



# DIRECTIONS

*Technology in Special Education*

Vol. 4, No 11

June/July 1998

## The Year in Review

*The DREAMMS Staff*

This year, as with each of the last 3 years, we will close our volume with a listing of the articles that have appeared over the last 11 months. This year we will list the articles by issue rather than by topic.

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# Accessible Learning

by **Lorianne Hoenninger**

lorianne@erols.com

A solid foundation in basic math and reading skills is essential to later academic success, yet these skills often are difficult for students with special needs to master. The computer, because of its unique ability to combine the auditory, visual and tactile modalities, can be an invaluable tool for these students and many educators have been motivated to develop software just for these purposes.

**Tykwriter** for Macintosh (<http://gamesdomain.uol.com.br/tigger/mac/tykwriter.html>) is a simple word processor designed for children learning to read and write. There are 3 levels of use, allowing the addition of features as the child progresses. The on screen keyboard eliminates the need to constantly look up and down from the screen to the keyboard.

A program often overlooked by educators that has text to speech capabilities is SimpleText. This program is built into every Macintosh. With the addition of **SimpleText Color Menu 3.2** (<http://techctr.educ.umkc.edu/moretrick.html>), which adds a color menu, Simpletext is an inexpensive talking word processor for young children.

Another simple program for the Macintosh designed to make typing and writing enjoyable for young children is **Type and Speak** ([http://](http://www.flash.net/~timbob/)

[www.flash.net/~timbob/](http://www.flash.net/~timbob/)). Kids can type any phrase they want and the computer reads whatever they type.

**The Dolch Sight Word Game** for Macintosh ([www.kidsdomain.com](http://www.kidsdomain.com)) is based on the famous Dolch sight word lists! You will be able to select from among the different levels: Pre-Primer, Primer, First Grade, Second Grade, Third Grade, etc. Users can add their own words in quickly and easily.

**Circus of Words** for Windows ([www.softseek.com](http://www.softseek.com)) is a simple picture and word matching program with lively music. No customization features are available.

**KidCalc** for Macintosh ([www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/park/8110](http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/park/8110)) is a beautiful on screen calculator for young children. It's large size may also be useful for individuals with visual limitations.

**Fizio: Math for Young Kids** is an excellent shareware program for the Macintosh ([http://ftp.sunet.se/ftp/pub/mac/info-mac/\\_Education/\\_Young/](http://ftp.sunet.se/ftp/pub/mac/info-mac/_Education/_Young/)). The program presents simple vertical addition and subtraction problems. Answers can be typed in from left to right or right to left, depending on the child's level.

**Fun Addition** for Windows ([www.softseek.com](http://www.softseek.com)) is a horizontal

## DIRECTIONS

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

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# Connect Online With CEC

CEC Launches Discussion Forums on the WWW

Source: CEC Today, Vol. 4 No. 8

Are you faced with a new or challenging teaching situation? Have you ever wished you could effortlessly tap into a network of special educators for suggestions and support? Well, for CEC members, connecting with colleagues from around the world is merely a mouse-click away.

## Ask Questions, Share Strategies, Trade Tips with Lesson Swap & Share

The latest addition to CEC's Web site, the CEC Discussion Forum, provides a simple way for CEC members to connect by reading and posting messages on the CEC Web site. *Lesson Swap & Share*, the first discussion area to open, enables teachers to share their best strategies and lesson plans and invite suggestions for ideas to use in the classroom from the comfort of their desktop!

## Easy as 1,2,3... but for CEC Members Only!

Joining a discussion online is as easy as 1, 2, 3 for CEC members.

1 You can reach the CEC Discussion Forums from the CEC home page, <http://www.cec.sped.org>. Click on the icon in the left-hand column that says "CEC Discussion Forum."

2. On the main CEC Discussion Forum Page, note that active

discussion area topics are listed on the left, and instructions for accessing the discussion areas appear on the right. Before you follow a link to a topic area, note that you will have to have your CEC member ID number handy, since the CEC Discussion Forum is for CEC members only!

