



Documenting Assistive Technology in the IEP

As mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, Individual Educational Program (IEP) teams must document a student's need for assistive technology (AT) devices and services within the IEP. Assistive technology may be addressed in one or more components of the IEP depending on the student's need for and use of AT. Regardless of the location in the IEP in which the AT is addressed, IEP teams should document the type of technology that is used and the environments and tasks in which it is used. The supports needed to facilitate the student's use of technology and the staff responsible for implementing the use of the technology should also be documented. The IEP should also include documentation of how the effectiveness of the use of the provided technology will be monitored.

When documenting AT in the IEP, it is often beneficial to describe the AT using feature terminology. For example, it would be appropriate to write "Suzie requires the use of a talking word processing program to assist her in completing classroom writing assignments. It may also be necessary to name the current technology that the student is using. For example, it may be necessary to follow-up the above example with a statement such as "Currently, Suzie is using Write: OutLoud."

It is important to remember that the IEP is a legal document which must be implemented in a timely manner. When AT devices are included in a student's IEP, they should be provided to the student, customized to meet the student's individual needs, and integrated into instructional activities within the classroom.

The following information is provided to assist IEP teams with the documentation of assistive technology devices and services:

Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

Assistive technology is frequently addressed in the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance section of the IEP. In this section, the IEP team addresses the student's strengths and weaknesses in academic, developmental and functional areas as well as recent evaluations, assessment data, and impact of the student's disability on accessing the general education curriculum. This section provides a natural place to address AT needs because assistive technology is frequently used to compensate for barriers to achievement, participation, and independence that the student is experiencing due to deficits in academic or functional skills. When documenting assistive technology in the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, the specific type(s) of technology that is needed as well as the manner in which it will be used should be described. The following are examples of how assistive technology may be addressed in the present performance levels of the IEP:

John exhibits a severe expressive communication impairment. He communicates with peers and adults within his environment using vocalizations and an eight location voice output augmentative communication device. He uses the device in all educational settings and appropriate vocabulary is programmed for each setting.

Due to her significant visual impairment, Susan is not able to access standard print instructional materials such as textbooks, worksheets, and written tests. She requires that all print copies be enlarged through the use of a photocopier or closed circuit television system. Computer-based materials are enlarged using a text enlargement software application.

Consideration of Special Factors

Assistive technology is one of the special factors that must be addressed in the development, review, and revision of each student's IEP. Minimal compliance with the requirement to consider assistive technology is responding to the statement in the IEP which states "Does the student require assistive technology devices and services? ___ Yes ___ No If yes, describe: _____". If the IEP team determines that the

student requires assistive technology through this consideration process, then the IEP must include a description of the assistive technology that is required.

Although minimal compliance for considering AT may be simply checking yes or no to the consideration question, best practice would dictate that IEP teams use a systematic process for considering a student's AT needs and that the outcomes of the consideration be addressed in the IEP. In most instances, it is just as important to document when a student does not require AT as when a student does require it.

The following are examples of how assistive technology may be addressed in the consideration of special factors:

Does the student require assistive technology devices and services? Yes No
If yes, describe: Johns requires the use of a talking calculator for all math activities that require calculation.

Does the student require assistive technology devices and services? Yes No
If yes, describe: Paula needs access to adaptive seating and positioning equipment (prone stander, wedge) in her classes in order to participate in her educational program.

Does the student require assistive technology devices and services? Yes No
If yes, describe: Karen uses an eight location augmentative communication device with speech output to supplement her current communication skills. See present performance levels and annual goals and objectives for additional information.

Annual Goals, Benchmarks, and Objectives

When developing annual goals, benchmarks, and objectives, the IEP team should determine whether or not the student requires assistive technology in order to accomplish them. First the goals should be developed and then the need for assistive technology should be addressed. Assistive technology is not the goal. Rather, it is the means to achieving the goal for many students. The following examples are provided to assist IEP teams in addressing assistive technology in this section of the IEP:

Annual Goal (Reading):

John will demonstrate comprehension of grade level text (presented in standard print and/or digital format using a text reader) by composing oral or written responses to teacher questions for 4 out of 5 times for three consecutive weeks.

Short-term Goal Communication:

Susie will independently express food and drink choices in the school cafeteria in 4 out of 5 opportunities for 4 consecutive weeks using single word utterances and a voice output communication device.

