



Educating for Success



Success Stories and Solutions for Educating Students with Disabilities.

Presentations for Parents' Groups

Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey's Assistive Technology Services Department will be presenting "Introduction to Assistive Technology" for the Arc of Monmouth on Monday, January 9, 2006 and to the Educational Support Group of Upper Saddle River on Tuesday, March 14, 2006.

For more information about these presentations or to find out about scheduling a presentation for your parents' group, contact Fred Tchang, Director of ATS at 888-322-1918 ext. 588 or via email at ftchang@cpofnj.org.

*Struggling with
Holiday Gift Ideas?
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Homework

How Much Support is Too Much?

It's easy to understand why students dread homework, but when parents and teachers start complaining, something's amiss. A weary mother recently confessed that she felt her son's homework was not so much an assignment for him but more a test of her parenting skills and patience.

She explained that her son, a fourth grader with dyslexia and auditory processing disorders, was not able to complete his homework assignments without her help. "He would put off doing his homework for as long as possible and I could see that it was very frustrating for him. So now we spend hours after dinner at the kitchen table going over and over things. In the end, I usually do the work and my son copies what I've written. I know this isn't the right way to do homework, but I don't know what else to do."

It can be hard for parents to know how much help is too much help. When does a parent stop being a support and start being an enabler?

First, let's look at what this parent has done right. She's established a routine - every night after dinner it's homework time. Her son works in an area that's quiet and free of distraction. And she's there to act as a support. Under these conditions, her son should be able to complete an assignment by himself or with a little bit of assistance.

If he can't, then a conference with his

teacher is in order and our parent should find out if her son is able to complete similar work in the classroom by himself or if he's using resources or supports at school that are not available at home. She should find out if there's an aide in the classroom helping him complete his work.

For teachers homework can be vexing as well. In this instance, the parent's efforts, however well intentioned, are masking issues that need to be

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addressed in the classroom. Many teachers also struggle with students who don't complete their homework and seem to have never ending supply of excuses. In some cases, it's the parent who is providing the excuses.

Homework is vital part of the learning process. If parents and teachers are on the same page, it shouldn't be a hassle. Getting on the same page may require a phone call or face-to-face-meeting.

Sharing the student's learning style with his or her parents may be helpful. If they know whether their child is an auditory, visual or kinesthetic learner, they maybe able to provide more effective support or find tools to make homework easier.

Solutions with Technology

Case Studies & Practical Applications of Assistive Technology in the Classroom



Helping Students Get Organized

by Jeannette Van Houten

How organized we are relates to how we manage daily tasks and control our environment. For a student with a disability affecting his or her ability to get organized, life can seem overwhelming, even the smallest task can seem too large to deal with.

Using tools and strategies, students can learn and develop organizational skills that will help them manage tasks, activities and their time. In high school, with multiple classes on different sides of or levels of a building, students live at the mercy of the late bell. For students with organizational issues this can prove to be quite a challenge. Not only do they have to get to class on time but also they have to do it with the right materials.

Harry, a ninth grade student, struggled with showing up on time with the right books. We suspected the black hole he called a book bag might have been part of the problem. Since Harry's an older student the first step in getting him organized was talking to him about what he would and wouldn't use. The most useful tool in the world won't help if it's not cool to carry.

The first area we addressed was Harry's locker. We purchased locker bins that held essential materials, post it notes, pens, and extra set of clothing and personal hygiene materials. We had maintenance create an extra shelf in Harry's locker so the locker was divided into three sections: bottom for book bag and clothing crate, middle shelf for notebooks and a top shelf for textbooks.

Help with Homework

Next, all text and notebooks were coded. Since Harry's a sports fan, team colors were used to code

what notebook and textbook go together. Harry also decided instead of one large notebook he would prefer 1-inch binders for each class. The smaller binders were split into three sections - homework, class work and study guides.

