



DIRECTIONS

Technology in Special Education

Vol. 12 , No. 1

January 5, 1995

Assistive Technology: Its Use CAN Help!

Part I – An Introduction

In 1988 Congress passed what is known as the Tech Act – Public Law (PL) 100-407 as an amendment to the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). This Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act defines **assistive technology** as “any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired off the shelf, modified, or customized to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.”

Examples of computer and high technology based assistive devices are: augmentative communication aids, alternative keyboards and keypads, touch screens, eye movement detectors, special needs software applications, voice analyzers, switch activated control devices, telecommunications devices for the deaf (TDDs), etc. The application and use of the various assistive technologies for the special needs child has been going on for years in schools all over the world. Many, many articles have been published in educational journals, and hundreds of studies have been conducted. The results show that these devices and methodologies are extremely beneficial for the special needs child. But, this is nothing new you’re saying.... We’ve heard all this before.... Why are we talking about all of this now?

Lower Cost Technologies

We’re talking about this now because technology breakthroughs have helped to make these devices more affordable. We’re talking about them now because more and more parents have home computers that can be accessed by children with

(Please see Assistive Tech on Page 5)

Monthly Tech Tip

Bigger IS Better!

Did you know that you may be able to make the Windows images on your PC screen a little bit larger than they currently are?!?

If your video display adapter is currently set to 800 x 600 pixels or higher (this means you have SVGA or Super VGA graphics), you can reset the video display to 640 x 480, (or regular VGA) or as low as 640 x 350 which EGA mode. SVGA is a much clearer and crisper display, but the images are much smaller than they are in VGA or EGA mode. By the way, VGA stands for Video Graphics Adapter and EGA stands for Enhanced Graphics Adapter. I know this is getting a little confusing, but hang in there for just a little, OK...

This lower resolution video graphic (VGA emulation) display will make the images on your video monitor (in Windows, remember!) less sharp, but larger! It really is very simple to change, so here’s how it’s done!

First, select (double click) the Window’s Setup icon from the Main Program Group within Microsoft® Windows. This small window will appear. Next, click on Options and select

(Please see Tip on Page 4)

Inside this Issue

We re Online

The DREAMMS Forum is Here!!!
See Page 4 for Exciting Details!

CompuServe Review

Get the scoop on the BIGGIE!
Turn to Page 6!

we're GROWING...

DREAMMS for Kids, Inc. is getting bigger and bigger every month! Our newsletter circulation is increasing, we're getting more phone calls, and we're sending out many information packets to parents and educators every day!! It's so very exciting!! But it's also creating a small problem! We need to expand our office resources in order to keep up with the increased volume and demands., Is there anyone out there who has, or may know of someone who has, one of the following (new or used) that they might like to donate to us?

Thanks so much, any help would be greatly appreciated!!

- Copy Machine
- FAX Machine
- 1 MB SIMMS
- 20 Meg External SCSI Drive for MAC Plus
- Triple Speed CD-Rom Drive
- Apple Newton (We're researching the possibility of developing this into an inexpensive communication device)

**Our new software and adaptive device catalogs have arrived !!
Call the HOTLINE
to get your copy!**

OOPS!

Our article in the October issue on Alternative Keyboards was incomplete We left out TASH! Sorry

TASH (Technical Aids & Systems for the Handicapped)
Models 2447, 2448, 2449, 2440, 2460
Order through:
Exceptional Computing
(904) 331-8847

Also *Kira's Word Explorer* has a bug! An updated version of this DREAMMware package has been uploaded to CompuServe and Logic Gate services. You can also find it in our new DREAMMS Forum on BizNet!! See the notice on Page 4!!

DIRECTIONS

Technology in Special Education

ISSN: 1079-607X

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DIRECTIONS: Technology in Special Education is published monthly (except July) by DREAMMS for Kids, Inc., (Developmental Research for the Effective Advancement of Memory and Motor Skills), a non-profit research and information clearinghouse. Annual home delivery subscription rate is \$14.95 U.S., \$17.95 Canadian, and \$29.95 Int'l. (U.S. \$) Single copies are available in the U.S. for \$2.50. Add \$1.00 for postage outside U.S.

