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**Hey, today we're talking about iPads in kindergarten: creating, innovating and learning. This is episode 82.**

*The Ten-minute Teacher podcast with Vicki Davis. Every week day you'll learn powerful practical ways to be a more remarkable teacher today.*

VICKI: Today let's talk to Caitlin Arakawa [@caitlin\\_arakawa](https://twitter.com/caitlin_arakawa) about her first year with iPads and how she's recording and creating. So Caitlin, how is it going and what are some of the cool things you're doing?

CATILN: Awesome. Hi Vicki. Yes, so this is my first year with iPads and there's so many different things you can do with iPads but the thing that we really tried to tap into this year was recording. Recording their work, recording their voices, story retells, things like that. I've actually used a couple of apps to record, one of them being Seesaw. <https://web.seesaw.me/> Seesaw allows them to take pictures of their work, draw pictures of their work or even take a picture and draw on top of their work and then also record their voice on top of that.

I really think the recording option is so important for kindergarten because it gives them an audience to listen to their work which makes it a lot more engaging and meaningful for them. They like to share with not only their parents but also with their friends in class. A lot of times they'll take a picture of a piece of writing for example, and they've spent the time writing with a pencil and paper. What did they do this summer or whatever the prompt maybe?

Then they'll record themselves reading it which I think is important because it gives them another chance to look over their work, see do they have their capital, do they have their period, does it make sense when I read it out loud?

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So they'll take a picture in Seesaw of their work, read it and record it. And what's great about Seesaw is that it actually makes it into a QR code for you right there. Of their recording. So then that gives the opportunities for parents when the work is sent home to scan that QR code and hear their children's voice reading their work.

VICKI: So Caitlin, these are what grade?

CATILN: Kindergarteners.

VICKI: Okay. We need to understand that because some people will be shocked with kindergarteners using punctuation. But these are kindergarteners. Are you having to go around and do this for all of them or can they actually do it themselves?

CATILN: Definitely at the beginning of the year it's a challenge, but that's how it is at the beginning of every school year, getting into the routines and procedures. And this is honestly one of my procedures is how do you hold an iPad, how do you login to the iPad? And what's great about some of these apps, especially Seesaw, it's so easy for them to login, it's very Kindergarten friendly, and then just teaching them that a plus sign in most apps usually mean add, add a picture, add a recording, you teach them what the camera sign is, or camera symbol or the recording square because that means stop.

And once they become familiar with that in one app it usually translate to different apps that we use. And of course, those procedures with the classroom management portion of it. I like to use recordings as a center. They're very independent, they know the time that – you know, we have 15 minutes at this center. So they know the time they have to record. So that avoids them from recording it and listening to it forever and recording it again. They have that time limit.

What I think is actually kind of like a teacher hack, I've created these sound booths. (see the picture at [https://twitter.com/caitlin\\_arakawa/status/868186844868902912](https://twitter.com/caitlin_arakawa/status/868186844868902912) ) What I did is I saw this online, actually. I went to IKEA and got those big bins, I think they're like 15 x 12 x 12. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWgLCPaOAzo> Those bins that you put in those book shelves that they have at IKEA. So you take one of those book shelves, you put it on the side. And I put that sound proofing phone that I got on Amazon all around the box on the inside. So the student can just put the iPad in there, record their voice, it cuts out a lot of the background noise.

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So sometimes I'll send them to the picnic benches outside and it definitely eliminates the wind, the kids playing at P.E. And sometimes they do have it in the classroom as well. So they just kind of stick their head in there and they're able to record.

VICKI: So they have their own little personal iPad recording sound booth where the sound has kind of gotten out so it can just be them and their recording, huh?

CATILN: It helps a lot of my quieter students to find their voice and they know no one else is listening to them. They're just recording them, the iPad and the sound booth. We have about five sound booths in my classroom so we're able to use it as a center. Kind of gets some of the out of their shell a little bit and also gives the ones that do like to talk a lot, gives them an iPad who will listen to them.

VICKI: So Caitlin, what's the most surprising thing about this approach?

CATILN: I think the engagement of the kindergarteners, how engaged they become, once you give them that voice and you give them a means to share their work and you give them an audience they're much more invested and wanting to put their best

foot forward, willing to do their best work because they know someone is going to be listening to it later. And sometimes we'll have a center where I'll put all of their papers out with the QR codes and they will and they'll get to scan each other's and I listen to each other's and say, "Oh Kailey, I really liked that." Or "Cool. That was a cool job." And just creating that atmosphere, I think, has really brought together our classroom.

VICKI: So Caitlin, what is the biggest mistake that you've made?

CATILN: First, I would say without the sound booth it was a disaster. We hatched butterflies in our classroom and then we took a picture at each stage. And the first thing I did wrong – they were all caterpillars in the beginning and I said okay, here's how you take a picture with an iPad. They already know how to take a picture but I didn't realize that they don't know how to take a good picture.

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So either it's so tiny or it's blurry or it's shaky and that's why it's blurry. So really teaching them how to take a good picture. You don't want it on the side, you want it in the middle, up close, tap the iPad so it becomes clear again. I think that was my first mistake was not teaching them how to take a picture because you don't realize what makes a good picture. It's a conversation we definitely had to have. What makes a good picture so that they're able to take their own pictures?

The sound booths were a big help after that. Not having the sound booths in the beginning, their work wasn't as good, it was kind of painful to listen to some of it but once we go the sound booth, we set it all up, then it sounds professional, it's really cool. And the parents are really amazed at the type of work their kids are creating.

VICKI: So as we finish up, Caitlin, what is the number one benefit of this approach to using iPads in the kindergarten classroom?

CATILN: I definitely think with the way education is going, our school is becoming really big on blended learning. Actually starting in second grade with our one-to-one laptop program. So we've just piloted the iPads this year and they're actually going to bring the iPads into first grade next year, and it really sets them up nicely for understanding who this works before they get their laptops as well as it gives them an opportunity to share their learning in a different way besides taking a test, besides multiple choice tests or besides writing all the time.

It adds up an extra layer of excitement and fun and creativity. In kindergarten, it's a little more difficult to give them a choice of how they want to share their work.

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But I can tell definitely after kind of scaffolding different types of projects and creative things that we've done throughout the year, the last few months of school I'm able to give them a choice of, "Okay, you know how to take videos,

you know how to record your voice on this, you know how to create a QR code, you know how to draw on something, make slide show, you know how to use these different apps. Now you tell me which one you would like to use to show to retail this story or to show a picture of a math problem.” So instead of giving the a test or giving them a paper saying, “Retell this story that you just read.” They’re able to take pictures of their story, beginning, middle and end.

They have to really find a picture of what shows that represents a beginning picture of the story, find a picture that really represents the middle, find the picture that represents the end and then they’re able to record their voice retelling the story. It save me time checking all these skills, they can do it at a center by themselves. And as well as math. They’re able to draw a picture of addition, draw a picture of fraction and show me with their drawing and recording telling a story. It’s much more fun than giving them a paper worksheet.

VICKI: Oh yeah. And much more meaningful. So teachers, I just want you to think about the remarkable experience. I want you think about how kindergarten is changing. We want to use technology where it can make it easier to teach and easier to learn. We don’t want it to get in the way but we’ve gotten some fantastic examples of how do we teach these procedures to help young kindergarteners use iPads?

And think about it, once they learn these procedures nobody else has to teach them, it just kind of grow s up with them. So these are some exciting ideas for wherever you star your iPad program in your school of the remarkable things that kids need to know how to do so they can create and share and connect with their parents and connect with their teachers.

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VICKI DAVIS @COOLCATTEACHER

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