



# Inclusion Solutions

## A Note from the Editor

A few months ago, I had the opportunity to attend a seminar for directors of nonprofit organizations. The president of a local marketing agency presented on the marketing of an organization and its mission. One director raised her hand and indicated that despite the fact her organization had been around 100 years, she had recently been told that they were one of the “best-kept secrets”. We all agreed that sometimes it is NOT good to be a best-kept secret, especially if you are a non-profit organization with the purpose of faithfully serving people.

I think in a way, WIN is a “best-kept secret”. We don’t want to be. We want to reach parents who need advocacy assistance to help their children be successfully included. The problem as I see it, is that the best-kept secret is really “inclusive education”. Many parents simply don’t know that this is even an option for their child with a disability. They don’t understand how their child could be included or how this would look for them during an average day. They often do not hear positive comments about inclusion from the school staff who serve their children.

It could be that these educators don’t really understand what inclusive education should look like either or how to make it happen.



The editor and her son, Gene.

I believe this must change. Parents need to have more information about inclusive education...it is their right. Educators need more information too. But parents will need to lead the way. I encourage all parents who value their child’s inclusion, to talk about it with other parents. Tell them that other children with disabilities are successfully being included around the state and the country. Share success stories, strategies and information. Spread the word.

Assist each other. Provide parents with resources and the phone number of WIN. We are here to help. We don’t want inclusive education to be a “best-kept secret” any longer.

Enjoy the summer and as Mark Twain says on the back of this newsletter, “Explore. Dream. Discover.”

Lauri Stein

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# Web Watch

Here are some websites and e-mail newsletters pertaining to legal issues worth taking a look at:

**The Beacon: The Journal of Special Education Law and Practice**  
<http://www.harborhouselaw.com/id/home>

**IDEA News**  
<http://www.ideapractices.org/forms/maillist.asp>

**IDEA Rapid Response Network**  
 For updates and alerts on reauthorization process, E-mail name and contact information to: [preserveIDEA@dredf.org](mailto:preserveIDEA@dredf.org)

**Action Alert!**  
<http://www.capwiz.com/ld/home>



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Do you or someone you know need an advocate at school meetings or IEP's? We serve parents and children in a nine county West Michigan area for no charge. Our advocates, who are parents of children who have been successfully included, can address strategies and services necessary for successful inclusion.

Do you want more info on how to include a student with a disability into a general education classroom? Attend our WIN educational meetings, held four to five times per year and our annual Inclusive Education Conference held in the fall.

Is your school interested in staff training regarding inclusion strategies? We can provide you with a list of knowledgeable professionals who can address a large array of topics.

### MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of WIN is to further the quality inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms with appropriate supports.

Contact WIN at:  
**West Michigan Inclusion Network**  
**P.O. Box 889**  
**Ada, MI 49301**

[www.wmin.org](http://www.wmin.org)  
 E-mail us at [wmichinclusion@aol.com](mailto:wmichinclusion@aol.com) or  
 call our offices at: **616-954-9424**

WIN is generously supported by time, energy and funding from those who support our mission and with grants from the Kate and Richard Wolters Foundation and the Sage Foundation. Thank you everyone!!

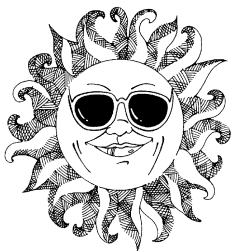
**If you have any ideas for this newsletter; we can post websites, events, meetings, and articles that involve inclusion.**

## Third Annual Inclusive Education Conference

WIN 3rd Annual Inclusive Education Conference "Together We Are Better" will be held Friday, October 25 at the GVSU Eberhard Center in downtown Grand Rapids, MI.

The conference brochure will be mailed out during the first week of September.

If you would like to check out the preliminary information on the conference go to the WIN website, <http://www.wmin.org>. There is also a printable registration form at the website.



