



## IN THIS ISSUE...

### That's Not Entertainment

"Beginning in the 1990s, entertainment began to take over the education software industry. The focus moved from, 'Is this software truly effective?' to 'Is the child going to like it?'"

The speaker, speech-language pathologist Dr. Mary Sweig Wilson, is co-founder and CEO of educational software publisher Laureate Learning Systems, Inc. Too often, she asserts, "there is little or no pedagogy behind far too many [educational software] products." As schools and colleges increasingly come to regard the conveyance of education to students as a product to be marketed to consumers hungry for entertainment, it becomes ever more vital for parents and families of children with special needs to have software available to them that teaches rather than entertains. This issue examines educational software created specifically to help special needs students to *learn*.

### Mary Sweig Wilson Speaks

Years ago, when she was a freshman theatre major at Smith College in Northampton, MA, Mary Sweig Wilson's literature professor, playwright Denis Johnston, stuttered uncontrollably when not in a lecture hall or a theatre. In the classroom or on stage, however, Johnston, a noted Irish Renaissance writer who had authored *Moon on the Yellow River*, among many other plays, delivered flawlessly dramatic lectures and direction. "I thought the contrast was really neat and I knew I wanted to do something professionally with that contrast later in life."

After a couple of years as an aspiring actress in New York, later came sooner for Mary Wilson. First came a Masters in speech pathology and audiology at Boston's Emerson College and then a Ph.D. in communicative disorders at Northwestern and a lengthy career in academia as a speech/language pathologist. In 1982, while a professor at the University of Vermont, she and a graduate student named Bernard Fox, in an effort to get their education software published, founded Laureate Learning Systems, Inc., a company that produces software for children and adults with special needs. Dr. Wilson and Mr. Fox continue to run Laureate while she remains a practicing speech-language pathologist with more than 30 years clinical experience in language intervention. Her clinical expertise is complemented by ongoing scholarship in contemporary linguistic theory. Dr. Wilson lectures often on the theoretical and research bases of language intervention and has presented seminars on this topic at several recent annual meetings of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Mary Sweig Wilson received the 1996 TAM (Technology and Media Division, Council for Exceptional Children) Leadership Award given for "exemplary vision and leadership in the application of technology and media for children, youth and adults with disabilities."

Supporting our interview with Dr. Wilson are resources to assist parents and others in accessing and assessing appropriate software designed to teach children with special needs. We also feature members of our **Knowledge Network**. The members spotlighted this month focus on education software. We invite you to contact these members for further information.

Please share this newsletter with other organizations, families and professionals who may benefit from it. We invite you to contact us at <http://www.fctd.info>. We welcome feedback, new members and all who contribute to our growing knowledge base.

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## **An Education Software Pioneer Stays the Course**

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### **An interview with Dr. Mary Sweig Wilson, Speech-Language Pathologist and CEO**

“Bernard [Fox] and I and Laureate have never been in the entertainment business,” asserts Dr. Mary Sweig Wilson, CEO and founder of Laureate Learning Systems, Inc. “We have remained true to our mission. Our material has always been theory and research-based. We feel that is the only way that (education) software can be truly effective in changing children’s language, cognition and reading for the better.”

According to Dr. Wilson, the creation of educational software has always been a serious endeavor grown even more serious with the advent of state standards. Although curricula are generated by states, most software programs are not generally designed with a specific curriculum in mind. The responsibility to integrate the software into the curriculum-driven day is the teacher’s. When a teacher has one or two special needs students in his or her class, the responsibility is even heavier. Given the responsibility and the curriculum constraints imposed on teachers, Dr. Wilson was asked, what does a software company like Laureate do to make it easier for a teacher to embrace, not reject, education software?

### **Content Based on Theory and Research**

From the beginning, she declares, “we’ve had this vision that the way to improve outcomes is by using theory- and research-based content in our software and by using research-based

procedures to collect data and document our progress.” In fact, she adds, “with the changes in having to relate special ed kids to state standards, we now have website correlations to state standards for each Laureate product” which make the software more easily “embraceable” for teachers.

At first, she explains, “it was regular educators who had to follow the curriculum as mandated by state standards. Over time,” she continues, “it’s been required in states that teachers had to indicate how their special ed students were working toward the standards.” In other words, she adds, “even if teachers had to make adaptations for their special ed kids, the state wanted to know how those kids fit in.”

She asserts that special education students “have not had to meet the standards in the same way that regular education students had to meet them.” Even before Bernie and I founded the company, long before we had state standards or thought about how special ed kids would fit in curriculums, back when people were only talking about Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), we believed that there was a three-step way of ensuring that the kids were making progress.” Those steps, she explained were: 1.) To have content based on theory and research; 2.) To have procedures based on instructional technology and research that demonstrates which procedures are most effective; 3.) To have data collection that clearly shows the children’s performance. “We’ve been using that three-step approach since 1982,” she declares.

