



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

AAC Awareness Month in October has been celebrated since 2007. It is a crucial time to raise awareness about augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). AAC systems provide essential support for individuals with communication impairments, enabling them to express thoughts, feelings, and needs. By promoting AAC awareness, we can help ensure that individuals with communication disabilities have access to the tools and resources they need to participate fully in society. This month-long initiative encourages education, advocacy, and community engagement to foster a more inclusive and understanding world for all. In this Update we have several links to assist you with learning more and gaining a deeper understanding of the needs of those who use AAC.

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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!

Scribbling...The Beginning of Writing for All Children

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

Kelly Fonner and 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)

Fonner and McNear gave a great presentation on October 8, 2024, 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 Closing the Gap October 22-25 in Bloomington Minnesota

- **The AT Forward Team will be presenting at Closing the GAP!** If you are at the conference, please look us up. We would all love to see you in person and chat about Assistive Technology!

- [Registration is still open- Click here to register](#)

Complete the Survey! We want to hear from you

- [CLICK HERE to complete the Beginning of the year Survey for Assistive Technology \(AT\) Forward 2024-25.](#)

- [Registration is still open- Click here to register](#)

Let us know how you are using the resources and what your preferences are for AT Forward CoP times.

Wisconsin Center for Blind and Visually Impaired (WCBVI) Update

iOS 18: Reasons you Might want to Wait to Update by Amy Snow

I don't know about you all, but I love reading about the new features being released in new iOS updates. I read all the articles I can get my hands on, especially from the many newsletters and listservs I subscribe to and the social media accounts I follow related to technology for the blind and visually impaired. I plan and strategize how students may benefit from these new options and how I can help support them while they learn to use the new or updated features.

As you are probably aware, the anticipated iOS 18 update was released in the middle of last month. But no matter how excited I get or how much my students beg for me to do it, I never update to the latest version of iOS until at least one minor update is released (for example, after iOS 17 came out, I didn't recommend that students update until 17.1, which was basically a one-month delay). I really didn't want to bore you with a story, but it proves the point I'll be making. So hang with me for a minute...

When iOS 8 came out, I was super excited. I hadn't been in the iDevice world terribly long and I was learning all sorts of fun new things. So of course, I updated my iPod (yes, I had an iPod) as soon as it would let me. But once I did update, there was a problem. VoiceOver would not work! The iPod worked perfectly fine otherwise, but the minute I turned on VoiceOver, I encountered issues that basically made the iPod useless. I tried EVERYTHING I could think of from settings to a reset (which did not roll back to iOS 7 of course). It stumped me for several days, though it felt longer.

Ultimately, it turned out the issue was related to a setting for braille displays that was turned on or something to that effect. But the reason for the issue didn't matter as much as the lesson I learned, and that was that updates can break accessibility! This was also not the last time that happened, but it was the most memorable.

I was fortunate in that the iPod was not my primary personal device. I had an Android smartphone at the time and used that for almost everything, except for learning to work with students on the iPads and braille displays our school had. I could not help but be grateful that our devices were not updated because many of our students may have lost the use of a device, they needed to access their school work, and in some cases, access to program supports.

See why I am hesitant to update as soon as a new version is released? Here are some other "hard and fast" rules on updating that I tend to follow:

1. NEVER update to a major release on your primary device ESPECIALLY if you are using any accessibility features. If you are fortunate enough to have two devices, update one first and use it for at least a couple of days.
2. Remember, different models respond differently to updates. Your iPhone 11 and iPhone 13 may both update to iOS 18, but bugs may exist on one phone and not the other. This is especially true between iPad and iPhone models. So just remember, if you update your iPhone 11 and everything works great, that doesn't mean you'll have the same experience with the iPhone 13.
3. With the first public release of a major update, many users will be scrambling to get their devices up to the latest version, which creates a larger pool of people using the new release. The larger pool provides Apple with a greater variety of users who will be reporting issues or bugs on more devices. This pool is also more likely to include individuals who use either the built-in accessibility features or third-party apps or hardware for accessibility. These reports will help Apple to "squash the bugs".

Already updated? It is possible to roll back to a previous version, but that comes with its own set of risks, including loss of data. There is information out there that can help you roll back, but Apple does not recommend it unless your device is unusable.

Whether you've updated or decided to wait, here's hoping you enjoy all the new features in the latest iOS version!

