

May 2005

# Iowa COMPASS News

**A Program of the Center for Disabilities and Development**

## “School’s Out for Summer”

*What you need to do to prepare for next year!*

The school year is drawing to a close. Kids are thinking about the summer ahead, but parents and teachers need to use this time to prepare for next year, making sure all of the technology and supports are in place. In this issue, we are providing you with assistive technology ideas and excellent resources that may help.

### **The Text Reader Project**

Have you ever heard a computer read the message typed on the screen? That computer probably had text reader software. Pretty amazing but does it really help students who have reading problems? That is one of the questions being asked this year by staff from the Area Education Agencies, the Iowa Program for Assistive Technology, local school districts, and the Department of Education in a study called the Iowa Assistive Technology Text Reader Project.

First, how does the text reader software work? Teachers scan material that the students need to read into the computer. Then, software programs like Kurzweil or Wynn convert the scanned text and read the story back to the students in the voice and at the speed the students select. Just as important, the software programs also have study skills features, which allow students to do many of same things on the computer that you and I would do with a regular book. They can highlight what they read on the computer, take notes, write outlines, and reread the story as often as they want. Teachers can even identify the key ideas and put sticky notes with instructions on the computer text.

The Text Reader Project started following the progress of 70 middle school students with reading problems who began this year using the text reader software with study skills. Nothing else changed. Teachers teach the same lessons and provide the same instruction.

The students complete the same lessons and work as their classmates.

- Will the text reader with study skills help them experience more success?
- Will they enjoy reading more?
- Will they become more independent readers?
- Will they understand more of what they read?

These are some of the questions the Text Reader Project hopes to answer by monitoring the students' progress and teachers' attitudes. How will they know if it makes a difference? The project will collect data each month and at the end of the school year from the students and teachers. To check reading skills, twice a month the students will read short stories and answer questions about what they read. At the same time their teachers will be interviewed about their attitudes and how often the text reader software was used.

At the end of the school year, the students' scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and their progress on their IEP goals will also be studied to see how they changed. The scores will be compared to see who makes the most progress. Attendance and behavior will also be checked. Finally, twice a year the students will also answer a survey on their feelings about the text reader and the difference it made. Looking at all this data should answer some of the questions.

Watch for details as the study unfolds! We'll be sure to keep you updated.

## Funding News

### Shopping for some Assistive Technology?

The Iowa Educators Consortium (IEC) is a program of the Area Education Agencies (AEAs). This is a cooperative buying program for schools, and it includes assistive technology (AT). This means that prices for AT and special needs software can be much lower. For example, a Kurzweil Reader 3000 for Windows is available for one-third its regular cost. These lower prices are often available to parents through the IEC. If you have a special ed student and need something for home use, call a member of your AEA's AT team. They can help you pick out the right equipment. Visit the IEC online at [www.iec-ia.org/](http://www.iec-ia.org/).

Call Iowa COMPASS if you have any questions about funding the assistive technology in your child's Individual Education Plan, (IEP). Email us at [compassfunding@uiowa.edu](mailto:compassfunding@uiowa.edu) or call 800-779-2001 and talk to Sue Deets, Funding Information Specialist.

Are you looking for low vision aids? This can include talking clock, writing aids, and magnifiers. Then check out the Aids and Devices Store run by the Iowa Department for the Blind. All of these items are sold at cost. The store is located at the Department's central office in Des Moines. You can also visit their website at [www.blind.state.ia.us/technology/store.htm](http://www.blind.state.ia.us/technology/store.htm).

For more information contact Sue Allen, [allen.sue@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:allen.sue@blind.state.ia.us), 800-362-2587 or 515-281-1357.

## Services

With Spring usually comes a review of the IEP. It is also the time when the IEP team decides if extended year services are needed. It can be difficult as a parent to keep up on the all the rules for special education. Here are some resources for learning about IDEA and getting ideas and advocacy.

- The Parent Training and Information Center of Iowa will give technical help to families. They also provide training and information. You can go to their website at

[www.askresource.org/pti.index.html](http://www.askresource.org/pti.index.html). You can also call them at 800-450-8667.

- The Learning Disabilities Association of Iowa works to protect the rights of individuals with learning disabilities. You can learn more about them on their website at [www.lida-ia.org/index.asp](http://www.lida-ia.org/index.asp). You can call them at 888-690-5324.
- Wrightslaw provides information about special education law. They also offer advocacy for children with disabilities. Go to their website at [www.wrightslaw.com/](http://www.wrightslaw.com/).

Always feel free to call Iowa COMPASS. We are here to help you with your questions about special education. We can also help by referring you to other organizations about disability-related issues.

## Product News

### Reading Machines



### ROBOTRON PTY LTD

#### Simon

The **Simon** reading machine is the world's lightest. This elegant and powerful device represents the culmination of two decades of experience in designing and manufacturing assistive devices, widely used and known by our blind and vision-impaired customers all over the world.