3. With your CEC ID number in hand, point and click on a topic area. You will then be prompted to enter your user ID. - your last name and your password - and your membership number. Once you have accessed *Lesson Snap & Share* or another forum area, take a moment to peruse some of the messages posted, send a reply, or post a new message and connect with your colleagues online! Look for other discussion forums, such as the new teachers' site, coming soon!

## Job Seekers, Employers, Check Out CEC's Job Bank

Job seekers will want to be sure to check out CEC's Job Bank, *Career Connections*. More than 200 positions from all over the country and Canada are listed on the job bank. Positions range from special education teacher to administrative posts to higher education to consultancies.

Plus, job seekers can post their resumes on the Job Bank. Through this easy-to-use service, employers can learn how a potential employee's skills

match their position openings. If you're looking for a job or the perfect person to fill a position, turn to the CEC Job Bank. It's your best resource for special education positions and special education employees.

## CEC's Member-Get-a-Member Campaign Better than Ever!

You just can't beat success. That's why CEC launched its fourth *Member-Get-a-Member Campaign* in Minneapolis. This annual recruitment campaign has proved so popular with our members that they asked us to continue it for another year. By bringing new members to CEC, our current members have won hundreds of exciting prizes, including *free* membership, free convention registration, free publications, free T-shirts, and *discounts* on CEC publications.

CEC looks forward to seeing more members participate in the 1998-1999 Member-Get-a-Member campaign. Try your hand at recruiting members, and join the ranks of those who have met with success. (With CEC's great benefits and work on behalf of the special education teacher, recruiting this year will be easier than ever!) For your Member-Get-a-Member campaign information packet, call 888-232-7733 or see your unit president.

## AbleNet Premieres Step-by-Step Communicator

AbleNet, Inc. has introduced the Step-by-Step Communicator<sup>75</sup>, a voice output communication aid that allows any user greater interaction opportunities by delivering several messages in sequential order. Now people with the most severe disabilities can easily participate in even more daily activities, such as giving their complete order in a restaurant, presenting the steps to follow a recipe or announcing the words of a spelling test. Users can not only get people's attention, but maintain it over a longer period of time.

Offering up to 75 seconds of recording time, AbleNet's easy-to-program Step-by-Step Communicator is designed to record up to 45 messages in a sequence. The initial activation of the communicator plays the first recorded message, the second activation plays the second message, and so on through the series previously recorded.

Using the Step-by-Step Communicator creates opportunities for persons to give directions or simple instructions for playing games, assembling toys or craft projects, or following recipes in preparing foods and beverages. Users also can make daily announcements over the intercom or present the starting line-up at a sporting event using the aid.

A unique "repeat" feature locks in a message until it is appropriate to move on to the next one. "The repeat feature is ideal for people who continually activate the switch surface," said Dr.

Peggy Locke, Director of Sales at AbleNet, Inc. "You can hold the user to one message or let them continue through the sequence".

The repeat function may also be an advantage if you want to store pre-recorded messages for one or more individuals for later use. Once you find the desired message in the sequence, the repeat function will hold the message in place so the user can "say" it.

The new communication aid has a 2 1/2-inch diameter switch surface. A toy/appliance feature allows for any message within the sequence to be paired with a reinforcer, and with as many messages as desired.

The Step-by-Step Communicator is part of the AbleLink Connectables™ series designed to link together to provide communication and control in a simple-to-use system. It is made of durable, shatterproof ABS plastic and has a colorful, easy-to-view angled switch, detachable mounting base for positioning in a variety of locations, and a snap track for connecting with other units. The communicator is 3 inches high at its tallest point.

Step-by-Step Communicator<sup>75</sup> is available in seven colors and sells for \$129.00. For more information or to order, call AbleNet at 1-800-322-0956. AbleNet, Inc. is a Minneapolis-based developer of innovative products for people with severe disabilities.

