

Educating for Success



Strategies and Solutions for Educating Students with Disabilities

Assistive Technology Bargain Vault

By Naomi Leibowitz

Assistive Technology Specialist

In this column, I'll take a look at a variety of assistive technology bargains that often go unnoticed! My rules of engagement are: Try to find assistive technology priced under \$99; share the findings here in this happy little column. I'll launch my first column with programs that come in at my favorite price point: **free!**

The first bargain is **WordWeb** (<http://wordweb.info/free>), a one-click free English thesaurus and dictionary for Windows that can look up words in almost any program. It works off-line, but can also look up words in web references such as the Wikipedia encyclopedia. Features include synonyms, root words, audio pronunciations and much more.

Another free software is **Camera Mouse** (www.cameramouse.org) that enables you to control the mouse pointer on your computer screen just by moving your head. The only thing you would need is a Webcam, which is available at stores such as Target, Wal-Mart, Staples, etc for under \$30.

Do you know about something that belongs in the Bargain Vault? Please email me the details at nleibowitz@advopps.org.

Early Planning Makes for Smoother Transitions

By Vanessa Lombardo M.ED

Special Education Teacher/ Assistive Technology Specialist

Transitioning from high school to college can be very scary for any student. However, students with disabilities have more to consider than course selection, housing and meal plans. At Advancing Opportunities, we've seen first hand that students who know their rights and actively work toward their transition goals while still in middle and high school have much smoother transitions than students who don't plan or who wait until their senior year to start.

Self-advocacy Is Imperative

When a student graduates from high school, his or her IEP does not follow them to post secondary school. Therefore, it is up to students to advocate for themselves at college or in a trade school. Disclosure of a disability is completely voluntary. However, in order for a post secondary school to provide a student with academic adjustments, the student must declare that they do have a disability.

Documentation must be provided. The required documentation may include one or more of the following: a diagnosis of your current disability; the date

of the diagnosis; how the diagnosis was reached; the credentials of the professional; how your disability affects a major life activity; and how the disability affects your academic performance. The documentation should provide enough information for you and your school to decide what is an appropriate academic adjustment.

In providing an academic adjustment, a postsecondary institution does not have to eliminate or lower essential requirements, or make modifications that would result in a fundamental alteration of the programs or activities being offered or impose an undue burden on the institution.

Know the Law

Many parents and their students with disabilities have familiarized themselves with the statues of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) during the students' 12-plus years in school. However, most parents are not as familiar with the statues of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Understanding the tenants of these provisions will help a student after high school.

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Solutions with Technology

Case Studies & Practical Applications of Assistive Technology in the Classroom



Find Switch Accessible Activities and Games Free Online

By Kristen Russell, OTP, ATP

Assistive Technology Specialist

We all know the Internet is a valuable tool for finding just about any information you could possibly want. Switch accessible activities are no exception, and there are tons of FREE ones, no less! A simple Google search for “free switch accessible activities/games” will bring up many options. It can feel daunting to wade through all of the different sites, so here are a few of my favorites to start from:

Priory Woods

www.priorywoods.middlesbrough.sch.uk/resources/videos.htm

The Priory Woods School in the UK has produced some really fun, switch accessible slideshows that are set to music. There are a good variety of downloadable slideshows for all ages, ranging from Bob the Builder to Black Eyed Peas.

SENSwitcher

www.northerngrid.org/ngflwebsite/sen/NetSwitch/index.htm

SENSwitcher activities are presented with high contrast colors, simple graphics, and interesting sounds, which make them particularly appropriate for switch users with visual impairments. One of my favorite things about this site is the ability to customize the color, order, length, and graphics used in the activities. There are a range of activities from cause and effect to scanning.

Knee Bouncers

www.kneebounce.com/

Kneebounce, created by a dad of small children, is a website full of simple games that can be activated by hitting any key on the keyboard, or for a switch user, by hitting their switch! There are fun graphics and sounds geared towards younger players.

