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11. Digital Literacy for Special Needs Children

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Abstract

Digital Literacy is essential for individuals entering college and the workplace. Students with disabilities experience a greater challenge in acquiring the skills necessary to succeed. This paper explores the Disability Digital Divide, success factors for acquiring digital skills, and the implications of a digital literacy curriculum, teaching strategies developed for special education classrooms. The paper reveals how incorporating Universal design for learning principles and supporting classroom teachers resulted effectively in acquiring the digital skills by the students with disabilities which they need to be prepared for entering schools and workplaces.

Keywords:

Introduction

‘Digital Literacy’ is the present Classroom Buzzword which is vital and essential to the 21st century students.....” the ability to use technology, digital communication tools or networks to locate , evaluate, use and create information. Digital Literacy is essentially the acquisition of the skills and abilities needed to read, write and communicate in the 21st century using current and emerging technologies. (Margaret Spencer,1986) & then Paul Gilster (1997) were the first to define the concept of Digital Literacy. Earlier the concept of Digital Literacy was confined to digital skills needed to be digitally literate because computer used at that times were primarily focused on basic operational skills like mathematical calculations and word processing. Now computers are ubiquitous, often focus on higher- level cognitive processes such as communication skills and critical thinking skills. The most elaborative and comprehensive definition given by Eshet-Alkalai (2004)claims that “ Digital Literacy involves more than the mere ability to use software or operate a digital device, it includes a large variety of complex cognitive, motor, sociological and emotional skills which users need to function effectively in digital environments.” Thus, Digital Literacy is a combination of intertwined skill sets competencies, and attitudes (Bawden,2008) though Digital Literacy changes rapidly as technology change and therefore, Digital Literacy should be redefined.