



DIRECTIONS

Technology in Special Education

Vol. 3 , No. 4

November 1996

Accessing Computers at Home

Using the Computer as a Reading Enrichment Tool

*Adapted from 'Parent's Guide to the Computer as a Reading Enrichment Tool'
The Education Team at Edmark Corporation*

Reading is integral to many of our daily activities. Everyday we encounter the printed word in books and magazines, invitations and greeting cards, memos, menus, movies and subtitles, signs and billboards, letters and messages, software programs and direction.

Using your home computer, your child can build reading skills by exploring many of these vehicles for communication.. The computer offers great flexibility as a learning tool and can play many roles in your child's education. As an ever-patient tutor, the computer will repeat a pronunciation, reread a selection, or demonstrate a solution hundreds of times (without getting frustrated!). As a mentor, the computer can introduce children to new skills, vocabulary and concepts-stimulating curiosity, sharpening reading abilities and broadening knowledge. As a creativity tool, computers let children create with words, graphics, music, speech and video, encouraging them to explore different ways of communicating. As a productivity tool, computers can simplify and expedite the process of writing; with a modem attached, they can speed communication and provide immediate access to a wide range of resources. As an entertainment tool, the computer is a place to explore and have fun.

The software you choose determines the role your computer can take. The next section discusses several different types of programs that help your child build reading skills.

Educational Software Programs Designed to Build Reading Skills:

You can find educational software for children of all ages and reading abilities. Programs are even available for pre-readers as young as age two! While very young children may require parental assistance at first, many of these programs have been designed to allow them to explore reading activities

Please see TOOL on Page 8



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My Dear Friends,

11/96

I would like to take this space this month to say thank you to all of those who helped bring Building Bridges to the parents and teachers of Central Florida. (I'm going to try really hard not to leave anybody out so bear with me on this .)

Mary Stoltz	Jeff Fitterman
Chet Hosmer	Sylvia Diehl (& students)
Paula Walker	Eloise Hayes
Pat Abjanich	Marcia McKenzie
Helen Sandonato	Jadene Ransdell
Mamie Evans	Ann Banton
Geri Banton	Paola Nunez
Rob McPherson	Dan Deignan
Tom Nurse	Rena Carney
Sandy Osborn	Susan Lait
Tina Brandel	Gary Brandel
Don Zink	Hill Abrahams

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 Language-Hearing Association
 Pinellas County Schools
 Time Warner Communications, Inc.
 McDonald's Corporation

I guess that about covers it. We reached a lot of parents and teachers with this seminar . and that has always been my goal to reach and to touch. I can't thank all of you enough.

Oh . and a special thanks to Karen Jacobs, whose vision and encouragement guided our path.

As always, My Kindest Regards to all

Janet

DIRECTIONS

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

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AT Advocate Corner

Source: *AT Advocate*

Newsletter of the National Assistive Technology Advocacy Project

Medicaid and AT: What Should Be in a Good Doctor's Letter?

To assure that Assistive Technology is approved, it is best to submit a letter of justification explaining why it is medically necessary and how it is the least costly alternative. This letter should summarize the person's condition, the requested AT, the exploration of other alternatives and why they were rejected, and the effect of the requested equipment on the applicant's home life, employment, education and medical needs.

Additional supporting documents may be provided from other doctors, occupational and physical therapists,

teachers, technology specialists, nurses, home health aids, psychiatrists, psychologists and counselors. Letters of support should be written on letterhead, summarize professional qualifications, recite the length of time that the writer has been working with the person, describe the diagnosis and prognosis, and explain clearly and simply, in compelling terms why the equipment, in his or her professional opinion is medically necessary.

Letters of support from other sources, including schools, employers, case managers, family members, relatives,

personal care aides and neighbors can also speak to why the person needs the Assistive Technology for matters of safety, independence, maximizing potential and conducting activities of daily living.

