

# The Essential iPad Guide for Principals

By Justin Baeder | [www.eduleadership.org](http://www.eduleadership.org)



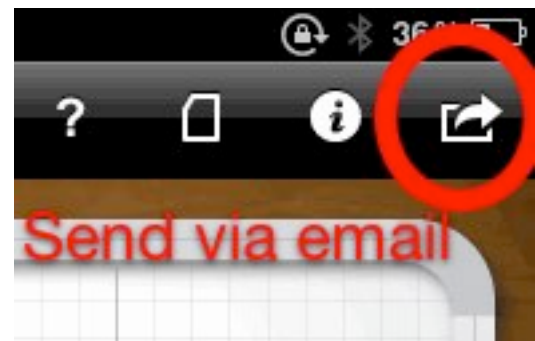
## Workflow

The way you use the iPad will determine whether it serves as a toy or as a powerful tool for managing your work as a leader. If you develop a reliable workflow, you can harness the power of dozens of your favorite apps to tap into your creativity, keep your information organized, and contribute to your effectiveness as a school leader.

If you just do discrete things in different apps, your important information will be dispersed among them, and may be hard to keep track of. For example, you don't want to do great brainstorming in a whiteboard app but then forget to do anything with it. If you have 20 different apps holding your work, it's easy to forget what you've done and where it is.

The key to managing your app workflow is to **limit the number of places where actionable information resides**. Most apps have a way to email a document either as plain text or as an attachment. Use this feature to send your work to your own email inbox so you can follow up later.

For example, if you do some brainstorming in a whiteboard app, you can email an image of the whiteboard to yourself so you have it in your inbox for later processing.



If you identify action items, add them to your to-do list rather than leave them in another app (see below for my recommended to-do list app).

### **Core Workflow Apps**

Of course, some apps, such as the calendar, are the best repository for their own information, and you'll have to commit to checking them regularly or setting reminders so you don't miss anything important. If you find yourself forgetting to check something important (like your calendar for the next day), put a recurring popup reminder on your calendar.

My "repository" apps include:

- **[OmniFocus](#)** – a powerful to-do list manager. If it's a task or project I'm responsible for, it's in OmniFocus.
- **[Mail](#)** – the built-in email app on the iPad is excellent. Needless to say, it contains my work email, including any documents that I've emailed to myself from other apps.
- **[iCal](#)** – the built-in calendar app on iPad, which syncs with my Outlook/Exchange work calendar and my Mac personal calendar.

If I need to deal with something and it's not in one of the above apps, I *put it on my to-do list or calendar* to ensure that I don't lose it.

### **Batching**

Another key is to *batch* – to do similar items together in a group. Having similar items in one app – for example, all the EdWeek articles I want to read together in [Instapaper](#) – makes it much easier to get everything done quickly, since I'm not switching back and forth between different apps.

### **Wireless Keyboard**

Finally, I highly recommend getting a Bluetooth wireless keyboard. [Apple's model](#) is extremely light and portable, and makes your iPad an excellent replacement for a laptop in meetings, on the road, or in classroom observations. (I don't recommend the Apple iPad keyboard stand, which isn't portable.)

I'm getting fairly fast typing on the iPad's on-screen keyboard, but for extended typing, it's extremely helpful to have a real keyboard.



### **Workflow Summary**

1. Limit the number of apps containing actionable information
2. Email yourself or put a to-do item on your list for other information in apps
3. Do similar items together in a batch
4. Get a Bluetooth wireless keyboard

## Apps

### Mail

Email is increasingly [how work is done](#) – especially [the work of leadership](#). I use my iPad to stay abreast of email as it comes in throughout the day, and to respond to email when I’m away from my computer but have my Bluetooth keyboard (see [this post](#)).



The iPad’s built-in email app is excellent, and it will probably work with your school or district email system. Check your desktop computer to see the server addresses and account settings, or check with your district tech staff to find out if there are any special settings to use. iPad does not have any special requirements – if you can access your email from your home computer, you can access it on the iPad.

A note about webmail – if you can access your email through a web browser, it might be tempting not to bother setting up the Mail app. However, webmail often lacks important features such as your district address book and the “mark as unread” button. It’s worth the effort to set up Mail to have access to its great features. In addition, other iPad apps need an email account to send files from (as described above), so you’ll want to have the Mail app configured.

### iCal

Planning my time and keeping appointments are essential parts of my work as a school leader, so I need a reliable calendar. Paper or a desktop-based calendar will work, but I’ve found it enormously helpful to have a powerful electronic calendar with me at all times.



