



# WELCOME BACK!!

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## Assistive Technology for Young Children: An Essential Conversation- So Let's Talk about It!

Shelley Chapin, EITA  
&  
Melissa Egan Kerr, Family Leader

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## What is Assistive Technology (AT)?

**IDEA, 2004: Assistive technology = devices and services**

**Device:** “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 the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.”

**Services:** “Any service that directly assists a child with the disability in the selection, acquisition or use of an assistive technology device.”

**OSEP Part C Clarification Letter**

“AT must serve a developmental purpose” by supporting the child’s ability to participate in everyday activities.”

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## Why is it called Assistive Technology?

- All technology and tools exist to assist.
- “Assistive” refers to a characteristic of the user – the user has a disability or supports someone with a disability.
- “Technology to Assist A Person With a Disability” is too long.
- Assistive Technology can be funded – generic technology is usually not.

*TechOWL, 2024*

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Assistive Technology **Device** is  
**Any Thing**  
 That Helps  
 A **Child** with a Disability or  
 Delay  
**Do Something**  
 They Could Not Otherwise Do  
*Milbourne, Mistrett, Gilormini, 2014*

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Assistive Technology **Service** is  
**Any Behavior**  
That directly **Assists**  
**A Family** of A **Child**  
with a Disability or Delay  
**CONSIDER, TRIAL, SELECT, ACQUIRE,**  
**and USE**  
assistive technology devices

*Milbourne, Mistrett, Gilormini, 2014*

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Who?



Assistive technology helps young children (infants, toddlers, preschool-age, etc.) with disabilities and delays participate in everyday routines and activities to grow and learn.

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## Assistive Technology in Early Intervention

- Creates opportunities
- Needs to be embedded into daily routines
- A bridge between what the child can do independently and what a child is expected to do or wants to do

*PACER Center*

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## When? Keep in Mind That...

- There are NO PREREQUISITES for AT
- AT for young children looks different than AT for students and adults
- AT for young children is used to support a child's development
- Many changes occur as young children grow which requires dynamic use of AT
- Legal requirement to consider AT for every child with an IFSP and IEP
- Under Part B and C of IDEA, if Assistive Technology is identified as part of a child's IEP/IFSP, it must be provided at no cost in most cases

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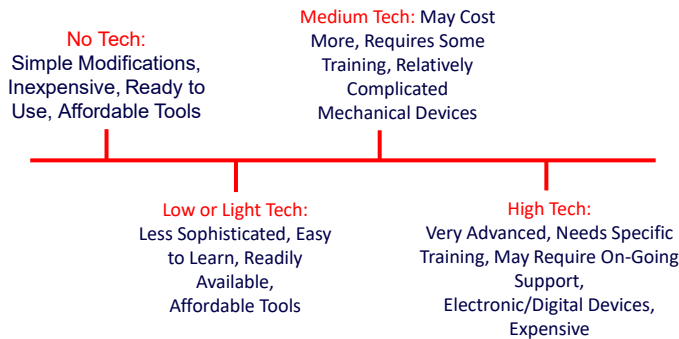
## Why? Just Some of the Benefits of AT....

- Promoting independence by making everyday routines and activities easier and more accessible
- Increasing or decreasing stimulation for the child feel more comfortable and secure in his/her environment
- Adapting to support grasping and manipulating objects
- Accessing AAC to communicate ideas, interests, preferences
- Developing social closeness with family, peers, and others
- Maximizing participation and opportunities for early language & literacy learning

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## Assistive Technology Continuum

***Assistive Technology is not just tablets and AAC!***



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# No Tech Tools

Highlighter Markers



Sticky Notes

Visual Schedule

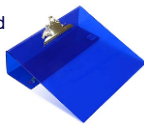


Pencil Grippers

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# Low Tech Tools

Slant Board



Switches



Reading Guide/Text Guide



Brightlines Paper/Raised Lines



Weighted Vest



Communication Board



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## Mid Tech Tools



Big Mack Talking Switch

Wobble cushion



Adapted Toys



GoTalk 20+



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## High Tech Tools

Juno Tower Receiver/Speaker



Tobii Dynavox Eye Gaze Access/SGD



BrailleNote Touch 32 Tablet



Eye Tracking Mouse



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## Meet the Egan Kerr Family