Authors - We welcome editorial submissions. Please include name, address and phone. Submission will be returned with self addressed stamped envelope, if desired.

Vendors - We welcome product news. Please include pricing and contact name with press releases.

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News from the Sunshine State!

Computer Learning for Mom and Dad Too!

FUTUREKIDS, Palm Harbor's Computer Learning Center, offers a FREE Introduction to Micro Computers Course. If you're confused about RAM, ROM or Mice in your computer, this course is for you. "It is just one of our many Community Service Programs", commented Theresa L. Nelson of FUTUREKIDS. The free course, entitled, "I Need to Know What I Need to Know" was originally structured to meet the needs of the parents of FUTUREKIDS students. "We have so many people asking us what type of computer and software to buy." "We also have parents that are a little intimidated or confused by computer jargon and just need to be pointed in the right directions," continued Ms. Nelson. During the course, attendees are provided with information to assist them in making both hardware and software purchasing decisions. The various types of hardware and software are discussed. Ms. Nelson, added "If you already own a computer

but are not comfortable operating it, the Introduction course is a great place to start because it will familiarize you with the basic assembly, anatomy, and operation of a computer." Participation and questions from attendees are encouraged.

FUTUREKIDS conducts the FREE class every Wednesday evening at 7:00 PM. To ensure personal attention, seating is limited and reservations are required. Please call 789-6968 for further information.

FUTUREKIDS, located at 3293 Tampa Road in Palm Harbor, teaches computer mastery to children and adults of all ages. FUTUREKIDS instructors intertwine learning basic computer skills such as keyboarding, word processing, database creation, graphics, and telecommunications with educationally based themes.

Auditory and Language Development

How about a non-pressure approach to

provide early auditory learning. "Sounds Like Fun", an educational cassette from Discovery Toys is the answer! This cassette is based on the concept that learning and remembering increase when a child is relaxed, and provides 65 minutes of continuous soothing music while promoting pre-reading skills, math, and auditory and language development. The creator of this tape, Barbara Milne has a background in children's music, early childhood education, and psychology. Call your Discovery Toys Educational Consultant, Patty Kawamura at (813) 784-3724 for more information and a free catalog.

SPECIAL NOTE

Both FUTUREKIDS and Discovery Toys are national organizations. Please check your local phone books for a FUTUREKIDS or Discovery Toys near you for further information on their products or services



Mousing Around ...

Mice (the hardware type *and* the squeaky type) can be very frightening! When first teaching a special needs student or young child how to use the mouse, its a good idea to keep the following things in mind...

*Move the keyboard out of the way. Place the mouse and its pad directly in front of the student at a very comfortable height. Work for short periods of time (about 5 minutes long) a few times a day.

*Place the student's hand (left or right, whichever they use to write with...) on the mouse. NOTE: Most mouse drivers allow for the function of the mouse keys to be switched around (i.e., right button to left button).

*Moving and clicking with the same hand may be difficult. Try starting out by having the student click with the index finger on the non-mouse-moving hand!

*Place your hand over the student's hand to show them the movement, while showing them the moving cursor on the screen at the same time.

*Try moving the mouse (with your child's hand on the mouse) by grabbing the cable coming out of the front (nose!). This way, your hand is out of the way, and the child gets the sensation that they are moving the mouse all by themselves. (be sure to provide lots of praise here!!) Again, make sure to point out the moving cursor on the screen.

We re Connected!

Announcing the DREAMMS Electronic Forum Online Technology Tips for Special Needs Kids

- * Sponsored by Sparrow Enterprises, Inc. of Tampa, FL
- * Software Libraries, Messages, Forums
- * MAC or PC Interface
- * Logon today!! (Register as a DREAMMS member, and your membership is absolutely FREE!)
- * A \$30.00 value!!
- * HURRY! Call Today! We re waiting to hear from you..

DREAMMS Forum on BizNet
813-971-0482

TIP (continued from Page 1)

Change System Settings, and you'll see this window.

Write down what it says in the Display combo box (we will need this information if you want to set the video mode back to what it was before).

