SKILLS DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COMMUNITY COMPUTING: THE IRONDALE COMMUNITY COMPUTER LAB

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DR. ELIZABETH DUNN
J. GORDON ARBUCKLE
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA

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The New Communities Projects (NCPs) and this evaluation are funded by a five-year grant from the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) National Initiative of CSREES-USDA. University Outreach and Extension (UOE) of the University of Missouri administer the grant through the Family and Community Resource Program (FCRP). UOE Outreach Development Funds provide additional funding for this work. Information about CYFAR, the NCPs, and FCRP’s programming with at-risk populations can be found at http://outreach.missouri.edu/fcrp. Contact Elizabeth Dunn at DunnE@missouri.edu with questions about this evaluation and Lynna Lawson at LawsonL@missouri.edu with questions about the ICCL program.
The Irondale Community Computer Lab (ICCL) opened in September 2001 as a collaborative project of University Outreach and Extension, the Big River Community Network, and the Irondale City Council. The purpose of the ICCL is to provide the children, youth, and adults of Irondale with access to computers and the Internet, and assistance with information technology. Prior to the opening of the ICCL, Irondale had only one, older model public access computer. The ICCL significantly increased the connectivity options for the general population of Irondale (estimated to be 437 people in the 2000 census), who live in a relatively isolated part of Washington County, Missouri.

The lab operates out of a room in the Irondale City Hall and is open five days a week: Tuesday through Friday from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm, Tuesday through Thursday from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm, and Saturday mornings from 8:00 am to noon. There are five up-to-date computers, four of which are connected to the Internet. Volunteers from Irondale and the Big River Community Network run the lab, with assistance from University Outreach and Extension staff. All of the people supervising the lab have the technical expertise needed to answer questions and handle computer problems. They also offer assistance to people who have questions about their home computers.

One of the anticipated impacts of the ICCL is an improvement in participants’ computer skills. The skills development process is likely to occur in one of three ways. First, participants are expected to gain skills simply through their hands-on use. In other words, by spending time using the computers and Internet, they acquire skills. Second, participants are expected to gain skills through informal tutoring from the volunteer technical staff and through interaction with other participants who have higher skill levels. Third, participants may choose to take advantage of on-line computer training offered through the Missouri Research and Education Network (MOREnet) or through Goodwill Industries of North Carolina.

The purpose of this study is to test the assumption that access to community computer labs can have a positive impact on participants’ computer skills, even when no formal on-site training is provided. The approach used was to measure participants’ computer skills twice over a six-month period and analyze the changes that occurred. Section II describes how participants’ computer skills were measured. The third section describes the results of the study, which indicate that participants do gain skills over time and that community computer labs such as the ICCL have a positive impact on participants’ skills development. These positive impacts are particularly strong with younger participants.

1 In addition to improvements in participants’ computer skills, other anticipated impacts of the program include an increase in after-school adult supervision for children and youth, increased exposure to educational resources and more learning time for children and youth, increased knowledge gains for community members from web-based resources, and increased interaction among community residents. These impacts, along with the inputs, activities, and outputs of the ICCL program are detailed in a program logic model, which can be viewed at the following web address: http://outreach.missouri.edu/fcrp/evaluation/plms.htm.
II. Measuring and Analyzing Computer Skills

To measure the changes in computer skills over time, a skills assessment test was developed. This test was given to as many eligible ICCL participants as possible in December 2001 and again in June 2002. The results from the two tests were analyzed to determine whether any changes in computer skills had occurred. This section describes the procedures that were followed in measuring and analyzing computer skills.

The Computer Skills Assessment Instrument

To measure the level of participants’ computer skills, they were each given a test. The test is referred to here as the computer skills assessment instrument.² It is a task-based assessment, meaning that the person being evaluated must complete a series of multi-step tasks to demonstrate competence in each skill area. A trained evaluator conducts the assessment by reading the tasks to the person taking the test and recording whether or not the person is able to complete each of the 96 distinct tasks.

