



The Computer Monitor



Volume XV

Autumn 2002

Music for Everyone! Part II of a Series

By Annette Cerreta, Assistive Technology Specialist

Technological advancements continue to change the way we experience and access music. Today, users can compose a piece of music or listen to their favorite musical artists with a click of the mouse on a personal computer. For many people with special needs, the computer is an excellent tool for gaining access to the world of music.

Although there has been an explosion of commercial music software programs in recent years, only a handful of these programs are accessible to people with disabilities who have special computer access needs.

Fortunately, some software developers are beginning to consider the needs of people with disabilities when designing music software, but this is more the exception than the rule.

Part II of Music for Everyone will introduce music software designed specifically for people with special needs as well as standard music software that can be adapted for alternative computer access tools, such as a switch, alternative keyboard, touch window, or Braille display. It also contains information about cutting-edge music technology for persons with special needs.



Adaptable and Accessible Music Software and CD-ROM Programs

The following pages contain a list of several music software resources for children and adults. This list is not comprehensive. New programs are always being developed, so use a Web search engine to look for additional resources.

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Music for Everyone! Part II

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GOODFEEL Braille Music Translator (Windows only)

By Dancing Dots Braille Music Technology
www.dancingdots.com

GOODFEEL is a Braille music transcriber that converts musical scores into Braille music or visual presentations. The Braille output can be sent to a standard Braille printer or saved as a computer text file. Users do not need to know how to read Braille music to use the program. This program is most appropriate for teenagers and adults.

Super Switch Ensemble (Macintosh only)

By Switch In Time
www.switchintime.com

Switch users can experience the joys of improvising a blues guitar solo or conducting a classical string quartet with this music improvisation program by Switch In Time. With the tap of a switch, users can improvise melodies as they play along with the built-in back-up band. The program features a wide array of song styles to choose from, including reggae, rock-n-roll, country, and blues. In addition, more than one switch user can play at the same time, making *Super Switch Ensemble* a terrific musical group activity!

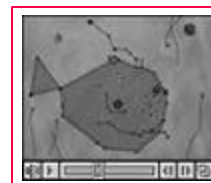
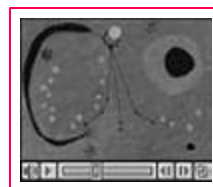
There are
new
software
programs
being
designed
specifically
for people
with special
needs.

Stella and the STAR-TONES (CD for Macintosh and Windows)

By BOEHM Interactive
<http://bohem-int.com>

This program contains 21 beautifully illustrated screens with captivating animated characters, each of whom hosts an original musical score in 21 melodic styles, including jazz, Latin, Caribbean, rock, country and more. This program lends itself to use by people who need alternative access methods because no mouse clicking is required. For example, a person using an electronic pointing device could easily activate notes on the screen by passing the mouse cursor over chosen musical elements. Moving the mouse cursor to different parts of the screen display triggers musical events, such as trumpet playing or cymbals banging. Melodies and rhythms are shaped by variation in mouse movement patterns and speed.

Even though this program contains visual elements, people who are blind could use this program since mouse clicking is not required and musical element locations can be learned through auditory and kinesthetic feedback. Finally, because *Stella and the STAR-TONES* doesn't contain text, it is suited to nonreaders who are motivated by music.



Thinkin' Things Collection 1

By Edmark/Riverdeep

(CD for Macintosh and Windows)

www.edmark.com

The award winning *Thinkin' Things Collection 1* invites young children to build musical skills with the aid of the Thinkin' Thing creatures, Oranga Banga, and Feathered Friends. Oranga Banga helps children enhance their musical listening skills while creating rhythmical sequences with percussion instruments. Goofy Toony Loon invites students to invent their own melodies on a xylophone with silly sound effects. This program was designed for standard mouse, switch, or touch window access. It also can be adapted for use with a programmable keyboard and corresponding overlays. It also offers both English and Spanish language support.

