



DIRECTIONS

Technology in Special Education

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How to get assistive technology into a university educational technology course?

Take a field trip!

by Dr. Tom Lough with Pat Nelson

Source: The Catalyst, Winter 2001, Volume 18 #2

In our lead article, Dr. Richard Riedl observes that, while schools may have access to technology, many teachers are not utilizing it because they do not understand its potential or because they lack training in its use. This dilemma applies particularly to special education, where assistive technology is often crucial to a student's success, and is equally often ignored. Dr. Tom Lough makes sure that his students resolve this problem - even if it takes a fire to provide the solution.

For the past several years, I had been inviting local experts in assistive technology to my "mainstream" educational technology graduate course as guest instructors. ("Educational Technology Courses: A Made-To-Order Opportunity for Assistive Technology," by Dr. Tom Laugh with Dr. Emily H. Watts, *The Catalyst*, Vol 16 #3. Spring 2000, p. 12.) They would arrive full of excitement and energy, and would bring their handouts and a sampling of assistive technology devices and appliances. (For that one class meeting, things would go well. The regular classroom teachers who were taking my course always enjoyed the event, and I was pleased to be doing my part to spread the word about this critical application of educational technology.

However, I had this nagging feeling that something was missing. The event was good, but it wasn't great. And I wanted it to be great!

This year, I tried something different. Let me tell you about it.

A tragic beginning

I am a strong believer that good things can come out of tragedy. Recent national events have only reinforced this belief. However, this belief was



Happy Mother's Day !!



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shaken about a year ago when a fire gutted most of our local community services building. It destroyed the offices and holdings of many service agencies and disrupted for a short time the support and services provided by these agencies.

One of the agencies displaced by the tragic blaze was the Western Kentucky Assistive Technology Consortium (WKATC). The fire happened just after Pat Nelson, one of the associates, had visited my class for a presentation about assistive technology. They lost most of their adapted toys in the loan library, and numerous materials were destroyed by smoke damage. The center had just recently doubled their office space in the building. The fire caused them to relocate in much smaller quarters with no area for a computer lab for assistive technology workshops and no private office space. Most of the items in the loan library that survived had to be stored away due to lack of space.

When I approached Pat to see if she would be able to come to my class this semester for another presentation, I was expecting the worst. Instead, she said, "Sure! I'd love to do that. But how about if your class meets with me instead?" A field trip? Interesting idea. But where? How?

On the road

As it turned out, the WKATC had taken advantage of the opportunity imposed on them by the fire. After being confined to the small temporary offices in an old strip mall, they decided not to wait for the reconstruction of the community building and took over a spacious

bright office building of their own. As a result, they were able to establish a brand new fully equipped assistive technology service center!

"When I came to your class previously, I was able to bring only a sampling of our assistive technology wares. Now I'd like for you to visit our new center and see everything!" Pat said. This was a real no-brainer! I realized instantly that this might be the little AT extra I was hoping to add to the class.

Early on a bright October morning, a dozen or more assorted vehicles rolled into the parking lot of the unassuming building at the intersection of Glendale Road and Whitnell Drive on the south side of Murray, Kentucky. Pat Nelson was there to greet us, show us the wonderful new WKATC quarters, and serve as our guide and facilitator for the next several hours.

Inservice AT style

Pat had set up a series of special displays and computer workstations for the occasion. But we did not get to them right away. Instead, she started the session off with an interesting summary of the most important relevant legislation, including PL 100-107 [Tech Act], PL 101-366 [ADA], various civil rights legislation, and PL 105-17 [IDEA]. Included in the Tech Act was a definition of assistive technology: "... any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, off-the-shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of children with disabilities."

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From this definition, she showed the class members that assistive technology can encompass a wide variety of devices. Next, she demonstrated a few of these gadgets to us. Then it was time to get started in earnest!

She took advantage of the cooperative groups already existing in the class and gave a collection of various devices and appliances to each group. "Play with these things and see if you can figure out what they do and why," she said.

Hesitant at first, the class members soon warmed to the task. They fiddled and fussed with batteries, switches, lights, and speakers. Soon I began to hear excited gasps of surprise as they succeeded in getting the devices to function. This, in turn, stimulated lots of discussion as they tried to figure out the application of the various items. Truly, this hands-on session was powerful and engaging for them.

After a break, Pat then took the groups on a tour of several computer workstations, each with a different application, and then invited the groups to explore.

The announcement for lunch came all too soon. Where did the time go?

The class members came away from Pat's presentation with a set of useful handouts and some personal experience with assistive technology devices. They were also aware of a resource center located right in their area, something they did not know about before. However, they also took with them a new attitude toward assistive technology. It was something that they clearly assimilated and internalized.

