Assistive Technology and Augmentative and Alternative Communication Policies and Procedures for the Moriarty Edgewood School District
Purpose

The purpose of this manual is to assist teachers, case managers, related service providers, and administrators in providing assistive technology and augmentative and alternative devices and services to students with disabilities as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The manual contains operating guidelines that address all components of the assistive technology service delivery process to include augmentative and alternative communication. It also contains procedures that IEP teams will use when providing assistive technology services.

This manual pertains to both assistive technology (AT) and Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). The term assistive technology is often used as a blanket term that encompasses augmentative and alternative communication.

Definitions:

Assistive technology refers to items that assist with daily living and facilitate independence in the settings a student must function within while at school. Equipment/materials used as a teaching tool or strategy utilized in the classroom used with multiple students is not considered to be assistive technology. Equipment/materials that are effectively addressed through instructional modifications such as instructional strategies or materials are not considered Assistive technology.

Assistive technology addresses areas beyond the scope of instructional tools, strategies, modifications or accommodations. Assistive technology needs are addressed only through a related service provider such as an Audiologist, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, etc. Examples of AT include, hearing aids, visual timers, word prediction software, etc. Considerations are made on a student by student basis.

Augmentative and alternative communication is utilized to compensate for impairments that inhibit or impede the production and/or comprehension of spoken and written communication. Types of AAC include: gestures, sign language, facial expressions, speech generating devices, computer software. Augmentative and alternative communication needs are met by a speech-language pathologist.

Items for AT and AAC can be in the low tech range, or high tech range. Examples of low tech refer to things such as graphic organizers, simple electronic equipment that uses replaceable batteries. High tech items use rechargeable batteries, and may also function as a computer.

The items regarding AT and AAC will often overlap for example with switches, word prediction software, graphic organizers, visual timers, software programs and some voice output devices.

The following policies and procedures provide structure for the consideration(s) process, the assessment process, and use of AT and/or AAC items in the educational setting.
Table of Contents

Purpose of Manual and Definitions of Services ................................................................. 2

Part I
Definition of Assistive Technology Devices and Services .................................................. 4

Part II
Procedures for Considering Assistive Technology Needs .................................................... 7

Part III
Assessing Assistive Technology Needs .............................................................................. 9

Part IV
Documenting Assistive Technology in the IEP ................................................................ 11

Part V
Monitoring the Use and Effectiveness of Assistive Technology ........................................ 13

Appendix A
Assistive Technology Consideration Checklist and Resource Guide .................................. 14

Appendix B
Assistive Technology and Augmentative Alternative Communication Assessment Referral Form ........ 16

Assistive Technology Website:

https://sites.google.com/a/mesd.us/pressley-assistive-technology-library/
Part I: Definition of Assistive Technology Devices and Services

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Public Law 105-17) offers clear definitions of assistive technology devices and services.

**Assistive Technology Device:**
Assistive technology (AT) devices are identified in the IDEA as:

Any of equipment/materials or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintains, or improves the functional capabilities of children with disabilities. (Section 300.5)

The definition of an assistive technology device as provided in the IDEA is very broad and gives IEP teams the flexibility that they need to make decisions about appropriate assistive technology devices for individual students. The term AT also encompasses augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) although the IDEA uses the term “device”, IEP teams should remember that assistive technology also includes assistive technology hardware and software. Assistive technology may also include technology solutions that are generally considered instructional technology tools, if they have been identified as educationally necessary and documented in the student’s IEP. For example, a classroom computer with a word processing program can be considered assistive technology for a student who demonstrates difficulty in writing and spelling, if the IEP team has determined that it is educationally necessary.

As used in this document, assistive technology devices, include devices, hardware, and software that are required by a student with a disability. Assistive technology devices can be purchased from a local store or a vendor that specializes in the production and sale of assistive technology devices. Assistive technology devices often need to be modified or customized to meet the individual needs of a student with a disability. For example, a computer keyboard may need to be adapted through the addition of tactile locator dots for a student with a visual impairment. When determining assistive technology needs, IEP teams should consider commercially available solutions that may be used “as is” or that can be modified to meet the student’s needs. However, in some situations it may be necessary to construct a device to meet the student’s unique needs.

