DISKoveries

Special Needs: New Software, Books, DVDs and Professional Resources

By Joan Tanenhaus

Show Me AAC (Life Tools, available from Mayer-Johnson: 800-588-4548, www.mayer-johnson.com) This program is designed to help students learn and practice vocabulary and basic concepts, including about 350 words within 12 categories (clothes, food, vehicles, bedroom, etc) , colors, shapes, size, letters, numbers, and time. Pictures or PCS can be used. The program can be accessed with a mouse, touch screen or with scanning. Each activity has four playing modes – Practice (click to hear the name); Find (computer asks you to find and click a specific object/item); Memorize (computer asks you to find several cards in a row); and Recall (concentration-type game). There are many options for control of numbers of pictures displayed at a time, specific letters to work on, choice of letter name or letter sound, number range for counting activities, specific shapes and colors to work on, and others. This is an outstanding program and is appropriate for all ages and levels and excellent for mastering basic concepts and vocabulary.

Flashwords AAC (Life Tools, available from Mayer-Johnson: 800-588-4548, www.mayer-johnson.com) This program is designed for preschool/kindergarten level and stresses early reading skills. There is a four-step learning activity that helps the user to read the words, followed by five games that provide practice, and additional on-screen reading books. The four-step learning process includes the following: Where can you find the same word/letter (visual matching); This says ---, Find another that says --- (visual and auditory match); Where does it say --- (auditory only); and Which word is this. Following this, there are five different games (fishing game, a truck game, a spinning game) that can be played in visual mode (match word to word or letter to letter), mixed visual and auditory mode (listen and match to either letter or word). Games include concentration (word to word, letter to letter or spoken letter to written letter); match letter or words; listen to a word, letter or sound and identify it, or match words. Then, there are picture books that can be played in training, learning and test modes. Access is with mouse, touch screen or switch with scanning. An extensive manual is available on the CD in PDF format. This is a good choice for early readers who are struggling with basic matching and word recognition.

Learning Language with Symbols (Attainment: 800-327-4269, www.attainment-company.com) This Windows program helps students learn over 1000 Mayer-Johnson Picture Communication Symbols (PCS). In the Matching activity, a symbol is presented on top and two to four smaller cards are shown on the bottom. The task is to match the symbols. The symbol name is spoken and the student can click to hear the word in a sentence (and see a printed sentence with

Candy Land Dora the Explorer Edition from Activision.

the symbol.) (Practice mode provides feedback while the Quiz mode does not). Different learning levels include matching PCS symbols to symbols; photographs and animations to symbols; text to text; text to PCS and photographs; and PCS symbols to text. Symbol lists can be created and pictures can be added and used in above activities. The Voice Recorder activity allows students to speak into a microphone to record and play back their own speech. There is data collection, automatic leveling, IntelliKeys overlay included, and single switch and two switch scanning. This is a valuable program for all students needing skills training with symbols.

Kurzweil 3000 USB for Windows Version 10 (Kurzweil Educational System: 800-894-5374, www.kurzweiledu.com) Kurzweil 3000 for Windows Version 10 is an outstanding reading, writing and learning

Kurzweil 3000 now comes on a USB flash drive, letting users gain immediate access without installation as well as access to their files from whatever computer they are using.
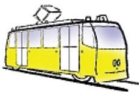

Show Me AAC from Mayer-Johnson.

program for students with visual, reading, writing or learning difficulties, appropriate for elementary through college level. It now is available in a USB version that lets students and teachers access Kurzweil 3000 on any Windows computer without installing any software. Kurzweil 3000 now comes on a USB flash drive, letting users gain immediate access without installation. Saving files and user settings right onto the flash drive lets students have access to their files whatever computer they are using. It's handy also for demonstrating Kurzweil at IEP meetings with parents or at conferences. It provides an easy way to move software from one classroom or lab to another, so that a limited number of licenses can be used anywhere in the school without having to install it on a network. It also enables students and teachers to use the software at home. For more details and information on other features of Kurzweil, you can view an online Flash demonstration of key features or request a trial CD by going to the Web site at www.kurzweiledu.com. (A full review of Kurzweil and its features was in DISKoveries, in the October/November 2006 issue.)

