**iPhones in the Journey Room**

**Description**

In my classroom, I try to get my students to work on risk-taking. I have a special education classroom and in the past, many of my students have been told “no” or “you’re doing it wrong” for so long that they won’t attempt even simple assignments. I am asking for help in getting one-on-one hand-held devices for my students in order to empower them and let them become better risk-takers. Currently, I have five students in my classroom. I would like to get a set of ten because ten is the average size of my program. I can get a new student at any time throughout the school year. (In fact, it is highly probable that I will be getting two to three new students within the first two months of school next year.) My program is called “The Journey Program” and is house to the students with the most severe emotional impairments throughout the district, kindergarten through fourth grade.

In conclusion, I am asking for ten iPhones for my Journey Program. I would have the calling and texting turned off. I would need to allow the students to use the compass feature for geocaching. The school where I work has wireless Internet throughout the district, so using the wireless on the phone would be no problem. We are a Mac district, so iPhones are easily useable in all of our classrooms. I believe that these hand-held devices would teach my students to become more independent and take bigger risks in school.

**Transformation**

Many students have been taught that they need to be perfect in school, home, sports, and their all around everyday lives. Many children haven’t been taught how to fail and overcome an obstacle. I see more and more everyday that students will stop trying when they get to an obstacle in their assignment, activity, or game. They don’t know what to do when something gets hard, or when they lose. This is when many of my students with emotional impairments don’t know what to do with their feelings and lash out in the only ways that they do know how-verbal outbursts or physical outbursts. If we, as educators, can take the time to teach students that failing is a part of everyday life, then many students will feel much better about themselves. Just because a student fails, doesn’t mean that they should quit, or worse, that they are a failure. It simply means that they need to adjust their tactics and try again. These are the essential skills that I would like to make sure every student that comes through my classroom understands before they move onto middle school.

In my classroom, I hope that my students become okay with the idea that failing is something that must happen. I believe that if my students see and believe this, then I, as their teacher and case coordinator, will see much fewer physical and verbal outbursts. I often see my students having outbursts because they didn’t win a game or because they think they’re doing a worksheet wrong in math (or another subject). If the student can see that “trying” is what we are teaching them, and when they try again and again then they will be able to succeed, then they will have far fewer outbursts.

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I believe that a student has to be able to see their own growth. In order to do this, they must see their baseline data. For instance, meet Jerry (pseudo name). Jerry had 11 physical outbursts and 24 verbal outbursts in November of 2010. Jerry has problems socializing with his peers, participating in group activities, engaging in lessons in the classroom, and with reading, writing and math skills. Jerry was pulled into a self-contained EI classroom for 3 months, starting in January, and has reduced his outbursts to 1 physical and 9 verbal in April. Although Jerry has been able to reduce his number of outbursts, he still isn’t socializing with his peers properly or participating or engaging as much as he should in the classroom. It takes a lot of coaxing in order to get Jerry to participate with his peers or in the classroom. He is still shy when it comes to taking risks and playing or interacting with friends/peers.

As Jerry’s teacher, I keep daily, weekly, and monthly data on how he is doing on his goals. A new way to track Jerry’s progress will be to have him make line graphs of his behavior. In doing this, he will be seeing his growth and see how far he has come. Jerry and I will also work on how he can work through his difficulty with interacting appropriately with peers. One reason I believe that Jerry doesn’t play with his friends on the playground, raise his hand in class, or often-even attempt assignments, is because he believes he will fail. Many students (especially students in special education) have failed many times in and out of school. Jerry was not labeled and able to seek special education help until October, 2010 (his third grade year). This leads him to fall much further behind, and fail much more often. Now that Jerry is able to receive extra help, from teachers and aides who understand his disabilities, he is able to work through his difficulties more easily.

Jerry has been failing for many years without guidance. Jerry wasn’t able to have someone beside him, holding his hand, and letting him know how to pick himself back up. Now that Jerry is receiving the help he needs and deserves, I believe that failing can be a lesson, not a punishment. I want to put Jerry into safe environments where he can learn that failing is okay. I want him to build up his understanding of himself, and learn that when he fails he needs to jump back up and try again. In order to do this, I believe technology needs to be involved.

I have five students, all with severe emotional impairments, and some also with learning disabilities. I have a push-in/pull-out model in place in my classroom. This is where my two paraprofessionals and I will either go into the classrooms with the students all or part of the day or pull the students into our classrooms for some or all of the day, depending on what they need. I have had students who come to my room only for the Friday rewards that I have in place, and I have had students who have needed to be in my classroom all day everyday for three months. But always, we try to get the student back into the general education setting as soon as they are ready.

In my classroom, we are constantly teaching the students risk-taking skills. When the students start to take risks and learn that it’s okay to fail, then I often see that they are ready to go back into their general education classrooms. I am hoping that iPhones will quicken this learning process. I hope that iPhones will teach my students skills that I wouldn’t otherwise be able to teach them. Without an iPhone, I wouldn’t be able to teach my students geocaching nor would they be able to ask for help from me when I’m across the school. In many cases, my students feel more comfortable asking me for help than their general education teacher. At first, this is perfectly fine, and the fact that the student has someone they are comfortable with is a success. Then we work on getting them to ask others for help when they are ready. The iPhones will help us in this quest.

Technology is a resource that can be used to create new environments for students. I want to create many different situations and environments for my students that are fun, safe, and easy to learn from. I believe that through the use of iPhones, my classroom can achieve these goals. iPhones serve many diverse functions including games, music, typing, searching the Internet, collecting information… These are all applications that my students can use in order to learn risk-taking skills.

