Alt+Shift Professional Learning Opportunity Practice Profiles: Assistive Technology (AT) Journey

Practice profiles outline the key components for successful implementation. They highlight evidence-based practices and describe the essential activities that support each component. For the purpose of this practice profile, all learners mentioned are students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

Practice profiles help teams and individuals assess their current practices, identify areas for growth, and set goals. They can improve consistency among educators, track progress, and guide system improvements.

The table below defines the headings in the practice profile and lists common terms you may find in each section.

Use in Practice Headings	Operational Definition
Expected Use	Educators apply required skills across various settings, use them consistently and independently, and continuously grow in their role.
Developmental Use	Educators apply required skills inconsistently within limited settings and may need additional support. They may benefit from a targeted coaching plan to improve and meet expectations.
Unacceptable Use	Educators rarely or never use required skills in any context. If performance falls into the unacceptable range, issues may stem from the overall implementation infrastructure, such as staff selection, training, program management, or data use for improvement.

Adapted from the Active Implementation Hub: Tool: Practice Profile Planning Template module - https://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/resource/practice-profile-planning-tool

How to Use Practice Profiles to Support Implementation

- Read the practice profile.
- Reflect on current practice. Consider where your actions align with the profile and where they differ.
- Ask questions and discuss observations. Use the profile to guide conversations.
- Avoid drawing conclusions from a single moment. One walkthrough or observation may not capture the full picture.
- If 'Expected Use' practices are not being observed, explore the available supports, resources, and professional learning opportunities. Assess readiness and skills before planning next steps.
- Avoid using this tool for formal evaluations so that the focus can remain on current reality and growth.

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Rethink the possible. Realize potential.

Essential Component #1: Regardless of severity or area of eligibility*, assistive technology (AT)* is considered by IEP team members for all learners with IEPs across areas such as academics, communication, adaptive, social, and physical development.		
Expected Use in Practice	**Developmental Use in Practice**	**Unacceptable Use in Practice**
Educators* consider AT for learners in **all areas of eligibility**.	Educators* consider AT for learners **in several areas of eligibility**.	Educators* only consider AT for learners in a **few areas of eligibility**.
All IEP team* members follow the same written process for considering AT.	**Some** IEP team* members follow the same written process for considering AT.	**Few/no** IEP team* members follow a written process for considering AT, or a written process **does not exist**.
IEP team* members consider AT **throughout the year**, anytime a need presents itself.	IEP team* members consider AT **occasionally throughout the year**, such as during progress reporting and/or reevaluations.	IEP team* members only consider AT **once a year** at the annual IEP meeting.

*Area of eligibility: Specific disability category under which a student qualifies for special education services. Eligibility is determined through a comprehensive evaluation process that assesses whether the student meets the criteria for one or more of the 13 disability categories recognized under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

*Assistive Technology (AT): 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.

*Educators: Anyone who interacts with a learner has a role in supporting AT. This includes general education teachers, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, ancillary staff, administrators, etc.

*IEP team: A team of individuals who directly impact or influence the learner's academic and/or social opportunities. An IEP team should include the learner with the disability, the learner's family/caregivers, general and/or special education teacher(s), and related service providers (e.g., occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech-language pathologist, social worker, assistive technology/augmentative and alternative communication consultant, etc.).

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Essential Component #2: When considering assistive technology (AT)* for a learner, IEP team* members follow a collaborative, team-based decision-making process while exploring a range of AT* devices and services.		
Expected Use in Practice	**Developmental Use in Practice**	**Unacceptable Use in Practice**
Educators *consistently* utilize a team-based decision-making process when considering AT.	Educators *occasionally* utilize a team-based decision-making process when considering AT.	Educators *do not* utilize a team-based decision-making process when considering AT.
Educators *consistently* ask for input from families, caregivers, and learners.	Educators *occasionally* ask for input from families, caregivers, and learners.	Educators *do not* ask for input from families, caregivers, and learners.
Before recommending a specific tool, IEP team members explore a *wide range* of AT, including tools that are unfamiliar or not immediately available (e.g. tools from state/regional lending libraries or app trials).	Before recommending a specific tool, IEP team members explore a *limited range* of AT, generally relying on familiar or previously used tools.	Before recommending a specific tool, IEP team members **only consider AT** that is immediately available or familiar, and does not explore further options.

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***Educators:** Anyone who interacts with a learner has a role in supporting AT. This includes general education teachers, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, ancillary staff, administrators, etc.

