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TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

The traditional definition of literacy is the ability to read and write. With the rapid development of new technologies, the nature of literacy is undergoing a rapid metamorphosis. Thus in addition to reading and writing, the current definition of literacy also includes the ability to learn, comprehend, and interact with technology in a meaningful way.

The literature is rich with examples of technology in the classroom. It helps the emergent learner, students with disabilities, students with language disabilities and the gifted child. With the cultural and socioeconomic diversity in our schools today, teaching effectively to these different levels of ability, background, interests, learning styles and modalities is a major challenge. We usually teach to the majority since it is somewhat impractical to try to tailor teaching to each student. Too basic an instruction will help the struggling learner but bore the gifted and vice versa. Thus poorer students are left hanging in their confusion, and the brightest students miss exciting challenges. With computers as tutors, each student has the ability to work at their own pace.

Often, students are too confused or embarrassed to ask questions because they don’t want to show their ignorance. With individualized computer instruction, students can always immediately request help if something is unclear. Computers help to make it more interactive. They are extremely effective with the struggling learners because they (unlike humans) have unlimited patience. Computers can teach via a multitude of modalities depending on the learning style of the student (Bennett, 2002).

The computer can also be used to educate the smarter students who easily get bored in a traditional classroom since they reach their goal faster. With computers, students that finish a unit can go to the next one immediately. For these bright students, the challenges that computers can offer encourage self-directed learning.

For a teacher, technology can be used as an information tool and can be separated into four categories:

1. Research: finding and gathering new and old information