The iPad's built-in calendar app is a dream to use. Add new appointments, accept or reject meeting invitations, set reminders (which will turn on your iPad when they pop up), and modify your schedule all from the slick interface. You'll never go back to a paper calendar again after using iCal.

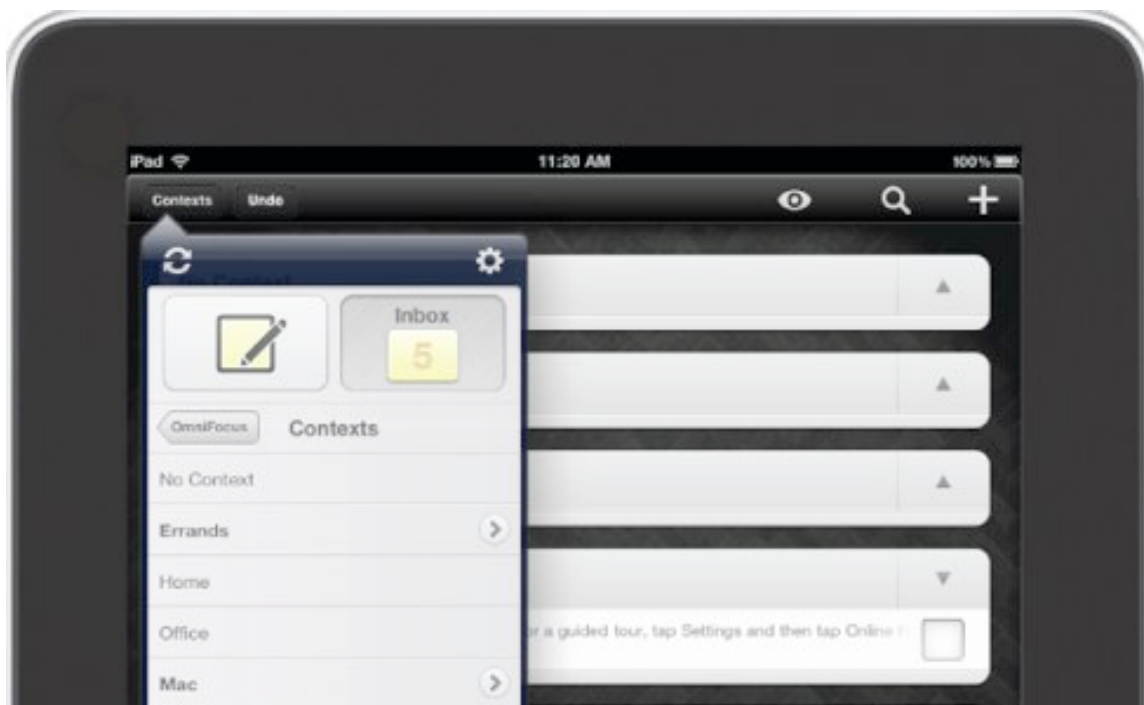
My secretary can add appointments directly to my calendar through Microsoft Outlook's designee feature, and they'll show up automatically in iCal. You can also subscribe to web-based .ical feeds, such as those generated by Google Calendar.

### OmniFocus

I need to keep track of countless projects, tasks, ideas, and plans in my work as a principal. I found that if I keep only simple paper-based lists, they get out of control quickly. [OmniFocus](#) is my hub for to-do items.



This \$40 app is pricey but amazing. If you've found that your paper or simple electronic to-do lists get unwieldy after a while, OmniFocus is the solution. [Check out this video introduction](#) to this complex but powerful app.

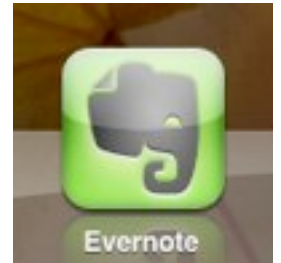


OmniFocus is one of the best-designed iPad apps on the market, and is a joy to use. However, if you're looking for a simpler (and cheaper) solution, try [Things](#). I haven't used Things, but I've heard good things (ahem) about it.

Whichever to-do app you use, the key is to write ALL of your tasks in it, instead of leaving them scattered across multiple apps.

## Evernote

As a principal, I receive a large amount of information that I may need to reference in the future. I have a good paper filing system, but I don't want to print and manually file anything if I can avoid it.