Check us out online at: [www.wmin.org](http://www.wmin.org)

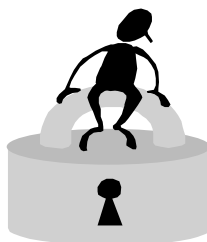


## Gadgets + Gizmos = Gaining Independence

By Robin Pegg, BS, COTA

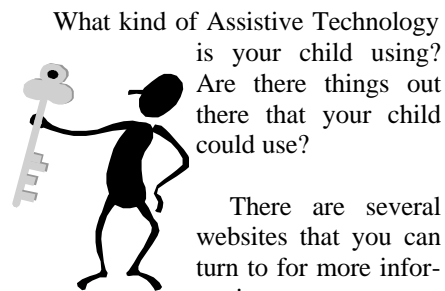
Have you ever walked into a school, maybe your child's school and noticed a student using a special seat cushion, a pencil grip, a laptop computer, a data entry device?

All of these items are Assistive Technology! Mary Purtee, Augmentative Communication Consultant for the Muskegon Area ISD, helps us understand Assistive Technology with this definition: Assistive Technology (AT) incorporates a continuum of accommodations and strategies that allows children with disabilities to be included in educational opportunities. The accommodations can vary from the highly technical voice input for computer and specialized speech output devices to low tech seating options and pencil grips.



As an Occupational Therapy Assistant, working in the schools, I have seen numerous students gain much, if not total independence, through the use of AT. One middle school student with cerebral palsy was able to write his own notes and papers using a laptop with word-prediction software. The laptop made it easier for him because it was light, portable, and fit easily on the tray on his wheelchair. The word-prediction helped him because the computer "predicted" what word he wanted to type and then he only had to select the word and hit one key for the entire word to be entered into his document. All of this made for fewer keystrokes and much faster typing. Thus this particular student no longer needed an aide to take his notes or his Mom to write his papers. He was able to accomplish

this independently. This is an example of high-tech AT. Most AT is not high-tech. For many students, their AT can consist of things that are very low-tech such as a visual schedule to help orient them in their day and help prepare them for transitions, a special seat cushion that allows them the extra movement they need to concentrate, head phones with or without special music to aid in attention, a slantboard to help with body position while writing, a weighted pencil grip to help with tremors, and many other very simple adaptations that lead to a wealth of independence.



What kind of Assistive Technology is your child using? Are there things out there that your child could use?

There are several websites that you can turn to for more information:

[www.assistivetechologies.com](http://www.assistivetechologies.com)  
[www.matr.org](http://www.matr.org)  
[www.premier-programming.com](http://www.premier-programming.com)  
 or type in **assistive technology** in any web search.

The key to discovering assistive technology is having a clear vision of what you and/or your child want to accomplish. Once you have this, then you choose the piece of equipment. If you think it is possible, someone has most likely created the software to do it.

For questions or further information, please contact me at [peggr@monashores.net](mailto:peggr@monashores.net)

*(Note from the editor: Robin is an incredible source of information! If you would like to borrow a video copy of her May, 2002 WIN presentation "Using Visual and Manipulative Strategies to Facilitate Inclusion", contact us.)*

## You Get Proud by Practicing

by Laura Hershey

If you are not proud  
 For who you are, for what you say, for how you look;  
 If every time you stop  
 To think of yourself, you do not see yourself glowing  
 With golden light; do not, therefore, give up on yourself.  
 You can get proud.

You do not need  
 A better body, a purer spirit, or a Ph.D.  
 To be proud.  
 You do not need  
 A lot of money, a handsome boyfriend, or a nice car.  
 You do not need  
 To be able to walk, or see, or hear,  
 Or use big, complicated words,  
 Or do any of those things that you just can't do  
 To be proud. A caseworker  
 Cannot make you proud,  
 Or a doctor.  
 You only need more practice.  
 You get proud by practicing.

There are many many ways to get proud.  
 You can try riding a horse, or skiing on one leg,  
 Or playing guitar,  
 And do well or not so well,  
 And be glad you tried  
 Either way.  
 You can show  
 Something you've made  
 To someone you respect  
 And be happy with it no matter  
 What they say.  
 You can say  
 What you think, though you know  
 Other people do not think the same way, and you can  
 keep saying it, even if they tell you  
 You are crazy.

You can add your voice  
 All night to the voices  
 Of a hundred and fifty others  
 In a circle  
 Around a jailhouse  
 Where your brothers and sisters are being held  
 For blocking buses with no lifts,  
 Or you can be one of the ones  
 Inside the jailhouse,  
 Knowing of the circle outside.  
 You can speak your love  
 To a friend

Without fear.  
 You can find someone who will listen to you  
 Without judging you or doubting you or being  
 Afraid of you  
 And let you hear yourself perhaps  
 For the very first time.  
 These are all ways  
 Of getting proud.  
 None of them  
 Are easy, but all of them  
 Are possible. You can do all of these things,  
 Or just one of them again and again.  
 You get proud  
 By practicing.

