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Chapter 2

Teaching Reading and Writing with Reading Progress, Diffit, and Padlet

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are reshaping literacy teaching by personalizing practice, streamlining feedback, and expanding opportunities for collaborative reading and writing. This is a practitioner-oriented article that is a synthesis of existing literature and examples of classroom practice. The use of three applications, Microsoft Reading Progress (with Immersive Reader), Diffit, and Padlet, is described, used in oral reading fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, written response, and multimodal composition instruction. Microsoft Reading Progress can lower performance anxiety and reduce assessment time, while Diffit enables text adaptation and question generation for diverse readers. Although Padlet is not an AI tool, it complements AI-informed analytics by providing a shared space for visible thinking, peer response, and formative assessment. The discussion situates these practices within a humanizing pedagogy that amplifies student voice and encourages critical literacy, while also addressing equity concerns that include device access, data privacy, teacher preparation, and algorithmic bias. Practical guidance for teachers and school leaders focuses on job-embedded professional learning, clear ethical frameworks, and infrastructure planning. Conclusions based on classroom practices are that the purposeful use of AI can support literacy growth when paired with teacher judgment, equitable access, and strong pedagogical design.

Keywords: literacy instruction, Microsoft Reading Progress Immersive Reader, Diffit, Padlet, Artificial Intelligence

Literacy remains a foundational requirement for academic success, civic participation, and long-term economic opportunity. At the same time, teachers are navigating rapid advances in digital technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), that are reshaping how reading and writing are taught in K-12 classrooms. A 2023 International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) guide describes AI as technologies that enable machines to perform tasks typically requiring human intelligence, such as learning, pattern recognition, and decision making (ISTE, 2023). In this article, AI in education is used more narrowly to refer to instructional tools that analyze learner data or generate content to support literacy instruction. AI-driven tools now listen as students read aloud, generate leveled passages, and provide immediate feedback that might once have required extensive teacher time (Ray, 2021; Diliberti et al., 2024). When these tools are integrated thoughtfully, they can personalize literacy instruction, may reduce anxiety for some struggling readers, and can open space for deeper human connection in the classroom (Jose, 2025; Hidayat, 2024). This practitioner-oriented article provides a conceptual synthesis and classroom practices, but does not report original empirical findings. It can serve as a foundation for future research and provide practical information for teachers.

AI in education, in the context of this study, refers to digital tools that use algorithms to analyze learner data or generate content in response to user input to support instruction (Chaudhry & Kazim, 2022; Ng et al., 2021). Examples include tools that adjust text complexity, detect miscues in oral reading, or create practice items aligned with a particular standard. In literacy teaching, AI is less about robots or fully automated classrooms and more about software that helps teachers tailor practice, monitor progress, and design texts or tasks aligned with students' needs. These tools can be paired with more familiar platforms, such as digital bulletin boards, to invite students into collaborative reading and writing communities.

Three applications form the focus of this article, and many teachers may already have them or can adopt them with minimal cost: Microsoft Reading Progress (with Immersive Reader), Diffit, and Padlet. Together, these tools illustrate how AI can support key literacy goals, including oral reading fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, written response, and multimodal composition, while also aligning with humanizing pedagogy that values students' identities and experiences. Although Padlet is not an AI tool, it complements AI-informed analytics by providing a shared space for visible thinking, peer response, and formative assessment. A holistic approach is used, meaning the discussion integrates skill development with relationships, identities, and classroom conditions that shape students' opportunities to learn.

Nevertheless, leveraging AI for literacy involves critical considerations such as data privacy, device access, and teacher preparation for AI-related digital competencies (Ng et al., 2021; Diliberti et al., 2024). A growing body of research indicates that successful technology adoption requires robust professional development, well-articulated ethical guidelines, and collaboration among educators, administrators, and developers (Chaudhry & Kazim, 2022; Hidayat, 2024; Ng et al., 2021). These conditions are especially important when AI tools are used to make decisions about reading levels, progress, and instructional next steps for historically marginalized students because unequal access and biased interpretation of performance can reinforce existing opportunity gaps (Benjamin, 2019; Noble, 2018).

