Greetings Assistive Technology (AT) Forward Community of Practice Members,

Welcome to the February edition of our AT Forward Update,
In our Update we embark on a journey to explore the transformative power of assistive technology in schools. In the realm of education, innovation knows no bounds, and this month, we shine a spotlight on the inspiring ways assistive technology is revolutionizing the learning experience for students with diverse abilities. We encourage you to join us in celebrating the inclusive and empowering impact that these technological advancements have on the educational landscape. From fostering independence to unlocking untapped potential, let's embrace the spirit of progress and collaboration as we navigate the empowering world of assistive technology in schools.

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Upcoming Assistive Technology Professional Learning Events

Upcoming Assistive Technology CoP Meetings

Please mark your calendars for the upcoming AT Forward CoP meetings:

Tuesday, February 27, 2024, Time: 4:00pm-5:00pm

Consider what? How to Match Features Presented by Anna Cliff and Kathy White. Description: Assistive Technology is everywhere. But how do you know you have chosen correctly? Feature Matching is an important concept in the field of Assistive Technology. It involves comparing the specific needs and abilities with various features and functions of AT tools. The goal of feature matching is to find the most suitable AT solution that aligns with the unique needs of a student. When conducting feature matching it is essential to consider factors such as the individual's physical and cognitive needs, the environment and the goal you are attempting to achieve. This session will look at a series of questions that will assist you in making informed decisions based on specific domains of needs. Please register in advance for this Zoom meeting.

Thursday, April 11, 2024, Time: 4:00pm-5:00pm
Selecting Apps for Safety, Functionality, and Fit presented by Mike Sindahl and DJ Scullin. Description: In 2009 Apple coined the phrase, "There's an app for that". Fast forward to the present and there are quite literally tens if not hundreds of "apps for that" so how do you select the best apps for your district? This presentation will walk you through one district's process for app approval, which includes evaluating digital tools for student safety, functionality with existing technology and systems, and fit with the district's curriculum and instruction. Please register in advance for this Zoom meeting.

Thursday, May 9, 2024, Time: 4:00pm-5:00pm
Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how it affects us and our students presented by Frank Devereaux and other CESA 2 staff. More information to come soon. Please register in advance for this Zoom meeting.

Other Assistive Technology Professional Learning Events

Feb 14, 2024 2:30 PM CST (free of charge)
Boosting Student Success: Integrating Assistive Technology Across the Educational Life Span
This is a Learning Opportunity for New U.S. Department of Education AT Guidance

Are you interested in learning more about the newly released assistive technology guidance by the U.S. Department of Education? Consider registering for this upcoming free webinar. Join this engaging leadership panel to gain insights into the assistive technology (AT) guidance released by the U.S. Department of Education in January 2024. The guidance package focuses on promoting and ensuring greater access to assistive technology (AT) for students with disabilities. Assistant Secretary Wright-Gallo will present the core tenets of the guidance. Leaders from the Office of Special Education Programs and the Office of Education Technology will participate in the discussion highlighting resources for students with disabilities and the practitioners, teachers, parents, and caregivers who educate and support them.

Wisconsin Center for Blind and Visually Impaired (WCBVI) Update

WCBVI Preschool Conference
The Preschool Conference is an annual event for the purpose of supporting families, caregivers, and professionals who have or who currently work with young children who are blind or visually impaired. Families and caregivers will make connections with other families as well as gain information and strategies to assist their children in reaching their highest potential.

This year, we are again providing a hybrid conference at the Hyatt Regency in Green Bay Wisconsin on March 15, 16 & 17, 2024. The sessions available virtually include the Keynote, Augmentative Communication, Navigating the Special Education Maze, Staying Ready to Learn; Strategies and Tools for Learners with Optic Nerve Hypoplasia, Beginner's Guide to Tactile Schedules, and finally the Q&A panel with students. A link to the working agenda is below.
WCBVI 2024 Preschool Conference - Working Agenda

This hybrid conference will be provided at a low cost of only $60 per family and $60 for each professional. WCBVI Outreach will also provide one (1) free hotel room for each family who has a child with a visual impairment on March 15th and March 16, 2024, at the Hyatt Regency Green Bay until our limit is full or the registration due date has expired. There is a limit to the number of

hotel rooms that we will provide for our conference, and they will be given on a first-registered, first-served basis. Please send a check or money order for $60 via U.S. mail to: Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Attn: Business Office, 1700 West State Street, Janesville, WI 53546

Please sign up for all breakout sessions you would like to attend virtually and in person at the Hyatt Regency Green Bay using the registration link below.
WCBVI Preschool Conference Registration

If you are attending at the Hyatt Regency Green Bay and have children, please bring a caregiver to help. These sessions are for parents and professionals to learn and we are unable to have childcare available. However, all family members and caregivers are able to join the meals and snacks offered during the conference. We will also have a designated resource room that will have toys and activities set up. We hope you will join us this year!

