

Living with an LD – Interview with Virginia Baldwin, ATN Client

By: Hope Clark

1. What is your LD?

Language based - Learning Disability

2. When did you find out you had a LD and how was it diagnosed?

I had always suspected that something was wrong. It wasn't until I had come to ATN that I finally received confirmation of a learning disability.

3. After your diagnosis, what did you do differently? How do you accommodate for your LD?

I really pay attention to Dr. Rynard's tips that you receive after your diagnosis. The tips for accommodation are very helpful and useful.

4. How easy do you find it to disclose? Has disclosing helped you in any way?

I did find it easy to disclose actually and disclosing has helped because now I have a diagnosis that is confirmed – I'm not stupid – I just have a learning disability. I had always thought that there was something wrong with my attention span. I thought that I had ADD perhaps. It turns out that there are attention problems with a Language based – Learning Disability.

5. Has anyone else in your family been diagnosed?

No, no one else has been diagnosed in my family.

6. What was your school experience like?

Up until grade 6 it was fun – school was fun for me. After grade 6 I became a bit of a loner and had no real use for school. I had problems with concentration and always felt like I wanted to be somewhere else – playground, home, etc. My assignments were never done and I didn't like to read.



Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario
London Region



UWO Centre for Inclusive
Education



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7. What would you say to a person with a LD looking to complete his/her education?

I would highly recommend that they continue their education, seek help and come to ATN and participate in the programs that they have to offer. You won't regret it.

8. What would you say to the teacher of a person with a LD?

I would ask for the child to be placed in a proper classroom with a trained and qualified teacher. The child needs a proper environment for the advancement of that child. If the teacher doesn't understand the needs of the child, neither the child nor the teacher will prosper.

9. What kind of assistive technology do you use, if any, and how has it helped you?

You see I just received my results back from Dr. Rynard. I actually haven't had a chance to use any of the assistive technology because I hadn't received my report. I am looking forward to learning Dragon Naturally Speaking next week though. I have been working on the computers and learning a great deal of things – the assistive technology will help me even more.

10. Do you see any value for schools to implement practices to accommodate people with LD's?

Absolutely! Assistive technology and accommodations should be brought to everyone's attention. If the school or institution can not accommodate then recommendations should be made as to where that person may seek help.

11. Looking back, are there things that you could have done and/or handled differently in your life?

No, not really. Everything that I have done to date has made me the person that I am today. In the past if I had received any of the information that I have received currently – from ATN or Dr. Rynard – I may have just rebelled and wasted the opportunity. Today, I can go forward with my head high and my arms open wide.

