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An examination of technology and its influence on reading in struggling students and an autoethnography of a preservice teacher

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AN EXAMINATION OF TECHNOLOGY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON READING IN

STRUGGLING STUDENTS AND AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF A PRESERVICE

TEACHER

by

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ABSTRACT

Educators have never had the possibility of incorporating technology into the classroom like they do today. Although technology can have its difficulties, it can truly help the development of reading for struggling students. Reading research is providing more and more clarity about how to use technology effectively within our school communities to support and enhance the academic performance of today's students (i.e. Gallagher, 2009; Isazadeh, 2004; Rice, 2011). A review of studies conducted by the CEO Forum (2001) emphasizes: "technology can have the greatest impact when integrated into the curriculum to achieve clear, measurable educational objectives." This meaning that with the help of technology and all of the resources it provides, if used within the curriculum correctly teachers can reach their learning goals better.

Technology can aid the growth of reading development in students with, or without, a learning disability. The beginning chapter will define students who are struggling readers and outline the effects technology will have on these students. Following, will be a present case study of a student who struggles with reading in order to frame the research in a contemporary setting.   There will also be a personal experience with technology, focusing primarily on the IPAD, and a self-reflected journey within each chapter in a quest in becoming a technology savvy teacher. The next chapter will present the use IPADs within the classroom. It will then describe ways teachers can spark their students' interests in reading with alternative practices. With the help of a local, technology savvy teacher, there will be a real-life circumstances that have aided struggling readers at any specific grade level.

DEDICATION

For my mentors, Susan Wegmann, Jeffrey Kaplan, and Sherron Roberts for encouraging me
to achieve my highest goals,

For my brother, Michael Campanile, for inspiring me,

And especially, for my mother and father, Tara and Robert Campanile, my role models. You
have made me the woman I am today.

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Defining students who struggle with reading

"I'm not that good at reading. It takes me a while and when I am reading a book, it takes me more than six times and then I still forget what I've read. It's very hard to keep focused and remember where I was. Even when I remember, I read so slow that I never finish my work. There are still lost of words I cannot pronounce. I can't remember how to sound out the words."

-McCray, Vaughn, & Neal, 2001, p.3

The words above are from a secondary struggling reader. Struggling readers in secondary classrooms are often overlooked, in favor of a complex curriculum that leaves little time for reading instruction. However, if students cannot read and comprehend the content, they will not learn as effectively, nor will they have success in the curricula. Thus, this paper will examine who are the struggling readers and how can educators and parents alike can help them. This thesis seeks to find ways in which technology can help assist students who struggle in reading.

According to Joanna F. Carlis (2012), struggling readers are those "who find it hard to grasp the relation of the spoken and written language and those who lag behind their peers in development of standard American English" (p.1). With that said, one must understand how to improve students' reading skills in order to help them through the learning process. Researchers have suggested that subject-matter teachers can improve students' reading abilities by providing skill and strategy instruction and opportunities to read and discuss texts in a variety of ways (Bakken, Mastropieri, & Scruggs, 1997;

Guastello, Beasley, & Sinatra, 2000; Hall, 2005a; Spence, Yore, & Williams, 1999; Yore,

Bisanz, & Hand, 2003). However, research has also suggested that the ways students

identify themselves as readers, and the ways they want others to identify them, can

influence their decisions on how and what they read (Moje & Dillon, 2006; Tatum, 2006).

In other words, if students are reading an e-Reader, others will not be able to see what they

are in reading and in this way they will not be identified as a struggling reader or judged for

a lack of reading ability. If this assumption is true, than perhaps, educators should consider

using technology to improve students' reading abilities and motivation levels.

Some teachers are unaware of how technology can help students who face

difficulties in reading (Berkeley & Lindstrom, 2011). Technology is not only "cool" in a high

school student's mind, but it catches their interest because for many, technology is

something that is used daily (Guess,2007). Seven years ago, the 2005 PEW Internet study

reported that 87% of teens in the United States use the Internet daily and 51% of teens go

online daily. The study also reported that of those who use the Internet, 89% send or read

e-mail, 81% play games online, 69% conduct homework and 43% buy things online

(Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey Report, 2010). In other words, because students are

using technological devices each day, incorporating them within the classroom setting may

heighten their interest.

For these reasons, teachers wanting to help spark students' interests may find that

learning about different strategies and technological advances can be extremely helpful. In

Kelly Gallagher's *Readicide* (2009), he explains how struggling students are being turned

away from reading because books were never presented to them in a relatable and

interesting way. Gallagher would argue that a powerful connection exists between struggling readers and technology; Gallagher suggest that struggling and/or reluctant readers might find reading more engaging if they have the skills to use technology to enhance their reading experiences.

Furthermore, in a longitudinal study on the impact of effective beginning reading instruction for English learners with literacy, language, and learning disabilities, Graves (2010) found that many students who have disabilities struggle with reading. This struggle leads them to give up and fail at reading. However, with the aid of assistive technology and engaging teaching strategies, struggling students may learn to enjoy and appreciate a lifelong reading habit (Warschauer, 2010). Similarly, Korat (2010) found that the e-Reader has different effects on children's early literacy development and this is why we he urged teachers to ensure that students have a better opportunity to learn with the help of technological devices, E-books, and online programs. E-readers are one specific technological tool that studies have found positive outcomes with such as increased student attention, and improved scores in comprehension, attitude and motivation (Reisberg, p.2)

The next section will focus on definitions and explanations of terms that will be used throughout the thesis.

Definitions and Explanations

E-Reader is a term that will be constantly used throughout the thesis. This stands for an electronic reader. The difference between this and an e-Book is that the e-Reader is the actual device at hand while an e-Book or electronic book, is the book that can be read off of the electronic reader. An electronic book is the electronic counterpart of a printed book, which can be viewed off any electronic device. Some e-Readers that will be covered within the thesis will be the Kindle, the Nook, and the iPad.

The iPad, however, uses different terms than the Nook or the Kindle. The iPad is the name of an electronic reader, but is made by Apple while other companies make the other electronic readers. The books that are on the iPad that can be read are considered to be an iBook. An iBook, which is the same as an eBook, is an electronic book that is designed specifically for Apple's tablets. All of the terms are very similar, yet, have seemingly different meanings. The iPad will be the main focus of this thesis.

The next section concentrate on students who struggle with reading and the effects the iPad can have on them.

The effects of the iPad on students who struggle with reading.

