



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

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Life-Tech Assistive Technology (AT)

By Wendy Overturf

Assistive technology (AT) can be a powerful tool for transforming learning. It can help reinvent approaches to learning, shrink equity and accessibility gaps, and adapt learning experiences to meet the needs of all learners. According to the [Information Update Bulletin 22.02](#) from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, districts must ensure assistive technology devices or services, or both, are provided to a student with a disability if the IEP team determines they are required in order for the student to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. Assistive technology devices and services are documented as supplementary aids, and services, specially designed instruction, related services, or program modifications and supports for school personnel in the student's IEP. Assistive technology must be provided at no cost to the parents of a student with a disability who requires such devices or services. On a case-by-case basis, the use of school-purchased assistive technology devices may be used in a student's home or other settings if the IEP team determines the student needs those devices to receive FAPE.

Assistive technology does not always need to be high-tech. While many people associate assistive technology with high-tech solutions, such as advanced computer software and sophisticated communication devices, there are also numerous lite and mid-tech options that can be effective in supporting individuals with disabilities.

The following are a few examples of Lite-Tech Assistive Technology:

Visual Aids:

- Magnifying glasses
- Large print books
- Color-coded labels

Communication Tools:

- Picture and letter boards
- Communication cards
- Writing aids like slant boards, adapted paper, pencil grips

Mobility and Positioning Aids:

- Canes and walkers
- Grab bars
- Transfer belts
- Non-slip surfaces

Organizational Tools:

- Daily planners and calendars
- Checklists or visual schedules
- Graphic organizers
- Label makers

Adaptive Equipment:

- Modified eating utensils
- Velcro fasteners
- Specialized grips for tools and pens
- Keyguards

Also be sure to check this document, "[Assistive Technology Continuum of Low to High Tech Tools](#)," for more examples. This guide outlines a continuum of considerations (low-tech to high-tech) in multiple areas. (Please note that technology changes rapidly. This guide is from 2005, so some examples may be out-of-date.)

- Motor/Mechanics of Writing
- Motor/Writing and reading Supports
- Visual/Reading Supports
- Math Supports

This [website](#) also gives further examples of lite-tech to high-tech AT considerations.

Parents may want to review these resources so that they are more informed about assistive technology possibilities when this is discussed at their child's IEP team meeting. Also be sure to check the Online Resource section of this newsletter for more guidance and information.

UPCOMING WI FACETS EVENTS

[IEP 2: Special Education Referral Process 2024.9.10 \(Pre-recorded\)](#)

Presenter: Ann Zielke, WI FACETS

Date: September 10, 2024

[Bullying Prevention and Awareness](#)

Presenters: Libby Strunz and Eva Shaw, WI DPI

Date: September 11, 2024

[Resolución de desacuerdos: Sepa sus opciones y entienda sus derechos](#)

Presenter: Nelsinia Ramos, WI FACETS

Date: September 12, 2024 (12pm-12:45pm)

[Serving on Groups - Opportunities to Get Involved & Types of Groups \(Sec 1 & 2\)](#)

Presenter: WI FACETS

Date: September 12, 2024

[IEP 3: Evaluation and Eligibility in the IEP Process](#)

Presenter: Ann Zielke, WI FACETS

Date: September 17, 2024

[IEP 4: Revaluation and Independent Educational Evaluation \(IEE\)](#)

Presenter: Ann Zielke, WI FACETS

Date: September 24, 2024

[IEP 5: Redacción del IEP- Parte 1](#)

Presenter: Nathaly Silva, WI FACETS

Date: September 26, 2024

[Serving on Groups – Processes Groups Use \(Part 3\)](#)

Presenter: WI FACETS

Date: September 26, 2024

HOME LEARNING



[Early Literacy Calendar: September 2024](#)

Check out these quick literacy activities for young children.

[Children's Activity Calendar: September 2024 \(for older children\)](#)

Explore programming ideas and book suggestions to celebrate Labor Day, and Classical Music Month.



[Making Room for Literacy:](#) Watch the short video for ways of making your home rich in early literacy learning experiences. You will learn how books, posters, magnetic letters, alphabet toys, games, writing and art materials, food labels, mail, and computers encourage early literacy learning.

Rhyming Words

Rhyming words play an important role in early reading development and literacy. Rhyming helps children recognize and predict sound patterns, which is a foundational skill in phonological awareness (recognizing letter sounds). This awareness is critical for learning to read and spell. Here are several activities to reinforce rhyming skills.

- Read, recite, and sing nursery rhymes. Check out this [list of classic nursery rhymes and children's songs \(with lyrics\)](#).
- Take turns with your child coming up with Animal Rhymes. You can start by saying something like, "There's a mouse in the house." Then they could say, "A frog sits on a log." Go back and forth coming up with animals and rhyming words. Get creative and silly with your rhymes!
- Read rhyming books with your child. Many books by Dr. Seuss use rhyming words. Here are a few: [There's a Wocket in My Pocket](#) and [The Cat in the Hat](#).



