

Kindle e-reader motivates less-enthusiastic readers, professor finds

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To help children become better readers, a Kansas State University professor thinks they may 'need to spend less time with their noses stuck in books.

Lotta Larson, a K-State assistant professor of elementary education, is finding that electronic readers allow children to interact with texts in ways they don't interact with the printed word.

Since fall 2009, Larson has been using the Amazon [Kindle](#) in her work with a pair of second-graders. The [e-reader](#) has features that make the text audible, increase or decrease font size and let readers make notes about the book.

"It's interesting to see the kinds of things these kids have been able to do," Larson said.

She said sometimes they make comments summarizing the plot, therefore reinforcing their understanding of the book. Other times they ponder character development, jotting down things like "If I were him, I'd say no way!"

"As a teacher, I know a student understands the book if she's talking to the characters," Larson said.

"If you take a look at those notes, it's like having a glimpse into their brains as they're reading."

She said the ideal outcome would be for teachers to improve reading instruction by tailoring it to each student. Tests already have shown improvement in the students' perceptions of their own [reading ability](#). Larson said the next step would be to gather quantitative data on how reading scores are affected.

Larson will present the work April 25-28 at the International Reading Association Conference in Chicago. She also presented in December 2009 at the National Reading Conference, and the work will appear in the journal *The Reading Teacher* this year. Now, Larson is working with e-readers for students who have special needs.

"I think that's where we'll really be able to make a big difference," Larson said.

She's also talking with middle school teachers about how downloadable [e-books](#) might appeal to young teen boys who are reluctant readers. Based on the elementary students' reactions to the e-readers, Larson expects that gadget-savvy teenagers will be equally interested in reading if it's done on their computers.

Provided by Kansas State University

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