The Power of AI in Literacy Instruction

Personalized Learning and Reduced Anxiety

One major benefit of AI-enabled literacy tools is the ability to tailor tasks to each student's needs (Chaudhry & Kazim, 2022; Diliberti et al., 2024). Microsoft Reading Progress (with Immersive Reader) exemplifies this capacity by letting students record themselves reading aloud while receiving immediate feedback on skipped words, mispronunciations, and

fluency metrics. Many learners find reading to a camera less anxiety-inducing than performing in front of peers or a teacher marking errors in real time, because Ray (2021), a practitioner-facing report, should be interpreted as classroom-based evidence rather than a peer-reviewed causal finding. Jose (2025) described a fifth-grade student in a Texas elementary school who initially hesitated to participate in oral reading but gained confidence after using Reading Progress for several weeks; the self-paced recordings allowed her to practice repeatedly until she felt ready to share aloud. Hidayat (2024) also reported that students using personalized AI reading platforms demonstrated higher motivation and improved comprehension compared with peers in traditional reading groups, suggesting that well-designed AI supports can strengthen reading outcomes.

Time Savings and Data-Driven Insights

Traditional one-on-one reading assessments, such as listening to individual students read aloud and marking miscues while tracking fluency and comprehension, can be time-intensive. By automating error detection, AI tools can free teachers to focus on targeted instruction. Ray (2021) reported that a first-grade teacher concluded Reading Progress significantly reduced weekly assessment time, allowing her to have more opportunities for small-group coaching and conferring with individual readers. Such time-saving benefits are echoed in research emphasizing that automation can redirect teacher effort toward higher-order instructional planning and feedback because routine tasks are reduced (Chaudhry & Kazim, 2022) surmised automating routine administrative tasks support a more student-centered focus, while Diliberti et al. (2024) observed that teachers who integrate AI-based platforms spend more time on planning, data analysis, and formative feedback than on clerical duties.

Equity and Access Considerations

Despite the promise of AI, equitable implementation remains a pressing concern (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Some students lack consistent internet access or reliable devices, which can deepen existing disparities if schools adopt new tools without careful planning. In addition, teachers need opportunities to develop sufficient AI digital competencies to interpret data responsibly, question algorithmic output, and integrate platforms in ways that fit their students' strengths and needs (Ng et al., 2021).

To ensure AI use narrows rather than widens opportunity gaps, districts may benefit from having more coherent implementation models. These models typically combine school-or district-wide device initiatives, robust professional development focused on pedagogy and ethics, and ongoing technical and instructional support (Diliberti et al., 2024). Schools may also need creative funding strategies and community partnerships to provide devices, connectivity, and shared spaces where students can engage with AI-supported literacy tools. Without such systemic supports, even well-designed AI tools are most likely to benefit students who already have the greatest access to resources (Diliberti et al., 2024; ISTE, 2023).

Diffit: Adaptive Reading Materials and Data Analytics

Diffit (2024) serves as a customizable platform for adaptive reading materials. Educators can upload their own texts or draw from online sources, then adjust complexity and generate connected activities to address the needs of both emergent and advanced readers. The features described below are drawn from the tool's published description rather than peer-reviewed evaluation studies. The key literacy features include:

- Personalized content: Teachers can create multiple versions of the same passage at

different reading levels by altering vocabulary load, sentence structure, and text length while keeping the core ideas constant. This allows all students to work with the same topic or standard, even if they are reading at different levels.

- Interactive comprehension and writing tasks: Diffit automatically generates text-dependent questions, including multiple-choice and short-answer items, as well as prompts for short constructed responses, summaries, and vocabulary activities. These tasks require students to reread, identify key details, and explain their thinking in writing rather than simply clicking through.
- Analytics tools: Teachers receive organized sets of questions and responses that can be used for quick checks of understanding, small-group discussion, or written exit tickets. When combined with classroom observation, these data can guide small-group instruction or targeted interventions.

When teachers use leveled passages, text-dependent questions, and short written responses in this way, they enact the kind of personalized reading instruction Hidayat (2024) describes, where AI-supported platforms maintain engagement and improve comprehension across a range of abilities. Emerging work on AI-generated text simplification also suggests that large language models can adjust readability while preserving key ideas (Agrawal & Carpuat, 2024), which further supports the potential of tools like Diffit to scaffold access to complex texts for diverse learners.