### **Teacher Training is Available**

Laureate conducts teacher training for its products, she notes. “We’ve been involved in two [RIAT@NASDE](mailto:RIAT@NASDE) training sessions this past year and have developed an assistive technology language assessment software package that we are incorporating into our training.” The purpose, she says, is to make it possible for professionals who are not AT

specialists to make assessments. “We believe that a lot more people, if they understand how to use some AT, can, in fact, do assessments and not have to rely totally on individuals trained in AT, because there are just not enough AT specialists to go around.”

Dr. Wilson adds: “We are constantly asking ourselves, ‘How can we get more people, maybe not trained [in AT] at the highest level, to become able to determine how a child is functioning even if the child is non-verbal?’” If there is no way of utilizing standardized tests to assess non-verbal children, “then our software should be able to place those children.” The Laureate software, she adds, is especially helpful in assessing children between birth and age three who are non-verbal, an often difficult task for professionals in the field “who haven’t been trained to assess these kids.”

### **“I Don’t Come from Business”**

So far, she asserts, she has received no negative reaction from the field to her contention that non-AT specialists can be trained in assessment, or to Laureate’s integrity. “There’s always the apprehension that the field may think, ‘All [Laureate] cares about is selling its products, not evaluating kids.’” In fact, she adds, “that’s been my fear all along, but, in my favor, I don’t come from business and I am not a business person.” What she cares most about, she emphasizes, “is delivery of service to children and adults. That’s my goal. That’s my only mission, and I fulfill that mission better than I fulfill my responsibility as a business person.”

A full staff of professionals is available at Laureate to answer customer queries and to provide advice. “My partner and I are speech-language pathologists. Another associate, Adam Wing, who has been performing assessments, is not a speech-language pathologist but is very well versed in our software. He’s a graduate of St. John’s College in Maryland and he has the kind of

high-powered liberal arts background that that institution emphasizes.” Dr. Wilson regards herself and her staff as “a resource, not only for our own software but for other software as well.” She reveals, “We frequently refer customers to non-Laureate software and are happy to do so.”

### **No “Home Versions” of Software**

The majority of the names in the Laureate database that can be identified by profession are speech-language pathologists and special educators, Dr. Wilson notes. Parents also comprise a large percentage of Laureate software users. “We have a large number of parents as customers because we offer a 50% discount to parents and family members,” she says. “Unlike some companies that make home versions of their software – not a full-fledged version -- that they sell for full price, we offer parents a 50% discount. A company should not sell a ‘junior’ version of what works best.”

Dr. Wilson also does not approve of arranging to have specific software named in a child’s IEP. Although Laureate has included goals and objectives with its software, Dr. Wilson does not approve of writing specific products into IEPs. “I think professionals should be free to fulfill the goals using the best available materials. A professional should never be locked into specific software. A child may not like what is written in.” It is a difficult issue, she admits, “because professionals want to be sure that a child is using software.” For example, she adds, “we’ve said through the years that most of our products are designed to be used in the home and the classroom without the special educator or the speech pathologist present.” That approach, she continues, “is a way to deliver individualized services 5-7 days a week, thereby expanding the length and breadth of individualized services available to a child.”

Parents, she says, “almost always want a proviso written into the IEP that says, ‘Student

will use tutorial software designed for language intervention.’ There are ways to get specific language written into an IEP, without specifying brand names, that will guarantee that the child will receive software but without mentioning the name of a specific product.”

### **Necessity is the Mother of a Business**

The spark that resulted in the founding of Laureate Learning Systems was struck in 1979, Dr. Wilson recalls. She was serving as director of the University of Vermont’s Eleanor M. Luse Center for Communication Disorders and acting chairman of the university’s Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, where Bernard Fox joined her that year as a graduate student. “Both of us had always believed that the price of computer-administered instruction would drop steadily as technology evolved and that it was logical to utilize that technology in order to extend the services of pathologists and special educators.” Until the introduction of microcomputers, however, the use of mainframes had proved too expensive, “but we had research that [indicated] computer-administered instruction was effective. We knew from the 1950s and 1960s that computer-assisted instruction would work.” She and Bernard Fox quickly planned intervention applications to be delivered via computer. Unfortunately, she recalls with a chuckle, there were senior colleagues “who doubted that kids would ever use computer-assisted instruction.”

Software publishers, she recalls, shared the academics’ skepticism. She and Fox could not convince publishers to produce their software. “Our only recourse was to go into business, but we knew absolutely *nothing* about business!” All the duo knew, she remembers, “was that we had to get our material published because that software was not going to help anyone unless it could be published and disseminated.”

