



The Computer Monitor



Volume XVI

Spring 2003

IBM and PACER Plan 'EXITE'-ment

The Simon Technology Center and IBM Corporation are partners in offering an EXITE (EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering) Summer Camp for girls with disabilities in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades.

The goal of EXITE Camp is to expose girls to career opportunities in technology and engineering and promote their continued interest in the fields. Camp activities are technical, hands-on experiences designed to be fun, challenging, and educational. Although IBM offers EXITE Camps worldwide, the Simon Technology Center camp, specifically for girls with disabilities, is being piloted for the first time.

Why focus the camp on girls with disabilities? Studies have indicated girls, in general, begin to lose interest in math, science, and technology

around the fifth grade and are often discouraged from pursuing technical careers. (*Tech-Savvy: Educating Girls in the New Computer Age, 2000*) There is an even more significant drop for girls with disabilities in these areas, as students who need accommodations or adapted curricula

often encounter difficulties having their needs met at the junior high and high school levels. (*Parent Brief on Universal Design for Learning and Transition, 2003*)

PACER seeks 20 motivated young women with disabilities to participate in EXITE. (see page 2)

The EXITE camp will be held at PACER Center on

Thursdays for five consecutive weeks, beginning on July 10, 2003. Activities include creating a Web site, tearing down a personal computer, designing and building a strobe circuit, and taking a field trip to IBM's Rochester plant. EXITE Camp will also feature inspirational speakers and mentor relationships with IBM staff who have disabilities to

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Parent Involvement is Key with Assistive

By Janet Peters, Coordinator

It's not an exaggeration to say that assistive technology can change the life of a child with a disability. Assistive technology can be the gateway to giving a child a voice, mobility, independence, or the opportunity to learn and be included. As technological advances have been made in our society in general, more sophisticated options for assistive technology are commercially available, and we are learning more about successful strategies on using assistive technology from low to high tech.

Yet, with all of the positive momentum for assistive technology there are still barriers for children. Many children who would benefit from assistive technology do not have access to it. Some assistive technology is purchased but not used, due to lack of training or technical problems. Sometimes an inappropriate device, that in theory works great, is purchased, but the decision did not take into account the student or family preferences.

PACER has long recognized that parents play a key role in the education of their child with a disability. Parents know vital information about their child and have a unique perspective to share. Assistive technology is no exception to the need for parental involvement. In fact, a parent's input may offer the exact information that leads to choosing and implementing the appropriate assistive technology.

As a parent you are part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team that decides the assistive technology needs of your child. Family goals and expectations are critical to the success of that decision.

IBM and PACER Plan 'EXITE'-ment

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demonstrate what people with disabilities can achieve in these fields. Each young woman who participates in EXITE will be matched with an IBM employee with a disability as a mentor for the EXITE camp and the 2003-04 school year.

PACER seeks 20 motivated young women with disabilities to participate in EXITE. The selection criteria for middle school girls is:

- A disability and currently be in grade six, seven, or eight
- An interest in solving problem and creativity
- Motivation, maturity, and a desire to achieve
- An interest in expanding their knowledge in math, science, and technology

The application deadline is May 23, 2003. Please contact Carol Nove in the Simon Technology Center to request an application package.

EXITE
camp - Sign
up now by
contacting
Carol Nove
at PACER.
Application
deadline is
May 23,
2003.

Technology

Learning your rights and responsibilities about assistive technology will help you be an effective member of the team. But being active while the team decides on assistive technology may seem daunting. Not all parents feel comfortable with technology or have an interest in learning the jargon. Even if your technology interest is low, you still have important information to share. Here are some thoughts you may want to share with the team:

- Do you have any family or cultural values that affect assistive technology? For example, if you feel uncomfortable using a device in your community or home, let the team know.
- Describe your expectations of assistive technology. What do you think or hope assistive technology may do for your child?
- Share your child's strengths, interests, and what motivates him or her, as well as his or her dislikes. Something as simple as color preference can make the difference to using assistive technology successfully.
- Tell the team about any assistive technology you are using at home, especially sharing what's working or not working with it.
- Explain to the team how your child feels about assistive technology. Ask your child's opinion, even if you think you know it. Is she excited about new technology or worried about looking different because of it?
- Tell the team your comfort level with technology. Are you interested in training or doing additional research on potential assistive technology solutions?

