to be a really effective tool, it is usually used in a variety of environments. The team should identify the setting(s) where the technology will be used. The *WATI Environmental Observation Guide*, (see *Evaluation* folder on *Education Tech Points Tools CD*), is one tool for collecting data on the environments in a child's life where the child might be more functional through the use of assistive technology.
- 3. Identify the tasks the student is required to complete:** In each environment there are usually a variety of related tasks that the student will be required to complete using assistive technology. The *WATI Environmental Observation Guide* can also help to identify the tasks the student must engage in and the barriers to participation, which might be overcome with assistive technology.
- 4. Complete formal and/or informal testing:** This may include achievement tests, receptive or expressive language tests, fine motor tests, and tests specific to making progress in the curriculum or on the goals in the student's IEP/IFSP. Team members each contribute their special expertise at this point in the assessment.



Make decisions using information gathered: The evaluation team has a number of decisions to make early in the process regarding the kinds of assessment data that will be collected and the types of assistive technology that will be tried. Later in the evaluation process, the team must also make decisions regarding the recommendations that will be made to the IEP/IFSP team. Using a clearly defined decision making process such as the one described in the chapter on *Teams* is recommended. The *WATI Decision Making Guide* (see Figure 1) can be used to guide the team through this process. Whenever possible these decisions are made in a meeting that is geared to making sure that all the information which needs to be collected is available when the recommendation goes to the IEP/IFSP team.

- 1. Identify possible assistive technology and non-assistive technology solutions:** Teams should consider both low-tech and high tech assistive technology solutions as well as other strategies. Using a feature match process can be very helpful at this stage of the evaluation process. Ask, "What do we want an AT tool to do for this student?" and "What features would this tool need to have to help this student?" Brainstorming with the goal of expanding your thinking and including all possibilities is also important in getting valuable input from all team members. Tools such as the *Assistive Technology Checklist* and the *Speech Generating Device Feature Comparison* provided in the *Evaluation* folder on the *Tech Points Tools CD* can provide ideas for the team. Use online resources as well, such as the technology matrix at www.techmatrix.org to determine which features many commonly available tools have or the fee-for-service AAC feature

match tool from www.aactechconnect.com. It will be important to have a comparison of the effectiveness of each type of solution during the IEP/IFSP decision making process in order to determine what the child needs in order to benefit from AT use.

WATI Assistive Technology Decision Making Guide		
Referral Question _____		

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION		
Student's Abilities/Difficulties	Environmental Considerations	Tasks
Include all that apply: Writing/Use of Hands Communication Reading/Academics Mobility Vision Hearing Behavior Other	Possible examples: Classroom Playground Lunch Room Home, etc. In Each: Technology Equipment Available Room Arrangement, Lighting Sound Activities, etc.	Possible examples: Produce legible written material Produce audible speech Read text Complete math problems Participate in rec/leisure Move independently in the school environment
		Reframed Question
		i.e. Specific task identified for solution generation
SOLUTION GENERATION	SOLUTION SELECTION	IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
Brainstorming Only No Decision	Discuss, prioritize and/or Select Ideas from Solution Generation	AT Trials/Services Needed: Date Length Person Responsible
		FOLLOW-UP PLAN
		Who & When Set specific date now.
Important: It is intended that you use this as a guide. Each topic should be written in large print where everyone can see them, i.e. on a flip chart or board. Information should then be transferred to paper for distribution, file, and future reference.		

FIGURE 1. ADAPTATION OF THE WATI DECISION MAKING GUIDE

- Determine whether a trial period is needed:** The evaluation team might ask, "Do we know enough about how assistive technology might help this child to make a recommendation?" If the answer is "yes" then the team can proceed with no additional input. However, for some children, a plan for one or more trial periods with various assistive devices might be developed. A trial period may be especially appropriate if the recommendation for a specific AT tool has come from an outside source. In this case the student's team will want to set up a trial period to fulfill their obligation to ensure that AT evaluations include a functional evaluation in the child's customary environment. (See the chapter on Trial Periods for more information.)

