



DREAMMS FOR KIDS, inc.

DIRECTIONS

Technology in Special Education

For Parents & Professionals

Vol. 3, No. 1

August 1996

Technology in the Classroom

ASKING THE COMMUNITY FOR HELP

*Adapted from "Mini-Grant to the Rescue",
Teaching Exceptional Children, Vol 28, No 2*

Most special education professionals agree that the school has the responsibility to pay for assistive technology recommended by the IEP team, but many school systems face limited fiscal resources, particularly in rural areas where financial constraints may be especially acute. This may become obvious at IEP team meetings, where members often have strong disagreements and hold heated discussions about the expense of such technologies. Despite the fact that teachers have a responsibility to advocate for children with disabilities who are served within their classrooms, some teacher—or other IEP team members—may feel quite intimidated by the prospect of aligning themselves against an administration that has a limited budget and has therefore limited the purchase of expensive technologies. A potential solution is to turn to community civic and business groups for assistance in purchasing assistive technology devices for students with disabilities who will benefit from its use. In order to do this you need to submit a proposal or mini-grant to the selected organization.

The mini-grant approach follows three assumptions:

- 1) Many schools have limited resources to purchase expensive assistive technologies for students with disabilities.
- 2) Appropriate technology has been identified for the child in question.
- 3) Within most communities, there are resources other than the school that can assist in purchasing devices.

When the teacher (or other member of the IEP team) realizes that it will be difficult or impossible for the district to purchase expensive equipment for a child, the team and the administration should discuss the possibility of

Please see MINI-GRANT on Page 6



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My Dear Friends,

8/96

For those of you who have followed our trek north.... we are finally settled into the wilderness. What a glorious place to live and work! (....Let's see how I feel about all this in February <vbg>)

I'm very proud of this, the first issue of our third volume of *DIRECTIONS*! I believe that we are bringing you the best information possible from Assistive Technology specialists and proponents around the country. Our goal has always been to assist you, the parent or professional who cares for and teaches a child with special needs, when you need help with Assistive Technologies. I believe we are doing this in the only manner that it can be done effectively, through the collaborative efforts of many individuals, groups and agencies. There are so many areas of concern in the world of Assistive Technology now; student assessment and level of ability, funding of the selected device, legislation regulating responsibilities, acquisition of the device, training of the user and the teacher, and don't forget repair! And while we're at it, look at the numerous topics within the field of Assistive Technology itself; computer access, adaptive hardware & software, augmentative communication, environmental control.... It gets pretty bogging at times! You can count on us to continue to bring you the latest tips, products, and background information that can help you provide the best learning environment possible for your child or student. And... we'll make your job a lot easier too!

Take a close look at the registration form on the last two pages of this month's issue. If you are close by the Sunshine State in October, you won't want to miss our premier **Building Bridges Training Seminar!** Specialists are coming together from around the state to provide "hands-on" training and instruction for anyone with an interest in Assistive Technology! Give us a call now.... It oughta be a great day!

My Kindest Personal Regards....

Janet

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 service agency 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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ATFSCP Notes

From the Assistive Technology Funding and Systems Change Project

RESOURCES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS AND PARENTS

Assistive Technology Funding & Systems Change Project:

This project is designed to provide families, individuals with disabilities and other interested persons with information and technical assistance on assistive technology funding issues. It is composed of a consortium of six national organizations and spearheaded by the United Cerebral Palsy Associations (UCPA) in Washington, D.C. The number for assistance is (800) 827-0093 (voice) and (800) 833-8272 (TDD).

Vocational Rehabilitation:

Each state has designated an agency to operate the vocational rehabilitation program. If you do not know yours, contact your governor's office, look in the phone directory under state government agencies, or, if all else fails, contact the US Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in Washington DC at 202- 205-5465.

If you are having difficulty in dealing with the vocational rehabilitation system, each state operates a client assistance program (CAP) which works to resolve disputes between the agency and those receiving services. VR personnel should

provide you with a reference to the CAP if requested, or the agency's central office should do so. If you are unable to obtain the information contact your state protection and advocacy agency.

Special Education:

The special education program is administered through your local school district. School officials must evaluate any child suspected of having a disability for eligibility for special education services. Contact the administrative offices of your school district for information on special education services. The phone directory will have most school offices listed with other county offices. If your school district does not respond to your requests, notify the state department of education, preferably its director of special education.

