



The LATI News

LOUISIANA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE

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ACCESS TO READING FOR ALL STUDENTS

Though the ability to read is crucial to student academic success, millions of students continue to struggle with reading for a variety of reasons. Traditional approaches to reading instruction routinely include evidence-based practices that are often insufficient to address the reading and literacy needs of far too many students. Fortunately, with advances and the wide availability of information technology, reading has become more accessible than ever before. Improved access to reading by persons who are unable to and/or who have difficulty reading traditional print materials is achievable using a variety of strategies including modification of reading material, implementation of reading interventions, and the use of technology. Providing the student with an appropriate means of accessing text (i.e., content, information) opens the door for student learning and provides the foundation for academic and social success.

Advances in technology have resulted in the use of e-text for reading access. Specialized software features reading the words aloud (i.e., text-to-speech) highlighting text, selection of voices, and customization of text size, color and background. Many of the text-to-speech programs offer word prediction and built-in dictionary tools. Provision of this technology allows the student to access meaning from the text in ways not afforded by traditional reading tools. Reading accessibility also includes access to the World Wide Web. People without

identified reading disabilities also benefit from improved access to reading content using today's technologies.

What does this mean for schools? Under IDEA 2004, schools and districts receiving federal funds must ask publishers to deliver textbook files that meet the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS). Guidelines have also been established for development of websites and browsers to address accessibility.

Additional information on reading accessibility can be found at the following websites.

Web Accessibility Initiative

<http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/accessibility.php>

LD Online

<http://ldonline.org>

Reading Rockets

<http://www.readingrockets.org/helping/questions/teach/>

Balanced Reading

<http://www.balancedreading.com/olderreaders.html>

National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC)

<http://www.nimac.us/>



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Contacts

LA Department of Education

Dr. Jackie Bobbett

Donna Broussard

225-342-3730

Region 6 LATI Center

Charlotte Ducote

337-234-7187

District AIM Liaisons

District Competent Authorities

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Jake Hebert is an 11th grade student at Dutchtown High School in Ms. Carla Ceaser's Class, where he receives most of his instruction when he is not in his general education classes. Jake's blindness and cerebral palsy present significant barriers to reading and writing and as such, he relies heavily on his auditory skills to retain information. Over the years, Patti Dietrich, Speech Pathologist and AT Specialist; and Melissa Bankhead, Teacher of Visually Impaired, have worked tirelessly trialing a variety of assistive technologies, to provide Jake with access to reading and writing. Currently, Jake is using Dragon Dictate v. 11, a software program that reads text to Jake and allows him to verbally dictate written material. As a result of this assistive technology, Jake is now able to read and produce written work with reasonable speed and efficiency. Read below for Jake's opinion of his assistive technology.



"My name is Jake Hebert. I was born blind and with cerebral palsy. I cannot see or use my hands very good. So I cannot type. I use a program called Dragon Dictate that lets me type by talking into a microphone. It took me a long time to learn it but I am getting much better. I write letters, do homework, send e-mails and I am learning to surf the web with it. I like it because I can say something in a microphone and then I say "read line" or "read sentence" or "read document" and it reads back what I typed. Then I can correct my mistakes. I still need some help when I use because it is not really made for blind people it but I hope that one day I will be able to use it all by myself and it will be better for blind people to use."

Ascension Parish

Jake Hebert - Dutchtown High School
&
Katelyn Johnson - Homebound

Katelyn Johnson is 10th grade student who receives academic instruction at home as a result of a degenerative disease of her muscles requiring full time support on a respiratory ventilator and full physical assistance for all of her needs. Academically, she is working on the Louisiana Extended Standards for her grade level. Physically, Katelyn exhibits limited motor control but is able to slightly move the knuckle on her right hand. Katelyn skillfully accesses the computer and the software program *EZ Keys* with automatic scanning made possible by the *Microlight* switch that she activates with her knuckle. Prior to using *EZ Keys*, Katelyn communicated via the computer and the software program *Speaking Dynamically Pro* as her voice. (And because she didn't want others to think she was cheating, she used to refuse to use the built-in word prediction feature!) Though Katelyn is a nonverbal communicator, she no longer has to rely on eye blinks to indicate choices and respond to questions. Katelyn is now proficient at accessing the computer to access any program she wishes to access, including the internet. The successful implementation of these assistive technology tools enabled Katelyn to completely plan her own birthday party for the first time in her life. Imagine the delight she felt being able to email her friends invitations to her Sweet 16 and invite friends through email using these assistive technology tools.

