



Writing Support for Every Learner

Becky Tyler, 9 years old.



DEB YERGEAU has eight years of experience in the Education field. She has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Stonehill College in Massachusetts. Before joining Crick Software in 2008, Deb worked as a one-to-one assistant for a student with autism, and then became a fourth grade teacher. Currently, she is a Sales & Marketing Executive at Crick Software.

One of the biggest challenges for teachers today is how to effectively address the wide variety of learning needs they will be faced with in their classrooms. How do you provide the individual support that students with special needs require, help any learners new to English develop their language skills, engage your reluctant readers and writers, AND stretch your gifted students, all within one lesson?

Clicker, Crick Software's award-winning literacy support tool, is currently helping thousands of educators around the world to address this very issue. This software can be tailored to support students of all ages and abilities, helping all learners to significantly improve their reading and writing skills, access the curriculum and achieve academic success.

New for 2012, Crick Software has launched a new version of this popular tool, Clicker 6. Clicker 6 is a complete re-design of Clicker, which harnesses the latest technology to help students work more independently and teachers to download or create engaging, differentiated activities in seconds!

Crick Software's product range is based on Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Using the methods of UDL, teachers can present the same information in a variety of ways to enable every student in the class to access the material in a way that suits their particular learning needs. Clicker 6 makes it incredibly easy to create these differentiated activities. For example, many students with Down Syndrome are thought to be visual learners. They can learn the names of animals using pictures in a Clicker 6 matching activity and can even listen to the name of an animal with a click of the mouse or by using a switch. A general education student can then do the same matching activity, but with words instead of pictures. Every element of Clicker can be modified to suit the needs of individual students.

Some of the Beneficial Features in Clicker...

SWITCH ACCESSIBLE

Clicker 6 enables students with physical disabilities to use a switch for writing sentences, reading talking books, and engaging in labeling, simple cause and effect and matching activities. These activities give students using switches the opportunity to illustrate their level

of understanding, something they may not have been able to do in the past.

SYMBOLS

Students with special literacy or communication needs can benefit from using Clicker with symbols. It's easy to add graphics to Clicker cells when creating a communication grid or a simple writing activity. Whether students are using a mouse, touch screen, eye gaze device, trackball or switches, students will start to make the connection between the words and images by seeing them together and by listening to the recorded speech as their work is read back to them.

WORD PREDICTION

Clicker's integrated word predictor, with optional picture and symbol support, suggests words that fit the context of the student's writing. This will help students with their spelling and grammar and encourage them to use more adventurous vocabulary. What's even better is that this intelligent predictor will prioritize any key words you have provided the student with for a certain activity. For example, if you have a student writing about earthquakes, you can open a word bank with words such as epicenter, crust, and



Bradley Warwick and Jonathan Westrup.



Benjamin Ashton, 13 years old, using Clicker on a laptop.

mantle. Then, either keep this word bank open for the student to use, or hide it and the words will still be predicted as the student starts typing the first few letters. This means that words you might not typically expect to appear at the top of the predictor, but are needed for a certain topic, will be accessible whenever they are needed.

Some Great Examples of How Clicker is Making a Real Difference...

CEREBRAL PALSY

"My daughter Becky is 9 years old and has severe athetoid cerebral palsy affecting her whole body. She cannot sit unsupported, stand or walk, so is in a wheelchair. She cannot coordinate her arm or hand movements so she is generally unable to use them. However she is extremely bright and she learned how to use a head switch for computer access from an early age.

Becky has been accessing Clicker using a Tobii eye tracker (she used the head switch before that). This equipment has transformed her life and given her some independence for the first time ever.

Becky has always been creative and shown a strong interest in making pictures and doing arts and crafts, but had never been able to do any of it independently. Once she started using

her Tobii C12 device with Clicker, we were in for a lovely surprise! With eye-gaze access using her Tobii CEye eye tracking device, she was no longer constrained by the scanning grids in the software and she could choose the tools, styles and colors for her picture simply by staring at them with her eyes to select what she wanted, and placing them exactly where she wanted on the page – she was off!" Fiona Tyler, Becky's mom

CEREBRAL PALSY

"Like many teenagers his age, Bradley Warwick is passionate about music. In 2010, he piloted Drake Music's Introduction to Music course and was extremely successful. Bradley's success is especially significant because he has cerebral palsy and uses an electronic VOCA (Voice Output Communication Aid) to speak. Historically, very few students who face such disabling barriers to music have had access to a formal music education.

