

>> Susan Gill: Welcome! Thanks for joining us today. (Pause) Good afternoon and thanks for joining us today in our webinar, A Focus and Consideration of Assistive Technology. This webinar is part of the series, the IDEA webinar series for this year. And my name is Susan Gill and I am an assistive technology consultant for PaTTAN, Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network; and I'm joined today by my colleague, Jennifer Goldbloom, who is also an assistive technology consultant and both of us also wear several other hats that -- with -- that provide us with some insight that we bring to this webinar today. (Pause) This side. We also always begin our webinars with -- by reminding people of PDE's commitment to the Least Restrictive Environment. But -- so today we will keep that in mind as we go... (Pause) Okay. All right. Our topic today on assistive -- consideration of assistive technology is important for a number of reasons. The need for assistive technology whether it's assistive technology devices or services is one of those special considerations that IEP teams must address before developing the IEP. This come -- unfortunately comes as a surprise far too often to some team members, sometimes to families. There are a lot of misconceptions around the consideration for assistive technology and what we want or trying to do... I'm going to -- I'm just going to pause and apologize that I'm having trouble advancing the slides. Okay. So what we really want to address in our short time here together this afternoon is what do teams need to know in order to do this consideration? So our way of doing that is to set -- we've set out these objectives. We would like for everyone to be able to identify what the possible outcomes are of AT consideration at the beginning, at that special considerations points at the beginning of each IEP meeting in the process of IEP development. To do that, we want to provide some guiding questions for families and team members in this process of considering AT, and we're going to end by identifying some resources to assist in AT decision-making. So our agenda for today, we're going to start off with what is assistive technology and then zero in on what is consideration, what do we mean by consideration and what might be some of the outcomes of that consideration at the beginning of each IEP. We'll do that by providing as well, some consideration examples to stretch people's consideration muscles -- and, as I said, end up with some resources. And at this point I'm going to turn the mic over to my colleague (Background Sound), Jen. (Microphone Noise)

>> Jennifer Goldbloom: I'm going to start out by reading the slide here just to get us on the same page about what assistive technology is and can do. Assistive technology bridges the gap between a child's functional skills and then 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 thing as their general education peers. So at the core of this definition is function, what does the student need to do? Is it write, read, speak, get from one place to the next and so on? Regardless of whether it's a high tech or low tech device or service, high cost, low cost, simple or complex, assistive technology allows a student to do the things he or she would not otherwise be able to do. Let's begin with defining what AT is a little bit further. AT is defined in federal law as both devices and services which is an important idea to keep in mind in the IEP development process. Here are the definitions. An AT service is any service that directly assists in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device; and AT services can include the evaluation of needs, purchasing, leasing or providing for the acquisition of assistive technology, selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, AT devices or software, coordinating and using other therapies, interventions or services along with the AT device or strategy, and/or training or technical assistance for the student, the family or the

professionals who are involved with working with that student. An AT device on the other hand 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 individuals with disabilities. And so you can see that AT is a very broad range of not only devices but it can be items, software services and includes much more than commercially available items. One thing we can be clear here is that an AT device as defined here does not include any medical device that is surgical implanted such as, for example, a cochlear implant or the replacement of any of those medical devices. AT consideration, like Susan said, is required by federal statute and must occur for every student with an IEP. And what that process of considering AT looks like though is not specifically delineated in the statutes. So consideration, it's intended to be brief at the point of initial consideration in the IEP; does a student or doesn't need IEP -- AT, sorry. But it does entail more than merely checking that box on the special considerations page. Okay? Consideration really needs to be woven into the whole IEP development process, as we'll see later in the presentation. AT needs to be informed, and what that means is in order to make appropriate decisions as to whether assistive technology is or is not needed for a particular student, someone on the team needs to know about AT or have access to someone who is knowledgeable without AT and can guide the team; and considering how AT might assist this individual student to access and progress in the educational program. We do want to avoid teams making decisions regarding assistive technology based on either inadequate information, antiquated information, or based on the latest craze in technology. We really want those decisions to be based on data rather than just our feeling or our hunch. So the first thing we need to do when we're considering AT is to ask for this students, and I keep saying for this student, which do we need to do something different to improve the student's access to the general education curriculum, or to make progress toward the IEP goals. Do teams always have the information to answer these questions? All the question might not get answered right there and then during the IEP meeting itself. By asking these initial questions, it leads to additional questions that are going to have to be addressed by the team and we're going to talk a little bit about that later. But, we get questions asked, some of them we can answer during the course of the meeting itself but when questions arise that we can't answer during the development or during the meeting time, we can say, "Well, yes. We need to consider something different for the student to be successful. At this moment in time, we can't decide what that's going to be but we need to make a plan. So we're going to seek additional guidance as needed, have more discussion as part of a decision making process." When we are on that considerations page, the special considerations portion of the IEP, we can come up with three possible outcomes of that consideration process. First one is AT is not needed by the students, so we don't check that box. And that is going to be determined because the team agrees that it's not necessary part of that program for an -- either a newly identified student or the student's plan that's in place for a student who's already has an IEP is affective as is. The second option is that AT that isn't use the student has AT as part of their IEP and educational program. It's effective, it's sufficient and it's defined in the IEP sufficiently. And so we have AT but we don't need to change anything right now. And the third option is, the team doesn't have enough information to make a decision about AT. So we think something might be needed, we're not sure what it is so we're either going to look at getting some technical assistance and guidance from someone who has more information about that process than us, or introduce some well-planned trials for AT to identify what is needed and so we're going to have to ask more questions, think about what

