![Assistive Technology Forward logo and Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction logo]

Greetings and Happy New Year Assistive Technology (AT) Forward Community of Practice Members!

We have reached the halfway point in the school year!
This milestone can mean many different things to teachers and students.
For me it always meant "time to progress monitor" and check to see how my students are doing with their equipment.

For example, if you are using a word prediction program, take the time to look over a variety of work samples. Look to see if the student is using grade level vocabulary, a variety of punctuation, decreasing their spelling errors and even look at the sentences they are writing to see if they have increased in length. This data is easy to collect especially if you use tools such as word count, grammar and spell check and readability statistics. Also check with the manufacturer of the tools you are using. Many have data collection tools built into their products to tell you how often a tool is being used. For more data collections tips and tricks checkout our past Community of Practice Video Resource Library.

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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, January 9, 2024, 4:00pm-5:00pm.

Assistive Technology Team: What does that mean to you? Presented by Dr. Penny Reed and Gayl Bowser.

Across the country there are many ways to address the Assistive Technology (AT) needs of students. All of them require teamwork. As a result, there are many different ideas of what constitutes an AT team. And all of them can have merit, depending on your resources, expertise, and the circumstances of the individual student. This session will look at some of the commonly used models and how they can help you to design your agency's services.

To join please click on the [link to register for the event](#).

Thursday, February 8, 2024 Time: 4:00pm-5:00pm
Bridging the Gap: School Teams and Specialists presented by Jennifer Seale.

This talk will address the value of collaboration between school teams and providers at outpatient specialty clinics for students who can benefit from augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) Tools and strategies. This webinar will provide attendees with the opportunity to explore their role in the collaboration process including highlighting the role of AAC finder, speech and language pathologist, educator, paraprofessional and /or family member. Additionally, an overview of how a collaborative program for school teams, families and providers can support students who benefit from AAC will be provided.

To join please click on the [link to register for the event](#).

Tuesday, February 27, 2024 Time: 4:00pm-5:00pm
Consider what? How to Match Features Presented by Anna Cliff and Kathy White.

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 click to 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.

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 click to register in advance for this Zoom meeting](#).

Assistive Technology Resource Suggestions

What's new in the lending library?
Did you know that the lending library is free to all?
Did you also know that you can get more than just AAC devices? Both low and mid tech devices have been added to the library.
Here are a few items you might want to check out: [AT4ALL](#)

[Micro Light Switch](#) - this switch is designed to be small and requires just .4 oz of pressure to activate it.
[Gooseneck Mounting](#) - having a staple switch is essential to student success with a switch. This device allows you to mount and position just about any type of switch.
[Modular Hose Mounts](#) - having a staple switch is essential to student success with a switch. This mount allows for a very stable mounting position for a student. This is a very heavy duty and durable mounting system.
[Pillow Switch](#) - the touch and feel of a switch matters! A pillow switch is soft and smooth so it is often used with an access point of the head or cheek.
[Powerlink4](#) - when you need access to appliances this is a great device with 6 modes of control to allow you to manage your appliances in the most effective manner.
[Oval Texture Switch](#) - some students seek out texture or need have a surface with texture on it. The oval switch allows the student to feel a surface of 4 ½" diameter. This is a pressure switch.
[Super Bumpty Saucer Switch](#) - large bumpy surface for those who seek tactile stimulation. The switch is bright yellow and is almost flat - 8 " switch makes it easy to activate this pressure switch.
[Vibrating Light Plate Switch](#) (no music)- large tactical surface that offers visual and tactile reinforcement upon depression. This is a pressure switch that can be used alone or with toys / appliances.

AT Forward Network
The beginning of the 2023-24 school year marks a new start for the AT Forward Network, where we will host an online space and forum to meet, share resources, and hold valuable discussions about Assistive Technology innovations and strategies that can help advance all students in WI. The name of this portal will be the AT Forward Community Collaboration and it is open to educators and caregivers around the state who can benefit from the information and support provided by this project. This community will publish articles and websites to assist educators in implementing and evaluating AT resources so that students can succeed, post blogs from leading professionals and experts familiar with AT in schools, and ask pertinent questions to gather insights from individuals with experience in specific subject matters. To join the AT Forward Community Collaboration Network, please follow this [invite link](#).

