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MN Regions 5 & 7 Assistive Technology Community of Practice

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Calendar of Events

2017-2018 REGIONAL MEETINGS

Benton-Stearns Ed District Office, Sartell MN

9:00 A.M. – 11:30 P.M.

September 20—AT Teams and AT Processes

October 4—AT Consideration/Assessment?

November 15—Feature Match

December 6—AT Trials and Purchasing AT Devices and Services

January 24—AT Inservice/Training; AT and IEPs

February— NO MEETING

March 21—Using AT Devices and Services; Progress Monitoring

April 18—Repair and Maintenance of AT; Updating AT

May 16—PACER, AbleNet, etc. Visit

**Note: Schedule will likely change to accommodate visit to PACER, AbleNet, etc. with P/HD CoP.

36th ANNUAL CLOSING THE GAP CONFERENCE

Mystic Lake Center, Prior Lake, MN

September 26-28, 2018

CHARTING THE CS CONFERENCE

Arrowwood, Alexandria, MN

Family Sessions: April 21, 2018

Pre-Conference Sessions: April 22, 2018

Conference Sessions: April 23 & 24, 2018

AT Information: Listservs

AT Listserv

The AT Listserv is a wonderful resource for educators who work with students who use technology for learning. Members ask questions, share information, and discuss topics that are relevant to our day-to-day work with students ages birth through 21.

How to Join: To subscribe, visit or send a message with the word “subscribe” in it to the request address, mn.at@mailmanlists.us for further instructions.

To Post on the Listserv: Send message to mn.at@mailmanlists.us. Complete the subject line identifying the topic of your post. Type your message and send it. Remember confidentiality when posting!

QIAT Listserv

The Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology (QIAT—pronounced quiet) listserv is a place to share resources, questions ideas, and problem-solving in an on-going email discussion (there are archives and a website of resources to assist you, too). To sign up, go to the following website <http://qiat.org> and follow the links to join the listserv.

Resources for Acquiring / Trialing Devices

Prior to purchasing assistive technology, teams will need to consider the most important features in a device or app that will meet the needs of the student, task and environment. Trialing devices and apps while taking data will help the team to make wise decisions and appropriate purchases to meet student needs. The following resources are available in Minnesota to assist teams in making decisions.

[Minnesota STAR Program](#)

“A System of Technology to Achieve Results (STAR) is located within the Minnesota Department of Administration. STAR’s mission is to help all Minnesotans with disabilities gain access to and acquire the assistive technology they need to live, learn, work and play.” STAR provides:

- Device Demonstration—“allows consumers to compare features” in a scheduled device demonstration with STAR.
- Device Exchange—“STAR maintains an online device exchange” to “donate, sell, and buy previously owned but still usable assistive technology.”
- Device Loan—A “try before you buy” loan program. “Short-term and open-ended loans are available.” Previously known as the MATLN program.
- Reuse—STAR promotes reusing devices when no longer used or needed by an individual.

[Minnesota STAR Lending Library](#)

The STAR Lending Library has a new searchable database in the following areas: computers and related; daily living; environmental adaptations; learning, cognitive and development; hearing; mobility, seating and positioning; recreation, sports, and leisure; speech/communication; vehicle modification and transportation; and vision.

“Short-term device loans are for 30-days or less and allow consumers to try a device or software program before buying. Short-term device loans may also be used to fill-in for a device that is being repaired or while waiting for delivery of a newly-purchased device.

“Device loans give consumers the opportunity to:

- Try a device in a real life environment
- Collect data substantiating that the device meets the consumer's needs
- Use data to justify a funding request
- Use as a short-term loaner while a personal device is being repaired
- Understand training and support needs associated with device or software
- Make an informed purchasing decision.”

“Open-ended device loans provide previously used equipment to Minnesotans who otherwise would not have access to assistive technology. These are long-term loans, which do not have a set return date and are helpful when the borrower needs a device for more than 30-days. Once the borrower no longer needs the device, it must be returned to the loan program.”

There are no fees for borrowing devices. Library users are asked to complete a survey.

