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Hello Microsoft staff! Wow, do I feel so honored to be here today to talk to you about assistive technology, specifically my use with a Tobii and Microsoft Surface with eye gaze. My name is Casey Rohrer and I am in 10th grade at Mira Costa High School in Manhattan Beach, CA. This device in front of me is a Tobii Dynavox and the device next to me on the stand is my Microsoft Surface with eye gaze. Today I am going to speak to you with my “big Tobii” because the voice volume is much louder. Both devices are communication devices for individuals that cannot speak.

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The Tobii and Microsoft surface with eye gaze have made a profound impact on my life. Without them I couldn't communicate with the world and I wouldn't be here today speaking to all of you. I think people have a lot to learn from one another and I hope you leave here today with a little more knowledge and understanding about these amazing pieces of equipment.

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Let's start with a little bit about myself and my journey to receiving an eye gaze system. I have a disorder called Cerebral Palsy. Does anyone know what cerebral palsy is?

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Cerebral means your “brain's cerebrum”.

The “cerebrum” is the part of the brain that controls your motor movement.

Can you clap your hands?

5

Good your cerebrum is working.

Now tap your toes.

6

Good.

Your “cerebrum” is helping you move your toes.

Now freeze, don't move!

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“Palsy” describes the paralysis of movement in your body parts. Meaning you can't move.

All of you are able to control your body and its movements. A person, like me, with cerebral palsy is not able to do that. Cerebral palsy is a disorder that affects a person's ability to move their own body, and for some of us, even speak.

But thanks to these amazing computer devices, I am able to speak, and I was also able to write up this speech I am currently delivering to you. Both devices have an eye gaze reader that reads where my eyes are looking at the screen, so I am able to type out everything I want to say, and speak.

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My Microsoft Surface with eye gaze, because of its smaller size, is a great device for me to use while I am watching a movie or at a high school football game, because it blocks less of my vision of the field. Both of these devices are really easy to use to communicate for an Old Pro like myself, but if you are a new user, it can be a little bit tricky. I had to really practice at keeping my head still to maintain steady focus with my eyes. I will note that Tobii, with its larger size, makes it easier for new users to become more fluent with their eye gaze focus first. Never ever give up. It takes a lot of practice to become a fluent user with an eye gaze system. I guarantee though, once you get the hang of it, these machines will change your life.

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Let's talk about the dark days before the Tobii and Microsoft Surface with eye gaze. I used to use a ton of different devices, from switches to buttons, both I had to hit with either my hand, my head, or my foot. None of them really worked and I was not efficient with using them. I also could only say basic things like "yes" or "no". Communication was very limited.

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I got my first Tobii when I was in second grade, a day I will never forget. The day the world heard my voice, my thoughts. Before Tobii, it was so frustrating for me, and my family, I couldn't express myself and my parents had to play 20 questions with me, asking "yes" "no" questions for me to respond, using only eye movements. I am so thankful for eye gaze technology and I can't wait to see what new apps and products that Microsoft has in store for eye gaze users.

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Currently, on both devices, I can surf the web, watch YouTube, Skype, email, type and store speeches, like this one, and save dates to my calendar. On my Tobii, I am able to make phone calls and even text message, an important part of being in high school. I can access my Quick Talk pages to make quick comments and easily respond to questions. Being able to use my voice to share my thoughts, wishes, and needs, has changed my life. I can speak up for myself.

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Now thinking forward to looking for jobs, I can make a preset communication page to access quick comments and questions that I would be using daily. For example, I would love to

deliver pizzas. I would be able to preprogram on both devices a communication page for my job with sayings like, "Here is your piping hot pizza.", "Here is your order.", "Thank you for ordering with us.", or "See you next time."

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Tobii and Microsoft have helped me access my education in several ways. I can access a calculator which I can use for my math class. It has also helped me in my Drama class because I have all sorts of different voices on the device. This has been so useful because I love to act and with it, I can try out for anybody! Once I played the "Cute Boy" and was able to do the "Hey Ladies" voice! However, the Microsoft Surface with eye gaze, only has one male voice, so I would not be able to use the voice change system during drama or theater. Being in high school, socializing is so important and my devices have provided me a voice during high school football games, going to the movies with my friends, chatting in the halls between bells.

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Also thanks to my communication devices, I am able to advocate for myself. For example, I spend a lot of time at the hospital, in therapy groups, and at various doctor appointments. These devices make it possible for me to be heard during my appointments. I am able to be an active member in my medical visits and treatments. I find it very helpful to email my doctors questions and comments before each visit so I am prepared and have time get my thoughts and concerns out.