Government funding, through small business grants, eventually gave the fledgling software publisher the breath of lasting life. NIH grants enabled the company to develop next generation software while small business grants from the federal government “enabled us to bring in bright, capable, dedicated researchers from distinguished academic settings,” including Tom Roper, a linguist at the University of Massachusetts and Jill DeVilleurs, a psychologist-linguist at Smith College, Dr. Wilson’s alma mater. The ability to attract top-level research professionals, she notes, “shows that just because you are a business doesn’t mean you don’t have strong connections to the academic research community.”

### **“We Haven’t Taken Full Advantage”**

As a profession, she declares, “we haven’t yet taken full advantage of research-based software with our special education children to the extent that we can.” The deterrent to taking full advantage, she believes, is this: “As easy as our software is to use, it still requires that the user should be able to choose a program, choose the activity in the program, determine how many students to advance, how many to drop back – all of the elements that have to do with content and instructional technology.”

When software is prescribed for use in the home or classroom, she emphasizes, “it means that an aide or a parent has to be instructed.” This procedure, she believes, acts as a deterrent “because professionals are busy; they don’t have that kind of time.” New generation software, she claims, “has what we call ‘optimized intervention,’” requiring only that an aide input a child’s name, the appropriate program “and press go.” The program, she says, automatically adjusts the training based on the child’s responses. “Now the speech pathologist can say, for example, ‘Do first verbs’ and the aide can put the child on first verbs and that’s that.”

The new generation, she continues, “is more of a factor in schools than at home because parents are motivated differently with their own children.” The changes in technology, she predicts, “should help people to use individualized research-based software outside the therapy room.” She continues to believe, she concludes, “that with all the advances in technology that more children can benefit from research-based intervention on a regular basis, not just when a speech pathologist or a special educator is available to work with the child.”



Please join our national online discussion –  
**“Assistive Technology Works: Making Evidence-based Decisions”**  
Led by Dr. Katya Hill & Dr. Penny Reed,  
it’s a most interesting and informative discussion.  
Join us at:  
[www.fctd.info](http://www.fctd.info)

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## RESOURCES

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### Catalogs

The following list of catalogues has been made available by Answers4Families. A description of that program may be found on page 10. Their website is at:

<http://nncf.unl.edu/common/toys.html>

#### **Abledata**

This catalog contains listings of more than 19,000 products, including toys, for individuals with disabilities.

Abledata

8401 Colesville Road, Suite 200  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

<http://www.abledata.com>

#### **Adaptivation**

This catalog features devices such as VoicePal, Taction Pads and LinkSwitch.

Adaptivation

2225 West 50<sup>th</sup> St.

Sioux Falls, SD 57105

Phone: 800.723.2783

<http://www.adaptivation.com>

#### **Artic Technologies**

This catalog highlights the TransType talking keyboard, text-to-speech synthesizer and various magnification systems.

Artic Technologies

55 Park St.

Troy, MI 48083

Phone: 810.588.7370

<http://www.artictech.com>

#### **Attainment Company**

This catalog offers educational software, video, print and augmentative communication products.

Attainment Company

P.O. Box 930160

Verona, WI 53593

Phone: 800.327-4269

<http://www.attainmentcompany.com>

#### **Carolyn’s Catalog**

Carolyn’s Catalog sells closed circuit television (CCTV) reading machines for the visually impaired.

Carolyn’s Catalog

PO Box 14577

Bradenton, FL 34280

Phone: 800.648.2266

<http://www.carolynscatalog.com/index.html>

#### **Creative Play Resources**

The catalogue features developmental toys, books and learning materials.

9420-5 Reseda Blvd.

Northridge, CA 91324

Phone: 800-390-7544; 818-886-4150

#### **Crestwood Company**

This publication offers communication aids and switch-adapted toys.

Crestwood Company 6625 N. Sidney Place  
Milwaukee, WI 53209-3259  
Phone: (414) 352-5678  
<http://www.communicationaids.com>

### **Different Roads to Learning**

This catalog provides information on learning materials and educational playthings for children with autism spectrum disorders.  
Different Roads to Learning  
12 West 18th Street  
New York, NY 10011  
Phone: 800.853.1057  
<http://www.difflearn.com>

### **Dragonfly Toy Company**

This catalog highlights adapted and developmental toys, toy search service.  
291 Yale Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R3M 0L4  
Canada  
Phone: 800.308.2208; 204-453-2222  
<http://www.dftoys.com>

### **Edmark (at Riverdeep)**

The Edmark catalog provides information on TouchWindow, educational software including KidDesk, McGee, Katie's Farm, Playroom, Stickybear, Millie's Math House. Riverdeep, a leading on-line developer of K-12 interactive learning solutions, acquired Edmark, a leading developer and publisher of children's educational software for the K-8 and Special Needs areas.  
Edmark (at Riverdeep)500 Redwood Blvd  
Novato, CA 94947  
Phone: (415) 763-4700  
<http://www.riverdeep.net/edmark/>

