



## OPENING REMARKS

2007 NATIONAL TECHNOLOGY INNOVATORS CONFERENCE (NCTI)

Tracy Gray, Director

November 15, 2007

Good morning and welcome to the 2007 NCTI Technology Innovators Conference. We are very excited and honored to have you here today – the leaders and innovators from industry, universities, foundation community, the not-for-profit sector, and government to focus your attention on our theme: *Bright Ideas, Real Solutions*. We are fortunate to have the opportunity to explore ideas and identify possible solutions to improve the quality of innovative tools, services, and programs to better meet the needs of students, particularly those with disabilities.

During the next two days, we will examine such questions as:

- What is the potential for innovation and its important role in the enhancement of assistive and learning technologies?
- How can we harness the power of social networking and other emerging technologies to advance the field? And
- How can we promote a public-private partnership to increase the funds and awareness for quality initiatives that make technology tools an integral part of the learning experience for all students?

As you can see from the Agenda in your conference books, we will be able to exchange ideas with experts who are leaders in their fields. In fact, I know that one is even a true, blue rocket scientist! And, course, we have much to learn from all of you, each leaders representing a broad cross section of expertise in assistive and learning technologies. You have come from far and wide, including Ireland and as far as New Zealand, to exchange ideas and learn.

Our presenters will challenge all of us to consider the implications of emerging trends, tools, and research related to the use of educational technologies. These discussions will underscore the important role we play to ensure that these tools are accessible and that there is solid research evidence to support their effectiveness for learning.

NCTI has benefited from your engagement during the first year of its new funding cycle. We are pleased today to launch the new TechMatrix, a product made possible by a generous grant from the NEC Foundation of America – represented here today by Sylvia Clark, the Executive Director. This new TechMatrix ([www.techmatrix.org](http://www.techmatrix.org)) results from the work of many individuals



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around the country, many of whom are joining us today. Our good colleagues at CAST have been instrumental in reviewing software and research with us. And our colleagues from the SEAT Center at Illinois State University, Phil Parette and George Peterson-Karlan, led the reviews of writing products and research on the use of technology in writing instruction.

We are also joined by many individuals who have participated in the [NCTI Technology in the Works competition](#). This competition was conceived as an idea here at the 2004 NCTI Technology Innovators Conference, and now three years later, we are seeing lasting benefits continue to develop from the researcher/vendor collaborations started with these small \$15,000 awards. This year, we were pleased to fund two collaborative research teams:

- Domenic Greco and Judy Pokorni researching [Video Games: Enhancing Attention with NASA-Developed Neurofeedback Technology](#) AND
- Lucy Baney, Leslie Walker-Hirsch and Christine Casey studying the [Social Simeror: An E-Learning Assistive Technology](#).

We are also pleased to have representatives from four of our five award winning teams represented this year and participating in the Technology Expo this evening. I encourage you to ask them about the award and consider submitting a collaborative proposal to us next spring.

In your bags, you also have a copy of the latest, hot off the press *Journal of Special Education Technology (JSET)*. NCTI is the Guest Editor of this issue, *The Future is Now*. This issue represents the hard work of many individuals in collaboration over the past two years. We encourage you to consult these articles and engage in a dialogue with us and the authors about the recommendations and findings and work with us to coordinate our efforts in the field to maximize the potential of assistive and learning technologies.

And finally, as many of you know, we rely heavily on web-based communications to deliver information to you through our website. This year we have updated our site to a more interactive platform and invite all of you to [www.NationalTechCenter.org](http://www.NationalTechCenter.org) to comment, blog, and digg our resources. We will be capturing all that happens here at the conference – blogging, posting video, podcasts and slide presentations. Please add your voice to the [conference blog](#) while you are here by visiting the Cyber Café and finding resources online once you are back home.

I don't have to tell you that we are in the midst of a profound change in the way we share information and communicate. The video you just saw, [Shift Happens](#), highlighted that clearly. Advances in technology are making it possible for us to share – instantaneously -- our ideas and products not just with people around the corner or around the country but around the world. And we can do this more quickly and efficiently than ever before possible.