A few days later, I sent each class member a copy of a digital photograph of a Christmas tree foot switch I found at a local do-it-yourself store and asked them if this was an example of assistive technology. By their replies, it was clear they had the true picture!

So what?

This field trip was designed to address one of the performance criteria of the Kentucky teacher standard for the implementation of educational technology: "*Requests and uses appropriate assistive, and adaptive devices for students with special needs.*" As a result of the trip, I feel that all of the class members are well on the way to meeting this criterion.

However, this is only part of the story. I was motivated to write this article, because I feel strongly that it might help instructors of regular instructional technology courses who are looking for ways to integrate assistive technology appropriately into their course design.

I would suggest that they seek out their local assistive technology center and arrange for a field trip themselves. In this way, they can make a contribution towards helping regular classroom teachers realize the potential of technology as they take on more and more inclusion-related responsibilities. I particularly call upon readers of *The Catalyst* to contact nearby universities and communicate with the instructional technology professors in the college of education. Offer your assistance in locating a nearby assistive technology center. Suggest the idea of a class field trip and maybe help with the arrangements.

You will be doing your part to help bring assistive technology into the mainstream educational technology courses, just as special needs students are coming into the mainstream schoolrooms.

Epilogue

Congratulations to the editorial staff of *The Catalyst* for 20 years of publishing excellence. In Sue Swezey, you have a dedicated professional. Thanks also to Pat Nelson and the staff of the West Kentucky Assistive Technology Consortium for the significant contribution to my course. The impact of the experience was clear.

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ACCESSIBLE LEARNING

by Lorianne Hoenninger

Teaching students how to organize their thoughts into a coherent essay is a challenge that faces many teachers and parents. A variety of strategies, including both paper and computer based graphic organizers, have been used to facilitate this process, with the software program, "Inspiration", featuring prominently among the computer applications used in many school districts.

Purchasing the right software is not enough, however, to help students learn. Parents and professionals need to integrate such technology tools into the learning process. A new book, "Structured Writing-Using Inspiration Software to Teach Paragraph Development" by Charles Haynes & Kathleen McMurdo, breaks down the writing process into incremental, color coded steps, that can be taught in a sequential manner. The included CD-Rom contains templates for both Macintosh and Windows platform word processing programs, so as to enable students to carry the writing process from organizer to word processor. Available from The International Society of Technology in Education (www.iste.org/bookstore) 800.336.5191, for only \$29.95, this easy to read, and easy to use, book is worth every penny!

Organizing information in graphic organizers, though, is the second step of the writing process. The first step involves gathering the information. In the old days, one simply went to the library and opened an encyclopedia or

two. The amount of available information was manageable. Now, however, the internet has made available a copious amount of information, much more than the organizationally challenged can cope with. One solution is to use a "WebQuest" to manage the information. WebQuests are inquiry-oriented activities in which most of the information used by learners is gathered on the web. WebQuests are designed to focus learners on using information rather than looking for it, and to support their thinking at the levels of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. WebQuests look like word processing documents with strategically placed links to graphics and information. The student reads a question, clicks on the link, finds the answer, and returns to the organizer.

There are thousands of WebQuests already created on the web, freely available to all, and a quick search through an engine such as google.com or yahoo.com, will most likely lead to a WebQuest on the topic of your choice. WebQuests can also be created through templates available on the web, through such sites as <http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/LessonTemplate.html>

Simple WebQuests can also be created in word processing documents. Virtually every word processor today has the capacity to insert "links" into the document. Teachers and parents can create an organizer in Microsoft Word, for example, with links inserted in the text. The basic difference

between such documents and WebQuests is that WebQuests are located on the web and can be accessed from anywhere. Word processing documents with links are located only in the host computer, and can only be accessed from there. An excellent example of a simple WebQuest that could just as easily be created in a word processor, can be seen at <http://homepage.mac.com/cohora/ext/March.html>. Other excellent sites for WebQuests include TrackStar at <http://trackstar.hprtec.org/> and the WebQuest Page at <http://webquest.sdsu.edu>.

Finally, for those with little time and money to spend, a variety of printable graphic organizers are available from <http://www.educationplace.com/graphicorganizer/index.html>, and printable puzzles can be created with custom word lists from <http://puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com>.

For those students who enjoy playing with the written word, go to <http://wordmorph.cjb.net/> for Word Morph. This freeware program was designed to help users create artificial and abstract words. Caution: this program may prove addictive to certain users!

If you have a specific question or need further information, do not hesitate to e-mail me at accessiblelearning@erols.com, or write c/o: Accessible Learning Technology Alternatives, P.O. Box 597, Shirley NY, 11967.

Until next time! §

CEC Performance-Based Standards Approved by NCATE

Source: Today, Council for Exceptional Children, Vol. 8, No. 7 February/March 2002

The National Council for the Accreditation (NCATE) recently approved CEC's performance-based standards for the preparation and licensure of special educators. CEC will now use the Standards performance-based standards to approve special education teacher preparation programs through the NCATE accreditation process.

