



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

December is always a busy month one filled with the holiday spirit for some and for others it is a time of renewal. It can also be a time when parents find giving gifts or finding toys that their son or daughter can play almost impossible to find or too expensive to purchase. Playing games not only offers learning and engagement, but also social acceptance. Check out this great [article](#) about PlayStation and Sony's work with making controllers accessible to all. As a side note.... a few of our usual items have been removed to keep the December Update a little shorter because of the holidays. Enjoy!

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Upcoming Assistive Technology Professional Learning Events

Upcoming Assistive Technology CoP Meetings

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

Tuesday, December 12, 2023, 4:00pm-5:00pm.

Information Technology and Assistive Technology: Making it All Work Together presented by Dr. Robert Smiley. Bringing Assistive Technology and Information Technology together in ways that enhance the outcomes for ALL students is at the core of this discussion. The School District of Janesville used creative and innovative internal structures to develop AT opportunities for ALL students. Join our discussion to learn how you too can take steps to enhance your students' use of Assistive Technology for the betterment of all. To join please click on the [link](#) to register for the event.

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

Assistive Technology Team: What does that mean to you? 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.

Thursday, February 8, 2024 Time: 4:00pm-5:00pm

Bridging the Gap: School Teams and Specialists presented by Jennifer Seale. This talk will address the value of collaboration between school teams and providers at outpatient specialty clinics for students who can benefit from augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) Tools and strategies. This webinar will provide attendees with the opportunity to explore their role in the collaboration process including highlighting the role of AAC finder, speech and language pathologist, educator, paraprofessional and /or family member. Additionally, an overview of how a collaborative program for school teams, families and providers can support students who benefit from AAC will be provided. To join please click on the [link](#) to register for the event.

Tuesday, February 27, 2024 Time: 4:00pm-5:00pm

Consider what? How to Match Features Presented by Anna Cliff and Kathy White. Assistive Technology is everywhere. But how do you know you have chosen correctly? Feature Matching is an important concept in the field of Assistive Technology. It involves comparing the specific needs and abilities with various features and functions of AT tools. The goal of feature matching is to find the most suitable AT solution that aligns with the unique needs of a student. When conducting feature matching it is essential to consider factors such as the individual's physical and cognitive needs, the environment and the goal you are attempting to achieve. This session will look at a series of questions that will assist you in making informed decisions based on specific domains of needs. Please [register](#) in advance for this Zoom meeting.

Assistive Technology Resource Suggestions

What's new in the lending library?

Did you know that the lending library is free to all?

Did you also know that you can get more than just AAC devices?

Both low and mid tech devices have been added to the library.

Here are a few items you might want to check out: [AT4ALL](#)

[C-pen reader reading pen](#) - a pen like device that read text, translates, and a dictionary

[ArithmeType keyboard](#) - a keyboard that types math symbols

[Quicktaker 23](#) - mid tech AAC device with light feature touch technology

[WatchMider](#) - a smartwatch that discreetly vibrates to provide reminders throughout one's day

[EnCloz iPad Security Stand](#) - a versatile and secure iPad stand

[Hitch2](#) - Hitch 2 is a plug-and-play USB computer switch interface with inputs for up to five switches or one joystick with a 9-pin D plug

[Tapio™ USB/iOS switch interface](#) - a native USB switch interface for the iPad

[Jelly Bean Switch](#) - pressure switch that is small that can be used with many devices and toys

AT Forward Network

The beginning of the 2023-24 school year marks a new start for the AT Forward Network, where we will host an online space and forum to meet, share resources, and hold valuable discussions about Assistive Technology innovations and strategies that can help advance all students in WI. The name of this portal will be the AT Forward Community Collaboration and it is open to educators and caregivers around the state who can benefit from the information and support provided by this project. This community will publish articles and websites to assist educators in implementing and evaluating AT resources so that students can succeed, post blogs from leading professionals and experts familiar with AT in schools, and ask pertinent questions to gather insights from individuals with experience in specific subject matters. To join the AT Forward Community Collaboration Network, please follow this [invite link](#).

