New Equipment in TTAP Device Loan Program

The TTAP Device Loan Program has added several new AT devices. Contact John Morris for further information about the following and other devices available for loan.

Freehand Glove

The Freehand is a modified glove that works as a wearable computer interface! Any computer command done by input into a keyboard or mouse can be replicated easily by using this glove.

Key features:

- Replicate any computer keyboard function using downloadable configuration software (PC only)
- Once configured, Mac and PC-compatible via USB interface
- Over 30 "contact points" for dozens of possible combinations
- Allows for nearly any finger movement to be a "switch activation"
- Breakaway magnetically-attached pod for safety
- Use with computer software, SoundingBoard (tm), or other switch compatible apps, electronic whiteboards, and even some wheelchair controls (see website for configuration instructions and downloadable software)
- Three sizes (small, medium, large)
- Ventilated design for all-day wear
The Skoog enables children to experience and play musical sounds for themselves. Designed specifically to meet the needs of anyone who cannot play a traditional musical instrument due to any combination of physical, mental, or behavioral difficulties. The Skoog has been thoroughly road-tested in special needs, music therapy, and healthcare environments and has been widely praised, with highly positive feedback from staff and pupils alike.

And, because it has been designed to work for those with the most challenging of circumstances, it works for everyone. The Skoog can be fully customized and set up to meet the needs of every individual musician. It is suitable for MLD, SLD, PMLD, children with global delay, genetic conditions such as Down's Syndrome, sensory impairments, physical/mental problems, behavioral issues, and those with autism.

Colorful and squeezable, the Skoog is robust and wipe clean. Playable with any part of the body. Suitable for all stages of the curriculum, from age 3 upwards.

- Designed specifically for special needs and therapeutic music practice.
- Helps develop musical expression and communication skills.
- Ideal for promoting inclusive music in education.
- Improves motor skills, coordination, and control.
- Supports sensory integration.
- An excellent resource for multi-sensory learning and ICT.

For more information, contact:
John Morris
Assistive Technology Coordinator
(512) 232-0753
jcmorris@austin.utexas.edu

### Attention Special Education Teachers and Speech-Language Pathologists:

We are seeking Special Education Teachers and Speech-Language Pathologists to participate in an interesting study funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Participants must:

- Currently serve at least one student with complex communication needs at any grade level, including early intervention/early childhood special education.
- Be responsible for developing communication-related IEP/IFSP goals for one student, as described above.
- NOT currently use the Communication Matrix to evaluate students

Participants will receive an honorarium ranging from $200-$350 depending on group assignment. If you are interested in further details about this study, please e-mail quinnem@ohsu.edu.
Grant #H327A110010
U. S. Dept. of Education; Dr. Charity Rowland, P. I.
Tech Corner:

DynaVox has a new product:

*DynaVox DynaWrite™ 2.0*

The DynaWrite's computer-style keyboard and large screen display suit individuals with strong literacy skills. Connect it to your PC, talk on the phone and use it as a universal remote control for common household appliances.

Spotlight on TTAP Demonstration Centers

**Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living**

**Connecting People to the Power of Independence**

The Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living (BVCIL) is a consumer-based, consumer-controlled, cross-disability, cross-cultural, non-residential, private nonprofit 501(c)(3) charitable organization whose mission is to promote the full inclusion and participation of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of community life.

BVCIL was funded in October, 2010 to address state-level priorities for providing independent living services to un-served or under-served populations in the Texas counties of Brazos, Burleson, Madison, Robertson, and Washington.

The BVCIL provides four core independent living services (a) information and referral, (b) IL skills training, (c) peer support, including cross-disability peer support; and (c) individual and systems advocacy. The BVCIL, as directed by its consumer-controlled board of directors, offers an array of independent living services to fulfill its mission such as:

- Adaptive and assistive technology supports (e.g., equipment loan and recycling);
- Supports related to securing affordable and accessible housing;
- Transportation and mobility training;
- Supports and training for individuals with cognitive and sensory disabilities including life skills training, interpreter, and reader services;
- Personal assistance supports, including attendant care and training of personnel that provide these services;
- Consumer information programs on the rehabilitation and IL services available under the Rehab Act, especially for un-served and under-served populations;
- Education and training necessary for living and participating in community activities;
- Individual and group social and recreational services; and
- Training to develop skills specifically designed for youths who are individuals with significant disabilities to promote self-awareness and esteem, develop advocacy and self-empowerment skills, and explore career options.