Thank you to Katelyn's instructors, Mary Sanchez, Homebound Teacher, and Patti Dietrich, Speech-Language Pathologist and AT Specialist for facilitating Katelyn's success!



BENEFITS OF TTS LITERACY PROGRAMS

CONTRIBUTED BY REGION 5

Text to speech (TTS) programs are becoming more popular in educational settings as a result of the Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) initiative. Although this technology was originally developed to support students with sensory impairments, research shows that TTS programs can benefit all students regardless of ability level.

According to the article "Technology to Help Struggling Students" in the Educational Leadership Journal (February 2006), text to speech programs benefit a variety of students because they provide "simultaneous, multiple modes of input to gain and hold a person's attention." The ability of these programs to highlight text as it is read aloud allows users to receive the information bi-modally (visually and aurally) which has proven to increase word recognition and retention. For students who struggle with decoding, text to speech allows them to focus on comprehension which in turn can increase the amount of time they spend working on a task. Writing can also be a challenge for students. Text to speech can assist students in proofreading their writing assignments when they are allowed to type compositions in these programs and listen to them being read aloud. When given the opportunity to listen to their writing, they are able to identify and correct many errors they would normally overlook.

There are numerous paid and free text to speech programs available. Kurzweil 3000, Read and Write Gold, Wynn Scan and Read and Read Outloud are some examples of paid text to speech programs that offer comprehensive literacy supports including the following: customizable speech, highlighting, word prediction, picture dictionaries, pronunciation tools, DAISY readers, graphic organizers, customizable topic dictionaries, phonetic spell checkers, research tools, and more.

Free TTS programs have limited functions as compared the comprehensive TTS Literacy Suites described above and include Natural Reader, Read Please and Orato. Specify exactly what the function is if you are interested in learning more about TTS and how it can be used to provide access to reading, contact your LATI Regional Center.

FREE TEXT TO SPEECH ON THE FLY

CONTRIBUTED BY REGION 4

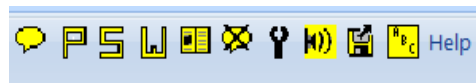


Looking for an inexpensive solution for text read out loud?

If you have a computer and *Microsoft Word* you are a download away from achieving this goal. *Word Talk* is a simple add-in for *Microsoft Word*. This free download can be installed on any computer running all versions of *Microsoft Word*.

Simply go to www.wordtalk.org.uk and click the download tab.

Once installed a tool bar will appear in *Microsoft Word*. Any text you type or copy and paste into *Microsoft Word* will now read out loud with synthesized speech.



To view a short demo video of *WordTalk* go to <http://tinyurl.com/3btm7u9>.

CONTRIBUTED BY REGION 4

Quick Tips

Digital Paper Fast!



Do you have students who could use text-to- speech but their instructional materials are not in digital format? A simple OCR compatible scanner can be the solution.

According to *ConsumerSearch.com* the Canon *CanoScan LiDE 110* is the best budget scanner and costs approximately \$60.



CanoScan LiDE 110

Once the scanner is installed onto the computer, you are just a few steps away from providing the student with a tool to promote independence and learning. Whether you scan a worksheet or the text book it is very important that you have a good copy of the page you are scanning. No purple copies please!!! This will prevent any errors in the scanned image.

Many basic scanners have OCR compatibility. OCR means optical character recognition. This technology will recognize the text on the page and convert it to digitized text which in turn will allow the *Word Talk* application to read the worksheet or textbook page.

UDL for Reading

CONTRIBUTED BY REGION 6



Adapting Books

With recent emphasis on how to address UDL in the classroom, ensuring teaching to all learning styles can be a challenge. One way to address Universal Design for Learning is to teach and present the information in various ways to the students and to also assess for understanding and skill mastery in ways that support student achievement based on individual needs and abilities. Adapting books could be a simple and easy task. The following photographs represent ways to address varied learning styles and abilities while ensuring whole group participation and independent practice.

The Kissing Hand

by Audrey Penn

Popsicle sticks or pony tail holders are tools to adapt book pages for those students who have limited range of motion or motor abilities.



Adapting text to individual reading styles for students who need picture supports to encourage participation.

Text can also be recorded by the teacher, student, or other students to help those students who have reading challenges or visual impairments.



These are only suggestions on how to begin addressing individual learning styles to support student motivation and achievement. Other suggestions and ideas can be examined by visiting the CAST website.

