



Assistive Technology Forward



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF  
**Public Instruction**

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

We apologize for the delay in getting out the April and May updates, so this email contains information and resources for the last few months.

Congratulations on all your hard work and getting to the end of the school year! Whoever said teaching was easy was never a good teacher. Teaching takes time, continual learning, forethought and lots of patience. This time of year, it is important to close out the school year with good data, take care of our equipment that will be stored over the summer and make sure our students who are leaving us are prepared for independence with their technology. At the end of the year, this is when progress monitoring is essential. Take the time to look at how your students are using their assistive technology to not only help with your goals and objectives, but to also look towards the next year. Assistive Technology is all about looking Forward. Forward to the next school year or major transition event. Ask yourself and others on the students' team questions such as:

- Do I need to order digital or braille textbooks to provide for AEM needs ?
- Do I need to teach any new teachers about how the student uses their technology?
- Does the student have access to tools for summer school?
- Is the AAC device personal or school owned backed up in case of damage over the summer?
- Is the technology making a difference in terms of increasing, maintaining or improving their capabilities?
- Is the student able to advocate for use of their Assistive technology?
- Is the student ready to transition to work or more education and if so do they know what tech they use and why? Consider writing a letter to DVR for support of their AT needs.

Thinking ahead and planning for the next year now will save time, energy and frustration.

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## **Assistive Technology Lending Center (ATLC) Updates**

The state lending library will soon be closing for the summer. The last day to checkout an item is May 14th with all items needing to be returned by June 14. The Lending library will reopen in the fall after Labor Day.

We wanted to take a minute to wish Donna Hudson a wonderful retirement. Donna, who has run the lending library for years, will be retiring in August. Thank you Donna for all of your hard work, dedication and assistance. You will be missed!

Below are some tips and reminders for returning ATLC devices.

- If you have a district lending library of devices remember to remove all batteries from devices for proper summer storage
- Devices that require charging should be charged before storage
- Students / parents need contact information for vendors if their personal devices need repair or updates over the summer
- Students who are leaving you need written information on items they have used including manufacture, information and reasons they need the technology. Need an example or two? Transition letter one and two.
- Documentation of what technology was trialed with a student and the data driven outcome

## **WisTech 2024 Trainings: Sneak Peak**

We are getting the 2024 WisTech webinars lined up and you can look forward to the following topics:

- The ABCs of AAC by Abygail Marx and Jennifer Schubring
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) and AT Ethics
- Outdoor Recreation AT
- Assistive Technology for Executive Functioning, Mental Health, and Cognition
- Assistive Technology and Party Planning

To register for any of the above trainings please follow this [Zoom link](#).

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

## **Wisconsin Center for Blind and Visually Impaired (WCBVI) Update**

Monarch Waitlist is Open!

The Braille Metamorphosis has begun! The [Monarch Waitlist](#) is now available to join.

This game-changing refreshable braille display from the American Printing House for the Blind (APH), which can also render tactile graphics, will be soaring into classrooms this fall! Secure your spot on the [Monarch Waitlist](#) today to stay in the loop on important updates and be among the first to know when the Monarch is available for purchase. Stock is limited, so don't miss out!

What is the Monarch and why is it going to level the playing field in the classroom for students who are blind or low vision? [Meet Monarch](#) and [learn all about the Monarch's Development](#).

## **Assistive Technology Resource Suggestions**

### **AEM: Notice of Interpretation Regarding Digital Instructional Materials**

In 2020, the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Center (NIMAC) issued the [Notice of Interpretation \(NOI\)](#) permitting the [National Instructional Materials Access Center \(NIMAC\)](#) to accept files derived from digital instructional materials. What does this mean for me? The NOI clarifies that the term “print instructional materials,” with regard to the scope of NIMAS in IDEA 2004, includes digital instructional materials. This includes digital learning management system platforms, digital textbooks and other digital learning materials. These materials must be accessible to all students and they are considered AEM. For more information, please review the [NIMAC and Digital Materials: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

### **Who doesn't like a free resource!**

The Coalition for Assistive Technology in Oregon (CATO) is pleased to announce that Education Tech Points: A Framework for Assistive Technology and its related publications are now available as free downloads from <https://educationtechpoints.org/>. Education Tech Points publications, authored by Gayl Bowser and Penny Reed, have been a resource to the field of assistive technology since 1995. The third edition of the manual was published in 2012 and was updated in 2023.

