

# T TAC BULLETIN

The Virginia Department of Education's Training & Technical Assistance Centers

## An inside view

Fall 2004 v. 13, n. 1

The focus of this T/TAC Bulletin is language arts instruction and universal design for learning.

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## Universal Design for Learning

by Glenna Gustafson

Students with diverse learning needs are not "the problem;" barriers in the curriculum itself are the root of the difficulty. (Hitchcock et al, 2002)

With the increase in diverse populations found in our schools, accountability mandates set forth in *IDEA*, the *No Child Left Behind Act*, and state standards, educators have been forced to rethink the way in which curriculum is designed, presented, and assessed. As an educator you have probably realized that the curriculum provided to you is not "one size fits all." You may have recognized the need for development of curriculum tools and experiences that offer learning alternatives for individuals of all ability levels.

The combined efforts of researchers and educators working at the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) have resulted in the development of a new educational paradigm—Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL implies that instruction and activities can be designed so that all individuals can accomplish the learning goals.

Universal Design for Learning can be defined as "...the design of instructional materials and activities that makes the learning goals achievable by individuals with wide differences in the abilities to see, hear, speak, move, read, write, understand English, attend, organize, engage, and remember" (Rose & Myer, 2000). In simpler terms, Universal Design for Learning is achieved by means of flexible curricular materials and

activities that provide alternatives for students with differing abilities. These alternatives are built into the instructional design and operating systems of educational materials—they are not added on after the fact (Burgstahler, 2002).

In addition CAST has proposed descriptions and principles of UDL based on brain and educational research and best practices. When teaching we ask students to recognize cues and patterns; master skills and strategies to assist with recall; and to engage in the learning process (Rose & Meyer, 2000). Learning more about the brain and its constructs assists in making the learning experience more positive and successful for all students. Using new brain imaging tools researchers are beginning to understand where brain activity takes place and how this activity leads to learning.

Three major neural networks have been identified that work together to coordinate every task that we undertake. These three networks provide a framework for UDL:

- The Recognition Networks assist with the identification and interpretation of patterns using our five senses and with the recognition of people, places and things.
- The Strategic Networks assist with the planning, execution and monitoring of our motor and mental patterns.
- The Affective Networks attach emotion to all we see and do.

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Motivation, attention, and level of engagement are all related to the affective networks (Rose & Meyer, 2002).

It is essential to remember that learning does not occur utilizing just one of these neural networks, but requires each network working together. The most effective and universally designed curriculum includes tools, methods, strategies, and assessments that engage all three of the brain networks and takes individual differences into account.

### Diverse recognition network

To support diverse recognition networks, the curriculum should provide multiple, flexible methods of presentation or representation. These alternate forms of presentation reduce perceptual/learning barriers and can be adjusted to the different ways that students recognize things.

- Alternatives that reduce perceptual barriers include the use of text, audio, and images when introducing and presenting curriculum materials.
- Alternatives that reduce cognitive barriers include building student background knowledge prior to beginning instruction. Providing summaries of “Big Ideas” found in the curriculum, and the use of graphic organizers.

### Diverse strategic network

To support diverse strategic networks, the curriculum should provide multiple, flexible methods of expression and apprenticeship. Students can respond using a variety of systems based on their individual preferred means of expression—oral, written, computer generated, or graphic.

- Alternatives that reduce motor barriers to expression include the use of computers, tape recorders, adapted writing and drawing tools and speaking. Opportunities for frequent practice of skills and consistent feedback and assessment should also be provided.

*Flexible materials fulfill the promise of UDL in that they open doors and circumvent barriers for students with disabilities and also improve learning opportunities for all students.*

- Alternatives that reduce cognitive barriers to expression include the use of instructional scaffolds and the utilization of explicit strategies for organization or assignment completion. Opportunities for students to be active participants and observe expert modeling should also be provided.

### Diverse affective networks

To support diverse affective networks the curriculum should provide multiple, flexible options for engagement. Students are more motivated if their interest in learning is matched to their mode of presentation and response.

- Alternatives for engaging students include providing support and challenges, focusing on developmental and cultural interests, and offering flexible materials (Burgstahler, 2002; Orkwis, 1999; Rose & Meyer, 2002).

By addressing individual strengths and weaknesses that may be found in each of these neural networks, and by providing multiple, flexible, alternatives for access, use and engagement to the curriculum, barriers are minimized and learning is maximized.