are the specific tasks that the student is having barriers with that might need to be addressed by AT. So here does the team's going to check "Yes" but they're going to choose one of those options above to move forward. (Pause) So who needs AT anyhow? Okay? There's a lot of misconceptions out there and we all come to the IEP team decision making process with our own past history, our own level of skill surrounding AT. But we really want to first decide whether the student needs AT or not before we'd start thinking about what that AT is going to look like or which AT is going to fit the bill. Very often, we come to the table at the IEP and say, "Ooh. My student needs a (inaudible) because it looks really cool and I think will help them," as opposed to "Let's see if he even needs assistive technology." There are some things that happen though that we want to avoid and too often teams come to the table and decide either for or against AT based on an imaginary litmus test. All students who have autism need AT, or all students that have multiple disabilities or complex needs must need AT, and we really wanted to avoid making decisions based on that kind of parameter. We do not make AT decisions or usually most other educational decisions based just on the nature or severity of the child's disability. So the child has a label, that doesn't mean necessarily anything (laughter). That child has been given a label for one reason but that does not give really any credence to whether or not he needs anything specific. The student may -- that other ideas about the student does not have a disability-label specific -- you know, student doesn't have autism so he doesn't need AT. Or the student -- all students who have learning disabilities need graphic organizers or something. Whatever it is, we want to avoid those sort of stereotypical group decision making processes. So another thing that people come to the table with is that assistive technology is for only particular types of learners and we want to dispel that myth also. Assistive technology is not just for certain types of students. There may be any kind of student who has an IEP might benefit from AT. Sometimes we make decisions about the AT "Yes or No" question based on just what we know currently about AT. And so we really need to open our minds and we really need to think more broadly about assistive technology in order to make individualized decisions for students, so we need to look at the individual learner and decide what range of AT options or tools might serve their need relating to a particular tasks and environments. So we want to move our thinking away from those misconceptions about what a group of kids might need to really, what does this particular student need? What does the student need to do? What can't he do now that he could do if he had access to AT? So once we determine a need, then we can go through a systematic process, determine which AT or combination of AT devices, strategies, software, services will fit the bill for that student. We can figure out what will meet that need and whether it's high tech or low tech or any combination. (Turning Pages) I think it just went backwards. There we go. Okay. So for AT to be effective and have the desired result, we want to make decisions based on the individual student's needs; not based on the following; which is what we were just talking; not based on the student's disability, all students who have a particular disability get this AT; not based on what it costs. Okay? So if it's expensive, we don't just say, "Sorry, we're not going to do that for the student." We are not going our base our decision on "Let's try this because we have it in the store room anyway, so let's see if that'll work for the student." We don't want to base our decision on "Well, this is what we've always used and our teachers really are used to it and they like it." That's the history, or "This is the latest, greatest device on the market," or "latest and greatest strategy," or "latest and greatest software." We really need to avoid that. (Turning Pages) We want to emphasize that decisions are made by teams. The state and federal law make it clear that the IEP decisions are made by the multi-disciplinary team, which includes parent. So AT consideration and

