

# **Online Professional Development and Technology Training Opportunities for Educators of Students with Visual Impairments**

**Constance C McAvoy**

Resources Coordinator

Special Education Technology – British Columbia

and the Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired – British Columbia

Vancouver , British Columbia

V6P6G2

**Canada**

604-261-9450

[cmcavoy@setbc.org](mailto:cmcavoy@setbc.org)

**Anne Wadsworth**

Vision Outreach Coordinator

Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired (PRCVI)

#106 1750 West 75 Ave.,

Vancouver

British Columbia

**Canada**

V6P 6G2

Telephone 604 269 2219

Fax 604 261 0778

[awadsworth@prcvi.org](mailto:awadsworth@prcvi.org)

This presentation will include a tour of the web-based Special Education Technology – British Columbia (SET-BC) Learning Centre, a demonstration of its assistive technology (AT) resources, and a description of how this online AT community resource development network functions.

The building of SET-BC's online Learning Centre represented a strategy for change in how we can offer AT-related training and resources to British Columbia, Canada, and the world. Assistive technology-related resources and training are available anywhere, anytime – free of charge. Educators, administrators, braillists and parents consider the Learning Centre, on Set-BC's website [www.setbc.org](http://www.setbc.org), their source for AT related resources.

Web-based training and resource sharing have become an excellent option for many in the Assistive Technology community. Centralization of resources has brought teams from around the province together, addressing geographical barriers and resource duplication issues. Team members new to their positions and continuing staff interested in upgrading their skills can follow self-paced training modules at any time, quickly becoming proficient in the use of specific assistive technology. Those involved in training others can also access any of the web-based resources to supplement their in-service programs. Consistent instructional design, standardized tools and applications and intuitive navigation provide users with a rich-media individualized learning experience.

SET-BC, a leader in AT training and resource development in North America, assists school districts in meeting the technology needs of students with physical disabilities, visual impairments, and autism. SET-BC's mandate is to lend assistive technologies where required to facilitate students' access to educational programs and to assist school districts in providing the necessary consultation and training for students and educators in the use of these technologies.

The SET-BC website features the Learning Centre that houses a wealth of educational resources and webcast content from professional educators and researchers. The online SET-BC Learning Centre was completed in 2003 through a joint project with SET-BC and the IBM Innovation Centre, Vancouver, Canada. School district personnel have responded favorably to the comprehensive resource packages. Workshops and team training sessions are focused and more interactive as participants realize they can refer to the narrated tutorials, at their convenience, for specific application settings and implementation strategy support.

Students, school teams, and families go to the SET-BC Learning Centre, at <http://www.setbc.org/setbc/default.html>, for AT information and support. Resources include narrated assistive technology demonstrations, assistive technology guides, student lessons, downloadable customized resources, product tip-sheets, feature matrices, case study information, and videos.

Technology changes rapidly and SET-BC responds with resource development to meet the ongoing training demands of the AT clients; from students, and families, to school team personnel. SET-BC meets the challenge of providing accessible technology training – delivering essential resources to the worldwide AT community.

### **Learning Centre Design**

The SET-BC website facilitates province-wide sharing of resources that support the implementation of AT. The resource section of the SET-BC website, now located in the Learning Centre, provides the community of assistive technology users with access to

practical resources and curriculum material. SET-BC consultants identify and develop AT resources. In addition, school district teams develop and share vital materials that benefit special needs students through resource development projects.

Post-secondary institutions and assistive technology programs across North America and internationally have established links that direct users to [www.setbc.org](http://www.setbc.org). Post secondary institutions regularly request permission to use SET-BC assistive technology resources in their teacher education courses.

### **Types of Resource Content** on SET-BC 's learning centre:

SET-BC provides resources to support the implementation of assistive technology.

Media formats include

- narrated assistive technology demonstrations,
- assistive technology guides,
- student lessons,
- downloadable customized resources,
- product tip-sheets and
- case study information to support the implementation of assistive technology in meeting student goals.

All resources are housed in the Learning Centre's Main library. The resources are also sorted and stored in the 'category' buildings' by disability categories of Access, Vision, Communication and General. This presentation will focus on the resources in the Vision category.

### **Types of Training Modules and AT Resources**

**Presentation** modules provide rich learning environments that include video webcasts, slide presentations, narrated software demonstrations, tutorials, and related resources. Learners can "attend" online training modules in much the same way they would a live workshop. Online viewers are able to watch and listen to informative presentations at their own convenience and in their own home or school.

Presentation training modules incorporate narrated software demonstrations for programs such as OmniPagePro, JAWS, Kurzweil. These demonstrations are powerful tools for teaching people to use software as they provide step-by-step instructions on individual features and options. Viewers can learn to use the software by listening to and watching a complete set of demonstrations, or they can return to individual segments to refresh their memory of specific skills.

SET-BC webcasts also include videos of students talking about and using assistive technologies in BC classrooms. These real life examples provide educators with a model of how to implement technology for their own students.

Each year, SET-BC adds new resources to the informative collection of guides, classroom activities, templates, and teaching materials. Educators from across the province now have easy access to downloadable resources for use in their own classrooms.

**Resource Guides** - Educators seeking overviews of assistive technology, as well as those who want more in-depth content, will find valuable information in these guidebooks.

**Tutorials** - Basic, intermediate and advanced tutorials, along with suggested practice activities, provide detailed instruction in the use of assistive software and hardware.