Padlet: Collaborative Literacy Engagement

Padlet is not an AI tool, but it is included because it provides a collaborative literacy space where students use, discuss, and reflect on work generated or supported by AI-enabled technologies, making learning visible and supporting peer response and formative assessment.

Teachers can embed digital texts, prompts, images, and videos on a Padlet board and invite students to respond (Waltemeyer et al., 2021). In literacy lessons, this supports several specific practices.

It provides opportunities for enhanced student engagement and writing practice. Students post short written responses, questions, and connections to a common text. They can revise their posts, add details, and comment on peers' ideas. Studies with elementary and secondary learners have found that Padlet-based tasks can increase writing quantity and quality, as well as students' confidence in their writing skills (Rashid et al., 2019; Ramadhani et al., 2023). Padlet offers streamlined communication and text access. A single virtual board can hold the anchor text, vocabulary supports, discussion questions, and student responses in one place. This makes it easier for teachers to organize shared reading, small-group literature circles, and whole-class discussions while keeping prior posts visible for review.

Also, important is Padlet's formative assessment of reading and writing. As students post and comment, teachers can quickly scan for comprehension, identify misconceptions about the text, and note which students are using evidence or elaborating their ideas in writing. These insights can guide follow-up mini-lessons on inference, summarizing, or supporting claims with textual evidence. Research on Padlet as a collaborative writing tool shows that such environments can improve writing accuracy and support peer feedback when teachers provide clear expectations and criteria (Rashid et al., 2019; Ramadhani et al., 2023). More broadly, Waltemeyer et al. (2021) describe Padlet as a versatile Web 2.0 platform that supports interactive, multimodal participation across a range of classroom activities.

When paired with AI-based analytics from tools such as Reading Progress or Diffit, Padlet can extend collaboration beyond individual reading practice. For example, a teacher

might use fluency and comprehension data to identify a small set of focus questions, then ask students to respond on Padlet and reply to at least two classmates. In this way, AI-generated analytics can help teachers identify which students may need additional support and which concepts may require reteaching (Ray, 2021; Diffit, 2024).

Amplifying Student Voice

Bartolomé (1994), Carter Andrews et al. (2018), and Reyes (2006) emphasize literacy as a conduit for student expression and social justice work. Humanizing pedagogy invites students to read and write in ways that name their experiences, question inequities, and communicate with real audiences.

AI-based feedback tools, such as Reading Progress for oral reading or writing assistants that flag unclear sentences, can help students refine technical skills in reading fluency, accuracy, and written clarity. On their own, these tools primarily provide automated feedback and suggestions, and research on automated writing evaluation emphasizes that instructional benefits depend on how the feedback is taught and supported with teacher guidance (Liu, 2024; Wilson et al., 2024). AI can support planning. Its student-centered component is evident when teachers use AI outputs as a starting point for authentic, student-driven literacy work.

For example, after using Reading Progress data to identify words or phrases that disrupt fluency, a group of students might rehearse a poem and record a spoken-word performance for a class podcast or draft a blog post or digital letter, use AI-supported writing feedback to improve organization and conventions, and revise again based on teacher and peer feedback before publishing for families or community members. AI can support planning, rehearsal, and revision, while the purpose of the work is to share students' perspectives with an audience that matters to them.

These extensions connect AI-supported skill development to the critical literacy goals described by Carter Andrews et al. (2018) and Reyes (2006): students learn to use reading and writing to tell their stories, challenge deficit narratives, and participate in public dialogue. The humanizing pedagogy described by Bartolomé (1994) is relevant here and can balance some of the effects of digital learning. Teachers mediate the process by interpreting AI-generated feedback with students, helping them decide which suggestions to accept, and ensuring that digital tools serve, rather than replace, relational feedback and classroom discussion (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology [OET], 2023).

Differentiation and Critical Consciousness

Educators need "political clarity" (Bartolomé, 1994) to recognize and challenge inequitable practices. AI tools can help teachers differentiate literacy tasks for multilingual learners and students with disabilities by adjusting text complexity, adding language supports, or offering alternative ways for students to demonstrate comprehension (Hidayat, 2024; Ng et al., 2021).