Multimedia Musical Instruments (Windows only)

By Voyetra Technologies

www.voyetra.com

This interactive musical encyclopedia lets users see, hear, and learn about the instruments of a symphony orchestra and other cultures and traditions. Videos, sound bites, and graphics provide a multi-sensory experience for all ages. *Multimedia Musical Instruments* can be accessed via joystick, head pointer, or touch window. Basic reading skills are required.

Part 1 of "Music for Everyone" discusses the benefits of music and simple ways to make music accessible. For copies of Part I call PACER. The Simon Technology Center has these accessible music programs available to try. Please stop in during our open lab hours on Tuesdays noon to 8 p.m. or Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. You can also call 952-838-9000 to arrange an individual appointment.

Accessible Music Players

Inclusive CD Player (Windows only)

By Inclusive Technologies

Switch users can listen to their favorite musical group with this free switch-accessible CD player for Windows 95 or higher. Download it directly from

www.inclusive.co.uk



CD Jukebox 2.1 (Macintosh only)

by Switch In Time

www.switchintime.com

This free, downloadable program allows the user to access any audio compact disk on Macintosh music players with a switch or IntelliKeys keyboard. Choose from five different play modes: Direct, Latch, Timed, Step, and Scanning.

Music Technology on the Cutting Edge

Exciting technology breakthroughs, such as the *Soundbeam* and *Midicreator* offer a new level of access to music for people with severe disabilities. Both of these devices are capable of converting minute physical movements of the eye, finger, or head into musical notes, chords, or effects. For more information about this innovative technology, log onto www.soundbeam.co.uk and www.midicreator.com

Use a Web
search
engine to
look for
additional
resources.

The Simon Technology Center Assists

By Perrine Dailey, Assistive Technology Specialist

Jim O'Neill is an adult who has struggled with severe dyslexia his entire life. He didn't write much because he felt uncomfortable with a pen in his hand or a computer keyboard in front of him. He was self-conscious about his reading and writing skills.

Several visits to the Simon Technology Center (STC) changed that.

Jim learned about the PACER Center from a support group for people with learning disabilities. Jim came to the Simon Technology Center in June 2001 for a free assistive technology consultation to find out if computers would be helpful for him.

While our priority is children and young adults with disabilities, the Simon Technology Center provides access to software, computers and assistive technology to people of all ages.

During the consultation, Jim admitted to having never used a computer before. He watched carefully as a variety of screen readers and text-to-speech programs were demonstrated. When asked if he thought these programs might assist him, he said he didn't know—he had so much to learn.

Over the next several visits, the Center's staff worked closely with Jim to teach him basic computer skills such as how to turn on a computer, move the mouse, and open files using shortcuts. In time, Jim became proficient in using the Internet-reading feature of *eReader* by CAST to read the local newspaper on the Internet. After much time spent surfing

the Internet and learning how to move from page to page and use bookmarks, Jim learned how to find information on-line about plane reservations for an upcoming trip.

Jim was soon ready to sign up for an e-mail account in order to communicate with his nephew in Wisconsin. Admitting his weakness in basic spelling, Jim then began to use *Co:Writer* word prediction software by Don Johnston to assist him with composing his e-mail messages.

At first Jim needed *Co:Writer* to offer a list of nine words that were spoken aloud. He also needed the program to predict the next word in the sentence. One day the staff person left Jim alone for about a half hour with *Co:Writer* and came back to find he had written a few short sentences. It was the most he'd written in many years, he said proudly. Then the staff person showed him how to listen to his text and edit it using cut-and-paste commands.

On his next visit to the Center, Jim began to work independently, turning on the computer, opening *eReader*, and proceeding to surf the Internet. When he was ready to write an e-mail to his nephew, Jim asked for assistance. The staff person demonstrated how to open *Co:Writer* in conjunction with *eReader* to write Jim's e-mail document and to be sure the cursor was in the right spot. After writing a few sentences, Jim was now on-line at PACER Center, sending the e-mail that he knew would be answered soon.

PACER
Center's
staff
worked
closely with
Jim to
teach him
basic
computer
skills, such
as how to
turn on a
computer
and move
the mouse.