Grandparents Day - September 8, 2024

[Interview with a Grandparent – Simple & Fun Questions to Ask](#)

Suggest for your child to ask their grandparent some of these questions, and they will not only get an idea of what it was like to be a kid some years ago, but they will gain some wisdom on the importance of family, friends and living a great long life!

[Grandparents Day Printables](#)

[Wisconsin Fall Color Report](#)

Find the most comprehensive resource on fall colors available in Wisconsin. Get the best locations for viewing fall colors throughout autumn.

[Creating a Fall Leaf Collection \(for all ages\)](#)

Leaf collections are a great way to celebrate fall and fit in some fun nature study. There are a variety of ways you can do leaf collections tailored for different ages and learning styles. Try Physical, Digital and Artistic Leaf Collection variations.



Hopscotch Math

Hopscotch math is a fun way to help your child practice and reinforce math skills. By incorporating movement into learning, it can make math more engaging and enjoyable. Here are some ideas for different types of hopscotch math games.

Number Recognition:

- Draw a traditional hopscotch grid with numbers 1-10 (or higher).
- Call out a number and have your child hop to that number.

Counting:

- Have your child count aloud as they hop through the grid, either forwards or backwards.
- For an added challenge, have them count by twos, fives, tens, etc.

Basic Addition:

- Write different numbers in each hopscotch square.
- Give your child an addition problem (e.g., $2 + 3$). The child hops to the square with the sum (e.g., 5).

Subtraction:

- Same setup as addition, but give subtraction problems (e.g., $7 - 3$). Your child hops to the square with the difference (e.g., 4).

UPCOMING STATE EVENTS

[Children Come First Conference](#)

Each year, the Children Come First Conference serves as a beacon of knowledge, offering a platform for sharing the latest research, strategies, and tools dedicated to children's mental health. This year's theme, "From Surviving to Thriving," embodies their commitment to empowering families to flourish in every aspect of their lives. For more information, visit www.wifamilyties.org

Dates: October 7-8, 2024

Location: Kalahari Conference Center, WI Dells, WI

[40th Annual State Superintendent's Leadership Conference on Special Education and Pupil Services](#)

[Leadership](#)

This conference provides local directors of special education and pupil services and other interested parties with opportunities to network with colleagues from around the state as well as consultants and administrators from the Division for Learning Support at the Department of Public Instruction. Presentations will include information about current issues and changes in state and federal policy related to meeting the needs of students with disabilities and students facing other challenges to success in school

Date: October 16, 2024

Location: Glacier Canyon Lodge, Wisconsin Dells, WI

[Self-Determination Conference](#)

The Self-Determination Conference is one of Wisconsin's largest events for people with disabilities and the people who support them. Learn how to live more independently, participate more in your community, and direct your public funds efficiently.

Dates: October 21-23, 2024

Location: Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI

[Special Education Conference 2024](#)

Join hundreds of your colleagues from around the state and Midwest to learn, relax, network, and gather new ideas and resources at the 11th Annual Special Education Conference.

Dates: November 14-15, 2024

Location: Kalahari Resort and Convention Center, WI Dells, WI

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

[Myths and Facts Surrounding Assistive Technology Devices and Services](#)

In January 2024, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology and the Office of Special Education Programs released a comprehensive document designed to increase understanding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act's (IDEA's) assistive technology (AT) requirements. This guidance dispels common misconceptions regarding AT and provides examples of the use of AT devices and services for children with disabilities. It also highlights the different AT requirements under Part C and Part B of IDEA.

Review Your Child's IEP

Back-to-school time is a great time for parents to review their child's IEP. Make sure that you have the most current IEP and read through it. Note goals, accommodations, modifications, and services that are outlined. If there have been any significant changes during the summer regarding your child be sure to contact your child's special education teacher. It is possible that a review/revise IEP meeting needs to be scheduled. Reviewing your child's IEP at the start of the school year ensures that their educational plan remains relevant and effective, setting the stage for a successful academic year.

ONLINE RESOURCES: Assistive Technology



[Center for Parent Information and Resources \(CPIR\)](#)

This site has links to resources related to assistive technology. It also has links to checklists that IEP teams can use when considering assistive technology.

[Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction \(DPI\)](#)

Along with AT resources, this site also has federal and state requirements that address assistive technology as it relates to the development of IEPs and the implementation of special education.

[Wisconsin AT4ALL](#)

The Assistive Technology Lending Center (ATLC) is now part of Wisconsin AT4ALL and includes lite, mid and high-end Alternative and Augmentative Communication(AAC) equipment for trial purposes for loan to Wisconsin LEA public school licensed professional educators for trial with children ages 3 to 18 who have IEPs and are enrolled in public schools or students age 19-21 who are enrolled in a Wisconsin LEA school program and have an IEP. To request assistive technology items for loan through the ATLC, click on the link above, set up a free account, select the category you are interested in, select "ATLC (AT Lending Center) WI School Based Loans" as the program, and search for the assistive technology that you are interested in obtaining for loan.