<http://udleditions.cast.org>

Text to Speech Pilot Project



Demonstrating Improved Student Outcomes

CONTRIBUTED BY CHARLOTTE DUCOTE, R 6/4

Several regional AT centers are conducting a TTS/AIM pilot project based upon a successful implementation developed through the AIM consortium in Missouri. The use of Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) and TTS software as a compensatory strategy for students with reading deficits is well supported in current research literature. Research data is available from the *Iowa Text Reader Longitudinal Study* on the efficacy of text-to-speech tools in increasing both reading fluency and comprehension levels (<http://aim.maineccite.org/content/aim-research>). Highlighting of text helps visual tracking; word prediction supports written expression; and a built-in dictionary, thesaurus, and other multi-modal tools are available within most robust TTS software applications.

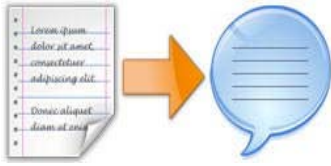
Districts participating in the TTS Pilot Project must choose a core group of students meeting the following characteristics:

- General cognitive ability within the average range
- Adequate listening comprehension skills
- Communication arts, reading, and written expression achievement scores significantly below age- and grade-level expectations
- Substantially limited reading/writing proficiency that has been addressed through special education (IEP) intervention in the past
- Generalized perception of being “at risk” for dropping out of high school, not persisting to high school completion, or failing to accumulate sufficient credits to graduate in a timely manner as a result of reading/writing deficits
- Past history of effective use of “oral reading” accommodations that are provided by human assistance (paraprofessionals, peers, teachers, etc.) or by assistive technology solutions

Once students are selected, the LATI Center AT facilitator(s) will conduct individualized trainings on the preferred TTS program currently implemented by the district for the students, teachers, parents, and other necessary support personnel. Regional facilitators will work closely with the district AT teams to assist in acquiring AIM and to provide on-going technical assistance. Baseline data will be collected on the selected students and the district will provide progress monitoring throughout the school year.

It is of utmost importance that districts realize that if TTS/AIM is required for FAPE, then it must be provided. If TTS/AIM is included in a student’s IEP and the IEP specifies that it will be available to the student throughout the entire school day and outside of school, then access to the TTS/AIM becomes part of FAPE and must be provided to comply with IDEA. Our goal is to see not only improvement in student achievement scores, but also a positive effect on the student’s self confidence in their reading abilities. For further information and to see a video on the successful outcome of the Missouri project, visit our AIM website at www.atanswers.com/aim and find the link at the top of the Resources tab <http://www.atanswers.com/aim/resources.html>





IEP ACCOMMODATIONS

Test Read Aloud and Text-to-Speech

CONTRIBUTED BY REGION 8

Students with **Test Read Aloud** as an accommodation on the IEP may benefit from the use of a text to speech program. Text to Speech programs allow a student to see and hear the text from a computer or portable device. This allows the student to “independently” read their own test. Certain text to speech programs can also be customized to meet the needs of the students who may require additional features including but not limited to high visual contrast, faster or slower reading rate, increased magnification, and more.

Students are allowed use of assistive technology (AT) during statewide assessments only when the specific assistive technology is properly documented on the Program/Services form of the IEP (see Louisiana Educational Assessment Program box). It is necessary to document the specific assistive technology without identifying a specific brand or vendor product and included under Assistive Technology box.

The [Louisiana Statewide Assessments, Accommodations and Assistive Technology](#) manual provides direction for the use of text-to-speech on statewide assessments. The use of AT as an accommodation for testing must be consistent with the use of AT as an accommodation for routine instruction and routine assessment that is implemented throughout the year. The District Testing Coordinator may request a PDF version of any and all Louisiana high-stakes tests, while ensuring that security protocols are followed. Districts that have requested a PDF version of tests in the past received a secure CD on which the PDF files were located. Upon receipt of the digital test, it was necessary for districts to further prepare the file to ensure compatibility with the text to speech technology used in the district. Currently, text-to-speech software companies are working with the State Department of Education to provide digital versions of Louisiana tests so that additional editing is not required by the district. Text-to-speech assistive technology may be used as a **Test Read Aloud** testing accommodation on all parts of LEAP, iLEAP, GEE and LAA2, **except** for any part of the tests that measure reading comprehension.

