

Assistive Technology: More than "Checking A Box"

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Alt+Shift



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Alt+Shift is an *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) Grant Funded Initiative through the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education



Meet the Presenter

- Carolyn O'Hearn
 - AT/AAC consultant
 - Speech Language Pathologist
 - Total communication enthusiast
 - IEP nit-picker



Objectives

- Explore how AT can be written (well) in various sections of an IEP
 - PLAAFP
 - Transition
 - Goals/Objectives
 - Supplementary Aids and Services
 - Testing
 - Related Services, Transportation
- Identifying next steps

Special Factors

The IEP team must consider the following for the student:

- ❑ The communication needs of the student.
- ❑ The need for assistive technology devices and services for the student.



More than Checking a Box

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- The need for assistive technology devices and services for the student.

...this box doesn't provide any details!

What is Assistive Technology?

- 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 functional capabilities of a person with a disability.
- Any service that directly assists the person with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.

AT Can Assist in Many Areas



Source:

<http://www.augsburg.edu/class/groves/assistive-technology/everyone/>



techsoup.org
the place for nonprofits and libraries

Back to “the box”

The IEP team must consider the following for the student:

- ❑ The communication needs of the student.
- ❑ The need for assistive technology devices and services for the student.

AT Consideration **MUST** take place for **EVERY** student receiving special education services.

Consider This...

- AT Consideration is a process that involves:
 - Collaborative decision making
 - Reviewing existing information about a person
 - Possibly collecting additional information
 - Deciding whether or not AT is needed
 - Identifying the AT in order for the person to be successful (if needed)

Five Possibilities of AT Consideration

*(and would be great generic phrases for IEPs)

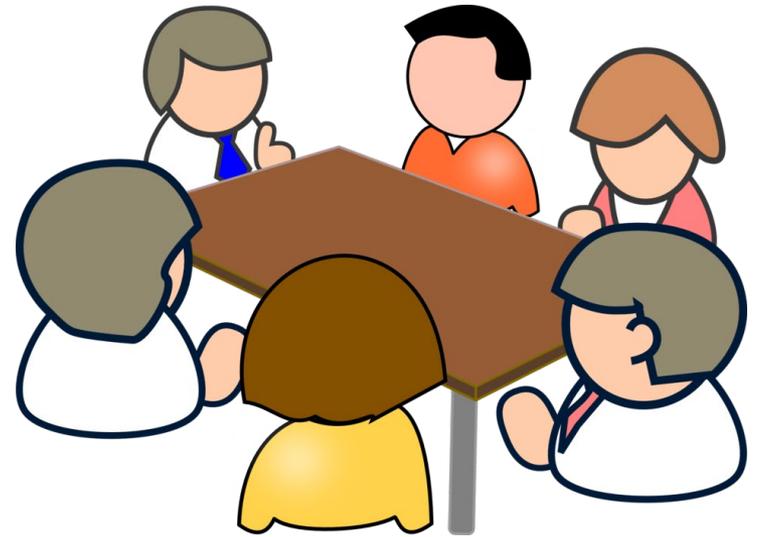
1. We've considered AT and it's not necessary at this time
2. We've considered AT and find the student has had not access and may benefit from AT
3. We've considered AT and the AT currently in place is working; student needs are being met

Five Possibilities of AT Consideration (continued)

4. We've considered AT, and while the student is using AT, he/she has additional needs
5. We've considered AT and we, as a team, do not have enough information. Additional information or assistance is needed.

We need more info...now what?

- Evaluation process
 - SETT process
 - Student
 - Environment
 - Tasks
 - Tools
 - Fonner Modified SETT framework
 - Provides guidance with device/tool trials, data collection, and implementation plans



Who can contribute to AT consideration, selection, and/or implementation?

- ANYONE on the student's IEP team
 - Student
 - Parent
 - Teacher
 - Ancillary staff
 - Other people actively involved in student's life
- bit.ly/ATskillsinventory

Common Errors of AT Consideration

1. AT is only considered for students with severe disabilities
2. No one on the IEP team is knowledgeable regarding AT
3. Team doesn't use a consistent process based on data about the student, environment, or tasks to make decisions

Common Errors (continued)

4. Consideration of AT is limited to those items that are familiar to team members or what's available in the district.
5. Team members fail to consider access to the curriculum and IEP goals in determining if AT is required in order from the student to receive FAPE.
6. If AT is not needed, the team fails to document the basis of its decisions.

