

Assistive Technology

<u>Important Definitions</u>	
<u>Assistive Technology</u>	<p>"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 child with a disability." (IDEA)</p> <p>It is important to keep in mind that providing assistive technology is not simply a matter of purchasing devices. To help ensure that students will benefit from using a device, schools need to address a number of issues...When exploring assistive technology devices for a student, it is important to consider the full range of devices that are available, beginning with low-tech devices and considering high tech-devices only after the lower-tech options have been tried. Although people sometimes assume that the most expensive, high-tech device is the best solution for a student, this is not necessarily true. In fact, a low-tech device is sometimes more effective, since it is often easier to learn, use, and maintain." (DESE)</p> <p>AT is a form of technology provided to a specific student on an IEP or 504 plan. It is technology REQUIRED for a student to access curriculum and/or IEP objectives. The technology may include anything from printed visual supports to iPads.</p>
<u>Instructional Technology (Education Technology)</u>	Technology that is provided by school, district, or teacher in the classroom for general use to enhance the curriculum. The goal of <i>Universal Design for Learning</i> is to reach most learners through careful inclusive planning and differentiated instruction.
<u>Modification</u>	A change in what is being expected from the student or provided to the student (i.e. Special education instruction alters grade-level curriculum to meet cognitive or performance levels).
<u>Accommodation</u>	A change that helps the student minimize the impact of a disability, but does not change what is expected from or provided to the student (i.e eyeglasses allow the student to see the test, but they do not change the content). AT allows access to the curriculum, and therefore, it should be documented in the IEP under the accommodations section of the IEP. AT does not work like therapy. The goal is to minimize the impact of a disability to allow access to the curriculum in the classroom

<u>Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)</u>	<u>Assistive Technology</u>
A system that provides a student with an alternative means of communication. These systems can be low tech, mid-tech or high-tech.	Refers to any item, piece of equipment or system that is used to access the curriculum and/or IEP goals for individuals with disabilities that <i>the student could not otherwise access</i> WITHOUT the provision of this technology. In the Boston Public Schools, AT typically refers to items that provide access for students with reading and writing difficulties.

What Do I Do If I Want to Consider AT For My Child?

You can request an assistive technology consultation or evaluation. In order to be using AT, your child must have a disability as reflected by an IEP or 504 plan.

- What are the specific problems my child encounters in school (i.e. reading assigned text, writing clearly and legibly, seeing written words, speaking clearly, communicating needs and interests)?
- What has been tried previously and what am I doing at home to help?

AT/AAC Consultation	AT/AAC Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultations both initial and follow-up allow continuing visits to the team to assess a child's AAC/AT needs and provide supports to the team through trial and reconsideration of any strategies. • A consultation allows us to trial different equipment and collect data before making an informed recommendation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation must be completed within 30 days of receiving the consent information, which may limit our ability to trial different equipment and collect data before making a recommendation. • If we are recommending equipment, it must be written into a newly developed IEP, or as an amendment to an existing IEP, to initiate a trial must be written. If the trial is successful, another amendment/addendum must be written in order for the recommendation to become a permanent accommodation in the IEP. • An IEP meeting is required upon completion of the evaluation and the trial.

What do we consider?:

When considering students' need for assistive technology, BPS uses the SETT Framework (<http://www.joyzabala.com/Documents.html>) for collaborative decision making. SETT is an acronym for Student, Environments, Tasks, and Tools—all of which need to be fully explored when assistive technology tools are considered or selected.

- Tool that helps to gather and organize information that can be used to guide decisions about the use of technology in educational environments (As recommended by DESE).
- Goal is to answer: is it possible that the student will not be able to make reasonable progress toward educational goals without assistive technology? (Zabala, 2005).

While the AAC/AT specialists are responsible for conducting evaluations and making recommendations, it is the responsibility of the IEP team as a whole to implement and deliver AT in the student's least restrictive environment. AT/AAC specialist are involved in the training and plan development phases for provision of AT.