However, teachers must be alert to potential algorithmic bias and limitations in the data on which these tools are built. For example, speech-recognition models used in oral reading tools are often trained on standardized varieties of English and may misclassify regional dialects or emergent bilingual pronunciations as errors, which can make some students appear less proficient than they are (Benjamin, 2019; Noble, 2018). Readability algorithms may also treat culturally specific vocabulary as "too difficult," even when those words are familiar to students in their communities. Teachers, therefore, need to treat AI-generated scores as one data source among many, compare them with classroom observations and student self-assessments, and talk with students about times when the technology seems to misrepresent their abilities.

Moreover, reading analytics can become an entry point for critical literacy (Freire, 1970;

Janks, 2010). Teachers can share selected charts or error reports with students, invite them to notice patterns, and then ask who might be disadvantaged by the way the tool defines "errors" or "complex" vocabulary. In content-area classes such as science and social studies, teachers might pair AI-supported reading of digital articles with lessons in which students examine whose perspectives are centered, whose are missing, and how different groups are represented. Short digital passages or search results can be analyzed for bias, then compared with sources located through other means. In this way, AI-based skill building is blended with critical literacy discussions of real-world contexts, supporting both differentiated instruction and the development of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970; Janks, 2010; Bartolomé, 1994).

Implementation Strategies for Teachers

These implementation strategies are evidence-informed and align with broader research and guidance on technology integration and responsible AI use in schools, which emphasize gradual adoption, clear routines, accessibility planning, and reflective use of learner data (Diliberti et al., 2024; Ng et al., 2021; U.S. Department of Education, OET, 2023; ISTE, 2023). One recommendation is to "start small". By incorporating a single AI tool (for example, Reading Progress) into weekly reading sessions, students can become familiar with the routines and expectations. Similarly, creating collaborative spaces is beneficial for students. The use of platforms such as Padlet can extend reading practice into dialogue by having students post short reflections, questions, or reading goals connected to shared texts. The guidance also emphasizes connecting learning to real-life applications. This includes using AI tools to generate or adapt texts, prioritize topics tied to current events, local issues, or student interests, so that literacy work feels relevant and personal.

The research also provides guidelines for planning for accessibility, integrating reflection into instructional practices, and using professional learning communities (Diliberti et al., 2024;

Ng et al., 2021; U.S. Department of Education, OET, 2023; ISTE, 2023). For accessibility, educators should begin by assessing device availability, internet reliability, and needed accommodations. AI tools can still support planning even when students do not have one-to-one devices. For example, a teacher might use Diffit or another AI platform to create leveled passages and comprehension questions, then print those materials so students can read and respond on paper while a smaller group uses the devices. In this way, digital resources are converted into practical print formats, and no student is excluded because of limited technology access. Structured reflection involves planning class time for students to review their reading analytics or written feedback, set personal goals, and identify strategies that helped them improve. This reinforces ownership of learning rather than treating AI output as a private teacher tool. Lastly, professional learning communities have benefits for teachers and students. Grade-level or content-area teams can share AI use cases, discuss data insights, and troubleshoot challenges. Collaborative planning helps teachers align AI use with curriculum goals, ethical guidelines, and school priorities rather than experimenting in isolation.

Considerations for School Leaders and Policymakers

Teacher Training and Ongoing Support

Schools need to allocate dedicated time and resources for professional learning if AI tools are going to move beyond novelty use. One-time workshops are rarely sufficient (Diliberti et al., 2024; Ng et al., 2021). More effective approaches include job-embedded sessions that model real classroom literacy scenarios, offer hands-on practice with reading data and AI interfaces, and build teachers' capacity to interpret analytics in relation to their own observations and curriculum goals. When principals schedule collaborative planning time for teachers to analyze AI-generated reading reports together, compare them with student work, and design follow-up instruction, AI is more likely to support humanizing, data-informed

literacy practices rather than stand alone as an add-on.

