



DIRECTIONS

Technology in Special Education

Vol. 6 , No. 4

December 1999

Family Center on Technology and Disability Offers New Funding Publication

A new publication entitled "Using Creative Alimony, Child Support and Property Settlements to Maximize SSI, Medicaid and Create Funding for Assistive Technology" is now available on line at www.nls.org/ssifmaty.htm. This document, published by Neighborhood Legal Services of Buffalo, New York and United Cerebral Palsy, Washington, D.C., will be available in hard copy in early November. You may receive a copy by contacting the project at Sgoodman@ucpa.org.

The Family Center website now lists 548 network organizations by state to facilitate communication and collaboration between statewide organizations that serve children and/or families of children with disabilities www.ucpa.org/fctd/netorgst.htm. A link to websites of 248 of the network organizations can be found at this site. If your organization would like to be included in this section, please contact Susan Goodman at the e-mail address listed above.

The Family Center on Technology and Disability Exemplary Model Programs have been selected by the Model Programs Subcommittee of the Family Center Advisory Committee. These programs are:

Site 1

Assistive Technology Library of Alaska (ATLA)
<http://www.ucpa.org/fctd/site1.htm>

Site 2

United Cerebral Palsy of Kansas (UCP-K)
Purchase of Assistive Technology Project
<http://www.ucpa.org/fctd/site2.htm>

Site 3

Parents Helping Parents iTECH Center
<http://www.ucpa.org/fctd/site3.htm>



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Accessible Learning

by **Lorianne Hoenninger**
lorianne@erols.com

Was I optimistic when I wrote last month that we would explore products and resources for students with hearing and visual impairments in one column! There is a plethora of resources, that I can only begin to touch upon. That being said, let's go!

For those of my readers just learning sign language, the online sign language dictionary at <http://www.masterstech-home.com/ASLDict.html> is the resource for you. This Dictionary has both animated and text definitions, seen from the prospective from the perspective of the viewer.

Can't stay on line all day. Then download SLaNT- Sign Language Teacher, for Windows from ZDNet. This program helps the user learn finger spelling. Type in the word you want to spell and the finger positions are displayed. Testing and game options make this a fun way for families and professionals to practice reading finger spelling.

Want to send a greeting card in sign language? Go to http://greetings.xoom.com/xigo/cat/sign_language to send animated sign language cards.

Road Runner is a new product from Ostrich Software at <http://www.ostrichsoftware.com>. I have not previewed it, so I cannot offer an

opinion, but it sounds interesting for blind and visually impaired users. The Road Runner is a hand held text to speech reader, that can read aloud any text based file, such as e-mail, internet on-line newsletters, web pages and e-text. Designed to run on AA batteries and reasonably priced, the Road Runner is compatible with Windows 95.

Another new product that sounds exciting that I have not yet previewed is ReadPlease2000 at <http://www.readplease.com>. This freeware product for Windows computers is a text to speech reader. Featuring 4 voices, with customizable pitch and speed, it speaks any text copied to the Windows Clipboard from any Windows application or any of the selected text in the ReadPlease window.

Oops! It is time for me to finish this column as I have to catch my plane to the Closing the Gap computer conference in Minnesota. Next month, look for a grab bag of ideas and inspirations fresh from the conference!

As always, if you have questions, do not hesitate to e-mail me at lorianne@erols.com, visit my website at <http://members.xoom.com/ALTA> or write c/o: Accessible Learning Technology Alternatives, P.O. Box 597, Shirley NY, 11967. §

DIRECTIONS

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

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The Journey: Homeschooling Our Special Needs Child Using Assistive Technology - Part 3

By: Susan Lait <aslnc@CITCOM.NET>

This article is a follow-up to two previous articles that appeared in Vol. 6 #1 & #2 of **DIRECTIONS**, “**The Journey: Homeschooling Our Assistive Technology Special Needs Child**”. If you read my first two articles, you are well underway with your research. You are familiar with the home school statutes in your state. You have found local & state home school support groups. You have located basic resources. Through your research, you are answering questions as to the legalities of homeschooling, funding and curriculum. In this article, I am pleased to share with you the individual focus of our home education program. Our primary target areas are putting the magic into learning; creating a user friendly educational & communication environment; expanding educational opportunities into natural contexts; an integrated education & therapy program; socialization.