WiVik

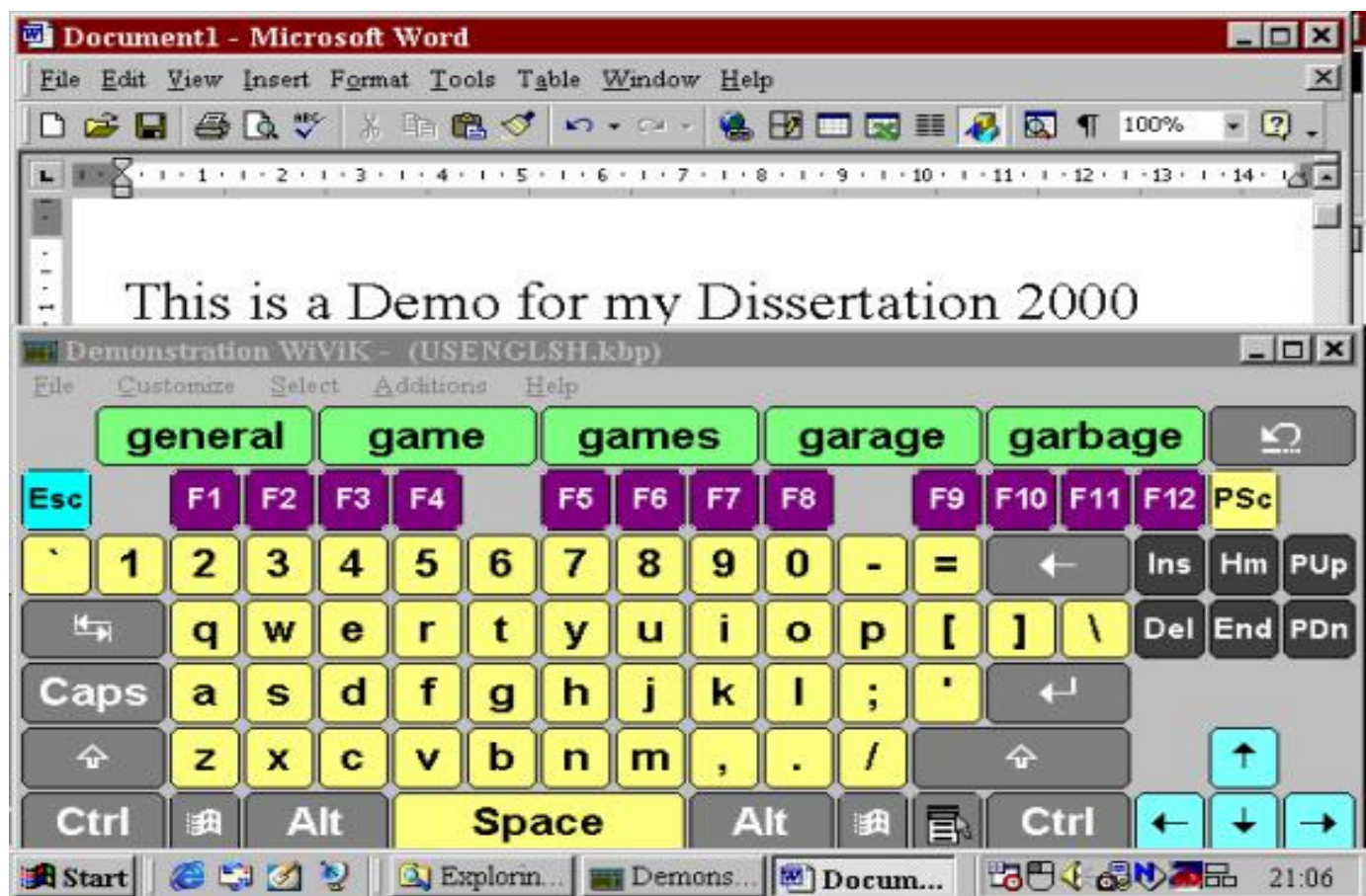
By Mary Rushe

As promised in the December 2008 LD Edge Newsletter article titled: "Education: Parents Play a Key Role" I would be explaining the program WiVik in greater detail. WiVik is designed to meet the challenges of people who do not have the dexterity to use a standard keyboard.

The number of people who are able to access technology for learning and pleasure continues to advance with new developments in assistive technology and data entry. WiVik is a software program that provides an alternative to standard input methods. Developed in 1991, WiVik is recognized internationally for its ease of use for individuals who have motor impairments resulting from cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, spinal cord injuries or any other conditions that may affect one's motor ability.

In addition to endurance and strength, standard input devices require users to be able to control, coordinate, reach, pull, push and manipulate entry tools. The WiVik software addresses these issues by replacing the physical keyboard with a virtual on-screen keyboard. The picture below demonstrates how the software displays the keyboard on the computer screen; the colourful interface provides a layout that emulates a standard QWERTY keyboard. This layout can be used or the keyboard can be customized to meet an individual's needs. Additional word processing supports are built into the software: these include Word prediction (described in last month's issue of the LD Edge) and word expansion options.

The user simply clicks or points on the appropriate keys to enter data.



Depending on the individual's ability, a user can choose from a variety of devices or pointers to input or access data in a word processing document, email messaging, or any other text application. Some popular choices include a joystick, touchpad, trackball, touch screens or a head pointer; the keys on the screen are accessed when one of these devices is activated to "press" a key on the screen.

Choosing an input device needs to be weighed carefully ensuring that it best suits the individual's abilities and is compatible with their computer's platform. Choices are extensive and include a variety of different versions of joysticks, trackballs, and touch screens or head pointers. The keys are in effect "pressed or accessed on the screen by these devices.

A version of this program can be accessed in all of the Window XP or Vista programs. To access this feature go into their accessibility program and click on the "On Screen Keyboard". The keyboard will come up on your screen; you can activate it with your mouse to input data in a word document. This version of a virtual keyboard, however, is not programmable; the Wives keyboard goes over and above the basic features provided by the XP or Vista sample.

With the Wives software the features provided offer the user supports that can increase speed, and accuracy but most importantly an opportunity to move beyond the barriers that stop communication and positive learning outcomes. It includes word prediction, speech output and abbreviation expansion. These features allow a user to customize his/her keyboard to compile a list of the most frequently used words and phrases used in their vocabulary. This list is developed using a personalized short form that is unique to the user. Quick access to this specialized list will enable the user to type faster and improve their spelling. A similar outcome is experienced by the typist when implementing word prediction as explained in the December issue of the LD Edge. Enabling the speech output feature advances writing skills by reading back sentences, words, or paragraphs to the writer and helping him/her identify any errors or additions that would improve the composition. This editing provides the user with good feedback in their grammar, spelling, sequencing and ideas.

References:

Free Typing Tutorials

Reviewed: Jan 15/09 <http://www.customtyping.com>

What is WiVik?

Reviewed: Jan 15/09 <http://www.wivik.com/description.html.com>

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We hope you have enjoyed this month's issue of the LD Edge Newsletter and that you are looking forward to the next issue.

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