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The Monitor

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SAVE THE DATE!

The 3rd Annual AT Across the Lifespan Conference will be held on December 3 & 4, 2009 at the Wilderness Resort in Wisconsin Dells. Mark your calendars now!!

From the Director

Fall has always been my favorite time of year. I love everything about it; it represents change. Leaves change, our schedules change, we change wardrobes, sports, foods, activities... and this fall add changes within WATI! Some of the changes are in **look, location, staffing, focus** and **activities**.

Look... not a big change but a new logo. The focus is on a more universal application of technology to support/assist students in being successful in community and school settings. The logo represents the partnership the children and adults create to stretch and work toward their goals, supported by a base of technology that grows and changes with the child and the tasks.

Location, location, location... the WATI office has moved to CESA #2 in Milton. The library has been relocated there as well. This allows us to maximize the reduced

staff. We also feel this will offer the best opportunity for sustainability after the grant cycle.

Staffing... there remain ten assistive technology consultants funded for about fifty days to provide input into the development of specific modules and tasks. We are no longer a state-wide technical assistance project. Technical assistance will need to be a fee-for-service contract with your particular CESA. CESAs 8 and 10 do not have a person funded by the grant, but they do provide AT services. Call their Special Education Directors for more information.

CESA #1 - Michelle Weingarten, Brookfield

CESA #2 - Jill Gierach, Milton

CESA #3 - Cindy Nankee, Fennimore

CESA #4 - Lillian Rider, West Salem

CESA #5 - Judi Cumley, Portage/Stevens Point

CESA #6 - Karen Jackson Stindt, Oshkosh

CESA #7 - Patti Lindstrom Drescher, Green Bay

CESA #9 - Marcia Obukowicz, Tomahawk

CESA #11 - Kim Swenson, Turtle Lake

CESA #12 - Laura Comer, Ashland

And two additional staff members!

We also have two new/gently-recycled staff that support the Milton/WATI office. Peggy Strong is our administrative assistant. She helps with the lending library, *The Monitor*, scheduling, product sales, minutes, note-taking, hand-holding and sanity-saving. Connie Isackson is the Lending Library Director. You will find her very helpful in working with all things library. Both of these folks are part time on the project so your patience is appreciated. Each can be reached at 800-991-5576.

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From the Director (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

The phone system is either answered by Connie when she is in the office, or you will need to use the mailbox system.

Our AT support person at the DPI: Sheryl Thormann is our state consultant for the assistive technology and the speech and language programs at the Department of Public Instruction. She is a valued resource for answers to questions about assistive technology and especially legal issues regarding provision of AT. She can be reached at sheryl.thormann@dpi.wi.gov.

Focus: I have started saying that we are “WATI Lite: same great services, just less of them.” Actually our activities have more focus, which allows us to target our results. Most of you are aware that this is the last year of our DPI discretionary grant. The 08-09 grant activities are very specific. The focus of many of them is to create materials that will be available after the grant period and to support the goals of our State Performance Plan (SPP). There are 20 indicators within this plan that are performance indicators that target how our students are achieving. Each district provides a special education district profile to the state annually; this profile is used to analyze the district’s performance on Indicators #1-#14. Assistive Technology is not part of any one indicator, but for

many students it is a performance enhancer that supports their access to curriculum.

It is critically important that our efforts are focused on creating environments that provide universal access to community and curriculum through the application of teaching strategies and tools that assist students to understand and demonstrate their knowledge. Our grant modules this year have that goal in mind. Whether it is to support the sharing of information, to design single-subject research projects to measure the application of technology on student learning, or to respond to the need for teacher training in specific areas or because of federal mandates (NIMAS), these must all point towards improving practice that impacts student achievement positively.

Activities: Here is a short explanation of each of the thirteen activities or modules that the project is funded to work on this year. This will give you an idea of what we are creating to support students and staff. It all begins with our manual and goes on to add materials and trainings that form a tool box of supports.

