



## iPad Apps for English Language Learners

### what is the teaching challenge?

Struggling readers and ELL students need a lot of individualized attention and feedback on their reading. Often it is not feasible for a teacher to provide adequate differentiation across his or her classroom. Even with the aid of an EA or a Literacy Tutor these students still need more attention to bring their literacy levels up to grade level.

My challenge is trying to figure out how a teacher can use technology to meet the differentiation needs of an ELL student or a struggling reader to empower themselves to improve their literacy independently and collaboratively.



Flickr: mikecogh

### what are possible technology-enabled solutions?

Computers are already used in many classrooms during literacy blocks. With programs like BookFlix and TumbleBooks, ELL students and struggling readers can gain more feedback from the text they read. Words may highlight or the student can listen to the story being read aloud.

The setback of traditional computers as literacy aids is that they isolate the child during literacy time. If it is during an independent reading block and students are allowed to sit at their desks or the carpet as they please, the struggling reader can be made to feel stigmatized by often going to the computer to read, away from his or her peers.

A solution to this social problem that continues to give the computer-aided literacy support is an iPad so a child can sit at their desk or on the carpet, or other literacy designated area of the classroom like their peers. For independent learning, interactive ebooks allow children to: listen to the story being read as each word is highlighted while it is being read, or read the story themselves with feedback coming from the app such as speaking out a word a child is struggling with when it is pressed.

### how will this technology support learning?

iPads with interactive ebooks help support student learning by allowing them to enjoy reading socially like their peers. As they read independently, they can either listen to the story being read to them, or read along as each word being spoken highlights. Or, they can read to themselves tapping on words they do not understand. More robust apps also allow the child to touch on objects in the background while the app displays and reads the word associated with the object touched. Every interactive ebook has a different level of interaction built in to it. Some include fun side games that can be played mid-story. Those may be appropriate for free time but not necessarily the best for staying on-task during independent reading.

In this ever globalizing world, our children are connected like never before. They can collaborate with students all around the world through sites like Edmodo (a teacher-moderated introduction to social networking) and Kidblog (a safe blogging platform meant for students). Of course both these sites can be used for collaboration on a computer – most of the students in the class would access them this way. However, the use of an iPad with these sites gives students more power to communicate and to improve their reading and writing skills.

iPads come with numerous multilingual keyboards built in and easily installable. An ELL student can ask in a language-appropriate group how they can say a word or phrase in their language and have other students who speak English and that language help him or her.



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### Interactive eBook Publishers

Auryn Inc [www.auryn.tv](http://www.auryn.tv)  
 Oceanhouse Media  
<http://www.oceanhousemedia.com/>  
 Disney Digital Books  
<http://disneydigitalbooks.go.com/>

### Collaborative Apps

Edmodo <http://www.edmodo.com/>  
 Kidblog <http://kidblog.org/>

### Other Resources

Getting, Sara. Swainey, Karin. "First Graders with iPads?" *Learning & Leading with Technology*. August 2012

McClanahan, Barbra. Williams, Kristen. Tate, Susan. "A Breakthrough for Josh: How Use of an iPad Facilitated Reading Improvement" *TechTrends* Volume 56, Number 3. May/June 2012.

Interactive eBooks (reviews)  
<http://bestinteractiveebooks.com>

Second Grader Shows How She Uses Evernote for Fluency  
<http://edudemic.com/2013/03/evernote-for-fluency/>

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### what are the considerations for enabling this technology in the classroom?

A large barrier to bringing iPads into the classroom is cost. The iPads themselves are the most expensive type of tablet and quality, educationally robust apps generally cost money. There are often bargains to be had watching for paid apps to go free or highly discounted for certain promotions. There's even an app that will scope out those deals for you!

This type of interactive reading and collaboration can be done on a computer but it may not necessarily be as able to be done on other brands of tablets. iPads are working their way into the education market to a degree that other manufacturers and content producers are not tapping into.

### how would you gather evidence of learning or change in the classroom?

Assessment would depend on the Pad setup in the classroom. If students had individual iPads, certain apps which track results of literacy games and quizzes can provide data. However, if devices are shared data may not be as reliable as some apps do not allow for multiple profiles. In that case assessment would be conducted as normal for literacy and improvement could be seen in those scores.

### what trends in education connect to this technology?

With the prevalence of interactive white boards, document cameras, netbook carts that bring computers from class to class, technology is already a trend in education. With apps that help students with special needs, iPads are already showing up on IEPs.

When exploring interactive ebooks, it allows children to benefit from experiences that address multiple intelligences. Most easy to notice is that interactive ebooks are both visually and auditorily stimulating. Many want the user to touch and trace things on the screen appealing to a tactile learner. Others still want to be tipped to shaken to reset the screen thus making learning with an iPad interesting for a kinesthetic learner.

### closing thoughts

While there is an argument to be made that a tablet is more beneficial for fostering independent literacy than a computer, it does not remain that that tablet be an iPad. Educational software for other platforms does exist even if finding it is a little more difficult.