



WI AAC Network - FALL 2027 - page#1

Welcome to the WI AAC Network fall newsletter. Like many of you, I use the summer months to relax and regroup from the school year, but I started working for the organization Open AAC. I am working at Open AAC, which is a think tank for the AAC community. I will be managing projects and working on other things to help the whole community. I am excited! You can read what they do later. <https://www.openaac.org/>

Employment opportunities for people who use AAC is a huge obstacle, in fact the AAC community did a conference called Pittsburgh Employment Conference, PEC was awesome. I was lucky to get to go to the last one in 2011. Unlike most conferences that we have, it was for AAC Communicators. Most of the speakers were AAC Communicators talking about their employment, their life, and what they enjoy doing. The year that I went, they only had one room so everything was in that room from 8 AM to 4 PM. I didn't want to leave the room, because I didn't want to miss anything going on. My mom and dad joke with people that I needed a bathroom in the room, because it was hard for me to take breaks. Some of the jobs that people talked about were authors, a saleswoman for a makeup company, artists, public speakers, and a singer. Yes, you can be a singer and songwriter if you use AAC.

My biggest takeaways from that conference were people who use AAC could work, employment looks different for everybody, and Pittsburgh is a beautiful city! If you have an AAC Communicator that wants to have a job, you will need to think outside of the box and explore what they can do. Can they find things in a store, maybe working at a grocery store or a store is right for them. Do they like to read to children, maybe working at a library or a daycare provider is right for them. I hope this is helpful for you guys, having a job has been a goal of mine since I went to the conference in 2011. It has been enjoyable for me. - Mike



Table of Contents

Page 1 - Welcome by Mike Hipple

Pages 2 - AAC Journey by the Kincade Family

Pages 3-6 - Fall Training Opportunities

Page 7 - Camp Chatter Matters recap by Jennifer Schubring

Page 8-11 - Back to School Ideas

Page 12 - Back to School Example by Kelly Fonner

AAC Journey

When Kyree was diagnosed with autism at the age of 3, we quickly realized that communication was going to look

different for her. At age 4, she received her first AAC device—an iPad with Proloquo2Go. That device opened a whole new world for her. For the first time, she had a reliable way to express her wants, needs, and thoughts when spoken words weren't available. It also gave our family hope that her voice, in whatever form it came, would always be heard.

When Kyree was 7 years old, she was also diagnosed with Childhood Apraxia of Speech. While this diagnosis helped explain why speaking was so difficult for her, it never changed her determination. From the very beginning, Kyree has told her speech therapist, Madi, that she wants to use her voice. That simple goal has guided so much of her journey and continues to inspire everyone who works with her.



Over the years, Kyree has made incredible progress. She has become more verbal and continues to surprise us with the words she is able to say. Even with that progress, her AAC device remains an important part of her daily life. It provides support when speech is difficult and gives her the confidence to communicate in any situation. Recently, she received a new Tobii Dynavox device, and we are excited to see how it will continue to help her grow and communicate.

We have been incredibly blessed with an amazing team of people who believe in Kyree. Her speech therapists, teachers, and paraprofessionals have embraced AAC and have been eager to learn how to use her device alongside her. Their willingness to support her communication has made a tremendous difference in her success. AAC has never been about replacing Kyree's voice—it has been about giving her every opportunity to have one. No matter how she communicates, we will always celebrate her voice, because every child deserves to be heard.

The Kincade Family

CTG is mixing it up - <https://www.closingthegap.com/conference/>

The annual Closing The Gap conference would like to change things to make the conference better each year. This year will start on a Tuesday morning with a full day workshop, one topic for 8 hours. I feel that you will get more from this format, because you will be learning about one topic, not eight different topics throughout the day. Wednesday and Thursday will be like usual, you will have so many excellent workshops to choose from hourly! They're going to have an AT maker fair where you can make your own assistive technology tools. You can get over 160 professional development hours on Wednesday and Thursday. Their exhibit hall is my favorite thing about this conference, because it is huge!! When I go I like to visit everyone to see what they have and to get to talk to people from the company, some of them are my friends. The hall is open to the public, if you live near Minnesota please consider stopping by. I hope to see you there.

