A Focus on Consideration of Assistive Technology

IDEA Webinar Series: Developing IEPs for Students with Academic and Behavioral Needs

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PaTTAN's Mission

The mission of the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) is to support the efforts and initiatives of the Bureau of Special Education, and to build the capacity of local educational agencies to serve students who receive special education services.

PDE's Commitment to Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Our goal for each child is to ensure Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams begin with the general education setting with the use of Supplementary Aids and Services before considering a more restrictive environment.

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The need for Assistive Technology (AT) devices and services is one of the special considerations that IEP teams MUST address before developing the IEP.

What do teams needs to know in order to do this?

Objectives

- Identify possible outcomes of AT consideration.
- Provide guiding questions for families and team members considering AT
- Identify resources to assist in AT decision-making

Agenda:

- What is AT?
- What is consideration?
- Outcomes of consideration
- Consideration examples
- Resources

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"Assistive Technology bridges the gap between a child's functional skills and his ability to participate in the educational process. It breaks through the barriers associated with vision, hearing, communication, processing and motor skills and allows students to do the same things as their general education peers."

Assistive Technology Solutions for IEP Teams, Purcell and Grant, 2002

What is AT?

AT SERVICES

"Any services that directly assist in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device."

AT DEVICE

"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 individuals with disabilities."

AT Consideration

- For every student with an IEP
- Not defined
  - Brief
  - Informed : assumes that at least one person has knowledge about the issue, or access to someone who can guide the team in considering the issue in the context of what they know about the student.

Do we think we might need to do something differently?

- In order to improve access to the general education curriculum?
- In order to make progress toward IEP goals?

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Possible AT Consideration Outcomes

1. AT is not needed (not checked)
2. AT in use is effective/sufficient (as specified in IEP)
3. Team does not have enough information to make decision and will (as specified in IEP)
   - introduce well-planned trials of AT for identified task/tasks
   - obtain technical assistance

Who Needs AT?

- AT decisions are not made based on the nature or severity of a student's disability.

- Assistive technology is not just for certain types of learners.

- An individual learner may need a range of AT options/tools for a variety of tasks.

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Consider NEED   NOT necessarily

- Disability
- Affordability
- Availability
- History
- Popularity

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AT Decisions

- AT decisions are made by teams in the context of *other IEP decisions* regarding access to the general education curriculum and setting and achieving goals.
- AT is only one aspect of the IEP: a means for reaching goals and providing access.

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Poor decisions?

- AT that is not properly selected and implemented can give the impression that the technology is not effective. OR NOT NEEDED.

- The apparent failure of AT can lead to under-use of the device, device abandonment, and the perception of stakeholders that AT is a costly risk. OR NOT NEEDED.

AT in the IEP Process

- Consideration of special factors
- *Everywhere else*
  - Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance
  - Measurable Annual Goals
  - Supplementary Aids and Services
  - Specially Designed Instruction
  - Transition planning
  - Related Services

AT Consideration

IDEA 2004 and Ch 14 require that teams consider AT *for every student with an IEP.*

<div align="right">300.324(2)(v)</div>

- Initial consideration*: Do we think this student needs AT in order to make progress or meet goals?*
- Ongoing consideration: *Do we think we might need to do something differently?*

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Special Considerations: Before IEP Development

- Is the student blind or visually impaired?
- Is the student deaf or hearing Impaired?
- Other special considerations
  - Communication Needs
  - Assistive technology devices and/or services
  - Limited English Proficiency
  - Behaviors that impede his/her learning
  - Transition services
  - Other

Guiding Questions:
Decision-making Resource

- These guiding questions have been developed as part of the Annotated IEP, available on the PaTTAN website
- Pp. 7-12 contain questions for consideration.

http://www.pattan.net/regsforms/annotatedformsandformats.aspx

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Does the student need assistive technology:

- to meaningfully participate in the general curriculum?
- to participate in academic or functional activities?
- to access print materials?
- to access auditory information?
- for written communication and/or computer access?
- for augmentative**/alternative communication (AAC)?**
- to participate in state and local assessments (address in Section VI of the IEP (SDI))

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Does the student have communication needs?

- What is the student's typical mode of communication?
- Is the student understood by others, especially with unfamiliar communication partners?
- What opportunities exist to foster communication with others?
- Do the student's communication skills impact upon learning?
- Does the student require assistive devices to assist in the development and use of meaningful language used in direct instruction?
- What other considerations (e.g., mode of communication used at home) should be addressed?

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Considering AT

Anna's parents have asked the IEP team for an "AT Evaluation" to determine "what AT might be able to do for her".

or

Ben's teacher would like the IEP team to discuss "whether AT might help him make progress"

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Do *we think we might need to do something differently?*

- In order to improve access to the general education curriculum?
- In order to make progress toward IEP goal*s?*

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Casey A.

- Casey is a 12 year old student with intellectual disabilities and no effective spoken communication. She has a 4 message AAC device, which she uses during morning meeting and snack time.

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- to access auditory information?
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- for augmentative**/alternative communication (AAC)?**
- to participate in state and local assessments (is it addressed in Section VI of the IEP (SDI))?

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- Does the student require assistive devices to assist in the development and use of meaningful language used in direct instruction?
- What other considerations (e.g., mode of communication used at home) should be addressed?

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Possible outcomes of team consideration:

- AT is not needed
- AT is in use and is effective/sufficient (as specified in IEP)
- Team does not have enough information to make decision and will (as specified in IEP)
  - introduce well-planned trials of AT for identified task/tasks
  - obtain consultation or begin assessment process

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Consideration is informed.

- Teams may need to seek input from someone knowledgeable about AT.
- Team involvement in this process is crucial; team has knowledge of the student.

Dante

- Dante is an 8 year old boy with Down syndrome who is fully included in third grade. His articulation continues to improve and he is now understood by his teacher and peers. He is reading at a first grade level and can write his name legibly. His printing is very slow and accurate, although larger than his peers'.

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Or …

- Dante is a 13 year old student with Down syndrome who is fully included in sixth grade. His articulation continues to improve and he is understood by his teacher and peers. He is reading at a second grade level and can write legibly. His printing/copying is very slow but accurate, although much larger than his peers'.

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- for augmentative**/alternative communication (AAC)?**
- to participate in state and local assessments (is it addressed in Section VI of the IEP (SDI))?

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Do we think we might need to do something differently?

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Another Scenario

Elias is a 7th grade student with LD. He reads at the 4th grade level, although his comprehension is reportedly at 10th grade level. He spells poorly and hates to write.

He is a pleasant young man who gets along with everyone.

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What if..

Elias is a 9th grade boy with LD. He reads at the 4th grade level, although his comprehension is reportedly at 10th grade level. He cannot spell and hates to write.

He is disruptive in class and frequently truant.

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AT can remove barriers

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Obtaining assistance

- Teams may need to seek input from someone knowledgeable about AT.
- Team involvement in this process is crucial; team has knowledge of the student.

The Consideration/Assessment Connection

- Assessment extends from consideration.
- Thoughtful consideration (using guiding questions) may result in request for AT technical assistance.
- Assessment guides teams in AT selection, acquisition, and use.
- Local procedures for obtaining assistance may vary.

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Resources

PaTTAN Publications

- Teachers' Desk Reference: Assistive Technology
- AT in the IEP
- AT for Students with Disabilities: A Closer Look at Acquistion and Funding

Annotated IEP

- Annotated IEP (see pp 7-12 for guiding questions for consideration)

Resources

- ## PaTTAN Short Term Loan
  www.pattan.net
  – PA Educators borrow for students in public schools up to age 21

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