STRATEGIES TO SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENT TABLET TECHNOLOGY IN A READING CLASSROOM

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STRATEGIES TO SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENT TABLET TECHNOLOGY IN A READING CLASSROOM

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Abstract

Trying to accommodate struggling readers is not a new problem for educators. However, current trends in technology are helping to reach these struggling readers in ways that was previously inaccessible, specifically tablets. This paper shows how tablet technology is being used currently in reading classrooms to address student needs, and discusses whether it is an effective investment for districts. A brief description of the tools that are available is included. Finally, the paper discusses potential risks of using tablets in the classroom. The literature reviewed in this paper includes surveys, reviews, qualitative data and analysis to conclude that tablets have a place in classrooms. However, depending on the students' needs, it may not be the most appropriate choice.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

Consistently low reading scores on standardized tests are a common problem and teachers everywhere are under pressure regarding what to do about it. One option for filling these gaps may be technology.

With the advancement in technology, more and more classrooms are moving toward implementing tablets in their classroom. Remedial reading teachers look toward the tablet technology as a possible supplement to their curriculum and a possible solution to reaching that specific population of students.

Problem Statement

Students, kindergarten through twelfth grade, who do not meet grade-level standards in reading comprehension are often considered for, and ultimately placed in, a reading intervention. These interventions are aimed at increasing the students' reading comprehension in a short amount of time. These are not students in special education and therefore have no identified reading disability. Depending on the districts' or schools' resources, the available support may vary. The reading intervention often chosen is an additional reading class that offers research-based curriculum designed to increase students' literacy comprehension in two years. These classes offer intense instruction with a small teacher-to-student ratio. These students, in theory, should be gaining two

years reading growth in one year of instruction (e.g., a seventh grade student reading at a 5th grade level at the beginning of seventh grade should be performing at grade level by the end of seventh grade). However, even with the intense reading support there are still students who perform below proficiency, contradicting the ultimate goal of the intervention.

Teachers are constantly searching for ways to increase students' scores by changing their current teaching procedure and implementing strategies that support this specific population. One strategy used to promote reading progress is the use of technology in the reading classroom. Looking specifically at tablet technology, how can remedial reading teachers implement tablets in their classrooms to promote necessary reading progress?

Purpose of the Study

The types of support that are currently in place are not effective with every struggling reader. In an effort to understand whether these devices promote reading progress, this study aims to look at current research to definitively understand the tablet's value in a reading classroom. This study will aim to answer the follow research questions:

1. What is the relationship between tablets and improved reading scores?
2. What teaching strategies are most effective for working with the struggling readers, currently attending U.S. schools, to ensure appropriate gains in reading with the tablet technology?

3. What applications (apps) are available on the tablet to support reading instruction and how can they be used?

Significance of the Study

The current trend in education places a significant amount of value on standardized test scores. In an effort for the United States to become more proficient in the area of reading, districts are being evaluated based on the reading proficiency of their students (Reed, 2012). The pressure to meet proficiency standards trickles down through the system and ultimately lands on the shoulders of the teachers and their students. Schools that consistently do not meet reading standards face possible repercussions (e.g.. Poor teacher evaluations, funding or staff cuts, district policy for advancement, state statutes, etc.).

There are a variety of interventions available to help address the reading proficiency gaps in schools. A common intervention choice is to place the struggling reader in an intense reading program, offered to students demonstrating reading ability two grade levels below their own or more. Placing these general education students (not needing special education services in the area of reading) in an appropriately leveled class with similar-ability peers should, in theory, increase their reading proficiency. This should result in higher teacher/school/district evaluations and rankings and a better-prepared student moving toward the next grade level or future endeavor.

Not every student is able to meet this goal. Reading teachers anticipate this and look for ways to supplement the program and offer additional support.

Why are there students, even after being immersed in additional reading support programs for many years, continuing to read below proficiency and what can teachers do about it?

New technologies continue to make their way into classrooms all over the world. It is a huge benefit to teachers as they attempt to reach that specific population. Today, in 2013, classrooms are being introduced to the "tablet." The tablet technology is not a new concept to education but class sets of these tablets are becoming more and more common. With this technology comes the issue of making its use relevant and rigorous in middle school reading intervention classrooms.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are key words used within this paper:

- Reading intervention- a state response to the laws enacted under No Child Left Behind to ensure no student falls behind in reading which puts into place evidence-based guidance in the form of programs or other instructional tools (Reed, 2012).
- Educational Tablet Applications- tools provided and available to download onto any device (such as the tablet) to assist in the productivity and education of an individual.