Assistive Technology Resource Suggestions

How to Use Point and Speak on the iPhone or iPad shared to us from the desk of Amy Snow WSVI

If you're blind or have low vision, you can use Point and Speak in Magnifier on your iPhone or iPad with LiDAR (Light detecting and ranging), to have text that is under your finger read to you. This can also be a handy trick for individuals with learning differences who may be able to see just fine, but benefit from having text read aloud. This is best used for words, numbers, or short phrases. Just point your finger at signs, keypads, labels and more to hear them read out loud to you. Please click on the following resources to learn more.
From the iPhone User Guide - Read aloud text and labels around you using Magnifier on iPhone
How to use Point and Speak on iPhone or iPad (Apple Support YouTube)

Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)

Are you looking for support in creating materials that are accessible for all learners instead of trying to retrofit materials for accessibility? If so, then we encourage you to visit the National Center on Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)'s website. Through the use of the POUR (Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, Robust) principles, it is a great resource for

creating and designing accessible documents, slide decks, videos, and web content.

Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL)
Talking Books for Wisconsin Students:
The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS), the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL) provides audiobooks and braille materials to persons, living in Wisconsin, who cannot read or use regular print materials as a result of temporary or permanent visual or physical limitations. Persons who qualify would meet criteria related to Visual Disability, Legal Blindness, Physical Disability or Reading Disability. Patrons include those who meet specific criteria and services are available at no cost. Services are also available to schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and other institutions that serve people with qualifying print disabilities.

For more information, please find the WTBBL contact information below:
Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library
813 West Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53233
Phone: (414) 286-3045
Toll-free within Wisconsin: (800) 242-8822
Fax: (414) 286-3102
Email: wtbbl@milwaukee.gov
Application forms are available on the Applications and Eligibility page.

Sometimes All We Need to Do Is Start A Conversation….

February is low vision awareness month. Low vision can affect a student's acuity, their ability to see in various lighting conditions and or reading, seeing smaller text or items.
As teachers we can assist our students in using clear fonts with good spacing around letters, words and sentences. The CDC estimates that nearly 3% of children under the age of 18 are blind or visually impaired. As teachers we can watch for signs of students struggling with visual tasks. There are many types of Assistive Technology available for students with low vision. Check out this free resource for using Quizlet from Perkins.org : Quizlet with students with low vision.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Corner

The world of AAC is changing due in part to the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in AAC systems. AI technologies have enabled personalized and context-aware communication solutions. These systems can learn and adapt to individual users' preferences, predicting their communication needs and providing more intuitive and efficient support. This has significantly improved the fluidity and naturalness of communication for individuals who rely on AAC devices.

Another exciting development is the incorporation of gesture recognition and eye-tracking technologies into AAC devices. This allows users to control and interact with their communication devices through simple gestures or eye movements, providing an alternative method of input for those with motor or physical limitations. These advancements not only expand the range of users who can benefit from AAC but also offer more flexible and customizable communication options.

In the realm of voice synthesis, there have been improvements in natural-sounding voices and the ability to convey emotion in synthetic speech. Users are not robots but human beings who need to sound like humans. New voices have contributed to more expressive and engaging communication experiences, allowing users to better convey their thoughts, feelings, and intentions through their AAC devices. No longer does every AAC user sound the same; they now sound like individuals.

These advancements collectively represent a significant stride forward in the field of AAC, emphasizing inclusivity, personalization, and improved user experience. As technology continues to evolve, we can anticipate even more groundbreaking developments that will further empower individuals with communication challenges and promote a more inclusive society.

