



MassMATCH NEWS Quarterly

Maximizing Assistive
Technology in Consumers'
Hands

Fall 2010
"BACK TO SCHOOL"

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6 Great Ways to Use Your AT Regional Center (ATRC)

MassMATCH has two [AT Regional Centers](#) (ATRCs) where educators, therapists, students, and parents come to see, learn about, and even borrow the latest assistive technology. Each ATRC is staffed by AT professionals eager to help you identify the right equipment for your students' needs in every environment.



Know a student who might benefit by assistive technology?

1. **Bring your student to learn about and try devices.** Explore everything from augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices to screen-reading software and alternative keyboards. Call ahead to schedule a device demonstration and a range of products will be available to see, touch, and try to address your specific situation. Staff are available to answer your questions and make suggestions.
2. **Borrow the latest equipment and take it for a test drive.** Try before you buy! AT should to be tested in all the environments in which it will be

Quick Links

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AT School Swap Receives Shapiro Foundation Grant- Now it Needs You!



This past July the AT School Swap received a \$45,000 grant from the Carl and Ruth Shapiro Family Foundation. The grant was awarded through the Shapiro Foundation's Disability Inclusion Initiative which supports ongoing efforts to promote the use of assistive technology for people with disabilities. For schools in the Greater Boston area this is an exciting opportunity. Grant funds will help 6-8 Greater Boston area schools get started exchanging AT and AT know-how.

What is the AT

used. The ATRCs provide short-term device loans (up to four weeks) to help ensure you find a good fit. Device loans are also helpful when a student's equipment is out for repair or while waiting for delivery of new equipment. [Browse the device loan inventory online.](#)

3. **Hold your special education staff meeting at your ATRC.** Enhance your professional development by holding your special education staff meeting at the ATRC. Educators cover their own agendas and then take time to learn about equipment, about the Center and its services, and to get questions answered to better serve particular students with disabilities. Special educators report this is a terrific way to multi-task with tight schedules while enabling learning and creative problem-solving with colleagues. In-service trainings are also available.
4. **Schedule a device demonstration at your school.** Center staff travel with their "bag of tricks" to meet the needs of rural schools. Device demonstrations and trainings on ATRC services can be scheduled for in-service trainings or for your special education staff meetings.
5. **Get help with a comprehensive AT evaluation and/or training for your student.** ATRCs refer students and others for AT assessments with trusted fee-for-service providers. ATRCs can also help find training with particular equipment.
6. **Get help with funding options for acquiring AT.** Center staff are well-versed with funding and financing options as well as reuse programs (such as the Assistive Technology Exchange of New England and the emerging AT School Swap). Family members and professionals consult with them on options for AT acquisition and for advocacy assistance.

Contact Your MassMATCH AT Regional Center:

Eastern Massachusetts:

Easter Seals
Catherine Bly, ATRC Coordinator
89 South Street
Boston, MA 02111
617-226-2640 or 800-244-2756 Voice
617-737-9875 FAX
ATRC@eastersealsma.org

Western Massachusetts:

United Cerebral Palsy of Berkshire County
Dawn Matthews, AT Demo and Loan Coordinator
208 West Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
413-442-1562 Voice

School Swap (ATSS)?

ATSS is an online members-only assistive technology reuse program. It is designed to help schools manage their AT inventories, share their accumulated unused devices, better afford assistive technology, network with educators using AT, and reduce delays acquiring appropriate devices for their students with disabilities.

The ATSS was created in response to a need articulated by special educators and school administrators. Schools, districts, and collaboratives need a way to keep AT in the hands of students who benefit by it, and they need a way for educators to connect with one another about how devices are working in real classrooms.

What will the grant support?

The Shapiro Foundation is providing technical assistance to 6-8 Greater Boston area schools to join the AT School Swap. Through a partnership with Northeastern University's Physical Therapy Department, technical assistance will be provided to help these schools register and get started uploading their AT inventory to the ATSS website. The Shapiro Foundation grant is also supporting improvements to the website platform to make it more user-friendly.

