



## For Immediate Release

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# Speaking from Her Experience

*Speech-generating device company selects North Ed student as ambassador*

**TRAVERSE CITY, Mich.** – Kathleen “Kat” Prince is funny, always ready with a joke. She has a zeal for conversation, an almost limitless vocabulary and admits she has a lot to say. When she does speak, it’s with the assistance of a speech-generating computer device.

Equipped with a remarkable memory, a beautiful smile and a sparkle in her eye, Kat is a pretty impressive young adult. She has many friends, and is a strong advocate for others. With a burgeoning artistic talent and distinct creative flair, she is almost always dressed in hot pink.

Like many her age, Kat adores Taylor Swift and gets a laugh from the cast of her favorite TV show – “The Big Bang Theory”. Yet she wakes up each morning needing a few accommodations. Since she was 3 years old, Kat has been using a computer to communicate with the aid of assistive technology. In addition to her speech-generating device, she relies on a wheelchair for mobility and human assistance for most other daily functions. But that hasn’t slowed her down.

A former Suttons Bay student and recent graduate from Northwest Education Services (North Ed) Transition Campus Life Skills Center, Kat has secured a place in the workforce with [Grand Traverse Industries](#) (GTI) in Traverse City this summer. She’s also been selected to serve as an [ambassador for PRC-Salttillo](#), a worldwide innovator of speech-generating devices and other assistive technology.

She began using an eye-tracking Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device over 15 years ago, using her eyes like a computer mouse to select word choices and create sentences to achieve spontaneous, independent and interactive communication. She currently uses a language system called Unity on a PRC Accent® speech-generating communication device.

Last fall, Kat was asked to serve on a six-person panel at a statewide AAC conference to speak about her experience with her communication device. She shared answers to questions prepared ahead of time, including a personal introduction of herself and her perspective on the importance of adding slang and trendy words in her device’s vocabulary system. She demonstrated great skill in communicating her thoughts and ideas, fielded questions on the spot from the audience, and showed empathy for other panel members when they struggled. Her contributions proved invaluable to practitioners and educators in AAC technology.

Following the conference, as a compliment to her success, Kat was invited to serve as a PRC-Salttillo Ambassador to inspire and help others learn how to use the PRC Accent® AAC

communication system. In her capacity as an ambassador, Kat will talk with groups in pre-professional programs and at conferences about using a communication device. She'll have opportunities to write blog posts to share her experiences and ideas with others, and she'll be able to serve as a mentor to someone just starting out with a device.

The technology behind AAC devices has progressed significantly since Kat's childhood, yet it has been one constant that has allowed her to advocate for herself and make great strides in her educational journey. Working with her parents and a team of educators and support staff, Kat participated in crafting her own Individualized Education Program (IEP), a legally required plan for any student receiving specialized instruction that identifies learning goals and aligns supports and resources to ensure progress each school year.

Megan Graham, assistive technology consultant with North Ed, first met Kat as a third grade student at Suttons Bay Elementary School, and worked with her through the 12th grade and then throughout Kat's postsecondary education at the Life Skills Center, a part of North Ed's Transition Campus for 18-26 year olds receiving specialized instruction.

"Kat was one of my first students, almost 20 years ago, and as she has grown and matured immeasurably, she also pushed me to learn and grow in so many ways, making me a better therapist," said Graham. "She is one of the most remarkable young ladies that I've had the pleasure of knowing and working with. Even though we all knew she would do great things, she managed to shatter just about every expectation we set for her."

All students have diverse abilities, and all are considered general education students first. Though special education is often unknown or misunderstood in the state of Michigan and across the country. These misconceptions can perpetuate stigma and exclusion, creating additional significant challenges for those with special needs and their families. Students with disabilities face higher dropout rates, lower academic achievement and fewer job opportunities.

In the United States, accommodations, including special education services, are provided based on the needs of every student. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed in 1975 and is a law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities. In Michigan, eligible students are able to enroll in special education services up to age 26.

A recent survey in Michigan found that nearly 75% of surveyed students who exited high school after receiving special education services were enrolled in higher education, competitively employed, or in a postsecondary education or training program, [according to the Michigan Department of Education](#).

"The value of special education is limitless," said Carol Greilick, North Ed's assistant superintendent of Special Education. "To some degree, we all need accommodations that allow us to learn or to do our jobs effectively. Special education teachers and professionals provide students a level of support that allows them to thrive and truly achieve their full potential, and that is an invaluable service."

Kat exited North Ed's Transition Campus Life Skills Center program with the rest of her graduating class on Friday, May 30. She will participate in programming and enter the workforce with [Grand Traverse Industries](#) (GTI) in Traverse City this summer, and will continue to serve as a PRC Ambassador, expanding her working knowledge and ability to communicate using AAC technology while pursuing her "limitless potential" to inspire others.

# LIMITLESS POTENTIAL

THE POWER OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

#MILimitlessPotential

*Limitless Potential is a coordinated effort among Michigan intermediate and local school districts to tell the important stories happening in Special Education.*

**Photos below provided courtesy of Northwest Education Services**



Above: Kat Prince, a recent graduate of Northwest Education Services Transition Campus Life Skills Center, is taking her talents to the next level, joining the local workforce with Grand Traverse Industries (GTI), and as a PCR Ambassador, sharing her insight and knowledge with others across the nation on the use of assistive technology that helps her speak and communicate effectively.





Above and below: Kat Prince, with Assistive Technology Consultant Megan Graham, at the Northwest Education Services Transition Campus graduation ceremonies in Traverse City on May 30, 2025.

