Educational Highlights for Leaders

Volume 1, Issue 3

November 2013

Supporting Erie, Huron and Lorain Counties

Special points of interest:

- December 10, 2013 @ Lorain County ESC

Topic: Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities
Presenters: Jennifer Heim & Barb Conrad

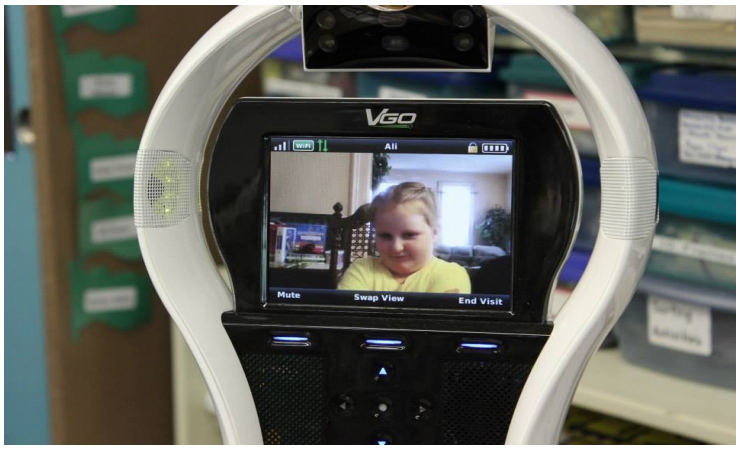
- January 14, 2014 @ Lorain County ESC

Topic: PARCC Accessibility Features & Accommodations

Presenters: SST 2 Staff

Inside this issue:

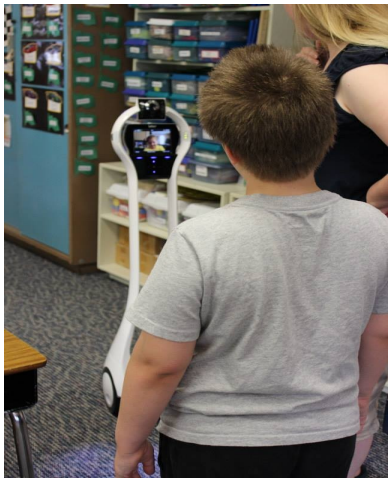
"A True 21st Century Education"



Left: Ali McKean seen participating in the class lesson from home via Vgo, a virtual robot.

What does your district do when faced with a child that displays such significant health issues that he will not be able to attend school on a long-term basis? In the past, there was a standard response to provide home instruction tutoring on an hour-per-day basis and perhaps add some therapy services in the home. When faced with this situation last spring, the Margaretta School District made a different decision. After consulting with Danbury School's Special Education Supervisor, the Margaretta District chose to "go virtual".

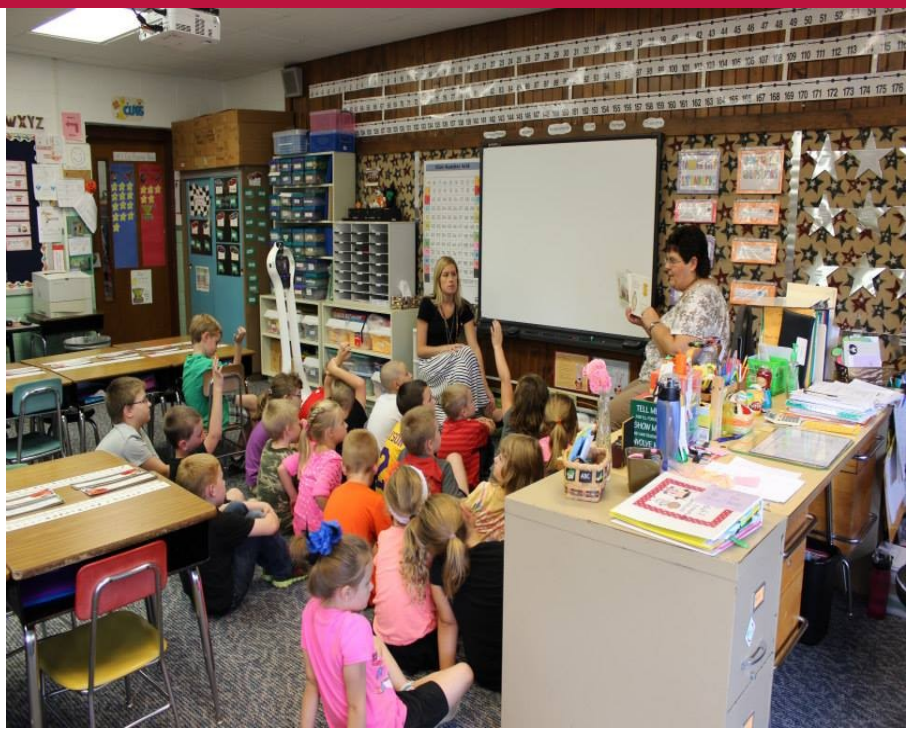
Here enters the Vgo robot – check it out at www.vgocom.com. It allows a student from home to log into a Skype or FaceTime-like situation, and have control to move that screen throughout the classroom and building. It also allows a student to adequately attend to and be included in classroom instruction. The robot stands approximately 4 feet in height and the teacher has the ability to override the controller if necessary. A light blinks on the top of the robot if the student has a question and the teacher and students can "live-time" interact with the other student. This allows the student on home instruction to interact with same– age peers, which is something that was always a missing component prior to this.



Above: Ali's older brother, Kaiden McKean, interacts with his sister on the Vgo robot for the first time from school.

