



# DIRECTIONS

## *Technology in Special Education*

Vol. 4, No 9

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### **Making Universal Access a Reality**

*By: Ellen Schiller Ph.D., Division of Research to Practice,  
Office of Special Education Programs*

*Source: TAM Connector Volume 11, Number 1, March 1998*

The Internet may be the most significant educational technology of the late 20th century. The Internet is not only a reference resource, it is also a communications vehicle, and multimedia presenter that enhances learning opportunities for students.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 has expanded schools' access to this technology through the E-Rate, which will offer more than \$2 billion in discounts on telecommunications to schools beginning January 1998. This effort attempts to make the Internet available to all students, including those in economically disadvantaged schools.

However, availability and accessibility are quite different things especially for children with disabilities. Ironically, as the use of the Internet expands and as websites become more complicated, there is a danger that the gap between children with disabilities and their peers will widen. Students with disabilities have difficulty accessing and using the vast amount of information available to them via the Internet. While it may be easy for an observer to understand the problems children with physical and sensory disabilities have in using the Internet, it is difficult to see the hidden needs of children with cognitive disabilities. For example, students with visual impairments are unable to view the multimedia features that compose the majority of websites, and students with learning disabilities may be unable to understand a complex Internet page with multiple frames and graphics.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is sponsoring efforts to expand universal access to information online. For example, research conducted by Gaylen Kapperman at the Research Development Institute in Illinois shows ways that students who are visually impaired can use graphical programs under Microsoft Windows, including web browsers. Programs provide verbal cues to tell the student where the cursor is on the screen and what object is under the cursor.

Those who still retain some vision could benefit from programs that magnify

*Please see ACCESS on page 8*



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# National Rehabilitation Information Center (NARIC)

<<http://www.naric.com/naric>>

The National Rehabilitation Information Center (NARIC) is a library and information center on disability and rehabilitation. Funded since 1979 by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), NARIC collects and disseminates the results of federally funded research projects. NARIC's document collection, which also includes commercially published books, journal articles, and audiovisuals, grows at a rate of 250 new documents per month.

NARIC's information specialists serve thousands of patrons per year. They are committed to serving anyone, professional or lay person, who is interested in disability and rehabilitation, including consumers, family members, health professionals, educators, rehabilitation counselors, students, librarians, administrators, and researchers. They offer a variety of services, and there are several ways to use NARIC services.

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Quick-reference and referral—an information specialist can answer simple information requests and

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For further information, contact NARIC at: 8455 Colesville Road, Suite 935, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3319, 800/346-2742 (V), 301/588-9284 (V), 301/495-5626 (TT), 301/587-1967 (fax), <http://www.naric.com/naric>. §

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# Accessible Learning

by Lorianne Hoenninger

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This month we are going to focus on shareware that can be used to make the computer friendlier for the user with motor impairments. As an educator, I am very aware of the importance of such modifications in the educational setting. If a child has to concentrate on the motor components of a task, such as moving the mouse about the screen, he/she will have less concentration left for

the cognitive task at hand. As motor demands decrease however, cognition increases, an important result for a teacher. Fortunately, there are hundreds of utilities available to adapt the computer, more than I can cover in this issue. We will return to this topic periodically during the coming year, but in the meanwhile, if there is a specific utility you are looking for, you can always e-mail me at

lorianne@erols.com or write c/o: Accessible Learning Technology Associates, P.O. Box 597, Shirley NY, 11967.

Next month, we will look at some of the fabulous authoring tools available for Special Educators and parents to use to create child specific software. See you then!

