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The Monitor

From the Director

A collaborative effort of the Milwaukee Public Schools Department of Special Services Assistive Technology and the Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative

Summer Institute is not far away! Please join us on June 20th and June 21st at a distance education site near you, or at Amherst High School June 22 – 24 and June 27 – 30!

If you have not already noticed, this year's program is available on the WATI website at www.wati.org. You can download the complete program from the training link or view the descriptions online. The registration deadline is May 16th so don't procrastinate!

The Summer Institute will run from June 20 through June 30. This year WATI is offering four distance education workshops, 16 hands-on lab workshops, 12 classroom workshops, 2 make-it-take-it workshops, and one featured speaker workshop. That brings the total to 35 over nine days. For those of you unfamiliar with the WATI Summer Institute, you can register for as many or as few workshops as you would like. Optional college credit will be available to those attending two or more workshops. There is no other place that you can get the same quality and variety of training in such a short period of time. Don't be left out!

The distance education workshops will start the Institute off on June 20 and 21. In an attempt to geographically cover the state, these workshops will be offered in two clusters: CESAs 2, 4, 6, and Hayward Middle School; CESAs 3, 8, 10, and Milwaukee Public Schools.

There will be two workshops on Monday (20th) and two on Tuesday (21st).

The hands-on lab workshops will provide a range of opportunities for the novice AT implementer to the expert. Several assistive and instructional technology companies will join us again this year to provide in depth instruction on using their products. National trainers as well as Wisconsin service providers will conduct other lab workshops. Also this year, we are offering an open lab as part of an advanced Boardmaker workshop for users to spend time with an expert making all those materials you didn't find time to make during the year.

The classroom workshops range from handwriting, augmentative communication, transition, math, handhelds, resources, and assessment. Some address specific areas and others are overviews. One is a two-day workshop.

This year's make-it-take-it workshops will have a specific focus. One will provide you with lots of ideas for making low tech assistive technology for students with mild disabilities. The other will focus on universally designed units for young and cognitively young learners.

Finally, WATI is bringing Judy Sweeney (Onion Mountain Technology) back to Wisconsin as this year's featured speaker. Judy is a nationally known

expert in technology and learning. This year she will address brain-based learning, bringing together current research and years of experience to share implementation strategies. She will explore many aspects of the learning environment including use of color, lighting, sound and music, smells, using digital images and graphics, and memory aids to match students' strengths and needs. Judy will conduct her workshop on Monday, June 27th.

Other news on the WATI front includes the Leadership Institute on April 15th with guest speaker, Jerry Stemach, *Engaging the Older Struggling Reader: Using Start-to-Finish Books to Review Research and Intervention Strategies*. More information is available on the WATI website (www.wati.org).

A new free WATI publication, *Driving with a Disability*, will be available on the web very soon. Check it out and share it with others. Also, we are looking to do one more state buy yet this year. The details are not finalized so watch the website.

Liz Lahm

ORGANIZING THE DISORGANIZED: ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR DISABLED STUDENTS TO BETTER PREPARE THEM FOR CLASS

By Caroline Congdon, Adaptive Technology Resources, Inc. (ATR)

From a very early age, it is impressed upon students to become organized. They are given assignment books, taught to take notes, and told to keep things in order. What happens though when ordinary methods such as the traditional pencil and paper just don't work? What happens to the students who, due to a physical or mental disability, are unable to use those traditional means for staying organized? When the standard methods don't work, there are other ways.

There are several possibilities, ranging in price from a few hundred dollars to several thousand dollars, and ranging in dimension from pocketsize organizers to the size of a small laptop. Each student's needs are going to vary, and what works for one may not work for another. Many devices were developed for one particular disability; however their features make them useful to many other types of students.

For a blind/visually impaired or deaf-blind student there are two very popular options: the *Pac Mate* from Freedom Scientific, and the *Braille Note* from PulseData/Humanware. These devices are similar in function, giving the student a full appointment book/calendar, word processing, calculator, and many other features. These devices can feature speech, Braille, or both, allowing the student to hear and read things that are presented to them. Teachers can share worksheets and other material with students via infrared or compact flash (if an electronic copy of the hand-out exists) which gives them the same access to information at the same time as their peers, with no major adaptation.

Other devices that were primarily

created for the blind, but are also very useful to those with other disabilities include the Parrot Voicemate from Parrot SA in France, and the Voice Diary from VDI Tele-Assist. Again, these two devices are similar in features, but are much more cost-effective. Small in size, (about as large as a cell phone), they offer both speech and visual display options, clock and alarm features, a notepad for students to keep track of assignments, and an appointment book section. These two devices primarily use speech recognition to interact with them. For example, if students are unable to write, but have no problem with verbal skills, they could use one of these units to record (in their own voice) the homework assignments that are due for the next several days, and group them into the dates that they are due. This allows them to learn to prioritize and work on those assignments that are due first, before tackling the ones due at a later date.

