

Using iPads to Motivate Reluctant Readers during Literacy

Instruction in Elementary School

Abstract

In today's classrooms, iPads are used as innovative devices that provide opportunities to help motivate and engage reluctant readers. The purpose of this study is to explore the benefits of using iPads for literacy learning support and the effect they have on student engagement, motivation, and comprehension reading skills.

Statement of Problem

As students with learning disabilities continue to have difficulty with developing reading skills, grade level expectations continue to become more and more challenging to achieve. Students with learning disabilities may not be intrinsically motivated to read and have difficulty reading self-sufficiently and without distraction on their independent reading level. Studies have shown that the benefit of the sensory integration of touch, which is available when using an iPad, helps children to remain engaged and interested in reading (Flewitt et al., 2014; Walsh & Simpson, 2013). When some students read text on an iPad, they became more excited, engaged, and are more likely to be reading on their appropriate reading level. If students are not reading on their independent reading level, they will struggle to decode words or comprehend what is happening in the story. Not only does this affect their attention, but it hinders their ability to develop as a reader. Theormer and Williams (2009) contributed a valid point that our society is becoming inundated and highly influenced by technology and teachers need to take this advancement in society into consideration when attempting to motivate their students to read.

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this study is to explore the use of technology to motivate and engage readers during literacy instruction and improve their independent reading levels. The following research question will be investigated: How will using an iPad affect students' interest and engagement during reading and improve their reading comprehension skills?

Literature Review

Research involving reluctant readers with learning disabilities has shown numerous benefits to using iPads as an innovative way to get struggling readers motivated, interested, and engaged while reading. Incorporating these innovative touch screen device readers may motivate readers to enjoy reading and increase their reading comprehension skills. Flewitt, Kucirkova, and Messer (2014) found that “the experience of human touch often enhances the student’s motivation, control, and independence when engaged in literacy endeavors with the iPads” (p.107). This study was conducted to research the sensory experience of touch through the observation of a case study with a diverse group of special education students that varied from ages 3-19. The research findings described the iPads as a great tool for stimulating enthusiastic responses from students with disabilities. Students’ interest in innovative technology, accompanied by the engagement of the sense of touch, may make iPads an exciting type of technology to use during the reading block.

A study that supports a similar theme of motivation through touch, was conducted by McClanahan, Williams, Kennedy, and Tate (2012). These author’s case study was conducted on a young boy with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) that demonstrated a more motivated and responsive reaction to the tutoring sessions that included the iPad for instruction.

These studies support the notion that when struggling readers become enthusiastic about reading, they are more likely to become fully engaged and motivated to stay on task.

Research Methodology

This action research study will take place in a resource room at an elementary school in Palm Beach County, in a reading support group. The population of the study will include one female and three male 4th grade students with disabilities. All four of these students have been identified as learning disabled and are reading two years below grade level.

To monitor the progress of the intervention and to collect data, both formal and informal assessments will be used. To start, the students' Reading Running Records (RRR) will be updated and used as the formal assessment that discloses the students' current independent reading level. Additionally, a tally chart will be used to record the number of redirections the students need, as well as anecdotal observations. The tally data will be used as a record of the students' overall engagement while reading both before and after reading on the iPad. Students will also complete bi-weekly comprehension checks to determine if they are comprehending the material they are reading. Finally, a reading survey will be completed before and after the use of the iPads to monitor if the students' interests or attitudes about reading has changed after the implementation of the iPad.

Results

The results of the study will be available in time for the conference and will be presented.

Implications

Students that are not fully engaged or motivated to read, are often the students that are unable to improve their reading comprehension skills. Students that are reading below grade level tend to have difficulty remaining intrinsically motivated to read independently during their reading block. Using iPads to reinforce literacy learning goals may be a great addition to the reading block. The applications on these touch screen devices helps students to become more engaged and motivated while reading, as well as improve their comprehension skills.

References

- Flewitt, R., Kucirkova, N., & Messer, D. (2014). Touching the virtual, touching the real: iPads and enabling literacy for students experiencing disability. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 37(2), 107-116.
- McClanahan, B., Williams, K., Kennedy, E., & Tate, S. (2012). A breakthrough for Josh: How use of an iPad facilitated reading improvement. *TechTrends*, 56(56), 20-28.
doi:10.1007/s11528-012-0572-6
- Thoermer, A., & Williams, L. (2012). Using digital texts to promote Fluent Reading. *Read Teach The Reading Teacher*, 65(7), 441-445. doi:10.1002/TRTR.01065
- Walsh, M., & Simpson, A. (2013). Touching, tapping... thinking? Examining the dynamic materiality of touch pad devices for literacy learning. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 36(3), 148-157.