| Potential Problem  | Freeware and Shareware Solution   | Computer Platform | Where to download  |
|--|---|-------------------|--|
| Finding/seeing the cursor                                  | <b>Fat Cursors, Cursor Beacons and Color Arrow</b> - change the shape and size of the mouse cursor. The first two also have a find cursor feature: press the spacebar plus a modifier key and a circle flashes at current cursor location | Macintosh         | <b>Fat cursors:</b><br><a href="http://hyperarchive.lcs.mit.edu/HyperArchive.html">http://hyperarchive.lcs.mit.edu/HyperArchive.html</a><br><b>Cursor Beacon:</b><br><a href="http://techctr.educ.umkc.edu">Http://techctr.educ.umkc.edu</a><br><b>Color Arrow:</b><br><a href="http://www.apple.com/disability/shareware.html">http://www.apple.com/disability/shareware.html</a> |
|  | <b>Arrowsmith, Animouse</b> - Changes the shape and size of the mouse   | Windows           | <a href="http://techctr.educ.umkc.edu">Http://techctr.educ.umkc.edu</a>  |
| Fatigue  | <b>Wrap Screen</b> - causes the cursor to "screen wrap"; i.e. when it gets to the left edge it appears on the right and visa versa.   | Macintosh         | <a href="http://hyperarchive.lcs.mit.edu/HyperArchive.html">Http://hyperarchive.lcs.mit.edu/HyperArchive.html</a>  |
|  | <b>Move It</b> - is control panel that automatically move the mouse pointer to the default button in dialog boxes   | Macintosh         | <a href="http://techctr.educ.umkc.edu">Http://techctr.educ.umkc.edu</a>  |
|  | <b>Okey Dokey Pro</b> - presses the default button in dialog boxes automatically after a user specified amount of time.   | Macintosh         | <a href="http://techctr.educ.umkc.edu">Http://techctr.educ.umkc.edu</a>  |
|  | <b>Keymouse</b> - Turns your keyboard into a mouse  | Windows           | <a href="http://techctr.educ.umkc.edu">Http://techctr.educ.umkc.edu</a>  |
| Difficulty holding down button while moving the mouse      | <b>Automenus Pro</b> - automatically pulls down menus when the pointer is over the menu bar.  | Macintosh         | <a href="http://hyperarchive.lcs.mit.edu/HyperArchive.html">hyperarchive.lcs.mit.edu/HyperArchive.html</a>   |
| Need auditory feedback due to visual/cognitive impairments | <b>Say It</b> - speaks out the keys on the keyboard as the student types  | Macintosh         | <a href="http://www.apple.com/disability/shareware.html">http://www.apple.com/disability/shareware.html</a>  |
|  | <b>Talkeys</b> - speaks out the keys on the keyboard as the student types   | Windows           | <a href="http://techctr.educ.umkc.edu">Http://techctr.educ.umkc.edu</a>  |

# ATFSCP Notes

## The Assistive Technology Funding and Systems Change Project

[http://www.ucpa.org/html/innovative/atfsc\\_index.html](http://www.ucpa.org/html/innovative/atfsc_index.html)

### Using State Insurance Laws to Advance the Cause of Assistive Technology

By Steve Mendelsohn, Esq.

Advocates and users of assistive technology (AT) widely believe that health insurance has not yet fulfilled its potential as a source of funding for AT devices and services. This viewpoint is based upon observations like those listed below:

The health insurance industry unduly limits coverage for AT by defining AT as "rehabilitative" or as "convenience items" - rather than as necessary medical treatment.

The health insurance industry evaluates AT on a case-by-case basis often concluding that the requested AT is not "medically necessary" in the particular instance.

Assistive Technology laws are largely unenforced. If current AT laws were recognized more widely, and if regulatory officials enforced these laws, assistive technology more likely would be provided by health insurance agencies across the nation.

Efforts must be made to change. While these efforts are undertaken, individuals should challenge Managed Care Organizations (MCO) to ensure that existing law is fully implemented. This would increase the number of individuals for whom AT will be made available under the rules that currently exist.

In addition, a federal law called the

Employee Retirement and Income Security Act (ERISA) regulates employer-sponsored, self-insured health plans. These health plans are not subject to state laws. Therefore, activity to improve availability of AT in a particular state would not have an impact on ERISA plans.

Below we have identified some of the areas where enforcement of existing laws may help potential users gain access to AT and suggest areas where important reforms may prove feasible.

#### What To Ask State Insurance Commissioners To Do?

In holding the state accountable for regulating managed care to the maximum extent permitted by law, there are two basic approaches to take.

First: Begin with familiarizing yourself with the law, deciding exactly what the appropriate state agency should be doing, and by asking them what action they are taking. For example:

-Do they monitor Health Management Organizations?

-Do they publish reports, initiate enforcement proceedings, levy fines, and require reports on compliance or on consumer satisfaction from licensed HMOs?