The Simon Technology Center has two May workshops to learn more about the family's role in choosing assistive technology. They are Thursday, May 1, in Spring Valley 6 to 8:30 p.m. and Saturday, May 10, at PACER Center from 10 a.m. to noon. The workshops will answer questions such as:

- What is assistive technology?
- What are some of the assistive technology tools to help my child learn?
- What does the law say about assistive technology?
- How does my child's IEP team choose the right assistive technology?

To register for the workshop, call PACER at (952) 838-9000, (800) 537-2237 (Greater Minnesota) or (952) 838-0190 (TTY).

*New look
on the STC
Web site
[www.pacer.org/
stc](http://www.pacer.org/stc)
The new
design has
been
created to
improve
navigation
as well as
provide new
features.*

Project KITE Continues to Promote

By Kari Jaehnert, Assistive Technology Specialist

Project KITE (Kids Included Through Technology are Enriched) started in 1994 and is a model project that trains parents and professionals to use technology for inclusion of young children with disabilities in the daily activities of their homes and classrooms.

But what is inclusion? The Division for Early Childhood's 2000 position states that inclusion supports the right of all children, regardless of their ability, to actively participate in natural settings, such as a child's home, childcare, place of worship, playgrounds, community events, and classrooms. A truly inclusive environment gives all children, regardless of culture, income level, or ability, the opportunity to learn, participate and play.

Project KITE has learned that for inclusion to be accomplished, parents and professionals must continue to find creative and effective ways to include children with disabilities in daily activities with their peers. One highly successful strategy is to use computers and assistive technology with young children. It can remove barriers and serve as a learning tool for not only a child with special needs, but *all* children in the classroom.

Simple technology adaptations can allow children to communicate their thoughts and feelings and participate in group activities within the classroom. Experience shows that the physical presence of a child with disability in the classroom is only the beginning; all children must be actively engaged in the learning to the greatest extent possible. Assistive technology, from low tech to

high tech, can promote that engagement by giving a child access to the curriculum and breaking down the barriers to participation and independence.

Using technology to promote inclusion does not need to be complex, but it does require some forethought and preparation. The most successful approach to incorporating technology uses a team approach, where the people most familiar with the child and his or her needs can have input and help with implementation.

If your team is new to inclusion, start small. Identify one or two activities that regularly occur. For example, use technology to make the story time activity accessible to all. Teachers, parents, and students may also feel more comfortable with the technology as the activity is repeated.

Once you have chosen an activity, observe what other students do during this activity. How do they participate? What materials are used? What type of communication exchanges happen? How does the child with a disability interact? Are there any barriers that are preventing them from interacting and participating? Then, as a team, identify possible solutions, including low- to high-tech options.

Using a variety of technology and assistive technology devices may allow youngsters to advance in ways that may otherwise be impossible. Technology is most effective when it is integrated into the existing curriculum and life-style of the classroom rather than added as

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Inclusion for Young Children

something 'extra.' A computer can be an integral part of a lesson to teach a new concept or reinforce concepts previously discussed. Most importantly, technology can allow a child to participate, learn and grow in their natural environment.

For more information and great examples of how to make simple, low-cost adaptations visit the following resources:

www.aacintervention.com - Contains creative and practical teacher resources with easy-to-follow ideas and directions on making lesson plans and classrooms accessible.

www.lburkhart.com - Tips on integrating technology in the classroom for children with special needs including instructions on how to make your own adapted products.

www.ataccess.org - The Alliance for Technology Access is a national network of assistive technology organizations, resource centers, and vendors. The section on "Assistive Technology in K-12 Schools" contains valuable resources, case studies, and downloadable planning forms to assist teachers and professionals implement AT into the classroom.

Other teacher resources to incorporate assistive technology into a lesson plan: Early Childhood Thematic Units: An excellent compilation of lesson plans, ideas, and activities geared specifically for the young child with special needs. Includes several thematic units with downloadable software, related book

and video resource as well as toys and materials adapted for assistive technology. www.sbcss.k12.ca.us/sbcss/specialeducation/ecthematic/index.html

Teaching Ideas for Early Childhood

Special Educators:

Contains links to good teaching ideas and activities as well as links to relevant sites. This site offers a substantial list of resources for the early childhood special education teacher or parent. Arranged in alphabetical order and very user-friendly. www.mcps.k12.md.us/curriculum/pep/teach.htm

Project KITE continues to conduct training to parents and professionals in Minnesota. Please call Kari Jaehnert or Brad Buelow at PACER (952) 838-9000 for more information about KITE training and products. Project KITE also has a Web site www.pacer.org/kite.

