



# DIRECTIONS

## *Technology in Special Education*

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### The Journey: Homeschooling Our Special Needs Child Using Assistive Technology

By: *Susan Lait*

Five years ago, I met a woman who homeschooled her Special Needs Child. I must admit that I was fascinated. I thought to myself that she must be one incredible woman. I was sure that I could never home school our daughter. What about “inclusion” and “socialization”. Besides, I was sure that we needed the school system to meet our daughter’s Assistive Technology needs. Yet my curiosity was sparked and I began to research homeschooling. For the next four years, homeschooling was our safety net. A direction our family could take if things really got bad with the school system. In other words.. ..if we failed. What I did not know at the time was that in the future, homeschooling would prove to be our success and the best way to achieve a positive communication environment and positive educational supports for our daughter. So whether you are curious, looking for a safety net, or are interested in a new direction, it is my sincere pleasure to share with you our personal experiences of “Homeschooling Our Assistive Technology Special Needs Child.

As parents, most of us want the same things for our children. We want our Assistive Technology Special Needs Children to be a part of society. We would like a user friendly environment for our children and ourselves. We depend on the school system professionals to work through their fear of technology by receiving appropriate education and training. We hope the educational professionals will focus on our child’s abilities and help integrate our children’s technology into the school environment. We hope that the school professionals recognize that appropriate implementation of our children’s technology allows our children to reach their fullest potential.

The reality for our daughter and perhaps some of your children was that our daughter’s disability, a fear of our daughter’s technology and inappropriate training supports created an environment of isolation. The school systems who provided services for our daughter did purchase the appro-

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*Autumn*

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# Digitizing the Community Normalizes Students

Source: CEC: today Vol, 5 No 9

No matter their age, functioning level or the lesson at hand, students at Sidney Lanier School in Gainesville, FL, master their world and boost their self-esteem with the help of a digital camera and a visionary and dedicated teacher. That teacher is Steven Noll, an assistive technology lab teacher and basketball coach with more than 20 years of teaching experience at Sidney Lanier, a center school for students aged 3-21 with cognitive and physical disabilities.

With compassion and devotion, Noll strives each day to find the "magic bullet" that will motivate his students to look, see, react, and then interact with their world. Recently, he discovered the digital camera as a motivation for many of his students. Digital technology transforms his students' abstract world into realities and enhances communication among his non-verbal students. Additionally, the digital camera "normalizes" his special education students who know they are using "cutting-edge" technology that puts them on par with, and in some cases, a step ahead of their non-disabled peers.

## Digital Camera Lessons

Following are some of the lessons Noll conducts with the digital camera:

**My House** - Noll and his higher func-

tioning/older students take pictures of everyone's house. Back in the classroom, the students print their photographs, write stories about their houses (incorporating mapping and address skills), and put the stories in a book.

## Photographs Chronicle Community-Based Instruction (CBI)

**Activities** - Noll and his older students photograph his younger students during their CBI activities (shredding paper and delivering it to animal shelters, crushing cans at the recycling center, delivering messages to other schools, and shopping for groceries). After the older students download the pictures, Noll displays all the pictures for his class and prompts his students:

"Today we're going to the animal shelter. Which place is the animal shelter? ... Tell me where we crush cans."

Noll finds this lesson particularly helpful for students who have difficulty understanding the difference between symbolic representation and the actual event. Additionally, non-verbal students can communicate their daily school activities by showing the pictures to their families. These "virtual tours" also provide accessibility for students with physical

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## DIRECTIONS

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

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# Using Computers to Open the Door to Music

By: Dorothy Laufer

Source: The Catalyst, Summer 1999

We all know that using technology often makes things easier, but for some people it makes things possible. This discovery inspired me to continue to explore the computer as a teaching tool. I have a very vivid recollection of the day Michael asked me if he could use the computer to play music. This student had physical disabilities, which prevented him from having traditional experiences with writing, art or playing a musical instrument. One day, while he was doing art on the computer, he asked me if it would be possible for him to play music using the same technology. My first reaction was an appreciation that he was setting a new goal for himself. My second reaction was to find out how we could do this.

