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Bridge Builder--My School Day Online Scheduler

A Fully Accessible Platform for Website Development

**Summary of Final Report to the National Center for Technology Innovation of
Research Conducted Under NCTI Subgrant**

Bridge Builder, which is in its alpha version, provides a user friendly platform through which any one with minimal computer knowledge can build an accessible educational web pages and/or websites. The scheduler portion of the *Bridge Builder*, known as *MySchoolDayOnline*, provides a format through which teachers, administrators, and students can access a calendar, task list, and schedule. This study investigated the accessibility and usability of the *MySchoolDayOnline* for students with visual impairments and teachers who work with students with visual impairments.

Student testing

Twelve students at Tennessee School for the Blind participated in the testing. All of the students were legally blind; ten used a screen reading program to access the computer and two visually accessed the screen. Students were asked to find and input information in the most commonly used accessible electronic scheduler, Microsoft Outlook[®] and using *MySchoolDayOnline*. At the end of the session students were asked what they thought about the programs.

With *MySchoolDayOnline* students attempted to complete 100% items, and with Outlook[®] students only attempted an 69% of the items. Of the attempted items, students were able to find the requested information or enter the correct information 90% of the time with *MySchoolDayOnline* and only 31% of the time with Outlook[®]. Of the attempted items,

students were able to complete the items independently 83% of the time with *MySchoolDayOnline* and only 50% of the time with Outlook[®].

The students' positive comments primarily revolved around *MySchoolDayOnline*'s easy to navigate layout without use of drop down menus. One student said, "It was easy for me to find stuff and that's really saying something." Another student commented, "I didn't get lost. It was so easy to navigate, I *couldn't* get lost!" One student who used a screen reading program explained "Everything was sticking out on page asking you to click on it." For the visual users, the main positive was the lack of visual clutter on the screen.

The students unanimously preferred and were more successful using *MySchoolDayOnline* than Microsoft Outlook[®]. One student stated that "If it (*MySchoolDayOnline*) was a person, I would hug it." Despite the difficulty experienced with Outlook, one student was able to complete all tasks using Outlook[®] indicating that the program is accessible but not very usable.

Teacher testing.

Eight teachers, all of whom are certified in teaching students with visual impairments, participated in the testing: four teachers with typical sight, three teachers with low vision, and one teacher who is blind. The teachers were asked to complete 12 items using *MySchoolDayOnline*. After completing the items, teachers participated in a group interview about their experience with the program.

Teachers were also positive about the current features in *MySchoolDayOnline*. They want to see more features in the final product so that they can have one program to complete all or almost all paperwork tasks that are required of them.

Conclusions

Students and teachers had positive responses to the *MySchoolDayOnline* program. All of the students, those using JAWS screen reader software and those visually accessing the screen, found the program much easier to use than Outlook. The teachers expressed appreciation for a program that was intuitive to use. These results indicate that usability is as important as accessibility when designing sites to meet the needs of teachers and students with and without visual impairments. This research provided valuable information about the real world accessibility and usability of *MySchoolDayOnline*. The suggestions and critiques from the teachers and students are being incorporated into the beta version of the product.

Our Appreciation

We would like to express our deep appreciation to NCTI for providing the funding that made this research possible. Much has been learned through this process that is being integrated into *My School Day Online* and the *Bridge Builder*. Thank you, everyone at NCTI, for your continuing support and active participation that made this research project a reality.

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