

Closing The Gap

FEBRUARY / MARCH, 2012
VOLUME 30 - NUMBER 6

Solutions

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PRESENTER: PHYL T.

MACOMBER

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90 MINUTES

MONDAY, MARCH 12, 2012

3:00 pm - 4:30 pm Central Daylight Time

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Create your own eBooks for a variety of portable platforms. Learn how to add recorded sound, how to work with your own images, which eBook Readers contain text-to-speech capability and how to keep your page formatting intact, as well

as how to use free online ePub programs to publish your books in eBook format. A variety of applications for creating eBooks, the differences between eBook Readers, downloading and importing free books from the Web and moving files from your computer to eBook Readers on iPad, iPod and Nook Color will be demonstrated.

PRESENTER: DAN HERLIHY

Using iPad Apps in Special Education

90 MINUTES

THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 2012

10:00 am - 11:30 am Central Daylight Time

AND

THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 2012

1:00 pm - 2:30 pm Central Daylight Time

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The iPad has become a very popular device in special education. In this Webinar, participants will experience the iPad with the latest and greatest apps for augmentative communication, speech articulation, storytelling, reading/writing and more. You will learn the newest features for customizing and configuring the iPad for individual users. You will then explore various applications that can be used in special education classrooms. A wide variety of apps across many different categories will be covered. Alternate methods of access, such as switch interfaces for scanning purposes, will also be discussed.

PRESENTER: MARK COPPIN

Apps for Students with ASD

90 MINUTES

THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 2012

12:30 pm - 2:00 pm Central Daylight Time

AND

THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 2012

3:00 pm - 4:30 pm Central Daylight Time

Registration fee \$55

(No cancellations, no refunds)

The iPod touch, iPhone and iPad have proven to provide a wealth of possibilities

for all students. Many of our students with autism spectrum disorders present unique learning styles and preferences. Participants in this Webinar will learn about many applications that could make a difference for children with ASD. This Webinar will cover apps for communication, organization, planning, story telling, reading/writing, behavioral support and much more. Participants will learn how these solutions can make a difference for children with ASD. At the end of the session, participants will have a better understanding of apps, device management and accessories that are available. They will also become more aware of some of the most promising apps available today.

PRESENTER: MARK COPPIN

Beyond Angry Birds - Fun Educational Apps

90 MINUTES

THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 2012

12:30 pm - 2:00 pm Central Daylight Time

AND

THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 2012

3:00 pm - 4:30 pm Central Daylight Time

Registration fee \$55

(No cancellations, no refunds)

The iPod touch, iPhone and iPad can provide many exciting, engaging and entertaining apps. However, these devices can and should be used for more than just sheer entertainment. This Webinar will explore many games that can be used in educational and therapeutic sessions. While the apps are fun and entertaining, they work on specific skills and knowledge. Ways to use and manage entertaining apps on your device will also be covered. While games and gaming on these devices can be challenging at times in the educational setting, they can also be very motivational and beneficial.

PRESENTER: MARK COPPIN

Video Modeling and Visual Stories on the iPad

90 MINUTES

THURSDAY, MAY 10, 2012

10:00 am - 11:30 am Central Daylight Time

AND

THURSDAY, MAY 10, 2012

1:00 pm - 2:30 pm Central Daylight Time

Registration fee \$55

(No cancellations, no refunds)

Video modeling and visual stories can be very powerful tools when working with students with special needs. They can be used to teach appropriate social skills and behaviors. Video modeling and visual stories can also help to reduce anxiety and confusion of social events by letting the child see the sequence of events before they encounter them. The iPod touch, iPhone and iPad are great tools for capturing and creating these visual supports. This Webinar will cover the basics of capturing and editing video and photos using the iDevice. We will then provide overviews of apps that can be used for creating video modeling activities and visual stories. This Webinar will also cover several video and video editing apps.

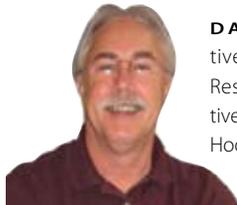
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WEBINAR PRESENTERS:



MARK COPPIN, B.S., is an Apple Distinguished Educator and the Director of Assistive Technology, Anne Carlsen Center for Children, Jamestown, ND.



DAN HERLIHY is an Assistive Technology/Technology Resource Specialist, Connective Technology Solutions, Inc., Hoosick, NY.



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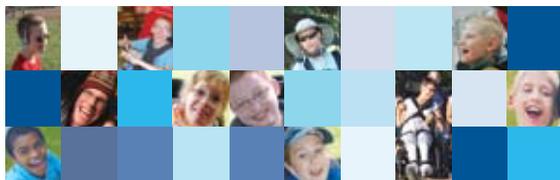
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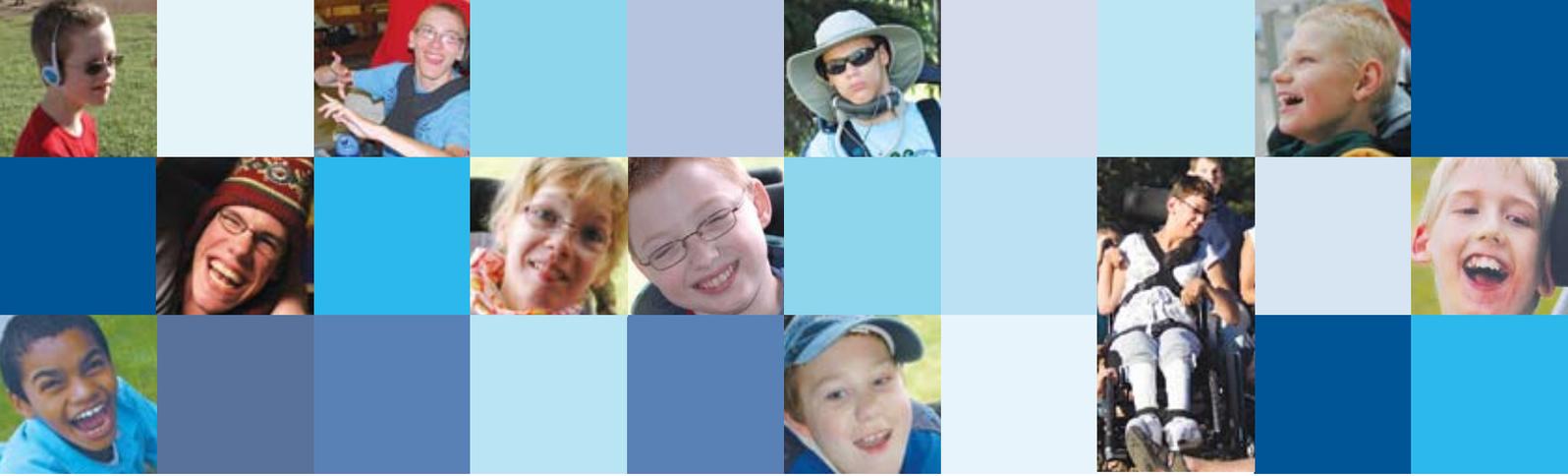


1. *Evaluation of the Effects of the Intel® Reader on Improving the Reading Performance of Adolescents with Learning Disabilities*, SRI International, November, 2010.

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Separating Fact from Fiction in

Assistive Technology Implementation

By Jason L. Gibson, Jason K. Carroll and Channon K. Horn



JASON GIBSON Jason's work has focused on supporting students with learning and behavior problems, including emotional and behavioral disorders, autism spectrum disorders and moderate to severe disabilities. Recently, his research has targeted how to leverage Web 2.0 technologies for student intervention delivery and professional development. Jason holds degrees in psychology, social work, and is a doctoral candidate in special education at the University of Kentucky (UK). He also holds a graduate certificate in Distance Education Program Administration from UK.



JASON CARROLL is an Instructional Technology Consultant out of Lexington, KY. He is a graduate of the Assistive Technology Applications Certificate Program (ATACP) at California State University at Northridge and holds an MBA. He can be reached at <jason@cksec.org>.

CHANNON HORN is an Assistant Professor in the School of Education at Asbury University. In addition, Channon obtained her graduate certificate in Distance Education Program Administration from the University of Kentucky.

Walk in any classroom today and you will see a wide variety of instructional activities, materials and technologies in place. This may include whole classroom supports, such as interactive whiteboards and document cameras, or more specific supports for students with disabilities, such as communication and accessibility devices. Many times, when educators explain why they are implementing a particular strategy or technology, the responses include: **I learned this in college; I learned this at an in-service or conference; I learned this from another teacher; it seemed to work; or any combination of the above. These responses are acceptable, providing that the source of information is accurate and up to date. Unfortunately, there are three reasons why these sources of information should be approached cautiously.**

First, there is a limited amount of peer-reviewed data in the field of assistive technology (AT) when compared to other fields of education research. Edyburn (2010) even humorously stated that the most consistent quantitative data we have in the field of AT are the receipts listing the costs of materials purchased. With this lack of data-based outcomes, educators frequently encounter sources of information based on what a colleague believes to work rather than what the data demonstrates will reliably work.

Next, caution should be used due to technology advancing at an incredibly rapid pace. Technologies that were taught in a university course can become commonplace and even outdated the following semester (Loeding, 2002). This is a tremendous asset to individuals with disabilities and the field of AT as a whole. However, in a field starved for evidence-based practices, researchers cannot keep pace. It is possible that by the time a new technology is acquired, research is conducted, accepted for publication and disseminated to the field, a newer and more advanced version is currently on the market. So educators must wrestle with the decision of purchasing and implementing a technology that is outdated but has evidence of effectiveness, or the newer version with promising new features.

The final caution lies within the field of research itself. Researchers are less likely to submit and be accepted for publication of educational practices that the evidence suggests do not work. Schuster (personal communication, January 17, 2007) remarked that there should be a journal that is committed to publishing practices that are ineffective. It is possible that there have been numerous studies in which the strategy or technology was not effective, yet the information was not disseminated and subsequently continues to be commonplace in educational settings across the world.

In this article, three common classroom practices related to the field of AT that are in question will be discussed along with practical steps on how to move forward to effectively increase outcomes for students with disabilities. The purpose of this article is not to discourage, but rather to encourage educators to challenge assumed effective practices in today's classroom and to assist in moving the field forward.

PROBLEMATIC PRACTICES

Symbol Supports. Software programs that involve replacing or combining text with picture symbols are being utilized with increased popularity among students with diverse needs. Frequently, symbols are used to facilitate communication and provide access to instructional material. More recently, the pairing of words and symbols has also become commonplace during reading and writing instruction. However, when looking into reading and writing research, there is some literature that calls into question the pairing of symbols and words during reading and writing instruction. Data in this literature suggests the use of symbols in conjunction with individual words make it more difficult for students to develop reading and writing skills and may increase confusion (Hatch, 2009; Pufpaff, Blischak, & Lloyd, 2000; Rose & Furr, 1984; Saunder & Solman, 1984).

Though continued research on reading and writing instruction with symbol-word pairing is warranted, rationale for proceeding cautiously exists. First, a picture symbol may have multiple meanings or represent abstract ideas. This broad pictorial representation could impede a student's ability to acquire and/or generalize the information being taught. Second, students who learn to interpret symbols rather than read words have decreased opportunities to encounter material they understand in their natural environments. This complicates engaging with others outside of the class-

room because there are fewer opportunities to interact with individuals who understand the meaning of the symbols utilized. Finally, during numerous site visits to classrooms, it is common to observe students with multiple pages of reading passages created with symbol-word pairings. Although the intention of such accommodations is well meaning, this gross overuse of picture symbols may be stifling the learning process for students with disabilities.

The intent here is not to say that symbol-word pairings or software that has this capability should not be used. For example, Pennington, Stenhoff, Gibson, and Ballou (in press) used PixWriter in conjunction with simultaneous prompting to teach a child with autism to write three word sentences. It was not the software alone that brought about the change, but rather the combination of the software with a systematic instructional program that has repeatedly been shown to be effective when teaching students with autism (Akmanoglu & Batu, 2004; Kurt & Tekinlftar, 2008). However, one must consider that a page full of symbols and words will not teach a child to read, nor will a student using software that pairs symbols and words alone learn to write.

Text-to-Speech. When considering tools to support success in the general setting for students with disabilities, text-to-speech (TTS) is an effective tool for learners in comprehending text (Gibson, 2011). Specifically, TTS is a tool that could be used to provide immediate access to content in collaborative settings in conjunction with the delivery of strategies to increase reading skills and long term access to content for those learners who have not benefited from literacy instruction. With the rapid development of technology, TTS is cost effective and can be delivered via mobile devices, computers and handheld pens. In light of the promise TTS provides, there are two major misconceptions in today's classroom.

The first misconception is that everyone who would benefit from TTS is using TTS. In our work in districts that have acquired a variety of TTS devices/software, classroom observations reveal little to no use of the tools by students. Many plausible explanations exist, including that the student or teacher does not know that the TTS tool is available for use, how to operate the TTS tool or when the use of TTS is most appropriate.

Second, though TTS offers significant promise for diverse learners, it is not a one-size-fits-all support. Among many factors one must consider, the listening comprehension performance of the learner is critical. One cannot assume that because a learner can hear text aloud that the learner is also able to comprehend what was heard. This is an important concept to understand because

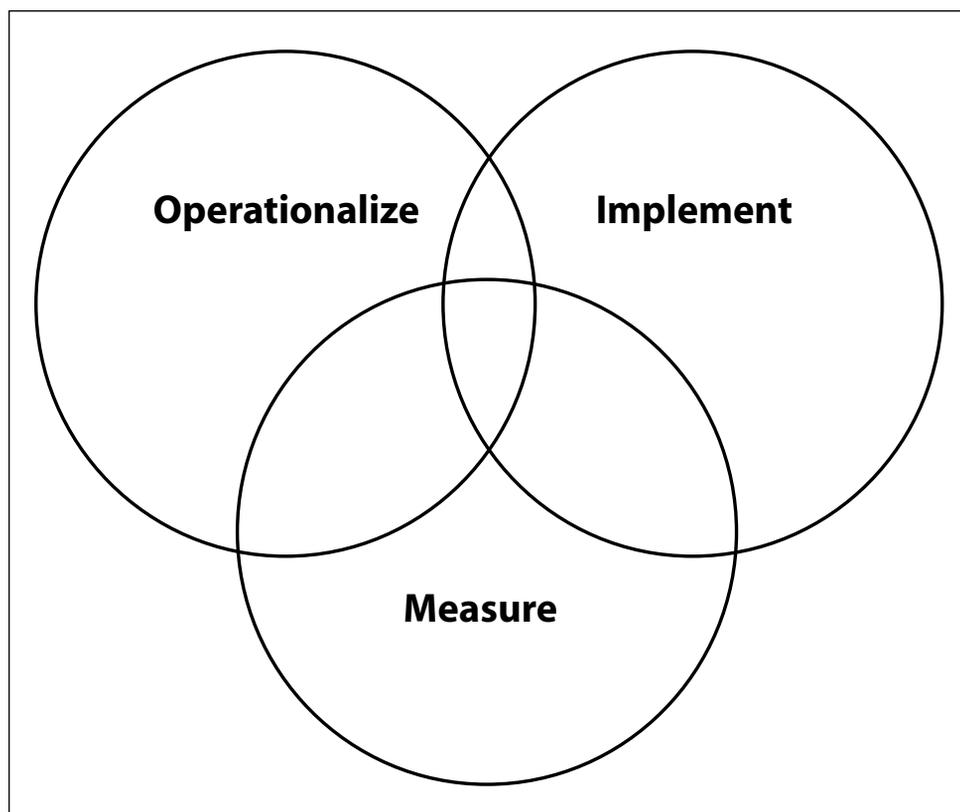


Figure 1 - Three necessary components to increase outcomes through the use of AT.