UDL removes the focus of “problems with students” to where it should be—the “problem is with the curriculum.” If the tools, materials, strategies, and approaches are flexible and built into the curriculum as it is designed then the maximum number of students will be able to access it.

As you begin planning your next lesson, use the principles of Universal Design for Learning to guide you in the creation of curriculum to meet the needs of all students.

Learn more about UDL by visiting: CAST- <http://www.cast.org> or <http://www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent/>

### References

Burgstahler, S. 2002. Universal Design of Instruction, Retrieved from <http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Academics/instruction.html>

Hitchcock, C., Meyer, A., Rose, D., & Jackson, R. (2002). Providing access to the general education curriculum: Universal design for learning. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 35 (2), 8-17.

Orkwis, R. (1999). *Curriculum access and universal design for learning*. ERIC/OSEP Digest. Reston, VA: ERIC/OSEP Special Project, Council for Exceptional Children. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 437 767).

Rose, D. & Meyer, A. (2000). *The Future is in the margins: The role of technology and disability in educational reform*. Peabody, MA: Center for Applied Special Technology and American Institute for Research. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 451 624).

Rose, D. & Meyer, A. (2000). Universal design for individual differences. *Educational Leadership*, 58 (3), 39-43. Retrieved July 28, 2003, from <http://www.cast.org/udl/>

# Literacy is a Goal for ALL! by Diann Eaton and Lora Kingma

We all know as educators and parents that reading aloud to children is important for many reasons. Reading to children:

- √ Develops a positive attitude toward books as a source of pleasure and information;
- √ Increases vocabulary and enhances natural language;
- √ Expands the child's knowledge base;
- √ Stimulates imagination;
- √ Sharpens observation skills;
- √ Enhances listening skills;
- √ Promotes self-confidence and self-esteem;
- √ Contributes to the child's problem-solving skills;
- √ Satisfies and heightens curiosity;
- √ Encourages positive social interaction;
- √ And motivates students to learn.

Reading aloud to a child encourages three important things to happen. First, a pleasure connection is made between the child and reader because they are sharing a positive experience together. Secondly, both the reader and the child are learning something from the book at the same time, which generates opportunities for conversation. Most importantly, when reading to a child sounds and syllables called words are poured into that child's ear (Gebbers, 1995). Pouring words into a child's ear overflows into their listening and speaking vocabulary. In Jane L. Gebbers' book, *Books are for Talking Too!* (1995), she states that, "relating and sharing information and ideas is the heart of true communication" (p. ).

It is equally important to read aloud to children with complex disabilities. Often these students need a means of communication other than verbal. Communica-

tion by definition requires several components. In order to communicate it is necessary that at least two people are involved, a sender and a receiver. It is imperative that the sender and receiver have an understanding of each other's methods of communication; therefore they need a form for sending a message. In order to generate a message they must have a reason or purpose for communicating—something to talk about! Literature provides a connection from interesting content to meaningful conversation via an AAC device or any other means of communication.

When choosing books to read to children with complex disabilities, teachers and parents should make sure the content is interesting to them as well as the child. If a book seems dull, put it down and find one that is more appealing.

Suggestions for finding books that will support reading aloud to children with complex disabilities:

- √ Exhaust the child's favorite series, author or genres.
  - √ Create "window" books, which are designed with a cutout in each page. Tape the child's photo to the inside back of the book and his/her face appears on every page.
  - √ Write books about the child's interest, special events, field trips or family trips.
- "The notion that children are too physically, too cognitively, or too communicatively disabled to benefit from experiences with written language, are not supported by current emergent literary research! Literacy is a goal for all!" (Mirenda, 1998)

## References

Gebbers, J.L. (1995). *Books are for talking too!* Austin, TX: Pro-Ed Inc.

Mirenda, P. (1993). Bonding the uncertain mosaic. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 9, 3-9.



**Mark your calendar!**  
**Autism Spectrum Disorders: Information Today, Strategies Tomorrow**  
**March 10-11, 2005**  
**Southwest Virginia Higher Ed Center**  
**Abingdon, VA**

Last year's conference was so successful we decided to make it an annual event!

### March 10

Spend the day learning about a curriculum for teaching social skills. Jed Baker, Ph.D. author of *Social Skills Training for Children and Adolescents with Asperger Syndrome and Social-Communication Problems* will present this full-day session.

