iPad with Students

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The late Steve Jobs once said “Every once in a while a revolutionary product comes along that changes everything” (Steve Jobs: The Man Who Saved Apple, 2011). As technology continues to changes over time, we find that instruction in the classroom must change as well. Students are becoming familiar with a wide variety of technology at home. As educators, using these new tools could be extremely beneficial as we attempt to differentiate our instruction to meet the needs of individual students. The iPad has become a device that many school districts have already adopted throughout their buildings. Many of those districts that do not have the iPad have considered it.

Carolyn Foote (2010), a school librarian in Austin Texas, wanted to examine how the iPad could be used in a variety of settings throughout the school. They have found that there are a wide variety of apps for the iPad that are available for free and have decide to continue to explore these. They have decided to take a look at two main aspects of this tool for teachers – as an instructional tool and a productivity tool. One teacher from her building said that one of the greatest assets of the iPad is that any subject area can benefit from its use. They have also found that the portability feature to be extremely valuable. During parent nights, teachers could walk around freely and show parents the school website.

Amy Price (2011), another librarian from Oakstone Academy in Ohio, has found that the iPad has helped meet the needs of their students with autism. They found an increase in comprehension scores when their students read interactive e-books on the iPad. Many of the teachers said that using the iPad motivated their students and that they found a decrease in negative behavior. However, the school did find difficulty with purchasing and managing apps on the iPad. For this reason, the school decided that teachers must go through the library in order to get new apps. Despite this setback, they have decided to continue to use this tool in their school.

As an educator interested in emerging technology, I feel strongly that this is a tool that every classroom should have. The iPad gives you access to an infinite amount of information and programs all at the tip of your fingers. It is also a medium that students enjoy and understand extremely well – perhaps even better than their teachers in most cases. If the iPad is a resource that students find intriguing, why not use it as a tool we use every day in our classroom?

When I have had the opportunity to use it in my classroom, there have been many times that I have turned it over to students. I had been reading a non-fiction book with a group of struggling readers. These students were working on a project and wanted to look up images of some of the characters from the story. When I gave them the iPad to work with, they immediately wanted to look up even more information. Instead of creating a poster as originally planned, they have now decided to create a multi-media presentation.

There may be many teachers that are not comfortable enough to dive into this sort of technology, but perhaps they just need the support from more tech-savvy teachers. After exploring the many features of the iPad, it’s clear that it’s worth putting the time and effort into learning how to use it.

References

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