The instrument is designed to measure skills in four common areas:

- General operation of the computer,
- Word processing,
- Using the World Wide Web, and
- Electronic mail.

The assessment starts with very basic tasks, such as turning on the computer and opening a file, and progresses to more difficult tasks. It is organized into six sections: 1) basic computer and operating system, 2) World Wide Web, 3) electronic mail, 4) basic word processing, 5) advanced word processing, and 6) advanced operating system. Word processing skills are tested using Microsoft Word.

Participants and Assessment Rates

The initial, or baseline, assessment was in December 2001, and the second round of the assessment was in June 2002. All participants who had visited the lab two or more times were considered eligible for the assessment. Since attendance at the lab increased between December and June, the number of people eligible for the assessment increased from 19 people in December to 45 people in June. However, not everyone who was eligible participated in the assessment.

In the baseline assessment, the participation rate was 74 percent, meaning that 14 out of 19 eligible participants took the test. The assessment participation rate improved considerably in the second round, with 42 out of 45 eligible participants taking the test. Assessment participation rates were highest for children and lowest for adults. Figure 1

² The full task-based computer skills assessment instrument and instructions for evaluators are included as appendices to this report.
indicates the percentage of eligible participants who took the test in each age group. Children are individuals in pre-K through sixth grade, while youth are individuals in seventh through twelfth grade.

**Figure 1: Assessment Participation Rates by Age Group**

![Figure 1: Assessment Participation Rates by Age Group](image)

**Attempt Rates**

The assessment instrument was organized so that similar types of skills were grouped together. For example, word processing skills were grouped together and electronic mail skills were grouped together. If a person had never used a specific skill area, such as electronic mail, then the participant was not asked to attempt the tasks in that skill area.

Table 1 indicates the attempt rates by age group and skill area. Predictably, attempt rates declined as the difficulty level of the instrument increased: while everyone attempted the first skill area, only 29 percent of people in December and 16 percent of people in June attempted the sixth (and highest) skill level. In addition, children were least likely to attempt more advanced skill areas. It should be noted that no children under 12 years of age were asked to complete the advanced word processing (skill area 5), because of the advanced spelling and keyboarding skills required.

**Table 1. Attempt Rates by Skill Area and Age Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Area</th>
<th>Children 12/01 (n=6)</th>
<th>Children 6/02 (n=13)</th>
<th>Youth 12/01 (n=3)</th>
<th>Youth 6/02 (n=10)</th>
<th>Adults 12/01 (n=5)</th>
<th>Adults 6/02 (n=19)</th>
<th>Total 12/01 (n=14)</th>
<th>Total 6/02 (n=42)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Basic Operating</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: WWW</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: E-mail</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Word processing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Advanced WP</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Advanced operating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. The Assessment Results

There are two important questions that can be answered with the assessment results:

1. What were the skill levels of lab participants in December 2001 and June 2002?
2. Were there any changes in skill levels for people who took the test in both December and June?

These questions can be answered by looking at lab participants’ scores on the December and June tests. Test scores are simply the percentage of tasks completed correctly. An individual’s score is calculated by dividing the number of tasks completed correctly by the total number of tasks in the assessment.

Skill Levels of Lab Participants

The overall skill levels of lab participants are indicated by the scores for everyone who took the test. Since lab attendance was increasing over time, there were 14 people who took the test in December and 42 people who took the test in June. Their average scores are presented by skill area and age group in table 2. As might be expected, skill levels were lowest for children and highest for adults.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Area</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Youth</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12/01 (n=6)</td>
<td>6/02 (n=13)</td>
<td>12/01 (n=3)</td>
<td>6/02 (n=10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: Basic Operating</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: WWW</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: E-mail</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Word processing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Advanced WP</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Advanced operating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average scores for the group as a whole did not change much: participants successfully completed 54 percent of the tasks in December and 60 percent of the tasks in June. A statistical comparison of these two scores (using a t-test) indicates that there is no significant difference between the scores in the two periods. This means that the 42 people tested in June had about the same skill levels on average as the 14 people tested six months earlier (in December).

