

Epson imaging technology helps disabled children develop new learning skills



Students at ACCEL school participate in a simple survey to determine which pizza is the most popular among class members. Cameras and printers donated by Epson America, Inc. are used to reinforce comprehension and memory skills.

As with the rest of the population, children with special needs also benefit greatly from technological advances that are currently available in today's world. ACCEL (Arizona Center for Comprehensive Education and Life Skills located in Phoenix), designs its curricula for children with disabilities, aspiring to the essential goal of graduating its young people into society with a worthwhile degree of marketable or, in the very least, self-sustaining skills.

One example of ACCEL's innovative uses of technology is their *Star Reporter* program that employs Epson digital cameras, Epson paper and their PictureMate portable printer.

ACCEL incorporated its *Star Reporter* program on two campuses in August 2004 and now serves over 225 students with the project. *Star Reporter* is a unique curriculum, integrating technology with a language arts curriculum for students with severe disabilities who require adaptation of equipment to participate. They learn to communicate and apply skills that most people could do without a second thought.

Students use assistive technology, such as voice output devices that enable them to operate the cameras and other equipment that would normally be controlled by someone pressing a button or switch. Some students use their language skills to make up for lack of finger agility in making the devices work. Visual supports such

as large, clearly understood symbols are used to increase understanding and communication.

All students are given opportunities to learn, communicate and have fun while they use technology to experience a wide range of functional educational tasks including voting, cooking recipes for taste testing, surveying participants, interviewing both familiar and unfamiliar people, writing articles, reading books and participating in book reviews and ending with the production of the paper. Each student participates in his or her own way to assemble pages for the school tabloid. The *Star Reporter* program has enabled students with verbal abilities to record their words into communication switch devices that are then used by non-verbal students to express wants and needs, make choices and gather information for their paper by photographing and interviewing others on campus.

The cameras, when adapted, have enabled students with physical challenges and even visually impaired students to become photographers. The result is a functional way to accomplish educational objectives and a finished product of which all the students, staff and parents can be proud.

Nancy Molder, principal of ACCEL school, praises the *Star Reporter* program because "it is simple to use and provides instant feedback for children." She explains that these factors are especially effective with significant challenges. Molder puts it simply, "It's easier for them to make realistic connections with the use of Epson technology and equipment in the classroom. The devices allow students with severe disability to participate in a visually effective language arts curriculum."

Benefits derived from digital photography include:

- ♦ Increased student recall of tasks and various components of activities
- ♦ Increased sequential understanding
- ♦ Bridged learning through improved comprehension through provision of concrete examples that encourage discussion
- ♦ Visual supports (digital photos) which allow students to build independence in completing projects
- ♦ Student motivation and increased self-esteem

Special Kids Photography helped get equipment donated from Epson for the *Star Reporter* program. But that was only fair— one might say, "payback" time because Molder and her staff played a key role in the editorial and pictorial production of the SKPA book, *Photographing Children with Special Needs*.

EVENTS

2005

WPPI - Mar. 19-24. Las Vegas. We'll see you at WPPI in March. WPPI has provided a booth for us on the "center entry" tradeshow platform.
SKPA Board Mtg. Tue, Apr. 26 Loc TBA Open to the public with RSVP to info@specialkidsphotography.com
Prophoto Expo - Apr. 27-29. Pasadena, CA. Prof. Photographers of So. CA. Convention and Trade Show.
Clinics On-call Contact us to arrange an accreditation clinic that fits YOUR schedule! These all-day clinics are held in Goodyear (west of Phoenix). What a bargain at \$250.

Accreditation Clinics

St. George, UT - Sat, April 23, \$89, lunch incl.
Long Beach, CA - Mon, April 25 @ Epson hqtrs. \$89, lunch incl.

Wanted: New board member!

SKPA is recruiting for a new board member. If interested, attend our board meeting on Tue., Apr 26 in So. California. Please RSVP to below.

Special Kids Photography of America is a nonprofit organization dedicated to "increasing the face value" of children with special needs.
Call 623 572-0046 (Arizona)
This newsletter is distributed via email only.
info@specialkidsphotography.com