Tech for Understanding: An Introduction to Assistive and Instructional Technology in the Classroom
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Abstract
This project examines the different types of assistive and instructional technology available to students who are classified with one or more of the thirteen disabilities outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its amendments. While the roles of assistive and instructional technology are different, there are many instances where their use may overlap. Thus, these two categories will be discussed separately, but it should be noted that some information may be applied to each category and more than one piece of technology. The purpose of this paper is to provide an introduction to the world of assistive and instructional technology for those who may be new to its concepts, particularly parents who have recently learned that their child may benefit from extra assistance and future educators who are interested in learning more about the devices they will be using to reach their students. Each of the thirteen disabilities will be discussed briefly, and then each disability will be assigned several types of assistive and instructional technology that serve it well. This will by no means be an exhaustive list of all types of technology available to teachers, parents, and students. However, it will attempt to provide a varied glimpse at some of the options that are available and how they may help children who are struggling to access the curriculum.

Categories of Disabilities (IDEA)
- Autism (A)
- Deafness (d), Hearing Loss (HL) (including Blindness), and Deaf-Blindness (DB)
- Developmental Delay (DD)
- Emotional Disturbance (ED)
- Intellectual Disabilities (ID)
- Multiple Disabilities (MD)
- Orthopedic Impairment (OI)
- Speech or Language Impairment (SLI)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Visual Impairment, Including Blindness (VI)

Disability/Technology Matrix

Conclusion
The needs of students are absolutely infinite. However, the world of assistive and instructional technology is incredibly vast and is expanding all the time. However, it is also important to remember that, while technology serves a significant part of the educational process, it does not educate children. Just as Bill Gates said, “Technology is just a tool. In terms of getting the kids working together and motivating them, the teacher is the most important” (The Telegraph, 2017). There is no possible way to replace or replicate the impact teachers have on their students. Now, this impact can be either positive or negative, and it should be the goal of each teacher to make sure it is positive. This influence cannot be undermined, nor should it be taken for granted. Each and every student has the ability to reach the highest of peaks with a little help from their teacher and maybe some technology.

References