



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

Welcome back, educators!

We're thrilled to kick off another year of exploring the exciting world of assistive technology. Your dedication to empowering students through innovative tools is inspiring. Let's continue to learn, grow, and make a positive impact together by joining in on our Community of Practice Meetings, and or completing a Micro Credential. We have an exciting year planned and new resources on the horizon that should increase your knowledge without taking up a lot of your time.

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Upcoming Assistive Technology Professional Learning Events and Announcements

AT Forward Community of Practice (CoP) Meetings

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

AT Forward Kickoff: Overview and Tour of AT Forward

Learn about all of the resources available from AT Forward from the Assistive Technology Lending Center (ATLC) and resource map, the AT Forward Micro credential program, the Wisconsin Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) Center, upcoming Community of Practice Meetings, and resources to support Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).

September 17, 2024 (12:00pm-1:00pm)

[Please click on this link to register in advance for this meeting.](#)

After registration, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Integrating Assistive Technology Devices and Services in the IEP

Thursday, September 26, 2024 (4:00pm-5:00pm)

IDEA requires IEP teams to consider whether a child with a disability requires AT devices and services each time they develop, review or revise an IEP. Attendees will learn how to document lite-, mid- and high-tech AT devices and services in the IEP. Practical strategies will be included to consider AT in goal writing, progress monitoring, and device trials to ensure all students have the tools they need to succeed.

[Please click on this link to register in advance for this meeting.](#)

Scribbling...The Beginning of Writing for All Children

Tuesday, October 8, 2024 (4:00pm-5:00pm)

Kelly Fonner Donna McNear will be our presenters. For children who write via non-traditional modalities, family and staff often miss the emerging steps of scribbling and drawing. We put an adapted keyboard in front of them or provide an alternative pencil and immediately expect them to write their name. We need to encourage, support, and provide creative opportunities for students with complex learning needs to experience the beginning stages of putting ideas to print through a variety of activities, strategies and technologies that encourage the acts of scribbling and drawing. During this webinar, Donna and Kelly will connect those

precious beginning steps of writing to all children through sharing strategies and tools to support their active learning.

[Please click on this link to register in advance for this meeting.](#)

Follow Up to “Scribbling...The Beginning of Writing for All Children”

Thursday, October 17, 2024 (12:00pm-1:00pm)

On October 8, 2024, Fonner and McNear gave a great presentation on the beginnings of writing: scribbling. This session will explore key points from this session as well be an open session for questions and sharing of ideas on what works in your classroom to assist students with writing. Presented by Kathy White.

[Please click on this link to register in advance for this meeting.](#)

Normalizing Accessibility

Tuesday, November 12, 2024 (12:00pm-1:00pm)

Iris Jacobson and Rose Kilmurray, Wisconsin DPI, will discuss normalizing accessibility for students. It will include a discussion on universal tools, accommodations, and assessment accessibility.

[Please click on this link to register in advance for this meeting.](#)

Assistive Technology Tipping Points

Tuesday, December 17, 2024 (12:00pm-1:00pm)

Malcolm Gladwell stated that " little things can make big differences." In education we are often looking for the big changes, the big moments in time. However, tipping points can be very small changes, an idea shared or a behavior changed. Ruth Ziolkowski and Kathy White will discuss how little changes can make huge differences in attitudes, and outcomes. What will your school district's tipping point be? Please [register](#) in advance for this meeting.

[Please click on this link to register in advance for this meeting.](#)

AI Chatbot Tutors to Help Build Background Knowledge and Scaffold Learning

Tuesday, January 14, 2025 (4:00pm-5:00pm)

Frank Devereaux will discuss content area chatbots designed to spark inquiry and answer unlimited student questions as well as how to create their own chatbot for specific student needs.

[Please click on this link to register in advance for this meeting.](#)

AAC Decision Tree: How to Do an AAC Assessment

Tuesday, February 4, 2025 (12:00pm-1:00pm)

Dawn Merth-Johnson and Kathy White will discuss what is an AAC assessment, the introduction of the AAC Decision Tree (from assessment to implementation), and a conversation around funding and how to avoid roadblocks.

[Please click on this link to register in advance for this meeting.](#)

Assistive Technology Myths and Facts

Thursday, March 13, 2025 (4:00pm-5:00pm)

Michelle Silverman and Kathy White will discuss tools and strategies to use feature matching to make suggestions for assistive technology trials and implementation. You will learn how the process of feature matching works through real life examples. Information on where to get equipment on loan (at no cost) for trial will be shared. Join us to learn how to leverage your expertise to enhance the skills you already bring to the table.

