

A Guide to Assistive Technology (AT) Assessment

The purpose of this document is to provide general guidance on how to conduct an Assistive Technology Assessment as a part of the development of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) that assures the provision of a Free and Appropriate Public education (FAPE) and is compliant with Federal (IDEA) and State (MARSE) regulations.

THE WAYNE COUNTY REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY

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Why Conduct an Assistive Technology Assessment?

When AT has been considered, but more information is needed an AT assessment should be completed by the IEP team through a collaborative and consistent process. Assessment of AT Needs is a process conducted by the IEP team, used to identify tools and strategies to address a student's specific need(s). The issues that lead to an AT assessment may be very simple and quickly answered or more complex and challenging.

Possible situations that could call for an AT assessment may include:

- Parent requests
- When the IEP team is unable to identify appropriate AT for the student to support IEP goals.
- When the AT consideration process concludes that more information is needed.

If the IEP team needs assistance with completing an AT assessment, WATT is available to provide guidance.

Note: *There is not a formal standardized test that directly addresses an AT assessment. An AT assessment is a process that gathers information from multiple areas to determine the student's needs.*

The IEP team may be asked to include an AT assessment on the Review of Existing Evaluation Data (REED). However, AT does not help determine student eligibility and therefore is not required to be documented there. If there is a specific request to document the AT assessment on the REED then it is recommended that it be documented as follows:

- Check the box “information and evaluations provided by parent” on the first page and write the request on the line and include the time frame.
 - An AT assessment/evaluation does not determine the student’s eligibility and therefore would not go under the assessment area.
 - Instead, select the areas that would be assessed during the AT assessment.

SECTION IV: REVIEW OF EXISTING DATA (check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Educational history	<input type="checkbox"/> Attendance	<input type="checkbox"/> Discipline record	<input type="checkbox"/> Progress toward general curriculum
<input type="checkbox"/> Report cards	<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom accommodations	<input type="checkbox"/> Support services provided	<input type="checkbox"/> Last MET/ Current IEP, if applicable
<input type="checkbox"/> Health/ Medical information	<input type="checkbox"/> Behavior plans/interventions	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Observations by teachers and related service providers (required)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Current classroom-based, local, or State assessments and classroom-based observations (required)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information and evaluations provided by parent: (required):			

Additional general education interventions needed: Yes No

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Note: *It is best practice to always inform and include the family in an AT assessment.*

What is an Assistive Technology Assessment?

Although the IDEA has clearly mandated the requirement that IEP teams consider AT devices and services for each student, many IEP team members have questioned how this requirement could be effectively implemented for individual students.

An AT assessment is always conducted by a team that includes the parents and involves the student at a level of participation and decision making that reflects the students age and ability.

Note: *The use of the terms “assessment” and “evaluation” varies across disciplines, geographic areas, and agencies. In IDEA, the term “evaluation” is used. However, in this document, the term “assessment” will be used to refer to a formative, ongoing process for determining a child’s unique need for AT.*

What is the Difference between Assessment and Consideration?

The most obvious differences between Consideration and Assessment/Evaluation are those of depth and duration.

Consideration is a short discussion that takes place during the IEP meeting using known information. Consideration results in the decision to continue something already being used or to try/not try assistive technology.

- Wayne RESA has provided the [AT consideration checklist](#) to help with this process. This checklist is modified from the [Assistive Technology Handbook for Educational Professionals, Michigan](#). For more information about this checklist, please refer to "[A guide for the AT consideration checklist](#)."

Assessment goes into much more detail, looking at:

1. The student's abilities & difficulties
2. The demands of the environments
3. Tasks the student to perform

Assessment also includes the acquisition of new information.

All students who benefit from the use of AT should have an active implementation plan. For additional information about an AT Implementation plan, refer to "[Assistive Technology Implementation Plan, A Tool for Improving Outcomes](#)."

