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Educating for Success

Success Stories and Solutions for Educating Students with Disabilities.

How Does Your District Rate?

The New Jersey Department of Education has recently released the School Comparative Spending Guide. According to the NJ Department of Education website, the guide "provides local educators and citizens with information about a school district's annual budget.

It ranks similar school districts in 14 of 15 spending categories, such as total administrative costs or total classroom instruction, and in four staffing indicators, such as student-teacher ratios and faculty-administrative staff ratios."

The guide can be viewed at:
<http://www.state.nj.us/njed/guide/2006/> .

Getting the Most Out of AAC Systems Keep 'em Current

Students with severe expressive language disorders are frequently helped by specially designed augmentative and alternative communication systems (AAC). These range from no-tech systems such as manual communication boards or books, to mid-tech voice output communication aids (VOCAs) to high-tech electronic VOCAs.

Often, the whole process of first identifying a student's need for AAC and then finally obtaining the AAC system can be very long and drawn out. Determining what type of AAC system is appropriate for a particular student is a complicated process and it begins with determining the student's communication needs.

When the assessment is complete and the AAC system is agreed on, ordered and delivered, staff and parents are trained. Then the system is customized for the student and he or she starts using the communication system on a regular basis. Finally, there appears to be light at the end of the tunnel!

But how do we insure that the student uses the device all the time and that it is not abandoned and found unused and sitting on a shelf? The best way to do this is to **keep it current.**



Make sure the vocabulary is relevant and not outdated. For example, are vocabulary and messages appropriate for upcoming curriculum areas, field trips or special events? Are old vocabulary and messages eliminated when they are no longer appropriate? When a student transitions to a new class or school the following year, the new classmates', teachers', and aides' names and new places need to be added to the AAC system.

Is the student's AAC system expanding to meet his or her language and communication needs? If a student is learning new skills, are they being programmed into the system? If a student has a new favorite television program, is that represented in the system?

The responsibility for making these changes must be shared by all team

SEE PAGE 3

Solutions with Technology

Case Studies & Practical Applications of Assistive Technology

in the Classroom



Cures for the Summertime Blues

by Mike Marotta

Well, we have just about made it through another year! As thoughts turn to summer vacation, the beach and hanging out with friends, the team should work with students to develop a plan to ensure that all those new skills learned throughout the school year are not "lost" over the summer from lack of use. With some simple planning, students can return to school in September with improved technology skills and be ready to face the new challenges of another school year.

Sometimes the best way to keep computer skills fresh in the summer is to attend a summer technology camp. A recent Google search for "summer technology camp, nj" returned 3,810,000 hits! It's hard to say that choices are limited - looking through these options should produce one match for everyone's needs. Many of these types of camps focus on technology uses that students are interested in but don't have the opportunity to work on in school, for example IMing, blogging, podcasting, etc. While these activities might not initially seem related to

skills needed for school, consider that in order to complete these activities students will have to use their writing and speaking skills to produce exciting products.

For students who are using specialized assistive technology tools to complete educational tasks, the summer is a chance to become more comfortable with the tools without the pressure of assignments. Specialized tools could include software to assist with writing or reading, portable word processors or laptop computers, books on CD, etc.

Typically, students will learn only the features of a tool that they need in order to complete assignments. The summer is a perfect time to encourage them to use other aspects of the tool that may enable them to work more efficiently when they return to school. Teams should review the tools with students before summer break and agree on new features to explore over the summer. Remember, create fun, interesting activities around these new features so students are excited about working on this over the summer. Ask them to keep a journal about the

family vacation, or create a photo slide show of summer activities.

Keeping technology skills throughout the summer can be fun with some planning. By committing to a little extra work over vacation, students will be ready to excel at the start of the next school year. For more information on technology support and training, contact Fred Tchang, Director of Assistive Technology Services at 888-322-1918 ext. 588 or via email at ftchang@cpofnj.org

Mike Marotta is a RESNA Certified Assistive Technology Practitioner and a Rehabilitation Technologist for Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey. Mike provides Assistive Technology assessments and training for consumers, teachers, and service providers throughout the state.