The Foundation of WATI (Blueprint for AT success)



Module 1

The **ASNAT** manual (Assessing Student Need for Assistive Technology)

ASNAT is a process that supports district teams in targeting curriculum tasks a student struggles with. First, one needs to identify what in the educational environment needs to change, which includes instructional practices, THEN look at potential technology that may support the student. It provides a framework for data collection and analysis of impact. It is built on a team approach to intervention which includes parental support to increase student achievement and student success. This process also supports transition planning.

Look for:

- Manual
- Training in assessment for district teams



Module 2

AUTISM Supports *Assistive Technology for Students with ASD manual*

There is a significant increase in the number of students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). A team of WATI consultants in the fields of assistive technology, autism, speech and language, occupational therapy and education have developed a practical manual. That will support

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From the Director (continued)

(Continued from page 2)

the local team in understanding how the unique needs of these students impacts the use of assistive technology and how assistive technology can support the student with ASD to succeed in the curriculum.

Look for:

- Manual
- Training opportunities

Module 3 The Tools State-wide lending library



The WATI Lending library has saved Wisconsin schools over \$1 million dollars. It is designed to allow school personnel the opportunity to, “try before they buy” software, hardware or other assistive technology equipment. Research indicates that access to the tools for trial use is directly correlated to the tool use success.

The project maintains updates and provides basic support to districts. The collection has moved to CESA 2 in Milton. Prepaid postage is provided by the project. The WATI library Director is Connie Isackson.

Look for:

- Statewide library with up-to-date materials for your staff to access FREE

Module 4 Tools for Change Independence By Design (IBD)



IBD is a single-subject research project designed to measure the affects of assessment of seating and positioning needs of students with significant physical disabilities on school based task performance. Initiation, engagement and distance between child and adult will be some of the indicators of success. WATI consultants will be providing ongoing support and documenting change. Two students have been selected to participate this year. Each child is provided the use of all equipment (digitally enhanced power-wheelchair, seating supports) for the year. Teams will meet throughout the year for support and technical assistance. A Moodle site is being created to share their information. Next year this equipment will be available for loan with the purchase of support of one of the trained Occupational therapists.

Look for:

- Progress updates in *The Monitor*
- Addition of equipment to the lending library next year

Module 5 Tools for Change: Creating Communication Environments (CCE)

This is a school-year team training opportunity. This research-based approach combines instruction with classroom application to increase opportunities for students to initiate communication within natural curriculum activities. It is a team-based approach using video tape, reflection, adjustment of instructional practice, and data collection. Support for implementation within your district is included. This is a powerful training!



What to look for:

- Team training opportunity
- Team coaching with teams in district
- Sharing of data

Module 6 Under construction

Module 7 Tools for Change Bulk Purchases— A Key to saving district dollars



WATI is the first state educational organization to create working

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From the Director (continued)

(Continued from page 3)

relationships with assistive technology vendors to promote state pricing on much needed technology, saving individual districts thousands of dollars and putting technology in the hands of students. Each year WATI responds to the needs of the state in providing access to materials that will support the state performance plan and in doing so, the performance of struggling students.

Look for:

- WATI website and email messages, flyers regarding bulk purchase for 2008-2009
- An opportunity to save lots of



Module 8

Tools for Success

Real Talk

State data indicates the need for support for staff and families in the area of assessment and functional application of alternative augmentative communication (AAC) approaches and devices. This module will demonstrate an approach that sorts through the devices by using a feature-match of the child-task to the device. Debbie McBride from AAC TechConnect will work with district personnel. We will purchase services and materials for the state lending library to support the implementation of her techniques with targeted students. We will also provide support during the implementation phase. Staff will be



encouraged to video tape, reflect and share their experiences. We will use a pre and post confidence survey and student data to measure the impact of this approach.

