



DIRECTIONS

Technology in Special Education

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Augmentative Communication

To augment means to increase. Therefore, the term augmentative communication (AC), literally translated, means increased communication. Those children who are capable of communicating, yet are unable to use speech, benefit greatly from the various methodologies and tools that are currently available.

Alternative methods of communicating, beyond sign language, were first explored in the 1970s with the increased use of “low tech” or constructed communication boards and then, electronic devices and computers. These alternative methods are now collectively grouped under the heading of AC. Most individuals use a combination of devices depending on their location and circumstances.

Selecting an Appropriate Device

Selecting from the various types and modes of AC devices can be a challenge in itself. Be sure that qualified professionals take part in the evaluation of your child, and that all options are examined. And, remember, one solution will not always suffice. As mentioned above, your child will most likely use a combination of devices depending on the situation and the location. Remember too, that one of the most critical considerations when selecting an AC methodology or device is: “will the child or individual use this particular method?” Can they readily make their needs and desires known? Is the device easy for them to use? Does it match their needs? These and many other questions need to be answered before purchases (sometimes, very expensive ones), should be made.

Picture Books & Boards

Picture books or boards are used regularly by children who cannot make their needs known with audible speech. They can be created

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Product News...

Sentient Systems Introduces DynaVox 2

Augmentative Communication device
offers color, increased portability.

PITTSBURGH, PA, May 1, 1995 Sentient Systems Technology, Inc., announced the release of a new line of state-of-the-art augmentative communication devices – DynaVox 2 and DynaVox 2c. These units offer the choice of a color display, built-in environmental control capabilities, more communication memory and are lighter in weight than the company's current DynaVox product.

“DynaVox 2 and 2c are an extension of our commitment to dedicated technology which gives users a faster, easier and even more flexible device, all in one convenient, durable package,” said Gary Killany, Sentient Systems vice president of product development. “In addition, the devices are integrated with our other dedicated text to speech, digitized, computer software and paper products.”

Additional features include: optional display color, increased portability, environmental control unit, more memory, and expanded communication software. DynaVox 2 and 2c are priced between \$4,995 and \$7,995.

Sentient is also introducing DynaVox 2 software for DOS and Mac computers. This software will turn a general purpose computer into an augmentative communication device. The software is priced at \$995.

Sentient Systems Technology, Inc. offers a full range of augmentative communications products for those with speech, learning and physical disabilities. Their products are integrated across multiple platforms, including paper and digitized products, desktop/laptop computer software, and dedicated text to speech communication aids. For more information on these and other products, contact Sentient Systems Technology, Inc. at 1-800-344-1778.

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Authors - We welcome editorial submissions. Please include name, address and phone. Submission will be returned with self addressed stamped envelope, if desired.

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

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very easily, are quite portable, are very inexpensive, and can be modified to meet varying situations.

Electronic & Computerized Devices

You will find many many different types and models of electronic AC devices found on the market today, and it would be impossible for us to describe all of these different devices and how they work. Instead, we'll give you an overview of a few of the more popular devices.

Mega WOLF & Whisper WOLF

by ADAMLAB 313-467-1610

The Mega WOLF and Whisper WOLF are user programmable voice output communication devices that use the Texas Instruments' *Touch and Tell* case and touch panel. The Whisper WOLF is different in that it provides auditory scanning and single switch selection along with input from the touch panel. Both use synthetic voice as opposed to digital voice output. An 18 page demonstration vocabulary, along with picture overlays is included with the devices. Areas are available for customized vocabulary programming. Prices: \$400 and \$450 respectively.

Liberator

by Prentke Romich 800-262-194

The Liberator is a multi-featured communication device that can also be used as an alternate keyboard and can operate environmental control. Access can be accomplished by touch, pointer, or switch control, and the input panel can have up to an 8 by 16 programmed grid. The Liberator also has a built-in 8 line display and printer for making hard copies of anything that is written. It is an extremely flexible device, and is appropriate for all ages and cognitive levels. Price: \$7,345.