This happened in the 1980s; we were using Apple lie computers. I am an amateur musician myself and was familiar with a piece of software that let me work with musical notation, but I felt that this software was too complicated for a non-musician. I set out to explore what software might be more suitable.

I have always enjoyed browsing through bargain bins of software and one day I came across an interesting piece of music software. With this software you could compose music by working with the keyboard to place notes on a staff. It was also possible to change the length of the notes and

to add rests and change the time signature. When you played the music, you could see a visual representation of high and low notes, the long and short notes, in a way that made sense to the viewer. The nice thing was that you

could work slowly, listen to the music you were composing, and make changes. The disk also had music stored on it that could be played back and changed, if you wished. One of the pieces stored on the disk was *The Flight of the Bumblebee*. When this music was being played, the visual representation on the disk looked very much like buzzing bees, and it dearly showed the high and low notes. I often played that piece of music when demonstrating the software.

When I introduced Michael and the other students in the class to the music software, I was pleased to note that my students quickly learned how to work with the program. They enjoyed exploring the software, with guidance. We experimented with how we might use sound to describe an airplane taking off and flying. We then added landing. This involved discussing pitch (high and low notes). We also created music for regular walking, quick walking, and running. A discussion of duration followed (quarter notes, eighth notes, half notes, etc.). Adding a musical description of bouncing balls was a lot

of fun. The students' enthusiasm and interest was obvious and very exciting to me, the teacher. It was very enjoyable to listen to each student's musical composition, all of which, I might add, were very acceptable. Each of the students had good reason to feel successful.

At this point it became clear to me that doing these tasks certainly resulted in building some newfound musical skills; more important, perhaps, was that it also resulted in musical knowledge and set the stage for meaningful musical discussions.

Our culminating project was for each student to compose a piece of music to accompany a computer animation created by students who were learning computer art. The one I remember best was that of a boat sailing across the water, with the sun setting in the background. The music that accompanied it enhanced the simple 5-frame animation. We presented the final finished products at an assembly attended by parents and students. It was a very wonderful and satisfying event.

Whether or not these students ever went on to do more with the musical skills they learned in working with musical notation, they certainly developed some musical knowledge. We had entered some new territory. We had all shared common experiences that led to

Please see MUSIC on page 7

# The Assistive Technology Evaluation

By: Dr. Penny Reed, Director of the Wisconsin AT Initiative

Source: *ATFSCP Tech Express*

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

The key to an effective assistive technology evaluation is to use a process that involves both parents and service providers equally. There is no quick, easy method to determine which assistive technology, if any, will help your child. There is also, no single expert” somewhere who knows exactly what will work. Many individuals, parents, teachers, therapists, as well as the child, have important pieces of information. When brought together, these pieces begin to point in some general directions.

A good assistive technology assessment process will include:

- discussions about what tasks your child struggles with the most,
- observations of your child in environments where he spends time, and
- trials with different types of assistive technology (starting with the simplest) to see what works and what appeals to your child.

There can be a marvelous assistive technology tool out there, but if your child hates it for any reason it will not get used. Therefore, it is not the right solution at this time.

Parents should expect to be part of the process from start to finish. This process focuses on the question:

“What functional task do we want this child to be able to do at a level that re-

flects his/her skills and abilities?” Parents and professionals together identify the tasks that are most challenging and choose which one to work on first. Parents, teachers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, and anyone else involved with your child then gather data while playing or working with your child and keeping notes. Ask to be included in the discussion as the team (which includes you) brainstorms about the data collected in different environments. The team will discuss what kind of things might work and where to borrow or rent what you need for trial, or how to construct it. As the child works and plays with different tools provided as a result of these observations, more data collection will be necessary. Finally, there will be a discussion by the team about what seemed to work best and should be provided on a long-term basis.

If this sounds like a lot of meetings and discussions, you are right. Parents and professionals who have been involved with assistive technology for many years find this process to be like solving a puzzle: experimenting and trying different methods and tools until a workable solution is found. It takes time and patience.