This piece has been excerpted from the *AT Advocate*, a newsletter of the National Assistive Technology Advocacy Project. Although written for attorneys and Assistive Technology advocacy experts, the project's newsletter provides beneficial insight into critical legal aspects of AT use and funding. §

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POP QUIZ #101

YES NO

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. DO YOU HAVE A STUDENT WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN YOUR ROOM? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. ARE YOU CURRENTLY USING STATE-OF-THE-ART TECHNOLOGIES? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. HAS ANYONE SUGGESTED THE USE OF ADAPTED COMPUTER ACCESS DEVICES? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. ARE YOU FOLLOWING THE CHANGES IN ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FUNDING LAWS? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. DO YOU WANT TO MAKE LIFE EASIER? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

SCORING

If you've answered yes to any or all of the above questions, you may need our help! Contact us to find out about all of our Assistive Technology information products. We'd be happy to send you one of our catalogs or answer any of your questions!

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Assistive Technology Solutions

A non-profit information clearinghouse and official dissemination point for the UCP Assistive Technology Funding & Systems Change Project

ATFSCP Notes

The Assistive Technology Funding and Systems Change Project

FUNDING DECISION CASE REPORT

I. Case Name: In re: M.L.W.

II. Decision Date: November 21, 1994

III. Reported By: National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems (adapted by ATFSCP staff)

IV. Critical Issues: Whether Connecticut Medicaid must provide coverage for an environmental control unit (ECU).

SUMMARY

Ms. W. has spinal muscular atrophy, a progressive neurodegenerative disorder. As a result of this condition, Ms. W. has quadriplegia and significant respiratory problems, including susceptibility to bronchitis and pneumonia. Currently, Ms. W. lives in her own home. Since 1988, she has relied on an environmental control unit (ECU), paid for by her private insurer, after a determination by her doctor that the unit was "medically necessary." That unit is now outdated, and is unreliable due to repeated breakdowns. When the ECU is not functioning, Ms. W. must have someone, usually a home health nurse, in her home to provide care for her. Ms. W. needs the ECU to be able to remain in her own home.

Ms. W.'s neurologist prescribed an updated model of her present ECU, and certified that the device is "medically necessary." The new model, a "Simplicity Series 6," allows her to control her lights and hospital bed, using her voice, as her earlier-

model ECU did. It also has new features which allow her to control the thermostat, air conditioner, and the front door of her home. The ECU also has a speed-dial telephone feature which retains its programming after a power outage. (The prior model only retained programming for one hour without power).

The state Medicaid agency denied coverage for the ECU, because ECUs were not determined to be "medically necessary." The Medicaid agency did not include ECUs on the state's durable medical equipment list.

Ms. W. appealed this ruling, represented by the Connecticut Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities. Medical evidence presented at the hearing included testimony of a public health nurse, who testified that an ECU was a "medical necessity" for Ms. W. She also testified that Ms. W. would need in-home nursing care without the unit. The nurse also presented testimony that the prescribed unit meets the definition of covered durable medical equipment.

ANALYSIS

The Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) considered the requirements of state and federal regulations regarding "durable medical equipment" and "home health services." In order for a device to meet the definition of "durable medical equipment," the device must be able to:

"withstand repeated use, primarily and customarily used to serve a medical

purpose; is generally not useful to a person in the absence of an illness or injury; and is not a disposable item."

The ALJ stated that the ECU met those criteria. "Home health services" can be provided to any individual entitled to skilled nursing facilities. They include "medical supplies, equipment, and appliances suitable for use in the home." The ALJ concluded that the ECU met the definition of covered durable medical equipment and home health services. It was prescribed by a licensed physician to meet a medical need, as required by federal law. Therefore, the ALJ ordered that the ECU be purchased for Ms. W. by the state Medicaid agency.

The ALJ noted that the state Medicaid agency made a decision that the ECU was not medically necessary without evaluating the medical necessity of the unit for Ms. W. Evidence was presented by the claimant's attorney to prove medical necessity. The state did not present any evidence to contradict the evidence presented by Ms. W.

