Products – DT Trainer – Reviews & Articles

The following reviews and articles come from respected University Research departments, Newspapers local to South Carolina, and other educational personnel that have been exposed to the DT Trainer. Please read through this information to see how effective the DT Trainer can be for your needs!

Exceptional Parent Magazine Article (2007)

When a child is not learning it can be an extremely difficult challenge in figuring out the best way to help him or her. When that child has a disability, the task is even more frustrating. However, more and more products and services are finding their way into classrooms and homes, changing education for people with disabilities. Karl Smith, for example, has a child with autism and chose to meet his son's significant learning needs by creating a unique software program. As a software developer and electrical and computer engineer with a background in counseling, tutoring, military, and research/development of artificial intelligence, Smith learned there were research-based methods available to teach individuals with autism and other learning disabilities – that it may take a lot of intensive work, but these children can learn.

The problem with the intensive methods was that they required a lot of costly adult staff time. Karl quickly determined that technology could fill the gap and help deliver part of the education inexpensively if the individual could use the programs independently. Unfortunately, this kind of software did not yet exist, so he created a program called the DT Trainer, initially for his son, but then founded Accelerations Educational Software (AES) to help other… **Read the Rest**

Carl Sundberg's Review of the DT Trainer (December 2006)

The DT Trainer is an excellent software program to assist and complement verbal behavior and other ABA programs. The software provides the student with valuable practice related to off computer instruction. The DT Trainer uses methods consistent with basic ABA principles of controlling the stimulation and reinforcement, and providing a prompt and prompt fading support structure.

The program is useful to facilitate lead teaching, generalization, and maintenance; and is highly configurable to accommodate the learners' needs. It is also highly configurable to accommodate individual teacher preference. For example: Receptive by Feature Function and class, mixing and varying tasks and errorless learning can all be programmed in various degrees. For students not learning specific topics off the computer, this product provides a means to provide direct instruction to teach the topics.

Of course we want a highly trained staff working with the students, but the DT Trainer can provide consistent expert teaching with or without well trained staff.

On the DT Trainer, the student gains independence and self confidence and learns at least some of what we need them to learn on their own time. The staff time can then be devoted to what the student can not learn, maintain, or generalize on his own.

Since the software is quite inexpensive, the DT Trainer is a must have tool for your programs. The company also provides free or low cost trials, so I would highly recommend at least trying the product with your child or students.

I am impressed with the product that AES has created thus far and with the company's openness to feedback. I look forward to their continued evolution of the DT Trainer to become an even more powerful and robust program.

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ABA and the Computer: A Review of the Discrete Trial Trainer

Behavioral Interventions, Behav. Intervent. 16: 287-291

It is highly flexible and can be customized to meet many students' varied learning styles and skill deficits." …

"The program contains sensory reinforces, both interactive and non-interactive, that are really quite clever and varied." … "Data collection is automatic. This is a hugely valuable component of the program." … "The data can be quickly scanned to measure student progress, identify problem areas, and develop a plan of action." … "Comprehensive training in using the software spans five modules and includes training in how to interpret student data reports and how to address learning failure through changing each student's program." … "The Discrete Trial Trainer is a long overdue, immensely valuable technology that will enhance the skill acquisition and learning maintenance of children with autism…" … "Once behavior analysts, teachers, and parents view this software, they will join us in looking forward to its evolution and expansion."

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Software for Autistic Children Gradually Catching On

The State Newspaper Columbia Business Journal

For almost three years, Karl Smith has been dead set on making a success out of his software company, Accelerations Educational Software. He's blown through his savings, run up large credit card bills and tested the patience of his wife and family. Now, Smith said he's passed a turning point for the company, which he started because of a need he saw in his own household.

