

What's New With Beckman

Winter Issue

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SPECIAL ISSUE: TECHNOLOGY FOR LEARNING

I have been involved with clients who use technology for learning, communication, and mobility for over twenty years. Within the past few years, I have intensified my efforts to learn about the most recent tools available for those who have learning disabilities and other learning challenges.

What is assistive technology?

IDEA97 states "Assistive technology device means any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability"

Assistive technology tools

I am excited about recent developments in applying assistive technology (AT) for use with children and adults with learning disabilities. These tools include:

- Screen readers that read aloud from web pages, email, computer based encyclopedias, documents, and other software.
- Software that can read aloud (from your computer) magazines, worksheets, and entire textbooks including pictures and graphics.
- Dictation software that allows children and adults to say their ideas as quickly as their brain works rather than waiting for their body to catch up. This software can be used with learning disabled children as young as nine, at home and in the classroom.
- Tools that copy teacher and meeting notes directly to the computer and translate these notes into computer text. This text can then be read aloud by a screen reader.
- Software to help organize your thoughts, essays and other writing.

"I don't have to wait for someone to help me anymore. I can do it myself."

Student, age 9

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LEARNING DISABILITIES (LD)
EVALUATIONS, ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY
EVALUATION AND TRAINING FOR LD,
CONSULTATION AND TRAINING SEMINARS

Where to start

If you suspect learning difficulties are holding you or your child back, you should:

- Begin by obtaining a thorough evaluation by a psychologist or other licensed professional specializing in learning disabilities.
- Determine what assistive technology would fit with your learning needs.

My learning disabilities services

include:

- Evaluations that combine the traditional learning disabilities testing with an assessment of the fit between the individual and the available assistive technology tools
- Working from an existing evaluation to select the appropriate AT tools for individual use at school and home.
- Hands-on demonstration and training along with assistance in selecting and purchasing appropriate solutions, including low cost, low tech resources.

Presenting these AT solutions to parents, schools, and service organizations allows me to share my enthusiasm with a wider audience. Some 2003-2004 events include:

- **October 16, 2003** Closing the Gap conference: *The Dyslexia Prescription*
- **October 27, 2003** Evanston District 65 *A Family Affair: Coping With Your Child's Learning Disabilities*
- **March 5, 2004** Association for Educational Therapists conference: *Technological Accommodations: A Learning Prescription for Dyslexia*
- **June 3-4, 2004** Learning Disabilities Assoc. of Arkansas Seminar: *Technology for Students with Learning Disabilities: Leveling the Playing Field*