

September 2002

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## **UAAACT News**

### **Utah Augmentative Alternative Assistive Communication and Technology Teams**

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UAAACT Web Site: <http://www.coe.usu.edu/psyc/uasp/uaaact/>

### UAAACT Conference Scheduled for February 2003

The UAAACT Leadership Council has scheduled the 2003 UAAACT Conference for February 20 and 21, 2003 at the Ogden Marriott Hotel. Along with the wonderful vendor hall, sessions on new technology tools, and the networking with other professionals, a major focus of this conference will be on conducting assistive technology assessments.

Keynote speakers at the conference will be Penny Reed on Thursday and Scott Marfilus on Friday. Dr. Penny Reed is the director of the Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative and the author of "Assessing Student's Needs for Assistive Technology: A Resource Manual for School District Teams." She has been a popular speaker at Closing the Gap and CSUN Conferences and has helped many special educators understand the steps and strategies in conducting effective assistive technology assessments.

Scott Marfilus is an Assistive/Instructional Technology Consultant. He taught several sessions at the 2002 CSUN Conference, including a session entitled, "A Virtual Field Trip." In this packed session (people were literally standing in the hall) Scott showed how a digital camera could be a powerful tool in any special education classroom or setting. Scott has worked in an integrated classroom and supervised a district team in assessing students assistive technology needs.

Others who have already scheduled presentations at the conference include Karen Sheehan and RJ Cooper. Karen Sheehan, of IntelliTools, will teach a hands-on computer lab session on the exciting new IntelliPics Studio software program. RJ Cooper of RJ Cooper and Associates will work directly with children with disabilities from northern Utah. In his sessions RJ will show how he works with students to introduce them to technology. This will basically be an opportunity to see how a vendor (a rehabilitation engineer) conducts an initial assistive technology assessment.

During the Thursday evening UAAACT Dinner, a major revision of the UAAACT Policies and Procedures Manual will be distributed and discussed. UAAACT members will learn about: 1) new training and certification opportunities, 2) team equipment budgets and how their service to students can have a positive impact on their team budget, 3) new forms for data collection that will make their assistive technology assessment more effective, and 4) the relationship of the UAAACT team and the local IEP team.

Please reserve February 20-21 on your calendar and plan to attend the conference!

## **Anoka, Minnesota Parent Wins Federal Court Case on AT - ISD 11 v. Pachl**

Magistrate Susan Richard Nelson ruled for the parents of Sarah Pachl in a U.S. Federal Court case late last week. Sarah is a ten year old student who has Dandy Walker, intractable epilepsy and other related developmental disabilities. She uses assistive technology equipment, specifically a device known as the TechSpeak, to augment her communication.

Her road to obtaining this device was not easy, however. Sarah's parents asked that she be evaluated for AT in April of 1999. The District did not evaluate Sarah until May of 2000 and only after the parent had requested a special education due process hearing. The district took the view that it needed "more specific information" from the parents to begin the evaluation and wanted to have an IEP meeting. The parents did not believe an IEP meeting was a necessary prerequisite for an evaluation, relying on 34 CFR 300.533(b). They were concerned about the IEP team process because the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning had indicated that the district was not following proper IEP team procedures. MDCFL eventually even told Sarah's parents that at times, the process was "noncompliant and corrupt." However, even after a meeting was held in February of 2000, the District did not proceed to promptly evaluate Sarah.

While waiting for the District to evaluate Sarah for AT, with the assistance of a private occupational therapist, the parents visited the United Cerebral Palsy lending library to try some devices. The parents also took Sarah to two different AT evaluators - Courage Center in Minnesota and Children's Care Hospital and School (CCHS) in Sioux Falls, SD. Both private evaluators determined that Sarah needed an AT device, the TechSpeak. Magistrate Nelson found that the ISD 11 wrongfully delayed evaluating Sarah. Noting that the private evaluators were able to accomplish the evaluation in just 2-4

hours, Nelson rejected the ISD 11's contention that it could not evaluate Sarah because it did not know what the parents wanted. Nelson stated: "A further problem with Plaintiff's argument is that it shifts the burden of providing FAPE to Defendants(Pachls). Plaintiff (ISD 11) maintains that it could not determine what AT to provide Sarah Pachl because Defendants (Pachls) would not tell it what they wanted. But it is not the parents' obligation to determine what resources are necessary to provide FAPE. If specific AT was required in order to provide Sarah Pachl with FAPE, it was Plaintiff's (ISD 11) burden under the IDEA to make that determination."