This section will take a close look at students who struggle with reading and the and the significant effects that using an I-Pad as a reader has on students' reading comprehension and motivation levels . "The introduction of the iPad in 2010 heralded a new age in technological convergence and became an affordable alternative to existing

educational technologies" (Sheppard, 2011, p.1). Sheppard's study showed how the iPad

has features of an eBook reader and allowed access to the resources of the Internet, which

allowed students to switch from one text to another or further expand their minds and

research. Although the iPad is a new form of technology and many have many doubts

about its usefulness (Melhuish & Falloon, 2010), Sheppard reported that many features on

the iPad can help struggling readers. Sheppard explained how reading electronically can

affect the way an individual comprehends what is read. "Web text reading is different from

print text reading because web text has additional features" (Sutherland & Smith, 2002)

which were created to help assist students. In other words, more supportive features are

available to a student using an iPad versus reading a traditional print book.

      According to Apple, "the IPAD inspired creativity and hands- on learning with

features you won't find in any other educational tool." According to the iPad support

website, the iPad comes with

> *"a screen reader, support for playback of closed-captioned content, and other innovative universal access features right out of the box. These features make iPad easier to use for students who have vision impairment, are deaf of hearing, or have a physical or learning disability."*

Students who struggle with reading may find the extra features on an iPad helpful.

      Taking a closer look at the iPad, the VoiceOver feature, which comes standard on

every iPad, "is the world's first gesture-based screen reader, and it allows you to enjoy the

fun and simplicity of iPad even if you can't see the screen." (p. 1). Interestingly enough,

with VoiceOver, the reader is able to use simple gestures to interact physically with items

on the screen. Instead of students having to memorize key commands or keep having to

press arrow keys to find what they are looking for, they are able to simply touch the screen to hear an item's description. This can be extremely helpful while reading on the iPad. Using the iPad students can touch words in which they have trouble reading or understanding and the VoiceOver feature will allow the student to interact directly with the word or object causing confusion.

VoiceOver is also fully compatible with iBooks, so the student can have books read aloud in 33 different languages. Additionally, "you can tailor iBooks to suit the way you read" (p.1). Thus, the student would be able to read in portrait or landscape orientation or choose whichever front size and kind of font they wish.

However, the iPad includes much more than just the Voice Over feature. The iPad has different features and apps that make it easier for users with impaired physical and motor skills. These interactive features support struggling readers. One of the main teaching tools that can be used during instruction and help students read is the iPad. Students now have a way to become directly engaged and interested in their reading through the iPad and iBooks.

In fact, Apple's iBooks have the simple e-Reader application, with more interactive capability than in previous editions. Not only does the application have an easy navigation tool for students, the Apple website indicates that "it also offers other important features to students: the integration of mixed media, including videos, images, and interactive graphics" (p.1). Videos can be placed by the teacher or student anywhere within iBooks text and can even be used to introduce students to a text. The Apple website indicates that what is even more helpful for students is the fact that "interactive content ranges from

slideshows to touchable 3D models, and, like the galleries, may display in-line or in full screen mode."(2012, p. 2) Glossary terms can also be scattered throughout a text, and students can simply tap on a word to bring up not only the definition, but also access a full glossary index. Moreover, Apple states that students may use certain tools built into iBooks to "highlight word or passages simply by swiping their finger over the text, and in addition, there are options for searching for the highlighted text, and for defining the selected word, should only one be selected." (2012, p. 1).

One of the main tools that apple provides with the iPad, which can be extremely helpful when trying to check a student's comprehension on the text before moving on, is the "brief review quizzes which can be at the end of some chapters" (Starrett, 2012, p. 3). Students may also use a notepad-like icon for accessing their notes and highlights, "as well as a built-in *Study Cards* feature that takes notes, highlights, and glossary terms and turns them into a virtual stack of flash cards" (Starrett, 2012, p. 1).

What is most useful about the iPad is that all of these resources can be used for casual reading or text-like reading which can also be used within the classroom. Students can use what they learn from their text and make connections to different books and resources, which are also found on the iPad. Not only do students have the ability to have hands-on experiences, they can use all the features to assist them in the reading process.

So, the iPad has many features that may help struggling readers but, the question remains, "how can teachers and parents use technology, like the iPad, to help struggling readers?" The next section will highlight a particular case study of a student, using a pseudonym, who struggled with reading and the influence of technology.

A Case Study relating to the Influence of Technology: Drew's Story

Drew was diagnosed with a learning disability as a first grade student at Palm Elementary School. His teacher recognized the disability; she could immediately tell something was wrong when he did not seem to keep up with the other students. Drew was immediately tested and diagnosed as having a recessive language disorder. Another name for recessive language disorder is *auditory processing disorder*, which means, "a child has difficulties understanding what is said to them and they have trouble using spoken language" (Better Health Channel, 2012, p. 1). Symptoms of this disorder can include lack of interest when stories are read to them, an inability to understand complicated sentences and verbal instructions, and an inability to function at grade level.

This disorder made it extremely difficult for Drew to read because it caused difficulties with remembering the sounds to make up a sentence. Furthermore it caused him problems with processing and comprehending what was being said to him.

Once the disorder was diagnosed at age six, Drew was placed in a resource room for several hours of the day, which meant that he was pulled out of his regular classroom for speech therapy and extra help. However, Drew still struggled throughout schooling and every aspect of education, with reading always being his biggest hurdle. He would then make up reasons not to attend school because he felt as if he did not fit in, and reading just made him more frustrated. Teachers placed Drew in special reading programs and provided him with Occupational Therapy throughout elementary and middle school.

However, no teacher truly got through to him. Instead, he was given books in which he had no interest and was forced to read orally to a group of four or five developmentally similar students, which embarrassed and discouraged him even more. By fifth grade, school was starting to become somewhere he *had* to go, instead of somewhere he *wanted* to go. Drew tried to find interest in other areas such as music and art, but reading always stood in his way, especially since his special reading classes took place during music and art enrichment times.

As Drew got older, he was placed in self-contained classrooms, which meant he was placed in a smaller class with students who needed the same resources as he did. In fact, Drew was placed in classes with students who were identified as 'mentally disabled.', Administrators at the school said it was supposed to make him feel good about himself, since he would be the best reader in the class. However, this made Drew feel even worse about himself; he thought he was different and less accepted. Administrators also placed Drew into an intensive reading class where students are placed if they perform below proficiency on standardized test scores. This class took the place of physical education, which was not a great incentive for him since he loved physical activity. Because of Drew's ease and confidence with his social life, he focused on the social aspect and not the academic aspect of school. His reading skills and grades began to fall at a rapid pace and to make matters worse, Drew saw no need for instruction to help with his oral reading or comprehension skills. Moreover, he began to resist teachers' attempts to help him learn to read more efficiently. By the beginning of eleventh grade, Drew's reading level was that of a 3rd grader.