School Success: How an ATRC Helped Chris Sing!

Last September, Chris, a nine-year-old boy with Down syndrome, came in to the MassMATCH AT Regional Center (ATRC) in Pittsfield with his parents. His special educator is a "frequent flyer" of the Center and had recommended he come in to try out augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices. Chris is non-verbal and his school had been using sign language to communicate with him. But Chris was hard to understand and his teacher knew they could do better. She wanted something to help Chris more effectively communicate and integrate with his class.



Springboard by Prentke Romich

At the Center, Dawn Matthews and Maneera Murphy demonstrated several different AAC products. The devices display pictures, symbols, and graphics. When a user touches (or otherwise activates) the symbols, the device voices whatever needs, feelings or other phrases each has been programmed to express.

The first product they showed Chris was a Dynavox Express, a small hand held device that has a better speaker system than the iPod Touch. The display on the device, however, proved too small to work for Chris.

Next they showed him a Dynavox V5 with a large display. But, alas, it proved too heavy.

Finally, feeling like Goldilocks, Maneera showed him the Springboard by Prentke Romich. The Springboard is not as heavy, but has a good-sized display. It's also dynamic, which means its symbols can easily change to correspond with Chris's activities as they vary throughout the day. And it has an additional feature, too, not shared by any of the other devices: the capacity to record a real child's voice.

Because of this last feature, Maneera hoped the Springboard would work well for Chris. Most AAC devices use synthesized adult voices of different kinds to sound the words or phrases selected by the child. This device would allow Chris to sound like the 9-year-old boy that he is, a feature with which Chris might strongly identify.

Chris did like the look and feel of the Springboard, and he and his parents took the device home for a four week loan. During this time, the Springboard was customized with activity boards and the voice of a peer from his classroom. Just as Maneera suspected, hearing a child speak his words visibly delighted Chris.

How will the Swap work?

Each school will swap AT on its own terms. Registered users will post "equipment wanted" notices and select what, if any, of their AT is available for loan, trade, or free. They will decide which devices stay in-district (or in-collaborative), and which may be available statewide.

What if I'm not ready to Swap?

Schools need not commit to exchanging equipment in order to participate. Participating schools will create and upload their AT inventory to the ATSS website, including devices not available for trade. Registered users and others will be able to browse and search for devices and learn where they are being used. Contact information for devices will allow Swap members to connect with one another and share advice about the equipment (or arrange the details of an exchange).

How do I get started?

MassMATCH is actively recruiting public and private schools, school districts, and collaboratives to join the ATSS. If your school is in the Greater Boston area this is the best time to get started so you can take advantage of this opportunity to receive intensive technical assistance.

Which got Chris's teacher thinking...

Each morning she starts her class with the whole room singing her good morning song. It's a ritual that up until then inadvertently excluded Chris. But with the Springboard, she realized, Chris might join in. So she asked the child whose voice was recorded on the Springboard if he'd also be willing to record their morning song for Chris. The child agreed and Chris was once again delighted. In this way the class' good morning song became his song as well.

Thanks to the device demonstration and loan provided by the ATRC, Chris's school district is acquiring a Springboard for his long-term use.