-Do they review performance in connection with license renewal?

-Do they respond to public inquiries regarding their enforcement powers and practices?

-Do they respond to public inquiries regarding what safeguards the law contains?

What do they say they do, and as far as you can find out, what do they actually do? If they are doing less than it seems they could and should be doing under the law, or if they turn out to be doing less than they say they do, advocacy efforts are warranted.

Second: Evaluate your MCO according to what the law specifies that it should be doing. Make a checklist of required documentation, timeframes, points of access, required approvals and other relevant matters. Decide whether the MCO is meeting its obligations in these areas. What does the organization say it does? Do they claim to be in compliance when they are not, or to have appeal procedures available that do not exist? Do they abide by timeframes or do they ignore or fail to meet them? Again, if the MCO appears deficient in any of these areas, complaints to the regulatory agency or to both the agency and the MCO simultaneously may be in order.

**The AT Connection**

If an MCO fails to meet its obligations as described above, the procedural defects will affect persons seeking AT and others. But for people with disabilities in general, and for people needing AT in particular, some shortcomings of insurers are more serious than others. These include: refusal to give reasons for denial, refusal to give clear definitions of those services which could most readily include AT and failure to include appropriate practitioners or specialists in the provider network.

These areas should be very closely monitored. Refusal to give reasons for the denial may suggest that a good reason does not exist. Some reasons must be offered or the decision-making process cannot be subjected to the necessary scrutiny. Once a reason is given (e.g., the devices in question do not constitute medical treatment, or they are not medically necessary in your particular case), challenging it is possible. For example:

-Why does a device that would restore function not constitute medical treatment, if surgery or drugs that would similarly restore the same function are covered?

-Why is improvement of a measurable function - in terms of ADLs or other objective measures - any less medically necessary than treatment that would improve circulation, increase joint mobility or reduce severe pain?

**Resources**

The kind of research and monitoring of AT that is necessary would be burdensome for most state governments. It is unlikely that any one individual could do produce major change on a private or voluntary basis. However, people and groups with common interests and shared concerns can combine their resources to provide the grass roots, citizen-based oversight that is needed.

Today there are many organizations engaged in the managed care evaluation process. Even Newsweek Magazine has recently gotten involved! While different groups have different grievances with managed care and with particular MCOs, many share the desire to make managed care more responsive to consumer demand and to legal control. No one should suggest that if people with disabilities get AT, senior citizens would have to go without prescription drugs in order to make up the cost.

Legal resources can be helpful. Given the importance of the managed care system to people with disabilities, your state Protection & Advocacy system (P&A) agency should be a vital resource. The recent involvement of the American Bar Association in the provision of free legal assistance to children recently cut from the SSI roles suggests a number of important possibilities for their future involvement.

Attorneys can help as well. A call from an attorney to the proper insurance organization official can

lead to a satisfactory resolution in a particular case. In today's environment of public hostility toward managed care, the last thing any HMO wants is a court battle particularly one involving a child who needs AT. Many of these organizations will resolve the matter, once persuaded that your threats of legal action and of publicity are credible.

**Conclusion**

Managed care and Insurance policies are subject to regulation by state law if they are not governed by ERISA. Not all policies or practices that could be regulated are in fact regulated. You may run into issues that fall under the jurisdiction of state law, but about which that law has nothing to say.

A presidential commission on the quality of health care has recently recommended adoption of Health Care Consumers' Bill of Rights legislation. Portions of the recommendations may become law. Because states have passed and continue to pass social legislation, it seems that the focus of health insurance reform will be on state government for the next few years.

Advocates of AT should associate themselves with these efforts and organize state-based advocacy, develop grassroots organizations and perfect the skills that will serve them well in the ongoing debate over federal health care and disability policy in this nation. §

# Assistive Technology for People with Mental Retardation

Source: The Arc WWW Homepage

<<http://fohnix.metronet.com/~thearc/welcome.htm>>

## What is assistive technology?

Assistive technology is the term used to describe devices that are used by children and adults with mental retardation and other disabilities to compensate for functional limitations and to enhance and increase learning, independence, mobility, communication, environmental control and choice. It also refers to direct services that assist individuals in selecting, acquiring or using such devices (The Arc, 1991).