## CSUN Programs

The Center on Disabilities at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) announces summer training programs for its "Assistive Technology Applications Certificate Program" (ATACP), a 100-hour training program which results in a Certificate in Assistive Technology from the Center on Disabilities and CSUN's College of Extended Learning, and 10 Continuing Education Units (CEU's). The course offered in the Los Angeles area July 13-24, 1998, is full, but here are still openings in the August 10-21, ATACP workshop to be held in Washington, DC.

The Center on Disabilities at CSUN is offering new professional and clerical support positions to support growth throughout its three units: Students with Disabilities Resources (SDR), the CSUN Conference, "Technology and Persons with Disabilities," and the new training program, ATACP ("Assistive Technology Applications Certificate Program.") These new positions will be posted over the next several months on the Center on Disabilities' Home Page: <http://www.csun.edu/cod/>. CSUN's Center on Disabilities also has an immediate opening for a full-time trainer in its "Assistive Technology Applications Certificate Program" (ATACP). For details see: <http://www.csun.edu/cod/>

For additional information contact: Center on Disabilities, CSUN, (California State University, Northridge), 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330-8340. P: 818-677-2578 V/TDD/Message, Fax: 818-6774929, Email: LTM@csun.edu



# Computer-Assisted Instructional Techniques for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

by Camilla Hileman

Successful conditions to arrange when teaching individuals with developmental disabilities include a predictable, consistent, and non-threatening atmosphere. A computer features predictable and consistent responses, reliability, and infinite patience. Furthermore, the visual presentation of material through computer-assisted instruction (CAI) establishes a compelling and motivating environment in which to learn.

Computer-assisted instructional techniques are a combination of the adult guide's assessment of the user's learning abilities as well as a thorough evaluation of the software program. The compatibility of these two factors must be considered before participating in CAI. For example, consider the user's current level of performance cognitively, as would be the case before designing any curriculum implementation, and select software in the assessed developmental range.

Initially, determine the individual's learning style as either auditory or visual. An auditory learner may require the program to verbalize instructions, provide auditory prompts, and supply auditory rewards (music, sound effects, and verbal praise) to be most beneficial. To the contrary, visual learners advance from demonstrations, visual prompts, and visual rewards

(animation and graphics). How much stimulation can the user tolerate? For some individuals music and sound effects can serve as motivators while other users may be distracted by them. Gratuitous sound effects/music have no apparent purpose.

A user's motivation can be maintained or enhanced by the type and amount of rewards offered. Rewards that are varied in a software application are more likely to continue to serve as reinforcing factors. Can the rewards be altered as the user's interests change? The reinforcing value of a reward fluctuates according to its appeal. The frequency of rewards influences the user's attention. Research indicates that an individual with developmental disabilities will be more attentive if a partial reinforcement schedule is employed. Consequently, reinforcement after every third trial as opposed to every trial may be more effective.

Prior to a CAI session, the adult guide prepares by adjusting the customize options within a program. Most software programs have an 'adult' or 'teacher' preference section where changes can be made to suit a learner's needs. Difficulty level selections become crucial to the ongoing participation of the individual in a CAI session. The objective is for the user to experience

the success and increased self-esteem that accompany achievement of lower-order skills while simultaneously providing the challenge of higher-order skills. This is known as task variation, to intersperse maintenance tasks with new acquisition tasks. The presentation of only maintenance tasks would lead to boredom and conversely, only new acquisition task availability may simply be too frustrating. In both cases, boredom and frustration may result in the onset of challenging behaviors.

Depending on the type of software being utilized, the format may be structured or unstructured. Drill and practice instructional software is at the extreme end of a structured presentation. On the other hand, discovery and simulation software provide an unstructured or more open-ended format. Many educational games now include structured play in a 'question and answer' mode and the free play and experimentation in an 'exploratory' mode. Once again, select what is more appropriate for the user.

