Abstract

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Practical Application of Assistive Technology in Schools

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Assistive Technology can promote inclusion, enable independence, promote positive self-esteem and confidence, and raise attainment and achievement of learners with additional support needs. Assistive Technology has never be more effective, more reliable, lighter, cheaper and more available. What once was heavy, bulky, expensive and specialist is now available to almost every teenager and young person in Ireland. But we are faced with a huge variety of devices, peripherals, apps and software - how do we identify the most appropriate to meet the individual needs of each learner? How do we integrate Assistive Technology into the classroom? This presentation suggests that this is only possible when practitioners focus on teaching and learning, rather than on technology. Using examples, we will explore how assistive technology can meet differing needs, and propose the use of Universal Design for Learning as a conceptual framework for supporting learners with diverse needs and abilities.

Presenter

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Biography

Paul Nisbet is Director of CALL Scotland, the national School Assistive Technology service in Scotland. Paul has worked with Assistive Technology since 1983 and brings a technical and engineering perspective to CALL's contribution to Scottish education. Paul works directly with learners in schools, providing Assistive Technology assessment and support, and has led a number of innovative national developments. These includes the development of SQA Digital Examination Papers for candidates with disabilities; licencing of high quality Scottish computer voices so that young people can read digital resources with support from text-to-speech; and the *Books for All* programme and Database, which are helping schools and pupils make and access learning resources in accessible, alternative formats. Paul was one of the inventors of the award-winning *Smart Wheelchair*, a powered wheelchair for children with severe disabilities. In 2011, Paul was awarded the University of Edinburgh Principal's Medal in recognition of his work.