



The Monitor



From the Director

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SAVE THE DATE!

**PODD
(Pragmatic
Organization of
Dynamic
Displays)
Training**

July 27-31, 2009

**See page 3 for
more
information!**

Resolute or Resolution?

It is that time of year again. After the decorations come down and the party items are stored, we collapse onto our chair and think, "What now?" What resolution (promise, pledge, oath) should I make? This is personal goal-setting 101. Each news show and magazine article blasts us with the details. Lose weight, exercise more, and get our finances under control. But statistics indicate that a resolution almost always is broken. A Scranton, NJ study in 2002 found that 5%-10% of resolutions were followed a year later. More than 46% of resolutions are broken in the first six months. What is the point?

The point is that as the WATI state project nears the end of its funded cycle, each one of us must do more than make a New Year's resolution to continue providing assistive technology support in the coming

year. We must each be part of building a real action plan to continue training, providing technical assistance, access to tools, and collegial support so each student has access to the tools and services that will support their successful participation.

When WATI began sixteen years ago we plugged AT into the model of special education we all understood. It was primarily a deficit model. The student was failing in special education or in general education with special education support. So we considered how assistive technology might build the bridge to the student's success. We used our assessing student need for assistive technology model (ASNAT) to consider strengths and deficits of the students in a specific task area. What technology support could we add to build on the student's strength and how would the tool minimize the student's deficit within

the targeted task? How must we change the environment instructionally and physically to support this addition? This process, when thoughtfully used, still supports a team to sort through issues that impede a student's success. The most important part of this process is the follow-through and data collection that takes place with the student after the ASNAT meeting is held. But still, this was primarily used when a student was failing. What would happen if we now used the same system proactively to look at the school environment?

Let's be *resolute* (firm, unyielding, determined, definite) to provide supports that student need to succeed. We may choose to use/adapt the ASNAT model to look at the environment prior to student failure. This is the universal design approach. Build the

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From the Director (continued)

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school/work/community environment that supports more students by making available more options and tools. Watch for the new 5th edition of the ASNAT manual to be posted at the end of June. We also will list opportunities for training on the ASNAT model by the authors of this work. They can help districts to use this model to assess not only student need but also the *System* need for supports. For more information on UDL and how it fits into supporting students of need under NCLB and IDEA criteria see *OSEP Ideas that work* website <http://www.osepideasthatwork.org/UDL/index.asp>.

Remember to be resolute about creating environments that support all students learning and to support partnership with your CESA AT person to make this happen.

Other WATI News

State-Wide Leadership Group Trainings

We had over 130 participants at our first of two yearly Leadership Institutes. The topic was NIMAS and implementing the Accessible Instructional Materials Acts (AIM). We thank the AIM consortium for



providing Scott Marfilius to work through the issues and help describe the processes. We also thank Jeremiah Holiday

and the staff from WAMP (Wisconsin Accessible Media

Production) for their participation. The discussion was lively. We have added an area on the WATI webpage for NIMAS discussion. We recommend that you join the NIMAS interest group listserv at <http://nimas.cast.org/>. This group goes in-depth on the issues of implementation and shares their experiences. For those of you who missed this presentation, others will be offered in the state. Watch our website for locations or contact the WATI consultant in your region for information. You also may view Wisconsin's twelve step process at <http://www.wamp.k12.wi.us/12steps.html>.

The last training of the year will be March 6th. We will be switching gears to look at the needs of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) users. Debby McBride, M.S., CCC-SLP will be our guide on this journey into using a toolkit for AAC interventions and using the toolkit approach for assessment. A follow-up distance education (DE) session is an optional support to implementation. Many thanks go to Patti Drescher, our WATI AT consultant from CESA 7, for her facilitation of this project. The information for this session is included in this issue of the Monitor. Sign-up now! This is going to great.

Website

The new WATI website is up and running. We hope you visit it and give us your feedback. All the products WATI has developed through-out the past sixteen years are on the free download page. We also will have a product page

for those of you who, even though it is free, would rather buy it all put together in an attractive package.



There will be links to CESA AT websites and continued posting of trainings through-out the state on AT-related topics.

