

**Title of Session:** Language Arts Forum

**Moderator:** Donna Hendry

**Title of File:** 20050921langarts

**Date:** September 21, 2005

Room: After School Online

**BJ:** welcome to the Language Arts Discussion

**BJ:** a reminder if you are new to Tapped In to go to the actions menu in the top right of the chat window and click on DETACH

**DonnaH:** I guess we'll start...if someone comes in, they can catch up:)

**DonnaH:** My name is Donna Hendry and I'm a technology integration specialist in CT.

**DonnaH:** \*waits to see who/were everyone else is)

**JacquelyJM:** I am Jacquelyn O'Murray a Reading Specialist from WI

**KimMo:** I am Kim M and English teacher from UT

**EmilyW:** I am Emily from TX

**DonnaH:** Not sure if John is visiting with us or not, so I'll continue.

**BJ:** I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania

**DonnaH:** I actually just got back from a great workshop yesterday, that really fits into a lot of what we try to do in language in the earlier grades, and as support in the older grads.

**JohnSmi:** sorry, no, I won't be joining the discussion

**DonnaH:** No problem! I thought that might be the case:)

**DonnaH:** so there are two different programs I want to discuss/share tonight.

**DonnaH:** however, they both go against my normal 'free' chant:)

**DonnaH:** (though, both do offer free 30 day trials.)

**DonnaH:** The first one is called Scholastic Keys, and was introduced to me a couple of months ago when I sent out a query about replacing storybook weaver (if you are wondering, great great program, but hasn't been updated by the company...)

**DonnaH:** The selling point is, that it isn't really its own program.

**DonnaH:** What it does is take over Office products, and makes them kid friendly.

**DonnaH:** So Word has larger buttons, a text to voice application, and smoother ability to insert graphics.

**DonnaH:** Let me show you...

**DonnaH:** <http://www.tomsnyder.com/products/product.asp?SKU=KEYKEY>

**DonnaH:** (the sales pitch...excuse it:)

**DonnaH:** there IS a 5 min online video on it...you can check it out if you want...it probably explains itself better than I can

**DonnaH:** It also takes over excel and PowerPoint.

**DonnaH:** it limits what the students can do, making it more manageable, but links the pieces a bit better than the adult.

**DonnaH:** the GOOD thing about it is, once they learn how to use the Keys version, learning the adult version is a given...so it's not having to relearn a new product because they're older.

**DonnaH:** comments, questions, concerns?

**DonnaH:** (or are we all investigating?)

**SusanArt** joined the room.

**KimMo:** Remind me again what age group this targets?

**DonnaH:** up to 5th grade

**BJ:** Hi, Susan. Welcome

**DonnaH:** but it could also be used to students with fine motor problems, as the buttons are easier to manipulate, or for students with reading difficulties.

**SusanArt:** hello

**KimMo:** Would you suggest this for ESL students?

**DonnaH:** Hi Susan, we're currently looking at this:

**DonnaH:** <http://www.tomsnyder.com/products/product.asp?SKU=KEYKEY>

**DonnaH:** I could see it used for ESL, but the next program I'm going to discuss might be of more use in that particular respect.

**DonnaH:** The excel has some great ideas, like using it build pictographs, etc.

**DonnaH:** (ready for the other program?)

**KimMo:** yes

**DonnaH:** [http://www.kurzweiledu.com/products\\_k3000win.asp](http://www.kurzweiledu.com/products_k3000win.asp)

**DonnaH:** Kurzweil is known in many different areas, very strong company in assistive technology.

**DonnaH:** They are also the makers of dragonspeak, which is one of the best speech to text applications there is.

**DonnaH:** What the Kurzweil 3000 does is actually really amazing.

**DonnaH:** (you'll have to excuse this, as I spent nearly 7 hours in a workshop yesterday on it)

**DonnaH:** What the program can do is much more than just a 'text to speech' program; it is highly useful to students with language difficulties and other learning disabilities.

**DonnaH:** For example, simple things, like the spell checker, when it suggests a word, will say the word, so the student knows which one is really the one they meant.

**DonnaH:** it offers tools which allow the student to highlight the document in various colors, and if they want they can extract just these highlights for notes.

**DonnaH:** It also offers a virtual scanner (like a pdf file,) which will allow you to make other files readable within the program.

**DonnaH:** Probably the coolest thing though, was that the documents don't have to be in the kurzweil program to be read. If you open a webpage through the kurzweil program, students can have websites read to them.

**BJ:** wow...that is cool!

**DonnaH:** it is really cool.

**DonnaH:** and since it reads the background text, it will also read the graphic tags

**DonnaH:** so it doesn't help just reading disabled students, but also low vision students.

**KimMo:** sorry, this is my first time and I didn't see that you were still going. I am still with it

**DonnaH:** one of the things we played with...you could use a magnifier, and it would pop up one word (huge, like 70 font) on the screen.

**DonnaH:** so it would flash the one word on the screen as it spoke...or you could turn off the speech portion, and it would flash the words at a given wpm speed you set.

**DonnaH:** so low vision readers could still read their own stuff.

**DonnaH:** OR if you have someone who is dyslexic, you could use this application, and there's a sliding scale, so instead of one word...it will verticalize the text.

**DonnaH:** so instead of a sentence of words side by side,

**DonnaH:** you'd get a vertical line, one word over another.

**DonnaH:** (helpful for students who have trouble separating their words/letters)

**KimMo:** Is there a way to demo this on the website?

**DonnaH:** not on the website, but they do offer a 30 day trial.

**KimMo:** Oh, great

**DonnaH:** (I have to admit though, it IS an expensive program)

**KimMo:** I saw that

**DonnaH:** you can also load tests into the program, so it will read the tests, and students can pop their answers in.

**DonnaH:** (you can lock options, like internet, dictionary, etc, to keep them honest)

**KimMo:** that is a good feature to have

**DonnaH:** so, if you have students who have iep's who require readers...this actually might be cheaper in the long run.

**DonnaH:** And I have to admit...the version 3000 is in its 9th edition...and the 2 new voices they have?

**DonnaH:** you almost can't tell they're computer generated, and have a personable lilt to them...they sound very natural.

**DonnaH:** so it's not like trying to figure out what the metallic voice is trying to say.

**KimMo:** would you say that hearing the words and seeing them at the same time would help the ESL students

**DonnaH:** definitely.

**DonnaH:** the other bonus is, this program can also read in 5 other languages, including Spanish.

**DonnaH:** (won't TRANSLATE...but if you have Spanish documents, it does have the ability to read them in Spanish.)

**KimMo:** I am having a hard time teaching 11th grade words to students who really need to be doing basic language

**DonnaH:** definitely would be helpful.

**KimMo:** Well thank you very much for sharing this information. I will look into both programs!

**DonnaH:** you can use the program to help them with the grade level stuff, and while you try to bulk up their basic language skills.

**DonnaH:** and kurzweil is created to be used by really, K - college.

**DonnaH:** actually, a number of schools are using it in place of test readers...

**DonnaH:** \*the workshop leader is actually a accessibility director at a college in NJ)

**KimMo:** Sounds like two really wonderful programs

**DonnaH:** I'm glad they were helpful!

**DonnaH:** (and since I only had one person's questions to answer, I finished early!  
\*laugh\*

**KimMo:** Thanks again! Have a great night!

**DonnaH:** you too, Kim:)