Considering Drew was quite talkative, very social, and into movies, music and art, his eleventh grade language arts teacher had hope for him. This teacher, Ms. D said he just needed someone to push him along and to grasp his attention in the reading world. It was not until he had Ms. D that he realized reading could be more than boring books. Ms. D was the one teacher to take notice of Drew's interests and to find books to match his interests. She chose shorter stories and allowed Drew to pick out books that interested him. Ms. D gave him the option of reading out of her own E-Book, something that was new in the world of technology then, and something Drew had yet to experience. This devise motivated him so he began to push through his annoyance of reading and he found himself enjoying the class he had each day with Ms. D. She began to show him that reading did not just have to do with the classics, but he could also read websites and magazines related to his interests, and even music lyrics. She found different ways to incorporate reading into the lesson that seemed much more enjoyable than any other teacher Drew had ever had. Ms. D. changed his life because his reading skills and attitude towards reading began to steadily improve. Ms. D's teaching and guidance changed Drew's attitude towards schooling; he began to view reading and learning more positively. He continued to go through the next few years of high school, finding that his increased motivation made the burden of attending school lighter. Eventually, he found himself walking across the stage at high school graduation.

Drew is now 20 years old and functioning just like most 20 year olds. Although he faces struggles in reading that not everyone has to face, he has learned to compensate. He is a musician, having taught himself to read music. With the help of technology, Drew has

now realized that reading is important to him. As a struggling reader, he benefited from the resources that the iPad offers him and the guidance received from Ms. D. I know Drew's story well, since he happens to be my brother. While I was interviewing him for this study, I realized my experiences varied greatly from his, even though we share the same family. It made me wonder why my experiences were so different. By way of comparison, the next section will focus on my own personal reading experience and how the iPad has shaped my world of reading.

My Story

An autoethnography is a qualitative research method that allows the author to write in a highly personalized style, drawing on his or her experience to extend understanding (Wall, 2006, p.2). This is how I decided to present some of my research, this way I can acknowledge an exact link between my personal experience and the new digital world. I also intend to make room for nontraditional forms of inquiry and expression. I am telling my story in such a way to explore a state of understanding on the iPad and to describe my experience of emerging into technology as a learner and researcher.

Reading has never been a huge part of my life in elementary and middle school. I will be honest; I always looked at reading as a chore, something I had little interest in; something I never imagined to be an academic or career. Yet, my attitude began to change when I met one teacher who inspired me to read. Throughout my schooling, I have formed

a deep passion for reading and found that it changed to become one of the most important aspects of my life.

Even as late as May, 2012, reading became more important in my life after receiving an iPAD as a gift for my birthday. At first I was a bit skeptical because I was unsure of reading from electronic device. However, I knew I needed to give it a chance.

The first book I ordered for my iPad was *The Hunger Games,* by Suzanne Collins (2008). Being the first book that I was going to read on the iPad, it was going to be a learning experience on how to use all of the resources that it provided. When you first open iBooks, it takes you to a screen that looks exactly like a bookshelf. In the top left hand corner, it has a small box labeled "Store" where you can find books to buy. This is where I found *The Hunger Games* along with numerous other books. What is good about the store is that you can search the top sellers or look by genre. Luckily, there is also an entire selection of free books (otherwise, I could spend all of my money there). As you choose books from the store, they get transferred into your own little bookshelf.

When I tapped onto *The Hunger Games*, the cover of the book popped up full screen onto my iPad. Just like any traditional paper-and-ink book, it showed the title page, contents, dedication page, and then the chapters. What is different from a paper-and-ink novel is that you turn the pages with a swipe of your fingers, which is probably one of my favorite parts. It is fun to just glide from one page to another and if you get lost, you can find your place with the page numbers located at the bottom of the screen.

As you read, different features are placed at the top right of the screen and of course, on the left is the icon to go back to your library. One of the icons appears as "ᴀA" and allows

you to adjust the brightness of your screen or change the font of the page. The brightness

was very useful to me because when I brought the iPad to the beach, I was able to adjust

the screen so that I could see clearly. Also, although I did not have to use the font feature,

one can change the size, font, and theme of the pages. The themes include a bright white

screen (the one I prefer), sepia (a crème background), and night (a black background with

white font). While playing around with the feature, I realized how helpful this could be for

students. Considering each person has his or her own learning style, being able to adjust

the book to your preferences could be very beneficial.

The next feature or icon in the top right corner is a magnifying glass. This can either

make a certain text larger or you can type in any given word or page number and it will

take you directly to an explanation or definition. This might be an interesting resource to

use as a scavenger hunt or a fun way to review or address new vocabulary with students.

They could type in a vocabulary word and use context clues, figure out what the word

means.

The next icon, is of course, the bookmark. I used this feature most throughout

reading the novel. This does the job of a normal hand-held bookmark; however, it will

never fall out or lose your place. With this, once you leave the book you are reading and

return back to the library; when opening the book again, it will bring you directly to place

where you were previously.

The last icon that is on the top of the screen is one that looks like a piece of notebook

paper. This icon is especially interesting; one I did not come across until later in my

reading. When pressed, it takes you directly to the table of contents' page. This allows you

to find specific areas within the book. In addition, it has a tab for bookmarks; this lets you know which page you were saving and will take you directly back to your place. The last tab that goes with this feature is a notes page. As you are reading, you can highlight any text you want and when you click on this icon, it will have every highlighted section underneath detailing when you noted it and the page number. If you then click on notes icon, it will then take you to the exact page of the notes. Whoever said you could not jot down notes on an e-book?

As I read, I continued to learn little things here and there. It was fun to play with the features and even more fun to continue to swipe my finger to the next page! Something I liked the most about using the iPad was that I did not have to carry a book around with me everywhere; it was so accessible and so easy to just throw into your beach bag or purse. Also, because I was reading a very engaging and popular book, I could not put it down; I did not have to feel embarrassed that everywhere I went I was reading, I took it with me. Furthermore, books with large numbers of pages always scared me. When I found a paper-and-ink book that had many pages, I typically was turned away. However, with the iPad, you never really know how big the book is because you are not holding that heavy book in your hands. Instead, you hold the iPad, which is the same weight for every book. With that said, I finished the first book in a week and then I ordered the next one and the next one; I ordered and read the entire *Hunger Games* series within two weeks. The iPad had now become my new best friend!

