



Greetings Assistive Technology (AT) Forward Community of Practice Members . Below you will find the December Update for the [Wisconsin Assistive Technology \(AT\) Forward Project](#). Through exciting learning opportunities, the AT Forward Project continues to move Wisconsin forward in the area of Assistive Technology!

What is AT Forward?

The Assistive Technology (AT) Forward Project works with educators, practitioners, caregivers, and families to increase student autonomy in utilizing Assistive Technology tools to support access, engagement, and progress in learning. The AT Forward Project provides a variety of resources and learning opportunities, including [Community of Practice \(CoP\) meetings](#), [micro-credentialing](#), and monthly email updates. To become a member of the [AT Forward CoP](#), please visit the [AT Forward Registration page](#). From AT beginner to expert, the AT Forward CoP welcomes all knowledge level backgrounds!

Please mark your calendars for the upcoming December CoP meetings:

December 12, 2022 , 4:00p.m.-5:00p.m.: [Providing Accessible Education Materials \(AEM\): What type of AEM is Needed?](#) with Stacy Duffy, Amy Snow and Kathy White

December 15, 2022, 4:00p.m.-5:00p.m. (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) [AAC Funding Considerations](#) with Abygail Marx

The table of contents below is designed so you can quickly jump to various sections of this update. You can also search this document using the command “Control F,” with a keyword to search for specific information. All monthly AT Forward [Updates](#) are stored electronically as resources on the AT Forward website.

Table of Contents

[Micro-Credentials](#)

[Resource suggestion](#)

[Sometimes All We Need To Do Is Start A Conversation....](#)

[AAC Corner](#)

[QIAT question](#)

[What is a feature match? Feature Match- Writing in terms of Physical Access](#)

Micro-Credentials: The AT Forward is excited to provide free supported micro-credentials and macro-credentials for assistive technology learning opportunities. Micro-credentialing is an opportunity for educators to learn on their own time, pace, and place.

Learning is structured in an online platform and is supported with email and video conference communication to enable clarity and success. As participants complete their micro-credentials, they receive feedback to assist in clarifying their goals and earn a digital badge. Digital badges can be added to your email signature to show others your commitment to assistive technology. For the 2022-23 school year, we are excited to announce new learning opportunities around Accessible Educational Materials (AEM), Early Childhood, and AT for Administrators .

Micro Credential status:

We are pleased to announce the following celebrations:

153 badges have been awarded to date.

8 educators have earned macro credentials (7+ Badges)

Over 50 educators have participated in the program from over 30 districts/organizations

Congratulations to the following people who have earned one or more micro-credentials in Assistive Technology:

Gabrielle Parkos UW Oshkosh 2 badges

Terri Oliver School District of Milton 2 badges

Mysie Sabin Muskego Norway School District

Abigail Bauer School District of Milton

Yarin Medina UW Oshkosh 2 badges

Andrea Glad Hortonville Area School District

Resource Suggestion:

Podcasts provide great and convenient learning opportunities, especially when time is limited.

[Talking with Tech](#) - This podcast is dedicated to all things AAC. Recently, Daniel Parker, Stacy Duffy and Kathy White were guest speakers to discuss the Wisconsin AT Forward Micro Credentials program. You can check out the episode [here](#) as well as explore their other podcasts.

[Mystic Access](#) This podcast specializes in information for the blind and visually impaired. They discuss tools as well as information that is needed to empower people with visual impairments.

[AT Banter](#) - Looking for a source of great information, as well as entertainment? This podcast has it all. Their goal is to “celebrate and share stories about disabilities.”

[AT Companion guides](#) - developed by the Maryland Department of Education and are supplemental to Maryland’s AT Manual and designed specifically to meet the needs of IEP team members who are new to or less familiar with assistive technology.

Sometimes All We Need To Do Is Start A Conversation....

With the gift giving season upon us it can be a very difficult time of the year for parents to find toys that are age respectful and fun for their children. There are several online stores that have filters for searches that can assist parents. Even [Amazon](#) has a Special Needs search area.

[Fat Brain Toy Company Special Needs Toys](#)

Are you looking for an adaptation to a gaming system? [Evil Controllers](#) is a company that believes everyone can be a gamer. They state “We strive to create a gaming community that connects all gamers and excludes no one.” During the season of giving, this is a strong and purposeful statement that can help all of us in the drive for inclusiveness for all. If you are interested in additional information on Adapted Gaming please visit the [Introduction to Adapted Gaming training](#) hosted by WisTech earlier this year.

AAC Corner

As a reminder, the Assistive Technology Lending Center(ATLC) library website has been changed to <https://wisconsinat4all.com/>.

Please go to this website to register. After you are registered, login and click on Speech Communication, (the Program field should fill in as ATLC. All devices will show up or you can search for a specific device. If you have any questions or problems please contact Donna Hudson at CESA 2 donna.hutson@cesa2.org or call 262.473.1449.

AAC

There has been a great deal of research in the past concerning AAC devices and abandonment. Many research articles state that common causes for device abandonment are device expense, device complexity, and or the device is too difficult to transport. (The AAC Abandonment Epidemic.” [Speakeasycommunity.Com](https://speakeasycommunity.com), 2022, <https://speakeasycommunity.com/blog/the-aac-abandonment-epidemic>.) However, there is often another reason that is rarely spoken of and that is that the device does not have the appropriate language for the AAC user. If a user cannot find the word or phrase they are searching for in a timely manner, the communicator and their partner in the conversation can quickly lose interest. This is why it is essential that students are taught as much literacy skills as possible.