Finally, there is a new device that can take the frustration out of note taking for any student with a disability - the *PlexTalk*. This portable CD-player/recorder has many features. A student can use this device to record up to 90 hours of classroom lectures on a single CD disk. Smaller amounts of information can be sent to a compact flash card. Bookmarks and voice tags can be placed directly into recordings to help them review material later. Many textbooks are now coming in the DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System) format. The *PlexTalk* allows students access to these books on CD, allowing them to navigate by

chapter, section, page, and in some cases, even by phrase. This format also enables students to "skim read" just like anyone else. Although this device was designed primarily for the blind, it can be very useful to a student who finds it difficult to handwrite as well as students with dyslexia or poor memory skills who may wish to review information repeatedly.

There are many other features of these devices that make them very useful for students of all ages. The decision to buy one of these devices is a big one, but their proper use can help keep track of even the smallest task and greatly improve study skills.

For more information or training on any of these products, or to purchase these items, please call Adaptive Technology Resources, Inc. at @ 800-770-8474.

About the author: Caroline Congdon is a Product Specialist at Adaptive Technology Resources, Inc. (ATR) in Cedarburg, WI. Caroline provides training for a wide variety of adaptive software and hardware devices for the blind and visually impaired. Besides ATR, Caroline's training experiences include the Badger Association of the Blind in Milwaukee, WI, the Wisconsin School for the Visually Handicapped in Janesville, WI, and Northcentral Technical College in Wausau, WI.

Milwaukee Public Schools Celebrates
“ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY WEEK”
April 11-15, 2005
Sue Loesl, Milwaukee Public Schools

April 11-15, 2005 is “Assistive Technology Week” in the city of Milwaukee! Throughout the week, schools will be invited to in-services, additional Open Lab opportunities in the Assistive Technology Resource Center (ATRC) at the MPS School Support Center, and a poster exhibit of assistive technology used in classrooms throughout the school district. Teachers, staff and support staff have created the posters, which highlight low-to-high-tech tools, adaptations, software and devices. There will also be an assistive technology “scavenger hunt” entitled, “*The Great AT Race*”. Participants will need to search on the Internet, go to the ATRC, and seek out information regarding information on the Assistive Technology program in MPS, answering 10 questions for a great grand prize. This week long event will be the AT event of the year!

Little Rooms, Sensory Buckets and Tunnels: Teachers Create Sensory Experiences for Students
Sue Jans, HI Program and Jaroslaw Wiazowski, VI Program
Milwaukee Public Schools Assistive Technology Team Members



Teachers in Milwaukee Public Schools attended an in-service on Tuesday, March 15, 2005 entitled, "The Low and Highs of HI and VI". One of the areas of discussion included "Little Rooms", a design for a sensory experience and active learning by Dr. Lilli Nielsen. Her vision advised that students with sensory integration issues, including students with hearing and visual impairments, as well as those with autism, can benefit from engaging with sensory opportunities specially created within small spaces such as a square box, a large plastic bin and metal or plastic buckets. With some PVC pipe, Plexiglas with some skillfully drilled holes, pegboard, cable ties and varnished pine boards, plus some carefully chosen items that are visually, auditorily and kinesthetically stimulating, a "Little Room" can be created. When finished, students lay on the "resonance board" (varnished pine board) with their bodies and head partially in the "Little Room". Some of the sensory items may include a mirrored surface, a measuring spoon set, a hard bristle brush, a soft stuffed animal, a wind chime, or a wire mesh strainer. Items placed into the "Little Rooms" are chosen per student as to their preferences. Students can then gaze at the items as they move, use their hands or feet to move the items, as well as listen to the sounds created when items hit each other. The students are to be undisturbed but observed while in the "Little Rooms", in short time spans of around 15 minutes. Plastic garbage bins, "tunnels", or buckets create another means to experience various sensory items. The buckets can be hung from classroom ceilings so that students can get the sensory experience from above, and the tunnels can be placed on the floor so students can crawl through them. For more information on "Little Rooms", see the following websites:
<http://www.lilliputnorthamerica.com/>
<http://www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach/seehear/winter04/active.htm>
<http://www.lilliworks.com>



Online Professional Development Cindy Nankee, CESA 3 WATI Consultant

Online learning is a fast growing movement in the education world today. Universities, businesses, and public schools are all adopting one or more forms of this technology for delivering education and training. Online learning offers flexibility in the time, place, and pace of instruction. The multiple communication modes used for online instruction is a powerful tool and also has the potential to simultaneously reach people with various sensory disabilities. This article is a guide for the professional educator, therapist, principal, administrator, paraprofessional and parent, to various forms of online professional development.

