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## The Monitor

### Inside this issue:

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Real Talk: AAC Assessment Simplified | 2 |
| Wireless AT Solutions                | 4 |
| Conference Update                    | 6 |
| Upcoming Trainings                   | 7 |
| Thinking About Print Support         | 8 |

### SAVE THE DATE!

The 3rd Annual AT Across the Lifespan Conference will be held on December 3 & 4, 2009, at the Glacier Canyon Lodge and Conference Center in Wisconsin Dells.

Mark your calendar now!!

## From the Director

Where does the time go? It seems just like yesterday that we began this school year. So many things have happened this year that will make it memorable.

### Statewide trainings:

- WATI brought in Debbie McBride to share her knowledge of AAC assessment. We were able to apply this knowledge and come back together to discuss next steps. See Lilly Rider's article on this training.
- Karen Kangas and Lisa Rotelli shared their extensive information on positioning for active engagement and the use of digital switches for power mobility. We were able to provide two students with power mobility and support them and their teams, and document their journey and expand our understanding.
- We had Scott Marfilus, representing the AIM consortium, come in to talk about NIMAS. Jeremiah Holiday from DPI was also on hand. See Marcia Obukowicz' article chronically her experience assisting a school district to implement accessible text supports.

### Resources:

- The statewide lending library moved to the CESA 2 building in Milton.

- We have added new materials to support children from age 3 to twenty-one. Watch for them on the library website.



Doodle Bug: switch adapted coloring tool

- The WATI staff worked hard to update two manuals: the ASNAT manual and the AT for Autism manual.
- All materials were posted on the WATI website as well as the DPI website for free downloads.
- By the beginning of July you will find some PowerPoints to support the use of the ASNAT manual as well as an overview of our Creating Communication Environments (CCE) workshop.



- Several bulk buy opportunities provided through Lab Resources, and CESA Co-op Purchasing.

Through-out this year we have worked hard to complete WATI supports you could count on beyond our grant. Sheryl Thormann at DPI has developed a wonderful web page and listserv to provide you  
(continued on page 2)

## From the Director (continued)

with continued support. She is there as a resource for your questions. Information regarding assistive technology can be found at: [http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/asst\\_tch.html](http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/asst_tch.html). The WATI website will also remain active. It will now be a volunteer organization.

We thank the Department of Public Instruction for its funding of the grant for these past sixteen years.

You may also sign up at the AT Ning - <http://watileaders.ning.com/>. This site offers member a forum to ask questions, post information, and share tutorials, videos and successes.

Many of you took the time from your busy schedules to let us all know how much the project has meant to you and to the children we all serve over the past years. We have been honored to be part of this larger learning community of people. Together we have done so much more than any of us could have done alone. Together we will continue to create innovative practices and engaging environments for all children, wherever our paths lead us.



Thank you for being our partners in  
this journey.

*Jill and the WATI Gang*

## Real Talk: AAC Simplified

By Lillian Rider, CESA #4 WATI Consultant

On March 6, 2009, WATI teamed with Debbie McBride, MS, CCC-SLP from AAC TechConnect to bring a unique training opportunity to participants that addressed augmentative communication evaluations. **Real Talk-Augmentative Communication Evaluations Simplified: Tools and Resources** training dealt with the frustration most of us feel when trying to put together the most appropriate and comprehensive evaluation for an individual who is being considered for an AAC device. This training was developed as a two-day session. Day One was a full-day interactive lecture. Day Two was a half-day follow up via distance education for those who wished to participate. Day Two focused on using the "toolkit" with students/individuals with whom the participants were currently working.

*(continued on page 3)*

## Real Talk: AAC Simplified (continued)

McBride has 20 years of experience in the field of augmentative communication evaluating the needs of individuals with complex communication needs. From this extensive experience she has developed a “Toolkit” that will guide professionals in the evaluation process from beginning to end. As an evaluator, one needs to understand that “Feature Matching” is an important aspect of the evaluation. One begins by determining what the student needs, then finds the technology with the requisite features and matches the technology to the student. This approach complements the WATI assessment.

The “Toolkit” was developed to allow easy access as well as simplifying the process for the evaluator, the individual being evaluated, and their families. **Augmentative Communication Evaluations Simplified (ACES)** not only guides the evaluator through the evaluation process but includes all the materials necessary to do hands-on trials with the student. These are the steps:

A **referral** is needed to begin the evaluation process. Gathering information on the student/individual who is being evaluated is the next step. Asking the right questions and having a complete medical history is crucial to the process. You can find information-gathering forms on the AAC TechConnect website.

