



# DIRECTIONS

*Technology in Special Education*

Vol. 5 , No. 9

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## AAC Frustrations

*By: Janet Hosmer  
Executive Director, DREAMMS for Kids, Inc.*

The following is a snippet from an e-mail conversation with the mother of a boy with CP whose frustrations, I'm sure, are shared by many many parents of kids with special needs.

*Dear Janet,*

*I am the mother of a 10 and 1/2 year old boy, with CP, who is non-verbal/non-ambulatory. Can you please help us? We are looking for schools who have knowledge of Augmentative Devices and education. We are currently using a Dynavox 2C. Our trouble stems from always having new team members who want things different or who see my son's disability as a huge barrier. Anything or any place you know of would really be helpful.*

*Thank you for your time and consideration.*

*Suzanne*

### My response

Hi Suzanne...

Your son needs to have an Assistive Technology evaluation done if he has not had one yet. I would suggest that you contact the Tech Act project for your state (check out our web site).... They can put you in touch with an agency in your geographic area that specializes in these evaluations for kids. The problem with AT and especially AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) is that there are SO many devices out there, it is difficult to determine which best suits the needs of the child.

But, once the evaluation is done, and a team determines which is best for him, that is the device that will be used, and the personnel at the school MUST (by law) learn the device and use it at school. (and btw, they must also PAY for the device if it is stated in his IEP that he needs it for his educational program!!)

*Please see AAC on page 8*



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# Accessible Learning

by **Lorianne Hoenninger**

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There is so much reasonably priced software for young children commercially available, it hardly seems worth the trouble to investigate shareware. But, there are always those few children whose needs are not best met in the commercial market, and that is when shareware can really help.

ToddlerMouse at <http://www.gansler.com> and My First Mouse are excellent examples of software that fills a niche for Macintosh users. Both programs introduce children to the mouse. **My First Mouse** displays a single shape on the screen. When the child moves the cursor onto and off the object, he/she is cued with visual and auditory reinforcement.

**Toddler Mouse** is the sequel to ToddlerKeys. It is designed for small children who like to move the mouse, but haven't yet quite figured out the concept of using the mouse to move the arrow on the screen. ToddlerMouse consists of one large window containing the letters A to Z, and the numbers 0 to 9. When the arrow is moved over a letter or number, that letter or number is flashed in different colors and then "spoken" using a digitized voice.

**Toddler Keys** "says" a letter or number (using my digitized voice) when that key is pressed. The letter or number is displayed in 256 point font. Letters are displayed in both upper and lower case. Each time a key

is pressed, one of seven colors is used.

Both Windows and Macintosh users should explore the Nick Jr. website. Nick Jr. has made 2 dozen **Blue's Clues** games available for free.. Go to <http://www.nickjr.com/bluegames/index.html> to download the most recent games and to [http://www.softseek.com/Education\\_and\\_Science/Childrens\\_Education/General/Review\\_22757\\_index.html](http://www.softseek.com/Education_and_Science/Childrens_Education/General/Review_22757_index.html) for links to other titles. Not to be outdone, the BBC has made available a **Teletubby** game, "Who Spilled the Tubby Custard"? also free for the downloading. Go to <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/teletubbies/activities/footprints/start.shtml>. Be aware that a web browser is necessary to run this program.

While none of these games have specific accessibility features, all use large, simple graphics and familiar characters to motivate young learners. With the addition of a utility such as **ClickIt** from Intellitools, each game can easily be modified for easy switch accessibility.

Finally, no article about technology for young children would be complete without mentioning RJ Cooper's products for babies (<http://www.rjcooper.com/babies>). The **Baby Button**, available for both the Windows and the Macintosh platforms, is a bright, colorful switch that emulates a

Please see **ACCESSIBLE** on page 9

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# International Parent to Parent Conference

**Presents: "Pioneer Spirit - Blazing New Trails"  
May 5-7, 2000, in Reno, Nevada.**

("No pessimist ever discovered the secrets of the stars or sailed to an uncharted land or opened a new heaven to the human spirit." - Helen Keller)

Nevada will host this 10th biennial "parent to parent" conference, one of the largest conferences of parents and families in the world. It has enjoyed the attendance of individuals from as far away as Russia, India, South Africa, Afghanistan, Norway, Guam, New Zealand and Japan as well as many other countries. This International Parent to Parent Conference will again bring parents/families and professionals from around the world together to share and learn from each other about how best to support families and develop best practices for people with disabilities as we transition into the 21st Century.