**Flaghouse – Special Populations**  
The Flaghouse catalog highlights adaptive toys and therapy products.  
Flaghouse – Special Populations

601 Flaghouse Drive  
Hasbrouck Heights, NJ 07604  
Phone: 800.793.7900  
<http://www.flaghouse.com>

### **Imaginar**

This publication features speech, language and learning materials, Nuk massagers, drinking cups, flash cards, Touch 'n Talk communication boards, Signs for Me basic sign book for children.  
Imaginar  
307 Arizona St.  
Bisbee, AZ 85603  
Phone: 800.828.1376  
<http://www.imaginar.com>

### **IntelliTools**

The catalog provides information on IntelliKeys alternate keyboard and overlays.  
IntelliTools  
55 Leveroni Court, Suite 9  
Novato, CA 94949  
Phone: 800.899.6687  
<http://www.intellitools.com>

### **Lakeshore Learning Materials**

This catalog features educational products, adaptive equipment, and outdoor play equipment.  
Lakeshore Learning Materials  
2965 E. Dominquez  
Carson, CA 90749  
Phone: 800.421.5354  
<http://www.lakeshorelearning.com>

### **Mayer-Johnson Co.**

The publication describes educational and special needs products; augmentative communication products, including Boardmake.  
Mayer-Johnson Co.  
PO Box 1579  
Solana Beach, CA 92075-1579  
Phone: 800.588.4548  
<http://www.mayerjohnson.com>

### **Mindplay**

The catalog features educational software for pre-K to adult.  
Mindplay  
160 W. Ft. Lowell Road  
Tucson, AZ 85705  
800-221-7911  
<http://mindplay.com>

### **National Lekotek Center**

This publication describes individualized assistance on toys and play for children with special needs.

Phone: Toy Resource Hotline – 800.366.PLAY

<http://www.lekotek.org/>

### **Oppenheim Toy Portfolio**

This quarterly guide/catalog includes a section on special needs toys.

Oppenheim Toy Portfolio

40 E. 9th Street, Suite 14M

New York, NY 10003

Phone: 800.544.8697

<http://www.toyportfolio.com>

### **Prentke Romich Company**

The publication spotlights communication devices such as AlphaTalker and TouchTalker, ECUs, computer access devices, switches and mounts developmental software.

Prentker Romich Company

1022 Heyl Rd.

Wooster, OH 44691

Phone: 800.262.1933

<http://www.prentrom.com/index.html>

### **R.J. Cooper & Associates**

The publication focuses on developmental software.

R.J. Cooper & Associates

24843 Del Prado #283

Dana Point, CA 92629

Phone: 800.RJCOOPER

<http://www.rjcooper.com>

### **SoftTouch**

The catalog Software for students with disabilities and the very young, including Old MacDonald's Farm, Monkeys Jumping on the Bed, and Five Green and Speckled Frogs.

SoftTouch

4300 Stine Road, Suite 401

Bakersfield, CA 93313

Phone: 877.763.8868

<http://www.funsoftware.com/softtouch/index.htm>

**Tash, Inc.** (Technical Aids & Systems for the Handicapped Inc.)

This catalog features switches and accessories, alternate keyboards, environmental control units.

Tash, Inc.

3512 Mayland Ct.

Richmond VA 2323

Phone: 800.463.5685; 804.747.5020

Fax: 804.747.5224

[tashinc@aol.com](mailto:tashinc@aol.com)

<http://www.tashinc.com>

### **Toy Industry Association, Inc.**

This E-toy resource catalog serves as a guide to toys for children who are blind or visually impaired.

Toy Industry Association, Inc.

1115 Broadway, Ste. 400

New York, NY 10010

Phone: (212) 675-1141

[info@toy-tia.org](mailto:info@toy-tia.org)

<http://www.toy-tma.com/index.html>

### **Toys for Special Children – Enabling Devices**

The catalog offers adapted toys and switches, communication devices.

Toys for Special Children -- Enabling Devices

385 Warburton Ave.

Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706

Phone: 800.832.8697

<http://www.enablingdevices.com>

### **Toys “R” Us**

A toy guide for differently-abled kids is available at toy stores or online.

Phone: 800.TOYSRUS

<http://toysrus.com/differentlyabled>.

### **WorkLink Innovations**

The company's Access-I product provides computer accessibility from a wheelchair.

WorkLink Innovations

2452 Armstrong St.

Livermore, CA 94550

510-848-8363

<http://www.worklink.com>

## Directories

### **Educational Software Directory**

The directory provides information on Web-based educational software resources for educators, students and parents.