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### **Going the Extra Mile**

“When Kaleb Stephens returns to North Summit Elementary on Aug.23, he will think Santa Claus made a summer stop at his Coalville school. The 8-year-old, who uses a wheelchair, will have playground equipment he can frolic on.

First-grade teacher Cindy Christensen watched the school's disabled children sitting idle during recess last year. Bored, Kaleb raced another child down a small incline and was hurt when his wheelchair flipped over. Christensen and resource teacher,Chris Warnick, raised \$5,000 from North Summit School District and \$15,000 from patrons to buy playground equipment for special-needs students. Flare Construction of Coalville installed it at no charge.”

### **Source: Salt Lake Tribune article by Rolly and Wells**

Chris Warnick is on the UAAACT team serving North Summit School District and is also a member of the UAAACT Leadership Council. Way to go Christine!

## UAAACT Leadership Council assignments for 2002-2003

David John is chairman of the council and representative of teams F, I, and M.

[dave.john@unitah.net](mailto:dave.john@unitah.net),

Patricia Smith is newsletter editor and representative of teams H, K, N, and P.

[patricia.smith@nsanpete.k12.ut.us](mailto:patricia.smith@nsanpete.k12.ut.us)

Julie Brown is responsible for team reports and is the representative for teams D, E, and G.

[juliebrown63@hotmail.com](mailto:juliebrown63@hotmail.com)

Chris Warnick will prepare the 2003 UAAACT Conference Program and represents teams A, J, O, Q, R. [cwarnick@nsummit.k12.ut.us](mailto:cwarnick@nsummit.k12.ut.us)

A future appointee will plan conference details, and represent teams B, C, L, S and the new team T.

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### A New UAAACT Team

When UAAACT team members from Team C (Kristin Gerrety, Karen Halterman, Dar Haywood, Debra Manning, Jenni Radford and Amy Jo Summers) reviewed the number of students they were being asked to evaluate, they realized they had a tremendous workload. Not only do they know how to assess their students for AT needs, they know how to assess their own situation.

As they did some problem solving, talked with their special education directors, and considered what would be best for the future, they decided making two teams from the existing UAAACT team made a lot of sense. With letters of support and a strong justification statement, the team presented a request to the UAAACT Leadership Council to divide Team C. Team C had been covering the Ogden City School District and Box Elder School District. The proposal was approved in May of 2002 with one stipulation,

the UAAACT grant needed an increase to cover the training and equipment costs for the new team. When the grant was written for the 2002-03 year, the additional funds were approved by the Utah State Office of Education.

The result - we now have a new team! Team T, the new team, covers Box Elder School District. Team C will serve Ogden City School District. Congratulations to the UAAACT members who worked hard to increase services to students in these two school districts.

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### UAAACT Competency Training

Training has always been an important component of the UAAACT Project. The goal of our training is to prepare UAAACT teams to conduct thorough and effective assistive technology evaluations for students. With this in mind, The UAAACT Leadership Council is developing the UAAACT Competency Program. The competency program is designed to develop assistive technology assessment skills in UAAACT members. We want Special Education Directors to be confident that their local UAAACT team can support them when they need a student evaluated. Our plan includes three levels of competency. These competency levels will become effective next year. However, you can start passing off skills at workshops this year.

Level I - Become an appointed UAAACT member in training with a letter of support signed by the Special Education Director and demonstrate an understanding of the assistive technology assessment process.

Level II - Demonstrate competencies in AT equipment usage or programming, funding, seating and positioning, and curriculum access.

Level III - Demonstrate leadership in assistive technology team activities including legal issues, allocation of team funds, and management of the team process.

In order to support your training efforts, the UAAACT project now has the ability to reimburse your school district when you need a substitute to attend UAAACT competency training. You may also be eligible for travel expenses when you attend UAAACT workshops. If you need more information, you can contact the staff at The Computer Center as you register for workshops listed in the UAAACT Training Calendar in the newsletter.