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## Welcoming Max

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## Challenges in a Changing World

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## Assistive Tech in Infant/Toddler Early Intervention



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## Personal Care Assistive Tech



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## Family Fun with Assistive Tech



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## Out and About with Assistive Tech



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## Assistive Tech in Community Preschool

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## AT DCL and Myths and Facts

- On January 22, 2024, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Educational Technology and the Office of Special Education Programs released a joint guidance package supporting children with disabilities who need assistive technology (AT) devices and services for meaningful access and engagement in education.
- Presented in two parts it is designed to increase understanding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act’s (IDEA’s) AT requirements and provide examples of the use of AT devices and services for children with disabilities.
- The ***Dear Colleague Letter*** and ***Myths and Facts*** documents can be found here: [Assistive Technology Devices and Services for Children With Disabilities Under the IDEA.](#)

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## Dear Colleague Letter

Intended for a wide range of individuals including:

- *Parents*
- *Early Intervention Service Providers*
- *Special Educators*
- *General Educators*
- *Related Services Personnel*
- *School and District Administrators*
- *Technology Specialists and*
- *Directors and Employees at State Lead Agencies and Educational Agencies.*

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## Dear Colleague Letter

Highlighted points include:

- AT devices and services can be used for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities as required in both IDEA Parts B and C.
- These devices and services must be available, accessible, and appropriate for children with disabilities and their families.
- It is critical that IFSP and IEP Team members understand how to procure, implement, and evaluate AT devices and services for children with disabilities.

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## Myths & Facts Document

- [AT Myths and Facts](#) document dispels common misconceptions regarding AT as well as highlights the different AT requirements under Part C and Part B of IDEA. Twenty-eight Myths and Facts are presented. As per IDEA, the definition of AT has two distinct components, **AT Device** and **AT Services**.

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## Myths & Facts Document



- **Assistive Technology Device:** 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 *an infant, toddler or child with a disability*.
- **Assistive Technology Services:** Any service that directly assists an *infant, toddler or child with a disability* in the selection, acquisition, or use of an AT device. Including:
  - (a) *The evaluation of the needs of an infant, toddler or child with a disability, including a functional evaluation of the child in the child's customary environment;*
  - (b) Purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of AT devices by children with disabilities;
  - (c) Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, or replacing AT devices;
  - (d) Coordinating and using other therapies, interventions, or services with AT devices, such as those associated with existing education and rehabilitation plans and programs;
  - (e) *Training or technical assistance for an infant, toddler or child with a disability or, if appropriate, that child's family;* and
  - (f) *Training or technical assistance for professionals* (including individuals providing education or rehabilitation services), employers, or other individuals who provide services to, employ, or are otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions *of infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities*.

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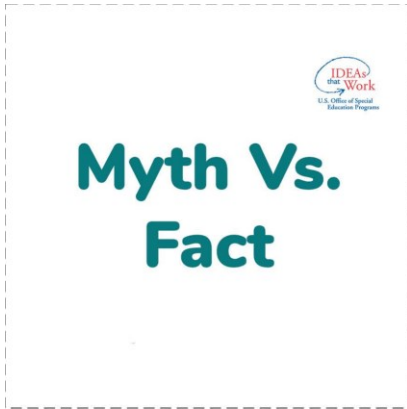
## Myths & Facts Document

- AT Requirements Under Part B of IDEA
- Common Myths & Facts about AT Devices and Services
- Common Myths & Facts about Deploying AT Devices and Services
- AT Requirements Under Part C of IDEA
- Common Myths & Facts about AT Costs and Funding Sources

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# GAME TIME!

