

Action Research Project: Chapter One: Introduction

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Problem

This researcher has been providing private tutoring for the past year for several students from various educational backgrounds. All tutoring sessions are private and take place in the researcher's home office. Presently, six of the pupils are first and second grade students and described by their parents as reluctant readers. The tutoring sessions are designed to provide reading support and intervention and utilize a direct-instruction approach to reading which introduces the students to various strategies they can use to improve their reading fluency. Curriculum based measurement is used to set goals and track student progress. Since it has been this researchers experience that technology increases student engagement, students are encouraged to follow up at home on websites, such as Starfall.com or ReadWriteThink.org with activities designed to improve phonics, word recognition skills and reading fluency. Although these are very useful sites, they may not be the right fit for all of the students, since all learners have different learning styles as well as different strengths. Employing a strategy that utilizes technology as well as a student's particular learner strengths would be ideal.

### Problem Statement

The current tutoring sessions have been developed to meet the needs of early readers; however, this researcher has observed that many of the students are still reluctant to engage in reading enough to develop the skills necessary to sustain independent reading. Students will need to develop skills to read for the content area subjects as well as for pleasure, so it is important to employ an intervention that will turn the reluctant reader on to reading.

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### Significance of the Problem

Student engagement in reading activities is important since literacy has been linked to future academic success (Biancaros & Snow, 2006). Students in the first and second grade show engagement when they talk about favorite books and choose familiar books for independent reading (Beaver, 2006). Wigfield and Guthrie (2008) explain that an engaged reader will be able to develop reading strategies to enhance comprehension and will also enjoy reading for pleasure.

If this research does find that the learner specific technology integration has increased student engagement, then this practice will be incorporated into future tutoring sessions when necessary. Sharing it with other teachers may encourage them to find new ways to use Gardner's multiple intelligences theory in the classroom. However, the ultimate goal of this action research project is to develop in students a passion for learning and the tools to succeed.

### The Purpose of the Study

With this action research study, this researcher will be determine if student engagement in reading among a group of first and second grade students will improve with the use of iPad applications that accommodate their specific learner strengths. These strengths will be identified through multiple intelligence learner inventories.

Howard Gardner introduced his theory of multiple intelligences in 1983 and has been of interest to this researcher for quite some time. In his book, *Frames of Mind*, Gardner challenged the notion of one form of intelligence measured only with a paper and pencil test. Through much research and observation, Gardner, a developmental psychologist, proposed that individuals

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possess several individual intelligences. For the most part, the psychological community ignored this theory. However, educators recognized its educational implications and embraced it (Gardner 1993). This researcher believes that utilizing the theory of multiple intelligences to choose learner specific iPad applications for the students would personalize learning for all.

The choice of an iPad, rather than a desktop or laptop was made because of its ease of use and the large number of free or inexpensive apps available for download. In his recent book, Gardener called today's high school students the app generation because they grew up using apps (Gardner & Davis, 2013). However, since the first google app was not released until 2006 and the first iOS app was not released until 2008, this researcher believes the true app generation is that group of students who were born in 2006 and beyond. That would be today's K through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students.

### Research Questions

The questions below when addressed with a literature review will help to guide this study. Since the effectiveness of the intervention begins and ends with determining a student's reading engagement, a central question would be: What does an engaged reader look like?

Other questions that will guide the research are:

1. How has the iPad been used to improve student engagement with reading?
2. How can Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences be used to improve reading engagement?
3. How can a student's specific intelligences be addressed with iPad applications?

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### The Limitations of the Study

In planning this action research, a few potential problems have been considered that could potentially hinder the study:

1. Students could drop out. Most parents retain this researcher as their child's tutor until the child begins to show progress. It may be necessary to eliminate the charges during the research study.
2. The time with the students will also be a factor. Currently, each student participates for 45 minutes, twice a week. The research will take place over a five-week period. It will necessary to carefully plan each session and to adhere to the schedule.
3. Any hint of bias on the part of the researcher during observations could be eliminated by having a trusted colleague complete the observation rubrics.

### Definition of Terms

Applications (Apps) - a software program installed on a computer device to perform a specific task (Application, 2008).

Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) - a method of monitoring a student's progress in basic skills of reading, mathematics, spelling, and written expression. This standardized assessment uses timed samples, or probes from the student's academic material. (Wright, 2003).

Direct Instruction- "a model for teaching that emphasizes well-developed and carefully planned lessons designed around small learning increments and clearly defined and prescribed teaching tasks" (National Institute of Direct Instruction, 2014, p. 1-1.).

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Student Engagement- “refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education” (Great Schools Partnership, 2014).

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