Chapter 3: Children as Our Technology Design Partners

"That's silly!" "I'm bored!" "I like that!" "Why do I have to do this?" "What is this for?" These are all important responses and questions that come from children. As our design partners in developing new technologies, children can offer bluntly honest views of their world. They have their own likes, dislikes, and needs that are not the same as adults’ (Druin, Stewart, Proft, Bederson, & Hollan, 1997). As the development of new technologies for children becomes commonplace in industry and university research labs, children's input into the design and development process is critical. We need to establish new development methodologies that enable us to stop and listen, and learn to collaborate with children of all ages. In the chapter that follows, a discussion of new research methodologies will be presented. (Also cross-referenced as UMIACS-TR-98-20)