From the desk of Mike Hipple, an adult who uses AAC

In the January Update, I talked about assistive technology in grade school and the importance of starting students early in their love of AT. This month we will be discussing middle school years, everybody loved their middle school years right? Ha ha ha!! We know that these years can be difficult for anyone with and without a disability. Being in a wheelchair and using an AAC can make middle school life even more difficult. Believe me I know. Let's just say that I had interesting years in middle school. Middle school is the first

time you change classrooms hourly. How does that look for children who use a power chair or a walker? Some questions to ask might be: Will they have more time to get to the next class? Do all of their teachers know about their assistive technology tools such as a reader or a trackball? Do they need to get out of their power chair or wheelchair during the day? These questions should have been answered and discussed at their last IEP meeting. To assist teams I have come up with a list of questions that I feel are important to the IEP development process. Please feel free to email me with any suggestions.

I talked earlier about having time to get out of a power chair or wheelchair. I would like to talk more about that. Students are in their wheelchair or power chair between five to eight hours a day. They need to have some time out of their chair, because that is a long time to sit in one position. An opportunity to do this is P.E. class, but music and science are phenomenal times to get out too. During music class they can dance to the song that the class is singing or have a dance contest. During science class you could walk around the classroom to see what their classmates are doing. This is especially helpful when the fine motor task is difficult for the student. Students might need to use assistive technology for the first time in middle school, like a note taker or access to Bookshare to have a textbook read. How do you think they will feel and how do you think their classmates might feel when they see their friend using something new? Because of some of the technology I used, some of my classmates thought I was cheating. The aide that was with me had to show others I was not cheating but in fact I was doing the work.

Middle School has many topics that I could write about, but I am only going to write on two more and they are getting to know your students and making sure that they have time with their friends. Getting to know your students who have a disability is important, because you will be working with them and their family everyday for the next two or three years. You want to have a good relationship with the student and their family. I didn't have any friends from grade school in any of my classes, I didn't get to chat with my friends, and it was hard to make friends. But middle school was fun for me too and it can be fun for your students too. I was in three plays and I wrote for the school newspaper. I made some friends, okay they were adults but that happened sometime and we are still friends today. Assistive technology can help students in middle school with their classes, but it can also help with

their social life. Please look at the things and the blogs that I found about middle school.
Now, we're going to talk about how to teach assistive technology and what students need to know in March, but I wanted to give you all a wonderful packet about what assistive technology is and how your students use it. This was made in 2001, by Dr. Penny Reed and Dr. Gayl Bowser. Hey Can I Try That? – Coalition for Assistive Technology in Oregon

A reminder to consider joining the United States Society of AAC to get your AAC knowledge and to submit someone for AAC star. USSAAC https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1uODYi6uZDfWNTtHEzpIcLgiuIYN89u-M7bUUEvx4Ss8/edit

For students who are blind, this sounds like a great camp!! Note that this is in Kansas and only for students who are blind. Registration is opening January of 2024! | Youth Support
Camp. I found a YouTube video about this camp here. Level Up Middle School Assistive Technology Program 2017

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Camp Level Up Middle School Assistive Technology Program 2017

QIAT Community, Help Me Out!

QIAT is a nationwide grass roots organization that supports the identification, dissemination, and implementation of the Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology services in school settings. Posting a question is free. Often the people who are answering the questions are users of AT themselves and or family members. Consider joining QIAT to assist you and your team in learning, and connecting with others who are willing to share and coach others.

Question:. "Hello QIAT team!
I have a student with Dysgraphia who is struggling with his middle school math classes. I am looking for a math App that could be used on a Chromebook or iPad. It would be great if the App were free and did not track or keep user data. Needs to be Soppa Approved.

I have looked at Modmath Pro - are there others?

QIAT community, help me out!

Answers from the group:

- Equati0 would be a great option to explore for the Chromebook. I have used ModMath and Panther Math Paper apps before and find them to be laborious for students to use. I have had students use Notability with a stylus where they can use graph paper, zoom in and handwriting can be converted to text. It's a great and robust app.
- I'm the parent entrepreneur for KiwiWrite Math, a newer web app for writing math online. I designed this app specifically to help students like my daughter who has dysgraphia and fine motor struggles. It runs on those systems and is SOPPA approved. It is a SaaS product, but we do provide free trials plus free subscriptions to ATs, just send in a contact request to get one. You can find our site by googling the name. A key feature is that a student can import a worksheet PDF to then place math right on top of it. We have updates coming of Google integration and a draw tool.
- We recently added KiwiWrite math in our district for our Chrome users. Here's a link for a free trial.

Feature Match: Early Childhood

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 very young students who are in Early Childhood programs.

When conducting an IEP and having the conversation about "whether the student needs assistive technology services or devices, " consider the following questions.