IMPLEMENTATION FIDELITY		
Outcomes	Good	Poor
Good	Continue the intervention	Option 1: Retrain the intervention and try again for better results Option 2: Identify the intervention steps that were not necessary and implement the more efficient yet still effective version.
Poor	Change the intervention	Retrain intervention and implement again

Table 1 - Decision-making options when intervention and technology are operationalized, implementation fidelity measured and outcome measures are collected.

reading comprehension and listening comprehension are not the same. So if the goal is increased comprehension and the learner has proficient listening comprehension skills, it is likely that an increase in comprehension will exist. However, if the learner does not have proficient listening comprehension, it is not likely that TTS would be as beneficial.

Learning Styles. One of the most far-reaching questionable practices is the concept of learning styles. Anyone familiar with Universal Design for Learning or teaching in general has heard the frequent use of this educational concept. Several companies and Web sites exist that offer learning style inventories and matching instructional materials that can be purchased in pursuit of teaching to the style of the learner.

What is known from the literature is that no quality empirical data exists that supports the idea of teaching to the preferred learning style of the student (Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer, & Bjork, 2009). This is not to be confused with students requiring certain types of instruction due to disability. While it is good for teachers to consider the needs of their individual students, the idea of using learning styles assessments and subsequently delivering instruction to match has yet to be proven as anything other than time consuming and potentially expensive.

Instruction does need to incorporate the senses, not because it was identified from a student preference inventory, but because it is good teaching. When considering effective practices that have support in the literature, most involve visual, auditory and kinesthetic modalities. For example, constant time delay is an evidence-based practice that could involve visual, auditory and kinesthetic elements. It is not relevant to what degree a learner is visual or auditory, what is relevant is that the learner now knows multiplication facts.

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

What are educators to do with the knowledge that popular practices may be in question and the field is in dire need of those informed by peer-reviewed research? Three components are necessary: operationalize the AT, implement the AT accurately and measure the outcomes (see figure 1).

Operationalize the Intervention. First, identify what AT will be implemented. This process is called operationalization, which is clearly articulating what is being done so that it could be done again in exactly the same manner. This involves answering the WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHO and HOW of what is being done. More clearly, what specifically is to be used or implemented, when and where will it be used, who will be involved and how much will be incorporated in various environments. Though this requires significant effort during the initial stages, it allows everyone to understand every aspect of the AT from start to finish. If it is successful, then it is possible to replicate the process again. If it does not work, then various components of the AT could be manipulated, in addition to the option of discarding the entire AT.

Implement Accurately. Now that the AT has been clearly defined, develop a procedure for ensuring that the intervention is implemented exactly how it was intended. This is referred to as checking for implementation fidelity. To check if the intervention is implemented correctly, print off the steps to delivering the intervention. Then have a colleague observe the delivery of the intervention and mark when each step is implemented correctly. Take this number, divide by the total number of steps that should have been implemented and multiply by 100. This will provide the percentage of correct implementation. It is important to periodically assess the degree of correct implementation. Without this information, one cannot determine if the effectiveness/ineffectiveness is due to the AT or just poor implementation. Many classrooms have



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multiple individuals working with students. A solid instructional team is one that incorporates frequent implementation checks throughout the intervention process.

Measure the Outcomes. Finally, it is critical that outcome measures are identified and collected. This requires educators move past a feeling about how a student is doing to identifying measurable, observable outcomes. For example, instead of reporting that Juan is able to use Proloquo2Go on the iPad, collect data to report that Juan increased his unprompted communication attempts in the cafeteria by 50 percent over the past two weeks. These types of data can be reliable, reviewed frequently and inform the process of continuing, modifying or discontinuing an intervention or technology.

EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING

When missing any one of the three components described above, decision making is a guess at best. Once all three are incorporated, effective decision making can occur (see Table 1). When considering the three components, the following actions are suggested:

If the outcomes were good and the implementation was correct, then continue the intervention.

If the outcomes were good, but the implementation was poor, then retrain the intervention and implement again for potentially better results or identify the intervention steps that were not necessary and implement the more efficient yet still effective version.

If the outcome measures were poor and implementation was poor, retrain the intervention and try again. It is possible that there was no success because of the poor implementation.

If the implementation was good and the results were poor, then change the intervention.

CONCLUSION

The most effective AT are those that incorporate all three components. Ensuring that each intervention, technology and procedure is clearly operationalized, accuracy of implementation is periodically assessed and desired outcomes are measured. As these components are included into each learning environment, two outcomes will result: AT will more effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities and practice will drive research to support the forward movement of the field.

When considering the effort required to implement these components, one can easily become overwhelmed. Theodore Roosevelt is often quoted saying "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." With this perspective in mind, select one student using AT and begin there. As comfort and skill are developed, begin ensuring that more students

receive the same quality instruction until it becomes part of your instructional methodology.

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results of a computer-assisted ABA intervention with children with Autism



By Christina Whalen, Laura G. Lara-Brady, Shannon Cernich, Lynn Young, Mikki Payne, Heather Whiteside

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) has been shown to be effective for young children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in multiple studies (e.g. Lovaas, 1987; Smith et al., 2010) but there is little research on effective practices for teacher-delivered interventions in schools. Results from one of the first such studies found that students who used the software for longer periods of time showed higher scores on the Brigance Inventory of Early Development, compared with students who did not use the software.

In recent years, computer programs have been developed as an option for ABA delivery and have shown effectiveness for training service providers (e.g. Granpeeshe et al., 2010), as well as for direct instruction for children (e.g. Whalen, Liden, Ingersoll, Dallaire, & Liden, 2006; Whalen et al., 2010). TeachTown: Basics is an ABA-based computer-assisted intervention (CAI) that was designed to meet the developmental needs of children with ASD in the 2-7 year

developmental range (See Photo 1 with characters). The program includes computer lessons to teach language, cognitive, academic and social skills, and also includes naturalistic off-computer activities to facilitate generalization and target skills not taught on the computer (e.g. social interaction, play, imitation and motor skills).

Research on TeachTown: Basics have been primarily conducted with parent and teacher implementation, primarily for children with ASD. In a parent implementation study using a multiple-baseline design, eight students (four autism and four Down Syndrome), ages 3-6 years, participated for 10 weeks in the home (Whalen, Schreibman, & Ingersoll, 2006). Results showed a significant change from pre- to post-test scores across curriculum (53 percent increase) on the TeachTown: Basics software for all students. Collateral effects were observed where students with ASD (n=4) demonstrated a 105 percent increase in language and positive social behaviors while using the computer, compared to a play condition with their parent. They made more spontaneous comments (e.g. "Look, a rocket ship!"), more positive affect and more joint attention behaviors (e.g. coordinated gaze). Inappropriate behaviors decreased both on (61 percent decrease from baseline) and off (44 percent decrease from baseline) the computer. The children with Down Syndrome responded to the CAI but did not demonstrate the same collateral effects as the ASD students.

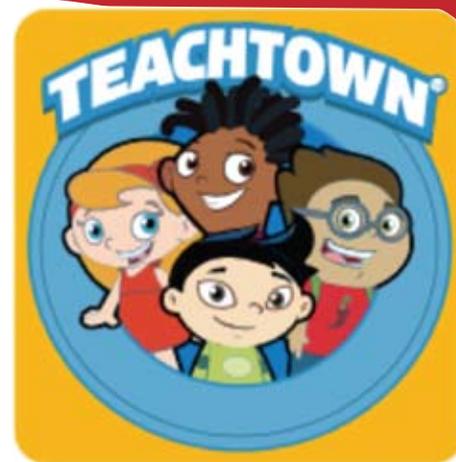
Success has also been demonstrated in self-contained classrooms with teacher implementation supporting 47 preschool and K-1 students who have ASD (Whalen, et al., 2010). Students who used the CAI (for three months with a 20 minute teacher

implementation per school day on the computer and 20 minute per day naturalistic off-computer activity) demonstrated larger developmental gains on the teacher-completed Brigance than the comparison group students in all tested learning domains. Students who used the CAI more consistently demonstrated even larger gains than the students who used it less consistently.

Many users of this program do not have an ASD diagnosis, so efficacy research was needed for the other special needs students. A follow-on study was performed for children with ASD to increase the sample size and to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention over a longer period of time (seven months compared to three months in previous research). The study evaluated 90 preschool children in special education classrooms over the course of a school year in a diverse military school district with teacher implementation.

METHOD AND DESIGN

Ninety students in special education and Pre-K classrooms from eight schools in the Killeen area used TeachTown:Basics. Students were divided into two groups: treatment and comparison. Students in the intervention group (64) differed only from the comparison group in that 1:1 ABA time was replaced with computer-delivered ABA (15-20 minutes/day for preschool and two 20-minute



sessions/day for Pre-K). Teachers were instructed to implement off computer activities throughout the school day as appropriate for each student (1:1 or small group). However, no certain number of off computer activities were mandated or measured.

In addition to the data collected on the CAI software, developmental gains were measured at the beginning and at the end of the academic year, and a social validity questionnaire was given to teachers at the end of the academic year. The CAI software collects data on student responses, duration of intervention, prompting and mastery of skills. Every trial collects data that are aggregated and summarized in

53% Increase on pre to post-test scores across the TeachTown: Basics curriculum

105% Increase in language skills and positive social behaviors

61% Decrease in inappropriate behaviors while on the computer

44% Decrease in inappropriate behaviors after using the computer

graphs and monthly reports automatically. The automatic data collection allows teachers to make daily data-based decisions, plan for IEPs and communicate progress with parents and administrators. The data were also available to the research team to analyze overall trends and progress. Developmental gains were also measured using the Brigance Inventory of Early Development (IED II) (Brigance, 2004), which provides a measure of the child's skills along with suggestions for next steps in the child's learning program. This measure was chosen as it was currently in use and teachers were familiar with administration and scoring. Although the measure covers a wide range of skills, teachers reported change in areas that are specifically targeted in the CAI, including auditory memory, sight words, general concepts, visual discrimination, alphabet, social emotional skills, daily living skills, expressive language - isolated skills, expressive language - early skills, and receptive language.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students in the treatment group spent on average 23 hours on the software, and mastered six lessons across domains, the majority in the communication/receptive domain. Results suggest that students in the treatment condition started with significantly lower age equivalent scores in the expressive isolated and academic cognitive domains of the Brigance IED compared with students in the comparison group.

Surprisingly, although the comparison group was higher than the intervention group in almost all IED learning domains at the beginning of the academic year, students in the treatment group had larger learning gains in months. Students who used TeachTown: Basics experienced statistically significant greater gains than students in the control group in seven out of 10 learning domains on the Brigance IED, compared to only three out of 10 domains for the comparison group.

Overall, the more time students spent on TeachTown: Basics, the higher the score was on the Brigance IED $r(64) = .21, p = .09$ and the more lessons were mastered. Furthermore, consistent implementation by teachers resulted in better scores within the software program and improved Brigance developmental gains.

Results in this study showed similar performance levels by students of all abilities, including ASD, in all domains of the IED. Students with diagnoses ranging from speech impairment to Down Syndrome and mental retardation performed at similar levels to those with ASD. This similarity of performance was identified in nine out of 10 tested Brigance IED domains (except sight words), although results were not statistically significant in any domain.

These results reinforce the importance of developing evidence-based interventions that can be used in real-world settings and that can work in public school classrooms. When such evidence is established, interventions qualify to serve a larger number of children with autism and other special needs.

Despite the positive student outcomes in this study, the intervention is not likely to have long-term effects without teacher buy-in. Regarding the social validity of the treatment, teachers believed that TeachTown: Basics was an acceptable intervention for students in pre-school and pre-kindergarten. Overall, 88 percent of teachers reported this treatment as likely to result in permanent improvement, and 88 percent of teachers had a positive reaction to TeachTown, with only one teacher giving a neutral response. Although many studies report effective ABA interventions with trained ABA therapists (e.g. Smith, Groen, & Wynn, 2000) and parents (e.g. Smith, et al., 2010) in clinical settings, few studies use special education teachers in regular schools, despite the fact that most children with autism and other special needs are receiving their treatments

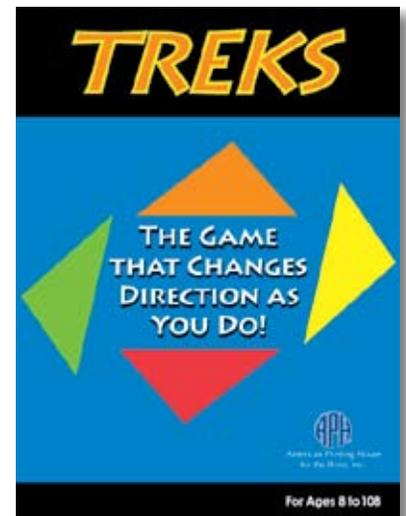
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from their teachers. In 2007, 95 percent of students with disabilities were served in regular schools (U.S. Department of Education & National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).

Although previous research shows promise for this CAI (e.g. Whalen, Liden, et al., 2006; Whalen, et al., 2010; Whalen, Schreibman, et al., 2006), this study uses a larger sample (90 students compared to eight and 47 participants in previous studies) and measures effectiveness of the intervention over a longer period of time (nine months compared to two and three months in previous studies). This study also contributes to the ABA intervention research as one of the few studies to look at the effectiveness of an intervention in classrooms with special education teachers (rather than clinical environments with trained ABA therapists or parents). This is also one of the first ABA intervention studies to look at the efficacy of an intervention with a variety of special needs students (rather than just ASD). One of the most unique contributions of this research is the use of technology (rather than 1:1 therapists) to facilitate an ABA-based intervention, allowing for more consistent implementation, more accurate data collection, easier progress reporting and reduced cost for schools. The use of technology may offer a realistic and feasible solution for cash-strapped schools while still offering interventions that are effective and produce significant results.

ABOUT TEACHTOWN: BASICS

TeachTown: Basics is a CAI program that includes a comprehensive curriculum aligned to standardized measures (e.g. The Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills-Revised-ABLLS-R, Partington, 2008), as well as state and national core standards. The program was originally designed to meet the needs of students with ASD but has recently had broader implementation with other special education and at-risk students. The computer curriculum includes domains of language development, social and emotional skills, adaptive skills, cognitive skills, language arts and mathematics. No prerequisites are required to use the software and it is touch screen compatible. The program automatically adjusts to meet the individual needs of each student. The instructional methodologies in the program incorporate common techniques in ABA, including discrete trial instruction and Pivotal Response Training (PRT). Specifically, the program presents objectives in discrete tasks and guides learning through prompting and reinforcement (e.g. Lovaas, 1987). The program does not use mass trials. Rather, it incorporates generalization into the trials from the very beginning, similar to how skills are taught in PRT (e.g. Pierce & Schreibman, 1997).

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Creating an E-Mentoring Community

By Sheryl Burgstahler

This article provides an example of how a school or community program can create and sustain a mentoring community to promote the success of youth with disabilities in college and other adult life activities.

PEER, NEAR-PEER AND MENTOR SUPPORT

Students with disabilities can benefit from help in developing self-determination, academic, employment and independent living skills necessary to successfully transition to college and other adult life activities. Getting this support from successful role models with disabilities can be particularly impactful as they establish goals, develop skills and learn to request reasonable accommodations. Individuals in helping relationships have sometimes been classified into three types – mentors, peers and near-peers.

Mentors, typically more experienced adults, can help protégés explore career options, set academic and career goals, develop professional contacts, identify resources, strengthen interpersonal skills and develop a sense of identity. They can also guide young people through the transition from the structured environment of high school to less structured postsecondary environments.

Peers, individuals who are the same age, can offer some of the same assistance as mentors – coaching, counseling, advice, information, encouragement and role modeling. Peers are sometimes easier for young people to approach than adults and offer a higher degree of mutual assistance.

Near-peers, individuals who are a year or two older, can help high school students who are entering college learn to ask for accommodations, work with professors, live independently and make friends. In addition, mentor, peer and near-peer supporters can become empowered as they come to see themselves as contributors in their supportive roles with other people.

Mentoring occurs in everyday life – for example, when an uncle helps his nephew choose a career or when a college student invites his high school cousin to visit his dorm to see what college life is like. Intentional mentoring, where a program establishes connections with the goal that positive mentoring will occur, can take on many forms.