Delimitations of the Study

This research was conducted through the Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and Carnegie Stout Public Library in Dubuque, IA. Primary searches were conducted via the Internet through the search engine EBSCO Host. Key search topics included combinations of the following terms: "tablet technology, success, reading intervention, electronic learning, and implementation."

- The University of Wisconsin-Platteville's library has limited access to articles and books to ensure completeness of the literature review.
- Appropriate qualitative research on this subject was sparse considering how recent a technology it is. This will hinder the completeness of the literature review.

Methodology: Method of Approach

The literature review focuses on what tablet technology offers, how it may be implemented in a reading classroom, is it effective, and what strategies there are to successfully implement the technology into current reading classrooms. This was accomplished by referencing many professional articles and research studies, as previously stated.

Chapter Two:

Review of Literature

What impact does tablet technology have on reading achievement?

Why focus all this energy on replacing paper and desktops with tablets if there is no correlation between their use and reading improvement? Looking at reading comprehension and fluency specifically, is there any correlation between tablet implementation and reading improvement?

Bayliss, Connell, and Farmer (2012) were interested in learning more. In their research involving 201 undergraduate students in a large southeastern university, they looked at comprehension and fluency effects between a Kindle 3 (popular eBook reader by Amazon), Apple's iPad, and printed text. Searching for an understanding regarding whether the format or presentation of the texts directly affects comprehenion and/or reading speed, their study concluded that with the undergraduate sample, the one-way analysis of varience showed no correlation between the text presentation and their reading comprehension. However, the results did show that the text presentation affected reading time, with printed material resulting in the fastest time.

This study went on to discuss device usability and task difficulty indexes. The results showed that text presentation format affected perception of task difficulty. In regard to usibilty, the tablet was considered to be the easiest to use, followed by ebook, and finally, printed text (Bayliss, et al., 2012). Thus, though students read printed materials faster, they comprehend the materials equally across formats and find electronic

devices easier to use than print materials. This was found with general education students.

The findings of Bayliss et al.'s study (2012) regarding usibilty could shed light on how tablets could be used to provide more individualized instruction to improve standardized reading scores. If we use these tablets to modify instruction and provide accomodations for students according to need, we may see reading growth in a faster period of time in students with specific needs and/or accomodations. This was the case for one student named Josh (McClanahan, 2012).

Josh was the subject for a diagnosis and tutoring project in an elementary education reading course. The teacher was encouraged to use an iPad as a vehicle for intervention strategies for a fifth grader with Attention Deficit Hyperacivity Disorder (ADHD). This teacher developed strategies that were specific to Josh's needs and appropriate for his diagnosis. Josh was reading instructionally at a second grade level (Josh is a fifth grader). Josh did not read in phrases or with expression and paid little attention to punctuation. His comprehension was also poor. He frequently missed detail, sequence, and inferencing questions. His teacher found applications that she felt he would find useful and would help him bridge the gap to make him a more proficent reader (McClanahan, 2012). The applications or strategies implemented included but are not limited to: games involving reading strategies, electronic flashcards, recording his reading and playing it back, electronic books, metacognitive lessons, vocabulary building, phonics, and the INSERT strategy (the INSERT strategy involves using simple marks to indicate a reaction or a response within the text).

Six months after starting the intervention, Josh is still reading below grade level but has made a significant improvement. Josh shared his thinking and was beginning to see the value in reading. Josh declared that he enjoyed the INSERT strategy and had even taken to doing it in his own independent reading (McClanahan, 2012).

But why did the iPad enable Josh to make significant progress even after five years of schooling and remedial reading? The authors speculate that the one-on-one intervention may have been a factor in Josh's growth. Also the use of the iPad as a mediator, allowing him to use several modalities, could have been enough. The visual, tactile, and kinestethic modalities are especially inviting to a child with ADHD. The sensory stimulation may have allowed Josh to engage in the learning in a way that typical education did not allow. The authors suggest that the touch screen may have added to Josh's sense of control (McClanahan, 2012).