The theme acknowledges and celebrates parent to parent models and philosophies and embraces the growing recognition that it is important for families with children with special needs to know where we've been, why we are here, and where we are going. Pioneering traditions create a culture in which it is necessary to exert strong leadership roles. Research indicates that families connected to a peer support network are more knowledgeable about resources, have a greater sense of empowerment, are more hopeful, and generally have a more positive attitude about their lives and the future of their children's lives.

The goal of this international conference is to showcase the most innovative programs and "best practices" in the area of culturally competent, family-centered services. We hope to increase understanding, convey information, provide practical applications, and/or change attitudes. We are committed to featuring current topics and issues that embodies a pledge to work collectively, across all disciplines and email type:

*subscribe p2pinfo*

You don't need to send a message in the body of the email. As soon as your request is received, an email message will be sent back with information about how to subscribe and unsubscribe to the listserve.

### **Important Note**

If you try to reply to a listserve message, all subscribers will receive your message.

**General Area Information:** The Reno Hilton Casino and Resort is Northern Nevada's premier hotel (near the Reno airport with free shuttle) with 2001 rooms, featuring one of the world's largest casinos. Special features include 8 great restaurants, Just for Laughs Comedy Club, a 50 lane bowling center, 40 store shopping mall, two movie theaters and an outdoor aqua golf range, swimming pool, Spa and Health Club, tennis courts, virtual golf, and

a wedding chapel. The Hilton Theatre, which seats 1600, is northern Nevada's largest showroom theatre featuring award-winning shows as they showcase. There is a lounge featuring live entertainment and dancing seven nights a week. Also one of Reno's best arcades - "Fun Quest" has laser tag, more than 200 arcade games and other fun stuff for kids of all ages. The latest outdoor ride "Ultimate Rush" combines hang-gliding, bungee jumping and sky diving from 185 feet.

**Surrounding Area:** The Reno-Lake Tahoe region has often been called the ultimate playground. Rand-McNally ranks the region the "number one place for outdoor fun." It's generally sunny and dry with wide variations in temperature during a 24-hour period and averages 306 sunny days a year. The Reno area offers plenty of indoor and outdoor activities from zoos, a planetarium and the National Automobile Museum in Reno to the Nevada State Railroad Museum in Carson City. And the wonders of Lake Tahoe are just 45 minutes away from Reno. In the Winter the Lake Tahoe area has 15 downhill and 12 cross county ski centers. In the Summer you can fish, ski, kayak or cruise the crystal clear waters of this spectacular fresh water lake or hike or bike the Tahoe Rim Trail or numerous other area parks. There are more than 30 golf courses in the area. Tours are offered of historical mining town Virginia City and the Cartwright's Ponderosa Ranch of TV's Bonanza fame! §

# ATFSCP Notes

## The Assistive Technology Funding and Systems Change Project

Source: *Tech Express*, December 1998

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

**TO:** Family Center Network Members  
**FROM:** Susan Goodman, Project Director  
**RE:** Favorable ruling on transferring assistive technology devices from school to post-school settings.

On July 21, 1998, in response to a letter from Susan Goodman, Project Coordinator for the ATFSCP, Judy Heumann, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the U.S. Department of Education issued guidance to, among others, State Vocational Rehabilitation Directors, State Directors of Special Education, Protection and Advocacy Agencies, Parent Training Centers, and State Tech Act Agencies which will enable school districts to transfer assistive technology to other federal agencies, such as the state Vocational Rehabilitation agency, to transfer assistive technology when students move from secondary school to higher education, or employment services. It also facilitates transfer when a student moves from one school district to another. This guidance from the Department of Education states that federal law and regulations allow for such transfers and the Department encourages it. Analysis of this guidance is included below. If you would like to have a copy of this policy guidance, please e-mail [Pbrown@ucpa.org](mailto:Pbrown@ucpa.org) and request the "equipment transfer" letter.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TELLS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FUNDING AND SYSTEMS CHANGE PROJECT:

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PURCHASED FOR STUDENTS RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES CAN BE USED TO FACILITATE TRANSITION INTO ADULT SERVICES AND PRODUCTIVE ADULT LIFE

By Steve Mendelsohn, Esq. and Susan Goodman, Esq.