Now, select the down arrow to the right of Display: Clicking on this arrow will display the names of the different video drivers that are available for your system. There should be a selection that says something like, "512K 640x480 256 color". Click on this with the mouse (the new selection now shows in the combo box). Select OK from the Change System Settings window. Follow onscreen directions, and if requested to do so by the system, insert the appropriate Windows distribution diskette. Follow the onscreen directions again, and you should be looking at a bigger picture of the Windows Program Manager screen!

If you want to return back to the higher resolution mode, just follow the same directions, but select the higher resolution (800 x 600 pixels) as your display mode.

These steps may seem complicated, but it's really very easy! Most software is made for the lower resolution video mode anyhow! Try this larger size out. You'll have bigger images for your student to look at, and it'll be less wear and tear on the eyes!! It may not be to your liking, but you can always change it back to the way it was!

Don't forget to call our HOTLINE if you should run into trouble.

Dear Friends,

Welcome to 1995! And, I'd like to welcome Sparrow Enterprises, Inc. and BizNet to our family!

**A Note
from
the
Editor!**

We're starting this new and exciting year out by launching our series on assistive technology. Interestingly enough, using assistive technology for students with special needs is not new... The interest in using computers with people with disabilities started as early as 1981, and in 1983, the Council for Exceptional Children held its First National Conference on the Use of Microcomputers in Education. What is new though, is the increased use of these assistive technology devices in the home.

Dropping computer and technology prices are prompting parents to purchase computers for educational and entertainment (edutainment) purposes at home. This trend also affects the prices of the assistive technology devices. They are now more affordable than ever ... and they may open up a whole New World for your child at home!

Possibly your child cannot use a regular keyboard or the mouse – well then, maybe an alternative keyboard, or single switch will allow for interacting with the computer! The combination of devices and aids can provide computer access for almost any child with special needs. Add one of the excellent multimedia educational packages, and you also have the makings for a lot of educational fun and hours of entertainment! (And, a child with a tremendous sense of accomplishment!) <vbg>

Kindest Personal Regards.....

Janet

Did you know that DREAMMS is a non-profit public charity that is supported by your gifts and donations? We use your dollars to help pay for the printing of this newsletter, for postage, for mailings to our parents, and to pay for our Hotline.

**W on't you please send us your tax
deductible gift today?**

Assistive Tech

(Continued from Page 1)

assistive devices. We're talking about them now because they can help to unlock doors for our children!

Part I of our series entitled Assistive Technology: Its Use Can Help is introducing the field of assistive technology for home use. Although the term assistive technology includes a wide variety of devices used for those with special needs, our focus in this series will be on those devices that are higher technology in nature and more related to electronic and computer technologies.

The remainder of the series will include the following topics:

- The Tech Act – What do I Need to Know?
- Adaptive Devices and Input/Output
- Augmentative communication
- Hearing & Vision Aids
- Funding for Assistive Technologies
- Resources and Information

What Can Assistive Technology Do?

In a perfect assistive technology world you can see a student sitting at a computer workstation and interacting with the software with a toe switch located on the floor, (there are also

keyboards for the floor and keyboards for one handed typists!); you can watch a non-verbal child ask for a glass of juice with her augmentative communication device, or watch another as their Braille printer prints out today's English assignment!! How about dropping in on a teen who can turn their radio on and off by linking his eyes!

These are all possibilities!! But, there's a giant maze of equipment combinations, resources, and funding issues. And, most importantly, you must be sure that your child can actually benefit from a device being selected! Not all devices are made for all students! And, not all students are able to use any assistive device. The selection process is involved and requires some background knowledge and the help of qualified professionals for evaluation purposes.

This series is designed to give you all the background information that you will need, and there are school systems and agencies nationwide to assist you with your decision!

Don't miss our next issue when we discuss the Tech Act of 1988! How much do you need to know in order to properly help your child!

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ON THE HIGHWAY

Online Services

This past month my job was to take a close look at the CompuServe online service. I paid close attention to the forum organization, ease of access, variety of topics, and the quantity and quality of the information we found online. Let's see what CompuServe has to offer for parents and educators of special needs children. One you've entered your forum of choice, you will have to join that forum. There is no charge to join the forum, but there may be a few questions to answer, or a survey to fill out. Once you have joined there are basically three areas of interest contained within. These are: Messages, Libraries, and Conferences.