<http://www.educational-software-directory.net/about.html>

### **DMOZ Open Project Directory**

This is a directory of software products geared for dyslexics.

[http://dmoz.org/Reference/Education/Special\\_Education/Learning\\_Disabilities/Dyslexia/Technology/](http://dmoz.org/Reference/Education/Special_Education/Learning_Disabilities/Dyslexia/Technology/)

## Videos

### **ASL Sign Language Videos**

Say It with Sign is a comprehensive series on signing. This 20-hour Home Video Library teaches conversational sign language. Cost: \$299.50

<http://www.signlanguagevideos.com/>

### **Special Kids Company**

The company produces learning videotapes and educational materials for children and teens with learning disabilities. The founders are parents of a boy with autism.

Phone: 800.KIDS.153; (800.543.7153)

<http://www.specialkids1.com/>

## Libraries

### **Captioned Media Program (CMP)**

Administered by the National Association of the Deaf, the CMP provides a free-loan media program of more than 4,000 open-captioned titles (videos, CD-ROM, and DVD). Deaf and hard of hearing persons, teachers, parents, and others may borrow materials. There are no rental, registration, or postage fees. Several hundred titles are also streamed on the CMP web site.

An additional service is a clearinghouse of information and materials on the subject of captioning. These resources are available in print or online to consumers, agencies, businesses, and schools. The clearinghouse also maintains a database of captioned media available for purchase.

Assistance is provided to captioning agencies upon request. An evaluation is administered to any agency that desires to perform CMP captioning work and to other agencies that want to pass the evaluation in order to appear on the U.S. Department of Education's "Approved Captioning Service Vendor" list. Agencies are provided training and captioning guidelines upon request or as required in their preparation for the evaluation.

Captioned Media Program  
National Association of the Deaf  
1447 E. Main Street  
Spartanburg, SC 29307

Phone: 864.585.1778 (VOICE);  
864.585.2617 (TTY); 864-585-2611 (Fax)  
800.237.6213 (VOICE); 800.237.6819 (TTY);  
800.538.5636 (Fax)

<http://www.cfv.org/about.asp#contact>

## Articles

### **Software: Focus on Special Needs**

By Elizabeth Amberg

*T.H.E Journal* November 2001

The author describes special ed software, including "Play Attention," a school-based system that helps students improve attention skills and improve behavior problems. The "Play Attention" system is specifically designed for teachers and gives educators detailed reports on student progress. The author describes the system's features in detail and its benefits so that parents and non-AT professionals can understand. The

article also highlights other adaptive technology systems designed specifically for students with disabilities, including "Web-Braille," which offers online access to 2,700 braille books.

<http://www.playattention.com/thejournal.pdf>

### **Supportive Software**

By Sarah Clutterbuck

The article opens with the following introduction by the author: "Choosing a quality software title for classroom or home use is hard enough for most parents. If you have a child with a disability that decision is even harder. One aspect of my job is looking at many software titles to see how appropriate they are for students with special needs. In this article I am going to share with you a few pointers on selecting software that will be both fun and accessible for your child. It can be difficult to try out software, but the better retail outlets will let you examine a demonstration of a program before you purchase it. Computer companies are also making it easier for parents and teachers by providing demonstration copies of their programs on CDs and also on their web site. Bear in mind the following issues when choosing software and feel free to quiz the salespeople. After all, it is your money."

<http://www.fortunecity.com/tinpan/doubleneck/93/swchoose.html>



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## **KNOWLEDGE NETWORK MEMBERS**

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### **Laureate Learning Systems**



Founded in 1982, Laureate publishes educational software for children and adults with special needs.

The company's multimedia programs combine instructional design with digital speech, graphics and animation and have proven their effectiveness in clinical settings. Through the years, Laureate has received recognition and awards from the Council for Exceptional Children, Johns Hopkins National Search and the Software Publishers Association.

Laureate is led by its founders, speech-language pathologists Dr. Mary Sweig Wilson and Bernard J. Fox. Wilson and Fox were among the first to recognize the important contributions computer technology could make to the lives of individuals with special needs. In 1980, Wilson and Fox completed research which demonstrated that microcomputer-based language intervention programs could provide an effective means to supplement the efforts of clinicians, teachers, and parents who work with children with language disorders, and could provide a cost-efficient delivery system for individualized language intervention. To date, Laureate has produced more than 60 software titles and has materials available for the five most common computer platforms in special education and clinical settings: Windows, Macintosh, DOS, Apple IIGs, and Apple IIe. All Laureate software is designed by professional clinicians and incorporates treatment strategies derived from contemporary theory and research.