Adults: Jim's Success Story

In the following weeks, Jim became a regular visitor to the Simon Technology Center. Because most of the people served by Simon Technology Center are families with children and young adults, Jim was an exception. After one particularly busy day in the open lab, he commented how well the children were able to use computers. He smiled and said, "but I'm catching up fast!"

Jim requested to learn voice recognition technology next. After a demonstration of *Dragon Naturally Speaking* voice recognition software, Jim worked with a staff person to train his voice file. Because he had difficulty reading aloud the text needed to train the voice file, the staff person read the text to him, and he repeated after her. After the initial training, he began to use voice recognition to compose his e-mails. After dictating, he would transfer his message to *eReader* to listen to it and run it through a spellchecker. He would then post his message into his e-mail document for delivery.

Over the next few months, Jim researched the best computer to use at

home. He decided to purchase a new computer that would run both *eReader* and *Dragon Naturally Speaking* as well as give him Internet access. After Jim bought the computer, the staff person helped him select the versions of the software he needed.

Once the new software was successfully loaded on the computer, Jim went home to try it independently. He returned a few days later full of questions. He was unable to get onto the Internet, because the setup was different than it had been at PACER. He had not known how to open *Internet Explorer*. With answers to additional questions, Jim went home to work with his computer again. This time, he was successful!

In December 2001, Jim dictated a thank you note to the staff that had worked with him. It said "I have been coming to PACER Center for five months. It has been a real good thing for me to do. I want to say thanks for all your help.... you have given me a great deal of new inspiration with the use of the computer. I learned a lesson many years ago and that lesson is 'never say never'."

Have Fun at PACER's Creation Station: A Place for Arts and Crafts!

PACER Center's Creation Station: a Place for Arts and Crafts that children with and without disabilities can visit, socialize, and participate in activities that help them succeed.

Open Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Creation Station's **free** activities vary from making fleece scarves to creating puzzles, beads, and leather items.

Save the dates: September 21 and 28.

Special Creation Station sessions feature Jessica Billings, Miss Minnesota Junior Teen, and a focus on scrapbooks. For information call Sandy Loehnis at PACER, (952) 838-9000, TTY: (952) 838-0190, Toll-free in Minnesota: (800) 537-2237.

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say never'."*

KITE Expands Program with Training

By Jean Nelson, KITE Coordinator

Gabby is a 4-year-old with spina bifida. Because she uses a wheelchair, she was sometimes left out when her peers played at preschool. Project KITE allowed Gabby to interact with her classmates through entertaining and educational computer activities, while training her parents and teachers how to use technology for inclusion.

Project KITE staff loaned Gabby's family and preschool teacher a computer for Gabby to use at both home and school and provided training on the best use of the computer for her. Now, as Gabby plays games and does other activities on the computer, she has many playmates and an opportunity to learn important social skills. This technology brought an added benefit for Gabby. When she spends time with her siblings, they help her with her computer, and they work together as a family.

Gabby is one of hundreds of children that have benefited from Project KITE (Kids Included Through Technology are Enriched), a program in the Simon Technology Center.

Project KITE began in 1994 when PACER Center received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop a training model for early childhood personnel and parents of young children with disabilities, ages 3-8. The object was to develop a training model that gave all children, regardless of culture, income level, or disability, the opportunity to be included in the classroom through the use of computers and assistive technology. This innovative early childhood technology training model has been replicated at 36 sites.

In the fall of 2001, KITE conducted a Training of Trainers Institute to expand KITE's impact. Several teams of teachers and assistive technology specialists from Minnesota applied to become the first regional KITE trainers. The Institute created 3 regional KITE trainer teams and provided them with the tools needed to help more children like Gabby learn and participate in regular classroom experiences.

The following professionals participated in the training and replication in Minnesota: Lyn Johnson, Fergus Falls; Linda Erickson, Fergus Falls; Kim Moccia, Rochester; Jay Swenson, Rochester; Diane McCormack, Detroit Lakes; and Anna Wuitschick, Frazee.