Education Tech Points and its companion publications help AT teams and School Districts to define effective and efficient processes for the provision of AT services to students who need assistive technology. In 2023, the CATO board of directors made the decision to offer the content of the Education Tech Points manual and companion publications as free downloads.

Downloadable files include materials for professionals, parents, and students.

Education Tech Points: A Framework for Assistive Technology (Updated chapters from the third (2012) edition)

The ABCs of Assistive Technology series:

- ABCs of Effective AT Consideration
- ABCs of AT Case Management
- ABCs of Effective Administrator Support of AT Services
- ABCs of Effectively Evaluating AT Use
- ABCs of Understanding Assistive Technology Devices
- ABCs of Improving AT Services
- Assistive Technology Pointers for Parents (English and Spanish)
- Hey! Can I Try That? (English and Spanish)

That could work for me!

Thanks to all of you who have purchased CATO publications over the years. All proceeds have been used to provide assistive technology devices for Oregon students with disabilities through a grant application process.

Visit the [Education Tech Points website](#) to review these publications and many other resources to help in developing your assistive technology services. Penny and Gayl will continue to add resources to the website, so check back frequently to see what's new.

### **The Case for #CamelCase**

Hashtags on social media seem to go in and out of vogue, at least as far as what I've seen. It also depends on the platform being used. But one thing that has been consistent, and is thankfully getting better, is the use of Camel Case for hashtags.

So what is a Camel Case? Imagine you are reading a hashtag that says #makeitaccessible. It's a longer hashtag, and it can take time to pick it apart to determine where the spaces are supposed to be. Screen readers will read this as a large word and more than likely it will be unrecognizable. Those with learning differences may look at the string of letters and get a headache.

Now imagine the above hashtag says #MakeItAccessible. Much easier to read isn't it? And if you are using a screen reader or other assistive technology, it will pick out the words and read the hashtag much better.

So the next time you're on Instagram or Facebook (or honestly, whatever social media or circumstances would use hashtags) try using Camel Case to make your hashtags more accessible to everyone! #CamelCaseForTheWin!

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

#### **April Resources**

The month of April had us engaging in a variety of areas. If you missed these, please take a moment to look at the Awareness areas for last month in April.

- [April 17th is Assistive Technology Awareness Day](#): Educate yourself and others about the essential benefits and vital role AT plays in the lives of those with disabilities.
- [World Autism Awareness Day](#): Observed on April 2nd, World Autism Awareness Day aims to raise awareness about autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and promote acceptance and inclusion of individuals with autism.
- [Occupational Therapy Awareness Month](#) OT's help our students become independent, enhance their performance in daily life, and encourage participation in different activities. Assistive Technology plays a huge role in the therapies OT's deliver.
- National Deaf History Month and [National No Limits for Deaf Children Day](#) . The assistive technology that is available today for those who are deaf or hearing impaired is astounding. Take a few minutes to look at what tools are available to help those who are deaf live independent and productive lives.

- Do you have students who think they can't do something due to their physical disability? Take a moment to watch this [inspirational video](#).

## May Updates

### The month of May is awareness for:

- [Mental Health](#) -Mental health is an area we should not ignore. Sometimes assistive technology can be very helpful for individuals who need help with executive functioning skills, time management skills and medication management.
- [Arthritis](#) - We often do not think about arthritis and students, but it can and does occur. Students with physical disabilities may need AT support in terms of carrying items, turning pages, participating in art, PE or tech ed classes. Take a minute and think about all of the things we do every day that require physical effort ( locker management!)
- [Global Accessibility Awareness Day](#)
- Please take a moment to look at the Awareness areas for the month of May. Think about what activities you could encourage or staff and students for the summer months. Learning does not stop just because school is out.

## Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Corner

The lending library has a new vendor. We would like to welcome Talk To Me Technologies as a new AAC vendor to our state lending library. Talk To Me Technologies offers a wide variety of AAC devices including eye gaze systems , Zuvo and Wego. Checkout their [webpage](#) to learn more . The lending library has purchased the Zuvo 12 with Vida Go, the Talk Pad Wego 8 and the Talk Pad Wego 10. Contact [Donna Hutson](#) for more information.