Stop and Think: *Don't immediately call for a formal AT assessment if the team can determine the AT devices and services, if any, that the student needs based on available information. It's not always necessary to conduct a formal AT assessment.*

When Should an Assistive Technology Assessment be Conducted?

Determining which AT will be effective often requires an *"assessment of assistive technology needs"*. Once the AT team has Considered AT during the IEP and determines that more information is needed to determine the need for AT, then an assessment should be conducted.

Who Conducts an Assistive Technology Assessment?

The IEP team determines whether a student's needs can be met through the use of AT or through other accommodations.

The Team can include:

- The Student
- The Family
- Classroom Teachers
- Instructional Assistants
- School Psychologist
- Speech/Language Pathologist
- Occupational Therapists
- Physical Therapists
- Orientation and Mobility Specialists
- Audiologists
- School Nurse
- Family Physician
- Other Medical Personnel
- Low-Vision Specialist
- Vocational Counselor/Case Manager
- School Administrators/Special Education Supervisors
- School Technology Contact
- Assistive Technology Specialist

In order to conduct an assessment, it is important the team have at least one person who:

- Is knowledgeable about the array of AT devices/services
- Able to provide information to the rest of the IEP team about potential AT options
- Prepared to search for and identify new AT options

How to Conduct an Assistive Technology Assessment?

The following steps have been taken from the [Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative \(WATI\) Procedure Guide for Assessment](#). WATI was designed to provide training, strategies and materials to build assistive technology capacity within schools. WATT recommends this resource since the WATI materials continue to be a gold standard in the field of AT.

The WATI Procedure Guide for Assessment is a 12 step process. This is designed to be a systematic approach to provide a functional assessment of the student's need for AT in their current environment(s).

Note: *This is not a test protocol, nor is it a standardized assessment. This is simply a step by step guide for completing a comprehensive AT assessment.*

☐ Step 1: Review what is known regarding the student's abilities and difficulties. Look at the results of Consideration during the IEP or IFSP meeting

Define the problem and "consider" assistive technology - What does the student need to do, but can't (or has difficulty doing) because of a disability or learning difference? If the student cannot adequately perform these tasks using existing strategies and accommodations, consider whether use of assistive technology tools might help.

Stop and Think: *Don't overlook technology that's available to all students. If a device is necessary for the student to receive FAPE, it must be included in the student's IEP. For example, all students may have access to a laptop through a one-to-one device initiative, but a laptop might be considered AT for a student with dyslexia who needs access to built-in text-to-speech software.*

☐ Step 2: Identify missing information and make a plan to gather it, assigning specific tasks to the individuals who will participate as part of an AT Assessment Team.

Gather relevant data about the student strengths and needs, tasks, barriers to performance, learning environments, and the student's current level of performance in his/her customary environments. Review of student file (including assessment scores) and IEP goals and objectives.

☐ Step 3: Individual team members gather information by completing identified sections of the WATI and any formal and/or informal tests that the team believes will help understand the student's needs and abilities.

***Note:** There is not a formal standardized test that directly addresses an AT assessment. An AT assessment is a process that gathers information from multiple areas to determine the student's needs.*

☐ Step 4: Gather information about the characteristics and demands of the environments in which the student functions. Use an observation guide to assist with gathering information about how instruction is delivered, what the student currently does, and what the other students do.

Examples: required curricular work, testing, homework, projects, in-class work, materials, statewide testing & other school functions;
Current levels of performance for identified tasks (baseline data);
Barriers to participation & independence

☐ Step 5: Schedule a meeting with the team

Decision Making

☐ Step 6: The team completes the Problem Identification Portion of [AT Decision Making Guide](#) at the meeting. (Choose someone to write all topics where everyone participating can see them.)

