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# UAAACT News

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## Assistive Technology Provides Access to Curriculum

*"One of the greatest potentials for the use of technology is in the education of children with disabilities."*

A. Edward Blackhurst, University of Kentucky  
Assistive Technology Project

Students with learning disabilities, cognitive impairments, or physical limitations often have reduced access to mainstream curriculum. A student with a disability may not be able to keep up with traditional reading instruction in a regular classroom. Or a student with a physical impairment may not be able to successfully complete their keyboarding requirements. The appropriate selection and use of software and computer related assistive technology devices can provide these students with increased success in their educational program.

**Software with UNIVERSAL DESIGN**, (the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design) is a relatively new concept. Some software developers are now incorporating universal design features in their software products. For example, the software version of the Edmark Reading Program has recently been released to help teach reading skills to students with developmental disabilities. The Edmark Reading Program has many universal design features, including single-switch access. This means the student with a serious physical limitation who would not be able to turn pages in a book or use the regular mouse and keyboard, can use still this program successfully. The student would activate a switch, responding to the software prompts by timing their switch activation to the highlighted answer. Bailey's Book House, also from Edmark/Riverdeep, is another reading program with universal design features, allowing student access to the program with a single-switch.

**Balanced Literacy software**, a year of literacy instruction at the first grade level from IntelliTools, also allows multiple access methods to assist students with physical disabilities. This reading software can be used with a traditional mouse and keyboard, with the IntelliKeys keyboard, or with a single switch. Balanced Literacy was developed under a grant from the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development. The program includes 142 lessons with guided reading, self-selected reading, 212 phonics activities, and structured writing exercises.

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**Start to Finish books** (high interest, low vocabulary, talking book software) from Don Johnston are another example of an accessible reading tool. Start to Finish books are available in a variety of grade levels. Gold Level Start to Finish books are written on a second to third grade level and the Blue Level books have a fourth and fifth grade readability. These books can be used on the computer by mouse, keyboard, or with a single-switch in scanning mode. The books feature simple syntax and vocabulary, easily decodable words, a limited number of ideas in each sentence, and word-by-word highlighting. The books come in three formats, "talking" computer book, paperback book and audiocassette.

**Scan and Read Lite**, a reading program from Premier Programming Solutions works with a computer scanner. This program allows you to scan books, newspaper articles, or any text. Once the print material has been scanned, the optical character recognition (OCR) feature in the software translates the scanned image into useable text. The "Read" feature of Scan and Read Lite is now ready to be put to work. The computer reads the scanned text back to the student in the computer voice, with word-by-word highlighting. This program runs on any computer with Windows 98 or newer operating system and a Twain compatible USB scanner connected. What a great way to help a student with a reading limitation access any curriculum, including that difficult science or social studies text book. By the way, Premier Programming Solutions is offering one free version of Scan and Read Lite to every school district. You may want to encourage your district technology coordinator to request a free version of Scan and Read Lite for your school district by having them call 517-668-8188.

**Kurzweil 3000** is another OCR software program that works with the help of a computer scanner. Like the Scan and Read Lite program, Kurzweil 3000 software also reads

scanned text. But unlike Scan and Read Lite, Kurzweil 3000 incorporates pictures and graphics into the scanned text, includes a talking dictionary, allows reading of words syllable by syllable and has study features that let the student highlight important text in different colors for future review. As you may expect, with the additional features, Kurzweil 3000 has a higher purchase price than Scan and Read Lite.

Since reading is such a key academic skill, I have described several products above that provide students with disabilities access to a variety of reading skill levels. But similar software programs are available to help students in math, writing, and social studies.\*

**Computer related Assistive Technology** devices can be used along with software to open the door to improved academic success. At The Computer Center for Citizens With Disabilities, we know that some students do not find immediate success when using a traditional mouse or keyboard. We use trackballs, touchscreens, head controlled mouse pointers, or mouse trackpads to help students use a computer successfully when they may have failed miserably with the traditional mouse. Alternative keyboards such as the LittleFingers keyboard, the IntelliKeys keyboard or Big Keys keyboard, might allow a student who could not access a traditional keyboard, complete use of the computer. Head pointers and mouth sticks can help a student with little or no hand control literally "use their head" to type. Or a student with an augmentative communication device (Dynavox or Vanguard for example) may be able to control the computer through their communication device. There are literally hundreds of physical alternatives to computer access.

I have mentioned a few of the ways assistive technology might help a student with a disability access traditional curriculum. Please do NOT take my word for it. Try some of the software or assistive technology products mentioned in this article with a student who

has inadequate access to curriculum in their educational program. Through trial use of a product, you can find out if assistive technology has the potential to help one of more of your students.