**Augmentative Communication Evaluations Simplified (ACES)** guides the evaluator to ask the important questions regarding the students:

1. Who are they?
2. What do they want to say?
3. Where do they want to say it?
4. How do they want to say it?
5. What are their current skills?
6. What technology can bridge the gap?

The ACES module consists of four very important components that will help to answer these questions. These components are: 1) The Communicator; 2) The Device; 3) Toolkit List; and 4) Other Factors.

The **Communicator** section plays a very important role in asking and answering the question, “At what level does this student communicate?” Are they an emerging communicator, or context/partner dependent? Are they an independent communicator? As you use the **Communicator** it helps you to evaluate the student’s skills in the areas of vision/hearing, access/modification, current

communication, fine- and gross-motor skills, as well as switch access.

The **Device** section considers what device features will be needed by the student in order to be successful. It guides the evaluator in asking questions about symbol use, language representation, navigation/page changes, keyboard, message display, message formulation, rate enhancement, voice/speech, type of device, and device functions and access.

The **Toolkit** form helps you organize what you currently have in your possession to carryout the evaluation. It also helps you decide what to add to your resources and gives you additional ideas for premade materials and resources. The evaluation toolkit is broken down into 3 levels to match the Communicator’s ability level: 1) **No-tech and lite-tech** tools such as picture icons with Velcro, magnetic boards, battery operated toys and key guard samples, etc.; 2) **Digitized** can include all the tools in level 1 with the addition of voice output devices that may be single or multiple message devices; 3) **Dynamic display computer** could include a laptop or desktop computer, communication software as well as a touch screen if needed. Toolkits can be purchased or you can put together your own kit with materials that you feel will meet the student’s needs. A Toolkit is available for checkout from the WATI library.

The **Other Factors** worksheet guides the evaluator in asking the questions:

- What are the communication functions of the individual?
- Where does the communication take place?
- Who is the individual going to communicate with while in each environment?

Finally, a program that puts it all together gives the evaluator the tools needed to carryout a comprehensive and accurate evaluation that lends itself to organization of materials, flexibility, and useful results.

During her presentation, Debbie McBride gave numerous examples of how to use each of the components within ACES to carryout a comprehensive evaluation. McBride shared a wealth of information and resources with her audience that can be found on her website [www.aacTechConnect.com](http://www.aacTechConnect.com).

## Wireless AT Solutions Clean up the Classroom

### By Patti Lindstrom, CESA #7 WATI Consultant

The world is going wireless. I use my laptop to surf the Wi-Fi Internet at the YMCA while watching my son in the pool. My cell phone automatically connects to my Bluetooth Phone in my car so that I can answer the phone from my steering wheel. So why are our classrooms still cluttered with cords? Many of our students are still tethered to their computers, toys, and communication devices. The assistive technology world is beginning to catch up with the rest of the wireless world, with high hopes for the future.

#### Type of Wireless Transmission

You've probably heard a lot of different terms that refer to wireless technology. It's important to know what type of wireless technology you are choosing for the classroom. What's the difference?

**Infrared**-Infrared (IR) technology is commonly found in the typical television remote control. Infrared transmitters have a range of only about 30 feet and they require line-of-sight. This means the infrared signal won't transmit through walls or around corners -- you need a straight line to the device you're trying to control. Augmentative communication systems that have built in environmental control features utilize infrared technology. The *Dana* and *Neo Wireless* versions also use Infrared to "beam" text to each other or an IR enabled printer.

**Radio Frequency** – Radio frequency (RF) requires two components to work properly, a radio transmitter and a radio receiver. An RF transmitter is usually integrated inside the device and sends information via radio signals to the receiver. The most common example of this type of control is a garage door opener. They can transmit up to 100 feet from the receiver and radio signals can go through walls. Sometimes multiple RF frequencies in one classroom can interfere with each other.

**Bluetooth** — Bluetooth® is short-range wireless technology designed to connect technology devices, like computers, keyboards and mice, mobile phones and headsets, printers, digital cameras, and other mobile devices. Bluetooth operates on a 2.4GHz band that's available everywhere. The distance in which one Bluetooth device can communicate with another is about 10 feet. Bluetooth technology does not need us to tell it to communicate. As long as two Bluetooth-enabled devices are within a specified range of one another, they will recognize one another begin communicating.

