

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

MEMORANDUM

July 25, 2011

TO: SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES
ADMINISTRATORS, STAFF AND TEACHERS

FROM: CINDY ANDERSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SPECIAL EDUCATION



SUBJECT: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

What does IDEA and the research say about AT?

With the support of technology – particularly assistive devices – many students with disabilities can increase their level of independence in terms of communication, mobility, and learning. Technology can provide a bridge for students whose needs would otherwise make participation difficult in the classroom setting.

IDEA specifies that the need for assistive technology be considered for each child with an IEP.

What is an assistive technology device?

...any item, piece of equipment or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. Assistive technology devices can be purchased commercially off the shelf, modified or customized (20 U.S.C./1401 (1)).

Some examples of such devices are:

- Electronic communication aids / voice output devices
- Braille writers
- Adapted keyboards
- Assistive listening devices
- Devices that enlarge printed words on a computer screen

How can the AT department assist teams?

AT consultants can be a resource to team members who are exploring assistive technology for a student with disabilities. Upon request, they can assist the team to select, acquire or use an assistive technology device. AT specialists provide access to resources and equipment, technical assistance to teams and training on systems and devices.

Do AT consultants provide direct IEP services?

AT consultants do not provide direct services to students and are not listed as team members on the IEP. They attend IEP meetings, as time allows, but are not required to do so.

How are assistive technology assessments completed?

A comprehensive AT assessment is a team process that occurs over time. The assessment process includes a functional evaluation of the child within the educational environment and often involves a trial period using a 'loaner' device or system. The AT specialist can assist with selecting and acquiring an appropriate trial device and can help the team to establish timelines for data collection throughout the process.

The team member linked to the area of concern completes the evaluation process with consultation from an AT specialist, as needed. For instance, the speech pathologist completes an assessment of functional communication skills; the special education teacher and occupational therapist might partner to complete an assessment of written expression; the BVI teacher completes the assessment of functional vision, etc. The AT specialist can assist team members to collect meaningful data across the school environment.

What happens once the data collection phase is complete?

The team reviews the data and determines the effectiveness of the device or system in the educational setting. The AT consultant can assist the team to analyze the data and make recommendations regarding the effectiveness of the device.

How is equipment acquired?

The IEP team determines if a particular device or system is required in order for the student to receive FAPE. If so, the AT consultant works with the child's team to acquire the equipment by accessing the available resources.

How about the IEP?

The team convenes and amends the IEP to reflect the need for assistive technology. The results of the assistive technology assessment process should be reported in the Present Level section (IEP page 2). Any additional accommodations, program modifications or training needs are detailed under Modifications (IEP page 8). IEP goal areas and objectives are revised, as necessary.

What happens if a student comes to school with a device or system recommended by the family's private therapist?

The school team calls the AT department/consultant to initiate an evaluation of the device within the school setting. The AT consultant will be responsible for training the school team on the operation, implementation and maintenance of the device. Data collection and other related documentation are compiled and analyzed by the team to determine if the privately purchased device is appropriate for use within the school setting.

How does the AT consultant support the team once the equipment is in place?

The AT consultants are available to provide training and technical assistance to the team. They can adapt, customize, maintain and repair equipment. Upon request, the AT consultant can provide individualized training in the use and implementation of specialized technology.