Smith, who has a 7-year-old son with autism, began Accelerations Software to write computer programs for children with autism and learning disabilities. The company's product, called the Discrete Trial Trainer, or DT Trainer, uses learning modules specifically designed to help these children pick up fundamental building blocks, such as letters, numbers, colors and objects. If you saw Smith's office today, you might not realize how far his company has come.He and a few part-time employees share a modest 1,000-square-foot office in downtown Columbia. Inside, a homemade wooden booth serves as the recording studio to make voice-overs for the software.

But if you saw where Smith was a year and half ago, you'd realize the progress he's made. Until last May, Smith had been running Accelerations Educational Software out of the room above his garage. He had a handful of schools using the DT Trainer software, which can be previewed at www.dttrainer.com. Smith now has almost 50 school districts, spanning from Hawaii to New York, using his software.

Kim Kulka, coordinator of the autism program at Mountain View Elementary School in Marietta, Ga., has been using the software for two years. The DT Trainer motivates children with autism to learn, Kulka said. It allows these children to pick up skills without requiring the usual one-on-one attention of a teacher, she said. "It's been extremely helpful," Kulka said. "I'm hoping for more programs."

James Bender, special education technology specialist with Silver Consolidated Schools in Silver City , N.M., has been using the DT Trainer for a year. The software immediately engaged the children, Bender said. In a test trial of the software, a Silver City student spent 25 minutes and then 40 minutes working through the programs, he said. "It was a phenomenal thing because this was a child that had trouble sitting still for more than 30 seconds," Bender said.

Smith's personal knowledge of children with autism and developmental needs can be seen in the software, he said. "It's software with soul," Bender said. "It goes to the fact that it comes from within Karl." Smith said he hopes to put the software into more schools. In the last year, his company has developed training material so teachers and parents can use the software without his assistance. Smith also has cut the price of the software by more than half to $99 for individuals and $249 for schools. As a promotional effort, the first license for a school district is free.

Revenues are improving and the cash flow is less erratic, Smith said. But the company continues to search for a financial backer so it can market the product more heavily, he said. "It would be good to find an investor who isn't looking for a 1,000-percent return," Smith said, "somebody who wants to make a nice return but also wants to have a social impact." Even without a major investor, though, Smith said he'll push forward on what he can afford. "We'll do it one way or the other," he said. "We're going to find a way of succeeding and making this grow."

Joe Guy Collier

Assistive Technology Associate Editor Column

JSET E Journal, Volume 16, Number 1

"The DT Trainer is a software tool and behavioral teaching method which breaks down the learning of a task into small steps, giving the student a very high chance of success. Students are motivated to succeed with this program through ample praise statements and other on-screen reinforcers."

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Firm Seeks More Than Profit

The State Newspaper

Karl Smith's son drifted away somewhere around the age of 18 months. He'd said "mama" a half-dozen, maybe a dozen, times. He had finally started to babble like young children do.And then it stopped. He quit babbling. He quit listening. He quit connecting altogether with the rest of the world. All he did was throw screaming fits that no one could explain.

"It was horrible," said Smith, a former NCR Corp. computer programmer. "He just basically tantrummed because he was frustrated. He was in his own little world." What Smith's son couldn't tell him, what no doctor would tell him, was the source of the problem. Smith's wife, Elsa Garay, finally figured it out. She came across a story that described a child just like their son, Karl Garay. (The couple decided to give the child Garay's last name because there are already enough Smiths in the world, Smith said.)

The child in the story Garay discovered had autism, and a few months later Smith and Garay finally found a doctor who would confirm the hunch that their child was autistic, as well. It wasn't welcomed news, but it was something to work with, Smith said. "The worst situation is not having any information," he said. "Once you have information, you can start addressing the problem."

So that's what Smith did, in the best way he knows how. Smith, who came to Columbia five years ago for an NCR contract, did what computer programmers do; he started writing a program to help his son. Two years ago, Smith began working part time on educational software for children like Karl with developmental issues. He's now quit taking on any outside programming contracts and fully devoted himself to the endeavor, running a company called Accelerations Educational Software.