[Evernote](#) is my file cabinet. It will accept text (emailed, pasted, or typed in), photos, and file attachments, and make all of them searchable. For example, if I'm at another school and see a playground rules poster I like, I can take a picture with my phone and email it to Evernote. Searching for "playground" will bring up the photo, because *Evernote can actually read text (including handwriting) inside photographs*.

Best of all, your data lives on Evernote's servers, and is instantly synched between your iPad, iPhone, desktop or laptop computer (Windows or Mac), and the web interface. In other words, your reference information is always on hand. If you're feeling ambitious and have a sheet-fed duplexing scanner, you can even scan your paper files into Evernote and get rid of your file cabinet. There's also a [bookmarklet](#) to clip items you find on the web.

## iPad Reading Apps

A note about reading apps: if you need to read something by a specific date (e.g. for a meeting), put it on your calendar or to-do list. Otherwise, you can use the following apps to read material of interest whenever you get a chance.

## **Instapaper**

I believe that leadership is creative work, and creative work requires inspiration and new ideas. Reading is therefore an essential part of the work of leadership, yet we don't read as much as we should. If you have a pile of unread leadership magazines in your office or home, you know what I mean. When you want to read something (eventually) but don't have time right now, save it to [Instapaper](#).

[Instapaper](#) works best for those moments when you find yourself wanting to read an article, but you realize you aren't going to have time to finish it without interruption. Instead of printing the article and using the resulting clutter as a reminder to read the article, save the article to Instapaper and read it at your convenience. The typography is the best I've ever seen – I'd rather read an article in Instapaper than any other way.

It helps to install the Safari [bookmarklet](#) to easily save articles you find online. This will take a minute but it's worth it.

Most education publications such as [EdWeek](#), [Educational Leadership](#), [Phi Delta Kappan](#), etc. offer their content free online to print subscribers. Since I don't want a pile of EdWeek papers filling my office or home, I flip through the paper, search for the articles I want to read online, and save them to Instapaper.\*

\*Instapaper saves public web articles and anything you email to it. For reading material that isn't already on the public web (e.g. EdWeek articles, which require that you be a logged-in subscriber), you can copy and paste into Evernote, then email the Evernote document to a special Instapaper email address. While this is a bit of a pain, it has the added benefit of giving you a searchable backup copy in Evernote.



## iAnnotate PDF Reader

Sometimes you need to read an article more carefully and take notes for later reference. If you're taking graduate or advanced certification classes, you probably receive plenty of PDFs. While Safari, Mail, and Evernote can all open PDF files, a specialized reader app such as [iAnnotate](#) will save your place and let you mark up the article.

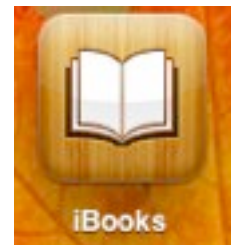
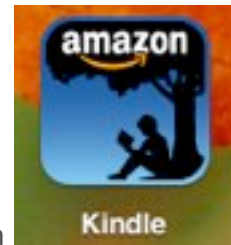


iAnnotate's interface is very easy to learn, and it's easy to save PDF files to the app. It's easily worth the \$10 price tag.

Again, if you need to read a document by a certain date, I don't recommend simply saving it to iAnnotate – put it on your calendar or to-do list as well.

## Kindle & iBooks

An increasing number of popular and education-related titles are available for Amazon's Kindle app or the iBooks reading app. Last Spring, I bought a paperback copy of Kim Marshall's [Rethinking Teacher Supervision & Evaluation](#), but I also clicked the "I want to read this book on Kindle" link on Amazon's website. A few months later, a [Kindle edition](#) was released. It works, and reading on the iPad is much more convenient than reading a paper book.



A little-known feature of the Kindle app is that you can highlight important passages and view a list of all the passages you've highlighted, either on the iPad or on [Amazon's website](#). This is a great way to review what you've learned from a book.

## Explore

The above apps are those I find indispensable and use daily, but I have dozens of other apps that I downloaded just to try or for fun. Don't be afraid to spend a few dollars trying new apps.

The key, as I mentioned above, is to limit the number of apps holding actionable information; otherwise, each new app is simply another place to lose something important.

What apps do you use on the iPad? Are you considering getting an iPad? [Let me know what you think.](#)

*Image credit: [Brandi Sims](#). Other images captured from iPad apps or their publishers.*

*For other articles on principal performance and productivity, visit [www.eduleadership.org](http://www.eduleadership.org).*

For information on Justin's two-day workshop **The High-Performance Administrator: Managing Time, Workflow, and Communication to Maximize Your Impact on Student Learning**, [click here](#).