## How can assistive technology benefit people with mental retardation?

Technology can help people with mental retardation overcome barriers towards independence and inclusion. Assistive technology compensates for the functional limitations of the user and serves as a liberating agent for the individual.

Specifically the user may communicate with others, engage in recreational and social activities, learn, work, control the environment, and increase his or her independence in daily living skills with the assistance of technology (Copel, 1991).

People with mental retardation should be introduced to the benefits of assistive technology early in their lives. There should be consistency in the kind of technology available, how it is used, and methods for instructing

the user on operating the device. The device should be available for use throughout the day and in all settings, including home, school, work and leisure time environments. Transitions from one device to another should be made as smooth as possible by building on and integrating previously learned skills.

Assistive technology solutions should be flexible and customizable to accommodate the unique abilities of each person with mental retardation. There is a growing use of assistive technology with infants and young children, particularly with communication devices being introduced to facilitate early language development. Technology is also being developed to address the needs of people as they age in an effort to help them continue to live independently.

## How is assistive technology used by people with mental retardation?

Communication. For a person who cannot communicate with his/her voice, for physical and/or cognitive reasons, technology can substitute as a voice for the user. Computerized communication devices with vocal output are called augmentative communication devices.

Environmental Control. Devices to control the environment are important to people with severe or multiple disabilities and/or cognitive

disabilities, whose ability to move about in the environment and to turn electrical appliances on or off is limited. Assistive technology allows a person to control electrical appliances, audio/video equipment such as home entertainment systems or to do something as basic as lock and unlock doors.

Mobility. For a person who does not walk, simple to sophisticated computer controlled wheelchairs and mobility aids are available.

Education. For a student with disabilities, the computer becomes a tool for improved literacy, language development, mathematical, organizational, and social skill development. Students with severe and multiple disabilities use technology in all aspects of the classroom learning environment; from academic software to communication. Alternative ways to access computers are available for students who cannot operate a keyboard. Software can be regulated so it runs at a slower pace if a student needs this type of modification for learning.

Activities of Daily Living. Technology is assisting people with disabilities to successfully complete everyday tasks of self care. Examples include:

- Automated and computerized dining devices allow an individual who needs assistance at mealtime to eat more independently (Brown, et al., 1991).

•Devices may be used to assist a person with memory difficulties to complete a task or to follow a certain sequence of steps from start to finish in such activities as making a bed or taking medication. •Homes can be designed which use technology to assist a person to become more independent. Various devices can regulate and control many aspects of the living environment. An environment can be computerized to give cues and auditory direction for successfully performing tasks or for navigating. •Directional guidance systems with auditory cues can assist a person to travel from one location to another. •Technology can assist a person to shop, write a check, pay the bills, or use the ATM machine.

Employment. With the advent of the Americans with Disabilities Act, employers are making the workplace more cognitively accessible. For some employees, this requires worksite modifications where the employer adapts the environment, to permit the employee to perform a job. As an example, an audio tape is an accommodation which can be used to prompt a worker to complete each task in a job.

Sports and Recreation. Computerized games can be adapted for the user with physical limitations. Adaptations can be made to computer games which allows the game activity to be slowed down for the user who cannot react as quickly to game moves and decision-making. Specially adapted sports equipment is available to compensate for functional limitations and which allow an individual to participate more

fully. For example, people with mental retardation can participate in bowling using specially designed ball ramps.

### **What are some considerations before using assistive technology with an individual who has mental retardation?**

Before determining whether or not an individual with mental retardation will benefit from assistive technology, the following questions should be considered:

- What functional limitation does the individual with mental retardation have that might be helped by assistive technology?
- Have professionals conducted a comprehensive assessment to determine what assistive technology might be beneficial?
- Will the technology be available for the person to use at all times in all environments where needed, and if not, what alternatives exist in other environments?
- Will the assistive technology be a tool and not inhibit typical development and skill acquisition?
- Does the professional support system exist for the successful application and use of the identified technology?
- Can parents, teacher, and/or the person with mental retardation obtain training in the use of technology?