Gabby at computer

*Gabby is
one of
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Project
KITE.*

of Trainers

Trainers were provided with an early childhood technology kit and the KITE training manual with CDs to conduct the trainings.

Upon returning to their home communities, the regional trainers recruited and trained nine people from three classroom teams in their community. They provided a series of six training sessions on technology over a five-month period. The local trainer team also conducted classroom and home visits for children and created a video to document an inclusive activity using technology.

Trainers reported that they learned valuable information about specific software programs and creative ways to use technology as a tool for inclusion in the classroom. Overall, the regional teams felt the training was very rewarding for both their participating teams and for themselves. At the conclusion of her last session, Lyn Johnson said, "Thanks for all the experiences, materials and knowledge." Kim Moccia commented: "This was a great experience and we are looking forward to continuing the relationship we established with our teams. Thank you for providing such a wonderful opportunity. It provides a much needed service to children with special needs."

Upcoming Workshops

Back to School Workshop

Learn about the services of the Simon Technology Center. Demonstrations of technology in three sessions: Alternative and Augmentative Communication, Reading & Writing, Creative Software for Art-rageous Fun
Saturday, September 21; 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. (PACER Center)

Early Childhood Intervention and Assistive Technology

The Early Childhood Project and the Simon Technology Center will present strategies and technologies that support young children with disabilities and their families.

Thursday, September 26; 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. (PACER Center)

Really Useful Technology for Students with Learning Disabilities

Demonstration of software and assistive technology devices that can assist students of all ages with learning disabilities.

Thursday, November 14; 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. (Willmar)

Technology for Family Fun (Simon Technology Center **OPEN HOUSE**)

OPEN HOUSE for **parents and children** to learn creative strategies for fun. In collaboration with AbleNet., it will be a "make it and take it" event.

Saturday, November 23; 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (PACER Center)

Project
KITE
will be
conducting
additional
trainings
in the
metro and
greater
Minnesota
in 2002-
2003.
Please call
PACER
Center
(952)
838-9000
for more
info.

After-School Technology at Benjamin

By Brad Buelow, Assistive Technology Specialist

At the end of each school day several months ago, the computer lab in the north end of Benjamin Banneker

Community School sat empty with no lights, no sounds, and no students. The 28 blueberry iMac computers sat in a large circle, seeming to stare across the room at each other,

PACER Center's Simon Technology Center received a Community Technology Center grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop an after-school technology program at Benjamin Banneker Community School in South Minneapolis. The program began in early February and continued through Summer 2002.

hard drives still spinning, as if the children leaving class had not turned them off. A few computers were half hidden behind stacks of outdated textbooks used as makeshift mousepads in this multi-cultural school in South Minneapolis. The lab was used regularly from 9 to 3, but once the final school bell rang, the day was over for the computers, and their young users.

Things began to change last winter. PACER Center began its first "after-school technology program" in the computer lab in early February. Since then, every Monday through Thursday afternoon, the lab is open, the lights are on, and third-grade children are using the computers to develop a variety of projects. Students in the class have used AppleWorks software to create nametags for class. With KidPix they have drawn images to share with each other. Internet access has allowed them to learn about their favorite animals, musicians, and cartoon characters. The

lab is filled with the sounds of clicking, typing, and children's excited voices.

Assessments of the students' needs by their teachers and parents revealed that there was a strong need for language arts and mathematics support within the third grade. Particularly urgent was the language arts need, as the Banneker student population is largely Somali with English as a second language. These needs were used as guidelines for planning the after-school technology curriculum. After the classes began, the need for students to become more technologically savvy became apparent. Therefore the program additionally focused on teaching students how to explore the computers, examine the output, and ask the right questions to improve their skills and language.

The students used computers to write short stories, letters, and posters and to create artwork. They also learned how to save a file with a title, and they found out why computers behave the way they do.