decision making should also be an act of the team. Well, how do teams decide the who and the what of AT? When we have questions or ideas regarding too AT, it's really best to take these ideas and questions back to the team and say, "Here's what I found or here's -- this is what I'm thinking about the student. What do you think about this? Once you take that to the team, we need to know, "Well, what do we do from there?" Okay? So how do teams make those decisions, how should teams make those decisions? And these decisions around AT happen as part of the IEP process and are not a one-shot deal. It really should be an ongoing process. So this AT decision making process doesn't happen in a vacuum, so it's not one shot and it just doesn't happen standalone out here in isolation. The AT decisions are made in the context of other decisions regarding student access to the general ed curriculum and outlining the student's educational goals. So if the team goes through the IEP process and say, "Okay. We've got everything figured out now. Let's now talk about AT for the student." It's probably not going to be the best decision making process, okay? It may be that at that point they've designed the whole IEP and there was really no discussion of AT so they don't really think that AT is needed and they might say, "Well, we've got everything set. There's no need for AT." Or it may be determined that, "Well, yeah, let's try some AT in here and see if we can't get at these goals?" But at that point it's really just an afterthought, so we might not be making the best decision making at that point. Another thing to think about here regarding AT decisions is that AT in and of itself is not a goal, okay? We're not here to light a whole bunch of AT goals for a student. AT, assistive technology, is a tool and it's a tool to be used to help students reach their other goals in education and access education. So we don't want to be writing goals that the student will learn to use the (inaudible) device, or the (inaudible) software; it's really about using the AT as a tool to get them where they need to go educationally. Now, we said it before, we don't want to give decision making around AT short tripped. If the team makes poor decisions around assistive technology selection and implementation, it can lead to the abandonment of that AT device or service, and this can create a false perception that AT is ineffective, in general, or effective for this student, or it may be leading to the false perception that that student really didn't need AT after all. And these are somewhat dangerous ideas and can spread to our decision making processes for other students. They can spread to our decision making about this particular student and it really leads us down a wrong path in where we're going. There was a finding by the National Assistive Technology Research Institute that highest use of AT was in third through sixth grade, but that use of assistive technology declined as the grades went higher. And a slower use of assistive technology in the higher grades is really alarming and it's the result most likely of AT abandonment. Okay? And this may be attributed to the poor decision making that happened and the poor implementation of those decisions back in the earlier grades. Okay. When AT fails, okay, it doesn't mean that the AT wasn't needed, okay? We often think, "Well, the student didn't use it or the student failed with the AT." But it's really not the student that fails with assistive technology. There are many reasons why assistive technology may have failed from the poor choice of assistive technology to start with; the lack of adequate training for the staff or the student or the family; the lack of implementation of the plan to practice and use the assistive technology that we are planning around, okay? So the child's need for the AT didn't go away but some of these things when they're not put into place correctly causes that abandonment. So the team needs to go back, take a very careful look and try to find some additional solutions. It is really essential to have good decision making based on valid information from the start and this consideration, this decision making is about the student's need and not about the prior results for the student. If something failed for a student, or if

something didn't work out, that doesn't mean the student doesn't still have a need for assistive technology. It's -- sometimes it's trial and error but we want to be systematic about it. But I will say that when we do get to that good decision making based on that valid information, it can truly be life changing for a student and really help that student be successful in school and beyond. So let's talk about where the -- where AT discussion occurs in the IEP. Okay. We know that AT is specifically listed and must be addressed in a special consideration section of the IEP, okay? But it can be considered, it can be explored and described throughout the different parts of the IEP form. Discussing the results of ongoing assessment leads to the discussion of AT almost anywhere in the IEP development process, and so it can show up in all of the areas you see on your screen. So looking at present levels of academic and functional performance, there can be a description there of the student's current use of AT and how that's working out; the levels of functioning in various educational areas; a description of where the barriers lie for the student; what are the needs for the student? Where are things -- where's the student having difficulty being successful and progressing in the curriculum? Looking at the measurable annual goals. Remember, we said AT is not a specific goal for the student but it can be specifically listed as the condition component of a goal. So, for example, a goal might state the student will use word prediction software to develop a paragraph with the main idea and three supporting ideas and so on. So the software is the AT; it's a tool and its part of the condition to help that student work on the actual goal which is written expression. So the goal is not using the software, the goal is written expression.

