



Good News!

Continuing TAM's steady membership growth through 2012, we saw a 5.45% increase in our membership for May—the second biggest jump in all of CEC. Thank you TAM members for joining and staying with us.

President's Message

Joel Mittler, Ed.D.

Thank You TAM Members

As you begin the new school year, I want to take a few moments to thank you for your membership in CEC and particularly for your membership in TAM. Your continued support demonstrates not just your commitment to the education of children with disabilities and those that are gifted and talented, but your specific interest in how technology can be beneficial to those children.

We know that membership in TAM is optional, but I want you to know that both CEC and TAM are worthy of your support. As you are well aware, our world of education is under scrutiny and facing significant review. As recipients of public financial support, most of our schools and universities are dealing with the impact of the financial crisis of the past few years. Politicians and policy makers, particularly in an election year, are speaking out on issues that affect our work. According to many observers, the upcoming election is one of the most important in our lifetime. (Please be sure to VOTE!!)

Having recently returned from the CEC CAN meeting (hint: read the CAN report), I can tell you that CEC is probably the most important advocate our field has to work for the issues we care about. Staff from both the Department of Education and the Congressional Committees that write the laws and prepare the budgets consistently report how much they rely on CEC staff to provide them with information and advice. I was proud to hear the comments about how often they look to CEC.

We, in TAM, work to provide you, our members, and the rest of the field, with current research and information that we believe will support your work. Whether it is through our recently published book, *Apps for All Students: A Teacher's Desktop Guide* (available through our website), our well regarded Journal of Special Education Technology (JSET), or our other publications or activities, we believe that we are leading the field and sharing the best that we have to offer.

As President, I am continually amazed by the energy and commitment of our Board. As volunteers with busy lives, they are always there to take on some task to benefit TAM. And I want to believe that your continued membership is your way of recognizing all their efforts and encouraging them to continue their excellent work.

Have a wonderful school year, and once again, thank you for your support of CEC and TAM.

What's Inside...

President's Message	1
AT Communities.....	2
CAN Report	3
Share a Story	4
RESNA Meeting Update.....	4

TAM on Facebook

TAM is excited to announce its new Facebook page. TAM members who are Facebook users are welcome to search Facebook for Technology and Media Division of the Council for Exceptional Children. Please request to join the group!

AT Communities

Anya Evmenova

Do you want to learn more about AT but do not know where to start? There are a number of groups that provide high quality information about AT and AT services. Following is a brief description of some groups with contact information.

QIAT

The Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology Services (QIAT) Consortium (http://natri.uky.edu/assoc_projects/qiat) is a group that supports dissemination and implementation of quality indicators for AT services in school settings. QIAT hosts annual summits and maintains a listserv, which is one of the most comprehensive forums for AT practitioners. The QIAT list includes over 2,500 subscribers including individuals with disabilities and their family members, teachers, administrators, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, advocates, university faculty, and AT vendors. The discussions involve various topics related to AT and AT services primarily in school environments, such as specific AT applications (both hardware and software), mobile technologies and apps, ways to meet the needs of students with certain abilities and needs, AT careers, certification, and much more. To join the QIAT list, go to <http://lsv.uky.edu/scripts/wa.exe?SUBED1=qiata&A=1>

CAST

Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST; <http://www.cast.org>) is a non-profit organization that focuses on research and development opportunities for individuals with disabilities through Universal Design for Learning (UDL). CAST provides on-site and online (e.g., webinars) professional development activities, hosts summer institutes, and offers internship opportunities to expand UDL knowledge and skills.

RESNA

Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA; <http://www.resna.org>) is a non-profit professional organization dedicated to rehabilitation engineering and AT. RESNA offers a certification (Assistive Technology Practitioner, ATP), holds an annual RESNA conference and ongoing professional development activities, develops AT standards for equipment and knowledge, supports research and public policy endeavors, and facilitates forums for continuous exchange of ideas. It also publishes the Assistive Technology Journal. RESNA members include practitioners, clinicians, educators, and researchers from the field of rehabilitation engineering and AT; AT manufacturers and consumers; policy makers; and advocates. Discussions involve new technologies and pieces of equipment, problem solving for specific situations and users, AT funding, etc. To join the RESNA listserv, go to <http://list.resna.org/SCRIPTS/WA-RESNA.EXE?SUBED1=AT-FORUM&A=1>