3. **Formulate recommendations to the IEP/IFSP team:** The job of the evaluation team is to make recommendations to the IEP/IFSP team. It is important to remember that evaluation data that addresses assistive technology is only part of the data that must be considered when developing a specially designed instructional program for an individual child. The IEP/ IFSP team is empowered by IDEA to make all decisions about a child's individualized education program, including decisions about assistive technology. The IEP/IFSP team may decide to include all, none or part of the AT recommendations in the student's plan.

Responsibilities of Team Members During Evaluation

Individual team members have a responsibility to bring the core of information from their own field to the evaluation process (e.g., the speech/language pathologist knows how to evaluate a child's receptive and expressive language and plan for vocabulary that will be needed to help the child progress, while the OT knows neuromuscular development and can help determine where a switch might most effectively be placed). Individual team members also must know how the formal and informal assessments that they typically use can bring valuable information to the AT evaluation process.

Team members must also know the array of AT that might be used to address the target skill, the AT tools available in the district, and how to match those tools to the student's needs by using a feature match process. For example, two students might have similar expressive language needs for augmentative communication devices, but if one uses a wheelchair for mobility, a larger or heavier device could be mounted. If the other student is able to walk a device that is lightweight and easily portable might be needed. The specific feature of portability would help to determine what tool is most likely to help each student.

Team members also can use their perspective and observation skills to point out significant factors that other team members may not be trained to recognize or have the opportunity to observe. Parents, for instance, are the experts about their own child's behavior outside of school and his/her individual preferences that will impact AT device use.



SHAR • Communication Boards or Devices

Shar's team reviewed a number of options that could be used to help Shar talk with friends at lunch. These included assigning lunch "buddies" who would volunteer to eat lunch with her every day for a week and providing Shar with a low tech augmentative communication board (assistive technology) with pictures that she could use as a conversation starter in the lunchroom. One team member thought that a speech generating device (SGD) would be a good solution for Shar. While the team agreed that this might be a future option, they decided to wait until Shar learned some new things about communication before they introduced an electronic device. The team agreed to try the communication buddy and communication board solutions first .

Shar's team felt that they had a lot of information about her performance and several ideas of tools to try so they chose to implement their own ideas rather than choosing the option of formal evaluation. They had collected data about Shar's receptive and expressive language skills and her interactions in customary environments. They made a plan to try out some of the tools they thought might help her. They planned this trial carefully using strategies you will learn about in the following chapter on Trial Periods.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Each education agency has differing financial, human and equipment resources. For this reason, it is important that each agency creates its own system for providing assistive technology evaluations. In doing this, it is important that the evaluation system follow state and federal procedural guidelines for evaluations. Topics such as required timelines for AT evaluations and required parental notifications should be specifically addressed. The *Education Tech Points* website has examples of agency operating guidelines in the *Pulling it all Together* resources section.

Once a system for AT evaluations has been developed, it is important that information about that system be disseminated to all staff that may be involved with students with disabilities (Bugaj & Norton-Darr, 2010). To ensure consistent services and equity for all students who need assistive technology, professional development efforts about assistive technology must ensure that staff members understand the concept that assistive technology consideration applies to all students with disabilities. If teachers, evaluators and other support staff are not aware of the district's system for providing AT evaluations for *all* students who might benefit from the use of assistive technology, students' teams may overlook the needs of particular groups of students such as those with high incidence disabilities or cognitive impairments.

An effective district-level evaluation process ensures that all staff including eligibility evaluators, special education teachers, and general education teachers are aware of IDEA and 504 requirements for assistive technology. Both building level staff and evaluation center staff should receive awareness level training in assistive technology. This training should include information about the definition of assistive technology devices and services and the types of devices and services available in the district. Evaluation team members need training regarding the availability and function of various assistive technology devices and their potential use in the classroom. For example, an FM amplification system may make a significant impact on the listening and understanding of a child with a hearing loss or of a child with ADHD. Evaluation team members should be knowledgeable about a broad range of devices and their potential to benefit a student.

Professional development should also be provided to ensure that all staff members are aware of possible assistive technology modifications and adaptations to high-stakes testing procedures. The kinds of assistive technology that a student uses in testing environments may affect an individual's ability to meet state standards. This information should be considered during every IEP meeting.

