

## Digital Access Newsletter

*January 2025*

Welcome to One Network – This newsletter is an overview of the digital opportunity services offered by organizations like Literacy Minnesota and resources for those wanting to know more about digit access.

We all experience the world differently; this includes how we interact with technology. It is important to make technology accessible to anyone and everyone. Digital opportunity services are all about access and this month's article goes over assistive and adaptive technology.

The focus of assistive technology is to help individuals with disabilities. Even though this technology has a group it focuses on you never know when something may be helpful to you. **Have you ever used a form of technology that is considered assistive or adaptive?**

### **Covered within this issue:**

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  - ELDES curriculum launched
  - Upcoming TLC Meeting
- **Literacy MN Digital Literacy Services**
- **Other Minnesota Initiatives**
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<https://www.literacymn.org/>

700 Raymond Avenue Suite 180, Saint Paul, MN 55114

**Mission:** Literacy Minnesota connects people to transformative learning, sparks innovation in literacy and mobilizes change.

# Community Bulletin



## **The Importance of Assistive Technology**

When it comes to technology it's all about accessibility. A big part of making something accessible is that all users can interact with it. Assistive and adaptive technology came about to help individuals with disabilities have that access.

The first official definition of assistive technology came in The Assistive Technology Act of 1998. This law defines it as "any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities." This technology was being used already but the government was now recognizing it as something that needed defining in order for better funding.

Adaptive technology is considered to be within the assistive technology category. While assistive devices are technology that can be used by any ability level, adaptive equipment is more specialized technology that is specifically designed to help individuals with disabilities.

To cover the wide variety of needs there are many different options for assistive and adaptive technologies. Here are some examples.

**Physical:** Wheelchairs, prosthetic limbs, walkers, ramps/lifts, utensil holders, service animals, accessible parking/bathrooms and PCAs (Personal Care Assistants)

**Sight:** Braille, glasses, text-to-speech, magnifying glass and readable text (color/size/font)

**Sound:** Sign language, closed captioning, hearing aids and noise canceling headphones

**Learning:** Note takers, adaptive keyboards, education apps, recorders and fidgets

These devices and services cover some of the areas that assistive and adaptive technology can improve the experience of an individual with disabilities. It is important to remember these when it comes to digital opportunity services.

The Americans with Disabilities Act is one of the laws that works to ensure inclusive technology. It was created in 1990 and had some amendments in 2008. ADA “sets out requirements that apply to many of the situations you encounter in everyday life. Employers, state and local governments, businesses that are open to the public, commercial facilities, transportation providers, and telecommunication companies all have to follow the requirements of the ADA.”

There is also the World Health Organization’s Global Cooperation on Assistive Technology (GATE) initiative. GATE works to bring people together in the fight for a more accessible world. “The GATE Community has over 2,500 members from 135 countries, including assistive technology users, policy makers, service providers, donors, educators, advocates, manufacturers and researchers. The diversity of membership is a strength, providing rich discussion and helping to generate strong solutions to difficult challenges.”

Smaller organizations are doing their part too, especially ones specific to employment. Three of these are Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (PEAT), Job Accommodation Network (JAN) and Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN). These organizations want to help individuals with disabilities be successful in the workplace by giving them access to the assistive technology they need.

In Minnesota, we have the 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.” They even have a guide to assistive technology that anyone, not just those who use assistive technology, can use to better understand this area of technology.

Remember, access should be for everyone so make sure to include assistive and adaptive technology when talking about digital opportunity services.

## Article Sources

### **Minnesota Adult Basic Education Physical and Nonapparent Disability Assistance**

<https://pandamn.org/>

### **National Center on Accessible Educational Materials**

<https://aem.cast.org/>

### **Universal Design for Learning – UDL Tech Toolkit**

<https://sites.google.com/view/freeudltechtoolkit/home>

### **Center for Applied Special Technology**

<https://www.cast.org/what-we-do/universal-design-for-learning/>

### **Top 5 Accessibility**

<https://top5accessibility.com/blog/adaptive-equipment-vs-assistive-devices-technology-that-drives-accessibility-for-all/>

### **Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology**

<https://www.peatworks.org/accessible-technology-vs-assistive-technology/>

### **Optimum Health Solutions**

<https://opt.net.au/optimum-life/assistive-technology-vs-adaptive-equipment-whats-difference/>

### **Assistive Technology website**

<https://www.assistivetech.com/adaptive-technology-versus-assistive-technology/>

### **Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario**

<https://www.ldao.ca/introduction-to-ldsadhd/what-helps/assistive-technology/>

### **eduTOOLBOX**

- <https://www.edutoolbox.org/rasp/3688?route=node/128>
- [https://glencoe.mheducation.com/sites/dl/free/0078901359/594902/AAT\\_v4.pdf](https://glencoe.mheducation.com/sites/dl/free/0078901359/594902/AAT_v4.pdf)

### **Assistive Technology Act of 1998**

<https://www.congress.gov/105/plaws/publ394/PLAW-105publ394.pdf>

### **North Dakota Assistive**

<https://ndassistive.org/blog/40-years-of-assistive-technology-so-many-innovations-so-many-more-future-opportunities/>

### **National Library of Medicine: National Center for Biotechnology Information**

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK11418/>

### **Accessibility Spark**

<https://accessibilityspark.com/types-of-assistive-technology/>

**United Disabilities Services**

<https://udservices.org/adaptive-devices-people-disabilities/>

**World Health Organization**

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/assistive-technology>

**Americans with Disabilities Act**

<https://www.ada.gov/>

**Minnesota STAR Program**

<https://mn.gov/admin/star/>

**Minnesota's Guild to Assistive Technology**

<https://mn.gov/admin/at/>

**Disability Hub MN**

<https://disabilityhubmn.org/top-topics/independence/assistive-technology/>

**Networking in Education and Assistive Technology**

<https://mn-neat.org/>

**ConnectAbility**

<https://connectabilitymn.org/>

**US Department of Labor: Office of Disability Employment Policy**

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/employment-supports/technology>