NATE

The National Assistive Technology in Education Network (N.A.T.E.; <http://natenetwork.org>) is an online community aiming to foster collaboration between professionals from multiple fields and disciplines involved in AT services in educational settings. N.A.T.E. offers a myriad of manuals and forms that can be purchased as hard copies or as electronic downloads. It also provides a list of resources organized into categories such as AT assessment, AT consideration, AT in the IEP, AT tools, and AT transition. N.A.T.E. also fosters a mentoring program to provide support to individuals who provide AT services in schools and other educational settings from experienced AT service providers. To join the N.A.T.E. mentoring program as a mentor or a protégé, go to <http://www.natenetwork.org/professional-support>

ASHA

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA; <http://www.asha.org>) is a professional association for audiologists; speech-language pathologists; and speech, language, and hearing specialists. ASHA hosts a Special Interest Group (SIG 12) on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) that addresses the quality of AAC services provided to consumers throughout the life span. The AAC SIG provides an online community and live online chats where members can discuss issues related to AAC. The ASHA community also supports knowledge of various listening and hearing AT devices.

SLATE

State Learners of Assistive Technology in Education (SLATE; <http://www.slatenetwork.org>) is a community of practice supporting collaboration between AT leaders designated by state departments of education. You can find the person of contact for the following states: Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Utah.

ATIA

Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA; <http://www.atia.org>) is a non-profit organization for manufacturers, sellers, and providers of AT devices and services. ATIA hosts an annual conference; publishes a bimonthly electronic newsletter; and provides webinars on AT products, services, and best practices for business, government, education and other agencies serving people with disabilities.

Closing the Gap

Closing the Gap (CTG; <http://www.closingthegap.com>) is a professional network

(continued on page 3)

CAN Report

Funding and Policy Action Await November

Joel Mittler, Ed.D., TAM CAN Coordinator

I have recently returned from the annual CEC CAN meeting at the CEC headquarters. At the four-day meeting, CAN coordinators from around the country spend a day and a half being apprised of current concerns and hearing CEC's positions. We then spend a day hearing from folks from the Congress, the Department of Education, or other local organizations that are making policy or influencing it. Finally, on the fourth day, we head up to Capitol Hill to advocate on behalf of CEC and our membership by meeting with members of Congress or their staff.

Most noticeable to me was the respect that CEC has in Washington. Representatives from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), from the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSE), from the House Education and Workforce Committee, and from a Senator's office all commented on how they turn to CEC for advice, for support, for input and even for specific legislative language. It made me proud to be a member of such a well-regarded organization.


However, I wish the overall news was more positive. Our field is facing possible significant budget cuts next year. "Sequestration", the cuts to

discretionary spending that were built into the Budget Control Act passed last summer, call for automatic cuts of about 8% starting January 2, 2013 to all IDEA funding, Jacob Javits gifted and talented funding, and Special Education Research funding unless Congress acts. In addition, the appropriation process for Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13), that begins October 1, 2012, is underway. While the House of Representative Budget guidelines suggest another significant cut in IDEA funds, the Senate Appropriations Committee did approve small increases in IDEA Pt. B (school age) programs, Pt. C (early intervention) programs, and Special Education Research. In addition, and of particular relevance to TAM members, the committee approved a 14% increase in funding for state Assistive Technology programs. Hopefully these small increases will prevail as the process moves along and the sequestration cuts will be reversed.

One of the highlights of the meeting was hearing from Dr. Debbie Speece, Commissioner of the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSE) and attending a Congressional briefing on Special Education Research organized by CEC and attended by many staff persons representing members of Congress. Perhaps as a result of the

briefing, the Senate Appropriations Committee did approve a \$10 million increase in funding for special education research. We also heard from Melody Musgrove, the Director of the Office of Special Education Programs about her efforts to streamline IDEA reporting.

In addition, we heard from representatives working on the implementation of the Common Core standards and from those working on the new assessments that will hopefully be fairer to students with disabilities. We even participated in some brainstorming work of generating ideas for a future reauthorization of IDEA. CEC, as always, wants to be proactive in making recommendations to the Congress whenever it gets around to revising this law, even as we await continued action on the reauthorization of ESEA (NCLB).

The overall sense was that most action in Washington on both funding and policy probably will wait until after the election in November. More than one participant commented on the importance of this upcoming election to our field. So with that I will end and offer an invitation to you. If you wish to receive a weekly update on policy from CEC, contact me at jmittle@liu.edu and please vote this November. 