Power makes you proud, and power  
 Comes in many fine forms  
 Supple and rich as butterfly wings.  
 It is music  
 when you practice opening your mouth  
 And liking what you hear  
 Because it is the sound of your own  
 True voice.

It is sunlight  
 When you practice seeing  
 Strength and beauty in everyone,  
 Including yourself.  
 It is dance  
 when you practice knowing  
 That what you do  
 And the way you do it  
 Is the right way for you  
 And cannot be called wrong.  
 All these hold  
 More power than weapons or money  
 Or lies.  
 All these practices bring power, and power  
 Makes you proud.  
 You get proud  
 By practicing.

Remember, you weren't the one  
 Who made you ashamed,  
 But you are the one  
 Who can make you proud.  
 Just practice,  
 Practice until you get proud, and once you are proud,  
 Keep practicing so you won't forget.  
 You get proud  
 By practicing.

*Taken from the [www.thenthdegree.com](http://www.thenthdegree.com). To support Laura's writing, you can order her books (\$5 each) or her audiotapes by writing to:  
 Laura Hershey Poetry, P.O. Box 9004, Denver, CO 80209*

# Our Walk For WIN was a Big Success!!

What can we say? June 8 was a great day for WIN!! The weather was perfect for our 3<sup>rd</sup> Walk. We want to thank all of you who made the day so successful.

Family Video  
AB Dick  
Applebee's - Wyoming  
Baseball Card City  
Cinemark Theatre - Rivertown

## Thank you Corporate Sponsors!!



Thank you to those who helped out; especially Wendy VerBurg, Rita Berlin, Deanna Cowden, Barb Doumanian and Chuckles the Clown!

And... a huge

## Thank You

to all the families and supporters who came out and walked, those who

collected pledges and those who made donations. We truly appreciate your support. It was so rewarding seeing all the children and parents and educators coming together for this great cause.

Zondervan Publishing House  
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Airway Oxygen Inc.  
Speerstra Carr Agency  
Orthopedic Associates of Grand Rapids, P.C.  
Arc Kent County  
Delta Apparel  
Earthbound Screenprinting

## Thank you to others in our Community!

Marge's Donut Den  
Spartan Stores  
D&W - Grandville  
Roger's Department Store  
Public Museum of Grand Rapids  
Chuck E. Cheese



## “Your Attitude Just Might Be MY Biggest Barrier”

Behaviors always happen for a reason. The reasons may or may not be obvious to us. They do not simply “just happen” but may be a function of a situation, a communication partner, the message that is being sent, or even a physiological need. Every human being uses behavior to communicate. Consider the facial expressions that let you know if a conversational partner is interested or not, the slammed door that expresses a frustration or anger better than any words could have, or the shove out of the way when someone wants to be left alone. Even though most of us can speak and have the ability to understand and solve problems, we often rely heavily on behaviors to express our feelings. Many of the individuals with autism spectrum disorders that we support may have limited or no speech to access when they want to communicate messages such as they don’t understand, want to be left alone, or are having a rough time. Instead, they “act out” as a way of telling us.

Individuals who have autism spectrum disorders or other disabilities are faced with many challenges. One of the challenges they may face are attitudes and misconceptions regarding their behaviors. Often behaviors are looked at as something to be fixed or eliminated rather than a method of expressing feelings or desires. In order to bridge that gap, the first concept to grasp is that behavior is communication and that communication is behavior. It is impossible for anyone to “not communicate.” Every human uses behavior to communicate at one time or another. This concept is central to our understanding of how “unacceptable” or “unwanted” behaviors develop and how they function in the communicative repertoire of some individuals. However, before looking at specific behaviors, there is yet another very important concept to understand. This is the concept of labels and how they are perceived. As Herb Lovett (1996) stated in *Learning to Listen*, “I do not like the idea of people (with disabilities) being identified in ways that are dismissive and rude. We have also taken people’s behavior out of their social and personal contexts by labeling them as well. The ways we label behavior simply extend the ways we have been trained to label people.” It is true that we use “labels” to name

behaviors but unfortunately labels cause us to miss the message the behavior may be communicating.