Does the tablet increase learning and engagement?

The iPad engages students in ways schools have not been able to before. If students are more motivated, they should, in theory, make faster progress. Technology has always been an important factor in schools and that is one reason why districts have invested in computers since the 1970's (Faas, 2013).

Readers using the iPad have the ability to watch, interact, and listen, all while reading. This certainly plays a part in the students' reading comprehension. These eBooks or tablets give the reader the option to review the information through: read-aloud texts, having individual words read, music, pop-up definitions, animations, and videos. These multimodal enhancements that support students' reading comprehension,

aid in the development of their reading fluency, and enhance their vocabulary could also have a profound effect on their attention span as well as their motivation. Additionally, readers are able to manipulate text size, text-to-speech capabilities, search functions, and word definitions. These capabilities provide needed accommodations for students who are visually impaired, dyslexic, or are second language learners. Many features of a tablet enhance student development and reading skills. For instance, the student may set the device to read the text out loud, or pronounce words. Students may also access definitions or view animations. The technology gives them opportunities to reread without adult facilitation (Felvegi & Mathew, 2012). Such augmentations are helpful to students with learning disabilities, or who are learning English as a second language.

However these qualities that the tablets offer can also potentially interfere with the student's ability to concentrate. The same animations, sounds, delays, and interactions can interfere with their ability to be active readers. The concern is that tablets may not really engage them in the text and make them think but rather only require them to be passive readers (Felvegi & Mathew, 2012).

McKenna (2012) examined student engagement in first and second grade classrooms. It was proved that the iPad increased student engagement in both classrooms. In the second grade classroom McKenna examined non-iPad and iPad-integrated math. The integrated students in the iPad classroom had a 2.22% higher engagement than did the non-iPad math students. McKenna also examined reading engagement in these classrooms. The second grade class using the iPad in reading had 7.95% higher engagement in reading than the non-iPad group.

The first grade class in this study had similar findings. The reading group with the iPad was 3.99% higher than the non-iPad group in engagement. The math group using the iPad technology had 1.8% higher engagement (McKenna, 2012). Considering only the reading data, this study offers evidence to support the claim that the tablet, when used in addition to supplement curriculum, will help increase student engagement. The tablet was the only change made in the study. Showing, but not conclusively proving, their need in a intervention reading class.

Miller (2012) looked at the engagement of students in a variety of subjects (music, organizational leadership and supervision, English, communication studies, and physical education). Miller looked at perceived learning and perceived engagement. Based on a survey given to 209 students, there was a higher engagement in the perceived learning than in perceived engagement. Students who participated in the study reported that information was easily accessed, group work was produced quickly and efficiently, and the iPad was a 'fun' way to learn. Students also reported negative aspects. Stating that the iPad was often distracting, too much wasted time when the iPad wasn't working properly, and lack of knowledge of how to use it was also a deterrent for those students. Overall, students responded fondly toward their implementation.

Miller's (2012) study shows only that iPads are a tool to supplement quality instruction and cautions that proper teaching and management of these devices is necessary. It does not conclusively prove that tablet implementation is necessary for student engagement. This study does show that there is a place for tablets in education.

Becker (2013) wrote about a school in Dubuque, Iowa and how technology has been improving the teaching and learning in one classroom. One teacher shared that

technology has allowed her students to direct their own learning and move at their own pace. The same teacher shared that this change (bringing technology into the classroom) is not always easy. The major issue for them is the wireless Internet. When everyone tries to watch a video or load a website, it takes a while with slow Internet.

What strategies are most effective when working with struggling readers through the use of tablets?

With this new way of delivering information, students are required to develop new modalities and strategies to access the information needed on electronic devices. Reading in digital format is different than reading in the traditional format. Thus, teachers must change their strategies to faciliate students working through texts digitally (Felvegi & Mathew, 2012).

This new way of accessing information leads the educators to adapt their lessons and teaching styles. Education today is about teaching students how to find more information and differentiate relevant information from nonrelevant information. Having access to a plethora of information right at their fingertips encourages quick and easy answers to questions while they are working, but it does not teach them how to evaluate whether these answers are valid. Moving away from memorizing facts and giving the student more control over what they want to learn may result in unquestioning acceptance of "facts" found online. Through online learning may fuel curiosity, students should be instructed regarding evaluating sources' reliability.

