



Family Engagement Newsletter

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Users “Bill of Rights”—A Parent’s Perspective

By Wendy Overturf

Some children with disabilities have difficulty expressing themselves orally. In other words, verbal speech may be hard for them or, in some cases, not possible at all. These children may require the use assistive technology in order to receive a free and appropriate public education. An assistive technology device or tool refers to any item, piece of equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is a subset of Assistive Technology. AAC is related to devices and services that compensate (either temporarily or permanently) for severe expressive communication disorders. AAC can range from a simple set of picture symbols on a communication board to high-end speech generating devices.

In the pages that follow, you will find excellent information and resources on the topic of AAC. Before diving into the resources, please take a moment to read the excerpt below from an [article](#) written by a mother who has a child that uses AAC. The mom shares a few things that she feels are non-negotiable for those who interact with her daughter. Perhaps we can all learn from this parent’s perspective as we interact with others who might use AAC.

[The Preschool AAC User’s Classroom Rights - A Parent’s Perspective](#)

(The following list represents one parent’s requests for her child and are not legal mandates.)

I have the right to access my device all day long, in all environments and situations.

This may not be easy on the playground, during messy art activities, or in the bathroom, but my device is my voice, and taking away my voice is like silencing a speaking child. Please ensure I always have access to my words.

I have the right to access all of my available vocabulary.

Children my age often experiment with saying “bad” words, using language repetitively, or speaking at times when they should be listening. Like my peers, I will need to be taught social language rules alongside language use. Please do not ever take away my option to use words by removing my access to vocabulary.

I have the right to be heard and listened to.

Please give me the time and attention I need to gather my thoughts and express them. I may need your assistance in:

- **adjusting the volume** of my device so I can be properly heard in a noisy environment
- **encouraging other children** with whom I am trying to communicate to wait just a moment while I type
- **waiting, waiting, and waiting some more** because I will need time to go through the process of sorting through both my thoughts and my 600+ accessible words, all of which requires additional motivation, focus, and clarity that might be hard for me to maintain in a fun and busy classroom
- **speaking slowly and clearly** so that I have time to hear and process what you said before responding

I have the right to access vocabulary relevant to the new things I am learning in school.

I have the right to be the only one making my finger touch the screen.

Sometimes I get tired, frustrated, stubborn, or distracted and I do not want to use my device. It is important to always let me be in control of using my own words so my device never becomes aversive to me. Please do not ever forcibly put my hand to the screen to make me select the things you want me to say. Instead, you can model it for me on your modeling device.

I have the right to be presumed competent.

Please know that even when I cannot speak, I can hear and understand everything you say. Please choose the words you use around me carefully, especially when you are talking about me with someone else. Remember that people with disabilities often receive very negative messages about society’s perception of their value and capabilities. Help me to see from an early age that I am valuable— and help communicate that message to my typical peers by talking positively about AAC and not allowing them to grab my device or attempt to damage it.

Statewide Events

[Comprehensive Special Education Evaluation \(Part 1\) Virtual Webinar](#)

The Wisconsin DPI special education team staff developed a framework to support schools and districts in ensuring special education evaluations are “sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the child’s special education and related service needs, whether or not commonly linked to the disability category in which the child has been classified.”

Date: September 21, 2021, 3pm-5:30pm

[Comprehensive Special Education Evaluation \(Part 2\) Virtual Webinar](#)

This webinar will continue the overview of the framework. These webinars will be recorded as well.

Date: September 28, 2021, 3pm-5:30pm

[Virtual Transition Parents in Partnership \(TPIP\)](#) (suggest Firefox or Edge to open)

TPIP trainings will take place virtually via Zoom beginning this fall. TPIP will prepare families for the transition process for their youth with disabilities ages 14-21 in the areas of employment, education, living and health.

[Youth in Partnership with Parents for Empowerment](#)

([YIPPE](#)) (suggest Firefox or Edge to open)

YIPPE will take place in person at two different locations beginning this fall (Green Bay and Milwaukee). Catch up on what you need to know for transitioning your youth from school to postsecondary options while having the opportunity to connect with other families. YIPPE is an opportunity for youth with disabilities and their parents to learn about the transition process in a unique way while building real life skills in the areas of employment, education, living, and health.

[31st Annual Children Come First Conference](#)

The conference is for those caring for, working with, or concerned with the well-being of children and young adults with social, emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges. The conference provides professionals, educators, and families with access to national experts in the field of children’s mental health.

Date: November 15-16, 2021

Location: Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI



At Home Learning Strategies

[Daily Literacy Activities to Share with Your Child: September 2021](#)

This calendar is packed with suggested actions you can take with the small children in your life to develop their early literacy skills.