Look for:

- Workshop opportunities
- Evaluation kit for check-out in state lending library
- Record of results on students by teachers who used this training

Module 9

Tools For Change

UDL Module

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is the new language of technology in schools. The premise is that the classroom environment is what disables our students. We need to provide responsive environments that include access to instruction and support students to demonstrate what they know and understand. We will respond to this by developing a "classroom walk-through" that will support schools in assessing what they could quickly change in the environment to support all students in participating in instruction. We will incorporate what we know works from our assistive technology field. We will only be able to begin the development of this module.



What to look for:

- Beginning draft of a manual
- Beginning draft of a process for the walk-through

- Opportunity to assist in implementation trial in two classrooms.

Module 10

AT plan for change

AT State Advisory Committee

This advisory committee is the brain power behind the project. It is comprised of powerful and passionate supporters of children. They represent the DPI, WIS-Tech, parent groups, B-3 projects, university leaders, and the RSN. The advisory meets quarterly and supports the WATI Director and the project.



Module 11

AT plan for change

AT Leadership Group

This group is nearly 130 people strong. They are AT practitioners representing practicing; SLPs, OTs, teachers, administrators, and parent representatives. They are key to the success of the students in their schools who receive assistive and supportive technology. The group is individually identified by their WATI/CESA consultants as leaders and invited to participate in two trainings a year. These trainings are created to support their more rigorous training needs.



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From the Director (continued)

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Look for:

- Letter identifying staff and inviting participation. This will come from your WATI/CESA consultant.

Module 12

Support for Change



The Monitor

The Monitor is an electronic e-zine that is posted three times a year. It is supported by Milwaukee Public Schools and WATI. It contains information about new technology that the WATI staff has found useful, lists supports materials and free supports, outlines trainings and other items of interest to staff and families working with students with disabilities age birth – high school. Our readership is over 3,000 people.

Look for:

- First edition for 2008-09 will be the end of the first quarter. Not on our list? Contact pstrong@cesa2.k12.wi.us and request to be on our mailing list.

Module 13

Support for Change

WATI Website



Everything “WATI” can be found at our site. All of our many manuals will be posted as free downloads. You can discover local and statewide trainings, the lending library, other AT supports... and many more items that supports teachers and

families in providing quality AT services to students in Wisconsin.

Look For:

- New updated site in fall 2008 www.wati.org

What is happening with the AIM Consortium and the NIMAS standards in Wisconsin

September 23 was the kick-off presentation on using Accessible Instruction Materials, by Kelly Fonner and sponsored by the AIM consortium. Jeremiah Holiday, the project coordinator for NIMAS in Wisconsin, was on-hand to answer questions regarding how Wisconsin was implementing this standard.

Things to consider:

- DPI bulletin 07.03 has the implementation guidelines.
- All purchase orders for curriculum materials must have a statement that requests a AIM/NIMAS file (see bulletin for sample wording).
- All textbooks published on or after July 19, 2006 must meet AIM/NIMAS standards.
- WI currently uses Accessible Media Producers (AMPs) to provide materials in Audio, Braille, Electronic and Large Print from within and outside our state.
- Wisconsin defines print disabled as a student’s inability to access ‘standard print format.’ Any specific diagnosis or disorder alone would not constitute an automatic consideration for ‘other print disabilities’. The IEP team

should consider if the student needs ‘specialized materials’ (alternate format) to meet their IEP goals and access the general curriculum.

- www.Bookshare.org is available for free by students with a documented print disability. They are adding more text books to their files.
- Students with a print disability must be provided core curriculum in a “timely manner”.
- The AIM/NIMAS centers must have file requests as early as possible prior to the start of the school year.
- Attend the December 5, 2008 Leadership presentation also sponsored by the AIM consortium. Scott Marfilus will be the presenter. The title will be **Text Story: Accessible Instructional Materials 101—What Wisconsin teachers, local education agencies and families need to know about NIMAS "to infinity and beyond."** It will take place in Stevens Point at the Holiday Inn. Registration materials will be posted on the WATI website shortly.
- There will be additional workshops across the state on this same topic. We encourage you to have your curriculum and instruction consultants, reading teachers as well as vision consultants attend. Anyone in your district who oversees curriculum and text book adoption and ordering should be aware of these changes.