Hiyah

www.hiyah.net/software.html

Hiyah, a website created by a mom, offers activities that can either be downloaded or played online. There are a huge amount of topics covered here for younger children, including stories, seasons, holidays, songs, emotions, etc. They can all be accessed by clicking a switch set to emulate a press of the spacebar. This is a very handy site for teachers looking for switch accessible activities based on a theme they are covering in class.

One Switch

www.oneswitch.org.uk/

One Switch.org is a great resource for free, downloadable arcade-style games that are switch accessible. Many of these games are very challenging, even though they only involve one switch.



This is a great site for teen or adult switch users who have often outgrown many of the available switch games.

In addition to web sites dedicated to games and activities, there are many great sites that provide information about switches, including how to use them and how to teach students to use them. Here are my top three:

One favorite is **Better Living Through Technology** (www.bltt.org), by Charlie Danger. This site has great, simply presented information on assistive technology, with a section that covers switch access. This website is a wonderful place to start if you are new to the world of switches!

The blog **Teaching Learners with Multiple Needs** (teachinglearnerswithmultipleneeds.blogspot.com/) is a great place to find switch activities and games, and to get updates on new ones that are out there.

A brief overview of **Linda Burkhart's** framework for teaching switch scanning skills can be found at www.lburkhart.com/hand2sw4s.htm. This information has drastically improved my ability to help teach students and their teams how to become effective switch scanners. You can also find information on how to purchase her book, *Two Switches to Success*, an excellent resource for any teacher, therapist, or parent of a child who is learning switch skills.

I've found that one of the biggest challenges presented when working with students who use switches is coming up with new ideas for switch accessible activities. The Internet is my biggest tool for overcoming this challenge, and who knows—maybe you will soon be inspired to create and share your own switch accessible activities!

Visit us online at
www.assivetechcenter.org
or visit our blog, Tools of the Trade, at
<http://assivetechnj.blogspot.com/>



Let's Look @ the nook

By Mike Marotta, ATP
*Assistant Director of Assistive
Technology Services*

Barnes & Noble has entered the e-book reader arena with its new device called the nook. The nook is an electronic book reader that is approximately the size of a paperback book (8 inches by 5 inches, with a weight of around 12 ounces). I got one of these devices for a Christmas present and let me tell you – this thing is fantastic!

The screen is divided into two sections: the top e-ink screen which displays the book and a smaller touch screen at the bottom that is used for navigation. The e-ink display is 5.5 by 3.5 inches and allows you to change the text size to best meet your visual needs. The device comes with 2GB of storage space for books – which is enough for 1,500 books.

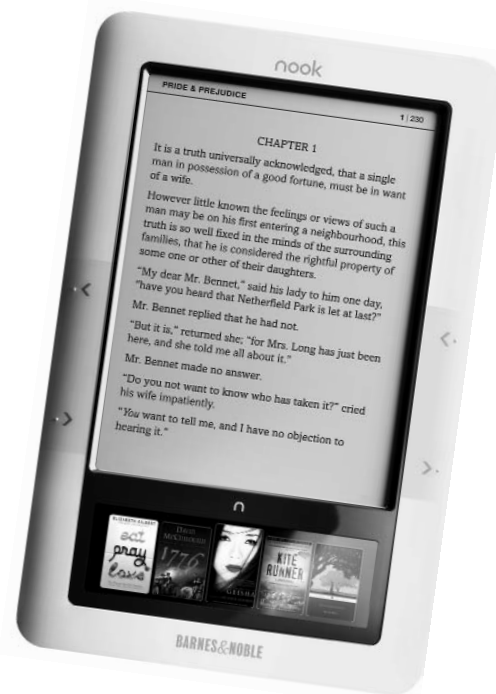
But what if you want to add more books? The one feature that separates the nook from its competitors is the expandable SD micro slot to enable you to add in even MORE books! Books can be in a variety of formats – from the Barnes & Noble eBooks to PDF files.