The real heart of determining what assistive technology might help is trying things out. Trial use of assistive technology is critical to deriving

solutions that work. Thousands of dollars are often saved by trying things before they are purchased. Trials with a variety of items to see what works effectively and what your child likes to use are a good investment of everyone’s time and energy, but this important step is often overlooked. Without a trial use, families, school districts, and insurance providers may spend thousands of dollars on an augmentative communication device or other tool only to have it sit in a closet unused. These experiences make everyone wary of making a commitment to a child’s needs.

## Evaluating the Effectiveness of Assistive Technology

Perhaps the most important questions in both short and long term use of assistive technology are:

- What is it we expect my child to be able to now that he or she has this device?
- How soon will s/he be able to do that?
- Will it happen right away, or is there a need for training first?
- How much time will training take?
- After training, will my child be able to use the device effectively,



# CALL FOR PAPERS

CSUN's Fifteenth Annual International Conference  
**"Technology and Persons with Disabilities"**  
**March 20 - 25, 2000**

This is an invitation to participate in a major, worldwide conference which drew more than 4,000 persons from all 50 states and 33 foreign countries to Los Angeles in 1999

## Introduction

By design, "Technology and Persons with Disabilities" is a comprehensive, international conference where all technologies across all ages, disabilities, levels of education and training, employment, and independent living are addressed.

## Audience

The audience of the conference is diverse. It includes a large number of:

- ♦ Persons with disabilities and their family members
- ♦ Special education teachers
- ♦ University professors and researchers
- ♦ Occupational and physical therapists
- ♦ Alternative & Augmentative Communication clinicians
- ♦ Manufacturers, distributors, and developers
- ♦ Community agency personnel
- ♦ Governmental policy makers
- ♦ Private and public rehabilitation service providers
- ♦ Rehabilitation engineers
- ♦ Assistive Technology practitioners and suppliers

## Content

Speakers are encouraged to share new information about hardware, software, adaptive devices, access to technology, training programs, and results of research in any area of assistive technology. In brief, if you feel you have a good idea about the use of technology among persons with disabilities, please submit a paper for consideration.

## General Sessions

This is an invitation to submit a paper for consideration as a General Session. General Sessions are either 30 or 60 minutes in length. General Sessions are scheduled for Wednesday, March 22, Thursday, March 23, Friday, March 24, and Saturday, March 25. In submitting a paper for consideration, speakers agree that their paper may be scheduled at any time on any of these days at the discretion of the conference staff.

## Special Features for 2000

If giving a paper in the Internet/WWW or Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) area (or both), please note on the proposal form. Otherwise, simply check "Other". Topics on the area of AAC need to be identified on the proposal form as these are blocked into the Hilton Hotel whenever possible. Topics in the Internet/WWW area need to be identified on the proposal form as these are blocked into special session rooms. Approximately 20% of all sessions at the 1999 conference dealt with Internet/WWW issues. There is also a lab with Macintosh and PC computers that are connected to the Internet for computer platform presentations -- please specify "Hands-on Computer Lab". To review the kinds of presentations that have been accepted in the past, please access the 1999 Proceedings on our Home Page: <http://www.csun.edu/cod/Papers> from the international community are warmly welcomed.

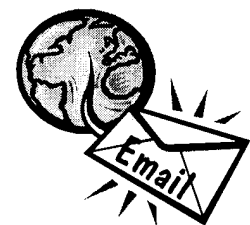
This brochure is available in alternative formats

## Information in Alternative Formats

Speakers and exhibitors are responsible for providing their own handouts and promotional materials in alternative formats. Please recognize that it is difficult to predict the composition and the needs of the audience in advance. Therefore, speakers should make an announcement at the beginning of their presentation that they are willing to provide materials in alternative formats as needed and will distribute shortly after the conference. Exhibitors should also be prepared for requests for promotional materials in alternative formats.

## Equipment & Set-Up

It is expressly understood that any equipment not listed on the proposal form is the responsibility of the presenter. If more than 20 minutes set-up time is needed, contact our office before January 3, 2000.