New informational CD-ROM available

A new, free CD, FCTD Info-Rom, is available from the Family Center on Technology and Disability. The CD has information on the history and mission of the Center, overview of the Web site, and highlights from the assistive technology resource review database.



The Family Center serves organizations and programs that work with families of children and youth with disabilities. PACER's STC is one of five partners on the project. Please call STC to receive your free CD or visit www.fctd.info.

Compass Heads to the Computer Lab

By Perrine Dailey, Assistive Technology Specialist

Each month, the students from the Compass program at Eisenhower Elementary in Hopkins eagerly await “PACER Day.” One Tuesday a month, they come to the Simon Technology Center computer lab during open hours to use the computers and software. “PACER Day” has been part of the Compass program for past two years.

Teacher Tracy Dauwalter started the Compass program eight years ago. It offers services to elementary students who have significant disabilities and special education and general education for a portion of their day.



Tracy said, “I have known about PACER for years. When I read about the open lab hours, I saw an opportunity for my students.”

She explained, not only are the students being exposed to educational software during their visits, but they also have the opportunity to practice their social and community participation skills.

The students have computers in their classroom, but Tracy wanted them to have a chance to experiment with new programs and assistive technology not available at school. The students have been able to try software to help with reading, math, music, typing, and creativity and have used touch screens, switches, and alternative keyboards.

The Compass staff and students have found that their regular visits to PACER offer multiple benefits. The students enjoy coming to the lab.

Tracy said, “They are not only drawn to the computers, but also to all the other ‘cool technology’ in there. The atmosphere is always calming and they usually get right down to business!”

One student with a visual impairment found immediate success when he began using the large 19” monitor available at the lab. Tracy says the school plans to purchase some of the programs they have tried at the lab as permanent fixtures for their classroom.

The families of the students have been very supportive of the computer lab visits. One family is looking into ways to encourage the school to continue the PACER visits as their child moves into junior high.

The Simon Technology Center has open hours on Tuesdays from noon to 8 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Teachers who are interested in bringing small groups of supervised students to the Center during open hours should phone PACER at (952) 838-9000.

Finally, Computer Games for All Abilities

By Annette Cerreta, Assistive Technology Specialist

Most activities at last Fall's Simon Technology Center Open House were appreciated by guests, but one stood out. The adapted Nintendo game station was hugely popular with young and old alike. Children with special needs had the opportunity to play Nintendo with friends and family using a device called TeamExtreme by Pathways Development Group.

TeamExtreme is a computer interface that enables individuals with limited motor skills to play Nintendo using a switch or a joystick. Players execute standard Nintendo actions by activating one or more switches instead of pressing buttons on the Nintendo game controller. They can also control the direction of movement using an adapted joystick.

Nintendo, as most parents know, is highly motivating for children of all ages. Lisa Adzick, mother of eight year-old Christian raves about how adapted Nintendo has been a great motivator for her son. "We recently purchased TeamExtreme and a switch for the Nintendo and Christian loves it. After completing his chore of getting the mail (Christian uses a walker), his reward is the same as his brothers' reward for their chores, 30 minutes of Nintendo." Lisa also points out that Christian's ability to play computer games has had a positive impact on his social skills. "It really is great for socialization. Christian and his friends are able to play together and interact, whereas before they would have only watched TV together. It is a important for social interaction and friendship for kids these days."

Nintendo is also a great way for children to improve functional and fine motor skills. For example, by using an adaptive joystick controller to play Nintendo, a child can refine skills needed to control a joystick-driven power wheelchair. It is a motivating tool for switch training and development of visual-motor skills as well.

TeamExtreme is available for Nintendo ES, Nintendo Super NES, and Nintendo 64. Prices range from \$300-\$350. To find out more about TeamExtreme visit the Web site: www.pathwaysdg.com

Accessible computer games may also be found on the Internet. The Web site www.LevelGames.net offers free arcade-style games for players with a wide range of ages and abilities. The games support many access methods, including single switch, expanded keyboard (Intellikeys), keyboard, joystick, mouse, trackball, touch screen and more.