### **What are some barriers in obtaining assistive technology for people with mental retardation?**

Sometimes, finding appropriate assistive technology for a person with mental retardation is difficult because the technology may not exist which

takes into account the unique needs of people with cognitive disabilities. Assistive technology professionals, like computer scientists and rehabilitation engineers, have limited experience applying technology assistance to users with cognitive disabilities. Consequently, they may be unfamiliar with appropriate system design, training and skill development strategies which encourage successful technology use by people with mental retardation.

Individuals with physical or sensory limitations have challenges that can be addressed through specific and generic problem solving. That is, by modifying a computer for a person who is blind, it will be accessible by many people who are blind. Because most people with mental retardation or cognitive limitations have a range of learning and processing abilities, it is difficult to develop generic assistive technology solutions which are appropriate for all individuals. Assistive technology solutions must be flexible and easily customized.

Developers and manufacturers of assistive technology often do not consider issues of cognitive access and flexibility when designing their products. An exception are developers of communication devices who are pioneering efforts to design their products for cognitive access recognizing that many users needing communication devices have cognitive limitations.

Sufficient instructional strategies for device use have not been developed to

*ACCESS continued from page 1*

sections of the screen. Cynthia Smith, a researcher at Gallaudet University, has developed programs for the deaf that replace auditory sounds with visual cues and provide the computer equivalent of closed captions for sound effects and voice.

Several other projects are underway to increase accessibility to the Internet among students with physical and sensory disabilities. For example, The National Science Foundation's STIMULATE project (Speech, Text, Image, and Multimedia Advanced Technology) provides grants to university researchers to explore universal access to the Internet. In addition, the Web Accessibility Initiative of the World Wide Web Consortium encourages developers of web pages to use standard commands that could be correctly understood by specialized Internet browsers developed for children with these disabilities.

While most research to date has focused on access for children with physical and sensory disabilities, OSEP researchers Doug Carnine and Sam Miller at the University of Oregon are currently developing a curriculum designed to teach students with learning disabilities how to use the Internet. This curriculum is based on knowledge about effective practices to ensure that students with learning disabilities discover how to gain access to the same information, quality training, and support as their non-disabled peers. Through the ten-lesson program, students learn how to operate various search engines, use the appropriate commands, use the appropriate spelling, define key words, and narrow a search for a particular topic. Students have the opportunity to compare different search engines that

are available, and understand the benefits and problems of using the Internet to access needed educational materials.

Although research that deals specifically with Internet accessibility for students with learning disabilities is limited, information from OSEP's vast array of research on diverse learners could be applied in the development of Internet web sites. OSEP's researchers have found that students with learning disabilities have problems with the three R's (reading, writing, and arithmetic) because they have not developed the three S's - self-monitoring, strategies, and skills.

**Self-Monitoring.** Because some students with learning disabilities lack self-monitoring skills they have difficulty navigating the endless interconnections of the web. They can easily wander off topic without noticing that they go no closer to their goal. These students would benefit from a web design that gives them fewer choices and includes enough information for the student to make an informed judgment about which links to follow.

**Strategies.** Some students with cognitive disabilities have difficulty developing strategies. They may simply click each link they come across in the hopes that eventually they will discover upon the desired information. OSEP researchers have developed methods of helping these students, for instance, by teaching them how to use knowledge maps to organize information and make connections among disparate facts. Web sites could incorporate these principles by strengthening the links that tie the sites together and

explaining to students why some connections are more important than others.

**Skills.** Students with special needs need instruction designed to link new concepts and skills with previously learned concepts and skills. For example, they may forget definitions of words and need reminders about those vocabulary words to link it with problems to be solved. OSEP researchers have experimented with the use of multimedia and hypertext for activating prior knowledge to prompt and guide students as they read the text. Since the basis of the Worldwide-web is simply a huge hypertext program, teachers and web designers can make web information more useful to these students by including links to definitions and thought provoking questions instead of just to other websites.

As desirable as these features are, and despite the importance of technology in helping students with all types of disabilities learn and achieve, many developers of websites still neglect to design for universal access. Just as OSEP is encouraging software authors to install universal access features into their products, researchers and the education community need to work with creators of websites to make sure that children with disabilities do not get lost in the worldwide web. Only then can we begin to think of the Internet as one of the most important educational tools of the late 20th century.

