



NASSET's IEP Components Series

Considering Assistive Technology

Assistive technology enables children with disabilities to participate more fully in all aspects of life (home, school, and community) and helps them access their right to a —free appropriate, public education‡ in the —least restrictive environment‡. The IEP team must determine whether an individual child needs an assistive technology device or service, and if so, the nature and extent to be provided. This issue of **NASSET's IEP Component series** comes from the Center for Parent Information & Resources. The checklist provided is designed to help IEP teams consider the needs of students with disabilities for assistive technology. It was adapted from the Nebraska Department of Education's *Nebraska IEP Technical Assistance Guide* (1998, September).

Assistive Technology

What is it?

Assistive technology enables children with disabilities to participate more fully in all aspects of life (home, school, and community) and helps them access their right to a —free appropriate, public education‡ in the —least restrictive environment‡. The IEP team must determine whether an individual child needs an assistive technology device or service, and if so, the nature and extent to be provided. It is possible that an assistive technology evaluation will be required to determine if the child would need an assistive technology service and/or assistive technology device. Any needs identified should be reflected in the content of the IEP, including, as appropriate, the instructional program and services provided to the child (92 NAC 51 007.07B7).

Why is it important?

Assistive technology increases a student's opportunities for education, social interactions, and potential for meaningful employment. It also supports a student's participation in learning experiences in the least restrictive environment. Assistive technology is a tool to help the student benefit from the general

education curriculum, and access extracurricular activities in home, school, and work environments. In addition:

___ A child's need for assistive technology must be determined on a case-by-case basis and could be special education, related services or supplementary aids and services for children with disabilities who are educated in the least restrictive environment.

___ A district must provide a device for use at home if necessary for FAPE. Decisions regarding the use of the assistive technology device or service in other settings outside school must be made on an individual basis.

___ A school may access alternative funding sources to defray costs of assistive technology devices and services. Schools may not compel parents to file an insurance claim and may not condition provision of equipment or services on filing or approval of a claim.

How do we do it?

The following written process addresses primary questions related to assistive technology: The team needs to consider carefully what environments the student accesses now, what are the tasks the student is required to accomplish, and what challenges does the student have in accomplishing the tasks. This will show us what the current educational need(s) are of the student. Then ask the question

—***Would assistive technology of some kind enable the student to meet the goal?*** Areas to consider include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- ___ Handwriting
- ___ Spelling
- ___ Reading
- ___ Math
- ___ Written expression
- ___ Daily organization
- ___ Communication
- ___ Mobility
- ___ Recreation
- ___ Seating/positioning
- ___ Seeing
- ___ Self-care
- ___ Levels of independence
- ___ Cognitive processing

Proceed to Step #2.**2. What has been tried to meet the student's special education needs?**

Once the area of educational need(s) has been identified, the team needs to review what has been tried in the past to address the need(s) of the student. This may include a variety of interventions achieved through strategies or modifications not typically considered —assistive technology.¶ These may be low-tech in nature or there may be high-tech assistive technology devices in place.

Example: A student with a learning disability, unable to memorize multiplication facts, may use a multiplication table. The multiplication table could be identified as a supplementary aid in the regular education environment. An assistive technology device, such as a calculator (identified as a low-tech device) could also be used to meet the student's needs.

3. Is it working?

Is the current strategy, modification or device meeting the student's specific need in the environment? Additionally, does the current strategy, modification or device encourage the level of desired independence, allowing the student to remain in the least restrictive environment (LRE) where he or she is able to receive FAPE?

Proceed to Step #4 and #5 or #6.**4. and 5. Is it working? YES. Provide documentation and evidence to support this conclusion.**

If the team agrees the specified educational needs and level of independence are being met within the LRE, and the student's current programming is appropriate with the strategies, modifications, and/or devices in place. There should be evidence to support this conclusion. The evidence may be in the form of:

- ☐ Work samples
- ☐ Classroom tests
- ☐ Formal testing
- ☐ Recorded observations
- ☐ Videotaping
- ☐ Any other form appropriate to the student and his or her needs.

The use of successful interventions may be documented within the IEP as part of the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP), within goal statements, as components of the objectives, or as related services.

Proceed to Step #13.