The Levelgames control panel allows players to adjust many of the game parameters, such speed and strength of major game elements. Each player can use his or her own settings, allowing two players of different abilities to play together. Large-character and high-contrast options are also available for players with low vision.

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Universe of Access: Taking a Closer Look

By Brad Buelow, Assistive Technology Specialist

Lost data and computer crashes at the least opportune times make Mac OS X and Windows XP, new operating systems released by Apple Computer and Microsoft, worth trying. In 2001, Apple Computer and Microsoft released new and improved operating systems to the public. Some of the improvements included better stability, easier networking, and a new focus allowing computers to create a central hub for other digital devices. In addition to general improvements, both operating systems incorporated features to increase accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Wish List

The STC needs the following items (*all donations are tax-deductible*):

- Children's Educational Software
- Barcode Wand Reader
- Microsoft Office 2000 for Macintosh
- Children's size chair and table
- Ergonomic office equipment, such as wrist guards, monitor stands, etc...
- New Digital Camera (at least 3.9 Megapixels, 3x zoom and USB)

For years, the disability community has developed, shared, and often sold, all manner of computer adaptations with one common goal: Providing access to users who are not able to use the computer in its native form. But do these new operating systems offer anything to improve current situations of people with disabilities in terms of accessibility? Yes, while not perfect, they are one step closer to the promise of universal access.

This article examines the two systems in special needs categories of: 1) Visual and Hearing Enhancements, 2) Keyboard Adaptations, and 3) General

Accessibility features. The following sections will outline what is available to users without purchasing additional accessibility software for use on your computer.

Visual Enhancements

Mac OS X offers several new customization options within the new operating system, including the ability to change how images and text are displayed which is beneficial to people with a variety of disabilities. Mac OS X includes a new black and white reverse feature previously not offered on the Macintosh. This feature allows the user to change the color screen to a simple white on black, a high-contrast image which can be toggled on or off with a simple keystroke. In addition, OS X offers a relatively low-contrast grayscale option, but without the ability to toggle back and forth. Both of these features work very well across the board and are a welcome addition to the Macintosh.

Mac OS X also offers a new zoom feature allowing the screen image to be dramatically enlarged with minimal loss of image quality using keyboard toggle features. This feature functions properly with OS X native applications but older programs do not always work with the zoom feature.

Windows XP offers black and white reverse and is quite effective because of the wide variety of color schemes and levels of contrast available to the user. The high-contrast feature can be selected in control panel or toggled on and off via keystrokes.

at the Latest Operating Systems

Cursor options are also offered in Windows XP, allowing the user to set the cursor to blink faster or slower than normal. Cursor size can also be set to small or large if the user is so inclined.

Another feature worth noting is the Microsoft Magnifier. Similar to the Mac's zoom feature, Magnifier shows a zoomed image of the screen with the cursor in a floating, moveable window on the desktop. The zoom feature works quite well, but the segregated nature of the zoom window makes navigation rather difficult at times. In addition, two cursors can be distracting. The zoomed cursor showed the action, but the real cursor existed right next to the window as well. To risk a cliché; the "big picture" was lost in an effort to get a closer look.

Hearing Enhancements

Mac OS X immediately sported one simple improvement over previous versions of the operating system. The inclusion of a volume control slider in the easily accessible menu bar, as well as volume control keys on the new standard keyboard, showed great improvement over previous operating systems that required users to access the volume through the control strip, a toolbar not always accessible or convenient to all users.

Apple's "Visual Alert," allows the operating system to flash the screen when a program has made an alert noise, giving a visual cue that something has happened to your computer and it wants to tell you about it.

Both systems offer speech interaction. However, the Mac OS X has considerably more options for its use, such as speech recognition from the user. Talking alerts are another Mac OS standard, but the real improvement of Mac speech options is a fabulous feature that allows the computer to read text either when hovered over with the mouse pointer, or when selected with the mouse and spoken through the use of a definable hot key. This feature has great potential for users who need help with reading their screens. It works flawlessly, but can be a bit distracting at times.

Windows XP also has a wide variety of hearing enhancements such as the "Sound Sentry" option. Similar to the visual alert on the Mac, Windows offers many options to the user with the choice of alerts ranging from flashing the taskbar to causing the active window or entire screen to flash. In addition to Sound Sentry, the classic Windows volume control has always been located in the taskbar, and built-in volume controls have been an option long available on many consumer keyboards.