This is not a new or novel idea. Great researchers such as David Koppenhaver, Karen Erickson (*Dave’s Literacy & Disability Site - Resources*. (2022). [Litdis.Com](https://www.litdis.com/). <https://www.litdis.com/>) and many others have been exploring this topic of teaching literacy skills to all for many years. It is possible and essential to teach a student with no current or limited verbal communication to read and write. Another great resource is [Karen Erickson’s book Comprehensive Literacy for ALL](#).

When trialing a device from the lending library make sure and demonstrate to the user how to access things like word predictions and alphabet pages. Even if your student is not

a proficient speller, teaching them how to access and express themselves as a conventional writer will increase their use of AAC as well as increase their literacy skills. Communication is a complex skill and an essential skill for ALL!

- **Video Resource:** [You're Hired: Employers and Agencies Share Perspectives on Employment for Individuals Who Use AAC](#)
- **[Chatter Matters Communication Camp](#):** Does your child or a child you know use AAC? Do you want to have fun as a family this summer? Apply to attend Chatter Matters Communication Camp June 15-18, 2023 at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.
- **[Wisconsin Assistive Technology Regional Network \(WATRAN\)](#):** Consider joining this organization if interested in joining a group of practitioner to learn more about AAC and share the work you are doing.

QIAT Question

Have you ever wished there was a place where you could ask a question and get real people who use technology to answer you? Then [Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology](#) (qiat.org) is the place for you! QIAT is a nationwide organization of parents, users, and professionals in the field of Assistive Technology. It is a free to join organization that is always accepting new members.

Question: I am wondering if anyone knows of a communication device that can be worn on the wrist. I have a student who is medically fragile and we want a way for them to communicate a couple of emergency type messages such as "I don't feel well".

QIAT community, help me out!

Answers from the group:

- In addition to looking at the AAC systems that can be downloaded onto an iPhone, iWatch (Proloquo2go, GoTalk Now) or Android (CoughDrop) there are some low tech, less robust systems without voice output- look to the wristlets and forearm AAC booklets (think what a football quarterback wears on their forearm) from Augmentative Resources.
- Voice output recordable wearable systems from Attainment GoTalkGo, Go Talk Choice and other small one to 4 messages.
- Enabling Devices has a couple of wrist products that wear like watches with one to 2 messages and the hip talker with 4 to 8 buttons.
- Small step by step can be connected to a belt or worn like a Fanny pack.

[Link to Kelly Fonnors Non Robust AAC System Feature Match](#)

What is a feature match?

Feature matching occurs when you look systematically at what a student needs and the features of various programs. Below is an example of feature matching as it relates to students with writing disabilities, motor issues and/or dysgraphia.

When completing an evaluation it is important to look at the student's disability-related educational needs. To further assist with this process, explore this resource on the DPI site that looks at the six areas of academic and functional skill. "Specifically, they are intended to serve as a guide for developing, reflecting on, and organizing developmentally and educationally relevant questions when planning and conducting a comprehensive special education evaluation aimed at accurately identifying a student's pattern of strengths and disability-related needs." *Comprehensive Special Education Evaluation: Six Areas of Academic and Functional Skill* | Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2022). Dpi.Wi.Gov. <https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/ccr-ieps/comp-eval/six-areas>

When conducting an IEP and having the conversation about "whether the student needs assistive technology services or devices," consider asking these types of questions listed in the chart below. Does my student have....?

Area of Student Concern- Writing Difficulties - Physical Access	Potential Solution Feature Match
Student has trouble with holding a writing instrument or has weak muscles for pushing a writing instrument.	Various pencil grips, various pencil styles, various pencil types (Marker or crayon)
Student has targeting issues on a keyboard	Keyguards , larger keys , membrane or virtual keyboards (iPad)
Student has only one hand or missing digits	Sticky keys or keyboard guard or a stylus
Student has weak stamina for writing (physical disability)	Voice to text, word banks , word prediction
Student has difficulties drawing	Teach the student to use drawing programs , or clipart to express their ideas
Student has difficulties transferring their gaze from a screen to a keyboard.	Onscreen keyboards or virtual keyboard with alternative access methods such as eye gaze or switch access
Student has difficulties perceiving they have pushed a key on a keyboard	Feedback maybe needed in terms of physical, or auditory input - consider a talking word processor that is set to speak every letter, word or sentence as needed

Student has difficulties finding their place on a keyboard	Stickers for high contrast , color or Braille can be added, keyboards can be made smaller or different configurations for physical and cognitive needs
Student has no ability to use their hands for typing	Alternative keyboard access through eye gaze , switch access, or morse code

Potential resources/suggestions to assist students with physical disabilities in terms of writing:

[Alternative Pencils by Kelly Fonner](#) - This recorded webinar is a treasure trove of information on what is an alternative pencil and how they can assist our students with the greatest of needs.

[REACH keyboard](#) On screen keyboards that match the users needs for access on a physical level as well as a cognitive level. These keyboards have pictures, sounds, and alternative access to assist those who need a very unique access mode.

[WordBank](#) - Sometimes students need a talking onscreen word bank. This tool not only provides assistance to students who need to reduce their keystrokes, it also provides specific vocabulary to match the subject they are writing about, a timeline of events from their article, auditory feedback and so much more in a very simple tool.

Together we can move AT Forward!!

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.