Follow the SETT Framework

The team should quickly move through:

- Listing the student's **abilities/difficulties** related to tasks **(10-12 minutes).**(Student)
- Listing key aspects of the **environment** in which the student functions and the student's location and positioning within the environment **(8-10 minutes).** (Environment)
- Identifying **tasks** the student needs to be able to do. The team cannot generate AT solutions until the tasks are identified **(5 minutes).** (Task)

Note: *The focus in problem identification is identifying critical tasks and the impact of the student's abilities and difficulties and the influence of the environment on the student's performance of the tasks.*

☐ Step 7: Prioritize the list of tasks. This may require a redefining or reframing of the original referral question or simply a re-emphasis on it, but is necessary so that you hone in on the most critical task.

☐ Step 8: The team moves on to complete the Solution Generation section of the *AT Decision Making Guide* brainstorming all possible solutions. Brainstorming is rapid-fire and all suggestions are written where everyone can see them (5 to 8 minutes).

Examples: Determine the features needed; Choose tools with appropriate features; Determine source of trials from demos, loaners, & rental programs; Set timelines; Prepare data collection recording method (Measurable determined above)

Teams may want to use resources to assist with solution generation. These can include, but are not limited to: the AT Checklist, the AT internet modules, and a person knowledgeable about AT.

Important: Pick the Features, Not the Product!

□ Step 9: Now solutions are selected. This involves discussing the solutions listed, thinking about which are most effective for the student. It may help to group solutions that can be implemented

1. immediately,
2. in the next few months, and
3. in the future.

Now is the time to list the names of specific devices, hardware, software, etc. If the team does not know the names of tools, there are a variety of resources available or you can contact WATT for assistance. (This step requires the most time; plan **20-30 minutes**).
(TOOL)

Note: *If AT is not needed, make sure it is documented on the FAPE page.*

- *Wayne RESA suggests the following statement: "AT has been considered but is not needed because the student is able to access the curriculum with the support of classroom technology, is making progress towards their goals and objectives and is communicating effectively without it."*

□ Step 10: Develop an AT implementation plan, including trials with tools, being sure to assign specific names of people who will carry out the plan (acquire tools, provide training, collect data, etc.) and dates by which they will complete those steps. Set a meeting date to review progress and list it under Follow-up Plan.

An AT implementation plan should include:

1. The assessment question(s)
2. Identify expected results & outcomes (e.g. Student will be able to _____)
3. What tasks are being evaluated?
4. Where will the trials happen?
5. Determine what will be measured (e.g. speed, quantity, quality, rate, accuracy, endurance)
6. Assign responsibilities
7. Set a timeline

Example data to include in the implementation plan:

- Interaction with the child and the technology
- Discussion with parents and those who work with the child on academic and social strengths
- Trial in a variety of settings in which the device is likely to be used
- Consideration of the child's and the family's feelings about the devices
- Observation of the child using a full range of devices, moving along the continuum from no technology to low-tech to high-tech
- Analysis from trials regarding the child's ability and accuracy when using various technologies, including positioning and settings that work best

Note: *It's recommended that all students with AT should have an active implementation plan. AT should be assessed on an on-going basis to ensure that AT continues to meet the student's needs/goals. Monroe ISD provides a **Sample AT Plan**. Once the team has made a decision, AT should be documented in the student's IEP.*

Completing Trial(s)

□ Step 11: Implement the trial(s) planned during the Decision Making meeting.

Conduct AT trials - This is often conducted over an extended period in collaboration with the school district staff and others. The goal is to validate the effectiveness of the chosen technologies so as to provide greater confidence about the decisions.

Stop and Think: *Various studies and surveys indicate possibly as much as 80% of AT is abandoned by the prospective user due to improper assessment procedures.*

Final Review and Decision

□ **Step 12: Follow Up on a planned date. Review the results of the trial use. Make any needed decisions about permanent use (continue or new trial). Update the implementation plan as appropriate.**

References

- [Assistive Technology Handbook for Educational Professionals, Michigan](#)
- [QIAT](#)
- [WATI](#)
- [Assistive Technology Implementation Plan, A Tool for Improving Outcomes](#)
- [SETT Framework](#)
- [Monroe ISD Assistive Technology](#)