Assistive Technology in Education

An assistive technology device 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 a person's functional capabilities. These devices may be as simple as reading glasses or as complex as a speaking personal computer. An assistive technology service is any service that helps an individual select, acquire, or learn to use an assistive technology device. These services include customizing, adapting, maintaining, and repairing devices, assistive technology evaluations, funding, and technical assistance and training on device use.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires states to provide a free and appropriate public education, including related services, for all children with disabilities. This law recognizes that children with disabilities may need assistive technology devices and services to help them receive an education equal in quality to that of other children.

Developing an Individualized Plan

The Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) for children under age three or the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for preschool and school-aged children are written plans for educating a child. They document a child's needs and the special services that can help meet those needs. Goals set in the IEP are designed to help the child reach his or her full potential in the community in the least restrictive educational setting. An IEP makes a critical difference in later education decisions.

There are eight separate parts in developing and implementing an IEP:

- A determination of a child's current performance level in physical, social, and academic areas.

- The establishment of specific instructional needs, based on current performance level.

- The statement of at least one goal for every need that is identified and prioritized.

- Specific short-term objectives leading to each goal.

Resources for Families

Need more information on IDEA, IEPs, or special education? Scan the QR code to access our online resources.

SCAN ME

Partners Resource Network

Offices in Lubbock, Houston, Austin, El Paso, and Dallas/Fort Worth

1.800.866.4726

info@prntexas.org

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- A definition of the type of service and/or technology needed to accomplish each objective.

- The amount of time needed to accomplish each objective.

- A description of the least restrictive environment in which the objectives and goals can be accomplished.

- Evaluation of how the child will be able to participate in regular education activities.

The IEP may also allow a child to spend as much time as possible in the regular classroom with peers. Interaction with other children in the regular education classroom is a crucial part of a child's social development. The IEP may also include assistive technology devices and services. The school district is responsible for delivering all services that are outlined in the plan.

Types of AT in the IEP

- **Sensory enhancers** help students with sensor y deficiencies (e.g., visual, hearing, orthopedic impairment) access their environments. Sensory enhancers can include augmentative communication devices, text magnifiers, scanners with speech synthesizers and voice analyzers.

- **Keyboard adaptations and emulators** are alternatives to using a standard keyboard to input data. They include joysticks, light pens, touch screens, sketch and graphics pads, and fist/foot keyboards.

- **Environmental controls and manipulators** modify the operation of a device to compensate for environmental restrictions caused by a disability. Examples include adaptations of timers, light switches and telephones; robotics; additional external switches activated by pressure, eyebrows or breath; telecommunications devices for the deaf (TDD), and control mechanisms with sonar sensing devices.

- **Instructional uses of technology** use computer software to allow students full educational opportunity. Some examples are computer-assisted instruction, which uses software for drill and practice, and computer-managed instruction, in which software displays and analyzes grades, schedules, placement, and information management items.

- **Motivational devices** encourage the student to interact with his or her environment through exploration, manipulation, and play. These devices include battery-operated or modified toys and games.

Funding

Yes. If it is necessary to achieve a free and appropriate education as for example, when the device is needed at home for homework and/or additional and supplementary training.

Appealing Decisions

Parents who want to appeal an IEP decision should express to the school their disagreement with a decision. They can also make a complaint to the state education agency, request the state to provide mediation and/or file a request for a due process hearing.