EXAMPLE

**ACCOMMODATION(S) NEEDED FOR LEAP TESTING
(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

- None
- Answers Recorded
- Large Print
- Braille
- Individual
- Tests Read Aloud except Reading Comprehension***
- Transferred answers
- Extended Time
- Communication Assistance
- Small Group
- Assistive Technology: Identify the type of AT to be used.**

*Text to Speech software program that reads the text to the student.
(List the features of the software program that are required by the student.
Do **not** include the specific name of the software maker.)*

FREE TRAININGS

NOVEMBER 2011		
7	I Have an Interactive Whiteboard, Now What? (online) Intellitools Classroom Suite 4 Basics Training (online) Smartboard Notebook Training (online)	Region 8 Region 8 Region 8
10	Literacy-AIM-AT: Students with Low Vision &/or Blindness	Regions 1/2
15	AT Tools for Writing Webinar Flip Cameras in the Classroom	Region 3 Region 6
16	Universal Designs for Learning 3 –Day Module	Region 4
17	Interactive Boards in the Classroom Creating Age Appropriate Text for Middle/High School Student	Region 6 Region 7
DECEMBER 2011		
6	Classroom Suite 4 Introduction to ActiveInspire and Accessibility	Region 4 Region 5
7	Free AT from A 2 Z	Region 7
8	Literacy Make N Take Kurzweil 3000	Region 3 Region 6
12	A-Z AT Free Resources	Region 2
13	WebCan: Using Web Cameras in the Special Education Classroom	Region 5
14	Clicker 5 with Clicker Paint	Region 6
15	Support for the Struggling Writer	Region 4
16	AT and RTI	Region 4
JANUARY 2012		
5	Get APPed Up! Using the iTouch/iPad in the Classroom	Region 5
10	AT and RTI	Region 6
12	Intellikeys Keyboard AIM without the NIMAC	Region 4 Region 7
19	Proloquo2Go: AAC in Your Pocket Classroom Suite Hands on with Communication APPS	Region 3 Region 6 Region 8
26	Putting the Access Guide into Action Creating Age Appropriate Text for the Elementary School Student	Region 6 Region 7

UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

November 28 - 30	27th Annual LACUE Conference New Orleans For more information and to register, visit: www.lacue.org
December 8 - 9, 2011	Inclusion Matters Conference Cajundome Convention Center- Lafayette, LA For more information and to register, visit: http://acadianaautism.com/
January 26-28, 2012	ATIA 2012 Orlando Orlando, Florida For more information visit- http://www.atia.org/
January 30-31, 2012	31st Annual LA CEC Super Conference Cajun Dome- Lafayette, LA For more information visit- http://www.lacec.org/



LATI Regional AT Centers provide free Professional Development, Consultations & Technical Assistance

The Assistive Technology Centers are a project funded by the Louisiana Department of Education. Reference in this printed material to any specific commercial products, process, service, manufacturer, or company does not constitute its endorsement or recommendation by the Louisiana DOE.

LATI Centers

REGION 1

Katherine Shea kshea@ppsb.org
8342 Hwy 23 504-595-6071
Belle Chasse, LA 70037 504-394-1431 (fax)
www.region1at.com

REGION 2

Danna Bouey dannabouey@ipsb.net
58060 Plaquemine St. 225-687-5400 ext. 183
Plaquemine, LA 70764 225-687-7390 (fax)
www.region2at.org

REGION 3

Sharon Edwards sharon.edwards@apsb.org
Kristie Stapler kristie.stapler@apsb.org
611 N. Burnside Ave. 225-391-7278
Gonzales, LA 70737 225-391-7279
www.lati3.com 225-391-7205 (fax)

REGION 4

Charlotte Ducote charlotte@atanswers.com
Tammy Dupre tammy@atanswers.com
N. P. Moss Annex 337-234-7187
801 Mudd Ave. 337-234-7188 (fax)
Lafayette, LA 70501
www.atanswers.com

REGION 5

Kay Bolen kay.bolen@cpsb.org
Anissa Fontenot anissa.fontenot@cpsb.org
1724 Kirkman St. 337-217-4120 ext. 1023
Lake Charles, LA 70601 337-217-4121 (fax)
<http://bb.lati.cpsb.org>

REGION 6

Charlotte Ducote charlotte@atanswers.com
DeWayne LaCaze dewayne@atanswers.com
LA Special ED Center 318-487-5488
5400 Coliseum Blvd. 318-487-5511 (fax)
Alexandria, LA 71306
www.atanswers.com

REGION 7

Kristie Sheffield kristie.sheffield@bossierschools.org
Karrie Bennett karrie.bennett@bossierschools.org
2500 Viking Drive 318-549-6113
Bossier City, LA 71111 318-549-6163
www.region7atc.com 318-549-6126 (fax)

REGION 8

Amanda Tull amanda.tull@r8at.com
Jessica Wingard jessica.wingard@r8at.com
1206 Marion Hwy. 888-368-9727
Farmerville, LA 71241 318-368-9727
www.r8at.com 318-368-9774 (fax)