Supplementary aids and services. Here, we're going to outline the supports that are needed to maybe set up or maintain the assistive technology device or software or strategy to train the staff and the student and family on how to use that particular assistive technology. Under specially designed instruction, here we can outline how we're going to infuse the use of assistive technology and to daily instruction across the student's program, so we are not going to look at implementing the assistive technology for 20 minutes on a Monday. Okay? It's probably not going to get us where we want to go. So between the measurable annual goals, the specially-designed instruction, this can really help us figure out specifically where we want to start utilizing the assistive technology. And then for transition planning, the team is going to outline what AT might be needed now and possibly in the future to reach the student's transition goals. Okay? Here we're going to maybe develop a plan, perhaps write some goals to meet that need. And then finally with related services, here the team would outline who might provide the services to help implement the adoption and use of the various assistive technology that was outlined in the IEP. So we're talking about what support, how much where and when, all the usual things that you would list under related services. Okay. So let's take a little bit closer look at AT consideration. IDEA 2004 and Chapter 14 require that teams consider assistive technology for every student with an IEP -- for every student with an IEP. So there's initial consideration and ongoing consideration. Sometimes teams think of consideration as a once and done deal. We've talked about that before that it's probably not a good idea to think that way if you were actually having a student who needs assistive technology. It's ongoing. But a "Yes/No" to an initial consideration for a student who has not used AT in the past there, you know, we're going to make that decision "Yes/No" first. But for students after that first IEP, we must still consider assistive technology on the special considerations page at each and every IEP even if we checked "No" on the student's last IEP. We're still going to look at it and say, "Is this something that the child needs? Let's consider it." Then we need to think in terms of ongoing consideration. Okay? The examination of what we're doing, what is working for the student and

what's not. So if the student -- we had checked "Yes" on the AT box and we're -- we've got the student working through some things with AT, student has access to assistive technology. We need to determine how effectiveness -- how effective that is and if adjustments need to be made. Do we need to change something about the services the student is receiving to support the use and growth of that AT device or service or a strategy? Has the student possibly outgrowth the current situation? You know, maybe we need to increase what the student is able to do using assistive technology. We need to consider carefully and broadly so that we discover what the potential areas of need are; and there are times where we don't know what we don't yet, so taking time to ask the right questions, get the right information from folks can help us find things that we might not have thought about otherwise. And so that's why we really come to talk today about addressing good thinking relating to that consideration; it's not once and done. Let's take a closer look at the special considerations page of the IEP form. Here are the areas that the team must consider when developing that IEP and there -- the first two are "Yes/No" responses and the others will be indicated by a checkmark. Okay. If any of the first three items are checked as "Yes," so is the student blind or visually impaired? Is the student deaf or hearing impaired, or the student has communication needs? It's very likely that the team will need to consider AT and AT will come into play. Certainly a "Yes" to any of those three would alert the team to explore the need for assistive technology to support the student in those areas. In addition to the initial consideration questions for each item on the special consideration page, there are further guiding questions for the team to consider. These guiding questions have been developed as part of the annotated IEP available on the parent website and you have the link on your screen; and the guiding questions are found on pages seven through 12. And note that there are specific guiding questions for each of the areas listed in the special considerations page in the document that we referenced here, and only some of them are included as examples here. And here are some of the guiding questions from the annotated IEP which the team may need to ask when considering AT. These questions help the team figure out what areas might be addressed for the use of AT, what does the current -- the student need to do that it can't do currently, and what are the barriers for the student. So does a student need to have technology to meaningfully participate in the general curriculum and there can be a further discussion of what meaningfully means to participate in the academic or functional activities and whatever program that student is participating in. Does a student need technology to access print materials or auditory information in order to be able to express themselves through written communication or for augmentative or alternative communication? And then also to participate in state and local assessments, there might be a need for assistive technology. In addition, because communication needs and AT needs are often so connected, the guiding questions for the communication consideration may need to be addressed as part of the AT consideration. The same can be said for the first two questions related to blind and visually impaired or deaf and hearing impaired. "Yes" answers on that consideration page to the questions. We'll leave the team to consider the types of AT that are needed. All right. So we've outlined a real basic frame for where consideration discussions occur in the IEP and the types of questions teams are going to need to explore. Susan is going to take you through a few scenarios to help you get a better sense of what that good thinking looks like and how AT consideration really plays out. (Microphone Noise)