For Harry, it's easier to look at one subject at a time instead of his whole class load. If he had homework for a specific class he would put a removable flag that said "DO THIS" on the notebook. At the end of the day, Harry would load the flagged binders into his book bag. Extra textbooks were already at home.

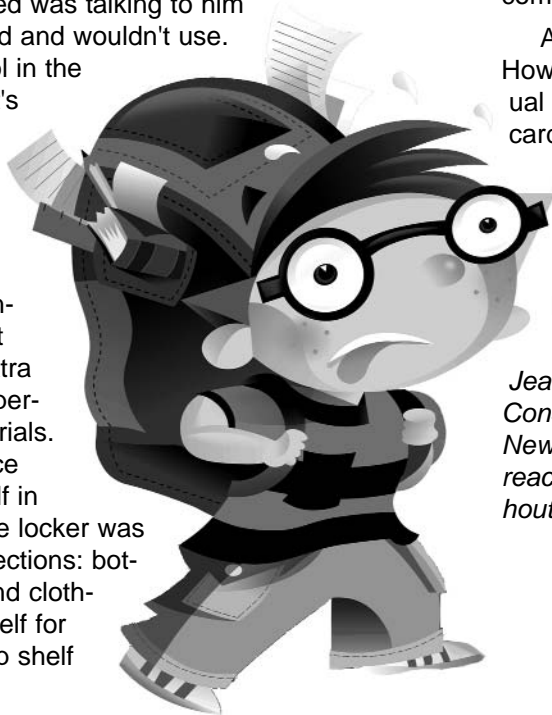
Harry kept a homework agenda but because his writing is not clear enough to be legible, the agenda was often a source of confusion. Instead, Harry enters his assignments directly into his Dana calendar. The calendar was set up with a listing of his classes for each day. After the materials have been synced on his home computer, Harry's ready to work.

Harry's AT consultant showed him how organizational skills could help him with actual assignments. For a research project in history, Harry needed to create baseball cards for 20 famous individuals and include relevant statistics about their lives. The class had four weeks to complete the task.

At first, Harry considered the project too intense. However, after seeing that if he researched one individual each night and filled in the information on an index card template the consultant helped him create, the job didn't seem so immense.

For students with learning disabilities organizational skills need to be addressed at a very young age. Just like students need to practice their letters and numbers, students need to practice creating structure in their lives.

Jeannette Van Houten is a Special Education Teacher Consultant and the Coordinator of Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey's Technology Lending Center. You can reach her at 888-322-1918 ext. 530 or via email at jvanhouten@cpofnj.org.



Check the February 2006 issue for ideas on how to help pupils in elementary school develop organizational skills.

Great Gift Ideas

Celebrate Learning this Holiday Season

MP3 Player

Just about any kid would enjoy unwrapping a portable MP3 player this holiday season. Not just for music, these handy little devices provide an excellent way to enjoy audio books. Before buying one, do a little homework and research the player's format. Some are designed for sound quality, some for file capacity.

AudioBooksForFree.com features a comprehensive article on figuring out which sort of player will work for your needs.

PDA

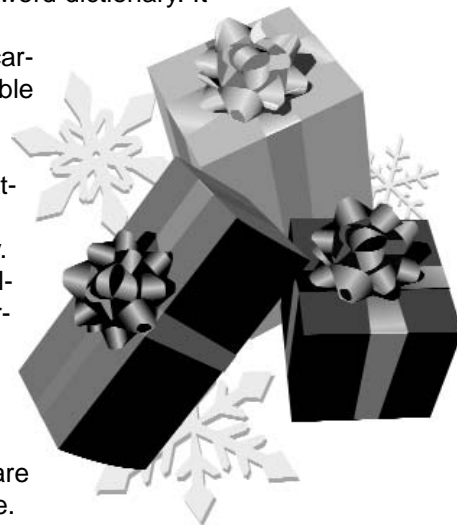
Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) were initially developed as personal organizers for addresses, phone numbers and such. Over the past few years, they've become much more versatile. Today, your basic PDA includes an address book, a date book, task list, memo pad and calculator and the device can be synced with a home computer. Some models use WiFi or Bluetooth technology to access the internet and some feature cameras, telephones, GPS or data storage. A PDA makes a great gift for a student who needs help keeping track of assignments. Prices range from \$90 to over \$450 - depending on what features it has.

iQuest

LeapFrog offers a PDA product for kids 10 and up called iQuest. This handheld device includes quiz type game system, an address book, calendar/scheduler, a calcula-

tor and a 75,000-word dictionary. It cost about \$50.