✓	Area of Student Concern- Early Childhood	Potential Solution Feature Match
	Are there accessible supports in place to manage activities of daily living such as using the bathroom, eating, lining up, getting ready to go home with good core vocabulary?	Consider PODD books to aide in language development Consider picture schedules Consider colored spots or Polydots for a visual when lining up Consider correct seating so feet are on the floor and it is a child size chair Consider wobble cushions, cube chairs, floor sitters (VIRCO) tomato inserts or carpet squares for boundaries
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with managing time or time related concepts?	Consider items such as Visual Timer Low tech reminders like adding sticky notes with picture supports, visual schedule, Velcro prompts for change in schedules First then App, GoALLY, or Visual Daily Schedule
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with independence in eating and drinking?	Consider drinking cups with weighted bottoms or no spill lids Consider adaptive eating utensils Consider a scoop bowl Look to make sure their feet are touching the floor when eating or doing fine motor

✓	Area of Student Concern- Early Childhood	Potential Solution Feature Match
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with self-management - like anger, stress or emotional regulation?	Consider a self-checklist or program such as *How does your Engine Run* Social Stories Video Modeling Apps like Calm, or Go Noodle
	Are there accessible supports in place to help the student follow a schedule?	Consider Check In and out system Consider visual or picture schedule First Then App or board Setting alarms on iPads or visual timers Consider ChoiceWorks app for video models. Program uses real photos as well as video and line drawings
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with learning new vocabulary ?	Consider using clear fonts like Comic Sans or Open Dyslexic Consider picture supports with the written words Consider a reading area Consider books with thick pages or page fluffers Consider consulting a literacy checklist High contrast symbols
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with new and novel events such as field trips?	Consider social stories, photos of the novel place, or even virtual reality or 360 photos or video modeling

✓	Area of Student Concern- Early Childhood	Potential Solution Feature Match
		Consider adding a visual like a star to indicate something new
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with fine motor skill deficits such as access to computers, or tablets?	Consider touch technology, or a trackball of a mouse Consider a "mouse house" or a defined space for the mouse like a shoebox top Consider mounting and stabilization of device(s) Consider a stylus
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with following verbal multiple step directions?	Consider step by steps, big macs or one steps Consider adding visuals from programs such as (LessonPix) or BoardMaker
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with learning to write?	Consider shorter pencils, markers (they take less pressure to make a mark), name stamps, or pencil grips Consider using a large binder as a slant board Consider a visual for the student to place their elbow on so it's not dangling up in the air thus providing stability

Thank you to Kathy Sween (<kathy.sween@badger.k12.wi.us) Occupational Therapist for her assistance and additions to this Feature Match.

Micro-Credentials Update

Congratulations to the following people who have earned badge(s) over the summer. We have now awarded 335 badges! We are empowering learners and raising the awareness of Assistive Technology!

- Kirsti Romenesko Fond Du Lac: 5 badges
- Timothy Baldry Milton: 1 badge
- Courtney Camarillo Plymouth: 3 badges
- Jeanna Kaland Plymouth: 2 badges
- Amanda Carson CESA2: 2 badges
- Wyeth Paine Plymouth: 2 badges
- Lindsay Hendricks New Berlin: 1 badge
- Brooke Belter Oshkosh Area: 2 badges
- Lisa Hoard WSVI: 1 badge
- Jessie Koehler Madison: 1 badge
- Brittany Leja Blackhawk: 1 badge
- Morgan Hansen UW Oshkosh: 2 badges
- William Simon New Berlin: 2 badges
- Halle Walsh UW Oshkosh: 2 badges
- Kelly Wiley Kenosha: 2 badges
- Martina Dosu Antigo: 2 badges
- Jeffery Zie La Crosse: 1 badge
- Vicki Poff Janesville: 1 badge
- Felicity Rose Kilmurray other: 1 badge
- Mike Hipple WI AAC: 7 badges!!! He earned a Marco Badge! Way to GO Mike

What is AT Forward?

The Assistive Technology (AT) Forward Project works with self-advocates, 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 free resources and learning opportunities, including Community of Practice (CoP) meetings, micro-credentialing, and monthly email updates. See all past recorded CoP meetings on the AT Forward CoP Video Resource Library. Please help us grow our AT community in Wisconsin and refer others to the AT Forward CoP, by visiting the AT Forward Registration page. From AT beginner to expert, the AT Forward CoP welcomes all knowledge level backgrounds!

Together we can and are moving 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.