The Monitor

Summer Institute June 19-21, Amherst

Now Accepting Registrations

Visit www.wati.org

From the Director

As we move from winter to spring we begin to think about the next school year. Even though it is a good four months away we are asked to make decisions that will impact what we do in the fall. Some of you will be asked for a 2006-2007 operating budget. And most likely you have been told that dollars are tight and your funds will, at best, stay the same as this year. So how do you make the funds stretch so you can accomplish all you would like to do?

This is the time of year when Directors of Special Education and other administrators often miraculously find funds that have to be spent by June 30, the end of the fiscal year. Put together a little wish list with a short rationale and present it to them. If they don't know you need it and how it can help your students, they will never think of you when they are looking for good ways to spend those final dollars. If you get something purchased for you this year you have all the more money for next.

One of the items on your wish list could be a registration for WATI's Summer Institute. Check out our 23 workshop offerings on our website (www.wati.org). This year we are offering a discount for school districts. If five registrations are received at the same time on one purchase order the cost is only $500, instead of $625 (materials fees for sessions are not included and must be added to the purchase order). This is a great savings, and a great way to increase the knowledge and skills of multiple staff in a district. Send the whole AT team! A flyer with

Stretch your AT dollars this spring.

information about this discount is available on the WATI website under Training. One or two graduate credits will be available again this year. You must attend two days of training for each credit.

So as we move to warmer weather, think spring by springing into action with your administrators. See if you can capture some funding for AT and for AT training!

And enjoy Spring!

Liz Lahm

Have You Seen the Neo?

Have You Tried the Neo?

Have You Met Neo?

By Mary Williamson, MPS

What a difference the right device can make! Sabrina was very excited. She had just used the new Neo portable word processor to copy her DOL assignment

with 100% accuracy.

Sabrina has low vision and learning delays, which make producing written work more of a challenge for her. She had been using the Alpha Smart 2000 portable keyboard. Her Vision Teacher had provided the large print

letter and number stickers to adapt the keyboard for Sabrina's vision.

The Neo is like the Alpha Smart; however, it has a 33% larger screen so you can change the font size to show 1 to 6 lines at a time. For Sabrina, this allowed

Summer Institute: Something For Everyone

There are many ways to look at the line-up of Summer Institute sessions. Here are a few:

AAC/Communication/Language

- Let's Communicate – Intro to AAC!
- AAC – So Many Options
- Getting Kids Talking with Augmentative Communication
- Visual Support Strategies for Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Language and Literacy Strategies for Young Children, Their Parents, and Providers Using Adapted Books

Birth-8

- Early and Struggling Writers Find the Right Words with Clicker 5
- Introduction to AT Assessment for Birth-3
- Language and Literacy Strategies for Young Children, Their Parents, and Providers Using Adapted Books
- Storytelling with Digital Cameras, Building Worksheets
- Make Picture Power-Packed Lessons

Assessment

- Technology Accommodations For Testing: Today and Tomorrow
- Phonemic Assessment: How to Assess Non-verbal Students
- Assessment Tools for Assistive Technology
- Introduction to AT Assessment for Birth-3

Mild Disabilities and Universal Design for Learning

- Storytelling with Digital Cameras, Building Worksheets
- The Shifting Paradigm of Using Assistive Technology for All Students
- Classroom Reality: One Size Does NOT Fit All
- Introduction to Accessible Technology in Schools
- High Tech Writing
- Using Kurzweil 3000

Autism/CD

- Handwriting for Students with Autism and/or Visual Motor/ Fine Motor Deficits

- Visual Support Strategies for Autism Spectrum Disorder

Writing

- Handwriting for Students with Autism and/or Visual Motor/ Fine Motor Deficits
- High Tech Writing
- Early and Struggling Writers Find the Right Words with Clicker 5
- Storytelling with Digital Cameras, Building Worksheets
- Make Picture Power-Packed Lessons

Assistive Technology Continuum

- Assistive Technology in the IEP for Transition
- Supporting Students in Elementary School Using Assistive Technology
- Wonderful World of AT
- The Shifting Paradigm of Using Assistive Technology for All Students
- Hands On with FREE Resources for AT and IT
- Resource Retrieval Revival: Let the Websites Scroll

Neo Continued

her to use the large size font she needed to adequately see her work to read and correct her typing. This feature is also very useful for students with typical vision because they can see more lines on the screen before scrolling down. This makes it quicker and easier to review and revise their work.

