What is Assistive Technology (AT)?

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004, the legal definition of Assistive Technology is:

...any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability (Authority: 20 U.S.C 1401 (1)).

The term [assistive technology] does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted, or the replacement of such device (Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1401(1)).

In essence, Assistive Technology (AT) is any item, or group of items (i.e. product system) that helps a student perform a task that they would otherwise be unable to do without the item. Here are some other qualities that characterize AT:

♦ Technologies must be determined to be necessary by an IEP team before they can be called AT.

♦ AT may be customized to meet an individual student's needs.

♦ AT should allow a student to make progress toward IEP goals and objective as well as within the general education curriculum.

A second term that is crucial in understanding the AT Process is the term *Assistive Technology Service*. AT Service refers to the process by which AT is selected, provided, supported, and evaluated to determine its effectiveness with a student.

Other Questions

Can I buy a piece of technology for my child to use in his/her classroom?

Yes.   However, (if the following three conditions are not met) unless (a) the IEP Team, including a student's parents, determines that the technology meets the definition of AT, (b) the technology is necessary for the student to make progress, and (c) the technology is documented in the IEP, then the technology is not required to be used by the student in school settings.

It is important to note that technology that is purchased by the family without approval or consideration from the IEP team does not have to be used in the classroom. Technology that is provided from an outside source and is not **documented in the IEP** does not have to be used and implemented by teachers. Therefore, it is recommended that parents propose any suggestions of AT to the IEP Team as part of the   AT consideration process.

Where can I get more information?

• Parent Guide—Educational Rights and Responsibilities: Understanding Special Education in Illinois

• http://www.isbe.state.il.us/spec-ed/html/parent_rights.htm

• Illinois Assistive Technology Guidance Manual

• http://www.isbe.state.il.us/spec-ed/

Illinois Assistive Technology Guidance Manual

An Introduction for Parents

Brian W. Wojcik
Karen H. Douglas
Brian M. Kulaga

SEAT CENTER
SPECIAL EDUCATION ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY
Illinois State University

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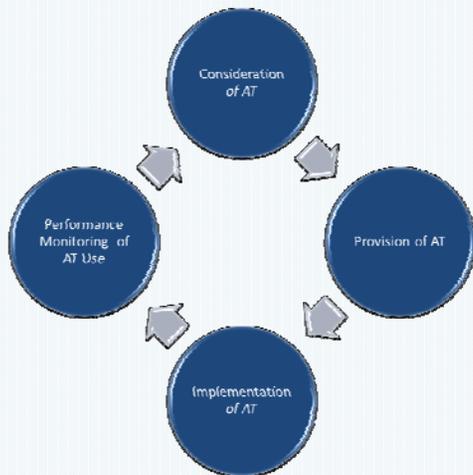
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The Assistive Technology Process

The Assistive Technology Process is a collaborative and team-oriented process. It is a process that occurs among the members of IEP team. The team considers data about a student and decides if AT is needed. If the team cannot gather enough data based on the resources available, then an AT Evaluation is conducted. An AT Evaluation is a series of assessments/trials that are used to determine the most appropriate AT tool or system needed by your child.

The process is classified by a cycle that is divided into four general cyclical phases:

1. Consideration of AT
2. Provision of AT
3. Implementation of AT
4. Performance Monitoring of AT Use

The AT Process: Parent Resource Table

Phase	Description	Questions to Ask
Consideration of AT	• The IEP team determines whether or not the student needs AT. • The IEP team collects and reviews data related to the student's present knowledge, skills, and their current IEP goals and objectives.	• Are there tasks my child is unable to perform that are preventing him/her from making progress in the curriculum? • How could the use of AT assist my child in progressing on his/her goals and objectives?
Provision of AT	• The IEP team determines how the selected AT will be acquired, provided, and funded.	• Will my child be able to use the AT at home? • If the AT breaks, who will be responsible for fixing it? • What will the happen to the AT when my student no longer qualifies for services?
Implementation of AT	• The IEP team ensures that the student can use the AT obtained in all environments noted within the student's IEP. • Teachers, service providers, parents, and students receive training on how to use the AT. • A back-up plan is developed for any future circumstances in which the AT malfunctions or is not accessible.	• What are my responsibilities with my child's AT? • What type of training will be provided? Who will provide that training? When? • Who can I contact if there is a problem with the device? • What can be used as a substitute for the device if it is temporarily unavailable?
Performance Monitoring of AT Use	• The IEP team determines if the AT a student is using is working, a new tool or system is needed, or the student no longer needs the AT.	• How will my child's progress using the AT be monitored? • If I have concerns about my child's AT use, with whom could I speak? • How will my child's progress be shared with me? • When will we reevaluate my child's use of his/her AT? • Do you see my child's use of AT as a long-term or short-term solution?