

Inclusion Times

Technology
for Children
& Youth with
Disabilities

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PDF Aloud

By Brian S. Friedlander, Ph.D.

Every once in awhile a new utility comes out that you wish you had thought of. This is certainly the case for PDFAloud, a new plug-in utility from TextHelp Systems. PDFAloud allows students to add text-to-speech support for all PDF files from within Adobe Reader.

Consider the importance of this utility in that the PDF (portable document format) format has become the universal format for files that are uploaded to the Internet. Today many documents, manuals, forms, catalogs and ancillary support materials can be accessed in a PDF format from the Web. For students with print and reading disabilities this can prove to be very problematic. Adding the text-to-speech component to your copy of Adobe Reader is very simple and straight forward. After installing PDFAloud, you now will have a new tool bar installed when you open your copy of Adobe Acrobat Reader.



PDFAloud Toolbar

Students who have used any of the text-to-speech tools will feel right at home using the toolbar. By simply clicking on the browser tool, PDFAloud will begin to read the text. Students have the option of having PDFAloud select the text; one word, one sentence or one paragraph at a time. PDFAloud will then highlight the text selection and read the word aloud while it highlights it using a very high quality speech engine. Students also have the option to change the voices, pronunciation of words and the pitch and speed of the voice. On the Windows platform, PDFAloud installs the RealSpeak text to speech engine. PDFAloud utilizes the built-in voices that come standard on the Macintosh. PDFAloud works on both the Macintosh and Windows operating systems and with any version of Adobe Reader 5.0 or greater. On the Windows side, students can select a word

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Editor's Note

The Summer is a wonderful time for those of us in the field of education to take the time to renew ourselves and begin to plan for the Fall. I for one, have attended several major educational computer conferences and have had the chance to see first hand new technologies that I am sure will make a difference in the classroom. With the start of school around the corner, many of us are beginning to plan for the day that our students return to the classroom. The beginning of the school year is always filled with excitement and optimism as we prepare to educate that new group of students who pass the thresholds of our classrooms. Many of us are already hard at work planning and thinking about new activities and educational programs that will make a difference in the lives of the children we work with.

Having been a subscriber of Inclusion Times for many years, you will undoubtedly have noticed a change with this issue of Inclusion Times. This marks the first issue which is being published by AssistiveTek, LLC. For the past year, I have edited the Assistive Technology Column for Inclusion Times and was recently given the opportunity to publish this fine newsletter. This issue marks a transition for Inclusion Times, as it moves to looking how assis-



...tive and computer technology can assist students in all areas of their schooling and education. Inclusion Times will keep you abreast of changes in the field of assistive technology and how technology can help you to mainstream and include students with a wide array of disabilities.

... Inclusion Times will explore how computer technology can make a difference in your classrooms and will provide you with information about new products, research and best practices in the classroom. You can count on Inclusion Times to keep you current and provide you with information that will help you and your students.

... In order to accomplish my goals for the newsletter, I am fortunate that from time to time I will be able to publish articles from some of the leading national experts in the field. I am excited to be able to share ideas, solutions and best practices in the field of assistive and computer technology and hope that you feel part of this adventure and e-mail us with your ideas. To all of the readers of Inclusion Times, I wish you a great start to the school year! If you have any comments or would like to see articles on a particular topic, please feel free to e-mail me at brian@assistivetek.com.

PDFAloud... continued from page 1

within a PDF file and look up the meaning from within a dictionary that is installed with PDFAloud. On the Macintosh side, Adobe Acrobat can look up words if the computer is connected to the Internet.

PDFAloud is a simple but very effective way to insure that your students with print disabilities have access to the vast library of documents on the Web that are stored in a PDF format. PDF files that have been "stamped" by the creator or pub-

lisher can be accessed using a free copy of PDFAloud which can be downloaded from the PDFAloud website. Otherwise, PDF files can be read by the retail version of PDFAloud. This is one application that schools should consider for quick accessibility to PDF files and to comply with Section 508 and IDEA mandates for accessible materials. For more information go to: www.pdfaloud.com.