A range of assistive technology devices are available. Some are relatively “low technology” and inexpensive. For example, a visual timer is an assistive technology device that may be used by a student with a physical disability to improve attention, and assist a student with transitions. An adapted cup with enlarged handles may be used by a student who has difficulty holding a standard cup. Other devices are more “high technology” tools and are often more expensive. An example of a “high technology” tool is an augmentative communication device in which a student types in messages on a communication display and they are spoken aloud.

Assistive technology devices are available in a variety of categories to address functional capabilities of students with disabilities. These categories include but are not limited to:

- **Academic and Learning Aids:** Electronic and non-electronic aids such as calculators, spell checkers, portable word processors, and computer-based software solutions that are used by a student who has difficulty achieving in his or her educational curriculum.

- **Aids for Daily Living:** Self-help aids for use in activities such as eating, bathing, cooking, dressing, toileting, and home maintenance.

- **Assistive Listening Devices and Environmental Aids:** Electronic and non-electronic aids such as amplification devices, closed captioning systems, and environmental alert systems that assist a
A student who is hard of hearing or deaf with accessing information that is typically presented through an auditory modality.

Augmentative Communication: Electronic and non-electronic devices and software solutions that provide a means for expressive and receptive communication for students with limited speech.

Computer Access and Instruction: Input and output devices, alternative access aids, modified or alternative keyboards, switches, special software, and other devices and software solutions that enable a student with a disability to use the classroom computer.

Environmental Control: Electronic and non-electronic aids such as switches, environmental control units, and adapted appliances that are used by a student with a physical disability to increase his or her independence across all areas of the curriculum.

Mobility Aids: Electronic and non-electronic aids such as wheelchairs (manual and electronic), walkers, scooters that are used to increase personal mobility.

Pre-vocational and Vocational Aids: Electronic and non-electronic aids such as picture-based task analysis sheets, adapted knobs, and adapted timers and watches that are used to assist a student in completing pre-vocational and vocational tasks.

Recreation and Leisure Aids: Electronic and non-electronic aids such as adapted books, switch adapted toys, and leisure computer-based software applications that are used by a student with a disability to increase his or participation and independence in recreation and leisure activities.

Seating and Positioning: Adaptive seating systems and positioning devices that provide students with optimal positioning to enhance participation and access to the curriculum.

Visual Aids: Electronic and non-electronic aids such as magnifiers, talking calculators, Braille writers, adapted tape players, screen reading software applications for the computer, and Braille note-taking devices that assist a student with a visual impairment or blindness to access and produce information that is typically present in a visual (print) modality.

A particular student with a disability may require assistive technology solutions from one or more of the above categories. For example, a student with a severe intellectual disability may use an augmentative communication device to supplement his or her communication skills, adaptive switch toys to participate in leisure activities, and an adapted keyboard for accessing the software applications on the classroom computer.

The above listed categories of assistive technology devices are not disability specific. For example, a student with a learning disability who has difficulty focusing on the teacher's lecture in class due to processing difficulties may require an assistive listening device to amplify the teacher's voice in a classroom. Students with various types of disabilities use adapted tape recorders originally developed for visually impaired and blind children to access audio-taped reading materials.

The need for assistive technology devices is determined by the student's IEP committee. Typically, assistive technology solutions are identified through consideration of assistive technology or through an assistive technology assessment. Once an assistive technology device has been determined educationally necessary, the student’s IEP team should document the required device(s) in the IEP. Information on considering and assessing the need for assistive technology devices and documenting assistive technology devices is included in subsequent sections of this manual.
**Assistive Technology Service:**
As defined in IDEA, an assistive technology service is: Any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, and use of an assistive technology device. The term includes:

(a) The assessment of the needs of a child with a disability, including a functional assessment, to help determine the educational needs of a child to support access to curriculum.