For future logins, please visit and bookmark: [AT Forward Community Collaboration Portal Page](#).

Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)

Helping our community partners obtain accessible educational materials for their blind and visually impaired students in a timely manner is important to us that's why we're happy to announce that we've updated our website with helpful information and resources!

[Check out what's new!](#)

- A new section called Forms, Processes, and Policies where you can find our different request forms, processes, and policies on requesting APH textbooks and textbook research, borrowing APH equipment, and requesting APH consumable materials
- AEM resources where you can find AEM-related links and resources from DPI, NIMAC, and APH
- Newly updated [American Printing House for the Blind \(APH\) Federal Quota Program website](#). This newly updated website includes:
 - An outline of the general process for the APH Federal Quota Census
 - Updated parent/guardian permission form and letter in English and Spanish
 - Updated APH Census registration instructions and FAQs
 - An overview of the APH Federal Quota Program, and
 - A summary of what is available through the APH Federal Quota Program

WCBVI Update

WCBVI Winter Events – Save the Date!

BrailleFest and the Braille Challenge will be coming back to WCBVI in February 2024! This event has been on hiatus the past few years, so we're very excited to be able to celebrate Braille literacy in person again. Braille literacy, much like print literacy, often includes AT devices and this is a great opportunity to see AT for the blind and visually impaired in action!

It's never too early to save the date!

- When: February 15-16, 2024 (snow dates of February 22-23, 2024)
- Where: WCBVI Campus 1700 W State Street Janesville WI
- Who: Students who are blind or visually impaired and their parents or TVIs
- What: BrailleFest and Braille Challenge
- Event Description: Statewide BrailleFest is back! WCBVI will be hosting BrailleFest and the Braille Challenge on our campus in Janesville.
- Students who attend BrailleFest can expect:
 - Games and activities that celebrate braille and braille literacy (including AT items such as braille displays or braille notetakers)
 - Opportunities to win medals and prizes for demonstrating sensory and braille skills
 - Social activities that encourage engagement and interaction with other students with visual impairments

Braille Challenge

This event is hosted by WCBVI and sponsored by the Braille Institute. Administered at several sites nationwide, the Braille Challenge presents the opportunity to compete with students on a national level by completing a multi-part test. Attendees also have opportunities to meet new friends and take part in braille and tactile learning enrichment if they also choose to sign up for [BrailleFest](#). The deadline to register is December 22.

During the Challenge, WCBVI participants will be utilizing the Victor Reader Stream to access the audio files needed for the test. You can learn about the Victor Reader Stream, the fully accessible MP3 and Daisy player for the blind and visually impaired by visiting the link below:

[Victor Reader Stream Information Page](#)

Registration will open sometime in December, so please [check the WCBVI website](#) and [follow the WCBVI Facebook Page](#) for up to date information and registration links.

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

Looking to increase awareness about AT?

See what special events are happening worldwide in December .

Awareness is the first step towards understanding and acceptance.

December 3 is the “International Day of Persons with Disabilities,” it is a day of observance for people who live with some form of disability, [proclaimed by the United Nations](#) in 1992. The core value of this day is to encourage all people to be valued for their “unique talents and abilities.”

Take a few minutes to explore these great videos.

[Things people with Disabilities wish you knew](#)

[Go Forth and Be Human: Disability Sensitivity Training](#)

[Disability and Work: Let’s Stop Wasting Talent](#)

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Corner

Often when we think about Executive Functioning skills we think in terms of students who may have the label of SLD or ADHD. However, it is important to think about these skills with all students. Parige Buckingham just presented for the AT Forward Community of Practice on the

connection between AAC and executive functioning. You can access the recording here if you missed it. *(will add the link when it becomes available)*

During her webinar Paige Buckingham looked at the principles of improving executive functioning skills in terms of AAC development.