- One-to-one. This mentoring arrangement assigns one mentor to one protégé.
- Mentor with a small group. Due, at least in part, to a shortage of available adult mentors, group mentoring programs have emerged. One mentor may be assigned to a small group of young people, allowing the mentor to support all of these protégés. This format also provides an opportunity for peer and near-peer support as well.
- Mentor group with a protégé group. A group of mentors may also work with a group of protégés. In this group mentoring model, positive outcomes can result from participants' interactions with each other in addition to their interactions with the mentor(s). Thus, peer and near-



A DO-IT Scholar engages with DO-IT Scholars, Ambassadors, and mentors.

peer interaction occurs, as well as the more traditional mentoring relationships.

The line between protégé and mentor that exists in traditional one-to-one mentoring is often blurred, particularly in group mentoring environments. Roles can change, depending on the topic. For example, in a group of teenage peers, near-peers and adult mentors, a person in their twenties might ask the group about how to learn to drive a car using assistive technology; a teenager who has already engaged in such training may have the best answer to the question. So, in this situation someone who might have been invited to the community as a mentor is actually receiving mentoring from someone who joined the group as a protégé. In addition, in long-standing mentoring communities, participants gradually engage in more mentor-like communications as they get older and more experienced and as younger participants join the

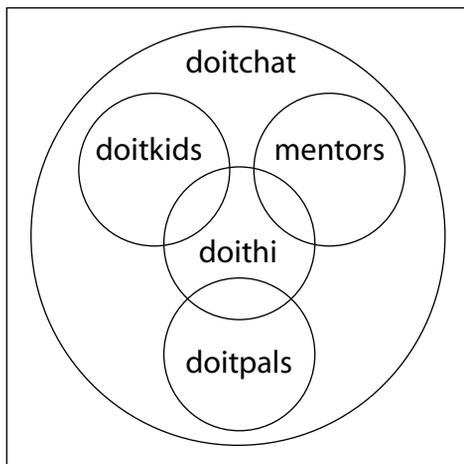


Figure 1 - How individuals in the “doithi” group are drawn from members of their other groups.

group. It might be better, therefore, to think of the role a person is playing in a specific situation rather than the assignment of a role upon entry into a program when analyzing what occurs in exchanges within a mentoring community.

IN-PERSON AND E-MENTORING

In-person mentor, peer and near-peer relationships can be limited by physical distance, time differences, schedule constraints and, in some cases, disability-related communication barriers (such as speech impairments). These constraints do not apply to online communication. The lack of social distinctions, like gender, age, disability, race and physical appearance, in computer-based communication can also promote interaction. With assistive technology, all individuals, regardless of disability, can communicate on the Internet. For example, a person who is blind can use text-to-speech software to read text on a computer screen, and an individual with no use of his hands can use a speech recognition system or other alternative input device to control the computer.

The terms “e-mentoring,” “online mentoring” and “telementoring” refer to situations in which mentoring occurs electronically, usually over the Internet. In e-mentoring communities, mentoring may occur one-to-one or in a group. Benefits of e-mentoring within a group rather than in pairs include the following:

Participants can learn from the experience of many mentors, peers and near-peers.

Mentors can specialize in areas where their expertise is strongest.

The program can be successful even when some mentors are less skilled than others.

The program administrator can view all group conversations and, thereby, more easily manage the mentoring forum.

THE DO-IT E-MENTORING COMMUNITY

Established in 1992, the DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking and Technology) e-mentoring community was reported to be the first intentional Internet-based mentoring

community for teenagers with disabilities when it received the National Information Infrastructure Award in 1995. In 1997 it received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mentoring.

The international DO-IT Center, at the University of Washington in Seattle, is a collection of projects and programs that promote the success of people with disabilities in postsecondary education and careers. The DO-IT Scholars are college-bound high school students with a wide variety of disabilities, including those that impact mobility, vision, hearing, learning, attention, speech, health and communication. DO-IT Scholars are members of a stimulating e-mentoring community. High school graduates who continue to participate as DO-IT Scholar alumni become DO-IT Ambassadors. As Ambassadors, they become near-peer mentors to the younger Scholars. In addition, college-bound teens with disabilities who are not in the DO-IT Scholars program can join the e-mentoring community as DO-IT Pals. The DO-IT e-mentoring community also includes DO-IT mentors; these college students, faculty and professionals, many with disabilities themselves, are accepted into the community through an application process.

DO-IT has studied the nature and value of participation in its e-mentoring community. Thousands of electronic mail messages have been collected, coded and analyzed; surveys have been distributed to Scholars and Mentors; and focus groups have been conducted (Burgstahler & Cronheim, 2001; Burgstahler & Doyle, 2005; Kim-Rupnow & Burgstahler, 2004). Findings confirm that Internet communication can be used to initiate and sustain both peer-peer and mentor-protégé relationships that provide psychosocial, academic and career support. Participants noted that using e-mail allowed them to communicate over great distances quickly, easily, conveniently and inexpensively; eliminated the barriers of distance and schedule; enabled them to communicate with more than one person at a time; and provided them the opportunity to meet people from all over the world. Many reported the added value that others treated them equally because they were not immediately aware of their disabilities.

The value of DO-IT’s e-mentoring community is reflected in the successful lives of its participants and the willingness of those who were once protégés in the program to become e-mentors themselves.

DO-IT, STEP BY STEP

Creating an e-mentoring community requires vision, a technological and administrative infrastructure and ongoing facilitation. Following are steps for setting up an e-mentoring community. Examples from the DO-IT e-mentoring community are shared at each step. Details can be found in *Creating an E-Mentoring Community for Teens with Disabilities: How DO-IT Does It and How You Can Do It Too* (Burgstahler, 2006b).

Establish goals for the e-mentoring community. The purpose of DO-IT’s e-mentoring community is to promote the success of individuals with disabilities in postsecondary education and careers, using technology as an empowering tool.

Decide what technology to use. DO-IT uses electronic mail and distribution lists as the primary communication tools for e-mentoring. This approach is fully accessible to everyone and results in messages appearing in participant e-mail inboxes, making it difficult for participants to ignore the conversations that occur.

In contrast, Web-based bulletin boards, blogs, chat and social networking forums require that participants have the motivation and discipline to regularly enter the system to participate. Some of these systems are not suitable for very slow typists, require that participants be on the same schedule, and/or are not fully accessible to individuals with some types of disabilities. For example, individuals who are blind cannot navigate Web content if it does not include content in graphic images in a text-based format; and individuals who are deaf cannot participate if audio is not interpreted, captioned or transcribed. Be sure that the system selected for communication is accessible to every potential member of the group.

Establish the mentoring group structure.

For example, DO-IT distribution lists include:

- doitkids@uw.edu, for DO-IT Scholars;
- mentors@uw.edu, for the DO-IT mentors, including the DO-IT Ambassadors;
- doitpals@uw.edu, for the DO-IT Pals, a group of teens with disabilities who are not part of the DO-IT Scholars program; and
- doitchat@uw.edu, a super-group of all of the members of the [doitkids](mailto:doitkids@uw.edu), [mentors](mailto:mentors@uw.edu), and [doitpals](mailto:doitpals@uw.edu) lists.
- accessstem@uw.edu, a group of [doitkids](mailto:doitkids@uw.edu), [mentors](mailto:mentors@uw.edu), [doitpals](mailto:doitpals@uw.edu), and other participants interested in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

As DO-IT grew in size, individuals expressed interest in also engaging in conversations in smaller groups with people who have similar accommodation issues. To address this need, DO-IT set up specialized discussion lists. For example, doithi@uu.edu is for participants on other lists with hearing impairments (See Figure 1). Members of this list discuss topics such as sign language interpreters, FM systems and cochlear implants.

Select an e-mentoring administrator and make other staff and volunteer assignments.

A DO-IT e-mentoring administrator obtains the informed consent of parents, distributes training and rules for participation in the community (including Internet safety guidelines), promotes communication in group discussions and disseminates Internet resources of interest to community members. To ensure that individual needs are met, each DO-IT Scholar, Pal and Ambassador is assigned to a staff member, who sends messages to protégés who are not regularly communicating on the [doitchat](mailto:doitchat@uw.edu) discussion list. Other staff assignments include technical support and mentoring leads for subgroups.

Establish roles and develop guidelines, orientation and training for mentors. DO-IT disseminates simple, straightforward guidelines to help potential applicants understand mentor responsibilities. DO-IT also provides Internet-based training for mentors.

Standardize procedures for recruiting and screening mentor applicants. At DO-IT, mentoring opportunities are communicated by word of mouth through organizations with which DO-IT has relationships. This approach helps ensure the quality of mentors and safety of student participants. Prospective mentors complete applications, provide references and undergo criminal background checks. All members of a review board must approve an application before a person is allowed to participate as a mentor.

Develop procedures to recruit protégés. Information about the DO-IT Scholars and DO-IT Pals programs is regularly distributed to schools, parent groups and organizations. An advisory board selects DO-IT Scholars by reviewing their applications, teacher and parent recommendations and school records. Teens interested in becoming DO-IT Pals submit a short online application; if they meet the basic criteria, they are included in the electronic community.

Provide guidance to parents. DO-IT encourages parents to put their Internet-connected computers in high-traffic areas of their homes

and to talk to their children about Internet safety.

Establish a system whereby new mentors and protégés are introduced to community members. The electronic community administrator sends messages introducing new DO-IT mentors and protégés to the group and invites these individuals to send their own introductions.

Provide ongoing supervision and support for mentors. At DO-IT, the mentors discussion list is used by mentors to support one another and by the electronic community administrator to share resources and provide guidance.

Monitor and manage online discussions. At DO-IT, the e-mentoring administrator monitors discussions within the e-mentoring community. This person sends questions to focus discussions and encourages protégés and mentors to contribute questions or thoughts to the group. The administrator distributes weekly messages called "DO-IT Lessons" that point to interesting online resources. These messages can be found online at <http://www.washington.edu/doit/Lessons>.

Employ strategies that promote personal development. The types of online activities DO-IT uses with youth include recognized strategies for self-development, including role modeling, affirmations, self-assessment, self-reflection and visualization.

Monitor the workings of the community as it evolves; adjust procedures and forms accordingly. DO-IT regularly surveys participants in the e-mentoring community to assess their level of satisfaction and collect their suggestions for improvement.

Have fun! Communication between participants in DO-IT's e-mentoring community is enjoyable for everyone. Sharing humor and personal stories is encouraged.

OTHER E-MENTORING PROGRAMS

DO-IT has applied its e-mentoring model in other programs. For example, Access-Computing (see <http://www.washington.edu/accesscomputing/>) and AccessSTEM (see <http://www.washington.edu/doit/Stem/>) – projects supported by the National Science Foundation to increase the participation of students with disabilities in computing fields and in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, respectively – both embrace the e-mentoring model established by the DO-IT Scholars Program to support students with disabilities across the United States as they pursue college studies, graduate school and careers.

Programs without the resources to develop and support their own e-mentoring community may be able to find an appropriate community for their participants to join. For example, any teenager with a disability who plans to attend college can apply to join DO-IT Pals (see <http://www.uw.edu/doit/Brochures/Programs/pals.html>). Other electronic communities are described in the DO-IT Knowledge Base article titled Are there electronic mentoring programs for students with disabilities? (see <http://www.uw.edu/doit/articles?218>)

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Some DO-IT participants have expressed interest in engaging in popular Internet-based social networking environments. DO-IT staff members encourage participants to explore these social interaction tools and invite interested

parties to join them in this type of engagement. For example, several DO-IT participants established a Facebook group called DO-IT Friends. Here, informal communication occurs between those who are interested in this type of social interaction.

CONCLUSION

Peer, near-peer and mentor support can help students with disabilities reach their social, academic and career potential. However, constraints imposed by time, distance and disabilities can make such relationships difficult to initiate and sustain. Building on the success of existing e-mentoring programs like DO-IT's, practitioners can use the Internet as a vehicle for developing and supporting positive peer, near-peer and mentor relationships.

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DISKoveries

Computer Software for Special Needs

By Joan Tanenhaus

Click to Read: Citizenship (Marblesoft-Simtech: www.marblesoft.com) This is the fourth in the excellent Click to Read Series for Mac and Windows. There are four stories for early readers using SymbolStix picture communication symbols (color coded by parts of speech). Designed for ages 3-7, this is an excellent program for vocabulary and language development and the development of early literacy. The programs are very age appropriate for older learners as well. The original and motivating stories included in this volume are A Leader Is (what is a leader and different kinds of leaders, such as parents, teachers, principals, coach, other leaders), I Can Help (different ways "I Can Help" at school, in the neighborhood, in the community), My Country (all about the USA, voting, the president, the flag, the 4th of July) and Recycle It (recycling common household objects). Each of the stories has repetitive lines and pages that really reinforce the concepts and make the story content clearer and more focused. The stories build vocabulary through simple text and picture support and increase literacy skills while providing independence and success. Each of the included stories has a reading mode, where the reader listens to the story, sentence by sentence,

and becomes familiar with the vocabulary and symbols. Clicking anywhere advances to the next page. The story can then be read in an Interactive mode. In this mode, the learner again sees the text, picture and three symbols for the text. They can then click any symbol to hear its meaning read aloud. When they are finished exploring, they can then click the arrow to advance to the next page. In the Tell The Story mode, there are three levels and children tell the story by arranging the symbols. The first level is errorless – two of the symbols are in place and the third (only symbol below the line) just gets selected to complete the sentence. In the second level, two of the symbols are already in place but there are now three symbols below the line and only one is correct. In the third level, children must arrange

the three symbols in correct order to re-create the sentence. There is a Show What You Know activity for each story, where the players can demonstrate their understanding of the core vocabulary in a practice mode or by playing Bingo or Concentration with the picture symbols. The program works with mouse, touch screen or switches and has many options to change voice (male/female, background, etc.) Along with each program is

program plays a sequence that the user repeats using the keyboard (numbers 1-6), mouse or switches. The more you remember, the longer the sequence becomes. The Cause and Effect activity is designed to familiarize the student with the use of the buttons. The user just plays the buttons without having to follow a sequence. This activity can also be used for evaluating switch-using abilities and for teaching the use of up to six switches.

You can also use Cause and Effect as a simple musical instrument by choosing six buttons and setting the feedback prompt to one of the musical instruments (piano, drums, synthesizer). The Monkee See activity teaches the user to play the game. A button will flash a sequence of one to five buttons (you preselect according to training level) and the student then repeats the sequence. After a number of correct answers, the program will add another button to the sequence. After a wrong answer, the sequence is shortened by one. Kopyy Cat activity is the traditional Simon game, adding a new button after each correct response. A new sequence is started after the student is unable to repeat the sequence correctly. In Multi-Player activity, two or more players can play against each other. There are many options to customize the program (number of buttons, type of buttons, auditory prompting and reinforcement, language [Spanish, German, French or Dutch] and access [switch, keyboard and mouse]).

Switch Kids (Marblesoft-Simtech: www.marblesoft.com) This is an updated and upgraded version of a classic switch learning activity for Macintosh and Windows and as an app for iPad too (see review below). The program includes three cause and effect switch training activities. In the first, Funny Sounds and Faces, each switch press shows a new face with a new expression and a fun sound. You can choose the number of faces to use and the background color. In Bubble Gum, press the switch to see the face. Each subsequent switch press presents another step in bubble-blowing process, up to the final step when the bubble pops. You can choose the



Click to Read: Citizenship (www.marblesoft.com)

a "print book," which allows you to print a copy of the story for each student that may be used during guided reading, for independent practice or for home reading. The core vocabulary is also provided on small cards that you can print, laminate and cut apart. The other programs in this series include: Click to Read Life Skills, Click to Read Animal Habitats and Click to Read All About Me. All four of the programs in this series are excellent for literacy and language for learners of all ages – they work extremely well on the SMART Board for small group and classroom interactive lessons.