Projects focused on production of tangible objects for the students. Each lesson's design was structured around introducing new concepts, techniques, and skills while reinforcing basic language arts skills. One of the most successful projects involved teaching the students about stamps, their role in the postal service, and what kind of imagery is generally included on a stamp. Students were then encouraged to design a stamp representing themselves, their values, or a concept they felt was important in their lives. Each student

Banneker Community School

then used KidPix to create an image of a stamp, which was printed out in color, shared in class and sent to each student's home with a letter composed in AppleWorks describing their stamp.

Students who took part in this lesson developed their typing, grammar, and spelling skills while also using their creativity. The students were also encouraged to practice a variety of computer skills such as saving a file with a name, switching between open programs, and using the mouse as a drawing tool. Most students had a little experience with these skills before, but this project reinforced those concepts while introducing new ideas such as copying and pasting, multitasking, and refining the appearance of their homebound letters through proper formatting of both text and imagery. The excitement of receiving their projects at home in the mail a few days later generated great enthusiasm among the students.

The second session of the after-school technology program, from early April to the end of May, was geared for students who have shown a strong interest in computers and have been recommended by teachers. Projects focused on long-term planning and development of ideas. Some of these projects include the production of simple multimedia presentations using BuildAbility (see review on page 10) displayed on a class Web site. The class also worked on developing computer materials for display in the school's computer labs. These efforts and projects reinforced basic computer skills that the students

can transfer beyond the classroom into their own futures as successful technology users.

Student enthusiasm combined with the strong support of Banneker faculty and staff have contributed to the success of this program. PACER Center and Banneker also collaborated on a summer session. The greatest measure of the program's success,

however, is the academic and social enrichment displayed by the students. Increased language ability and interest in computers, greater knowledge

of specific computer techniques, and an increased understanding of technology has been a result of each class.

This previously empty computer lab now bustles with warmth and activity each afternoon. The computers are bombarded with small hands and fingers for one last hour of each school day. There is a wonderful sound of children trying out new ideas, exploring the technological world, and increasing language skills through use of a powerful tool, the computer.



Quintin Johnson enjoying new technology

BuildAbility: A New Authoring Tool Makes

By Sharon Young, Assistive Technology Specialist



Don Johnston Inc. recently released *BuildAbility*, a new authoring tool that makes learning an enjoyable and interactive experience by letting teachers, students and their families combine text, sounds, graphics and speech to create stories.

What makes *BuildAbility* stand out from the crowd is its unique *Drawmation* effect. This feature works in the background of each page the user creates. Each action created by the user, whether it be drawing, typing, adding voice or animation, is replayed in sequence like a movie. This produces a flip book effect, creating the illusion of dozens of carefully drawn illustrations that make a well-connected story.

This program can be used by people of all ages and abilities. Young children can draw simple stick figures and record a sound on a page. More advanced users can create lesson plans or

presentations. It is especially beneficial for visual learners and those who have difficulty expressing ideas in writing because *BuildAbility* lets users express themselves using images and sounds as well as text.

Users can add a variety of media, including photos, clip art, movies, sound and music to enhance their creations. Several movies, sounds, and music are built-in to the program. A *Library Sampler CD* offers 20 activities created by literacy experts. Eight stories are available for teachers to explore and modify for use with their students. Individualized lessons or stories can be created or viewed to match learning styles, levels and personal interests.

Teachers can use *BuildAbility* as a creative literacy tool for all students, including students with disabilities. This program was designed to enhance inclusion, so it is easily adapted for persons who use alternative input methods such as touch screen or other mouse alternatives, single switch

and Don Johnston's "Discover" tools. One drawback is that switches and scanning are not supported in the designing portion of *BuildAbility*. Presenters and viewers of the finished product may, however, use a switch to advance through the story. The "Wait Mouse Click" option will pause the story until the computer receives a mouse (or switch) click. A small mouse image can be added to the page to prompt viewers or presenters to continue the story. However, without the pause for a click, the program will go forward at its own pace. Scanning is used exclusively on the *Library Sampler CD*. This option allows users to scan and read the menu for access to one of 20 sampler stories.

