



DIRECTIONS

Technology in Special Education

Vol. 12 , No. 4

April 11, 1995

What is a Conference?? And What Can I Find There...

A conference is Keynote Speakers, Breakout Information Sessions, Vendors, Educators, Friends, Administrators, Parents, Hand-On Technology Experience, New Product News, Networking, and hopefully a short stay at a very nice hotel! There are a number of educational technology conferences held throughout the U.S. and abroad every year. Very few though, are specialized in that they focus on assistive and adaptive educational technologies for children with special needs. The conference held last month in Orlando is one of the largest of its kind, and is growing and getting larger every year!

“The Assistive Technology Connection” was the title for the 4th Annual Florida Assistive Technology Impact Conference (FATIC) and Technology and Media (TAM) Division of the Council for Exceptional Children. It was held March 2-4, 1995 at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida, in conjunction with the Florida Educational Technology Conference (FETC), and was an absolutely wonderful event! Over 2,000 professionals, parents, speakers, and technology vendors attended this year’s FATIC conference, almost twice the number as last year.

They Keynote Speaker this year was Dr. William Purkey, a professor at the University of North Carolina, and the Director of the International Alliance for Invitational Education. Dr. Purkey, and active writer, lecturer, and researcher has authored or co-authored over 80 professional articles and eight books. His address, entitled, “Inviting in the Rain: Invitational Education”, was inspirational, sincere, and motivating. Whether one left the auditorium laughing or crying, they left with a new sense of purpose and determination with regard to educating today’s youth!

The FATIC/TAM Hands-On Assistive Technology Lab provided a myriad of new or existing adaptive and assistive technologies to wonder at and explore.

Attendees could try out a switch on an IBM, Macintosh or Apple computer, could play a tune with ANY part of their body, or could watch a demonstration of, and then use, a new adaptive keyboard or special needs software product. They could

(Continued on page 4)

conferences

Reprinted From NARIC Calendar of Events & Other Sources...

Date: April 20-23

Event: Catch the Vision, Statewide Conference

Location: Clearwater, FL

Contact: Family Network on Disabilities, 800-825-5736

Date: April 20-23

Event: Abilities Exp

Location: Anaheim, CA

Contact: Coordinator: Expocon 203-256-4700

Date: May 1-2

Event: Spring Leadership Conference: Funding Assistive Technology

Location: Austin, TX

Contact: Jamie Judd-Wall at Technology & Inclusion

512-891-9288

Date: May 14 - 17

Event: 1st World Congress on Brain Injury

Location: Copenhagen, Denmark

Contact: Coordinator: International Brain Injury Association

202-296-6433

Welcome

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kidBoard™

ADAPTIVE KEYBOARD REVIEW

KidBoard, Inc. 612-926-7995

The kidBoard™ keyboard, designed specifically for children, is bright, colorful, kid-friendly, and very enticing, but is still a completely functional PC or compatible, 101-key standard or Macintosh computer keyboard.

kidBoard™ introduces kids to computing and typing by helping them locate keys and learn their ABCs at the same time! The keyboard is laid out in 3 different colors: blue keys are letters, red keys are numbers, and the yellow keys are for everything else! Each of the letter keys also has a picture stamped next to the letter. A for apple, B for bear, etc. Also, the letters/icons for left and right hand typing are in different colors! It truly is a fun looking keyboard!

Included with the board are special kidBoard™ games designed to help youngsters become familiar with the alphabet, keyboard and computer operation. The goal of each of the 3 games is to find the letters being shown on the keyboard! The games are bright, animated, and have music and songs associated with them.

We found the keyboard itself, although quite colorful and attractive, to be a little crowded with the pictures on the keys. Our testers had a little bit of a difficult time trying to distinguish the letters!

However, the software games that come with kidBoard™ are wonderfully colorful, clearly defined, lively and enticing for any child just beginning to use a computer! There are three choices: Letter Rap, Kick Ball and Clown Bounce, each becoming increasingly more difficult to use.