Language Master 6000

by Franklin Electronic Publishers, Inc.

Distributor: Tiger Communications 800-724-7301

The Language Master 6000 is a hand held, text-to-speech device. It provides the capability to store and

instantaneously replay 26 personal messages for ongoing conversation, while also providing digital speech output of every letter, word and phrase input on the QWERTY style min-keyboard. It also houses a dictionary, with 3000 definitions, a thesaurus, grammar guide, and educational word games. Price: \$490.

DynaVox 2

by Sentient Systems 412-381-4883

Please see the new product announcement found on the previous page.

Talk: About

by Don Johnson Inc. 800-999-4660

Talk: About is conversation software for the Macintosh that lets individuals who are non-speaking participate in real communication. Tools included for quick conversation are: Quick:Chat, Story:Talk, and Story:Panel. Quick:Chat is a palette with buttons that has words and buttons for quick conversations, and Story:Talk and Story:Panel allow for the speaking and use of story files. The user can also keep track of recent conversations. Offers high-quality text-to-speech output or digitized voices for speaking. Works with an external speech synthesizer. Price: \$490.

Summary

We have only just touched the very surface here in talking about alternative and augmentative communication techniques and devices, since the topic area is so broad! There are many other types of devices, and each one has its own list of benefits, along with specific drawbacks.

The most important thing that you should do when first thinking about augmentative or alternative communication devices, is to become an informed consumer! Please contact a local professional, or call us for a Tech Pak, should you need advice or direction in determining which device or method would be appropriate for your child's use. Also, be sure to look for our September issue, when we'll be talking about funding ideas!



Teaching Tip

The following are techniques which have proven to be useful in stimulating student Interaction.

Over Emote: In working with the special need, population, it is often necessary to over emote and 'ham it up' to elicit a little emotion from the students. Don't hesitate to change your voice, whisper, and show *lots* of emotion!

Silly Sabotage: Making mistakes on purpose is a highly effective technique to engage students in communicating without relying on questioning and giving commands to respond (Goossens', Crain and Elder, 1993). Students love to correct the saboteur! The students' familiarity with the books, scripts and what is "supposed to happen," allows them to more easily detect mistakes.



Silly Sabotage adds humor, injects the element of comedy to the activity and, helps to maintain interest. In working with the Big Book, *Peanut Butter and Jelly*, as the authors did, the perfect opportunity for sabotage is to incorrectly state the title, or in a follow up activity, the therapist, or parent can, for example, put peanut butter and jelly on the child's hand rather than on bread to make a sandwich. Sabotage can be planned ahead of time, but sometimes the most humorous mistakes have been the spontaneous ones!

Adapted from: "Linking Literacy with the Mega Wolf", 15th Annual Southeast Augmentative Communication Conference Proceedings. J. Embry, & J. Sauers. Contact DREAMMS for reprints.

Conferences

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

Date: June 17- 19

Event: NECC '95, "Emerging Technologies, Lifelong Learning"

Location: Baltimore, MD

Contact: Towson State U. 410-830-2773

Date: July 17 -21

Event: "Breaking Computer Barriers: Computers in the Inclusive Classroom" Location: Peabody, MA

Contact: Ann Brennan, 508-531-8555

Date: July 23 -28

Event: 6th World Conference on Computers in Education

Location: Birmingham, United Kingdom

Contact: Secretariat, WCCE 44+(0)21-428-1258

Date: August 6 -9

Event: Educational Technology Conference & Expo

Location: Orlando, FL

Contact: LRP Conference Division, 703-684-0510

Living With Computers 101

Rule #2

NEVER EVER

SPILL COFFEE IN YOUR KEYBOARD

Computers are allergic to caffeine !!

PARENT ON THE LOOSE

Dreams Can Come True - If You Work at Them!