**Lesson Plans** - To help teachers introduce new technologies to their students, we provide sets of lesson plans that incorporate curriculum implementation strategies. See the Mountbatten and BookPort student lessons. Also see the Expanded Core Curriculum course outlines.

**Custom setups and templates** - Ready-made resources can be downloaded and used to help individual students take part in curriculum activities. Searchable databases enable educators and parents to find, download, and customize activities, and templates in two repositories:

- curriculumSET - a collection of customized AT-based activities and templates for the basic areas of the curriculum
- pictureSET – a collection of downloadable visual supports that can be used to support expressive and receptive communication

### **SET-BC 's Learning Centre**

SET-BC 's Learning Centre is designed as a virtual learning campus. The learning centre campus includes:

#### **Main Library**

The Main Library of the Learning Centre contains the full collection of SET-BC resources

#### **Category Buildings**

The collection is then sorted by disability categories of Access, Vision, Communication and General. In each of these 'category' buildings, there is a library and a classroom.

In the Classroom, you can take part in online workshops, view webcasts and learn from narrated tutorials on technologies used by students with visual impairments. The training modules provide effective multimedia opportunities for self-paced learning.

In the Library you will find a collection of downloadable guides on assistive technology issues, classroom strategies, links to web resources, and best practices in implementation and training.

### **The Learning Centre category buildings:**

- **Vision Library and Classroom**

resources on educational strategies and assistive technologies for students with visual impairments.

- **Access Library and Classroom**

resources on educational strategies and assistive technologies for students with alternative access needs.

- **Communication Library and Classroom**

resources on educational strategies and assistive technologies for students with augmentative communication needs.

- **General Topics Library and Classroom**

resources on implementing assistive technologies in the curriculum.

### **Conference Centre**

The Conference Centre hosts resources and learning materials developed in partnership with post-secondary institutions, educational programs, non-profit agencies, and vendors and manufacturers. The Conference Centre modules complement and expand on the assistive technology resources provided in other areas of the website.

### **How can educators use the learning centre?**

Goal: To support professional development through training on the educational uses of assistive technology.

You can use the Learning centre for:

- personal self-paced learning

Team members new to their positions and continuing staff interested in upgrading their skills can follow self-paced training modules at any time, quickly becoming proficient in the use of specific assistive technology.

- hosting an AT workshop

Those involved in training others can also access any of the web-based resources to supplement their in-service programs.

- sharing AT info with parents and the community

The Learning Centre and Conference Centre house a wealth of educational resources and webcast content from professional educators and researchers. Students, school

teams, and families go to the SET-BC Learning Centre, at <http://www.setbc.org/setbc/default.html>, for AT information and support.

## **A Sampling of the Resources:**

### **Presentations:**

#### **ALT-VI; Access to Literacy through Technology for Persons with Visual Impairments**

This 2003 overview of vision technologies focused on approaches for independent access to e-text. The team of presenters demonstrate research and study tools, Braille notetakers, screen readers, magnification software, and e-text production. SET-BC presented this full day technology workshop at “Getting In Touch With Literacy”, the international conference on literacy for individuals with visual impairments. .

#### **Functional Vision Assessment**

Darick Wright from the New England Eye Institute Clinic at Perkins School for the Blind, provides an overview of the essential components of a Functional Vision Assessment and specific examples addressing each of these elements.

### **Print Resource Guides**

#### **JAWS tutorials**

JAWS tutorials are developed and shared for teachers and students to use as new versions are introduced to the market

#### **Expanded Core Curriculum Course Outlines – Technology - VI**

The Technology ECC-VI course outlines were developed to provide instruction in grades 10-12 for credit in the areas of the expanded core curriculum. Topic modules include: CCTV, Room Viewing, Screen Magnification, Braille Notetaker with Refreshable Braille Display, Operating Systems Modifications, and Screen Reader with Refreshable Braille Display.

### **Student Lessons**

#### **Mountbatten Resource Guide and Report**

This series of ten Mountbatten Pro lesson plan modules contains strategies and ideas that will serve as a resource and teaching guide for vision professionals. The second document, MB Pro - A Visual Guide, helps teams become familiar with the hardware.

#### **About the Mountbatten**

The Mountbatten is an electronic Braille notetaker and embosser featuring an ergonomic keyboard, memory, speech feedback and forward and backward Braille/print translation.

**BookPort Student Lessons Resource Book (2005)** SET-BC developed this set of BookPort Student Lessons. The lessons are student-focused, practical resources, specifically designed to help students and teachers implement the technology.

The BookPort Student Lessons Resource, a set of practical lessons developed and designed by a team of SET-BC consultants to help students and teachers learn and implement the technology, was a great support to teams. SET-BC also set up the BookPort List Serve to enable students and teams to communicate with one another as they explore the varied uses of their BookPorts.

### **About the BookPort**

The BookPort is an innovative portable device designed for the blind to read electronic books, play digital audio files, record voice memos, and enter notes in 6 key Braille entry. Its small size, large storage capacity and battery operation enables students to take their studies anywhere. Data is transferred easily to the BookPort from a Windows computer via USB connection.

### **Web links**

**Links to Assistive Technology-Related Websites page** - A grid with live links to websites containing assistive technology content including e-text sites, major conferences, professional organizations and vendor information. All entries include category reference of either general. Access, vision or communication.

SET-BC strives to meet the challenge of providing technology training by delivering essential resources to the worldwide AT community of teachers.

Thank you for this opportunity to present the SET-BC Learning Centre.

Contact us at [info@setbc.org](mailto:info@setbc.org) for more information.