Further information can be found by going to www.wamp.k12.wi.us or by contacting Jeremiah at jeremiah.holiday@dpi.wi.gov or at 608-266-3522.

October is National Disabilities Month

Submitted by Sue Loesl, ATR-BC, Milwaukee Public Schools

October is National Disabilities Awareness Month....What are your plans to heighten the awareness of successes and challenges of persons with disabilities in your home, school and community? The effort to educate the American public about issues related to disability and employment began in 1945, when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1962, the word "physically" was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to "National Disability Employment Awareness Month" and "National Disabilities Awareness Month." The theme for the 2008 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), "America's People... America's Talent... America's Strength!" is emblazoned on an image of Mount Rushmore National Memorial. Carvings of the founding fathers emerge on a backdrop of the Declaration of

Independence to convey the philosophy of the nation's government that every human being has inherent worth bestowed upon them and that equality is a fundamental right." There are free posters available, or you can download a pdf poster to print from <http://www.dol.gov/odep/programs/ndeam.htm>.

Here in Milwaukee, in other cities in Wisconsin as well as other

authors and displaying works by and about persons with disabilities. Businesses that offer products such as accessible vans, supports for vision and/or hearing challenges and a host of other products are sponsoring open houses and events. In Milwaukee, there are a number of art venues throughout the city (including the City Hall Rotunda) planned for the traveling exhibit, "Colors of Self", an exhibit by artists with disabilities. The Milwaukee Transit Company will

use Milwaukee's theme, "Tap the Potential" with information on bus tickets to increase awareness of opportunities in the city. At General Mitchell International Airport in Milwaukee, WI, Easter Seals of Southeastern Wisconsin is hosting an art exhibit. Students from Burbank Elementary School in Milwaukee Public Schools have 4 pieces accepted for

the exhibition. Fifty-three artists of all ages and varied disabilities will be showcasing their artwork at the airport from October 6-24, 2008.

Check out opportunities during October that you can attend or create to help increase awareness of strengths and challenges of persons with disabilities in our homes, schools and communities!



states, exciting events are planned to celebrate National Disabilities Awareness Month. Around the country architecture, engineering, and nursing college students will be spending a day during the month in wheelchairs as they attend classes, study and recreate. Accessible voting workshops and trainings are planned for poll sitters and voters in many cities. Libraries are hosting events by

Lending Library News

WATI Lending Library Relocated! **Check us out!**

The WATI (Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative) Lending Library moved over the summer from CESA #6 to CESA #2 in Milton, Wisconsin. Connie Isackson is the WATI Lending Library Director. The WATI Lending Library is up and running! WATI staff are anxious to hear from Birth-3 providers and educators with resource and equipment needs defined in their students' IEPs.

The WATI Lending Library may be accessed at the WATI website www.wati.org. Select **Loan Library**. A listing of the catalog is provided. The new online catalog is currently under construction, and will have its big debut soon! The new online catalog will feature: new materials added to the collection; display a listing of resources on loan to an individual plus a history of materials checked out in the past; the ability for patrons to access their listing of items on loan with due dates; and place reserves on resources currently checked out.