Other technologies, like 3G (combination of mobile phone, laptop PC and TV, seen in the Apple *iPhone*) have huge potential in the assistive technology market.

#### Wireless Switches

Wireless switches use a transmitter and a receiver to operate battery-powered and electrical devices.

The Jelly Beamer by AbleNet is probably the best know wireless switch. It works just like the traditional Jelly Bean switch. It includes a receiver that you can plug into a switch adapted device, such as a battery toy, electrical appliance or IntelliKeys. You can even use it to access the computer with a switch interface box. Although it uses RF technology, each switch is uniquely paired with its receiver, so multiple Jelly Beamers can be used in one classroom without interfering with one another. AbleNet also offers the Big Beamer, which is similar in size to the Big Red switch, and performs just like the Jelly Beamer. Enabling Devices offers other similar wireless switches including the Wireless Saucer Switch and Wireless Ultimate Switch.

Prentke Romich Company recently came out with the Bluetooth® Wireless Switch that is compatible with some of their augmentative communication devices. Adding the PRC Bluetooth Adapter also provides some wireless computer access features utilizing some of PRC's software.

(continued on Page 5)



## Wireless AT Solutions, continued

### Wireless Switch Adapters

Perhaps you already have switches and don't want to spend money on new "wireless" switches. Or maybe you have a student that is successful with a particular switch, but you would love to make it wireless. You can purchase a switch adapter to make your current switches wireless. You plug your switch into the transmitter and your switch-adapted device into the receiver. The Enabling Devices offers their wireless switch adapter for under \$100.



### Wireless Switch Interfaces

In order to access the computer via a switch, you need to plug your switch or switches into a switch interface box, which then plugs into the computer. Several companies now offer a wireless switch interface box.

The *USB Wireless Switch Interface* by Quizworks uses RF and transmits up to 100 feet. The Switch Interface plugs into the USB port of a Windows or Macintosh computer. No additional drivers are required.

*IntelliSwitch* by Madentec also uses RF but requires that you install their driver software. *IntelliSwitch* automatically recognizes the overlays for *IntelliTools Classroom Suite*, *Overlay Maker*, *Balanced Literacy*, and *ReadyMade Number Concepts* and *MathPad* titles, and it is compatible with Madentec's *Discover* products. There are also two built-in switches, making it easy to assist a student who is using the switch.

The *Beam™ Wireless Switch Transmitter* in conjunction with the *Swiftly™ Wireless USB Switch Interface* by Origin Instruments allows you to connect up to three switches to remotely activate mouse clicks, joystick buttons, and keyboard functions without any driver software.

### Wireless Environmental Control

There are several low cost wireless devices to control electrical appliances, and toys. The *AirLink Cordless Switch* from AbleNet provides infrared access to the *PowerLink® 3* control unit. The *PowerLink® 3* control unit gives students the ability to control most electric appliances, tools and toys with single switches through momentary (direct), timed in seconds, timed in minutes, and latching mode controls. The *Jelly Beamer with Switch Latch and Timer (SLAT)*, also from AbleNet provides the same functions while utilizing RF technology.

The *FreeHand* and *Wireless Pal Pad* from Adaptivation allow control of electrical device through an X-10 module. Since X-10 modules are plugged into an outlet and use the existing electrical wiring to turn devices on/off, this type of system may be better suited for home use.

Many AAC manufacturers, including Dynavox, Tobii ATI, and Prentke Romich Company, offer augmentative communications devices with built-in infrared, allowing the user to control devices typically controlled by a remote control (TV, DVD, etc.).



### Wireless computer access

There are many wireless computer access devices, including AbleNet's *Wireless WAVE RF* trackball. The *WAVE* is switch-accessible with a large track ball and right, left click and drag lock functions. It can easily be used on a wheelchair tray or from any comfortable position.



## Wireless Classroom (continued)

Infogrip offers the *Versa Point RF Keyboard*, a full-featured wireless keyboard for PC & Mac systems using an RF USB receiver. There are many other wireless keyboards and mice that utilize either Infrared or RF technology. Be sure to consider the environment when choosing a wireless solution.



AbleNet recently released *The Impulse Switch*, an EMG switch that adheres to the skin and uses wireless Bluetooth technology to sense tiny muscle contractions and then transmit a signal to a receiver on the computer. This is a potential option for students who are paralyzed or have a neuromuscular disease like muscular dystrophy.