SYSTEMS CHANGE AND ADVOCACY

This case is important because the ALJ ruled that unless an evaluation of an individual's needs is performed, the state Medicaid agency may not determine that a particular piece of equipment is not medically necessary. In other words,

the state Medicaid agency cannot decide, as it did in this case, that ECUs are not ever medically necessary.

Frequently, Medicaid coverage for assistive technology devices and services is denied by state agencies who rely on general laws or lists of approved devices that limit Medicaid coverage, without evaluating the request for coverage on an individual basis.

If these issues were not adequately evaluated by the state agency, a judge should evaluate them on an appeal. It is important for a person who has been denied coverage for a prescribed, medically-necessary device, to appeal that denial. It may be only after the appeal is requested that the individual may learn the extent of the evaluation of his/her claim.

The Medicaid fair hearing process is an important avenue for obtaining Medicaid coverage for assistive technology devices and services, when funding has been denied. It is common for Administrative Law Judges to reverse a state's denial of Medicaid coverage for assistive technology devices.

Each ALJ's decision is educational to the state agency about how it must process claims for assistive technology. One decision can be used in support of the same result in a future claim on the same issue. It is important for people with disabilities to exercise their due process rights, appealing decisions that deny Medicaid coverage for devices which are medically necessary.

ACTION STEPS

1. Ask whether your state Medicaid agency evaluates the medical necessity of requests on an individual basis, or by using lists of excluded devices. If the agency uses lists, and does NOT evaluate on an individual basis, be prepared to appeal their denials based on medical necessity.
2. In any case in which Medicaid suggests the use a Medicaid paid provider (instead of a device), a cost comparison should be made. The cost of the device will, almost always, be less.
3. Contact known vendors of the assistive technology device which you need, to determine whether Medicaid has ever paid for the device in your state. If Medicaid HAS paid for a device in the past, ask for documentation which proves this.

Cite: Inre: M.L.W., #944453, Connecticut Office of Administrative Hearings and Appeals Nov. 21, 1994.

To secure general information on the project, contact: Assistive Technology Funding & Systems Change Project, 1660 L Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036 Tel: (202) 776-0406 Fax: (202) 776-0414 Email: atfscp@aol.com. To secure information & individual assistance on AT funding issues, contact: 1-800-827-0093 (voice) 1-800-833-8272 (TDD), or (404) 919- 8305 (fax)

The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of the opinions expressed herein should be inferred. §

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Technology in Special Education

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Each issue is filled with valuable assistive technology information and tips, along with product information and news. Please send \$2.50 (check, PO, Visa or MasterCard) for each issue requested along with your name and address to:

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Building

by Janet Hosmer

It was a beautiful Saturday morning in downtown St. Petersburg. I waited nervously on the front steps of the Campus Activities Center at the University of South Florida since I was afraid that no one would attend our first regional training seminar. And I don't think I was the only one—all of us who had worked so hard over the past months were waiting for 8:00 AM—ready for the group of parents and teachers if they came.

Well—was I pleased when I saw scores of people starting to line up at the registration desk! All tolled we had almost 150 attendees! And of those 150, almost 45% were parents, some with their children all waiting to learn more about these wonderful technologies that may help their kids in their educational and daily lives. It was more than I could have dreamed for.

Our first presenter was Tom Nurse from the Parent Resource Organization, speaking about the Parent/Professional partnership. We all know that parents play a critical role when making Assistive Technology determinations for their child, and that relations and communications can become strained even in the best of scenarios. Tom's session explored the relationship between parents and professionals and showed how working together can make a difference. Tom is the father of a lovely young lady with Cerebral Palsy and used many of his own experiences to bring his suggestions across. He had lots of great tips!