- [CITES: AT Guidance Myths and Facts Graphics and Game \(cast.org\)](#)



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## How? AT in the IFSP

- All AT decisions are child-focused, based on a child's skills and needs
- Consider including measurable outcomes for AT success
- Consider device **and** services (i.e. training family and staff)
- Consider back-up for any AT
- Consider AT across transitions
- Consider the AT continuum
- Consider how AT might change as the child grows
- Consider trialing and choosing what AT is best for your child
- Document, document, document!



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## Annotated Infant Toddler Evaluation Report

### VI. Evaluation of Developmental Domains

#### **Communication Development:**

This section includes early development of communication and language, including the child's ability to understand (receptive) and communicate (expressive) wants, needs and ideas within everyday routines. ... This also includes the use of Augmentative and Alternative communication, both low tech (e.g. picture exchange) and high-tech (e.g. tablet technology) and other forms of AT to support communication.

If the child has a delay in communication development, a recommendation for further hearing assessment and AT should be considered.

#### **Other Information:**

Document any adaptations or Assistive Technology/Tools that the child/family currently use. Observe the child and ask the parent/caregiver about any current use or potential need for any no-tech, low-tech or high-tech tools that would support the child in each developmental domain. Address Assistive Technology/Tools needs that are not addressed in other domains.

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## Annotated IFSP

### **III. Special Considerations**

Assistive Technology/Tools should be considered for all children to support all areas of development. Assistive Technology is defined as no-tech, lowtech, or high-tech tools to support participation in everyday activities.

#### **5. Does the child have communication needs?**

NO YES- Team must consider the communication needs of the child in the development of the IFSP

Consideration should be given to the mode(s) of communication used by the child, including whether the child requires Augmentative and Alternative Communication (no-tech, low-tech, high-tech) to assist in the development and use of meaningful communication. Family input is critical to the comprehensive communication considerations.

If this Special Consideration is checked, consider Special Considerations #6 carefully.

#### **6. Does the child need assistive technology devices and/or services?**

NO YES- Team must consider the infant, toddler or preschooler needs for assistive technology in the development of the IFSP.

Assistive technology is any no-tech, low-tech or high-tech tool used to support a child's participation in everyday activities, it is not necessarily a device. AT also includes the services required for assessment and implementation of tools or devices. Be sure to include specific steps/timelines to identify, trial and obtain any needed service or device.

If Special Consideration #5 is checked yes, you should carefully consider checking this box. A plan should be developed to provide supports for communication, including Augmentative and Alternative Communication (pictures, signs, etc.). Use PEAT's Suite as a resource.

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## Annotated IFSP

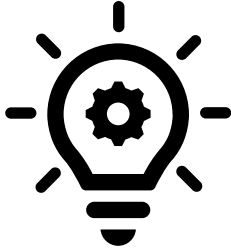
### **IV. Measurable Result/Outcome/Goal**

**What teaching strategies are needed to reach the outcome/goal?** Include specially designed instruction, supplementary aids and program personnel supports, home or program modifications and training and materials needed by the family or team. Also include location and how all team members, including the family/caregivers/early childhood educators, will work on this. All strategies should be individualized for the specific child and family based on their unique needs. Strategies which relate to this outcome/goal should consider the following:

3) Steps to identify, trial and obtain Assistive Technology/Tools or Augmentative and Alternative Communication, adaptations to existing materials, or acquisition of other materials that will support the child's participation in everyday routines and activities; this should include current use of Assistive Technology/Tools.

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## Remember, AT in the IFSP...



- Legal requirement to consider AT for every child with an IFSP and IEP
- Under IDEA (Parts B & C), if Assistive Technology is identified as part of a child's IFSP or IEP, it must be provided at no cost in most cases.
- One of the Special Considerations on IFSP/IEP
- Used to support a child's development and acts as a bridge to create or increase opportunities for participation in daily routines and activities

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## Remember, AT can help a child to...

