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News from the Device Loan Program

The TTAP Device Loan Program now has the Intel Reader® and Portable Capture Station!

The Intel Reader transforms printed text to the spoken word. It combines a high-resolution camera with the power of an Intel Atom™ processor. Read on the spot, or store text for later listening. Easy-to-use buttons, audio and visual navigation, and straightforward menus keep things simple. Weighing just over a pound and about the size of a paperback book, the mobile Intel Reader can be used at school, work, home, or on the go. Versatile enough to play MP3, DAISY* books, and text transferred from a PC, the Intel Reader can also be used with the Intel Portable Capture Station to make it easy to scan, convert, and store multiple pages from a book or magazine.

Learning to position the Reader free hand can be challenging, but with a little practice you can capture text anywhere.

For further information please contact: jcmorris1@mail.utexas.edu

Assistive Technology Q&A

Q: What is the responsibility of a school district in regard to assistive technology?
A: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that districts provide assistive technology to all students with disabilities if it is needed for them to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE). The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team is charged with the responsibility for determining a student's individual need for assistive technology in order to benefit from his or her education and to have access to the general education curriculum.

“Communication Tips - Hearing or Not” by Crystal Darby

Crystal Darby – www.bestcommcoach.com – is a communication coach and consultant. She offers training for organizations and one-on-one coaching to help people improve their communication skills. She can be reached at crystal@crystaldarby.com.

Opportunities for communication are everywhere. The UT community is diverse and rich, but sometimes communication is difficult because of the differences between us. When one of the parties in the discussion has a hearing impairment, is deaf, or is unable to talk, communication can be complicated. There are ways to overcome the hurdles, though. Remember that the communication cycle consists of four parts:

- Sender
- Message
- Receiver
- Feedback

If any of these parts – sender, message, receiver, feedback – are missing, communication does not happen. This is true when any two people communicate, but when communicating with someone who has impaired hearing, ensuring that the message was received is even more important. For one-on-one communication, there are some easy ways to send and receive messages between someone who is deaf or hard of hearing and someone who can hear.

If the person with the hearing impairment knows sign language, use an interpreter if one is available. If you know any sign language, use it, even if you cannot sign the whole conversation. Even if all you can do is provide initial letters, you will better convey your meaning, and the sign language user will appreciate your efforts. Remember, though, that not every person with a hearing impairment uses sign language.

If you are near a computer, use Microsoft Word, Works, WordPad, or any word processing program. Both the hearing and hearing-impaired can type messages to
each other. If no computer is available, most cell phones have a message or note-taking capability. Each person can type on the keypad and read the other's text.

There are numerous devices that can help communication. Phone conversations through TTY (TeleTYpewriter), TDD (Telecommunication Device for the Deaf), or text telephone are relay systems that allow the hearing person to speak to a person who is deaf through an operator. The operator acts as the go-between, typing in the message from the hearing person and speaking the message from the person who is deaf who receives the text on a device connected to his or her phone.

Chat mode in many programs eliminates the need for an intermediary. Either party can suggest a time to communicate through an e-mail. Both parties log in to the chat program at the designated time. AOL Instant Messenger (AIM), Yahoo! Messenger, and Google Talk are free, easy-to-use chat programs. There is also a chat feature in Facebook that can be used if the two people are Friends in that program.

If there are no interpreters or technological devices around, communication is still possible. Make sure you face the person who cannot hear well. Ensure that your face, especially your eyes and mouth can be seen. Develop your non-verbal communication. For someone with a hearing impairment, your gestures and facial expressions provide clues to your meaning. Find a place to converse where there are few distractions. Adequate lighting and an absence of extraneous noise will help as well.

Sometimes the old-fashioned way is the optimal choice. Both people can write messages down on paper. This method may not be as quick as others, but it works in nearly all settings.

If you are facilitating a group that includes someone who is deaf, make sure that all participants are in a circle or sitting around a table. Uninterrupted line of sight with all individuals makes discussion much easier. Gesture toward the person who is talking, so that group members who are hearing impaired or deaf can find the speaker easily.

Remember that feedback is an equally important part of the communication cycle. If you do not receive feedback, you cannot know if your message has been received. Check for understanding by asking questions. Use questions to discover if you delivered your message effectively rather than if the recipient understood. "Does that make sense?" may be received more positively than "Do you understand?" If the discussion is about business or is highly important, an email recap of the conversation may help both parties.

The majority of these suggestions work well with all people, no matter what their differences. Consideration for the people you communicate with, no matter what their situation, can ensure that you are understood and that people feel comfortable communicating with you. As Mark Twain said, "Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see."
Spotlight on TTAP Demonstration Centers

Helping Hands
2400 Lakeview, Suite 109
Amarillo, Texas 78109
(806) 331-7202 (V)

Helping Hands is a Component of Specialized Therapy Services (STS) and TTAP’s newest Computer Access Demonstration Center.

Services:

- Speech/Language Pathologist
- Physical Therapists
- Rehabilitation Services
- Occupational Therapy
- Assistive Technology Demonstrations

Areas of Specialty include Autism Treatment, Assistive Technology, Fluency, and Stuttering.

Full Demonstration Centers

- Easter Seals, Fort Worth
- Paso Del Norte Children’s Development Center, El Paso
- United Cerebral Palsy, Dallas
- United Cerebral Palsy, Houston
- Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living, Corpus Christi

Computer Access Demonstration Centers

- RISE Center for Independent Living, Beaumont
- East Texas Center for Independent Living, Tyler
- Brazos Valley Rehabilitation Center, Bryan
- 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

Tech Corner

Proloquo2Go

Proloquo2Go™ is a new product from AssistiveWare® that provides a full-featured communication solution for people who have difficulty speaking. It brings natural sounding text-to-speech voices, up-to-date symbols, powerful automatic conjugations, a default vocabulary of over 7000 items, full expandability and extreme ease of use to the iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch.

With a price of approximately $189, Proloquo2Go is a great solution for anyone who cannot afford spending thousands of dollars on an AAC device and yet wants a solution that, in terms of sheer communication power and ease of use, rivals solutions typically priced over 10 times higher. It is also great for teenagers and young adults who want a device as “cool” as the iPhone, iPad or iPod touch. Additionally, this a great solution for children and adults with autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, developmental disabilities, or apraxia. Proloquo2Go can also serve adults with acquired disabilities such as ALS, stroke, or traumatic brain injury. It can be a useful solution in hospital and rehabilitation settings.

TTAP has the iPod and iPad in the Device Loan Program with Proloquo2Go loaded.

Contact John at (512) 232-0573 or jcmorris1@mail.utexas.edu for more information.
What’s on TTAP for Winter

January 26-29, 2011  Assistive Technology Industry Association 2011 Conference
Orlando, Florida
Phone: (312) 321-5172
Fax: (312) 673-6659
E-mail: info@atia.org
www.atia.org

February 7-9  Texas Transition Conference
Austin, Texas
http://ttc.tamu.edu/registration.htm

February 10-12  PEAK’s 2011 Conference on Inclusive Education
Denver, Colorado
www.peakparent.org/conferences.asp

February 16-19  National Association for Bilingual Education Conference
New Orleans, Louisiana
www.nabe.org/conference.html

March 14-19  26th Annual Technology and People with Disabilities Conference (CSUN)
Manchester Grand Hotel
San Diego, California

Just for Laughs

Cartoon of two young children looking at a Picasso-type modern art painting in a museum. One child says: “It’s clearly an error in the graphics program.” The other child responds: “or, the wrong printer driver.” Two older ladies are looking at them with expressions of total amazement.