Transition from school to work or other post secondary education activities has long been a vexing problem for the disability community. Both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the federal Vocational Rehabilitation Act (VR) provide for cooperation between the education and rehabilitation systems in the planning of transition from educational to adult services, including post-secondary education. However, practical experience indicates that implementation of this intended cooperation has been limited and difficult.

One area where the transition problem has been especially apparent is that of assistive technology (AT). Students transitioning from education programs have often been faced with the need to give up vital AT devices and services and to await provision of replacement devices and services by the rehabilitation system. A long interval without technology results in loss of employment oppor-

tunities on opportunities for maximum integration in a variety of activities.

The goals of successful transition would be better achieved if students whose technology was relevant to their post school goals could retain and use devices and services without interruption during the transition period. The goals of coordination and cost effectiveness would also be better served, in many cases, if such continuity was possible.

An analysis of why transition has not worked in many cases is beyond the scope of this report. One major factor, however, has been the fear on the part of school district administrators and rehabilitation agency officials that legal constraints might limit the authority of school districts to transfer title to assistive technology devices to the rehabilitation agency and other post school service systems. Concerns have also persisted regarding the proper procedures and documentation to be used regarding any exchange of funds that would be involved.

In an important interpretation of the law issued on June 21, 1998, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) in the

U.S. Department of Education has responded to an inquiry by Assistive technology Funding and Systems Change Project (ATFSCP) Project Coordinator, Susan Goodman, with a clarifying letter on this issue. By emphasizing its commitment to effective transition services, the clarification goes a long way toward resolving some of the concerns that have inhibited coordinated and cost-effective use of publicly funded AT devices and services. In this response, Judy Heumann, Assistant Secretary of OSERS, states:

"We agree that coordination between LEA's (local education agencies) and state VR agencies to enable students with disabilities to continue using assistive technology devices as they move from one program to another is an efficient, cost-effective means of facilitating transition from school to work related services and fully support the type of cooperation between the agencies to which you refer. We believe the EDGAR1 requirements outlined above support this type of cooperation." Letter dated June 21, 1998 to Susan Goodman, from Judith Heumann, at p. 3-4 (quoting 34 C.F.R. '80.32(c)(1)).

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Education Department General Administrative Regulations, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Contracts to State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments. According to the Department, the regulations allow the continued use of equipment by students after leaving school and/or the transfer of its ownership to the rehabilitation system or other entities in all cases where the school district does not have a continuing need for the device. This decision rests within the authority of each school district but, as stated in the clarification letter:

"We presume that assistive technology devices purchased by LEA's are often customized or otherwise modified to suit the individual needs of a particular child with a disability, making it unlikely that the LEA would need the device once the child leaves school. In instances in which that is the case, the LEA is permitted to transfer the device to the state VR agency that is serving the former student for whom the device was originally purchased." Letter dated June 21, 1998 to Susan Goodman, from Judith Heumann, at p. 3 (quoting 34 C.F.R. '80.32(c)(1)).

Ordinarily, federal regulations will only apply to equipment with a fair market value of \$5000 or more at the time of transfer. The Department does not indicate how fair market value will be determined but there are a number of simple and satisfactory ways of doing this including contacting the manufacturer, consulting Internal Revenue Service depreciation tables, asking local vendors for help, and so forth. In these cases it will be important to maintain documentation of how the value was reached, and what basis of depreciation was used.

Generally, the rehabilitation agency will have an obligation to transfer funds in payment for the technology only in those instances where State Education Agency (SEA) contributed funds to the original purchase of the technology. In those cases where the fair market value (at the time of transfer) is \$5000 or above, the SEA has a right to receive its pro rated share of this

value. Thus, if the fair market value of a transferred device is \$6000 and the SEA has contributed 10% to its original purchase, the SEA would, in theory, be entitled to \$600 reimbursement. Of course, the SEA is free to waive this reimbursement in any and all cases.

Another point made by the letter is that schools' authority to transfer ownership is not limited to state VR programs. While VR programs are specifically addressed by the letter (because of its focus on transition), ownership transfer can be made to any "activities currently or previously supported by a federal agency." Letter dated June 21, 1998 to Susan Goodman, from Judith Heumann, at p. 2 (quoting 34 C.F.R. '80.32(c)(1)). This means that inter-district transfer of equipment can occur for students who move from community to community, or when equipment currently being stored by one district is identified as being needed by another. Both of these inter-district transfers can occur as freely as transition-transfer to VR program.

