

WHEN TO CHECK THE AT CHECKBOX: IS IT AT OR ISN'T IT?

Use of this document: This document can be used to help decide if the AT checkbox should be checked YES or NO.

Consideration of Special Factors

Click on each special factor box and review the associated questions. If a special factor will be addressed in the IEP, click the checkbox to indicate its inclusion. If no factors were selected for the IEP, check the box next to the statement, "All special factors were considered but none have been selected for this IEP."

Accessible Educational Materials
(AEM)

Assistive Technology

Communication

English Learner

Health

Hearing

Social Emotional Behavior

Vision

The definition of AT includes 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 individuals with disabilities. A quick search of the terms *assistive technology device* and *assistive technology service* will take the reader in many directions related to what is, what is not and what could be assistive technology. However, it is clear, related to disability and FAPE, that assistive technology consideration is required. In addition to this requirement, both the AT device(s) and the AT service(s), e.g. training, data, skill development and maintenance, must be included in the IEP if AT is determined by the IEP team to be required for FAPE.

Some assistive technology can be easier to identify than others. Easily identifiable examples of AT in education are those devices that are personalized, individualized, educational and not medically related. Examples include:

- A head switch and software for a student with a physical disability to access the keyboard of a computer to access a web-based instructional tool used in the classroom.
- Speech recognition software for a student with significant spelling difficulty to produce readable writing.
- An adapted 100's board with peg handles for a student with physical access difficulty to use during 100's board math activities.
- A digital text reader for use by a student who is unable to read the text or print independently to access grade-level reading material.

Examples of AT that is *less easily identifiable* may include devices that are dually required for medical and educational purposes. Though the dual requirement for a device as both educational and medical does not appear to limit inclusion as a required educationally related AT device in the IEP, it does, sometimes, muddy the waters of how the device will be funded, e.g., wheelchairs, AAC devices. IEP teams will need to consider the educational requirement and include these items in the IEP when the device is required for FAPE.

Other examples of assistive technology that is not easily identified as AT includes instances in which the device is also readily available and used by some or all of the general population of students in the classroom. These *devices*, e.g., iPad,

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may have previously been considered new and now are found as a regular and accepted part of many (or most) classrooms.

For these instances, two queries, used together, can help answer the IEP question: *Should the AT checkbox be checked YES for AT?*

1. Is access to this device required for FAPE? I.e., If this device was not available, would the student's access to FAPE be denied? If yes, this should be enough to check the AT Checkbox. However, IEP teams sometimes consider that the device is not actually assistive technology, even though it meets the definition of AT, because it is available to all students in the classroom. To help guide decisions related to this condition, the second question can be asked.
2. Is it possible that the device will not be available now or in the future? I.e., Could the student go into another classroom, school, or district and find that the device is not always available?

If the IEP team answers YES to both questions, then AT should be checked.

For this guidance to be effective, the team will have to be able to consider two things: 1. Identification of *those things* in the current educational environment that are currently available to any or all students and that are critical for the individual student to the point of being *required for access to FAPE* and and 2. Determination of whether it is very likely or assured, that *those things* will or will not continue to be available in future educational environments.

Examples are provided in the following section. In each of these examples, Question #1 has been answered as YES based on knowledge of the example student. With regard to Question #2, the example responses suggest that IEP teams applied common sense when considering the special characteristics of the current educational environment (that may not apply to all educational environments) relative to student need and that decisions were made in favor of protecting the student's access to FAPE.

Example:

- Student requires a calculator to complete tasks that require recall of math facts. Questions 1 and 2: AT Checkbox is checked YES.
 - There is a strong possibility that the student will be in a future classroom that does not routinely use and/or allow use of calculators.
- Student requires black markers with ½" thickness for use on wall whiteboard to be able to see the writing or drawing? Questions 1 and 2: AT Checkbox is checked YES.
 - It is highly unlikely that every whiteboard user will have access to thicker markers unless there is a special requirement.
- Student requires a computer for all reading and writing tasks for word prediction, speech recognition and text reader. Questions 1 and 2: AT Checkbox is checked YES.
 - There is a high level of certainty that the student would not always have access to both a computer and the reading and writing supports required (word prediction, speech recognition and text reader).
- Student requires an pencil grip and #2 pencil lead? Questions 1 and 2: AT Checkbox is checked YES.



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- It is anticipated that pencil grips are no longer provided as a standard classroom tool in the upper grades as often seen in kindergarten and first grades.
- Student requires an external or attached number keypad for computer number input. Questions 1 and 2: AT Checkbox is checked YES.
 - There is a high level of certainty that there are typical use of keyboards that do not have the attached number keypads, e.g., laptop keyboards and some external keyboards.
- Student requires a chair with a seat back. Questions 1 and 2: AT Checkbox is checked YES.
 - There is evidence within the school that there is standard use of bench seating (gym, lunchroom) and stools (science lab tables). As a result, a stadium chair (for benches) or high stool with back (science lab) would be required.



Please direct questions or comments to: mbaea-at@mbaea.org

Additional resources: [IOWA iDEA Information-i3](#) and [Iowa Department of Education - Assistive Technology](#)

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