[Information Update Bulletin 22.02 from WI Department of Public Instruction](#)

This bulletin provides technical assistance on state and federal requirements related to identifying and addressing the need for assistive technology as part of a special education evaluation and Individualized Education Program (IEP) development.

[National Center on Accessible Educational Materials \(AEM\)](#)

The agency provides technical assistance, coaching, and resources to increase the availability and use of accessible educational materials and technologies for learners with disabilities across their lifespans.

[Bookshare](#)

An ebook library that makes reading easier. Members can access a huge collection of ebooks and read "their way" with the most customizable ebooks for people with reading barriers. Bookshare is free for U.S. students with qualifying reading barriers. People with [qualifying conditions](#) who are not U.S. students, and organizations serving them, pay a low membership fee. [Educators](#) may also sign up for an account to access books for their students.

[SETT Framework](#)

The SETT Framework is an organizational tool to help collaborative teams create student-centered, environmentally useful, and tasks-focused tool systems that foster the educational success of students with disabilities. The SETT Framework is built on the premise that in order to develop an appropriate system of assistive technology devices and services, teams must first gather information about the student, the customary environments in which the students spend their time, and the tasks that are required for the students to be active participants in the teaching/learning processes that lead to educational success.

[Free Assistive Technology Apps](#)

Check this website for links to online assistive technology tools to help with reading, writing, and math. There are also many more areas covered that are not included as listed above. Do a search for "free assistive technology apps" and the search results will provide even more links.

[Assistive Technology for Kids with Learning Disabilities: An Overview](#)

This is a link to an article for parents about the role of AT in helping their children with a learning disability. The better informed that parents are about AT, the greater the chances their child will experience success in school, in recreation and, eventually, at work.

[Closing the Gap Resource Directory](#)

The Resource Directory is your go-to guide for exploring the most recent advancements in assistive technology products. From software to hardware, the directory is regularly updated with the latest offerings and their manufacturers. This guide has been curated with the goal of facilitating your discovery, research and comparison of the most cutting-edge assistive technology products available today.

Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS)

Back-to-School time often involves kids having to get back to homework. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) can be effectively applied to help children with homework. PBIS focuses on promoting positive behavior through proactive strategies and reinforcement. Here are some PBIS strategies for supporting homework completion:

Creating a Positive Homework Environment:

- **Designate a Homework Space:** Create a quiet, well-lit, and organized space specifically for homework.
- **Set a Routine:** Establish a consistent daily schedule for homework time to create a sense of predictability.

Clear Expectations and Goals:

- **Set Clear Expectations:** Clearly explain what is expected during homework time, such as staying focused, completing tasks, and asking for help when needed.
- **Break Down Tasks:** Break homework into smaller, manageable tasks with clear, short-term goals.

Positive Reinforcement:

- **Praise and Rewards:** Use specific praise to acknowledge effort and achievements (e.g., “Great job finishing your math problems!”). Implement a reward system, such as earning points or stickers for completed homework, which can be exchanged for a preferred activity or small prize.
- **Incentive Charts:** Use charts to track homework completion and progress towards goals. Celebrate milestones with small rewards or privileges..

RESEARCH

Improving Engagement: Integrating Assistive Technology in Early Literacy

Marsh, K. L., Schladant, M., Sudduth, C., Shearer, R., Dowling, M., & Natale, R. (2021). Improving Engagement: Integrating Assistive Technology in Early Literacy. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 54(2), 146-153.

[Read Full Article](#)

Although there are documented benefits and legislative mandates for children from birth through age 22, assistive technology (AT) is highly underused, especially among young children. One of the main reasons for this underuse is that while teachers are legally required to provide AT for children with disabilities, many teachers do not have the knowledge, confidence, or skills needed to provide AT to support early literacy instruction. This article identifies the benefits of AT during early literacy instruction and describes how teachers can integrate practical AT tools and strategies into early literacy instruction using a widely utilized framework call the SETT Framework (Student Environment Task Tool; Zabala, 1995). The authors aim to provide free professional development resources to improve teachers’ integration of AT in their classrooms.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

Upcoming Newsletter Topics:

October: Learning Disabilities

November: Emotional Behavioral Disabilities

December: Communication

To submit contributions of articles, events, or resources you may use the [Word document](#). Send submissions to [Wendy Overturf](#). If you are unable to access the form, you may send the information in an email.

Material appropriate for the monthly newsletter include web links to family involvement/parent leadership resources,

advertisements for statewide trainings for parents, youth or parent/educator audiences, information about statewide parent agencies, recent research pertaining to family engagement, and family engagement success articles.

This monthly update is provided by Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support (WI FACETS) to share statewide information regarding parent leadership and family involvement. If you would like to receive this monthly update or if you would like to have your name removed from the distribution list, please email [WI FACETS](mailto:WI.FACETS).

The WI FACETS Family Engagement E-Newsletter can be found online: www.servingongroups.org/newsletter



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