BuildAbility's many features make it easy to navigate. The navigation box shows each action, which can be reviewed or edited at any time. Features allow the users to edit speech or select images and experiment with the speed of animation, so the finished product can appear as slow as a snail or fast as a

"Families, students, adults and children can draw and tell a story at the same time. It is great to hear the background voices that express the sense of wonder, fun and learning!"

Learning Fun

rabbit. To edit or review, the pages can be put on paint brush used for making bold strokes or fine line drawings in multiple colors. Typed text can be highlighted and spoken with a computerized voice. Comments or instructions can be added with the user's voice. Parts or all of the stories can be copied to use in another story. A *BuildAbility Player* is

included to publish and share stories with others. Families, students, adults and children can draw and tell a story at the same time. It is great to hear the background voices that express the sense of wonder, fun and learning!

BuildAbility is available for both Macintosh and Windows computers and costs \$99 per copy.

Companion products are sold separately and include music tracks, background photos and sound effects. Find out more about this product at www.donjohnston.com/catalog/buildabilitydfm.htm and download the free *BuildAbility Player* to experience the product yourself at www.donjohnston.com/downloads/downloads.htm

New Software to Preview at the Simon Technology Center

SoftTouch, a software company that makes special education software designed for students with disabilities, has partnered with the Simon Technology Center to provide previews of their software. These exciting products are accessible with a mouse, single switch (scanning), alternative keyboards such as *IntelliKeys*, and touch screens. There is a new phonics series, *Teach Me Phonemics*, which teaches phonemic awareness and word identification using photographs that transform into Mayer-Johnson picture symbols. Other programs available for preview include *Attention Getters*, *Shop Til You Drop*, and *Old MacDonald's Farm*. For more information about *SoftTouch's* products, visit their Web site at www.funsoftware.com/softtouch/index.htm

Simon Technology Center also has the latest software by *Inspiration Software, Inc.* Inspiration publishes visual thinking and learning tools for K-12 education, which are great for students with learning disabilities or writing challenges. The software integrates diagramming and outlining environments that work together to help students comprehend concepts and information. Young readers and writers build confidence in organizing information, understanding concepts and expressing their thoughts. For more information about these products visit their Web site at www.inspiration.com.

The Simon Technology Center has open-lab hours on Tuesdays noon to 8 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Staff can demonstrate new software for you and help answer any questions you have.

PACER Helps Bridge the "Digital Divide"

By Amanda Reinsfelder, intern

Each year, being digitally connected becomes ever more critical to economic, educational, and social equality. Now that a large number of Americans regularly use the Internet to conduct daily activities, people who lack access to those tools or knowledge on how to use them effectively are at a growing disadvantage.

—U.S. Department of Commerce, 2000

Computer classes in Spanish are offered free to families

It is especially difficult for individuals with language barriers to maximize the benefits of the Internet and other technologies. To help overcome this "digital divide," the Simon Technology Center has partnered with several organizations in Minneapolis to offer technology training.

One partnership is with Chicanos Latinos Unidos En Servicios (CLUES) in Minneapolis to offer computer classes in Spanish free to their families.

There were more than 30 people who attended sessions this summer and had the opportunity to learn about computer basics, word processing, e-mail, and the Internet. A separate class was offered to focus specifically on using the

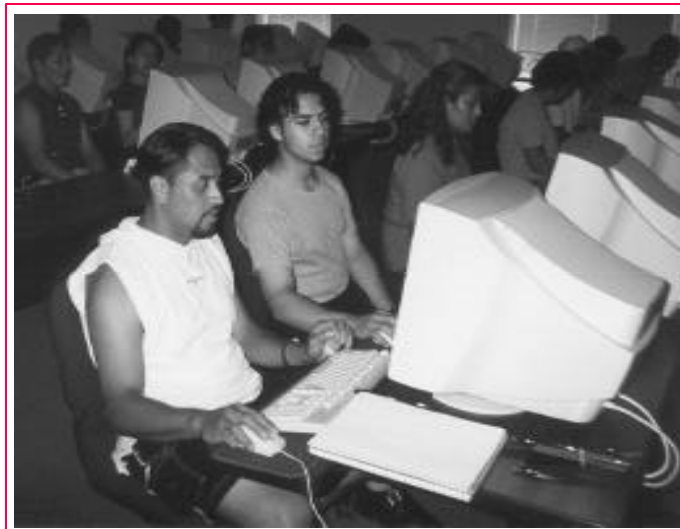
Internet to find employment. The students learned the basics through a PowerPoint presentation and then received individualized assistance.