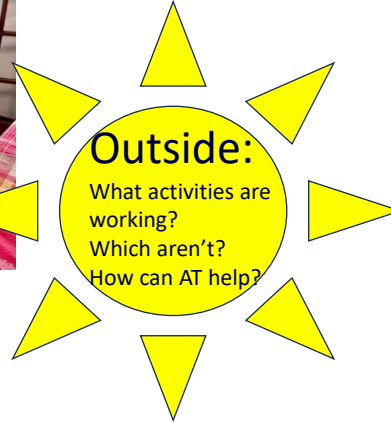
- Expand **Communication**
- Increase **Independence**
- Broaden **Life Opportunities**
- Support **Participation**
- Promote **Development**
- Enhance **Learning**
- Boost **Self-Esteem**

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**Inside:**

What does the child want to do? What is important?  
What are the family's priorities?



**Outside:**

What activities are working?  
Which aren't?  
How can AT help?

**Consider the Child:**

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**Assistive Technology is Everyone's Responsibility!**

- Family
- Special instructor
- Special education teacher
- Early childhood teacher
- Speech language pathologist
- Occupational therapist
- Physical therapist
- Assistive technology specialist
- Vision or hearing specialist
- Others



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## Tools and Resources



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# Assistive Technology, Tools & AAC for Young Children PADLET



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## Early Intervention Technical Assistance (EITA) Portal



- PEAT's Suite is a set of planning materials coupled with an action-oriented process to support and track a child's **PEAT** Journey
- PEAT's Suite compliments and extends the information in CARA's Kit by focusing specifically on the physical environment features and the assistive tools that a child might need.

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The acronym **PEAT** stands for:

**P**hysical  
**E**nvironment and  
**A**ssistive  
**T**ools

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## In a Nutshell...

- **What**
  - PEAT’s Suite is a comprehensive package of materials that helps service providers (educators, home visitors, therapists, etc.), families, and other stakeholders plan to support the participation of young children with differing abilities using Assistive Tools.
- **Why**
  - Deeper dive into Assistive Tools and embedding within everyday routines & activities
  - Intentional plan for generalization of identified AT
  - Transition planning and family engagement
- **Who/Where/When**
  - Natural Environments (Home, Community, EC Classroom)
- **How to Access**
  - Hard copy with digital files
  - Online EITA Portal Job Aid with digital files
- **Effectiveness**
  - Team Planning, Family Engagement, Guided Problem-Solving & Data Collection



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# Early Intervention Technical Assistance (EITA) Portal



**Assistive Technology and Young Children**  
 Assistive Technology (AT) consists of a wide range of adaptations and items that, when provided, allow a child to independently participate, learn and interact in his/her home, community, and ECE program settings in ways that might not otherwise be possible.



Assistive Technology: Using Environmental and Universal Tools in Early Childhood (Self Enrollment)



**Augmentative and Alternative Communication**  
 Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) involves the use of many different means to enhance functional communication, social closeness, learning, language and concept development, as well build the foundations for literacy.



Navigating how to **trial and acquire an augmentative and alternative communication device** in Pennsylvania is a multi-step process. Check out this great resource that outlines each step that professionals and families take together, in addition to providing easy-to-use, immediate resources along the way!

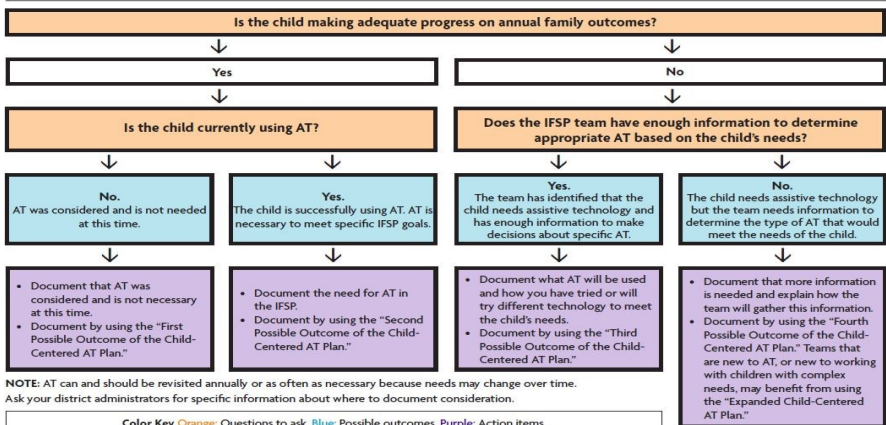


Assistive Technology: Using Modified and Specialized Tools in Early Childhood (Pre-Registration Required)