Online learning is found in the form of online product tutorials, webcasts, video streaming, list serve communities, chat instant messaging, *synchronous* or interactive live training sessions, and *asynchronous* interactive through chat and phone contact with teacher and classmates. Some courses are tuition based and may be fairly expensive while others are free and also being recognized for professional development requirements.

Consideration issues when attending or creating online courses include course content, time demands, type of internet access, computer hardware and software needs, and cost. Most require Windows 98 or above, high speed internet access, a media player (free download available), Adobe Reader (free download available), a sound card, and microphone.

The following is a list of resources with a brief discussion. My suggestion is to try one of the free workshops offered by many of the product companies. Often times the instructor will talk you through any technical problems you might have and you are then on your way to experiencing 21st century online learning. Do not try to learn everything at once! Get comfy with the basics and then expand on your learning environments, as you need them. It is so important that we, as professionals, move forward and explore the modern 21st century methods of teaching and learning in order to keep up with our students.

Tutorials

Beginning with low tech there are many tutorials about how to use software applications commonly used in K-12 classrooms. Start by checking product specific websites like *IntelliTools* for tutorials you can follow for independent self-paced learning. The following website offers a variety of software tutorials.

www.internet4classrooms.com/on-line.htm

Webcasts

Kidz Online is a nonprofit educational organization whose mission, vision, and values are dedicated to preparing K-12 students and teachers to live and work in the information age through innovative peer-to-peer technology training distributed using advanced digital technologies. To accomplish this, *Kidz Online* provides hundreds of free streaming videos and lesson plans. Free registration at the site allows users the ability to download these resources for use on their local computer systems and networks. They produce over forty live, interactive video webcasts each year. These webcasts support *Kidz Online* and a variety of other educational and non-profit institutions in their efforts to use 21st century communication tools to connect with national audiences. <http://www.kidzonline.org/edtech/>

Listserv Groups

There are listserv groups to meet almost every interest. Some are by invitation only. Most are monitored for appropriate conduct. Many allow you to sign up for a digest mode which delivers one grouped message daily rather than receiving numerous individual messages each day.

Web Conferencing Programs

WebEx meeting center services enable live meetings online that are effective and economical. The service is a fully hosted solution that includes a choice of either low pay-per-use or flat monthly subscription pricing.

A few companies that are using *WebEx* for live and archived online product demonstrations and trainings include *Dynavox*, *Kurzweil*, and *TextHelp* to name a few. Simply go to the training link on their website to find the list of times and topics of *WebEx* trainings available. After you register they email you a website link and password. Most require high-speed Internet access, a sound card, speakers, and a microphone. Your instructor will communicate to you live via a toll free phone number or through an internet phone and you communicate back via your microphone or type your questions and responses into the chat box.

<http://www.webex.com>

Continued...

Online Professional Development, Continued...



IvoLize is a company similar to *WebEx*. The image shows the *IvoLize* Conference layout. The numbers 1 thru 4 show the basic areas of the room. Numbers on the image are explained below. <http://www.ivoLize.com>

1. This is the main or browser area of the conference room and is where web pages or slides are shown to participants.
2. The bottom left portion of the room has two parts. The upper section shows a list of participants in the room. The bottom portion has a mic icon with a slide bar that allows you to raise or lower mic volume. The second icon depicts a speaker and it has a volume slide bar as well.
3. This area contains the chat conversation.
4. Just below the text chat area is the edit field where you type your chat comments

Tapped In is a free Web-based environment for professional development providers and educators. *Tapped In* offers cost-effective, high-quality professional development and support to teachers. <http://tappedin.org/tappedin/>

Talking Communities offers a multimedia interactive synchronous web conferencing tool. The welcome room is free and open to all, with private rooms available at a cost. <http://www.talkingcommunities.com/>

Blackboard 5SM is a comprehensive and flexible e-Learning software platform that delivers a course management system, enabling users to collect, share, reuse, and manage content. <http://www.blackboard.com>

Free Professional Development Workshops

Teacher-to-Teacher Workshops is a new free professional development web site for teachers and administrators provided by the U.S. Department of Education. It presently includes more than 12 workshops featuring training in reading and language-arts instruction, science, and math, data-driven decision making, and NCLB compliance. <http://www.paec.org/teacher2teacher>

Online Professional Development Resources

Critical Issues: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) is a vast resource of articles <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/methods/technlgy/te1000.htm>

Professional Development in a Technological Age: New Definitions, Old Challenges, New Resources, Cathy Miles Grant http://ra.terc.edu/publications/TERC_pubs/tech-infusion/prof_dev/prof_dev_frame.html

Advantages and Disadvantages to using Different Technologies Tools <http://www.ncrtec.org/pd/lwtres/aadodtt.pdf>