Another issue could arise as a student transitions from iPad reading to book reading. Traditionally, students are taught to read left to right and top to bottom. With

electronic text there is no “page” and therefore the reader is invited to “swipe” side to side or scroll at their leisure. Instead of pictures on a page, the graphics may be videos for the student to watch, or interactive graphics (Felvegi & Mathew, 2012). Therefore it seems obvious that with this advancement in technology, teachers need to explicitly teach students strategies to read on tablets or other electronic devices at the risk of all the button-pushing becoming too distracting. For instance, setting limits on what can be “clicked on” or limiting access to certain fetures can help students keep focused on their task. Tablets should also not be used exclusively; books should also be used.

Electronic texts, tablets, eReaders or ebooks enable students and educators to use a variety of tools. However, their existence does not necessarily mean they will be used meaningfully. For students with limited technology at home, schools are their only access to technology. They rely on public education to provide and educate them on technology’s use. Exposure to these technologies will help all students become more successful in and outside of school. In a sense, because students will be brining the techonolgy home, teachers using tablets also have an opportunity to educate families regarding appropriate use of technology.

What benefits are offered with tablet use?

According to one teacher, “tablets hit the sweet spot between computer and a piece of paper” (Hedge, 2013, p. 50). The teacher no longer has to move between her computer screen and printed documents. The tablet takes care of both. This flexibility has been noticed by teachers and, of course, by the general public. Within weeks of becoming available, the iPad sold more than three million units (Murry & Olcese, 2011).

These three million buyers are realizing the benefits of this technology. In addition to the iPad the other tablets available include, but are not limited to: RM Slate, Blackberry Playbook, Sony Tablet, HP Tablets PCS, Brainchild Keno, and the Fujitsu Stylistic Tablet (Tech and Learning). These are the tablets that are currently making their way into classrooms.

In 2010, education alone was responsible for 60% of the iPad distributions (Gentile, 2012). Of those polled, 100% had integrated the technology into their schools. In the next five years, tablets are expected to outnumber computers. With this knowledge, teachers should be looking ahead and preparing for the inevitable (Gentile, 2012).

One reason people and teachers alike gravitate to the iPad is speed. One educator adopted the device after much hesitation, to decrease the amount of wasted time. This educator measured the amount of time it took for him to open his desktop and iPad programs for email and web browsing and realized he can save a minimum of 45 minutes a day in just the key functions when using the iPad, compared to time spent using the standard computer (Brantley, 2013). Teachers everywhere fight the constant battle with time. There is never enough time for everything. This aspect alone is enough for some teachers to begin to see the need for the iPad in today's classrooms.

There is no way to eliminate the "grunt work" that a teacher must complete throughout the day, such as taking attendance, grading, assigning homework, etc. However, there is a way to streamline the process. Implementing a course management system allows students and teachers to interact online. For example, students can turn in their homework electronically and teachers can monitor and assess the same way. Later on in this paper, applications will be introduced to assist with this process. This idea of

streamlining the communication and interaction seems daunting, but many of the teachers attempting this have mentioned the impact far outweigh the fear (Faas, 2012).

What are the safety and security risks and issues?

As schools continue to gravitate toward this new technology within their curriculum, a mobile device management system is necessary to support the need (Gentile, 2012). The Mobile Device Management System (MDM) is important to consider when deciding between technologies. The MDM must provide the IT (information technology) department with the ability to track and secure the devices though the district (Gentile, 2012). The IT department will also need to regulate and safeguard the sensitive and important information.

Before bringing the technology into the classroom, teachers should ask themselves the following questions (Gentile, 2012):

- Do the tablets meet the district's requirements for enforcing security policies, managing content, and controlling access to the public Internet and district resources?
- Do the mobile device management policies also support these requirements in conjunction with the tablets being considered?
- Can the tablets be readily classified and sorted in order to dispense policies and content?
- Can the MDM product being considered work in conjunction with the district's existing products for managing laptops, desktops, and other district computing

resources to optimize the efficiency of the support personnel and minimize the learning curve?

