



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF  
**Public Instruction**

Greetings Assistive Technology (AT) Forward Community of Practice

Members, October is here and by now we are all in the thick of it!

Our students are beginning to settle in and we are starting to figure out their needs. Now is a great time to set up daily assistive technology routines. Teaching students to be independent in a task takes time, but is essential to long term success. Start with something small, like teaching students to use [Google Calendar](#) to keep track of their assignments or special days ( like days off!) Remember in the September Update we talked about knowing your” why” for teaching? Well, students need to know their why in terms of learning. Taking small daily steps is beneficial to all.

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## **Upcoming Assistive Technology Professional Learning Events**

### **Assistive Technology CoP Meetings**

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

#### **Finding the Right Assistive Technology Fit: How to “Try it On”**

Tuesday, October 10, 2023 , 4:00pm-5:00pm.

This session will connect you with the WisTech’s WisconsinAT4ALL online inventory. AT devices available for short term loan, demonstration, and giveaway are listed on [WIAT4ALL](#). During our time together you’ll be able to see how the website works and understand how to borrow AT devices from partners around Wisconsin. To join please click on the [link](#) to register for the event.

## **Executive Function Skills and Augmentative Alternative Communication Connections**

Thursday, November 9, 2023, 4:00pm-5:00pm.

Paige Buckingham is back to talk to us about Executive Functioning Skills and AAC. Executive Function skills are necessary to become independent in life and Language is necessary for a person to be able to develop Executive Function skills. What does this look like for a person who uses Augmentative Alternative Communication? We will do a crosswalk by looking at Executive Function checklists and various Communication and Language development checklists to see how these areas fit together. Strategies to support emotional control, sustained attention, and response inhibition will be shared and participants will practice picking vocabulary to support their student.

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

## **Frequently Asked Questions Around Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) Assistive Technology Team: What does that mean to you?**

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

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.

## **Additional Assistive Technology Professional Learning Events**

### **WisTech Assistive Technology Trainings**

WisTech hosts free assistive technology training on a variety of topics. All trainings are recorded and made available on the

WisTech YouTube Channel. You will also find information about the monthly WisTech AT Chit Chat. Visit the [WisTech AT Trainings website](#)

## **Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)**

Are you looking for support in determining if a student with an IEP has a need for Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)? If so, then check out the [AEM Decision Tree](#), as it is a great resource to guide IEP teams in their decision-making around AEM. If the IEP team decides there is a need for AEM, then we encourage you to utilize the [Next Steps for Providing Accessible Educational Materials to Students with Disabilities](#). This resource will help teams navigate the next steps in providing AEM and meet the legal requirement associated with AEM. For additional resources and support, please visit the [Wisconsin AEM Center](#).

## **WCBVI (Wisconsin Center for The Blind and Visually Impaired) Update**

October 27th Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired ( WCBVI) campus in Janesville, will host its “2023 Fall PST: WCBVI Open House”. Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs) will be given the opportunity to look at our extensive AT loan library and get some hands on time with devices. Other activities will include touring the WCBVI AEM Center, playing Blind Soccer, learning about our on-campus programming such as Little PEANUTS, Short Courses, and Residential Programs, and accessing information on our statewide resources such as Low Vision Clinics and Professional Development Opportunities. For more information on this event and future WCBVI opportunities, please contact WCBVI Outreach at [wcbvi.outreach@wcbvi.k12.wi.us](mailto:wcbvi.outreach@wcbvi.k12.wi.us) or [follow this link to sign up for the WCBVI Weekly Update](#).

## **Assistive Technology Resource Suggestions**

Assessing written language is a difficult task. Every teacher looks at different criteria and it is often difficult to assess growth in this area. With more and more Artificial Intelligence that is readily available this task can be easier for students and teachers. Readability Calculators are programs that look at text and analyze it based on a variety of factors.

When we talk to students about the need for punctuation in a body of text they often do not respond in a favorable manner. However, if you use a Readability Calculator and it states that the text is at a 2 grade level and the student is a high schooler, this they understand.

Learning what to correct in one's writing is essential to the learning process. Try teaching your students to use free Readability Calculators to improve their writing and also provide you the teacher with a way to track written language progress.

[Readability Formulas](#)

[Reliability Calculator](#)

[Readability Test](#)

[Online Utility](#)

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

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

October is ADHD awareness month. We live in a very busy world and staying on task is a common goal for many people. Using alarms, calendars and reminder lists can be very beneficial to someone with ADHD.

Down Syndrome Awareness month Students with Down Syndrome have a large array of abilities and needs. When looking at assistive technology remember to rephrase your question from “what is the best tech for a person with Down Syndrome ?... to what is it that this student needs to be able to do?” Then match the technology features to the need.

Dwarfism It is all about functionality and conservation of energy. Check out some of the technology that is available for those with mobility and other motor impairments.

Learning Disability Awareness Month Having an invisible disability can be complicated. Today’s everyday technology such as text to speech and voice to text can assist those with learning disabilities to show what they know.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month - This year's theme is Advancing Access and Equity. As educators we should be always looking forward to the future and independence. What better way to increase independence than through the use of Assistive Technology. Everyone deserves a chance to work and succeed in their chosen profession. Companies are looking for a more diverse workforce as stated in this Forbes article. Everyone should be seen for their strengths. It is never too early to explore work opportunities and careers.