>> Susan Gill: Okay. As Jen said, I'm going to take us through -- so if you -- I'm going to pause before I say "scenarios" because really the cases that I -- that we're going to be talking through and that you see on

your handout are really amalgamations of students, cases and issues that arise around the consideration of AT. So there really -- I really have -- I'm using them as a way to look at really familiar issues through this AT consideration lens, and none of them are meant to be sort of guidelines for how to provide AT for a student who sounds like the one that I may be using, so that's my caution moving forward. So I'm going to start just with considering AT in the context of an IEP team meeting, you may be familiar with the situation such as Anna's where Anna's parents asked at the IEP team -- asked about an AT evaluation to determine whether AT might be able to do something, or to see what AT might be able to do for her. And it would be really easy to consider -- to think about that request in a very specific way like, oh, maybe even a negative way thinking, "Well, maybe Anna's parents just want some -- you know, want some equipment or want as Jen referred to whatever the latest, greatest devices. But in a more open minded manner, I think that that -- that I want you to think if that kind of question as very similar to Ben's teacher who in the context of the IEP team meeting says, "You know, I wonder whether AT might help make him make progress?" And in both of these cases, in both of cases like these, and I know that these are very familiar-sounding questions, the issue here isn't what are the details of requesting an AT evaluation which is not our point today and nothing that we say today changes the procedures and timelines related to those sorts of requests, but to look at these kinds of questions that come up and realize that they actually may be indicators of the need to consider AT in situations where perhaps at the point that initial -- that page on the IEP that has the special considerations where, "Let's say Anna or Ben have had many IEPs before and AT has not been checked, and it's just glazed over and that's something that can happen historically. So I want us to think about the kinds of questions that come up at team meetings and to consider that they may actually be interpreted as the need -- to show the need for the IEP team to discuss and Jen brought up this question before; do we think they might need to do something differently? And that question, that question is, of course, a good question for any IEP team to ask about any issue, but we -- but the AT consideration is, is there something that we might need to do differently to continue doing in order to improve access to the general ed curriculum or to help this student make progress toward IEP goals. And so my first example for you with Anna and Ben is that when questions like those come up in the context of an IEP meeting, that it is an opportunity to cycle back to that AT consideration question, even if the team has bypassed it inadvertently already maybe because they historically have. But to consider that if AT is not checked where the team is saying that AT is not needed, in fact when those kinds of questions come up about AT in the context of an IEP meeting, then the determination that AT is not needed is not so very clear. So you go back to that consideration question and consider whether the AT in use is effective or sufficient, and again, those outcomes are not likely when those questions come up of, "Gee, is there something -- you know, would AT make a difference?" So it takes us to the third outcome which is what information does the team have? Does the team have -- can the team look at the information they have that they've brought to the meeting, all of that data, all of those, those anecdotes, all of the rich discussion that comes to an IEP meeting to determine that either one or two not needed, or in use and sufficient are the case. Or, is there -- are those questions red flagged to introduce some trials -- very well-planned trials of assistive technology for -- to address the identified tasks that the student is having, so that those students whether Anna or Ben are having difficulty with. So if the team doesn't feel able to do that or things, "Well, I don't know. What's available? What might make a difference?" then that might be the red flag to obtain some technical assistance and we'll talk a little bit more about doing that, as well. So our first cases of Anna

and Ben were really about reading into the kinds of questions that come up in the context of IEP meetings and as an indicator to go back to careful consideration. Our third student that I mentioned here, we'll call Casey. And Casey is a 12-year-old student with intellectual disabilities and no effect of spoken communication. She does have a four-message augmentative communication device and she uses it, we're going to assume pretty effectively, every day during reading and morning meeting, and during snack time. So what might consideration look like for Casey? Well, let's assume -- I think that we can assume that Casey has an IEP that already has -- yes, checked because she does have -- she does -- is using and therefore needs AT as part of her IEP, that four-message AAC device and there are many, many speech-generating devices or language boards that could meet that description. So we're going to assume that she -- you know, she has AT as part of her IEP already. But now let's extend the Anna and Ben question to Casey and say -- we think, "Well, what if her team members, whether it be the team members who are parents, or teachers, or related service professionals, what if they're wondering what else AT might do for her or whether there's something more that could be done for Anna?" So let's go back to those guiding questions. Let's apply the guiding questions that Jen introduced. And, again, these guiding questions are a part of the -- come from the annotated IEP. So, you've seen the slide before but let's just take a look. Now, if -- is Casey's four-message communication system allowing her to meaningfully participate in the general curriculum? So the team would post that question and perhaps they may say "Yes," perhaps not. It is -- maybe what the team would discuss is that it is not likely that the four things that Casey is able to communicate in the context we described really allow her to leverage the symbolic ability and communication skills she has to really participate in the general ed curriculum. Now, what about participating in academic and functional activities? The team may discuss that greeting and the morning meeting that was described and snack or lunch are very functional activities for Casey to be able to communicate what she wants or needs. The team may want to take a closer look and say, "Well, can she participate in academic activities with the vocabulary that she has?" So already we may be saying, "Well, we may need to look at the AT that Casey is using for communication in this case and either get some technical assistance or introduce some trials to expand and have her make some progress in the use of that that actually increases her functional vocabulary." But let's continue with these questions because there is no one answer to the -- when you go through these questions for any particular student. These are absolutely designed, these questions, for the team to address to consider in IEP development. So let's move on. To access print materials, now could Casey turn the pages of a favorite book herself? Can she? Can she listen maybe to her favorite book independently? Could she maybe comment on it with her communication system? Does she? Could she? Perhaps so. There may be even for a student who has "Yes" checked for maybe a very -- a much -- maybe even a much more effective communication system than is described for Casey, a student using for whom you check? Yes, because of the communication system they're using may still need the team to look at AT for access to print materials or to auditory information, or for written communication or computer access. Could Casey write a note to her mom or to her friend? Or could she produce some kind of written or pictographic report on that favorite book that she -- that the team could use a teacher to give her access to. That maybe is the book that the other students in her class or in her -- in the general education class are reading. So all of these questions would give -- a IEP team cause to say, "Maybe there's something more that we should do." Now we have already addressed even -- at least in prior IEPs for Casey, for this student, there are student needing AT for augmentative alternative