Sections of an IEP

- Present Levels (PLAAFP)
- Transition
- Goals and Objectives
- Supplementary Aids and Services
- Testing, Transportation
- Related Services

PLAAFP

- Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance
 - Strengths, parent concerns, special factors
 - Progress on previous goals and objectives
 - Baseline of how they access and participate in educational tasks
- If the student moves tomorrow, will the new team know how to best support him/her?

PLAAFP Suggested Components

- Academic Achievement
- Communication
- Medical/health
- Social-emotional/behavioral
- Perception/Motor/Mobility
- Adaptive/Independent living skills
- Transition/Vocational
- Transportation*

When there's a need to further explore AT

- **Written Expression:** Nick has a weak grasp due to a progressive neuromotor condition, and as a result he has difficulty handwriting responses beyond a few sentences. Due to his fine-motor difficulties, Nick dictates extended paragraph forms to his resource teacher to complete his assignments. A more independent mode of writing is needed for Nick and further assessment is necessary to determine accommodations that will enable him to complete paragraphs without assistance.

Exploring More AT

Self-help skills: Kyle enjoys interactions with peers during lunch in the school cafeteria. Due to his motor difficulties, a teaching assistant feeds him. Further assessment and exploration of adapted eating utensils may facilitate more independence while eating.

Augmentative communication: Susie, a kindergartener, responds to yes/no questions with appropriate head movements. She indicates her wants and needs by pointing and gesturing in her environment. Susie needs an AT assessment to determine if she could benefit from an augmentative communication system to increase her ability to communicate with others.

When It's Time to Reassess AT

Written communication: Jon is in the fourth grade; his handwriting is illegible and slow. He handwrites at a speed of 3 WPM, which is much slower than that of his peers. He types using a portable word processor at 10 WPM, and while this has helped to ensure that his typing speed is much closer to the speed of grade-level peers, he may benefit from the additional use of keystroke reduction such as abbreviation/expansion and word prediction to further increase his typing speed. Further assessment of his AT needs can determine if additional AT supports can increase his written production speed to better meet the current academic writing demands.

When AT is Effective

Writing difficulties: Using a pencil grip, Julie performs all written assignments in her first grade classroom independently.

Auditory difficulties: Angie has a severe hearing loss in both ears for which she wears hearing aids. She adequately hears and understands general classroom lecture and discussion when wearing an FM system.

Visual difficulties: Bill reads eighth-grade-level text material when enlarged to 1 inch using a closed-captioned TV (CCTV).

Transition Planning

- Looking toward the future
 - Independent living
 - Employability
 - Education and training
 - Community involvement
- Consider parent and student input
- WATI – [Protocol for Transition Planning](#)



Goals and Objectives

- Tie into the need expressed in the PLAAFP
- Include the task/skill the student is expected to achieve
- Identifies HOW the student will achieve the task/skill
 - What tool?
 - How much support?
- Goals are student-driven (not staff-driven!)

Goal (Example 1)

- Utilizing a form of AAC and aided language input, student will produce 3-5 word utterances in order to participate in a three-turn conversational exchange at least once per day, 4/5 days per week, in order to improve her overall communication skills.