AAC Learning Opportunities from AT Forward

Welcome back everyone. This school year the staff at AT Forward has put together a great line up of speakers that include many AAC related topics. We do ask that people register for the sessions but there is no cost for a great hour of learning. Running monthly from September 2026 through April 2027 from 12 PM and 1 PM, these interactive sessions are designed to tackle the most pressing topics in assistive technology, accessible materials, and classroom equity. We hope to see you there!

Please follow this link to see our year long list of learning opportunities. [2026-27 AT Forward CoP Meeting Schedule](#)

The Waisman Center's AAC Partnership is once again collaborating with the Department of Public Instruction this year to support school-based SLPs and school teams through AAC consultation, which will be offered with morning, lunchtime, and end-of-day time slots available to fit into busy school schedules. SLPs can request virtual consultation support more than once for different students, or for the same student as communication needs evolve.

In-person visits to the Communication Aids and Systems Clinic are also available on a limited basis, if determined appropriate. In-person support is only offered during the academic year; in-person referral pathways are paused in March in order to ensure adequate time for an outpatient clinic visit, and completion of next steps prior to the end of the school year. The AAC Partnership service is not a one-stop shop, but rather an ongoing resource teams can return to as a student's communication needs evolve.



WI AAC Network - FALL 2027 - page#4

Referrals to this service must be made by an SLP, as SLPs play a critical role in our ability to support AAC needs in schools. This service is available to school teams statewide. For more information, email

aacpartnershipprogram@waisman.wisc.edu, and stay tuned to our [website](#) for new developments.

PD ideas for you

Let's face it, not everyone reading this can attend CTG, so how will you get your professional development in and teach others? Well, these days we have many different opportunities. If you work in a school district maybe you look at starting an AAC and assistive technology club where you read journal articles, watch YouTube videos, or and listen to podcast episodes of Talking With Tech and discuss them. We can all learn from each other's thoughts, ideas, and views. Bring in an AAC Communicator to talk about their experiences and life. Please check out the USSAAC Speaker Connection program which is a search tool to find a person that use AAC to speak with organizations. A fun PD idea is to have people need to use a communication device to do everyday things like going to the library, bank, and post office or chatting with someone. This will teach people how challenging using a communication device is. A good PD idea is to invite former students to come back to speak, let them educate their former teachers and therapists about what they have been doing. No matter what you do, remember to have fun with it.

The Waisman Center's ECHO-AAC Virtual Learning Series

returns for Fall! Save the dates —Join us for three sessions featuring experts from across the country, each presenting for 30-45 minutes (including Q&A) followed by a case study discussion. On September 16, 2026, Lauramarie Pope, PhD, CCC-SLP, from Auburn University will be presenting her work in the area of *Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions in AAC*. In October, (10/21) we have tentatively scheduled Jess Caron, PhD, CCC-SLP and Salena Babb, PhD, from **Penn State University**, to share their expertise on the topic of *Literacy and AAC*. We wrap up our fall series on December 2, 2026 with Jamie Boester, PhD, CCC-SLP, presenting on the topic of *Cortical Visual Impairment and AAC*. Stay tuned to our ECHO-AAC [website](#) for updates and registration links. If you would like to share a case study to be discussed at an ECHO, please contact us and we can include it this fall or plan for it in our Spring series! echoaac@waisman.wisc.edu

WI AT Forward Fall Assistive Technology Professional Learning Events and Announcements

Thursday, September 17, 2026 (12:00pm-1:00pm CST)

Does the AT Fit? Navigating WIAT4ALL and the AT Lending Center

Assistive Technology (AT) works best when it's the right match for the student. Just as you might try on a pair of jeans before buying them, your students can have the same opportunities with AT devices. Learn more about WIAT4ALL and the Assistive Tech Lending Center (ATLC), including how to request a short term loan, how the ATLC and WIAT4ALL are connected, and hear success stories from the field.