Submit your proposal form and complete paper by email:  
[ltm@csun.edu](mailto:ltm@csun.edu)

# FCC Ruling Most Significant Action Since ADA

## FCC News Release

July 14, 1999 - Today the FCC adopted rules and policies to implement Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and Section 251 (a)(2) of the Communications Act of 1934, that require manufacturers of telecommunications equipment and providers of telecommunications services to ensure that such equipment and services are accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities, if readily achievable. These rules will give people with disabilities access to a broad range of products and services — such as telephones, cell phones, pagers, call-waiting, and operator services, that they cannot use today.

Today's action represents the most significant opportunity for people with disabilities since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. The rules adopted today require manufacturers and service providers to design telecommunications equipment and services with the needs of people with disabilities in mind. In developing these rules, the FCC relied heavily on the Access Board guidelines for equipment developed pursuant to section 255, months of productive discussions with interested parties from the disability community and industry, and a careful analysis of the appropriate precedent under the ADA and other statutes designed to remove access barriers.

Our nation has an estimated 54 million Americans with disabilities. Persons

with disabilities are the largest minority group in the United States, yet despite their numbers, they do not experience equal participation in society.

Access to telecommunications can bring independence. The disability community has told the FCC of the frustration of not being able to check the balance of a checking account using telecommunications relay service, or not being able to tell if a wireless phone is turned on, or not being able to use a calling card because of inadequate time to enter in the appropriate numbers. The FCC has received numerous reports from relatives of senior citizens saying that their elderly parents could live on their own, if only they had telecommunications equipment that they could use.

The benefits of increased accessibility to telecommunications are not limited to people with disabilities. Just as people without disabilities benefit from the universal design principles in the ADA and the Architectural Barriers Act (for example a parent pushing a stroller over a curbcut), many people without disabilities will also benefit from accessible telecommunications equipment and services.

Indeed, many of us already benefit from accessibility features in telecommunications today: vibrating pagers do not disrupt meetings; speaker phones enable us to use our hands for other activities; increased volume con-

trol on public pay phones allows us to talk in noisy environments.

The FCC expects many similar results from the rules adopted today. More importantly, we all benefit when people with disabilities become more active in our communities and in society as a whole.

Statistically, most Americans will have a disability, or experience a limitation, at some point in their lives. While 5.3% of persons 15-24 years of age have some kind of functional limitation, 23% of persons in the 45-54 age range experience functional limitation. The percentage of those affected by functional limitations increases with age: 34.2% of those aged 55-64; 45.4% of those aged 65-69; 55.3% for those aged 70-74 and 72.5% for those aged 75 and older. The number of persons with functional limitations will also increase with time. Today, only about 20% of Americans are over age 55, but by the 2050, 35% of our population will be over age 55.

Today, most Americans rely on telecommunications for routine daily activities, for example, to make doctors' appointments, call home when they are late for dinner, participate in conference calls at work, and make an airline reservation. Moreover, diverse telecommunications tools such as dis-

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*MUSIC continued from page 3*

meaningful discussions. Isn't that what education is all about?

Things move quickly in the field of technology. Software has become very powerful and sophisticated and it might take some doing to find a simple piece of software to meet this kind of a need today. However, the adaptive technology is also more powerful so it might be easier today to simplify mouse control and to access the software. If I were to try to accomplish today what I did then with music software, I would look at the wide variety of programs available now and explore how one creates sound. One of the pieces of software that I would look at is *Microworlds*. This software has a "melody center," which puts a keyboard on the screen. You can register notes by clicking the mouse on the

"screen keyboard." You can select various instruments (flute, violin, guitar, piano) to play back the sound. I can see possibilities for all kinds of musical experiences, including listening activities and ear training. Working with notation, and doing the things I described above, would also be possible.

I would like to point out that it is really interesting for me to look back at the experiences I have had with computers and special needs. I find the memories very gratifying and they certainly help me to plan and set new goals. I also think that it is important to share our ideas with others. We welcome your own memories. What things have inspired you in your use of technology?