AT Communities (continued from p. 2)

for AT practitioners, parents, and persons with disabilities. CTG provides training opportunities through annual conferences and webinars. It publishes a bimonthly magazine providing information about AT implementation in education, rehabilitation, and vocational settings. CTG also hosts a free discussion board for sharing questions, ideas and best practices in the

field of AT. To access the AT discussion board, go to <http://closingthegap.org/forums/ubbthreads.php>

ATA

Alliance for Technology Access (ATA; <http://www.ataccess.org>) is a network of

community-based resource centers that provide guided technology exploration for children and adults with disabilities and functional limitations. ATA focuses on public education, information and referral, capacity building in community organizations, and advocacy/policy efforts. 

Share a Story

Failure is NOT an Option

Nichelle Stewart
Fairfax County Public Schools

Hi, I'm Nichelle Stewart and this is my story. It all started when I was four years old. I was living life. Then I became five years old, and it was time to start school. School was fun the first few days, but then it all changed. We started learning how to read, and I remember being so happy because my brother could read and now it was my turn. In my kindergarten class, I quickly found out that I was not like the other kids. I did not yet know what that was going to mean to me, but I was in the "turtle" reading group.

By time I was in elementary school, I was told by my teacher, "I get paid whether you learn or not." I still didn't really know what that meant. I remember one day a girl saw me reading "Frog and Toad," and she said, "This is for babies!" She laughed at me and told

the whole class. After that, I kept to myself and I would not read out loud to anyone. I was nine years old, and I already wanted to drop out of school.

Bad enough I felt that I didn't fit in, but I was starting to feel like every teacher wanted to make a science project out of me—as if I was some kind of product with a glitch; some kind of broken toy. Everyone wanted to know what was wrong with me, or if I was faking it—maybe I was lazy. What did that mean? Was I stupid? I kept thinking, "Why did this happen to me? Why me?" Eventually, I started acting out, getting more and more frustrated. Talking back became "my thing". I was so mad that my teachers didn't understand me! I mean, didn't they go to college for this kind of stuff?

I was not looking forward to going into high school. It was hard, but I remember

being in class thinking, "There's got to be some way for me to learn!" My teacher called Mrs. Kropp, was my school's assistive technology resource teacher. Once I met her, everything changed. She taught me all about Write:OutLoud, Co:Writer, and Read:OutLoud. Then she brought me a Smartpen and Dragon Naturally Speaking. Next thing you know, reading and writing became fun! And the next thing I knew, my reading level went up four grade levels in one year! Now I go to various events and talk about my experiences, and I'm on Don Johnston's website. I'm Fairfax County Public School's first Assistive Technology Student Ambassador. In one year I saw what I wanted and needed, and I found my calling.

I'm Nichelle Stewart. I'm sixteen years old and I'm proud to be me, with Dyslexia or without. This is my story and "Failure is not an Option!"

TAM Represented at RESNA Meeting

Margaret Bausch

Recently, TAM was one of 11 organizations represented at a Partners Luncheon hosted by the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA). RESNA, as described on their website is a "professional organization dedicated to promoting the health and well-being of people with disabilities through increasing access to technology solutions," sponsored the meeting during their annual conference in Baltimore, MD. The purpose of the event was to discuss common areas of interest, possible collaborations, and ways to work together to advance the field of assistive technology and rehabilitation. Jerry Weisman, president of RESNA, explained that through collaboration

and a united voice supporting the use of assistive and rehabilitative technologies by persons with disabilities, we can accomplish more than if we stand alone.

Group members discussed the challenges faced by each organization and the potential future of the partnership. In the immediate future, there will be a position paper drafted by RESNA followed by a conference call with the partners. In addition to TAM and RESNA, the organizations represented included the American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. (AOTA), American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), Association of Driver Rehabilitation Specialists (ADED), Assistive Technology Industry

Association (ATIA), Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), National Coalition for Assistive and Rehab Technology (NCART), National Rehabilitation Association (NRA), and National Registry of Rehabilitation Technology Suppliers (NRRTS). Look for more information on the Partnership in upcoming TAM newsletters.

TAM CONNECTOR

TAM Connector is published 4 times a year by the Technology & Media Division of the Council for Exceptional Children. Email all news items to Anya Evmenova (aevmenov@gmu.edu). Change of address should be sent to Anna Henderson at the Council for Exceptional Children, 2900 Crystal Drive, Suite 1000, Arlington, VA 22202-3557.

© 2012 Technology and Media Division (TAM)
www.tamcec.org