



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
Public Instruction



Assistive Technology Forward

December marks the halfway point of the school year and offers a great opportunity to reflect on your students' progress and identify areas where assistive technology (AT) might be beneficial. Additionally, December 3rd is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD), a day to raise awareness and promote the rights of people with disabilities. By incorporating AT into your classroom, you can create a more inclusive learning environment where all students can reach their full potential. Simple AT tools like text-to-speech software, screen readers, and speech-to-text software can help students access educational materials more independently. Thank you for joining us and learning more about Assistive Technology. Happy Holidays Everyone!

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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!

Assistive Technology Tipping Points

Tuesday, December 17, 2024 (12:00pm-1:00pm)

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 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), 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

NCADEM The National Center on Accessible Digital Educational Materials & Instruction

The [National Center on Accessible Digital Educational Materials & Instruction \(NCADEMI\)](#), pronounced "n-cademy" is a groundbreaking technical assistance center funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the U.S. Department of Education.

In an effort to provide more information about a child's need for accessible educational materials (AEM) under IDEA, NCADEMI has developed a new resource titled, "[More to the Myths and Facts: Addressing Accessible Educational Materials in the 2024 Assistive Technology Guidance](#)". The purpose of this document is to supplement the AT guidance Myths and Facts document by adding the relevance of AEM to each issue raised by the 28 Myths and Facts.

The National Center on Accessible Digital Educational Materials & Instruction (NCADEMI) is hosting two upcoming free webinars on timely topics for states, school districts, and all of us with an interest in improving access to materials and technology for learners with disabilities. In the first webinar, NCADEMI will provide information and calls to action related to the new digital accessibility requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In the second, the team will demonstrate how the ADA requirements are different from the obligation of states and schools to provide accessible materials under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Both webinars are accompanied by a virtual coaching session. Please visit [NCADEMI's webinar page](#) for more information and to register!

Takeaways from Closing the Gap

- Keynote from Karen Erickson discussed a progress monitoring tool called VC. The tool is free and can be found [here](#). It is a literacy progress monitoring tool that has over 200 indicators. This could be very helpful in tracking progress and writing IEP goals.
- Google Learning - A [custom building block](#) in Google Docs is a saved section of content that can be reused in other

documents. This can be used in newsletters or other templates you might create.

- [AI Tools for Special Education Staff](#) This spreadsheet gives you the name of the tool, link to find the tool and the task the tool can complete or assist with.
- [Red, Yellow, Green Assistive Technology Plan Template](#) for designing and documenting AT plan.
- [Head to Toe Communication](#) for recognizing changes in body movements that indicate communication.
- Using Google Forms for collaborative digital data collection: [Heather's IEP Goals](#) example



The above group, Michelle Silverman, Dawn Merth-Johnson, Kathy White and Laura Plummer presented at the conference Closing the GAP.

Wisconsin Center for Blind and Visually Impaired (WCBVI) Update

Resources and Ideas for Making the Holiday Season Inclusive for All!
The holiday season is upon us once again. Making sure this fun and festive time is accessible to everyone (including those with disabilities in general and blind children in particular) can be daunting. Below are some resources on traditions, gift ideas, and other information to help you and your family celebrate inclusively! Please note that though these resources may specifically refer to blind children, much of the content can be generally applied to any child with a disability.

General Holiday Season Resources:

- [APH Connect Center: Outside-the-Box Holiday Gift Ideas for Family, Friends, or Colleagues Who Are Blind or Low Vision](#)
- [APH Connect Center: You Can Touch the Elf on the Shelf - A Letter from Santa Claus](#)
- [Paths to Literacy: 10 Ways to Include your Child in the Christmas Fun!](#)

Gift Ideas for Blind or Visually Impaired Children:

- [Perkins School for the Blind: Ten Accessible Holiday Activities and Gift Guides for Children who are Blind](#)
- [Paths to Literacy: Gift Ideas for Blind and Visually Impaired Children](#)
- [APH Connect Center: Presents and Toys for Young Children](#)

Assistive Technology Resource Suggestions

Feature matching is a crucial process in selecting appropriate Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices and other assistive technology (AT) for individuals with disabilities. It involves aligning the features of the technology with the user's specific needs, abilities, and preferences. By considering factors like cognitive abilities, motor skills, communication goals, and environmental contexts, practitioners can ensure that the chosen AT empowers the user to communicate effectively and participate fully in their daily lives. This collaborative process involves the AAC user, their family, and professionals to identify the most suitable AT solutions that support their unique communication journey. Here are a few resources that can help provide feature matching in the area of AAC:

- [PRC/Saltillo Feature Matching Document](#)
- [Boston Hospital Feature Match](#)

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

December is a month filled with celebrations. December 3rd marks the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD). This special day

is dedicated to raising awareness about disability issues and promoting the rights and well-being of people with disabilities. It's a time to celebrate the diversity and contributions of individuals with disabilities and to advocate for inclusive and accessible communities. Let's work together to create a world where everyone, regardless of their abilities, can thrive and reach their full potential. [Things People With Disabilities Wish You Knew](#)

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.