Smith, his wife and another employee run the company out of a home office in West Columbia. The financing for Accelerations comes from personal savings and credit cards. Garay said her husband's decision to work on Accelerations full time has made things "a little edgy at times" when it comes to family finances, but the sacrifice has been worth it. "This is something he wanted to do," Garay said. "He can always go out and find another job."

For the past year, the project has consumed her husband, she said. He has always been a hard worker, and his effort on the educational software is no different, Garay said. On a typical day, Smith will head upstairs about 8 a.m. to the home office and work until 6:30 p.m. Most nights, he'll go back for a few more hours after dinner. He'll also spend a half-day on Saturday and some time on Sunday working on the software, Garay said.

The Accelerations software gives her husband a chance to use his talents to help their son and children like him, she said. "I'm happy for him," Garay said. "He found a way to channel this traumatic situation into something to help others and help himself." Though she won't admit it, Garay channels her talent into art. The couple's home in West Columbia is filled with pottery, stained glass and various pieces of artwork she has made in the past few years. Garay spends most of her time taking care of Karl, but when she has a free minute, she'll slip into the garage to work on a new piece.

"I consider it more stress management than art," Garay said. "I just do it for me." The Accelerations software

company, which Garay also works on part time, is for Karl and children like him, Smith and Garay said. Smith started the company because the couple didn't think the educational software on the market addressed the needs of children with developmental issues. Most of the software was cluttered with busy graphics, Smith said. The fancy graphics and animation can be distracting for children with developmental issues, he said.

Smith's software, the DT Trainer, has a simple look by design. The software, patterned after the "discrete trial methodology," take s children through a set of modules in areas such as letters, colors, objects, numbers and animals. The reward for a correct answer is a vocal "Yabadabadoo" that sends a clear signal and a streaming video of a happy moment. The video clips might be from a carnival or the beach, whatever the child responds to best. While the child is completing the modules, the software also compiles performance data.

Smith said he wanted to give teachers and parents a way to monitor progress and make adjustments. The difficulty level can be changed depending on how the child performs. At this point, Smith is primarily marketing the DT Trainer to schools, where a single sale can help it reach many children. He said he's received inquiries from across the United States and has the software in classrooms in four Columbia-area school systems.

Kathye Herring, a teacher at Saluda River Academy for the Arts, used the software last school year in her class for 4-year-olds with special needs. The children using the software have shown signs of improvement, and the academy plans on using it again this school year, Herring said. The ability to look at data reports and tailor the program for a specific child makes it attractive , she said. "This is one program that I can make fit what I want it to be," Herring said. "With most programs, I can't do that."

Smith said he hopes to get the software in more schools in the next year and move the company into its own offices. He also sees the possibility of expanding the software into other areas, such as helping Alzheimer's patients. The software behind the DT Trainer is similar to a flash-card system that could be used in a variety of situations, he said. The immediate goal, though, is to secure contracts for the initial Accelerations software and get the company on sound financial ground, Smith said.

Software like the kind Accelerations is developing has the potential to be a tremendous asset if in the right hands, he said. Computers will never be a substitute for training with a live therapist, but they can speed up the learning process, Smith said. "There's a lot of repetition involved," he said. "It just seems like the computer could be used to help."

For Karl, now 5 years old, the use of the software, as well as intensive one-on-one training, has already paid off, Smith said His communication skills, both talking and listening, have dramatically improved, he said. "He has a much more sophisticated brain than he did three years ago," Smith said. "We can actually teach him things outside of the drilling environment." A nice reward would be to see that same progress in other children like Karl, he said.

For more than 13 years, Smith has been working as a computer programmer, but none of his previous software projects comes close to the one he's working on now, he said. "It's personal," Smith said. "Hopefully, it's a good business, but it's also something I feel very close to. When you have a child with disabilities, it changes your life."

Joe Guy Collier