[Please click on this link to register in advance for this meeting.](#)

Adaptive Gaming, AT, and Recreation

Thursday May 1, 2025 (12:00pm-1:00pm)

Erik Johnson will discuss adaptive gaming and the relation to assistive technology and recreation.

[Please click on this link to register in advance for this meeting.](#)

Other Assistive Technology Professional Learning Events or Announcements

WisTech 2024 Trainings

Technology and Tranquility: AT for Mental Health and Self Care, on 9/17 at 10AM.

This is the first of many Wis Tech training sessions!

Many individuals associate Assistive Technology (AT) solely with physical or sensory disabilities, overlooking its vast potential in supporting mental health and neurodiversity. In this interactive workshop, we invite you to explore the wide array of high and low-tech apps and devices tailored to enhance mental health and substance use management across all age groups. From aiding executive functioning to managing stress, anxiety, depression, PTSD, and fostering organization and communication skills, AT offers invaluable resources. Join us as we delve into the diverse landscape of AT solutions, encompassing task reminders, emergency assistance, medication management, and neurodiversity support. Presenters are Aimee Sterk and Laura Hall.

[Click on this link for registration.](#)

All WisTech trainings offer FREE CEUs and CRC hours. Don't miss out on future upcoming events [by signing up for the WisTech Listserve.](#)

Assistive Technology Resource Suggestions

- **DPI Releases Artificial Intelligence (AI) Guidance for Schools and Libraries.** AI is embedded in everything and is everywhere. We all need to understand this concept and understand what it means to us as educators. [Click on this link to view the full update.](#)
- **Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) Resource:** [This short AEM video](#) (11 minutes long) video that explains NIMAC and helps educators understand the meaning of accessible educational material or AEM. If you or others are looking for more information on AEM, the [National Center on Accessible Educational Materials](#) has a great website filled with easy to digest information.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Corner

- Do you have students who use AAC and you are looking at ways to increase vocabulary skills?

Try [Word of Week Activities](#) or [A year of Core](#). Free Resource Access to digital children's books read aloud by human readers.

- [Unite online library](#) provides free access to more than 400 original picture books.
- [Tar Heel Reader](#) will soon have a new name and a fresh new look. Tar Heel Reader will soon be named Monarch Reader and it will be supported by Building Wings by Don Johnston. The site will remain free and accessible.

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

Welcome back to the forward community and the AAC space of the monthly newsletter. I hope your summer was awesome like mine was. September means, for me, a time to start over. When I was a student my aides always told me that we were starting with new teachers who didn't have me and they didn't know what happened last year. My aide from seventh grade to twelfth grade said this to me on my first day of eighth grade, "all that I care about is we stay in classes". She, my physical therapist, my assistive technology specialist, and my parents had many other goals for me, but that was the important one for them and for me. Staying in regular education classes meant I was learning and was with my peers. My teams through school understood that I could do great things if I used my device and other assistive technology tools. I hate to say this, but they were right with that. I didn't want to use my assistive technology tools, because no one else at school was using assistive technology tools. But when I got older and started working with kids, I finally understood what my school teams were telling me over the years. I was working with two students that my former special education teacher had in her class.

One time I worked with these students and their teacher asked how they did today and I answered with this they didn't want to use their device and she said really I don't see that with anyone else who I have worked or working with. I understood the joke. What is one goal that you want to see your students work on this year? Maybe it is using their communication device, maybe it is driving their power chair safe, maybe it is following directions, or maybe it is staying in classes like mine was. No matter what it is, I know that they will get it, keep working on it. I wish everyone a phenomenal start of the school year. Please enjoy things that I found for you this month. A cool program helping people to find a job

I was trying to find something to watch and I came across this webinar on VR and jobs. I had a huge smile on my face because this is for anyone. One of the people

who worked on this was a former special education teacher. Ask your school librarian or the public library about it and please let us know how it works with students who use AAC. [An Overview of Transfr: Career Exploration in Virtual Reality \(LWC, 6/25/24\)](#)

A reminder about the AAC star program, please submit some amazing students this school year!! What a great way to celebrate [AAC Awareness month to submit a student or students to the AAC star program](#). If you are interested in technology and you are a member of Council of Exceptional Children, you might be interested in joining their special interest group called Innovations in Special Education Technology Division {ISET}. They have great information and opportunities to learn and network. [Check out their website](#), their [Facebook group too](#), and [webpage USSAAC](#).

