



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
Public Instruction

Hello Assistive Technology (AT) Forward Community of Practice,

As we reach the midpoint of the school year, it's a good time to consider how we're supporting all students, especially those who use assistive technology (AT). Karen Erickson's quote, "Even having just one champion can transform a learner's entire experience," perfectly captures this idea. In a recent Community of Practice meeting, (COP), Ruth Ziolkowski and Kathy White discussed the concept of "Tipping Points". These are small actions that can create significant positive change. If you missed the meeting, you can find the presentation [here](#).

One Tipping Point discussed was the power of 30 seconds of positivity. Simply taking 30 seconds to share a student's positive achievement with a colleague, like a teacher or principal, can have a huge impact. We all know how negative gossip can spread, so let's focus on spreading positivity instead. The webinar highlighted how sharing a positive student accomplishment with a principal not only brightens their day but also creates a second Tipping Point. When that principal later interacted with the student, they were able to offer the student their own 30 seconds of positive feedback, referencing the specific accomplishment. For example, showing a principal a student's work sample with and without AT, or sharing a quick snapshot of a uPAR score, allowed the principal to later offer specific praise to the student, like, "Hey, I saw your writing today, and you're doing terrific!" This creates a chain reaction of positivity, encouraging continued use of AT tools.

Another Tipping Point discussed was having an AT specialist work closely with technical staff. By focusing on the positive impact on students with disabilities, the AT specialist helped IT staff better understand their needs. This led to a further Tipping Point: IT staff began proactively developing helpful technology solutions when they observed students struggling. As educators, we rely on the technical expertise of our IT departments. This collaboration is crucial. We encourage you to watch [this informative webinar](#), which has been divided into 15-20 minute segments for easier viewing.

Table of Contents

[Upcoming Assistive Technology Professional Learning Events and Announcements](#)

[Assistive Technology Resource Suggestions](#)

[Sometimes All We Need to Do is Start a Conversation](#)

[Augmentative and Alternative Communication \(AAC\) Corner](#)

[Feature Match: To view all of our Feature Matching Document follow this link.](#)

Upcoming Assistive Technology Professional Learning Events and Announcement

AT Forward Community of Practice (CoP) Meetings

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

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), as well as a conversation around funding and how to avoid roadblocks.

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

NEW: Protocol for Accommodations in Reading (PAR and UPAR)

Tuesday, March 4, 2025 12:00pm-1:00pm

Dave Butler and Kathy White introduce the Protocol for Accommodations in Reading (PAR), a free tool that provides concrete data to validate students' needs for reading accommodations. We will also demonstrate uPAR, the enhanced, paid version of this valuable resource.

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

New Title: Implementing Feature Matching

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 AT trials and implementation. Real life examples of feature matching will be shared as well as information on where to get equipment on loan (at no cost) for trial.

[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

From Rachel Holt at the Lending Library

Starting in January 2025, the ATLC will be making some changes to streamline the device process.

If you've received a device loan from the ATLC in the past, you may remember that a printed version of the loan agreement was included with your delivery. That will no longer be the case; instead, you'll get an email from the ATLC requesting your digital signature on the loan agreement before the device is shipped.

Also, after you have returned the device at the end of your loan, you will receive an email with a Google Form survey. This brief survey includes questions to help us collect data on the device loan experience. We appreciate your willingness to complete this survey so we can continuously improve our services."

Assistive Technology Resource Suggestions

The mental health field is increasingly embracing assistive and wearable technology to enhance support and treatment. Wearable devices, like smartwatches and fitness trackers, can passively collect physiological data such as heart rate, sleep patterns, and activity levels, providing valuable insights into an individual's emotional and physical state. This data, combined with specialized apps and platforms, can help individuals track mood fluctuations, identify triggers, and practice self-regulation techniques. Cognitive aids, virtual reality programs, and other wearable tech can support individuals with mental health conditions in managing symptoms, improving social skills, and promoting independence. This integration of technology offers exciting possibilities for personalized and proactive mental healthcare.

An example of this type of technology was recently shared by an educator. She shared her experience with a self-regulation tool that has proven beneficial for both her and an autistic teenager. This individual described struggling for years to help students with difficulty recognizing their body's stress signals before reaching a meltdown or shutdown. They discovered an app called [Pauser](#), which works in conjunction with a smartwatch. The app monitors heart rate and alerts the user via a message on the watch when it detects an elevated heart rate indicative of stress, suggesting a "pause." The app also offers guided breathing exercises and tracks alerts, allowing users to identify patterns and proactively manage stress triggers. This individual found the app equally helpful for many students around self-regulation. They noted its effectiveness in catching stress before it escalates. It should be noted that the requirement of both a smartwatch and smartphone might present a cost barrier for schools, they felt compelled to share this potentially valuable and unique tool.

Sometimes All We Need to do is Start A Conversation....

- [International Epilepsy Day February 10th](#) - Take a minute to read this [article](#) on learning and epilepsy. It has many links to necessary and effective assistive technology.
- Low Vision Awareness Month - Checkout this great [article](#) of 26 most common AT devices for users who have low vision.
- White Cane Week Feb 2-8th - Technology is changing the white cane! Checkout this video on [WeWalk Smart Cane](#).
- [International Angelman Day](#) - Celebrate International Angelman Day by exploring Angelman Syndrome Foundation's exceptional Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) training resource. Designed to make the complex topic of AAC more accessible, this award-winning program (2024 Training Resource of the Year!) offers 20 comprehensive modules. Each module features engaging activities, informative videos, and easy-to-understand information, making it an invaluable tool for

families, teachers, and caregivers supporting individuals with Angelman syndrome.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Corner

Conducting an augmentative communication assessment can be a daunting task.

Here at AT Forward Project we would like to assist you with this process. We have compiled a list of questions that can help guide you to the information and strategies you might need. Each month we plan on giving you a few ideas.

Writing AAC goals can be a difficult task. Goals are a necessary part of the AAC acquisition plan. You must know where the student is at and where they are going. Check out the Dynamic AAC Goals Grid tool ([DAGG-3](#)) to assess and progress monitor current communication abilities. It guides IEP teams in choosing and tracking appropriate AAC goals. DAGG-3 can be used for all ability levels from early learners to more advanced communicators. DAGG-3 is available free of charge. When writing an AAC assessment for review with Medicaid, the reviewers will be looking for goals that are short term, long term and across more than just the school environment. Medicaid is also looking for a tie into the medical needs of students. Think about the needs your student has that they can not express. For example if they take medication does it make them thirsty and can they ask for a drink of water. Can your student ask to use the bathroom or leave a room that is too loud?

Feature Match

Looking for various Feature Matching Documents? Take a minute and explore our [Updates Search List](#) In addition to our Feature Matching documents you will find resources and information that was highlighted in previous AT Forward Updates. This is a central place where you can begin your search to assist and enhance your understanding and implementation of assistive technologies in your educational settings. This is a living resource that will be added to each month. Your commitment to fostering an inclusive learning environment is commendable, and we hope this document serves as a helpful resource to save you time.

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.