For future logins, please visit and bookmark the [AT Forward Community Collaboration Portal Page.](#)

WCBVI Update

Professional Mentor Webinar Series

Please join WCBVI Outreach's Dave Ballmann for a series of three Professional Mentor webinars. These are aimed at highlighting the skills and accomplishments of working blind people. These webinars will take place on January 17th, February 13th, and March 12 from 3:30-4:30. They will feature Greg Stilson, Head of Global Innovation with APH, Jennifer Ottowitz Older Blind Specialist with Mississippi State and Cheryl Orgas, executive director at Audio and Braille Literacy Enhancement. Come and learn from these distinguished professionals what it took for them to get into the career of their choice. For more information and to register, click the links below.

- [Register for Jan. 17 with Greg Stilson](#)
- [Register for Feb. 13 with Jennifer Ottowitz](#)
- [Register for March 12 with Cheryl Orgas](#)

Quick Tip: Quickly Shut Down your PC

Sometimes you just want to shut down your PC quickly without having to fumble with the mouse or tabbing through the Start Menu. After all, this process can be frustrating for students and can take extra time when the student inadvertently loses track of where the cursor is focused. Here is a trick to log out of, restart, or shut down your PC in less than ten seconds. And the keystrokes are easy to remember!

1. Press Windows + X to open the Windows Expert Menu
2. Press the letter U to open the "shut down or sign out" submenu
    a. Press I to sign out of the Windows account
    b. Press R to restart your PC
    c. Press U to shut down your PC
3. That's it! The requested process has begun exactly as though you had tabbed through the Start Menu or used the mouse to click.

What does it look like in action? To quickly perform these functions, press the series of keystrokes noted below:

- Windows + X, followed by U, then I = Sign Out
- Windows + X, followed by U, then R = Restarts the computer
- Windows + X, followed by U, then I = Shuts the computer down

Did the process save time? We hope so!

Resources:
[The Windows X Menu – Microsoft Learn](#)

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

Looking to increase awareness about AT? See what special events are happening worldwide in January .
Awareness is the first step towards understanding and acceptance.

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Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Corner

Whether your student has had an AAC device for a month or several years, it is still important to look at data collection and effectiveness of a student's device. A common error with AAC devices is that once the device has been chosen, many feel the process is complete. However, you must remember that your student will continue to grow and develop vocabulary as well as conversation skills that need to be adapted to be age appropriate.

An easy way to monitor your students' AAC use is to use built in tools for data collection. Start by asking the question to your vendor if there is a way to monitor vocabulary use. If the device does not have data collection you can look at tools such as the Communication Matrix. This free tool is a web based assessment tool. This tool looks at behavior, conventional and unconventional communication , symbol use and other developmental skills.

Other data collection tools techniques can be as simple as making a list of every word a child uses with a date next to the word when you first heard it used. Or looking at the amount of student response - was it independent, modeled or partially prompted. Teachers and paraprofessionals can help too with short video samples. One last point - don't forget to give them access to an alphabet page. Even if your student is not a writer at this point experimenting with spelling and writing is an essential skill that can be a game changer. Just think about all of the vocabulary you want to put on a device. If a student can independently write those words, there is less search and page turning and more communication.

Think about just recording use of specific verbs or greeting or number of student communication exchanges. Data collection like other types of progress monitoring should be completed for a reason and have an end goal in mind. For other ideas be sure and look through our [past CoP meetings](#) that dealt with data collection.

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

I hope you enjoyed an excellent holiday vacation. This month's topic is using assistive technology tools in grade school. Grade school is the starting point of using a variety of assistive technology tools such as a power chair or a communication device, or other tools that might assist someone in the world of work. We need to keep in mind that assistive technology can be anything that the student could benefit from a lot of things and the student will need to use it across their life and environments to help them achieve their dreams and goals. Buy in is key for them and their family to understand why the tool is needed. This needs to start in grade school.