These are just a few of the many wireless products that are now on the market. As more and more wireless solutions become available, we will be able to give our students new options for independence, and make our classrooms more manageable for everyone.

## The Assistive Technology Across the Lifespan Conference is coming!

**By Susan D. Loesl, MPS**

Nestled in beautiful Wisconsin Dells, and overlooking the newly-refilled Lake Delton is Glacier Canyon Lodge and Conference Center, host to this year's Assistive Technology Across the Lifespan Conference. The conference will be held Thursday and Friday, December 3 and 4, 2009. Attendees will include educators, parents, therapists, service providers, rehab specialists and consumers using AT. This year all proposals and registrations are online, utilizing a new website at [www.atacrosslifespan.org](http://www.atacrosslifespan.org). Developed with the AT user in mind, you will find the navigation accessible by all.

At the site, you can create an account that let's you access exhibitor links, as well as speakers and events prior to the conference. Keep updated on other exciting aspects of this event! Unlike previous years where the first day is a whole day or 2 half-day workshops, this conference is packed with 2 days of 90 minute presentations and 2 hour hands-on workshops/lab opportunities. Included in your conference registration is: breakfast and lunch each day, conference materials, an Exhibitor Hall overlooking Lake Delton, a very exciting performance at the Thursday night reception, and more information about Assistive Technology than you can imagine! This year, the strands include Birth to 3, Education( K-12), Vocational, Home and Community AT, as well as many other topics related to all aspects of AT.

Teachers, therapists, exhibitors, rehab specialists and other specialists from Wisconsin, surrounding states and other parts of the country are getting geared up to present at this conference. In case you missed it, one of the many highlights of this conference is the Exhibitor Hall Raffle on Friday. Exhibitors donate software, equipment and other surprises for attendees to win and take home. Each year gets bigger and better—makes plans this December to attend the Assistive Technology Across the Lifespan Conference! See you there!



# Training Opportunities

## Universal Design for Learning: Research and Practice EXCED 740-291

Universal design for learning (UDL) is an instructional design philosophy that seeks to increase access to the curriculum. Students will study UDL research and design classroom interventions that enhance the performance of students with disabilities and their non-handicapped peers. 3 Credits, Graduate.

This course is taught completely online. Class begins June 22 and ends August 11. Current UWM students may register for this class through their PAWS account.

If you're new to UWM, visit the following link for information on how to enroll in summer classes as a guest student:

[http://www4.uwm.edu/summer/new\\_guest.cfm](http://www4.uwm.edu/summer/new_guest.cfm)

For additional information, contact: Prof. Dave Edyburn, [edyburn@uwm.edu](mailto:edyburn@uwm.edu)



## PODD training with Linda Burkhart and Gaye Porter July 27-31, 2009

George Williams College, Williams Bay, WI (on Lake Geneva)

The PODD approach provides strategies to support the design, production and implementation of communication systems to enable genuine communication for a variety of functions in all daily environments. PODD includes strategies to minimize some of the common difficulties associated with the use of multi-level communication books. Video case samples will be used to demonstrate the Dynamic Assessment process of identifying individual communication requirements and strategies. Go to the WATI website [www.wati.org](http://www.wati.org) for more information or call/email Peggy at 608-758-6232 ex336 [pstrong@cesa2.k12.wi.us](mailto:pstrong@cesa2.k12.wi.us).



A limited number of discounts are available for multiple registrations from the same agency who wish to attend the one day overview (July 30). Call Peggy for availability.

## Check you local CESA for additional supports

Many of the WATI consultants will become certified SMART Board trainers over the summer. Additional training is being conducted by many software vendors. Please contact your local CESA AT department if you need staff development after your district purchases software.

## Family Center on Technology and Disability Offers Summer Institute

The Family Center on Technology and Disability is pleased to provide a free 2-week online summer institute, **July 20-31, 2009**. The Family Center's summer institutes have been extremely popular, connecting educators, disability professionals and parents throughout the country with leading national experts in assistive and instructional technologies. This year's institute will have two learning strands: **Accessible Instructional Materials** and **Social Media Tools**. Whether you participate in the Institute for continuing education credit or just to increase your knowledge, their faculty of assistive technology experts will share successful strategies and useful resources. Join colleagues throughout the country from the comfort of your office or home. Participants can register for continuing education units (CEU's). For more information on each strand or to register, go to:

<http://www.fctd.info/show/home>.