Headquartered in Winooski, Vermont, Laureate employs 24 people, including curriculum designers, computer programmers, computer artists and animators, and customer support personnel. The company's "next

generation" of software for language intervention is under development with the assistance of grants awarded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD). This "next generation" of software combines a curriculum informed by recent developments in linguistic theory, sound and visual elements designed to take advantage of advances in computer technology, and an artificial intelligence component inspired by Laureate's association with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Software Technology Branch at the Johnson Space Center.

Laureate software follows a Linguistic Hierarchy that outlines seven stages of language development from birth to adulthood. Students move from one program to the next as they meet their goals. To learn more about Laureate, contact:

Laureate Learning Systems, Inc.  
110 East Spring Street  
Winooski, VT 05404-1898  
Phone: 800.562.6801 (US and Canada);  
862.655.4755  
Fax: 802.655.4757  
<http://www.LaureateLearning.com>

### **Answers4Families.org**

The Answers4Families website enables families, care givers, and professionals to subscribe to e-mail discussion groups, search the Nebraska Resource Referral System (NRRS) database, submit questions to a registered pharmacist through "AskRx", or to an "expert of the month" through the "Ask an Expert" program, and find links to numerous federal, state and local government agencies and organizations.



Answers4Families is a project of the Center on Children, Families and the Law at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and is supported by contracts with the Nebraska Health and Human Services System and the Nebraska Department of Education, Early Development Network. Among the project's target groups are families with special needs children, children and families with mental health needs and the professionals who serve them.

The A4F project began in 1994 with a grant from the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau. Initially called the Nebraska Network for Children & Families the project was extended in 1996 by a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce TIIAP program that created the Partnership IDEAS Network.

Connie Hayek, A4F director describes some of the ways in which the organization serves families: "Because Nebraska is primarily a rural state, our project may be the only connection [families] have to [disability] issues. Many of our families live in small communities where they may be the only family with a child with a disability. Through our project they can connect with other families who are dealing with similar issues. They can access resources within the state and sometimes beyond; and they can get advice from other parents and from professionals. We also work quite a bit with schools. I often get calls from families who are struggling with school issues because they don't understand both their rights and responsibilities and those of the school. They contact us and ask how they can get what their child needs. We can refer them to someone in the Department of Education and to other parents who have dealt successfully with the same challenge. I can explain to them what the school is required to provide and give them the references to cite. Sometimes I connect them with the Nebraska PTI. We work a lot with the State Departments of Education and Health and

Human Services, as well as with several disability organizations.”

For more information on A4F, contact:

Answers4Families

Center on Children, Families, and the Law

121 S. 13th Street, Ste. 302

Lincoln, NE 68588-0227

Phone: 800.746-8420; (402) 472-9827

<http://www.answers4families.org/>

## Education by Design

Ebbydesign.com is an Australian educational web site dedicated to sharing its holistic approach to educating children. The ebbydesign website features three main sections:



- *Special Needs Resource*, which supplies inspirational ideas and information for teachers, therapists and parents to encourage children with intellectual disabilities to reach their full potential
- *Kids' Activities*, which offers Interactive, educational activities for children ages 5-12, including scrambler puzzles, practicing mathematical skills and online publication of stories, jokes, riddles and poems written by children; some activities are designed to cater to children at a very basic level of understanding while other activities are designed to extend and develop children's creativity
- *Learning Resource*, which provides practical ideas and strategies aimed at encouraging parents and teachers to give children a positive learning experience

The *Special Resources* feature consists of the following components: special needs software designed and published for learners with intellectual disabilities; art idea for special artists; special needs resource newsletters; homepages created by children with special

needs; links to other special needs and special ed sites. Ebbydesign designed the activities in its programs to cater to the unique learning needs of special needs students. Learners receive instant verbal feedback. A simplified, clear layout helps keep them focused on the task. To learn more about ebbydesign, connect with the following URLs:

<http://www.edbydesign.com/ebdsw/index.html>

<http://www.edbydesign.com/ebdsw/benefits.html>

## Vision Management Consulting, LLC

According to VMC, “Application of the IEP model often fails because the IEP is commonly viewed as a document to be completed because it is required by law, rather than as a planning process of which the IEP is the end product. This is due, in large part, to the time consuming nature of IEP preparation, inadequate training of staff in IEP development and a perception, borne of prior experience with inadequately prepared IEPs, that the document has little relevance or meaning for the day to day instructional program.”

VMC says it views computer assisted IEP development software as a vital component of an overall strategy for:

- Achieving compliance with special education rules and regulations.
- Developing IEPs with targeted outcomes which enhance student competency and performance.
- Reducing the potential for conflict with parents of students.
- Documenting that the programs and services provided to the student were appropriate, provided in the least restrictive environment and reasonably geared to confer meaningful educational benefit.