Sabrina enjoys working on her personal word processor. Her printing is slower, requires more effort and is more difficult to read. She is very motivated to use the Neo. And like other Alpha Smarts, it is small and lightweight. She can conveniently

carry it with her wherever she needs to work. Plug in the cord to a compatible computer (with USB plug), and it is simple to send work into a computer file to print. The Neo is also sturdy and low maintenance; requiring occasional fresh AA batteries.

Like the Alpha Smart, Neo has 8 separate files that allow Sabrina to save 8 different assignments before downloading. Or 8 different students can take turns typing their assignments in an individual file. Command keys make it easy to Send, Clear a file, Check Spelling, or change font size.

Both the Alpha Smart and Neo word

processors make group projects easier. Sabrina's class likes to write group stories on the current classroom theme. They can sit together around a large table, each using his or her Alpha Smart, Neo, or Tough Book Communication device to write sentences, which are sent to a Microsoft document. Pictures are added; then the students make books to take home to reinforce their learning.

Neo is definitely worth getting to know. Why not contact your AT resource to see if a trial loaner is available. You will be pleasantly surprised at the difference a Neo can make.

Reading A to Z Assignment

By Ann Marie Markon, Diagnostic Teacher and Technology Specialist

Milwaukee Public Schools purchased a three year site license to Reading A to Z (readinga-z.com) in the spring of 2005. The site offers valuable resources for both regular and special education teachers in the area of literacy. Teachers can use the site to supplement reading activities in the classroom and increase the variety of texts available to students to read.

The Reading A to Z website offers books in .pdf format (Adobe Reader). The books are leveled by age/grade and reading ability. The levels A through Z are appropriate for students from the pre-kindergarten level through 6th grade. At each level both fiction and non fiction titles are available.

Along with the titles, teachers will also find guided reading lesson plans and worksheets to use with the students. The sessions (lessons) for teaching the texts usually take about 15 minutes and work with the students on skills such as building prior knowledge, phonics, word structure, prediction, and other comprehension skills.

Teachers using the site within the district find that presenting the students with books they can easily take home

http://www.readinga-z.com

and keep is a good motivational tool. The students enjoy the variety of stories. In the special education realm, the non fiction books can easily be used as a high interest / low vocabulary text for older students who may find reading a regular text book difficult.

Staff members at Milwaukee Public Schools who are using the site are finding a lot of tools to use within the classroom. Books are only one feature of the site. Teachers can also access flashcards, benchmark books for assessments, passages to assess fluency, and graphic organizers.

Teachers in MPS also have access to the Reading A to Z sister site, RAZ Kids. RAZ Kids offers audio versions of some of the texts found at the Reading A to Z site. Teachers can use the site to assign books at a specific level to students and teachers can monitor the progress of students as they read and listen to assigned books.

At the site, a student can choose to listen to a story or read a story on their own. After reading or listening to a story, the student takes a short compre-

hension quiz. The student is given feedback about how they did and the site keeps track of the student's score so that the teacher can check on progress.

For struggling readers, the RAZ Kids site offers an alternate means of accessing books and literature. Because the books offered at the RAZ Kids site are also available to download from Reading A to Z, students can have a copy of the book to take home and read on their own after hearing the text on the RAZ Kids site. This site will allow many special needs students to access the same curriculum as classmates.

For those interested in getting more information about the Reading A to Z site, non members can take a tour and view sample books, worksheets, and lesson plans. Non members can also view a sample book on the RAZ Kids site.