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 has 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. [Head to Toe Communication](#) for recognizing changes in body movements that indicate communication.

From the Desk of Mike Hipple an AAC User

December is for holidays, family time, and getting together with friends that you haven't seen in a while. I love the holiday season, because I see people that I don't see everyday or monthly, but when we are together it is like old times. I have a few friends that I have known for my whole life. We were neighbors and went to school together. One of them I call my sister, because we are near our age and grew up together. She understands that people who have a disability belong in the community. She understands that people who use a communication device have something to say and wait time is important. She knows me

better than I know myself sometimes. When we were in high school, we were in some clubs together and she advocated for me to stay in the clubs. I have another friend who I have known since first grade. When we were in grade school together, he advocated for me with our classmates when I was having behaviors that I was a cool friend to have. Once he said to everyone in our class that Mike is trying his best and he works harder than everyone in the classroom. Wow, he is an amazing person and friend to have. I need to tell you about three more friends that I have than I will let you know why I decided to write about friendships this month. When I was in high school I made friends with three boys. They were phenomenal and great friends to have. They watched out for me, kept me in line in classes, I knew that I could always count on them for a laugh, and they ate their lunch with me any time they could. They are and were excellent friends for me to have. Okay, can anyone tell me why I am writing about friends in the forward assistive technology monthly newsletter? No, I didn't run out of assistive technology topics to write about. Friends are the most important people that anyone has in their life, but for the students who have a disability, having friends is key to success in life and school. With friends you know that you always have someone to talk to, have a meal with, or to chat about anything. Remember last year I came up with a list of things to do when students are changing schools and one thing that I have on every list is list their friends so the new school team knows who they are. I hope you do that, because school teams are busy at the start of the school year, they don't have time to ask everyone in the school, are you their friend? Friendships are important, please help the students who use assistive technology to keep them and to add some new ones.

The following I found for you to read and remember about the AAC Star program.

The newsletter of WI AAC Network [Fall newsletter 24](#)

Interesting articles about friendships are like assistive technology.... A great read. [Thank you for being a friend: Assistive Technology can be that Friend for Life - AHEAD](#)

What an amazing app to make friends. [Making Authentic Friendships](#)
January 1st is the start of the membership year for USSAAC, please think of joining to help the community out. <https://ussaac.org/>

Feature Match: Recreation and Leisure

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- Recreational and Leisure Access | Potential Solution Feature Match |
|---|---|---|
| | Are there accessible supports in place to assist with the student learning and understanding the rules of the game? | Consider a task analysis of the activity Consider picture or text supports for each step Consider what part of the game the student could play |
| | Are there accessible supports in place to assist with access to the game ? | Consider adaptive game controllers Consider pressure switches or joysticks for alternative access Consider virtual reality games Consider virtual assistance like Alexis (Hey Alexis play my favorite song could be programmed into an AAC device |
| | Are there accessible supports in place to help with PE such as throwing objects in a game? | Consider a beach ball that is not totally inflated and use a yarn ball as the object to be thrown. The student uses a gross hitting movement on the beach ball to launch the yarn ball that is sitting on it. Consider other game adaptations as seen in this Padlet . |
| | Are there accessible supports in place to assist with sensory issues? | Consider items that are tactile or have sound attached to them Beeping Foam Ball |

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|--|---|---|
| | | Consider items to reduce sound like noise canceling headphones Consider using high contrast symbols |
| | Are there accessible supports in place to assist with cognitive scaffolds or task analysis ? | Consider visuals with steps of the game Consider video modeling of the game |
| | Are there accessible supports in place to assist with access, manipulation or stability of an item? | Consider the students grasp, or ability to manipulate items. Consider stability items such as Modular Hose or Dycem mat Card shufflers Adaptive scissors Adaptive cooking utensils Raised garden beds Tools with built up handles |
| | Are there accessible supports in place to assist with the environment? | Consider where the student need to look or manipulate something - things high on a wall may need to be lowered Consider |
| | Are there accessible supports in place to assist with everyday access to music, or videos? | Consider items like smart speakers or smart remotes to change channels or ask for specific videos or music with AAC devices |

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

Created by Kathy White M.S. Ed / ATS CESA 2
Wisconsin kathy.white@CESA2.org

Micro-Credentials Update

Congratulations to the following people who have earned badge(s). We have now awarded 422 badges! We are empowering learners and raising the awareness of Assistive Technology!

- Laura Warnke – Shorewood: 6 badges
- Kathryn Cafazzo : 3 badges
- Brittany Anthony – Wauwatosa: 2 badges
- Kennedy Butryn - Waukesha: 2 badges
- Jenna Sturgis:1 badge
- Katherine Keepman - CESA2: 2 badges
- Katherine McCauley - Hartford j1: 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.