

SETTS AT TIPS FOR TEACHERS: EDITOR, DENNIS DEEDS, PSUSD
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ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY IN YOUR CLASSROOM

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY: CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVES

Assistive Technology (AT) in the classroom helps Special Education students connect with the curriculum. AT runs the spectrum from no-tech, to low-tech and high-tech and can be applied to most academic areas. AT can be inexpensive – like a 20c rubber pencil grip, or expensive – like a computer setup that scans and reads textbooks to the student.

In between those extremes you'll find a wide variety of devices and services that will be beneficial to students as they complete their academic assignments. Key factors in the successful application of AT are the student's ability level and willingness to use the recommended applications.

Computers in the classroom are useful tools. Students no longer need to accomplish their written work with a lead pencil or an ink pen. As early as elementary school, a student with beginning typing skills can benefit from computer software designed to improve the quality and content of written work. Inexpensive software can be used for organizing ideas prior to writing, improving spelling by anticipating words being typed, and reading completed words or sentences back to the writer to assure correct usage, meaning, and syntax. Use of such software results in a more legible finished product that is generally of higher quality than a hand-

WELCOME!

Many of us have heard about YouTube™ videos that come in a variety of topics, many of which are inappropriate for educational use.

However, there is a great website designed for teachers with content that is readily usable in the classroom.

TeacherTube™

(<http://teachertube.com>) has a wide variety of videos from elementary through high school spanning virtually every curricular area.

Using these videos can be a great way to review times tables by having a multiplication facts video playing while students are entering the classroom. Or what better way to begin a United States History lesson than by showing a video that is a quick discussion of the Civil War and the Battle of Gettysburg presented by General Meade himself?

Some of the videos have been produced by teachers, others by students. Not all are of first quality, but many are very classroom friendly.

As always, teachers should preview the entire video prior to classroom use.

written document by the same student. The student's self esteem goes up and some of the barriers to written language are removed



I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

Did you know that when you read a text passage, your eyes stop frequently as you scan across each line from left to right? While it may seem that your eyes are gliding non-stop across the text, they are actually making a series of brief stops. The difference between effective readers and poor readers can be measured by the number of stops, the duration of each stop, the number of re-reads or regressions, and the span of character recognition.

When reading, information only registers in the brain during the stops the eyes make while scanning a line of text. A typical effective reader stops for approximately 250 milliseconds (that's a quarter of a second for those of you who haven't embraced the metric system) while scanning each chunk of text along a line. Ineffective readers stop more

frequently and for a longer duration. Their eyes may also backtrack (re-read/regress) along a line of text instead of smoothly moving from left to right. Ineffective readers also take in a smaller number of letters or words (span of recognition) at each movement across the line. Aspects that slow the process of reading also hinder reading comprehension and lead to student frustration.

The commercial reading program, Reading Plus® (<http://www.readingplus.com/>) diagnoses and tracks eye movement and then provides individualized on-line reading exercises leading to increased fluency and comprehension. It has been used in the WESELPA and is currently in use in Palm Springs USD.

AT SOFTWARE

Some AT software titles that are currently in classroom use:

Dollars & Cents, \$99 www.attainmentcompany.com
Paper money and coin recognition, things like 5 pennies = one nickel, making change, buying items with correct change, and more.

Basic Sight Words, \$69 www.attainmentcompany.com
Presents 245 Dolch sight word flashcards on screen. The computer will read the word and use it in a sentence. Includes a multiple choice game. The program tracks student progress.

Inspiration™ or Kidspiration™, about \$10 with district license or \$59 per copy without. www.inspiration.com/
It's a graphic organizer for preparing to write paragraphs, stories, etc. Goes from brainstorming to providing an outline that can be printed out for seat- or home work.

SETTS

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