Young pupils', their teacher's and classroom assistants' experiences of iPads in a Northern Ireland school: “Four and five years old, who would have thought they could do that?”

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## Sample

25 children (aged 4-5 years) recruited via a primary school in Northern Ireland

## Implications For Educators About

STEM Education

# Abstract

This paper describes an iPad project in a Northern Ireland primary school. It evaluateshow the technology impacted on learning in literacy, numeracy and in pupil skills. Theyoungest pupils were asked about their iPad experiences using small-group interviewsbased on the circle time approach. Their teacher and two classroom assistants wereinterviewed about organisational, pedagogical and pupil skill patterns. The teacherreported improvements and greater readiness in pupils’ ability to grasp initial key con-cepts in literacy and numeracy, including lower ability and special needs children. Moti-vation, concentration and conﬁdence grew, as did spontaneous peer collaboration andthe early stages of peer assessment. Classroom assistants had an innovative role insupporting iPad use and noted improved pupil communication, listening and ﬁne motorskills. The children said that iPads helped them with writing, counting and drawing.They understood the purpose of speciﬁc apps, how to navigate them and what learningoccurred.

# Outcome

"Using one iPad per pupil with a pre-loaded bank of core apps that were considered by the school to be genuinely educational (see Shuler, 2012), these pupils’ readiness in acquiring initial key concepts in literacy and numeracy improved, including struggling learners who made unexpectedly good progress (see Watts et al, 2013). This was attributed to strategies that incorporated constant reinforcement from the apps with traditional classroom activities, such as whiteboard use (see Goodwin, 2012). In maths, girls overall were deemed to have improved more than boys who, in keeping with gender stereotyping (eg, Vekiri, 2013), often did well in maths although the apps helped them to concentrate much better. Independent learning developed when pupils selected apps for extension tasks. Motivation and thus behaviour were improved, especially among boys, with greater efforts to complete traditional activities in order to use the iPad (Henderson Yeow, 2012). Peer collaboration increased such as the sharing of new skills and knowledge, and pupils helped each other unprompted, fostering the early development of peer assessment. Clark and Luckin (2013, p. 12), in fact, reported that “the iPad can contribute to better quality collaborative, co-operative or cross-contextual learning experiences.” ICT skills were acquired without necessarily being taught (see Copeland, 2011). The children said that the iPads enabled them to learn, write, count, make patterns and do artwork, using what they saw as “games” (see Tapscott, 2009). Negative comments were minimal and related to aspects of learning some found difﬁcult, or to the sharing of iPads during charging, thereby limiting normal usage. When asked about four speciﬁc apps, they articulated their purpose, how to navigate, the steps involved to complete tasks and the need to save their work." (Clarke and Abbott, 2016 : 1061).