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| Topic: | Prescribed Assistive Technology |
| Effective: | November 2020 |
| Cross-Reference: | Special Education Plan, Acceptable Use Procedure for Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Statement of Personal Information Practices |
| Revision Date: | December 2020 |
| Review Date: | December 2025 |
| Responsibility: | Superintendent of Education – Student Services |

PURPOSE:

This document outlines the process and use of prescribed Assistive Technology for students in schools.

DEFINITION:

Assistive Technology refers to any technology, electronic or otherwise, that assists an individual in maximizing their physical and/or cognitive abilities by ameliorating an area of disability. Assistive Technology does not remediate, but provides an alternative means of access or expression. For the purposes of this document, Assistive Technology (AT) will be used to refer to computer-based technology (hardware and software), including but not limited to computers, tablets, and handheld devices, as well as interactive whiteboards, robotics, and a range of augmentative or alternative communication devices (AAC), and associated computer software.

PROCEDURE:**Who Qualifies for Prescribed AT?**

A recommendation of need for AT by one or more appropriately qualified professionals is required for a student to receive personal assistive technology through the *Special Equipment Amount - Per Pupil Amount (SEA-PPA) Grant*. AT may be prescribed for a student without a formal identification as an exceptional student, or without a diagnosis, if, in the opinion of the prescribing professional(s), the technology is required for the student to access the curriculum or to express their understanding of the curriculum.

Not all students with an exceptionality benefit from AT, and not all students who may benefit from AT are developmentally or psychologically ready to access it when it is first considered as a tool for learning. Schools are encouraged to introduce students to AT, with the assistance of the appropriate support personnel such as the teacher, Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT), Assistive Technology Lead (ATL), Student Services Instructional Program Leader (IPL), Assistive Technology Speech and Language Pathologists (AT SLP)] if required, prior to consideration of a prescription.

It is not fiscally feasible to provide every student who might benefit from AT with a personally-assigned device. For that reason, where licensing allows, AT software is included in the standard student image on all student computers with an operating system that can run the programs. All HDSB students have access to the G-Suite of apps through Google Chrome, as well as other software that can support learning needs (e.g., Read & Write for Google, Boardmaker Online, etc.).

In keeping with the spirit of the Ministry of Education guidelines for the use of AT purchased through the SEA-PPA grant, shared use of equipment is encouraged. Students for whom the equipment is prescribed have primary access to use the AT, but if not needed, it may be used at school by other students. Home Use is limited to the student for whom the equipment was prescribed.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

For a student to receive AT provided by the Board the following procedure applies:

1. A prescription for technology from a qualified prescriber (e.g., Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Speech-Language Pathologist) is presented at the School Resource Team (SRT). Discussion may include the most appropriate device for the student and with agreement at SRT a school may choose to request a computing device different from the one described in the prescription (e.g., a tablet vs. a laptop computer). The type of device would be determined normally by a trial of at least 6 weeks to 3 months and an IEP needs to be in place to reflect how the technology is supporting their programming. Once agreed, a request is submitted to Student Services with appropriate documentation. This is a recommendation and requires approval from Student Services.
2. A consent form must be signed by a parent/guardian or adult student to share personal information with Student Services personnel, including assessments from the prescribing professional. This form also includes consent to use software, such as apps and extensions, that may be recommended by the prescribing professional which might require the students to login using their HDSB account or provide personal information in order to achieve the full functionality of the tool to support student learning. See [Statement of Personal Information Practices](#) for more information.

This consent, along with the prescription, a current IEP signed by the Principal that demonstrates the need for the AT, and a request for technology will be submitted by the school to Student Services. The IEP must include:

- An updated *Assessment* section with report/prescription (e.g., OT, Psych, SLP)
 - Accommodations* with the use of AT (e.g., Instructional, Assessment)
 - Assessment accommodations for *Provincial Assessments* if applicable (i.e., Gr. 3, 6, 9, 10)
 - Use of AT indicated in applicable *Program Areas* (e.g., Language, Math, Alternate AT)
 - Individualized Equipment* section must indicate SEA claim in process
3. The IEP and prescription is reviewed by Student Services to ensure the requirements of the Ministry of Education for eligibility are met. At this point, conversation may occur between the school, Student Services, parent/guardian, and the prescribing professional about the details of the request. Equipment is assigned in order of the date of submission unless there is an extraordinary need (medical) or equipment is needed for a Program or a Self-Contained Class placement by a specific date.
 4. Equipment is delivered to the school.
 5. Schools may contact the appropriate AT Lead and/or AT SLP for student or staff support, if required.

In addition to completing the claim process and submitting accompanying documents, schools are also responsible for the following:

- Developing a sign-out process for AT
- Providing instructions on the correct procedures for device set up, battery recharging, breakdown, storage, and transport
- Contacting the SEA Inventory Manager responsible for SEA equipment if there is damage or loss of equipment
- For damaged or lost peripherals (e.g., headphones), submitting an IT support ticket
- When device arrives, updating the IEP - Individualized Equipment to include device, model, and serial #

RETURN PROCEDURES:

AT remains with a student until graduation (if required). When a student graduates or leaves the school board in which it was purchased for another, the equipment is returned to Student Services. Equipment will be sent to another publicly-funded board in Ontario on request from that school board. Equipment that remains in the HDSB as a result of students graduating, moving outside of the public system or the province, or because the new school board does not request the equipment, may be reassigned providing it is still a supported device.

UPGRADES:

Devices assigned through the SEA process are expected to have the same supported life as the same model of device throughout the board, as determined by the Information Technology guidelines. If, in the opinion of the school, a student requires a replacement device at the end of the supported life of their current device, a request is made to Student Services for an upgraded device. Once determined the device is eligible for an upgrade, a new device can be requested. Devices not designated for upgrade by IT will be replaced with another device only at the recommendation of IT personnel. Parent/Guardian consultation and consent is required to process this upgrade.

CHANGE OF DEVICE:

A change in device can occur when the SRT determines that the current device does not meet the needs of the student. A trial of the new device and data to support the change is required. A device change cannot occur until a student has been trained in the use of their initial device and has had the initial device for at least six weeks to 3 months of school. Parent/ Guardian consultation and consent is required to process this change.

HOME USE:

The Halton District School Board supports the home use of Special Equipment Amount (SEA) purchased computer equipment and software by outlining the relative responsibilities of parents and students for this equipment.

Parent/guardian or students over 18 must sign: [Assistive Technology Home Use Procedures & Consent](#) form. Students must abide by the Admin Procedure: [Acceptable Use Procedures for Information and Communication Technology \(ICT\)](#).

Home Use may be rescinded if the equipment is used for purposes that contravene the Home Use and Acceptable Use directives. Home Use may entail financial responsibility for repair or replacement if damage to the device results from purposeful activity or through downloads. Families are not required to insure equipment. Most repairs will be the responsibility of the

HDSB. Repairs may be done only by HDSB personnel or by a licensed warranty provider contracted by the HDSB. Maintenance and repair will take place only at a school or board site unless the computer or peripheral repair requires it to be sent back to the manufacturer or provider.

AUDIO VISUAL RECORDING:

Students who have prescribed equipment capable of audio/video recording do not require permission to record classroom instruction if it is required for them to access the curriculum. They must follow [Acceptable Use Procedures for Information and Communication Technology \(ICT\)](#) and respect the privacy of staff and other students in the classroom.