### March 11

This second day of the conference will feature traditional breakout sessions covering social skills, communication, and teaching strategies.

**Watch the mail for brochures!**

# Literacy is Everyone's Job! by Helen Barrier

With directives from *No Child Left Behind* the responsibility of students understanding text is no longer solely on the shoulders of the reading and language arts teachers. It is now the responsibility of every teacher to see that students have access to the curriculum to begin to close the performance gap.

With this in mind there are a multitude of research-based strategies for all teachers to use with their students regardless of the content area. We can begin to think about these strategies as ones we will use before, during and after reading.

## Before reading:

We can activate students' prior knowledge before they begin to read by using graphic organizers, prediction and vocabulary strategies.

1. These suggested software programs allow teachers and students to create graphic organizers to depict information in an easy to understand format.
  - Graphic organizers can be designed using the software *Inspiration and Kidspiration* found at [www.inspiration.com](http://www.inspiration.com)
  - *The Works* from Masterminds, llc is graphic organizer software that is available at [www.GraphicOrganizers.com](http://www.GraphicOrganizers.com).
  - There's also *Draftbuilder* from Don Johnson available at [www.donjohnston.com](http://www.donjohnston.com).
2. Teaching students strategies to learn and remember new vocabulary words before and as they meet them in text will assist in their understanding of the text.
  - *Wheels for Reading* from *Independent Strategies for Efficient Study* by Karen Rooney available at [www.krooney.com/strategies.htm](http://www.krooney.com/strategies.htm)

- *LINCing Vocabulary Routine* researched and developed by Ed Ellis and The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning. For more information go to [www.ku-crl.org](http://www.ku-crl.org).
- 3. Prediction (or "front-loading") isn't a new technique to use with students to set them up to learn and can be a strong predictor for setting the scene for learning to take place.
  - Asking questions like "What do you think you'll learn as we study this unit on Jamestown?" or "How will this information affect what we already know about Colonial America?"
  - These and many other ideas are shared in: *Textbooks and Students who Can't Read Them* by Jean Cibrowski (1993).

## During reading

Keeping interest high during reading will help our students "stay with us on the journey." We can do this by using interactive reading strategies, being pro-active and pre-teaching "tricks" and by just reading!

- Taking notes using "cued notepaper" developed by Joe Boyle is an interactive reading strategy that is available to copy off-line at [www.familyeducation.com/article](http://www.familyeducation.com/article).
- *The Framing Routine*, researched and developed by Ed Ellis and The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, is another interactive strategy. For more information go to [www.ku-crl.org](http://www.ku-crl.org).
- Click and Clunk is a reading "trick" in which students are taught prior to reading to read the words they know (a Click) in the text and if they come to a word they don't understand (a Clunk) they reread the sentence without the word in it, read the

sentence before and after, look for a suffix or prefix, and finally break the word into smaller parts. If after this they still don't understand, then they ask for clarification. Information on CSR (Collaborative Strategic Reading) is available at [www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org).

- An effective "trick" is to teach students to use post-it notes as they read to make notes to themselves about what's important, what's confusing, and/or anything they need to remember about the text. From *Improving Students' Understanding of Textbook Content* by Barbara Flanagan available at [www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org).
- Read aloud to students (after students have pre-read their section to identify any troublesome words).
- Use a variety of reading methods to help students access text such as choral reading, silent reading, listening to text on tape or CD, on-line text, or use text-to-speech software such as *ReadPlease 2003* which is available free at <http://www.readplease.com>

## After reading

It's important to consolidate what students read by extending the graphic organizers you introduced before they read, analyzing their prior predictions and extending their learning.

- Revisit the graphic organizers you started before students read and expand on them. Add new information, ask critical questions and allow students to use this information to gain further understanding. Develop writing assignments, role-playing, video productions and/or PowerPoint presentations allowing students to apply their new knowledge.
- Revisit the questions you started with and analyze the students'

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predictions. "What do you know now that would change your predictions?" "What did you learn?" "How has this changed what we knew about this subject?", etc. Our questions are critical in helping students make connections and learning important concepts.

- Allow students to continue learning about a subject with supplemental reading resources, designing a web quest for an on-line search found in [www.powerof2.org](http://www.powerof2.org) in Teacher Vistas and <http://library.thinkquest.org>.

These are just a "snip-it" of ideas that we can use in our classrooms to ensure literacy all learners!