Surfin' for Technology Resources

How to create a Blog - www.blogger.com

What is a Podcast? (WGBH) - www.pod101.com

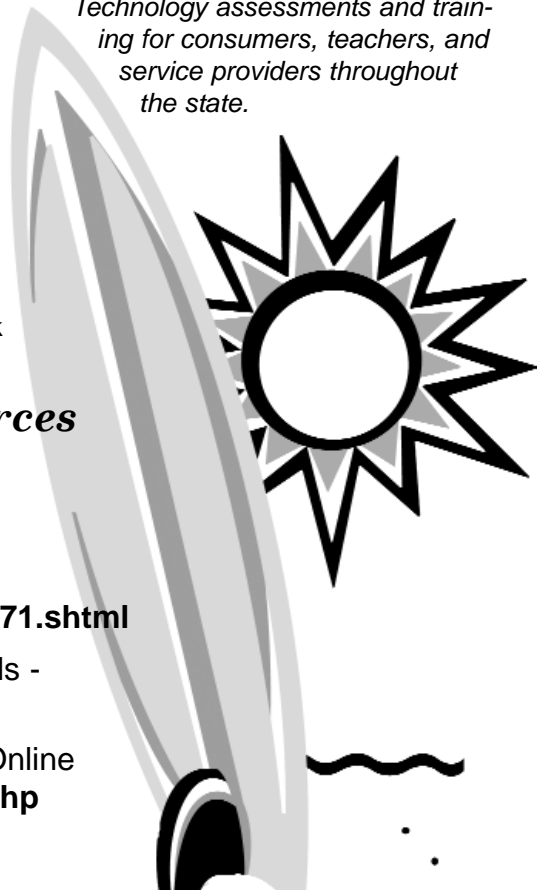
Create a PowerPoint Photo Slide Show -

http://www.educationworld.com/a_tech/techtorial/techtorial071.shtml

On-Line Practice Modules for Standard Classroom Software Tools -

<http://www.internet4classrooms.com/on-line.htm>

Assistive Technology Software Tutorials - Assistive Technology Online Training Project - <http://atto.buffalo.edu/registered/Tutorials.php>



Now in its 2nd Year!
**Program Offers
 Students Choices**

Last year Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey developed a new service to meet the needs of students who participate in Extended School Year programs.

The program, **Choices: A Creative Approach to Extended School Year Services**, takes extended school year programs out of the classroom and offers a new approach to continuous and fun learning for students ages 3 to 21. Students participating in **Choices** have the opportunity to experience the community around them and to use both their past and everyday learning experiences in real world settings.

Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey develops an individualized curriculum for each student and then provides the staff suitable to provide the support and implement the curriculum. The students who participated last year were involved in a variety of activities that included: attending summer camp, job sampling, learning and practicing independent living skills, attending theater workshops, and going grocery shopping. In addition, students were able to develop and/or increase social skills since they were able to participate in many of these activities with their siblings and friends. Conducting the program in community settings offers students the opportunity to participate in society while working on academic and vocational goals.

For more information on the **Choices** program for students ages 3 through 13, contact Angela Baldwin at 856-310-0214 ext. 32 or abaldwin@cpofnj.org and for information on programs for students who are 14 through 21, contact Lorraine Brown at 609-392-4004 ext. 532.

Keep 'em Current

FROM PAGE1

members: parents, speech-language pathologists, teachers, classroom aides and other therapists. Often, parents are the only constant throughout the student's years in school, so it is vital to empower them to help keep the system current.

Parents and staff may need access to materials (such as computer software for making communication boards) in order to revise systems in their "spare time." Since everyone's time is at a premium, AAC services may need to involve direct treatment or therapy, as well as indirect treatment, to enable teachers, therapists or aides to program and revise the system.

Another important consideration is making sure that all staff and family members are comfortable with the system and understand how to enable the student to communicate throughout the day. Often, training or technical assistance needs to be ongoing, to help monitor the student's progress. Keeping their systems current will help to keep your students using AAC systems effectively!

For more information on the training and support Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey can provide to students who use AAC and their teachers and families, contact Fred Tchang at 888-322-1918 ext. 588 or via email at ftchang@cpofnj.org.

Parents' Night Out Expanded to Southern Region

Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey now offers Parents' Night Out (PNO) to families in Burlington and Camden counties.

Each week, children with disabilities and their siblings are invited to participate in a group activity that is supervised by specially trained Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey staff. Activities include things like pizza parties, bowling, going to the movies, taking in local theater events, craft nights and more. Parents can enjoy an evening out, knowing their children are having fun in a safe environment.

The program, funded by the

Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), has been available through the agency for several years in Warren, Sussex and Morris counties.

For more information on PNO in the northern counties, contact Deanna Wrobleuski at 908-813-8292 ext. 307. For information on the program in the south, contact Angela Baldwin at 856-310-0214 ext. 32.

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