However, there was a significant increase in children’s skills, from an average score of 24 in December to an average score of 42 in June (p<.01). There are several possible reasons for this increase: 1) skills improved for the six children who were tested in both periods, 2) the seven new children had higher starting skill levels, or 3) both. As will be
seen in the next section, the six children who were tested in both periods actually did improve their computer skills.

It is also interesting to look at the scores of the adults. Adults’ average scores dropped from 84 to 69 between December and June. Although this drop is only marginally significant (p=.16), it does seem rather large. Again, there are three possible explanations for the drop: 1) skills dropped for the five adults who were tested in both periods, 2) the 14 new adults had lower starting skill levels, or 3) both. In the next section, it will be clear that scores did not drop for the five adults who were tested in both periods. Therefore, we can conclude that the new adults coming to the lab had lower initial skill levels than the adults who came to the lab when it first opened.

In summary, the scores for the group as a whole did not change much between December and June, but children’s scores increased and adults’ scores appeared to drop. These changes should not be interpreted as impacts of the ICCL, since there were many new participants tested in the second round. Instead, the scores for the full sample provide information on the overall skill levels of lab participants at any particular time. The next section analyzes the impacts of the lab on participants’ computer skills by focusing on the results for those participants who took the test in both December and June.

### Changes in Skill Levels Over Time

In this section, we look only at the scores of the 14 people who took the test in both December and June. These are the people who have been using the computer lab at least six months. In this group, there were six children, three youth, and five adults. This group of participants is referred to as the “paired sample” because, for the statistical analysis, each individual’s score from the baseline round is “paired” with his or her score in the second round.

The results indicate that lab participants improved their computer skills over the six-month period between December and June. As can be seen in table 3, the average score for the group as a whole increased from 54 to 72 (p<.01). The improvements in scores were particularly pronounced among children and youth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Area</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Youth</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12/01(n=6)</td>
<td>6/02(n=6)</td>
<td>12/01(n=3)</td>
<td>6/02(n=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: Basic Operating</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: WWW</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: E-mail</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Word processing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Advanced WP</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Advanced operating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Average</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The impacts were larger and the statistical significance of the results was stronger for the youngest participants. Children experienced the largest increase in skills, with a doubling in their average scores from 24 to 50 (p<.01). Average scores for youth increased from 65 to 80 (p<.10), which represents a 23 percent increase over the base score of 65 percent. Adults’ average scores increased by about 11 percent, from 84 to 93 percent, but this increase was only marginally significant in a statistical sense (p=.12).

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The results indicate that the ICCL had a positive impact on the computer skills of participants. Children, in particular, experienced the strongest increase in skills. The children who took the assessment in both rounds were able to complete twice as many tasks in June as they had in December. On the other hand, children as a group have the lowest overall skill levels. Even those children who attended the lab more than six months were able to complete only half of the tasks on the assessment. This implies that children, in particular, could benefit from specific programming to help them develop their computer skills.

Youth also experienced improvements in their computer skills, although there were only three youth who took the test in both December and June. Initial skill levels for youth were about the same in both periods, with youth able to complete about two-thirds of the tasks on the assessment. There is the possibility that some of the gains in computer skills for both children and youth were due to computer instruction in school, rather than being entirely attributable to participation in ICCL.

The results for the adults were not as obvious. The five adults who took the test in both December and June experienced some improvements in skills, although these findings are statistically weak. The 14 adults who began attending the lab sometime between January and June 2002 had lower starting skill levels than the adults who began attending the lab when it first opened. These “late-joining” adults were able to complete only two-thirds of the tasks on the assessment, which means that there is more room for improvement in their skill levels. However, the impact of the lab on adults may be less about improving computer skills and more about improving their access to information through the Internet.