Assessment in any area can be difficult, but conducting an AAC assessment can appear as a daunting, overwhelming task. Knowing where to checkout a few tools can assist you with this task. The Tobii Dynavox Company created a free resource called the [DAGG-3](#) (Dynamic AAC Goals Grid, edition 3). The tool was created by Tobii Dynavox but is not specific to their device. It helps professionals assess needs, track goals and create an implementation plan. The tool is available at no cost.

Another tool is the [Pragmatics Profile of Everyday Communication Skills in Children](#). This is an interview type tool to assist SLP's and other team members in identifying current and emerging communication skills.

Summer time can be a great time for students and families. But it can also be a time when students might lose skills. To assist parents with helping their child who uses AAC think about creating a list of ideas and core vocabulary they could use to maintain skills. For example the site [Clinician Connect](#) has free materials that parents can use to help with learning core vocabulary. [Tobii Dynavox](#) offers free materials for clinicians and parents too that includes books, teaching materials and everyday implementation ideas. [PrAACtical AAC supports](#) is another site that offers great free resources for teachers and parents.

Another great way to assist students with learning more about their AAC devices to encourage parents to explore their child's device. If parents are more familiar with the device they can assist their child in finding specific vocabulary. Lastly, encourage parents to keep photos of special events that take place over the summer, so that in the fall the student can answer the question "What did you do over the summer?"

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

April: Wow, can you believe it is April already?? I know I can't. This month I decided to write about when a student finishes up their school journey, what do you do and how to support them, their family, and of course their assistive technology needs. No matter if the student is leaving for college, the world or work or staying at home, transition is a hard time for everyone. For many students who have been in the same district for 15 to 18 years, they might have known their OT, PT, speech, and special P.E. teacher for five years or more, and they might have the same aide or aides for years. It is understanding that the student might feel scared or frustrated when they leave the school community, how would you think you would feel if someday a person would tell you this. I was so nervous because that was my assistive technology community for 15 years.

I remember thinking where to go when I have questions, need to get something new, and brainstorm ideas about how I can do things. I had a community of friends who use a communication device but they weren't professionals who went to conferences and workshops who had many many ideas and brought back some cool stuff for me to try. It took me around three or four years until I started learning about assistive technology and going to events like closing the gap to start my new assistive technology community.

Meeting people like Kelly Fonner, Penny Reed, and Joy Zabala changed my life. What if my school team asked my parents and I to go to Closing The Gap with them or tell me about QATI email list? Will I start learning about assistive technology earlier? Maybe, but I don't know. If you have a student who might be interested in the field of assistive technology, please tell them about QATI email listserv and our forward community. If they are using a communication device, please tell them about Wisconsin AAC Network and the United States Society of AAC [USSAAC]. Tell them about how to get an assistive technology tool to try through the state's assistive technology libraries aka Independent Centers so they know where to go to get some support. Talk to them if they are planning to go to any state university, help them to contact the university's disability center. A reminder that Wisconsin universities might use different programs to help the students, please ask the student if they would like to start using the university's programs so you can help them learn about the new programs and tools that they will be using.

Let's talk about the students who are in self-contained classrooms and their parents. First I am going to be guessing here but I did some researching. It is so important that students get out of the ordinary classroom as much as you can, because being in a classroom isn't the student's LRE{I just learned this when I looked things up}. The community is their classroom and in my blog, we will talk about it. Don't be afraid to have fun with this part of their education. Some assistive technology tools that you might like to look to have in your 18 to 21 program are switch appliances like a mixer and blender, a switch when you are

out in the community for quick hit messages, and some low tech and no tech assistive technology tools to use to communicate in the community.

I want to talk about writing down directions and where to turn for assistive technology support. We touch on this throughout, but I want to talk about one more thing. Families might not understand why their child needs to use the assistive technology device and the device is in a closet. Please do follow-up and if you can stay in touch with the family so they feel supportive. Let's hope everyone has assistive technology tools that they need to use so they have a great life!! Enjoy what I found to do with the 18 to 21 programs and because April is Autism A month I found some blogs about Autism and assistive technology. [High School/Adult Transition Life Skills Classroom Tour](#)

[Transition Programming Beyond Age 18](#)

[Assistive Technology for Autism: Tools and Benefits](#)

[Examples of Assistive Technology in the Classroom](#)