Ethical and Privacy Frameworks

Collecting audio and video recordings for reading assessments requires robust data protection. District leaders, legal counsel, and technology specialists should work together to draft clear guidelines that address consent, data storage, data sharing, and retention periods, as well as compliance with privacy laws such as FERPA and COPPA (U.S. Department of Education, OET, 2023). Policies should clarify who can access recordings, how long they are stored, and how families can review or request deletion of their child's data. Chaudhry and Kazim (2022) also note the risk of algorithmic bias in AI systems, underscoring the need for oversight committees or review processes that routinely examine how AI-generated scores are used in placement, progress monitoring, and intervention decisions.

Sustaining an Equitable Vision

Schools in under-resourced communities may require grants, state or federal funding, or local partnerships to secure devices, internet hotspots, and ongoing training. Districts can pilot AI platforms in a limited number of classrooms, gather feedback from teachers, students, and families to refine their approach before scaling more widely. This allows leaders to identify unintended inequities, such as schools with less reliable connectivity or students who are consistently mis-scored by speech-recognition tools. Teachers can then share successful strategies and highlight areas where additional support is needed. When leaders pair AI adoption with sustained investment in infrastructure, professional learning, and community engagement, they are better positioned to ensure that AI-supported literacy initiatives expand, rather than restrict, students' opportunities to learn, as district safeguards and data governance policies continue to evolve alongside new AI capabilities (U.S. Department of Education, OET, 2023; ISTE, 2023).

Future Research

Although AI-driven literacy instruction holds promise, the empirical evidence base is still emerging, particularly for long-term and humanizing uses. Most existing empirical studies are small-scale pilots or short-term implementations rather than multi-year investigations (Diliberti et al., 2024; Hidayat, 2024). This matters because short-term pilots may overestimate benefits or miss longer-term effects related to sustainability, teacher workload, and equity. Longer-term studies are also needed to examine whether implementation routines and safeguards remain effective after initial novelty fades (Diliberti et al., 2024; Ng et al., 2021). Conceptual reviews of AI literacy, such as Ng et al. (2021), also underline that the research base remains limited. Building on themes in the literature (Ng et al., 2021; Hidayat, 2024), future research should address several gaps in the literature.

Longitudinal research is especially needed**.** Future studies should track cohorts of students over multiple years to examine how sustained use of AI-supported literacy tools influences reading fluency, comprehension, writing development, and motivation, with explicit attention to subgroup patterns for emergent bilinguals and students with disabilities (Diliberti et al., 2024; Ng et al., 2021). Comparative and mixed-method designs would strengthen the evidence base. Future studies should compare AI-supported literacy interventions with more traditional approaches, using both quantitative outcomes and qualitative classroom data. Such studies could investigate how teacher beliefs, AI competencies, and local context shape the effectiveness of AI-enhanced reading and writing instruction (Ng et al., 2021).

Finally, research should examine humanizing pedagogy in practice in classroom settings. Document classroom cases where AI tools are deliberately integrated with culturally relevant texts, critical literacy discussions, and community-engaged projects. Research in this area could

explore how students experience identity affirmation, agency, and voice when AI is used to support, rather than replace, relational aspects of literacy teaching (Bartolomé, 1994; Reyes, 2006).

These research agendas can clarify how digital tools shape students' skills, identities, and motivation, and can identify practices that harness the strengths of AI without losing the personal, relational aspects of good teaching.

Conclusion

In an era when digital technologies touch nearly every facet of life, AI-enhanced platforms such as Microsoft Reading Progress, Diffit, and Padlet can change how students learn to read and write. These tools can support oral reading fluency, comprehension, vocabulary development, and written response by personalizing practice and making reading and writing more visible. Yet technology by itself cannot humanize education (Bartolomé, 1994; Freire, 1970). Meaningful pedagogy still depends on teachers' professional judgment, sustained professional development, and a clear commitment to equity.

When AI tools are used with teacher guidance to support feedback and revision while centering students' lived experiences and language resources, they can help connect classroom literacy tasks to students' identities and communities (Bartolomé, 1994; Janks, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, OET, 2023). The examples and strategies in this article illustrate how adaptive technology, grounded in humanizing pedagogy, can help teachers create collaborative literacy spaces, differentiate for diverse learners, and invite critical discussions about texts and data. If educators and school leaders attend to access, privacy, and bias while centering relationships and student agency, AI-supported literacy instruction can foster genuine reading and writing growth and prepare students for a lifetime of empowered learning.

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