



DREAMMS FOR KIDS

DIRECTIONS

Technology in Special Education

For Parents & Professionals

Vol. 2, No. 11

June/July 1996

The Year in Review

We are proud that this past year's editorial calendar brought a variety of highly informative assistive technology and special needs related topics to our *DIRECTIONS* readers. This month, we're providing you with a handy index into our last 11 issues. All articles are listed here and have been categorized into broad sections and alphabetized within that section. I hope you find the index useful, and refer to it often. Please see the next page if you are interested in single copies of *DIRECTIONS*.

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The Assistive Technology Funding and Systems Change Project

RIGHT OF INDEPENDENT EDUCATION EVALUATION (IEE) TO INCLUDE
EVALUATION OF NEEDS FOR ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

By Susan Goodman, Esq.

On December 4, 1995, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in the U.S. Department of Education, issued a policy letter that discusses the responsibility of school systems to pay for independent assistive technology evaluations, as it must for independent education evaluations (IEEs).

Policy letters are issued in response to a letter from anyone who wants to clarify the regulations issued by the administering agency. The U.S. Department of Education is the parent organization of OSEP. OSEP administers the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for the Department. Therefore, questions about regulations are directed to OSEP, which then answers them.

BACKGROUND

OSEP answered an inquiry from an Assistant Commissioner, Division of Special Education, who asked the question: "Must a local school system pay for independent assistive technology evaluations as they must for independent educational evaluations?"

In its December 4, 1995, response, OSEP stated, in part: "Public agencies are required to provide assistive technology devices or services to a student with a disability if the participants on a student's individualized education program (IEP) team determine that the student needs an assistive technology device or service in order to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE). (34 CFR Sec. 300.308). Depending on the individual situation, assistive technology could be designated special education, a "related service," or a supplementary aid of service. Consistent with this responsibility, each public agency must ensure that, as part of its (Part B) educational evaluation when warranted by the child's suspected disability, it assesses, in accordance with evaluation requirements, the student's functional capabilities and whether they may be increased, maintained or improved through the use of assistive technology devices or services (34 CFR Secs. 300.05 and 300.06). The evaluation should provide sufficient information to

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DIRECTIONS

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Vendors - We welcome product news. Please include pricing and contact name with press releases.

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permit the IEP team to determine whether the student requires assistive technology devices or services in order to receive FAPE.”

The response later states that: “If the public agency does not, as part of its evaluation of the child in all areas of suspected disability, assess the functional capabilities of the child as they relate to the need for assistive technology, the parents have the right to seek, at public expense an independent evaluation if they believe the evaluation conducted by the agency fails to address appropriately the child’s needs in this area.”

What this means is that parents have the right to seek a private evaluation of the child at public expense, if they believe that the school did not perform a thorough evaluation in regards to AT. In addition, if the parents disagree with the school’s evaluation, they may seek an independent evaluation at the district’s expense.

ANALYSIS

This decision is consistent with the January, 1995, OSEP policy letter reported in the Early Fall, 1995, edition of Tech Express, in which a similar inquiry was made about the responsibility to evaluate a student with a suspected hearing or vision disability.

Collectively, these policies are significant because they state that: 1.) A student needs to be assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including areas in which assistive technology devices and/or services may be necessary. 2.) The school district is responsible for evaluation in areas in which assistive technology may be a factor. If the district is unable to provide an evaluation that addresses AT, the parents have a right to an independent education evaluation at the district’s expense. 3.) The school district must provide AT devices and services if the IEP team decides that students need the devices to benefit educationally.

ACTION STEPS: 1.) Families should ask about evaluations that include assessment of the need for AT in areas of suspected disability. If the school district refuses to perform the evaluation, parents should request an independent educational evaluation (at a school district’s expense). 2.) Families should ensure that language in the IEP addresses the types of AT needed, and that it is incorporated into goals and objectives. 3.) If the school district refuses to do an evaluation or pay for an independent educational evaluation, the local Protection and Advocacy agency should be notified. *(NOTE: Families should first investigate their home state legislation.. -Ed.)*

To secure general information on the project, contact: Assistive Technology Funding & Systems Change Project, 1660 L Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036 Tel: (202) 776-0406 Fax: (202) 776-0414 Email: atfscp@aol.com. To secure information & individual assistance on AT funding issues, contact: 1-800-827-0093 (voice) 800-833-8272 (TDD), or (404) 919-8305 (fax). □

The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of the opinions expressed herein should be inferred.

CONFERENCES

Date: June 11-13, 1996
Event: NECC '96
Location: Minneapolis, MN
Information: 612.638.8764

Date: July 8-19, 1996
Event: 5th Annual Institute on Literacy Issues in AAC
Location: Chapel Hill, NC
Information: 919.966.7486

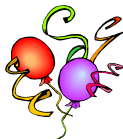
Date: August 4-7, 1996
Event: LRP Educational Tech. Conference & Expo '96
Location: San Francisco, CA
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Technology & Inclusion Notes

CHOOSING AND USING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

by Jamie Judd-Wall, Executive Director

The next several months we will be exploring the role of assistive technology in the education of students with disabilities. We'll begin this month with a brief overview of the mandate for assistive technology devices and services for students with disabilities. We will consider some of the critical issues of service provision and how those issues differ with different applications of assistive technology. Then in each of the coming months we will explore how that mandate applies to students of various ages and grade levels, ending with the transition into the realm of adult service providing agencies.