Looking forward, to support the ever-changing and advancing technologies, districts without systems in place will be subject to infiltration, leaving the sensitive information compromised.

What applications are available to support reading instruction?

The iPad comes with the App Store (application store) as well as on-line connections that gives the user access to more than 250,000 application options (Murry & Olcese, 2011) varying in cost, to select for implementation. These "apps" range in function. Some of the functions discussed in this paper will be: classroom management, organization, literacy and vocabulary development, data saving, technology training, and note taking. The following section describes potential uses, organized by need, for some of the possible applications available to teachers.

Word Processing. The iPad has a variety of apps that allow users to transcribe what they want and, with internet accessibility, be able to share it with others. A teacher could go from the lesson plan (written on the iPad) to taking notes in a discussion group very quickly. Moving around the room with the physically light tablet makes taking anecdotal notes very easy (Hedge, 2013). This allows teachers to liberate their teaching style. This e-technology keeps all notes organized and easily accessible in one place. Tablets save paper when all word processing is completed and shared on the tablet.

Teachers may also find Pagesis, a flexible word processing app with built-in versatile layout features, useful. Or with Quick Office Pro (www.quickoffice.com), a user

can create, open, and edit all existing Microsoft Office files (Brantley, 2013). These are just some of the apps available for word processing.

Organization. Organization is a topic relevant to both students and teachers. Starting with student organization, iBrainstorm is one way students can get organized with writing. This application allows students to start to make meaning out of their writing, by drawing or typing their ideas in the prewriting stage. Students can begin by starting to jot down their ideas for their topic and swiftly move into the draft stage using this application (Cohen, 2012).

Popplet is a graphic organizer app, designed to create text or photo bubbles to help students see their ideas in an organized and graphical way (Cohen, 2012). It is also a note-taking application. Using the camera, students can take actual photographs of handouts or teacher-given resources without taking the actual hard copy. Using the text or handwriting tool, students can write or type their own notes, questions or thoughts next to the photograph or graphic.

Organizing information coincides with another section (Data Saving). One application that assists with both is Evernote (www.evernote.com). This app functions as a virtual file storage system and can store and access Microsoft Office files, PDFs and image files. This works well as students may be handing in writing or work at various stages. Using this application keeps everything organized (Cohen, 2012).

Data Saving. External hard drives are great but not when they are lost or stolen. Keeping all data/work on a web-based tool allows users to retrieve or save work anytime they are connected to the Internet. The Pen.io interface is a cloud technology that works with all platforms. Text and images are saved to the web. The individual obtains a user

code for posting and a link for sharing. Students can turn-in, save, or share their work with others. This allows other students to see the work posted by other students and the teacher has the ability to view and grade that work from anywhere (Cohen, 2012).

Dropbox is another cloud technology that provides web-based data saving. Students and teachers could have access to a folder to "turn-in" or access homework, assignments, etc. (Cohen, 2012).

Paperport allows users to write with text, images, or in their own handwriting. These documents can be shared in .pdf format in any online data saving or cloud technologies (Cohen, 2012). Other cloud sites include Live Binders and Voice Thread (Siegle, 2013).

Literacy. Reading and literacy development are in the front of teachers' minds. The iPad helps integrate reading curriculum with language arts curriculum. There are many ways to support reading and literacy in the classroom with the iPad. Here are a few suggestions for use.

One of the more popular ways to use the iPad is for electronic books: reading and studying with books on-line though the iPad or other tablet. Users can purchase books through iTunes or iBooks. Recently, Kno announced that, like Amazon, it will be providing electronic textbooks and textbook rentals using Kno's iPad application (Faas, Cult of Mac, 2012). At this point the iPad doesn't have as many applications or resources for on-line reading and interactions, but it does have the potential to do so (Faas, Cult of Mac, 2012). An easy way for readers to interact is with the app Subtext. With this app, students read collaboratively in a way that is visible to the teacher. The teacher can highlight, annotate, ask questions, and look up phrases or images that connect them to the

text (Cohen, 2012). Book Creator and My Story-Book maker for Kids support literacy by providing an app for the students to create their own book (Siegle, 2013).