Resources:

- [Balancing Accessibility and Cutting Edge Technology](#)
- [iOS 17: Update or Wait](#)

Assistive Technology Resource Suggestions

Tar Heel Reader is now [Monarch Reader](#). There are a few new changes to the site. One of the best changes is that the site is now more age-respectful. Building Wings states that, "The Tar Heel Reader digital library with tens of thousands of books to support beginning and emergent readers will continue to have the components educators know and love such as alternative access methods and input device compatibility. Users can also change text and background color, which is particularly helpful for learners with CVI (Cortical Vision Impairment). Adults who created books on Tar Heel can link those to their new Monarch Reader account. The library's content is both age-appropriate and age-respectful for young and older readers. Accessibility for all is central to the Building Wings mission of breaking down learning barriers and providing tools that enable everyone to access the knowledge they seek. Monarch Reader will be an additional puzzle piece to enable that." Take a minute to check it out and create your free account so you can write and publish your own books.

Sometimes All We Need to Do is Start a Conversation

The summer of 2024 gave us all a treat that only comes around every 4 years. The Paralympic Games offered students a unique opportunity to witness incredible athletic feats and learn valuable life lessons. By following Paralympic athletes, students can gain inspiration from their determination, resilience, and unwavering spirit. These athletes prove that with the right mindset and support, anyone can overcome challenges and achieve extraordinary things. Additionally, the Paralympics can help foster empathy and understanding for people with disabilities, promoting a more inclusive and accepting society. Besides being great athletes many of the Para Olympians use Assistive Technology. Read more here about the "[Equipped for equity](#)" campaign or think about showing a [short video like the Armless Archer](#).

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Corner

Conducting an augmentative communication assessment can be a daunting task.

It requires a deep understanding of the individual's communication needs, cognitive abilities, and physical limitations. Factors like the individual's age, cultural background, and communication environment can also influence the assessment process. However, by following a structured approach and utilizing appropriate assessment tools, healthcare professionals can effectively identify the most suitable communication strategies and technologies for individuals with complex communication needs. 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.

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.

Question?: Have you created a list of ways your student does communicate?

Yes/ No - Keeping a list of what you tried is essential in the process. You need to know what worked and what did not work and why. You will need this information when writing your AAC assessment report

Need more ideas or help start with this free resource from [Communication Matrix](#) and fill out the form for a starting point. Keep good records to see what works such as what symbols set was used, color contrast of icons, length of utterances and types of devices tried.

NEW: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction [Augmentative and Alternative Communication \(AAC\) Webpage \(Click here to view\)](#) Here you will find information about definitions, conferences, organizations, resources, AAC and Artificial Intelligence and more. There is also information here about the AAC Partnership Program.

[AAC Partnership program](#) is designed to support SLPs, and other team members, working with children who need an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) evaluation. It was developed with aims to: (1) increase access to AAC services for individuals across the state, (2) provide teams with recommendations to continue growing their student's communication skills, and (3) increase the statewide capacity of speech-language pathologists (SLPs) to provide AAC services. When individuals are referred to the AAC-PP, the clinical team in the Communication Aids & Systems Clinic (CASC) at the Waisman Center reviews the intake information provided by the referring/partner SLP to determine the most appropriate service model for that child. They work with the referring school to provide the appropriate evaluation and service model.

From the Desk of Mike Hipple AAC User

Because this month is AAC awareness month, I thought what a great time to talk about awareness month. AAC awareness month was started in 2007 by the United States Society of AAC and the International Society of AAC. The goal is to make the public aware of the fact that people who can't speak, they need to have access to AAC to live their best life. I know everyone who is reading this understands it, but do your co-workers, the grocery store workers, the bus drivers, and police officers understand that the students who use AAC should have access to their device at all times? I was working at an organization this summer and one of my students who I have known since they were eight, they were there for the summer program. They can speak so some people can understand them, but they have an iPad to communicate with. I wanted to see and hope to see if they needed it would they get it to communicate and they did!! This only happened because, when they were younger their team worked hard with them to know when no one could understand them they needed to use their device to say what they wanted and needed. That happened because everyone on their team understood the importance of the device. This does not happen every time sadly. When I was in seventh grade, none of my teachers understood that I needed to have my communication device with me, but I am lucky enough to have a great family and had a great school team who taught me the importance of using my communication device. So please do some AAC awareness this month not only for the school staff, and for the students and their families too. I hope you will have an excellent month doing awareness

things. Please look at what I found for you this month. They are amazing things not to be missed!!