Letter Rap is a fun game where the child selects a blue letter from the keyboard and the corresponding picture (the one shown on the keyboard) falls into the big machine, and emerges as the letter on the other side.

Kick Ball prompts the child to find a letter on the keyboard by dropping a ball with a letter from the top of the screen. When the correct letter is selected, a child on the screen kicks the ball into the machine. The corresponding picture is zapped onto the monitor on the screen.

In Clown Bounce, pictures drop out of a chute. The user has to find the corresponding key on the keyboard. With each correct selection, another clown appears! The best part is that the clown gets bopped by the pictures bouncing around! It's really a lot of fun!

Contact kidBoard™ at the above number for information regarding their innovative child's keyboard, or look for it at Egghead Software, Computer City or various retailers throughout the country. We found it to be very effective in promoting the use of the computer for fun and games!

DIRECTIONS

Technology in Special Education

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

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Multimedia Max™: at Your Service...

by: Chet Hosmer, DREAMMS' Technical Director

Since this month's issue is focused on FATIC, I decided to do my column this month on what I felt was the most exciting technological device found there.

Meet Multimedia Max™, the star of the Assistive Technology Hands-On Lab! Max, who we met in our February issue, is a "free field" voice activated personal computer that controls telecommunications, electrical, and infrared devices. Max can also be controlled by mouse, keyboard and touchscreen!

Max was designed specifically to assist physically challenged individuals in controlling their environment.

ALL stereo and TV controls are depicted on the screen. When you give your voice command to Max (they are programmed in when you get your system...) the mouse on the screen moves over and clicks the appropriate button. In this manner, control can be achieved either for direct selection or through voice commands.

It's important to note that Multimedia Designs, Inc., the creators of Max, configure Max for each individual's needs. In other words, if you have 3 TVs and 1 stereo, they can each be set up for control from Max. Also, Max will respond to non-words! For example, if the individual

using Max cannot speak clearly, Max can be trained to respond to sounds, whatever they might be, as long as they are repeatable!

Another very exciting feature, that may not be clear from the list of features below, is that Max allows for

TOTALLY HANDS FREE TELEPHONE USAGE! This means using the phone, getting messages off the answering machine, and using the fax and modem! The possibilities that this opens up for individuals with physical limitations are truly exciting!

Multimedia Max™ is priced at \$5995, including computer, installation, training, and one year modem support. Options include touch screen monitor for access by touch, and TV scan converter to project computer images on your own TV. Contact Dan Deignan at Multimedia Designs, Inc. at 813-786-3317 for more information. If you get lucky, Max will answer the phone, and you'll get a chance to chat with him for a bit!

See you next month when our series on using the Internet continues...

- Voice control of 256 different lights and electrical appliances**
- Voice control of 99 different infrared (audio video) appliances**
- Voice control of Heating and Air Conditioning systems**
- Events can be scheduled in advance or executed real time**
- Voice control access to CD-ROM based applications**
- Voice control access to online services and the Internet**
- Voice control speakerphone, answering machine, fax and modem**
- Speech-to-text dictation in and Windows based word processor**

(Continued from page 1)

also copy IBM, Macintosh or Apple public domain software, (FREE if they had their own disks!), consult with the experts on any number of areas, try out the Florida Informational Resource Network (FIRN), or just stand by and marvel at the whole thing!

It's really very difficult to begin describing the numerous workshops and breakout sessions that were available for conference participants! There were product demonstrations, lectures, hands-on workshops, and poster sessions. Topics ranged from alternative and adaptive devices, augmentative communication, and telecommunications, to learning styles, inclusion through technology, funding issues, and instructional technology implementation. Two jam packed days from 9 AM until 6 PM were wonderful, informational and exciting! All tolled, there were 149 different sessions from which to choose! It's a very good thing that there is a CD-ROM available with conference proceedings!

Then came the opening of the Exhibit Hall on Saturday!

