Assistive technology, specifically computer technology, addresses and benefits educational needs for students with intellectual disabilities (Blackhurst & Eduburn, 2000). These technologies have the potential to enhance student’s educational achievement and self-image (Sivin-Kachala & Bialo, 1993). In addition to the use of technology for traditional instructional purposes, students with intellectual disabilities can benefit from technology to support learning in a wide array of life skills areas (Wehmeyer, Smith, Palmer, & Davies, 2004).

Unfortunately, students with intellectual disabilities cannot always easily obtain and use traditional assistive technological devices (Wehmeyer et al., 2004). Touch screen devices such as the iPod Touch, iPhone and iPad offer promising enhancements for those with an intellectual disability. In terms of functionality, the iPad tablet has recently been considered to be a new platform for classroom computing (Walter & Baum, 2011).

The purpose of this study was to explore whether the use of iPad technology could assist students with an intellectual disability as they deal with barriers created by their disability in post-secondary education.

The research provides a set of actionable recommendations for embedding the use of iPad technology into future H’art School students’ academic lives.

The H’art School is a registered charitable, non-profit organization in Kingston, Ontario committed to helping adults with intellectual disabilities reach their highest potential through arts and education.

Participants: 5 H’art students with an intellectual disability were invited to participate in the study. The invitations were based on recommendations from the H’art School teachers.

Data Collection and Analysis: Qualitative data was collected using observations and interviews. The 5 H’art students were observed with their iPad during their classes both at H’art and Queen’s University. At the end of the term, open-ended interviews took place at H’art School. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and analyzed for emergent themes.

FINDINGS
Without exception, all H’art school participants found that the iPad assisted them in their participation in the Inclusive Post-Secondary Education (IPSE) program at Queen’s. Some participants said that they found their semester was more successful at Queen’s than in the past, due to the iPad.

Although organization was not referred to directly, many participants spoke about how they used the calendar application to manage class times, responsibilities and everyday activities. All of the main applications (apps) were used, however, most reported that the use of the Calendar, Safari and Notes apps were most helpful.

The H’art students began to advocate for applications that would meet the demands of the Queen’s Classes as notes by these quotes:
• “I need something that can be used as a separate alarm”
• “opens readings from the teacher.”

Most importantly, the H’art students used the iPads with ease at both H’art school and Queen’s University. For some students, this translated into both an entertainment and academic support tool.

The data shows that all participant’s benefited from the iPad as an assistive technology device. Many commented on how the iPad positively affected their every day life and one participant felt that, “through the iPad I was able to manage my school life.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS


REFERENCES