VMC created IEP PlaNET™, a product that facilitates the development of IEPs that are compliant with federal and state regulations. IEP PlaNET™ facilitates compliance, quality, efficiency and professional development in special education service delivery by:

- Reducing the likelihood of due process cases through the consistent preparation of IDEA '97 compliant IEPs linked to assessment data
- Automatically linking IEP goals and objectives to regular education curriculum proficiencies
- Providing an easy means for the accurate assessment of student progress using the IEP to objectively evaluate attainment of instructional goals
- Managing the numerous federal, state, and local reporting and record keeping demands as well as allowing for the timely, flexible analysis of district resources

IEP PlaNET™ software features include:

- Word processing capability
- Predetermined, modifiable lists for the selection of standard entries (case manager names, classifications, programs, schools, termination reasons, etc.) may be customized
- Password and multiple security levels maintain system security
- Contact information storage maintains students' demographic information
- Web access allows users to prepare IEPs from any location with access to the Internet via a standard phone line and modem
- On-screen point and click selection of goals, objectives, modifications, aids, services, etc., eases IEP preparation
- On-screen editing of any computer generated sample statements to individualize IEP's for student needs

- On-screen previewing of IEP document prior to printout
- IEP printout reflects professional appearance rather than a computer generated look
- Auditing feature, tracks every entry made by users including name, date and time of entry
- Spell Check on all text fields
- Required fields on all screens
- Safeguard against duplicate student entry (based on last name, first name, DOB and gender)
- Time Stamped "Notes" field on student demographic screen
- "Notes" field on all documents (does not print on document, for information only)
- Archived documents automatically locked to ALL users
- "Draft", "In-Force", or "Archive" imprinted on ALL IEP documents
- Export feature to allow mail merge, capabilities to create letters, labels and envelopes
- Aggregate Report Operations include:
  - o Increment grade
  - o Graduate students
  - o Delete students
- Fixed Format Reports include:
  - o Annual Federal Census report
  - o State reports
    - o Funding
    - o Statistical analysis

To learn more about VMC and its IEP product, contact:

Vision Management Consulting, LLC  
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## Don Johnston, Inc.

Don Johnston Incorporated was founded



in 1980 by Don and Cheryl Johnston in their garage in Lake Zurich, Illinois. As a young student, Don Johnston struggled due to significant learning disabilities. The company's first products were wooden developmental toys for children with special needs. The company provides a full array of critical intervention products for all components of balanced literacy instruction, including:

- *Reading intervention* solutions that build reading skills
- Award-winning *writing intervention* software
- *Word-study products* that teach spelling and phonics skills
- Industry-standard *computer access products* that let students with physical disabilities use the computer to learn to read and write

Don Johnston, Inc. employees are former regular education teachers, special education teachers, speech and language professionals and parents of students with disabilities. To learn more about the company, contact:

Don Johnston, Inc.  
Phone: 800.999.4660 (US and Canada);  
847.740.0749 (US and global)  
Fax: 847.740.7326 (US)  
[www.donjohnston.com](http://www.donjohnston.com)

## IntelliTools, Inc.



For 20 years IntelliTools has designed products for students with learning and physical disabilities. The company's flagship

product, IntelliKeys<sup>®</sup>, is a programmable alternative keyboard that enables users

with physical, visual or cognitive disabilities to easily type, enter numbers, navigate on-screen displays and execute menu demands.

IntelliTools in 1991 launched IntelliKeys<sup>®</sup>, the sleek, sophisticated membrane keyboard that dramatically increases computer access for people with disabilities. To increase the functionality of IntelliKeys<sup>®</sup>, IntelliTools introduced a line of Creativity Tools – Overlay Maker<sup>®</sup>, IntelliTalk<sup>®</sup>, IntelliPics<sup>®</sup> and ClickIt!<sup>®</sup> – that allows teachers to create accessible multimedia activities. Working with Mary Male, Ph.D., San Jose State University, the company's literacy research in the mid-1990s lead to the development of: *Hands-On Concepts: Animal Habitats* for grades preK-1. The company's next effort, the Hands-on Early Literacy Project (HELP), involved a national research effort directed by Richard D. Howell, Ph.D., and associates at Ohio State University, and Karen Erickson, Ph.D., Coordinator of the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, resulting in the development of two award-winning programs: *IntelliTools Reading: Balanced Literacy*<sup>®</sup> for grades K-2 and IntelliTalk<sup>®</sup>, for grades K-8.

In 2001, IntelliTools expanded into curriculum-based classroom products. Its *ReadyMade Curriculum Activities* line, developed to correlate with national and representative state standards, complements classroom content and support all learning styles: incorporating text, graphics, animation, on-screen manipulation, speech output, and recorded sounds.