Messages

Each of the areas offer different types of information. Forum members can search, browse, read, and post messages of their own. Each forum is divided up into message topics or sections. For example, the IBM Special Needs forum currently has the following topic areas for messages: General Information; Software; Hardware; Special Needs; Teacher Talk; Option of Adoption; Developers/Vendors; IBM Bits & Bytes; Deaf Talk; Bilingual Tech; and NBA Transcribers. The number of messages in the forum is around 460 in 100 different subject areas.

Libraries

Forum libraries are a collection of files, usually organized into sections (somewhat following the message topics). Forum members can search, retrieve, and contribute to the library. Every file is identified by its title and contributor Users ID. In addition, keywords and a description are stored along with the file to facilitate searching and identification. For example, the Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) forum contains the following topic areas: Family/Social Life; Parenting Issues; Grps/Confs/Events; Schools & Learning; Alt. ED/Schools/Campus; Kid/Teen Library; Adult ADD; Adult Work/Career; Member Connections; What Works for Us; Diagnosing ADD; Therapy/Medication; Member Bios & Pics; ADD Theories/Studies; Books/Pubs/Tools; TS/Aut/PDD/NBDs; Legal & Advocacy; PR Press Releases; and Using Your Computer.

Conferences

Every CompuServe forum has electronic conference rooms where members can participate in "live" keyboard conversations, guest lectures, scheduled special conferences,

or just casual chats. When in conferences, you can enter a room, check who's there, set your nickname, view conference announcements, view summaries of conference room functions, invite others to join a private group, and even block comments from certain <annoying> participants. One important thing to remember when conferencing, it to turn capture on with our communications program. This will ensure that you can review important information after the conference is over. There are six general areas dealing with special needs students. There are no specific exceptionalities other than ADD, so you may have to do a little work in order to find the specific information you're looking for.

The following list identifies the forums of interest and the corresponding GO command to access them. The GO commands are universal, and work whether you are using a MAC, PC Windows, or a DOS environment.

IBM-Special Needs	GO IBMSPECIAL
Handicap User's Database	GO HUD
Disabilities Forum	GO DISABILITIES
Attention Deficit Disorder	GO ADD
Education Forum	GO EDFORUM
Education Research Forum	GO EDRESEARCH

***Note: All of these forums are outside basic services, which means that additional charges are being added to your bill. The current billing from CompuServe for extended services is \$9.95/hour for 9600-14400 bps, and \$4.80/hour for 300-2400 bps. Some services carry additional premium surcharges. For the most current and complete information, GO RATES online.

Inside IBM Special Needs: GO IBMSPECIAL C+

The IBM Special Needs forum attempts to address all aspects of special education. They address education of the handicapped, bilingual and vocational education, and K-12 and adult literacy programs. The forum also includes support for IBM specific education programs such as Write to Read, Listen to Learn, and PALS. The forum also focuses on software and hardware for IBM compatible computers. After reviewing the forum, we found the Special Needs and Teacher Talk messaging sections to be of interest mainly due to the quality of the message exchanges between parents and teachers. In the libraries, we found a limited amount of quality software or downloads available. The area seemed a little commercial to use, and it was difficult to find information relating to a specific disability.

CompuServe Scores a B-

By Chet Hosmer, DREAMMS Technical Director

Inside HUD: GoHUD B

The Handicap Users Database (HUD) is one of the largest areas focusing on special education and technology on CompuServe. The database provides articles and topics of interest for and about the disabled. There is a reference library, a list of organizations, and information about computer products specifically geared toward use by the disabled, and a message board for the exchange of ideas. In addition to the reference library, there is information pertaining to voice operated computers, AudiBraille Computers, augmentative communication, special reading devices and adaptive technologies. There is even information on special peripheral devices such as Braille embossers, paperless Braille devices, voice recognition systems, and low vision aids. Keep a tight hold of your wallet though, most prices we viewed were pretty high!

