

US Secretary of Education Addresses Technology Accessibility

Judie Lee, IPAT Director

Secretary Riley, United States Department of Education, has recently disseminated a letter about the importance of having electronic and information technology that is accessible to everyone in schools, including individuals with disabilities. He states in his letter, As the use of technology in all aspects of life has become more prevalent, technology skills have also become a basic requirement, just like reading, writing and math, that every student must master to succeed and be productive. Therefore, it is essential that the technology used in our schools leaves no one behind.

It is possible for schools to unintentionally create new barriers when acquiring educational technology systems if they do not consider accessibility features upfront. Schools in North Dakota are making large investments in technology. It is more cost effective to consider accessibility issues in the planning stages, prior to purchasing, rather than incurring the expenses of retrofitting later. Certainly, every computer or piece of technology equipment does not need to be equipped for use by someone with a disability. However, technology devices and systems should be capable of being used, or adapted for use, by individuals with disabilities.

Secretary Riley has developed a technical assistance packet which includes information about aspects of access, legal obligations regarding technology and individuals with disabilities, and a list of resources for further information and assistance. This packet can be obtained by calling the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in Washington, D.C. at 202-205-5466. It is also available on the Departments web site at:

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/whatsnew/techpack.html>

Planning is critical in the development of a successful technology program and accessibility issues need to be a part of that plan. Statewide surveys of assistive technology practices revealed an absence of planning in this area throughout North Dakota. Administrators indicated there was a lack of technical assistance to aid them with identifying the critical components to address in the area of assistive technology planning. In response to this need, IPAT has written, *Technology For All: A Guide to Solving the Puzzle*, which identifies the critical components to address when planning for assistive technology. In addition to the explanation of components, it

contains checklists, worksheets, tables and other resources to assist in analyzing and designing a program. Copies of this guide will be available from IPAT in the spring of 1998.

Discover Another Way to Do It

IPAT is sponsoring a workshop on Thursday, April 16, 1998 at the Fargo Holiday Inn from 9 AM - 4 PM. Participants will be introduced to environmental control systems (ECSs) which provide alternative access to devices (TV, phone, computer) at home, school or work. Michelle Lange, a registered occupational therapist, published author, and international presenter, will conduct the workshop. She will demonstrate a variety of ECSs and describe how to analyze systems by access method, device used and other features. Participants will have an opportunity to try out the systems and ask questions.

ECSs are the least understood and least used assistive technology solutions. Discover the world of ECSs for yourself or someone you care about who may be aging or disabled. Registration information will be sent to all AT KEY newsletter recipients in late February. All are welcome but space is limited. For further information contact the AT Info-line 1/888/214-2780. Check out an on-line resource at [SmartHome](#).

I Can't Hear You

There are an estimated 4.5 million Americans using assistive devices to aid in hearing. The most common devices used are hearing aids which can be worn on the body or in or behind the ear. Hearing aids consist of a microphone, amplifier, battery and receiver. Aids are individualized, prescribed by a physician and fitted by an audiologist. Another common amplification solution is an assistive listening device (ALD) which can be used with or without a hearing aid. ALD's are available for large and small areas, with headphones, earphones or neckloops and with FM, AM or Infrared transmission. Typically, an ALD works like a portable radio with headphones. For example, in a theater you hold the receiver unit in your lap and wear the headphones to better hear what is going on. Other ALD's can be used with a television or radio if the appliance has a headphone jack built in. Just plug the ALD directly into the appliance, the sound will go directly to your ear and you adjust the volume accordingly.

For a person who cannot hear a phone ring, a knock at the door or an oven timer go off, visual alerts can signal these happenings. Visual alerts work by using a signaling device which is plugged directly into an AC outlet. The signaling device may or may not have the capacity to transmit to additional remote receivers. For example, to turn the auditory ring of a phone into a visual alert, plug the modular phone jack into the signaling

device as well as a lamp, plug all into an AC outlet. Now when the phone rings the lamp will turn off or on letting the individual with hearing loss know of an incoming call.

Vibrating alerts, like visual alerts, give more independence to persons with hearing loss. For example, if you are unable to hear a conventional alarm clock, a vibrating alarm clock placed under your bed pillow will signal you that it is time to get up. The same idea can be used for smoke alarms and personal pagers. These assistive technology device examples allow individuals with hearing loss to be alerted quickly and efficiently by changing sound signals in meaningful ways. For further information on AT devices for hearing loss, call the toll-free ND AT Info-line 1-888-214-2780.

Consumer Connection

"Say Cheese"

RESNA, an interdisciplinary association for the advancement of rehabilitation and assistive technologies, is conducting the Third Annual Assistive Technology Photo Contest. The purpose of the photo contest is to heighten public awareness of the uses of AT.