Lastly, Windows XP offers a feature titled "ShowSounds" where programs can display auditory feedback in an alternative version such as captions or informative icons. Software programs however, need to be coded to take advantage of ShowSounds capabilities, and to date there are few programs that take advantage of this option.

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*STC has
many
resources
on acces-
sibility.*

*Call (952)
838-9000.*

Universe of Access

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Keyboard Adaptations

When it comes to keyboarding, there aren't very many new features for either system. "Sticky Keys," for users who have trouble pressing more than one key at a time, continues to exist as an option for both Windows XP and Mac OS X. Sticky Keys allows users to access key combinations like "Shift + a" by first pressing the shift key, and then selecting the letter "a." This feature has existed for years and does not benefit from any improvements in either operating system. Both versions offer visual and auditory cues to let the user know when sticky keys have been pressed.

Another long-time standard for keyboard accessibility, "FilterKeys" (in Windows) and "Slow Keys" (Mac) allow users to designate how much of a repeat rate the computer should allow for users whose hands may linger over the keys a bit longer than necessary. Both systems offer standard options such as setting the repeat rate and auditory feedback for repeated keystrokes.

One final keyboard option does exist in Windows only. The "Toggle Keys" option allows users to hear an alert when Scroll Lock, Caps Lock, and Number Lock keys are selected. Even this option, however, is not new to Windows users and really only augments the indicator lights on most keyboards.

General Features

In addition to all of these features listed above, there are a few general

accessibility options that are standard on both operating systems. On-screen keyboards are now featured in both systems. The Apple "Keycaps" program once again makes a basic appearance in this version with Windows including an on-screen keyboard with a much nicer display and a full array of features. Both systems also support the attachment of various assistive technology devices to enhance your computing experience. Windows XP in particular showcase a much-improved "Plug and Play" attitude than previous versions while the Mac OS continued to prove its claim to "just work" with peripheral devices. The ability to save individual settings for multiple users on one machine also adds a lot to these systems in a practical sense. This preexisting feature allows one user to have no accessibility features while other users with special needs can log onto the same computer with instant accessibility settings loaded automatically.

Lastly, both computers allow complete control of mouse speed with Windows XP also including the ability to designate multiple mouse buttons for right and left hand users. The Macintosh mouse, with its single button, neither has, nor needs, such an option.

Contact Apple Computer www.apple.com or Microsoft www.microsoft.com for more information on the operating systems, or stop by PACER's open lab on Tuesdays, noon to 8 p.m., and Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

*The Simon
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Saturdays
10 a.m. to
4 p.m.
Staff can
demon-
strate new
software
for you
and help
answer any
questions
you have.*

New Vision Products in the STC

Simon Technology Center and Freedom of Speech, a Twin Cities company, will have several products for students who have low-vision or are blind to try on Tuesday, April 22, from 4 to 8 p.m. and Saturday, April 26, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at PACER's Simon Technology Center. Two of the products that will be presented are highlighted below. Come check it out!

SAL - A State-of-the-Art Braille Learning System

SAL (Speech Assisted Learning) System by Freedom Scientific is a unique stand-alone Braille learning station. It combines paper Braille overlays, a pressure-sensitive pad, and high-quality synthesized speech for an uncomplicated approach to teaching students Braille. SAL comes with pre-packaged curriculum courseware and has the ability to be customized. The curriculum introduces students to correct formats, spelling, mathematical sequencing, and special Braille symbols. These Braille worksheets are

placed on the touchscreen of the unit. Through a synthesized speech feature, the student listens to spoken tutorials and then is asked questions. The student indicates an answer by pressing on the Braille page or by typing it on the 8-dot notetaker-style keyboard. SAL will then provide spoken feedback on the accuracy of the answer. The SAL System, measuring only 16" x 13" x 1-1/2", comes with a carrying case for easy transport.



Type'n Speak 2000

Type'n Speak 2000 is another tool from Freedom Scientific. It is a 3-pound device that looks like a keyboard and offers a vast array of features and functions to satisfy the needs of students with visual impairments. At a glance, Type'n Speak 2000 will store typed

information, read it back, and allow the user to print it out using either a Braille embosser or a printer. It also has the functionality of a word processor and supports Braille 2.