12 Online Resources for AT for Education

1. [UDL Tech Toolkit](#). This is a very, very deep resource of FREE "universal design for learning" tools! Categories include: apps, audio books, free text-to-speech, graphic organizers, multimedia and digital storytelling, study skills tools, literacy tools, writing tools, collaborative tools, research tools, math tools, and tools to compensate for handwriting issues. This Wikispace is organized by Karen Janowski (an assistive and educational technology consultant in MA) and Joyce Valenza (a librarian extraordinaire in PA). Janowski also has a highly recommended blog: [Teaching Every Student](#). 
2. [WatchKnow](#)--Free Educational Videos for K-12 Students to support the UDL classroom. The site aims to index and organize 50,000 educational videos by the end of 2010! Each video is categorized and accompanied by a description, age level information, and rating. The site is maintained by teachers and librarians and is foundation supported. Brought to us by a co-founder of Wikipedia, Larry Sanger. Videos are not often captioned.
3. [The Assistive Technology Training Online Project \(ATTO\)](#). This site, from the University of Buffalo, provides information on AT applications that help students with disabilities learn in elementary classrooms; it includes online tutorials, AT planning tools, and links. Funded by OSERS.
4. [Need AT for Math?](#) Check out this great video posted at the Virginia Department of Education's Training and Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC) at VCU's Assistive Technology Blog. "Sometimes we just need a little memory jog to remind us of some AT solutions we might consider when students are

For more information contact the [AT School Swap Administrator](#).

With your help we can build a rich database of equipment and a broad community of educators with AT know-how.



New Product Spotlight: The Mobile Activity Player



by Mayer-Johnson

Now available to borrow from [the short-term device loan program](#) at UCP-Berkshire, this lightweight touchscreen computer is designed for and preloaded with Boardmaker Plus Player software and Curriculum Companion activities.

Choose from a laptop or tablet configuration.

Make direct selections with fingernail, stylus, or other options.

The device easily carries activities between classrooms and to and from school and home. User friendly, the Mobile Activity Player's activities may be shared with the

struggling in math..."

5. [LD Online-Technology](#). Many good articles about the use of technology for students with learning disabilities. Included are general information, technology reviews, classroom applications, and information on making the right decisions when integrating technology.
6. [A.T.TIPScast](#) is an audio podcast produced by Christopher Bugaj, co-author of *The Practical and Fun Guide to AT in Public Schools*. The podcast is also practical and fun and usually less than 10 minutes long.
7. [Advocacy Institute](#) is DC-based non-profit and home to "The Advocate Academy"-- a Webinar service designed to meet the training needs of special education advocates. [Archives of Past Webinars](#) include AT related topics such as: "AT, AIM, NIMAS, UDL and More: Making It All Work for Students with Disabilities," and "Prepping for an IEP Meeting: What you need to know about AT consideration and AT implementation" (for sale for \$25 each, and sometimes free over the summer).
8. [Access Text](#) is an electronic database designed to make it easier for colleges to get students with print disabilities specialized textbooks in time for classes. Created by the Association of American Publishers and the University of Georgia.
9. [Techmatrix](#) is an online tool for finding assistive and learning technology products for students with special needs. It was created by the National Center for Technology Innovation (NCTI) and the Center for Implementing Technology in Education (CITeD).
10. [National Center On Accessible Instructional Materials \(AIM\): AIM Product Tutorials](#) provides links to dozens of screencast videos on how to use different types of AIM software products (unfortunately they are not captioned). Each of the tutorials presented focus on a different aspect of accessible instructional materials and services for use in classrooms and at home and offer detailed practical instruction in the use of AIM and related products. Developed by the AIM Consortium and the Michigan Department of Education, the purpose of the tutorials is to provide a suite of tools for learning about and using assistive technology applications that support the use of AIM (i.e. digital text, audio, and braille).
11. [No Limits 2 Learning: celebrating human potential through assistive technology](#) is a blog by Lon Thornburg, an AT specialist and trainer in Oregon. Thornburg writes compelling posts about the AT he uses with students with disabilities (K-12) and recommends useful resources.

whole class or conducted independently.

[Learn more about the Mobile Activity Player and Boardmaker Plus at Mayer-Johnson.com.](#)

Reminder: MassMATCH and the U.S. Department of Education make no endorsement, representation, or warranty expressed or implied for any product, device, or information set forth on this newsletter. Neither MassMATCH nor the U.S. Department of Education has examined, reviewed, or tested any product or device contained in this newsletter.