Medicaid:

Medicaid also operates through designated state agencies. The eligibility determination must again be separated from the determination of exactly what medical services an individual will be provided. To locate your local Medicaid agency, contact the state department of health or the department

of social services. You also may ask your governor's office or your state legislator for the name of the Medicaid agency in your area.

Independent Living Centers:

There are approximately 400 independent living centers around the country. For the name of one nearest you, contact the National Council on Independent Living Centers (703) 525-3406 voice; (703) 524-3407. Most states have a state independent living council (SILC) which can give you a referral.

State Tech Act :

Each state operates a program under the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act who should be able to assist you on problems related to assistive technology. You can locate the program in your state through an independent living center, or by calling your governor's office to determine the agency or organization serving in this capacity. The designation will have been made by the governor. If this fails, the RESNA Technical Assistance Project can provide the name. They may be reached at (703) 524-6686.

Technology & Inclusion

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION - A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

Jamie Judd-Wall

In this month's article we are going to be discussing assistive technology and very young children with disabilities. Children from birth to age 2 are typically served through an Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program. These programs are generally home based with some therapies being provided in a center or other office. Children from age 3 through age 5 are generally served in a Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD). PPCD programs are part of the school system and are generally based in a public school.

The guidelines for assistive technology applies to very young children with disabilities in the same way that it applies to school age children with disabilities and to post-school age adults with disabilities. For any child with a disability, the lead service providing agency (the ECI provider or school district) is required to consider which assistive technologies are appropriate for use with that child. However, because the child is so young, our criteria for determining what is appropriate is different than the criteria used for determining appropriateness for an older child or an adult. In both cases there is some documentation (either an IFSP or and IEP) that indicates the nature of the assistive technology assessment that was

conducted, what technologies were considered and how it was determined what technologies were appropriate for your child.

Why are we using technology with young children?

□ Young childhood is a time of exploration, investigation, and play. Very young children use play as the medium for learning. In play, children learn language. In play, children learn about the effects of their actions on their environment. In play, children learn about movement and sensation. In play, children learn about turn-taking and social structures. The computer and other assistive technologies can be an excellent tool for empowerment, growth and development; if we allow ourselves to be guided by the child's preferences.

□ Our challenge as parents and professionals is to find out what interests and excites the child. In using assistive technologies with very young children we want to create an environment in which the child is free to explore and experience their environment. This 'first impression' of assistive technology gained during exposure in very young childhood sets the stage for school age and adult technology use.

□ Therefore in determining which technologies are appropriate for very young children with disabilities, we ask one critical question:

*Is it fun for the child?
Will he/she use it in play?*

□ Don't try to fit the child to system ... rather work to fit the system to the child. Today's software and hardware, toys and wheelchairs offer flexibility and variety for virtually every child.

□ It is also important to remember that technology is not everyone's "cup of tea". If your child isn't interested, let it go for a while. Over time his/her interests will change; you can try it again later ... maybe even next week or next month!

What Technologies Are Out There?

Assistive technologies for very young children with disabilities include more than just computers. There are adapted battery operated toys, simple environmental controls, power mobility toys and wheelchairs, augmentative communication devices and more. While most people focus on the computer, your assessment team should consider every type of assistive technology to determine if it is appropriate for your child.

Very rarely, when considering assistive technologies for a very young child, will the team suggest complex or high end technologies. Very young children with disabilities will grow and change a great deal. You and your team should look for with technologies that have the potential to grow with your child.

Is Your Child Ready?

There are no readiness indicators, or prerequisite skills, for assistive technology use! Use your child's responses to guide you in determining what activities to pursue and which activities to postpone. Don't try to push your child into activities that are beyond their current skill level or that he/she doesn't enjoy. You'll have plenty of time to learn reading, math and history... technology and young children is about fun!

Hardware & Software...

The standard keyboard and mouse, without adaptations, are almost always too difficult for a very young child with a disability - although there are some exceptions. For most very young children with a disability you will be looking for two types of modifications or adaptations;

1. modifications to mouse use, and
2. modifications to keyboard use.