[Click on this link to register in advance for this meeting](#)

Tuesday, October 13, 2026 (12:00pm-1:00pm CST)

Communication Matrix and DAAG

During this session Kelly Fonner will provide an overview of commercially available and free AAC Assessment tools. Two of those free tools, The Communication Matrix and the DAAG, are widely used to determine current expressive output skills and assist in developing future goals that will be described and demonstrated. Participants will be able to follow along and work through their first use of these tools during the presentation by downloading or setting up profiles prior to the beginning of the session at [Log in - Communication Matrix](#) and [DAGG-3](#). Kelly Fonner will share examples and outcomes from these assessments as well as how goals and objectives can be developed from within each tool.

[Click on this link to register for this meeting](#)

Thursday, October 29, 2026 (12:00pm-1:00pm CST)

Practical AT Strategies to Support Employment

Anna Cliff explores how assistive technology supports individuals in preparing for, entering, and succeeding in employment. It includes real-life case examples showing how to identify workplace barriers, match AT tools to job tasks, and build confidence in advocating for current and future accommodations. Participants will learn practical strategies for using AT to maximize access and support during on-the-job training.

[Click on this link to register for this meeting](#)

Wednesday, November 18, 2026 (12:00pm-1:00pm CST)

Accessible Educational Materials by Design: Ensuring Access from Procurement to Delivery

Amy Snow will share the importance of considering accessibility at the beginning states of the curriculum planning process. She will also include information on sources for acquiring accessible education materials in electronic format as well as in other alternative formats such as braille. The importance of meeting ADA Title II requirements will be addressed.

During this session, attendees will learn:

WI AAC Network - FALL 2027 - page#6

- Why consideration of accessibility during the procurement process is essential and how it can save teachers and administrators time, money, and frustration.
- How ADA Title II requirements apply to classroom curriculum and resources and why simply buying electronic curriculum does not meet accessibility requirements.
- What sources and options exist for acquiring accessible educational materials, including textbooks and other supplementary materials and resources.

[Click on this link to register for this meeting](#)



Date: Sunday, October 11, 2026, 8:45 am - 4:15 pm Pacific Time

Presenters: Stephanie Fassov, Lance McLemore, Chris Klein, Tracy Rackensperger,

Hannah Springfield, and Dr. David McNaughton!

Description: AAC communicators navigate a world that was not built with them in mind. This is a conference that centers lived experience. It is built on the belief that joy and connection are not extras. They are the whole point. Whether you are an AAC user, family member, clinician, educator, direct support professional, or other interested party, there is a place for you here. Join us for several AAC user-led sessions!

This is an intermediate-level conference. Attendees should have a foundational knowledge of AAC and how it is used.

Visit [2026 NWACS Fall Conference](#) and our [Eventbrite](#) page to learn more about the conference!

PODD Introductory Training - November 4&5, 2026 in Stevens Point, WI

The 2 day Introductory PODD (Pragmatically Organized Dynamic Display) AAC Language system available in printed books and in electronic page sets will be explained with videos and hands-on practice. The host site is Innov-AT. The original training dates were in August, but due to a low attendance, needed to be changed. Information about the training can be found at <https://innov-at.com/intro-to-podd-26>

Another Great Camp Chatter Matters

Mike and I (Sue Hipple) were lucky enough to again join Camp Chatter Matters as volunteers. It is held in June at the UW-Whitewater Campus. As you can see from the picture below a lot of people care about providing the AAC campers with opportunities to use their devices.



The camp is sponsored by Variety Charity of Wisconsin. The fantastic program of activities is coordinated by Speech Pathologist Beth Swanson and a group of Speech Therapists, AAC Specialists, AAC mentors, students in ST, PT and OT. The camp has fun activities for the campers and siblings in the morning and afternoon. Parents have their own learning sessions including time with AAC mentors Stasia Wilson and Mike Hipple. The camp is family friendly, some campers come with both parents and their siblings others come with a parent. The campers and volunteers are split into color groups to encourage lots of close contact to build lifelong relationships.

Read more about Camp Chatter Matters at

Camp Website - <https://www.varietywi.org/programs/chatter-matters-308/>

WI Autism Society page -

<https://autismsocietywi.org/resource-directory/chatter-matters-camp/>

Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsBrJS6pPqg>

Watch the winter newsletter for information about registering for the summer of 2027.