The clarification letter recognizes that state law also plays a role. It is possible that, aside from the federal regulations involved, your state may have laws or regulations bearing upon such transfers. Typically, this will not be a law barring the transfer but one that establishes procedural or documentation requirements regarding how it is to be done.

Many states are also likely to have provisions allowing education and rehabilitation agencies to enter into

## Family Center on Technology and Disability

## PACER Center, Inc.

The United Cerebral Palsy Associations and their project partners, Alliance for Technology Access (ATA), the Parent Advocacy Center on Education (PACER), Academy for Educational Development (AED) and InfoUse have been awarded a contract from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education to form the Family Center on Technology and Disability (Family Center). The purpose of the Family Center is to assist other organizations and programs serving families of children with disabilities by providing information and support on accessing and using technology.

In this context, technology is defined as a broad range of high-tech and low-tech products, including assistive technology devices (as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), adaptive devices, telecommunications, multimedia, computer hardware and software, audiotapes and videotapes. Specific categories of assistive technology devices considered by the Center include cognitive and learning aids, communication alternatives, mobility and movement aids, environmental controls, self-help skill devices, seating and positioning supports, work environment modifications, and leisure time adaptations. Some of the activities of the Family Center include:

1. Establishing a broad-based network of organizations interested in receiving and disseminating information about technology.

2. Conducting a needs assessment and resource analysis to ensure that the Center addresses documented needs of organizations for information and draws upon information resources about technology that are currently available.

3. Collecting and evaluating technology and disseminating information to organizations.

4. Developing a catalog of technology resources for organizations to use as a resource and disseminate to their membership.

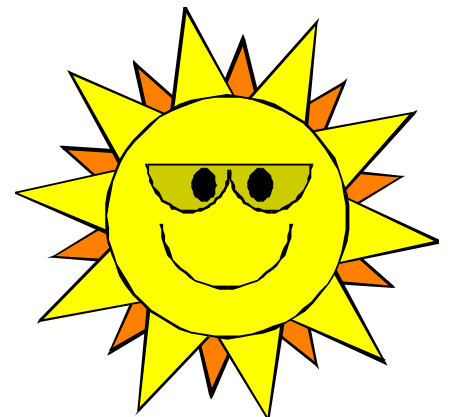
5. Developing a Family Center web site which contains navigational links to a bibliographic database of materials, informational resources, model programs providing technology information and other network organizations.

The Family Center on Technology and Disability has been funded for five years. For more information or if you are interested in being part of this network, please contact Susan Goodman, Project Director, at these contact points.

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PACER Center, Inc. is a parent center and the coordinating office for two nationwide efforts focusing on special education issues: the Technical Assistance Alliance for Parents program, which works with parent centers on key issues related to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), and the Families and Advocates Partnership for Education (FAPE) program, which works with agencies, organizations, self-advocates, and families to promote the best ways to help children with disabilities learn. FAPE also conducts outreach activities to ensure broad-based understanding of IDEA legislation.

For more information or to request a free copy of the newsletter, **PACSETER**, write to PACER Center, Inc. at 4826 Chicago Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55417, call toll-free 1-888-248-0822, or e-mail [pacer@pacer.org](mailto:pacer@pacer.org).



Yeah

Summer!

# Technology Plays Vital Role in Special Education and Literacy Development

Source: CEC Today, Vol. 5 No 5 December/January 1999

Once literacy was defined as the ability to read and write. No more. Today, most individuals agree that literacy entails much more than these basic skills. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs defines literacy as reading, communicating, computing, making judgements, and taking appropriate action.

Technology is one tool that helps students with disabilities develop literacy skills. Macro International and CEC conducted a project that explored which technologies students with disabilities use to promote literacy, how technology benefits students with disabilities, and the factors that encourage and discourage technology use. Specifically, the following questions were addressed:

- What is the state of practice of using technology for special education students' literacy skill development?
- What are effective and innovative strategies for using technology to promote literacy?

## How Technology Promotes Literacy

Nearly all special educators believe that technology helps students with disabilities develop literacy skills, as well as enables them to meet IEP objectives, improve course grades, and increase standardized test scores.

A primary reason is that technology often allows students to accomplish things they otherwise would not be able to do or would have a very difficult time doing.

"For some students, technology makes a difference in whether or not they learn," said one survey respondent.

Following is a breakdown of the numerous ways in which technology helps students with disabilities become literate, in every sense of the word, and achieve academic success.