If you have additional questions, please email [fctd@aed.org](mailto:fctd@aed.org) or call Jackie Hess at (202) 884-8217 or Ana Maria Gutierrez at (202) 884-8068.

## Thinking about Print Support: A System Perspective

By Marcia Obukowicz, CESA #9 WATI Consultant

“Change will do you good” sings Sheryl Crow. NIMAS and AIM have triggered a change in our thinking about print for all students with special needs, asking us to consider our students’ abilities when accessing print and how we deliver printed information. This change has us looking at our students to determine who qualifies for a print disability and those who are struggling with print but may not qualify. We start to wonder how we are going to provide all that other print “stuff” a student may need access to as print flows through their school day, especially print that doesn’t fall into the neat categories of textbook and workbooks.

This is a change that has us in CESA #9 concentrating on service delivery as part of the IEP discussion. Teams need to figure out how to deliver training on and practice time for assistive technology tools that supports reading print, so that software is implemented effectively over time. Teachers and students need time to find and create, play and learn, integrate and master the software supports needed to access print materials in alternate ways.

A change in how instructional materials are provided using technology that we are only now beginning to use such as audio and digital formats from publishers, the Internet or national access entities such as Bookshare and the NIMAC for those who qualify.

Here are two system solutions we found helpful:

- Work with the publisher of printed materials to purchase digital formats directly. This saves much NIMAS tracking time and allows access to the material by any student who needs it. Many text books are coming out with CD versions so consider them as part of new purchases. Have a conversation with librarians and curriculum folks about the need for alternate formats. Digital versions often include a simple reader, but if more support is needed many higher-end text readers can convert the material to an easier format to read, without needing to scan the book. Purchasing audio version of books for the library and resource rooms offers a struggling reader portability and human inflection/sound effects that can assist in understanding the story.
- Most server systems have a way to create group storage spaces. These spaces can be have different names; ours is called teacher boxes. Access can be controlled so that materials can be available only to teaching and support staff, be made available to a class or get very specific, such as an individual NIMAS-qualifying student’s materials. Through the use of permissions, access can be set so teachers can add and students can access without worrying about accidental deletion of certain documents. This storage space is a great way to digitally manage paper coming from classrooms. No more tracking lost paper, it’s already in group storage. We ask our teachers to save tests, reading guides, assignments, scoring rubrics, etc. in the teacher boxes in an area called accessible print materials. This area can be subdivided by grade level and class area so materials are easy to find. Once material is digital, conversion to accessible print can be as quick as a virtual print or scroll over. Make friends with your tech folks! Regular education staff have seen an added benefit to students who constantly lose things. Regular housekeeping of this space needs to occur to keep it’s size manageable.

### When should print support start and how do we do it?

This question can be hard to answer. Teachers know they have struggling readers in early elementary, so should they start text readers then? By 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade the shift from decoding to reading for meaning has occurred. Does this signal our transition into supports? How about middle school when the textbooks get bigger and the words get longer? Or wait until high school when we know they can’t read well and we wonder how they will navigate print without us? This is a system question. Here are some ideas that have worked well.

- The early grades were a great time to introduce “talking books” on the computer and audio books kids could “read” along with. There are several digital text sites like [www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com) or subscriptions services like [www.onemorestory.com](http://www.onemorestory.com) ([www.onemorestory.com/tour/ontour.html](http://www.onemorestory.com/tour/ontour.html)) that offer early elementary books in an easy access, digital text reader format.

(continued on Page 9)

- The change to reading for meaning in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade triggers concerns about print disability. We want to be sure kids have access to text readers in the resource room, and a general sense of how to use them. Depending on the student's needs and NIMAS this means buying a lot more text reading stations than originally planned. Some text readers have great network versions that allow the text readers to be available all over the building up to the site license count. This is a nice setup for sharing an expensive resource.
- It is critical to "make time" for text reader training in middle school. This was the age we start to see the spark for learning really depart for those struggling with print, and we want to give them alternate methods to access these types of resources. Teaching the software in a group format decreased student worries about being or looking different from peers.
- High school staff can feel highly pressured to get students through assignments so they pass classes and earn credits to graduate. They find it hard to make time to systematically teach the text reader individually. They suggest using summer school or tech classes to train on software. They were greatly relieved that most students arrived knowing how to use the text reader. Access was made available in the resource rooms and writing lab. Soon it will move into some regular class environments.