The night before we began homeschooling our daughter, we explained to her that she would not be going back to school. We told our daughter that we were starting a home school. Our daughter was very excited. The next morning, we awoke at 5:00 a.m. to the sound of our daughter’s communication device saying, “**It’s time for school**”. I opened my eyes to see our daughter standing beside our bed with a book and pencil box. She was ready to get started. Now, rain or shine, sick or well, weekday or weekend, I am greeted each day with her enthusiasm. Learn-

ing occurs in our downstairs school-room (a converted spare room), all over the house, in the community and in enrichment locations. We find natural context opportunities everywhere. It is the natural environments that enhance learning. After our morning core work, we may experience math at the mall, language in the community or science in the great outdoors. Our daughter has developed a real love of learning. Veteran home school educators refer to it as “**putting the magic into learning**”.

Home school educators feel that putting the magic into learning is the first child centered goal for a home school program. We have found that the best way to achieve this goal is by taking education into areas of natural context and placing a focus on our daughter’s special areas of interest. For example, our morning core work may include practicing the sequencing of making a purchase in a store, the social demands of interacting with store staff, the math & language related to making a purchase, etc. We create the appropriate communication overlays or pages. During the afternoon, we go to the local WalMart. The goal is to purchase a favorite Barbie Doll using Augmentative Communication & Assistive Technology. At WalMart, our daughter practices sequencing skills, math skills, social skills and problem solving skills. In addition to achieving education and communication goals, our daughter feels very independent and proud of herself.

With the help of Assistive Technology, she has used birthday money that she received from her grandfather to purchase a favorite toy. By focusing on our daughter’s special interest, I have been able to put magic into learning. The look on my daughter’s face as we drive home gives me a feeling of pride. I am not only proud of my daughter, I am proud of myself too. It is one of those golden parent moments. The reality is that we are not only putting the magic into learning for our daughter, we are putting magic into parenting. If your child is an Augmentative Communication User, I recommend the resource “Augmenting Basic Communication in Natural Contexts”, written by Jeanne M. Johnson, Diane Baumgart, Edwin Helmstetter and Chris A. Curry, published by Paul H. Brooks Publishing, P.O. Box 10624, Baltimore, Maryland 21285-0624. Your local Assistive Technology Center may have this selection as part of their lending library.

While we are putting the magic into learning and taking advantage of natural context opportunities, we work on creating a user friendly environment for our child, her technology and her mode of communication. Our goal is to achieve home & community environments where there is access to a wide variety of Augmentative Communication ranging from Sign Language, Assistive Technology and Picture Symbol Communication. Access includes her personal communication device, the

Please see JOURNEY on page 6

America's Telability Media

Fifth Edition 1999 - 2000

More than 1,350 mass media resources serving people with disabilities are contained in the 1999/2000 edition of *America's Telability Media*, the nation's first disability media directory, published by the National Telability Media Center.

Charlie Winston, editor and NTMC Director, has added more than 150 new entries to the fifth edition, which provides current information resources that benefit the disability community and the rehabilitation industry.

The 320-page book is based on an annual nation-wide survey which collects data on the growth and development of telability media and offers the only national view of America's newest field of journalism.

Again, this year, the directory will be available free of charge to anyone on the Internet at www.freedomforum.org. The website is provided in partnership with NTMC by the First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University, a fully funded program of the Freedom Forum, one of the nation's leading foundations concerned with media and press freedom.

Each directory entry contains a full description of the resource, along with complete contact information, including websites and e-mail addresses. Included are more than 1,150 magazines, newspapers and newsletters; more than 90 broadcast producers; 23 newspaper columnists; nearly 70 dial-in newspapers for the blind; and 20 professional organizations.

"Our book," Winston added, "is a marketing tool for corporations and a thorough reference guide for libraries and service organizations."

Winston, who is blind, founded the NTMC in 1992 as a non-profit organization to support the growth and development of mass media for persons with disabilities. He holds B.J. and M.A. degrees from the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Journalism.

America's Telability Media is available in print or on disk in Word format. The price is \$35 per copy. Mailing labels can be purchased on disk or through e-mail, with unlimited use for \$135. §

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America's Telability Media

No. of directory copies: Print Diskette Directory Labels

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Total Amount
Enclosed

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FUNDING continued from page 1

Site 4

United Cerebral Palsy Associations of
New Jersey (UCPA-NJ)

<http://www.ucpa.org/fctd/site4.htm>

Site 5

Hawaii Assistive Technology Training
and Services (HATTS)

<http://www.ucpa.org/fctd/site5.htm>

Site 6

United Cerebral Palsy of Greater
Suffolk

Mobility Opportunities Via Education
(MOVE)

<http://www.ucpa.org/fctd/site6.htm>

Please visit these sites to find out
about the great opportunities being offered
to individuals with disabilities
through these programs.