The performance-based standards reflect a major change. In the past, teacher preparation programs provided evidence that the standards were taught. Under the new system, programs must provide evidence that the standards are learned. To be approved under the performance-based standards, programs must establish that their graduates can demonstrate they have appropriate knowledge and skills.

CEC – A Leader in Developing Standards

For more than 75 years, CEC has developed and implemented standards for special education teachers. The 2001 standards continue this long tradition of leadership by providing guidance to colleges and universities that prepare teachers, as well as to states as they develop new licensure frameworks for special educators. The move to performance-based standards places CEC at the forefront in educational reform with other national associations seeking to improve the quality of all teachers who serve children with exceptionalities.

The CEC Knowledge and Skills Subcommittee, led by Kathlene Shank of Eastern Illinois University, has worked for more than three years to refine and build on the current CEC standards and create the performance-based standards. In addition, more than 100 CEC members directly helped develop and evaluate the standards, and thousands of CEC members and many other individuals affiliated with other organizations helped validate the standards.

How Are the New Standards Different from the Current Standards?

The performance-based standards are built on the current standards, but they look very different. The 2001 standards are divided into three parts: Special Education Content Standards, Field Experiences and Clinical Practice Standards, and Assessment System Standards.

The Special Education Content Standards are built on the current knowledge and skill base. However, the knowledges and skills have been re-organized from eight domain areas into 10 domain areas that parallel the 10 principles of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC). The Content standards are now 10 narrative standards that reflect the validated knowledge and skills in each of the 10 domain areas. The Content Standards are identical for all programs but are informed by the validated knowledge and skills in the Common Core as well as in each of the specialization areas.

Program reviewers will consider the appropriate knowledge and skills bases as they evaluate the 10 content standards. This will ensure that each program's evaluation system comprehensively addresses each of the 10 standards.

In the past, CEC had 15 separate practicum standards, including a requirement for a set number of hours of practicum. The new field experiences and clinical practice standards no longer require a specific number of hours or weeks. Instead they are designed to ensure that candidates experience systematically planned and sequenced field experiences to ensure that candidates are prepared to enter the classroom.

The assessment system standards require programs to build assessment systems that are comprehensive, appropriately address the standards, include multiple measures, and collect information that is used for program improvement.

How Will the Review Procedures Change?

The 2001 standards and review procedures will significantly change. In the past, the primary forms of documentation were course syllabi. These syllabi demonstrated that the program taught the standards. Under the performance-based procedures, the program report will

document each program's assessment system as well as how well the candidate performed. Therefore, program faculty must develop their comprehensive assessment system to address each of the 10 content standards and collect and aggregate candidate performance on those assessments.

The performance-based procedures do not require assessments for every knowledge and skill. The assessments must address the 10 content standards. The 10 content standards are the same for all programs. However, it is expected that faculty will use the knowledge and skill items in the common core and the appropriate area of specialization to evaluate their curriculum development to ensure that the standards are met.

When Should Programs Have a Fully Implemented Assessment System and Aggregate Data?

NCATE has established a timeline for transition to the performance-based accreditation procedures. CEC expects programs to be on the same timeline NCATE has established for units. This will provide a four-year period allowing institutions to plan, develop, pilot, and fully implement assessment systems that generate candidate proficiency information. Programs will be expected to provide information according to the following schedule or sooner. If the program is submitting its report to CEC in:

*Academic year 2002-2003 — it should provide an assessment plan, pilot data, and currently available data.

*Academic year 2003-2004 — it

should provide an assessment plan, more pilot data, and currently available data.

By 2004-2005, all NCATE institutions are to have fully functioning assessment systems that produce data on candidate proficiencies. By that year, CEC expects all special education programs to provide full candidate performance evidence to demonstrate that standards are met and that programs merit national recognition.

How Will CEC Help Us Prepare a Program Report (Folio)?

The CEC Accreditation Subcommittee, under the leadership of Linda Blanton of Florida International University, has developed procedures to aid faculty in preparing reports and is developing rubrics for reviewers to use in evaluating reports. Rubrics for the field experiences and clinical practicum standards and for the assessment system standards are on the CEC Web site. Rubrics for the content standards are in development and will be placed on the Web site early in the spring of 2002.

CEC has prepared *Guidelines for the Preparation of a Special Education Program Report* to assist programs in meeting the new standards. It is available at www.cec.sped.org. Margie Crutchfield, CEC's director for program accreditation, is available to answer individual questions (margiec@cec.sped.org or 703/264-9484). In addition, CEC staff can provide on-site technical assistance in a variety of modes. Information about this is also available at www.cec.sped.org.