6. Is it working? NO

If the team agrees that the current educational needs are not being met, they should... ***Proceed to Step #7.***

7. What was tried? What were the results?

What strategy, device, or modification was tried? If there were more than one, deal with each one separately. Document the time period the strategy, device, or modification was tried. Indicate if there were any —breaks in service that may have affected the outcome. Provide information and descriptions about how each strategy, modification or device was used and indicate the anticipated outcome. Actual outcomes or results should be noted. Indicate what worked and what did not work. Are there implications regarding further strategies or modifications or devices that should be considered to achieve the student's goals? Specific information and/or data collected from this step should be used in considering alternative interventions.

Proceed to Step #8.

8. Do we as a collaborative team have the necessary knowledge and resources to continue to try to meet the student's needs?

After efforts have been made to attempt modification, apply strategies, and/or use assistive services or devices, and it is apparent the IEP team's efforts are not affecting the desired change, determine a course of action. By asking this question, you can determine whether or not you can continue to brainstorm and come up with strategies on your own, whether there are more resources that can be tapped, or whether it is time to consider advice or assistance from an outside source. The next step is to either seek additional process or continue to work as a team.

Proceed to Step #9 or Step #11.

9. Do we have the necessary knowledge and resources? NO. *Proceed to Step #10.*

10. Seek additional assistance

At this point, the IEP team may consider a referral to another source for information. There may be other resources within the school building or school district, or other agencies, local or otherwise, the IEP team may want to use. As a result of information provided by your source of additional assistance...

Proceed to Step #12.

11. Do we have the necessary knowledge and resources? YES.

The team needs to develop a plan of action to meet the specific need(s) of the student. Based on what has been tried, they need to decide on alternative intervention strategies, service or devices, or modifications to interventions already in place.

Proceed to Step #12.**12. What will be tried?**

Given the specific educational needs of the child, the team needs to address the following questions regarding the assistive technology device:

- ☐ Under what conditions will it be tried?
- ☐ In what environment(s) will it be tried?
- ☐ How long will it be tried?
- ☐ What is the criterion for determining whether or not the need is being met?

Based on the discussion of previous outcomes, develop an action plan and incorporate it into the IEP as documentation of consideration for assistive technology that will be acted upon to meet the appropriate educational needs of the student in the LRE.

NOTE: Assistive technology is necessary as a supplementary aid if its presence (along with other necessary aids) supports the student sufficiently to maintain the placement, and its absence requires the student's removal to a more restrictive setting. For example—If a student with multiple physical disabilities can make independent, educational progress on his or her IEP goals in the regular classroom with the use of a computer and an augmentative communication device and cannot make such progress in that setting without the devices, then those devices are necessary supplementary aides. Assistive technology needs for each student will vary. The criteria will also be unique to each student, depending on the desired goal. The goal for each student should include:

- ☐ Increased independence
- ☐ Task mastery
- ☐ Rate at which a task is accomplished
- ☐ Stamina to accomplish task(s)
- ☐ Accuracy
- ☐ Attentiveness
- ☐ Increased interactions
- ☐ Other child-specific criteria

As with any IEP considerations, goals related to assistive technology depend on the individual needs of the child and must be determined on a case-by-case basis. The service or device is related to, or integrated into the goal or short-term objectives, but is it the student's needs, not service or device limitation, that drives the decisions?

Proceed to Step #13.

13. Consideration is an ONGOING PROCESS. Change in environment, change in student skill level or needs, and new technology may influence the process.

It is important to remember that consideration of assistive technology and evaluating its role in the education program of a student is an ongoing process. While there is a beginning, there could quite possibly be no end. As the student's environments change, as the tasks change, and abilities change, the student's needs will likely change as well. The process of consideration is required to be a part of every annual IEP review, at minimum. In best practice, the evaluation process will be ongoing with those around the student continuing to ask —Are the needs being met?

How Do We Know We Are Doing It Right?

The IEP team:

- ___ Considers what they want the student to be able to do within the educational program, what he or she isn't able to do because of his or her disability.
- ___ Documents on the IEP what has been tried, how long it was tried, and the results.
- ___ Documents on the IEP what will be tried?
- ___ Considers whether necessary knowledge and resources have been obtained.
- ___ Seeks additional assistance if needed.
- ___ Considers the student's ongoing assistive technology needs.