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ePals and Literacy Apps for ELLS Resource List

ePals – <http://www.epals.com>

ePals is a free online Global Classroom that connects teachers and students from all over the world. Using this online community, classrooms can work together to create real world, culturally-enriching learning experiences. It makes learning English fun and relevant; it is an opportunity to see how learning English can open many doors of communication to people from all over the world. Teachers who match their class to another who have posted on ePals can create the unique opportunity to collaborate and communicate with students from all over the world. ePals would be a wonderful tool for an ESL classroom, as it gives children the opportunity to practice both their reading and writing skills in English and also opens their eyes to a different culture, and introduces them to people from places they may not have ever heard of, or of whom they may have had (perhaps, misguided) preconceived notions.

Unfortunately, in the district in which I teach, my schedule is too highly prescribed and regulated to deviate and allow our class to open an ePals account or link up with another classroom online. Perhaps a greater barrier to our access is our lack of convenient access to computers (there are only two in my classroom; I have twenty-three students). I will definitely recommend ePals to our school librarian, who has my students for an extended class period on a bi-weekly basis and has ready access to a dozen computers and a handful of iPads.

There are a couple of current ePals postings that I believe would be a wonderful match for my students. One of them is with a classroom of English Language Learners in Pakistan (http://www.epals.com/show-profile.php?id=227ad5bf-ad4d-4acf-8e4d-cc75530c4963&search_text=Pakistan%2C+science) who are covering the same topics in their science curriculum as we are and are looking to connect with children from diverse backgrounds. The posting teacher expressed a desire to collaborate on science projects that align exactly with our own curriculum. Not only can I just about guarantee that none of my students would be able to locate Pakistan on a map, but I can also be certain that if they have heard of the country, that they have made negative associations with it. I couldn't think of a better opportunity to not only enrich our understanding of our science curriculum, but to also delve into world geography, and on an even higher level, learning to cooperate with and accept others from different backgrounds, regardless of preconceived notions.

Another ePal posting I would definitely link up with, if circumstances allowed is a fifth grade class from the Dominican Republic. (http://www.epals.com/show-profile.php?id=d2ad1027-f5ea-486a-bb64-c965a237a86d&search_text=Dominican+Republic) Many of my students, or their families, are from the Dominican Republic. The students in the classroom with which we would be communicating are also English Language Learners and are looking for information about living in the United States. This would be such an opportunity for my students to connect with children from their home country (or at least, perhaps, a similar cultural background) and to "show off" what they know about living and going to school in the United States. Making that cultural connection would be important for my Spanish-speaking children, and would absolutely create a sense of excitement about the cooperative project. I could see this being extremely popular.

I definitely see the value in connecting with others, creating a "global classroom," and providing students the opportunity to expand their horizons, or to connect with the familiar. I will absolutely be collaborating with our school librarian, and perhaps, with the school principal to see if there is a feasible way to make ePals a part of our learning community.

ESL Reading and Writing Apps for Grades K-5 (Entering and Emerging)

Apps for Learning High Frequency Words



1) **Sight Words List – Learn to Read Flash Cards & Games**

Innovative Mobile Apps, Ltd. (2013). *Sight Words List – Learn to Read Flash Cards & Games* (Version 5.0) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <http://itunes.apple.com>

This is a free word recognition app in which students can read the word and hear it read to them in English. Words come from the Dolch sight word list and can be customized with your own words and the learner can even record their own voice reading each of the flash card words. The game mode is also customizable. In this mode, a sight word is given verbally, and the learner has to correctly identify the corresponding flash card from a list of 2-6 possible choices. This app is appropriate for ELLs because it reinforces recognition of commonly used words from the Pre-K through third grade level and is appropriate for Entering-level ELLs and up.