The Exhibit Hall, not for the weak of heart, was a bustling, bright, busy, conglomeration of computers, modems, printers, sounds, lights, multimedia, and vendors! I must admit, even for a seasoned veteran like me, it was a bit intimidating! But..... SEEING THE NEW TECHNOLOGY WAS ABSOLUTELY WONDERFUL!!! There was software, hardware, communication devices, sound devices, networks, CD-ROMS, CDIs, windows and doors! (Oops, sorry, no doors!) We came away with demonstration disks, product literature, catalogs, and a thousand ideas!

Next year's FATIC conference will be held again in Orlando, in February of 1996, and if the current trend continues, will be bigger and better than ever! Remember, parent and family stipends were available this year to cover conference costs, child care and transportation. I would think that they will be available again next year! Look for preliminary information right here in Directions, or check with the technology coordinator in your own school district for information.

Congratulations to Jeff Fitterman and the entire FATIC Planning Committee! You did an outstanding job!
Thank you.

More Neat Products..

Neighborhood Life

Hartley Courseware 800-247-1380

Neighborhood Life offers six activities containing sentences with higher level of grammatical complexity, and covering such skills as inferencing, sequencing, alphabetizing, classifying, and more. Students learn how to use an ATM machine, how to find information in a library, and explore the mall, making shopping decisions.

A help screen is available if learners forget how to make a desired action happen. Students can practice speaking by recording their own voices on the computer. An option is also available for learners to type their own words in the characters' speech bubbles.

This program, available for \$99, operates on the Macintosh or on Windows compatible machines. For more information, contact Hartley Courseware.

Minimal Motion Computer Access System

Equal Access Computer Technology, Inc. 508-263-6437

Minimal Motion provides full computer access for individuals who cannot easily use a traditional keyboard, but who have some finger dexterity. The full range of standard keyboard keys and controls are accessible without moving any finger from its user-selected home key. The user needs to operate only four or more keys, just one key per finger, individually and in most combinations.

The Minimal Motion Computer Access System can be used with selected keys on an ordinary keyboard, without any special hardware. The user can select those keys which are most comfortable, and this selection can be changed at any time. This approach is quite suitable for most individuals.

However, individually designed and fitted custom-made input devices can also be provided. For example, small switches can be mounted directly on thermoplastic splints. With this design, arm and wrist motion is not required! These custom devices will be made in the many forms, shapes and sizes required to meet the individual needs of the user.

Contact Equal Access if you are interested in trying a demo disk of the software.

Thoughts from the Florida Assistive Technology Impact Conference

By: Tom Nurse, Parent Resource Organization
District 5 Representative

On March 2nd and 3rd, the FATIC conference was held in Orlando at the Convention Center. As a father of a 4 year-old who has cerebral palsy, I received a family stipend to attend the conference.

The conference was attended by over 2000 teachers, parents and vendors, not just from Florida, but from around the globe. With so many great options, one of the toughest choices was trying to determine how to be in three places at once!

Along with an extensive daily schedule of breakout workshops and presentations, there was also a hands-on demo room set up by Orlando's Center for Independence Technology and Education (C.I.T.E.) where you could try a wide variety of positioning devices, switches, adapted toys, alternative keyboards, specialized software, and lots of computers.

In addition, a vendor hands-on workroom ran throughout the show and gave everyone a chance to meet the developers, owners, and creative folks who are leading the way in developing new and exciting products for those who need assistive technology.

One powerful experience that I'll never forget is that of meeting Purcilla. Purcilla is a charming, eager 10 year old from Taylor county who has Down syndrome. I was sitting in on a demonstration of the alternative keyboard, IntellikKeys, given by Arjan Khalsa, president of IntelliTools, when Purcilla and her Mom came to watch. Mom said, "don't let us interrupt, Purcilla won't understand this, so go ahead". Well, instead I gave up my seat in front of the computer so Purcilla could have a try.

Arjan was showing a program which would make a ball bounce by touching the word "hop" on the IntelliKeys overlay. So, Arjan began by pointing out the word "hop" to Purcilla on an overlay that had only one word. Next, he used an overlay with 6 words including "hop", and finally an overlay with 24 words! With each change, Arjan prompted Purcilla as to where the word "hop" was, and she would touch it. This would make the ball bounce!