Paige developed the following chart:

Principles for Improving EF Skills	Best practice in AAC development
Teach the deficit skills	System has to be taught Model (aided language)
Work at the student’s developmental level	Functions of language System selection Core Words
Move from external to internal	Visual Supports Color Coding Aided Language Pull back prompts as student learns
Modify tasks to allow for student’s unique abilities Use student’s desire for control	Core Words GLP System set up (motor planning, categories, topic pages) Follow student lead and assign meaning

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

As I sit at my computer wondering what to write about this month, I thought about the families who just got a communication device and this will probably be the first holiday season that they will hear their child's voice. How powerful and special will that be? On Christmas morning with my family, I always used my device to say thank you, you're welcome, or tell stories and jokes. When my grandparents, cousins, uncles, and aunts were together celebrating the holidays we were at dad's family house and mom's family house which I couldn't get in using my power chair. My parents asked everyone if we can have the holidays at our house, so Mike can be a part of everything. I am so grateful that everyone said of course. Now, my parents didn't need any support

asking their families to do this, but I think some families might like to have some support from their child's team. If a family asks you to support them, please do.

I think new families need assistive technology, they might be worried about what the other family members might think about having this new thing come into the family life, and here is where you come in if the family would like to have your help. First you might like to have a talk with the family to find out what your family's holidays tradition looks like. Then ask the parents if you could invite their family members to a Zoom meeting for them to see what this tool is and how it helps their family member. You might want to practice with the student what to say, what to do, and what to try if the device decides to quit working in the middle of the family event. Yes it isn't part of your job duties as an educational professional, but it is one of those things that you do to make your student's life meaningful.

Do you know that you can add photos of family members on the student's device? This is awesome to do for telling you stories about their favorite family members! Please ask the families to send you photos to add to the device. This is great to do with anyone, but I love to do this with younger AAC Communicators, because to get that buy-in from the family is so important and who doesn't like to tell stories about the crazy aunt or the goofy uncle? If you don't know how to do this, please send a message to the forward leaders and they will tell you how to do this or forward to one of the specialists who does AAC and we will walk you through it. This is easy to do and a lot of fun. Remember that I am available to support teams, just email the forward leaders. I wish everyone a happy holiday, enjoy your time off, practice with your students on what to say, and see you at an event in 2024.

Here is some stuff that I think you want to know about around AAC and assistive technology community. For our friends in preschool or kindergarten, I came across this YouTube channel called [Swing Set Mamas](#). They have music for circle time. Have fun with this and remember to model with AAC.

With a new year coming, please consider joining the United States Society of AAC {USSAAC}. [United States Society of Augmentative Alternative Communication \[USSAAC\]](#) is the only society that works for and with family members, AAC communicators, and professionals. Please let the families that you work with know about this phenomenal organization.

Links to pass on to families and professionals :

Need more ideas to assist families with accessibility? Checkout this [link](#).

This is WI AAC Network fall newsletter [The Fall Newsletter](#)

The [AAC Star program](#) is designed to celebrate all of the phenomenal students that we have in Wisconsin. Please submit someone today.

Summer may be a ways away but it never hurts to think about warmer weather. Information about [Camp Chatter Matter](#), a family weekend camp can be found here

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!

"Does anyone have guidelines regarding the prerequisites needed for a student to be successful using speech to text to include grade level recommendations? It seems like there is a lot of contradicting information on the web."

QIAT community, help me out!

Answers from the group:

I highly recommend Daniel Cochrane & Kelly Key's guide, [Speech Recognition as AT for writing](#).

There is also a plethora of information regarding writing development and research in [the DeCoste Writing Protocol](#), now available for free from Don Johnston. Two thirds of the protocol is on research and research based instructional practices and one third on administration.

Micro-Credentials Update

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

We have now awarded 309 badges! We are empowering learners and raising the awareness of Assistive Technology!

Courtney Camarillo Plymouth 4 badges

Kirsti Romenesko Fond Du Lac 6 badges

Taylor Schneider Genoa City J2 1 badge

Timothy Baldry Milton 1 badge

Jeanna Kaland Plymouth 2 badges

Wyeth Paine Plymouth 1 badge

Amanda Carson CES A2 2 badges

Telli Langford CESA 2 1 badge

Lindsay Hendricks New Berlin 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.