Grade levels: All

WIDA levels: Entering -Emerging



2) **Abby Sight Words Games & Flash Cards for Reading Success** (22 Learn)

CFC s.r.o.(2012). *Abby Sight Words Games & Flash Cards for Reading Success* (Version 1.3) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <http://itunes.apple.com>

This is a word recognition app in which students can choose from a variety of games that are vibrant, colorful, and fun to play. These games challenge them to identify words that are spoken to them in English. The free version of this app allows the learner to play two games using words from the Pre-K list. The full version costs \$1.99 and unlocks word lists from Pre-K through three and a set of commonly-used nouns. It also offers five games, including one for spelling, and also a flash cards mode. This app is appropriate for ELLs because it reinforces recognition of commonly used words from the Pre-K through third grade level and is appropriate for Entering-level ELLs and up.

Compatibility: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch

Grade levels: All

WIDA levels: Entering -Emerging

Apps for Reading and Writing



3) **FarFaria**

Intuary, Inc. (2013). *Farfaria* (Version 2.17) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <http://itunes.apple.com>

FarFaria is a reading app that allows readers to choose stories based on theme and reading level. While it is a free app, the free version only allows one story download per day (they are not saved to a “library”; once you are done, it is gone). For \$3.99 per month, you can gain unlimited access to over 500 e-books, with five new ones being introduced each week. The stories allow readers to read independently, or to have the story read to them (or a combination of the two). This is a wonderful option for ELLs of all levels, because they can opt to read a story at their level aloud to themselves, then self-monitor using the “read to me” option, which can be done page-by-page.

Compatibility: iPad

Grade levels: All

WIDA levels: Entering +



4) **ESL Reading Comprehension**

Van Quoc Huy. (2013.0 ESL Reading Comprehension (Version 1.2.0) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <http://itunes.apple.com>

ESL Reading Comprehension is a reading app that presents readers with a short, easy to read paragraph using high-frequency words, but used in a context that would be appropriate for learners of all age levels. Before reading, vocabulary used in the selection can be frontloaded – the word is presented with an icon to hear it pronounced, and a written definition is also given. After reading and mastering the paragraph, the learner is presented with two different activities, one is a CLOZE activity, where key words are omitted from the paragraph and the learner has to type the missing word that corresponds with each blank. The other is a dictation activity, where a sentence taken directly from the text is read orally, and the learner is expected to type it into a blank space, using proper conventions. The free version of this app offers one reading comprehension paragraph and related activities, for \$7.99, you can get the full version with 100 lessons. This app is appropriate for ELLs, because it reinforces reading of frequently-used English words as well as developing attention to details from text. It also reinforces English writing conventions and word order.

Compatibility: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch

Grade levels: 2 through adult, depending on reading level **WIDA levels:** Entering +



5) **Raz-Kids**

Lazel, Inc. (2013). Raz-Kids (Version 1.7.0) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <http://itunes.apple.com>

Learning A-Z is created by the makers of the *Raz-Kids* reading program. It is designed to be used by subscribers to that program (otherwise, . If your school uses *Raz-Kids*, then this app gives you more than 1,100 books and quizzes to use for reading comprehension. If not, the free version offers six books of varying comprehension levels . Every book has three options. The first is to have the book read aloud to you. Each word is highlighted as the reader reads, and it can be manipulated so that the student reads to herself first, then clicks on “play” to have it read to her. The next option is for the student read to himself, with the option of recording their own voice. This would be a wonderful tool for ELLs to check their pronunciation and fluency. The third option, to be used after reading, is a brief multiple choice quiz. This is fantastic for ELLs because every question and every possible answer has a “sound” icon next to it so they can hear them read aloud by the narrator.

Compatibility: iPad

Grade levels: All **WIDA levels:** Entering +



6) **Sentence Reading Magic**

Preschool University. (2013). Sentence Reading Magic (Version 2.1) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <http://itunes.apple.com>

Sentence Reading Magic is a free app that allows beginning readers to practice reading and building 2 and 3 word sentences. The sentence building option provides readers with a photograph illustrating the sentence, while a narrator reads the sentence aloud. The reader then has to drag and drop the words in the correct sequence into boxes provided. The program then consolidates the boxes into one line of print and inserts the appropriate punctuation. The sentence reading option

shows 2 or 3 word sentences segmented by individual words. The reader can read these aloud to themselves, then tap on each word to hear it read aloud. Above the sentence is a blank box. When clicked, the narrator reads the entire sentence and a photograph illustrating the sentence appears in the box. Additional (more complex) forms of this app can be purchased for \$2.99 each and focus on such things as consonant blends and short vowels. This app would work well for young beginning-level ELLs for learning to read English and placing English words in the correct sequence to convey meaning.