### **Learning and Integrating Software into the Classroom Environment**

There is a learning curve to text reading software and there is a class integration curve that has to be figured out too. We found that it actually took us three years to really get the text reader training just right. There are a lot of bells and whistles to master, especially on higher-end text readers, so the first year we were just happy to figure out where to get e-text to read and how to use the text reader on web finds. The second year we learned the study tools like highlighting and helping students extract meaningful text from the sources they were engaging with. By the third year, kids took over a lot of the prep, as they understood that some scans look or sound funny when read and that if they were going to scan they needed to recognize "the funnies" in a scan up front and do a correction. Throughout these three years, we learned it was important to have text ready to scan before we needed it in class. We learned to schedule the "reading" stations for the class, so everyone had an opportunity to use them, as it is difficult to teach the reader when there were 2 machines with the software loaded, 1 scanner and 10 kids. We found that students who were successful users of the system demonstrated that by increasing the speed of the text reader. Worries about this second issue relaxed a lot when the students completed the learning guide that went with the readings successfully. We learned from the Visually Impaired teacher that picking up speed was normal, that this happened for students with visual impairments who were using text reader software well.

Here are some tips we found that helped us.

- Learning and integrating software are 2 separate issues. While learning the software we had a fast course in e-text finding and e-text making. Having materials upfront would have saved a tremendous amount of stress and time. Digital materials are like gas for the car. Text readers don't run without them. Teaching staff quickly fell behind if we were responsible for scanning materials. Some students figured this out and suggested they do their own scanning even if it wasn't perfect. This proved to be a great idea, especially when students came into the resource room with "on the fly" assignments and a teacher was not available.
- Learning the software is different from integrating it. Even after several teacher trainings, we still needed extra adult support in the beginning of implementation. One person to focus on the technology and the other to focus on the instruction. As we continued with implementation that extra support could be weaned fairly quickly.
- Good use of text reading software is a learned skill. We needed to provide students with systematic exposure over time. This means we used the text reader as a tool at least 3 times during the year as part of the assignment process. This took some concerted effort on our part because the first year we had to borrow other computers to do our "trial" with the software. The scanner/text readers were "always" available in the room for other projects as well. Some kids liked the program immediately and some kids complained at first but with the repeat practice got significantly more proficient at using it. What we know now is after three years of systematic exposure we had students arrive at high school trained and ready. The high school teachers reported that the students arrived asking where the readers were so they could access them when they needed them.

*(continued on Page 10)*

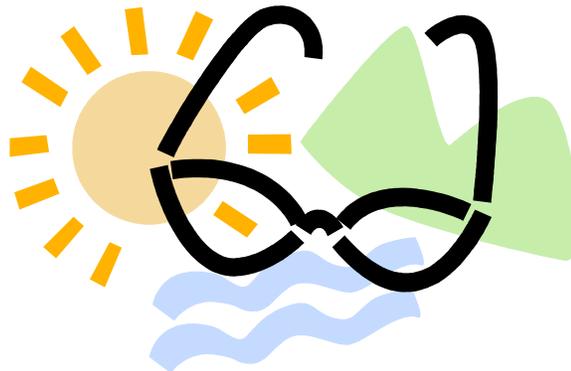
# Thinking about Print Support: A System Perspective

*(continued from Page 9)*

- Don't count text readers out after only one trial. Yes the voice is mechanical, yes scanning can be slow, but as one student so confidently stated "...well I knew I could not take "teacher" with me after graduation to read everything to me, so I figured I better learn how to use this gadget pretty quick."

Hopefully our struggle to build better system-wide print supports for our students will save you some time and energy! The challenge is big but it is also surmountable. The critical factor for us was to realize that the print access problem is bigger than one IEP team. By moving it to a system level, we were able to recruit crucial support at the administrative and regular education levels, get enough digital resources and tools to meet many student print need in house and to feel we have systematically tried to expose and train our students to manage print in the medium that works best for them.

Have a  
wonderful  
summer!



## Our Mission ...



WATI assists school districts' programs in their responsibility to ensure that every child in Wisconsin who may need assistive technology (AT) has equal and timely access to appropriate assessment and the provision and implementation of needed AT devices and services.



The Mission of the Milwaukee Public Schools is to ensure that maximum educational opportunities are provided for all students to reach their highest potential so that:

1. Students achieve their educational and employment goals, and
2. Parents choose the Milwaukee Public Schools to educate their children.