communication because she's using something but that doesn't necessarily mean that the student may not need something different and that the students that the team -- just because they've checked yes doesn't -- that the team would not consider and ask some really good questions about what else the student needs. And then of course there's the question to participate state and local assessment, so let's move on here. One, I'm going to go back for a moment to these guiding questions on "Does the student have communication needs?" because -- now, as Jen pointed out, this is one of the areas that could indicate a need -- as well a need for AT. Now, certainly for many students, perhaps students who are deaf or hard of hearing, they may not necessarily need AT for communication, but one of the things that we have found is very often and perhaps many of you have, too, is that people assume that "Does the student have communication needs?" Does not -- that when you check that people don't necessarily correlate that there may be a need for AT. So let's consider Casey here just for a moment. Are we looking at whether the students understood by others especially with unfamiliar communication partners? This is a great opportunity for the team to talk about what the limitations of her current communication system maybe where they may want to take her next. Let's look at whether the students' communication skills impact upon learning. Perhaps, does the -- that the fact that Casey at this point has a vocabulary of four pictured items limit her ability to talk about other things that she might be learning, or to limit people's expectations of what she could learn? So and one of these important questions is what other considerations should be addressed? Are there other modes of communication that should be addressed? For instance, if it's a voice output communication device, is there some sort of a backup system that is used in places where it's not, or the student doesn't have access to that or where it's not audible or -- so we really do need to look at multiple notes. So we've stretched a little bit with Casey. There may be -- there are a couple of different outcomes of that team consideration as we've said. It would appear that in Casey's case that the team needs to look further than simply to say that what she is using is effective and sufficient. Now, here's our reminder that consideration is informed and it's not just -- and genuine through this very specifically that consideration, although it's not defined in federal statute, it is assumed to be brief but it's assumed to be informed. And it's not just AT consideration that is assumed to be informed, it is assumed that IEP teams will have the make-up to be able to consider all of those special factors. And if they don't, that the teams may need to seek input from someone who's knowledge in this case about AT. And we're really fortunate in Pennsylvania in that we have a system whereby every intermediate unit has an AT consultant so that there is someone to ask. Having said that, team involvement in the process is crucial; an informed person whether it's the AT consultant or an outside evaluation that either the LEA has provided look at -- the family has brought for consideration to the teams, it is very, very important that the input of whoever those informed parties are is considered by the team because it's the people at the table of the other members of the IEP team who particularly, including the family who have that crucial information, that crucial knowledge of the student. So the recommendation whether verbal or otherwise of an informed party is important but it's not marching orders for the team, that assistive technology decisions are made by the team. And, no, I believe that there was a question that is there some specific requirement for who qualifies as an informed person. You know, that there are assistive technology consultants in the IUs; there are many districts -- more and more districts have designated a person as their AT go-to person. Further, we have in our work encountered so many gifted teachers, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists and others who have a great deal of information about AT. So this doesn't necessarily mean a specialist