The Class of 2038 or 2041

We love this time of the year, because we have a new class of kindergarten across the state. They are the youngest students who will be in our school system until 2038 or 2042. Let's teach them about Communication Bills of Rights right away. We want them to understand that they have rights and professionals need to follow these rights.



We also want to make sure that they would have the opportunity to communicate in all places of the school, not just the classroom and the speech therapy room. The cafeteria has a lot of communication opportunities. When I think back on my grade school years, I remember talking to cooks and my aides. I brought my communication device everywhere, but you might think of making low tech AAC boards or switches. I am wishing every kindergartner who are using AAC and my nephew who is starting kindergarten himself an excellent first year of school!

IDEAS for Back to School

Starting the school year with Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems requires setting up the **environment, creating communication profiles, and integrating core vocabulary** into daily routines from day one. Success relies heavily on prep work, low-tech backups, and collaborative modeling rather than just handing a student a high-tech device. Here are some tips from a combination of websites including:

1. [Video - Amanda Hartman SLP for Assistiveware](#)
2. [Website - Back to School with AAC Tips](#) - PRC/Salttillo - Liberator Australia
3. [Website - 3 Back to School for Parents](#) of AAC Users - Elevate Health & Therapeutic Services
4. Website - Quicktalker - Freestyle
<https://quicktalkerfreestyle.com/blog/speech-device-users-back-to-school/> -
5. Website - [Effective AAC in the Home](#) - Quicktalker - Freestyle
6. [Video - Tips for Starting Back to School](#) - PrAACtical AAC / The Autism Helper
7. From Cerebral Palsy Foundation 8 tips for families
https://cpresource.org/topic/school-education/8-helpful-back-school-tips-students-ies?utm_source=CP+Resource&utm_campaign=e72ef9afd0-EMAIL_CAMPAI

WI AAC Network - FALL 2027 - page#9

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Tobii- Dynavox - NEW Resource for Schools

Welcome back to school! I (Sarah Marshall) am excited to share a new program from Tobii Dynavox: **TD Snap for Schools**.

This one-stop resource gives educators access to a free TD Snap professional license, downloadable AAC resources, and tools designed specifically for school teams.

👉 **Get started here:** [TD Snap for Schools](#)

Looking for on-demand learning? The **TD Snap for Schools Group Learning** features a curated collection of courses and resources created specifically for educators supporting AAC users.

👉 **Learn more:** [TD Snap for Schools Learning Hub](#)

The following set of Back to School with AAC phases was created with assistance from Gemini AI. Resources and links have been verified and checked. Examples were added from the consulting practice of [Kelly Fonner, MS. www.kellyfonner.com](#)

Phase 1: Team Alignment & Documentation

Before students walk through the door, the educational team (teachers, speech-language pathologists (SLPs), paraprofessionals) should sync up on how the student communicates. [1, 2]

- **The Communication Profile:** Create a one-page "snapshot" for every staff member. Detail the student's communicative intents (e.g., requesting, protesting, greeting), current methods (gestures, high-tech AAC, vocalizations), and how frequently they initiate communication. [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]
- **Personal Communication Dictionary:** Build a cheat sheet for the classroom staff. For example: *"When [Student Name] looks at the door and vocalizes, it means they need a bathroom break. Respond by modeling 'Go' + 'Bathroom' on their device."* [1, 2, 3]
- **Letter of Introduction:** Work with the student and family to write a "Hello, this is me!" letter to introduce the student's personality, interests, and how they use their voice/AAC to new peers and staff. [1, 2]

Phase 2: Environmental Setups & Examples

A communication-rich classroom provides easy access to language across all physical spaces. [1]

- **Low-Tech Backups Everywhere:** Print and laminate low-tech core boards matching the student's exact digital layout. Place them in high-wear zones like the sensory area, playground, and cafeteria where high-tech devices might get damaged. [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]
- **Use a Large AAC display for modeling:** Build an interactive station on a wall or whiteboard using Velcro icons. Model morning routines by building simple sentences like *"I like my play group"* or *"Today I feel happy."* [1, 2]
- **Visual Schedules:** create classroom visual schedules to help students connect daily transitions (e.g., Circle Time ➡ Math) to the specific vocabulary locations inside their communication systems. [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]

