Sonocent Audio Notetaker: A Revolutionary New Approach for Note-taking

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Problem

Class lecture remains the principle method for communicating course content to students. Accordingly, notetaking during lecture is considered essential to student academic success (Titworth, 2001). The process of taking notes engages a student in the learning process and assists with deepening their comprehension and ability to synthesize new material (Katayama & Crooks, 2003).

But how hard is it to take good notes?

Notetaking can be challenging for all students; students typically record only 11-70% of the key information presented in lecture (Anderson and Armbruster, 1991). We can assume that students with disabilities such as learning disabilities in reading or writing, ADD/ADHD, Dyslexia, and other bona fide barriers that affect information processing (chronic pain, physical impairments, Autism Spectrum Disorders, etc.) would perform at this level or below. Furthermore, according to Piolat, Olive and Kellogg, (2004) it takes more cognitive effort to take notes from a lecture than it takes to play chess, read a book, or even read a sentence.

Considering that between 1990 and 2008, there was a 166% increase in students with disabilities in general education settings (McLeskey, Landers, Hoppey & Williamson, 2011) re-thinking notetaking has never been more timely and critical.

Typically, colleges and universities provide note-taking accommodation via an in-class note-taker, which may be a volunteer or student that is paid for providing a copy of his/her notes. In addition, faculty may provide a copy of their lecture notes to the student in lieu of a peer note-taker. However, recruiting student notetakers can be a challenge and payment for notes can be an expensive endeavor.

For example, if a college pays note-takers a stipend of $25 per credit for a typical three credit class, it is not uncommon for a college to pay as much as $10,000-$50,000 or more, per year on note-takers.

If peer notetakers are expensive and hard to find, is there a better alternative in the ever-changing realm of learning technology?

Sonocent Audio Notetaker, an effective, established learning technology software, is a cost effective tool that empowers all students to take more effective notes.
Evidence

Brazeau (2006) argued that active learning, considered a key aspect of student engagement, is reduced when students are not directly involved in the process of collecting and sorting information for notes. If a SWD only has a copy of another student’s notes or notes from an instructor, for example, he or she may be missing out on the critical active learning that occurs during the note-taking process; thinking about the information, sorting it, evaluating importance, and synthesizing with other related course material. Students with learning difficulties are often passive learners (2006); combining passive notes and passive learning strategies poses serious negative educational consequences for SWD.

When presented in lecture format, things like multiple concepts, facts and vocabulary may be difficult for students with LD to learn, especially if content is presented at a fast pace or is dense (Scruggs et. al, 2008). As a result, the notes that they take are often incomplete. If information is recorded poorly in their notes, students will more likely perform poorly on tests (Stringfellow & Miller, 2005).

Lastly, many students that use a notetaker also struggle greatly with reading comprehension. Even if the notes are perfect, how much of that information will the SWD actually be able to use? Accessible notes are a vital part of an accessible education and written notes are not very accessible for many SWD.

Traditional note-taking accommodation models place students at risk several times during the learning process; first as they learn during lectures, when they study their own inaccurate or incomplete notes after class, or try to read the notes provided to them by a student or faculty (Suritsky & Hughes, 1996).

Is the “level” playing field accidentally tilted for many students using traditional notetaking accommodations?

The evidence clearly indicates that traditional notetaking creates a deficit for many students with disabilities. With the ever-changing world of learning technology, it makes sense to review new ways of empowering all students to “take more effective notes.”
Why Sonocent Audio Notetaker?

There are several key reasons for the selection of Audio Notetaker. First, Audio Notetaker does not rely on words, which is critical for students with disability-related barriers that affect reading.

Audio Notetaker visualizes audio by creating bars of color that begin to grow when the instructor starts talking and end after each verbal pause. In essence, the lecture is “chunked” into manageable units of information without relying on written words. Audio Notetaker can incorporate an instructor’s PowerPoint, PDF’s, and other visual content for lecture, thus allowing students to record some basic annotation of the audio & visual either at that time or later after class.

In addition, Audio Notetaker recordings are more than just the audio recording a digital recorder, Smartphone, or laptop alone might create. Audio Notetaker creates an active, personal learning experience that fosters independence. Hadwin, Kirby and Woodhouse (1999) found that when lecture material is complex or challenging, simply listening results in higher achievement than taking notes. Use of this software provides the student a complete record of the class, allowing a student to go back after class and review the audio. As a result, Audio Notetaker provides the best possible solution; a student can focus on listening during class and review the lecture later, annotating and highlighting important lecture content. Audio Notetaker captures lecture in manageable, visual “chunks”, rather than a long tedious audio recording, so working with the lecture is easy.
Testimonials

Dakota (A community college student with a learning disability)

"I'm using audio note taker for my History class and I find it very helpful. After I'm done taking notes I can go back and see what I've missed and correct errors in my notes. It gives me confidence because I know I will have the lecture on hand and can refer to it whenever I need to. I find myself more prepared for class than I was before. I can check my written notes against my audio notes. I use the color-coding all the time with my notes to switch when my teacher is speaking compared to when we watch films."

Using Audio Notetaker provides a critical opportunity to increase retention and minimize information loss in a “hands on” environment, allowing students with kinesthetic learning styles to shine. Students can interact with lecture material and “play” with the material after class.

Garth (A community college student with ASD)

"Audio Notetaker helped me a lot this past year...I felt more relaxed that by recording my class lectures, I could go back and listen to any details that I couldn’t remember. In one of my classes, the instructor changed the exam dates several times, which became confusing. I was able to go back and listen to the lecture to find out the actual date of the exam. Audio Notetaker also helped me a great deal in my computer networking class. While I was practicing with my instructor on physically putting together a network, I could record the discussion and get all the details and steps I needed to be able to study/practice for my final exam. I recommend Audio Notetaker for students on the spectrum."

A 2008 study found that students scored higher on exams when they had a chance to review a podcast and PowerPoint and take notes on the audio, rather than relying solely on written lecture notes. Furthermore, students that created their own notes from the podcast obtained higher test scores (McKinney, Dyck & Luber, 2009). Considering that compared to a podcast, Audio Notetaker provides a superior visual anchor that is both interactive and organized into chucks of audio, one could infer the same positive results or better for students using Audio Notetaker.
Save money. Lots of Money

Audio Notetaker is a cost-savings tool as well. Providing notes to 100 students via a paid peer notetaker in 2 classes each, per semester (at $25 per credit), costs a college $30,000 in one academic year.

If a college decides to purchase individual Audio Notetaker licenses for 100 students at $150 per license, the total one time cost is $15,000. If you assume these students will complete their degrees, that savings is even higher: a college would save $45,000 ($15,000 vs. $60,000) of total cost for 2 year degree seeking SWD and a whopping $105,000 ($15,000 vs. $120,000) for 4 year degrees.

Audio Notetaker is an innovative and interactive note-taking tool. It serves as an “anchor” for recording, reviewing, and interacting with class lecture. As a result, it empowers students to work to their strengths and be active learners, which copies of peer or instructor lecture notes noticeably do not provide. Inclusive education predicates that all students can have the opportunity for effectively carrying out the critical task of learning. Audio Notetaker is a vital, inclusive tool that puts the student with a disability in control of their education.

About Sonocent

Celebrating over 5 years of Audio Notetaker, Sonocent is a leading innovator in productivity software, renowned for its visual and interactive platform. Users of Audio Notetaker benefit from one easy to access hub which stores slides, images, text, audio recordings and other notes in one place.

To find out more about Sonocent Audio Notetaker visit

www.sonocent.com
References