### Increases Access to Information

Technology allows students with disabilities to access information that otherwise would not be available to them. Many educators say - "technology accommodates for the disability," because **it** gives students the same access and advantages that general education students have when they use the computer.

### Reinforces Information

Technology gives students additional practice and augments their lessons by giving students the opportunity to repeat a lesson as many times as desired. "The computer will repeat things many more times than a human. It is always patient. The more practice students get, the more ingrained the material becomes," said a participant.

Additionally, the computer allows students to enhance their learning. For instance, students can use the Internet to find further information on a topic.

### Allows Students to Work More Rapidly and Produce a Finished or More-finished Product

Since technology can make it easier to perform certain tasks, it enables some students with disabilities to produce a finished or more-finished product.

Not only do these factors contribute to a student's success, it also allows teachers to more accurately assess student performance and knowledge. Papers are completed and can be accepted by teachers, for "teachers are more receptive to products that appear finished and polished." Another teacher said that with a computer and an audio tape recorder, one of her students is able to create products that can be used for grades.

### Offers Independence

Some students with disabilities gain independence through technology. For instance, pushing a head switch can allow individuals with a severe physical disability to control when software advances to the next screen.

*Please see VITAL on page 10*

*AAC continued from page 1*

If you send me your postal address, I'll forward some information on what DREAMMS has available, and a few catalogs of various AAC devices and manufacturers.... Good luck and God bless.

Janet :)

*Dear Janet*

*I appreciate your time and thoughtfulness. I should probably clear up a few facts for you....We have had more than our share of Aug. Com. Eval's...actually...five. We have gone through several devices and actually we are inline for yet another Tech Eval. from another location. My son has been evaluated and received equipment from school and we have also paid for equipment on some occasions. I am also an advocate in my state and have access to top leaders throughout the world, actually, in the field of inclusive supports for individuals with disabilities. Oh, I forgot to mention that every eval. was paid through the district and, as part of the IEP, an accommodation is six hours--per week--of programming, by a highly paid private speech path.*

*You can see we've worked really hard to get the appropriate supports, the appropriate evals., and on and on. IT TRULY DOESN'T MATTER --sorry for yelling. When educators and professionals don't give up on territorial issues, when "experts" (I use this term loosely) won't respond to need, and when Administrators allow for staff to run against IEP documentations and individuals need.... NONE OF THIS*

*MATTERS. Kids are successful when someone takes an interest and believes in a child. When they step outside and combine as a team to not tell someone else to program but learn to accomplish this task and USE THE DEVICE to give appropriate feedback. When a team is more directed to copy and I mean copy every piece of everything that has been sent home and completed in school to "document" no education can occur. Teams are just covering butts not curriculum. It is no wonder that five paraprofessional have left this years team.*

*Wow! This is not directed at you....it's just that we choose to "STOP THE INSANITY" and just find a place that doesn't have to learn to finally partially "GET IT" THEN MOVE ON TO THE NEXT BRAND NEW TEAM..and..RIDE THE ROLLER COASTER AGAIN.*

*We want somewhere who knows how to use and implement AAC. Maybe that place, as in the words of Dorothy, "in my own backyard..". I hope not because my son also needs to continue the battered friendships with kids who are so great that even when my son is isolated in the class, lead out for pull out, and his device isn't accessible, except for when "they" think it appropriate...they still call and invite him to join them.*

*Well that's actually to tip of our story. Thanks for reading...if you made it this far down.*

*Suzanne*

## **My response**

Hi again Suzanne,

Would it be ok if I included this in the next issue of our newsletter, DIRECTIONS: Technology in Special Education?? (Without your name of course :)

Your frustrations and concerns are shared by thousands of parents throughout the country, but your eloquence (and yelling :) make a strong impact!! I can't truly relate since our son (14 with Down syndrome and the love of my life!!) has no interest in the computer and most forms of AT will not help him. But I can somewhat relate since I fought for 2 years in New York state to get him into a 12 month program.... The Committee on Special Education chair hates to see me coming.... <LOL>

Anyhow, seems I can't offer you any assistance other than a voice..... and a regular one at that if you'd like...