but the question is -- for the team is, do we have someone who can -- who knows enough to answer all - - to lead us through a really thoughtful consideration using these guiding questions. Okay. So just brainstorm of possibilities for Casey, we really talked about these. Casey, you know, we might consider access to a more generative and maybe generalizable AAC vocabulary, something that when she moves to a new placement, when -- or if she moves to the next grade or she goes down the hall or if she transitions -- eventually transitions out of school that her communication is understood and that she can generate -- use her AAC system to tell what she knows and what she thinks. We talked about maybe means to independently select and listen to preferred books or to text that's aligned with academic content, for instance, through some electronic text for -- through adaptive books at the computer or use some media player or audio books, maybe -- you know, for some students, if not for Casey, maybe those -- the physical access to those books, being able to turn views, a switch or just a mouse to be able to physically turn pages herself if she can't do it would be important and these are important considerations. With regard to writing, although it sounds like Casey uses symbols, perhaps uses symbols or words on her communication device, we don't know a whole lot about her at this point but using those same -- that same symbolic ability, those graphic symbols for writing is absolutely a possibility that the team might want to explore. So expanding on the AT that is being considered by the team for Casey to access the curriculum and to make progress toward her IEP goals are -- all can come out of going through these lists of questions. Now there may be more. I don't want anyone to think that the things that we -- that, you know, that I come up with here and say "How about? How about?" are exhaustive, prescriptive or anything else because it -- AT is really, really broad, but every student -- for every student we should be asking these questions at the IEP because we really want to utilize AT if students need it in order to gain access to the general ed curriculum or to make progress in their goals. So, let's look at another student. Now, my next student here is Dante, and Dante is an eight-year-old boy with Down syndrome, and he is fully included in third grade. He's had some articulation problems. His -- you know, I didn't know Dante when he was little. I'm smiling because Dante is of course fictitious but he had a lot of articulation problems and developed speech very late. But his articulation continues to improve and he's now much more understood by his teacher and peers. And, of course, all of you are probably thinking, well, once we get used to listen to him, that maybe your experience. Dante's reading at a first grade level and he can write his name legibly. His printing is very slow and accurate although it's still much larger than his third grade peers. Now, Dante is a picture of a student who is really -- whose team is very, very pleased with how well he's doing and how he's using his skills, his communication skills and his reading skills to access, to participate in that third grade classroom. But let me just switch gears for a minute. Let's just suppose that Dante was 13, that same student with those same skills fully included in sixth grade. That same, you know, continuing to improve in his articulation and reading now at a second grade level and can write legibly and his printing and copying not surprisingly is still very slow but accurate and still much larger than that of his peers. Now, I may - we could've made Dante looked two different ways on purpose here because as you -- as I put it, stretch your AAC consideration muscles, I want people to think beyond the artificial lids that we sometimes put on, on students where we consider AT while they're still making a certain amount of progress or where we say that, "Well, he didn't need -- maybe someone considered that Dante that this 8-year-old boy maybe didn't need AT, although I think that we could. We could -- I could make a case for considering going through that list." But the AT needs of Dante as a 13 year old in sixth grade will have changed, and

further, I can say with pretty -- I can say pretty reliably that his needs will have changed that he will still need AT. This Dante at age 13 probably needs AT in order to access the general ed curriculum in order to have access to printed text, in order to do the writing along with his -- in the curricular activities that he's involved with in sixth grade. However, it may be that Dante at 13 is less likely to have AT. So, let's look at his -- those questions for Dante. Does he need -- and let's address both the young and the middle school Dante. Does he need AT to meaningfully participate in the general ed curriculum? Probably. Does he need AT to participate in academic or functional activities? Assistive technology can absolutely assist a student who is -- has reading and writing skill levels that are greatly below those needed or -- a called for in the grade level that the student is participating in. And regardless of whether the student's skills at -- are how far below grade level they are, there's nothing that we know about any particular disability that tells us that the students will not continue to learn and make progress as they move through the years -- as they move through school. So a student who is not reading or writing better than they were needs -- is likely not just to need intensive instruction, which is not necessarily -- it's not necessarily our point today, but I mean there's nothing about AT that supplants the need for the IEP team to consider intensive instruction for students who need it in whatever area. However, assistive technology is a means for students to access the general ed curriculum, to access print materials, to access written communication, whether they are a student who needs augmentative and alternative communication or not. And certainly, those means of access that the students use would be reflective as well in their IEP on the -- in terms of the accommodations that they may need for school or for state or local assessments. So, ultimately with Casey as with the young and the middle school Dante, what we're saying at the point of consideration is, do we think we might need to do something differently in order to improve the students' access to the general education curriculum, or in order to help the student make progress toward IEP goals? It is entirely likely that going through this list of guiding questions that the team on their own or in seeking assistance will come up with something that they want to try out to get some data rather than, as Jen put it, rather than to write an IEP based on hunches; to take some data to see whether the provision of a particular kind of AT support does in fact improve the student's quality or quantity of writing, or does in fact provide the student with access to -- better access to their print materials. So it's those well-planned trials that you will reflect in the IEP. Now, a question came in as to where the AT may be -- when it's considered, maybe included in the IEP. And when you check "Yes" on the consider -- when you check "Yes" with "The student does need assistive technology," it is required that assistive technology be reflected in the IEP. It is not specific what area. It is a very good and Jen went through this, but it is a very good idea to reflect that consideration in present levels; in fact, it is good -- it would be good -- a good idea and it is good advice for teams when they check "No" after a discussion or a trial with AT when they've determined that their student does not need it to reflect that information in -- when they report on present levels. But certainly, the AT can also appear in the other places that Jen mentioned. As a condition of a goal, it could be specially designed to instruction; it could be under related services; it could be supplementary aids and services, certainly in accommodations; but I would -- AT would need to be reflected in the IEP when the team has checked "Yes." So, just as a quick brainstorm of some things, there were possibilities for Dante at whatever age. Electronic text for access to reading material, perhaps book share; most LEAs know about book share which is an absolutely free service that can provide students with access -- auditory access to books, to digital books. Other adapted books such as books that you adapt using Tar Heel Reader or PowerPoint