So my journey as a reader was different than my brother's, even though we had the same parents and the same schools. Unlike my brother, I experienced success in reading

during school, but even so, when I received an IPad as a college student, my love of reading grew. So, through my brothers' and my experiences as readers, I am convinced that e-Readers can motivate and sustain a love of reading. This urged me to study literature to find out why e-Readers were helpful, so I can impact the lives of my future students.

The next chapter will focus on research about iPads and their use in the world of reading and education. Since I am interested in the classroom use of e-Readers and iBooks, and I wanted to know if Drew's experience with an e-Reader and my own experience with an iPad were consistent with what I might find in a local classroom. To this end, I decided to survey sixth graders about electronic reading devices. In the next section, I have included results of this survey.

CHAPTER 2: A SHIFT IN EDUCATION: IPADS IN THE CLASSROOM

Effects of the IPAD on Reading: Student Interview

Much evidence exists that focuses on research and student interviews on how the iPad helps students learn (Maag, 2006, p, 1). In an article about a pre-service teacher who encouraged the use of the iPad and used it for particular strategies with a student who Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, McClanahan found the device to help the student focus, and to facilitate metacognitive reading skills (2012). McClanahan also found that the student gained one year's growth in reading within six-weeks' and that the student remained in control and confident throughout his learning experience.

According to Caroline Connell (2012), digital reading devices are becoming increasingly popular. Connell performed a study that compared the Kindle, which is another e-Reader, and iPad to a printed document to "determine if text presentation format had a significant effect on reading time and text comprehension (p.131)". Results from her study indicated that those who read printed materials read faster than those reading from the eBook reader and tablet. However, participants reported the tablet the most useable, followed by the eBook reader. The printed material was considered the least useable. In other words, students preferred the iPad tablet over any other form of reading. Although it may have been slower to use, the iPad helped students the most.

John P. Falcone (2012) also researched the iPad and found that many people felt that it was daunting due to cost. However, Jason Tomassini (2012) did a study finding that the iPad could not only "improve students' reading and achievement" (p.1), but also that it

saved money versus the cost of textbooks. He found that schools could save between $35 and $250 per student per year by switching to digital textbooks. Both Falcone (2012) and Tomassini (2012) recommended the switch to iPads as textbooks since many schools are opening up to digital devices. However, although all tablets and e-Readers have a positive impact on learning, it was the iPad that was found to be "much more versatile" (Falcone, 2012, p. 1).

Therefore, integrating the iPad, or any other form of e-Reader into instruction might be a first step toward enhancing instruction with technology. A second step might be to understand how the new "digital" world defines text. In order to do this, one would need to explore the possibilities for students. Donald Leu (2004) suggest that there is no , "precise definition of these new literacies" and "it may never be possible to achieve because their most important characteristic is that they change regularly" (2004, p. 1570). He suggested that students read differently in their worlds outside of the classroom, so teachers could incorporate these various forms of reading into classroom life.   Texts, e-mails, and website construction are all new ways of reading that students are probably using outside of the classroom. In fact, most local bookstores or online book vendors will undoubtedly confirm a recent boom of digital readers instead actual books (Larson, 2010).

To hear from actual sixth graders, I administered a survey to a sixth grade classroom in a Central Florida Middle School. I wanted to hear their voices and find out their opinions on e-Readers. The participants were 20 students (approximately 11 years old) in a suburban area of Orlando, Florida.

Below are the three questions that I asked them:

1. How do you feel about electronic readers (iPad, Nook, Kindle, etc.)?

2. Would you rather read a book an e-Book or have an actual copy of the book?

3. Do you think technology would be a fun thing to use within your classroom?

The chart below shows the differences among students who choose to read using an e-Reader versus those who wanted to read from an actual book. Blue indicates those who were for the e-Reader, red indicates those who choose to read from the actual book, and green indicates those who were indifferent. The graph shows that over 50% of students preferred to read from an e-Reader.

Figure 1: Sixth Grade Student Survey Results for Question 1
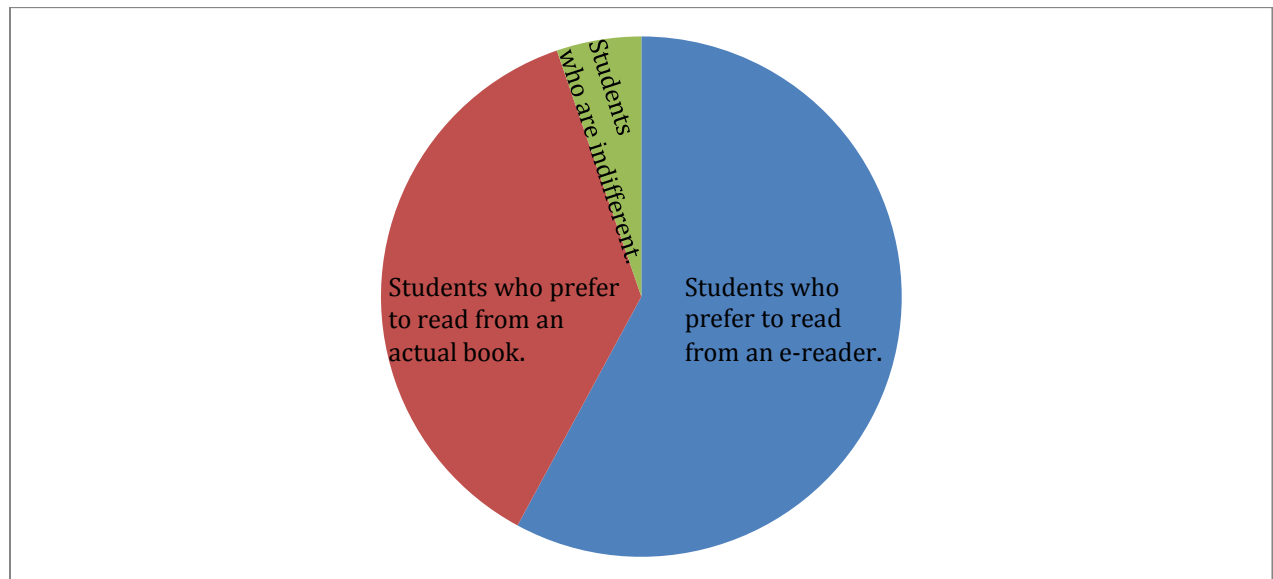
Out of 20 students, 11 or 60% stated that they would rather read an e-Reader and only 7, 30% choose an actual book . One student was indifferent. Those 11 students who

chose to read from an e-Reader all had one of their own. I followed up the survey with informal conversations about reading and technology. After administering the survey, reading the students' answers, and talking to them one-on-one, I was able to get a better feel for their views on e-Readers., The one student who was unable to answer if he would rather read an e-Reader or an actual book, did express verbally; however: "I think that the e-reader makes things so much easier." Furthermore, the 7 students who preferred to read from an actual book rather than an e-Reader, all stated that they did not have an electronic reader, but thought they were "cool." They also added "technology makes everything easier," and "technology in the classroom would be fun."