Janet :)

*Hello again to you too, Janet:*

*I would like to give you come idea of the impact your, most recent, response has made. I thought for sure if I heard back from you, it would be a cryptic quote with an angry message or something in all caps -- you know the electronic yelling thing. Instead you welcomed me and actually heard my words and thoughts. I am so appreciative of your offer and your thoughtful understanding. I guess that's it --- you really understand --- even though*

*Continued on the following page...*

*you do not have the same impact with your son. What a wonderful surprise and gift you have given me. I am so used to defensive responses -- I was bracing myself as I opened your mail. And, felt guilty for imparting such strong words and feelings on someone I don't even know.*

*I can simply say thank you. You may print my words, and if I am able, I would take up the offer to write...the problem will be my overwhelming task of finding a school or starting to home school. We can attempt to work out the details you require. In any case...the sun is shining in my home, on a very rainy day, because through the power of technology...you reached out in a graceful way that was totally unexpected.*

*Thank you again,*

*Suzanne*

And, there it is - Suzanne's voice. Sometimes we all just need someone to listen. Your story may be a bit different, possibly your frustration is over a wheel-chair issue or an inclusion thing with an adaptive device. Whatever - it always helps to know that we're not alone - and that other parents out there are fighting the same fight, some winning and some losing - but always being strong - and hangin' in there for their kid.

By-the-way, if any of you know of a school that specializes in the use of AAC, please pop me an e-mail at [janet@dreamms.org](mailto:janet@dreamms.org) and I'll be sure to pass the information along to Suzanne. Thanks :) §

*ACCESSIBLE continued from page 2*

mouse click. All computer programs that are activated by a mouse click work with the Baby Button.

RJ's **BabyBam** Games are designed for children functioning from the 4 month level of development to 24 months. Built around music, **BabyBAM I** is customizable, allowing the insertion of any music file (or use one of the 4 packaged songs), to use as a soundtrack to accompany the simple animations. Users can record the child's name and set the length of reinforcement.

**BabyBam II** contains full-screen simple animations to accompany the music. In between each animation, users can have their own pictures displayed.

**BabyBamIII** offers a wide variety of simple cause and effect activities.

Next month, we will explore the availability of books on tape and Internet accessible e-text. If you have a specific question in the meanwhile, do not hesitate to e-mail me at [lorianne@erols.com](mailto:lorianne@erols.com), visit our web site at <http://www.members.xoom.com/ALTA> or write c/o: Accessible Learning Technology Alternatives, P.O. Box 597, Shirley NY, 11967. See you on the Internet! §

*ATFSCP continued from page 5*

reciprocal agreements to facilitate such transfers. The federal law, likewise, encourages such agreements.

#### ACTION STEPS

1. Set up a meeting with school district officials to inform them of this new interpretation of the law and to offer your support in assisting them in efforts to establish procedures to implement this guidance.
2. If you know of a student who might be affected by this clarification, work to document the benefits to the individual and cost savings to the public that would result in the transfer of technology.
3. Set a meeting with a representative of your SEA to inform them of this letter and request that they issue an advisory to all school districts informing them about this important clarification and to issue guidance on its implementation in the LEA's.
4. Encourage your SEA take "positive practices" in transition services into account in the award of discretionary funds to school districts.
5. Set up a meeting with your state VR director or designated representative to inform the agency of their obligation to accept these transfers in appropriate cases. §

#### **OOPS!**

**WE HAD A TYPO IN OUR LAST ISSUE!  
THE ADDRESS FOR THE QIAT WEB SITE IS:**

**[HTTP://SAC.UKY.EDU/~JSZABAO/QIAT.HTML](http://SAC.UKY.EDU/~JSZABAO/QIAT.HTML)  
(HOPE YOU WEREN'T WANDERING AROUND LOST :)**

*VITAL continued from page 7*

Many students with disabilities do not have the fine motor control to use a standard keyboard. Using an alternative keyboard with large buttons allows these individuals to operate a computer independently. Previously they dictated their work, but students with physical and learning disabilities can write independently using speech recognition software.

### **Makes Learning More Interesting**

Many students with disabilities enjoy using technology and find learning more interesting if technology is involved. Several educators say that technology is appealing because students are more actively involved than when reading a textbook. For many students with exceptionalities, using a computer and other technologies adds fun to learning. Some students feel "they are playing a fun game, rather than learning" when they use CDs, structured writing programs, and other technologies, according to one survey respondent. Numerous educators said their students try harder, and consequently learn more, because they enjoy using technology.

Because they are more motivated and interested in what they are doing, students stay on task more and work at a lesson for longer periods of time. Several educators said that students write longer products, read for longer periods, and pursue further informa-

tion on their own when they use technology.