Parents, teachers and other support staff may dismiss the message of the behavior by saying, “oh, they’re just doing that for attention.” In many instances, the term “attention seeking” has become a way of “devaluing the needs of people and not taking them seriously” (Lovett, 1996). There are many questions to ask regarding “attention seeking” such as: Why might someone be seeking attention? Is seeking attention always a bad idea? Most often it is true that, when behavior is identified as attention seeking, the next step is to ignore the person and their behavior. Perhaps it would be a better option to consider why attention is desired. Is the only time the individual receives any “meaningful” conversation and attention after they have done something which resembles “misbehavior?” Could the individual be hurt, frightened, or frustrated and wanting to tell someone? Could the individual be lonely and simply want to be noticed?

Young children in school love to receive attention and be noticed. Adults also like to receive attention. It may even be the case that adults may have a conversation the phone with someone simply for the sake of communicating with another person. When you have called someone “just to talk,” has anyone ever told you “you need to call another time when you have something meaningful to say?” Perhaps “attention-seeking” behaviors are not always wrong.

If behavior is to avoid or escape a person, situation or activity, our response should be “why do they want to avoid this activity.” Instead of calling someone “non compliant” we should begin thinking of the possible reasons for the behavior rather than reacting automatically. We seldom consider whether the individual is bored, frustrated, frightened, does not understand, or finds the situation or activity meaningless. Would any of us want to show up for work if it was meaningless and we were



**“A small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has...”**

**-Margaret Mead**

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paid poorly? Or would we want to attend classes in school where the subject didn't interest us or was boring? Could avoidance behavior be the result of other issues such as not thoroughly understanding the situation, not introducing a new person, or not creating an environment that supports the individual's learning style? What is really necessary for the individual to learn? How are the activities and situations meaningful to the individual's future life? There is much to consider when an individual avoids or escapes. Along with the avoidance behaviors, Lovett discusses aggression.

"One of the most common 'difficult behaviors' is aggression. Most people do not like to be hit, or to live or work where violence is a common occurrence. But labeling a person, or even a behavior, as aggressive in a clinical context has a radically different dynamic from respecting the reasons a person might be legitimately angry in a social context: being bossed about, being sexually frustrated, being insulted, or rejected or any of the dozens of other real and individual reasons anyone might have for being angry. It seems strange and perverse to persist in seeing these reasons strictly in our own terms rather than also in the ways the person who is angry sees them (Lovett 1996)."

Certain repetitive behaviors, sometimes called "self-stimulation behaviors," may also be sensory in nature. Individuals may engage in these behaviors when they are bored, stressed, or frustrated, however, our behaviors are not as obvious. We wiggle in our seats, tap our feet, chew on erasers, hum tunes, bite our nails, or fiddle with jewelry to maintain attention or to calm ourselves when feeling anxious. We may want to be alone if we are stressed or need to have some "space." Often when the individual with disabilities uses "self-stim," we decide that we should extinguish the behavior because it is inappropriate, or makes the individual stand out as very different. Perhaps we feel uncomfortable with the behavior and how it might reflect on us as teachers, parents or other supports. Lovett (1996) states, "By labeling people's behavior we often feel that we have the right to act

on how the behavior affects us rather than on what the person doing it might be trying to communicate." If that is the case, maybe we should look more closely at those situations when individuals engage in sensory (self-stim) behaviors and instead of simply telling them to "stop" ask ourselves, "Why?" or "How can I help?" or "Does the person need help?"

Remember the language we use is powerful and can set a tone in which people's behaviors and motives are dismissed and demeaned. The important concept is to remember that all behavior is communication. So when an individual "misbehaves," rather than merely reacting and putting the behavior in to a disability framework as something to be corrected, we should ask "Why?" "What is being said?" "What do they want?" and "How can I help them get what they want?"