Next, Jeff Fitterman from the FDLRS/FIMC-VI/ATEN Lab in Tampa explained how ergonomics, or the relationship between an individual and

his/her environment, must be considered when designing a learning environment for a child with a physical, visual or hearing impairment. Jeff's talk was quite informative and extensive, and gave us some very important information regarding design, space requirements, equipment placement, climate considerations, lighting, power requirements, and more. This was an extremely informative presentation, and was well received by all.

Next up was Chet Hosmer, Technical Director here at DREAMMS, talking about adapted software for kids with special needs. We learned how to determine which types of software packages are appropriate for kids with differing special needs. Software should be multi-sensory, interactive, modifiable, and flexible, and should support alternative input and output devices for kids who may need adaptive devices like Braille or special keyboards. We also got some tips on where to look for software and how to ask the right questions when buying, along with a comprehensive list of software vendors throughout the U.S. Chet is also the parent of a child with special needs, and brought many life experiences with our son Matthew into his talk. A really great presentation on adaptive special needs software.

The highlight of the day was the general session after lunch. Sandy Osborn and Susan Lait from IDEAS, Special Needs Consults gave us a two

**"Bridges"
attendees
number 150!!**

Bridges

DREAMMS Executive Director

part presentation focusing on funding personal use Assistive Technologies, and creating a collaborative model to be used once the technology has been funded. Sandy drew from her 30 year educational career of serving the needs of thousands of students with exceptional needs in Orange county and throughout the state of Florida. We learned that we need to document the need for Assistive Technology, provide justification for it, get information about it, and *then* begin to locate funding sources. We also learned how important it is to become as informed as possible about the equipment we are considering. Are there upgrades or expansions available? Can we try it out first? Can we return it if it is not what we thought? So many questions that we never think to ask.

Susan did a fabulous job in describing the collaborative model that her family uses as they interact with the team of professionals that provide services for their daughter. They discovered soon after receiving the augmentative communication devices for their daughter that advocacy just wasn't enough. They realized that funding and placement were easy compared to the actual application of devices in the educational setting. They wanted a model that would encourage the cooperation of classroom staff and the integration of the AAC devices into the total school environment! She taught us, step by step, how to set up a collaborative system and how to make it work for all involved. We all learned a great deal.



Augmentative Communication is a quickly expanding component of assistive technology. Our next presenters, Paula Walker and Pat Abjanich of the Communications Disorders Team of Pinellas County Schools provided us with a complete introduction into this topic. They told us about what to consider when choosing a device and demonstrated many low end, mid range, and high end devices that are being used today. This was an extremely informative and well done presentation.

Use of the World Wide Web has become almost necessary in today's society. Our last presenter, Chet Hosmer, Technical Director at DREAMMS and a leading researcher in the area of information security and telecommunications, provided us with a history of, and description of the World Wide Web, along with examples of destinations and pages that focus on disabilities and Assistive Technologies.

This presentation gave us a glimpse into cyberworld and a true feel of what information collection and transfer will be like in the not too distant future. It's going to be truly exciting!

While all of this was going on in the main hall, we had a number of vendor presentations that were taking place in auxiliary classrooms. Prentke Romich Company, Multimedia Designs, Inc., IntelliTools, Computer Multimedia Productions Corporation and Exceptional Computing all provided vast amounts of information along with product demonstrations throughout the day. Also, the Assistive Technology Educational Network (A TEN), the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST), the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) and FATIC, INC. all had tables or kiosks in the exhibit area where all could touch, feel and try out any of the devices that were available. There was so much interest at these

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TOOL Continued from Page 1

independently. When young children have opportunities to read on their own, they develop increased self-esteem and begin to think of themselves as successful readers.

Reading programs can help children learn letters and words, improve their spelling ability, expand their vocabulary and deepen their appreciation for literature. They invite kids to become active participants in their own learning and to develop skills through self-paced instruction.

There are many types of reading programs which reflect different goals and approaches to learning. Some reading programs offer a phonetic approach, while others emphasize a sight-word approach. Some reading

programs present a flash card, gamelike setting in which questions are very structured and reading skills are built through repetition. Other software is open-ended and exploratory, offering children more control and a broader learning experience.