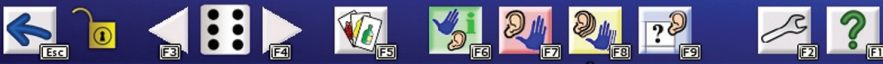**Kidspiration 3** (Inspiration Software, 800-877-4292, www.inspiration.com) This is a new version of Kidspiration, a program created for Kindergarten through Grade

5, that helps develop reading and writing skills, builds math concepts, and develops thinking skills across the curriculum, using the principles of visual learning. (Previous versions have been reviewed in DISKoveries in April 2004.) The new version of Kidspiration 3 (for Macintosh and Windows) includes an expanded symbol library and a symbol search tool. There is a combination dictionary and thesaurus that helps develop vocabulary and reading comprehension. Entries include definitions, synonyms and antonyms, parts of speech, sample sentences, images and recorded speech to guide pronunciation of words. There is also enhanced audio support, with longer recording time, support for higher resolution monitors with larger visual workspace and is compatible with Windows Vista. The Math View has five visual math tools: Color Tiles (to count, compare and explore numbers); Pattern Blocks (to explore patterns, similarities, fractions, etc.); Base Ten Blocks (to help understand place value and strengthen number sense), Fraction Tiles; and Fraction Boxes (to compare, order, simplify and find equivalent fractions). There are more than 150 cross-curricular activity templates, as well as standards-aligned lesson plans and online teacher resources. Excellent also for use with English Language Learners and English as Second Language students. For a free 30-day trial of Kidspiration 3, visit www.inspiration.com/freetrial. Kidspiration in the Classroom: Reading Essentials: This lesson plan book, covering two grade spans (K-2 and 3-5), contains 50 standards-based lesson plans designed to support reading instruction with Kidspiration 3. Lessons for grades K-2 focus on early literacy, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary and comprehension. For grades 3-5, the lessons focus on comprehension, vocabulary and content literacy. Each lesson includes standards alignment, lesson description and step-by-step instructions. Some lessons also include teaching suggestions to support English language learners.

Technology for Communication and Cognitive Treatment: The Clinician's Guide (Joan L. Green, M.A., CCC-SLP) This excellent and very comprehensive book is written as a guide to enhancing treatment outcomes for those with speech, language, learning and cognitive disabilities, using technology. It includes individual chapters on treatment and technology to improve verbal expression, auditory comprehension, reading comprehension, written expression, cognition and memory, as well as chapters on multi-media

programs and programs useful in generating printed treatment materials. Suggestions are made regarding specific software programs, adaptive equipment, techniques to use, technology tips, Web-based solutions, and much more. Just published in 2007, it is up to date on its resources and references. One chapter is devoted to games and free, online and interactive activities. A section is devoted to online support, information and discussion groups, including an index of vendors and products. This is a helpful book for computer users of all levels, with support material on why to use technology and how to get started in different treatment settings. A great resource for speech-language pathologists and assistive technology specialists, as well as OTs, reading specialists, special education teachers, and others interested in integrating computers into the curriculum, and in addressing treatment goals with technology.

Dora and Diego Programs from Activision (Activision: www.activision.com) Young children will love this new series of computer programs that star their favorite TV characters Dora and Diego. In Go Diego Go! Safari Rescue for Mac and Windows, they will help Diego save the elephants while they explore the Serengeti in Africa. They will fix all the mixed up animals, beat the drum to put the stripes back on the zebra, learn animal facts and attributes and play mini-games (shape matching, puzzle solving, music). In Go Diego Go! Wolf Pup Rescue (Windows only), they will explore the rainforest to save a lost wolf pup. Along the way, they will match animal babies to their mothers, paddle down the river and save otters, match animal sounds and footprints. They will find hidden babies by matching animal sounds, jump logs to get to the top of the hill, and solve puzzles and mazes. There are three difficulty levels. In Candy Land - Dora the Explorer Edition (Mac and Windows), players join Dora and her friends and play the classic board game to get to the Fiesta. Up to four players (or teams) can play at one time and there are also eight mini-games that strengthen shape matching, letter recognition, color identification, counting and more.