TAM Connector is an official publication of the Technology & Media Division of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). You can reach them at: 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 20191; Voice: 703-620-3660; Fax: 703-264-9446; Web: <http://www.cec.sped.org>. §

*ARC continued from page 6*

assist practitioners. Thus, even though a device is designed for cognitive access and use, if the user does not receive adequate instruction, the device has limited utility.

The predictable barrier of the cost of assistive technology is also an ever present issue. Information on funding is available through The Arc.

### **What are some sources of information about assistive technology?**

Currently, 42 of the 50 states have funding from the federal government to coordinate and organize statewide assistive technology services. To identify resources within your state, contact the RESNA Technical Assistance Project, 1101 Connecticut

Ave., NW, Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20036 (202)857-1140.

Some communities also have assistive technology learning centers. Contact the Alliance for Technology Access for more information, 1307 Solano Ave., Albany, CA 94706-1888 (415)528-0746.

The Arc also maintains an extensive library of information on assistive technology and can provide information on specific topics.

### **References**

The Arc. (1991). Assistive Technology Position Statement.

Copel, H. (1991). Tech Use Guide: Students with moderate cognitive

abilities (Technical Report). Reston, VA: Center for Special Education Technology.

Brown, C., Sauer, M., Cavalier, A., Frische, E., & Wyatt, C. (1991). The assistive dining device: A tool for mealtime independence. Proceedings of the RESNA 14th Annual Conference (pp. 341-343). Kansas City, MO: RESNA.

Further information can be obtained by contacting The Arc National Headquarters, P.O. Box 1047, Arlington, Texas 76004, (817)261-6003, (817)277-0553 TDD, E-mail: [thearc@metronet.com](mailto:thearc@metronet.com), or visiting their web site at: <http://fohnix.metronet.com/~thearc/welcome.htm> §

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# AT Newsletters & Journals

ACTTion News  
Macomb Projects  
27 Horrabin Hall  
Western Illinois University  
Macomb, IL 61455

Assistive Technology News  
National Easter Seal Society  
70 East Lake Street  
Chicago, IL 60601

Augmentative Communication News  
One Surf Way, Suite #215  
Monterey, CA 93940

Augmentative/Alternative Comm.  
Purdue University  
South Campus Courts, Building E  
West Lafayette, IN 47907

Closing The Gap  
P.O. Box 68  
Henderson, MN 56004

Computer Disability News  
The National Easter Seal Society  
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Chicago IL 60601

Communication Outlook  
Artificial Language Laboratory  
405 Computer Center  
Michigan State University 4882-1024  
East Lansing, MI 48824-1024

ConnSENSE Bulletin  
The University of Connecticut  
Special Education Center  
Technology Lab, U64  
Storrs, CT 06269-2064

Current Expressions  
Prentke Romich Company  
1022 Heyl Road  
Wooster, OH 44691

Journal of Special Education Technology  
Box 328  
Vanderbilt University  
Nashville, TN 37203

The Networker  
Cerebral Palsy Association  
1522 K. Street, N.W  
Suite 1112  
Washington, DC 20005

Rehab Tech  
Connecticut Rehabilitation Engineering  
Center  
Human Resources Development  
78 Eastern Boulevard  
Glastonbury, CT 06033

Rehabilitation Technology Review  
RESNA  
1700 N. Moore Street Suite 1540  
Arlington, VA 22209-1903

## Conferences & Events

**Date: April 15 - 18, 1998**

Council for Exceptional  
Children Annual Convention,  
Minneapolis, MN.

Contact: 1-888-CEC-SPED;  
<http://www.cec.sped.org>

**Date: May 3 - 6, 1998**

Rehabilitation Technology  
Associates Training  
Symposium, Transitions, Salt  
Lake City, UT.

Contact: 304-766-2680, TDD:  
304-766-2697, FAX: 304-766-  
2689, [rta@rtc2.icdi.evu.edu](mailto:rta@rtc2.icdi.evu.edu),  
[www.icdi.wvu.edu](http://www.icdi.wvu.edu)

**Date: May 14 - 16, 1998**

Colorado Assistive Technology  
Conference, Denver, CO  
Contact: 800-255-3477 or 303-  
864-5100.