The key to success with the Introduction to Music course is that it comes with a comprehensive set of accessible learning and assessment resources, created by Drake Music for Clicker. Bradley has no significant learning difficulties, so by using the Clicker resources to learn, as well as Assistive Music Technology to perform and compose, he was able to access every aspect of the course.

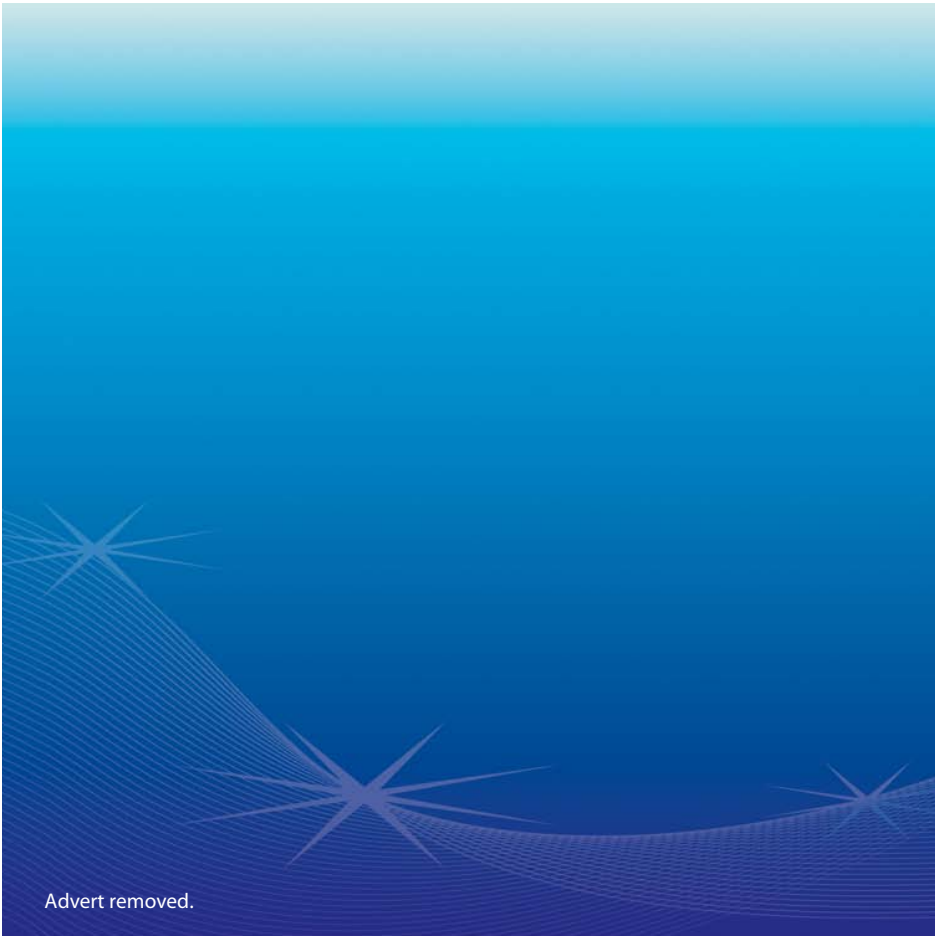
Bradley used two switches to control Clicker on his computer; independently learning about key musical concepts, watching films and listening to audio clips. He also completed a range of assessment tasks in Clicker without adult intervention.

Bradley's achievement involved challenges that will undoubtedly be familiar to other disabled students and their teachers. Getting the most out of one session a week in a busy timetable that included therapies and numerous unforeseen events was not easy. Despite the access afforded by the Clicker resources, it still took a fair amount of time to make the performing and composing tasks suitably accessible to Bradley. However, his success opens up new opportunities for other disabled music students." Jonathan Westrup, Education Associate and Associate Musician at Drake Music UK www.drakemusic.org

DOWN SYNDROME

"Benjamin has Down Syndrome, he is a visual learner and has a lot to say verbally, but his ability to compose grammatical sentences and physically write words has been holding him back in developing his potential in both literacy and the spoken word.