or other -- or simply using a talking word processor, having your -- you know -- or reading a book from the computer using text to speech. With regard to writing, talking word processor with word banks, with word prediction as an alternative, pen or paper writing. Even for students whose handwriting is so painstaking as it would appear that Dante's is a name stamp or for a quick way to mark items. I'm going to just go quickly to our last scenario to "Elias is a seventh grade student," I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this, but I wanted to make sure that we included a student consideration of a student with learning disabilities who reads at a level that is significantly below the grade and it could (inaudible) fourth grade, for a tenth grader who spells poorly, hates to write. We're saying that he's a pleasant young man who gets along with anyone and it shouldn't really make a difference whether what grade Elias is in or what -- how far below grade level he's reading. And it may also be that he's disruptive in class and frequently truant which often happens with students who have difficulty with reading and certainly with writing considering we show -- indicate everything we know by writing. So I just want to wrap up by saying that provisions within IDEA and Chapter 14 and 711 for charter schools require the textbooks and related core instructional materials be provided to students with print disabilities and specialized formats in a timely manner and that this -- this is accessibly instructional materials and it does apply to more than students who are blind and visually impaired. So print disabilities are blind visually and impaired, student is blind, or has a visual impairment, student has a physical impairment, student has a print disability that limits -- a reading disability due to organic dysfunction actually is the federal definition. What's important is that those disabilities don't directly correlate with the IDEA disability categories. Those remain unchanged but that and we should -- you should circle this -- students with IEP teams who need accessible instructional materials need to be provided with accessible instructional materials, which means how are they accessing the texts that everyone is accessing, because AT in all of these forms that we've mentioned can remove barriers. I said that we'd -- I'd talk more about providing -- getting assistance that because teams may need some input, I often use this visual to describe the brain of the assistive technology consultants at the IU level because they really are great and terrific resources who know about an awful lot of tools, and you can't really provide for students assistive technology that you don't know is out there. So I would say that obtaining that kind of technical assistance is crucial. The consideration assessment connection is that when the team needs a - - determines that additional assessment is needed, that assessment really does extend from consideration and really thoughtful consideration using those guiding questions can result in a request for technical assistance as we say, or in a assistant -- further assessment or an assistive technology evaluation and local procedures for obtaining the assistance from that, for instance, from the IU may vary, but I'm going to say that it's a really good idea to check with your intermediate units about that. I'm going to wrap up by saying that there is some resources here for you, PaTTAN Publications; and there are also some -- PaTTAN short term loan is a great way to try out AT if a team makes that consideration. There are some additional consideration resources that are not in your -- the handout that is posted, but we will put -- include the slide that just connects you to some further resources and reading around assistive technology consideration. So, that brings us to the end of our presentation and I'm just going to pause for a quick moment to look at my colleagues to see if there were any other burning questions that needed to be answered. So here is contact information for myself and for Jen. If your questions weren't answered, you should -- by all means, you can feel free to send me your questions and I am also very likely to direct you to your IU, your intermediate unit assistive technology

consultant depending on where you come from. But thank you so much for sticking with us, especially through some of our initial audio problems. Thanks so much for joining us!