<u>Keyboarding Programs</u>
Compiled by Deanna Iris Sava, MS, OTR/L

This information was compiled from occupational therapy listservs, and is based on therapists' experience in using these programs with students. Thanks to all the therapists who contributed information.

<u>Kid's Typing CD</u>
Kid's Typing by Bright Star Technology, Inc. It can be purchased through Mac Station Technologies Corp. in Canada (www.macstation.com). This is software which is really fun for the child. Its star is a "Casper" like ghost, who encourages the kids to type. It moves back and forth from drills while he verbally/visually encourages the student to enter various rooms, where the child is able to manipulate the environment by typing faster (for example, a mother is mixing something in the blender in the kitchen, and the faster the child types, the faster the blender spins until the food flies all over the place). You can also go to another screen which will gives the WPM and other data. You can print out award certificates with the data. Kids love this program and have a lot of fun with it. Total cost was around $20.00 in Canadian money (under $6 U.S.).

<u>Type to Learn (TTL)</u>*
By Sunburst (1-888-321-7511 or www.sunburst.com) Set up for regular QWERTY keyboard. For 2nd-5th graders. It is FABULOUS!!! I like it much better than any of the others (I've tried Mavis Beacon, Mario Teaches Typing, Paws, and Communikeys) for elementary and middle school students (LD and even some lower level kids who are in 3rd-6th grade). It teaches home row placement, is visually oriented and has great up beat music. It is visually stimulating, but not overstimulating. It's got a space theme and gives "game breaks" during the lesson to break it up a bit. The kids enjoy typing to earn stars or make it around the solar system. The games also incorporate scanning and reaction time. It allows you to set parameters such as wpm goal, automatic review of keys after __ errors, how often you want game breaks to be offered, % accuracy desired, etc. You can set the speed goal as low as you want so the child won't become frustrated. It is an excellent motivator, amazingly keeping students' eyes focused on the monitor with nice graphics of realistic hands and keyboard, visual prompts as needed. Another advantage is its functionality that reinforces reading skills and puts learned letters into words, phrases, then sentences as soon as they are mastered. It has approximately 25 lessons (the first 16 cover the alphabet and common punctuation, so most of my students earn the privilege to complete assignments using a keyboard upon completion of lesson 16 with 90% accuracy and at least 10 wpm). The company allows school systems to buy the home version ($20-$30) which can keep progress records (that can be printed and sent home) for 5 students. Since they do not offer a system packets, each school must have their own site license, lab pack, or individual home versions for each classroom where needed.

<u>Type to Learn, Jr.</u>*
By Sunburst. This is similar to Type to Learn, but is for preschool-2nd, and low-level kids. It has more age-appropriate graphics. It doesn't teach finger placement but stresses using both hands on the correct sides of the keyboard. The keyboard is divided into right and left sides – one side has red letters and the other purple letters.

Type for Fun
By Sunburst. To improve speed and accuracy for grades 3-adult.

Nimble Fingers
This is a great program. You can download a trial version for free (www.nimblefingers.com) or purchase the full version from their website.

Paint, Write and Play*
By the Learning Co. For preschool through 1st grade, or self-contained classes. It works well with autistic and mentally impaired kids because it is very visually oriented. It gives them half a page for drawing and then a story. When they attempt to write, they are given all the letters of the alphabet at the bottom of the screen and can click on a letter. When they click on a letter, it brings up word choices for them with pictured icons. When they click on the A for Airplane, and the picture is there, both the word and the picture are included in their story. If you click on the megaphone icon, the software "reads" auditorily what they have typed. All this for $19.95! That is what I use for lower level kids.

Herzog Keyboarding System
(www.herzogkeyboarding.com). This is a book, not a software program. It uses a kinesthetic approach. This is geared to all ages, but I see it's greatest use with younger children. The program teaches keyboarding using the A-Z sequence rather than teaching the "home row." The theory is that this is a sequence which children are already familiar with. I have modified the program for some children by adding more repetitions of the drills. What I don't like about the program is the "limited inticement" in this world of technology and visual entertainment!