A factor that concerns parents, teachers, and other professionals is the ability of individuals to generalize skills learned in a computer activity to a non-computer activity. The research available in this area concludes that it is more likely for skills to be generalized from a computer activity to a non-computer activity than vice versa. Generalization is one of the most

significant outcomes expected from CAI. Generalization of skills is more likely to result when the computer instruction coincides with the curriculum. The provision of personal instruction in the same conceptual area preceding or following CAI strengthens the user's ability to generalize information. Furthermore, some software publishers do supply suggestions contained in the manual on generalization, reproducible sheets to be used during a non-computer activity, and manipulatives to assist with transferred learning.

Finally, data collection is extremely important to inform all team members of the user's progress, which may easily be accelerated over the progress attained through personal instruction. Internal record keeping is a more

common feature in instructional programs than has been available in the past. A daily printed copy of the individual's progress report updates all team members and contributes to the team's cohesive efforts toward a desired goal. One important notation is that the computer program cannot determine whether an error was intentional/unintentional. In this case, the adult guide should note on the report any unintentional errors observed during the session. An unintentional error may be produced by poor muscle control or inadvertent clicks. The data collected provides the basis for program revisions and supports modifications to an 'EP occupational, or recreational situation that would otherwise be controlled or chosen for them. When an individual can express preferences and practice

control, the possibilities are limitless.

*Camilla Hileman is a private consultant in the field of computer technology and individuals with developmental disabilities. She is an experienced national conference presenter contributing to The Autism Society of America National Conference, Closing The Gap National Conference, Florida Assistive Technology Impact Conference, and many others. Camilla is the author of the recently released book Point...Click...& Learn!!! A "User-Friendly" Guide to Educational Software Programs for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities. published by Future Horizons, Inc. (1-800-489-0727). Contact Camilla at 3061 Belden Circle, Cincinnati, Ohio 45211. E-mail: ch@tso.cin.ix.net*

## **AT Survival Kit**

**A Comprehensive Assistive Technology Resource**

### **INCLUDES.....**

- *DREAMMS Guide to Assistive Technology - extensive AT reference anthology of local, state and national agency literature - value \$39.95*
- *A full year subscription to "DIRECTIONS: Technology in Special Education" - value \$14.95*
- *The DIRECTIONS Electronic Digest - the past 2 years on diskette (Mac or PC format) - value \$39.95*
- *Product information from over 50 vendors of assistive and adaptive devices and services - invaluable*

**Receive this \$95.00 value for only \$59.95  
(Parents receive a 50% discount!)**

### **Call us today!**

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Ask RJ

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Ask RJ

CEC's DEC Conference

AbleNet - Book of Possibilities

AbleNet - TV & VCR Remote Control

## Laureate Software 50% Off for Families and Individuals

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

Laureate Learning Systems is a leading publisher of software for people with special needs. Laureate offers over 80 programs specifically designed for individuals with developmental disabilities, language-learning disabilities, physical-impairments, hearing impairments and autism.

From June 1 through August 31, 1998, Laureate is offering 50% off all software to families and individuals. For the past four years, this sale has been extremely popular with parents who want their children to continue the progress they have made during the school year.

This year, Laureate is also offering families an Easy Payment Plan. If you place your order with a MasterCard or VISA, you can choose to have your credit card billed in four monthly installments.

Laureate software comes with a money-back guarantee. If a program doesn't meet your child's needs, you can return it for a full refund. Laureate also has a flexible Trade-in policy which allows you to send back programs your child has mastered and get 50% credit toward new titles.

Laureate was founded by two renowned speech-language pathologists who were among the first to recognize the important contributions that multimedia software could make to the lives of individuals with disabilities. Laureate offers software in the areas of language development, cognitive processing, reading, speech/voice assessment and training, and instructional games.

If you need help making software decisions or would like to receive Laureate's new Family Catalog, contact Laureate, 110 East Spring Street, Winooski, VT 05404 - or call 1-800-562-6801.

