



*A newsletter for the employees of the  
East Central Kansas Cooperative in  
Education*



March 2020

Developmental Disabilities  
Awareness Month

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## Accessing Assistive Technology for Students Who Need It

Assistive technology (AT) for your student may seem daunting to consider. It may cause feelings of anxiety or fear to truly consider all the student's needs because there is such a broad definition and so many options for AT. However, never fear, there is help. You may or may not know, there is a flow chart that looks complicated, but it isn't that hard to use when you actually get started. You can find the flow chart on the coop's website at: <http://www.eckce.com/assistive-technology-resources>.

This is a great place to start because it can help you start by making the decision of whether or not you even need to explore options. Many students do well with traditional interventions provided by the staff and the tools readily available to all students. However, when these tools aren't enough, we need to take a deeper look and reach out to get the student the tools and supports necessary to help the student make progress on his or her IEP goals.

If the IEP team needs to consider AT, there are additional tools to help the IEP team to determine which tools will most likely meet the need. This process will be as data driven as other



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## Frequently (Recently) Asked Questions

### Every month I will include questions that you have asked – others probably need the answers

**Q:** We had a parent attend an IEP meeting but disagree with the service increases and locations that we proposed as necessary for the student. The IEP was due the following day, but we couldn't get consent, and the old IEP is about to expire. What do we do?

**A:** This highlights one of the confusing points of the deadline and eligibility process. Once a student is determined to be eligible for services, the IEP that is put in place never really expires. The rule for reviewing the IEP is that it must be done at least annually, so in meeting with the parent, in spite of the fact that they disagreed with the proposed changes in that review, you have met the legal obligation. In the state of Kansas, however, the changes that exceed 25% of a service or greater than 25% of time in any given setting requires consent on the parents part, so if this is the case, you must continue to provide the services that are listed on the previously agreed upon IEP until the parent gives consent, OR adjust the proposed changes to reflect the legal limit of less than 25% to comply with the consent rule. If the changes are less than 25%, you can make those without parental consent, but the parent still needs to be given the prior written notice that the changes will be put into place. Of course it is always better to have agreement, so if that is possible, always strive to get the parent to understand why the team believes the proposed changes are necessary.

**Q:** Kindergarten roundup just happened at our school and some of the preschoolers who we recommended for Kindergarten didn't do well, and the parents were told that they should consider an additional year of preschool, even though they will be five before the deadline and their IEPs reflect services we proposed for Kindergarten. What do we tell the parents?

**A:** Ah, the familiar collision of general education and special education philosophies. Wouldn't it be nice if we could present a unified front? Here is the bottom line. When a student has been found eligible as having a disability under the Kansas eligibility guidelines, only the IEP team can make the decision that a student remain in preschool. I will caution that this should be a very rare occurrence in terms of research and best practice. Because we have full day kindergarten, it is better to promote the child to a full day FAPE offering where they will have more access to appropriate peer modeling and a greater range of services. If the student at the end of the Kindergarten year is still not demonstrating the progress they need to in order to move on to first grade, then retention for a second year of K might be appropriate—that is the only time that retention has been found to be effective in the studies that have been conducted on the topic. We obviously need to do a better job of connecting with our Kindergarten teams about not discouraging our parents with news that their children may not be ready—they are on IEPs for that very reason. And the more sever the disability, the more they need the full day offering.



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interventions to meet the student's IEP goals. Depending on the area of need (i.e. written expression, reading comprehension, communication, etc.) you will use different tools to help you identify a few AT tools to trial, take data on and that will determine what AT that you might include in the IEP. This process may take several weeks. This process can be formal or informal. We have one such checklist to help a team on our website at: <http://www.eckce.com/cms/wp-content/uploads/AT-Planning-Worksheet.pdf> . There are other resources available like Joy Zabala's SETT Framework at: <http://www.joyzabala.com/Documents.html>. Also our Infnitec website has great resources that are even more specialized.

If you would like to learn more about how to use Infnitec's website or how to determine what assistive technology might meet your student's needs the best, please register for free access with our membership at <http://www.myinfnitec.org/home> with your work email address. There are many, many free resources on this website that can help you learn and can narrow down the search for you. The online classroom has AT decision making if you would like to learn more. In addition, there are hundreds of other professional development training videos available. This website has researched and narrowed down the best educational apps available and can narrow the search if you are looking for a specific app for a specific purpose. If you just want a good resource to help the IEP determine which AT to consider, there are resources under the resource tab on the left side of the home page. Under this tab, select AT decision- making and then AT decision-making links. There will be more options for you to choose from.