When I started using assistive technology in 1997, one of my first assistive technology tool was a walker so I could run, oh I meant to say walk around my school. I don't know why my team did this, but I bet you that it was so my family members and I bought into the idea that assistive technology tools would help me. I loved my walker, because I could walk anywhere that I wanted to. That was my freedom from my disability. That is such an important thing for people who have a physical disability to have. It feels like you have the power in the world, you could do anything. That feeling is still important for students who have a physical disability. My school team understood that. II have phenomenal memories from using my walker, and stander.

The last topic that I would like to write about is exploring powered mobility. I am a huge believer in every student who needs powered mobility should have a trial.. I understand that everyone is different and unique, but students need to have an opportunity to try a power chair. I just want everyone to have their freedom. How would you like someone to take you everywhere, you have no choice on where you are going and which way you are taking? I know that I didn't like it. If you have a student who can't drive a power chair, please please give them choices talked to them about directionality (we are going right or left) and remember to empower them with a choice of how to get to a destination.. Grade school is such an important part of their life, friendships start there and their love of learning starts there too. Let's start their love of assistive technology and who knows you might find the next Mike Hipple, they might go into the assistive technology field. Please look at my links that I came across on using assistive technology in grade school. Like always you can email me if you have a question or you need help.

101 AT [The Importance of Assistive Technology in the Virtual and Physical Classroom](#)
Now I couldn't do a paragraph about grade school assistive technology, without having anything about recess. Recesses were my favorite part of the school day. I played with my friends counting how many shots, who won the race, practicing my driving skills, and teasing my friends.
- [Recess for your Child with Special Needs: 7 Challenges and Solutions](#)
- [Indoor Recess Ideas for the Special Ed Classroom - Mrs. D's Corner](#)
- [Top Playground Activities for Children with Wheelchairs](#)
- [What does recess look like for children with significant disabilities?](#) This is a long one, but it is so interesting. One of the best walker companies out there is this company. The school district that I attended and the wheelchair company that I have got an opportunity to try this in 2012 or 2013. They wanted me to try this walker out and it was great walking in and they have so much information about the person's walk. [Trexo Robotics](#)

I found these articles about teaching students how to use their wheelchair, power chair, or scooter. Please know that DPI or the forward team aren't saying that these are the only two tests that school districts can use. If you have a great test that you use and you want to share, please contact the forward team.
- [Promising Wheelchair Operation Tests for School-based Therapists – SeekFreaks](#)

- [ARTICLE REVIEW: 11 Ways to Unleash the Power of Power Mobility – SeekFreaks](#)?
- [Optimizing Power Wheelchair Use Through Mobility Training - Rehab Management](#)

In [November](#) we told you about the AAC Star Program. This is a program that recognizes students who are doing great things with their AAC device. We want to say congratulations to the following Communication All Stars. They are rocking, communicating and letting people know what they are thinking. Ellia used her device to let her school team want more to eat, when she is changing classes she always makes sure that she has her talker, and she can pick icons. Awesome job! Zacharie D is using his device at his employment. He knows how to add words on his device and he likes to tease his co-workers and friends. Phenomenal job. Myles L and his school team worked hard on choosing which communication device work best for him. Phenomenal team work everyone. Sophia uses her device to let people know when she needs to go to the sensory room. At the start of school years, she teaches her classmates and teachers what is AAC and what is autism. She will now wear a strap to bring the communication device anywhere she goes. This sentence brought a smile to my face. She will use her free time to learn where the words on her device, that is awesome!! Please if you are working with students who use AAC and have a rock star email the AT Forward team or myself so we can give them an award. The opportunity to celebrate via Zoom can be scheduled.

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!
Good Morning,
I am looking for links to any research articles that you may or may not have shared with parents which supports that the use of AAC will not deter verbal development and instead results in communication growth. I have many many years in the AAC/AT field. This is one of the first times that a parent, who is a physician, would like to see "up to date randomized controlled studies".   This is a student with autism who does have verbalizations typically single words with some sporadic 2-3 word combinations. Trials with high tech AAC were proposed to give him access to an increased amount of vocabulary which is more in line with his receptive language.   Compounding the parent's concerns was a recent visit to a neurologist who told them that it was not a good idea to use AAC since it would deter him from talking.