Competency levels will eventually determine your team training budget. UAAACT members at Level I would earn \$250 toward their team training budget, Level II would earn \$500 toward their team training budget, UAAACT members at Level III would earn \$750 toward their team training budget.

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**Team Reports – More Important Than Ever**

**Julie Brown has the formidable task of collecting semi-annual reports from the twenty-one UAAACT team leaders. Her task will become a little easier as team leaders realize their service reports will determine their equipment budget for the 2003-04 school year.**

The entire UAAACT grant is justified by assistive technology services we provide to students. The only way we can show the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) that we are serving students is to collect data.

In order to encourage team leaders to complete and submit timely reports, and to insure we allocate equipment funds to teams who need the funds, team reports will soon be tied to team equipment budgets. Instead of providing a \$1,500 equipment grant to each team, the UAAACT Leadership Council is planning to provide team equipment funds based on the teams need for equipment.

Each team will receive a basic equipment allowance of \$500 per year. Then, based on team reports of students served and hours of service, UAAACT teams will earn budget points which indicate their need for additional equipment. Each student served during the 2002-03 school year will earn the team four budget points. Each hour of service a UAAACT team member provides will earn one budget point. Hours of service will be clearly defined before the January 2003 service report is requested. The team budget will include the \$500 basic allowance plus a percentage of the total equipment budget, based on budget points. The example below illustrates how a UAAACT team equipment budget may be calculated.

| <u>Budget Factors</u>                       | <u>Team One</u> |
|---|-----------------|
| 1- Number of Students Served                | 142             |
| 2- Students Served Times Four               | 568             |
| 3- Team Hours                               | 1175            |
| 4- Total Budget Points (line 2 plus line 3) | 1743            |
| 5- Percent of \$21,000 based on points      | 8.68%           |
| 6- Formula allocation amount                | \$1823          |
| 7- Base                                     | \$500           |
| <b>Annual Team Equipment Budget</b>         | <b>\$2323</b>   |

**The sample above would be representative of an active UAAACT team who is conducting evaluation and follow-up services for a large number of students. Appropriately, they would have a larger team equipment budget than a team who served 10 or 15 students.**

The first report of students served and hours of service is due to Julie on January 10, 2003. Teams that do not submit timely reports may receive only the \$500 base equipment budget during the 2003-04 school year. Active UAAACT teams who submit their reports by the dates requested may have a significant increase in their team equipment budget. Please keep track of your services and report by January 10<sup>th</sup>.  
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Craig and Mellowdee have new e-mail addresses.  
Craig Boogaard      [cboogaar@utah.gov](mailto:cboogaar@utah.gov)

## AAC in the Mountains

A jewel for training is right here in our back yard. **Creative Communicating** has summer training in Park City. This year presenters were Caroline Musselwhite and Kelly Fonner. With permission I am sharing with you some of what they presented.

### SOCIAL SCRIPTS

#### WHAT ARE SOCIAL SCRIPTS?

Social Scripts are interactions such as joke-telling, sharing life stories and general conversations. They help persons using augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) move beyond wants and needs to using 'real' communication for conversational purposes. They support students in learning to claim, start, and maintain turns in a conversation.

#### WHY SOCIAL SCRIPTS?

Research compiled by Arlene Kraat in 1985 indicated a number of problem areas in the growing area of AAC. These have been verified by other researchers and authors:

- Communication displays / devices rarely used
- AAC users typically respondents, not initiators (Culp, 1982; Harris, 1982; Light, et al, 1985)
- Limited range of functions available to AAC users
- Interaction patterns that focus on closed-answer questions (What do you want?) and "testing" (What's this?)
- Expectations for AAC users are minimal
- Conversational partners control interactions, with turntaking highly unequal (Farrier et al, 1985; Light et al., 1985)
- Peer interaction is minimal

Culp & Carlisle (1988) suggested that many factors can contribute to the difficulty shown by augmented communicators in initiating and maintaining topics. She suggested the following: vocabulary constraints, rate and timing of message delivery, physical effort required, limited environmental experiences, and partner behaviors (e.g., failure to pause).