Kopyy Kattz (Marblesoft-Simtech: www.marblesoft.com) This program, for Mac and Windows, contains four activities for one or more players – it's a Simon-type game in which the

color of the bubble gum and also select to have random early pops. In Build A Kid, each press presents another part of the “kid” picture – head, ears, hair, eyes, nose, mouth, etc., until a fully dressed “kid” is shown. Choose a single child, twins or triplets and also show their names. If you choose twins or triplets, they can be identical (same sex, same clothes) or random combinations. Great on the SMART Board, too, for young children – great fun for the youngest children and a motivating way to work on facial expression and the body.

Pre-Made Boardmaker Activities are new software programs from Mayer-Johnson (mayer-johnson.com). They are a wide range of fun activities and educational programs that do not need Boardmaker software to run them. Just download, install and play. They can be used for early literacy (pre-school) and all the way up to older students and adults. There are activities for transitional and related skills for functioning in the community. They all read the text aloud (a combination of synthesized and digitized speech) and have scanning options. They can be used at the computer and are really good for group activities using a SMART Board. They are like apps for your computer! You can download and try any of these Boardmaker Activities for a seven-day period. That way you can review the program and determine its appropriateness for your students and class before you purchase. Just go to Mayer-Johnson.com and choose Trials from the menu bar.

Early Literacy Packs There are four programs in this series of Pre-Made Boardmaker Activities, for ages 3-6. Each of the activities includes an online book and three supporting language activities. In Pound, Squish, Roll! children listen to the story read aloud, find animal shapes, listen to and correct silly sentences and find words that begin with “p.” In Building with Blocks, children hear a story about building with blocks and play activities, such as identifying colors, listening to silly sentences and finding words that begin with “r.” In Becca’s Bubbles, there is a story about bubbles and activities to find words that begin with “b,” find colors to pop the bubbles and listen to and correct some silly sentences. In Snack Time, there is a story about snacks, an activity to find the snack, silly sentences and finding the words that begin with “c.”

Reading Corner Series Each of the four interactive books in these pre-made Boardmaker activities tells a narrative story with simple consonant-vowel-consonant target words, which are highlighted in yellow. Each page has an illustration and a short sentence that is read aloud with additional highlighting. Children press the arrow to advance to the next page, using either the mouse, touch screen or single- or two-switch input. The “Symbols” button on each page provides access to symbols for all the target words, so the child can respond to questions about the story. Volume 1 contains Our Biggest Fan, The Campfire, Our New Van and Can You Guess? Volume 2 contains Soccer Rules, On Top of the World, Look Up and Hog Heaven. Volume 3 has Under My Bed, The Picnic, Grandma’s Bag and Our Fat Cat. Volume 4 has Yum! Pizza!, Traffic Jam, Spider’s Web, and Little Red Fox Cubs.

Beginning Board Games These pre-made Boardmaker activities are virtual board games – spin the dice, follow the directions and drag your

token the given number of spaces. One to four players can play together. In Circus Counting, students move forward and then count the number of circus animals, wagons, etc. In Cody’s Colorful Crayons, they answer questions about colors. Others in the series include: Rhyming Words, Find The Shapes, Opposites (choose the opposite symbol from the one you land on) and Onset Letters.

Virtual Field Trip Games With this series of pre-made Boardmaker activities, for Grade levels one to three and age-appropriate for older learners, students can take a virtual trip to different places. They will hear a book read aloud with important facts and pictures to illustrate. Presented with well-phrased, clear sentences and interesting photos and illustrations, the different items and situations within each place are explained. Each field trip also includes a Matching Game, a Hidden Picture Game, a “Check It Out” area where the scene is shown with captions that point out other interesting items and a Quiz that requires the student to integrate and think about all the facts they have learned. The different programs in this series include: Planetarium, Washington DC, Baseball, Zoo, Post Office and Hollywood.

Match & Memory Series Each of the programs in these pre-made Boardmaker activities includes a group of mini-games with two levels of difficulty. Users can match picture to goal (with all pictures on screen) or play a concentration-type matching game. Modules available include: Beginning and Ending Letters (match word to the letters it begins or ends with); Consonant Blends (match picture/word to consonant blend or digraph it begins with); Tick, Tock, Time (match digital to analog time for hours, half hours, quarter hours and combinations); Look Closer (match different views of animals, food, nature, extreme close up [part/whole] and combinations. Each time an object is selected, a statement of information about the object is spoken.); Crazy for Color (match object to color, i.e., red wagon to red); and Count Me (match sets of pictures related to categories such as beach, camping, birthday, barnyard, weather and school).

Curriculum Companion This series of pre-made activities is designed to improve reading and writing skills through the use of science and social studies curriculum subjects. The activities within the program are divided into different parts that introduce and teach the subject and also work on reading and writing skills related to the topic. The program is divided into four main areas. In Read, the activities are: Explore (slideshow, characteristics/facts, hidden pictures, symbol explore and teacher tools); Bookshelf (books on topic that are read aloud); Idea map (good for brainstorming the topic); Picture Glossary (pick an icon and get more information) and Flash Cards. In Write, the activities are: Free Writing (write with symbols or keyboard); Structured Writing (using the vocabulary words/symbols to write a sentence); Sentence Building (select the correct word from each column to make a sentence); Errorless Writing (select any word or phrase from each column to make a sentence); Stamping (drag stamps onto a picture to make your own scene); and Word Scramble (select the letters in the correct order to spell the illustrated



My Virtual Field Trip (www.mayer-johnson.com)

word). In Practice, there are multiple choice questions, matching, sorting, labeling, yes-no, true-false and a word search. The Quiz section uses the same activities as above. There is one sheet per topic (i.e. one sorting activity, one labeling activity, etc.). These programs are excellent to use on the SMART Board and there is a large range of topics. Here is a list of some of the current topics available: All about Plants, Being a Good Citizen, Exploring Our Solar System, Money Matters, Healthy Choices, Famous Inventors, Recycling, Changing Seasons, Amazing Animals, Community Faces and Places, How Our Nation Began, It’s Alive, Land and Water, Native American History, Nature’s Neighborhoods, Our Country, Rocks/Minerals/Soil, What’s The Weather, Your Body, and From Here to There. Visit the Mayer-Johnson Web site for a complete list.

Quiz Show Series You can play with one to four players or teams in this Jeopardy-like game series of pre-made Boardmaker activities. Players pick a category and money value for the question (five levels). Then they are presented with a multiple choice question that reads aloud – three choices are presented with symbol and text and are read aloud when cursor is placed on them. Select an answer and if correct, you will hear a fact about the subject, as well as a thumbs-up. If you select the wrong answer, you will hear a buzz and receive the correct answer with some additional information. This is a fun trivia game with lots of interesting information and a fun format to help learning. Quiz Show Series comes in the following topics: Health & Body, Animal Kingdom, Natural Disasters, Music, Music, More Music!, The 50 State Quarters, and Ancient Egypt.

APPLE APPS AND IPAD ACCESSORIES

Cases, Covers and Stands for iPad 2 More suggestions for different solutions to cover, carry and use your new iPad :

Swivel Stand iPad 2 Case (www.boxwave.com) This is a unique and well-designed case that lets you view your iPad in either horizontal or vertical position while also placing it in any one of three pre-formed grooves, in order to find the perfect angle for viewing or typing. It’s also an excellent case to have if you are using your iPad with young children who need varying positioning. In addition to its positioning features, the case allows access to all of Apple iPad,2’s controls, features and ports on the outside of the case. The case’s hidden magnetic activation puts your iPad

to sleep mode to conserve battery when closed – open the cover and the iPad automatically wakes up.

Variable Angle Super Stand (www.RJCooper.com) This is a great stand to use with the iPad, in or out of any case you have, in portrait or landscape view. Made of white plastic, it adjusts to many different angles and, best of all, it folds flat, is very lightweight and is easy to transport. Users just pull apart the two sections and then lift the top edge to find the metal stand and place it in the desired groove to adjust it to different angles. On the stand, RJ has put his Stick & Suck to prevent the iPad from moving around when it is pressed or touched. On the bottom, there are rubber “feet,” also covered with Stick & Suck, so the stand stays firmly on the table, wheelchair laptray, etc. Works great for therapy or for just playing games, watching YouTube, videos, reading books, etc. You can also use it for a keyboard for the computer if you need one placed at an angle.

iPad 2 Smart Sleeve (www.boxwave.com) This case is made of thermoplastic polyurethane and was designed to be paired with Apple’s Smart Cover. It provides durable protection for the back of the iPad 2. It’s thin, flexible and lightweight. It’s easy to slip on but stays securely in place and has cut-outs that provide easy access to all of the controls. There’s a cut-out section that fits the Smart Cover hinge, allowing the iPad 2 to utilize both cases simultaneously. The Smart Sleeve is available in a variety of colors that are designed to match the Apple Smart Cover color options. The iPad 2 Smart Back Cover is similar in design, but is made from polycarbonate and is a little firmer and rigid in flexibility.

Quilted iPad 2 Carrying Bag (www.boxwave.com) This is a great bag to use to if you want extra protection for your iPad when you are traveling or moving around. It is designed so that your iPad 2 fits inside with a Smart Cover and Smart Sleeve attached. The case has thick, soft padding and a front pocket large enough to carry your charger or other small accessories. It has a double zipper design so you can lock your iPad, as well as an integrated and removable carrying handle. If you prefer a slightly smaller case without a handle, SoftSuit with Pocket is a slim but protective carrying case with a double zipper lock design, with soft cushioning and an integrated front pocket with a zipper. It’s slightly smaller and thinner in design, but still fits the

Apple iPad 2 with Smart cover and Smart Sleeve attached.

At times, the built-in speaker of the iPad may not be sufficient for AAC purposes or for classroom/group use. These might help:

Rechargeable Mini Speakers (AbleNet: www.ablenetinc.com) This is a great mini-speaker system for the iPad. Just plug them into the headphone jack and turn them on. There are two amplified speakers that provide excellent sound. They are rechargeable using the included USB cable – connect to your computer when you see the blue power light dimming. For travel and/or storage, the mini speakers compress and connect to each other with a magnet and get stored in the enclosed draw-string carrying case. They also work with your laptop or any other product with a headphone jack.

iMainGo X Portable Speakers (AbleNet: (www.ablenetinc.com) This speaker system and protective case also works with the iPad, as well as most laptops, portable gaming devices, etc., via a 3.5 mm audio jack. The sound is great and the speakers are easy to carry. You don’t need to open the speaker case – just plug into the device and the sound is amplified. There is a rechargeable lithium-ion battery, two headphone jacks, a travel bag with a wrist strap and an adjustable carrying strap. The iMainGo X also features a microphone input that doubles as an auxiliary input. There are dual headphone jacks for two listeners and a jack that lets you use both the headphone jack and the speakers at the same time. One headphone jack plays only through the earphones and disables the external speaker.

Tablet Speaker (www.rjcooper.com) This wireless Bluetooth speaker can be mounted on back of the iPad with the included Velcro or used with its built-in clip. Made by Jabra, it connects (pairs) easily to the iPad and delivers clear speech output, with a built-in volume control and on-off switch. The built-in batteries can be charged through the USB port of your computer.

AbleNet Wireless Speakers (www.ablenetinc.com) If you prefer a speaker that stands nearby on the table or on a laptop tray, this speaker has a mini-stand to keep it positioned. It pairs easily and has a volume control and on-off switch. Its sound is loud and clear. The built-in battery charges through the USB port of your computer and the speaker

can also be connected to an MP3/CD/PSP/Mac with the included 3.5 mm audio cable.

Both wireless speakers can be placed near the iPad or in other parts of the room and the voice and volume remain loud and clear.

APPS FOR LEARNING

Special Words (www.specialiapps.com) This interactive app for vocabulary and sight word recognition has three levels with increasing difficulty to help users learn to recognize written words. It comes with 96 written words and you can easily add more words, pictures

and sounds to increase learning and interest. On the first level, children match a picture to one of four pictures. The name of the picture is spoken when it appears and again when it is matched. When two pictures are matched, they are



Variable-angle Super-Stand (www.rjcooper.com)



Swivel Stand iPad 2 Case (www.boxwave.com)

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replaced with the written word. When all four pictures are completed, four more pictures will appear automatically or manually, depending how you set the options. In the second level, words are matched to words and in the third level, the word is printed and spoken and users find the matching picture. Other options include animation speed, playing the word before and/or after the match and optional reward. You can also use Bluetooth or Wi-Fi to transfer pictures and sounds between copies of Special Words on two devices.



Irregular Verbs (Super Duper: www.superduper-inc.com)



Naming Therapy (www.tactustherapy.com)

Super Duper Apps: (www.superduperinc.com) Super Duper, a well established company that develops excellent learning materials for children with special needs, has developed a series of apps based on their fun deck series. In Irregular Verbs Fun Deck App, students fill in the blank to practice irregular past, present infinitive and future tense verbs. The prompts include statements like "Beth will ---- the race." The student looks at the illustration and either reads the prompt or touches the screen to listen to the prompt and answer choices. In the How? Fun Deck App, students look at an illustration and either read the prompt or touch the screen to listen to the questions, such as "How do you help someone who's hurt?" The student then gives a verbal response. After each answer, tap the green button for correct or red button for incorrect to keep score. In What Would You Do at School If.... App, there are questions with illustrations, such as "What would you do if you forgot your homework?" or "What would you do if your classmate teased you about the shirt you wore?" In What Would You Do at Home If, there are 56 illustrated cards and questions related to home. Others in the series include: How Would You Feel If.... (questions like How would you feel if you forgot to study for your spelling test?" or "How would you feel if your favorite football team lost?"; WH Questions at Home (questions like "Who are your neighbors?" or "Where do you keep your clothes?"); If.. Then ("If it looks like it's going to rain, then..." or "If you spill your drink, then"; Let's Name... Things ("Let's name things that live in the ocean" or "Let's name things you would take on a trip."; Name That Category Fun Deck App ("A horse, cow and pig are" or " A sandwich, pizza and French fries are"; Wh Questions at School (questions like "Who is your principal?" or "When do you eat lunch?"); Fun Deck Following

Directions (student looks at the picture and either reads the prompt or touches the screen to listen to the prompt and then follow the directions. Select the cards you want students to see and have them follow one-step directions like, "Growl like a bear," to help boost their memory, motor, and auditory processing skills. You can even have the students follow multi-step directions by presenting them with more than one card at a time. Other Fun Deck apps are Practicing Pragmatics (social skills questions about Politeness, Solving Problems, Feelings, Giving Information, Requesting, Telephone Skills and Staying on Topic); Understanding Inferences ("Who might live here?" and sentences like, "Bill is sick. His mom is taking him to. . ."; All About You, All About Me Fun Deck App (essential questions about getting to know someone); "Story Starters"; "What are They Thinking (all the people and animals in these fun cards have thought bubbles above their heads). This is a great series for problem solving, practicing social skills, opening up discussions and improving language skills. All apps let you select all cards or just the ones you want, can manually or automatically advance to the next card, present cards randomly or in order and track results for up to five users for each app. Super Duper also has a free app – the Super Duper Age Calculator. More Super Duper apps are coming and will be reviewed in next DISKoveries.

Spot the Dot (Ruckus: www.ruckusmediagroup.com) This fun and well designed app was created by David A. Carter, best known for his Bugs in a Box series (excellent books and software programs that entertain and teach). This app is an excellent way for young children to learn and practice colors, while at the same time, it helps them with attention, focus and visual perceptual skills. There are 10 different activities – spot the red dot (or the blue, yellow, green, etc.) in all different screens – it's an I Spy type of search and find game that really engages children. Each color has a different activity. For example, when looking for the orange dot, players use a finger to move a spotlight around a dark screen until they find the correct dot. In another, shapes "pop" and are transformed into different shapes. When looking for the purple dot, you have to touch all the pieces of the sliced-up purple dot and they will merge to form a completed purple dot. The dots' locations are randomized so that the app can be played over and over again with each game being different.