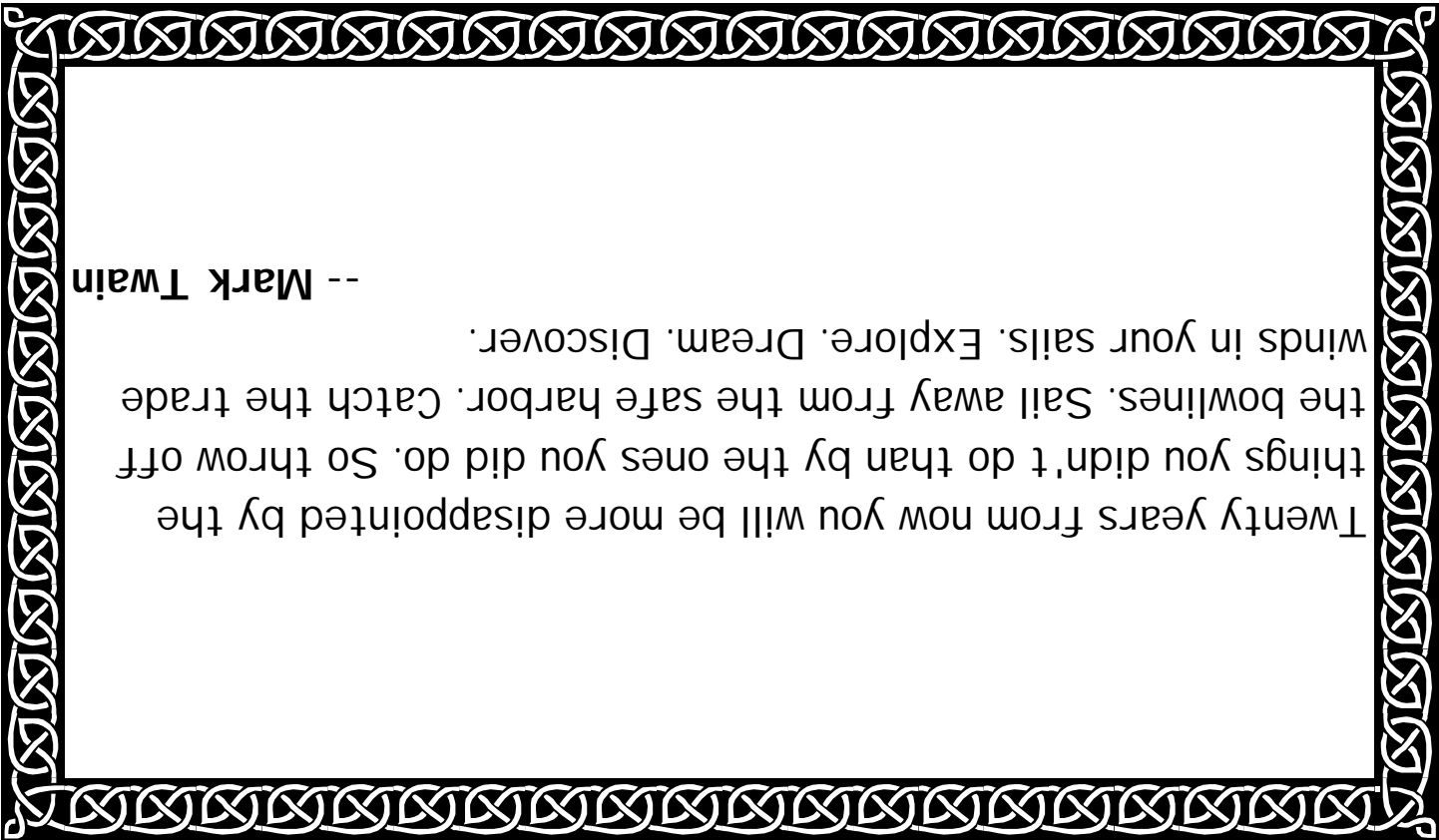
We can begin to reframe our thinking by forming support teams around individuals who may be challenging. Rather than focusing on incident reports at meetings, share stories and look for strengths, preferences, interests, motivators, fears and frustrations. Rather than discussing the data and behavior incident reports that everyone already knows, begin to focus on the person's history and personality in order to get a different perspective for why some behaviors may be occurring. Share positive information as freely as "negative" information is shared. Include the individual whenever possible to get their feedback. Build on the strengths instead of creating a curriculum where each individual goes to school and "majors in their deficits." Create supportive communities for everyone by listening to the behaviors, avoiding labels, and asking, "Why?" or "What can I do to help?"

Contributed by Kim Davis  
Source: Dan Wilkins, *Nth Degree* 1991



**"We must be the  
change we wish  
to see in the  
world."**

**-- Mahatma  
Gandhi**



Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.

-- Mark Twain



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