This remarkable reading machine combines all the attributes one should look for in a reading machine: speed, reading accuracy, simplicity of use, low weight and small size. We included all this, and yet, incredibly, we managed to keep the glass size at 14.5 x 8.5 inches (370 x 216 mm), the largest scan area available in any reading machine of its size and price, making it possible to scan two pages of a standard-size book at the same time. The machine weighs only 8.5 lb (3.7 kg), making it the first reading machine which can be carried around with ease.



## Kurzweil 1000

Kurzweil 1000 is reading software that makes printed or electronic text accessible to people who are blind. It converts a PC and scanner into an advanced version of the revolutionary reading machine invented by Ray Kurzweil in 1976.

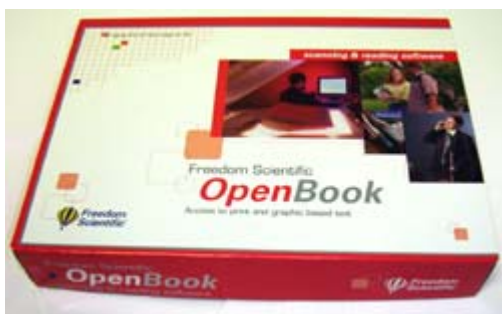
Kurzweil 1000 turns text into a variety of life-like voices and does much more. Users can bookmark, make notes, skim or summarize text to aid mastery of concepts and details. They can modify reading speed, pitch, and emphasis to suit specific preferences and purposes. They can edit or create documents assisted by an audible dictionary, thesaurus or prioritized spell checker, and archive them using a simple file management dialog.

## ARTIC TECHNOLOGIES INTERNATIONAL INC

### i-Scan

Just turn on the power... i-Scan will start up and go into a Document Reading Mode. Put a page in the scanner and hit a key to scan the page and begin conversion of print into speech a few seconds later. Use simple key commands to move around the text. Later, if you are so inclined, you can use the other built-in features of Microsoft Windows like editing.

## Reading Software



## FREEDOM SCIENTIFIC

### Open Book

OpenBook allows you to convert printed documents or graphic based text into an electronic text format using accurate optical character recognition and quality speech. OpenBook's many powerful low vision tools allow you to customize how the document appears on your screen, while other features provide portability.

OpenBook provides you with the flexibility to use either of the two leading text to speech software synthesizers: RealSpeak and ViaVoice. RealSpeak features a natural, human-sounding voice that can help enhance your reading experience. ViaVoice provides practical and efficient speech for editing or skimming documents. OpenBook also supports most hardware speech synthesizers.

## Kurzweil 3000 for Windows®

Kurzweil 3000 for Windows was first introduced in 1996. It has since become the leading reading, writing and learning solution for individuals of all ages with learning difficulties like dyslexia, attention deficit disorder (ADD) and other literacy difficulties.

Teachers have demonstrated time and again that Kurzweil 3000 provides students the tools they need to improve their reading speed and comprehension, plus a suite of features that make it possible for them to learn and study independently. In this way, it has helped improve their academic experience, their ability to function effectively in the workplace and the quality of their daily lives.

In addition, the product is proving instrumental for both classroom and standardized assessments. Kurzweil 3000 not only reads questions and answers aloud, it allows students to type answers directly onto the image of a scanned test, thereby offering more independence for both the student and teacher.

# **UERS**

## **USED EQUIPMENT REFERRAL SERVICE**

*from Iowa COMPASS, a program of the  
Center for Disabilities and Development*

**Do** you or someone you know have adapted equipment collecting dust in an attic, garage, or basement because it's not being used?



**Then** call Iowa COMPASS, because the UERS is a **FREE** resource for buying and selling used adapted equipment.



**It's as simple as a phone call.**

**800-779-2001**

(toll-free voice)

**877-686-0032**

(toll-free TTY)



[www.uiowa.edu/infotech/UERS.HTM](http://www.uiowa.edu/infotech/UERS.HTM)



## **Mailing List Update – We need to hear from you!**

We are working to update our newsletter mailing list. To make sure we have your correct address, please call us 800-779-2001 or email us at [compassnewsletter@uiowa.edu](mailto:compassnewsletter@uiowa.edu).

We also now offer the COMPASS News electronically. If you would like to get this newsletter by email we can make it happen. Let us know when you call or email. **Please contact us by June 15, 2005. If we do not hear from you, you will be dropped from the mailing list!**

To view the Iowa COMPASS News on our website, go to: [www.uiowa.edu/infotech/Publications.htm](http://www.uiowa.edu/infotech/Publications.htm).

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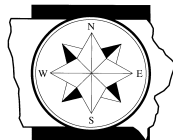
### **Iowa COMPASS**

800-779-2001 (toll-free)

877-686-0032 (toll-free, TTY)

319-353-8777 (local)

[www.iowacompass.org](http://www.iowacompass.org)



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