

CP of New Jersey's

EDUCATING FOR SUCCESS

September 2004

SUCCESS STORIES
and SOLUTIONS for EDUCATING
STUDENTS with DISABILITIES

Issue IV
Volume I

Preparing the Class for a Student who has a Disability

The teachers, aides and children in the resource room or in special education programs are used to students with different abilities. When a child comes to class in a wheelchair or uses an augmentative communication device to facilitate communication, it's business as usual.

But when a child with a disability is incorporated into a full inclusion setting, especially if he or she is transitioning for the first time, a little apprehension is a normal thing - for the student, the teacher and the classmates too.

The child with the disability has the same concerns any other student might: I wonder if my teacher will like me? Will I get along with my classmates? Will I be able to keep pace with the rest of the children in the class?

There are a few things the teacher can do to help ease the transition. For starters, the teacher needs to fully understand the nature of the student's disabilities. This may mean getting in touch with the student's previous teachers or consulting one of the district's Special Education teachers. The teacher should also be sure he or she knows what the child's abilities are. Focusing on what the child can do, the teacher should look for ways to adapt the curriculum so the student with the disability can participate.

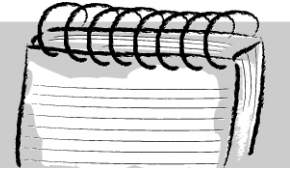
The other children in the class will follow the teacher's lead when it comes to interacting with the student with the disability. If the teacher is patient and relaxed and treats the student the same as all of his or her other pupils, the rest of the class will too.

For more ideas on welcoming a student with disability to your classroom or for information on how to adapt the curriculum and lessons plans to fit his or her needs, contact Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey's Associate Executive Director Jackie Edwards at 888-322-1918 ext. 526 or via email at jedwards@cpofnj.org.

Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey
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UPCOMING TRAININGS



The following workshops are being offered at the Middlesex Educational Training Technology Centers (ETTC). To register for these workshops, it is necessary to contact the ETTC directly. You can reach them online at <http://www.techtrain.org> or by calling (732) 613-6607. For more information about the many different types of workshops Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey provides contact Fred Tchang, Director of Assistive Technology Services at (888) 322-1918 ext. 588 or via email at ftchang@cpofnj.org.

Kid-ergonomics

Wednesday, October 27, 2004

4 to 6:30 p.m.

We are requiring our students to do more and more work on the computer - the problem is that they are working on equipment designed for adults! This session will discuss proper ergonomics and the best ways to modify the technology to fit the students.

Presented by Mike Marotta, ATP

Using the Technology You Already Have

Thursday, December 9, 2004 from 9 a.m to 3 p.m.

Tuesday, April 5, 2005 (time to be determined)

Look around your classroom: Are you using the technology you currently have to engage your students? Most classrooms will have at least one computer and many have a TV as well.

Presented by Mike Marotta, ATP

Low-Tech to High-Tech

Wednesday, January 19, 2005 (time to be determined)

Wednesday, April 6, 2005 (time to be determined)

Accommodating specific learning disabilities requires the creative use of everyday materials. We will review the low-tech accommodations used successfully across the curriculum. Compare commonly used mid-tech (handheld spellers, alpha smarts), and hi-tech (talking software, word prediction) and learn tools to help you identify when it's necessary to use one or the other.

Presented by Jeannette VanHouten

Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey has been recognized by the New Jersey Department of Education as a "Registered New Jersey Professional Development Provider."

Solutions with Technology

Case Studies & Practical Applications
of Assistive Technology in the Classroom



New Devices Mean Learning New Skills for Teachers and Aides as Well

by Jeannette VanHouten

The good news is that advances in assistive technology are helping more and more students with disabilities advance academically and participate in class. The other news is - I don't want to call it bad news because it's really not - is that some of these technological solutions for students with disabilities seem to be getting more and more complex.

There's a learning curve with the latest software and assistive devices. There always is. And we need to understand that it's there for the teachers and aides as well as for the students.

I'd like to tell you about Jordan, a 13-year old with multiple physical disabilities. Currently, he's being educated in a mainstream/full inclusion setting. He has several pullout activities to reinforce specific skills, but for the most part, he's an active member of his class. Jordan uses a wide array of tools during the course of the day, starting with a laptop, adaptive keyboard and printer. He also uses interactive software, speech-to-text technology and an electronic visual organizational tool.

Incorporating all of these assistive technology elements into one smooth school day for Jordan took a little time as well as some patience. To determine which tools would best help Jordan, Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey evaluated his abilities and needs. We also worked with his teacher to assess the curriculum. Then we helped create a way for Jordan to complete his assignments and meet his requirements using his new tools.

We discovered a major glitch in the system when Jordan's aide was absent for a day. She had been trained along with Jordan on the devices and without her there, Jordan was left to flounder. Since then, Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey has trained two substitute aides and created visual manual of how Jordan's equipment is set up.

With the support of the tools Jordan uses to accommodate his difficulties in reading and writing, his skills have improved dramatically and he's able to complete previously unattainable tasks, including daily journal assignments, creative writing compositions and even weekly spelling tests.

Prior to using the new technology, Jordan's contributions in class were primarily conducted through his aide or by pointing. With the devices, he's been able to demonstrate independence and can interact with his peers without feeling stigmatized by his different abilities.

Jordan's progress in reading and writing and his growing competence with computers have helped unleash his innate gifts as a teacher and mentor. He is willing to help students and staff with specific applications he has mastered, coaching them by giving hints to the right answers. The positive attention and feedback from peers has significantly increased Jordan's self-esteem and has made him much more willing to try new and challenging tasks.

Part of the reason Jordan is enjoying this scholastic success is because his teacher and aide were willing to step outside of their comfort zones. When I first started working with Jordan, they admitted they were not confident with computers and the idea of Jordan using more devices was intimidating. But they learned along with Jordan how things worked and after seeing the difference these tools made in Jordan's abilities, both agreed it was worth the effort.

For more information on integrating assistive technology in the classroom or assistive technology training, contact Fred Tchang, Director of Assistive Technology Services at 888-322-1918 ext. 588 or via email at ftchang@cpofnj.org.

Jeannette VanHouten is the Coordinator of the Technology Lending Center. Her formal training is as a special education teacher with an interest in using assistive technology to increase a student's independence.

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