[AAC Bill of Rights ISAAC online](#)

[ISAAC - AAC Awareness Month Archives](#)

[Many Stories - One Voice AAC Story Collection 2008](#)

My favorite one to share with anyone. [Talking With My AAC](#)

This is my great friend and mentor Chris Klein. He has a new book out, please consider buying it. This is my favorite video that he did. Enjoy it and maybe watch it with your class. [TEDxMacatowa - Chris Klein - seeing unique abilities](#)

[My Big Toe](#)

[Google Form for All Star AAC](#)

[USSAAC](#)

QIAT Community and AT Forward 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.

- **Please note The QIAT list is moving to a new list email hosted by ATP/AT3.**

This move will take place on or before Oct. 15, 2024.

Members of the current QIAT list have the option to subscribe to the new list.

You can do this by sending a “subscribe” message to QIAT-ATAP@simplelists.com .

If you do not subscribe to the new list, you will not receive or be able to send messages to the QIAT list after the current list is discontinued. You can address any questions to the QIAT Leadership Team at:

QIATleadership@gmail.com

- **QIAT community, help me out!**

Question: “What iOS app are you using with students to access Bookshare.org books? I was told that the Bookshare Reader app does not meet federal, state, or district privacy policies and I will not be able to use it with students. I need to find an app that is compatible for a student who needs to access books on Bookshare.org.”

Answers from the group: “Lara from Bookshare here and I wanted to clear up any misinformation circulating that the Bookshare Reader Mobile app is not compliant with Federal or State privacy laws. This is simply not true! The Bookshare platform and our associated reading tools such as the mobile app for iOS and Android are compliant with all applicable laws related to student data and its protection including FERPA, COPPA, PPRA, IDEA etc. VoiceDream Reader works well.”

Feature Match: Seating and Positioning New

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.

Seating and Positioning Feature Match

✓	Area of Student Concern- Seating	Potential Solution Feature Match
	<p>Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who needs to have movement while they are listening or working in the classroom?</p>	<p>Consider: → <u>Fidget Bands for Classroom Chairs</u> → <u>Wiggle Wobble Feet</u> → <u>Active Learning Stools</u> → <u>Standing Desk</u> → <u>Bike Desk</u> → <u>Armchair Rocker</u> → <u>Classroom Rocker</u> → <u>Zuma Floor Rockers</u></p>

	<p>Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who needs to have movement while they are listening or working in the classroom when adapted equipment may not be available?</p>	<p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Be sure the chair and desk are at the correct height (feet supported flat on the floor, hips centered back in chair and both arms able to rest on desk) → Classroom heavy work jobs → Heavy work activities
	<p>Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who needs a variety of seating options?</p>	<p>Consider varied flexible seating options as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Active Learning Stools → Therapy balls → Bean bags chairs → Standing desk → Bike desks <p><u>32 of the Best Flexible Seating Options for the Classroom</u></p>
	<p>Are there accessible supports in place to</p>	<p>Consider varied flexible seating</p>

Seating and Positioning Feature Match

✓	Area of Student Concern- Seating	Potential Solution Feature Match
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	<p>assist a student who needs access to various environments such as floor activities, or eating in a cafeteria?</p>	<p>options as follows: → <u>Tripp Trap Chair</u> → <u>Sunni Cafeteria chair</u> → <u>FlexSpace Comfy Floor Seat</u> → <u>BackJack Floor Chair</u> → <u>ECR4Kids Leaf Floor Seat</u> → <u>Surf Portable Lap Desk</u></p>
	<p>Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who needs body stability? Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student to decrease fatigue and or increase alertness?</p>	<p>Consider all of the materials they use during the day - books, computers, art tools ... are they stable? Consider <u>rigid mounts</u> or easy to move mounts Consider use of energy conservation techniques Be sure the chair and desk are at the correct height(feet supported flat on the floor, hips centered back in chair and both arms able to rest on desk) Consider use of varied seating options such as tilt</p>

		<p>in space; recline, etc.</p>
	<p>Are there accessible supports in place to assist a student who needs physical access to special places like the playground?</p>	<p>Consider adaptive playground equipment → Be active part of building conversations → <u>PlayGround Equipment</u> → <u>Playground AAC boards</u></p>

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

RESNA Position on the Application of Wheelchairs, Seating Systems, and Secondary Supports for Positioning vs Restraint

Thanks to Barbara Jermyn (barbarajermyn1@gmail.com) for her work on this Feature Match!

Micro-Credentials Update

Congratulations to the following people who have earned badge(s). We have now awarded 412 badges! We are empowering learners and raising the awareness of Assistive Technology!

- Emily Kobs Swallow 1 badge
- Sarah Harke Oconto Falls 3 badges
- Laura Warnke Shorewood 6 badges
- Matt Klawitter Aubrundale 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.