Initial funding for the BVCIL has been obtained from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and the Rehabilitative Services Rehabilitation Services Administration. The BVCIL has current and future collaborations with many local and state organizations including the Texas Technology Access Program at The University of Texas at Austin, the Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M University, Bryan-College Station Mayors’ Committee on People with Disabilities, Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services – Division for Blind Services and Division for Rehabilitative Services, Junction 505, Brazos Valley Council of Governments, Project Unity, College Station ISD, Brenham ISD, Bryan ISD, MHMR Authority of Brazos Valley, Community Partnership Board, School of Rural and Public Health, Brazos Valley Rehabilitation Center and the Disability Resource Team.

For more information, please call (979)776-5505 or contact by e-mail at info@bvcil.org.

Students with vision and physical impairments forge new learning pathways with audio/digital books and reading technologies.

Article written by: Valerie Chernek with Roger Price – September 2012

Roger Price, a Texas VI teacher at Keller ISD in Fort Worth, recalls many years of observing his students who are blind and visually impaired struggle to keep up with their reading assignments. In the past, these students were routinely burdened with heavy volumes of printed textbooks. Images and photos were low quality, text was black and white, and students would straddle their desks to read the large print – requiring extra space to accommodate their learning needs; indications of being labeled ‘different’. Mr. Price says, “advancements in reading technologies and the availability of accessible educational materials in digital and audio formats have given his students more freedom to forge new learning experiences.”

“The Keller ISD school district has made technology and digital accessible books a priority for students with qualifying print disabilities,” said Jill Ross, Special Education Coordinator for the district. “Today, many of our students are comfortable using MacBooks, iPads, PC laptops, and desktop computers to download and read digital text. Some use smart phones and devices such as the Braille Note Apex, PlexTalk audio, and Bookport Plus.” Mr. Price wants his students to read in braille first and then use digital text so they can hear information read aloud through text-to-speech. “This reinforces tactile learning and also enables students to improve their reading comprehension, spelling and grammar,” he said.
Mr. Price shares the following stories about his students using digital books from Bookshare and reading technologies. Bookshare is an online accessible book library, free for U.S. students with print disabilities who qualify through federal awards from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

On left: Roger Price, Texas VI Teacher (blue shirt), works with student "J" on his iPad.

“J” came to Keller ISD five years ago. He spoke no English and was on the verge of retinal detachment failure. Eventually “J” would lose his sight. Through the efforts of Mr. Price and teachers at the Texas School for the Blind, “J” became an avid reader of digital books. He learned how to use many electronic devices and is now very tech savvy. “J” is at the top of his class in academics, speaks English, and is learning French. In general education classes, he signs on to the Bookshare website and downloads literature in English and Spanish to his iPad, MacBook, or computer. “J” is an inspiration to all of us!” said Price.

“A” is an incessant reader and a graduate of Keller ISD. In the fall, she will attend The University of Texas at San Antonio. “A” uses a top-of-the-line Braille Note Apex. It’s a small and lightweight electronic device she carries on her shoulder. She finds the digital books she wants to read on this device at Bookshare. In high school, she took advanced literature classes and kept up the reading pace through the use of digital books and technologies. “Many students with vision difficulties get stumped when teachers give impromptu assignments, but not “A,” said Price. “She is comfortable using the refreshable braille device and downloading digital books, just as a sighted student is in opening a hardback book or a technology device.”

“S,” a 10th grader, has severe cerebral palsy, and low vision. His motorized wheelchair gets him to and from his classes. “He only types with one finger, but can quickly whip out his MacBook and navigate through digital text,” said Price. “Accessible formats enable him to more easily change font size, set color contrasts, and modulate speech. They are an equalizer for him!”

This year, Mr. Price and Ms. Ross watched “E,” an 8th grader with Stargardts Disease, or juvenile macular degeneration - a condition that causes extremely low vision, receive six distinguished learning awards in school. She took all advanced placement classes and reads a lot of digital books on her Plextalk, iPad, and Kindle Fire. “Without Bookshare and the portable technology devices, this student would not have kept pace with her peers in school,” said Price. “It’s such a contrast now from the days of learning with closed circuit TVs. My students are tech-savvy. They use the latest technologies and digital books and are the students who carry flash drives, download MP3 formats, use braille, and text-to-speech. These advancements help them fit into a social norm and, for the first time, the stigma of being labeled ‘different’ is finally fading.”

Teen with juvenile macular degeneration reads digital books on an iPad.
Yes I Can!

Adaptive Skiing
Article Courtesy of Disabled World News

What is Adaptive Skiing?
Adaptive skiing enables skiers with disabilities to participate in alpine skiing by using special equipment. Adaptive skiing lesson programs are available at many ski resorts for children and adults with a wide range of disabilities.

The first adaptive ski programs were started for veterans with disabilities after World War II. They have expanded to include special needs skiers of all ages and abilities. Ski areas on public lands are required to accommodate skiers with disabilities. Adaptive skiing is a caring, therapeutic experience between individuals with disabilities who enjoy adventure. Adaptive skiing is one of many sports enjoyed by people with disabilities.

