iPads in Action II: More iPad Apps for Special Needs Students

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A special education classroom was expanded at the Elmwood Park High School to serve additional students who had previously been served in out-of-district placements. The class is composed of students of varying needs, including autism, severe learning disabilities, and low cognitive functions. To address the needs of these students, the administration of the Elmwood Park School District met with the teachers to investigate the use of iPads ordered with ARRA stimulus funding last year. Two teachers instruct these students during the school day, teaching core academic subjects matched to Illinois Learning Standards, with language arts and social studies in the morning and math and science in the afternoon. The teachers felt that the students would be highly engaged to address learning goals through the use of iPad applications, including games and simulations, especially those incorporating music. To facilitate the use of appropriate educational applications, a pilot program was set up with the classroom teachers meeting regularly with administrators from the District Office and a professor from a nearby university. The goal of this collaboration was to select and utilize appropriate iPad games and simulations for continued use in meeting learning standards.

The objectives of this poster presentation are as follows:
1. Participants will become aware of iPad software that has a positive impact on academic skills for high school special education students.

2. Participants will have the opportunity to talk with the presenters about the effectiveness of the applications and their usefulness with secondary special needs populations.

3. Participants will be able to review the process of selection and testing used to identify effective iPad applications.

Details of the Presentation:
This Round Table session will highlight the continuing process used to identify additional appropriate iPad academic games and simulations for use in a high school cross-categorical classroom. The classroom is made up of 8 students, grades 9-12, who were previously served through a co-op program and who have been returned to their district of residency this year. The students have low to moderate cognitive functions, with two students being identified with autism. They are taught in a self-contained classroom with access to HP laptops and iPads. The iPads are in their 2nd year with the class. The teachers and District tech support staff are currently working to identify additional appropriate learning tools for the iPad that will help students work toward academic standards in reading, language arts, writing, math, science, and social studies. Of particular interest are games and simulations that can help anchor key skills in these subject areas. This session will show screen shots of the best apps reviewed, student and teacher responses to the apps, videos of students using the software, and excerpts of interviews with the students about the efficacy of the iPad applications. The intent of the Round Table is to make other teachers and curriculum specialists aware of the wide variety of software available for the
iPad that can make a positive impact on secondary special education students.

Supporting Research = Listed are current articles that have appeared in newspapers, magazines, or online forums concerning iPad use with Special Education students:

The iPad: Breaking New Ground in Special Education. District Administration (online journal – 11/1/10).

New assistive technology research focuses on iPad, communication skills. Article By Meris Stansbury On May 31, 2010 (11:44 am) In Breaking Through Barriers to Learning, eClassroom News.

iPad Plays Bigger Role in Special Education. Montreal Gazette, June 21, 2011.