For struggling readers, the RAZ Kids site offers an alternate means of accessing books and literature.

WATI Used Equipment Marketplace

The WATI Used Equipment Market Place is a clearinghouse for individuals or agencies that wish to buy, sell, donate, loan or rent assistive technology for individuals with disabilities. This free service is intended for

SALE

any equipment valued at more than $25.00. To sell, locate, rent, donate, buy, or loan equipment visit the WATI website at

http://www.wait.org, complete the UEM form and return it to WATI. WATI exchanges the seller's contact information with the buyer. WATI does not house the equipment. For more information visit the website or contact Kelly Brodhagen at (800) 991-5576 or email her at kbrodhag@cesa6.k12.wi.us.

Not All Visuals Are Created Equal!

By Glenis Benson, Ph.D., Autism Consultant (http://www.asd-doc.com)

By now, most who support persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASDs) know the value of visuals. Temple Grandin drove home the need in her insightful, now ten year old book, Thinking in Pictures. Her statement, to the effect that *"if you cannot make a picture in your head of the word, the person with the ASD will not understand it"* single handedly altered the way I personally understand and consult for persons with ASD. Add to that her pronouncement that she can retain or comprehend *no more than 3 verbal directives* at a time and you understand that we must augment the verbal signal when interacting with persons with ASD. Time timers, schedules, calendars, checklists are all examples of visuals that help the person understand expectations and upcoming events; they make **concrete** the abstract concepts for which one cannot 'make a picture in one's head.' But Temple tells us more. **Processing** in persons with ASD often is delayed; they may hear the signal but usually there is a lag in their ability to respond. The reasons for this are too numerous to discuss herein, however, suffice it to say that we must also accommodate and plan for these processing delays.

But, many who support persons with ASD have understood the need for visuals to mean *sign language.* The adoption of sign language for persons with ASD as a receptive or an expressive means truly is less than ideal. Yes, sign language is visual and at the ready, but that's about where the good news stops!

- Signs are incredibly abstract, both to form and to comprehend.

- Signs are fleeting; the signal is not stable so once you've made the sign the signal disappears because your hands drop to your sides…think back to the processing delays.

- Signs are far too difficult for some given their motor limitations

- Sign language has a very small audience (few understand) in comparison to a stable visual system (e.g., icons and/or print)

- Signs look different depending upon whether you are the one making them or you are the one looking at them.

- Signing can be incredibly distracting (a negative shared by a self advocate with this consultant)

Stable (not fleeting like sign language) visual systems are necessary to optimally support persons on the spectrum. Such systems are necessary both for comprehension and expression. Furthermore, visual supports are lifelong supports; resist the urge to wean them off these accommodations. The use of visuals to support sighted persons on the spectrum is non-negotiable, but the stability of that visual is imperative.

Autism Spectrum Disorder Resources:

An excellent resource for visual strategies is Linda Hodgdon's free e-letter filled with teaching ideas, resources and helpful tips.

http://www.usevisualstrategies.com/information.html

"Visual supports are lifelong supports; resist the urge to wean them off these accommodations"

Mayer Johnson has free templates, monthly activities and other free downloads at**:**
http://www.mayer-johnson.com/Downloads.aspx

Carol Gray developed Social Stories™ and Comic Strip Conversations strategies that are used worldwide with children, adolescents, and adults with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The Gray Center offers a free e-newsletter at **http://www.thegraycenter.org/**

A comprehensive website for ASD's that include information on behavior, communication and social interventions http**://www.autismnetwork.org/**

WATI Summer Institute June 19-23 in Amherst, WI

Check the WATI website for workshop descriptions and schedule.

www.wati.org

Voice Recognition: Speeding Up Your Input?