　　　The students who stated that they would rather read from an e-Reader made interesting remarks. Some of the statements they conveyed were:

"They are great because they do not take up that much space,"

"They are nice because of no bookmarks and no old book smell,"

"It can hold so many books but is thin and light,"

"You can get access to anything!,"

 "They help me because I can zoom in,"

"They are very handy and they are easy to handle."

 All of these students also reported that electronics should be brought into the classroom.

　　　From this survey, I was able to conclude a couple of things. First, students favored technology inside the classroom. This tells teachers that students want to use technology to help with their reading, writing and computation.   Secondly, more students would rather read from an e-reader than an actual book. This does not mean to get rid of

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paperbacks, but rather to implement e-readers as much as possible. In addition, this survey showed me that even at such a young age, many students indicated that they had their own e-Reader. This meaning that the numbers will probably only go up as e-Readers become more popular in our "digital" world.

The next section will take a closer look into the influence of e-Books on reading. It will provide different research in which e-Books are changing the world of learning and reading.

Influence of E-Books

This section will take a close look at the influence of e-Books in education. Higher education's interest in digital content, especially e-books, has increased dramatically (McCarthy, 2011) and according to Marquette University, technology, or E-Books, can promote reading, especially as we become more accepting of how we define reading. They also made a significant point to state that "students today have grown up in a digital world and as such are active in front of the screen of computers and other mobile devices, thus they are constantly reading something" (2011, p 20). After all, digital reading devices "store hundreds of books, newspapers, magazines, and blogs; allows for quick look-up of information through its built-in dictionary, Wikipedia, or internal search capabilities; and offers customizable settings to suit each unique reader" (Larson, 2010, p.15) which is all extremely useful to students. Understanding the idea that reading has gone beyond the touch of paper and has changed to more than books, educators now use; blogs, email, texts,

twitter, Facebook. Because students are "digital natives" a paper back book may be less useful to them verses an e-book because it does not include all of the features that accompany e-readers. With that said "the reader can manipulate the text far easier by making annotations, looking up unknown words in a dictionary, or adding specific bookmarks to return for a later review" (Hall, 2011, p. 74). With all of the assistance that is built into e-books, students have a better opportunity to read and learn. In addition, "digital books or e-books change the way learners interact with books by adding a layer of hardware (the reading software and internal ecosystem), such that the content, can be tailored to the reader" (Franklin, 2011, p 261).

Furthermore, according to the University of Prince Edward Island, researchers are now exploring how e-books may increase children's reading commitments and how they may help readers better understand texts they are reading. "The multimedia features in many newer e-books (such as audio narration, sound effects, animations, links to dictionaries, etc.) support the reading of the text and help readers visualize meaning and comprehend more easily" (Dorian, 2011, p.1). With that said, studies have also looked at the efficacy of using e-books in exchange for textbooks and have realized that students preferred using a standard computer over a traditional textbook since they can engage in note-taking and reference checking while on the computer (Doiran, 2011). Instead of having to search through numerous pages to find one answer, students have the ability to type in a word on the computer and find answers to their questions, as they read. This can be crucial in the classroom because it provides teachers with more room to teach. Technology cuts down the time it takes to use a textbook and to find an answer.

The Chicago Tribune newspaper reported that many students today may feel embarrassed about reading, because it is considered "uncool" or "nerdy." However, with an e-book, you do not have to lug around a huge book or feel embarrassed to take out "Twilight" in public. Because these technologies are so appealing to students, teachers have a better opportunity to grasping their attention. Students do not want to go through hundreds of pages of print (Christman, 2011). Rather, they want to be able to access something quick and easy. A number of recent studies indicated the increasing interest in e-books (Sage Journals, 2012) thus showing that "technology will only help our students have access to reading and promote it throughout the process" (Halls, 2011, p.74). Simone Morgan stated that "in this generation kids live and breathe technology, therefore, they will readily be open to reading if they can do it via the Internet and other devices such as e-book readers. While most parents would prefer their child/children reading from actual books, one has to come to terms with the realities of the kids' generation" (2012, p.1). However, it is not just parents who prefer their students to read from an actual book, many districts also insist on book usage to e-Reader usage.

The old fashioned way of teaching (i.e. chalkboard, paper-and-ink textbooks, etc.) is no longer an option if teachers want engaged students (Bates,2005 ,p.3). Education is now calling for many types of technology in classrooms and this is where we come to many crossroads. Teachers are now finding ways to help support this new way of teaching. This is why understanding how effective the iPad and e-Readers are in the classroom can only support this new wave.

However, although all types of e-Books are effective and "although the iPad has eBook capability, it is the iPad that is much more effective than an eBook" (McClanahan, 2012, p. 20). Furthermore, while we wait for more information and research to come out on using the iPad in the classroom, teachers should explore different ways in which the iPad can "provide support for struggling readers" (McClanahan, 2012, p. 21). After all, it cannot hurt to look into ways in which we can engage our students, particularly those who struggle with reading.

The next chapter is going to focus on alternative practices that can help heighten the students' interest in reading. Although it focus is on iPads, this chapter will also provide different ways that the use of technologies can help support students engagement within the classroom.

CHAPTER 3: ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES THAT CAN HEIGHTEN STUDENTS INTERESTS IN READING WITH THE IPAD

This section will cover different ways in which technology can be incorporated in reading lessons in classrooms of today. Often times as students get older, reading becomes a less important factor within their lives. With that said, reading is something that becomes a chore to do in their English classrooms, not something that is fun. Struggling readers rarely get to experience how great it feels to finish a book and how much fun it can be to escape day-to-day life by jumping into a good book (Brinda, 2011). This is why English teachers need to focus more on literature that speaks directly to adolescent readers interests and needs, while also providing a way of engaging the students interest (Halls, 2011), which we have already seen can be done with the iPad.