## OSEP-Funded Projects

*Source: CEC Today, Vol 4, No 8*

CEC has developed a database of more than 1,200 discretionary grants and contracts funded by the Office of Special Education Projects, which you can search on the World Wide Web. These projects include:

Research and Innovation Projects, Demonstration Projects, Technical Assistance and Dissemination Projects, Technology Projects, Personnel Preparation Projects, State Improvement Projects.

Each project description contains the project director's name and institutional affiliation; a summary of the project's purpose, method, and products; the project number; and the project's beginning and ending dates.

The user-friendly database enables you to retrieve the projects you are specifically interested in by searching for project director, organization, project title, project number, state, or keyword. Using this database, you can easily get answers to questions such as: What personnel preparation programs exist in my state?, Where can my school district get technical assistance on cooperative learning?, Does Montana have any distance education projects?, What research is being funded on cooperative learning?

To search the database, point your Web browser to: [www.cec.sped.org/osep/search.htm](http://www.cec.sped.org/osep/search.htm). On-screen instructions will guide you through the process.

The database is also available in a print version, published in five volumes: Research, Innovation, and Evaluation, Personnel Preparation, Technical Assistance, Dissemination and Parent Training, Technology and Media Services, State Improvement.

The print version contains the same data as the Internet version, and each volume is indexed by project director, institution, state, and subject. The volumes may be purchased separately or as a set. To order, call 888/CEC-SPED.

The database was developed by the ERIC/OSEP Special Project with funding from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education.

## New Computer Technology Based on Eye Movement

Boston College and Harmonix Music Systems, Inc. proudly announce the success of their joint project to combine the use of state-of-the-art computer system with a consumer interactive music product to allow the severely disabled to compose music using only their eyes.

The computer system, EagleEyes, developed by Boston College, uses eye and head movement detection to control a computer cursor and carry out the user's directives, dramatically improving the quality of life for people with severe physical limitations. The music software, The Axe (TM), developed by Harmonix Music Systems, Inc., enables users to produce original, real-time, virtuosic music typically through the use of a

mouse or joystick. The marriage of these technologies is opening a new door for the disabled.

The EagleEyes system utilizes surface electrodes placed on the user's face, above, below, and to the sides of their eyes, to detect eye or head movement, thus acting as a mouse emulator. Selection is made by looking at a small area of the screen for a short period of time which causes the equivalent of a mouse click.

For more information, contact Harmonix Music Systems, Inc., Spencer Saltonstall at 617-491-6144, x152 or Boston College, Joseph Hunter at 617-552-0419, hunterjo@bc.edu.

*AL Continued from page 2*

addition math program with a simple screen, though little customization is available. It does show the objects to be counted, a necessary feature for the beginning mathematician!

**ArithmeticTackToe** for Windows ([www.indigorose.com](http://www.indigorose.com)) requires the answer to a math problem (you pick the level) to place the X's and O's.

**Talking Spelling Teacher** for Macintosh (<http://www.shareware.com/>) and **Weekly Speller 1.6** for Windows (<http://www.pcwin.com>) are excellent ways to encourage children to practice weekly spelling lists. Custom lists can be created, words can be recorded and

printed reports allow teachers and parents to monitor progress.

**Spelling Games** for Windows ([www.softseek.com](http://www.softseek.com)) includes 8 terrific games that cover all aspects of spelling for children ages 5-11. You can use your own word lists or any of the built in lists (grades K-6).

I hope that you find these programs as helpful as I have. Next month's focus will be on age appropriate software for the older student. If you have a specific question in the meanwhile, do not hesitate to e-mail me at [lorianne@erols.com](mailto:lorianne@erols.com) or write c/o: Accessible Learning Technology Associates, P.O. Box 597, Shirley NY, 11967.

### Conferences & Events

**Date: July 31 - August 2, 1998**

Abilities Expo, Chicago, IL.

Contact: 203-256-4700 x 114 for general info and 203-256-4700 x 123 exhibitors.