By Paula Walser

Most people speak faster than 160 words per minute, but type fewer than 40 words a minute. That means you can create letters and e-mails about three times faster using voice recognition technologies! Think of the possibilities for our students with mild disabilities. This technology has followed the trend of other useful technologies by increasing in function and consistency while coming down in price. (Moore's Law) There are benefits for everyone. Along with the advances in voice recognition technologies we have also seen an increase in products offering voice recognition as an alternative input option. This article will look at some of the products offering voice recognition and attempt to offer some comparisons of the current products to aid you in your search for the "right" solution for writing.

The most familiar program on the market for voice recognition is probably Dragon Naturally Speaking (however many teachers refer to it as Dragon Speak). Dragon Naturally Speaking comes in many varieties for many different uses. Dragon Naturally Speaking Preferred, Version 8 ($169.95) offers individuals with mild disabilities a tool that provides a good voice to text engine, a text to speech features that reads the text on the screen to the student, a playback feature that will play a recording of the child's dictation, and up to 99% accuracy voice transcription. Dragon Naturally Speaking Professional ($649.95) provides additional supports for students who need to have total voice control over their computer. Version 8 of Dragon Naturally Speaking Professional also supports dictation with a Pocket PC or a Palm Tungsten handheld computer.

SpeakQ - designed by Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre with the Education Development Center in Newton, Mass. and integrated with powerful word-prediction software WordQ is another alternative for voice recognition. *SpeakQ* is for those who cannot use other speech recognition products because they cannot fluently dictate at fast rate, remember verbal commands, and/or get through training**.** SpeakQ was designed to be simple - unlike products targeted to professionals that require a high degree of literacy. SpeakQ works with any software application - from word processing to e-mail - and is bundled with companion software WordQ for $425. *WordQ/SpeakQ*, is for those who can type but who have trouble writing and reading in the first place. They can benefit from a combination of word prediction, speech output and speech input to generate text when stuck with spelling and word forms, identifying errors, proofreading and editing. Such users may find it difficult or impossible to use other speech recognition products because of reading demands and complexity. *SpeakQ* features a simple training interface where the computer prompts you by voice what to say. You can then dictate directly into any document or dictate into *WordQ's* prediction list. Your speech is combined with the word prediction. To keep it simple, there are no verbal commands. You only dictate text.

SpeakQ provides 2 options for dictation: In the **Speak and select** mode spoken words are displayed as a list of choices enhanced by word predictions. You then select from the

Websites to Visit

www.classicbookshelf.com

Classic Bookshelf is a gem! This site offers classic readable books that can be personalized according to your reading preferences. You can:

- Choose your own font size
- Choose your own background colors
- Choose your spacing and margins

If you want to read an entire book online, you are prompted to bookmark your page. This bookmark link takes you back to that spot when you return! There are many of the classics available for your enjoyment.

Do yourself a favor and visit this website. Imagine the implications for your students! Try it!

But the Daemons who live in the mountain caves grew to hate Santa Claus very much, and all for the simple reason that he made children happy.

by Louisa May Alcott

CHAPTER ONE

"Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents," grumbled Jo, lying on the rug.