Vocabulary Development. Hand-in-hand with literacy development is vocabulary. There are extensive vocabulary applications available. Dragon Dictation is an application that types spoke language into text (Siegle, 2013). This is perfect for students struggling with writing and spelling. Any student with poor fine motor skills or a physical disability that renders them unable to hold a pencil will benefit from Dragon Dictation. This application also improves the speed in which students write. With Dragon Dictation, students, having completed any prewriting, will dictate what they want typed into the program. Dragon Dictation will very accurately type what is dictated to it.

Dictionary.com is another vocabulary application. Definitions and vocabulary are accessed instantly via spoken or typed request (Siegle, 2013). Also vocabulary development is often embedded into ebooks. With a "click" on the word, the application will give the reader the correct pronunciation and definition instantly.

Note Taking. Note taking applications come in a variety of styles and some of the previously stated applications could be used for note taking as well. Another is Noodletools. Noodletools is an on-line subscription that enables users to create notecards, outlines, and to-do lists (Cohen, 2012). Students can collaborate with fellow students, librarians, and teachers. The teacher can monitor the writing process as it happens.

Technology Training. With all of these new technologies, learning how to operate them can be daunting. There is a web-based training application that can assist. Lynda.com provides users with a range of training, including accounting, graphic design and art, filmmaking, and music editing. It also includes training on almost every major

technology and software package as well as classes on programming, app and web development, and other computer science and IT topics (Faas, Cult of Mac, 2012).

Summary

Tablet technology has been readily embraced by school districts, teachers, and students. Many software options exist to enhance efficiency in the classroom, aid struggling readers, and enhance the opportunities for all students to learn. Care must be taken to integrate tablet technology with more technology, so that students are not dependent on tablets. In addition, students must learn how to evaluate the creditability of the sources they access. Finally, districts must carefully oversee the safety and security of data accessed on the internet, or saved via cloud technology.

Chapter Three

Conclusions and Recommendations

The research shows that the tablet does provide needed accommodations for students with special needs and visually impaired students, as well as optional adaptations for students in general education. The tablet offers many modalities and ways of accessing information, keeping students engaged and motivated during lessons in which they might not otherwise maintain interest.

The research indicates that there is a level of risk taken on when implementing this technology into classrooms. There is often too much information available and students may have a hard time absorbing it all. There is very little to no evidence found that shows any major changes in reading comprehension and fluency since the students were introduced to, and began using, the tablet on a regular basis.

A significant number of tablet applications are available to address any specific needs that arise in a reading classroom. Applications also address general needs of students in general education or even high-functioning classes. Tablet technology allows teachers and students to find what they specifically need to improve their understanding and knowledge.

Recommendation

As previously stated, the intention was to review the current literature and provide up-to-date information regarding tablets and their place within reading classrooms. The literature found is not significant and there is not enough evidence to conclusively prove that the tablet, in isolation, is a main contributor in the reading success of struggling

readers. There is a need to study this area of education further to determine whether there is a significant need to include technology in the lessons and day-to-day activities of students.

There is not enough evidence to proclaim conclusively that tablets have a profound effect on the reading comprehension of students. No evidence has been found that the tablet itself, with no other contributing factors, improved the reading comprehension of students. This is another area where further study is recommended.

The literature supporting the implementation of tablets and providing strategies for using it within the classroom walls does not have quantitative research to back it up. What was found is subjective and inconclusive. Findings show many ways that the tablet can be used to supplement instruction and possibly be used to fill instructional gaps for students with special needs, or those requiring learning accommodations. The tablet has a place in the classroom and does provide a certain level of support.

The research gathered indicates a level of risk. If this technology is being introduced in a classroom, it would be wise to develop an acceptable use policy. However, if used productively and safely there may be benefits to both students and teachers for adopting this technology. In an attempt to learn more about what the tablet has to offer teacher and students alike, many applications were discovered and their place within classrooms is obvious and substantial. If an instructional need is going unfilled within a classroom, there may be an application to supplement this need. There many applications available and there may be an application that would support that student or that need.

Overall, there is a place for tablets in a classroom. More research is needed to understand how significant the tablet is in reading comprehension and fluency and whether the tablet is a contributing factor. The tablet offers tools to help supplement instruction and accommodate students with learning disabilities and/or special needs. There is a safety concern when implementing this technology and certain precautions are necessary. The tablet is a device with many functions and adaptations and can be a very useful tool in education.

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