



Leveling the Playing Field for Students with Special Needs

Many students with ADD/ADHD, Learning Disabilities and other learning difficulties struggle everyday in school. As a result, they become frustrated while falling further and further behind their classmates. This often leads to changes in their behaviour, changes which are not conducive to learning. They begin to act out or withdraw into themselves. In all cases, their self confidence and self esteem vanishes.

However, once children are identified with special needs, there are various accommodations that can be made which will help them overcome the barriers to learning they are encountering. One of these accommodations is the use of Assistive Technology (AT) computer applications.

Effective use of AT computer applications can help level the playing field for these students. AT software can help the students become more independent, experience success at school and in life and most importantly build self esteem and self confidence.

Although AT software programs can be the great equalizer, simply handing students laptops with these applications is not the answer. Nor is providing them with a few hours of training which simply illustrates the various functions and features of the software.

It is absolutely imperative that students be shown how to effectively apply the software to their schoolwork. This requires instruction by an educator who is not only trained in Special Education but is also proficient in the utilization of this software. General application of AT can be taught in a workshop environment. However, to truly reap the benefits this software has to offer, students need to be shown the application of the software to their schoolwork and projects. This is best accomplished in one-on-one sessions.

Once students realize what an incredible tool they have at their disposal, they quickly embrace the computer and the AT applications.

Indeed, AT computer applications can greatly level the playing the field for students with special needs. Parents and educators must strive to ensure these students have access to and adequate training on these applications thus enabling them the opportunity to reach their full potential at school and in life.

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