Some programs offer games of strategy and adventure, in which kids build reading skills by reading directions and interpreting clues.

Each of these types of programs can have a place in your family's software library: there will never be one reading program that is best for all children! Your selections should be determined by your child's learning style and personality, the quality of the software and the program's ability to teach the

skills you want your child to learn. Below we discuss several criteria as they relate to selecting software that builds reading skills.

The software should be easy for a child to use independently. The interface should be intuitive; the primary input device should be a mouse; and a minimum number of keyboard keys should be required. For pre-readers and early readers, software should not require reading; these children will benefit from applications that use pictures to represent words and employ natural-sounding voices to speak directions. Printed letter names, words and sentences should be spoken, and children should be able to listen to them repeatedly by pointing and clicking with the mouse. (Note: a touch screen or switch device can also be used. -Ed.)

The font size of words must be large enough that pre-readers and early readers can read comfortably. A larger font size also makes it easier for young children to select the word when pointing to it with a mouse.

The software should engage the child (by offering an entertaining combination of animation or video, sound, music, speech and amusing characters) and require active interaction. The best computer learning is active learning. It should inspire kids' curiosity, interest and amusement. Kids should have control of their learning, directing the pace and path of the software by making decisions about what will happen next.

The software should be appropriately challenging. Select software that meets your goals for your child's learning experience. Programs that are extremely challenging can discourage learning and have a negative effect on self-esteem; however, they can sometimes be inspirational, allowing a child to reach

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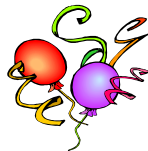
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new heights. Programs that are too easy may not offer as much learning as the more demanding programs, but your child may delight in playing “the expert”, reinforcing mastered skills and enjoying a sense of accomplishment. Challenging programs that introduce your child to new concepts and skills in a non-frustrating manner offer the greatest educational value and will encourage your child to keep learning.

Before you purchase software, try to see it “in action” at a computer store, at a friend’s house or at your child’s school. As you evaluate the software, keep the following in mind:

*Software for pre-readers and early readers should not require reading.

*Words beyond your child’s speaking or reading vocabulary should be presented in a context that will allow children to determine their meaning.

*Children should control the pace of the program; their reading should not be hurried.

Edmark Corporation is a publisher of educational software and print materials, with more than 20 years of experience applying proven educational concepts to the development of early learning products for the classroom and home. Designed to take advantage of the graphics, sound and speed of Macintosh and IBM/Compatible computers, these award-winning programs will engage your child in hours of fun-filled learning. Awards include: *Technology & Learning Award of Excellence*, *Early Childhood News Directors’ Choice Award*, *Children’s Software Revue All Star Software Award*, *MacUser Editor’s Choice Award*, *Parents’ Choice Award*, *Software Publishers Association Excellence in Software Award*. Contact them at: Edmark Corporation, P.O.Box 97021, Redmond, WA 98073-9721, 800-362- 2890. §

Assistive Technology Examples

Source: *Assistive Technology in Education A Policy Framework for Florida*
Sandra Osborn, M.S. and Bettye D. Weir, M.S.E

Disability	Area of Concern	Possible Low Tech Options	Possible High Tech Options
Learning Disability	Listening	taped assignments auditory aids (cues, tapes)	submit work on computer disc, access to computer instructional software
	Writing	extra time for written response, dictate themes & answers on tape, note taker/note taking paper	word processing software
Physical Impairment	Writing	pencil grips (in addition to above)	voice activated software, alternate keyboards, touch screen, switch activated control devices, trackballs, joy sticks
	Mobility	wheelchairs, walkers, canes, crutches	motorized scooters or wheelchairs, specialized seating systems
	Communication	manual augmentative communication (boards)	augmentative and alternative communication devices
Visual Impairment	Reading	tape recording of required reading, large print materials, Braille materials, color transparencies, enlargers glasses	closed circuit monitor (CCTV) to display print materials, text enlargement, software
	Writing		Braille keyboard and software that speaks what is printed, Braille writer and printer
Hearing	Communication	sign language interpreters, visual fire alarms, phone amplifiers, hearing aids	decoders for TV and individual and classroom amplification systems, telecommunication device for the deaf (TDD)

Children with traumatic brain injury, multiple disabilities and dual-sensory impairments may need any or all of the above.

