

Kindergartners who shared iPads in class scored higher on achievement tests

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Using tech, like iPads, in schools has turned into a heated political debate. Los Angeles infamously spent \$1.3 billion on a program to give iPads to each student that has subsequently been plagued with problems. In the United Kingdom the head of the National Association of Head Teachers claimed he was dubious about using tech as a teaching aid in non-IT classes. One solution could be using shared tech in classrooms. A promising study by a researcher at Northwestern University found that kindergartners in classes with shared iPads significantly outscored their

peers on achievement tests who were in classes that had no iPads or classes with iPads for each student (1:1).

Courtney Blackwell from Northwestern University will present her findings at the 65th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Blackwell worked with 352 [students](#) at a Midwestern suburban school district that was phasing in 1:1 iPads into their kindergarten classrooms, creating a natural experiment where classrooms in one school had 1:1 iPads; classrooms in a second school had 23 iPads to share, where kids primarily used them in pairs; and classrooms in a third school had no iPads. She looked at the effect that using 1:1 iPads for one academic year (9 months), compared to the other two conditions, had on student literacy (as measured by the STAR Early Literacy Assessment).

Results showed that students in shared iPad classrooms significantly outscored their peers in 1:1 and non-iPad [classrooms](#) on the spring achievement test, even after controlling for baseline scores and student demographics. Blackwell found that shared iPad students scored approximately 30 points higher than 1:1 iPad students and non-iPad users.

There has been little quantitative research done measuring the effects of [young children](#)'s academic achievement and this is the first study to examine the effect that sharing iPads can have on young students.

"1:1 tablet computers may not be the most effective way to use technology for all grades and from a policy standpoint, we need to rethink what developmentally appropriate technology use is for young children," said Blackwell. "Shared iPad students significantly outperformed both the 1:1 and non-iPad condition, suggesting it's the collaborative learning around the technology that made the difference, not just the collaboration in and of itself. While schools and districts

may still want to go 1:1 in all grades, they may reconsider how the tablets are used, especially in earlier grades, in order to make the technology most effective."

More information: "iPads in Kindergarten: Investigating the Effect of Tablet Computers on Student Achievement" by Courtney Blackwell; to be presented at the 65th Annual International Communication Association Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 21-25 May 2015.

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