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There are a few things I would like everyone here to understand when communicating with an individual using a Tobii or Microsoft Surface with eye gaze. You have to be patient while talking with a person like me. This was very hard for my friends when we were little because they would just lose patience and run away. This made me feel sad. But now, since we're older, we have full on conversations! It is important to wait for my verbal response. Many listeners just want to read my screen, it is important to let us users speak.

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As much as I love my Tobii and think it is a fantastic, life changing device, there is one improvement the device still needs. Hopefully all of you tech peeps here today can start brainstorming to help fix this problem. I am unable to use this device outside because of the glare from the sun. It is frustrating to not be able to communicate when I leave my house or when I am out with friends at the beach. My surface pro is super tiny and light which makes it very easy to travel with. However, it has a quiet voice, and if you use the device daily, you will need big Tobii so others can hear you. Hopefully these problems will be solved quickly since this is the day and age of great technology.

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My Microsoft Surface with eye gaze saves the day when Tobii is "sick". When my "big Tobii" is in the shop or being worked on, I am able to use my Microsoft Surface with eye gaze. I love this device as well, but there are a few things I hope you at Microsoft are able to work on

fixing. It needs to be louder and I would like to be able to text and make calls from the device. For a person like me that can't use a regular computer, I am so excited that you are stopping, collaborating, and listening. Did you see what I did there? Did I mention I'm a huge Vanilla Ice fan.

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It has been hard living with cerebral palsy but there are many reasons it is ok too. My Tobii and Surface Pro are big reasons for that. I am able to communicate with the world. I am able to teach people about patience, acceptance, and that my disability doesn't make me who I am, I make me who I am. I am a brother, a son, a friend, a tenth grader, a director, a producer, an actor, a comedian, and now thanks to you, a public speaker.

Recently I spoke to a group of pre-med students. They had a few questions for me that I thought I would share with you, along with my response.

#1. Are you able to store phrases in your devices? Yes. I worked on this speech for a week and was able to store and save it so I could come and speak to all of you. I also store "quick phrases," like, "hi," "yes," "no," and "do you want to hang out?"

#2. Are you able to change the voice? Yes. I can change my voice on my Tobii but not my Microsoft Surface with eye gaze. I can go from a 1 year old to a 90 year old in minutes. Useful, yes, it helps with my "acting." I am in Drama class at Mira Costa High School and have been able to play different characters in skits with my classmates.

#3. Have you even been misunderstood and how did you fix it? Yes. Before I had these devices I would have to keep my body as still as possible and "kick" when my parents would grab the item I was looking for, for example, if I wanted something to drink. This was always a long game of 21 questions. Or a hundred..

4. Have you found other ways to express yourself? Yes. I laugh at anything funny, I cry at anything sad, and I scream to anything scary. I also use my eyes to move up and down to answer "yes" and my eyes to move left and right to answer "no." One thing that I have been very vocal making "happy sounds" about, was the trip up to San Francisco. It had me very excited.

#5. Your passion is the theater. How have these communication devices benefited you with theater? Yes, theater is my passion. I wrote, directed, and starred in my very own play, Once Upon A Road Trip. It was based on a crazy family vacation we went on one summer. The play was performed at the community theater in Hermosa Beach. I have been in several plays there as well. Musicals, theater, and play productions are my jam.

#6. What therapies do you receive? Do you have physical therapy? I receive speech and physical therapy and have been doing those my whole life. My Tobii and Microsoft Surface have helped me be able to communicate with my therapists during sessions.

#7. Do you like to travel? Where is your favorite place to travel? How has the Tobii and Microsoft Surface with eye gaze helped during traveling? I love to travel and I LOVE to

research hotels and locations before traveling using my communication device. My favorite trip has been going to Las Vegas because it has extremely cool themed hotels and lots of productions to go see at night. Using my devices I am able to book hotels, make reservations for dinners, and check and see if locations are handicap accessible.

#8. How will your eye gaze communication devices help you fulfill your dreams? After high school I would love to move to New York to become a world famous playwright. Keep a listening ear for my name at the Tonys!

Thank you for listening and thank you Microsoft and Tobii Dynavox for having me here today to speak. I am glad I was able to come and hopefully teach you a thing or two about using these communication devices and I look forward to seeing what technology you continue creating.

Before I ask if you have any questions, please remember to be patient while I respond, remember I have to type out my answer with my eyes. Also before I hop back in my limousine, be sure to meet me in the lobby for an autograph. Thank you very much and do you have any questions?