Phase 3: Direct Classroom Activities (Examples)

Integrate AAC directly into standard back-to-school lesson planning rather than teaching the device in isolation. [1, 2]

Here's an example:

Activity	Targeted Vocabulary	AAC Strategy / Action
Back-to-School Read Alouds	"Look", "Play", "Go", "Like"	Mirror the AAC device to a big screen or interactive board. Model words while reading books like 'Yo! Yes?'
Vocabulary Notebooks & Scavenger Hunts	"Crayon", "Pencil", "Principal", "Therapist", "Bathroom"	Create customized matching books; guide students to locate school spaces and school staff words on the system
Daily Transitions	"Hi", "Go", "Wait", "Finished", "Help"	Practice functional core words during morning arrivals, lining up, and cleanup routines

Phase 4: Peer Modeling & Community Training

WI AAC Network - FALL 2027 - page#11

Everyone in the room is a communication partner who needs to understand the system.

[1]

- **Aided Peer Modeling:** Provide neurotypical classmates with a low-tech printed copy of the user's AAC board. Train them to point to symbols while speaking during structured games or small-group activities. [1, 2, 3]
- **Model on Your Own Device/Tablet:** Check into how many copies are legally downloadable onto staff's systems. Check out free assessment copies available to staff with ASHA licensure. Use free software like the [PRC-Salttillo NewVoicePass](#) program to model language choices directly on a smartboard or teacher laptop while running whole-group instruction. [1]
- **Respect Device Autonomy:** Educate the team and peers to respect the student's physical ownership of the tool. Always ask permission before touching a student's device. If a student hugs the device to their chest, treat that action as a clear "no" to intervention. [1]

Visual Supports for Back to School

Here are some recently posted visual supports - Go to AAC Language Lab to download <https://aaclanguagelab.com/> You do not need to have a subscription to get all of the FREE resources!

Back-to-School AAC Best Practices



 prc-salttillo
Celebrating 60 Years

Start with a communication snapshot

Take time to learn about
your students' strengths,
interests, communication
partners, and environments.

Focus on meaningful communication opportunities

Prioritize communication
that is relevant and
motivating to your students.



Use the Language Skills Survey

A quick survey can help
identify your students'
current language stages
and guide goal selection.

Model consistently

+3
Communication partners play
a critical role in language
development by modeling
language throughout
everyday activities.





Back to School Inservice Example: I (Kelly Fonner) was a part of a recent Middle School training for 30 staff who were going to be teaching a newly arriving 6th grader. This 6th grader has Rett Syndrome and uses a variety of technology for mobility, access to the curriculum and communication. The AAC systems included a Tobii-Dynavox Eyegaze system with TD Snap and PODD Page set and a lotech PODD 80 Partner Assisted Visual Scanning Communication Book. We had an exciting 2 days with myself and the student's parents presenting to the staff. The staff included middle school general education teachers that for math, social studies, language arts, science, as well as the librarian, the PE teacher, the drama teacher, the Music teacher; the special education staff of teachers, OT, SLP, PT, PT aide, and paraprofessionals who worked throughout the school including those outside for recess, lunchroom and classrooms. In addition, administrators in attendance included the building principal, the special education coordinator for the school and district, SLPs from the district; at one point the school district superintendent, the human resources coordinator joined us. The student made an appearance towards the end of the 2nd day. It was a mass of people to meet, so they went to a side room and had a few of the staff come chat.

Topics covered included the organization of the PODD language, multiple access methods to her communication, with hands on opportunities. Planning time and a long question and answer discussion period were invaluable to discuss suggestions for how to respond in academic situations, access to tools such as alternative calculators, and general interaction tips including descriptive teaching and the use of wait time and "tell me more about that". Plans for how to collect needed vocabulary were put into action. And plans for more training on communication, health and curriculum access were discussed. It was a great first step to build awareness of all the staff in the school that would be connected to teaching and supporting this new middle schooler starting on day#1!