Switch Kids (Marblesoft-Simtech: www.marblesoft.com) This is a fun app with three cause and effect activities that can be used just by touching the screen or with a switch, connected by either the AbleNet Bluetooth switch interface or the RJ Cooper Bluetooth switch interface. Just like the computer program, Funny Sounds and Faces, each touch or switch press shows a new face, with a new expression and a fun sound. You can choose the number of faces to use and the background color. In Bubble Gum, press the switch or touch to see the face. Each subsequent switch press presents another step in the bubble-blowing process, up to the final step ,when the bubble pops. You can choose the color of the bubble gum and also select to have random early pops. In Build A Kid, each press/touch presents another part of the "kid" picture – head, ears, hair,

eyes, nose, mouth, etc., until a fully dressed “kid” is shown. Choose a single child, twins or triplets and also show their names. If you choose twins or triplets, they can be identical (same sex, same clothes) or random combinations.

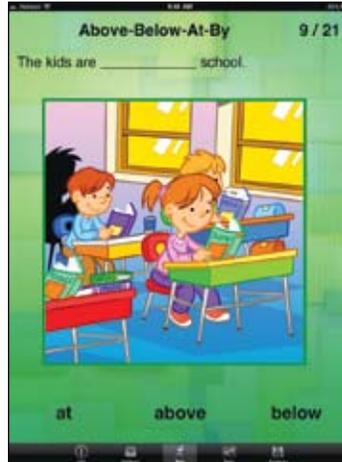
A Present for Milo (Ruckus: www.ruckusmediagroup.com) This is a fun, interactive digital storybook with over 80 animated hotspots to touch and explore. All text is read aloud and repeats when tapped. The story is simple and full of excellent illustrations, especially of prepositions – under the sofa, across the piano, up and down the stairs, through the kitchen and lots of others. Great for language learning. Another book by Ruckus is *Tonka Chuck & Friends: Friends for the Long Haul*, an interactive reading adventure with games, video and story book. There are matching activities, touch and reveal spelling activities that encourage letter recognition, picture/word association and basic problem solving. Players can read along, play along and record their voice telling the story.

TherAppy Apps (www.tactustherapy.com) This is an excellent series of three apps specifically designed for adults with aphasia and other acquired language disabilities, but extremely useful with adults with developmental disabilities, as well as older students working on receptive and expressive language and literacy issues. *Comprehension TherAppy* has over 500 nouns in 10 semantic categories, such as animals, foods, objects, concepts, places, people, body parts and more. There are three modes: Listen (listen to the spoken word and select the picture that matches); Read (match the printed word to the picture; and Listen & Read (match the spoken word to the written word. Users can select from two, three, four or six photos on the screen or use the Auto feature that automatically adjusts the field size based on performance. Three levels of difficulty adjust the relatedness of foils (semantic and phonemic). *Naming TherAppy*, for single word confrontation, naming and circumlocution practice, has over 400 pictures (nouns) and four modes. In the first mode, which is Naming Practice, there is a cueing hierarchy, including Description (a short definition for a semantic cue); First Letter (the first letter appears either with or without the number of letters in the word indicated); Whole Word (printed word appears on screen); Phrase Completion (a common phrase is heard that ends in the target word, i.e. Sew with a needle and . . .); First Sound (initial phonemes are heard for a phonemic cue) and Repetition (word is spoken). The second mode is Describe – there are over 480 pictures with four to six question prompts for semantic feature analysis, and the third mode is Naming Test. There is also Flashcard mode where all 500 pictures are shown – just touch to hear the spoken word. *Writing TherAppy* provides copying, writing and fill-in-the-blank activities for single words. There are four modes (Fill-in-the-Blank, Copy, Naming (spell what you see) and Dictation (spell what you hear). In the Fill-in-the-Blank activity, there are three levels of difficulty, with options, such as one missing letter, two missing letters, all letters displayed, small set of letters displayed, etc. When a student is having difficulty, they can press the hint button and these options are available. In Copy, the word is displayed along with the entire alphabet. Just drag the letters to the boxes to spell. Again, the hint button is available to make the task easier. You can also select the maximum number of letters in the words displayed (from three to ten). Since these apps were designed for adults, they include words and pictures that might not be appropriate for young children – so for use with younger children, turn on the Child-Friendly Mode to eliminate these pictures (such as cigarettes). All three programs have automatic scoring, they track success and progress on-screen and results can be e-mailed in table and report-ready format. These apps are well-designed, with excellent pictures and voice quality, and the hierarchy of hints and prompts make them extremely helpful for both adults and children.

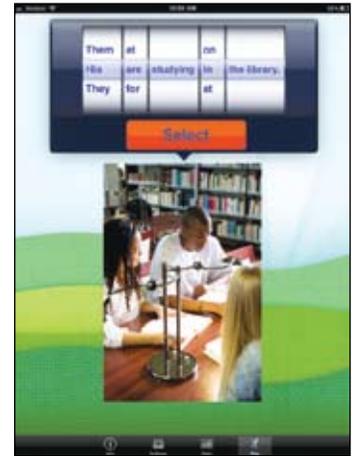
Preposition Builder (Mobile Education Store: <http://mobile-educationstore.com>) This app is designed to help school-aged children learn the correct use of prepositions and how prepositions change the meaning of a sentence. A picture is presented and the student drags the correct preposition (printed word) from a group of three to complete a sentence. As the preposition is being dragged, the word is spoken. If correct, the sentence is read aloud and the student has the opportunity to record the sentence if they would like. If they select the wrong preposition, the image and scene change to show the student the proper use of the word they chose. In this way, they actually get to see how the sentence meaning is changed by the use of different prepositions. They then return to the original picture and are given the opportunity to try again. This is a very powerful way to help students understand the meaning of a preposition and to actually see how different prepositions impact the meaning of what they are saying. There

are nine different groups of prepositions to use (in-on-under, down-up-off, above-below-at-by, behind-between-beside, etc.) with about 20 sentences in each module. The stats page displays the student’s statistics for each module, showing how many attempts it took to find the correct answer. This summary can be e-mailed. Excellent app to also use with older students struggling with preposition use.

Sentence Builder Teen (Mobile Education Store: <http://mobile-educationstore.com>) This new app is designed to help teenagers and older students learn how to build grammatically correct sentences. It is designed the same way as *Sentence Builder* (reviewed in February 2011 DISCOVERIES) but has 100 teenage-themed pictures, including a Teen Boy and a Teen



Preposition Builder (www.mobile-educationstore.com)



Sentence Builder Teen (www.mobile-educationstore.com)

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Girl game pack, to build the sentences around. A multi-wheel picker appears with one to five words. The student is asked to build a sentence that describes the displayed picture. There is only one correct combination. In Level 1, both the subject and adjective of each sentence is fixed. The student chooses the modifier and the verb. In Level 2, the student chooses the modifier, verb and adjective. The student will be given two, three or five choices on each wheel. In Level 3, the student must also correctly choose the modifier, verb and adjective, but will have five choices in each picker wheel. The app also tracks student progress. Great app!

Conversation Builder Deluxe (Mobile Education Tools: www.mobile-educationstore.com) This app is designed to help students learn how to have multi-exchange conversations in a variety of settings. It is identical to Conversation Builder (reviewed previously) but it contains all the add-on modules in addition to the original game pack (Animals, Friends Around Town, Holidays, Playground and Water). The user is presented with a picture and asked "How would you start this conversation?" It presents three choices. If the user reads and touches the correct choice, they can then record their answer and play it back. When they click Next, there is a response to their question and then another choice on how to continue the conversation. There are four levels of exchange: one with one to four exchanges, one with one to eight exchanges, Group - four exchanges and Group - eight exchanges. The Conversation Initiator can be a student (the user), a peer (the iPad) or you can alternate between both. Conversations can be saved. Student name, age, primary interest and city of residence are used in the conversations to personalize play. The 160 distinct conversations can be archived and e-mailed.

Language Builder Deluxe (Mobile Education Tools: www.mobile-educationstore.com) This app is identical to the original Language Builder, but also include all the add-on modules (Hobbies, Inside Playtime, Medical, Pets, Places, Playground and School) in a stand-alone version. It is designed to build receptive and expressive language skills, as well as sentence formulation. The program displays a picture and the app prompts the user to "make a sentence about the picture". Users are then able to record their sentence or skip the picture and get a new one. There are three levels of hints – Level 1 presents a text entry on top with a sentence cue (i.e. The girl is building a _____ at the _____.) Level 2 presents a shorter text hint (i.e. The girl) and Level 3 presents a spoken hint (Use the words girl and sandcastle in your sentence.). Sentences can be saved and e-mailed too. There are 250 distinct images to create sentences from.

Touch Tutorial (Touch Autism: www.touchautism.com) This app teaches gestures commonly used with the iPad and other mobile devices. This includes touching, tapping, holding or sliding your finger along the screen, zooming in, swiping, etc. Different symbols are used to prompt the different gestures. This is a good app for those who are having difficulty with understanding the touch requirements of the iPad.

PhonoPix Full (www.rinnapps.com) PhonoPix is a companion app to ArtikPix, which

was reviewed in DISKoveries in February 2011. It differs in that it has decks of minimal pairs of phonological processes instead of decks of articulation cards by sounds. There are 10 decks with 40 minimal pairs in each for the following phonological processes: prevocalic voicing, word final devoicing, final consonant deletion, fronting, marked blend reduction, unmarked blend reduction, gliding, stopping, backing, and initial consonant deletion. There are two activities – flash card and matching for each deck. Children view the minimal pairs in double-sided flashcards by flicking through the album and tapping an "around" button to see the other side. In the matching activity, users match the minimal pairs in three different levels: easy with three pairs, medium with six pairs and hard with 10 pairs. During both activities, users can practice by listening to the recorded audio, recording their voices to self-monitor and collecting data. Practicing with minimal pairs enables children to learn the difference in meaning between their production and the correct production. Great app for speech therapy practice.

SpellBoard (Palaware: www.palasoftware.com) SpellBoard allows you to create any spelling quiz in any language. You enter the words, the grade level and the spoken word (recorded through the built-in microphone). You can also add a written and/or a spoke phrase if you want. With that done, users are ready to use the app to study the word list and be quizzed on it. You can also share your quiz with other SpellBoard users, via e-mail, Bluetooth, or iTunes File Sharing. There is also a study mode where you can take a quiz, seeing and hearing the word and phrase. You can also practice writing the word on the virtual white board or connect to the Internet to get the word's definition. (SpellBoard is also available for the Mac.) MathBoard is a great app for teaching addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Pick operator types (addition, subtraction, etc., number of problems, vertical or horizontal presentation, answer style (multiple choice-fill in the blank-keypad) number range and digit limit. The app provides random problem generation and there is an area on-screen to write the problem and work it out.

Preposition Remix (Smarty Ears: www.Smartyearsapps.com): This app provides drill and practice flashcards with 20 common prepositions in English, including above, behind, below, beside, between, closest to, furthest, in, in front of, in the middle, inside, near, next to, on, on top of, out, outside, to the left, to the right and under. There are 10 flashcard screens for each preposition. Users can go to the settings options and select any or all of the above prepositions, with or without written cues. Other options allow you to randomize, repeat question and choose the app's response when wrong (keep going, no response or buzz.) When playing, the user is presented with a screen with one or two pictures – the app will then speak the direction, i.e. "Touch the car inside the circle," "Touch the heart near the balloon," etc. The app will track the responses, including prepositions worked on, overall accuracy and accuracy for each preposition.

House of Learning (Smarty Ears: www.Smartyearsapps.com): In this app, there are 12 background scenes – users pick a scene and are



My First AAC (www.injini.net)

then presented with groups of items related to the scene (i.e. bedroom, bed, dresser, chair, pillow, etc.). They can add these to their scene, add people, change their poses, etc. (Pinch gestures can be used to resize people). Since language is learned best when interacting with an adult partner to guide their learning, parents/therapists are encouraged to guide the child by playing with them and giving them directions that will enhance their language (i.e. following directions, vocabulary development, etc.). Smarty Ears has indicated that other scenes will be added to the program in future updates. Other apps by Smarty Ears include: That's How I Feel (There are three rows of Smarty symbols on screen – green for positive feelings, yellow and red for negative feelings. There are a total of 39 feelings/symbols. Children press to hear "I feel" (happy, awesome, upset, lonely, etc. It is designed to teach students vocabulary for feelings, as well as an alternative communication application.) Caselod Tracker (designed for special education teachers and speech-language pathologists, this app provides a way to track IEP meetings, due dates, evaluation due dates and eligibility due dates. The app is password protected to protect confidential information.) Other apps from Smarty Ears include the SLP Goal Bank, designed to present a very general framework for treatment goals to help speech-language therapists write IEP goals. The app allows for adding goals but not adding or removing disorder type/area of need (i.e., AAC, Fluency, Literacy) or editing existing goals.

EBooks from Oceanhouse Media (Oceanhousemedia.com) This company continues to be a leader in bringing classic children's books to the iPad. All the books are presented with three ways to read. In Read to Me, the story is read aloud, page by page, with word highlighting. Readers listen and interact by touching pictures to hear their names, by swiping to turn the pages, by pressing words to hear them spoken individually or by touching and holding the text to hear it read over again. In Read It Myself mode, all the same options are available, but the story is not read automatically. If the user wants a word or a page read, they can just press and hold. In Auto Play mode, the story will read in entirety without the user having to swipe to hear the whole story. Some of the new stories they have created recently include: There's a Wocket in My Pocket (another imaginative rhyming story from Dr. Seuss about a boy and all the creatures he shares his house with); Oh Say Can You Say? (a Dr. Seuss book of tongue twisters); The Bippolo Seed

and Other Lost Stories (seven lost Dr. Seuss stories originally published in magazines in the 1950s); The Berenstain Bears Go on a Ghost Walk (a new Halloween story about the Berenstain Bears); Elmer and the Lost Teddy (the story of the special bond between babies and their teddy bears ... excellent narration, enlarged artwork, pan and zoom features and picture/word association – words zoom up and are spoken when pictures are touched); and Elmer and Rose (learning about being different and fitting in for young children).

There's No Place Like Space (Oceanhousemedia.com) This new storybook from Oceanhouse kicks off a new series of The Cat in the Hat's Learning Library. Children follow along on a trip through the solar system, visiting each planet and learning fun facts along the way. Users can tap stars in the sky to reveal constellations, learn the order of the planets, search the night sky using a telescope, find hidden information cards and access word definitions by tapping on special highlighted words. They can also touch pictures to see their names zoom up and be spoken and interact with animated objects and move them around. The Berenstain Bears Trim the Tree is designed like a lift-the-flap book. Children interact with each scene by tapping on special pictures that reveal hidden surprises. Lots of interactive fun and the children participate in the story. Dr. Seuss Band is a musical instrument game – your iPad becomes a musical instrument. As the music plays, press the buttons to make your own music or match the falling colors by pressing the colored buttons that match. The faster you match, the faster they come down. You can purchase additional songs, horns and effects.

Injini: Child Development Game Suite (NCsoft: www.injini.net) This excellent early learning app has nine learning games for children with special needs that are good for fine motor, cause and effect, spatial awareness, memory, visual processing, sequencing and more. The activities include: Balloons (pop balloons of varying colors and shapes to practice fine motor skills and follow auditory and visual directions); Farm (eight mini games – feed the horses, interact with hatching chicks, grow plants, bathe muddy pigs and more); Find It (follow instructions to find everyday objects and drag them to destination – great for listening skills and learning to drag on the iPad); Frog (use finger to draw a line between the insects and the frog – good for prewriting skills); Patterns; Puzzles; Squares (concentration-type game); Tracing and Matching. Great app that will really engage and teach young children.

My First AAC (NCsoft: www.injini.net) This app is specifically designed for toddlers, 18 months and up. Icons are organized into 22 different categories that are basic and natural for young children (i.e., greetings, food, feelings, questions, places, animals, clothes, weather, etc.) and contain over 250 related words and phrases. Each is represented by a colorful icon that speaks in a child's voice (girl or boy) when touched. There are also animated icons with sign language for words like "more" and "all done." Several icons allow you to record personal information, such as name, address, phone, birthday, etc. The screen can be customized to display between two and eight icons per category. You can also create a new screen with your choice of icons from the library and create customized icons using your own images.