Throughout this exercise, Purcilla appeared to be making notes in a small spiral notebook. When I looked over her shoulder, everything on the page was scribbles, except for the clearly written word "hop"! So, Purcilla was, in fact, learning!

Well, it didn't end there... A group of us stayed around for another hour as Arjan demonstrated more IntelliTools products. Purcilla and her Mom stayed to watch too! After an hour, a new group came by. Arjan asked Purcilla if she would like to help demonstrate the word "hop".

Arjan then put the 24 word overlay on the keyboard, and before he could even say something to Purcilla, she reached up and touched the word "hop"! She remembered! Then Arjan turned to the group and said, "An hour ago she also wrote the word "hop" on her pad." He took Purcilla's pad to show the group, but couldn't find the word. Before too long, Purcilla reached over and told Arjan, "Don't worry about it..." She took her pad and without looking at the overlay, wrote the word "HOP" in her pad!

She had remembered and learned! She was quite proud of herself! And so were we! But even more powerful was seeing Purcilla's Mom with tears of joy for her daughter's success!

I'll never forget Purcilla and her Mom. This experience brings home the fact that assistive technology gives families greater hope for unleashing our children's potential. Being there to witness this even was the most rewarding experience of the conference for me!

Editor's Note: IntelliTools of Richmond, California, is a leading developer and manufacturer of computer assistive devices and software that benefits disabled people. Their most recent hardware invention, IntellikKeys, was awarded first place in the Johns Hopkins National Search for computing Technology to Benefit People with Disabilities competition at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. In the last five years, Mr. Khalsa has conducted over 20 workshops in 18 cities across the United States on three main topics: using Alternative Keyboards, Selecting Software for Special Education, and Selecting Software for Regular Education.

Memory Building Blocks

SOFTWARE REVIEW

Sunburst Communications 800-321-7511

Memory Building Blocks is available for the Apple, Commodore 64, IBM and compatibles, IBM PS/2 and Tandy.

Sunburst communications has developed a Problem Solving Skill Matrix as a basis for the development of problem solving. Memory Building Blocks provides practice in the memory section of this skill matrix. This program is appropriate for a student of any age who needs to improve their memory skills, by providing lessons that emphasize visual association, context creation and sequencing.

Memory Building Blocks is a "concentration" type of game where the student is required to remember what they saw on the screen and where they saw it. Objects for matching can be pictures, shapes, colors, words or tunes. (Note that words can be modified to include those that the student is practicing.) Also, the game board can be selected from 9 different boards varying in difficulty, and many options can be set before the session begins.

This program works with a variety of input devices. Input can be accomplished with a keyboard, Muppet Learning Keys, or TouchWindow. Although these input devices are varied, we felt that mouse input is also desired, since selection using the keyboard is very abstract without a TouchWindow.

Sunburst Communications offers a number of educational software packages. Call them at the above number to receive your free catalog.

Early Learning I Early Learning II

SOFTWARE REVIEW

Marblesoft 612-755-1402

The Early Learning I software for the Apple or Macintosh computers teaches color, shape, letter and number identification and recognition. Early Learning II teaches basic addition principles. Our staff reviewed the Macintosh package which has a number of features above and beyond the Apple IIe or IIgs packages.

The Early Learning I program comes with colors, shapes, numbers and lower case letter keyboard overlays, and is single-switch, PowerPad, TouchWindow and IntelliKeys compatible. Early Learning II has number overlays for the keyboard to make viewing and selecting easier, and is also compatible with the above alternative input devices. Early Learning II also provides special prompting for blind students.

Screens for both packages provide large, clear and simple graphics, and a custom female voice. The programs allow for multiple levels of difficulty, allowing the student to progress to more difficult levels as their successes increase. In the Macintosh version of Early Learning I, color pictures may be substituted for the color blocks or shapes, thus making the program more enticing for the student.

We found these programs from Marblesoft to be very appropriate for children who are younger or may have developmental delays. Call the above number to request your free catalog.