Listing of Special Education and Related Services

In many states, AT is provided as a part of a student's special education, related, or supplemental aids and services. As a result, AT is addressed in the appropriate sections of the IEP such as goals or accommodations for testing.

However, in some states, AT is considered a related service. When AT is provided as a related service, the technology should be documented in the listing of special education and related services and should be addressed separately. The following are examples of how IEP teams may address assistive technology in this component of the IEP:

Speech-Language Therapy	1 hour per week	8-15-00 through 6-10-01
Assistive Technology (Augmentative Communication Device)	30 hours per week	8-15-00 through 6-10-01

If AT is listed as a related service, it is important to remember that additional information may need to be added in other sections of the IEP to clarify the types of technology that will be used, the environments and tasks in which the technology will be used, and the staff responsible for supporting the use of the technology.

Supplemental Aids and Services

Assistive technology may also be addressed in the supplemental aids and services component of the IEP. Assistive technology is often provided as a supplemental aid and service when required for a student to function in the general education setting. The following are examples of how assistive technology may be addressed in the supplemental aids and services section:

Shaunda will use a portable word processor with built-in spell check for all note taking in her general education classes.

Kendra will have access to a calculator for all math activities in her general education classes.

Instructional Accommodations

The IEP team is responsible for determining the instructional accommodations that the student requires to access the general education curriculum. Accommodations, including assistive technology, may be provided in the delivery of instruction, in the types of instructional materials used, and in the student's method of responding. For example, a student may need closed captioning of a video that is being viewed in the classroom. A student may need to use the computer with a talking word processing program as an alternative to handwriting when the student is having difficulty completing the assignment due to the length and complexity of the assignment. Another student may require books in large print as an alternative to standard print.

When selecting accommodations for instruction, it is important to remember that some accommodations may be needed for instruction, but they may not be needed or allowed on district-wide and state-wide assessments. The need for and use of accommodations should be addressed on an on-going basis

Classroom Testing Accommodations

Students may also need accommodations when participating in classroom testing that are used during instruction. Students should not use accommodations in classroom testing, including assistive technology, that are not used during instruction. In addition, some classroom accommodations may not be required for testing. It is important to review testing accommodations on an on-going basis.

Accommodations for State-wide and District-wide Assessments

The IEP team must address the accommodations and modifications that the student requires in order to participate in state-wide and district-wide assessments. For some students with disabilities, assistive technology may be a required accommodation or modification. The following examples are provided to assist the IEP team in addressing assistive technology in this component of the IEP:

When participating in group testing situations, Marcus should wear his auditory trainer to optimize his ability to listen to verbal directions provided by the teacher.

Due to her severe visual impairment, Shantae requires that all testing materials including directions, and answer sheets, if appropriate, should be provided to her in Braille.

In order to participate in tests that require a written response of greater than one paragraph, Stephen needs to use his portable word processor.

Instructional Modifications or Supports for School Personnel

When addressing assistive technology, IEP teams should document the instructional modifications that the student needs in order to participate in and benefit from his or her educational programs. Additionally, the IEP team should address the supports that the school staff requires in order for them to effectively provide assistive technology devices and services to the student. The following are examples of how assistive technology should be addressed in this section of the IEP:

Paul's teachers will receive training in the use and programming of his augmentative communication device.

Kelly's special education and general education teachers will be provided with follow-up training and technical assistance as needed to aid them in integrating the use of her assistive technology devices (spell checker, word processor) into her school curriculum.

Transition Services Plan

When addressing transition services required by the student, it is important to address assistive technology devices and services needed by the student and, when appropriate, to address assistive technology that may be required in post-secondary environments. The following is an example of how assistive technology may be addressed in this section of the IEP.

Colin's school staff, vocational rehabilitation counselor, and family will contact public and private agencies to assist him in obtaining funding for a communication device that can be used after he graduates from school. They will begin contacting agencies at the beginning of his senior year. The vocational rehabilitation counselor will identify potential sources to technical support that will be available to Colin after he graduates.

Summary

The IEP is a powerful document for ensuring that students with disabilities have access to the assistive technology devices and services that they need to participate in and benefit from their educational programs. Assistive technology devices and services required by a student with a disability should be clearly documented in the student's IEP. The type of technology that the student requires and the manner in which it will be used should be specified so that all parties to the IEP, including parents, have a clear understanding of the technology and how it will be used.

Once assistive technology has been documented in the IEP, it should be provided in the manner in which it was specified.