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## If One AAC Device Cannot Fit All, Why Would One AAC App Fit All?

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Many years ago, when I got involved with assistive technology at Temple University's Assistive Technology institute, the one thing I learned and heard most often was "you need to find the device that matches the needs of the child". The lesson continues with "there is no such a thing as the best AAC device, but the best match for that child". Why is it then that all of a sudden some administrators of educational institutions and even communication specialists are creating a bad reputation for the iPad as an AAC tool by recommending that schools purchase 2000 copies of the SAME communication app!?

Last school year, as I traveled all over the US presenting, the single thing I heard most often was "My school district bought the \_\_\_ communication application for all our special education students" and of course after they say that they wish that the administrators had consulted them because some of them don't even like \_\_\_ app that much. My issue is of course not whether or not the therapists personally like the app, but the fact that the school will now bypass an evaluation and push that specific application for communication on all of their students. I know that this movement is partly a result of Apple's Volume Purchase Program, which gives education institutions 50% off the purchase of the apps when more than 20 copies of the same app is purchased. The picture gets even more distorted as the mass media outlets fall in love or give coverage to just one or two particular apps with the reporters not really understanding the importance for "matching the app to the student" (or even of the existence of alternatives). Lastly, if we add into the equation the fact that many administrators can sometimes be led to make decisions without consulting those who will be using the application or someone who knows a bit more about what is really needed, and it's easy to see how things may have gotten a little out of hand.

I don't think the problem of buying 3864876 copies of the SAME app would be the same if we are talking about an articulation, language, or even a fluency application; however communications apps must be chosen based on individual needs. The number and variety of communications applications are growing daily, and in my presentations I always bring out that apps could fall on a spectrum of complexity which must be taken into consideration.

I think that many SLPs may end up buying many AAC apps, and use different ones with different students.

Even if some AAC applications offer a range of solutions, I have a hard time seeing how one app can fit all needs.

This by no means should be a post to discourage the purchase of A, B, or C application, but to alert and draw attention to the problem that many SLPs have been concerned about over the past year. Also I am hoping that administrators themselves will read this and consult with their SLPs, and special education teachers before buying a particular AAC app as specialized knowledge in this area is more critical than ever when it comes to finding what is appropriate for each student.

Lastly, I'd like to congratulate those schools who have been doing an amazing job of creating teams for selecting and purchasing apps that best fit their individual students (especially when it comes to AAC), and best serve their student populations.

# Smart Board Technology at Mapaville School

By Stacy Buss, Supervisor for Instruction, Mapaville School

Mapaville School received, through a donation, a Smart Board complete with surround sound, Smart camera (for enhancing pictures and objects), and art/music software. This equipment allows students to interact through the large screen to manipulate objects, explore the environment, and serve as an individual communication device.

Students' specific goals and benchmarks are addressed through the daily use of the equipment under the direction of the teacher and teacher aides. Teachers utilize structured lesson plans with this equipment. Internet access allows for additional educational activities ranging from simple games to solving simple reasoning problems, such as matching shapes and colors and basic addition. Students engage in manipulating the Smart Board screen with hands-on interactive programs with instant results. While one child works on the Smart Board, the other students watch and participate in the activity that is on the screen. This powerful tool helps students learn cause and effect, attend to task, follow directions, practice with midline and bilateral movement, make choices through increasing visuals and highlighted text, and provides increased sensory input.

Examples of Smart Board usage in the classroom include listening to on-line story time through Barnes & Noble's Website; Learning Station involves the students in movement, stretching, and reaching activities; and music programs allow visually impaired students to listen for tones and then attempt to repeat the tone on the on-screen piano keyboard. All classes practice switch touching through the dinosaur and science activities. Recent usage of the Smart Board involves rhythmic clapping and stomping, activities to improve independent eye-hand coordination, listening for commands and following directions, and learning to take turns and share. The Smart Board is another use of technology which opens the world to our students.