### **Serves as a Motivator**

Experiencing success motivates many students to try to learn new things. Numerous educators share this administrator's opinion that "kids try harder because they feel better about themselves. They are more active learners." A teacher said, "They become more focused (when using technology), and they explore more on their own."

Knowing that they can accomplish more by using technology, some students with disabilities will attempt to tackle new lessons. Also, by making the task easier, technology decreases students' frustration, and they are more willing to continue trying. For others, being able to do something independently encourages them. In addition, some students are motivated by being equal or more equal with their peers, which results from the advantages technology gives them. Finally, many educators have found that students' improved attitudes toward schoolwork often lead to better grades.

This article was adapted from the *CEC Today*. *CEC Today* is an official publication of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). You can reach them at 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191. Phone: 703-620-3660; Fax: 703-264-9446; Web: [www.cec.org](http://www.cec.org). They offer many types of memberships for parents and professionals alike. §

## **Conferences & Events**

**Date: June 24 - 27, 1999**

MOVE International Training  
Bakersfield, CA

Contact: 800-397-MOVE

**Date: June 25 - 29, 1999**

RESNA '99  
Long Beach, CA

Contact: 703-524-6686

**Date: Sep 30 - Oct 2, 1999**

Southeast Augmentative Communication  
Birmingham, AL

Contact: 205-251-0165

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

Assistive Technology Industry Association  
Orlando, FL

Contact: [www.atia.org](http://www.atia.org)  
[atia@northshore.net](mailto:atia@northshore.net)

Date: October 19 - 20, 1999  
17th Annual Closing the Gap Conference  
Minneapolis, MN

Contact:  
[www.closingthegap.com](http://www.closingthegap.com)  
[info@closingthegap.com](mailto:info@closingthegap.com)  
507-248-3294

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# Prentke Romich News

PRC announces the **Axs 1600**, a fully functional Windows® 98, pen based portable computer with your choice of two communication packages. The WiVik®2 Scan with WiVox® software is a text based communication package featuring Word Prediction, Abbreviation Expansion, and Voice Output. The Vanguard™ for Windows software is a highly customizable symbol-based communication package containing hundreds of pre-stored words and phrases.

A variety of access solutions are available for the Axs 1600. Selections can be made through the built-in touch screen or a mouse or trackball. The Headmaster™ 2000 can be used for headpointing. A switch cable enables you to connect two single or dual switches for scanning. Mouse Tools is a dwell program that has been added for those who have difficulty clicking the mouse buttons. Lightweight and portable, the Axs 1600 is easy to carry or mount on a wheelchair. It weighs in at 5.5 pounds. A mounting plate has been added for use with the PRC or Daessy™ wheelchair or desk mounts.

The Axs 1600 is pre-loaded with Windows® 98, Microsoft Word® Viewer, Internet Explorer and other standard Windows applications. A 56K modem is

included for faxing and Internet access. Optional peripherals and accessories include keyboard, 3.5' 1.44MB floppy disk, port expander, carrying case and extra battery pack.

Prentke Romich Company also introduces New Vanguard Features. Now the world's most powerful dynamic screen communication device has just become better! PRC has upgraded the Vanguard to include free **Infrared software**. This allows for total wireless computer access, as well as environmental control capabilities. (Requires infrared receiver and emulator.)

The Vanguard also acts as a remote control for anything in your environment that uses infrared remote controls (such as the TV, VCR etc.) Remote control pages and commands are set up and ready to use. And with the help of the Command Center (sold separately) the Vanguard can operate up to 16 appliances or lamps within your environment.

**Icon Importing** is another exciting new Vanguard feature. Although there are more than 1,600 icons pro-

vided with Vanguard, we know there will be times when you want to personalize your system with your own photos or graphics. The icon importing feature allows you to import pictures from your computer into the Vanguard and use them as icons.

**Word Prediction** supplements the language symbol system by predicting words you wish to spell.

**Icon highlighting** allows icons (individual or grouped) to be color-coded. In addition to the 4,8 and 45 location pages, we've added a 15 location page. Vanguard now has six user areas! Like having six Vanguards in one, each user area operates independently, making it possible to set up a variety of access options and vocabularies.

Current Vanguard owners can obtain the software upgrade for a small charge by contacting our Sales Department at 800-262-1933.

*Prentke Romich Company*  
1022 Heyl Road, Wooster, OH 44691  
800-262-1984, (330) 262-1984,  
Fax (330) 263-4829  
e-mail: [info@prentrom.com](mailto:info@prentrom.com)

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