One large reason why I believe iPhones would be useful in my classroom is because of geocaching. This is a specific task that I want my students to learn risk-taking skills. I have been trying to stress risk-taking to my students for the past few years. I would love to get iPhones for my classroom in order to have my students be able to find real geocaches around our school (go on walking field trips around town), set up my own geocaches for the students to practice taking risks and finding prizes, and also setting up small geocache scavenger hunts where they need to find one answer to a question in order to answer the next. This could be used with math, language arts, science, social studies, or behavior.

iPhones would also empower my students. Carrying an iPhone around to the general education classes would allow the students to do their math work when they need a calculator, which they would otherwise not attempt. It would allow the student to have a student-specific dictionary/spelling book so that when they are writing, the words that they need to work on could be looked up easily and quickly. iPhones would allow my students to have music at their fingertips that they could listen to whenever they were feeling stressed. An iPhone would allow my students to send me an email when they were in class in order to tell me how they were feeling during a certain time of day. If they needed me to come and sit with them, for emotional or academic help, I could get that email easily and quickly.

Students with emotional impairments have learned that if they fail enough times at something, they are going to get yelled at. I think this has happened to them before they have gotten the proper amount of help, and gotten into special education. Before they have been labeled with an impairment, the teacher usually believes (not to the fault of the teacher or the student) that the student isn’t trying and is just acting out. Unfortunately, the student has then learned that when they do try, they will fail and get scolded. I think this is where we need to break the cycle. We need to teach children that if they try, often times they will fail, but that it is okay to fail. We need to teach them that it is when we fail that we learn. After we fail many times, do we finally succeed and get rewarded.

Without iPhones, I would be able to teach some risk-taking skills. However, it wouldn’t be getting the same message across. With iPhones, I am telling the students that I trust them enough to use something that none of the other students have. I am telling them that I trust them with an expensive and highly wanted device. The students will be able to see how technology plays a role in our lives and how important it is. They will be able to see all of the applications and uses that an iPhone has to offer. Without iPhones in my classroom, I would not be able to hear from a student how they are doing in their classroom, when they are across the school.

**Evaluation**

In order to evaluate how my students are working with the iPhones, I will first look at the data from the year before (when the students were without iPhones). I will count how many outbursts each student had with what interventions we used throughout the year. This is the first part of the baseline data. Next, I will count the number of outbursts the students have in the first month of school (both physical and verbal). We will keep track of when each outburst occurred, whether it was due to failing at a game, unable to complete an assignment, frustration, or other. I will also ask the students what they can do in order to help themselves during an outburst (what skills they have available that they believe will be beneficial to helping them during an outburst or in preventing an outburst). The first month (the students now being with the iPhones) will be the second part of the baseline data.

Every month after getting the iPhones, I will keep the same data as the first month of school. I will look at how many outbursts occur with each student (both physical and verbal), when they occurred, and what made that outburst happen. I will ask the students what they would like to do in order to help stop an outburst or to help prevent it from happening in the future. I would hope to find that learning risk-taking skills and being able to be more independent through the iPhones, my students will have fewer outbursts and will see the iPhones as a great tool to help them with their frustrations and emotions.

Looking at the data, I will then make line graphs to compare the number of outbursts from year to year, and the beginning of the year (without iPhones) throughout the rest of the year (with iPhones). Using images, such as line graphs, easily shows students, other educators, and parents whether the intervention of using iPhones is working or not. Having all of the applications and tools on an iPhone, it would be surprising if iPhones didn’t help reduce the outbursts of students in the Journey Room.

**Connecting with Other Issues in Educational Technology**

Through this proposal, students will be able to work on their literacy skills. They will be able to email me (their teacher), look up how to spell words, look up definitions of words, have words read to them, etc. There are an uncountable number of ways literacy will be used with iPhones in the classroom, because it is only limited by the teacher and students’ imaginations. The iPhone can be used to help in any subject. Math can easily be assisted using the calculator, compass, level, etc. Watching videos would be a great way to get students to better understand a science experiment. Many of the teachers already use videos to assist their teaching, so providing the link to their video would allow the student to watch the video multiple times, pause, rewind, and remember the most important parts. When working with recorders in music, students could download an application to show them the positioning over the holes in the recorder for each note. Then they could listen to how each note is supposed to sound. In Spanish class, Spanish words could easily be translated on the iPhone to help assist with words that aren’t known yet by the students to. When learning dates in social studies, the students could easily find what happened on each day in history doing a simple timeline search. There are many uses for an iPhone in the classroom, easily assisting students and making them more independent.

When teaching and using iPhones in the classroom, many parents, educators, and administrators might be scared putting these devices into the hands of children. However, my students will be taught how to properly use the iPhones within the school setting. They will not be allowed to communicate with other students between classrooms. The students will leave the iPhones at school at all times, so that the phone portions of the iPhone will not become tempting to the students. The Journey Room will have bi-weekly lessons to keep students up-to-date on the applications offered by apple.com. We will also check in to see how students are using the iPhones, and what new ideas they might have come up with. Students will be encouraged to think of new ways to use their iPhones in the general education and special education classrooms. They might think of new ways to relax themselves when becoming frustrated or angry. Keeping communication lines open between the students and teachers is the most important part of new technology.

Through getting the iPhones, I hope to be able to share with others how beneficial iPhones are in the classroom. I would love to see each student having an iPhone in every classroom, or at least have a small set that they could work in groups with them or have them available if they needed to look something up, communicate with the teacher, geocache, or relax with the many features the iPhone has to offer. I would love to help other teachers (both general educators and special educators) think of more ideas to use iPhones in the classroom.