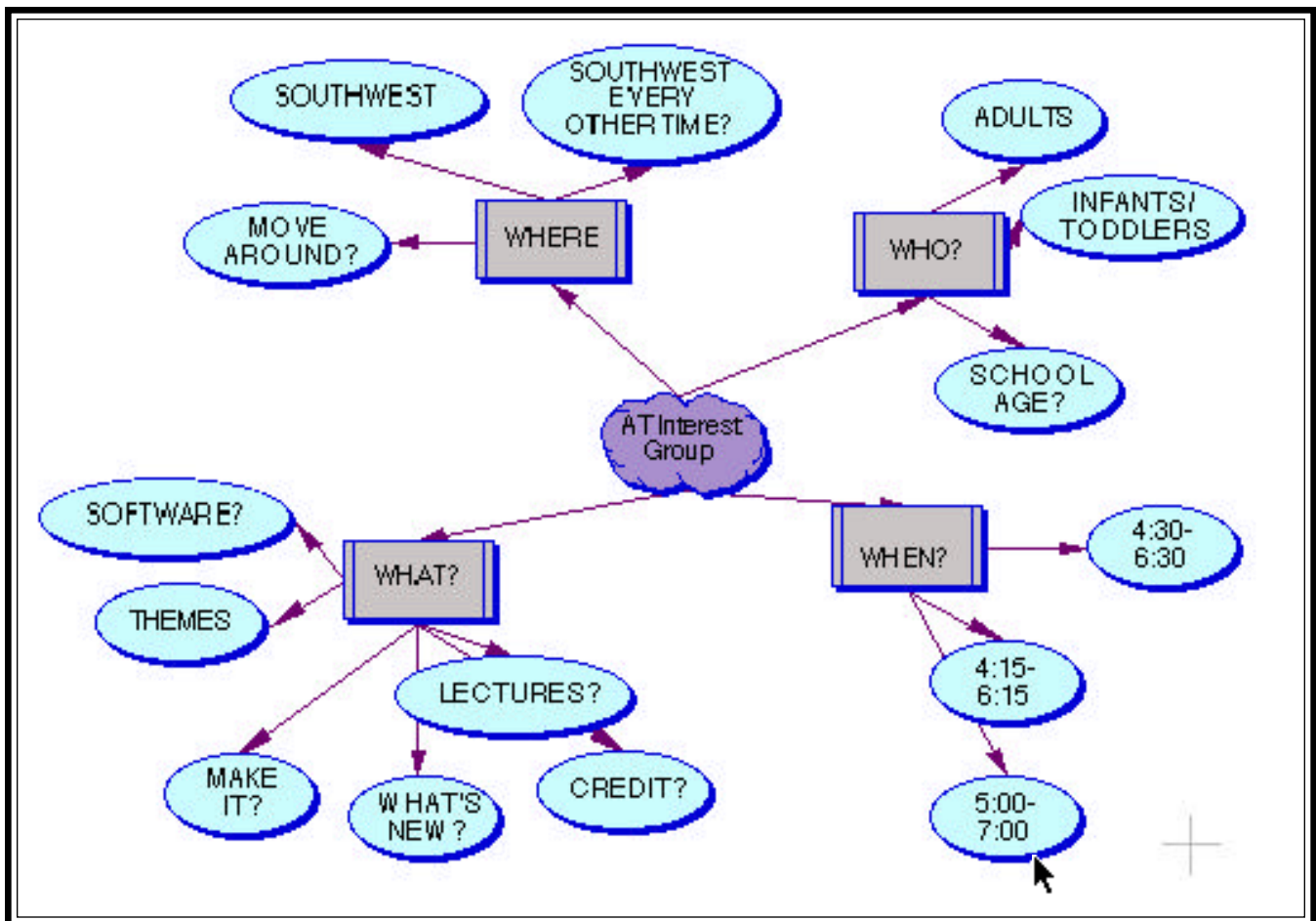# *Starting an AT Interest Group*

**WHY?**  An AT Interest group can provide networking and information sharing in a community. Groups can also give support to people dealing with difficult issues.   You may even be able to offer CEU hours for meetings.

**WHO?**  Ideally, groups should be inclusive, providing support to parents, teachers, AAC users, therapists, and vendors.

**HOW?**  A core group can start a flyer, which is shared through snail mail or e-mail. Start off with a bang - be sure to offer an exciting presentation for the first meeting.

**WHAT?**  This is the core of the issue!  It is crucial to offer enough to keep people interested and coming.  AT groups typically change across time.  Once a year, it is important to meet to decide features such as who you are targeting, where you will meet, when meetings will be held, and what will happen at meetings.  The graphic below shows discussion topics for our AT group in Phoenix, summarized using Inspiration software (www.inspiration.com).

# *Ideas for AT Interest Group Meetings*

## SET A THEME FOR THE EVENING:
**Curriculum Area:** Science, math, etc. Focusing on a specific area (ex: modifying science experiments; using poetry to jumpstart writing) seems to help.
**Comparing / Contrasting Materials:** Ex: word processors, graphic organizers, etc.
**What's New:** Introducing new devices, software, etc.
**Specific Focus:** We sometimes pick a small topic such as: gardening / favorite books, and bring curriculum materials, songs, and communication displays to share

## LECTURE: A short slide show on a topic of interest can be a big draw. Take turns being the presenter. In general, 20 - 30 minutes is long enough for a presentation.