WATI Initiated State Buys

We currently have two special pricing opportunities with Lab Resources. The discount on Board Maker software has been extended, and a new awesome deal for Dragon Naturally Speaking (DNS) version 10 has been created through a partnership with LAB Resources and Nuance. The individual user price is \$66. To locate the flyer go to <http://www.wati.org/?pageLoad=content/services/special-buys/index.php> on our website.

LAB resources also has bundled the DNS with Linda Baldwin's fabulous training supports. We know that teachers not only need tools but must have training to be successful at supporting students. Nuance has also developed free online supports to assist with appropriate implementation. On January 27th at 2:00 pm Eastern you can learn about how educators across the country are supporting student use of Dragon Naturally Speaking v10 to access curriculum. To register, go to <http://app.marketing.nuance.com/e/er.aspx?s=274&lid=2067&elq=CB09A6853C8E42>

PODD Training—July 27-31, 2009

Submitted by Shelly Weingarten, WATI and AT Consultant, CESA #1



“I have something to say”
Wouldn't you love to hear that from your students with significant motor and communication challenges? Are you looking for a way to focus language and communication skills separately from motor skills? Consider this: **Partner- Assisted Communication** with a **PODD** communication book. Have you heard about PODD? No, it is not another new gadget from Apple. It is 15 years worth of work by Gayle Porter and her colleagues in Melbourne, Australia. Linda Burkhart has been working with Gayle for a number of those years.

When switch access is difficult for a user and they use a communication partner to do the scanning for them in a similar way to a communication aid, this is what Gayle Porter and Linda Burkhart call **Partner Assisted Scanning**. Partner-Assisted Scanning has proven very effective to use with **PODD communication books**.

PODD stands for Pragmatically Organized Dynamic Displays. One way to describe them is to

think about a high-tech device that has dynamic displays, and picture this PODD as a paper book of dynamic displays.

PODD communication books are a systematic approach to present vocabulary that doesn't disappear and can be built upon, instead of replaced. Burkhart and Porter (2006) discuss how this effectively supports learning because:

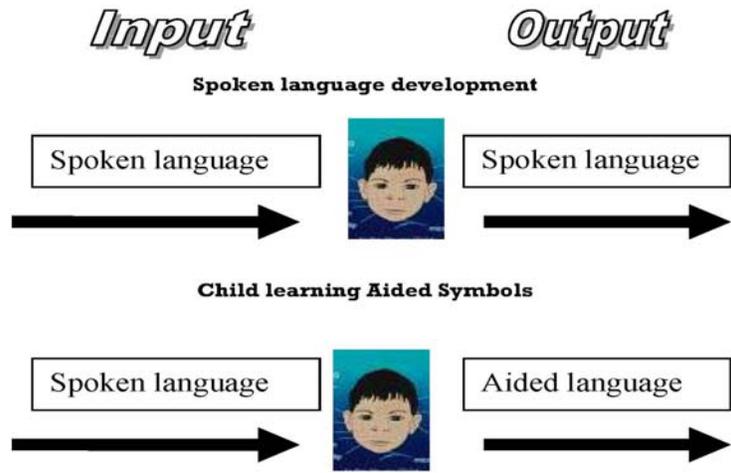
- The brain builds understanding based upon patterns
- Working memory can only deal with a limited amount of information at a time
- Routine placement and availability of symbols assists to develop automaticity for more efficient location of language

I think a picture is worth 1,000 words; the image below may help you understand why we need PODD.

“When we talk about spoken language development children are immersed from birth, in a rich environment of language users modeling the pragmatics, semantics and syntax of their language. The opportunity to be truly immersed for children using aided language is rare. Children learning to use aided symbols frequently experience a significant discrepancy between the language used by others in their environment (speech) and the language they are expected to use. In these circumstances, children must problem solve how to use a language that they have rarely seen used to communicate.” (Porter, G. 2008)

Using a PODD gives the partner and the student a way for children to be immersed in aided-language stimulation in the way they will use language. It is for talking about what happened on the weekend

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PODD Training (continued) / AT Across the Lifespan Conference

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when you went on an exciting overnight, as well as the mundane that is happening everyday. A PODD is not something you take out when the speech therapist comes 2 times a week.

Learning how to use a PODD using partner-assisted communication is like learning a foreign language. The results are that our children with significant motor and communication challenges can learn to say, "I have something to tell you."