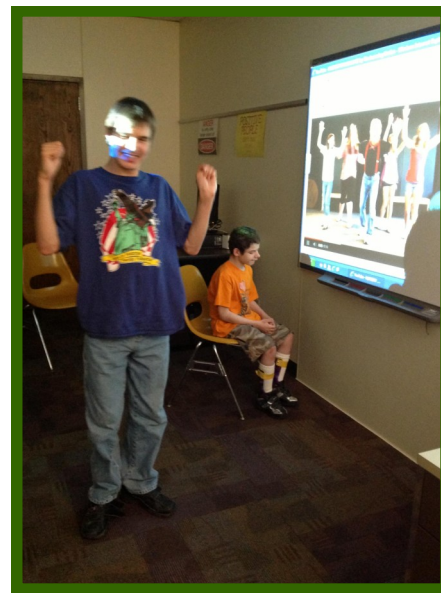
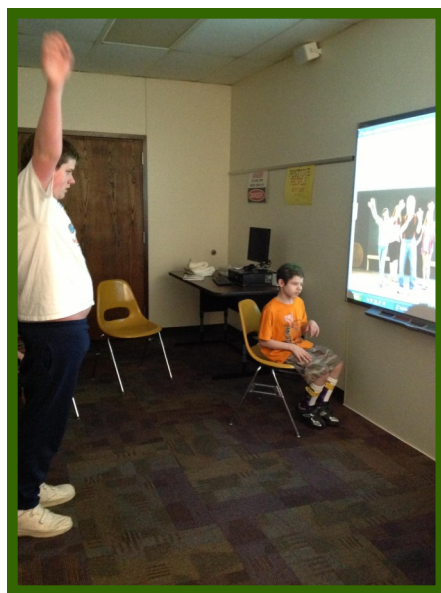
## Parent Focus

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*Information concerning other available resources, programs, etc., is not to be construed as an endorsement by Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled for any specific product, organization, or philosophy.*



Students at Mapaville School participate in an activity on the Smart Board

**Attention Parents of 2012/2013 Graduates:** MSSD is proud of our students and their accomplishments and we want to stay in touch after graduation. You will be contacted in December or January and asked to complete a survey to tell us about what your child is doing after graduation. So please think of MSSD if you should move or change your phone number between now and then. Be sure to send your updated contact information to the school. It is important that your child is included in this survey. The results help MSSD provide better services.

# REVISIONS TO ANNUAL REGISTRATION PACKET

Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled (MSSD) is already planning for next school year. There will be some changes relating to the forms that must be returned to your child's school for the 2013-2014 school year. At the end of the school year, you normally receive a registration packet for the following school year. This packet includes health forms for your child in addition to information on the Free and Reduced Price Meals and bus transportation. The timeline for distribution and date for forms to be returned is different than in past years. It is our intention to let you know the dates now so as to allow you ample time to schedule doctor appointments within this time frame, as some of the required health related forms needed for your child may require a doctor's signature.

## Important Dates—Registration for 2013-2014 School Year

**June 17, 2013** – First day of Extended School Year (ESY). The school will mail the registration packet to families, or send them home in students' backpacks the first day of ESY (the packet will be mailed if your child is not attending ESY).

**July 1, 2013** – The forms included in the packet for your child must be **completed** on or after July 1, 2013. MSSD cannot utilize any health forms for the 2013-2014 school year that are dated prior to July 1, 2013.

**July 22, 2013** – The forms included in the packet for your child must be **returned** to the school by July 22, 2013.

MSSD has the responsibility to provide appropriate medical care for your child while they are at school. Without current medical information from your child's doctor we cannot meet this responsibility. If your child's forms are not on file at the school by the first day of the 2013-2014 school year, you or another legal guardian will be required to come to school to perform any special healthcare procedures or administer medication for your child until the forms are received. If these forms are not received, we are required by state law to file a report with the Division of Children's Services, who investigate situations that may involve possible child neglect.

Please contact your child's school if you do not receive a registration packet for your child by June 21, 2013. If you have any questions, please contact your school building administrator.