QuestionIt (Language Learning Apps: www.languagelearningapps.com) QuestionIt is designed to teach learners how to understand and answer WH questions. It uses a color-coding system (i.e. who words are yellow, what doing words are green, where words purple, when words blue). There are four activities, each with two to three levels. In the first, students identify which words answer which type of question. They learn to sort words into the categories of who, what doing, when and where, with color support that is gradually faded in the other levels. In the second activity, which is Sentences, a picture sentence with color coding is shown and read aloud (i.e., the girls are drawing in class today). They are then shown a color coded symbol and asked "Where are the girls?" In progressive levels, the color coding is phased out. There is also an Advanced Sentence level and a Paragraph level (three sentences). There is data management and data reports can be e-mailed from the app. This is an excellent app for students of all ages who are struggling with the process of understanding WH words.

IntelliPad (www.intellipadapp.com) This is an exciting new app that combines the functionality of a word processor with word prediction, text-to-speech and the ability to customize the keyboard. It lets the student use writing tools on all levels. The keyboard editor gives you the ability to create an unlimited selection of keyboards to best suit your students' needs. You can have a full qwerty keyboard or you can merge individual letters cells to form larger keys for phrases and/or sentences. You can select fonts, size of letters, colors, etc. that can be applied to the whole keyboard or to select

keys. You can also create audio recordings that are played when the key is pressed. There are shared IntelliPad layouts available free for download and you can share your own with others. Text created within the program can be e-mailed, printed or copied to the clipboard.

Apps from Portegno (www.portegno-apps.com) This company has produced a fun collection of educational apps for pre-schoolers. They contain a variety of fun and educational activities that will entertain, as well as teach. They have an excellent KidsMag, which is currently available in two different issues. Each one has multiple activities (over 20 pages) with things like Learn More About Farm Animals, Meet the FireFighters, Dress Up



QuestionIt (www.languagelearningapps.com)

?it

**QuestionIt:
the answer to
Wh-questions**

**designed by an SLP;
teach what kind of words
answer**

which type of question

<http://languagelearningapps.com>

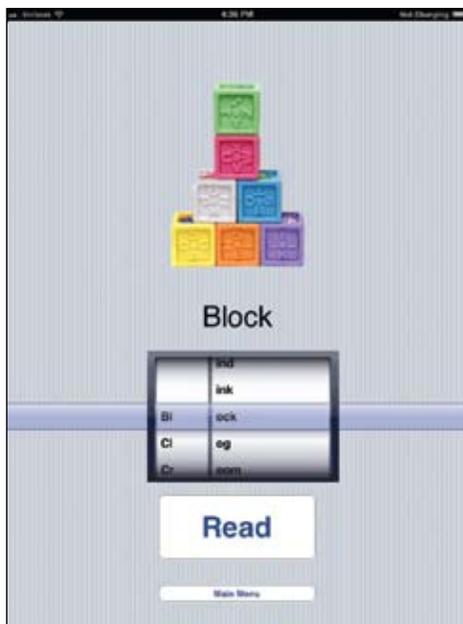
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the FireFighter, Puzzles, What Does Not Belong, Stories, Learn How to Brush Your Teeth, Counting and Letter games, I Spy-type games, Spot the Difference, Spanish games and so much more. KidsMag Issue 2 has activities related to going into space, the human body and the circus. All the activities in each magazine revolve around the main themes. Great fun. There is also a series of iWash programs (dog, cat, horse, etc.) — soap them up, rinse, dry, brush — watch as dog goes from dirty to beautiful, with lots of fine-motor activity for young ones. Princess Activity Cards contains a combination of different games for girls; there are coloring pages, puzzles, find-it games and fun activities to create your own princess and decorate scenes with stickers.

Apps from Goatella (www.Goatella.com) Beginning Blends Word Builder is designed to help children learn about the beginning consonant blends, bl, cl, cr, dr, fr, gr, pl, pr, sn and tr. There are two modes. In Builder Mode, for each beginning sound, there is a list of ending sounds. After picking a beginning blend and ending sound and clicking the Read button, the word and an image will appear and the word is spoken. The



IntelliPad (www.intellipadapp.com)



Beginning Blends Word Builder (www.Goatella.com)

app contains 100 different word combinations. In Quiz Mode, students are shown a picture and Read button (to speak the name) and a choice of three possible beginning blends. Ending Blends features the blends ft, ll, nt, st, nd, sk, rn, ck, mp and lk and also has a word building and a quiz mode. These are well done apps and excellent for working on blends and word families. Touch Switch is a cause and effect program — press the green switch and see graphics and hear music. Options allow you to put text on the button, select the duration of the video display (seven to 60 seconds) and rotate the button. iSpeak Button is a single message talker and works well as a single communication button. Record your message and enter text, too, if you wish, change the color of the button too. User just has to press the button to have the message spoken aloud. Goatella also has a Coin Calculator app — it works like a calculator, except that all of the inputs are actual US coins and a dollar bill — a fun way to learn about money and coin values.

Talking Cards (Timagine: www.timagine.se) This is a really nice app that can be used for helping young children in the early stages of developing language and communication skills. It can assist AAC, as well as be used as a language therapy tool for receptive/expressive language, categorization, etc. When the app opens, it shows the albums (sets of cards) that you have. Tap an album to open it — tap an image to hear the word spoken. It is easy to add new albums and images from the built-in library (with text and sound) or from your own photos. If you have an iPad2, you can add pictures directly into the app with the built-in camera. There are many options — size and number of pictures on screen at one time, background color and language (American English or Swedish). There are over 450 illustrations included. Take a look at the Web site and video that shows the app in detail. Good choice.

Dropbox (www.dropbox.com) This is an amazing productivity app that lets you share files, photos, documents, etc. with your computer, your iPad, and with others also. Just download to your iPad (it's free, with 2 GB of memory) and to your computer. Drop files into Dropbox on your computer and they will appear on your iPad. Lets you have all your files with you whenever you need them. If you want to share with someone else, just have them download the app, create a share folder with them and, then, whatever you put in that folder will appear on their iPad. You can share photos and videos this way too.

Some new and noteworthy free apps: Grasshopper Apps (a great collection of children's books designed to help reading, literacy and language skills); Sai Services (free spelling apps); Preschool University Apps (15 different free apps for reading, phonics, spelling, Spanish, etc.); Lakeshore (Sound Sorting, Tic Tac Toe Phonics, and Letter of the Day); Laz Readers from Language Technologies, Inc. (a large group of Leveled Readers), Innovative Net Learning Limited (Phonics Fun, Vocabulary Builder, Vocabulary Catcher and many more), Alligator Apps, MyFirstApp.com (My Profession, Memo Game, Matrix Basic and others) GigggleUp Pty Ltd (excellent simple jigsaw puzzles); and individual apps, such as Phonics Silly Sentences, iTouchNoteFree, VisTimerFree, Spot the Difference, ABC Mysteriez:

Hidden Letters, HoopsFree, 25-in-1 Free Education Games, What's That Sound, I Can Write, Bluster, Find Odd Quiz (what does not belong), Color by Shape, Social Skill Builder and Audio Sight Words.

INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS

I've been asked for information on being able to record directly from Interactive Entertainment/Gaming Systems to create recordings and burn to DVD, to create recordings to be played on game systems, and to make videos and tutorials for parents, teacher training and YouTube. Here's a video recorder that will let you do that:

HD PVR (Hauppauge Computer Works: www.hauppauge.com) The HD PVR is a high definition video recorder for Windows that lets you record video from your Sony Playstation3, your Xbox 360 and your Wii to either your television or your computer. You can then transfer these recordings to standard DVD-R and DVD+R or Blu-Ray to play on a television, on a DVD player, or on a Smart-Board. Playback on your computer screen is full HD. You can also record your video game play, upload to YouTube and/or share with parents, classmates, or use for instructional purposes. HD PVR captures videos in HD in the H.264 format. It uses component video, S-Video or composite video and will record at resolutions from standard definition (480i) up to high definition (1080i). In addition, you can make your own library of videos from television. For example, if there is something special on television that you want to share with a class or families or other staff, you can easily do that also. You can also record from a video camera, a VCR or from DVRs. The included software lets you edit as well. Also included are one set of component video cables, an audio cable and a USB cable.

Some new and motivating game programs for players who use gaming systems for recreation, socialization and family/peer interaction:

Just Dance 3 for Kinect Xbox 360 (Ubisoft: www.ubisoft.com) This dance program has over 40 tracks from multiple genres and popular artists. It allows up to four dancers to play, with each one getting their own "moment of fame." Watch the background change as you perform. There's a Just Sweat mode with workout plans and playlists. All tracks provide song lyrics on-screen for singing along. Create and record your own dances and challenge your friend to dance along. You can also upload and share. This dance program is a lot of fun! Also from Ubisoft is Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2010, which contains fitness activities for everyone — workout routines, fun games like jump rope, "Run the World" which lets players run throughout the streets of New York or London and enjoy the sights. There are floor exercises, dance classes and over 90 hours of workouts.

The Adventures of Tintin The Game (Ubisoft: www.ubisoft.com) Based on the new movie, this game combines action-adventure platforming, flight, swordplay and puzzle-solving gameplay. You can play as different characters — Tintin, Snowy, Captain Haddock and three others, each with their own personality and skills, solo or in two-player co-op mode (playing together with friends to help solve the mysteries). Pilot a plane through a rumbling tempest, drive a side-car in desert canyons, swim through underwater

caves and participate in a sword fight with a 17th century knight! Other fun programs rated E for Everyone (10 and up) include Rayman Origins (an all-new four-player co-op comic adventure, set in a lush, 2-D world, teeming with unexpected secrets and outlandish enemies) Power Up Heroes (the player is the superhero and, with the universe in peril, it's up to him to annihilate the forces of evil.)

Portal2 (Electronic Arts/Valve: www.valvesoftware.com) Portal 2 is a unique action-puzzle game that challenges the players to think and act creatively. They use the game's wormhole-creating portal gun to create their own paths through otherwise sealed surfaces and across open spaces. The goal is to make your way through the game levels by creating temporary passages through solid surfaces, allowing for creative platforming and multiple possible means of clearing a level. The game also requires the player to solve puzzles to clear sections of levels. Portal 2 also contains a two-player co-op mode, playable both locally and online, with split screen functionality. Portal 2 really has it all. The characters are likable, the story line is engaging and intriguing, and the game play requires you to use your brain. Rated E for Everyone, it is available for Xbox, Playstation3, Windows and Macintosh.

Sports and fitness programs are great favorites of the teen and older population to play and interact with on entertainment systems like the Xbox, PlayStation and Wii. Here are some of the new and favorites:

Madden NFL 12 (EA Sports: www.ea.com) Another addition to the Madden football series that continues to be enjoyed by football fans. It features all 32 teams, stadiums and the favorite players in the league. Users have full control of the players, from tacking to blocking, with over 100 new tackle animations, advanced defensive plays and custom playbooks. New visual improvements include new player equipment, helmet stickers, player degradation system that affects uniforms and helmets based on weather and field surface and new player-specific animations that showcase the personalities of each NFL player. Available for Xbox, Wii, Playstation3 and PSP.

NHL 12 (EA Sports: www.ea.com) This annual hockey video game lets users experience the skill and aggression of hockey while taking control of their favorite team and guiding them to victory. Track every event and view replays. You can now play as select legends on whatever team you want. You can also play as a female in Be a Pro. You can play as "legends" such as Wayne Gretzky, Mario Lemieux, Steve Yzerman, Chris Chelios, Gordie Howe, Ray Bourque, Patrick Roy, Jeremy Roenick and Borj Salming. Available for Xbox and Playstation3.

MLB 2K11 (2K Sports: www.2ksports.com) This is a multiplayer baseball game that puts you in the jerseys of your favorite big league players as you take the mound, swing the bat and play at every position. The new game features include analog pitching and hitting controls, dynamic player ratings, a revamped fielding system, improved play modes and new player

models. In My Player Mode, you can guide your player through the Minor Leagues and into the history books. With MLB Today, you can stay up to date on the latest happenings in Major League Baseball, with timely play-by-play commentary and stat overlays pulled from real life news and box scores. Available for Xbox, Playstation3, Wii, Nintendo DS, PSP and Windows.

MotionSports Adrenaline (Ubisoft: www.ubisoft.com) This program for Kinect with Xbox 360 has a wide selection of extreme events, including mountain biking, rock climbing, kayaking, kite surfing, XTRM skiing and wing suit diving. There are six locations where you can play solo, multiplayer or compete in online challenges against athletes from around the world. Great fun!

Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2010 (Ubisoft: www.ubisoft.com) This program contains fitness activities for everyone – you can design a workout based on your fitness level, your goals and your preferences. The Kinect Sensor for Xbox 360 allows you to experience controller-free gameplay, utilizing revolutionary full-body tracking to put you at the center of the fun.

Joan Tanenhaus, M.A., CCC, Speech-Language Pathologist/Assistive Technology Specialist, is Founder and Executive Director of Technology for Language and Learning, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the use of computers and technology with children and adults with special needs. (e-mail: ForTLL@aol.com) ■



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MONIQUE PICA



CASEY BURD



CECILLE AUGUSTA



TARA SCHROEDER



“sing a song of six paints”

A Collaborative Approach to Art and Music in the Classroom

The purpose of this article is to offer our knowledge and experience on how collaboration can enhance lessons, as well as to help other professionals use this method to empower their students to be as independent as possible.

Included in this article are examples of lessons, descriptions of therapist intervention, the benefits and challenges of collaboration, as well as the vast array of assistive technology used.

DESCRIPTION OF OUR SCHOOL

Hawkswood School is a fully accredited, private school located in Eatontown, New Jersey. We are approved by the State of New Jersey to provide special education

services and supports to students with disabilities ages 3-21.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Hawkswood School affirms the inestimable worth and dignity of every individual, regardless of his or her condition in life; the right of each person to develop to his or her full potential; and the right to be judged on the basis of personal accomplishments.

We believe that the achievement of full humanity is enhanced by the experience of the human family.

ABOUT THE ART AND MUSIC PROGRAM

The Hawkswood School Fine Arts Collaborative Program began as a trial

program for only two classrooms in 2001. Since its inception, it has grown to be utilized in each of our 19 classrooms. Art and music take place as one class, rather than separately, and focus on a thematic unit. This allows for a multi-sensory approach to art and music education and offers a better understanding of the theme on which each classroom is working.

Our art and music teachers work together to teach one lesson from the perspective of each discipline. The lessons themselves start with a theme-based unit. From there, the theme, concepts and skills involved within each lesson are presented from an art and music perspective. This multi-disciplinary approach is successful in a variety of ways. Over the years, we

MONIQUE PICA, M.A.T., has been the head art teacher for five years, with eight years experience in special education at Hawkswood School in Eatontown, NJ.

CASEY BURD, B. Mus., has been the head music teacher for 11 years at Hawkswood School in Eatontown, NJ.

CECILLE AUGUSTA, PT, DPT, is a physical therapist with 12 years of experience working in a school-based setting.

TARA SCHROEDER, M.S., CCC-SLP, graduated with a B.S. and M.S. in speech-language pathology from Bloomsburg University. She has been a speech-language pathologist for over seven years, working with students with severe multiple disabilities, autism and various speech and language differences. She has focused her therapy on dysphagia and augmentative communication.



Photo 1: Erin sits with minimal support on a Kaye Bench as she actively participates in "The Octopus Song."

started to notice that students who preferred art to music began to enjoy music more, and conversely, students who preferred music to art began getting more involved in art. By utilizing a multi-sensory approach with assistive technology, we have been able to address many student needs and further abilities simply by presenting a lesson within this model.

