

Assistive Technology and the IEP

Consideration of assistive technology during the IEP process

- Every IEP team is required to consider each child's need for assistive technology during the IEP process as part of the Special Factors requirement in IDEA. Consideration is a process that takes place within every IEP meeting. In order to consider the need for assistive technology, at least one person on the IEP team must have knowledge of the assistive technology being considered to meet educational needs. If the IEP team determines that assistive technology is necessary for a student to receive FAPE, the school must provide it. The IEP is a written commitment for the delivery of services to meet a student's educational needs. A school district must ensure that all of the related services specified in the IEP, including the amount, are provided to a student.
- As stated in IDEA, assistive technology devices and/or services may be required by a student in order to provide FAPE. These services can be provided by special educators, speech/language, occupational and physical therapists and other trained providers in the area of AT. The service provider does not have to be an assistive technology specialist or a SWAAC team member.
- The IEP team must consider whether the child needs assistive technology devices and services and is required to check the corresponding yes/no box on the IEP. It is important that the child's need for AT devices and/or services be documented on the IEP. The need for AT devices and/or services may be documented or described in the following sections of an IEP: Consideration of Special Factors, Accommodations and Modifications, Goals and Objectives, and/or Special Education and Related Services. It is recommended to list device features when describing AT to allow for student growth, student mobility and new technologies. An example of a generic description is "lightweight portable keyboard capable of storing text and sending written output to a computer or printer." A NEO, Dana or Fusion would fit the description and possibly meet a student's needs.

- When a student receives an assistive technology evaluation, it results in recommendations to inform the IEP team and assist them in their decision-making. The decision about what assistive technology devices and services a student requires and how they are included in the IEP is the responsibility of the IEP team.
- It is the school's responsibility to maintain and repair student-owned equipment when the use of the equipment has been determined to be necessary in order for the student to receive FAPE.

Writing goals and objectives

Assistive technology is not a goal in and of itself; it is a means or a tool to accomplish a goal. However, the complexity of an assistive technology device may require that goals and objectives be developed to teach a student to use the AT. This is especially important if there is a long learning curve anticipated or that many hours of instruction will be devoted to learning basic operational skills. In cases such as these, use of assistive technology is an access skill.

When a student has some proficiency with an AT device, an embedded goal or objective (e.g. "Using her dynamic display communication device, Sally will present a book report to the class.") would be appropriate because the AT is the tool with which Sally can do the same task that the other students are doing as part of the general curriculum. However, if Sally has just received her communication device and is learning to use it independently, the goals and objectives should reflect that and not imply that such skills as presenting a book report are part of her current repertoire.

Samples of goals and objectives

Objectives are intermediate steps between the Present Level of Educational Performance and the Annual Goal(s) established for the student.

Goal: Oscar will use a repertoire of communication strategies to express wants and needs at home and in school at least five times each day.

Objective 1 Given a verbal prompt to choose, Oscar will make two choices during snack time using vocalization, sign, gesture, picture board or voice output communication aid in 75% of opportunities, four out of five days.

Objective 2 Given a single message communication device, with appropriate language, Oscar will indicate a desire to change activities by activating the device instead of crying 50% of the time.

Goal: Luisa will participate in first-grade level math activities using a variety of assistive technology devices.

Objective 1 Luisa will complete simple single digit addition and subtraction computations using adapted manipulatives with 90% accuracy.

Objective 2 Using a basic numbers overlay on an alternative computer keyboard, Luisa will complete daily math assignments with 90% accuracy.

Goal: Trent will produce all written assignments in American Government independently.

Objective 1 Trent will complete 100% of assignments in American Government using a computer with a word processor, word prediction software and Text-to-Speech feedback.

Objective 2 Trent will locate the print command in the File menu and independently print documents 100% of the time.