May: Well, we are almost done with the school year, can you believe it? I know that I can't believe it. Please take some time to celebrate your assistive technology goals. You might have started an assistive technology team for your school district, you might have learned about a new feature on Google Chrome, you might have attended Closing The Gap or ATTIA. Whatever it was you should celebrate it! I believe that little wins like when a student wants to use their communication device, they drove their power chair safely to the end of the hallway, they advocated that they needed their walker, or they met their goal for standing. These wins are important especially to the student. Remember the buy-in for students to get them want to use their assistive technology tool is so important. Little wins for the school district could be, educating professionals who might not be in special education and assistive technology, having a parent night to educate them on what assistive technology is and why does my child need to use this, or have a chat with a principal about what does this student need to have. Remember to share with them our [AT Forward Program](#), and please tell them about micro-credentialing programs. Maybe they will take some of the classes to learn more about assistive technology over the summer. That will be awesome!!

Now, I know some of you have attended Closing The Gap before, but maybe some of you didn't or haven't heard about this conference. Closing The Gap is an excellent three days conference on assistive technology that takes place in Minnesota. All of the assistive technology stars will be there doing workshops on different topics such as AAC, assistive technology in math, assistive technology in reading, positioning, how to work with families, and many more topics. They have the best exhibit hall with a lot of the assistive technology and special education companies. They always find some new company or companies which are fun to learn about! I think my favorite part of the conference is seeing my friends that I have known and met there. I hope you will consider going. And if you see me, please say hello. I hope you will have a relaxing summer and take some time to learn about assistive technology.

Who doesn't love attending a conference to learn more about assistive technology???

These are two amazing conferences coming up. The AAC In The Cloud is free and virtual. I

hope to see you at one or both. <https://www.aacconference.com/>  
<https://www.closingthegap.com/conference/>

Need another virtual option for learning? I just learned about this last year and it didn't work out for me to go, hopefully I can go to it one day this year. It is about all kinds of technology, not just assistive technology, but I think that it is important to learn about different kinds of technology and network with everyone and anyone we can. Plus it is free too. [Summerfest Tech 2024](#)

Are you hosting an event? Do you need to have a speaker or speakers to come to talk to your group or school district? This is a tool to search for someone who uses a device or an iPad to communicate. Please think of hiring someone that is not name Hipple:). [USSAAC Speaker Connection](#)

October is AAC awareness month and I know it is a long way away but it is not a bad idea to start planning what your school wants to do before the end of the year. Please consider picking students to be AAC Stars. Watch out for information by USSAAC and WI AAC Network over the summer.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1uODYi6uZDfWNTtHEzplcLgiuIYN89u-M7bUUEvx4Ss8/edit>

## **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! Are you looking for more research based activities that help our AAC users? Well thank you goes to Kelly Fonner for posting this great resource on teaching the Alphabet with Variety.

### **April: QIAT community, help me out!**

*Answers from the group:* [Jane Farrall](#) an SLP and special educator who has over 30 years of experience in the field of AT /ACC posts a blog all about literacy skills. Check out her site for all things literacy.

*Question:* "Does anyone know of software that will quickly convert a teacher created worksheet or PDF into a digital worksheet that can be manipulated (drag and drop)? I know how to markup a PDF with edits like arrows or lines but looking for something that can be easy for someone with a physical and cognitive disability."

### **May: QIAT community, help me out!**

*Answers from the group:* Texthelp has one called orbitnote that is fantastic. Kami can also do this but it is not as powerful. Kami has many free features. So does orbitnote.

[Read&Write and Orbitnote creating an inclusive learning experience for all.](#)



PDF Escape might fill the bill for you.

[PDFescape](#)

If you are an Apple Ipad user we had great success with GoWorksheet Maker

Try [Interactive Worksheets For all Languages and Subjects | Live Worksheets](#)

It allows you to upload a traditional PDF and convert it to an interactive worksheet. You can then assign it to the student - making it easy for them to access.

### Feature Match: Resource Databases

Feature matching occurs when you look systematically - either formally or informally - at what a student needs. In the process of determining what features might work for your student you will need a product or system to try. This process can be difficult in terms of even knowing if a product exists. The world of assistive technology is always changing and keeping up with those changes can be difficult. This is where a resource such as the one created by [Closing the Gap](#) can be extremely helpful. This ever changing database allows the user to search by hardware type, software, vendor or other type of product ( such as a switch, mobility device or daily living tool. The database allows for very specific search parameters such as search by: writing, elementary, physical disability. Each area will also allow the user to just explore what products might be available or look for a specific product.