[Children’s Activity Calendar: September 2021](#)

Ring in the new school year with a Skyscraper Day building contest, Yoga Awareness Month yoga games tournament, or International Talk Like a Pirate Day party. Learn how to turn pizza boxes into tabletop games on Cheese Pizza Day and how to make a homemade library tote for Sewing Month. Plus, find new books, music, and crafts that will keep kids engaged every day.

Labor Day-September 6, 2021



On the first Monday in September, we take the day off to celebrate Labor Day and reflect on the American worker’s contributions to our country. Whether in the form of a leisurely barbeque, a relaxing swim in the pool, watching a film at a drive-in cinema, or even just relaxing at home with family, there are many different ways to mark the occasion.

- LABOR DAY Facts for Kids | Why Do We Celebrate Labor Day? This [short video](#) will help kids learn what Labor Day is all about and how Labor Day began.
- There is nothing more satisfying than sitting outside and enjoying a great book in the company of other book lovers.
- Write a thank you letter to your postal carrier or a police officer.

Grandparents Day-September 12, 2021

Grandparents Day is celebrated each year on the first Sunday after Labor Day.

- **Letters of love:** Whether they live near or far, have your child draw portraits of their grandparents and then help them write their favorite things about them. Everyone likes to get FUN mail!
- **Interview your [grandmother](#) and/or [grandfather](#).** These printable pages have questions and spaces for a child to write responses. If your child is not able to do this in person, consider a chat via a virtual platform such as Zoom. This activity could also be modified if your child no longer has a living grandparent. The interview could be done with any older adult who is an important person in your child’s life.



National Kids Take Over the Kitchen Day-September 13, 2021



Children and teens are encouraged to ‘take over the kitchen’ by involving them in the preparation and planning of the day’s meals (under the supervision of parents/guardians where required). Not only will this be a healthy learning experience for your child, but the day will also help foster a tremendous family spirit; and afterwards you might even have acquired a new, regular helper in the kitchen. Here are two recipes to get started- [herbed chicken nuggets](#) and [yogurt sundaes](#).

Fall Equinox- September 22, 2021

The first day of fall in 2021 arrives on Wednesday, September 22, 2021 at 2:21 p.m. central daylight time. The fall equinox marks the turning point when darkness begins to win out over daylight and daylight times grows shorter. At the fall equinox, day and night are approximately equal in length. Have your child chart [sunrise and sunset times](#) from the start of fall for the rest of the month to see how the daylight time grows shorter.



Johnny Appleseed Day-Sept 26, 2021

A day for remembering the man that made apple trees bloom across the United States. Not only do we honor everything that he did for the United States, but we also spread awareness regarding conservation and growing our own produce.



Check out this [read-a-loud](#) on the story of Johnny Appleseed.

There are so many tasty apple treats you can make with your children to celebrate Johnny Appleseed Day! Try one or more of these: [Homemade Applesauce](#), [Cinnamon Apples](#), or [Applesauce Overnight Oatmeal](#).

Practice understanding of fractions by cutting an apple in half, in fourths, and in eighths.

Online Resources: Assistive Technology (AT)

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

The website offers three pages of resource links related to assistive technology. It also has links to checklists that IEP teams can use when considering assistive technology.

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

This website has resources related to Assistive Technology. It also has federal and state requirements that address assistive technology as it relates to the development of IEPs and implementation of special education.

[Center on Technology and Disability \(CTD\)](#)

Since 2013, the CTD team has been pleased to provide a wealth of free, high-quality resources and events on all aspects of assistive technology. A U.S. Department of Education-funded project, CTD ended in May 2019. However, the resource-rich website will be available through 2021.

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

This site focuses on how schools can serve students who are unable to read or use standard print materials, through the use of specialized formats (braille, audio, large print, and digital text). There are articles and research about effective practices, technical information, tutorials, webinars, and online forums.

[Bookshare](#)

An online library of more than 170,000 digital books for children and adults with qualifying disabilities. Schools can download textbooks, books, and periodicals, which their students can access on computers or mobile devices using software or apps that read the text aloud. For students with visual impairments, schools can also download files for use with braille devices. Bookshare is also FREE for U.S. Students with qualifying reading barriers. Students 18 years and over can sign up on their own; parents can sign up students under 18 years of age.

[SETT Framework](#)

Student, Environments, Tasks, and Tools—all of which need to be fully explored when assistive technology tools are considered or selected. The website offers a set of forms for collaborative decision making related to assistive technology.

[Free Assistive Tech Tools Make Learning Accessible to All](#)

This website has a long list of tools and articles related to assistive technology. It also includes links to tools to support Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL is an educational framework based on research in the learning sciences, including cognitive neuroscience, that guides the development of flexible learning environments that can accommodate individual learning differences.

