

Competencies in the Area of Assistive Technology

A subcommittee appointed by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) recently worked with a group of individuals from across the United States to develop a statement of competencies for school district staff members working in the area of assistive technology. This group, called the "the Partnership of States," was represented by: Jack Hazekamp, California; Carroll Ann Donaldson, Colorado; Kim Hartsell, Georgia; Janet McCulloch, Illinois; Shirley Amond, Indiana; Kathy Fries, Maine; Marilyn Sorenson, Minnesota; Janet Levine, New Mexico; Susan Wilson, Ohio; Sylvia Gray, Oklahoma; Janet Armstrong, Pennsylvania; Diana Carl, Texas; Kathy Knighton, West Virginia, Penny Reed, Wisconsin.

The full membership of the Partnership of States and the NASDSE subcommittee provided feedback. The following competencies were presented to the NASDSE board in a report. Subsequently they were distributed to each state education agency by NASDSE.

I. Basic Knowledge of Assistive Technology (AT) Services and Devices

- Understand AT including legal requirements, its purpose and functional application for the student's educational program.
- Demonstrate awareness of a variety of assistive technology devices and services and the ability to integrate technology into educational programs.
- Demonstrate knowledge in their specialty area of assistive technology (e.g., access, alternative/augmentative communication, computer-based instruction, mobility, positioning, assistive listening and signaling devices, recreation/leisure/play, vision technology, environmental control, and activities of daily living)
- Demonstrate the ability to apply discipline specific knowledge regarding AT.
- Demonstrate the ability to use appropriate AT in a variety of educational settings.
- Demonstrate the recognition of the need for ongoing individual professional development and maintaining knowledge of emerging technologies.

II. Collaboration and Communication

- Understand the transdisciplinary nature of AT application and contribution of a variety of disciplines to the service delivery process.
- Understand skills required to serve as a member of a transdisciplinary team providing services for assistive technology.
- Include parents as team members ability to listen and respond to input from other team members demonstrate effective group process skills.
- Know when and where to refer to other resources for assistive technology.
- Utilize resources to meet technology needs for students with disabilities.

- Demonstrate the ability to network with others in the community, including parents and general educators for technical information and problem solving.

III. Assessment, Planning and Implementation Process Assessment:

- Identify appropriate, qualified team members necessary to determine AT needs and strengths.
- Determine, in collaboration with other members of the assessment team, assistive technology needs as part of a comprehensive transdisciplinary evaluation which addresses all areas related to the disability and is based on student's strengths, tasks, and expectations.
- Use appropriate data gathering procedures and strategies to conduct an assistive technology evaluation utilizing a team approach to assess the student in customary environments.
- Integrate and discuss, in collaboration with the transdisciplinary team, all evaluation information including formulating recommendations and preparing a report.

Planning:

- Develop a plan utilizing appropriate, qualified team members.
- Identify and design appropriate AT devices, services, and strategies in the plan.

Implementation:

- Implement the plan using a collaborative approach.
- Evaluate, measure, and report on the effectiveness of the plan to meet the student's needs.
- Modify the plan as required to meet the student's needs.
- Identify areas that require further assessment or reevaluation on an ongoing basis.

IV. Resources

- Identify, in collaboration with team members, assistive technology resources at the classroom, building, district, region, community, state and national level: funding resources, product resources; (e.g., augmentative communication, computer access); print and electronic resources, (e.g., books, web sites, journals, list serves); human resources, (e.g., individuals who can provide assessment, training, customization); problem solving, (e.g., maintenance and repair).
- Recognize own scope of knowledge and skills and utilize identified resources to augment knowledge and skills represented within team.
- Serve as a resource for others.
- Identify staff development needs and opportunities which meet needs.
- Participate in staff development opportunities that address identified needs.