The purpose of the Family Center on
Technology and Disability is to assist

organizations serving families of
children with disabilities by providing
information and support on accessing
and using technology. We are engaging
in ongoing efforts to collect
information about technology for our
database. Technology is defined as:

High-tech devices, low-tech products,
assistive technology devices, adaptive
devices telecommunications, multi-
media computer hardware and
software, audiotapes and videotapes

Some of the categories considered
assistive technology devices include:

Cognitive and learning aids, communi-
cation alternatives, mobility and
movement aids, environmental
controls self-help skill devices, seat-
ing and positioning supports, work
environment modifications

The materials collected will be evalu-

ated by teams of experts in the
technology field. Some of the evalua-
tion criteria include:

Format, Clarity, Accuracy of informa-
tion, Timeliness, Cost, Extent of need
addressed, How well does it accom-
plish its goal Usefulness by a broad
audience, Extent to which it addresses
the needs of underserved communi-
ties, Effectiveness, Usability, Flexibil-
ity, Accessibility,

Please send your materials to:

Tom Morales

Alliance for Technology Access
2175 East Francisco Blvd., Suite L
San Rafael, CA. 94901

Phone: 415-455-4575

Fax: 415-455-0654

For more information about the
Family Center, please contact
Sgoodman@ucpa.org. §

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computer and communication books, boards & posters. In a user friendly environment, our daughter's efforts are measured by her individual success as in the above example of purchasing the Barbie Doll. Our daughter is not compared to other children or a testing norm. Success is measured by doing her best effort and the pride that comes from doing your best effort. We reserve standardized testing for a yearly evaluation tool.

Since our daughter's mode of communication involves AAC and AT, most standard educational curriculums must be adapted to her mode of communication. Therefore, we did not select a prepackaged curriculum that came with prepackaged workbooks. We selected a curriculum that uses resources from the library. With the assistance of our independent professionals, we create custom educational tools. The custom tools are based on our daughter's mode of communication. The user friendly environment that we have created based on our daughter's mode of communication has reduced the stress our daughter previously associated with an educational environment. As a result of reduced stress, our daughter has been better able to monitor her own sensory system, her motor planning has improved and her attention span has increased. I can only imagine the stress that our daughter must have felt when she entered a public school classroom where a user friendly environment did not exist for her.

An additional goal has been to develop a Home School Individual Education Plan (IEP) Team with indepen-

dent professionals. We selected professionals that had worked with our daughter for years.... professionals who were familiar with and focused on our daughters needs. We also selected professionals to meet general education needs that had previously been met through the Local School System with a regular education teacher. Our independent team consists of therapists, a regular educational consultant, a special educational consultant, and an Assistive Technology Educational Consultant. It is a dream come true for us as parents. Although, the Individual With Disabilities Act (IDEA) provides that the focus of an IEP Meeting is the individual child and the child's individual education needs, as parents, if you have attended IEP Meetings, you can be very aware of a school system based agenda. Therefore, it is a wonderful experience to enjoy a truly collaborative environment with our independent professionals. Our daughter is the focus and we enjoy an environment where parents & professionals facilitate for each other.

A very important part of our Home School Program is to achieve an "**integrated education & therapy environment**". When our daughter received services from the Local School District, contacts between parents & therapists were rare and contacts between therapists & classroom professionals were infrequent. When as a parent, I offered to create custom communication aides for Physical and Occupational Therapy, the therapists were often not receptive. I was asking OT and PT to become involved in communication. It was explained to me that communication is the domain

of the speech language pathologist. An open exchange of information did not exist between parents & school professionals. Our daughter based on her expressive language disability could not tell us what she did in therapy or what communication she needed in the pull-out sessions. In our Home School Program, we implemented an "Integrated Therapy Model" developed by Sandy Osborn, "**IDEAS, Special Needs Consults, Inc.**", P.O. Box 180605, Casselberry, FL 32718-0605, (407) 332-7770. In an integrated program, the professionals increase one on one contacts and training with the educators & parents. In the case of our home school, contacts are increased with us as parent educators. We as parent educators then take goals into natural context environments. The result is that our daughter is provided the opportunity to practice skills throughout the day in all types of environments. Our daughter is learning basic skills and to generalize skills from environment to environment rather than practice a skill primarily in a pull-out session. Our daughter and most children, have difficulty implementing skills that are learned in isolated pullout sessions into natural environments. Prior to beginning our integrated program, individual sessions were a struggle. Our daughter often resisted pull-out therapy sessions. I wonder what she must have thought when she was taken to a session with a therapist to practice a skill that had no meaning for her other than she was expected do it in the pull-out session. I also imagine that it must have been frustrating to have been unable to communicate with the therapist. As an alternative, an integrated therapy & education program has served her well and resulted

in improved function. Integrated Therapy gives our daughter purpose, meaning and practice in natural environments. Through Integrated Therapy and a user friendly environment, our daughter is also provided access to her mode of communication.