(b) Purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of assistive technology devices by children with disabilities;

(c) Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, retaining, repairing, or replacing assistive technology devices;

(d) Coordinating and use of other therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices, such as those associated with existing education and rehabilitation plans and programs;

(e) Training or technical assistance for a child with a disability.

(f) Training or technical assistance for professionals (including individuals or rehabilitation services), who are otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions of children with disabilities. (Section 300.6)

As stated in the IDEA, assistive technology services are provided to assist in the selection, acquisition, and use of an assistive technology device. Often IEP teams focus their energies on the device itself and forget that the assistive technology services, as described in this document, are critical to the student's use of the device to support educational success. Devices are identified through an assessment process. For some students, appropriate assistive technology devices are identified through an assessment that the IDEA specifies must be conducted in the student's educational environment. After, a device has been selected through a trial period or assessment process that meets the student's needs, the next step or "service" is to actually provide the assistive technology device for the student's use. After the device has been obtained, and if necessary, modified, all appropriate individuals should be trained in the use of the device. The device should be made available for the student's use across instructional settings as needed.

Required assistive technology services should be addressed in the student's IEP. Information on addressing assistive technology services in the IEP is included in subsequent sections of this manual. Consideration and assessment of AT and AAC is provided by the IEP team and the AT team at the school level and possibly the district level. Team members can include any combination of the following; Student, family members, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Speech-Language Pathologist, Special Education Teacher, General Education Teacher, Nurse, Doctor, Social Worker, Audiologist, Vision Specialist, etc.
Part II
Procedures for Considering Assistive Technology Needs

Requirement:
Each IEP team at the school level will consider assistive technology as a part of the development, review, and revision of the student’s IEP. Students in the General Education Setting, that are in the TIER II, will have access to assistive technology, through a related service provider and must be part of a written plan, such as Student Assistant Team documentation. These items will be checked out to the Teacher and related service provider, making the teacher responsible for the item and the related service provider available for assistance. Students in Special Education will have priority, at which time AT may be requested to be returned, though every effort will be made to accommodate both situations. Equipment is for the purpose of supporting student progress in the educational environment.

Procedures:
The IEP team should utilize the Assistive Technology Consideration Checklist (Appendix A) as a framework for considering the need for assistive technology devices and services. When considering AT/AAC, the following areas should be addressed:

- Review the instructional and access areas that are relevant for the student and determine the required tasks within each of the areas.
- Determine whether or not the student can accomplish the required tasks within each of the standard classroom tools.
- If the student cannot accomplish the required tasks using available standard classroom tools, the IEP team should determine whether or not the student can accomplish the required tasks with modifications, accommodations, and assistive technology solutions that are currently in place.
- If the student cannot accomplish the tasks independently with standard classroom tools or with modifications, accommodations, and assistive technology solutions that are currently in place, then the IEP team must determine what additional solutions (including assistive technology) are required.

The IEP team may use the Assistive Technology Consideration Checklist (Appendix A) as a framework for discussing assistive technology during the consideration of special factors phase, which should then be placed in the student’s special education legal file.

The consideration process may include an opportunity for the student to use assistive technology on a trial basis in order to obtain information on the potential effectiveness of the assistive technology. The first point of contact is a related service provider at the school level such as an Occupational Therapist or Physical Therapist, for assistive technology, or the Speech-Language Pathologist for communication devices. Related service providers do not need to have a student on their caseload to consult on issues concerning AT/AAC.

Assistive technology for trial use may be available within the district’s assistive technology library at: https://sites.google.com/a/mesd.us/pressley-assistive-technology-library/. Guidelines and procedures for the library are be located on the website. Staff members responsible for day to day use of equipment will sign out equipment/materials.