Compatibility: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch

Grade levels: All

WIDA levels: Entering-Emerging



7) **ABC Phonics Word Family Writing**

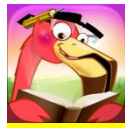
Hien Ton. (2013). *ABC Phonics Word Family Writing (Version 7.0)* [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <http://itunes.apple.com>

This free app presents the learner with an abbreviated list of words sorted by word family (ex. – and words: band, brand, hand, land). The narrator reads a word aloud, it is displayed in block letters, and the writer is to practice writing the words on the lines provided (using their finger or a stylus). The app has options to allow the writer to trace over the letters, or to write them for himself. There are also buttons the writer can press to have the narrator repeat the word, then, spell it out letter by letter. For \$2.99, you can access all words in each word family list and remove the ads. This would be a nice app for younger ELLs at the Entering-Emerging level, as it reinforces sound-letter correspondence, letter formation, spelling of commonly used words, and recognizing spelling patterns within words.

Compatibility: iPad

Grade levels: Pre-K – 5

WIDA levels: Entering-Emerging



8) **English Storytelling for Kids**

Savivo A/S. (2013). *English Storytelling for Kids (Version 1.0)* [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <http://itunes.apple.com>

The free version of this app unlocks one story that the learner can read independently, or have read to them (or a combination of the two). All ten stories and their related activities can be unlocked for \$4.99. The story uses simple language and cute illustrations (starring flamingoes) that provide nice visual support for the reader. Once the story has been read, the reader can choose to “Illustrate the Story”, or choose the best illustration to match the provided text from the story. The third option the learner can use is to “Create a Story”. Using this option, the learner can insert illustrations from the story that they read, then write or dictate their own captions to re-tell the story in their own words (or, perhaps, create their own). For ELLs, this would be a great choice, because it not only touches upon reading and comprehension, but also gives them the opportunity to exercise their writing skills. This would be useful for ELLs of a high-Entering level and up.

Compatibility: iPad

Grade levels: 1 and up (depending on reading level)

WIDA levels: high-Entering +



9. **Popplet**

Notion, Inc. (2012). Popplet (Version 1.9.2) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <http://itunes.apple.com>

Popplet is a productivity app that also works as a mind mapping tool designed to be used with the iPad. The full version costs \$4.99 and is most appropriate for students in grades 3 and up. This app can be used to begin structuring the writing process. The app can also be used to create graphic organizers, classroom visuals, organize material according to text structures (list, sequence, compare-contrast, cause-effect), and to practice sentence combining and complex sentence creation by connecting individual "Popples." *Popplet Lite* is a (limited) free version of the app.

Compatibility: iPad and iPhone

Grade levels: 3 and up

WIDA levels: high-Entering +



10. **Toontastic**

Launchpad Toys. (2013). Toontastic (Version 2.6.0) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <http://itunes.apple.com>

Toontastic is a free creative learning application that allows students to draw, animate, and share their own stories through imaginative play. An "all access" version with more storyboarding and character options can be purchased for \$19.99. Both versions teach key storytelling principles such as setting, conflict, challenge, climax, or resolution. *Toontastic* is an easy to use common-core standards-aligned app that is like creating a digital puppet show — children simply press the record button, move the characters onscreen, and tell their stories. Once they're done, *Toontastic* will play back their animation and voice as a cartoon for them to share with their teacher, friends, and family. While a largely oral-language-oriented application, it could be used with great success with ELLs for whom oral language skills in English are usually better-developed than their writing skills. They could first set up their digital puppet show (or "toon") and tell and record their story verbally. Afterwards, they can transcribe their story into a writing piece.

Compatibility: iPad

Grade levels: K and up

WIDA levels: Entering +