Type'n Speak 2000 also offers personal data assistant (PDA) capabilities. For busy students, multiple address books and a calendar are available to keep track of telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and appointments. The wide-ranging functionality makes this type of technology very attractive to students and professionals. However, the leading features of Type'n Speak 2000 are the ability to upload and download information into a desktop computer.

In a nutshell it means taking notes anywhere, storing them, and then transferring them later into your desktop computer so you can send them to a friend. You could also download your homework from your desktop computer, take it to school, and make a presentation that deserves an A!

The Simon Technology Center and Freedom of Speech will have several products for students who have low-vision or are blind to try on Tuesday, April 22, 4 to 8 p.m. and Saturday, April 26, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at PACER.

Finally, Computer Games for All Abilities

Continued from page 7

Parents and teachers often call Simon Technology Center staff in search of computer games for individuals with blindness or low vision. A company called ESP Softworks has developed several engaging arcade-style computer games for youth or adults that can be “played by ear.” Free demonstrations are available for some of the games, such as “Alien Outback,” and most programs cost under \$40. ESP Softworks can be contacted at www.espssoftworks.com for more information.

For PACER

Resources

call (800)

537-2237

Resources

The Simon Technology Center has several publications for you to learn more about assistive technology. Call PACER at (952) 838-9000 to order or download from our Web site at www.pacer.org/stc. Back issues of the Computer Monitor are available in pdf and html form from our Web site, as well.

Just Your Type: Alternative Keyboarding Options

This handout gives an overview of keyboarding alternatives for one-handed typists and other people with disabilities who have difficulty using a standard keyboard. It includes a list of devices and software options, including alternative keyboards, software accessibility tools, typing tutorials, and vendor information. 2002. \$3 each. 10 or more copies, \$2.50 each

Opening the Doors of Communication

Learn more about communication tools for your child. This handout covers low to high tech devices, strategies for selecting and implementing communication devices, and a grid of products with descriptions, features, and manufacturers. 2002. \$3 each. 10 or more copies, \$2.50 each

NEW! Really Useful Technology for Students with Learning Disabilities

Technology can help children and adults with learning disabilities. This handout has an extensive list of useful technology, such as writing software, portable devices, and reference tools. 2003. \$3 each. 10 or more copies, \$2.50 each

Voice Recognition Technology

Learn about the latest developments in voice recognition technology and how it can help people with disabilities. This handout includes a cross comparison of voice recognition products on the market today, tips on how to make voice recognition work successfully, and a list of voice recognition vendors, Web sites, and other resources. 2001. \$3 each. 10 or more copies, \$2.50 each

Workshops

Simon Technology Center and AbleNet will be co-sponsoring a Communication Workshop on Wednesday, May 14, 2003, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at PACER Center.

Children with disabilities can communicate! This workshop will discuss the basics of devices, strategies to introduce communication to students with significant disabilities, and the progression of symbol discrimination and choice making. It will cover a variety of devices from low-technology to high-technology options. Hands-on opportunity with communication aids and devices will be provided.

- I. What is Alternative and Augmentative Communication?
- II. Speaking in Social Situations – Hands-On!

More Simon Technology Center workshops and conferences:

4/26/2003

Women in Technology Workshop (for girls with disabilities)
PACER Center, Bloomington
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

4/28 – 4/29 2003

Charting the C's Conference
Sponsored by the Department of Children, Families, and Learning
St. Cloud, Minnesota

5/1/2003

A.T. Manual Training (for parents and professionals)
Spring Valley
6 to 8:30 p.m.

5/14/2003

Introduction to Communication Technology
(for parents and professionals)
PACER Center, Bloomington
9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

III. Small Group Sessions – Hands-On!

- Cool Things You Can Do With BoardMaker
- Enhancing Communication Through Everyday Actions
- Exploring High Tech Devices, including the Gemini, Dynavox, and Vanguard

Space is limited, register early!
To register for the workshop, call PACER at
(952) 838-9000,
(800) 537-2237
(Greater Minnesota), or
(952) 838-0190
(TTY).

An Exiting New Workshop for Girls with Disabilities

*Saturday, April 26, 2003
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.*

IBM Corporation and Simon Technology Center will sponsor a Women in Technology workshop for girls with disabilities in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades.

The workshop is a hands-on opportunity to creatively solve problems and make a presentation using technology. Small groups will be facilitated by women at IBM in technical position, who will show the students that using computers can be fun. The IBM employees will also encourage the girls to continue their study of math and science subjects in order to keep their options open for future careers in technology.