**For more information on universal design see:**

[http://trace.wisc.edu/world/gen\\_ud.html](http://trace.wisc.edu/world/gen_ud.html)

**For more information on products mentioned in this article see:**

Edmark Reading and Bailey's Book House  
<http://www.riverdeep.net/edmark/>

IntelliKeys, Balanced Literacy, MathPad and IntelliMathics  
<http://www.intellitools.com>

Start to Finish Books  
<http://www.donjohnston.com>

Scan and Read Lite  
<http://www.premier-programming.com>

Kurzweil 3000  
<http://www.kurzweilededu.com/>

LittleFingers Keyboard  
<http://www.datadesktech.com/>

Big Keys Keyboard  
<http://www.caro.net/gdi/>

**\*Writing Tools**

AlphaSmart, <http://www.alphasmart.com>  
Co:Writer, Inspiration, and Write Out Loud,  
<http://www.donjohnston.com>  
IntelliTalk II, <http://www.intellitools.com>

**\*Math Tools**

Math Pad and IntelliMathics,  
<http://www.intellitools.com>  
Mathtalk at <http://www.mathtalk.com/>

**\*Social Studies**

IntelliPics Studio, <http://www.intellitools.com>  
HyperStudio, <http://www.hyperstudio.com/>  
SurWeb, <http://www.surweb.org/>

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**Team Members going and coming**

On the Ogden team, Nadine Lescoe will be replacing Shauna Iverson. Kim Barfuss will be replacing Valerie Drollinger on the Cache/Logan team. Also leaving the Cache/Logan team is Lindsey Stauffer. The new person for this open position has not yet been selected.

**Leadership Council Changes**

Judy Roberts, Janice Hill, and Jim West will complete their two year term on the UAAACT Leadership Council at the end of this school year. We extend to them our thanks and appreciation for the service and leadership they have provided to the UAAACT Project.

Jim Payant of the Cache/Logan team, Christine Warnick of the Park City/ Summit team, and Julie Brown of the Jordan team will fill the council positions. We appreciate their willingness to support the UAAACT project with their time and talents.

In addition to providing direction to the UAAACT Project, the three new council members, along with current members, Patricia Smith and David John, will be planning the UAAACT Conference that will be held on February 20-21, 2003 at the Ogden Marroitt Hotel.

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**New Items for the Central Inventory**

An assortment of new items was approved by the council and will soon be available for checkout. First, two old Liberators have been traded in for credit toward the purchase of two new Pathfinders. Council members feel it is critical to have current technology available. Next, a MessageMate 40 will be added to the inventory. A new PC laptop computer will be purchased for use with the new Speaking Dynamically Pro software. It will be available for checkout. A Vocaflex is the last new device added. Two keyguards for the current Dynavox were approved, as well as a copy of Co:Writer 4000 for demonstration at the Center.

**Goodies for each team**

After some discussion about obtaining more items for the central inventory, it was decided that it would be best to get some items for the teams. So each team will get a subscription to the program, "Teaching is Easy". This program is available over the internet, but requires subscription. It was decided to give each team a one-year trial use of the program for evaluation. If teams then choose to continue, they could use their own team allocation to renew the subscription. The trial subscription will start around August 1, 2002.

The other item that will be purchased for each team is a software program that has been found to be effective with secondary aged students. The program "Splatter" is a single switch cause and effect program. It has assorted highly motivating graphics and sounds that get the older students really excited.

### Conference and Training Opportunities

This summer, AAC in the Mountains will be July 18-19, 2002. On July 18<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Caroline Musselwhite will discuss "Look Who's REALLY Talking: Communication Success in the Classroom." On July 19<sup>th</sup>, Kelly Fonner, M.S., CCC, SLP, will discuss "Assistive Technology in the Curriculum." UAAACT members who have not used their \$500 training budget this year may be eligible to attend this conference with support from UAAACT funds. Conference Registration forms should be faxed or mailed to The Computer Center by June 7<sup>th</sup>.

Training may also be scheduled at The Computer Center with Mellowdee and Craig if there are equipment or software items you would like to learn about. Just call CCCD to schedule a workshop for yourself or your team.

Dynavox workshops are scheduled for July 25<sup>th</sup> and August 27<sup>th</sup>. Call 1-800-344-1778, ext. 322 for details or to register.

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++++ TEAM LEADERS +++++

!!!! ALERT ALERT ALERT !!!!

Team Hours for the second half of the school year are due on June 10, 2002. These reports are used to justify the continued funding of the UAAACT project. A reporting form is included with this newsletter. Please turn them in as soon as possible. The last report covering the time period from July to December was due in January. Some reports did not arrive until March. MAIL YOUR REPORTS AS SOON AS YOU FINISH YOUR YEAR TO:

Patricia Smith  
North Sanpete School District  
220 East 700 South  
Mt. Pleasant, UT 84647

Thank You!!

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