

Ali and his classmates sit next to each other in an science class. They are not listening to their teacher or penciling down notes in their science journals. Ali is watching a video cells on his iPad Other students use an app to about experiment. design an When they need help, they type a quick message their teacher who monitors them from his computer the Middle East tablet computers are are revolutionizing education. Today, more schools using tablets instead of paper or books. Governments predict the best jobs will require students to have strong computer skills. Their hope is tablet-based learning will better prepare them for this future. Saudi Arabia's support for school tablets only began recently. In 2014, the Ministry of Education started to put Internet access, computers, and tablets in hundreds of classrooms. The tablets connect students to an enormous amount of new digital content, including e-books, online videos, and classroom apps. Eventually, all schools could have tablets. But will the experiment work? Right now, it is too early to know. However, the answer could be next door. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), thousands of public school students are already using tablets. According to the government, every student will have one by 2017. The country believes tablet-based learning is the answer to the future. And so far, early results have been positive. Mohammed Gheyath works for the UAE Ministry of Education. He says students are doing better with tablets because the learning is interactive and dynamic In history class, for example, students can use apps to a discover and "rebuild" an ancient city. To start, they may video tour of the ancient city of Petra With tablet technology they can walk through" it as if they were really there. Next, they use an app to design their own Finally, with special software, they turn their designs city. into a presentation and share them instantly on their eens. The students use creativity to solve their own roblems. Experts believe this motivates students to learn Teachers also benefit because they can easily track ents' progress. In the past, teachers had to wait for paper t results. Now students in the UAE are taking ests and quizzes on their tablets. In seconds, their scores to the teacher. Teachers can then direct them to ana sant a o or website if they need extra instruction. Students can also email their teachers for help. Experts say this is good for students too shy to raise their hands. In these instant feedback can equal greater success. Still, no technology is perfect. Many UAE students are often expected to complete tablet assignments at home. One problem is that not all families have Internet access. Other times, Internet connections are slow or stop working. This can put their children at a disadvantage, Back in Saudi Arabia, the government is trying to prepare for this. It is investing millions into fast, reliable Internet for schools and cities. This is part of the country's decision to develop a "knowledge economy," It wants to prepare schoolchildren for new jobs in science and technology. Putting tablets in children's hands and faster Internet in everyone's is one step toward this goal. However, if all Saudi students do have tablets one day, success will require more than the fastest Internet Teachers are going to need training. Schools will have to make sure children access content safely. And parents must learn to adapt to technology they never had in school. But if Saudi Arabia gets it all right, it will be the next leader in tablet education. And children like Ali will be the new leaders of the country's knowledge economy.