Sometimes All We Need to Do Is Start a Conversation....

As we begin the school year it is often good to look at how the world is changing. If you are looking for a quick diversity and empathy idea for a bulletin board, check out this article on the first ever [blind Barbie Doll](#).

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.

Feature Match: Physical Access to a Computer

When conducting an IEP and having the conversation about “whether the student needs assistive technology services or devices”, consider the following questions. This is not a finite list. This is intended as a starting point for teams.

Area of Student Concern- Computer Access - Physical Access	Potential Solution Feature Match

<p>Are there accessible supports in place to assist with visually tracking a mouse?</p>	<p>Consider built in accessible feature to enlarge the cursor, change the cursors shape, or give it a visual trail” Windows Chrome</p>
<p>Are there accessible supports in place to assist with direct access a device for mouse controls ?</p>	<p>Consider a trial with a touchscreen device and or gestures for access Windows iPad Chrome</p>
<p>Are there accessible supports in place to assist with a student who may have only missing digits or only one hand ?</p>	<p>Sticky keys or keyboard guard or a stylus, or reduce key strikes with predictive text, or an alternative keyboard such as a mini keyboard, or consider a keyboard with the number pad off to the side if not used frequently</p>
<p>Are there accessible supports in place to assist difficulties with using a trackpad?</p>	<p>Consider trying a variety of different types of mice trackballs. Some mice are designed to reduce the amount of movement a person makes and therefore reduce the physical contact stress. A normal mouse relies on your hand to move a sensor over a static area like a desk or mousepad. A trackball mouse relies on your fingers to move a ball over a static sensor. Trackballs can be setup to reduce stress on other parts of the arm or forearm. Check out the Microsoft Sculpt or vertical mice</p>
<p>Are there accessible supports in place to assist with a student who has difficulties making a mouse click?</p>	<p>Consider an external switch as a mouse click or other alternative mouse like device</p>
<p>Are there accessible supports to assist with difficulties completing right mouse click?</p>	<p>Consider the keyboard shortcut, voice recognition multi function mouse with buttons for click or change the built-in mouse settings</p>

Are there accessible supports to assist with difficulties perceiving they have pushed the mouse?	Consider a mouse with auditory feedback. Link to article on auditory, tactile mouse type devices
Are there accessible supports in place to assist with difficulties perceiving they have pushed a key on a keyboard?	Consider 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
Are there accessible supports in place to assist with difficulties finding their place on the keyboard?	Consider Stickers for high contrast, color or Braille to be added, keyboards can be made smaller or different configurations for physical and cognitive needs
Are there accessible supports in place to assist with finding the cursor on the screen?	Consider changing the thickness, and or color of the mouse pointer (Custom Cursor for Chrome)
Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student without the ability to use their hands for typing?	Consider alternative keyboard access through eye tracking , switch access , or morse code, or alternative body parts like head, knees or foot.

As always, remember to check with your district's technology policies to ensure compliance with all software and applications compliance rules. .

Micro-Credentials Update

Congratulations to the following people who have earned badge(s).

We have now awarded 407 badges!

We are empowering learners and raising the awareness of Assistive Technology!

- Nancy Vandervort: (2 badges)
- Kirsti Starkey - Fond Du Lac: (7 badges and a Macro Credential!!!)
- Kristy Hrobsky - Milton: (6 badges)
- Patricia Peloquin - Lancaster Community: (2 badges)
- Kristin Johnson - Silver Lake J1: (1 badge)
- Yasser Ahmed - CESA2: (1 badge)
- Becky Ruff - CESA 3: (1 badge)
- Lindsay Hendricks - New Berlin: (2 badges)
- Sarai Wittig - Kettle Moraine: (7 badges and a Macro Credential!!!)
- Matt Palma - WSDHH: (1 badge)
- Emily Lucht - Fond Du Lac: (1 badge)
- Kathryn Cafazzo: (1 badge)
- Andrea Sieb - Deforest: (1 badge)
- Katherine Sween - LakeGeneva J1: (1 badge)
- Kathryn Cafazzo: (1 badge)
- Kali Boardman - Fond Du Lac: (1 badge)
- Jennifer Faust - Wausau: (2 badges)
- Julie Schroeder - Fond Du Lac: (1 badge)

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.