"It's so dreadful to be poor!" sighed Meg, looking down at

Beyond the Classroom

By Sue Loesl and Mary Beth Werner

Ten years ago, Milwaukee Public Schools and the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design (MIAD) joined teams to create adaptive devices for students with various disabilities to independently access art in the classroom. The students from MIAD came to the Pleasant View High School to determine what kinds of art devices that they might need. At that time, Pleasant View was a high school of students that was self contained with some of the most significant physical, emotional, social and medical needs in the schools district. (Today, students with significant disabilities are integrated throughout the Milwaukee Public Schools high schools). To the surprise of the MIAD students, the students from Pleasant View High School were able to tell the MIAD students about how the tables were too difficult to work on because the table didn't slant to raise the surface to them, the art tools didn't fit into their hands well, and the paper they were trying to draw on slid around on the work surface. Products already out there has minimal help to their individual needs. The MIAD students then set to task to create adaptive art tools, and took their concepts to the Pleasant View students for their opinions. Many of the ideas were really great and we were excited about actually having such devices! Other devices, as they say, needed to go back to the drawing board. After a few more visits for sizing the tools and devices and requesting color and material choices, new adaptive tools were created and then left for the MPS students to use. The project over the years has changed to devices and tools not only related to art, but also to activities of daily living, transitional tasks for use in clerical settings, and for activities for home use. This year's project was at Riverside University High School in Milwaukee, with again 10 projects being completed by the MIAD students. The projects this year ranged from a stapler device that slides into a stapler smoothly on a jig, a funnel to help direct paper into a paper shredder, a portable phone holder for students with a weak grasp, a folding device for towels and t-shirts and a device to help steady a pot on the stove when only one hand is available to stir the pot AND hold the pot steady. The Riverside students were ecstatic about the completed projects, as they had input into the creation of the devices and tools. The MIAD students were able to see their creative designs through to a functional end where the creation actually betters the life of another person...enabling someone to have independence over choices and activities. Both sets of students were profoundly impacted by this project, as were the staff working with them. Who knows, some of the devices that were created this year may end up on a shelf near you!

> **"The project over the years has changed to devices and tools not only related to art, but also to activities of daily living, transitional tasks for use in clerical settings, and for activities for home use."**

Library News: Seating, Positioning & Mobility

By Sharon Rhode, Library Manager

Have you checked out this area of the lending library recently? Have you thought about this issue as it relates to your students? Many of the items can help position tools, work space or switches in a way that students can access or use them. For example, the various jelly bean switch mounts can stabilize a switch so that it can be activated on a tray or other surface without getting accidentally knocked out of position. The Goose Neck and Magic Arm systems can move a switch into visual range for a student who has difficulty looking at items on a flat work surface or have difficulty focusing at midline. These systems can move the switch or other item attached into an almost 180 degree arc of possible locations that can be easily changed throughout the day decreasing the possibility of switch fatigue.

WATI consultants who are also occupational therapists and who have expertise in the area of positioning, seating & mobility and their email addresses, include:

Marcia Obukowicz
   marciao@newnorth.net
Karen Stindt
   kstindt@cesa6.k12.wi.us
Shelly Weingarten
   sweingar@cesa1.k12.wi.us
Paula Lees
   plees@cesa7.k12.wi.us

Feel free to email one of these consultants with your questions or comments.

Voice Recognition

list of words or phrases (using the keyboard or mouse), or type letters to further refine the suggestions. In the **Speak continuously** mode your spoken words are typed directly into your document as you say them. Recognized words and phrases are immediately read aloud to help you identify mis-recognitions. To help you make any corrections, highly accurate word predictions are suggested by combining speech with predictive information. As a result, the desired word can be selected with a minimum number of keystrokes. Free 30 day download of SpeakQ is available at http://www.wordq.com/cgi-bin/download/download.pl or you can request a demo CD at http://www.wordq.com/cgi-bin/download/CD_step_1.pl.

A third option for voice recognition is the Microsoft Speech to Text engine which is available in the Microsoft XP Version of Office. To view a video of the future of speech recognition and computing go to: http://www.microsoft.com/mscorp/innovation/yourpotential/main.html and click on Microsoft Research and then