HOW DO I ACCESS THE DREAMMS FORUM ON BIZNET ??

- * LEARN HOW TO USE YOUR MODEM AND COMMUNICATIONS PACKAGE

(You can call our HOTLINE for help ANYTIME you know .)

- * CALL 813-971-0482 WITH YOUR MODEM
- * INSTALL THE TELEFINDER SOFTWARE & USE IT TO CALL AGAIN
- * SIGN ON AS A NEW USER FOLLOW THE SIMPLE DIRECTIONS
- * SEND A NOTE TO THE SYSOP RE: DREAMMS AND SAY HOWDY

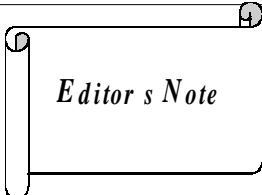
(He s a real friendly guy)

and then

- * ACCESS ALL KINDS OF USEFUL INFORMATION (TEXT FILES, MESSAGES & SOFTWARE)

Dear Friends,

Welcome to all of our new subscribers! It's great to have you as a part of our DREAMMS family! We hope you enjoy DIRECTIONS, and find it beneficial to you in your home or school! Please be sure to let us know if there is something that you'd like to see included in a future issue! We'd love to hear from you!



Editor's Note

I'd also like to welcome Tom Nurse, our new parent on the loose. Tom will be reporting on various topics of interest in upcoming issues. Luckily for us, Tom, along with being the District 5 Rep. for the Parent Resource Organization, is an IDEA kind of guy... He'll be sharing what he knows about the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and will help us to be sure that our children benefit to the utmost! Welcome aboard Tom.

This month we're focusing on the new and exciting products and ideas that we found at the Florida Assistive Technology Impact Conference. The products described here are only a few of those that we felt would be appropriate for our readers and their special students. We'll return to our regular columns and format, along with our Assistive Technology and Internet series next month! Everyone reading this newsletter, whether they are a parent of a child with special needs, or a teacher, administrator, or therapist, knows the feeling of overwhelming emotion when a child who has been struggling finally succeeds! I saw a child this past month with utter joy on her face as she kicked a small piece of wood and created a musical note! She succeeded! And she did it by herself! There is no greater empowerment!

There were only a small number of children at the FATIC conference, since they most likely were in school. But, the children that were there seemed as if they were in their own special fantasy land! Everything in the "Hands-On lab" was created especially for them! And -- they could touch and play with anything that they chose!! It was absolutely magical to see! How I wish every child with a disability could have had the opportunity to be surrounded by computers & switches & music & lights & voices, but most importantly, by the people who care enough to devote their lives to making small pieces of wood sing to the children! Till Next Month....Kindest Personal Regards... Janet

Marketplace

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513-860-5475 Phone or FAX

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Judy Lynn Software
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East Brunswick, NJ 08816

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Tidbits...

Tidbits...

Tidbits...

Father's Network

From the CITE – Vision Parent Support Group Newsletter: The national Father's Network is an organization that connects fathers of children with disabilities with support groups around the country. This organization also produces a newsletter written for and by fathers. For more information, call the national Father's Network at 1-206-747-4004.

1/3 of All Americans have Computers

Personal Computers, either IBM or compatibles or Macintoshes are found in 31 percent of American homes! And, an estimated 1,000 new personal computer software titles pour into the market each month!! That's a lot of software to decide upon!!

Parent To Parent Training in Florida

Parent to Parent in Pinellas County, Florida is holding a training seminar on May 12th from 9 AM – 2 PM at the Long Center. If you are interested in becoming a trained supporting parent in this group for parents of children with special needs, call 462-9606 to pre-register. Lunch is provided, and there is no registration fee.

New Catalogs

Attendance at an Educational Technology Conference assures us of one thing that's certain!! New product catalogs!! We have the latest and greatest from each of the vendors that attended the FATIC conference! Be sure to give us a call at 813-781-7711 if you're looking for a particular product or software package!



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Assistive Technology Solutions

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