The *Computer Basics Class*, a four-week class with a new topic each week, was

conducted in both English and Spanish. During the first class, students learned how to turn on a computer, the components of the computer, and how to navigate in Windows. They were taught about hardware, software, applications, programs, files and folders. They learned about software media and how programs can be installed to the computer with them. Word processing was introduced during the second week. The students were able to learn about

the different word processors and how to use Microsoft Word. In Word, they practiced mouse skills such as scrolling, clicking, and dragging. The class created, saved, and recalled original

documents. New material included page setup and printing. The third week provided the students with the ability to connect to and navigate the Internet. E-mail was explained in the fourth session and the class was taught how to set up their own account.



Students at the CLUES training

The *Internet Job Search Class* created a large amount of interest and the class was usually full. This was a single session repeated for three weeks, taught entirely in Spanish. In this class, the adults figured out how to navigate the Internet and learn the most effective ways to use it. They enjoyed learning how to manipulate Web pages and take Internet searching to the next level.

After the exploration ended, the class was introduced to three different examples of job searches. The first example was a general search on the Spanish version of *www.monster.com*, (<http://internacional.monster.es/>) narrowing the search down to jobs in Minnesota. The second task was to enter a specific employer's site to apply for a specific job at *www.minnesota.localopenings.com*. Here, a person is able to put his or her

information and résumé on the Internet so employers can find him or her. Students were able to see both perspectives of a job search this way.

The class also found out how to view any Web site in Spanish using an on-line translator. With these on-line translators, such as *babelfish.altavista.com*, it can be faster viewing pages that contain useful information. On-line translations can also be wonderful quick references for words and short phrases.

The collaboration between Simon Technology Center and CLUES offered families great opportunities to learn more about technology and why to use it. They also appreciated the classes being offered in Spanish, because it was easier for them understand and participate fully.

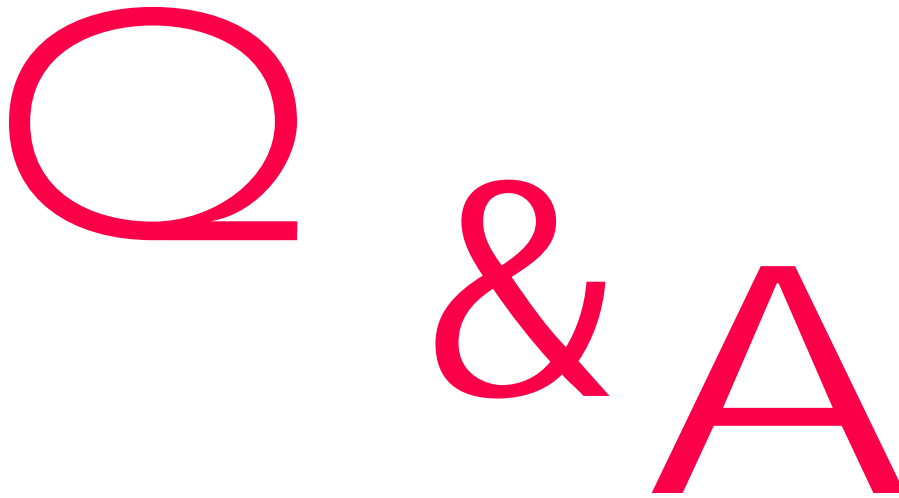
The Simon Technology Center is a key partner for the Family Center on Technology and Disabilities. The Center serves organizations and programs that work with families of children and youth with disabilities, offering a range of information and services nationally on assistive technology. The goal of the Family Center is to support efforts to bring the highest quality education to children with disabilities. Visit the Web site at www.fctd.info



Thank You, Vendors!