Dorothy Laufer is a computer specialist, advocate, and consultant, with emphasis on resources for individuals with disabilities. She also teaches a course on Computers and Special Needs at McGill University in Montreal. She can be reached at 5604 Palmer Avenue, Montreal, Quebec H4W 2P1.

\* The Catalyst is the newsletter of the Western Center for Microcomputers in Special Education, Inc. and is a quarterly newsletter providing comprehensive coverage of technology in the fields of special education and rehabilitation. Published since 1981, subscription costs are \$18.00 for organizations and \$12.00 for home use. Contact them at: 1259 El Camino Real, PMB 275, Menlo Park, CA 94025. §

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disabilities. Noll sets up the computer so that the pictures of his students' CBI activities can be accessed by a switch. With that switch, students with physical disabilities "travel" to the various places without leaving their wheelchairs.

**Holiday Cards** - Around the holidays, students make cards by shrinking, enlarging, and moving their pictures to fit a template Noll has created for this project.

**Words of Wisdom**

Noll urges beginning teachers to let their lives be driven by their students' accomplishments, no matter how big

or small, rather than be swallowed up by the overwhelming paperwork he sees as his biggest obstacle.

He also encourages new teachers to "steal as much as you can from whomever you can. ... Take one thing from everybody," he says. "Try to find teachers who have been around the block and pick their brains."

Noll also warns against bringing work home. "Don't let it rule your life, or it'll ruin you." he says.

Following his own rule, Noll leaves his work at school. But, he brings his home to work. His son and daughter volunteer regularly at the school. His wife, also a special education teacher,

leads their daughter's Girl Scout troop in activities with Noll's students.

And while Noll refuses to let his work rule his life, he continually devotes himself to his students outside the computer lab. On the basketball court, he coaches Sidney Lanier's girls' and boys' teams to many victories (and records them with a digital camera). In fact, with matches against other Special Olympics and local university basketball teams this season, the boys' team holds a winning record~ the girls' team is undefeated!

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appropriate equipment. Yet, staff was often inexperienced in the use of the equipment, untrained as to the use of the equipment and unable to effectively implement our daughter's Assistive Technology supports. As a result our daughter was often unable to communicate with school professionals or her peers using her "**mode of communication**". I can only imagine how alone she must have felt being unable to express herself. A pattern repeated itself each school year. Usually by the end of the school year, the school professionals would receive enough training to be able to understand and begin the implementation process. The school year would end and we would start the journey all over again with inexperienced and untrained school professionals in the form of new therapists, a new teacher and perhaps a new aide. By the time

our daughter turned nine years old, we had repeated the pattern six times. IDEA was re-authorized in June of 1997. The Federal Regulations were not released until March of 1999 and did not go into effect until May 11, 1999. There has been and continues to be much confusion in reference to the application of IDEA and the Federal Regulations. Especially in the areas of Assistive Technology and Mode of Communication. Some advocacy organizations project that it will take years for the dust to settle and IDEA '97' Federal Regulations to be fully implemented. We decided to put our home school safety net into place while we continued our parent advocacy efforts.

Over the next few months, I will share our homeschooling experiences with you.

First, let me give you a brief caution. Before making a decision to home school, you will want to be familiar with any statutes concerning homeschooling and homeschooling special needs children in your state. If you telephone your local school district, the district should be able to provide you basic information or refer you. The magazine "*The Teaching Home*" should be available in most good bookstores. Inside each issue is a list of State Home School Support Organizations where you can obtain information about Home School Statutes in your state.

Second, build your support system. It is a wise parent who works on building a support system before making the leap to home school. There are state and local home school support organizations. It happens that a parent

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## **DIRECTIONS on CD**

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tance learning, telemedicine, telecommuting, and video conferencing enable Americans to interface anytime from anywhere. Understanding that communications is now an essential component of American life, Congress intended the 1996 Act to provide people with disabilities access to employment, independence, emergency services, education, and other opportunities

More specifically, telecommunications is a critical tool for employment. If telecommunications technologies are not accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities, many qualified individuals will not be able to work or achieve their full potential in the workplace. Congress recognized the importance of creating employment opportunities for people with disabilities with Title I of the ADA, which addresses the employer's responsibilities in making the workplace accessible to employees with disabilities.

