



BOARD OF EDUCATION

Media Information

December 4, 2007

'Cool Communicators' Holiday Gathering for Speech-impaired Children

Kelowna, BC: On Wednesday, December 5, students with severe communication challenges will have an opportunity to share in a special holiday gathering. Sixteen students from Kelowna, Vernon, Merritt, Penticton, Summerland, Keremeos, will play games and exchange gifts with other students who rely on speech-generating devices. Often, in their home communities, these students, aged 7 to 18, rarely meet another child who relies on a speech device.

“The Cool Communicators” holiday gathering is a chance for kids who use communication technologies to interact in a fun real life situation,” says Susan Rampone, a Registered Speech-Language Pathologist/SETBC District Partner. The gathering will take place at the Hollywood Road Education Services building at 1040 Hollywood Road from 10am to 2pm.

“Students with severe communication impairments often cannot speak at a level that can be understood by unfamiliar listeners,” says Rampone. “New technology provides a voice for those individuals and enables them to communicate to anyone at any time just like their peers. New speech generating devices give students a voice of their own.”

Some of these students have experienced communication challenges as a result of cerebral palsy or autism. Many of them have received their speech generating devices through Special Education Technology BC (SETBC), which develops and provides assistive technologies to BC school districts to assist students with disabilities. The devices involve touching a screen or accessing a switch to produce an audible message.

In the summer, these children and others across BC will have a chance to participate in a favourite childhood pastime: summer camp. Rampone will participate in the camps along with her School District No. 23 colleague Heather MacNaughton and SETBC consultant Kathy Ryan. Three Virtual Voices camps are planned for the summer of 2008 including one locally at Winfield.

Information on speech assistance devices can be found on these websites: www.SETBC.org, www.dynavoxtech.com and www.prentrom.com

For comments, please contact:

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