Essential Component #3: Educators, family members, and caregivers supporting the learner receive timely, relevant training and resources on how to set up, use, and troubleshoot the AT* to ensure consistent and effective use.		
Expected Use in Practice	**Developmental Use in Practice**	**Unacceptable Use in Practice**
The IEP team* provides **all** educators, family members, and caregivers with training and resources.	The IEP team* provides **some** educators, family members, and caregivers with training and resources.	The IEP team* **does not** provide educators, family members, and caregivers with training and resources.
IEP team* members **consistently** follow an established process to troubleshoot AT and request additional support as needed.	IEP team* members **inconsistently** follow an established process to troubleshoot AT and request additional support as needed.	An established process for troubleshooting AT and requesting additional support **is not available**.

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Essential Component #4: AT* is consistently documented throughout a learner's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and the documentation reflects how the AT helps the learner with specific tasks.		
Expected Use in Practice	**Developmental Use in Practice**	**Unacceptable Use in Practice**
IEP team* members consistently **document AT throughout the learner's IEP**, with clear explanations of how the technology supports specific academic tasks.	IEP team* members **mention AT in the IEP**, but its role in supporting specific tasks may not be fully detailed or clear.	IEP team* members **do not document AT in the IEP, or the documentation is vague** and does not explain how the technology supports the learner's needs.
All educators* that support the learner have access to the IEP.	**Some educators*** that support the learner have access to the IEP.	**Few educators*** that support the learner have access to the IEP.
IEP team* members **document a designated person(s) to collect** AT data across settings, and **data is collected**.	IEP team* members **discuss who may collect data** but **data is inconsistent or not collected** across settings.	IEP team* members **do not assign** or document who collects AT data, and **no data is collected**.

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***Educators:** Anyone who interacts with a learner has a role in supporting AT. This includes general education teachers, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, ancillary staff, administrators, etc.

Resources

- Bowser, G., & Reed, P. (2011). The ABC's of Effective AT Consideration. Winchester, OR: Coalition for Assistive Technology in Oregon.

- Castellani, J., Reed, P., Zabala, J., Dwyer, J., McPerhson, S., & Rein, J., (2004). *Considering the Need for Assistive Technology within the Individualized Education Program*. Arlington, VA: Technology and Media Division of the Council for Exceptional Children.

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  https://techknowledgy.ttaconline.org/TechKnowledgy2014/Document/ofu2SIdugGw

- *Indicators and matrices*. Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology Services. (2021, April 3). https://qiat.org/indicators/

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- *Michigan Alliance for Families*. Parent and Educator Guide for Assistive Technology Guide. (2017).
  https://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/AssistiveTech_5-1-17-1.pdf

- The Assistive Technology Assessment Process in the School Environment. (2013).
  https://www.ocali.org/up_doc/AT_Resource_Guide_5.pdf

AT Journey Practice Profile – Discussion and Reflection Guide

This guide is designed to help teams and individuals reflect on, clarify, and deepen their understanding of the AT Journey Practice Profile. It can be used during team meetings, PD sessions, self-reflection, or coaching conversations to support implementation and system improvement.

Step 1: Grounding in Purpose

Facilitator Prompt: "Let's reflect on our roles and how we support learners with AT needs. Try to be honest, curious, and collaborative; focus on systems and practices, not on individual people."

Starter Question: "What comes to mind when you think about AT in your current role?"

Step 2: Reflect on Each Essential Component

Essential Component #1 - AT Consideration

- How do we ensure AT is considered for all learners, not just based on eligibility categories?
- Do we follow a consistent, written process? What might that look like?
- How do we involve all IEP team members throughout the year?

Essential Component # 2 - Collaborative Decision-Making

- How do we include families and learners in meaningful ways?
- Where and how do we collaborate outside of formal meetings?
- Are we exploring tools, even if they're unfamiliar? What resources are we using or could we use?

Essential Component # 3 - Training and Support

- Are all staff and families receiving relevant, timely training?
- What's our process when devices or tools aren't working?
- How do IEP team members request additional support? Is this process known to everyone?

Essential Component # 4 - Documentation

- How is AT reflected in our IEPs? Is it task-specific?
- How are we informing all educators who support an AT user about their AT tools and services?
- Are we designating a person/people who are responsible for collecting AT data?

Step 3: Identify Strengths and Gaps

Use the table below to guide reflection and discussion. It can be recreated on chart paper, in a shared doc, or another format. The goal is to reflect on current practices and identify action areas.

Component	Strengths	Observations	Next Steps
AAC Availability			
Team-Based Decisions			
Multimodal Communication			
Modeling AAC			

Step 4: Wrap-up & Final Reflection

- What is one insight you're taking away from today?
- What's one thing you will try, change, or advocate for?