Teachers and students can use *ReadyMade* activities out of the box with free downloadable Players. ReadyMade activities are customizable with the IntelliTools Classroom Tools. Titles include:

- Exploring Animal Habitats (preK-1)
- Primary Writing (K-2)

- Primary Literacy (K-2)
- Fractions 1 and 3 (3-5)
- Lewis & Clark (3-5)
- Oceans (4-6) Due first-quarter 2004

IntelliTools Classroom Suite was released in 2002, a product that brings together into a cross-platform, network-ready integrated suite the company's our three classroom tools:

- *IntelliPics® Studio 3*
- *IntelliMathics® 3*
- *IntelliTalk® 3*

For more information about IntelliTools, contact:

IntelliTools, Inc.  
 1720 Corporate Circle, Petaluma, CA 94954  
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 Fax: (707) 773-2001 (24 hours a day)  
<http://www.intellitools.com/>

## Marblesoft



Marblesoft is a developer of great educational software for pre-school, early elementary and special ed. Programs run on Macintosh and Windows computers and feature a variety of special access methods for students of all abilities. Marblesoft's Early Learning programs have included single- and dual-switch scanning since 1984.

The Early Learning Series is Marblesoft's popular series of pre-reading programs for pre-school, early elementary and special ed. The series teaches a variety of skills including colors, shapes, numbers, letters, sorting, matching, problem solving, early math skills and counting money.

Early Learning I for pre-reading special needs students features four activities that teach matching colors, learning shapes,

counting numbers and matching letters. Early Learning I runs on both Windows and Macintosh computers.

Money Skills, an early learning program and Money Skills 2.0, a hybrid CD-ROM, run on both Windows and Macintosh. Five activities teach counting money and making change using US, Canadian or European money.

For more information on Marblesoft, contact:

Marblesoft  
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## Academic Software, Inc. (ASI)

ASI designs and distributes a number of software and hardware products for the educational research and assistive technology communities. These include the Adaptive Device Locator System (ADLS), a full spectrum national database, listing products from over 1000 vendors for elderly and disabled persons and the family members and professionals who assist them. A recently completed project supported by the US Department of Education places *ADLS-on-the-Web* where it can be accessed throughout the world.



ASI pioneered the development of software to automate the production of picture overlays for membrane keyboards and augmentative communications boards, producing the Unicorn Overlay Express for Unicorn Engineering (now IntelliTools, Inc.) and the Apple version of the Picture Communication Symbols for the Mayer-

Johnson Company. Now, however, the company is best known for its products for single switch access for PC computer users. According to Dr. Warren Lacefield, president of ASI, "Today, inexpensive PC computers can be adapted as easily as the Macintosh for home, classroom, or business use by persons with special needs."

ASI produces the SS-ACCESS PC Package, a single-function, single switch, serial interface for Windows and DOS, and WinSCAN, a powerful multi-function switch interface package for PCs with Windows. With WinSCAN, a person can turn on the computer and immediately access all the features of Windows 3.1/95/98; manage and navigate the desktop; run programs and CDs; and surf the Internet; using only a single-switch.

Recently our company completed an exciting adapted curriculum project supported by the National Science Foundation entitled *Single Switch Access to Science Software* (and scientific web sites). This project demonstrated that with WinSCAN and the appropriate setup files, children who use single switches can access the same math and science education software and perform the same scientific computer-based activities as do other children in the classroom who use the keyboard and mouse. Out of this research and two new projects (*Beyond Cause and Effect*, NIH, and *MultiSCAN 2000*, US Department of Education) will soon come a variety of supplemental materials for science and math education that teachers can use to help insure the accessibility of the curriculum.

In addition to its interface products, ASI produces the popular Dino-GAME series of single switch scanning games for young children and the Multi-SCAN single switch activity center program for classroom and home use with Mac or PC computers. ASI

manufactures a new type of force adjustable, electronic pressure switch featuring a soft, compliant, 5" diameter activation area. The Analog Switch Pad is suitable for battery toys, environmental controls, and computer access. The company also publishes the *Handbook of Adaptive Switches and Augmentative Communication Devices*. The 3rd edition of this 300+ page Handbook contains physical descriptions, lab tests, and functional data for a wide variety of commercially available pressure switches and augmentative communication devices. Chapters and worksheets cover physical interaction, seating and positioning, and control access issues. The Handbook has become an essential reference tool for assistive technology professionals, therapists, and others who make decisions concerning physical access.

In addition to in-house R&D activities, the company provides services in areas of research design, statistics, and educational and assistive technology and collaborates with other university and private groups to promote the development of innovative products for persons with special needs. ASI is a charter vendor member of the Alliance for Technology Access (ATA) and the Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA) and is a regular exhibitor at major assistive technology conferences throughout the country.

For more information on ASI, contact:  
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