A Short Legal Overview

As many of you know, the definition of assistive technology was established by P.L. 100-407, Technology Assistive Individuals with Disabilities Act and then adopted by both education and rehabilitation legislation. What many people do not realize is that these pieces of legislation cover more than just providing equipment for students with disabilities. Included in the legislation is a level of service relative to assistive technology that has a definite impact on students with disabilities. Assistive technology devices and services are grouped together because the services

must be relative to "the selection, acquisition and use of an assistive technology device" (34 CFR 300.6)

The legislation describes some of the assistive technology services that are available. Assessment/evaluating, designing, fitting, repairing and training are all covered services if the service is provided about an assistive technology device.

Categories of Assistive Technology in Education

Essentially, for students with disabilities, this means that assistive technology devices and services must be made available. Each state has the responsibility for developing policies and procedures for determining the appropriate assistive technologies for any specific student. The assistive technologies used, or recommended for use must be educationally relevant respective to that student and their disability.

For most students with disabilities, assistive technologies can be divided into three categories; personally necessary technologies, developmentally necessary technology and instructionally necessary technologies. The application of these categories will vary depending on the age and disability of the individual; but

globally the categories can be described as follows.

Personally necessary technologies are those items designed for use by an individual student. A personally necessary assistive technology device may be a single switch which provides an individual with access; or it may be an augmentative communication device which provides an individual with communication. Usually a personally necessary assistive technology device is selected for and used by one person and one person only until that person's needs change and a new or different device is needed.

Developmentally necessary assistive technologies are those items that meet an educational need based on a developmental delay. These items are usually programmed with activities or specific features to meet individual needs. However, unlike personally necessary assistive technology, these items may be shared by several students. Generally, developmentally necessary assistive technologies are accompanied by curricular modifications, especially as students move into upper elementary and secondary grades. An IntelliKeys™ keyboard programmed with pictures

representing sentence beginnings (Lets go to, Its fun at, I bought some cotton candy at, Nana and I really love) and endings (the mall, the zoo, the park, Disney World) and used with IntelliTalk™ software may be used as developmentally necessary assistive technology for a student with minimal literacy skills who needs to write sentences. A student may use a TouchWindow instead of a mouse to use a piece of software because concepts of directionality and hand eye-coordination make mouse use unrealistic. Without the assistive technology support, both of these students with a disability may not be able to participate in the lesson or may be viewed as needing a segregated placement; with the technology the student is active and successful.

Instructionally necessary assistive technologies are used when the instructional process needs modifications at or near the student's grade level. These technologies support the student with a disability by addressing personal needs which mask the student's performance, thereby enabling the student to be successful in the standard curriculum. The curriculum itself is rarely modified when using instructionally necessary technologies. A student may use word prediction or voice recognition software to write a report if their learning disability impedes the production of the document. A student with attention deficit may use a non-amplifying FM system to help eliminate environmental sounds and help him to focus on the teacher. A chapter from the history text may be scanned and read by an optical scanner for a student with strong comprehension skills who has severe dyslexia.

Conclusion

Each of these applications of assistive technology, and many more to be discussed in months to come, are educationally appropriate for some- but not every- student with a disability. In future issues we will discuss how and why decisions are made about what assistive technologies to use for many different students. I hope that this brief discussion has made you think about your own personal and professional children... what you are doing and what else you can do. If you have a specific question or concern, I invite you to contact me through DREAMMS or directly at my office in Austin. I am looking forward to being part of DREAMMS and *DIRECTIONS: Technology in Special Education*.

Next: *Assistive Technology and Early Childhood Education - A Match Made in Heaven* □

My Dear Friends,

4/96

Well..... I'm sure you've noticed that things are a little different this month :-)

This is our last issue for the 95-96 editorial year! And what a year it's been! We are very proud of the articles and features that we bring you each month and hope that you use this information to help provide a better educational and personal environment for the children with special needs that are in your life!

We are especially excited about this next year at DREAMMS! Naturally our **BUILDING BRIDGES** Seminar is the highlight of the fall! But we are also relocating the DREAMMS office to beautiful Ithaca, New York! When you hear from me again in August, I'll be breathing mountain air (... and probably freezing to death :-)) ...but I can't wait to get there!

I consider myself to be so fortunate to have had the opportunity to meet and know the wonderful people in Tampa Bay! You have helped to shape my life, and I will hold you all in my heart always. Especially though, I want to say thank you to the staff at Paul B. Stephens School in Pinellas County. You guys are simply the best--and we've never felt so at home..... We'll miss you!

As always... my kindest regards,

Janet

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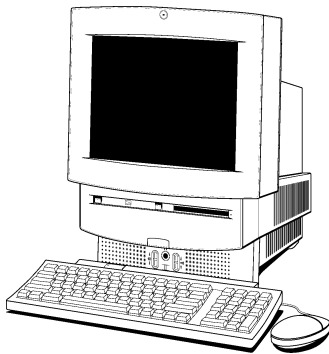
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