What Options Does CEC Provide for Different State Licensure Frameworks (e.g. Multi-categorical Frameworks)?

State licensure frameworks for special education are quite diverse. Some states license by disability category. Many group categories together, but these groupings vary from state to state. Since preparation programs must meet state standards, preparation programs typically follow state licensure frameworks. This means there is extraordinary diversity in how special education teachers are prepared. Therefore, one set of special education standards cannot meet the needs of all the programs that prepare special educators.

Because of this diversity, CEC provides options to preparation programs. CEC has disability specific standards (e.g., Learning Disabilities, Emotional Disorders, Visually Impaired), multi-categorical standards (Individualized General Curriculum and Individualized Independence Curriculum), and age-specific standards (Early Childhood).

These options allow programs to select the set of standards that most closely aligns with their program.

A New Benchmark for Special Education

CEC is proud of the newest version of its standards. They represent the work of thousands of CEC members and provide leadership to a field that is continually working to improve the quality of beginning special educators. They also provide a benchmark for all teachers to make sure that they are maintaining their professional expertise. §

HalfthePlanet News

ADVANCING INDEPENDENCE: MODERNIZING MEDICARE & MEDICAID (AIMMM), A PROGRAM OF HALFTHEPLANET FOUNDATION

The ArcLink.org's Medicaid Reference Desk AIMMM is working with ArcLink.org to provide an analysis of the Medicaid program in select states and bring the information to the Web. The web site will feature information about Medicaid services and eligibility rules provided in an easy-to-use and easy-to-understand format, particularly helpful for self-advocates. For more information on ArcLink.org, go to <http://www.thearcLink.org> and for future information on AIMMM, please go to <http://www.halftheplanet.org>.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison

Trace Research & Development Center introduces the first fully accessible door. The University of Wisconsin-Madison Trace Research & Development Center contributed to the development of the nation's first cross-disability accessible door entry system that was demonstrated Wednesday, February 27, 2002, at an event in San Francisco by the mayor's office.

Trace assisted Viking Electronics of Hudson, Wisconsin, with accessibility options and interface design of its AES-2000 door entry systems for multi-family residential and commercial buildings. To read the full article, please follow this link to Halftheplanet Foundation <http://www.halftheplanet.org>

To subscribe to this newsletter go to <http://www.halftheplanet.org> §

CONFERENCES

Date: June 17-19, 2002 23rd Annual National Educational Computing Conference (NECC)

San Antonio, TX

Phone: 800-280-6218 (U.S. only) or
541-346-3537

E-mail: registration@neccsite.org

Date: October 17-19, 2002 20th Annual Closing the Gap: Computer Technology in Special Education and Rehabilitation

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http://www.fetc.org/fetc_2003.html

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*This month, we'd like to extend an extra
special thank you to....*

*The Spurlino Foundation
Raytheon Systems' Repro Dept*

*Without their help this publication
wouldn't exist!*

God Bless...

Special Needs Project

You want to read the latest publications on a given subject, for example — Assistive Technology --, and you spend what seems like *forever* trying to locate them. Or you need to access information on several subjects, which makes the search even more frustrating!

Well, have WE got a site for you!!

The Special Needs Project

The SNP was founded by Hod Gray, who's daughter was born with cerebral palsy. It actually started as an independent bookstore in Berkeley, California, and evolved into the Special Needs Project in 1989. From once serving local parents in the area, it has turned into a resource of hundreds of publications, including audio and video material, that is made available to parents, teachers, students, libraries, schools and agencies through their online catalog!

This catalog covers over 40 categories, including subjects like Autism, Developmental Disabilities, Down Syndrome, Inclusion and Independent Living...the list goes on and on!!

“Special Needs Project is a place to get books about disabilities. Located in Santa Barbara, California, SNP serves families, professionals, agencies and schools worldwide with the largest, most authoritative collection of disability-related materials.”

The web page offered by the SNP is very user friendly. You can search by category or keyword. There is even a short list of ‘most popular categories’ that you can access as well as a list of Top Best Sellers! And if that wasn't enough, they have an extensive listing of items that are ‘on sale’.

The Special Needs Project has been featured in several publications, such as *The Catalyst*, and *Directions*.

“...Special Needs Project is dedicated to making the best information available to those who need it.”

A visit to their website is a definite must for anyone who is seeking information on disability-related issues. You can find them at <http://www.specialneeds.com>.

From SNP...

Adaptive Technology for Learning and Work Environments. Joseph Lazzaro, American Library Association Press, 2001. \$48.00 (softback). Also available on CD.

Lucy's Story. Lucy Blackman, with Mary Jane Blackman. Book-in-Hand Press, Australia, 1999. Discounted at \$14.99. §

Look for exciting news in next month's issue about DIRECTION'S new web-based format!!!



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