However, it can be difficult to get students to want to read. So how *do* we catch student's attention and get them to want to read? Some of the answers are obvious; we need to focus on what drives them away from reading. One of the main reasons is that we ask them to read material that is too hard for them; we also ask them to read about things they are not interest in; we ask them to read for no purpose other than they have something to read (Newkirk). With this, "we induce mistakes, undermine confidence, frustrate, and exhaust" (Newkirk, 2011, p. 88).

One interesting way to incorporate technology into the classroom is to design online social networks and use them within your classroom (Casey & Evans, 2011). Hung and Yuen (2010) found that "social networking technology can be used to supplement face-to-face courses as a means of enhancing students' sense of community and, thus, to promote

classroom communities of practice in the context of higher education" (p. 703).

Considering adolescents spend a great deal of their time outside of school hours online,

why not supplement it in their classrooms? This would cause teaching to "be in line with

their current trend" (Manan, 2012, p. 1). Not all social networking is bad, and indeed it can

be used for educational purposes. Teachers can form their own Facebook or Twitter and

use it strictly for education purposes. It can be the Facebook page for the class and it can

hold classroom assignments and homework. What better way to get students to check

their homework then have it posted on a site where students spend most of their time

anyway? Furthermore, when something is posted, whether it be on Facebook or Twitter,

the post goes onto everyone's news feed that is friends with that particular person. This

can be great for announcements and/or homework.

Social Networking goes hand-in-hand with classroom web pages. If teachers are

nervous about social networking, they can form a webpage or blog strictly for their

classroom. This is a great way to communicate with students and parents. Here you can

upload course information, assignments, lecture notes, links to other sites, study tools, and

presentations.

Another great strategy to incorporate into the classroom is the concept of keynotes.

Teachers can make keynote presentations or lessons and download them onto a classroom

set of iPads or the student's individual iPads. This can save time for students who are

absent and it is also great for ESOL and ESE students.

There are also many great applications on the iPad that help students master

English at all levels.   These apps are geared for elementary, but they can help assist

students with reading, phonics, writing, and vocabulary. There is also an app that the teacher can use and as they walk around the classroom, they can take pictures of the students work and that picture that they take will go directly into the students file online. This can be extremely useful for portfolios. Teachers can either use these applications within the classroom or educate their students on what apps to use. Croy (2012) even suggests that teachers might be able to eventually develop their own apps and this is what teachers need to engage students.

Schools should also be supporting this epidemic. Turn the Wi-Fi on and let students pull out their technological devices to look up a word in the dictionary or to find information on a specific topic. I was recently in a school that frowned upon cell-phones and/or tablets. It is understandable that administration does not want students texting at inappropriate times, but teachers should have the right to say to the students that they may use their technological devices at certain times for educational purposes. Also, teachers can use texting as an exit slip. Instead of having students write on a piece of paper, allow them to text their teachers one thing they learned that day. Or, teachers can have students rate themselves on a sale through 1-5 (5 being the highest) on how well they understood the topic that was presented that day in class.

The amount that can be done with the iPad or computer alone is outrageous. Technology supports four key components of learning which includes: participation in groups, frequent interaction feedback, and connection to real-world experts (Edutopia Staff, 2008). These resources, which are now provided to us as educators, "don't just help us teach the old stuff in new ways – they can also help us teach new stuff in new ways"

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(Klopfer, 2009, p. 1). We must go where the students are, and they are online and on mobile devices.

With technology becoming so prevalent in our students' lives, teachers should use it as a tool in their classrooms; this could even mean the use of smartphones. Right now, it is estimated that "one third of American high school students own an iPhone, and that 40% plan on purchasing one in the next six months. This does not even account for other types of smartphones and tablet devices" (Croy 2012, p.2). Croy also stated instead of being worried about how students will misuse their devices, teachers should think about how they can excel with them. Teachers are now competing with Google and one interesting teaching idea was to refrain from asking questions to the students and instead have them ask questions to Google.

If mobile devices seem too risky, teachers should at least be using videos from online, educational networks, and recommended apps. Instead of being scared of technology, teachers should embrace and encourage it. This is how we can engage with students in learning in ways we were never able to before. The possibilities that come with technology are endless. One important thing educators should remember is that, "learning does not change, what changes is the delivery of the learning" (Franklin, 2011).

The last chapter will focus on how to bring technology into your own classroom. It will include an interview of a technology savvy teacher who provides insight into an English classroom that uses technology to promote reading. It will also give a brief understanding on how to set up a technology "safe" classroom.

CHAPTER 4: BRINGING TECHNOLOGY INTO THE CLASSROOM

Interview of Technology Savvy Teachers

Integrating technology into the classroom is a growing trend. Technology enters the doors of classrooms in the pockets, bags, and backpacks of many students and educators of today (Peluso, 2012) and this is the reason that digital media needs to become a part of the educational environment. For this reason, I conducted an interview with a tech-savvy teacher, who described her thoughts on technology within the classroom. Spending four months with this teacher as part of my Internship, I was able to see the integration of technology within her classroom in full swing. Every lesson was somehow focused around technology; something she encouraged her students to do as well. Throughout these months I was able to watch the use of computers, videos, audios, iPads, and mini-lap tops being used for instruction, group work, and projects.

Ms. Smith is a 9th grade English teacher and a technology professor in Florida. She has both an English and technology degree and she uses both to best fulfill the needs of all of her students. Ms. Smith's goal within the classroom is to ensure that all of her students are engaged and actively learning. She is well respected in her profession and knows considerably about integrating technology in the classroom. For a transcript of the entire interview, please see Appendix A.

During my interview with Ms. Smith, I had the opportunity to ask her questions and to get a first-hand experience with technology within the classroom. The first thing Ms.

Smith said to me was that there was no doubt that technology is changing the world of education. Something important that she stated was that students no longer want to take notes, "they want to take a picture of the board with their phone". This is a very important statement. Today, students are able to use the camera on their phone or iPad to take a picture of the notes that are on the board, or their homework that is on the board. They do not want to take the time to write it down in their notebook and this is not because they are lazy, it is because this is what they know and what they are used to.

When I asked her opinion on the eBook and iPad, Ms. Smith believed that they both had their pros and cons but that "the iPad gives you a better selection and is more versatile." The downside is that students can get distracted with the apps and have the ability to go onto different websites. However, with the supervision of their teacher, students can be monitored or restricted in their access to WIFI within classroom buildings.

Finally, Ms. Smith concluded our interview by stating that "teachers need to be able to weave technology into their lessons seamlessly: they need to make it easy and interesting for students to access; they need to plan ahead and anticipate all the things that can go wrong; and most of all, teachers should not be afraid to experiment and try new things. Technology is constantly changing and by using technology students will find interest in it.

