

Teacher Tech

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Literacy Software: A Universal Tool

Literacy software is not a new tool in the assistive technology toolbox. For years schools and individuals have used programs such as Kurzweil 3000, Read&Write GOLD, WYNN and other programs to improve literacy outcomes among students. These programs offer a variety of features that benefit not only special education students, but all students. Falling under the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), literacy software can enhance the ability to access and comprehend reading and writing tasks for nearly everyone.

These products offer a variety of helpful features to assist in reading and writing tasks. Each type of software offers its own unique features and may possess features that target specific audiences.

These features may include:

- Word Prediction - interprets spelling and grammar mistakes and offers word suggestions
- Text to Speech – reads text out loud
- Save spoken text as audio files for future use on other devices
- Speech to Text – allows the user to use their voice to compose documents
- Dictionaries
- Homophone Assistance – checks for words that sound the same but are spelled different and have different meanings
- Highlight and read web pages
- Screen Masking – masks out parts of the screen to reduce distractibility or provide a visual reference
- Study Tools such as highlighters, outline creators, note taking options, bookmarks

It is easy to see how these tools could enhance the learning experience of any student. Providing these tools to every student in school gives everyone the opportunity to improve their performance. It also helps students who need these tools to perform in class blend in with their peers in an inclusive setting.

WVATS offers a variety of literacy software for demonstration. For more information about these options, contact WVATS at 800-841-8436.



Literacy Software: Comparison

	Read&Write GOLD	SOLO 6	WYNN	Kurzweil 3000
Content Areas				
Reading	X	X	X	X
Writing	X	X	X	X
Math	X		X	X
Grade Level				
Early Elementary	X	X	X	X
Intermediate Elementary	X	X	X	X
Middle School	X	X	X	X
High School	X	X	X	X
Instructional Supports				
Text to Speech	X	X	X	X
Screen Masking	X		X	
Dictionary	X	X	X	X
Highlighting	X	X	X	X
Spell Checker	X	X	X	X
Word Prediction	X	X	X	X
Homophone Checker	X	X	X	
Verb Checker	X	X		
Speech to Text	X	X		X
Web Tools	X	X	X	X
Fact Mapping	X	X		X
Outline Support	X	X	X	X
Note Taking Supports	X	X	X	X
Compatible With				
Microsoft Word	X	X	X	X
Adobe Reader	X	X	X	X
Web Browsers	X	X	X	X
Goggle Docs	X	X	X	X
Scanned Documents	X		X	X

Literacy Software Options

This comparison chart provides a small sample of literacy software options and a listing of some of their features and tools.

New for Exchange

The WVATS Virtual Loan Library not only offers assistive technology for loan, it also provides an exchange program. The exchange items are assistive technology items that have been donated or have been replaced by other items in the loan library. Items are donated back out into the community on a first come first served basis. To see what is available for exchange, select 'Free' items under the 'Transaction Type.' To learn more about the WVATS Virtual Loan Library or check out a device, visit www.wvats.cedwvu.org or call 800-841-8436.



ABC Keyboard

The keys on the ABC keyboard are in alphabetical format. This often makes it easier to learn, use and comprehend for all ages, non-typists and beginners. The letters on this keyboard are also in large print.

MightyMo

The MightyMo is an augmentative communication device. It gives those who prefer digitized speech the power to speak. The MightyMo features several tools that allow augmented communicators and their care teams to communicate with one another and the world around them. This device has been discontinued, but is comparable to the DynaVox M3.



Visually Impaired Communication Device

These units have two dimmable fluorescent tubes which provide intensive background illumination. The icon holders are transparent. They allow the therapist or teacher to use clear or transparent icons. Pictures are not included.



Web Spotlight: do2Learn

The Do2Learn website provides numerous pages of learning, behavior management, transition materials and tips for across the lifespan. Key topics covered by the site include disabilities, academics, social skills, behavior management, picture cards and employment.

The disability section provides information on the evaluation process. It also describes characteristics associated with specific disability areas and strategies for working with the population.

The academic section provides instructional strategies, games and printable resources to assist caretakers and teachers. This section covers topics such as fine motor skills, literacy and math.

The social skill section offers strategies, games and printable materials to teach communication skills, social and emotional awareness and coping skills.

Behavior management offers suggestions on classroom arrangements, simple assessment procedures, intervention strategies to improve behavior and the steps to developing a behavior management plan.

The picture card section explains how to use picture cards to develop functional communication systems, visual schedules and story strips. It also offers hundreds of free printable picture card sets as well as a 'Make a Schedule' program.

JobTIPS helps individuals with disabilities explore career interests, seek and obtain employment and successfully maintain employment.

For more information, visit www.do2learn.com.

www.wvats.cedwvu.org

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