Even without formal on-site training programs, the ICCL is having a positive impact on the computer skills of community members. It offers a well-equipped, Internet-connected lab with regular operating hours, staffed by qualified community volunteers. The Irondale Community Computer Lab appears to be making a difference in the lives of the children, youth, and adults of tiny Irondale, Missouri, serving as a successful model of skills development through community computing.
APPENDIX 1: TASK-BASED COMPUTER SKILLS ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

Evaluator Name ________________________  
Participant Name ________________________  
Date ________________  

Note: Check [4] the blank for successfully completed tasks and place an X in the blank for tasks that are not completed successfully

Skill Area 1: Basic Computer and Operating System Skills

_____ Skill Set 1.1: Identifying basic components of the computer

_____ Step 1: Identify the CPU [main part of the computer]
_____ Step 2: Identify the keyboard
_____ Step 3: Identify the mouse
_____ Step 4: Identify the monitor
_____ Step 5: Identify the printer

_____ Skill Set 1.2: Turning on the computer, opening a program, using the mouse

_____ Step 1: Turn on the computer
_____ Step 2: Open the Internet Explorer program
_____ Step 3: Exit the program

_____ Skill Set 1.3: Multi-tasking: running two programs at once, closing programs

_____ Step 1: Open the Internet Explorer program
_____ Step 1: Open Word without closing Internet Explorer
_____ Step 2: Without closing Word, return to Internet Explorer
   EVALUATOR: Instruct the person to exit both programs

_____ Skill Set 1.4: Opening and closing files

   EVALUATOR: Tell the person how to open the Computer Skills folder on the desktop then open the St. Louis Rams folder so the document Marshall Faulk can be seen

_____ Step 1: Open the document named Marshall Faulk
_____ Step 2: Close the document

_____ Skill Set 1.5: Saving files to a disk

   EVALUATOR: Give the person the formatted disk

_____ Step 1: Insert a disk
_____ Step 2: Save the document named Marshall Faulk to the disk
Skill Set 1.6: Finding and opening files on disk

Step 1: Open the document named *A Very Short Story* on the disk
Step 2: Close the document and remove the disk
EVALUATOR: Instruct the person to exit Word.

Skill Set 1.7: Using the CD-ROM drive

Step 1: Insert the ________________________ CD
Step 2: Start the ________________________ program
Step 3: Exit the program
Step 4: Eject the CD [take the CD out]

Skill Area 2: World-Wide Web

EVALUATOR ASKS: *Have you ever used the World-Wide Web [internet] before?*

Yes ____ No ____ [If the answer is no, do not administer this skill area. If yes, continue.]

Skill Set 2.1: Connecting to the world wide web [if not a dedicated line]

EVALUATOR: Skip this Skill Set if you have a full-time connection
Step 1: Connect to the internet
Step 2: Check your connection status

Skill Set 2.2: Searching the web by using a search engine, following links, and going backwards.

EVALUATOR: Make sure the computer is connected to the internet
Step 1: Open Internet Explorer [get on the internet]
Step 2: Go to the Yahoo search engine
Step 3: Find a web site about your favorite musical group or artist
Step 4: Go back to the Yahoo page

Skill Set 2.3: Going to a specific URL, setting a bookmark, returning to your homepage, and using a bookmark

Step 1: Go to www.nfl.com
EVALUATOR: Tell the person that the URL [web address] is on the index card
Step 2: Use the Rams “logo” link to find the St. Louis Rams page
Step 3: Bookmark the site [add to “Favorites” in Internet Explorer]
EVALUATOR: If the site is already book marked, have the person overwrite the previous bookmark.
Step 4: Return to your homepage [wherever you started]
Step 5: Use your bookmark to return to the St. Louis Rams page
EVALUATOR: Keep the person on the St. Louis Rams page for the next Skill Set. If they could not find it, tell them how to get there.

Skill Set 2.4: Saving images from the web and viewing them

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Skill Area 3: Electronic Mail

EVALUATOR ASKS: Have you ever used email before?

Yes ____ No ____ [If the answer is no, do not administer this skill area. If yes, continue.]