Subject specific cartridges are available with thousands of questions based on 266 textbooks used in classrooms today. There's also a college test prep cartridge to help older students prepare for the PSAT, SAT and ACT. Cartridges are about \$15 a piece.



FLY Pentop Computer

Also by LeapFrog, this new pen device runs on one AAA battery and includes a computer processor, an optical scanner and a speaker. It's an interactive marvel that requires special dot matrix paper. The Fly can calculate a math problem, remind you of an appointment or record music you've created playing a keyboard you've drawn. The pen sells for \$99. Additional cartridges are available for specific games and learning and are available for around \$30.

Case Study: Finding the Right Tool

by Fred Tchang, ATP

Samantha is a 9th grade student who is attentive and participates well in class, but her illegible handwriting leads her to avoid doing homework assignments. For this reason, Samantha looks for ways to type her homework. While there is a computer in the home, it has been experiencing technical problems.

We performed trials with both the Neo and Dana portable word processors (www.alphasmart.com). The significantly larger screen on the Dana, combined with the capability of recording homework assignments and to do lists in the Dana's built-in programs, made Samantha and the team feel that it would better meet her needs.

We also considered use of a laptop, and I outlined some of the benefits of each: The Dana offers much better battery life, instant on and off (no boot time), does not crash or lock up, and is light and fairly sturdy. It can print directly to a printer, or be connected to a computer for downloading typed text.

Laptops, on the other hand, have the larger, brighter screen, have significantly better spell check capability, and can run all different kinds of programs, rather than just being used for word processing. Weighing all the pros and cons, the Dana seemed a better tool that would be more likely to be used not just for homework, but when traveling from class to class.

Design Your Own Conference or Workshop

Let us know what kind of training you would find worthwhile. We have received requests to provide trainings and conferences to support parents, teachers, therapists, and child study team members, as they look to support students.



- I am a:
- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Therapist | <input type="checkbox"/> CST Member or other school staff |

I would prefer trainings that occurred at these times. please check all that apply...

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekdays | <input type="checkbox"/> Weekends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9 AM to 4 PM | <input type="checkbox"/> 9 AM to 11 PM |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 PM to 3 PM | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 PM to 9 PM |

Areas of Interest (Please Check All That Apply):

- Advocacy _____
- _____
- Assistive Technology _____
- _____
- Recreation _____
- _____
- Transition _____
- _____
- Other _____
- _____

Please feel free to include additional comments. This survey is also available online at: www.cpfnj.org/survey.htm.

Mail or fax this back to Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey, 354 South Broad Street, Trenton, NJ 08608

Fax: (609) 392-3505 Attn: Fred Tchang

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

What You Need to Know About Special Education Students and Substance Abuse

Are you working with a student you think may be abusing alcohol or drugs but are unsure how to confront him or her about the issue? Are you aware of the risk factors for substance abuse among the classified special education student?

Whether a student is abusing alcohol, using illicit drugs or misusing prescription medication, teachers, child study team members, administrators and counselors need to be able to recognize the signs of substance abuse and what they can do to help the student.

Debbie Maslansky, MS, CPS, Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey's Director of Substance Abuse Prevention, offers

free Roads2Recovery staff in-service training sessions for educators on risk factors for substance abuse among classified special education students and prevention issues.

To schedule a free workshop contact Debbie Maslansky at 1-888-322-1918 ext. 518 or email her at dmaslansky@cpfj.org.

