



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
Public Instruction

Happy New Year! As we embark on a new year, let's continue to explore the exciting world of assistive technology (AT). In this Update, we'll dive into the latest Micro Credentials (yes we have 2 new ones!), discuss the new Disney movie "Out of my Mind," and look forward to new Community of Practice Meetings.

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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!

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), as well as 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 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

New Micro Credentials!

Announcing 2 new Micro Credentials. The first, focuses on recreation and leisure, aims to equip professionals with the knowledge and skills to design inclusive recreational programs for individuals with disabilities. This micro-credential will dive into topics such as adaptive sports, accessible recreation tools, and strategies for promoting lifelong leisure skills. The second micro-credential is tailored for older students and explores the use of assistive technology to support independent living and academic success. This program will cover a range of tools and techniques, including assistive listening devices, screen readers, tools for the world of work, and other software. By completing these micro-credentials, professionals can enhance their expertise and better serve the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities. Explore all of the [Micro Credentials here.](#)

Assistive Technology Resource Suggestions

[Link to the BeeLine is a Chrome extension here.](#) This extension is designed to help you read faster and easier. It uses a colored overlay that moves horizontally across the text, guiding your eyes and supposedly improving focus. Whenever we assess a student for a specific tool, we look for ways to quantify our choices and solidify our tool choices with data. BeeLine is now following that trend. On the

BeeLine website (where you can get the tool for free), you can scroll down on the page and “take the challenge!” The challenge is a quick reading assessment that will give you a score to tell you if the tool really did help your help and by how much. Take a minute and check it out.

Access Past AT Forward Updates

Time is a precious commodity, and leveraging tools to maximize efficiency is essential. A searchable resource from past newsletters is an asset for educators and professionals in the field of assistive technology. By accessing a centralized repository of information, you can quickly locate relevant articles, tips, and best practices, saving time and effort. This efficient approach allows you to stay informed about the latest trends and innovations without getting bogged down in extensive searches. [Links to past information can be found here.](#)

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

January is a perfect time to snuggle up with a good film. Disney's "Out of My Mind" offers a heartwarming and thought-provoking exploration of disability, communication, assistive technology, and the power of the human spirit. Based on Sharon M. Draper's novel, the film follows the extraordinary journey of Melody Brooks, a brilliant young girl with cerebral palsy. Despite her physical limitations, Melody possesses a sharp mind and a vibrant imagination. The film explores the challenges young people with Cerebral Palsy face in expressing themselves, highlighting the importance of assistive technology and inclusive education. Phoebe-Rae Taylor delivers a remarkable performance as Melody, capturing her intelligence, humor, and frustration with poignant authenticity. Jennifer Aniston's voiceover work as Melody's inner voice adds depth and richness to the narrative, offering viewers a glimpse into the complex thoughts and feelings of a young girl who is attempting to communicate with just a few select symbols.

"Out of My Mind" is more than just a movie; it's an opportunity to spark conversations about disability awareness, empathy, and the power of human connection. By showcasing the challenges and triumphs of individuals with disabilities, the film encourages viewers to consider their own biases and to advocate for a more inclusive world.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Corner

Conducting an augmentative communication assessment can be a daunting task.

Here at the AT Forward Project, we would like to assist you with this process. We 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.

Question? Have you tried any AAC devices with your student?

Yes/ No -Go to the state lending library and check out a device. Devices are available at no cost and a trial is essential in your data collection journey. Here is the [link to our statewide lending library](#). You can also get devices for trials from vendors at no cost. See the partial list of vendors below. Please remember when seeking devices from our lending library to also look for peripherals such as mounting devices, keyguards, and a variety of switches. Easy access to the device is essential.

[Prentke Romich Company \(PRC\)](#)

[Tobii Dynavox](#) and [Find Your Consultant](#)

[Saltillo Corporation](#)

[Forbes AAC](#)

[Attainment Company](#)

Question? Do you or members of your team understand the process involved with securing an AAC device?

Yes/No The process can appear daunting, but it can be divided into a few simple steps.

- 1) Identify your student who has needs in the area of AAC.
- 2) Try different options.
- 3) Pick an option (based on data collections.)
- 4) Write the report. See the example below from Tobii Dynavox.

[AAC Assessment Process Overview .pdf | Powered by Box](#)

Feature Match: Executive Functioning

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- Executive Functioning	Potential Solution Feature Match
	Are there accessible supports in place to manage larger tasks like research papers or other large projects?	Consider programs such as graphic organizers or outlining programs Get Ready, Do, Done! by Sarah Ward
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with managing time or time related concepts?	Consider items such as Visual Timer Smart Watch Low tech reminders like adding sticky notes to a student's desk area to warn about upcoming schedule changes or events like fire drills
	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 <i>How does your</i> 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 Google Calendar Check In and out system with an adult Smart tech like Alexis Reminders or Smart Watch Reminders Visual or Picture Schedule First Then App or board Setting alarms on iPads Picture Schedules Work task in picture and word forms
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with listening and taking notes?	Consider outlines, teacher or peer student created notes Using the camera feature on a phone or iPad to take pictures of the board Livescribe Pens

✓	Area of Student Concern- Executive Functioning	Potential Solution Feature Match
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with elapsed time?	Consider a stopwatch so the student can “see” time elapsing Time Timers or visual timers /apps
	Are there accessible supports in place to keep papers organized ?	Consider keeping things digital Teach the student to use a system like Google Drive or Keep, or One Note
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with following verbal multiple step directions?	Consider written directions or an auditory text to speech program that read written directions Picture directions (LessonPix)
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with writing in an organized manner?	Consider outlines or graphic organizers

Please note: Any listed app/website should be vetted prior to student use to ensure compliance with the district’s technology policy.

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.