

Plugged into learning: Computers help students advance

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Technology has grown by leaps and bounds, yet are computers helping students progress in their learning? Absolutely, says a 40-year retrospective on the impact of technology in classrooms.

Published in the journal *Review of Educational Research*, the findings gathered by Concordia University researchers suggest that technology delivers content and supports student achievement.

Expanded from a doctoral thesis by Rana Tamim, the study's first author, the research brought together data from 60,000 elementary school, high school, and post-secondary [students](#). It compared achievement in classrooms that used computer technology versus those that used little or none.

In those classrooms where computers were used to support teaching, the technology was found to have a small to moderate positive impact on both [learning](#) and attitude. "We deduce that the impact would be even greater if observed over a student's entire [educational experience](#)," says co-author Richard Schmid, chair of Concordia's Department of Education and a member of the university's Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance.

The research team found technology works best when students are encouraged to think critically and communicate effectively. "A standard [PowerPoint presentation](#) will most likely not enhance the [learning experience](#) beyond providing content or enhancing teacher-directed

lectures or class discussions," says Schmid.

The team now plans to evaluate what technologies work best for what subjects. "[Educational technology](#) is not a homogenous intervention, but provides a broad variety of tools and strategies for learning," says Schmid, adding there are few resources available to keep teachers abreast of newer technologies and their potential.

"Teachers across Quebec are not particularly familiar with the use of technology to promote learning," he stresses. "The problem is compounded by the fact that children are increasingly more adept with computers. One of the mandates of Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance at Concordia is to support teachers and provide the tools to facilitate the integration of technology into their classrooms."

More information: rer.sagepub.com/content/81/1/4.full

Provided by Concordia University

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