Socialization was a major concern for us. When we began homeschooling, we were nervous about what homeschoolers call the "Big S Word". We were very serious in our commitment to address socialization as a curriculum issue. We addressed specific goals in reference to socialization with typical kids; kids with disabilities; same aged peers; younger kids; older kids; children who also used AAC & AT as their mode of communication; home school kids; school system kids; one on one opportunities; interactions with older adults. When I explained our socialization plan to my home school friends at a Mother's Night Out Meeting, they were very entertained to say the least. What I did not know was that we would achieve all of the above social goals without much effort or even much thought. Through routine activities with our home school support group and in the community, socialization became very natural. There are field trips, enrichment classes, sports activities, and one on one play dates with home school and public school friends. Through natural context opportunities, we watched our daughter's social skills blossom. Some months later, at a social gathering, I was asked if I was finding socialization for our daughter difficult. I laughed and said, "No.... it's really quite natural". The lessons that I learned from veteran home school

parents are that socialization means learning how to interact with all ages of people not just same aged peers. It also means learning how to interact with people in different kinds of environments not just school. Socialization remains a curriculum issue but we easily achieve our goals and it is no longer a major concern.

I hope that I have presented my articles in such a way as to encourage you to research and make your own decisions as to homeschooling. Should you decide to home school your Special Needs Assistive Technology Child, the decisions that you make in reference to curriculum, supports & services will be individual to your child. I recommend that you trust your instincts when it comes to your child. Your home school research may convince you to begin a new direction, or it may simply provide you with a safety net. Your networking may assist you in building resources to be used with a Local School System IEP Team, your Home School IEP Team or it may result in you sharing knowledge with other parents. The purpose of my articles has been to assist you in your independent research. I recommend that you make choices based on your own research, your child's needs and your family needs. There is no one right choice only the personal choice that you as parents make based on what you feel will best serve your child.

My best wishes to you as you enjoy your family and your Special Needs Assistive Technology Child. If you have questions, comments or concerns, you can e-mail me at aslnc@citcom.net. §

TAM 2000

Technology Access Conference

The Technology and Media (TAM) Division for the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is a professional organization dedicated to the effective use of technology to improve educational opportunities and increase the independent living of individuals with disabilities and for those who are gifted. Penny Reed, Program Chairperson, and the members of the Program Advisory Committee are pleased to invite you to the TAM 2000 Conference on Special Education and Technology. It will be held January 20-22, 2000, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin at the Four Points Sheraton.

Special events this year will include preconference workshops, an exciting vendor area that includes a variety of vendors showcasing technology application, and receptions. The conference will "kickoff" with a Thursday evening reception and opening keynote session in the exhibit hall. Throughout the conference, there will be a "meet the vendors" activity that offers several chances to win prizes! The conference fee includes continental breakfasts each morning.

For more information about the TAM 2000 Technology Access Conference, please visit our website at <http://www.tamcec.org>. If you have further questions regarding the conference, please contact Penny Reed at preed@wi-net.com, or call 715/824-6415. §



15th Annual Conference
"Technology and Persons with Disabilities"
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- Held at the Hilton Los Angeles Airport and the Los Angeles Airport Marriott Hotels
Keynote Speaker: Tom Whittaker, the first person with a disability to climb Mt. Everest
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Center on Disabilities

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Email: ltm@csun.edu
http://www.csun.edu/cod/

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Conferences

Date: January 27 - 29, 2000
18th Annual International Technology, Reading & Learning Difficulties Conference
San Francisco, CA
Contact: 888-594-1249, info@trld.com, www.trld.com

Date: March 20 - 25, 2000
15th Annual International Conference, Technology and Persons with Disabilities, CSUN
Los Angeles, CA
Contact: 818-677-2578, ltm@csun.edu

Date: March 31 - April 3, 2000
80th Annual American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Conference & Exhibition
Seattle, WA
Contact: 301-652-6611, www.aota.org

Date: April 5 - 8, 2000
PEPNet 2000, Innovation in Education
Denver, CO
Contact: 423-974-0607, www.pepnet.org

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