Most frequently I recommend a touch screen, like the *MagicTouch* or *TouchWindow*, for modifications to the mouse and an alternate keyboard, like

the *IntelliKeys* or *DiscoverBoard*, for modifications to keyboard use. For some children a single switch, like the *Big Red*, may be the best modification. To determine the best choice for your child, ask your OT or an assistive technology specialist that knows your child well.

There is so much wonderful software for young children with disabilities, I could not begin to list it all. You and your child can sing songs, play games, draw pictures and generally have a great time. Check with your lead service providing agency (the ECI provider or school district) for software suggestions. You are also welcome to contact me for a list of software suggestions.

and other Stuff!

While computers are a wonderful teaching, learning and playing tool, adapted toys and simple environmental controls also offer very young children with disabilities important opportunities to play and be part of the action. Have you tried using an electric control unit, like the *PowerLink*, to run the mixer when you're making pancakes on Saturday morning ... or have a race in the family room with two adapted battery operated toys (who is faster the tortoise or the hare) ... or play Musical Chairs with an adapted radio ... or lead the flag salute, or grace at dinner, with an adapted tape recorder ... or go to get the mail using an adapted power scooter,

like the *Cooper Car*? One friend modified one of those new squirt guns to wash the patio windows and the family car!

You can use assistive technology with your very young child with a disability virtually every day...the possibilities are endless. Have fun!

References

- Ablekids Project, Assistive Technology: Computers for Young Children, Freedom Cntr, San Antonio, TX 19940
- MagicScreen, KeyTech, 1293 N. Plano Rd., Richardson, TX, 75081
- TouchWindow, Edmark Corp, Box 97021, Redmond, WA, 98073
- Big Red, Ablenet, 1081 10th Ave NE, Minneapolis, MN 55414
- IntelliKeys, IntelliTools, 55 Leveroni Ct #9, Novato, CA 94949
- PowerLink, Ablenet, 1081 10th Ave NE, Minneapolis, MN 55414
- DiscoverBoard, Don Johnston Inc, 1000 N. Rand Rd #115, Wauconda, IL 60084
- Cooper Car, RJ Cooper & Assoc., 24843 Del Prado # 283, Dana Point, Ca 92629
- Next:** *Entering School with Assistive Technology - Kindergarten through Grade 2.* □

The Courts' Impact on Special Education

While most eyes have been glued on Congress as it wrangles with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), special education law is also being formed in a second venue—in the courts. The following case is an example of those that most affected special education in 1995.

Damage Claims

1995 cases showed a trend toward allowing parents to seek damages against public schools and school personnel who violate special education laws.

In *W.B. v. Matula* (67F. 3d 484), the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that monetary damages could be awarded for violations of Section 504, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and, possibly, IDEA. In *Matula*, the district failed to identify and provide a free, appropriate public education to a student with a neurological disability.

This case may change the way IDEA's due process hearings are conducted. Currently, at due process hearings, the parents and/or attorneys raise their concerns about lack of services, but they usually do not ask for monetary damages or bring charges against specific administrators, teachers, or other school personnel. Many of these hearings are settled without further legal action.

However, if *Matula* stands, attorneys may be forced to raise damages issues and name individual defendants at this early state. If this happens, schools and parents won't be able to settle; and these cases will likely go all the way to the circuit court, said Reed Martin, education attorney.

Matula also opens the door to other questions: If damages are available under IDEA, do parents have to exhaust the claim in the IDEA hearing? If a damage claim is not exhausted at that level, will the parent be able to assert it later? Also, damage claims are often tried before juries. Once a claim is exhausted at the administrative level before a hearing officer, could a parent tell the federal District Court they want to re-try the issues before a jury, or would the federal judge use the administrative record to determine damages?

This excerpt has been taken from the CEC Today, June/July 1996 issue, Vol 2, No. 10. Contact DREAMMS for Kids for a free copy of the complete article. Contact the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) at 703.620.3660 for information on membership and subscriptions.

MINI-GRANT continued from Page 1

collaborating with the community to secure the needed assistive technology. Once administrative support is secured, the team needs to identify resources within the community that might be receptive to the concept of cooperating with the school to assist in the purchase of assistive technology for a child with disabilities. The inclusion of the family of the child is critical at this point since their commitment will be essential in the undertaking.