This summer Jill Gierach and I had the great pleasure of hearing Gayle Porter speak, along with Linda Burkhart, about partner-assisted scanning using PODD Communication Books. We spent three days at Easter Seals in DuPage, Illinois. When we left we knew this was an opportunity that more people needed to be trained in. We want the children with significant motor and communication challenges in Wisconsin to say, "I have something to tell you."

This summer at George Williams College in Williams Bay, Wisconsin (on beautiful Lake Geneva), CESA #2 will sponsor a week-long conference of train-the-trainers. The dates are July 27-31, 2009. Watch for details at the WATI www.wati.org or CESA #2 www.cesa2.k12.wi.us website.

To find out more about PODD Communication Books and Partner-Assisted Scanning, please see: →

Important Lending Library Dates

Mark your calendar now!

The last date to request library items is April 17.

All resources must be back to WATI by May 15.

The library closes for the summer on May 29.

[Partner Assisted Communication Strategies for children who face multiple challenges](#)

→ [PODD Communication Books](#)



**AT Across the Lifespan Conference—
December 3 & 4, 2009**

The ATALC (Assistive Technology Across the Lifespan Conference) committee has been meeting monthly to develop an innovative program for December 2009. This two-day event will be a joint effort between WisTech, Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute, Milwaukee Public Schools and Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs).

The conference will be held at the Wilderness Territory, Glacier Canyon Lodge in the Wisconsin Dells.

A conference website will contain all important information . It will be functioning before spring. The site address will be: www.atacrosslifespan.org . Watch for it ! Cindy Nankee, CESA 3 and WATI AT consultant is the conference chairperson. She can be reached at cnankee@cesa3.k12.wi.us for further information.

Using AAC with Young Children: Where's the Magic?

**Submitted by Judi Cumley,
WATI and AT Consultant, CESAS**

We know and experience the power of communicating and anyone who has had the pleasure of being around typically developing young children get the sense that it is truly magical. Young children typically learn 5 new concepts each and every day. They talk about them, incorporate them into their play, ask questions, and integrate them into their own complex cognitive and linguistic system. Now, what about our young children who need an AAC system? I know from experience that I never added 5 new concepts a day to a preschooler's system, so how was that child going to learn and talk about those new concepts? Janice Light from Penn State has conducted extensive research on the development of language of young children who use AAC systems. I want to share some of her exciting findings which were shared most recently in November at ASHA and are also available on the AAC-RERC website.

When we start to build the language of young children, our goal is to build all of their communication functions, not just wants and needs, but to engage in joint attention and be an active social participant with others; peers, siblings, parents, teachers. Often we start by presenting a desired object or activity to the child and encourage them to request it. The problem with that

is that the interaction goes nowhere! After the child receives the toy, juice, video, there's nothing more to say. Light and her researchers have instead focused on using active engaging contexts that are motivating to children, provide lots of communication opportunities, are highly interactive and occur with a high frequency. Their focus is on social interactions so that activities they used might include songs and music, shared reading and a



variety of play activities.

In an earlier study, Light and her colleagues presented typical young children with the opportunity to create a communication system for another child who couldn't talk. It should come as no surprise that the children's creative AAC systems looked nothing like the systems adults create! Their systems looked more like toys with bright colors, familiar characters (Disney, Sesame Street, etc.), silly social comments; in other words they were highly engaging and appealed to other young children. Taking that information, the Penn State team used a combination of

low and high tech systems, but they added fun engaging components such as decorations, bright colors, sound effects, laughter and giggles, different voices, musical instruments. The advantage of having a visually attractive fun-looking and sounding device is that it naturally acts as a "magnet" to other young children. They also incorporated the play into the devices, so that a child could play "telephone" using the device which would have ringing tones, "Hello", "Who is this?", "Hi Grandma", "I'm just fine, how are you", "Gotta run, talk to you later", etc. They also used low tech systems that became part of the play, so that a symbol of a bus or other vehicle came off of the display and was incorporated into the play.