A variety of specialized evaluation options are currently available to most school districts in regard to assistive technology. Larger districts often have one or more augmentative communication or assistive technology specialists. Some occupational therapists, speech pathologists and educators may have developed expertise in one or a variety of types of assistive technology devices and services. State departments of education, universities and hospital settings may also provide assessment services. Such services will be a necessary part of an eligibility evaluation and of specific AT evaluations for some students, especially those with very complex needs such as communication, positioning, mobility and self-help where AT tools must be integrated into a system that addresses all of those needs.

While specialized evaluation services may be available, many school districts have not developed policies and procedures that enable the general education staff and building level staff to access these evaluation options. Teachers who have concerns about a particular child may not know how to obtain the services of a district assistive technology specialist or may assume that such a specialist works only with students with very severe disabilities. When outside assessment is needed,

teachers may be hesitant to refer, fearing the excess costs the district might incur. Parents who feel that their child might benefit from the use of assistive technology may become frustrated in their attempts to get school staff to consider their request for evaluation. In order to avoid these problems, direct service staff and others involved in the assessment need to have clear, written guidelines regarding the use of specialized assistive technology assessment services.

To be in compliance with IDEA requirements, districts must ensure that assistive technology assessments are completed within reasonable timelines as defined by their states. IDEA requires that each state define “timely manner” and ensure that all evaluations, including assistive technology evaluations are completed in a timely manner. All IEP/IFSP team members, including the student and family members, should be a part of determining the timelines for initial evaluation and also the length of any trial periods that may be needed.

Districts need internal processes for determining students’ need for assistive technology. In this chapter, we assume that those completing an AT evaluation are employed directly by the district and are assigned to provide expertise about assistive technology devices and services as part of their responsibilities. We also assume that the agency has a system for identifying additional assessment resources and completing Independent Educational Evaluations (IEE) that include assistive technology when this is needed. Such a system should include options for handling the AT needs of students who have complex and interrelated assistive technology needs such as the use of powered wheelchairs with augmentative communication devices or the use of highly specialized and uncommonly seen equipment. The development of district processes will be discussed more extensively in Chapter 10-*Pulling it all Together*.



Quality Indicators for AT Assessment

Assessment of Assistive Technology Needs is a process conducted by a team, used to identify tools and strategies to address a student’s specific need(s). The following quality indicators provide guidelines for reviewing AT assessment practices to ensure their strengths and weaknesses.

1. Procedures for all aspects of assistive technology assessment are clearly defined and consistently applied.
2. Assistive technology assessments are conducted by a team with the collective knowledge and skills needed to determine possible assistive technology solutions that address the needs and abilities of the student, demands of the customary environments, educational goals, and related activities.
3. All assistive technology assessments include a functional assessment in the student’s customary environments, such as the classroom, lunchroom, playground, home, community setting, or work place.
4. Assistive technology assessments, including needed trials, are completed within reasonable time lines.
5. Recommendations from assistive technology assessments are based on data about the student, environments and tasks.
6. The assessment provides the IEP team with clearly documented recommendations that guide decisions about the selection, acquisition, and use of assistive technology devices and services.
7. Assistive technology needs are reassessed any time changes in the student, the environments and/or the tasks result in the student’s needs not being met with current devices and/or services.

(QIAT Consortium 2011)

ACTION ITEMS FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

During evaluation, action items for school programs center around making sure that procedures for evaluation are in place and that staff have the information they need to make appropriate assistive technology decisions during the evaluation process. Programs can take the following steps to assure that assistive technology is included in a meaningful way during the evaluation process.



Define procedures for all aspects of assistive technology evaluations: Clearly defined procedures help ensure consistency throughout the agency in the conducting of assistive technology evaluations. Procedures may include items such as initiation of an evaluation, planning and conducting an evaluation, reporting results, and resolving conflicts. Once procedures are defined, training for staff should be provided on a regular basis and include a discussion about how they are implemented. Assistive technology evaluation procedures should be included with all other district procedures on their website, or in handbooks and other written documents.



Ensure that teams that complete assistive technology evaluations include people with adequate knowledge and skills: Effective evaluation teams include individuals who have knowledge about the student's strengths and needs and the student's tasks and demands in a variety of settings. They also need to include people who know about appropriate AT options. Collaborative team members may include teachers of the visually impaired, therapists such as OT, PT, SLP, curriculum specialists, technology specialists, and job coaches, depending upon individual student needs. When team members each contribute their expertise to the assessment process in a collaborative manner, they are able to more effectively identify the student's AT needs.