## T/TAC Changes

### Welcome

**Brad Bizzell** is the new School Improvement Coordinator for the T/TAC at Virginia Tech. Brad has worked in public education for 18 years. Most recently Brad served as an elementary principal in Montgomery County. He has a BS in Business Administration from Appalachian State University, an MS in Vocational and Adult Education and an Ed.S. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Virginia Tech. Brad's interest and experience is in school improvement, inclusive practices in schools and reading instruction.

**Lynn Everett** comes to T/TAC at Radford University from Montgomery County Public Schools where she taught special education for the past 15 years. She received a BS in Elementary Educa-

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# Virginia's 2005 Transition Forum

**March 14 – 16, 2005**

Williamsburg Marriott

50 Kingsmill Road

Williamsburg, VA 23185

Phone: (800) 228-9290 or (757) 220-2500

The 2005 Transition Forum consists of a series of interactive informative workshops, as well as panel presentations. Each day's program will commence with an opening speaker, followed by a series of presentations within these specific strands:

- Adult Service Options
- Behavior
- Career and Technical Education (includes career evaluation/assessment)
- Empowering Students and Families (includes self determination, community partnerships, family/school/community partnerships)
- Instructional Strategies (includes access to the general curriculum, high school completion, inclusion)
- Legislative Reform (includes standards and regulations, NCLB, WIA, IDEA reauthorization)
- Model Programs for Students in Transition (includes secondary, middle school, post-secondary, and alternative education)
- Personnel Preparation and Training
- Post-Secondary (includes higher education, training, research)
- School to Career and Employment
- Technology (includes assistive technology, universal design)

### Who should attend?

Education personnel, including administrators, transition coordinators, special educators, career and technical educators, general educators, vocational evaluators, higher education faculty and student support services.

Rehabilitation personnel, including rehabilitation counselors, vocational evaluators and program managers, therapists, assistive technology personnel and case managers.

Workforce development personnel, including employment specialists, vocational counselors, college and university faculty and staff.

Any other persons interested in the successful transition of youth and young adults from education to independence and productivity in adult life in the community.

### For additional program information

Visit our website for updates at [www.radford.edu/~conf-serv](http://www.radford.edu/~conf-serv) click on View Programs & Events or contact 2005 Transition Forum Co-chairs:

Dale Matusevich  
Radford University  
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# Put Reading and Writing first in your Home-to-School Connection

by Tammy Craft

Perhaps you remember the children's story, *The Little Red Hen*, and perhaps as a teacher or parent you often feel like you are doing all the work of planting, cutting, weeding, harvesting and baking. This favorite children's tale reminds us of the importance in building the home-to-school connection. One person cannot do all that needs to be done and it is important to share active roles when planning for and communicating about a child's academic and school success. Review the suggestions below and try one new approach for putting reading and writing first in the home-to-school connection. The goal is to set your classroom up for successful communication.

## Make writing meaningful

During language arts centers, give students meaningful writing assignments in support of classroom communication. Parents are more likely to read newsletters and outlines written by their child. Teacher and students share in the task of developing classroom communication and sharing learning objectives through:

- Students begin the school week by writing a letter to their family outlining the class schedule and upcoming events.
- Students write an end of the week letter to parents that outline units of study. Facts and information are highlighted and provide review for upcoming unit tests.
- Students develop monthly calendars that highlight volunteer opportunities for family participation.
- Twice a month, students and parents share in purposeful letter writing. The student composes a letter to their family. Families

write back on the reverse side of the letter, answering questions and responding to the interests of their child.

- Students practice word processing skills by typing lists for family reference such as: names of classmates, specialty teachers, and school personnel.
- Excellent writing software programs like *Kidspiration* and *Print Shop* are available to help students create professional quality posters, invitations, cards, outlines, and newsletters.
- Students develop checklists outlining student responsibilities around homework assignments, class participation, student preparation, and appropriate classroom conduct.

The result: improved reading and writing skills that enhance classroom communication.

## Building reading fluency

To develop prosodic reading and fluency, children need many opportunities to practice oral reading skills in the classroom and at home. Prosodic reading reflects an understanding of meaningful pausing and phrasing during reading. Prosody in reading includes spoken language features such as pitch variations emphasis, intonation, and reading rate. Consider the opportunity to invite families to participate in a family reading project and support prosody and fluency in and out of the classroom.

