I believe technology has the unique opportunity to support classroom texts and resources as well as provide ways for students to process, integrate, collaborate, and present information using their individual learning strengths. Webster’s dictionary defines technology as “a capability given by the practical application of knowledge” and defines literacy as “the quality of being able to read and write.” For me, technology in education is a tool that supports the ability to learn a specific skill or to comprehend and use that skill in the real world while literacy is the basic ability to read something, comprehend what you have read, and be able to write about it later. Technology provides education a resource to find ways to help students at all levels become literate not just in the school atmosphere but in the real world too.

In my classroom, I try to use technology to support my students to meet a number of literacy-related goals. The two areas I use technology the most in literacy are writing and reading comprehension. This year my goal was to establish a classroom that used technology to allow students to experiment, collaborate, reflect, and evaluate on their reading and writing skills, both independently and student-led small groups. My goal for my students was for them to work independently and with others to accomplish a number of tasks that worked on strategies in both comprehension and writing. One way I tried to reach this goal this year was to implement a process for my students to edit, reflect, discuss, and review their writing with others in the class and myself. By using GoogleDocs (however, you could use any online doc sharing site), my students created portfolios and published a variety of works then shared them with group members and classmates. Students began to comment, critic, and collaborate on each other’s writing. I was able to monitor their discussion and provide instruction through the different comment features. Another way I tried to reach this goal was by using a variety of blogs, online forms, and chat rooms in which students were able to post what they were reading, practice their comprehension strategies, challenge each other to think deeper, work on developing critical thinking skills, and participate in relevant assessments.

Both of these approaches took a number of hours of set up and classroom management. Teachers must remember implementing technology for learning and instruction, especially for those with learning disabilities, takes time. However, once students understand the expectations and management of the new resource, technology can provide a number of possibilities for students to learn, present, practice, and self-assess both reading and writing strategies at their individual level. To achieve literacy goals in your classrooms, students should be part of the discussion in how they learn and how they use technology for their literacy learning. When students feel pride in their accomplishments as well as an active participant in their education, the classroom can become a shared space. I believe technology should be viewed as more than games and typing but rather a way to change how we differentiate instruction and assessment. It should not be just a supplemental tool instead it should be a resource used to support each student and his/her individual strengths and needs in all areas of literacy development. Technology will be a vital part of their world outside of school and it is important for students (especially those with disabilities) to feel comfortable using a variety of technologies and software. All students need to have an understanding that technology is not just Facebook and Angry Birds but a source from them to gain and apply knowledge in a practical, meaningful way.