If you have more specific questions feel free to email Dee Steinbach at [dsteinbach@usd348.com](mailto:dsteinbach@usd348.com). If you have difficulty logging onto the Infnitec website and all of their resources, please contact Shelly McCart at [smccart@eckce.com](mailto:smccart@eckce.com).

## You're not Alone—Spring Break is Coming!

March is typically the most difficult month for teachers to maintain a focus for student achievement. The reasons may be obvious—the tendency to look ahead to summer or even to look to the following school year is tremendous, with the advent of Spring and changing energy levels and focus of the students. Just remember, this is the home stretch for many of our educational goals and we need to stay one step ahead of our kids when it comes to energy and focus. Spring break is a great time to inhale, and get ready for the rest of the school year. As you go out on break, reenergize and take a beat, knowing that the job you have done this year is one of the most important jobs there is, but the job you have before you to finish the year is equally as important. Thank you for all you do for the students of our districts and have a wonderfully refreshing week where you can get some resolve for our ever important stretch run of April and May. Don't forget your deadlines for Lump-sum requests and movement on the schedule are due by April 15<sup>th</sup>!

## DOs & DON'Ts

Here are things to consider when working with kids and determining assistive technology needs

**DO** always be on the lookout for new ways of presenting information to kids. Often times there are assistive technology strategies that will help our students learn concepts better.

**DO** think outside the box when a student is struggling with traditional methods of instruction. Both low and high technology options should be considered to ease the struggle

**DON'T** hesitate to suggest things, both to the team that works with the student and to the parents when they express concerns at home. Sometimes solutions are obvious. Sometimes they are not.

**DON'T** just think of devices as assistive technology. Contact your assistive technology supports within the district to see if they have suggestions for things you may not have previously considered.

## **No March SEAC Meeting - -Will Resume April 28**

Our Special Education Advisory Council, or parent advocacy group, met again on February 25<sup>th</sup> with a presentation from Families Together on appropriate participation in the IEP process and a presentation on the WEBS program. Due to Spring Break and a variety of other sponsored events, our next meeting will be on April 28<sup>th</sup> at the Baldwin Intermediate Center. For more information please visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/WEB-of-Compassion-711766132538996/> Hope to see many of you next month!

## **Community Resource Expo to be Held April 8<sup>th</sup>**

Building Bridges, the 17<sup>th</sup> annual community expo highlighting area service providers, organizations and support groups will be held at Billy Mills Middle School in Lawrence on April 8 from 4:30-6:00. Tell your parents!

## **ESY Determination and IEP Plans Due March 20**

Just a final reminder that ESY plans are underway! For those students who qualify, depending on the amounts specified by the IEP team, we are setting up programming in various locations, pending the numbers of students and needs. The dates for these locations are tentatively set for Monday--Thursday the weeks of June 8 and June 15, with two weeks off for Independence Day and resuming the weeks of July 6 and 13. Note that the days are set up to provide the most effective ESY model for most students but may be altered in situations where it is deemed necessary. All lesson plans and ESY Eligibility forms need to be turned in by March 20 or before you leave for Spring Break. Thank you!

## **Para Corner**

Please share this newsletter with your paras, just in case they did not receive it via email. If you have questions about paras as a group, don't hesitate to now contact Shelly McCart @ [smccart@eckce.com](mailto:smccart@eckce.com).

**Please** demonstrate regular attendance so that the students you are there to support can feel consistency in their programming. While you are given discretionary leave at the beginning of each semester, please use it judiciously. If your attendance has been less than expected, you will be receiving a visit to see how we can get it to improve.

Your inservice logs are due now. In order for us to keep track of the inservice hours requirement, we really need you to turn those in to Shelly McCart. If you do not have those turned in at this point in the year, expect that I will be coming around to inquire about their status. Thanks for all you do!

## **Mardi Gras Celebration February 12**

The annual Mardi Gras Celebration held in Baldwin for all surrounding districts was a tremendous success. Speakers from within our district as well as from outside agencies highlighted Down Syndrome this year and all in attendance were inspired and energized. Thanks to all who helped make it a success!

## **Medicaid Count Window Closes March 6**

The Medicaid Count window for 2020 will be open Feb 24-Mar 6. Make sure all of your billable services are kept up to date and entered on those days particularly by Mar 6 so that we can receive our share of the Medicaid Replacement Funds by the number of eligible students. IF you have not gotten your hours in by now do so immediately!