BRIDGES continued from Page 7

hands-on tables; teachers, parents, kids what a sight! It was great!

Did I mention that throughout the day we gave away door prizes? Well, we did! ClarisWorks, Lotus 1,2,3, DateBook, and many other new software packages were awarded to lucky winners throughout the day. And, at the end of the day, we awarded grand prizes! Congratulations to the winners of the FATIC '97 registration, the *Ke:nxOn:Board* adaptive keyboard, the Prentke Romich Company *Head Mouse!* We handed out over \$10,000 worth of software and devices! That is incredible! (A heartfelt thanks to all of the wonderful

organizations and to the Apple Disabilities Solutions Group for the donations).

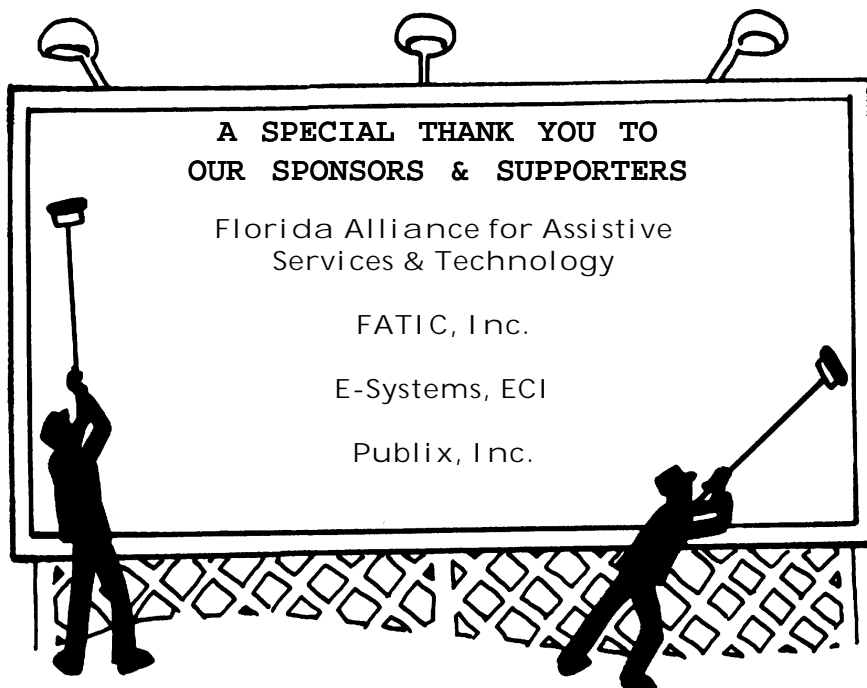
Well folks-needless to say, we were absolutely thrilled to see so many parents, teachers, and professionals being able to take advantage of the wealth of information that we brought together for them. And best of all was the sharing, talking and collaboration between everyone that attended. My fears at the

Over \$10,000 worth of software and devices are distributed at Bridges !!

beginning of the day, turned to joy as we chatted with the parents, the teachers, the vendors... It is a day that I will remember for a long time.

My thanks to all of you who played a part in BUILDING BRIDGES! I'm proud to be affiliated with all of you!