The questions that were used to interview Ms. Smith provided teachers insight on how effective technology is within classrooms of today. Ms. Smith does a great job explaining how students are no longer stuck in the old fashion ways of the classroom and instead are craving for the digital world. According to Ms. Smith, teachers have the

capability to provide their students with the best opportunity to a successful education and

this is evident through the use of technology within the classroom. What I found most

important throughout this interview was that we must learn and grow in technology use

along with our students and never be afraid to learn from them.

Classroom Environment

Technology is being promoted as a method of enhancing teaching and learning

throughout the country (Wright & Wilson, 2012). National accrediting agencies including

NCATE and Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology are providing grant programs which

support teacher training in building knowledge in technology integration (Koehler &

Mishra, 2005). Teachers will be able to use their knowledge of technology to

"accommodate student needs, promote student learning, and better prepare students for

the digital society" (Zhao, 2007, p. 312).

For these reasons, new teachers need to recognize that schools must accommodate

technology and all its implications in classroom instruction (*North Carolina State*

Deptartment of Public Instruction, 1995). Designing an effective classroom environment for

learning is difficult (Roskos & Nueman, 2011), not to mention designing one that

incorporates technology. For many teachers, setting up the their classrooms "can be quite

daunting" (*Teacher Vision*, 2012, p. 2) especially when faced with technology. However,

organization and labeling are both effective tools when bringing technology into the

classroom. To ensure a successful classroom setting, teacher should log when something is and is not being used.

It is hard in many schools to get either approval or funding for technology. However, there are many grants that support the use of technology within the classroom. Adding to this, McCarthy (2011) also showed that electronic textbooks can actually save a school a lot of money. As long as teachers want and promote technology, it will become a necessity to classrooms. Furthermore, many students have their own mobile devices, which can be brought into classrooms and used.

"As long as we have it, we must engage it" (Sheppard, 2011, p.2) . However, by doing this we must be aware of our classroom environment to ensure no student is out of order around new technologies. Many classrooms today even have a smart board, or Interactive White board, which is placed in the front of the classroom for teacher and student use. However, to ensure a safe environment, technologies must be placed in spaces that provide a safe classroom environment. One tip for a classroom with computers is to have all computers facing the wall, this way the teacher can move freely around and monitor each computer to provide feedback and assistance. Another good idea would be to have a round table in the middle of the room so that students can easily turn around from the work they are doing on the computers and sit at the table (Williams, 2010).

Also, with the use of technology there needs to be rules and limits. With that said,

"our students can quickly through the use of their mobile device fact check a class lecture, find people who may know more about the topic than the faculty, find people who have completed the assignment last year and ask them for help – or copy intellectual property directly -- and facebook or tweet (becoming verbs) how bad/boring your class is – all while attending your lecture" (Franklin, 2011).

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This can be scary and distracting if students are accessing their technology during important class lectures so educators should consider setting limits. Teachers can promote the use of technology and mobile devices but under their terms. For example, a rule that could be used would be that all technology and mobile devices must be put away unless directed otherwise. Students should not have their phones out at all times, free to use the Internet as they wish. However, teachers could monitor and limit students use of mobile devices.

Overall, with the rise of technology, educators must find ways to promote the best learning environments. Considering they are now finding the necessary creative and innovative ways to connect technology's power for school and educational improvement, (Anderson & Balajthy, 2009) teachers must set up their classrooms appropriately.   In order to do this teachers must be aware of their classroom layout and the way technology is being used. They must ensure they have the opportunities in which students can thrive while also protecting technological devices such as computers and e-Readers.

The next section is going to continue looking at Drew's story, which was introduced in the beginning paper. Here we will take a look at Drew's journey and how his use of the iPad affected him.

Another look at Drew's Story

Looking at how the iPad has affected Drew and through the lens of the research shown above, it is quite evident that the iPad, along with other technologies, can be a

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success within the classroom. Drew has recently bought himself his own iPad and is reading at a level he never believed he would achieve. He is buying books for himself and finding pleasure doing so. Instead of reading because he *has* to, he is reading because he *wants* to. For him, the iPad has proven a great tool to motivate and help him develop a love of pleasure reading. Just as Drew has done with the iPad at hand, students can take charge of their own interaction with books.

Drew found that with resources that the iPad had, he was better able to access information while reading. He noted that often times when he was unsure about a word in the text or specific information provided about a subject, luckily the answer was just a click away. No longer did he have to access a dictionary or search the web and books for answers, everything was easily accessible. This is where he found that the iPad has helped him most. Luckily these resources relate to all students, not just struggling readers.

Within just three months of having the iPad, Drew read two books. Even though it was summer and he had more time than usual, reading two books was quite an accomplishment for him! This is two more than he had ever read willingly. Drew is happy with his purchase and feels that using an iPad to read books has changed his view on reading all together. He is now setting goals to read more to increase his reading ability and fluency.

When talking with Drew he gave me considerable insight on how the iPad had changed and developed his reading ability and attitude towards reading. One of the questions I asked him was if he had the opportunity to share his story, what would be the most important thing that he would want people to no. Drew's answer was no shock when

he stated that "the iPad has changed my life as a reader." Drew then went on to explain

that the most useful feature he would like to share with other struggling readers was the

idea that he was able to highlight words and find the meaning to them with just a click of a

finger. "This," he said, "was the most helpful while reading." It did not stop his fluency or

pace, rather enhanced what he did not know and he was able to quickly move on.

 With this, I hope all students have the opportunity, just as Drew has, to find an

outlet to reading. Teachers have the opportunity to open new doors, provide guidance, and

show students what reading can and is (Blankenship, 2008). Now teachers are not alone,

they have the help of technology, something that students thrive on. With the help of the

iPad and e-Books, students can grow to form a love for books like never before. The next

section looks at my story and my journey with the iPad. It will show what my experiences

have been and how I have progressed in my reading fluency.

My Story

From my own personal experience, the iPad has been a success story. I had it for

only four months and I have read a total of eight books, including an audio book! Who

would have thought? I found pleasure in reading in ways I never thought I could. The iPad

was always glued to my side; the beach, school, the classroom, the mall, doctor

appointments...the list could go on and on. Of course I used everything the iPad had to

offer, including email, games, and social networking, but especially, e-books.