Barnes & Noble books can be downloaded wirelessly directly to your device in less than a minute.

The ability to load PDF files allows you to load your own files into the device to take with you. But what if you don't have the ability to create PDF files? Don't worry – just download a simple program called CutePDF (www.cutepdf.com). This program enables you to create PDF files from any electronic files you may already have on your computer (.doc, .txt, .rtf). Then just plug the nook into your computer with the included USB cable and simply drag your new PDF files right into your nook.

How about audio content? Sure, the nook can handle that too! Load audio books or .mp3 files into your nook, plug in your headphones and enjoy. Remember, that any audio content you download to your nook will use the internal memory. If you plan on loading audio content, make sure to add in the extra memory card.

The company claims that a battery charge will last 10 days (with the wireless off). I have been using my nook for over a month and I have to agree with



the company claim. I make sure to turn off the wireless to increase my battery life since there really isn't much need for the wireless if I am not planning on downloading books. The nook can be charged either with the included wall charger or directly from the USB plug in your computer.

Overall, the nook is an outstanding e-reader and I would recommend it. Still not sure? Go visit your local Barnes & Noble store and try one out.

Happy reading!

Planning Early Makes for Smoother Transitions

FROM PAGE 1 **ADA and Section 504**

The ADA of 1990 is a federal civil rights law that protects the rights of people with disabilities. It affects access to employment; state and local government programs and services; access to places of public accommodation such as businesses, transportation, and non-profit service providers; and telecommunications. Section 504 is part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Section 504 is a civil rights law that covers the rights of all individuals with disabilities, not just school-aged children. It prohibits disability discrimination by any program or activity that receives federal funds. For example, it applies to public schools, colleges, and vocational programs. State and local government agencies and programs, public services, are also covered.

Resources

The following websites offer good transition information for students with disabilities and their families.

PACER Center (Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights)

<http://www.pacer.org/index.asp>

Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html>

Auxiliary Aids and Services for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities: Higher Education's Obligations Under Section 504 and Title II of the ADA

<http://www.ed.gov/ocr/docs/auxaids.html>

Wrightslaw

<http://www.wrightslaw.com>

Districts interesting in learning more about having Advancing Opportunities' staff support students and their families in transition, can contact Catherine Wiegand, Coordinator of Community Education Services at cwiegand@advopps.org or call 609-882-4182 ext. 532.

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8th ANNUAL SUMMER INCLUSION CONFERENCE

What is working? How do I know?

Presented by: New Jersey Coalition for Inclusive Education (NJCIE)

Location and University Partner: Georgian Court University

District Partner: Lakewood Public Schools

NJCIE's eighth annual Summer Inclusion Conference will take place on June 30 and July 1, 2010 at Georgian Court University. These two interactive and strategy-packed days will feature 21 workshops per day focused on including students with disabilities in general education settings.

Presenters will include New Jersey teachers, higher education faculty, NJDOE Consultants and nationally known presenters: Paula Kluth (You're Going to Love this Kid: Teaching Students with Autism in the Inclusive Classroom), Michael McSheehan (University of New Hampshire's Institute on Disability), Carol Tashie (Voices of Friendship) and Kenna Colley (Radford University).

Strands will include collaborative teaching, strategies for teachers (K-12), literacy, Assessment/Rtl, including students with complex needs, early childhood inclusion, multi-cultural classrooms, integrating supports, and strategies for families.

Register before June 1, become a NJCIE member and secure a price of only \$205 for both Conference days (\$225 for nonmembers). Brochures, registration forms, and directions are posted on <http://njcie.net> or contact NJCIE at 732-613-0400.

Participants can sign up for a hands-on demonstration of AT devices or software provided by Advancing Opportunities' Assistive Technology Services Department.

Professional development credits of up to 5 hours per day are available. This Conference is endorsed by the NJEA Professional Development Institute. ASHA CEUs will be available.