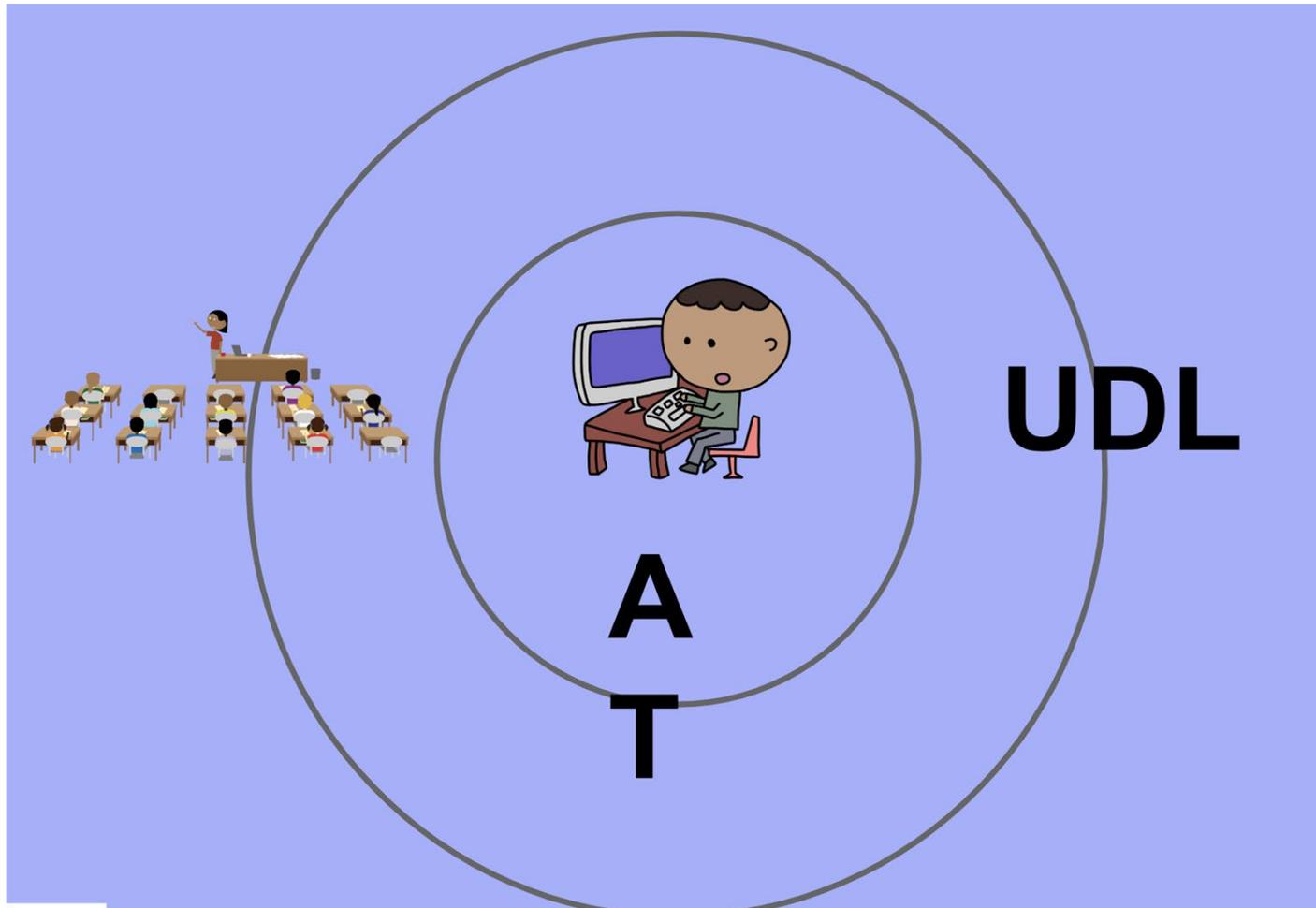
Goal (Example 2)

- Utilizing an electronic graphic organizer, student will independently write an opening topic, three supporting detail sentences, and a closing sentence to construct a 5-sentence paragraph during writing assignments.

Supplementary Aids & Services

- Accommodations and modifications
 - Changes to tests
 - Presentation of material
 - Method of response
- Supports addressing environmental needs
 - Preferential or planned seating
 - Altered physical room arrangement
- Specialized equipment needs
 - Assistive Technology (including AAC)

AT or Universal Supports?



Supplementary Aids & Services (continued)

- Pacing of Instruction
 - Home set of materials
- Presentation of subject matter needed
 - Taped lectures
 - Paired reading and writing
- Materials needed
 - Scanned tests and notes
 - Shared note-taking
 - Large print, specific font
 - Braille

Supplementary Aids & Services (...still continued)

- Testing adaptations needed
 - Questions read aloud
 - Modified format
- Consultative services (SLP, OT, PT, TC)
- Time/frequency/condition
 - Be as specific as possible – which classrooms, which subjects, which activities/tasks
- Location
 - General ed? Special ed? Both?

State/District Assessments

- State assessments
 - Accommodations are identified for each assessment
 - Corresponds to a need identified in the PLAAFP
 - Aligns with supplementary aids and services
 - Accommodations also need to be used for more than just the state/district assessments
 - Ex: Questions are read orally for classroom assessments as well as state/district assessments

Related Services, Transportation

- Direct services
 - Speech therapy, OT, PT
 - VI, O&M
- Transportation
 - Wheelchair lift
 - Harnessing system
 - Securement system



Thank you!



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