Will we do it again? You betcha! §



CONFERENCES

Date: November 17-19
Event: 5th Conference of the Int'l
 Assoc for the Study of TBI
Location: Melbourn, Australia
Information: 912-350-5940

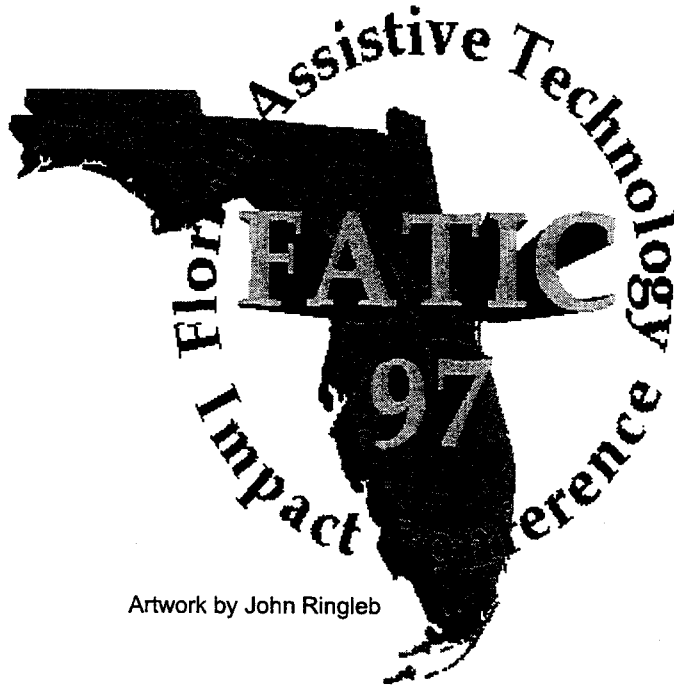
Date: November 21-25
Event: ASHA (American Speech-
 Language-Hearing
 Association) Convention
Location: Seattle, WA
Information: 301-897-5700

FATIC '97

.....

The Florida Assistive Technology Impact Conference

THE DREAM GOES ON: From Vision to Reality



Artwork by John Ringleb

Sponsored by: DREAMMS for Kids, Inc.

.....

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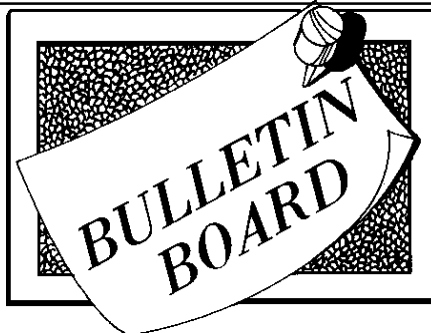
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For FATIC information contact:
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The New Katie's Farm

Galesburg, MI-Lawrence Productions announces the release of its latest software title, *The New Katie 's Farm*. An early learning exploratory program, *The New Katie 's Farm* is an enhanced version of Lawrence's popular *Katie's Farm*, which is a part of the best-selling McGee Series. Children ages four through seven will join Katie to learn about farm animals, solve puzzles and play make-believe with the animals-including dressing up a cow for a formal party and putting various hats on a goose. To learn more detailed facts about farm animals, children click on the thinking cap and learn how to care for, feed and groom their furry friends. The software even prints out paper dolls for kids to play with and color. *The New Katie's Farm* is available as a Macintosh/Windows hybrid CD-ROM and costs \$39.95 for a single version, \$139.95 for lab packs (5 CDs), and \$499 for site license (25 CDs).

Lawrence Productions
1800 S. 35th Street
Galesburg, MI 49053
800-421-4157



The Speech Enhancer

St. Louis, MO-Electronic Speech Enhancement, Inc. introduces the *Speech Enhancer*, a new battery-powered portable speech system that helps a person with an articulation or low-volume speech challenge. A patent-pending new technology, the *Speech Enhancer* is an excellent solution for many mild to moderate speech challenges, providing an aid for independence never available before. The *Speech Enhancer* does require some articulation in order to operate, although it only needs to be a very small percentage of "normal". This aid is appropriate for those with low volume and dysarthric speech.

Electronic Speech Enhancement, Inc.
1115 Ridge Road
St. Louis, MO 63021
800-600-9819

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