Every community has a unique constellation of potential resources that may be able to assist in the acquisition of assistive devices. These resources usually include civic organizations, or private sector entities. Civic organizations that may be potential sources of funding include, but are not limited to, the Junior League, Lion's International, Kiwanis International, Pilot Club, Rotary International and Civitan. Private sector entities would include any business that has visibility in the community and has a history of service activities to its respective community, or that has an interest in serving the community, such as telephone or grocery chain companies.

The mini-grant proposal should include the following content:

Identifying Information. Provide identifying information about the teacher (or other IEP team member) and the school requesting assistance. The address

and phone number of a contact person is a necessity in the event of questions or concerns regarding the proposal.

Specific Need: Clearly articulate the specific need of the school and the child. Include a description of the child and the specific device or equipment requested. If possible, attach any promotional or sales information from the vendor. Provide an explanation of how *this* device will meet the child's present and future needs.

Benefits to the Community: After describing the child's specific needs, provide an explanation of community benefits that will result if the assistive technology is provided for the child. If possible, link the usage of the device

with long term outcomes, such as assisting in the development of work-related skills; facilitating the inclusion of the child into the community; and minimizing the child's reliance on Medicaid, Social Security, and other public assistance programs.

Benefits to the Organization: Clearly identify the benefits that will be realized by the organization for providing financial support for the purchase of the assistive device. Most organizations and businesses like to be recognized for their involvement in the community, and the team must identify strategies that will provide optimum recognition for the provision of funding to a student with a disability. Regardless of the

nature of the recognition activity, a clear statement of how the funding organization will obtain benefits from collaboration with the school may be the key to actually obtaining the funding.

The use of the mini-grant approach will help to avoid the adversarial process inherent in due process proceedings and budgetary conflicts and substitute a collaborative team process where all members of the team are working to provide the technology that will assist children with disabilities. □

Source: Teaching Exceptional Children, Vol. 28, No. 2, The Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091. (703) 620-3660.

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From Our Readers...

Dear DREAMMS,

I want to take this opportunity to pass on information about an extremely effective computer program I have used with my son.

Matthew is now 17 years old. A number of years ago I made up my mind that I wanted Matthew to learn to read. How I would accomplish this I was not sure, but I considered myself a champion resourcer and I took up the challenge of finding "the way".

Someone mentioned the *Edmark Reading Program* to me. Now that was all I needed. Just someplace to start. I got the demo disks, and we were ready to begin. I had no idea how this was going to work. It was bizarre. I sat him down in front of the computer and it didn't take any time for him to start mastering the words he saw on the screen. Ask me how to explain how he grasped it... I don't know.

The program was simple and structured. I taught him Lesson 1-5 and when he learned the material, I knew it was time to move on to Lesson 6-10, and so on. It was structured for Matthew, and especially for me because it gave me the feedback on how to proceed.

I have done a lot of resourcing and have tried a lot of commercially available products, and nothing can measure up to the *Edmark Reading Program*.

Barbara Vininsky
Montreal, Quebec

Please take a second to send us a note or comment. We love to hear from our readers, and will pass along anything that we feel is helpful to all parents and educators of kids with special needs. Thanks! Editor. □

Did You Know...

Did you know that the total number of households online at the end of 1993 was 4,585,000. Well the number of new online signups in 1995 was 4,983,550! *Source: Information & Interactive Services Report.* □



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CONFERENCES

Date: September, 1996
Event: Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago,
National Conference on AT
Location: Chicago, IL
Information: 312.908.9558

Date: Sept 5 - 8, 1996
Event: National Rehabilitation Association
Location: Norfolk, VA
Information: 703.836.0850

Date: Sept 16-18, 1996
Event: Instruction, Inclusion and Technology
Location: Austin, TX
Information: 512.280.7235

Date: October 12, 1996
Event: DREAMMS for Kids, Building Bridges
Location: St. Petersburg, FL
Information: 607.539.3027

Date: October 17, 1996
Event: Forum '96, Exceptional Parent Magazine
Location: Anaheim, CA
Information: 1.800.EPARENT

Date: October 24 - 26, 1996
Event: 14th Annual Closing the Gap
Location: Minneapolis, MN
Information: 507.248.3294

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Protection and Advocacy Services:

Each state has a protection and advocacy program for persons with disabilities whose purpose is to provide legal services. In addition, each state protection and advocacy system has special funding to address issues related to assistive technology. If you believe you have a legal problem, you may contact their state offices, which should be listed in the phone directory. If not, you can locate the Protection and Advocacy program in your state, call the National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems (NAPAS) at (202) 408-9514 voice and (202) 408-9521(TDD).