**Date: September 15, 1998**

Gadgets & Electronics: Total Technology 2, New Haven, CT

Contact: 860-424-4871, Fax: 860-424-4850, E-mail: [cttap@aol.com](mailto:cttap@aol.com)

**Date: September 15 - 17, 1998**

AVIOS, '98 - Speech Technology Conference, San Jose, CA

Contact: Phone: 408-323-1783, Fax: 408-323-1782; E-mail [avios@pilot.net](mailto:avios@pilot.net)

**Date: September 25 - 27, 1998**

Abilities Expo, Washington, DC

Contact: 203-256-4700, x 114 for general info and 203-256-4700 x 123 exhibitors.

**Date: October 20 - 24, 1998**

16th Annual Closing the Gap Conference, Minneapolis, MN

Contact: Phone: 507-248-3294, Fax: 507-248-3810, E-mail: [info@closingthegap.com](mailto:info@closingthegap.com)

**Date: October 23 - 25, 1998**

Abilities Expo, San Mateo, CA

Contact: 203-256-4700 x 114 for general info and 203-256-4700 x 123 exhibitors.

# New Internet Resource on AAC

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

Computer Options for the Exceptional announces the publication of its new website at <http://www.augcomm.com>. This website is designed to be a comprehensive, non-commercial resource in the field of augmentative/alternative communication. It offers 4 departments: Notable News, Worthwhile Links, AAC Products & Manufacturers and an AugCom System Search Tool.

Notable News presents concise summaries of tidbits from the field. This includes news from manufacturers, assessment and implementation strategies, AAC conference schedule and AAC publications.

Worthwhile Links is a compilation of carefully selected websites that contain valuable information on the

topic of AAC. Rather than weed through a Yahoo list of hundreds of thousands of site (using a keyword search of "augmentative c o m m u n i c a t i o n" ), [www.augcomm.com](http://www.augcomm.com) has already done all the tedious 'surfin' and identified a manageable list of useful sites.

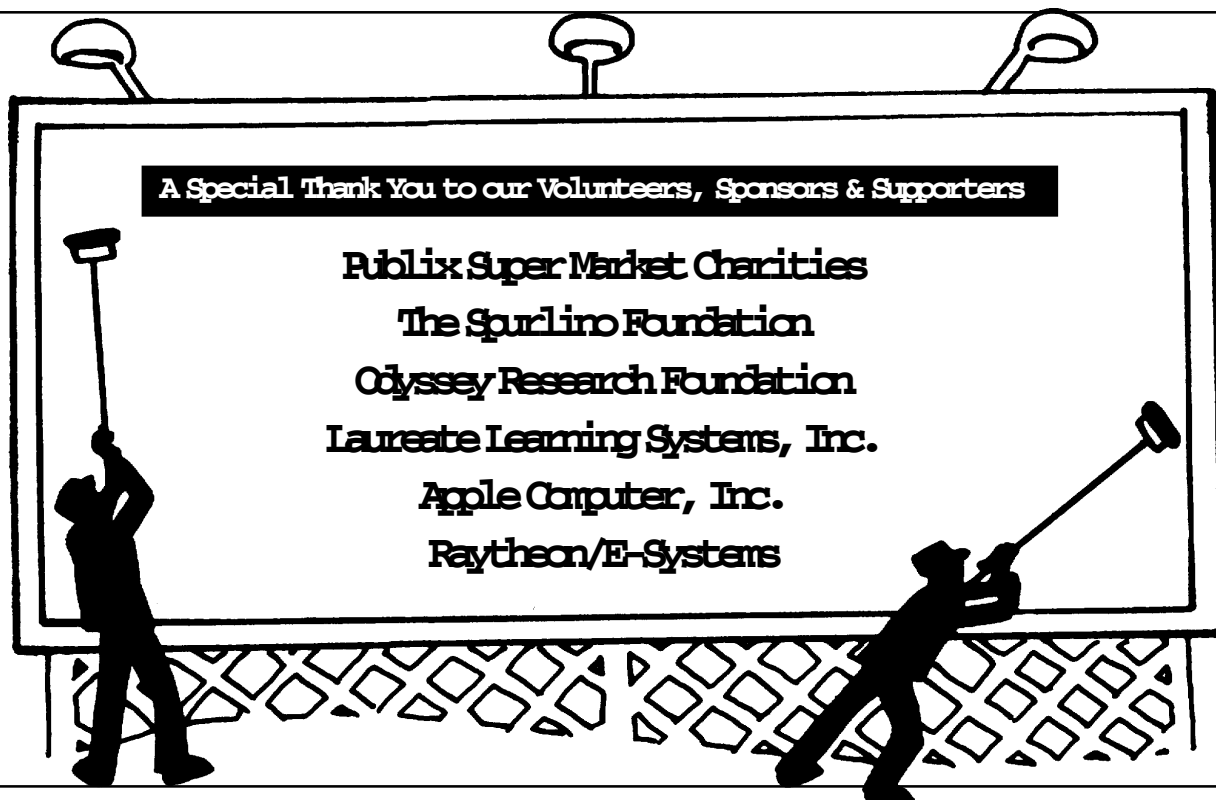
[www.augcomm.com](http://www.augcomm.com) also contains a listing of over 140 AAC systems and their manufacturers. If the manufacturer has their own website, a link to their homepage is offered. This is an efficient way to investigate the many AAC solutions available today.