National Center access current and past newsletters Educational Technology News <http://www.ncrel.org/tech/etnews>

Google search professional development for a vast resource of articles and information <http://www.eschoolnews.com>

U.S. Department of Education website is also an excellent resource. Again, do a search for online professional development <http://www.ed.gov>

National Education Association <http://www.nea.org>

A new professional development web site for teachers and administrators <http://www.teacherquality.us/>

A nonprofit educational research and development organization. Concord creates interactive materials that exploit the power of information technologies. www.concord.org

EASI provides online training on Accessible Information Technology for Persons with Disabilities <http://easi.cc/>

Revised Mission Statement for WATI

Several minor revisions were made to the mission statement that drives the *Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative*. The revised statement is as follows:

The Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative ensures that every child in Wisconsin who may need assistive technology (AT) has equal and timely access to appropriate assessment and the provision and implementation of needed AT devices and services.

The goal is to improve the outcomes and results for children with disabilities, birth to 21, through the use of assistive technology to access services, curriculum, and school and community activities. The project increases the capacity of early intervention agencies, school districts, and their partners to provide assistive technology by making training and technical assistance available throughout Wisconsin.

Any questions can be directed to Liz Lahm, WATI Director, at elahm@cesa6.k12.wi.us.

Authentic Voices of America

Each summer you can find a wide array of camps on the campuses of the University of Wisconsin system. However, one specialty camp that is held at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater offers a life changing experience for youth who rely on communication devices to communicate. *Authentic Voices of America* is a weeklong residential camp for young people age 12-21 with communication devices. This year's dates are July 10-15. It combines fun activities with discussions about the issues that people with speech disabilities face in the real world. The camp was founded and is directed by an AAC user, Jon Feucht. Jon and his staff, which includes other AAC users, mentor the campers to show them how to use over all communication to accomplish the best life outcomes for themselves.

For further information on *Authentic Voices of America*, go to <http://www.uww.edu/conteduc/camps/voices.htm> or e-mail Jon Feucht at jonfeucht@hotmail.com.

Used Equipment Marketplace

WATI manages a Used Equipment Marketplace that offers a place for individuals to list items they would like to sell or donate when they no longer need them. Likewise, the *Used Equipment Marketplace* is a place for an individual to look for a needed item. There is no charge for this service.

The current list of available items is located on our website at www.wati.org. The form to list something on the Used Equipment Marketplace is also on our website, or you can call to request one. Forms must be submitted to WATI at the following address:

Andrea Britz
WATI
Polk Library
800 Algoma Blvd
Oshkosh, WI 54901

Please note, WATI does not physically collect or keep these items. We are a liaison between the seller and the buyer. If you are interested in a product, contact WATI to receive the contact information for the person selling the item. Tell them what item you are interested in and they will give you the appropriate information.

If you have any questions, you can call Andrea at 800-991-5576 or email her at abritz@cesa6.k12.wi.us.



Monitor Schedule
September 15
November 15
January 15
March 15
May 15

Websites to Visit

Articles due the first of the month

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We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.wati.org

One Million Books Available with a Click

Can everything in the Library of Congress and more be digitized and made universally available? According to Brewster Kahle, chairman of the non-profit organization called the *Internet Archive*, the answer is yes. His company is currently digitizing everything they can to preserve world knowledge and make it universally accessible to all. In collaboration with many organizations, including the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian, he is in the process of digitizing the Library of Congress' 138 million-item collection, plus other collections not typically in the library. When legally possible, these collections are available to anyone at www.archive.org. This includes texts, audio, moving images, software, and archived web pages.

One project *Internet Archive* is spearheading is the One Million Book project.

Through this, one million books will be digitized by the end of 2005 and made available on the web. The project is piloting a program that makes them available through bookmobiles. The first bookmobile cost about \$15,000 and included a satellite dish, printer, binder, cutter, and access to the collection of one million books. Traveling across the United States, patrons could 'borrow' a book from the library. The bookmobile staff would download the book, print it, bind it, and give it to the patron. The cost to do all of that is about \$1.00 per hundred pages. Several of these bookmobiles have been launched internationally, including one in rural Uganda.

Currently the interface to the archive is the Way Back Machine. At this time the interface provides access to a great number of things but

not everything, though the project is working toward universal access. There are a great number of things you can use to enhance your teaching, and the digital books can be used in conjunction with any of a number of text-to-speech programs, giving access to information through audio as well as print. Explore this site!

The above information came primarily from a Library of Congress lecture by Brewster Kahle on the Digital Future. If interested, it is a free download available at audible.com. You have to sign up to be a member but it is free. Search for free audio. It is fascinating to listen to and think about the implications for students with disabilities.

Contacting WATI ...

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