



Assistive Technology (AT) Forward February Update

Greetings Assistive Technology (AT) Forward Community of Practice Members! The AT Forward Update is a monthly publication, which provides information about the AT Forward Project, highlights the upcoming AT Forward Community of Practice (CoP) meetings, and includes additional AT resources and tips. We are now over 700 participants strong and growing!

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Micro-Credentials for Assistive Technology!



The Assistive Technology (AT) Forward is excited to provide free supported micro-credentials and macro-credentials assistive technology learning opportunities for the 2021-22 school year. Micro-credentialing is an opportunity for educators to learn on their own time, pace, and place. Through this process, you can earn a total of twelve badges for each completed micro-credentials. If you earn seven badges, you will qualify for a macro-credential. The courses are self-paced and coaching support sessions are available to provide guidance and to answer questions. There are many topics from which you can choose and customize your own learning, including assessment, AAC, vision, transition,

etc. If you would like to register for a micro-credential learning opportunity and join an AT learning community from across the state, please visit the AT Forward Micro-Credentials Home Page. Thank you to the 165 people who have started their journey towards earning their Micro-Credentials, and to date, 41 badges have been awarded,

Congratulations to the following individuals for earning their AT Badges!

Ann Barry: Racine Schools - Ann has earned 7 badges!

Melanie Baumunk: School District of Janesville - Melanie has earned 6 badges!

Nicole Nichols: School District of Janesville - Nicole has earned 4 badges!

Jennifer Schubring: Green Bay Area Schools - Jennifer has earned 2 badges!

Sara Vold: School District of Janesville

Mary Houser: School District of Menomonee Falls

Lindsay Lauters: Mequon Thiensville School District

Laura Simpson: CESA 6

Carly Sandgren: Madison Metropolitan School District

February AT Forward CoP Meetings

There will be two Community of Practice meetings in February.

February 2, 2022: Accessing Grade Level Content: This meeting will provide an overview of technologies to assist students who face barriers in accessing grade level content. This session will also give participants the opportunity to share their own stories and resources to promote learning engagement for all students. (Video Available Soon)

February 17, 2022: Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) Resources: This presentation will focus on the use of Learning Ally and Bookshare to acquire Accessible Educational Materials for students with print disabilities. Additional classroom resources will also be provided to assist teachers to promote engagement for all students based on their learning needs. Participants will be invited to share their favorite resources.

What is the Quality Indicator Spotlight for February?

Each month will highlight a Quality Indicator for Assistive Technology, which can easily be utilized to provide training for district staff. For February, the spotlight is [Indicator 2 Assessment of Assistive technology Needs](#).

“Quality Indicators for Assessment of Assistive Technology Needs is a process conducted by a team, used to identify tools and strategies to address a student’s specific need(s). The issues that lead to an AT assessment may be very simple and quickly answered or more

complex and challenging. Assessment takes place when these issues are beyond the scope of the problem solving that occurs as a part of normal service delivery.” *Indicator 2: Assessment of Assistive Technology Needs - Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology Services.* (2022). Qiat.Org. <https://qiat.org/indicators/indicator-2-assessment-of-at-needs/>

Common Errors with Assessing Needs for AT (QIAT)

The following pitfalls can result in students not receiving FAPE.

Procedures for conducting AT assessment are not defined or are not customized to meet the student’s needs.

A team approach to assessment is not utilized.

Individuals participating in an assessment do not have the skills necessary to conduct the assessment and do not seek additional help.

Team members do not have adequate time to conduct assessment processes, including necessary trials with AT.

Communication between team members is not clear.

The student is not involved in the assessment process.

When the assessment is conducted by any team other than the student’s IEP team, the needs of the student or expectations for the assessment are not communicated.

Family Connections

Do you have a student who has a visual impairment or know of a family that needs support raising their child who is visually impaired? American Printing House for the Blind (APH) has a place for families and educators to connect and find information they need called [FamilyConnect](#). Their site offers many helpful posts including a large section on [Assistive Technology](#).....Check it out!

Autism Speaks publishes new employment resource for autistic adults

Autism Speaks is a free resource available just for signing up with your email. They recently published that research is showing that “nearly half of 25-year-olds with autism have never held a paying job, though many are willing and able to work.” To assist with this fact they have developed a “ [Roadmap to Meaningful Employment for Autistic Adults](#). It is “designed to help adults with autism navigate their employment journey and offers guidance and resources at every stage of their career, whether they’re looking for their first job or preparing for retirement.”

What is the Assessing Student’s Needs for Assistive Technology (ASNAT)?

ASNAT is the acronym for the manual and process of assessment in the area of Assistive Technology. If your school district would benefit from a step-by-step AT assessment guide, this is the manual for you. This [link](#) will take you to the entire manual, but we suggest that you break it down into manageable sections. This month we will look at [Chapter 12](#) of the 5th Edition of ASNAT Manual which goes perfectly with our CoP meeting on February 17, Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) Resources. During this session we will look at materials that assist students who are blind or have other visual needs that make it difficult for them to access standard print materials. Teams should pay close attention to the decision making guides, which assist teams with laying out the [SETT](#) process and completing a good AT Assessment, as shown below:

