

Copyright 1994 Miguel Guhlin
May be duplicated so long as credit is given.

Tool-Based Software: The Other Alternative

Integrated Learning Systems offer many benefits: TAAS remediation and/or drill, easy-to-read and print reports, individualized study plans. Tool-based software offers teachers an alternative to drill-n-kill.

ILSs are a step backwards into behaviorism, drill-n-practice. They are no more than electronic worksheets with bells and whistles. Integrated Learning Systems are popular with those who believe computers should do the teaching--teacher-proof technology. Usually, ignorant administration choose ILSs rather than invest in teacher staff development required.

Technology can be used as a tool for student inquiry and as an information management tool. Tool-based software--Bilingual Writing Center, HyperStudio, Kid Pix, Decisions, Decisions--is based on a constructivist view of learning. That is, learners are active participants in the learning process who construct meaning through experience and develop personal theories about the physical and social world.

This contrasts sharply with the passive view of learners in the "traditional" classroom (teacher lectures, heavy reliance on textbooks, drill-n-practice, emphasis on teaching the test characterize this approach to teaching.

In Integrated Learning Systems (ILSs)--like IDEAL and CCC--learning is seen as mastering an existent body of knowledge and learning is entirely consistent with the traditional transmission pedagogy. This may explain why some teachers subscribe to the use of Heartbeeps for TAAS drill-n-practice.

Affirming the tool-based software (TBS) approach to technology in February 1994, the Texas Education Agency commended Perales Elementary (Edgewood District, San Antonio, Texas) for its extensive staff development in the area of technology, parent involvement (via Parents' Technology Institute) and long-range planning (in the form of a campus technology plan).

Miguel Guhlin

mguhlin@tenet.edu

References

Stoddart, T. & Niederhausen, D. (1993). Computers in schools. Technology and Educational Change. vol 9.