Mia: Reading (Kutoka: 877-8Kutoka, www.kutoka.com) For 5-9 year olds, this fun program focuses on literacy skills within the context of a story about Mia, the mouse, and some troublesome bugs who invade her home. There are twelve activities with four levels of difficulty that include goals such as associating images to words, punctuation,

phonics, rhymes, spelling, sentence structure, vocabulary, reading comprehension, verb tense, following instructions and more. The activities are integrated into the story but can also be practiced individually outside the story. Progress is monitored and viewable. The program is on a DVD with great graphics, surprise animations, and lots of places to explore, for both Windows and Macintosh (and works with Vista).

Some new fun DVDs for the preschool set include: **Barney: Hi! I'm Riff!** (featuring Barney's new friend Riff, the first new dino to join Barney & Friends: www.barney.com); **Bob the Builder: The Three Musketrucks** (five new adventures with new friends: www.bobthebuilder.com); and **HIT Favorites Summertime Fun!** (Barney, Bob the Builder, Angelina Ballerina, Thomas & Friends and Fireman Sam in five enjoyable summer adventures: www.hitentertainment.com). All are from Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment and HIT Entertainment.

GRAPHICS AND MULTIMEDIA

Adobe Visual Communicator 3 (Adobe: www.adobe.com) For those professionals and agencies wishing to create newscast-style video presentation, this program can help accomplish that goal. With Windows XP,

microphone and Web cam or camcorder, first, you can choose from graphics and templates to help you generate the style that suits your video. Then you type or paste a script into the teleprompter to narrate your presentation. You can drag and drop any image, graphic, video clip, PowerPoint slide or music clip and place it next to the words that correspond. When you press Record, you can read from the teleprompter – just like a TV newscast. You can then save your presentation in the video format of your choice. Video presentations can then be shared via the Web.

Easy Media Creator Suite 10 (Roxio/Corel: www.roxio.com) This new version is compatible with Windows XP and Vista. Not only does it copy CDs/DVDs, and burn data disks to CD or DVD, it also converts audio and video files to most popular formats and even sends videos to YouTube with one click. You can also turn your photos into calendars, cards and other keepsakes and prepare pictures and clips for your iPod, PSP, and mobile phone. With your photos and videos, you can add soundtracks, auto-fix your camera phone photos, and use DVD menu styles and photo project templates. It's easy to use and fast – tag, assign keywords and instantly find your favorite photographs, wherever they are on your computer. You can restore old photos

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by removing scratches, dust and blemishes and go from camera to DVD with one click. You can mix still images, videos and music to create slideshows, schedule backups and secure your data with encryption and password-protection. Great new program!

Corel's ULead VideoStudio 11 Plus (Corel/www.ulead.com, www.corel.com) For those of you wondering what to do with the movies you take with your digital cameras, here's a product that will provide you with easy video editing and DVD authoring. You can use video and photos from camcorders, VHS tapes, digital cameras and handheld devices. Then you add professional effects (effects, filters, transition, titles, music and much more) and output to tape, mobile devices, e-mail or share online. You can create DVDs with menu backgrounds, layout buttons, audio and more. Additional editing tools allow you to fix and enhance video with auto color and tone, smooth out shaky hand-held video, clean up grainy low-light video, and create instant movie intros. You can also take your movies with you on your iPod, PSP, Zune and mobile phone or upload directly to YouTube. If you want, you can also combine your digital phones to create a slideshow on DVD. Good for both first-time users and more experienced editors because it combines ease of use with powerful features! (Works with Vista). You can download a 30-day, fully functional trial edition.

INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS FOR LEARNING

Interactive entertainment systems are a very important way that children, teenagers and adults of all ages interact with their siblings, family and friends. The most powerful applications are cooperative play, social, recreational and whole body interactivity. They are also great for language (following a story line, sequencing, etc.), fine motor and gross motor skills, timing and coordination.

Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Games (Sega: www.sega.com) Two favorites, Mario and Sonic, are together in this new program for Wii. Players can compete as or against a range of familiar characters including Mario, Sonic, Luigi, and many more. Set at the Olympics, up to four players can play at 20 real Olympic sports events, including track and field, swimming, archery, skeet shooting, tennis, gymnastics and more, all while competing for the Olympic gold medal. All of these contests

use motion-based controls; some require both the Nunchuk and the Remote while others require only the Remote. Graphics and visuals are excellent. This is great fun for everyone. (Also available for the Nintendo DS).

Mario Kart for Wii (Nintendo: www.nintendo.com) Here's a great new Wii game with appeal for all ages. The Wii Remote snaps into the included steering wheel, which is then used to race your kart, motorcycle or dirt bike. You can also use the Wii Remote with Nunchuk, Classic Controller, or Game-Cube Controller as well. Players can race as their favorite Nintendo character, or even as their personalized Mii characters and can even see other Mii characters they have created cheering from the sidelines as they race. Along the way, during the race, players will find old and new items (mushrooms, shells, thunder clouds) and more to pick up or avoid. They can play with up to three players in their living room or challenge up to 11 opponents via Nintendo Wi-Fi. Great choice for family fun.

Thrillville Off The Rails for the Wii and DS (LucasArts: www.lucasarts.com) This is great fun, on both the Wii and the DS. Players build and ride their own roller coasters. It's full of thrill rides, in 15 theme areas. They can also play mini-games. In the Wii version, there are 34 new and classic carnival and arcade games, like bumper cars, go karts, mini golf, monster trucks, trampoline, pool, etc. You can follow the story with over 100 missions, while also interacting and talking with park guests. The Wii Remote is used to both build the roller coasters and play the games. The DS version is different and unique. It uses the stylus in innovative ways to develop the coasters and to play the seven mini-games, such as air hockey, fishing, and putting and to socialize with the other park guests. Great fun for ages 8 and up.

Game Party for Wii (Midway: www.midway.com) This is a collection of classic skill games, including table hockey, darts, skill ball, hoop shoot, ping cup, shuffleboard and trivia. Play with the Wii Remote with up to four players, and 175 unique characters. Great fun for the family. Also from Midway, Cruis'n for Wii lets you use the Wii Remote to steer and race your car through twelve different street circuits with a variety of different cars.

Sega Bass Fishing (Sega: www.sega.com) Out for a day on the lake and the bass are plentiful and biting! Using the Wii Remote, players can motor out, choose from 20 types

of lures, four types of bass, choose time of day and year, then catch and reel in a prized catch with the Nunchuk. There are four modes of play, including Arcade, Tournament, Practice and Nature Trip. A simple flick of the wrist casts the line. You can use A or B buttons to reel in the line or flick the Remote for a quick pull upwards. Moving the Remote to the left or right of the screen moves your rod, while tilting it up or down changes the tension on the line. This is a terrific way to have fun with the Wii and with family and friends of all ages. **Fish Tycoon DS** (Majesco Entertainment: www.majescoentertainment.com) This is an aquarium simulation where you raise fish in real-time. At the beginning, you have a tank, fish food, a batch of fish eggs, some growth hormone to accelerate growth, and $350. You can buy things like vitamins, decorations for your tank, medicine, and other things. Control is almost completely with the stylus, by tapping and dragging.

For older players: **Ben 10: Protector of the Earth for Wii and DS** (D3 Publisher: www.d3publisher.us) In this TV-based game, players take control of the Omnitrix (the alien control box) and play as five different alien heroes from the show and try to save the world. Players can challenge friends in one mode or play together in two-player co-op mode. Basic reading ability is needed to fully interact with the game. The DS version uses the stylus and touch screen for controls and the Wii version uses the Wii Remote settings and movements. Rated E 10+. **Super Smash Brothers Brawl for Wii** (Nintendo: www.nintendo.com) This new Mario hit can be played by one to four players, and also with others over the Internet. With a cast of characters from all over the Nintendo universe (35 in all), the game can be played any way you like – Wii Remote and Nunchuck, Wii Remote alone, Classic Controller, and GameCube Controller. Though primarily a multiplayer game, it has a single-player mode as well. Rated T – ages 13 and above.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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