Equipment that people with disabilities use may be different, but individuals with spinal cord injuries, brain injuries, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, visual and hearing impairments, post polio syndrome, and a wide variety of other disabilities go to the slopes to enjoy adaptive skiing each year.

With the increase in adaptive ski programs throughout the country, and the advances in equipment, adaptive skiing is fast becoming one of the most popular sports. Through a combination of specialized equipment and training, people who might otherwise be left behind when friends and family take to the slopes can now join in the fun by using special rail-like devices, ski-bottomed crutches, and tethers to take part in what is known as adaptive skiing.

In adaptive skiing, there are six different disciplines: developmental, visually impaired, mono-ski, bi-ski, 3-track, and 4-track. Skiers’ range of disabilities include blindness, deafness, amputations, para and quadriplegia, autism, and other forms of injury, illness, and cognitive defects that prevent people from skiing in the more traditional ways. Much attention has been focused on adaptive skiing recently. This is mainly due to exposure relating to the Wounded Warrior Project which, through a partnership between Disabled Sports USA, provides year-round sports programs.
Adaptations for skiers with disabilities:

Guides for blind skiers - The guides are considered "equipment" and there are generally no extra charges for them.

Bi-skis - for people with significant lower extremity or trunk weaknesses and for others with difficulty standing and balancing. It's a sit-down ski that lets even those with severe balance impairment experience the thrill of skiing.

Two-track skis and snowboards - for any skier who stands on two skis but might need tethers to aid in leg strength. These are good for people with visual and hearing impairment and for those with developmental and cognitive disabilities.

Three and four-track - for skiers who can stand on skis but need additional support to remain balanced. They are best for students with leg amputation, cerebral palsy, arthritis, spina bifida, or a traumatic brain injury.

Ski Bike - The latest piece of adaptive skiing equipment is similar to a bicycle with skis instead of wheels, the ski bike has been used in Europe and now adaptive programs have recently discovered that it can be an ideal way for many people with disabilities to enjoy skiing. Since the ski bike takes the majority of a person's weight off the legs and feet, it can fill a frustrating void between stand-up and sit-down snow skiing.

Paralympic alpine skiing is an adaptation of alpine skiing for athletes with a disability. Paralympic alpine skiing is a sport in the Paralympic Winter Games. It is governed by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) under the auspices of the International Ski Federation (FIS). In addition to the Paralympic Games, elite disabled ski racing includes the Disabled World Alpine Skiing Championships (held every four years from 1980 to 2004 and every two years beginning in 2009), and the IPC Disabled Alpine World Cup, an annual international racing circuit. Ski racers with disabilities compete in three different medal categories: standing, sitting, and visually-impaired. Each of these groups is divided into three to seven classes, some of which are further subdivided into two or three sub-classes.

Using the best adaptive equipment and teaching techniques available, private one-on-one instruction in adaptive skiing and snowboarding maximizes each participant's potential for success. Mono-skis, bi-skis, and outriggers allow beginners to quickly feel the freedom of gliding down the mountain while those with more skill and determination take on the advanced slopes.

Citation: Disabled World News - Adaptive skiing is a therapeutic experience between individuals with disabilities who enjoy adventure:
http://www.disabledworld.com/sports/snow/skiing/#ixzz2C29nbLeC

What’s on TTAP for Winter

February 13-16 50th Annual Learning Disabilities Association International Conference, San Antonio, Texas

Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Headquarters
4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15234-1349
Phone (412) 341-1515 | Fax: (412) 344-0224
TTAP values your input. If you have any suggestions, comments, or an article you would like to have included in our newsletter, please contact us:

(512) 232-0751/rogerlevy@austin.utexas.edu
(512) 232-0753/jcmorris@austin.utexas.edu
(512) 232-0750/dwest@austin.utexas.edu
(512) 232-0772/srthomas@austin.utexas.edu

TTAP Demonstration Centers

- Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living, Bryan
- Paso Del Norte Children’s Development Center, El Paso
- Ability Connection, Dallas
- Goodwill Industries of Fort Worth
- Easter Seals of Greater Houston
- Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living, Corpus Christi
- RISE Center for Independent Living, Beaumont
- East Texas Center for Independent Living, Tyler
- Goodwill Industries of Central Texas, Austin
- Brazoria County Center for Independent Living, Angleton
- Helping Hands, Amarillo
- Not Without Us, Abilene

Portable Computer Demonstration Centers

- REACH Center for Independent Living, Plano
- Houston Center for Independent Living, Houston
- Heart of Central Texas Independent Living Center, Belton
- VAIL – Valley Association for Independent Living, McAllen