## The classroom lending library

Encourage families to set aside one evening a week dedicated to family reading time. Families borrow one book at a time from the classroom lending library. At

home, each family member shares in reading aloud.

1. How do I get this reading project started?

Ask parents who are book club members if their club will sponsor this program by providing your lending library with several selections. Check with local bookstores and thrift shops or your school's business partner for book donations. Your school library or PTA may be another resource. Acquire a variety of books including non-fiction, poetry, children's classics, and transitional novels.

Teachers, be ready with a book wish list. You may get offers from excited parents and partners interested in contributing to your project.

Store the books in a location easily accessible to families; a shelf or small table will work fine.

2. How do I manage this project?

Keep it friendly and simple. I suggest you use the honor system. Invite families to visit the lending library before or after school with their child. Families read and return one book at a time. Provide a bookmark tucked inside each book with a friendly reminder. "Read, Enjoy, and Return to Mrs. Craft's Lending Library."

Teachers, be sure to read several of the books and provide notes of recommendations to families. Hang a poster near the bookshelf for recording "great picks" and "family favorites."

For a book list to support your classroom-family library talk to your literacy specialist, librarian or call our T/TAC office.

I hope you found one suggestion to make your own and easily

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incorporate into your home-to-school communication project. Happy reading, and remember to put reading and writing first in your home-to-school connection.

### Resources:

Allington, R. & Cunningham P. (1999). *Classrooms that work: They can all read and write*. New York: Addison-Wesley Longman, Inc.



**Mark your Calendars**  
**Making the Connections '05**  
**Ideas in Assistive Technology and**  
**Augmentative Communication**  
**June 23-24-2005**  
**Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center**  
**Roanoke, VA**

## Creating Language Experiences for Young Children

by Selina Flores

All children enjoy language experiences--spoken, written, sung, or animated. Whether children are drawn to the melodic rhythm or to the shapes and patterns that letters and numbers make, they like to play with language. The following suggested activities (based on the favorite fall theme of apples) offer an array of language experiences to incorporate throughout the day.

### Language and vocabulary

Depending on the age and understanding of your children, begin by introducing an actual apple (or several kinds of apples), photographs, then drawings. Label the photographs or drawings. Encourage the child to point to, repeat, or name pictures of apples or related items while reading a book. You can point out the letter /a/. "A is for apple, apples grow on trees, where's the apple?" While looking at picture books or magazines, encourage the child to tell you what's going on in that picture and from time to time ask him, "How do you know that?" Encourage an older child to make a prediction.

Technology adaptation: For a child who might need assistance accessing pictures or books consider

utilizing the computer and Microsoft Power Point. Scan the pages of a book to create an electronic book or use clip art or images from the worldwide web to create an electronic picture book. Other multimedia software programs to create electronic books readily available from the T/TAC lending library include *Build Ability* by Don Johnson, *My Own Bookshelf* by Soft Touch, and *IntelliTalk* by IntelliTools.

### Outdoor play

Go on an apple hunt using plastic apples, pictures of apples or colored apples created by the children. Rather than making this a competitive game turn it into a cooperative activity by telling the children there are (X number) of apples to find. They have to help each other find all the apples; put the apples in one large basket; and identify someone to count the apples and someone to verify the count. When all the apples have been collected, everyone counts the apples together and then give each other high fives for a job well done.

Technology Adaptation: Consider utilizing an augmentative communication (aug com) device such

as the *Step-by-Step Communicator* by Able Net or the *Sequencer* by Adaptation, Inc. for a child who may have speech or communication difficulties. He can count the apples going into the basket or provide directions on finding another apple "Did you look on the slide? Check by the swings. Are there any under the bushes?"

### Cooking experiences

Cooking is a wonderfully rich language experience and with all the textures, scents, directions, and measuring the children have to do, no wonder there is so much joyful "noise" around this type of activity. Prepare apples to make dried apple rings or make an apple salad incorporating 1/2-cup vanilla yogurt, 1-cup raisins, and 2-cups chopped apples. Sprinkle a dash of cinnamon on each serving. Help the children chop, measure, scoop, and stir the ingredients together.

Technology adaptation: A child can activate a device with multiple cells such as the *CheapTalk 8* from Toys for Special Children or the *GoTalk* by Frederic Thomas LLC with pictures can be used for a child to read the recipe aloud. If

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your activity calls for a blender or other small appliance use the *PowerLink* (Able Net) and a switch for the child to control the operation.

