

Assistive Technology

The TERM assistive technology means any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used in increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of students with disabilities.

An assistive technology SERVICE can be defined as a service that (not all inclusive):

- assesses the need for a student to have an AT device, including functional evaluation in the child's usual environment, and/or
- provides acquisition of a device, and/or
- selects, designs, fits, customizes, adapts, applies, maintains, repairs, or replaces assistive technology devices, and/or
- coordinates in the use of the device with other therapies, and/or
- trains or provides technical assistance for the child, the child's educational team, or the family of the child, where appropriate

The Assistive Technology Continuum

Often when people think of assistive technology, they think mostly about computers or sophisticated electronic devices. However, it is important to realize that assistive technology "devices" range from "high-tech" to "no-tech".

High Tech -High-tech devices incorporate sophisticated electronics or computers.

Medium Tech- Medium-tech devices are relatively complicated mechanical devices, such as wheelchairs.

Low Tech -Low-tech items are less sophisticated and can include devices such as adapted spoon handles, non-tipping drinking cups, and Velcro fasteners.

No Tech - No-tech solutions are those that make use of procedures, services, and existing conditions in the environment that do not involve the use of devices or equipment. These might include services such as physical therapy, occupational therapy or the services of other specialists.

As IEP teams make decisions regarding the need for assistive technology for a student, the best approach is to start with the no-tech solutions and then work up the continuum as needed. Much too often, the tendency of the team is to start at the upper end of the technology continuum when, in fact, it is better to start at a lower point.