Young children learn concepts in context, not in isolation and yet we present concepts with AAC symbols that are taken out of context, use adult referents and are presented in a way that is foreign to how children view the world. Light specifically referenced the symbol for "want". Children in their study found the usual PCS symbol disturbing and wanted to know why the person's hands were cut off! When children were given the opportunity to draw "want", they showed two children together, one holding a desirable object and the other reaching for it. Kids also organize concepts very differently from adults. They tend to use personalized groupings based on familiar events or activities. For instance they might put the baby

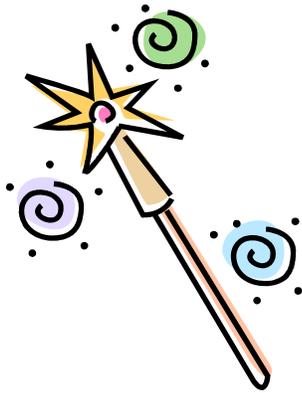
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Using AAC with Young Children: Where's the Magic? (continued)

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with a mommy, crib, bottle and diaper, but they wouldn't organize the baby with "people".

Penn State has looked extensively at the way young children learn and use communication systems. Even typically developing young



children have difficulty communicating using a typical grid layout. However, when presented with a visual scene, either a digital picture or pictograph that represents a familiar environment, children were able to communicate about that environment using messages that were embedded within the scene. For instance a bookshelf, bed, toy chest, closet, lamp, etc. with appropriate messages under those images is more "transparent" to a young child than a grid layout with the same vocabulary. Light and her team found that all of the young children in their study who started using visual scenes to communicate were able to later use a combination of a visual scene and grid display (hybrid) and some were able to transfer to a traditional grid display. While you might think this type of display

automatically means we need to use a high tech device to display a visual scene, lower cost options such as the LEO or 7 Level Communication Builder (use the 8 or 16 grid option for programming, with the 1 message window frame) would work as well.

Light reflects that often times our language interactions with young children are spent teaching the child how to use their communication system. If we take a minute to think about that, "... there is no inherent value in learning how to use a system; the only value in learning a system is to communicate effectively". (Light, 2005) We need to make sure we shift our focus from using the communication system to really communicating! Navigating to new pages added an especially difficult component to young children so when a child was required to navigate to a particular page set for an activity, the adult often helped the child or modeled the steps. They also represented page sets by taking screen shots of the actual page so that the child was looking at mini page symbol rather than a symbol representing a category.

Modeling by the adults, regardless of the activity or demands was a vital part of the study. Because the study incorporated parents into the project, they had to teach them the foundations of good language modeling. Parents learned to use appropriate speech models (expansion), wait for the child to communicate, always respond to the child's efforts and monitor the

child's progress. She describes the procedure they used for encouraging communication:

We'll make use of expectant delay for kids that need that, focusing our attention on the child, maintaining eye contact with them, using expectant body posture and facial expressions to encourage them that it is an opportunity to communicate and they need to fulfill that turn. That's a very powerful way to encourage kids to interact. (Light, 2005).

There is magic in witnessing a young child's foray into active, social communication. By thinking like a child, we have a better chance of "pulling this particular rabbit" out of the hat! To read the full transcript or view the webcast



of Janice Light's presentation, *AAC Interventions to Maximize Language Development for Young Children* go to the AAC-RERC website:

http://www.aac-rerc.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=135&Itemid=152

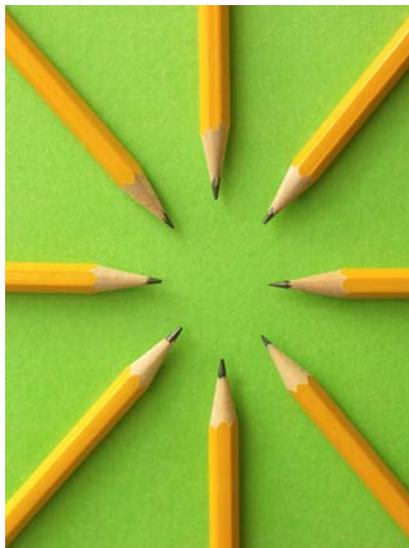
New Support For Writing

Submitted by Susan D. Loesl, ATR-BC Adaptive Art Specialist/Art Therapist Milwaukee Public Schools