While I was home during the summer, I thought I would try a few different things on the iPad so downloaded a few educational apps. A couple I downloaded were Aesops Quest, Opp Ocean, and Reading Comp. The app I thought was most useful was Kids Reading Comprehension, which is geared towards a younger age group. What I liked most about this app was that you could add as many readers as you would like. Each reader started at a Level one and as they read through each book, they had to answer questions that went along with the story. This not only checks their comprehension skills, but it keeps the students focused. Once they finish the required number of books for each level they move up to the next level. This forms an incentive for the student. This would be especially useful within an elementary classroom as students could take turns on the iPad.

Listening to an audio book was another hurdle I jumped. The thought of it has always turned my cheek but being so successful with the e-Book I figured I would give it a shot. So on my way down to Florida, which is an 18-hour drive, I listened to an audio book through my iPad. Surprisingly, I did not even want to stop for gas or food and when the book was over before my trip was, I knew I had to order another one. This was something I never thought I would have enjoyed, but the audio book was an experience I would love to share with my students. I feel this could be especially useful when reading the harder texts such as Shakespeare. Students could listen as they followed along in their books.

Another feature I found on the iPad was that you could download other applications such as the Nook and Kindle and receive all of the free books they provided. Now I have about 20 books on my iPad, many I cannot wait to begin reading. It was amazing to be able to read a book and when becoming confused about a situation or topic, I was able to get

information immediately. Most of all I would say that the iPad is easy to use, assessable, and provides readers of today with many new opportunities.

This is a device I would be thrilled to incorporate within my classroom. This is a new era and it is time to engage or students with what they know and understand best, technology. What better way to get them up and reading then having them reading on electronic devices? With the world at their fingertips, our future students have an amazing opportunity to learn and read. It is time to get into the classroom and provide my students with a willingness to read.

Students of today do not remember a time where Internet did not exist and " the young children of today and the future college students of 2025 will not remember a time when there was not pad-based mobile devices and smart phones" (Geist, 2011). Teachers should now be engaging in the digital world and finding ways in which they can incorporate technology into their classroom. Through this paper there have been numerous experiences in which the iPad, e-Reader, or technology has influenced not only our struggling students, but all students.

As technology changes, so too will schooling for our students. Students need to excel, and in order to achieve excellence, teachers need to find ways in which lessons interest their students. As technology changes and grows, we must change and grow with it. It is not the students who will fall behind the times; it is the teachers. This is why we must ensure we are keeping up and providing positive ways to engage our students that keep them engaged. Apple believes that interactive digital books, which are designed for the iPad is the future to education (Lopresti, 2012).   Digital books are more than what they

seem. With research, I was able to conclude that education is now slowly changing and with the help of the technology, struggling students have the ability to grow as readers just as Drew and I did.

Results, Implications, and Conclusions

The results of my research indicate that technology has a positive impact on students in the classroom. With the case study of my brother Drew, I was able to conclude that the iPad has helped him in a successful way. This meaning that students who have disabilities like Drew, have the opportunity to grow and learn with the help of the iPad. This research on the influence technology has on reading in struggling students has opened the doors to the awareness on how technology can be a success story within the classroom.

With the help of my survey on the 6th grade classroom, I was also able to conclude that students more than favor using technology in their classrooms. While there are many pros and cons to the idea of bringing technology into the classroom, one can determine, through my interview and research, that times are changing within education and teachers can find many different ways to incorporate it into their own classrooms.

More research should be conducted on the effects of technology on students who struggle with reading. Topics of further study include the effects e-Readers can have on all students, incorporating digital textbooks, and different forms of technology that can be successful in a specific subject area. The current concept of technology in the classroom, as we have seen, is that it is slowly helping students across the board.

Although my research has varying opinions, one can conclude that the iPad, along with other technological devices can be a success story within and outside of the classroom. Teachers can use what they now know about technology and slowly incorporate it within their lesson plans. However, we must never be afraid to learn from our students who have grown up in this "digital era" and we must never be afraid to try something thing.

APPENDIX A:
INTREVIEW USED IN "INTERVIEW OF TECHNOLOGY SAVVY TEACHER."

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW USED IN "INTERVIEW OF A TECHNOLOGY SAVVY TEACHER."

Interview

Me: Is technology changing the world of education?

Ms. Smith:
There is no doubt technology is changing the world of education. Students no longer want to take notes, they want to take a picture of the board with their phone. For the summer reading I had them do a dialectical journal and they had to document the page number they took the quote from, but the problem with that is that the iBook and Kindles don't have traditional page numbers. Instead of reading the book students ask--can't we just watch the movie? On the other hand bringing in current examples from the web or Youtube makes it easier for students to connect new knowledge to what they already know. Research becomes a breeze and as far as MLA--just use Bibme.com

Me: Do you believe students have a better opportunity with E-books or the iPad?

Ms. Smith:
There are pros and cons to both. On one hand the iPad with all of the apps give you a better selection and is more versatile. Because so many students know how to use, there is very little learning curve. The downside is that students can get distracted with the apps and the ability to go to different website. E-books keep students from wandering around and getting distracted, but because they are not as versatile, students can get bored and it use is limited to just reading. My choice if I could would be IPads--I think it has the best of both worlds, E-books and the web for research and on the spot learning if students have a question.

Me: As teachers, how can we successfully incorporate technology into the classroom?

Ms. Smith:
First of all teachers have to be as comfortable with technology as they are using the whiteboard. They need to be able to weave it into their lessons seamlessly. Secondly, remember that technology is just a tool to communicate the lesson. Third, make it easy and interesting for students to access. For example creating a scavenger to activate prior knowledge helps students learn or review needed information to understand the new material. By creating the scavenger you give students the exact webpage to go to and minimize distractions and time by giving them the exact place to go instead of having students waste time trying to find it. Teachers need to plan ahead and anticipate all the things that can go wrong and try to minimize it. Teachers should not be afraid to experiment and try new things and most of all don't be afraid to learn from students. I

always tell them that if they know a better shorter way to do something, let me know. Technology is constantly changing and many times our students know more than we do.

Me: Do you believe that students become more interested with an activity if technology is involved?

Ms. Smith:
I do believe that using technology will interest students, but I do not think that technology alone will motivate. For example, typing an essay is better than handwriting, but will not generate a great deal of excitement. Therefore, the activity and its purpose is also important. Is it connected to something students are interested in. For example one activity that generated a lot of interest in was figurative language. After introducing students the figurative language, students had to analyze their favorite songs and identify different types of figurative language--it was a huge success. Students were genuinely excited to present their projects and many added audio and video clips. It was evident that they spent a lot of time and effort on the project.

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