ShaRetha Crawford

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Assistive technology is defined as software or devices that facilitate the process of learning for an individual with a disability (Roblyer & Doering, 2012, p. 403). This can range from something as simple as a calculator to something as complex as a text-to-Braille converter. Although assistive technology does not eliminate the disability, it does make it possible for students with disabilities to use their strengths to make up for the challenges they face in order to reach their full potential. Above all, students with disabilities have the opportunity to experience a feeling of independence and self-confidence with the use of assistive technology. There are numerous devices and software programs available for students with disabilities, but educators have the responsibility to determine which one or ones will help each particular student succeed in learning the best.  
  
  
**Mild Disabilities:**  
  
“Mild disabilities are considered to be the most prevalent type of disability” (Roblyer & Doering, 2012). This type of disability consists of learning and emotional disabilities, as well as mental retardation. Some examples are those students with dyslexia and ADD. Students with mild disabilities do not understand concepts in the same way as their grade-level peers. There are many tools available to help these students succeed in their learning environment, such as reading skill software, text-to-speech products, word prediction software, games, tutorials, and much more (Roblyer & Doering, 2012).  
  
One great technology for students with Mild disabilities is a [Livescribe](http://www.livescribe.com/en-us/) pen which reads aloud what the students has written. Students can also scroll the pen over other text and it reads it to them. Another great AT is [Merit Software](http://www.meritsoftware.com/solutions/special_ed_learning_disabilities/index.php).This company offers several different software programs that will assist students with mild learning disabilities. They have programs for Basic and Intermediate Reading Comprehension, Process Writing, Mathematics, and much more.  
  
  
**Moderate and Severe Disabilities:**  
  
Students with moderate and severe disabilities have limited skill levels due to impaired cognitive ability and communication discrepancies. Educators try to ensure these students acquire "daily living skills such as personal hygiene, shopping, and use of public transportation" (Roblyer & Doering, 2012). They need assistive technology tools that help them learn these skills. As with any assistive technology tool, it will vary from student-to-student on what tool or tools will be used. The hardware can range from something as simple as a special keyboard to something as advanced as a device that talks for them.  
  
One great website is [eSpecial Needs](http://www.especialneeds.com/computer-software-daily-living-life-skills.html). They offer 35 different daily living and life skills software programs such as how to count money, how to tell time, hygiene, and much more. Another great tool is [AbleNet Quick Talker](http://www.ablenetinc.com/Assistive-Technology/Communication/QuickTalker). This device allows a child to communicate messages to parents and teachers. It is only one of many available assistive technology tools offered by AbleNet.  
  
  
**Physical Disabilities:**  
  
Students with physical disabilities have difficulty with fine motor skills. They may need special desks, special access to computers, special equipment to operate the computer, such as a special mouse or keyboard. Again, each student is different, so their assistive technology will be as well (Roblyer & Doering, 2012).  
  
Some great hardware for students with physical disabilities is ergonomic adjustable workstations. These can be used to adapt the child’s work environment to the child’s specific needs. There are also other types of ergonomic furniture that could be useful including chairs, desks, and tables. A great link that suggests some very good classroom accommodations for students with physical disabilities is<http://www.adasoutheast.org/ed/abouted/blueridge/motor.html>. I also found this interesting company called [Brain Gate](http://www.braingate.com/intellectual_property.html). Their software interacts with the student (or anyone for that matter) and allows them to control the movement of their wheelchair, for example, through a neural interface system they have developed. It was really interesting seeing how far technology has truly advanced!  
  
  
**Sensory disabilities:**  
  
Sensory disabilities are impairments such as hearing or vision impairments. Again, this will vary for each student on the level of the problem, but the disability can range from being only impaired but can see or hear to completely blind or deaf (Roblyer & Doering, 2012). This past year, I had a student who used a hearing aid. For her, I had to wear a microphone that she was connected wirelessly to her hearing aide. For students with vision impairment, some pieces of hardware that would be very useful are a Braille reader and a Braille printer ([Juliet Pro 60 Braille Embosser](http://www.brailler.com/julietpro60.htm)). Also, magnification systems such as the Genie Pro are very good to help enlarge images on a screen. A good software program that can be used much in the same way that a magnification system is the [ZoomText](http://www.aisquared.com/zoomtext/) software. It magnifies text and images on the screen.  
  
  
**At-Risk Behaviors/Situations**:  
  
At-risk students are those that can be described as those students which struggle with classrooms tasks. These students have not succeeded in their schoolwork and need extra help and remediation to succeed (Roblyer & Doering, 2012). In many ways these students’ struggles often mirror those of students with disabilities that receive services. Schools may provide these students with organizers or student planners like this one I have provided the link for - [Daytimer Student Planner](http://www.daytimer.com/student-planners). It may be used so the student can keep up with his or her assignments. There are also many different software programs that will encourage and motivate at-risk students such as [BrainPop](http://www.brainpop.com/), and [SpokenText](http://spokentext.net/) (that converts text to speech).  
  
  
**Gifts and Talents:**  
  
Students that are gifted and talented are those that show they go beyond conventional thinking and take things to another level above their peers. These students display a high intellect, creativity, and leadership characteristics as well as high academic achievement. Students can access www.hoagiesgifted.org and have a variety of online magazines, links, reading resources, and other things that can challenge them to think independently. Teachers can also use the site to gain new strategies to reach gifted and talented students in the classroom. Gifted and talented students can also use hardware devices such as the computer, hand-held devices, and laptops to improve their thinking and reasoning skills.