Appendix D: Assistive Technology Guidance

Overview

What is assistive technology?
Assistive technology (AT) refers to any item, piece of equipment, software, or product system—whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized—that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a person with a disability. In the context of educational assessment, AT ensures that students can access and respond to test content in ways that reflect their true knowledge and skills, not their disability.

What is assistive technology in the context of educational measurement and testing?
In educational assessment, AT plays a vital role by ensuring that students with disabilities have equitable access to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. It helps remove barriers that might otherwise prevent accurate assessment of a student's abilities. The goal of AT during testing is to ensure that a student's disabilities do not interfere with their ability to understanding test questions, respond to items, and navigate the testing platform. AT helps maintain the validity of the assessment by allowing students to show they know and can to in each content area assessed.

Assistive Technology Resources

Ohio educators are encouraged to use the following resources for guidance on AT selection and implementation:

- **Assistive Technology Decision-Making Tool (DMT)**
  A structured process provided by the Ohio Center for Autism and Low-Incidence (OCALI) to help IEP teams consider and document students' AT needs.
  AT Decision-Making Tool (PDF)
  AT Consideration Resources (webpage)

- **Ohio's Assistive Technology Manual**
  A comprehensive guide to AT use in state assessments, including eligibility, documentation, and examples.
  Assistive Technology Manual (webpage)

Considerations for Educators

Students should be familiar with the assistive technology they will use during testing from use during regular instruction. Districts should provide many opportunities for students to use the technology prior to operational testing. Districts can access the Student Practice Site for Ohio's State Tests using the secure browser or app to assess the technology's compatibility with the online testing platform.

Types of Assistive Technology
When considering the AT that students may use during testing, it is helpful think about AT according to the task it enables the student to perform and the content area of the test. Common categories include:

- **Access Tools**: Devices to help students interact with content (screen readers, Braille displays, magnifiers)
- **Input Tools**: Tools to assist students in responding to questions (speech-to-text, adaptive keyboards)
- **Communication Tools**: Supports for students with speech or language impairments (augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices)
- **Cognitive Supports**: Tools that aid memory, organization, or processing (fact charts, timers)

- **Environmental Controls**: Devices that help students manage their physical testing environment (noise-canceling headphones, adjustable lighting)

It is also helpful to understand that AT is not always some complex, expensive, electronic device. AT includes low-tech, mid-tech, and high-tech devices.

- **Low-tech AT** typically refers to simple, non-electronic tools that require little to no training and are often inexpensive. Examples of low-tech AT in education assessment include pencil grips, slant boards to support writing, and paper-based communication boards for students with limited speech.

- **Mid-tech AT** usually refers to devices that may include some electronic components by are generally simpler and less expensive that high-tech tools. They often have limited customization and require minimal training. Examples of mid-tech AT in educational assessment include talking calculators for math assessments and single-message voice output devices (e.g., Big Mack) used by students with limited or no verbal speech.

- **High-tech AT** refers to advanced, often computer-based tools that are highly customizable and may require training to use effectively. In educational assessment, these tools often can integrate with digital assessment platforms. Examples of high-tech AT in educational assessment include: text-to-speech software, speech-to-text tools, screen readers, and eye-tracking systems for students with limited motor control.

Conclusion

AT plays a critical role in ensuring equitable access to Ohio's State Tests for students with disabilities. By supporting access to test content and enabling varied response methods, AT allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills without being limited by their disability. When selected and implemented appropriately, assistive technology helps uphold the validity and fairness of the assessment process.