## **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Corner**

When working with students with complex communication needs it is important to always consider the literacy aspects. Alphabetical knowledge is important, but it is also essential to present this concept in an age appropriate respectful manner. When providing support to students start with small cognitive scaffolds and then add as needed. For example, by arranging the alphabet in a manner that shows all of the vowels in one row and constants in another you can clue the learner into the fact that all words require a vowel. See the example here created by Calroine Musslewhite.

## **Remarks to the Office of Civil Rights**

As educators it is important to keep abreast of the news that affects us and our students. Below is a link to remarks made by Bob Williams on the rights and needs of those who use AAC devices. Please take a few minutes to read this important piece.

[Remarks to the Office for Civil Rights, US Department of Education](#)

[COMMUNICATION FIRST POLICY DIRECTOR BOB WILLIAMS](#)

[August 22, 2023](#)

## **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 just started with a kindergartener on switch access. We're starting with a Hitch2 to turn a preferred YouTube video on.

His PT, OT, and I tried a bunch of different switches, and the [wobble switch](#) seems to work best for him because he can sweep his arm in towards his wheelchair tray to activate it. The PT and OT like the wobble switch and the placement, and it also meets his vision needs. A problem we noticed is that he sometimes swings his arm in really hard, activating the switch to start the video, but then swings it back out, which accidentally activates it again and turns the video off.

I know for some AAC apps you can turn on a release time to help prevent accidental double button activations. After a button is activated, all buttons are disabled for a designated period of time. Is there anything like this we can program on his PC or Hitch2? Or another kind of switch that could match that feature?

**QIAT community, help me out!**

**Answers from the group:**

Our USB Switch can do that, although I appreciate the format of the switch is not what you really want. The good news is that it has sockets too, so you can plug the wobble switch into it.

USB Switch has a bunch of switch filtering capabilities, including an 'ignore after release time', which is what you need. They work on the sockets as well as the built-in switch.

As with all our products, you can get them in the US from Inclusive TLC

[www.inclusivetlc.com](http://www.inclusivetlc.com)

Here's a link to the product on their site..... <https://www.inclusivetlc.com/pretorian-usb-switch>

...and ours.... <https://www.pretorianuk.com/usb-switch>

You could try this:

<https://www.tinyswitchy.com/>

A space bar will play and pause the music video in YT. Then you can just use built in filter key options to ignore double hits from the keyboard.

Some drawbacks, especially if the YT video window becomes inactive but for the most part this has worked for me and no extra hardware...

## Feature Match: Writing and Physical Accessibility

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 who display difficulties in the area of writing- specifically the physical aspects of writing.

✓	Area of Student Concern- Writing Difficulties - Physical Access	Potential Solution Feature Match
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with holding a writing instrument?	<u>Various pencil grips, various pencil styles, various pencil types (Marker or crayon)</u>
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who has targeting issues on a keyboard?	<u>Keyguards, larger keys</u> , membrane or virtual keyboards (iPad)
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who has only one hand or partial use of a hand?	<u>Sticky keys</u> or stylis, keyboard guard
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who has weak stamina for writing ?	Voice to text, <u>word banks</u> , word prediction
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who has difficulties drawing?	Teach the student to use <u>drawing programs</u> , or clipart to express their ideas
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who finds it difficult to transfer their gaze from a screen to a keyboard?	Onscreen keyboards or <u>virtual keyboard</u> with alternative access methods such as eye gaze or switch access

Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student to perceive they have pushed a key on a keyboard?	Feedback maybe needed in terms of physical, or auditory input - consider a <a href="#">talking word processor</a> that is set to speak every letter, word or sentence as needed
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Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who visually loses their place on a keyboard?	Stickers for <a href="#">high contrast</a> , color or <a href="#">Braille</a> can be added, <a href="#">keyboards can be made smaller or different configurations for physical and cognitive needs</a>
Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who has no ability to use their hands for typing ?	Alternative keyboard access through <a href="#">eye gaze</a> , switch access, or morse code
Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who has limited abilities in terms of phonetic awareness for writing / spelling?	Low tech <a href="#">alphabetical chart</a> with vowels in one color and constants in another Color coded keyboards Picture supports for identification of letters

Looking for more information on Feature Matching? [The Center for Inclusive Design](#) out of Colorado is presenting a free Feature Match Webinar in October. Check it out - registration is required.

### Micro-Credentials Update

Congratulations to the following people who have earned badge(s) over the summer. We have now awarded 287 badges! We are empowering learners and raising the awareness of Assistive Technology!

Tiffany Reynolds-Prairie Du Chien Area: 1 badge

Sarah Harke-Oconto Falls: 2 badges

Heather Maydak: 4 badges

Cassandra Wohlert-Milton: 7 badges Congratulations on Marco Certification!

## **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](mailto:Kathy.White@CESA2.org) or Stacy Duffy at [stacy.duffy@cesa2.org](mailto:stacy.duffy@cesa2.org).