Thank you to many vendors who have generously donated software and assistive technology to the STC! These vendors include: Don Johnston, Ability Research, Silver Lining Multimedia, Inspiration, Teknimedia, Boehm, Saltillo, Simtech, Orcca, Crick Software, RJ Cooper, Sunburst, Louis Semrau, Bow Wow Software, Optimum Resources, AbleNet, Computer Options for the Exceptional, Freedom Scientific, Technology for Education, and TextHELP!

*The
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families
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learn
more
about
technology
and why
to use it.*



The STC offers in-service trainings for groups of five or more people. Call Janet Peters at PACER Center 952-838-9000 to arrange a training.

Q: What kind of adaptations can be made for my child who is having trouble using traditional writing tools (crayons, pencils, pens, etc.)?

A: These ideas may help your child be able to use traditional writing tools:

- Thick-line markers are easier to grasp and require less pressure
- Primary (thick) pencils or crayons are available from Lakeshore Learning Materials at 2695 E. Dominguez St., Carson, CA 90810, www.lakeshorelearning.com or call (800) 421-5354 or (310) 537-8600
- Foam or rubber are grips available from office supply stores, or a pink soft foam hair curler can be used. Masking tape or modeling clay around the pen can also be used to build it up.
- Use a tennis ball with a hole into which a pencil, pen or marker can be inserted.
- Commercial hand splints come with or without rollers. Talk to your child's occupational therapist or order equipment from orthopedic supply stores.
- A headstick, chinstick, or mouthstick with a writing tool can be used. They can be ordered from orthopedic supply stores.
- Use a slanted board or easel to assist in positioning of the arm to increase accessibility to the work space.
- Use rubber stamps or a computer as an alternative to use of traditional writing tools.

Q: My child does not use several educational software programs or his touch window anymore. Is there a place to sell this equipment to other families?

A: Yes, the Simon Technology Center sponsors SUPER (Still Useful Products and Equipment Referral) that connects buyers and sellers of assistive technology. Anyone who wishes to buy or sell software or adaptive equipment may use the free on-line service. The Web address is www.pacer.org/stc or call PACER at (800) 537-2237.

Staff Profile: Sara Sprenger-Otto

Simon Technology Center welcomed Sara Sprenger-Otto to its staff as assistant in the Software Lending Library in March. Sara works on Tuesday afternoons and Saturdays with the families and professionals who visit the SLL. Sara's favorite part of her job is meeting families and helping them find software. She also enjoys interacting with the children and learning about their different personalities. She said she is excited to be learning about different software and devices and the many possibilities they offer.



Sara has an extensive background in working with children and adults, as well. Sara was attracted to PACER Center because of its good reputation, and she was pleased with the range of advocacy services provided.

When she is not at work, Sara enjoys spending time with her baby, going to her son's basketball games, and being with friends.

*We
accept
equipment
and
donations.
Donations
are tax
deductible.*

Q: I recently read an article that referred to "Universal Design for Learning" in the classroom. What is Universal Design for Learning?

A: Universal Design for Learning (UDL), as conceptualized by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) www.cast.org, is a new approach to curriculum design based on research about learning, the brain, and educational technology. Universally designed curriculum aims to support the unique learning needs of each student by building flexibility into both instructional materials and teaching methods. Accessible electronic instructional materials, including electronic textbooks, educational Internet Web sites, multimedia, and software, can help teachers more readily customize curriculum to meet the learning styles of different students. To learn more about Universal Design for Learning, log on to the Center for Applied Special Technology Web site, www.cast.org <<http://www.cast.org>>, or contact PACER's Simon Technology Center.



Thank you to all of the PACER employees, family, and friends who contributed to the donation of a new iMac in the Simon Technology Center. It will be put to good use for families.



The Computer Monitor

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