

Chapter 17

Using iPads to Support K–12 Struggling Readers: A Case Study of iPad Implementation in a University Reading Clinic

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ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on the use of iPad technology and educational applications to assist struggling K-12 readers. Based on research at a university reading clinic, this chapter offers strategies for selecting, evaluating, and incorporating this technology into literacy instruction. The chapter includes suggestions for educators that offer examples of how specific apps were used successfully as well as the alignment to the Common Core State Standards during the lesson. Further, an evaluation rubric created based on the study results will help literacy teachers identify the app features that both motivate students and target specific literacy skills so that they can offer more tailored instruction for struggling readers. Finally, the implications of this study suggest that more research is required to learn how the use of digital tablets, particularly for students with learning disabilities, allows for individualized and modified instruction for students with diverse needs.

INTRODUCTION

Technology in the classroom is continuing to advance at a rapid pace. Electronic tablets such as iPads are springing up in schools around the world, changing the ways in which students learn. As more technologies are incorporated into curriculum, a growing number of teachers are starting

to notice the positive effects that digital tools can have on student learning. For instance, research has shown that technology can create a positive learning environment for older struggling readers who do not perform at their grade level (Hasselbring & Goin, 2004) as well as for students with learning disabilities (Smith & Okolo, 2010).

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Technology is an integral part of digital learning and students' 21st century literacy practices (Mullen & Wedwick, 2008; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009). Students in the 21st century read to learn daily, encountering a wide variety of information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as ebooks, blogs, email, instant messages, and tweets. Technology also changes the way that students learn to read as new devices require "new literacies to effectively exploit their potentials" (Leu, Kinzer, & Coiro, 2004, p.1570). This interface of technology and literacy will have a greater impact on reading acquisition and instruction. For example, online children's storybooks change the way teachers prepare beginning readers. Also, a great number of studies have documented the impact of digital texts, such as ebooks, in enhancing the reading motivation and engagement of reluctant readers (e.g., Larson, 2010; Moody, 2010; Rhodes & Milby, 2007; Thoermer & Williams, 2011).

Many P-12 teachers are using a variety of technology tools when they differentiate their instruction to support students' literacy development; preparing students for new literacies that require novel skills and practice. However, because technology is constantly changing, teachers need strategies for selecting, evaluating, and incorporating new technologies into literacy instruction. In this context, the International Reading Association (IRA) strongly recommends integration of new literacies and 21st century technologies into curriculum, stating "literacy educators have a responsibility to integrate information and communication technologies (ICTs) into the curriculum, to prepare students for the futures they deserve" (IRA, 2009, para. 1).

Ever since its introduction in early 2010, iPads are one of the fastest growing technologies implemented in schools. The promise of the iPads as a literacy teaching tool has been studied in early childhood classrooms (Beschorner & Hutchinson, 2013). Recently, more teachers have adapted this device to promote literacy development in the

elementary classrooms (e.g., Dobler, 2011/2012; Hutchison, Beschorner, & Schmidt-Crawford, 2012). Using the iPad as a small laptop is more convenient for classroom instruction because it can be used to differentiate instruction and motivate reluctant readers (Hutchison, Beschorner, & Schmidt-Crawford, 2012). However, little has been researched on how the use of tablets, such as iPads, changes teaching and learning of literacy for struggling readers including beginning and adult readers. Technology is underutilized for struggling learners with disabilities, including students with reading disabilities (Smith & Okolo, 2010). Moreover, little guidance and professional development has been provided to literacy educators when they implement this technology into instruction.

This chapter presents a case study that documents literacy teachers' implementation of the iPad to help K-12 struggling readers enrolled in a university-based reading clinic in northeastern United States. The study reports on the experiences, knowledge, and skills used by reading tutors—certified teachers and reading specialists—in the clinic to integrate the iPad and its various educational applications into literacy instruction for struggling readers. Implications of the study will springhead more research on the use of iPads to improve literacy instruction by classroom teachers and other literacy educators.

BACKGROUND

Role of Technologies in a Literate Society

We live in a world in which new technologies are redirecting our attention for literacy instruction to help us identify alternative instructional possibilities and multiple meanings of literacy. The use of rapidly changing technology for reading and writing has reconceptualized the nature of literacy; therefore, forms and practices of mul-

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