Clicker has enabled us to provide Benjamin with a tool that is allowing him to start to easily produce meaningful sentences. He can now print



out his sentences and use them in other work. We expect Clicker's word level support to make all the difference to Benjamin's literacy levels as he will be able to concentrate on constructing sentences with words instead of spending a lot of valuable patience forming the words himself using pen and paper.

Although his condition generally affects his learning ability, some specific abilities are more affected than others. For example, his alternating divergent squint was an early problem that prevented him from reading fluently. We found that retyping his books in a larger font and on a light blue background and working alongside the optometrist to adjust his glasses' prescription produced a significant and noticeable improvement in his reading ability. Repeating this process using Clicker would have been much easier and quicker.

The key to getting Benjamin going on Clicker was using a mouse pad. Benjamin has to work very hard with an ordinary mouse, as the cursor moves while he is trying to left or right click. With a mouse pad, the cursor stays in the same position while he moves his hand to left or right click an object on the screen, and this means that he has been able to develop good proficiency now in using a computer.

We find that the supplied examples demonstrating the different ways that Clicker can be used are really useful in providing ideas to support Benjamin's requirements for vocabulary and sentence building. We have made a lot of use of these resources to become familiar with what Clicker can do and to see which ones benefit Benjamin. By using our own pictures, we can produce grids that are relevant to his life and experience that engage and keep his attention.

With Clicker, we are starting to use forced order grids to help Benjamin develop his understanding of sentence structure and meaning by allowing Clicker to steer his sentence composition. We are currently using Clicker books and sentence building to enable

Benjamin to complete his project work at the horse riding school he attends on Saturdays. We also plan to use Clicker books to help Benjamin create his own picture schedule for weekend news that he can take to school on Mondays to share the news that he has produced instead of producing it for him" Bernard Ashton – Benjamin's dad.

REVIEW

Clicker 6 has also recently been reviewed by Brian Friedlander in his AssistiveTek Blog. Dr. Friedlander is a school psychologist in New Jersey with expertise in the area of assistive technology.

"Truth be told I have been a big fan of Clicker for a long time now and with the current release, I am even more excited with the potential of this program with students with a wide range of abilities. Having worked with a lot of assistive technology over the years, one of the key criteria for me is that it has got to be easy to use. If it takes me awhile to learn how to use a software program, then I know that it is doomed in the classroom. The latest release of Clicker 6 now includes Activity Wizards, which make using the program a real dream. Just this morning I had the chance to use Clicker 6 with a student I was working with who had underlying cognitive and language disabilities, and within seconds of selecting a Talk About Wizard, I had developed a picture-based activity that he could use to tell a story about the pictures on the screen (see Photo 5). It was incredible just how engaged the student was and how exciting it was to see the expression on his teacher's face as he told his story. Using the Activity Wizard, the activity was created within 15 seconds. In today's, fast paced classroom, having tools at your disposal that can create rich curriculum-based materials is more important than ever.

After I created this Talk About activity, I decided to create a picture-to-word matching activity to see if the student could match the pictures to the word (see Photo 6). To create this activity, I selected

the Matching Wizard, followed the on-screen prompts and selected the pictures that I had downloaded to a folder on my desktop. Again, within 10 seconds, my matching activity was up and running and the student could give it a try. The teachers were very impressed and were able to see just how easy it was to create the activity. Clicker 6 provides students with high quality text-to-speech supports and with the integration of the webcam, audio and multimedia, it is my go to program for students that have a wide range of learning challenges." <http://assistivetek.blogspot.com/2012/07/clicker-6-whole-new-game.html>

CONCLUSION

With its easy-to-navigate tools and recent updates, Clicker 6 will support every student in a school, whether they have physical or learning disabilities, struggle with reading and writing or take part in a gifted program. The possibilities Clicker has to offer are endless,

and both teachers and students will benefit from the time-saving features and learning independence that the program has to offer.

REFERENCES

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Upgrade from Clicker 5 to Clicker 6 Single Computer License: \$200
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