### Snack

While eating the dried apple rings or apple salad talk about the snack; is it sweet or tart, crunchy or soft, warm or cold, does your treat have a scent? Talk about the preparation process. What did they enjoy the most or the least? Is this something they can do at home? Should they repeat this snack again? Why or why not?

Technology adaptation: Provide access to an aug com device to share fun facts about apples or uses of apples for pies, cakes, or salads, etc. Allow the child access to more snack choices on his aug com device or have food package containers or pictures to initiate another request.

### Field trip

Take a field trip to an apple orchard to pick apples or to the grocery store to purchase apples. Buy one of each variety and don't forget to take pictures of the children and their experience. Ideally each child would get their own picture book of their experience with the adult recording the child's story for each page.

Technology adaptation: A student can use the computer to draw their experience using a "paint" type program such as *Build Ability* or *IntelliTalk*. With *Build Ability*, a child can record her voice to tell her own story or have an adult help with writing the text.

### Children's literature

Suggested titles to read include: *Apples* by Ken Robbins or the one by Gail Gibbons; *Apples Here!*, by Will Hubbell; *Count* by Denise Fleming; *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle; *Down on the Farm with Grover* by Ray Sipherd; and

*This Little Pig Went to Market* by Ron Brooks.

### Table activity

During your art activity have the children add texture or dimension by incorporating scrap material such as tissue paper, ribbons, foam craft paper, cotton balls, feathers, sequins, beads, leaves, or twigs. Ask each child to name and sign her masterpiece. Encourage the children to share their creation with each other, and to discuss the type of materials, colors, and patterns they used.

The children can make a batch of playdough, color it, and roll it out. Have the children use the rolled playdough to copy letters, or word for the day by manipulating the playdough over laminated letters or words. Use 6x8 laminated index cards for this activity.

Technology adaptation: Child can use the paint program in *Build Ability* to create their own artwork and practice pre-writing skills. Use letter-shaped cookie cutters to identify specific letters, spell out words, or cut the playdough.

### Songs & fingerplays

*Two Little Apples* (chant)

Two little apples hanging on a tree, (extend arms to side and cup each hand to make apples)

Two little apples smiling at me, (turn cupped hands forward, open hand)

I shook the tree as hard as I could (bring hands to midline, shake body and arms)

Down came the apples, (squat down on the ground)

Mmm! They were good! (rub tummy and smile)

*Red Apple* (fingerplay)

A little red apple hung high up in a tree, (point up)

I looked up at it (look up) and it looked down at me (look down).

"Come down please," I called (beckon). And what do you suppose?

That little red apple dropped right on my nose (Touch nose)

Technology adaptation: Utilize the *Bigmack* (Able Net) for the child to recite the chant or fingerplay verse with the group.

### Creative dramatics

Provide settings (e.g. home, school cafeteria, bakery, grocery store, or restaurant) in your classroom for children to use appropriate props to create apple dishes, serve or sell apples, and other fruits. Along with clothing be sure to include appropriate accessories such as recipe cards, utensils, trays, flowers or other interesting props.

Technology adaptation: Using the *Sequencer*, a child can direct his play in this center. "I'm the baker. I'm gonna bake an apple cake. I'm gonna need..."

### Active involvement

Remember, the key to these language experiences is having the child actively involved, manipulating and discovering, during the activity.

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# Bits and Bytes: UDL and Technology Tools for Language Arts

by Glenna Gustafson

The key ingredient to creating a universally designed for learning (UDL) curriculum is providing flexible opportunities for presentation, interaction, and assessment. Technology tools can assist in helping educators create curriculum that is flexible. While no single curriculum or software package can meet the needs of all students, technology tools, especially digital media offers more flexible and versatile features than traditional print media.

- Digital media are flexible and versatile and can present content in a variety of formats—text, still image, sound, moving image, combinations of text on video, sound in text, video in text, and more.
- Digital media are transformable; the same content can be displayed in multiple ways. For example font, size, color and sound can be added or changed within digital media.

Keeping these things in mind here are some technology tools that you might want to integrate into your language arts curriculum.