Train all staff in the legal mandates regarding assistive technology: When staff members are not aware of the legal mandates of IDEA, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, they may not consider assistive technology or may consider assistive technology inappropriately.



Train staff in making recommendations through the use of a decision making process: It is important that everyone involved in the AT evaluation process participate in formulating recommendations. It is also crucial that evaluation team members understand that their expertise and recommendations are only a part of the information that the IEP/IFSP team will use in making a final decision about the use of assistive technology. The IEP/IFSP team may develop goals that affect the child's need for assistive technology. The job of the evaluation team is to formulate the best possible answers to the referral questions and to provide accurate and clear information.



Provide information resources in print or online for IEP/IFSP teams that need additional information: If IEP team members appear to need ideas, provide a resource such as the those in the *Consideration* section.

. See Figure 2 for a sample of a protocol for evaluating the use of audio and talking word processing.

Audiotape or CD			Text Viewed
Sample used:	Reading/Vocabulary level:	Length of sample:	<input type="checkbox"/> Required rereading/ listening to _____ additional times
Reading time:	<input type="checkbox"/> Able to track in book while listening		Questions asked: <input type="checkbox"/> prior to reading <input type="checkbox"/> after reading
Student able to answer ___/___ questions	<input type="checkbox"/> main idea <input type="checkbox"/> factual <input type="checkbox"/> inferential	<input type="checkbox"/> list events in sequence	
Student was able to operate a tape/CD based player: <input type="checkbox"/> place or remove tape or CD into/from player <input type="checkbox"/> play <input type="checkbox"/> stop on cue <input type="checkbox"/> find page on CD <input type="checkbox"/> rewind <input type="checkbox"/> Cue/Review (play w/ fast forward or rewind) on tape <input type="checkbox"/> adjust playback: <input type="checkbox"/> volume <input type="checkbox"/> speed on tape <input type="checkbox"/> pitch on tape <input type="checkbox"/> student was able to locate target text Comments: _____ _____ _____			

Talking Word Processor			Text Viewed
Sample used:	Reading/Vocabulary level:	Length of sample:	Reading time:
Software Used: _____ Voice: _____ Words per minute: _____ Font size: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Headphone <input type="checkbox"/> Speakers <input type="checkbox"/> Highlighting used	<input type="checkbox"/> Required rereading _____ # times	Questions asked: <input type="checkbox"/> prior to reading <input type="checkbox"/> after reading
Student able to answer ___/___ questions	<input type="checkbox"/> main idea <input type="checkbox"/> factual <input type="checkbox"/> inferential	<input type="checkbox"/> list events in sequence	
Student <input type="checkbox"/> did <input type="checkbox"/> did not require highlighting to track text			

FIGURE 2: A SECTION OF THE GPAT PROTOCOL FOR ASSESSING THE USE OF AT TOOLS FOR READING



Provide information to all staff about assistive technology that is available in the district:

An inventory of all assistive technology devices that have been purchased by the district should be available to all. When a team begins to consider a particular AT solution for an individual child, team members need to know whether the solution is already available to children in the district and whether it can be accessed for staff review or student trials. This list should include commonly used productivity tools such as operating systems for computers that have accessibility features built in and readily available tools that have accessibility features such as spoken text, voice recognition and spell checking. The more staff members know about assistive technology and have the chance to explore and try it, the more likely it is that they will be able to make good decisions during an AT evaluation.



Train all staff in acceptable accommodations in the testing environment including the use of assistive technology during evaluation: This includes information on accommodations, modifications and the range of assistive technology that is available for use by students with disabilities. Under IDEA, the parent must also be a part of the team that plans the assessment. This means that when assistive technology is to be used in the process of evaluation, parents must also understand the effects on test administration of using assistive technology.



Provide a pool of basic assistive technology devices which can be used for evaluation and assessment purposes: While school districts, especially small districts, find it impossible to have every assistive technology device available in the event that a student may need it, they should make available an array of technology that will allow educators to try the device options that are needed most often by the students they serve. Examples might include software applications commonly used by children with learning disabilities, spell checkers and calculators, portable word processors, simple message devices for augmentative communication, etc.