Can we see what is wrong with this sentence? Not everyone can. There are a number of computer-based options available for persons who struggle with writing, such as word prediction and spell checkers. But an issue that continues to challenge writers is identifying misspelled or grammatically incorrect words when the words are right for a different context. According to the article in the September 16, 2008 *The Jerusalem Report*, Ziv Hellman writes that "most of us have become accustomed to relying on computerized spellcheckers to catch and correct spelling errors - and consider them a stroke of luck when compared to the alternative: leafing through a dictionary." But standard spellcheckers leave much to be desired. Consider, for example, the sentence: "My idle holiday wood bee on an island." Inputting that sentence into Word's spell checker might result in: "My idle holiday wood bee on an island." In 2007, Ginger Software developed a program that goes beyond traditional spellcheckers (such as Word) to use sentence context to help the writer create more meaningful and grammatically correct sentences. This new software is called "Ginger Spell" and is available in a free downloadable beta version (PC only) until the

tested version is available free in mid 2009 at www.gingersoftware.com.

Through one click of a button, a writer can highlight up to four lines of text at a time and have the text grammatically spell- and grammar-checked. The software offers options based on color highlighting—for example, blue is for the "regularly wrong words" and correctly spells and/or grammatically corrects them automatically; red means that there are too many context options and the writer will need to choose. The Speech Feedback option lets the writer hear the sentences to make the correct choices. Regardless of "creative spelling", this program can "see" through the errors to help rewrite the sentence based on context. The beta version does not have the Speech Feedback option, but the site demo shows the potential.



Ginger Software founder and chief executive, Yael Karov, has spent much of the past year working



with therapists and dyslexia organizations, as well as dyslectics themselves, to understand how dyslectics and others process writing. Not only will this software help those with dyslexia, but it will also be able to help others who may have been identified with writing difficulties, by reaching the writer on visual, cognitive and auditory levels not usually available with other supports.

Two teachers outside our state have beta-tested this product and were able to utilize Ginger Spell's unique features. We are looking forward to the release of the full program and implementing its use with students in Milwaukee Public Schools.

Lending Library News

WATI Lending Library News... from the desk of Connie Isackson

WATI's new online catalog is up and running! Check out the WATI online catalog at www.wati.org. **Select Library. Set up your account.** Your email address will be your user name/login name. The password you select is case sensitive. After setting up your account, select **Catalog** to view the WATI collection. **Click on the subject area desired. View titles by clicking on the titles in blue.** Scroll down to the bottom of the page to "**Make a Request.**" **Select the desired date** for the resource giving a couple of days notice. Provide the **age and disability of the student** you will be using the resource with and then "**Confirm Order Details.**" Your order will be then be sent to Connie Isackson at the WATI Lending Library. She will e-mail you to confirm the order and the send date. Resources are checked out for 5 weeks.

Please note:

- WATI is no longer able to provide return shipping for free but is able to provide shipping to your school at no cost. **Patrons are now responsible for return shipping of resources back to WATI.** Please have your resources back to WATI by the due date.
- The library collection is available for checkout by only Wisconsin LEA public school educators for children ages 3 to 18 who have IEPs and are enrolled in public schools, or for students age 19-21 who are enrolled in a Wisconsin LEA school program and have an IEP.
- The last date to order library items is April 17. All resources must be back by May 15, as the library closed on May 29.

If you have questions, call or e-mail Connie Isackson at 800-991-5576 or isackson@cesa2.k12.wi.us.

Upcoming Trainings

March 6, 2009

[Real Talk: Aug Comm Evaluations Simplified](#)
Glacier Canyon at Wilderness Resort, Wisconsin Dells

March 12, 2009

AIM High— a NIMAS/AIM workshop
Portage, CESA #5
http://web.cesa5.k12.wi.us/departments/sped_AT_professionallevel.cfm

Workshop information and flyers can be found at the WATI website <http://www.wati.org/?pageLoad=content/services/learning/index.php> or by contacting your local WATI consultant.

Our Mission ...



WATI assists LEA school districts in their responsibility to ensure 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 Mission of the Milwaukee Public Schools is to ensure that maximum educational opportunities are provided for all students to reach their highest potential so that:

1. Students achieve their educational and employment goals, and
2. Parents choose the Milwaukee Public Schools to educate their children.