## Electronic text

Free Online Text can be found for download at:

- Public Library - <http://www.ipl.org>
- Project Gutenberg - <http://promo.net/pg/>
- ReadPlease - <http://www.readplease.com>
- Electronic Text Center - <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/>

## Text-to-speech software

These are programs that read aloud the text on the screen. Some programs offer features that allow the words to be highlighted as

they are read aloud, others only perform the function of reading.

Commercial Products (available for loan from the T/TAC library)

- CAST eReader - <http://www.cast.org/udl/index.cfm?i=211>
- Kurzweil - <http://www.kurzweilededu.com/>
- WYNN - <http://www.freedomscientific.com/LSG/index.asp>
- textHELP - <http://www.texthelp.com/home.asp> (Coming soon!)

Free Text Readers

- Acrobat Reader - <http://www.adobe.com>
- Microsoft® Reader - <http://www.microsoft.com/reader/downloads/pc.asp>
- ReadPlease 2003 - <http://www.readplease.com>
- Tex-Edit Plus 4.5.1 - <http://www.tex-edit.com/>

## Writing and Organizing Software

Commercial Products (available for loan from the TTAC library)

- Inspiration and Kidspiration - <http://www.inspiration.com>
- Co: Writer, Write Out Loud and Draftbuilder - <http://www.donjohnston.com/>

Free Online Resources

- Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators - Graphic Organizers - <http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/assess.html#go>
- George Mason's PT3 Project has archived Web videos on using Inspiration - <http://www.techmentor.org/webcasts.html>

- Project Impact Resource - <http://web.utk.edu/~impact/resources.html>
- Graphic Organizer Printables - <http://www.teachervision.com/lessonplans/lesson-6293.html>
- The Graphic Organizer - <http://www.graphic.org/>
- S.C.O.R.E. Language Arts: Graphic Organizers - <http://www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/actbank/torganiz.htm>
- Write Design Online: Graphic Organizers - <http://www.writtenonline.com/organizers/>
- NCREL Graphic Organizers: <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/learning/lr1grorg.htm>

## Learn more

Learn more about utilizing digital media in the classroom by visiting: [http://www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent/toolkits/tk\\_introduction.cfm?tk\\_id=41](http://www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent/toolkits/tk_introduction.cfm?tk_id=41) Here you will find the *Digital Content Toolkit* which provides information, support, tools, ideas, models, research, and a community of practice for educators interested in using flexible computer technologies to reach and teach diverse learners.

## AT and Aug Com Interest Groups Now Forming!

Are you interested in staying abreast of all the new AT and Aug Com tools? Would you like the opportunity to talk with other educators and service providers about how they are using AT and Aug Com? Then email Lora Kingma (lkingma@vt.edu) or Glenna Gustafson (gsgustaf@vt.edu) to let them know. Please include your name, title, school and mailing address.

## T/TAC Featured Area Employer: Kroger by Ben Tickle

The next time you enter one of the local businesses in Montgomery County, pay close attention to the number of young men and women working. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has provided many opportunities for students with disabilities to gain skills and employment through their Community Based Instruction (CBI) program. In employment settings, you will notice young people working diligently at such jobs as cleaning, collating, filing, sorting, cooking, inventory, bagging, running registers, babysitting, and many others. You will also see these same young people learning skills in comparison-shopping, proper restaurant use, community mobility, and communication. Through CBI, students with disabilities learn many skills that will allow them to be more independent in adult life. In other words, the community is their classroom.

We must realize that CBI would not be possible without employers and businesses willing to work with these students and the school system. The process of matching jobs to student skills can be a tedious process and some businesses are not willing to undergo this endeavor; however, one local business experienced the benefits of CBI and became a "community partner" with Montgomery County Schools. The Kroger (University City Blvd) in Blacksburg has become a regular employer of students with disabilities from MCPS and adults with disabilities in the community. Specifically, they have worked with the school system to match student skills to jobs, helping students with disabilities to learn job skills, survival skills, and to foster independence.

Many businesses might consider hiring individuals with disabilities a task they do not wish to undertake, but Mr. Kevin Boone, Store Manager of the Kroger (University City Blvd) for the past four years, currently employs two individu-

als with disabilities. "We have one high school student and one adult with disabilities currently employed at the store and have employed several others in the past," stated Boone. Boone explains, "Employing students with disabilities is no different than employing other teenagers and young adults. They all have their strengths and weaknesses. It is our job, along with Wayne Zellers (Montgomery County Teacher), to develop all of them into good employees and make them more independent." Mr. Boone continued by saying, "I don't have to worry that my workers with disabilities are going to show up late or not show up at all." He explained that his workers with disabilities are at work on time, look respectable, and are dependable. Many of our youth struggle with these skills in today's society. Sometimes, the store management spends more time training individuals with disabilities, but Boone says he doesn't mind that because these students value their employment and work hard to improve. Boone says, "Their positive qualities make it worth spending more time showing these workers how to complete a task and helping them practice."