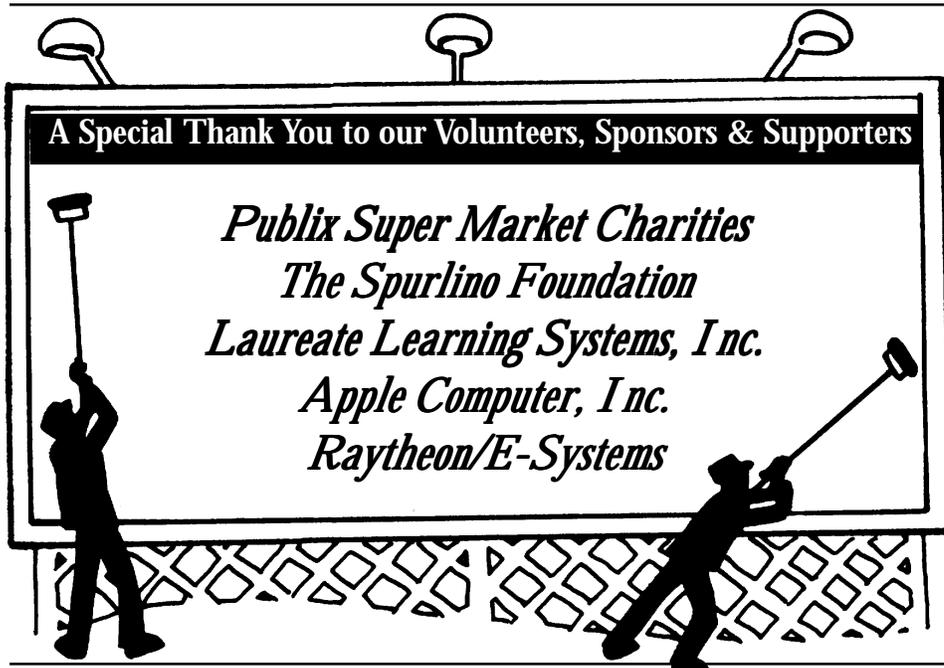
**Date: May 29th, 1998**

Assistive Technology '98,  
Boston, MA

Contact: 617-737-9495, TTY:  
617-737-0081, FAX: 617-439-  
7701, [www.matp.org/  
AT98.html](http://www.matp.org/AT98.html)

**Date: June 22 - 24, 1998**

NECC '98 National  
Educational Computing  
Conference, San Diego, CA  
Contact: 541-346-6322, FAX:  
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[necc@oregon.uoregon.edu](mailto:necc@oregon.uoregon.edu),  
<http://necc98.csusm.edu>



# Special Software for Special Kids

## Special Learning...Food for Thought

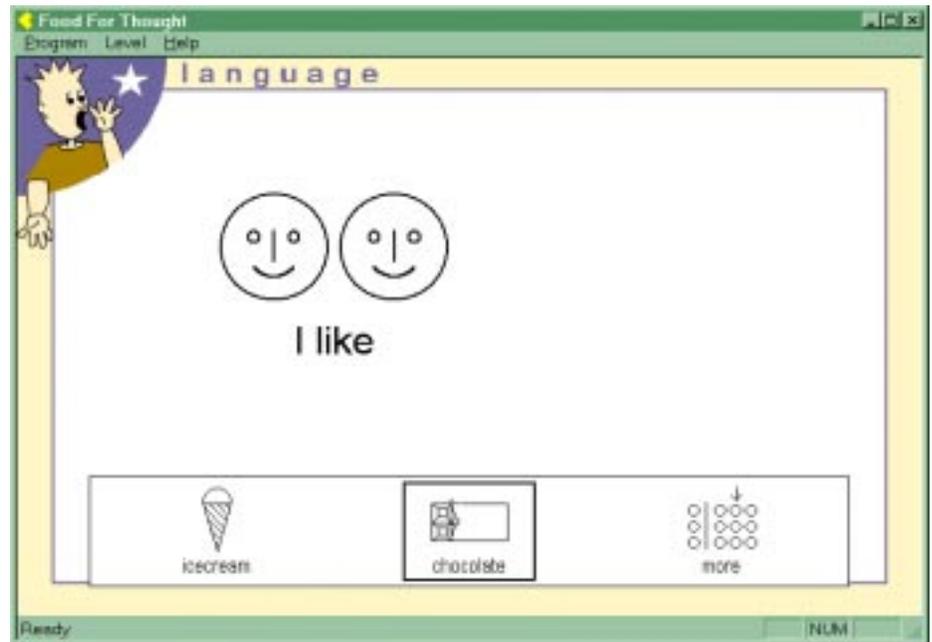
Education by Design, has just released an innovative, new software program called Special Learning...Food for Thought. The program caters for the unique learning abilities and fine motor skills of learners with intellectual disabilities.