This workshop is free and open to all young women with disabilities in Minnesota currently in sixth, seventh and eighth grades. Please call PACER at (952) 838-9000 for more information.

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



Q: What is “Universal design?” I hear that term, but don’t really understand what it means.

A: Universal design is any product or service designed with many factors considered, including aesthetics, functional options, environmental issues, safety concerns, and cost. Typically, products and activities are designed for the average user. In contrast, universal design is the design of products and environments usable by as many people as possible, with no or limited adaptations.

For example, a standard door is not accessible to everyone. If a large switch is installed in a convenient location, the door is accessible to more people, including some wheelchair users. However, applying “universal design” principles could lead to the installation of sensors that signal the door to open when anyone approaches. The door could then be used by children on skateboards, delivery staff with rolling carts, parents with baby strollers, or persons with disabilities.

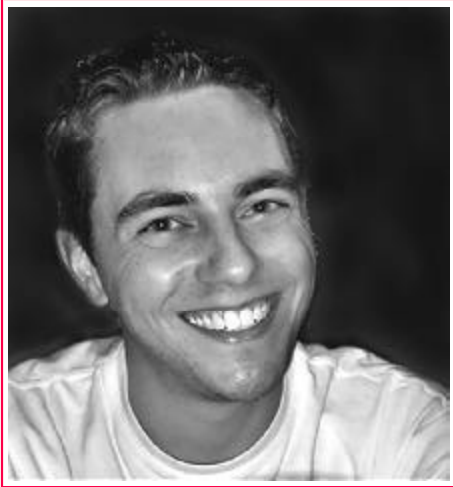
Universal design can also be applied to information technology in the classroom and computer lab. Accessible technology products provide the user with alternative ways to accomplish tasks, so they can choose the method that works best for them with option that are part of the design not added on after-the-fact.

The Simon Technology Center offers training and technical assistance in the Midwest on this topic through a partnership with the Great Lakes ADA & Information Technology Center. Please call Annette Cerreta at (952) 838-9000 if you would like more information.

Q: Are there any software programs incorporating both American Sign Language and English designed for elementary children who are deaf or hearing impaired?

A: While there are a limited number of software programs that contain both American Sign Language and English, the number of programs is increasing.

Staff Profile: Brad Buelow



Brad Buelow is an assistive technology specialist with the Simon Technology Center. He joined the staff in January 2002. Brad works on Project KITE, provides consultations to families, answers assistive technology questions, contributes articles to the *Computer Monitor* newsletter, and does the technical maintenance on technology in the Center. On a previous project, Brad implemented after-school technology programs in two inner city schools Minneapolis. Brad enjoys working with children, families, and professionals, helping them to effectively use technology to enhance their learning, teaching, and living.

Brad is a graduate of Iowa State University with a degree in visual studies and a focus on educational technology. When not at work, Brad enjoys painting, golfing, reading, and playing basketball with his one-year-old nephew. The nephew always wins.

Below are a few that are appropriate for elementary children.

The Great Action Adventure by Silver Lining Multimedia contains close to 200 ASL signs of basic verbs and the related nouns. For example, along with eat, the program teaches common food words such as “apple” and “banana.” The signs are always paired with a clear photo of the object or a video of the verb so that there is no confusion about what is being taught. For more information about this program, which is available for both Macintosh and Windows, and costs about \$70, visit www.silverliningmm.com

IDRT has several new programs available including *ASL Tales and Games for Kids* which contains stories that happen in the neighborhood of Paws, the signing dog. There is a central group of neighborhood children, most of whom are deaf, hard of hearing, or have multiple disabilities, and represent different ethnic groups. They also offer *Con-SIGN-tration 1* and *2*, which are memory games that teach over 250 new words in sign and English. Two *Beginners* books of signs are available: one called *Opposites*, which offers seven different pairs of opposites, and the other called *Happy Birthday*, which teaches words needed at a birthday party.

Several products are in development, including *ASL Songs for Kids*. Prices for these programs range from about \$5 to \$50. For more information about IDRT’s software programs for children, visit their Web site at www.idrt.com.

IDRT also offers the Ultimate American Sign Language Dictionary and Russian Sign Language and Mexican Sign Language translators.



The Computer Monitor

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