

Assignment #2 – read&write for Google Chrome

The program read&write for Google Chrome is something I wish I knew about before as I would have used it with my grade 4/5 class last year. With so many challenges and barriers to accessing content, this would have made a tremendous difference. Our classroom was right across from the computer lab, which was extremely underutilised outside of my class and two others. I would have used read&write for Google Chrome to support their research projects, stories, math sites, and more. I love that the tool is all encompassing; there are so many tools out there that are free or cost something that lack so many of the aspects of this program. Yes, there is text to speech and speech to text option on Macs and iPads. Having this in one program with things like dictionary (words read aloud and pictures) and word prediction makes it much more accessible. I had learners who struggled with written output, reading, spelling, and more, so having all these options in one program supports all individual learners in different ways.

I had one learner in particular that this program would have benefitted greatly. They were very gifted with their oral speech, artistic creativity, understanding of technology, and their brilliance with building and creating. They had previously been homeschooled, and many of these important areas of their person had been fostered in ways that I believe would not have been cultivated to the same extent in public school. When this learner started public school in my class they struggled with spelling, decoding of words, and lack of practice with written math. Unfortunately, they would often refer to their self as “stupid” and found Language Arts and Math in public school both discouraging and frustrating. Every day I spent time focusing on this learner’s strengths and tried to build their self-confidence, hoping to move away from the negative self-talk and take a strength-based approach to their learning. Sadly, they still maintained their belief of being lesser and not as smart as other learners in the class and yet when it came to science, building/creating, oral storytelling, social studies, art, or sharing their perspective with the class, this learner stood out very strongly in a positive way.

If I had known about read&write, I would have taught the whole class about it to promote UDL and be inclusive; while some learners might not have wanted to use it in

the future, I know this learner would have. They would not have had to worry about their spelling because they had a very strong vocabulary, but they were limited by having to write things down. Word prediction (with text to speech reading of each word suggestion) would have removed this barrier. A picture dictionary and a dictionary with audio explanations would have aided them in their research projects where their ideas were great, but they had less time to implement them due to reading speed / ability to decode. If this learner wanted to use speech to text instead of typing with word prediction, they could have. Regardless of which tool they preferred, the important thing is that both options would have been there for them in one program and it was accessible to use.

There are so many more tools from this program that this learner would have used. This program would have empowered them, making them feel more successful in a public school environment. I tried my best to support this learner with the technology and resources I knew of, but this support was spread out across multiple devices and programs. I wish I could have given them the tools they needed to remove more barriers to their learning. I hope that as this learner grows, they see themselves as smart, capable, and unique. Now that I know about read&write for Google Chrome, I can see myself using this program in the future to support all of my learners, especially the ones that struggle with reading and writing.