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Skill Set 3.1: Sending and receiving e-mail

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Skill Set 3.2: Sending an attachment and downloading an attachment

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Skill Area 4: Word Processing Basics

EVALUATOR ASKS: Have you ever used a word processor such as Word before?

Yes ____ No ____ [If the answer is no, do not administer this skill area. If yes, continue.]

Skill Set 4.1: Entering, editing, and deleting text

Step 1: Open Word [or other word processing program]
EVALUATOR: If person cannot open Word, tell them how and continue
Step 2: Type the following: “Hello,”
Step 3: Move down the page two lines
Step 4: Type these two sentences: “You won a trip. Call for the prize.”
Step 5: Edit [change] the first sentence to read “You have not won a trip.”
Step 6: Delete [erase] the second sentence and type “Try again.”
EVALUATOR: Instruct the person to close the document without saving

Skill Set 4.2: Selecting, cutting, copying, and pasting text

EVALUATOR: If it is not still open from Skill Area 1, instruct the person to open the document called Frog and Toad in the Computer Skills folder. You may have to tell them how step-by-step.
Step 1: Go to page 2 and select [highlight] the text on page 2
Step 2: Cut the selected text and paste it at the bottom of page 1 [move it to the bottom of page 1]
Step 3: Copy the title of the story so you can paste it somewhere else
Step 4: Paste [put, insert] the title at the bottom of the page
EVALUATOR: Leave the document open and go to the next skill set

Skill Set 4.3: Selecting all of the text, undoing and redoing changes

EVALUATOR: Use the document Frog and Toad from the last skill set
Step 1: Select [highlight] all of the text [words] and delete [erase] it
Step 2: Undo the deletion [get the words back]
Step 3: Redo the deletion [erase the words again without using delete key]
EVALUATOR: Instruct the person to undo the deletion again. Leave the document open and go to the next skill set.
Skill Set 4.4: Previewing and printing documents

EVALUATOR: Use the document *Frog and Toad* from the last skill set

Step 1: Use the print preview feature to view how the document will look when it’s printed

Step 2: Close print preview

Step 3: Print the document

EVALUATOR: Leave the document open and go to the next skill set

Skill Set 4.5: Saving files with a new name and deleting documents

Step 1: Save the document as [save it with a new name] *Frog* on the desktop

Step 2: Close the document named *Frog* and delete [erase] it

Skill Area 5: Word Fundamentals [FOR PERSONS 12 AND OLDER ONLY]

EVALUATOR: If the person skipped Skill Area 4 because they have no experience with word processors, skip this Skill Area too.

Skill Set 5.1: Changing text alignment, font type, size, color, and style; and underlining text

EVALUATOR: Instruct the person to open the document called *A Very Short Story* in the *Computer Skills* folder

Step 1: Select [highlight] the title line that says “A Very Short Story”

Step 2: Center the title line

Step 3: Change font type to Arial

Step 4: Change font style to bold, italic, and underlined

Step 5: Change font size to 24 point

Step 6: Change font color to blue

EVALUATOR: Leave the document open and go to the next skill set

Skill Set 5.2: Checking spelling and using the thesaurus, finding and replacing words

EVALUATOR: Use the document *A Very Short Story* from last skill set

Step 1: Check document spelling

Step 2: Use the “find” feature to find the word “glob”

Step 3: Use the thesaurus to find a word that means the same as “glob” and replace “glob” with the word that you choose

Step 4: Use the “find and replace” feature to find the next occurrence of “glob” and replace it with the same word that you chose earlier

EVALUATOR: Leave the document open and go to the next skill set
Skill Set 5.3: Viewing documents using the normal and print layout views [“page layout in earlier versions of WORD”], using the “page setup” feature to change margins and paper orientation

EVALUATOR: Use the document *A Very Short Story* from last skill set
Step 1: Change view to normal
Step 2: Change view to page [or print] layout
Step 3: Open the “page setup” feature
Step 4: Change the left and right margins to 1.5 inches
Step 5: Change the paper orientation from “portrait” to “landscape”
Step 6: Close page setup
EVALUATOR: Leave the document open and go to the next skill set

