

Sorting through Symbols to Text Systems

Why choose a symbol to type text?

- As a means for written expressive communication
- Create accommodations, adaptations and modifications to curricular materials
- Promote a higher level of participation in inclusive settings
- Visual supports to cognitive recall
- For very young children who have not started to use text to write
- Those who have difficulties with spelling
- Those who need motivation to write are helped by support of pictures, symbols and sounds
- Adults with cognitive disabilities to support independence and self-advocacy

Features of Symbols to Text Systems

- Type of symbols
- Symbols transferable to other applications
- Number of Symbols
- Arrangement of Symbols
- Flexibility of Grid design
- Use of Color
- Use of Sound
- Use of Linking (grids, files, applications, internet)
- Switch Scanning access
- Printing capabilities
- Demo CD or download availability

Features of the Symbols used in Grids (Tina Dethridge)

- Characteristics of Symbols
 - Picture or Symbol?
 - Illustrative or Schematic?
 - Pictorial Representation or Design schemes?
- Level of Symbols
 - Recognizable – easily represented items/actions
 - Guessable – require explanation
 - Learnable – relate graphical to the concept
 - Abstract – no graphical cues

Products

Dedicated Symbols to Text Products

(symbols can only be used to type into the same program)

- Board Maker Plus – Mayer Johnson - <http://www.mayer-johnson.com>
- Clicker/Cloze Pro – Crick Software - <http://www.cricksoft.com>
- Communicate: By Choice – Widgit – <http://www.widgit.com>
- Gus MultiMedia/OverBoard – Gus Systems - <http://www.gusinc.com>
- IntelliTools Classroom Suite – IntelliTools - <http://www.intellitools.com>
- Pix Writer – Slater Software - <http://www.slattersoftware.com>
- Speaking Dynamically – Mayer Johnson - <http://www.mayer-johnson.com>
- UKanDu Little Books <http://www.donjohnston.com>
- Writing with Symbols – Widgit Software / Mayer Johnson - <http://www.widgit.com>

Transparent Symbols to Text Products

(symbols can be used to type into any text accepting program)

- Discover – Madentec - <http://www.madentec.com>
- Grid /ProtoType – Sensory/Zygo - <http://www.sensorysoftware.com>
- Overlay Maker – IntelliTools - <http://www.intellitools.com>
- Proloquo/ Layout Kitchen – AssisitiveWare/Origin Systems – <http://orin.com>
- Reach Interface Author - Applied Human Factors - <http://www.ahf-net.com>
- Viking Communicator 3 – AMDI – <http://www.amdi.net>

Email Symbols to Text Products

- Communicate: Web Wide – Widgit – <http://www.widgit.com>
- InterComm – Mayer Johnson - <http://www.mayer-johnson.com>
- Web Trek Connect - AbleLink Technologies - <http://www.ablelinktech.com>

Sorting through Symbols to Text Systems

Feature Matching making decisions about which product to trial

The Student/Person

Abilities – What are their strengths in the areas of senses, cognition, language & motor?

Needs – How do they learn best? Visual, auditory, both?

Expectations – What level of participation is expected during this activity?

The Technology

Input – What are the access options?

Processing – What does the layout look like? Are there rate enhancements?

Output – Do I want to produce text or produce pictures? Are there speech options?

Other properties – OS? Cost? Ease? Training?

Decision Set #1: Environment & Tasks (*www.joyzabala.com*)

- STUDENT
- ENVIRONMENT
- TASK
- TOOL

Decision Set #2: Level of Participation (*Beukelman & Mirenda*)

- Academic
 - Competitive
 - Active
 - Involved
 - None
- Regular Classroom
 - Full
 - Selective
 - None
- Social
 - Competitive
 - Active
 - Involved
 - None
- Independence
 - Complete
 - With Setup
 - Assisted

Decision Set #3: Type

Adaptation / Accommodations

- Any adjustments that are made in order to enhance a person's ability to successfully participate in an activity
- An alteration to an instructional task
- An alteration to the administration of an assessment
- Maintains the integrity of what the task or assessment is designed to measure
- Temporary or Permanent
- Can be useful across environments
- Based on student strengths & needs

Modifications

- An alteration in the task, test or assessment
- Substantially changes the integrity of what is being performed or measured
- The "standard" is in some way significantly changed

Decision Set #4: Which features are the best match?

- Symbols to Text or Text to Symbols
- What Operating System?
- Which Symbol System?
- What are our available resources?
 - Try out through loaner or demo
 - Funding or Site Licensing
 - Training & Support

Implementation Ideas/Considerations

Literacy Considerations (*Jean Slater*)

- Proactive strategy to assist support development of emergent writing skills

Sorting through Symbols to Text Systems

- Children encounter a variety of graphic symbols all day everyday
- Not all words need to be symbolized
- Using symbols can support writing for a purpose/specific topic
- Graphics can help us to read/use foreign words in a sentence

Graphic Purposes in the Beginning Literacy Framework (Don Johnston, Inc. Start to Finish Starters)

- Emergent Reader – support language of story / not exact one to one correspondence with words
- Transitional Reader – support language of story a& provide direct word reading support /use sparingly to support key concepts
- Conventional – Provide direct word reading support / use none in text

Additional Ideas for Symbols to Text Systems

- As picture based Word Banks, Journals
- As an Errorless Story or Poem Writer
- Data Entry Screen
- As a picture based Start Menu (for those symbol arrays that can launch applications)

Resources that include Symbols to Text
--

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alliance for Technology Access. (2005). Computer resources for people with disabilities: A guide to exploring today's assistive technology (4th ed.). Hunter House Publishers: Alameda, CA.• Calculator, S.N., & Jorgensen, C.M. (Eds.). (1994). Including students with severe disabilities in schools: Fostering communication, interaction, and participation. Singular Publishing Group, Inc.: San Diego, CA.• Dethridge T., & Dethridge, M. (1997). Literacy through symbols: Improving access for children & adults. David Fulton Publishers: London.• Downing, J.E. (1996). Including students with severe and multiple disabilities in typical classrooms: Practical strategies for teachers. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co. Inc.: Baltimore, MD.• Gierach, J., & Walser, P. (1998). DESK: Designing environments for successful kids. Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative: Amherst, WI.• Hodgdon, L. A. (1995). Visual strategies for improving communication. Vol1: Practical supports for school and home. Quirk Roberts Publishing: Troy, Michigan.• Musselwhite, C., & King-DeBaun, P. (1997). Emergent literacy success: Merging technology and whole language for students with disabilities. Creative Communicating: Park City, UT.• Sheets, L., & Wirkus, M. (1996). Everyone's classroom: An environmental design. Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative: Amherst, WI.• Slater, J. (white papers) Using Symbols for literacy VS. Using symbols for communication. & Increasing literacy skills in students with disabilities: A pictorial approach. Slater Software.• Winebrenner, S. (1996). Teaching kids with learning difficulties in the regular classroom: Strategies and techniques every teacher can use to challenge & motivate struggling students. Free Spirit Publishing: Minneapolis, MN. |
|---|