QIAT community, help me out!
Answers from the group:

- Just recently, on Talking with Tech, Chris Bugaj (raise your hand if you are here, Chris :) told of a spectacular resource for finding research on any topic.   In fact, your very question is the one that he demonstrated on the podcast.   The resource is: https://consensus.app/
It is a search engine that uses AI for scientific research.   Input a question, and it generates a summary of the research on that topic.   I've only used it once since I heard about the website yesterday, but I am intrigued by the uses of this search engine.
- I've always used the article that's attached for parents because it addresses many of the myths and it's an easy read. Each myth has research references.
- Here's an article that was published in the Journal of Pediatric Rehabilitation Medicine and was written for medical professionals.
- Did you see that Informed SLP recently posted an open article on this topic as well? You can read it here.

Feature Match - Switch Accessibility

✓	Area of Student Concern- Switch	Potential Solution Feature Match
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who may have sensory issues vision, hearing, preferences or aversions when it comes to touching a switch?	Consider the tactile surface of the switch , consider the sound a switch may make, consider the temperature of the surface of the switch (sometimes certain plastics will always be cold)
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who may have range, strength, coordination, inhibition of movement, tone, or fatigue when it comes to accessing a switch?	Consider no force to activate switches like proximity switches Consider the switch placement Consider time of day and activities required for the switch activation
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who may have memory, sequencing, attention issues ?	Consider switches that are different in color to help with cognitive remembering what switch does what Consider switches that make sounds when activated Consider switches that allow for recording of verbal directions
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who has more than one	Consider where the switch will be located

✓	Area of Student Concern- Switch	Potential Solution Feature Match
	device on their wheelchair or more than one device that needs to be accessed?	Consider the type of mount and how the person will access the switch Consider how much real estate the mount and the switch need Consider in what environments the switch be used
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who may be in a public space to use their switch?	Consider a switch that does not play music or make noises
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who has difficulties with cords (i.e. they tend to get tangled up in cords)?	Consider switches that are bluetooth
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who has a different or unique pattern for applying pressure - they may need to grasp an item, or pull not push	Consider switches that are grasp or pull rather than a push switch **Textured Orbit Ball**
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who finds it difficult to provide any force to a switch ?	Consider a proximity switch Switch, **HoneyBee Proximity Switch**
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who needs to activate more than one device with one switch?	Consider **Switch Switcher** Tiny Switchy Or **Powerlink** for items that require AC power
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who needs switch access to a computer or iPad?	Consider Blue2 Bluetooth Switch Hitch 2 **IHook**+ for iPad **how to manual**
	Are there accessible supports in place for a student who needs a device to run for longer periods of time without a continuous hold of a switch?	Consider latch timers, or normally closed Jelly Bean Switches (switch is activated all the time until it is touched).

✓	Area of Student Concern- Switch	Potential Solution Feature Match
	Are there accessible supports in place for a student who needs a switch that can take a significant impact and not give multiple hits to the switch?	**Consider items that are not considered AT such as musician's foot switch. It is very strong and won't get multiple activations.** **Consider Switch filtering** **Consider a Cosmo Switch.**

Micro-Credentials Update

Congratulations to the following people who have earned badge(s) over the summer. We have now awarded 320 badges! We are empowering learners and raising the awareness of Assistive Technology!

- Brooke Belter Oshkosh Area 2 badges
- Wyeth Paine Plymouth 2 badges
- Lisa Hoard WSVH 1 badge
- Jessie Koehler Madison Metro 1 badge
- Telli Langford CESA 2 2 badges
- Brittany Leja Blackhawk 1 badge
- Lindsay Hendricks New Berlin 2 badges
- Morgan Hansen UW Oshkosh 2 badges
- Telli Langford Salem J2 2 badges
- Mike Hipple WI AAC Network 6 badges

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. 67e49982579@lists.dpi.wi.gov