Mrs. Beth Steager Burkett (standing) instructs students, including Ali, on math vocabulary. Prior to the district obtaining Vgo, a virtual robot, Ali would not have been able to participate in class and interact with her same-age peers due to significant health issues. Also pictured is Ms. Lynsey Eleman (seated).

For more information on Ali, the student who uses the robot from home, please visit www.alis-army.org



"A True 21st Century Education" continued from page 1

The student is also able to receive the same instruction, not similar instruction, as his or her peers. It is a blessing to see a child that has had such limited interactions with other children given the opportunity to feel like any other child in the classroom! The entire classroom does an enthusiastic greeting and says goodbye as a group every time the child logs into the Vgo, and the other children find the experience to be very neat.

One of the big questions the district faced going into this opportunity was "how much is it going to cost them?" Their buildings are not new and have technology limitations. They were able to get the Vgo for around $6,000, with an additional charge of approximately $1,000 for tech support. The robot itself is quite sturdy – and it must be in order to be in a classroom full of 6 year olds! It has features that prevent it from being tipped over and from going forward down a step or flight of stairs. According to Vgo, there are about 100 robots in schools across the nation. Two of those are at Margaretta & Danbury Schools, located in North Central Ohio.

The opportunity to get to know the student and use the robot has been uniquely gratifying. If there are any other districts that have specific questions, Kathy Hall, Director of Special Education, can be reached by email and welcomes comments and questions. Kathy's email address is: Khall@margaretta.k12.oh.us

Feel free to watch the news feature from Toledo 13ABC news, which shows the robot in action at: http://www.13abc.com/story/23602348/girl-with-life-threatening-illness-uses-a-robot-for-school

Are your Students' Reading Difficulties Also Affecting Their Math Skills?

"The problems underlying language disability may also impact in the realm of math. For example, memory issues may also affect retention of math facts or sequential problems would make following the order of operations more difficult for students. Other problematic areas include: short-term memory, retrieval from long-term memory, internalization, seeing patterns, making generalizations, transferring to different situations, and in math vocabulary development. Sounds a lot like some students when they struggle with reading doesn't it?" asks Ron Yoshimoto, Fellow, from the Orton Gillingham Academy. One solution is to approach a child's math development in much the same way as is done in Orton Gillingham Reading. Educators using a Multi-sensory Structured Approach developed by Jerry Mortensen entitled "OG Math," have had proven results.

If your students are displaying some (if not all) of these following symptoms, they may have a math disability known as Dyscalculia. Under the umbrella of Dyslexia, Dyscalculia is a Specific Learning Disability.

1. Reversal, rotations, omissions, substitutions
2. Difficulty in mastering math facts and operations
3. Weak mental math ability
4. Problem with concepts of time and direction
5. Calculates but does not understand the underlying concepts
6. Has trouble remember-ing steps when calculating
7. Difficulty with estimation
8. Weakness in solving word problems due to language processing issues (decoding, comprehension, etc.)
9. Evidence trouble solving multi-operation computations
10. Difficulty in grasping and remembering concepts, rules, and formulas
11. Problems solving multi-operation computations
12. Trouble remembering and reading algebraic equations
13. Problems with alignment of numbers
14. Difficulty with concepts such as before, after, above, etc.
15. Has problems with copying math problems from the board
16. Difficulty visualizing
17. Math phobia
18. Problems with math survival skills-checkbooks, giving change, etc.

This list is not all inclusive but does include many issues that students may present in the classroom and with homework. This methodology is intended to build a child's auditory, sequential and memory functions in which they are taken from the concrete to representational (semi-concrete) to abstract (numbers/formulas). In education, we tend to move students too fast to get to the abstract. This method gives them the opportunity to build their strength and automaticity in each area before getting to the abstract. If you would like more information on OG Mortensen Math, please contact, Nancy Osko at osko@sstr2.org.

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We are on Facebook !
Search State Support Team Region 2

New Website Coming Soon ...
www.sstr2.org

"Pathways and Planning"

It has never been more important to consider early (before age 14) planning for our students with disabilities than it is today. With the current pathways to graduation, teams need to thoughtfully consider a student's preferences, needs, interests and strengths along with the parent's vision of their child's future plan when discussing when and how the student will graduate. In addition to avoiding predetermination of outcomes, this process is crucial in assuring the student will be taking the course of study that will best support their future plan and post-secondary goals. Keep in mind that if the team chooses to have a student opt-out of the Core courses of Algebra II or the high level science, they will need to discuss with the student and family the consequences (e.g. that their child may not be prepared to do well on the ACT or SAT or may not be prepared for the rigors of college) and then document this conversation in the IEP. A parent's signature on that IEP will serve as their understanding of the consequences, and if all the necessary components are in the transition plan, the IEP itself will serve as the Individual Career Plan. Please contact Kari Foreman, Post-Secondary Transition Consultant at foreman@sstr2.org with any questions you may have in this regard.

Clarification on the requirements for a school to exit OIP status

- A reset of accountability system including OIP began in September of 2012 as a result of the ESEA Flexibility Waiver
- The Gap Closing (AMO) was added to the district/building report card in August 20, 2013
- The school building impacted by the OIP must earn an A, B, or C in Gap Closing (AMO) for two consecutive years to exit OIP status
- The earliest a school building may exit OIP status is August 2014

"2nd Annual Empowering Families December 9, 2013"

Please help us spread the word to families about a free learning opportunity on December 9th. This full day training will offer break-out sessions regarding Dyslexia, Transition beyond high school, Behavior, Bullying, Mental Health, Section 504, and Transition to School-Age. For more information, please contact Jennifer Heim at heim@sstr2.org or Darren Conley at conley@sstr2.org. Individuals may register at http://goo.gl/UkAyLJ

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