## TRY IT OR DEMOS: Participants get to see it or have hands on at a 'station' with:
**New Device:** this can include simple and high tech devices.
**Switches & Toys:** remember not to focus only on AAC devices
**New Software:** it's so much easier to 'try before you buy'

## SHOW & SHARE: Participants bring materials to show and copies to share such as:
**New Books:** including books for students and textbooks
**Overlays:** share light tech overlays for books, cooking activities, songboards, etc.
**Software Setups:** participants might bring disks or CDs with setups developed for software such as: BuildAbility, IntelliPics, IntelliTalk, PowerPoint, Inspiration, etc.

## MAKE IT / TAKE IT: One person brings materials to make a simple project such as:
**Page Fluffers:** paper + foam + paper clip, to separate the pages of a book
**Write On Boards:** simple write-on / wipe-off board
**Songboard:** songboard for Martin Luther King Day, etc.
Typically, projects should be completed in about 15 minutes or less.

## CASE STUDIES: Case studies can be shared periodically, or one per meeting. Many participants are isolated, and don't have people to share ideas. We have used Inspiration software to summarize our brainstorming process.

## SNACKS: We're all more likely to attend an end-of-the-day meeting if we can expect snacks. One person volunteers to bring snacks for each meeting.

## DOOR PRIZE: We have found that door prizes significantly increase attendance!
Door prizes can be solicited from local vendors, statewide AT organizations, or local participants. Sample door prizes include:
**Books:** including books for students and books for teachers, such as those from local teacher stores.
**Software:** participants love authoring software so they can make the materials they see
**Software Setups:** perhaps a member of your group has created some really fun stuff that can be collected on a CD and given away as a prize
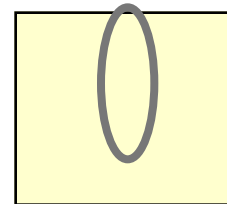**Movie passes, etc:** try to solicit prizes from local businesses!

# WHAT'S NEW IN AT??

## AT INTEREST GROUP MEETING!

| | |
|---|---|
| **When** | Tuesday, October 21, 2003 |
| **Where** | Southwest Human Development<br>202 E. Earll St. (1 block N of Thomas) |
| **What** | *New Stuff!!*<br>**Make It:** Page Fluffers!<br><br>**Demos:**<br>*Reps from various companies will be showing the new stuff unveiled at Closing the Gap* (and they won't even have to shoot you afterwords!!)<br><br>**Share It:** Bring in new stuff YOU have been doing! |
| **Planning** | Planning for future AT meetings |
| **Door Prize** | SWHD is donating some *BuildAbility* software. . . THANKS!!! Caroline is donating her new *Singing to Read* |
| **And???** | Food, of course! |

*BuildAbility*

# HOLIDAY FUN. . . & LEARNING!

## AT INTEREST GROUP MEETING!

| | |
|---|---|
| **When** | Tuesday, November 12, 4:30-6:30 |
| **Where** | Southwest Human Development<br>202 E. Earll Street |
| **What** | *Holidays Make Me Happy!!*<br>**Software:** *IntelliPics Studio*<br>**Dear Santa:** Ideas for writing that special Christmas list!<br>**Make It:** fun holiday or winter songboard<br>**Show 'n Tell 'n Share:** bring holiday stuff to show & share<br><br>**White Elephant AT Gift Exchange:** bring an AT gift that would be a great present for an AT user |
| **Planning** | Upcoming AT Meetings |
| **Door Prize** | SWHD is donating IntelliPics Studio - WOW!!! |
| **And???** | Food, of course! |

*IntelliPics Studio*

# WANTED! IDEAS FOR MY STUDENTS

## AT INTEREST GROUP MEETING!

**New Address!!!**

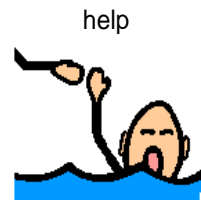| | |
|---|---|
| **When** | Tuesday, December 9, 2003, 4:30-6:30 |
| **Where** | Southwest Human Development 2850 N 24th St. (just S of Thomas) |
| **What** | *Case Studies +* **Make It:** Caroline will bring materials to make 'mini books!' |

My Friend

**Demos:**
*New BuildAbility stories - truly high interest / really low vocab!*

Play Ball by Jerry Stemach

help

**Share It:** Bring in info about one of your students so we can brainstorm

**Planning** Planning for future AT meetings

**Door Prize** SWHD is donating *Inspiration Software* . . . THANKS!!!

**Inspiration**

**And???** Food, of course!

# End of Year Plus!

## AT INTEREST GROUP MEETING!

| | |
|---|---|
| **When** | Tuesday, May 14 |
| **Where** | Southwest Human Development<br>202 E. Earll Street |
| **What** | The program will include stories and extension activities about cooking.  Bring your favorite symbol-based recipe books!<br>* *stories*<br>* *recipes*<br>* *computer activities* |
| **Planning** | Advance planning for next year! |
| **And???** | Yummmm!<br>It's our annual pot luck - bring your favorite or visit Domino Pizza! |