At a time when Americans are experiencing the lowest unemployment rate in years, unemployment among people with severe disabilities is roughly 73%, and when employed they earn only one-third of people without disabilities. The rules the FCC adopted today give employers expanded tools with which to employ and accommodate persons with disabilities.

For information relating to this news release, please contact Martha Contee at 202-418-0263, TTY: 202-418-2555, e-mail: [mcontee@fcc.gov](mailto:mcontee@fcc.gov). §

## Conferences & Events

**Date: October 1 - 2 & 4 - 6, 1999**

Technology & Inclusion Fall '99 & 6th Annual Instruction, Inclusion & Technology Conference  
Austin, TX  
Contact: 512-280-7235  
[fall99@taicenter.com](mailto:fall99@taicenter.com)

**Date: October 6 - 9, 1999**

Assistive Technology Industry Association  
Orlando, FL  
Contact: [www.atia.org](http://www.atia.org)  
[atia@northshore.net](mailto:atia@northshore.net)

**Date: October 19 - 20, 1999**

17th Annual Closing the Gap Conference  
Minneapolis, MN  
Contact: [www.closingthegap.com](http://www.closingthegap.com)  
[info@closingthegap.com](mailto:info@closingthegap.com)  
507-248-3294

**Date: December 2 - 4, 1999**

RESNA: Promoting Independence and Quality of Life for Older Persons  
Buffalo, NY  
Contact: Chairman, Conference on Aging, University of Buffalo  
[wings.buffalo.edu/ot/cat/conference](http://wings.buffalo.edu/ot/cat/conference)

**Date: December 9 - 12, 1999**

15th Annual DEC International Early Childhood Conference on Children with Special Needs  
Washington, DC  
Contact: [www.dec-sped.org](http://www.dec-sped.org)

## Animal Switches

<<[www.enablingdevices.com](http://www.enablingdevices.com)>>

*Animal Switches*, manufactured by Enabling Devices/Toys for Special Children, are activated by the slightest touch. There are four adorable - and irresistible animal switches to choose from the *Teddy Bear Switch*, *Kitty Switch*, *Frog Switch*, *Fido Switch*. Can be used to activate any of our items.

Enabling Devices also manufactures communication devices, capability switches, environmental controls, adapted toys and more!!! Product literature and free catalogs available call 1-800-832-8697 or visit our web site at [www.enablingdevices.com](http://www.enablingdevices.com). Enabling Devices / Toys for Special Children, 385 Warburton Ave., Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706.

# A Resource Guide to Assistive Technology for Memory and Organization

Technology for Memory and Organization announces the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of [A Resource Guide to Assistive Technology for Memory and Organization](#).

The Guide contains over 70 pages of information on products and services to help people remember what they need to do and when, or to be more organized in their daily lives. Products range from \$.99 pill reminders to \$900 color display handheld computers, with hundreds of products in between. The Resource Guide is a cross disability resource, including products for individuals with sensory, physical and cognitive disabilities, and includes off the shelf, commonly available items as well as customized one of a kind products.

One section of the guide provides a series of questions to help you choose from among all the available products by considering the following factors: the individuals' goals, abilities, disabilities, and preferences; the task related to memory or organization that the person wants to perform; the environment (both physical and social) in which the task will take place; and the physical features of available devices.

Another section provides an overview of products for medication management, calendar and to do list management, and other daily activities, such as using the telephone, organizing bills, etc.

A special section for students includes information about products with features specifically helpful to students of all ages.. A series of appendices provide contact information for mail order catalogs; manufacturers and developers of products; software products; free Internet resources; and people and organizational resources.

