

Nothing else like it

Six-year-old Tyler Serrano turns the page. The story about mummies has him bouncing and grinning, and whenever he's ready to continue, he can swipe the iPad screen himself. For the first time, he's reading at his own pace.

Tyler's wearing a new device, custom-made by a group called [fabricATe](#), that enables him to extend his arm and move it laterally. It's made of corrugated plastic and Velcro, with a soft pad underneath so it glides over his table. His mother Cindy Serrano says she's never seen anything like it on the market. "If there is something, I'm sure it's a bajillion dollars."

Through fabricATe, she got it free of charge. [Suzanne Milbourne](#), an assistive technology (AT) researcher and co-director of the [Delaware Early Childhood Assistive Technology Demonstration](#) at CDS, formed the diverse group of volunteers, who craft simple devices from common materials so individuals like Tyler may acquire them quickly at no or low cost.

fabricATe first met in December 2015. Its monthly laboratories have seen educators, therapists, child care specialists, woodworkers, engineers, robotics whizzes, painters and librarians pitching in. After reviewing [requests for AT](#) submitted online by parents, teachers and therapists, many of which can be challenging, the artisans and innovators, with their wide range of backgrounds, experiences and levels of expertise, produce novel solutions.

Tyler's therapist submitted the request that led to his arm support. After one visit and 20 minutes of designing, fabricATe built a prototype. It went through two redesigns within the week to ensure it was fitted and functioning the way Tyler needed.

Eventually, Milbourne wants fabricATe to become community-run, growing through promotions and demonstrations until groups of volunteers are meeting nationwide, advised by a cloud of experts and sustained by donated materials.

And making hundreds—thousands—of Tylers happier and more empowered than they'd thought possible.



Here's looking at you: Tyler Serrano peeks at the camera before returning to his latest love—books.