BY: Tom Nurse
PRO District 5 Representative

When it comes to considering assistive technology options for your child, it is very important to develop some long range goals, dreams, and visions for their future. It is also key to balance these goals with a realistic time frame.

One of the biggest challenges we faced as a family, after learning that our daughter has cerebral palsy, was what was her future going to be like? What were we going to

What role do you play as a parent? dream about for her future? How would she get around? How would she communicate? What kind of toys can she use?

When we began to learn about assistive technology, we realized that we needed *as a* professional help in determining what would work for her. She has been evaluated by her OT, PT, speech therapists, Custom Mobility, All Children's in St. Petersburg, the Center for Independence Technology and Education (C.I.T.E.) in Orlando, and by the Pinellas County School assistive technology team.

With all of this input, what role do you play as a parent? I suggest you write down some goals and dreams and bring these ideas to the table. For example, we wanted our daughter to be mobile as early as possible. After lots of hard work on determining the best powerchair, positioning aids, and battling for funding - we finally got her chair just after she turned three years old.

I thought she would learn to drive in a matter of weeks! Well, it has now been a year, and we can really see her skills improve dramatically! She now drives in the house, around school, to her school bus, and even goes for "walks" around the neighborhood!

I must admit that we had our doubts over the past year about the powerchair, but now one of our dreams has come true! I suggest that you start early, start simple, but

with a vision of where you want to go. And, most importantly, keep dreaming of the possibilities, because you know your child better than anyone else.



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For two decades, this award-winning magazine has been a source of hope, help and guidance for millions of parents, family members and professionals concerned with the care of children with physical and development disabilities, including psychological, learning, emotional, hearing and vision problems, as well as chronic illness.

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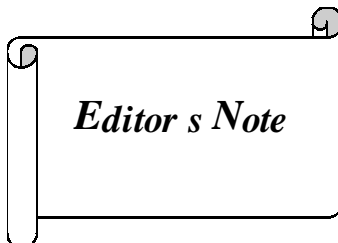
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Organization: Dreamms for Kids Inc. Code: D86

My Dear Friends,

Well, its almost summer time! (Actually, in Florida, it's ALWAYS summertime!) I know you're not going to believe this, but sun can get just a tad boring after a while!! What I wouldn't give for just a little snow flurry!! We'll be taking the month of July to get ready to move into our second year of publishing DIRECTIONS! Our editorial calendar for the remainder of this calendar year will bring you information on hearing and vision aids, funding assistive technology, and adapted toys and games. We'll also be devoting two full issues to listing AT vendors and resources, and we'll bring you bulletin board and online service phone numbers! I'm sure that you'll find a number of useful pieces of information.



We are also being contacted by a number of professionals in the special education field who are interested in providing us with articles and columns on computers, and adaptive and assistive technology uses for upcoming issues! I'm very excited about this, since we can bring you even more ideas and topics!

It's going to be a very very exciting year! I'm looking forward to sharing it with you! - As always...

kindest Personal Regards...

Janet

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Tidbits...

Survey Deadline II

OOPS! ! We forgot to print the deadline for mailback of the FESTT survey from last month. Please mail your response no later than August 21, 1995. Thanks!!

Training Efforts Growing

T.H.E. Journal reports that inservice and staff development programs to assist teachers in the area of computer and technology training are expanding. Some programs are: training centers for technology coordinators, media specialists, librarians, etc., user groups, workshops, and schedule modifications.

Summer Sale !!

Due to popular demand, Laureate Learning Systems, Inc. has decided to again offer 50% off all of special education software to parents and individuals during the summer months! Last year, this sale was extremely popular with parents who wanted their children to continue the progress they had made during the school year. Call 1-800-562-6801 for a free catalog. Hurry, offer ends August 31, 1995!

Call for Papers

Are you interested in writing an editorial piece for *DIRECTIONS*? Call us at 813-781-7711 for details!

Have A Great Summer!!



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