The following are examples of how a lesson would be planned and presented:

One of the featured lessons presented at the Closing The Gap Conference this year was based on a "Winter/Snow" theme. The music teacher used "The Snowman" song, which reinforced the winter weather theme, as well as body parts recognition throughout the song. The art teacher used a low technology snowman comprised of a covered box fan and white plastic bag fastened to one end of the fan. Eyes, a nose, a mouth and a top hat are then taped to the plastic bag. The fan is plugged into a Powerlink 3 Switchbox, thus enabling students to turn on the fan and, thereby, inflating the snowman via switch. The entire class sang the "Snowman Song," either verbally or via a voice output communication device. The song ended with the snowman melting to the ground. This was accomplished with just another click of the switch. The result was a fun, fantastic and cost-effective way to reinforce this thematic unit.

Another featured lesson was based around "Sea Life." Each student created a paper plate octopus with colored ribbons attached to the

perimeter. Afterwards, the students sang "The Octopus Song" while each student played a large hand drum with ribbons attached in the same method. See photo 1. The ribbons served as visual aids for visual tracking with students who have low vision. The song was sung with each student controlling the pace of the song by striking the hand drum at specific moments. This is a great way to reinforce the identification of sea creatures while also working on visual tracking goals, grading of movement and breath control via singing. Each student is exposed to several different kinds of visual, auditory and tactile input, all of which engage the students in a unique and individualized way.

Sometimes lessons are presented without a particular classroom unit in mind, as in the final featured lesson, *Hyperscore*. *Hyperscore* is the name of a PC-based art and music program that translates artwork into a music score. The first, low technology, part of the lesson was to have the class create their own art mural. A large piece of butcher paper was draped over a six-foot table. Each student was given a paintbrush and asked to choose a paint color. Each student was then asked to paint a wavy line based on the sound they heard. The student painted when they heard a "drum roll" sound played by the music teacher. The student began painting when the sound started and stopped painting when the "drum roll" stopped. Another part of the lesson had the students play an adaptive instrument that

coincided with colors on the mural. See photos 2a and 2b. This lesson works on sequencing, interpreting aural cues and verbal directions, and communicating choices, all while providing an engaging, unique, and creative art activity for each student to express himself or herself. The mural was then recreated in the Hyperscore program using the computer palette provided. Using this high technology program, the students assigned musical instruments for each color in the computerized mural. When played back they could hear the sound each color created.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY IN THE FINE ARTS PROGRAM

Assistive technology enhances students' involvement in art and music activities. The students' Individual Educational Plan (IEP) objectives are embedded into the art and music activities. Students are provided opportunities to utilize their modes of communication and are exposed to math concepts, literacy, life skills and world cultures. Fine and gross motor skills are addressed, as well, through alternate positioning in adaptive equipment, such as standers and gait trainers, movement activities and functional grasp patterns using various art tools and instruments.

Assistive technology has been a great asset for the program at Hawkswood School. Some of the assistive technology tools that benefit our students are high technology devices and some are handmade, low technology tools. Assistive technology increases participation in the classroom and promotes maximum independence in the school environment. Students with access to assistive

technology can now have the ability to be creative on their own without hand-over-hand assistance in many cases.

Two years ago, Hawkswood School invested in interactive whiteboards, called SMART Boards. This high technology tool allows students who are visual learners to see the activity displayed before them on a 5-1/2 foot x 4-foot, full-color screen. The collaborative teachers here at Hawkswood School produce activities that allow the students to have control of the art and music in the lesson. Over the years, the collaborative teams have created unique tools to help our students be more independent and empowered during their lessons. For example, if you take a toilet paper roll, tape and a paintbrush or marker, you can make a low technology art tool to enhance grasp. An adaptive hand brace can be made out of neoprene and Velcro to encourage students' independence in art class. The Velcro attaches to any art tool, which then attaches to the neoprene glove, making it easier for students to independently grasp the instrument. Another adapted tool that we have created to help with accessing the SMART Board is a pointer for students who are unable to get close enough to the SMART Board. This enables him or her to contribute to the lesson. The pointer is made from a wooden dowel with a pencil eraser attached to the end. We have learned that anything can be adapted for our students with a little creativity and, of course, collaboration!



Photo 2A & 2B: Angelo illustrates how he can independently access a switch to activate drums during the Hyperscore lesson. In his Ormesa gait trainer, Angelo is able to increase upper extremity function to "wind-up" his arm and hit the targeted switch. This movement is often limited for Angelo when seated in an adaptive chair or wheelchair.

COLLABORATION WITH THERAPISTS

Collaboration is working together to achieve a goal. It is between equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision-making as they work toward a common goal. The classroom teacher collaborates with physical therapists, speech-language pathologists and occupational therapists to create innovative lessons. They are a “team” working towards one goal – the students’ objectives. This allows for students to receive their therapy in a realistic classroom setting, rather than “pulling out” to a separate room. This model also allows for reinforcement of the classroom’s thematic unit.

An example of including physical therapy into a lesson is having a student use a stander or a gait trainer to allow for maximum independence during art and/or music, as well as to provide alternate positioning. See photo 3. One student may have difficulty moving his or her arms in a sitting position, however, when standing, he or she is able to freely move to paint while using low technology tools, such as an adapted paintbrush. In addition, tolerance to standing improves as the student is busily creating a work of art without hand-over-hand assistance. See photo 4.

Many variations of this activity are possible. Another example is to utilize stairs or step benches to practice stair negotiation with tapping or reaching for musical notes on the SMART Board in varying directions, or to paint a picture using an adaptive art easel, or to attach a piece of paper to a collaborative art mural. The possibilities are endless and are only limited by the imaginations of the collaborators.

In terms of speech-language therapy, students participate by using voice output communication devices of varying levels, ranging from one-message devices to dynamic communication systems, as well as their own voices, picture symbols and other modes of communication. They are given opportunities to make choices, control the lesson, anticipate action and cheer on their peers. These activities allow the student to communicate in a variety of settings with a variety of teachers and peers, truly promoting generalization.

BENEFITS AND OBSTACLES WITH COLLABORATION

There are many benefits to collaboration. These lessons increase student understanding of thematic units by allowing more opportunities to reinforce various skills by the use of multiple modalities of learning in a multi-sensory approach. Collaboration allows students to benefit from diverse perspectives from various professionals,



Photo 4: Alex uses the adaptive art tools for his painting while standing in the Easy Stand. Tolerance to standing improves with the diversion of his focus on creating a masterpiece work of art!



Photo 3: Gabrielle uses an adapted glove with Velcro to secure the paintbrush for maximum independence during art class. An adjustable easel and her KidWalk gait trainer assist with positioning.

which leads to productive and innovative problem solving. Of course, with any style of teaching, there are obstacles that may be encountered. One obstacle can be finding the ideal amount of time to consult and schedule lessons. There may also be personality conflicts, imbalance in team member commitment and a lack of administration support. These obstacles can be overcome if all professionals involved remain flexible and supportive toward a common goal. Additionally, the collaborative team needs to advocate for a collaborative model and, in



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doing so, must inform other staff members and administrators of their efforts and the positive results they achieve.

STRATEGIES TO HAVING A SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATIVE LESSON WHILE INTEGRATING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

In order to be successful, the collaborative team needs to have consistent collaborative team meetings, effective models of co-teaching and essential interpersonal relationships, dependability, cooperation and consistency. Go with it, anything is possible. If it does not work the first time, do not get discouraged – try again! Try the lesson three times before giving up on the it. Lastly, always remember: anything is possible, think outside the box.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the use of a collaborative model in a school setting proves to be beneficial in so many ways. Not only can the student's IEP objectives be met, but it is also innovative, creative and fun. Maximum independence is achieved via low technology and high technology tools, allowing for carryover of skill development and acquisition of functional mobility.

The staff at Hawkswood School embraces the collaborative model and hopes it becomes an avenue of teaching and learning at your organization.

REFERENCES FOR ART

Abilities Crayon Pinwheel - \$26.65
<http://www.amazon.com/Abilities-CrayonPinwheel-Adapted-Multiple-Crayon>

Easy-grip paint brushes - \$6.30 for a set of 10
 Discount School Supply, P.O. Box 6013, Carol Stream, IL 60197-6013; Phone: 800-627-2829; or Fax: 800-879-3753;
www.discountsschoolsupply.com/

Velcro for crayons and markers - \$21.99
 Phone: 888-388-3224
<https://store.schoolspecialty.com>

Alvin Heritage™ Table Mount Easel - \$31.99
 Phone: 888-880-4884
<http://www.easelsource.com/>

Adaptive hand braces
 (created by Janice Stuart, COTA, at Hawkswood School)

Adaptive markers
 (created by art teacher at Hawkswood School)

Adaptive pointer
 (created by art teacher at Hawkswood School)

REFERENCES FOR MUSIC

Big Talk Triple Play - \$160.95

Bongo Drums (Tunable) - \$129.95
 Enabling Devices Toys for Special Children, 50 Broadway, Hawthorne, NY 10532; Phone: 914-747-3070 or 800-832-8697
www.enablingdevices.com

SMART Board - (prices vary depending on size)
 SMART Technologies, Phone: 866-518-6791 (U.S./Canada) or +1.403.228.5940
www.smarttech.com

Hyperscore - Direct Download - \$79
www.hyperscore.com

REFERENCES FOR PT AND OT

KidWalk - \$2795+ (may be covered by some insurance carriers)
 Prime Engineering, 4202 W. Sierra Madre, Fresno, CA 93722; Phone: 800-827-8263; Fax: 800-800-3355
www.primeengineering.com

Kaye Tilt Bench - \$174+
 Kaye Products, Inc., 533 Dimmocks Mill Road, Hillsborough, NC 27278; Phone: 919-732-6444, Fax: 800-685-5293
www.kayeproducts.com

Ormesa Grillo - \$1568+ (may be covered by some insurance carriers)
 Ormesa S.r.l., Via A. Da Sangallo, 1-06034 Foligno PG- Italy
 P. IVA 00574020541; Phone: 39 0742.22927; Fax: 39 0742.22637
www.ormesa.com/en
www.adaptivemall.com

Easy Stand - \$1718+
 Altimate Medical, PO Box 180, 262 W. 1st Street, Morton, MN 56270; Phone: 800-342-8968; Fax: 877-342-8968
www.easystand.com

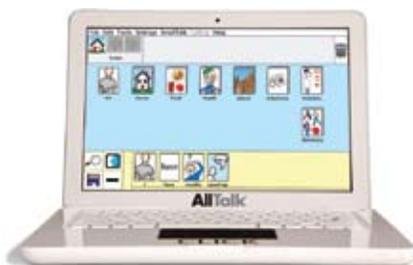
REFERENCES FOR SPEECH

Boardmaker Share
www.boardmakershare.com
SMART Board activities
<http://exchange.smarttech.com/search.html?m=01>
<http://exchange.smarttech.com/search.html?m=01>

Powerlink 3 - \$379.90
 Patterson Medical Headquarters, 1000 Remington Blvd., Suite 210, Bolingbrook, IL 60440; Phone: 630-378-6000
<http://pattersonmedical.com/> ■

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THE EVOLUTION OF A SOLUTION



Technology captures all ages and levels of learners, and can allow for differentiation for various levels within a single group lesson. Photo credit: Jeff Richards



LAUREN STAFFORD, M.Ed. is an Intervention Specialist focusing on children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in both public and private school settings in Virginia and Ohio. Ms. Stafford previously worked at the Monarch School (now the Monarch Center for Autism), for more than a decade where she also served as an Academic Supervisor, Entry Year Coordinator, LPDC Chairperson, Data Coordinator, and collaborator with Curriculum Design with Children's Hospital Boston. Ms. Stafford currently serves as Vice President, Visual Learning Solutions for Monarch Teaching Technologies where she works with Dr. Howard Shane, Monarch staff, and programmers to continue development of innovative Web-based technology driven by visual language.

The revolution and evolution of technology is rapidly transforming the face of education, including special education for autism

The choices of computer programs and apps available, both for general education and specific to autism, interactive boards and tables, response systems to track performance in classrooms, desktops, laptops and tablet computers, have multiplied exponentially and will continue to evolve as we learn about new ways to improve learning and outcomes for our students.

Meanwhile, teachers are required to monitor IEP goals and objectives, access state standards, choose evidence-based practices, modify curriculum, differentiate instruction, collaborate to promote generalization and, all the while, foster independence. On top of all that, how can you possibly keep up with and leverage all of the new technology?

The Monarch School for Children with Autism of Bellefaire JCB in Shaker Heights, OH, sought to find a consolidated solution to the ever-expanding needs of the students, the staff and the administration. In a collaboration with Dr. Howard Shane and Children's Hospital Boston/Harvard Medical School, visual language and technology

become the drivers of a visual learning solution for students on the autism spectrum (as documented in his book *Visual Language in Autism* [Plural Press, 2008]).

WHY VISUALS AND TECHNOLOGY?

Research has proven that individuals with ASD typically use visual processing as their dominant information processing mode, and, because of that strength, they usually possess a heightened interest in visual materials (Furth, 1981). Children on the autism spectrum have extensive interest in computers, television and video, and the majority choose to spend more time with electronic media than with all other forms of play combined (Shane & Albert, 2008). We have seen this at home, on the bus, in the community and in the classroom as technology becomes more portable and children are using cell phones, hand-held gaming systems and video on the go. But when it comes to learning concepts and content for higher learning, is technology better?

What most parents and teachers will anecdotally attest to has been well documented: Children with ASD are more attracted to, and engaged by, materials presented interactively on a computer. For many children on the spectrum, that engagement is the key to success. In one of the many studies available, a group of children on the spectrum were attentive to a computer-generated lesson 97 percent of the time, learning 74 percent of the targeted nouns. The same material in a teacher-directed lesson engaged only 62 percent of the time, with only 41 percent of the targeted nouns acquired (Moore & Calvert, 2000). Technology can reach these students in ways nothing else can. Technology can be the difference between success and failure with children with ASD.

THE EVOLUTION OF A SOLUTION

As the Monarch School began to evolve a Visual Language Program with Dr. Howard Shane and Children's Hospital Boston, it quickly became clear that harnessing newly developing technology was the key to transforming the research into practical applications. VizZle, a visual learning program, was born out of the research and need. Based in Shaker Heights, Ohio, Monarch Teaching Technologies, Inc. (monarchtt.com) committed to providing technology-enhanced solutions that provide effective, yet cost-efficient support for children with special learning needs. After almost four years of research and development at both Monarch and in public school special education classrooms, the company introduced VizZle Software for Visual Learners for the general market in 2009.

VizZle has evolved into an award-winning Web-based software that provides visual and interactive technology-based instruction for diverse learning needs. It aligns with and supports evidence-based practices



The VizZle player allows generalization into multiple settings on a wide variety of computer platforms including iPad and Android mobile tablets. Photo Credit: Adam Noble.

identified by the National Professional Development Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders. VizZle supports 18 of the 24 evidence-based practices, which should be chosen based on individual assessment and need. This list includes computer aided instruction, differential reinforcement, discrete trial training, naturalistic interventions, parent-implemented intervention, picture exchange communication (PECS), prompting, reinforcement, social narratives, social skills groups, structured work systems, video modeling, visual supports and more (<http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/content/briefs>)

VizZle allows access to engaging differentiated curriculum in a peer-reviewed shared library, with lessons that can be used directly from the library or edited as needed. It also has flexible templates with an impressive array of in-program images (all approved by educators specializing in autism), videos and audio clips, and easy-to-use tools that allow you to create your own lessons. Features like tracking data by IEP goal, complete control over built-in reinforcers and celebrations, the ability to import images or videos from your computer or found on the Web and simple controls for adding voice or text-to-speech, make plain that this program was custom made for working with children with ASD, by hands-on educators with classroom experience.

And while most VizZle activities can be printed for tabletop use, they all take advantage of the intrinsic engagement of displaying interactively on any computer, touchscreen or electronic whiteboard connected to the internet. Just as important, VizZle can be used on a huge variety of hardware platforms (e.g. PC or Mac, iPad or Android) allowing you to create and organize from anywhere and play a lesson that can be generalized to any number of settings, without having to buy specific hardware to use it.