The WATI collection holds numerous Assistive Technology (AT) materials in the following areas: Computer Access; Writing; Communication, Reading, Studying, Math & Science; Recreation & Leisure; Positioning, Seating, & Mobility; Electronic Aids for Daily Living; Vision; and Hearing materials, as well as Teacher References. Wonderful resources include: keyboards, augmentative communication devices, switches, books, software, sensory devices, alternative keyboards, and much more! The loan period for materials is five weeks. Resources not on reserve for others may be renewed for an additional two week period. Patrons must complete a 2008-09 Loan Agreement Form to check out resources. The form may be found at the WATI Loan Library website www.wati.org. Educators should complete the form and FAX it to Connie Isackson at 608-868-6740. Once the 2008-09 WATI Loan Agreement Form is on file with us, requested resources will be mailed to patrons via UPS. For now, WATI is able to send a prepaid UPS return shipping label to return resources at no cost to the patron! Districts receiving

CESA #2 van delivery service will have their resources sent to staff via the CESA #2 van.

We also ask that you complete the evaluation form. This is critically important to demonstrate how the library supports students. This will help demonstrate the value of continued support for the library after this grant period. The new lending library database will have a requirement that you return the evaluation form before it will allow you to check out additional materials. The form will also be available online. Thank you for this important feedback!

The WATI staff looks forward to hearing from you soon!

WATI Lending Library Contact Information:

WATI Lending Library

Connie Isackson, Director
CESA #2
448 E. High Street
Milton, WI 53563
isackson@cesa2.k12.wi.us

Upcoming Trainings

Leadership Dates:

December 5, 2008

Holiday Inn Hotel & Convention Center, Stevens Point

March 6, 2009

Wilderness Resort, Wisconsin Dells

Other Trainings:

November 7, 2008

Using Picture-Assisted Literacy to Address State Performance Plan Indicators—Roxanne Butterfield, presenter @ CESA 2

Workshop information and flyers can be found at the WATI website <www.wati.org> or by contacting your local WATI consultant.

Lessons From Karen Kangas

**Submitted by Laura Comer,
WATI & AT/Autism consultant,
CESA 12**

At a recent WATI created workshop, *Independence by Design*, I was reminded of all the things we do in education just because we've "sort of always done them that way!" In this case, we were looking at seating and positioning for active engagement. The workshop presenter was Karen Kangas, an occupational therapist. Karen urged us to look at students' needs as they vary throughout the day and to essentially throw out what many in the field have held near and dear (positioning people in wheel chairs with their bodies set in 90 degree angles) to really look at what we want to help kids to DO. "Sure," she said, "Leaning back in ninety degree angles is safe and appropriate for bus rides, but does it allow wheel chair users to fully engage in activities of choice?" We tested positions ourselves. We experimented with academic tasks

and social interactions. And, guess what? For most of our group, being strapped into 90 degree angles made it really hard to do much at all. Why have so many of us been trained to think that, in essence, one size (or position) fits all?

Experiential learning and questioning is just the sort of process I would recommend to all educators, especially as it applies to decision-making in assistive technology. We need to ask, "Why?" more often. Are we making choices based on what a professor taught us fifteen years ago or on the specific and fluctuating needs of each individual student? Sometimes it takes a hands-on lesson to figure it out. Try using a communication device with only phrases suggested in a textbook to express yourself for half a day, or use an oven timer to tell you each time you need to move to the next task. Using the technology yourself for the purpose, and in the activity you have in mind for your student can

be a mind-opening experience.

Sometimes, we mistakenly identify using the technology itself as the goal for our kids. Don't forget the "Why?" in pursuit of the "How." Using the word processor is not the goal. Using the word processor is *how* the student will express herself in an activity that is, hopefully, meaningful and motivating. The goal is participation in the activity. Designing a brilliant bit of assistive technology to support a student in an activity that has little relevance or appeal is a recipe for gathering dust on an unused (no matter how cool it is) piece of technology.

Independence by Design was not only a lesson on seating and positioning, it was also a reminder to really look at the functions of the AT we choose. Habits, conventions, and the "how to" we learned in school have their place in guiding AT choices, but they can't replace an open mind that continues to assess and respond to the continuing question, "why?"

Our Mission ...



INNOVATIVE PRACTICES + ASSISTIVE TOOLS = SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

WATI assists school districts and Birth to Three 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.