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## Assistive Technology (AT) Consideration Flowchart (IFSP)

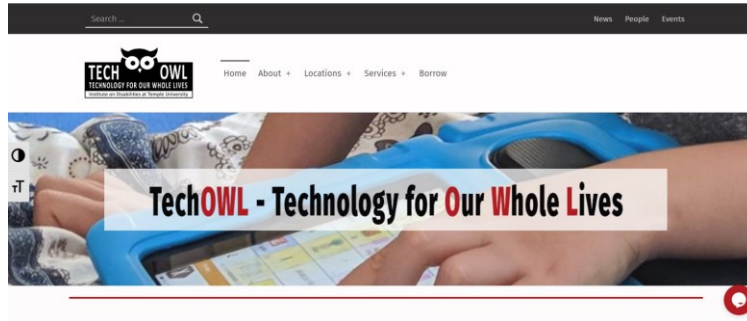


[TIKES - Exploring Assistive Technology \(AT\) - Simon Technology Center - PACER Center](#)

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## TechOWL



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## TechOWL AT Lending Library

### Projects & Programs:

- Pennsylvania's AT Lending Library (hundreds of AT available)
- One-on-one Demonstrations
- National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (iCanConnect PA)
- Emergency Preparedness
- AAC Community
- ACES
- Reuse Program
- CreATe Together

### Lending Library Specifics:

- Anyone in Pennsylvania can use the lending library to meet a disability-related need.
- Loan period is 5 weeks (iPads and Chromebooks are 9 weeks)
- Extensions are a possibility
- Each user may borrow up to three items at a time

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# PA Training & Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN)

The screenshot shows the PaTTAN website interface. At the top left is the PaTTAN logo with the tagline 'Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network'. To the right is a search bar. Below the logo is a navigation menu with categories: 'Attract-Prepare-Retain', 'Collaborative Partnerships', 'Evidence Based Practices', 'Post School Outcomes', and 'Special Education Forms & Resources'. The main content area is titled 'Short Term Loan' and features a photo of a young boy using a tablet. To the right of the photo is a text block describing the Short Term Loan (STL) program. Further right is a 'Useful Links' section with several hyperlinks.

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## PaTTAN Short Term Loan Program

### AT Kit Categories:

- Augmentative and Alternative Communication
- Blindness & Visual Impairment
- Computer Access
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing/Deafblind
- Switch Access/Environmental Access
- Technology for Print/Reading/Writing Support

### Short Term Loan Specifics:

- PA educators employed or contracted by an IU, SD, charter school, approved private school, or state EI program (county Infant Toddler EI program or MAWA Preschool EI program)
- May borrow AT kits for a 6-week loan period
- May request up to 5 kits for a student at one time, but only one kit per student is loaned at one time

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# PA Assistive Technology Fund (PATF)

Helps individuals with disabilities (and older Pennsylvanians) acquire assistive technology devices and services

- 0% interest and low-interest cash *loans*
- Extended repayment terms

Program available to Pennsylvanians of:

- All ages
- All income levels
- All disabilities and health conditions

\*Check out [PATF Funding Your AT Guide 2023](#)



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“When a flower doesn’t bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower!”

Alexander Den Heijer

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## Brainstorm...

- What questions do you still have about Assistive Technology?
- What training needs do you have around Assistive Technology?
- Share an AT success related to your Program (child, classroom, process, training...)



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## Thank You!



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