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As you could see from the video, our youth are leading the way with technology. They are truly “digital natives”, using technologies seamlessly to create, share, contribute, learn, advocate, and express themselves. As we just saw, they are entering a world that is vastly different from the one we knew 10 or even five years ago. Our American students will face challenges we cannot anticipate. Are we equipping them? Are we equipping ourselves?

As all of you know, technology solutions are not so much about the technology but the means to optimize communication and productivity. Today anyone from a high school teacher in Colorado to a technology innovator in her garage to a MacArthur Genius Fellow can have a platform. But you have to get in the mix and learn about these emerging tools to figure out how best to use them for you and your needs.

As we all know, the pharmaceutical industry has used communication tools extremely well, transforming its marketing strategies from doctor to consumer to directly targeting you -- the consumer. The drug companies said, we’re not just going to push information at you, but we are going to give you a call to action. They have shifted the traditional power lines. They want you to ask your doctor for a drug by name. And it has worked. They have tapped into another workforce—you and me—to do their selling for them. And now, savvy public health officials are countering the blizzard of advertising with educational content in places adults hang out – such as islands in the online virtual world of Second Life.

There are lessons to be learned for the assistive and learning technology field. We **can** tap into and leverage the collective brainpower and energy of all of us here to advance our ideas, our products, our services, our policies to increase the learning opportunities for children with disabilities.

Over the next two days, we look forward to a series of lively discussions and the opportunity to get our hands on tools and technologies that many of you will be sharing here in the ballroom later today at the [Technology Expo](#). We are eager to see your bright ideas and together, identifying real solutions.

One way we will encourage your active participation is with the audience response devices. Everyone has a vote here, even if we are in the District of Columbia. Throughout the conference, we will be polling you, sharing the real-time results, and discussing the various points of view represented by this interdisciplinary audience. I need to take a few moments to get us all oriented to this system so that we can maximize our use of it during the conference. So – get ready to vote. Here’s a warm up:

### **Who is the Director of NCTI?**

- Meredith Grey
- Tracy Gray



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- Tracy Chapman
- Earl Gray

[hint: <http://www.nationaltechcenter.org/index.php/about/tracy-gray-phd-project-director/>]

**What is a geomag?**

- An early invention of Bill Gates
- A skyscraper in Kuala Lumpur
- A toy for aging children
- A geological formation

[hint: <http://www.nationaltechcenter.org/index.php/events-main-page/annual-technology-conference2007/>]

Seriously, this system also will allow NCTI to understand how our various stakeholder groups perceive the challenges and opportunities in the field, so take another moment to answer these next two questions to establish your profile (remember: answers are unique but anonymous):

**Which sector best describes your position?**

- University
- Commercial business
- Foundation
- Government
- Service provider
- State or local education agency

**Which is your primary role?**

- Developing products or solutions
- Technical assistance and teacher training
- Policy or program management
- Conducting research
- Marketing, promotion and sales
- Other



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What unites all of us here today is a desire to make sure that individuals with disabilities can participate fully in our society. Technologies make fulfilling this promise more attainable than in the past. Enhanced with accessibility tools and combined with thoughtful policies, technologies can make it possible for those who have been on the sidelines to be more fully included.

The future isn't what it used to be. We are now at the crossroads to shape it to ensure that all individuals, including those with disabilities have a role to play in building that future.

And now back to the present where none of this would have been possible without the support and guidance provided by our project officer, Jane Hauser and Lou Danielson, the Director of Research to Practice at the Office of Special Education Programs. In addition, we wanted to recognize Dave Malouf, who is here with us, who was instrumental with Jane Hauser in turning the vision of a center that fosters collaboration among researchers, developers and vendors into the National Center for Technology Innovation.

It is now my great pleasure to introduce Jane Hauser, our NCTI Project Director at OSEP.