



Paving the road to success: Technology and students with disabilities

By *Evelyne Marcil and Catherine Fichten*

Many college students with disabilities have to work harder than students without disabilities, and they are often rewarded with results that do not reflect their effort or abilities. Instructors, too, face challenges ensuring that these students perform up to their full potential. The students themselves, teachers and administrators alike often ask what can be done to assist students with disabilities in the classroom.

In a survey of over 300 CEGEP students, the Adaptech Research Network found that virtually all students like it when instructors use technology in class. Be it PowerPoint or videos, students like it all! For example, students feel that PowerPoint presentations add structure to lectures, and when PowerPoint slides are made available online, students are freed from copying what is on the board and can better focus their attention on what

is being said in class.

Another technology that works well for all students, particularly for those with disabilities, is videos in the classroom. Although all students like videos, more students with disabilities reported that this technology works well for them. This may be because videos grab their attention, offer a change of pace, illustrate concepts, or address different learning styles. Oftentimes, instructors struggle to find the balance between being an entertainer and an educator, and providing students with the right amount of each. Videos tap into that sweet spot and can be a powerful teaching tool.

Students like using their own technologies in class. Opinion among teachers regarding this practice is divided. Many students surf the web or Facebook during class, and it is well known that students who multitask do more poorly and learn less than those who do not. But for many students, especially

those with disabilities, having their own technologies in class is an accommodation without which they are disadvantaged. So students with disabilities who need their own tablet, laptop, or phone in class should make sure to ask their instructor to permit them to use it, even when this practice is not generally allowed. If there are difficulties, the college's office for students with disabilities can help.

All students, and particularly students with disabilities, can benefit from technology in the classroom. So why not use it? The time has come for educators to embrace the harmony between pedagogy and technology and harness its power to enhance students' motivation and learning.

Evelyne Marcil is a Research Assistant at Adaptech Research Network, Catherine Fichten is the Co-director of Adaptech Research Network. Both are Professors at Dawson College. Other contributors to the



Technology is advantageous to all students, but even more so for students with disabilities.

article are Laura King, Research Associate at Adaptech Research Network and professor at Cégep André-Laurendeau; Alice Havel, Research Associate at Adaptech Research Network; Mary Jorgensen, Research associate at Adaptech Research Network and CRISPESH; and Jillian Budd, Research Assistant at Adaptech Research Network.