[Reading Rockets](#)

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



“A new school year means new beginnings, new adventures, new friendships, and new challenges. The slate is clean and anything can happen.”
— Denise Witmer



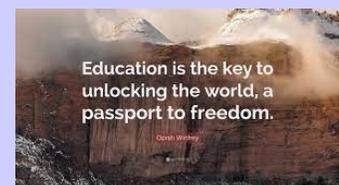
“There’s more treasure in books than in all the pirate’s loot on Treasure Island.”
— Walt Disney



“Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.”
— Robert Collier



“Work hard, be kind, and amazing things will happen.”
— Conan O’Brien



WI FACETS



Event title links to information & registration for WI FACETS FREE workshops & webinars:

To register by phone: 877-374-0511

All webinars 12:00—1:00 PM (unless otherwise noted)

[The Power of Shame](#)

Presenter: Tim Markle, Forgiveness

Factor

Date: September 1, 2021

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

Presenter: Lisa Stewart WI FACETS

Date: September 7, 2021, 12pm-12:30pm

[Family Engagement & Resources in Multi-Level Systems of Support](#)

Presenter: Jennifer Grenke and Dan

Seaman, RtI Center

Date: September 8, 2021

[IEP Checklist \(Spanish\)](#)

Date: September 9, 2021

Training in Spanish - To register, contact

Nelsinia Ramos, nramos@wifacets.org

[Special Education Discipline Requirements](#)

Presenter: Patricia Williams, WI DPI

Date: September 15, 2021

[IEP 4: Reevaluation and Independent Educational Evaluations](#)

Date: September 21, 2021, 12-12:30 pm

Presenter: Lisa Stewart, WI FACETS

[Functional Behavioral Assessments](#)

Presenter: Tim Peerenboom and Eva

Shaw, WI DPI

Date: September 22, 2021

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

Presenter: Jan Serak, Serak Consulting

Date: September 23, 2021

[Special Education and Pupil Discrimination - Legal Updates](#)

Presenter: Paul Sherman, WI DPI

Date: September 29, 2021



Children's Mental & Behavioral Health Resource Navigator

[The American Academy of Pediatrics](#) stated “that the stress, fear, grief, isolation and uncertainty created by COVID-19 pandemic can wear anyone down, but many children and teens have had an especially tough time coping emotionally. As more people get COVID-19 vaccines, there is growing hope that pressures of the pandemic will ease. But the struggles and losses of the past year will likely continue to affect families for some time to come.”

The WI Children's [Mental and Behavioral Health Navigator](#) is a free, online tool of the Well Badger Resource Center. It helps parents, caregivers, and professionals navigate mental and behavioral health services and support for children, adolescents, and young adults under the age of 21. Parents can complete a short questionnaire and receive a customized resource guide with suggested next steps and applicable resources.

IMPORTANT: If your child is experiencing a mental health crisis, violent behavior, or suicidal thoughts – please dial 911



Research to Read

Using Assistive Technology in Teaching Children with Learning Disabilities in the 21st Century

Adebisi, Rufus Olanrewaju; Liman, Nalado Abubakar; Longpoe, Patricia Kwalzoom *Journal of Education and Practice*, v6 n24 p14-20 2015

Article Link

This paper was written to expose the meaning, benefits, and answer why the use of assistive technology for children with learning disabilities. The paper discussed the various types of assistive technology devices that were designed and used to solve written language, reading, listening, memory and mathematic problems of children with learning disabilities. It pointed out the need for selecting the right technology tools for the children with learning disabilities, to enable achievement of the target goals, and highlighted instructional guides for the classroom teachers, that would make children with learning disabilities benefit maximally from the use of assistive technology tools, whether in the classroom or at home, in order that the technology would make the teaching-learning process enjoyable and productive. The possible challenges faced by developing nations in using assistive technology were mentioned. It concluded that there was potential for assistive technology to improve the lives and to eliminate learning difficulties for children with learning disabilities.

Serving on Groups That Make Decisions: A Guide for Families



A guidebook developed by WI FACETS and partners in response to feedback from parents who were looking for the tools to gain more confidence in participating in IEP meetings, parent teacher organizations, and more. This guide focuses on developing specific skill sets using research-based strategies while being broadly applicable to a diverse audience for a more effective and robust decision-making group. *Serving on Groups* applies to all decision-making groups, not just in education or specifically to one state. *Serving on Groups* is a guidebook as well as a training available in online modules, webinars, and in person. To learn more about *Serving on Groups*, please view the following [parent testimonials](#) and [overview](#), or visit the servinongroups.org website.

The Fall series of *Serving on Groups* webinars begins on 9/23/21 with [Opportunities to Get Involved & Types of Groups](#).

This monthly update is provided by the 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, contact: Wendy Overturf at woverturf@wifacets.org.*



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 attached word document. Send submissions to woverturf@wifacets.org. 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 sources of 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.

***The WI FACETS Family Engagement E-Newsletter
can be found online at:***

<https://servingongroups.org/newsletter>



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