Well it's the new millennium ...and most of those problems are still with us. We must use a variety of strategies to ensure that augmented communicators – even those with limited access skills, can achieve interactions that are: frequent; motivating; self-initiated; varied, to maintain interest; ongoing, with multiple turns; with a range of partners, including peers; a way to model a range of pragmatics; low maintenance (do them "on the fly").

#### WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM CO-PLANNED SEQUENCED SCRIPTS?

Social scripts can support users with a range of physical, language and cognitive challenges.

- **Individuals with Poor Access Skills:** Often, individuals with poor access skills are limited in their social interactions, as they are unable or extremely slow to use devices to take conversational turns. Using social scripts with easily accessed devices can give these students a 'feel' for the give and take of conversational turntaking.
- **Individuals with Limited Expressive Language Skills:** The umbrella term "limited language skills" can cover a range of issues. As used here, it specifically refers to individuals whose receptive language is greater than their expressive language. This may be due to a number of factors, including access to limited vocabulary. Limited vocabulary, in turn, may have many causes, from limited experiences and opportunities to restricted vocabulary due to the lack of generative language and the difficulty storing (or remembering the location of) all needed vocabulary.
- **Individuals with Cognitive Delay:** To some, use of sequenced social scripts may seem questionable for students with cognitive delay, as that may create a receptive-expressive mismatch (what the student is saying is at a higher cognitive level than their receptive level). We have found that this is not as great a concern as we initially thought, for two reasons: 1) Often, when given an opportunity to communicate

for 'real' purposes, in socially engaging ways, we find that students have higher receptive language levels than previously guessed; 2) Motivation can cause individuals to 'turn on' to communication, where basic wants and needs (eat, drink, toilet!) were unsuccessful.

From: Can We Chat? by Dr. Caroline Musselwhite and Linda J. Burkhart (Copied with permission from Dr. Caroline Musselwhite, [www.aacintervention.com](http://www.aacintervention.com))

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### **UAAAC Conference Call for Presenters**

With the upcoming UAAACT conference on February 20 and 21, 2003, each team is invited to submit proposals for presentations. Teams selected to present will receive a \$500 equipment grant. If you would like to share information, strategies, or technology tools that would be helpful to those who will attend the conference, please complete the enclosed "PROPOSAL FORM FOR 2003 UAAACT CONFERENCE" and return it to The Computer Center by December 12, 2002.

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### **UAAACT Equipment**

In addition to the new laptop computers that each team will be receiving (see article on next column), there are a couple of new items available for checkout in the UAAACT Central Inventory.

The DynaWrite is a keyboard-based augmentative system that allows the user to type and spell message that can be spoken by the device. It features VeriVoice, a natural sounding synthesized voice. The DynaWrite can be used with single switch scanning in three formats.

The E-Talk is a dynamic display augmentative communication device. It has a color screen, touch window and switch access, text to speech and digital speech capability, and is small

enough for many individuals who are ambulatory.

When you check out equipment from the UAAACT Central Inventory at The Computer Center, please honor the 30 day checkout when the item you have has been requested by another team. UAAACT members from other teams appreciate a quick response to return equipment they have reserved!

The Leadership Council has also discussed a concern where one UAAACT team will reserve the same piece of equipment for several months by having other members of the team request the item for future evaluations. If an item has been used by a team for one month and is requested by another team, the team that has not had the item will receive priority in reserving that piece of equipment.

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### **NEW Laptop Computers for Teams**

The UAAACT project has received 21 laptop computers, one for each UAAACT team. The computers are Dell Latitudes with Intel Pentium 4 processor, 20 GB hard drive, Windows XP professional, Microsoft Office, and a carrying case. These laptops should be a great tool for student assessments, report writing and tracking your team equipment inventory.

In the near future, Mellowdee and Craig will be scheduling training so teams can pick up their new computers. The training will cover the computer, basic Windows XP features, FileMaker Pro and EvaluWare (ordered but not yet received). At least one team member will be trained as the team computers are distributed.

EvaluWare is a software program that helps professionals identify the best computer access methods and ideal AAC setups for students with disabilities. A student's listening skills, visual skills and motors skills are assessed with the program.