

IMPORTANT NEWS

iPods in Schools

District 75 is presently working on activities that will be loaded into iPods and put in as a pilot in a few schools specifically serving the autistic population.

The idea behind this iPod project is to provide experience with this technology for the purposes of communicating within a structured school activity. This will enable parents to incorporate this into the home environment where they may already be using or familiar with iPods. Families could then purchase the proloquo2go.com applet (\$189.00) and load it onto their existing iPod at home and engage in communication with their child or purchase the entire package from Origin Instruments with an add on speaker needed for group talk for @ \$650.

http://shop.orin.com/shop/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=4_8&products_id=120)

To watch a YouTube video on this software click on the link below:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulf11Kg8-II&feature=related>

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Using the iPod touch is not a method of communicating that we are looking to put on IEP's and or to be used as sole communication devices in schools for the following reasons:

The iPod is not a dedicated communication device and is not sold as such; therefore it is not recognized by Medicaid or insurance companies as a communication aid. It can aid communication along with all the other things it is originally intended to do.

Apple is not interested in selling a device that will not do anything but run a communication applet. This is not the business they are in. There have been similar size units that we have been using like the chat PC.

However, as an educational facility, we would like to have children that can use this and become familiar with it for communication in a structured school activity. This is where we can address, from the start, the communication behavior so it is seen as such and not as a music, game and or movie player.

Communication behaviors begin to be established with the first experience in and are hugely important for success with any device.

We cannot have our students be a target for theft and we do not want to be in a position of establishing active behavior issues where students are using them to listen to music. We also do not want to have any competition with the mainstream who would not be allowed to use iPods in a classroom setting.

THE GOOD NEWS IS:

The Apple iPad is just around the corner. This is the computer version of this touch screen technology with the ability to download the software for communication. We can run Speaking Dynamically (as well as so many other software options) or use the proloquo2go software to communicate. The new Dragon dictate applet (text to speech) program is amazing and works better than the Dragon program we have used in the past. The iPad is larger with a 9.7" touch screen, so it will accommodate many of our Dynamic display users. We can run on them only the software needed for the student to communicate and interact with educational materials. This will enable us to IEP mandate these when appropriate for those purposes. The device is also a book reader which has a world of possibilities for everyone especially for those struggling with a variety of disabling conditions. The additional speaker if needed is small and lightweight and can be purchased for @ \$20.

For families it is familiar to consumer technology most are comfortable with and it bridges a social gap where all technology for the mainstream and the disabled looks the same!

District 75 will be committed to working on language boards for the iPad that will be programmed into the device or be available for the students within our district as well as combining a some software packages to meet educational needs for our students. We will work on mounting systems for access as well. We feel that this new technology will open a lot of doors for our students in so many areas, socially, educationally and by providing access communication.

Lastly we are also excited about the potential savings for us as compared to most AAC devices...It is the first time we can recall new interesting technology also having a smaller price tag!

We will keep you posted as things progress. We are not suggesting anyone buy these devices until we have prepared the related materials for you. This goes for the iPods as well. The units will not be available for a few months and we have work to do!

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