Johanna Reivers, the designer, who is a qualified special education teacher said "Food for Thought was inspired by a need for locally made, special needs software. My students had problems using regular early learning software as it was often too abstract and quite difficult to use. I needed software that was suitable both in content and ease of use."

The program is based on a food theme and allows the learner to make sentences, match pictures, count food, 'pack the shopping' and sort food items. They can interact with the program using the mouse, arrows keys or the built in scanning function.

"We have used it with a number of children with intellectual disabilities, including some with autism, and found they responded very well to the speech and simple visual layout of the program. We have presented the activities using COMPIC pictographs which are used widely in special schools to aid communication." said Ms Reivers.

People with disabilities often miss out on playing computer games



because they are result orientated and require quick thinking and good reflexes. Food for Thought has a game activity that is both fun and achievable for the special needs learner.

Food for Thought requires Windows

95 and a sound card. It retails for \$129.00 and is available with a 14 day money back guarantee. Contact Education by Design at ph: 03 9886 3318, fax: 03 9886 3328, email: info@edbydesign .com or on the Internet at: <http://www.edbydesign.com>.

**COMMUNICATION  
ENHANCEMENT!****PERMANENT 501(c)(3) STATUS**

Hastings-on-Hudson, NY - Enabling Devices, a division of Toys for Special Children, recently introduced the *Grooved Platform Talking Communicator*, a three compartment communication device that features voice recordings and a raised platform which accommodates objects and card holders simultaneously. Use the card holders to identify the objects on the platform, to introduce a new concept, to personalize a message. Then press one of the colorful plates to see a light and to hear auditory feedback identifying the objects, pictures and/or words on the platform. The addition of the card holder helps to strengthen skills needed for object/word association and independent communication. Simply write directly onto the card holder or attach a picture to it.

The *Grooved Platform Talking Communicator* is appropriate for a wide range of cognitive levels - early speech development, remedial speech and speech training for older individuals with impaired communication skills. It is available in

two models: one that features tone and light feedback, and one that features message (up to 5 seconds - user recordable) and light feedback. Each model has large, colorful, and very sensitive message/sound plates with ultra-bright LEDs pointing toward the user. According to one company spokesman, the durable construction - unbreakable one piece mold with suction cups to prevent sliding - and the flexible configuration - interchange common objects, picture and/or words with tone of message - make this one of the most unique communicators on the market today.

In addition to communication devices, the company manufactures capability switches, environmental controls, adapted toys and more! Product literature and free catalogs are available. Contact Enabling Devices, Toys for Special Children, Inc., 385 Warburton Avenue, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706, Phone: 800-832-8697.

Freeville, NY - DREAMMS for Kids, Inc., the non-profit information clearinghouse and publisher of *DIRECTIONS: Technology in Special Education*, and multiple Assistive Technology related manuals, announced today that after a 5 year trial period, the Internal Revenue Service has granted them permanent status as a publicly supported charity. As a public charity, DREAMMS is able to take advantage of reduced mailing costs from the U.S. postal service, and submit proposals to designated agencies for funding to help defray the cost of printing and office supplies. DREAMMS is a wholly volunteer based Assistive Technology Information Clearinghouse that is supported solely by private and corporate donations and serves children with special needs by providing technology based information to their parents and teachers. DREAMMS for Kids, Inc. can be contacted at: 273 Ringwood Road, Freeville, NY 13068, Phone: 607-539-3027; Fax: 607-539-9930; E-mail: [info@dreamms.org](mailto:info@dreamms.org); Web: <http://www.dreamms.org>.

 **DREAMMS  
FOR KIDS, INC.**  
*Assistive Technology Solutions*  
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