Possible conclusions of the consideration process include:
A. The student independently accomplishes required tasks within the relevant instructional or access areas using standard classroom tools. Assistive technology is not required.
B. The student accomplishes the required tasks within the instructional or access areas using standard classroom and modifications and accommodations that are currently in place. Assistive technology is not required.
C. The student accomplishes the required tasks within the relevant instructional or access areas with assistive technology that is currently in place, then assistive technology is required. Document required assistive technology devices and services in the IEP and as a proposed action on the Prior Written Notice. Do not include any statements on the PWN if the box is marked “no.” Do not name specific devices, equipment or materials in the IEP or PWN. List the type of device, equipment, or materials needed. For example, Michael requires a speech generating device to communicate with a variety of partners across the educational setting. Monitor the use of the assistive technology through data collection and make changes as needed.

D. The student cannot accomplish the required tasks within the relevant instructional or access areas with modifications, accommodations, and/or assistive technology that is currently in place.

- If potential assistive technology solutions are known to the IEP team, trial use of the identified assistive technology solution may be documented in the IEP and implemented. Mark “yes” on the Considerations of Special Factors page of the IEP with a statement regarding that it is for a trial period. Then include a supporting statement on the PWN, again regarding the trial phase. Following the trial use period, once a specific type of device, equipment or materials is identified, the assistive technology type should be documented in the student’s IEP if the team determines that it is required, which can be done through an addendum as needed. Do not name specific devices, equipment or materials in the IEP.

- If potential solutions are not known to the IEP team at the school level, a consultation should occur with the district AT or AAC specialist before a referral is determined to be necessary. Once an assessment is determined necessary, a referral will be made to the pertinent district AT or AAC specialist utilizing the appropriate forms on Tienet (refer to Part III for more detailed information). The student’s case manager will initiate the process by contacting the assistive technology team member (related service provider). The team members include the Occupational Therapist or Physical Therapist for assistive technology and the Speech-Language Pathologist for communication devices. The related service provider will contact the district AT or AAC specialist for consultation if a student’s needs are outside the scope of the school level. A consultation should occur before a referral is made considering the district specialist’s input.

Requesting Equipment/Materials for Trial Use:
If a student requires trial use of equipment/materials, or devices through the assistive technology library, access the library website: https://sites.google.com/a/mesd.us/presley-assistive-technology-library/. The website contains procedures for checking equipment/materials out.

Requesting Equipment/Materials not found in the AT Library
In the event that the AT Library does not contain the necessary equipment/materials consult with the AT/AAC Specialist. If at any time the purchasing of equipment/materials is determined necessary, documentation regarding justification will be required, prior to submission to the Student Support Services Director for approval. Justification must include all information regarding the student and data collected during the consideration process, reason(s) for the request, and how the requested item/s will be utilized in the educational setting to facilitate independence.

Requesting Assessments Outside the Moriarty Edgewood School District
If a student requires the consideration of a service or equipment, outside the scope of the Moriarty Edgewood School District, the district AT or AAC Specialist will consult with the necessary agency and professionals. After all the necessary information is compiled the district specialist will consult with the Student Support Services Director to determine how to proceed. The IEP team will request assistance in completing the consideration process when they are unable to determine whether or not the student requires assistive technology, or when they are unable to identify AT/AAC solutions available from MESD.
Part III:
Assessing Assistive Technology Needs

The assessment process for identifying AT or AAC needs is for students receiving special education services for occupational therapy, physical therapy, or speech-language therapy is an informal assessment process. Just as in the consideration process there is a trial period of the assessment process. Therefore, no formal assessment deadlines are required. The purpose of the assessment is to identify a specific type of equipment/materials that promote student independence.

Requirement:
An AT or AAC assessment will be completed when the IEP team at the school level, determines that the student’s AT / AAC needs cannot be effectively addressed through the consideration process at the school level. Students are referred for an assessment to the district AT or AAC specialist. The MESD district specialists are an Occupational Therapist to meet AT needs, and a Speech-Language Pathologist for AAC needs. Specific individuals in these positions are listed on the district AT library website.

