

Opening Doors Newsletter

A publication to promote the inclusion of individuals with disabilities within AmeriCorps programs. Author: Kathy Bean

Assistive Technology to Improve Writing Skills

ccording to the National Commission on Writing, whose study Writing: A Ticket to Work...Or a Ticket Out: A Survey of Business Leaders reported that "two-thirds of salaried employees in large American companies have some writing responsibility, perhaps through email, letters, or memos" (National Commission on Writing, 2008.) The National Institute for Literacy (2008) Facts and Statistics of Workforce Education reported proficient writing ability tops the list of important work skills, and writing deficit is the number one reason why employers in manufacturing and production

withhold job offers.

eople with learning disabilities such as dysgraphia deficiency in writing thoughts or graphing,

expressive language disorders and dyslexia may find the product "Whitesmoke" particularly useful. Whitesmoke, a new software program, goes beyond the traditional word-processing edit tools and can



Service Day Project with Montana Conservation Corps, Special Friends and Flathead Industries.

edit the user's written work, making suggestions such as relevant adjectives and adverbs that enhance and improve the written text. Entire sentences can be analyzed for improvement and transformation. Whitesmoke has over 600 sample writing templates and over 400,000 ways to correct errors through spell check, grammar check, automatic proofreading, dictionary, and thesaurus options. For \$79.95, this software is an inexpensive way to provide an effective job accommodation.

hitesmoke works with all contemporary applications, operating systems, browsers, and communication tools. Preview the product here: http://www.whitesmoke.com.

Assistive

ow – Tech devices; watches, note pads, calendars and day planners are used

for task-sequencing and organization. Challenges arise in writing the information and then finding it readily available. With the development of personal computers individuals with traumatic brain injuries, learning disabilities and stoke rehabilitation needs are given opportunities through the use of PDA's (Palm Pilot Device Aids) as reminder systems and task – sequencing coaches. PSA's are easily accessible and assist in daily organizational routines. Devices range from basic functional aids to higher end capabilities. Visit the following links for a complete listing of electronic cognitive aids and in depth information on brain injury partnerships and available services. www.biausa.org, www.vcu/partnerships/pda, www.colemaninstitute.org.

Technology for **Cognitive Aids**

Thank you for your efforts toward promoting disability inclusion. Call or email with any questions or concerns; 406-444-5547 or **kbean@mt.gov**.

Accommodations in service environments are nothing

new. Determination of what type of accommodation

should be made with both employer and employee

identifying the limitation imposed by the disability.