Skill Set 5.4: Inserting page numbers and inserting dates

EVALUATOR: Use the document *A Very Short Story* from last skill set
Step 1: Insert a page number at the bottom center of the document
Step 2: Insert today’s date at the top of the page
EVALUATOR: Instruct the person to close the document without saving

Skill Set 5.5: Creating numbered and bulleted lists

Step 1: Open the document called *Grocery List* in the *Computer Skills* folder
Step 2: Using the “bullets and numbering” feature, number the items in the grocery list
Step 3: Using the “bullets and numbering” feature, bullet the items in the grocery list
EVALUATOR: Instruct the person to close the document without saving

Skill Area 6: More Advanced Operating System Skills

Skill Set 6.1: Navigating among folders, creating and naming folders, moving and copying files, deleting folders

Step 1: Open the *Computer Skills* folder
Step 2: Create a new folder within the *Computer Skills* folder
Step 3: Name the new folder *Kansas City Chiefs*
Step 4: Move the document named *Marshall Faulk* to the *Kansas City Chiefs* folder [a copy of *Marshall Faulk* should not remain in *St. Louis Rams* folder]
Step 5: Copy the document *Marshall Faulk* and put it back in the *St. Louis Rams* folder [the Chiefs will never get Marshall Faulk]
Step 6: Delete [erase] the folder named *Kansas City Chiefs*
Skill Set 6.2: Finding files

Step 1: Find the program called *Magic.exe*
EVALUATOR: If the person could not find the file, tell them how to get to it WITHOUT using the “find file” tool.

Skill Set 6.3: Installing and uninstalling programs

Step 1: Install *Magic.exe* on the hard drive
EVALUATOR: If necessary, tell the person which drive to install it on. However, the program itself should choose the proper drive.

Step 2: Open the game, *Sean’s Magic Slate*, that you installed
EVALUATOR: If the person can’t find the game, tell them how to find it

Step 3: Close *Sean’s Magic Slate*

Step 4: Uninstall *Sean’s Magic Slate*
APPENDIX 2: EVALUATOR INSTRUCTION SHEET
FOR TASK-BASED COMPUTER SKILLS ASSESSMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

This document is meant to guide the evaluator through the task-based skills assessment process. It lists the steps that the evaluator must take to prepare for each skill set. It also provides some important instructions meant to help the evaluator get ready to do the assessments.

2. SETTING UP

1. First, create a folder named Computer Skills on the computer’s hard drive. The Computer Skills folder and the files and folders that you place in it will be used for many skill sets.


3. Within the Computer Skills folder, create two new folders and name them St. Louis Rams and Roxy.

4. Place the file called “Marshall Faulk.doc” in the St. Louis Rams folder and place the file called “Roxys ABC Fish.exe” in the Roxy folder.

5. Prepare a blank, formatted disk and save the document “A Very Short Story.doc” to it.

6. Using the instructions below, either type or write information needed in the blanks provided in the assessment instrument, then either print out or photocopy sufficient instruments for all participants.

7. Print out the “Cue Card”.

Skill Area 1: Basic Computer and Operating System Skills

- Skill set 1.1: Make sure the computer is off prior to starting.

- Skill set 1.2: If Internet Explorer and Word are not on any of your computers, select two commonly used programs on the computer and use them.

- Skill set 1.3: Be prepared to explain how to open the St. Louis Rams folder through the “My Computer” feature in a step-by-step fashion.
• Skill set 1.6 and 1.7: Provide the disk that contains the file “A Very Short Story”.

• Skill set 1.8: Provide a CD-ROM program that is either already installed on the computer or that runs only off the CD and write the name of the program in the blank. The program can be a popular game, an encyclopedia, or other program.

Skill Area 2: World-Wide Web

• For this skill area, the evaluator must make sure that Adobe Acrobat Reader is installed on the computer that will be used for the assessment. If it is not, download it from the web and install it.

• Skill set 2.1: If the computer is on a network with full-time internet access, this skill set can be skipped.