Chapter 12 – Assistive Technology for Students who are Blind or have Low Vision		
WATI Assistive Technology Decision Making Guide		
Area of Concern: <u>Vision</u>		
PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION		
Student’s Abilities/Difficulties	Environmental Considerations	Tasks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print size • Reading visual or tactile medium • Illegible handwriting • Navigating the computer operating system and programs • Identifying & finding details in pictures • Touch typing • Need for audio enhancement • Color blindness • Photosensitivity • Activities of daily living • Participation in gym activities • Organization • Physical or motor-related issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk space • Classroom space • Location in the room • Visual access of board work • Visual access of classroom presentations • Type of learning medium • Type of light and level of illumination • External noises • Assistive Technology: past and present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Writing • Note-taking • Large group distance presentations • Visual activities • Computer-assisted tasks • Converting print into electronic format • Activities of daily living • Gym activities
Sensory Considerations		Narrowing the Focus
What sensory challenges does the student have that impacts learning? (i.e., visual, auditory, tactile)		Identify Specific task(s) for Solution Generation

AAC Corner

Have you ever heard of [Project Core](#)? Project Core was developed to assist professionals and families with the huge job of teaching those with limited vocabulary a “core” set of words. “Project Core is a **support system for students with complex cognitive disabilities**. It helps them learn to communicate in both social and academic contexts using powerful core vocabulary.” Their primary goals are

- “Empower teachers and classroom professionals to deliver access to a Universal Core vocabulary and communication instruction during the naturally occurring academic and daily routines of the school day.
- Improve the academic achievement of students with significant cognitive disabilities as evidenced by gains in their communication and literacy skills, and ultimately in their end-of-year assessments.”



Our emphasis this month is on [Project Core's Tactile Symbols](#) for people with visual and communication impairments. With the assistance of 3D printers anyone can create tactile symbols to assist students with low or no vision to become communicators. This [link](#) will take you to a video on how to download and order the files for tactile symbols. Once your symbols are created / printed you can pair them with an AAC device such as a [GoTalk](#). AAC devices like a GoTalk work with recorded speech. For some students, recorded speech is easier for them to understand versus synthesized or computer-generated speech. A GoTalk is made by the [Attainment Company](#) and can be purchased with 4 or more cells. You can purchase a GoTalk as a dedicated device or there is also a [GoTalk App](#) that allows for alternative access such as single switch access Check out their [Lite](#) version which has no cost.



Sometimes with students who have complex needs it is difficult to know where to begin. Students with Complex Communication needs require different types of assessment tools. Here is a [link](#) to a handout that describes a symbol assessment.

Where can I turn if I have an Assistive Technology question? Join the [QIAT Listserv](#)

The QIAT Listserv is a place where anyone - user, educator, parent, caregiver, anyone, can post a question concerning Assistive Technology. Join the list and participate in the conversations. Together we can all make a difference.

Recently there was a great UDL /AT conversation around the use of Assistive Technology and does it become a crutch. Here are some of the answers .

“There is also published research that shows positive effects of using text-to-speech (TTS). This study found significant increases in both reading vocabulary and reading comprehension for those who had used TTS even when not using it: Park, H.J., Takahashi, K., Roberts, K.D., Delise, D. (2017). Effects of text-to-speech software use on the reading proficiency of high school struggling readers. Assistive Technology, 29(3), 146-152. Also look at Wood, S.G., Moxley, J.H., Tighe, E.L., & Wagner, R.K. (2017). Does use of text-to-speech and related read-aloud tools improve reading comprehension for students with reading disabilities? A meta-analysis. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 51(1), 73-84. They did a meta-analysis of studies and found that the use of TTS had a significant impact on reading scores for students with learning disabilities.” Dr. Penny Reed

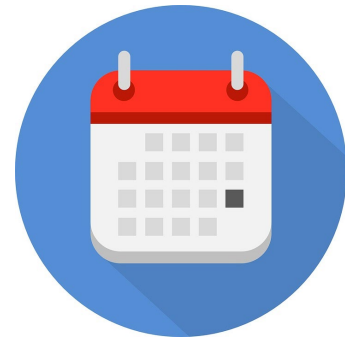
“There was a research study out of the University of Illinois that looked at the impact of using CoWriter & ReadOutLoud- (the pre-cursor to Snap&Read) on elementary students when taking the statewide writing test. In the study the students had access to the tools everyday but we're not able to use them on the statewide test. The study showed that even though the tools were not available for the test, the students who had previous use of them still improved and scored higher.” Kelley Fonner

Resource of the Month - Getting to Know Wisconsin Services



WisTech

The mission of WisTech is “to improve awareness, access to, and acquisition of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities of all ages in Wisconsin.” WisTech assists people of all ages with such things as device trials, funding questions, device loans, and more. WisTech serves people of all ages with any disability. WisTech offers a variety of services including a device loan program. You can get more information on WisTech by visiting their web site or by joining their [listserv](#) or search the [statewide map](#) for other services in your area.



February 2 is [Rheumatoid Arthritis Awareness Day](#): Check out this [site](#) for assistance with everyday tasks. Remember that the true definition of Assistive Technology is anything that **increases, maintains, or improves** the functional capabilities of a person with a disability. Assistive Technology devices do not need to be high tech.

February 17 is National Random Act of Kindness Day - be nice to ALL people... it will make a difference

February 22 is World Encephalitis Day - children and adults with encephalitis can have learning, motor and speech difficulties.

Upcoming AT Forward CoP Meetings:

February 2, 2022: Accessing Grade Level Content

February 17, 2022: Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) Resources: Accessible Electronic Texts for Students with Visual Impairments or Print Disabilities

March 7, 2022: Low and No Cost Resources to Support Assistive Technology

April 26, 2022: Finding Tools to Fit the Needs of Today's Students

May 11, 2022: Non-Academic Activities: Engaging Students in Social and Leisure Activities

May 19, 2022: Supporting Students with Medical Complexities



If you have any questions or comments about the AT Forward Project, please contact Kathy White at Kathy.White@CESA2.org or Stacy Duffy at stacy.duffy@cesa2.org.