In addition, resources should be available to evaluation staff to help them determine what adaptations might make a difference for individual students. The evaluation center might have a computer with the ability to provide basic accommodations for individuals with a wide range of disabilities. Such accommodations might include alternative input, screen enlarging software, voice output, word prediction, etc. An assessment system like this allows evaluators to recommend basic accommodations or modifications that could be tried for an individual child and to make recommendations regarding the need for further assistive technology assessment.



Develop program procedures for accessing specialized assistive technology assessments when they are needed: These procedures may be referrals to assistive technology specialists or they may be procedures to follow when the services of an outside consultant is needed. It is particularly important that evaluators understand the steps they are to take when requesting additional information so that effective assessment can be obtained without undue delays or unnecessary costs. District procedures should include evaluation of a child's functional performance in the customary environment, using the recommendations from the outside agency.

A recent development in assistive technology assessment options is the use of distance consultations and assessment strategies. The use of digital video files or real-time video broadcasting tools such as Skype and Google Chat have made it possible for a person knowledgeable about assistive technology to provide recommendations and suggestions to school district staff from a remote location. School districts that use this distance consultation option are able to bring specialized expertise to the student's team without the need for extensive travel by team members, students or consultants. The *Evaluation* section of the *Education Tech Points website* contains several forms and a process description that describe a strategy for accessing expertise at remote sites.



STEVE • AT Evaluation

Because the school psychologist had been trained in the use of assistive technology as an accommodation in testing, he asked himself the question "Can Steve be accurately evaluated with standard assessment procedures?" He also asked himself "Would the use of assistive technology as an accommodation during testing enhance Steve's performance?" He realized that he could use enlarged copies of the testing materials but he wondered about a technology solution in testing. The vision specialist recommended the use of a CCTV to enlarge print materials for Steve and make it possible for him to complete the tasks on the test. Steve had used a CCTV in his preschool classroom so he was familiar with the device. These accommodations did not change the tasks that Steve needed to do, so the testing results were considered valid.

REFERENCES

- Bugaj, C., & Norton-Darr, S. (2010). *The practical and fun guide to assistive technology in public schools: Building or improving your district's AT team*. Eugene, OR: International Society for Technology in Education.
- Gierach, J. (Ed.) (2009). *Assessing Students' Need for Assistive Technology: A Resource Manual for School District Team (5th Edition)*. Milton, WI: Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative (WATI). Retrieved from www.wati.org/?pageLoad=content/supports/free/index.php
- Office of the Federal Register. (1993). *The Federal Register*. Vol. 58, No. 131. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- QIAT Consortium. (2011). *Quality indicators for assistive technology: 2005 revisions*. Retrieved from www.qiat.org
- Thompson, S., Morse, A., Sharpe, M., & Hall, S. (2005). *Accommodations manual: how to select, administer, and evaluate use of accommodations for instruction and assessment of students with disabilities*. The Council of Chief State School Officers. Retrieved from www.osepideastthatwork.org/toolkit/index.asp

RESOURCES

DeCoste, D. (2004). *Assistive Technology Assessment: Developing a written productivity profile*. Volo, IL: Don Johnston, Inc.

Outlines a 4-step process to assess student handwriting and then determine the appropriate assistive technology solutions. This book is perfect for assistive technology specialists, occupational therapists, special educators and diagnosticians.

DeCoste, D. & Wilson, L.B. (2012). *Protocol for Accommodations in Reading*. Volo, IL: Don Johnston, Inc. Download from www.donjohnston.com/products/par/index.html

PAR provides resources to systematize procedures for making data-based reading accommodation recommendations for students who are not reading at grade level or have physical disabilities that keep them from utilizing printed texts.

Gierach, J. (Ed.) (2009). *Assessing Students' Need for Assistive Technology: A Resource Manual for School District Team (5th Edition)*. Milton, WI: Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative. Retrieved from www.wati.org

This excellent resource manual contains useful information organized in an easily accessible format. The manual contains a full set of forms that teams can use during the assessment process including: The WATI Student Information Guide, the WATI Observation Guide, the WATI Planning Guide, and the WATI Assistive Technology Checklist. The sections of the manual are organized in the same order as the assistive technology listed on the Assistive Technology Checklist.