Here are a few other places to learn about what AT might be available.

Looking for an app? Try exploring [Smartappsforkids.com](#)

How about [Android apps](#) for assistance for those students with dyslexia.

Looking for independent living aids? Try exploring [Living Made Easy](#).

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

### Feature Match: Executive Functioning (Updated)

When conducting an IEP and having the conversation about “whether the student needs assistive technology services or devices, “ consider the following questions.

✓	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 <a href="#">Get Ready, Do, Done! by Sarah Ward</a>
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with managing time or time related concepts?	Consider items such as Visual Timer

✓	Area of Student Concern- Executive Functioning	Potential Solution Feature Match
		<p>Smart Watch</p> <p>Low tech reminders like adding sticky notes to a student's desk area to warn about upcoming schedule changes or events like fire drills</p>
	<p>Are there accessible supports in place to assist with self management - like anger, stress or emotional regulation?</p>	<p>Consider a self checklist or program such as <i>How does your <u>Engine Run</u></i></p> <p>Social Stories</p> <p>Video Modeling</p> <p>Apps like <u>Calm</u>, or <u>Go Noodle</u></p>
	<p>Are there accessible supports in place to help the student follow a schedule?</p>	<p>Consider</p> <p>Google Calendar</p> <p>Check In and out system with an adult</p> <p>Smart tech like Alexis Reminders or Smart Watch Reminders</p> <p>Visual or Picture Schedule</p> <p>First Then App or board</p> <p>Setting alarms on iPads or watches</p> <p>Picture Schedules</p> <p>Work task in picture and word forms ( always think about promoting good literacy skills)</p>
	<p>Are there accessible supports in place to assist with listening and taking notes?</p>	<p>Consider outlines, teacher or peer/student created notes</p> <p>Using the camera feature on a phone or Ipad to take pictures of the board</p> <p><u>Livescribe Pens</u></p> <p>C-Print for those with hearing impairments</p> <p>Google Closed Captions or other captions</p>

✓	Area of Student Concern- Executive Functioning	Potential Solution Feature Match
		Visual descriptions for videos and or Alt tags for images
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with elapsed time?	Consider a stop watch so the student can “see” time elapsing <u>Time Timers or visual timers /apps</u> Consider pictures of the student at different times of the day with different lightening
	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 Consider teaching students to use the Control F keys to find content faster.
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with following verbal multiple step directions?	Consider written directions and / or an auditory text to speech program that read written directions Picture directions ( <u>LessonPix</u> )
	Are there accessible supports in place to assist with writing in an organized manner?	Consider outlines or graphic organizers Consider programs like Snap&Read outlines, Evernote, <u>Free AI Outline Generator</u> , Scrivener

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

**Micro-Credentials Update**

Congratulations to the following people who have earned badge(s). We have now awarded 374 badges!

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

Vicki Poff Janesville: 1 badge

Martina Dosu Oshkosh Area: 2 badges

Felicity Rose Kilmurray DPI: 2 badges

Mike Hipple: 9 badges!!!!

Nancy Vandervort: 1 badge

**Jeffery Ziel La Crosse: 17 badges!!!! Marco Badge**

Kirsti Starkey: Fond Du Lac 4 badges

Jessie Koehler: Madison Metro 3 badges

Mary Houser Sheboygan: Area 3 badges

Kristy Hrobsky Milton: 2 badges

April Wheeler Ruhland Baraboo: 1 badge

Lindsey Shay La Crosse: 1 badge

Laura Warnke Shorewood: 1 badge

Heather Maydak: 6 badges

Terri Oliver Milton: 11 badges

Alyssa Gentile: 1 badge

Kirsti Starkey Oshkosh Area: 1 badge

Kristy Hrobsky Milton: 3 badges

Emily Gauthier Oshkosh: 1 badge

**Testimonial:** from Jeff Ziel “At the beginning of my journey into Assistive Technology I had much of the foundational knowledge necessary but lacked the knowledge on how to apply it. It was recommended to me to check out AT Forward. I wound up completing every available module. The information was exceptional and provided me with a template from which to grow our Assistive Technology program at Aptiv. I would recommend these Micro-Credentials to anyone looking for more knowledge on Assistive Technology.”

### **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](mailto:Kathy.White@CESA2.org) or Stacy Duffy at [stacy.duffy@cesa2.org](mailto:stacy.duffy@cesa2.org).