The Resource guide costs \$8.00, which includes shipping, handling, and taxes. To order, send a check for \$8.00 payable to Technology for Memory and Organization, 185 Lindbergh Avenue, Needham, MA 02494. If you have questions, call Kathy McHale, founder of Technology for Memory and Organization at (781) 444-0297 or send her an email at kmchale@mediaone.net. §

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out of frustration announces at an IEP Meeting, "Well.... I'll just home school my child". At this point, a parent may be backed in a corner, in a panic and asking themselves, "What do I do now?"

Third, do your homework. Most bookstores and libraries have books available on home schooling. Three of my favorites are "*The Homeschooling Handbook*" by Mary Griffith (Prima Publishing), "*The Complete Home Learning Source Book*" by Rebecca Rupp (Three Rivers Press), and "*HomeSchooling Children With Special Needs*" by Sharon C. Hensley (Noble Publishing Associates). There are many more good books, vendors and curriculum resources available. Approach homeschooling as you would an Individual Education Plan

(IEP) by researching individual curriculum, supports & services for your child.

The biggest concerns of new home school families are can I do this and will people think I'm crazy? Although the modern home school movement began as way to extend religious freedom, homeschooling is very much in the mainstream. You have a choice between curriculums that have a religious foundation and those that do not have a religious base. People home school for lots of different reasons. Most people know someone who home schools. People now look at me the way I looked at the first Mom I met who home schooled her Special Needs Child. My friends tell me that I'm a wonderful mother. The truth be known.... I'm

not any more wonderful or capable than any of you. We're working on our dream to create a place for our child in our community. The dream is still alive. We achieve "**inclusion**" and "socialization" in the community rather than in the local school system. Homeschooling has improved the quality of our daughter's communication, socialization, education and our family life. By the way, homeschooling also provides me more time to work on advocacy and positive changes in the Public School System.

My best wishes to you as you begin your individual journey. Please, If you have specific questions do send them to "**DIRECTIONS**" care of Janet Hosmer and she will forward your questions to me. §



*STUDENTS continued from page 7***The Award**

The State Farm Good Neighbor Award for special education was developed in cooperation with The Council for Exceptional Children. Each of the ten recipients announced throughout the year receives a \$5,000 check payable to the educational institution of the recipient's choice, recognition in national publications, and a commemorative plaque at a special ceremony at his or her school.

Null was recognized this March with print advertisements in Teaching Exceptional Children, U.S. News & World Report, National Geographic, Reader's Digest, Woman's Day Parents, Business Today, and Audubon. He will donate his \$5,000 financial award to his school to purchase more assistive technology devices, Macintosh computers, another digital camera, and basketball uniforms.

CEC (and DREAMMS for Kids!) congratulates Steven Noll on his innovative contributions to the education of exceptional children and youth.

*CEC today* is an official publication of The Council for Exceptional Children. Contact them at 888-232-7733 for membership information. §

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or is our expected outcome something that my child is not developmentally ready to do?

These questions are critical for parents and service providers to discuss before investing a great deal of time, energy, and money. Different expectations can cause real problems. For example, if parents and service providers spend months determining a way for a child with severe motor limitations to access a computer, but there is not clear agreement on what that child will *do* on the computer, there is a huge potential for someone to be very unhappy.

**Where to Look for Information**

If the idea of assistive technology is new to you or the IEP team, there are a variety of resources available to begin learning what assistive technology is available. *Editor's Note: These resources were listed in the April '99 issue of DIRECTIONS and can also be found on our web site at [www.dreamms.org](http://www.dreamms.org).*

**Conclusion**

Remember the original question way back at the beginning of the process? It was, "what functional task do we

want this child to be able to do that s/he is unable to do at a level that reflects his/her skills and abilities?" If the team keeps this as the central question, it allows them to:

- focus on a clear outcome,
- brainstorm about what devices might help achieve that outcome, narrow down the list of possibilities until there is agreement two or more devices to try,
- try those devices and determine which ones work, and
- obtain funding to purchase that device.

And, by following these guidelines, no one ends up with a device in the closet.

*Penny Reed is the Director of the Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative, a statewide technical assistance project in assistive technology. Her experiences as a teacher, consultant, and administrator in special education spanning 30 years led to her interest in assistive technology. §*

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