IPAT would like to extend an invitation to all newsletter readers to participate in this national awareness effort by entering the photo contest. This years theme is Assistive Technology at Work, School, and Play.

Contest specifics:

- Illustrate the uses of assistive technology by persons with disabilities of all ages Black & white or color photos only (no slides)
- Signed release form (from all identifiable subjects) with each photo; obtain from 1-800-265-IPAT (4728)
- Winners must supply original negative or transparency
- Entries become the property of RESNA and will not be returned
- Label: Name, Address, Phone,
- Title and brief description of AT

Mail to: Photo Contest
RESNA Technical Assistance Project
1700 N. Moore St., Ste 1540
Arlington, VA 22209

Winners will be announced at RESNA 98 in Minneapolis.

- Prizes include:
- A round trip airline ticket to the Twin Cities (donated by Alexis Travel)

- Sega Genesis 2 Sonic Spinball System and Bugs Bunny in Double Trouble game (donated by Sega Foundation)
- \$100 gift certificate (donated by Circuit City Stores)
- Subscription to AT Journal (donated by RESNA) and more!

So take off your lens cap, purchase some film and have fun capturing the assistive technology spirit in North Dakota.

Deadline is June 1, 1998.

FUNDING NEWS

Schools Fund AT Via Section 504

Students whose disabilities do not qualify them for special education services, but who still need special assistance, are covered by section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Section 504 requires reasonable steps to insure that students with disabilities have access to a school's full range of programs and activities. The special assistance needed for students to fully participate often includes assistive technology. If so, section 504 may require the schools to provide assistive technology devices and services.

Section 504 applies most often to those students who are academically capable of mainstream participation, but require some type of special accommodation. If, for example, a child with a motor impairment requires the use of a wheelchair for mobility, various accommodations may be necessary to provide him full access to the schools programs and activities. A special desk with an elevated surface and open storage slots for paper management may be required to participate in classroom activities. Additionally, a mini-keyboard may be the means by which this student is able to use a computer within the school's computer lab. Because the classroom and the computer lab are available to all students, the school must implement reasonable steps to insure that this student, despite having a disability, also has full access.

Schools must implement procedures to determine Section 504 eligibility and to evaluate the needs of students with disabilities who do not qualify for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The procedures must include: a comprehensive, individualized evaluation of needs, with regular re-evaluations; decision-making by a group of people (including the child's parents) knowledgeable about the student, the evaluation information and the placement options; and written identification of the student's needs and the services to be provided. Parents who disagree have due process rights, including the right to a hearing.

For further information, contact the ND Department of Public Instruction (701) 328-2260, your local school district, or Beth at IPAT (800-265-IPAT).

EQUIPMENT SPOTLIGHT

The IPAT Equipment Loan Library now has another way for those with limited physical abilities to access printed materials; the GEWA page turner! This device allows the user to manipulate a mechanically driven rubber roller through four simple maneuvers to complete independent page turning of books and magazines.

The GEWA page turner is designed for use via direct selection using a multiple switch, allowing four functions; a standard joystick is an example of this type of switch. As well, the page turner can be used with the SC-1 Scanning Controller and any single switch. When scanning and single switch use are employed, the user can choose between momentary or latching modes. The only assistance required is to insert the document, position the operating control for the user, and occasionally clean the turning mechanism.

The GEWA page turner is available for trial use at no cost through the IPAT Equipment Loan Library 1-800-421-1181 or may be rented/purchased through Zygo Industries, Inc., 1-800-234-6006. **Base Cost \$3,000.**

North Dakota Adds Three ATP's

RESNA, the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America, has announced that , Don Olson and Peggy Shireley have fulfilled the eligibility requirements and passed the credentialing exam necessary to become certified Assistive Technology Practitioners (ATP's). These requirements include a combination of relevant education and experience, as well as adherence to a code of ethics and rules as outlined by the RESNA Standards of Practice. RESNA has developed this voluntary credentialing process in order to insure consumer safeguards and increase consumer satisfaction with the service delivery process.

The ATP credential is intended for service providers who are primarily involved in the evaluation and assessment of an end user's assistive technology needs, as well as training and follow-up in the use of that technology. By passing the exam and meeting all eligibility requirements, , Don Olson and Peggy Shireley have demonstrated a level of expertise to guide the consumer, including third party purchasers of services, in determining how assistive technology can help meet their needs.

Calander of Events

March 17-21, 1998

Technology Conference
Los Angeles, CA CSUN

April 16,1998

ECS Training
Fargo, ND

Apri1 17, 1998

Disability Awareness Day
Fargo, ND

April 23, 1998

IPAT Equipment Expo
Maddock, ND