Parent Information and Training Centers:

If you have difficulty with special education services, parent assistance and advocacy resources exist. To find out about the resources in your area, contact the National Parent Network on Children with Disabilities at (703) 684-6763.

Regional Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers:

These centers (DBTAC's) exist in all ten regions of the country to assist individuals and business with ADA compliance. To locate the center covering your state call (800) 949-4232.

Other Advocacy Resources:

There may be a number of resources worth consulting. For example an independent living organization who should be able to provide you with the necessary information. □

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Exceptional Parent

The Magazine for Families and Professionals



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Cordless Control System

Minneapolis, MN -- AbleNet, Inc. has introduced the Cordless Control System that allows the safe and simple activation of a variety of devices while eliminating the switch cord. "With the removal of the switch cord, you can easily position a user anywhere in the room, pass a switch around during group activities and activate a moving toy," said Peggy Locke, Ph.D., director of education services. "There are no longer distractions caused by the switch cord, and the amount of equipment needed on the lap tray is kept to a minimum". The cordless control system is a part of a very exciting group of new AbleNet products because it will allow individuals access to a wider range of activities in many different environments. The switches must be used with one of two receivers, the Battery Powered Receiver or the Small Appliance Receiver. These receivers plug into any switch activated device that you already have or directly into the wall.

AbleNet, Inc. is a Minnesota company that designs and markets simple, affordable and durable assistive devices that expand activities and achievements of persons with disabilities. Contact them at:

AbleNet, Inc.
1081 Tenth Avenue, SE
Minneapolis, MN 55414-1312
612.379.0956



BIGGY Cursor Control

Dana Point, CA -- RJ Cooper & Associates has released BIGGY, a control panel that puts BIG cursors on your Mac and works with all applications.

The small 16x16 pixels cursor has remained virtually unchanged since the Mac's inception. This has been problematic for persons with low vision and/or cognitive challenges. Even able-bodied Mac users have wished for a larger cursor. BIGGY finally breaks this barrier with a variety of 32x32 and 32x64 pixel cursors, roughly 8 times the size of the regular arrow. BIGGY even has "lefty" cursors and options for auto-doubling the size of all system and application specific cursors. BIGGY works in any color depth, and across multiple monitors on any System 7 or greater Macintosh.

A free demo is available that puts BIGGY on your system for 15 minutes every power-up or restart.

RJ Cooper & Associates
24843 Del Prado #283
Dana Point, CA 92629
714.240.1912

Bubble Busy Boxes

Hastings-on-Hudson, NY -- Toys for Special Children, Inc. announces an innovative new series of toys called the *Bubble Busy Boxes*. These activity centers are designed to invite exploration that results in "rewards" including buzzers, music box melodies, radio, vibrations, puff of air, flashing lights, and even a model that talks! These new busy boxes encourage eye-hand coordination, fine motor skills and gross arm movement.

Enabling Devices
Toys for Special Children, Inc.
385 Warburton Ave.
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706
914.967.8838

Closed Caption Encoder

Wauwatosa, WI -- International Computers introduces the Closed Caption Encoder (ccE). This product allows you to add closed captions to live or existing videos, and is a combination of a Windows based program along with an external box which plugs into your PC's serial port. The ccE is a cost-effective and permanent solution to ADA related regulations. Supports the addition of pre-existing text or typing captions in live. Supports standard and S-video formats.

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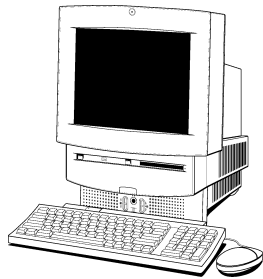
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Are you confused by Assistive Technology jargon and legislation?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Would you like "hands-on" help with computers and assistive technologies?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Are you concerned that you are not keeping up with technology changes?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Is your technology program suffering from the "budget cut blues"?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Do you want to learn how to best use your current resources?
		If you've answered YES to even one of these questions, register today for this intensive, one-day seminar. Complete the registration form and return before Sept. 1, 1996 to take advantage of our EARLY registration!

Funding, support and assistance provided by FFAST, FDLRS, JULE, & FATIC, Inc.



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