March Newsletter

Children and Technology

Contributing Therapists: Arlyn Zeller, M.S., CF-SLP, Emily Tolstad, M.A., CCC-SLP & Megan Baisley, M.S., OTR/L

March, 2014

There is a great deal of controversy surrounding the use of technology with children. However, like everything else, when used in moderation, technologies like the iPad and other tablets can be a wonderful resource for practicing and advancing your children's speech, language, and fine motor skills at home. There are several things to keep in mind when choosing to use technology with your children as a learning tool in the home environment.

Inside this issue:

Tips for selecting and using technology appropriately with your kids.

iPad app recommendations to facilitate the development of speech, language, and fine motor skills.

Websites and other helpful resources for finding apps for kids.

1. Use the tablet as an *interactive* toy. While it may be tempting to hand our tablets over to our children as a convenient and simple distraction, tablets are most useful and educational when we use them as interactive toys. There are thousands of apps out there that you can sit and enjoy *with* your child, and by making it more of an interactive experience, and modeling specific skills, you allow your children a much greater opportunity for learning.

2. Use the tablet in *moderation*. While tablets are wonderful and have much to offer our children, they cannot and should not replace traditional toys. Traditional toys allow our children to exercise and expand other skills that cannot be practiced using a tablet. For example, buttoning up an old shirt while playing dress up or completing a puzzle are essential opportunities for fine motor skill development that tablets do not provide. Likewise, playing in a toy kitchen provides your child the opportunity to expand his pretend play skills, which is an important part of language development.

3. Be *selective*. The App Store is continually expanding, and at times it may seem overwhelming trying to determine which apps are worth purchasing and using with your children. Do not be afraid to be selective. Look for apps that are well-designed, have an educational purpose, and are able to be used interactively. Additionally, look out for "free" apps that only offer one free sample- they are a waste of that precious tablet memory space.

iPad App Recommendations for Targeting Speech and Language Skills	
Flipbooks ($9.99)	This articulation app is a wonderful resource for practicing a variety of speech sounds at home. You can practice words, phrases or sentences with your given target sound by flipping through the "flipbooks" and creating silly sentences. Additionally, this app may be used to target a variety of different language skills, including grammar, syntax, "wh" questions, and vocabulary. A full description of the app may be found on the iTunes website (itunes.apple.com) or on the developer's website (www.mayer-johnson.com).
Goodnight Safari (Free)	Goodnight Safari is an adorable and interactive book that can be used for practicing reading skills, following directions, expanding vocabulary, and more. The book prompts the child to follow a simple direction on each page, and all of the scenes are interactive, making the book come to life. A full description of the app may be found on the developer's website (www.polkstreetpress.com).
Peekaboo HD (Free)	The speech-language pathologists at K.I.D.S. Therapy consider this app their "go-to" early intervention app. The app is simple yet engaging and interactive, and it provides parents with delayed talkers the opportunity to practice animal sounds, which are wonderfully simple consonant-vowel combinations (e.g., "moo-moo", "baa-baa"), making them easy and appropriate target sounds for early intervention learners. Spanish mode available! A full description of the app may be found on the iTunes website (itunes.apple.com) or on the developer's website (peekaboohd.com).
Get Dressed (Free)	The name of the app is self-explanatory; use this app to practice getting dressed! It is a wonderful opportunity to practice age-appropriate vocabulary (body parts, clothing items, colors) as well as following directions (e.g., "put on her blue shirt"), and making requests using appropriate pronouns (e.g., "Can I put on *her* shirt?"). A full description of the app may be found on the iTunes website (itunes.apple.com) or on the developer's website (fishdog.net).
Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame (Free)	This app provides parents and children the opportunity to practice social-pragmatic abilities at home. In this app, you and your child help the Sesame Street monster take the steps (1. Breathe, 2. Think, 3. Do) to relax and calm down when feeling stressed or upset. Spanish mode available! A full description of the app may be found on the iTunes website (itunes.apple.com).

iPad App Recommendations for Targeting Fine Motor Skills	
Dexteria ($3.99) & Dexteria Jr. ($2.99)	These award-winning apps develop fine-motor skills and handwriting readiness and abilities through a series of hand and finger exercises that help to build strength, control, and dexterity. A full description of the apps may be found on the iTunes website (itunes.apple.com) or on the developer's website (www.dexteria.net).
iWriteWords ($2.99)	This app helps you and your child practice writing letters and words. The app prompts the user to trace letters with their fingertips through a fun, interactive game. A full description of the app may be found on the iTunes website (itunes.apple.com).
The Zones of Regulation ($4.99)	The Zones of Regulation is an interactive game that teaches children how to understand and recognize their own behaviors and emotions, and then provides them with strategies for self-regulating these behaviors and emotions. A full description of the app may be found on the iTunes website (itunes.apple.com) or on the developer's website (www.selosoft.com).

Websites and other helpful resources for finding apps for kids:

- Sign up for daily free app alert emails at www.smartappsforkids.com

- Follow Pediastaff's "Apps & Extras 4 Therapy" board on Pinterest

- Follow "Sublime Speech" on Facebook for free app alerts.

Website:
www.kidstherapyassociates.com

Address:
11838 Bernardo Plaza Court, Suite 110,
San Diego, CA 92128

Telephone
858-673-KIDS (5437)

Happy Saint Patrick's Day!