Upcoming Events

UCP-Berkshire (MassMATCH AT Regional Center) in Pittsfield:

September 22nd
Open House on AT for Education! Hands on time with the latest technology for educators, therapists, students, and family members. Resources for how to borrow and/or acquire AT. 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

October 20th
Come learn about "The Pearl" reading device from [Freedom Scientific](#) as well as various means of magnification. 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

November 2nd
"What did she say?" Come see, touch, and try devices for individuals who are hard of hearing. 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

UCP-Berkshire
208 West St., Pittsfield.

12. [Teaching Learners with Multiple Special Needs](#) is the award winning blog of "resources and ideas for teachers of learners with severe, profound, intensive, significant, complex or multiple special needs" by Kate Ahern, M.Ed. She writes, "I tend to think outside the box and I love the creative side of teaching, such as creating curriculum units or finding ways to make breakthroughs with students who are harder to reach."

MassMATCH Help for Educators

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ([IDEA](#) 2004) requires school districts to consider AT devices and services for each student with a disability. In Massachusetts, the [Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](#) recommends that AT be considered for students with disabilities before the creation of the student's [IEP](#) (Individualized Educational Program) goals. Why? Because students with disabilities benefit from AT to such a degree that not only can it help them reach educational goals, it can also help them envision new and higher goals.



MassMATCH has programs and website resources designed to help educators learn about and get access to AT appropriate for their students with disabilities. To get started, browse these MassMATCH [FAQs from Educators](#).

Get AT Stuff Highlights



GetATStuff--the New England "Craig's List" for AT--currently has hundreds of items available for sale or free throughout the six New England states.

As of this writing, GetATStuff highlights include:

22 Vision-related items

including a talking alarm clock for \$5 in Acton, MA

2 Hearing-related items

including an amplified cordless telephone for \$45 in Manchester, NH.

18 Speech Communication-related items

including a free DynaMyte AAC device in Winooski, VT

Contact Dawn Matthews by email at ATRC@ucpberkshire.org or by phone 413-442-1562 ext. 24

Easter Seals (MassMATCH AT Regional Center) in Boston

October 20th

A presentation about Read and Write Gold by Nate Stevens, District Sales Manager, of [TextHelp Systems Inc.](#)

3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

November 17th

A Presentation about [The Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library](#) and Downloadable books in general, given by James E. Gleason, Deputy Director of the Library 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Please RSVP: 617-226-2634 or email atrc@eastersealsma.org

Easter Seals
89 South Street, Boston
[Get directions to Easter Seals Boston](#)

Disability Law Center Conference on Transition Planning

October 2nd

A free training and clinic for parents on special education transition services for children with disabilities, ages 14-22. In Portuguese and English.

9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
300 North Harvard St., Allston. 617-787-6313.
Learn more at this [DLC-MA Special Education Conference web page](#).

TechAccess-RI

10 Learning, Cognitive, Development related items

including a frog swing for \$70 in Williston, VT

360 Mobility, Seating, and Positioning related items

including a free Action Arrow power wheelchair in Amherst, MA

303 Daily Living related items

including a free Convoid Stroller tray in Sudbury, MA

56 Environmental Adaptation related items

including Amramp wheelchair ramp sections for \$220 or best offer in Newton Center, MA

53 Transportation and Vehicle Modification related items

including a 1999 accessible Dodge Ram for \$4,999 or best offer in Sudbury, MA

5 Computer related items

including a DynaVox DV4 with headmouse for \$1,000 or best offer in Rutland, VT

13 Recreation, Sports, and Leisure related items

including a Somatron Playfloor for \$1500 or best offer in Worcester, MA

Go to www.getatstuff.org to search items by category or geography or to list what you need. Go to the [MassMATCH AT Swap and Shop web page](#) to learn about additional AT reuse sites.

Conference

November 30th

Established as a forum for the community to learn about assistive technology, the conference attracts over 350 participants each year, including assistive technology, users, families and direct service providers from all areas of practice. Crowne Plaza Hotel, Warwick, RI. [Learn more at the TechAccess-RI conference web page.](#)

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