Korsten, J., Foss, T., & Berry, L. (2007). *Every Move Counts, Clicks and Chats: emc³*, Lee's Summit, MO: EMC Communications, Inc,

A sensory based approach to communication and assistive technology for individuals with significant sensory-motor differences, developmental differences and autism. *Every Move Counts* includes directions and forms for completing functional assessment of a student's communication efforts.

Minnesota Department of Education, Division of Special Education Policy. (2008). *The SETT Framework for Assistive Technology*. Available from education.state.mn.us, contact Kurstin.dubbels@state.mn.us.

In this video, Joy Zabala explains what assistive technology is and how to use the SETT framework to make decisions about the need for it.

Reed, P. Warger, C., Jeffs, T., & Walzer, P., Zabala, J. (2007). *Using Assistive Technology Accommodations in Assessments*, Order from www.tamcec.org

Students with disabilities often require accommodations to help them demonstrate their achievement in the general curriculum. This TAM Fan provides a sampling of assistive technology devices that may help a student participate in both classroom and district-wide assessments. Selected AT tools are organized according to the following types of assessment accommodations: setting, timing/scheduling, presentation, and response.

Technology and Media Division: Council for Exceptional Children. (2009) *Accommodating Students with Disabilities—Instructional and Assistive Technology Tools that Work!* Order from www.tamcec.org/publications/

National experts share practical tools and approaches for using instructional and assistive technology to help students with disabilities participate in and access the curriculum. Topics include: How to use technology supports for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders; How to select English language acquisition technology for students with disabilities; How to increase adaptive access to instructional materials for students with significant disabilities; How to assess whether the technology is working.

Texas Assistive Technology Network. (2009). *Assistive Technology Evaluation: A Team Perspective*. Download from www.texasat.net/default.aspx?name=trainmod.evaluation

Focuses on the AT evaluation that may be a part of the services provided to a student who has already qualified to receive special education services under the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Texas Assistive Technology Network. (2007). *Technology Supports for Struggling Writers*. Download from www.texasat.net/default.aspx?name=trainmod.writing

Discusses writing strategies that research has determined can assist students in learning to write, and explore the technology tools that will assist in acquiring and practicing those skills.

Zabala, J. (2005). The SETT Scaffolds. Download from: www.joyzabala.com/Documents.html

The SETT Scaffolds are a series of forms that, like architectural scaffolds, are designed to be used when and where needed. They are meant to be examples and can be adapted and changed to meet the needs of the people who are using them as long as credits to the original source are maintained. They include the SETT Scaffolds for Consideration of AT Needs, for Data Gathering, for Tool Selection, and for Implementation and Evaluation of Effectiveness Planning.

Websites

AAC Tech Connect – www.aactechconnect.com

Provides access to fee-for-service AAC feature match tool that can be extremely beneficial for teams who are not familiar with the wide variety of AAC products on the market. It also has many excellent free resources and tools. Look at their many forms and samples, such as their Features to Consider form for choosing communication devices.

Communication Matrix – www.communicationmatrix.org

An easy to use, online assessment instrument which gives assessment information for individuals of all ages who function at the earliest stages of communication and who use any form of communication.

Georgia Project for Assistive Technology, resources for AT Evaluation – <https://gpat.gadoe.org/Georgia-Project-for-Assistive-Technology/Pages/default.aspx>

A must for school district teams that are initiating their own assistive technology programs. Basic information about assistive technology along with tools and resources to help teams get started.

Education Tech Point #2

Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative (WATI) – www.wati.org

The WATI website has a variety of high quality, free resources under “Supports” on their website, including the assessment guides developed by WATI and widely used throughout the country.

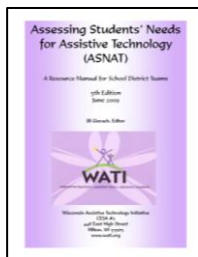
T O O L S

in the

EVALUATION SECTION

of the Education Tech Points Website

For Use with Students



Assessment Forms, Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative (WATI). The assessment packet includes all of the WATI forms including the Consideration Guide, Student Information Guide,

Observation Guide, Decision Making Guide, AT Checklist, Trial Use Guide and Trial Use Summary.

For Districts/Agencies



Assessment Process Planner (QIAT). A useful checklist to guide the assessment process, designed with columns to track due dates and persons responsible.