Assistive technology assessments for assistive listening devices regarding students with hearing impairment may be conducted by an audiologist in consultation with the pertinent specialist, school AT team and/or the NMSD Liaison as applicable. Contact the Student Support Services Director’s office regarding audiology services or support for students with a suspected or identified hearing impairment.

Requesting an AT Assessment:
Prior to referring a student to an assessment specialist, all typical assessments should be completed e.g., speech/language assessment, occupational assessment if within the tri-annual assessment year. Otherwise previous assessment will suffice. Before an AT/AAC assessment is requested, consultation with a district specialist is required. The assessment process is informal and at the discretion of the assessment specialist as to what areas need assessment.

I. Procedure for requesting an assessment:
   A. Consult with AT or AAC Specialist after compiling the necessary information:
      1. Have the following information available for consultation
         a. Case History
         b. Considerations form in Appendix A form (located in this manual, AT Library, SSS webpage)
         c. Appendix A require detailed narrative regarding AT/AAC trial items and outcomes
         d. Any formal assessments should be considered and any pertinent information shared with Assessment Specialist.
         e. Referral form in Appendix B (located in this manual, AT Library, SSS webpage)
      2. Information should be compiled and entered as a file base document in Tienet
         a. Notify the Assessment Specialist regarding availability of file based document via Tienet or email.
   B. For audiology services contact the office of the Director of Student Support Services.

II. Following receipt of a completed referral packet (Appendices A and B), the MESD Assessment Specialist will:
   A. Contact parent to obtain consent to proceed with assessment
      1. Consent is provided by a conference with the parent in person or by phone.
      2. Document the conference using the conference document found in Tienet
   B. Include proposed actions on the PWN regarding informal assessment
   C. Proceed with assessment
   D. Document assessment outcomes using appropriate evaluation form located in Tienet
      (Occupational Therapy Evaluation for or Speech-Language Evaluation form located in Tienet)
1. **Under Reason for Referral** section on evaluation form, state in that the assessment process is informal.

   E. Determine if a trial phase is required
   F. If no trial phase is necessary make equipment/material recommendations for student use
   G. Notify school level AT team regarding assessment outcomes and recommendations by Tiemail, or email when report is complete.

III. The school level AT Team will follow up with assessment recommendations, or commence with trial phase.

   A. Modifications/Accommodations regarding AT will be provided to staff for general and special education staff
   B. The use of AT will be addressed in Goals and objectives if student has an IEP
      a. Follow up on student progress a quarterly reporting periods (progress notes for students with IEP)
   C. Consult with Assessment Specialist as needed.

Consultation between the assessment specialist and the school level related service providers will be ongoing. Student needs change over time, so services should adapt accordingly. During the trial period of the assessment process, no changes to equipment or materials should be made without consultation with the assessment specialist. Goals, objectives and benchmarks will be co-written between the assessment specialist and the persons delivering services.
Part IV

Documenting Assistive Technology in the IEP

Requirement:
Assistive technology and AAC items, equipment, and services that have been determined educationally necessary by the IEP team will be documented in the student’s IEP. Educational necessity encompasses the trial period or use of specific items/or equipment and services needed to access the educational setting. Sections in the IEP to be addressed:

1. Consideration of Special Factors page.
2. The Prior Written Notice (PWN).
3. The instruction and testing modifications and accommodations.
4. Goals and objectives to include the Present Levels of Performance
5. Transition documents for graduating students
6. Documents to obtain funding for individual use

Procedures
To meet compliance regarding AT and AAC the outcomes of the consideration process must be documented in the IEP on the “Consideration of Special Factors” page. If a student is in the trial phase of AT or AAC use, mark “yes” in response to the question, “Does the student have assistive technology needs”. If the question is answered “yes” a statement of need in relevance to the educational setting will be provided about the trial phase. If marked “yes” it will also be included on the Prior Written Notice as a proposed action

Examples of statements to include in the PWN for students in the trial phase:
1. Student has severe cerebral palsy resulting in dysarthria and difficult to understand. He/she requires a speech generating device to function effectively in the academic setting. Currently he/she is in a trial period to identify an appropriate device for him/her.
2. Due to attention deficits, student is in the trial phase of identifying a type of assistive technology to aide in maintaining focus on class assignments and activities.