Inside Disabilities: GO DISABILITIES B+

The Disability forum runs a close second in size to HUD, but the quality of the educationally related information seems to be better. The focus is a communications a support group for anyone interested in disabilities exchange information. Disabled people share information, ideas and experiences related to their daily living. Parents and families of disabled people and professionals who work with disabled people also share their experiences and information. The scope of the forum includes developmental disabilities, emotional disturbances, learning disabilities, vision impairments, mobility impairments, and family life issues. Under the developmental disabilities section there is a very good directory of services section, and ADA newsletter, a small mainstreaming discussion, and even special software for blind user. As with virtually all the forums we reviewed, there is a lack of focus and organization, but with a little persistence, and a few late nights on the computer, you can certainly make it worth the effort.

Inside Attention Deficit Disorder: GO ADD A-

This forum was certainly the most focused that we found! Instead of trying to be all things to everyone, the ADD forum focuses on one area, ... ADD. (We wish others would follow their lead!) This forum is dedicated to discussions specific to ADD, such as the diagnosis of; schools, learning, therapy, and Add in the workplace. You can find out where and when support group meetings are held, and can question doctors about ADD and its effects. We found

excellent depth in this forum with libraries specifically focussing on ADD parenting issues, alternate schools, a What Works for Us section, alternate therapies, and even a kids/teen library.

Inside Education Forum: GOEDFORUM n/a

This forum's major focus is education, with only a small area dedicated to special needs. This is the SpED/Gifted/LD/ADD Forum. (Special Education/Gifted/Learning Disabled/Attention Deficit Disorder ... <whew>) This is a very large general purpose area that contains messages and libraries that deal with alternate education and adaptive keyboarding. The information is certainly limited, however, you might just find that proverbial diamond in the rough!

Inside Education Research: GO EDRESEARCH n/a

This forum is designed for people who are interested in research about the process and products of education. Through the forum, the latest research findings are shared and compared, and a dialogue is established between researchers and educators in schools. Under the education research forum there is a section entitled Special Education. This section contains specific message areas and libraries relating to inclusion, sensory integration, Goals 2000, Autism, and legal disputes. Again, the information is a little scant, but if one of these areas is of interest, you might just find what you're looking for. Overall, CompuServe gets a not very exciting B- for its support for parents and educators of students with special needs. Their sections that pertain to disabilities are disorganized, with poor cross reference utilization. We also feel that the board is a little too commercial, and the cost for access to these areas is a little pricey too! In a more positive vein, the open communication between parents, educators, vendors, and individuals with disabilities is outstanding! There seems to be little censorship evident, folks are able to "put in their two cents", and believe me they surely do!! Most importantly, there is a large mass of information there, and if you're willing to hunt around a bit, you'll certainly be able to find some information that can help you.

Next month, we'll be looking at America OnLine to see how they score and what they have to offer us!!

Till then...

Happy Hacking!

Thanks to Our Sponsors

A Special thank you to each one of you who have donated generously to the DREAMMS organization this month! Your contributions help to provide this newsletter and the services that we provide our special students and their parents. Remember, we couldn't do it without you!

*Mark Reilly
Frank & Rosemary Reid
Bob & Cynthia Acee*

Special Thanks to Matt Lobel at Sparrow Enterprises, Inc. for all of his assistance in setting up and sponsoring the DREAMMS Forum on BizNet!

**DON'T FORGET
OUR HOTLINE !**

813-781-7711

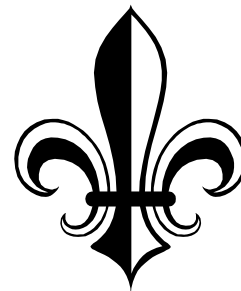
Conference News !

A new feature in DIRECTIONS is our Conference News column. Each issue we will list upcoming national and state educational technology conference announcements. These announcements have been collected from various sources. Please call the listed numbers for specific conference information on any that you may be interested in.

January 19-21: TRLD '95, Technology, Reading & Learning Difficulties; San Francisco, CA; Diane Frost, Educational Computer Conferences, 1070 Crows Nest Way, Richmond, CA 94803 (510) 222-1249.

February 7-11: Texas Computer Education Association (TCEA) 15th Annual State Conference, Austin Convention Center, Austin, TX; Robert Knight, Executive Secretary, TCEA; (800) 282-8232.

February 25-26: The Kentucky Council of Teachers of English/ Language Arts Annual Spring Conference; Louisville, KY; Fred Cornelius, English Department, Murray State University, Murray, KY 42071.



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