VIZZUALIZING THE PROGRAM

VizZle is a visual language program. The idea is to support students across settings and experiences with visuals to promote communication and comprehension. Theoretically, visuals fall into three distinct categories.

Visuals for instruction include visuals to expand experiential learning and concept development, as well as accommodations and modification of curriculum, which help students process, comprehend and respond to information.

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Vizzle's entry page let's you navigate quickly to any of the three sections of the program.

Visuals for expressive communication expand language and self-expression, including communicating wants and needs and expressing comprehension of new language tasks, which helps students understand information being expressed, as well as expressing information themselves.

Visuals for organization, probably the most familiar of all visual supports, like schedules, token boards and timers, help students understand the expectations of learning, reducing anxiety, improving compliance and behavior, as well as promoting comprehension of daily routines and activities.

Vizzle is a solution for managing all three kinds of visuals – drop in the student's IEP goals, search the shared library to find content to support the goals and objectives, modify content to differentiate instruction or create exactly what's needed. Once lessons are assigned, students can login and work independently, work 1:1 with an instructor or work in small or large groups, depending on the learning environment. Once lessons have been completed, reports are instantly accessible for data-driven decision making.

THE PROGRAM ITSELF HAS THREE MAIN AREAS TO NAVIGATE, TEACH, CREATE, AND SHARE

TEACH provides the tools to organize and launch those individualized lessons and includes powerful data collection, either generally or by specific IEP goal or state standard – a feature unique to Vizzle. Add your students, customize their profile and drop lessons into a student player folder so each student has their own individualized experience on the iPad,



Images resident in Vizzle are all reviewed and approved by autism specialist, and are often uniquely suited to working with children with autism.

Android or computer. Network with others on the IEP team by using shared folders. If you choose, parents, as well as staff, can have access to a child's folder to reinforce and track data across environments to promote generalization, collaboration and communication.

CREATE lets teachers, parents or therapists create or edit any and every feature of a lesson for differentiated instruction of students with diverse needs. They can choose from thousands of images, audio and video clips in our database or drag-and-drop in their own media directly from the desktop. Each interactive lesson template has customizable reinforcers and rewards built in.

The templates were specifically designed to meet the needs of the students and the teachers, in order to foster learning and independence. They also align with the three areas of visual language to create a holistic approach.

vizzle
visual learning

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Interactive books can be used to create social narratives or modified curriculum. Add a variety of comprehension questions and popups to differentiate instruction during a group activity to promote active participation at any level.

Matching Boards provide a question and answer format to facilitate assessment and instruction through combinations of images, audio, video or text. They can accommodate any level of learner, from very basic 1:1 matching and discrimination through the highest level learning concepts.

By their group nature, the game-type lessons facilitate social interaction, providing important practice of social skills during play. They, too, can be set up for any level of ability and in any topic from math to science, speech therapy to activities of daily living.

The tools in VizZle are great for student organization. Schedules increase communication about expectations in the classroom, during transitions, in the community or in the home, reducing anxiety and increasing time on task. VizZle goes beyond standard schedules though, introducing interactive timers, token boards and first-then boards that add a whole new level of communication about expectations.

Need to print pictures for a Picture Exchange Communication System or topic boards to incorporate new vocabulary into daily interactions, label the areas of the classroom for structured teaching or make activities for an independent work station? VizZle has more than 15,000 pieces of media that can be used interactively or printed, using a lesson or Pix-2-Go template. Printing allows for generalization of activities into multiple formats and for assessment of true skill mastery across settings and activities.

SHARE allows users to share and borrow adapted curriculum from a vast and ever-growing peer-reviewed shared library of effective materials. VizZle is also the fastest growing online community for authoring and sharing interactive visually supported lessons. The more shared, the less the need to create from scratch, saving a huge amount of time previously spent reinventing the wheel each time something was needed. All lessons in the Share library are editable, so you can make quick tweaks to lessons to target specific learning styles and needs.

CLASSROOM OF THE FUTURE

It all seems to be evolving with lightening quickness – the lists of evidence-based prac-

tices, the needs in the special education classroom, what makes administrators feel secure in student learning and outcomes, and all of the new technology to support the changes. As educators, we are expected to somehow keep on top of all of these changing needs. VizZle supports that need to evolve, as well to succeed.

VizZle itself has evolved, and will to continue to do so, to meet these challenges with success. The goal of VizZle is to provide a program that grows with the child, the teacher, the classroom, the school and the technology. It provides rich multisensory experiences that give students access to the world at their fingertips. Whether it is helping them navigate independently, transition more smoothly or open doors to learning any content at any level, technology like this visual learning solution is what will transform our classrooms into the ideal future. ■

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CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

CONFERENCE: CLOSING THE GAP'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE HAS AN INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION AS A LEADING SOURCE FOR INFORMATION ON INNOVATIVE APPLICATIONS OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

The 2012 Conference builds on a tradition of providing a comprehensive examination of the most current uses of technology by persons with disabilities and the professionals who work with them.

Topics will cover a broad spectrum of technology as it is being applied to all disabilities and age groups in education, rehabilitation, vocation and independent living. People with disabilities, special educators, rehabilitation professionals, administrators, service/care providers, personnel managers, government officials and hardware/software developers will share their experiences and insights at what has become known as the best educational AT conference in North America.

Groups or individuals who wish to participate in Closing The Gap's 2012 Conference should submit their proposals for one-hour and multiple-hour presentations as soon as possible. Directions and information are found within. Please fill out the proposal form completely; incomplete proposals will not be considered.

PROPOSALS:

Closing The Gap will consider proposals for one-hour or multiple-hour sessions that describe and/or demonstrate successful applications of assistive technology for persons with disabilities.

Proposals are invited that report results of current applications, research, development of hardware, software or adaptive devices, model programs or procedures used by and for persons with disabilities.

Proposals for sessions that demonstrate the use of software programs, adaptive devices or the innovative use of assistive technology are highly encouraged – especially specific how-tos, tips and tricks and product comparisons.

Proposals should focus on practical applications, implementation strategies and best practices rather than theoretical discourse.

Proposal content should be supported by evidence and should include quantitative performance data.

Proposals for open forums in which participants discuss, comment openly and share ideas and opinions relevant to a primary subject or focus are also encouraged.

Because the median assistive technology sophistication level of Closing The Gap Conference participants advances each year, Closing The Gap encourages proposals for sessions directed at persons who are actively using assistive technology in education,

rehabilitation, vocation or independent living – typically intermediate to advanced level users.

Closing The Gap recognizes the continued need for introductory activities as well, and will select a range of proposals that meets needs across the assistive technology experience continuum and facilitates a balanced interchange between special educators and rehabilitation professionals.

PROCEDURE

ABSTRACT: A 300- to 500-word abstract must accompany a copy of the proposal form found within this Call for Participation. This abstract will be reviewed by a conference panel and is critical in determining the quality and acceptance of the presentation.

SUMMARY: A separate, 100-word summary must also be submitted for inclusion in the Conference Directory. This summary should be written in the future tense, using person-first language, concisely stating presentation sequence and scope, and highlighting concrete examples and products. This summary must be congruent with the content of the actual presentation. It will be used by participants as the basis for attending and evaluating the presentation.

PROPOSAL FORM: The proposal form must be completely filled out and returned with the abstract and summary. If there will be more than one presenter, a lead presenter must be designated and complete contact information provided for each presenter.

Also, please only list those persons who will actually attend and present at the conference. You may note the appropriate author/creator of your presentation on your abstract, but do not list the author(s) or creator(s) as presenters unless he, she or they will be present at the conference.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

The proposal form, abstract and summary must be received by Closing The Gap on or before 2:00 pm Central Daylight Time on Thursday, May 3, 2012. Incomplete submissions will not be considered.

NOTIFICATIONS:

Confirmation of presentation proposal acceptance/declination, and confirmation of specific date and time of accepted presentation will be sent by the first week in August.

In offering to present a paper, it is expressly understood that the presentation may be scheduled at any time on any of the conference days at the discretion of the conference organizers.

Presenters will be expected to provide all handouts at the conference. In addition, handouts must be made available to Closing The Gap for posting on Closing The Gap's Web site. Failure to adequately supply handouts, both on-site and Web, will result in nonconsideration of future proposals.

Selected manuscripts submitted by conference presenters will be published in the Closing The Gap magazine, both in print and online. Guidelines for submitting materials for these proceedings will be sent upon confirmation of presentation acceptance.

REGISTRATION:

Presenters may register for the three-day (October 17-19, 2012) conference for \$325 (regular registration is \$455).

Presenters do not have to register for the conference to present; however, only those presenters who have registered may attend conference sessions/exhibits other than their own.

All-day preconference workshops are scheduled for October 15-16 and cost \$275 for one day or \$490 for two days.

"RETURN" DISCOUNT:

A \$30 "return" discount is available to ANY past conference registrant and must be used by June 30, 2012.

This discount can be used for any preconference workshop OR conference registration and is

IN ADDITION to any and all other applicable discounts.

If registering online, you will be required to enter and apply code **RETURN** at checkout.

2012 PRESENTATION PROPOSAL FORM

CLOSING THE GAP 30th ANNUAL CONFERENCE - WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17-19, 2012

Presentation title: _____

Presenter name(s): (If more than one presenter, designate lead presenter and provide complete contact information for each presenter. List only those persons who will actually attend and present at the conference.)

Professional experience: _____

Position / Title(s): _____

Institution / Company: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State / Country: _____ Zip / Postal code: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Mobile phone: _____ E-mail address: _____

Web site: _____

Have you or any co-presenter(s) presented this proposal before? yes no

If yes, please indicate when and where: _____

Will you or any co-presenter(s) submit this proposal to or present this proposal at any other national conference in 2012?

If yes, please indicate what conference, when and where: _____

The content of this session is supported by evidence and references are provided. yes no

This session includes quantitative performance data. yes no

LENGTH OF PRESENTATION:

1 hour 2 ½ hours

COMPUTER TYPE ADDRESSED:

Macintosh PC iPad

TYPE OF PRESENTATION:

- demonstration networking session / discussion hands-on workshop (iPad Lab)
 lecture hands-on workshop (Macintosh Lab) hands-on workshop (participant-provided computers)*
 make-it, take-it hands-on workshop (PC Lab)

*If computer is participant provided, this information must be included in the session's description.

List software to preinstall (if any): _____

List computer platform: _____ List operating system requirements: _____

List Web browser requirements (if any): _____

COMPANY AFFILIATION / PRODUCT DEMONSTRATION:

Are you or any co-presenters affiliated in any manner with a company or organization whose commercial products you will be presenting or demonstrating? yes no If yes, please explain affiliation: _____

If this is a product demonstration, is the product available for purchase at this time? yes no

Please note, if representing or endorsing a product, please be very careful to share information, strategies and implementation ideas rather than to "sell the product." Participants have commented and requested this to be the case.

LEVEL OF SOPHISTICATION:

Audience computer sophistication level: beginner intermediate advanced n/a
Presentation subject sophistication level: beginner intermediate advanced all

EQUIPMENT:

Standard equipment in each presentation room:

- projection system used for computer and / or video display
- Internet connection
- one screen
- two wireless microphones

If you need a computer, e-mail Tech Director Jeff Steinborn <jsteinborn@closingthegap.com>, with specifics.

If you supply your own laptop computer, it is necessary for you to list the make and model: _____

Additional equipment that you, the presenter, will supply: _____

PRIMARY SUBJECT OF PRESENTATION (please be specific; if more than one is applicable, rate 1, 2, 3):

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> accessible instructional material | <input type="checkbox"/> functional living skills | <input type="checkbox"/> professional development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> assessment | <input type="checkbox"/> funding | <input type="checkbox"/> research |
| <input type="checkbox"/> augmentative communication | <input type="checkbox"/> geriatrics | <input type="checkbox"/> response to intervention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> autism | <input type="checkbox"/> IEP / IPP | <input type="checkbox"/> screen alternatives
(Braille / large print / speech output) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cognitive development | <input type="checkbox"/> inclusion / cooperative learning | <input type="checkbox"/> seating / positioning / mobility |
| <input type="checkbox"/> curriculum development / modifications | <input type="checkbox"/> keyboard alternatives | <input type="checkbox"/> technology integration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> deaf communications | <input type="checkbox"/> language development | <input type="checkbox"/> transition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> differentiated instruction | <input type="checkbox"/> learning styles (LD) | <input type="checkbox"/> universal design for learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> early childhood development | <input type="checkbox"/> legislation | <input type="checkbox"/> Web 2.0 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> employment / job accommodation /
job training | <input type="checkbox"/> literacy | <input type="checkbox"/> other (please state):
_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> environmental control | <input type="checkbox"/> mathematics | |

LEARNING OUTCOMES: As a result of this activity, participants will be able to: _____

(Check the CEU area of the AAC Institute Web site for appropriate verbs to be used for learning outcomes statements. <www.aacoinstitute.org>)

PRIMARY FOCUS OF PRESENTATION (please be specific):

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> administration | <input type="checkbox"/> cognitive disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> infant / toddler skill level |
| <input type="checkbox"/> rehabilitation | <input type="checkbox"/> hearing impaired / deaf | <input type="checkbox"/> preschool skill level |
| <input type="checkbox"/> service / care | <input type="checkbox"/> learning disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> kindergarten-grade 6 skill level |
| <input type="checkbox"/> special education | <input type="checkbox"/> physical disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> grades 7-12 skill level |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> speech / language disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> adult skill level |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> vision impaired / blind | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> behavioral / emotional disorders | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> traumatic brain injured | |

SUBMIT PROPOSAL FORM:

Return proposal form, abstract and summary by mail or fax to, Presentations Manager, Closing The Gap, 526 Main St., P.O. Box 68, Henderson, MN 56044. Fax: 507-248-3810.

To submit a proposal form, abstract and summary online, visit <www.closingthegap.com/conf/call_for_participation.lasso>.

For additional information, call 507-248-3294, e-mail Closing The Gap at <info@closingthegap.com> or visit our Web site at <www.closingthegap.com>.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

Proposal must be received by Closing The Gap on or before 2:00 pm Central Daylight Time on Thursday, May 3, 2012.

CONFIRMATION DATE:

Confirmation of presentation proposal acceptance / declination and confirmation of specific date and time of accepted presentation will be sent by the first week in August.

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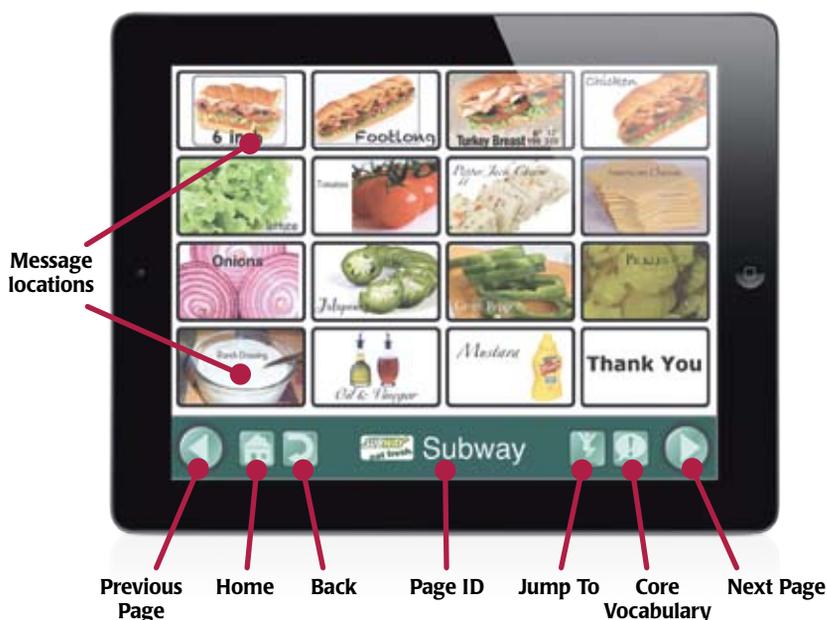
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