

## ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY & EDUCATION



Assistive Technology (AT) offers the opportunity for individual student success. It plays an important role in helping students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) and can make the school setting much less restrictive.

There are a wide range of AT devices and services available today for children in special education and a mandate to consider the AT needs of every child with a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA).

IDEA defines assistive technology devices and services. "**AT device** means any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off-the-shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to maintain, or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability." This could be an augmentative communication device, an FM system or specialized software. "**AT service** means any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device." This could be an AT assessment, consult with an orientation and mobility

specialist, or training on the use of a device.

### **Examples of AT**

The following categories of education-related technology are intended to provide a general guide of a variety of applications. These are not all inclusive, but will help you in identifying the area(s) in which AT could benefit the student.

1. **COMMUNICATION AIDS:** Any system that aids students who are not independent verbal communicators - augmentative and alternative communication or AAC devices, synthesized speech, picture symbols, or computers.
2. **EDUCATIONAL/ADAPTED TOYS:** Toys and games that are specially adapted for use by student to participate with classmates - switch toys, beeping balls, learning games, or skill games.
3. **ASSISTIVE LISTENING:** Any system that aids students with hearing loss to function in various activities - personal amplification devices, visual signalers or closed captioning devices.
4. **COMPUTERS:** Computer hardware that assists students with disabilities use a computer - adapted or alternative keyboards, keyguards, trackballs, joysticks, moisture guards, or switch interfaces.
5. **COMPUTER SOFTWARE:** Software installed on a computer that allows a student with a disability to learn, communicate and share information - word prediction, picture symbols, text to speech, or screen magnification.

6. **ENVIRONMENTAL:** To assist a student with independence - environmental control units, door openers, ramps, or reachers.
7. **MOBILITY/SEATING POSITIONING:** Items that will assist a student in movement - walkers, wheelchairs, standers, or seating cushions.
8. **SAFETY ALERT/HEALTH:** Alert systems - smoke detectors with visual signals for the hearing impaired, or verbal systems for the blind.
9. **VISUAL AIDS:** Devices that assist a student that is blind or visually impaired - Braille cards, talking clocks, magnifiers, or CCTV.
10. **RECREATION/EXERCISE:** Items that can assist a student - card holders, shufflers, three wheeled bikes, exercise equipment or switch activated video games.

### **AT and the IEP**

The determination of need to provide AT devices and services is based upon whether the child requires these to benefit from the educational environment.

- The need for AT devices and services must be determined on an individual basis by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. The determination of a child's need for AT devices and services must not be based upon a category, severity, or class of disability.
- AT devices and services should be written into the IEP. The IEP is the basic document that sets up all of the special education and related services that will be provided to a qualifying child under the IDEA.

