

Chapter 12

iTeach Literacy with iPad Devices: Preparing Teachers for Effective Classroom Integration

Diane Santori

West Chester University, USA

Carol Smith

West Chester University, USA

Heather Schugar

West Chester University, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter presents two unique cases of pre-service and in-service teachers utilizing iPad devices during literacy instruction, identifies numerous affordances and constraints of employing these devices, and offers suggestions for preparing teachers to integrate the iPad into literacy instruction. It is argued that iPad devices have the potential to truly transform literacy teaching and learning if used properly. If teachers are well prepared to use iPad devices effectively for literacy teaching, then their students will be able to utilize this mobile technology to enhance their literacy knowledge while also gaining technological skills essential for participation in our global society.

INTRODUCTION

Across the United States, iPad devices are making their way into classrooms and being used in various content areas; the size, affordability, and mobility of the devices make them particularly attractive to educators. Furthermore, using mobile technology devices in the classroom to support children's literacy development appears to hold

great promise. Admittedly, research findings about e-reading's effect on literacy development are limited (Zucker, Moody, & McKenna, 2009; McClanahan, Williams, Kennedy, & Tate, 2012). Nonetheless, some things are clear. It is known that learners find mobile devices engaging (Dalton & Proctor, 2008), and that using them in the classroom helps bridge children's home and school literacy experiences (Richardson, 2010). Additionally, providing these learning experiences for all children enables educators to address concerns

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-4333-8.ch012

about the digital divide that exists between children from privileged and non-privileged homes (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008). iPad-based learning is also multimodal, self-paced, and individualized. As such, it constitutes appropriate pedagogy not only for the general population, but also for learners with language-based disabilities (IDA, 2000) and attentional disorders (Raggi & Chronis, 2006). These understandings provide confidence that iPad-based learning can play an important role in classroom literacy instruction.

This chapter offers two cases of university professors utilizing iPad devices in their field-based literacy courses, at the undergraduate and graduate level, in order to explore the affordances and constraints of incorporating this mobile technology into the courses and the related fieldwork while also considering how to best prepare teachers for this technology integration. It is demonstrated that iPad devices can support the literacy development of elementary-aged readers and writers; thus, it is crucial for pre-service and in-service teachers to familiarize themselves with this technology while adopting a critical stance toward its use and various applications.

THE PROMISING POTENTIAL OF IPAD-BASED LEARNING

Realizing the promise of iPad devices for literacy learning and teaching requires careful planning and reflective implementation, both of which must be grounded in research. Although research specific to the iPad device is just emerging, broader research about technology-based learning in general does offer findings for our consideration. Although digital natives (Prensky, 2001) spend considerable time engaged in digital literacy practices, those practices may be primarily for entertainment or socialization rather than for purposes of learning (Leu, 2010; Wilber, 2008). Also of concern is the fact that students may not transfer their skills from traditional print literacy tasks and settings

to digital tasks and settings (Walsh, Asha, & Spranger, 2007). Hence, in preparing teachers to implement iPad devices effectively into classroom practice, we must prepare them to focus on skills development and transfer.

Additionally, effective implementation of iPad devices – like that of all current technologies – requires teachers to acquire and apply *Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge* (TPACK) (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Teachers who understand the TPACK framework can design learning experiences that optimize and capitalize upon the interplay of content, pedagogy, and technology, and they can apply their TPACK flexibly for effective technology integration (Koehler & Mishra, 2008). Such teachers understand how, when, and why a given technology—in this case, iPads—might change children’s learning of particular content, how the technology might match particular pedagogies or necessitate pedagogical changes, and how the learners’ literacy skills might be influenced by the technology (Walsh, 2009; Van’t Hooft, 2009). Teachers who develop and apply TPACK transcend the level of technology-for-technology’s sake. Effective teacher preparation, then, will provide opportunities for candidates to become familiar with the specific affordances and constraints of the iPad device, to practice incorporating the iPad into lessons, and to reflect upon the effectiveness of the transaction between the iPad, the pedagogy, and the content to be learned.

In addition to the necessary focus on technological skills and the acquisition of TPACK, effective teacher preparation must facilitate the development of positive dispositions regarding the potential of iPad devices. Research has shown that teachers’ effective integration of computer technology into classroom learning experiences correlates positively with their beliefs and dispositions about the technology’s potential to support learning (Cervetti, Damico, & Pearson, 2006; Vannatta & Fordham, 2004). Since the development of positive dispositions can accompany even brief and limited experiences with technology-based

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