## Planning for Next School Year

After the first day of Extended School Year (ESY), you will receive a mailing from your child's school that includes forms you will be asked to complete and return before the start of the 2013-2014 school year. Please visit your child's physician between July 1 - 22, 2013, and have the medical forms signed and returned to school no later than July 22, 2013. If you have questions, please contact your school building administrator or school nurse.

### Doctor's Physical Examination Report

It is important for the school to be kept up-to-date on your child's health so that staff can provide necessary healthcare (and educational instruction) without any negative side-effects.

### Emergency or Illness Form

This information is vital if there is an emergency with your child while at school or during bus transportation.

### Parent Authorization for Special Healthcare/Healthcare Provider's Order and Approval of Special Healthcare Procedure and Special Healthcare Procedure

This information is necessary so that appropriate training can be provided to the staff responsible for conducting your child's special healthcare procedures. Since your child's healthcare needs can change, it is important that any changes to procedures be shared with the school so that appropriate care is given to your child as ordered by a physician.

### Medication Order

Neither staff nor the school nurse will be allowed to give prescription or over-the-counter medication to your child without a medication order. This order ensures that your child will receive

the appropriate medication for his or her condition as deemed necessary by your child's physician.

### Immunization Request

Missouri State Law requires children attending Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled be current in their immunizations. This form will indicate any immunizations your child needs.

### Medical Statement for Students Requiring Special Meals

The federal lunch program requires that any special diet is to be ordered by your child's physician.

### Bus Transportation Information

This form is important for providing bus personnel and the school with alternate addresses where your child can be dropped off if you are unable to be home to meet the bus. You can update this form at any time during the year, and you may enter several alternate addresses of family members or friends. Phone numbers should also be updated if they change.

### Free and Reduced Price Meals Letter and Application

This should be completed by families that are eligible for free and reduced price lunches.

# 2013-2014 MSSD School Calendar



Cut out and save this schedule to keep track of important dates for next school year!

## School Session Days

August 19	First Day of School
<b>September 2</b>	<b>Labor Day Holiday</b>
<b>September 18</b>	<b>Staff Development Work Day</b>
<b>October 17-18</b>	<b>Staff Development Work Days</b>
October 25	End of First Quarter (Report of Progress to Parent)
<b>November 11</b>	<b>Staff Development Work Day</b>
<b>November 28-29</b>	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>
<b>December 4</b>	<b>Staff Development Work Day (MAP-A)</b>
<b>December 23-January 1</b>	<b>Winter Break</b>
January 2	Classes Resume
January 10	End of Second Quarter (Report of Progress to Parent)
<b>January 17</b>	<b>Staff Development Work Day</b>
<b>January 20</b>	<b>Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Holiday</b>
<b>February 12</b>	<b>Lincoln's Birthday Holiday</b>
<b>February 17</b>	<b>Washington's Birthday Holiday</b>
<b>March 4</b>	<b>Staff Development Work Day (MAP-A)</b>
March 14	End of Third Quarter (Report of Progress to Parent)
<b>April 1</b>	<b>Staff Development Work Day</b>
<b>April 16-18</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>
April 21	Classes Resume
<b>May 8</b>	<b>Truman's Birthday Holiday</b>
May 23*	Last Day of School
May 27	Fourth Quarter (Report of Progress to Parent)

\*The last day of school will be adjusted as necessary to make up for missed school days due to inclement weather or other factors.

**NOTE: Dates designated in bold are student non-attendance days.**

## Make-Up Schedule

Make-up days will begin with May 27, 2014 and continue on consecutive weekdays, as needed (excluding Memorial Day, May 26).

## 2014 Administrative Calendar for Extended School Year

June 23-August 1 (July 4 break for Fourth of July)



MISSOURI SCHOOLS FOR THE SEVERELY DISABLED

Website: [dese.mo.gov/se/mssd](http://dese.mo.gov/se/mssd)

**NOTE:** If you have items of interest for Parent Focus, please call 573-751-0706, 800-735-2966 (Missouri Relay) or forward them to Debbie Downing, Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; or send an email to [debbie.downing@dese.mo.gov](mailto:debbie.downing@dese.mo.gov).