Ultra Keys
By Bytes of Learning. Kind of boring but good for the middle and high school levels. I like that they have "tests" at the end of the lesson that let you see what you need to work on (wrong keys, missing keys, etc.) and provide % accuracy/wpm. Their website address is:
http://www.bytesoflearning.com/

Jump Start Typing
For 5th and 6th graders. Very busy. The girls like it much more than the boys do. Most of my kids got so carried away with the games that they used two finger hunt and peck, so it wasn't terribly successful. A few who were cognitively delayed got very frustrated. I have on fourth grader who is doing great with it. On the Mac, it sometimes crashed. It does have varied tasks/games and adjusts to the student's level. Also, I like the printable report cards that it generates.

Paws
I like it because it seems to hold the attention of almost all age level kids, even though the arcade games are really dorky for older kids.

Slam Dunk Typing
From Scholastic. Good for younger children. A favorite with the boys. They love the basketball theme. Requires a lot of visual tracking.

Mario Teachs Typing
Very boring; very, very busy. Not my favorite.

KidKeys
From Davidson. Intro keyboard program for 4-8 year olds. Only on diskette format that you can only get on a teacher's pack (site license) for about $250. It is success-oriented and attention getting, so I keep plugging away with it. Aside from the difficulty in obtaining it, it is an old program, does not keep track of how a student has done and does not modify itself based on performance.

Read, Write and Type
By The Learning Company. It uses speech output. Read, Write, and Type takes a phonetic approach to the letters of the alphabet and teaches the phonemes as well as the letters. It has a villain that the typist must help overcome. He keeps stealing letters and one must type them to get them back. It teaches correct hand placement as well as any computer program can. Unfortunately, there is no replacement for a 'coach' that catches the mistakes and 'cheats' as they happen. One therapist didn't like this program at all, and another therapist liked it better than Write Out Loud.

On Screen
By R.J. Cooper and Assoc. Has word prediction program. Intellikeys can be used, or an augmentative keyboard device if you have Boardmaker.

All the Right Type
Kids DON'T like this program.

Rhythmic Typing
(http://www.comp4learn.com/ OR info@comp4learn.com/). Requires a lot of RAM.

Keyboarding by Ability
Teaches the keyboard based on the amount of finger isolation and/or use the student has.

Typing Arcade
Kids like it. What I like about this program is that you don't have to have a certain wpm to go to the next lessons like some of the other programs such as Mario, Lion King, etc. Many kids couldn't get past the first lesson on those programs, so at least on this one we can work on more than "home row". It has various levels so that younger as well as older kids can use it.

Typing Instructor
The kids love this one. I'm using it with upper elementary, Jr. and Sr. high school students. It has lessons as well as a variety of games. The games are really unique, such as a mountain climbing game -- the mountain climber climbs as the student types the letters. Anyway, there are lots of neat games that are great for lessons and improving speed. It gives wpm and accuracy on lessons and games.

Typing Instructor Deluxe
This program is available from Amazon.com for $29.99. One of the things I really like about it is that it gives you progress reports in chart of graph form. It tells you the accuracy of each lesson and/or test, the average wpm, and peak wpm. Following is part of Amazon.com's description of the program: the program automatically suggests the right lessons and tests for your skill level. Easy-to-follow, next-step recommendations and proven teaching methods, such as double key stroking, help you master a few keys at a time. Or, build your own custom typing plan to focus on specific areas you'd like to improve. Along the way, you'll get constant feedback on your progress, with accuracy and words-per-minute scores after every lesson and test. Improve your speed and accuracy with seven action-packed games. For beginning to advanced typists, kids to adults, you'll sharpen your keyboard and 10-key skills with amazing graphics and exciting challenges.

Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing
Some therapists use this, but it isn't a favorite. They prefer programs such as Type to Learn.

Diana King Method
Have no information about this program.

Websites
Website with Transcript of Keyboarding and LD-related Issues
http://www.ldonline.org/bulletin_boards/techtalk/bpisha.html

If you have access to the web, here is a great site for teaching typing and writing. The games go from preschool to grade 6 or you can buy programs from this site, too:
http://www.funschool.com/current/games/preschool,36">funschool.com.