The store and the school work together to place students based on their skills and interests. At that point, Mr. Wayne Zellers, special education teacher for MCPS coaches the students in performing their jobs. Mr. Zellers gradually decreases the coaching until students are able to complete the task independently. However, Boone doesn't stop there. Mr. Boone explained that Kroger tries to have employees with disabilities explore and sample other jobs within the store. Boone stated, "We try to provide the employees with as many experiences as possible." By doing this, other opportunities for growth and independence occur. That

provides the students with other skills they can use to continue employment at Kroger, or generalize in other employment settings. Mr. Boone says, "We always enter the arrangement with the hope that the employee will continue employment with us." Boone states, "This partnership with the school system has provided us with some good employees." I am sure this is a partnership that both Kroger and the Montgomery County School System wish to continue.

The Blacksburg Kroger (University City Blvd) is doing their part to facilitate a sense of belonging for everyone in our community, a vital part of an Inclusive society. Practices such as theirs should be commended for the valuable benefits they provide for our citizens. So, the next time you are in the store, tell them how much you appreciate their practice of true equal opportunity employment. In closing, the Virginia Tech Training and Technical Assistance Center would like to salute the Blacksburg Kroger (University City Blvd) as our first feature area employer.

### T/TAC Changes cont. from page 5

tion from Longwood College and an MA in Education from Virginia Tech. Lynn recently achieved certification by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards in the area of mild to moderate disabilities. Her areas of interest include reading strategies and accessing general curriculum for students with disabilities.

**Darren W. Minarik** is the new Secondary Coordinator with the T/TAC at RU. As a Secondary Coordinator, Darren provides educational training to schools and community programs throughout southwest Virginia. Prior to his



## T/TAC staff directory

position with Radford University, Darren was a secondary social studies teacher and educational technology trainer in Pulaski County, VA and taught Instructional Technology courses at New River Community College. He worked for six years in Washington, DC for the Close Up Foundation, the nation's largest civic education organization and served as a tutor for the Lab School of Washington, a private school for students with learning disabilities.

### Not really goodbye

**Kenna Colley**, co-director of the T/TAC at RU accepted a teaching faculty position in the department of special education at Radford University. She began this new challenge on August 10. She will remain co-director devoting 25% of her time to the T/TAC at RU.

**Leslie Daniel** recently began a 10-month leave of absence from the T/TAC at Virginia Tech. She is taking time to be a full-time student, working on a doctorate at VT (no, she won't finish this year, but she'll complete the majority of classes).

### Job sharing

While Leslie's away **Margaret McGee** and **Mickey VanDerwerker** will each assume 50% of the Severe Disabilities Coordinator job.

Many of you know Mickey as a regular presenter and consultant for the T/TAC in the areas of autism spectrum disorders, positive behavior support, and other issues surrounding students with complex disabilities.

Margaret recently moved to Floyd County from New Jersey. She is a physical therapist with expertise in helping students with complex physical disabilities access computers and augmentative communication devices.

Each of these people bring a unique perspective to the T/TAC. Welcome one and all!

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## Mission

The mission of Virginia's Training and Technical Assistance Centers is to improve educational opportunities and contribute to the success of children and youth with disabilities (birth–22 years). The Centers provide quality training and technical assistance in response to local, regional, and state needs. T/TAC services increase the capacity of schools, school personnel, service providers, and families to meet the needs of children and youth.

## School Divisions Served

### Region 6

Alleghany  
Botetourt  
Covington  
Craig  
Danville  
Floyd  
Franklin  
Henry  
Martinsville  
Montgomery  
Patrick  
Pittsylvania  
Roanoke City  
Roanoke County  
Salem

### Region 7

Bland  
Bristol  
Buchanan  
Carroll  
Dickenson  
Galax  
Giles  
Grayson  
Lee  
Norton

Pulaski  
Radford  
Russell  
Scott  
Smyth  
Tazewell  
Washington  
Wise  
Wythe