## Lyndale Neighborhood Association – ELDES Curriculum



**ELDES**  
English Learner  
Digital Essential Skills

### English Learner Digital Essential Skills (ELDES)

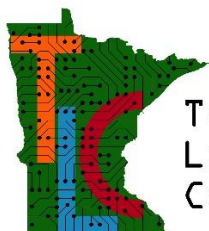
ELDES is an innovative digital literacy curriculum. It was written to bridge that gap for Intermediate English language learners and native English speakers who are new to computers. The ELDES curriculum is created by the Lyndale Neighborhood Association with funding through Hennepin County's Office of Broadband and Digital Inclusion.

**Check it out here:** <https://lyndale.org/eldes/>

Thank you, Grayson Betz (Lyndale Neighborhood Association) and Katrina Benson (Neighborhood House) for working hard to get this curriculum out to the people!

**Grayson Betz email:** [grayson@lyndale.org](mailto:grayson@lyndale.org)

## Technology Literacy Collaborative – Upcoming Meeting



Technology  
Literacy  
Collaborative

The TLC is a group of aspiring leaders in the digital equity field within the Twin Cities. They gather to problem solve and discuss best practices.

### Next Meeting

When: February 20 from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Where: Team Meeting

The upcoming meeting will be hosted by Cynthia Child. She will be discussing her work as TECH Services Program Coordinator at Senior Community Services. Katrina Benson from Neighborhood House will also be discussing the ELDES curriculum.

Email Katrina at [kbenson.neighb@gmail.com](mailto:kbenson.neighb@gmail.com) to get the meeting link.

**TLC on LinkedIn:** <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/14411564>

# Our Digital Literacy Services

Digital opportunity services require access to devices, an internet connection and digital skills. Below you can find how Literacy Minnesota is helping provide those services.

<https://www.literacymn.org/digitalliteracy>

## Northstar Digital Literacy



The Northstar program assesses digital skills and provides classroom curriculum and self-directed online learning.

**Website:** <https://www.digitalliteracyassessment.org/>

## Digital Access and Navigation

**Digital Navigators** mentor individuals in using technology and help with getting low-cost internet. For more information on our services contact Susan at [swbrandt@literacymn.org](mailto:swbrandt@literacymn.org).

<https://www.literacymn.org/digital-equity-navigation>



**Midway Location:** 553 Fairview Ave N, Saint Paul, MN 55104

The Midway digital literacy lab at Goodwill-Easter Seals is coordinated by Manee Thao and open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

**Minneapolis Location:** 627 W Broadway Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55411

Katey Miller works at the Minneapolis campus facilitating computer labs and Northstar digital literacy classes. The lab is open from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays.

## Trainings and Workshops

We offer an assortment of programming for instructors that focus on digital literacy.

<https://www.literacymn.org/digital-literacy-trainings-workshops>

# Other Initiatives in Minnesota

## Neighborhood House



The Adult Education Program at Neighborhood House provides adult learners with ongoing educational support and learning opportunities. One of the areas of service they offer is digital literacy classes.

<https://neighborhoodhousemn.org/>

## Lyndale Neighborhood Association



The Lyndale Education Program serves the residents of Horn Towers with literacy, language, and career skills. They created the ELDES curriculum to help address digital literacy gaps in English learners.

<https://lyndale.org/>

## PCs for People



This is a nonprofit social enterprise working to get low-cost quality computers and internet into the homes of individuals, families, and nonprofits with low income.

<https://www.pcsforpeople.org/>

## Office of Broadband Development



<https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/>

Helping Minnesotans understand broadband options available and work together to improve availability and use of high-speed broadband services.

## Connectivity Blueprint

### Connectivity Blueprint:

*Digital Equity Roadmap for Ramsey County and Saint Paul*

An initiative led by Ramsey County and Saint Paul to create a community-guided roadmap for achieving digital inclusion.

<https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/projects-initiatives/ramsey-connected-computer-internet-resources/connectivity-blueprint>

## Technology Literacy Collaborative (TLC)



The TLC is a group of aspiring leaders in the digital equity field within the Twin Cities. They gather to problem solve and discuss best practices.

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/14411564>

Check out this newsletter's resource section on our website to see more local organizations.

<https://www.literacymn.org/one-network-newsletter-resources>



# Resources



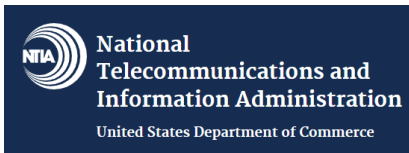
**Digital Equity Act**  
<https://www.digitalequityact.org/>



**National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA)**  
<https://www.digitalinclusion.org/>



**National Collaborative for Digital Equity (NCDE)**  
<https://www.digitalequity.us/>



**National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)**  
<https://www.ntia.doc.gov/>

## **NDIA's Important Words**

### **Digital Equity**

A condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy and economy. Digital Equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services. Sometimes called TEQuity/Tech Equity which is the shortening of technology equity.

### **Digital Literacy**

The ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.

### **Digital Navigators**

Trusted guides who assist community members with ongoing, individualized support for accessing affordable and appropriate connectivity, devices, and digital skills.

*Thanks for Sponsoring*



**COMCAST**

**More information here:** <https://www.literacymn.org/digital-equity-navigation#one-network-newsletter>

**Join the mailing list here:** <https://www.literacymn.org/one-network-signup>

**Questions, comments, or concerns?** – Contact Frances Bates at [fbates@literacymn.org](mailto:fbates@literacymn.org).



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