on Speech Recognition. Microsoft created the speech recognition engine to assist the average computer user and not with individuals with disabilities in mind. However, we are finding that many students with mild disabilities are able to successfully use the speech recognition within Office. Users are reporting 95% to 99% accuracy with the latest version (6.1). You can use speech recognition to dictate text into any Office program. You can also select menu, toolbar, dialog box, and task pane items by using your voice. The Microsoft Speech recognition is not designed for completely hands-free operation; you'll get the best results if you use a combination of your voice and the mouse or keyboard. To install the speech recognition feature in Office click **Speech** on the **Tools** menu in Microsoft Word, or by doing a custom installation. After speech recognition is installed, it is available on the **Tools** menu in any speech-enabled Office program. This feature does not install in a typical install.
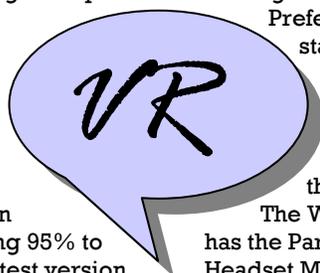
The Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative (WATI) has multiple copies of Dragon Naturally Speaking Preferred (1.0.7.4.f-s) in our statewide lending library. SpeakQ has a free demo version available for download or you can request a demo CD from the site mentioned above. The WATI lending library also has the Parrott TalkPro Xpress Headset Microphone (1.0.7.4.h) and the Buddy Gooseneck USB Microphone (1.0.7.4.e) available for checkout. The Buddy Gooseneck USB microphone is a good choice for the child that cannot wear a normal headset microphone because of seating or sensory issues. It connects to the workstation and has a bendable gooseneck to position the microphone for optimal speech recognition. So, if you have not tried voice recognition within the last few years, I highly encourage you to give us a call and try one of the great and functional voice recognition programs with your students who struggle with the motor aspects of writing.

Lending Library Positioning, Seating & Mobility Items

Positioning and seating plays a critical role in a student's ability to function. The three key areas are: physical access, visual access and attention. Mobility refers to movement within the environment, typically impacted by vision and motor impairments

Number	Item Name	Developer	Cost
6.0.1.0.i	DynaMount Desk Mount Kit w/ Adaptor Plate	Dynavox Systems	$325
6.0.1.0.a	Ergo Rest	Global Computer Supplies	$109
6.0.1.0.k	Gooseneck Mounting System Kit	Enabling Devices	$63
6.0.1.0.g-o	GoTalk Desk	Attainment	$99
6.0.1.0.h-o	GoTalk Easel	Attainment	$59
6.0.1.0.e	Jelly Bean Holder (4 Bean)	AbleNet	$41
6.0.1.0.b	Magic Arm Switch Mounting Arm	Toys for Special Children	$241
6.0.1.0.f	Mighty Mount	TASH	$160
6.0.1.0.l	Sensitrac Flat Pad	Sensitrac	$50
6.0.1.0.j	Sensitrac Mounting System	Infogrip	$200
6.0.1.0.m	Sensitrac Pad with Adjustable	Sensitrac	$99

Our Mission ...

WISCONSIN ASSISTIVE WATI TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE

The Mission of the Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative is to ensure that every child in Wisconsin who needs assistive technology (AT) will have equal and timely access to an appropriate evaluation and the provision and implementation of any needed AT devices and services.

MPS Milwaukee Public Schools

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.

Books to Ponder

The World is Flat

by Thomas L. Friedman

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005, $16.50

Reviewed by Liz Lahm

This is not the kind of book you curl up in bed with but it highlights so many things that impact our world that it is a 'must read'. Actually, I listened to it as an audio book (19+ hours) while I walked my dog and couldn't put it down.

Friedman presents an analysis of our changing world and the role various technologies have had on that change. He explains that to be 'flat' means to be 'connected'. Globalization through connectedness resulting from technology and political changes has

landed us in an almost seamless society. When you call for customer service you don't know what country you are talking to. When you purchase a product you don't know how many companies and countries participated in making that product. Google is named as one of the major players in globalization and connectedness because it rapidly transports knowledge around the world. The book is loaded with fascinating statistics about Google and nine other major 'flatteners' that support his analysis.

Technology has always been an equalizer, and even more so, assistive technology. Understanding the broader role of technology on today's society, and hence on our students with disabilities, is imperative if we are going to adequately prepare them

for the new (or current) world.

Challenge yourself to this book and extrapolate from it the impact on assistive technology and the role of disability in this new world. Dare to imagine!

"Friedman tells his eye-opening story with the catchy slogans and globe-hopping anecdotes ... He wants to tell you how exciting this new world is, but he also wants you to know you're going to be trampled if you don't keep up with it."

Excerpt from the Editorial Notes for this book on Amazon.com