If an assessment has been performed, a report must be included, found in Tienet, under the appropriate Occupational Assessment or Speech-Language Assessment form. The original copy of the assessment report must be sent to the Student Support Services office for the student’s legal file.

Once a specific item/piece of AT or AAC equipment is identified, it must be included on the “Consideration of Special Factors” page of the IEP regarding assistive technology. It will be included on the PWN as well. Specific types of equipment/materials will be identified and must fit within the IEP period. Do not label specific brand names of equipment/materials, only state the type.

Examples of statements to include on the PWN for a student when a specific item or piece of equipment is identified:
1. Student has severe cerebral palsy resulting in severe dysarthria making his speech difficult to understand. He/she requires a speech generating device to be understood by staff and students in the academic setting.
2. Due to student’s attention deficits, a visual timer will be used to show the student how much time is needed for individual assignments and activities.

**Only include the information on the Prior Written Notice if the special factors component on the IEP regarding assistive technology has been marked “yes”. If “no” is marked, no further action is needed. Do not include a statement regarding no need for services on the Prior Written Notice. This is not a proposed action and is not necessary to include on the Prior Written Notice.**

11
Specific items/equipment must also be included on the goal page in the “Present Levels of Performance” section and within the goal that will serve the student’s AT or AAC needs. Assistive technology or AAC needs can be addressed through an objective as well if the IEP team agrees.

If a student’s AT or AAC needs cease to be met through the current IEP year, an IEP meeting must be held. Reasons to call for a meeting before the end of the IEP year include:

1. Student’s needs are not met by current AT or AAC items/equipment.
2. AT or AAC goal no longer meets student’s needs.

Addressing accommodations and modifications
Assistive Technology or AAC needs will also be addressed in regard to modifications and accommodations by the IEP team. The modifications and accommodations will address the areas of need in the instructional and testing settings, and where appropriate. For example: A student with a fine motor impairment would need word processing software if written language is not legible in the instructional setting and testing setting.
Part V: Monitoring the Use and Effectiveness of Assistive Technology

Requirement:
The student’s IEP team will monitor the student’s use of the recommended assistive technology and make changes in programming as needed.

Procedures:
The student’s IEP team will collect data on the student’s use of assistive technology as outlined in the IEP or assistive technology intervention plan. Quarterly progressed notes will be provided on the necessary dates.

The IEP team will analyze the data to determine the continued appropriateness of the assistive technology intervention and to make changes in programming as needed. The school staff will make changes in the student’s assistive technology intervention plan as needed based on data collected by the team.
Appendix A
Assistive Technology and Augmentative Communication
Consideration Checklist

Student: _____________________  School: ___________________  Grade: ___________  DOB: ___________

Provide a statement of the student’s impairment and how it impacts academic performance and
limits access to the educational setting.
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Settings student must have access to:
A. General Education Classroom (GEC)
B. Special Education Classroom (SEC)
C. Work Study Setting (WSS)
D. Other

Generally state the student’s needs, abilities and difficulties in the education setting, use the key
above to document the settings information pertains to.

1. Needs
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

2. Strengths
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

3. Weaknesses
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
4. List the barriers that impede student performance and achievement in the academic and educational setting. Consider the following:
   a. Access to curriculum or instruction
   b. Access to areas in the educational setting
   c. List standard classroom tools student uses independently
   d. List tasks student can complete with accommodations/modifications and list
   e. List AT or AAC currently being used and the effectiveness

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

5. Detailed narrative of trial equipment/items outcomes and additional information.
Appendix B
Referral for Assistive Technology and/or Augmentative and Alternative Communication Assessment

Student: ___________________ School: _______________ Grade: ___________ DOB: __________

Type of Assessment Requested
__________________________________________________________________________________

Reason for Referral:
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________