Finally, [www.augcomm.com](http://www.augcomm.com) offers information and access to Needs First:

Augcom System Search Tool. This is a database of over 140 AAC systems categorized according to 48 distinguishing features (i.e. single

switch, text-to-speech, word prediction, etc.). Tell Needs First what feature(s) the user requires, and the database will identify the system(s) that possess the feature(s). This is a much more thorough and efficient process than fumbling through stacks of catalogs or being persuaded by salespersons.

[www.augcomm.com](http://www.augcomm.com) is frequently updated as news and information on AAC becomes available. Visitors to the site are encouraged to bookmark it and visit often. Anyone with information they'd like to see included at [www.augcomm.com](http://www.augcomm.com) should send an e-mail to [bcadams@augcomm.com](mailto:bcadams@augcomm.com) or snailmail to Computer Options for the Exceptional, 49 Overlook Road, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603, or call or fax to 914-452-1850.



# FREE Web Site Provides New Resources for Teaching and Learning

Hundreds of resources for teaching and learning can now be found on one Web site. The Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE) Web site is a collaboration of the efforts of more than 35 federal agencies, and makes hundreds of Internet-based education sources easier to access for students and teachers.

“This new Web site...offers one-stop shopping for a treasure trove of historical documents, scientific experiments, mathematical challenges, mouse paintings, and other tools for teachers and students,” U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley said.

Thousands of topics can be searched on the FREE Web site: the Civil War, the Constitution, photosynthesis, condensation, immigration, Picasso, Jefferson, Henry David Thoreau, Mary

Cassatt, Jackie Robinson, the Amistad Case, famous FBI cases, cartography, genealogy, the Renaissance, the solar system, and others. Resources can also be viewed in 10 subject areas. The FREE Web site was developed in response to a directive President Clinton issued more than a year ago to expand access to Internet-based education resources for children, teachers and parents. The FREE Web site supports President Clinton’s Technology Literacy Challenge, which comprises four goals:

1. All teachers will have the training and support they need to help students learn to use computers and the information superhighway;

2. All teachers and students will

have modern computers in their classrooms;

3. Every classroom will be connected to the information superhighway: and

4. Effective and engaging software and on-line learning resources will be an integral part of every school’s curriculum.

The site also offers a “Looking for Partners” page to facilitate future partnerships between teachers, federal agencies and organizations. For more information about the FREE Web site, visit <http://www.ed.gov/free>. The U.S. Department of Education’s publication a *Parents Guide to the Internet* is available by visiting <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/internet/> or by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN. ~



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