• Skill set 2.3 to 2.5: The person being assessed will need the “Cue Card” with the FCRP URL on it.

• Skill set 2.4: Write the name of YOUR program site in the blank.

Skill Area 3: Electronic Mail

• Skill sets 3.1 and 3.2: The evaluator should use a general program email account. A general account can be set up using Yahoo mail or Hotmail if one does not already exist. The person being evaluated should use this account to send and receive the email message. If you are using Yahoo or Hotmail, add the account ID and Password to the “Cue Card”.

• Skill set 3.1: Write the name of the email program to be used in the blank.

• Skill sets 3.1 and 3.2: Write the address of the general email account on the “Cue Card”.

Skill Area 4: Word Processing Basics

• Skill set 4.1: Be prepared to explain how to open the Computer Skills folder through the “My Computer” feature in a step-by-step fashion.

Skill Area 5: Word Fundamentals

• Skill set 5.3: In older versions of Word, there are two main “view” features: “normal” and “page layout”. In newer versions, the “page layout” view is called “print layout”. Instruct the person being evaluated according to the version of Word you are using.
Skill Area 6: More Advanced Operating System Skills

- Skill sets 6.2 & 6.3: Write the name of the hard drive in the blanks.

- Skill set 6.3: Be prepared to explain how to find the file Roxys ABC Fish.exe in the Computer Skills folder through the “My Computer” feature or “Windows Explorer” feature in a step-by-step fashion. DO NOT use the “Find File” feature.

3. ASSESSMENT INSTRUCTIONS

1. Complete all of the steps described above in the “Setting Up” section before starting.

2. Try to keep distractions (noise, activities) to a minimum while giving the assessment.

3. Before starting, you must obtain “verbal assent” from the participant. Say the following (or something similar) to the person being evaluated.

   “Thank you for agreeing to participate in this assessment. You do not have to participate in this assessment if you do not want to and you can stop at anytime. You will not be penalized in any way if you decide not to participate.”

4. Also before starting, you need to let the person know that he or she is not expected to know how to do everything and that it is OK if they can’t do something. The main thing is to make the person understand that it’s alright if they can’t do something. You should say something like:

   “This is a hard test and we don’t expect you to know how to do everything that we are going to ask you to do. If you don’t know how to do something and don’t think that you can figure out how to do it, just say so and we will move on to the next part. No big deal.”

5. Before starting, write your name and the name of the person being evaluated in the spaces provided. Make sure that both the first and last names are legible and that they are the same as the ones used in the output tracking spreadsheets.

6. Use the Evaluation Instrument as a basic script, reading each step within the skill sets as instructions to the person being assessed. For example, for skill set 1.3, you would start by saying something like “Now I would like you to find a document named “Marshall Faulk” on the “C” drive (or whatever drive is the main hard drive).” When the person locates the file, you will say something like “Now I would like you to open the document”, and so on. DO NOT read the Skill Area heading that tells what the area is assessing. Just start with “Step 1”.

7. When giving directions to the person being assessed, you may rephrase the instructions in order to clarify what is expected (rephrase computer jargon), but you must be careful not
to give hints about how to do it. For example, if the person does not understand a technical term such as “cut-and-paste”, you might use “move” instead. Alternative words are provided in parentheses next to difficult terminology in the instrument.

8. The skill areas and skill sets should be done in order.

9. Skill Area 5: Word Fundamentals should NOT be administered to children 10 and under.

10. It is important to remember that there are often several ways to accomplish a given task. As long as the task is accomplished (without using “HELP”), the means do not matter.

11. Pay close attention to the notes to the EVALUATOR in the instrument itself. Especially important are the instructions that tell you what to do if a person being evaluated cannot do something basic like open Word. Remember, if you have to tell a person how to complete a step, the person does not get credit for the step.

12. If a person struggles with a step, give him or her about 30 seconds to find a solution. If after 30 seconds he or she cannot complete the step, gently say that it is time to move on and go to the next step.