[PACER: Simon Technology Center](#)

The Simon Technology Center (STC) has “more than 1,500 items” in its Lending Library. “The Lending Library lets you try out and borrow some of the newest educational and disability-specific software and devices on the market including:

- Text-to-speech software for reading accessibility
- Speech-to-text software for improved written communication
- Universally designed toys for playtime accessibility and inclusion
- Communication devices for communication freedom
- Computer access adaptations for independence
- Talking calculators for improved independence with math

“The Simon Technology Center Lending Library allows you to try assistive technology before making a purchase decision and is open to Minnesota residents. Families, educators, and consumers who become library members benefit from personalized assistance, convenient hours and services. As a member, you can:

- Receive personal assistance in selecting and checking out materials.
- Try out devices and software.
- Reserve, check-out, or renew items by phone, email or in person.
- Schedule quick pick-up during regular business hours or library open hours.
- Have items mailed to you for free if you live in Greater Minnesota.”

Family or Individual memberships are \$50 (check out up to 4 items at a time); Professional or Organizational memberships are \$200 (check out up to 6 items at a time).

EquipALife

“EquipALife provides assistance and financial solutions for Minnesotans of all ages to locate the ‘right tool for the right task.’ Programs include low interest loans to purchase equipment, statewide partnership for short term equipment lending, and Access to Telework which is a low interest loan program. This program supports the equipment needs for people who are self-employed, work from home or telecommute.”

The program serves all ages and all Minnesota residents with diagnosed disabilities.

Services include:

- Funding Assistance: purchasing, renting, loan money, and information/referral.
- Services Funded: consultation/observation, assessment/evaluation, ordering, fitting, training, maintenance/repair, and custom fabrication.
- Device Funding: daily living; beds/bed modifications; computers; communication; education/employment; electronic aids; hearing; home/building modification; mobility, seating and positioning; prosthetics and orthotics; recreation/leisure; transportation; and vision.

Health Care Recycling Organization (HERO)

HERO collects and redistributes donated healthcare supplies to those in need. They are a source of equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, etc.

Digital Learning

SETDA

The State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) has a project called The Digital Instructional Materials Acquisition Policies for States (DMAPS). It is “an online database providing state and territory policies and practices related to the acquisition of digital instructional materials in K12 education.” Minnesota’s page shares the following information regarding digital materials:

“Minnesota does not procure resources for schools or districts on a statewide level. Each school district has the constitutional authority, from state and/or local resources, to procure and use digital resources and innovative educational technologies as they deem appropriate to meet educational goals and requirements.”

The Federal definition of accessible educational materials (AEM) “are print- and technology-based educational materials, including printed and electronic textbooks and related core materials that are designed or converted in a way that makes them usable across the widest range of student variability regardless of format (print, digital, graphical, audio, video). Minnesota has its own definition found at [Accessible Educational Materials in MN](#).

“Minnesota provides guidance to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to support the use of accessible digital educational materials for learners with disabilities to improve outcomes.” The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) website includes specific information acquiring accessible educational materials.

- Curriculum committees need to understand the meaning and use for accessible educational materials. A basic definition and explanation can be found at [What are Accessible Digital Learning Materials?](#)
- The National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) contains publisher files that can be converted into special formats for accessible materials. A district that orders curriculum from a vendor should request the files be placed in the NIMAC to allow the district access to those accessible format files as needed. The files can be converted to braille, large print, digital or audio files. The directions for accessing the files is found at [Obtaining Files from the NIMAC](#).
- When curriculum committees determine the curriculum needs for an academic area, the purchase order sent to the vendor needs to contain language that requests the publisher files be sent to the NIMAC for access by the school district. The process and language for ensuring that districts have the accessible files available to them is outlined on the MDE webpage [Guidance for Purchasers of Learning Materials](#).

SETDA also offers resources for school district teams to move from print to digital with their webpage [Guide to Quality Instructional Materials](#). This webpage addresses research regarding learning materials. The information addresses guides with considerations, questions and helpful hints for curriculum committees in:

- Planning
- Budget & funding
- Selection
- Implementation
- Effectiveness

Some e-documents that are helpful when moving from paper-print to digital instructional materials include:

- [Navigating the Digital Shift II Implementing Digital Instructional Materials for Learning](#) (June 2017) addresses what is happening in states and the best practices that include policies, selection, acquisition, and accessibility.