



SPRING 2013

HALDIMAND-NORFOLK HEALTH UNIT

COMMUNICATION MATTERS

A NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS, TEACHERS, EARLY LEARNING PROVIDERS AND CAREGIVERS OF PRESCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN.

Technology Apps “There’s an app for that!”

It wasn't so long ago that “There's an app for that” would have seemed like a meaningless sentence to many of us. In fact, there are a lot of terms that we use commonly today that weren't in use just a generation ago. A notebook used to only be made of paper. A tablet was a form of medication. Text was a thing, not an action. Phones were just phones, not smart phones, or even cell phones! An MP3 player, an iPod, an iPad? Those terms would have made members of the previous generation scratch their heads. And “applications” were understood only by computer experts.

Technology changes so rapidly. Today there truly seems to be an app for everything, and we're all expected to know how and when to use them. When it comes to using technology to help your child learn, the range of devices and apps available can be overwhelming.

This issue of “Communication Matters” will address some of the issues around using technology with your child. Our intent is to inform, not to endorse. The apps named here are ones we found interesting; we don't intend to suggest that they will necessarily be helpful for you and your child's individual needs. We've avoided listing apps that were



designed specifically for communication, as those tend to be expensive and can be disappointing if they don't meet your child's needs. For example, many parents ask us about Proloquo2Go, which was designed for people whose speech is severely limited. It's available on iTunes at a cost of \$189.99. There's no demo version available, so you're putting out a lot of money in the hope that it will be appropriate for your child. If you're considering Proloquo2Go, it might be worth your while to visit an Apple Store and ask a staff member to demonstrate the app for you. The nearest Apple Stores in our general area are at Maplevue Centre in Burlington, Masonville Mall in London and Conestoga Mall in Waterloo.

If you're interested in using technology with a child who has special needs, be sure to talk to your child's Speech-Language Pathologist about any questions you have. She can show you the

Boardmaker software that we use to create many of the visual displays we use in intervention. She may also be able to help you access the services of the Technology Access Clinic (TAC) in Hamilton, our local experts in prescribing communication devices.

Things to Remember about Technology

1. No device can replace human interaction as a language teacher. Face to face interaction with you is critical to your child's language development.
2. Limit screen-based activities. Recent research by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) resulted in these recommendations:
 - a.) Babies under the age of two years should have no exposure to TV, videos or computer activities
 - b.) Children between age 2 and 6 should be restricted to no more than 2 hours of screen time a day.

In an age where screens are everywhere, these are hard recommendations to follow. Our children watch TV, play with our smart phones, play video games and watch videos on TV, computer or tablet screens. Children may be watching screens at home, in their day care, at school, even in the car. It's hard to escape screens!

But the reasons for limiting screen time for young children are compelling. Research shows that a young child's brain is very busy trying to tie together all the information it absorbs. If the input the brain receives is largely screen-based, with rapid movement and quick changes in images, the brain learns to pay attention only for very brief moments rather than

focusing carefully on information. A young brain in hyper drive can have difficulty attending and learning in the school years.

3. Visual information is powerful no matter what the source is. Sharing a book with your child can be as appealing to them as staring at a computer screen – and a richer learning experience to boot.

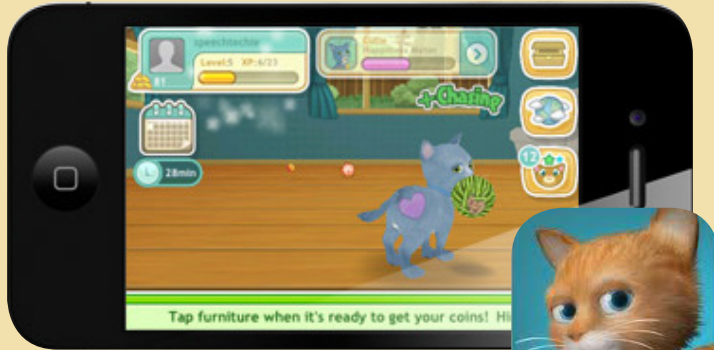
With those reservations in mind, here are some early apps that provide opportunities for you to interact with your preschool child.

Vocal Zoo. This free app from iTunes has a display of animal photos. Photos are easier for young children to recognize than line drawings. When you touch a picture, you hear the animal sound. This app could be used to take turns, to build vocabulary by talking about the animal names, where they live, what colours they are, etcetera. Animal sounds are also a fun way to encourage your child to imitate and to use his voice.



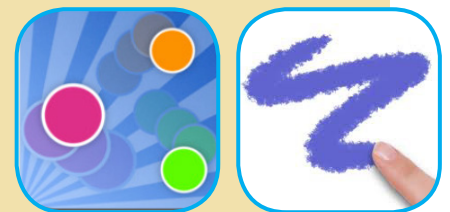
Cookie Doodle. Another free app from iTunes. You and your child can choose a type of cookie dough, roll it out, choose a cutter, bake, decorate and eat a cookie! Again, lots of opportunities for taking turns, with some great vocabulary thrown in – action words, nouns, shapes, colours.

Touch Pets Cats. Also free, also from iTunes. Another great opportunity to share turns and learn about action words and cause-effect relationships as you and your child adopt and care for a virtual cat together.



Two free apps from iTunes are great introductions to concepts of cause and effect, colours, counting and sharing. These are **Color Dots**, where players can take turns “popping” coloured bubbles as they appear on the screen, and **DoodleBuddy**, which responds to a finger touch to scribble, stamp or draw on the screen. Children who are still developing fine motor skills enjoy these easily accessed apps.

Enjoy technology, but don't forget lo-tech ways of interacting with your child, like sharing books! Have fun!!



Attention JK teachers and Parents of children entering JK!



OUR NEW “JK RULE!”

Please note that effective immediately, children attending a Junior Kindergarten program MUST be referred to our program by JUNE 30th of their JK year and programming services.

This change was prompted by the increasing demand for our services. We are committed to providing excellent service. With our current resources and growing waiting lists, we're unable to achieve that when JK children are referred to us later in the year. If you have any concerns about your child's speech and language skills, call 1-519-426-6170 Ext. 3243 today to make a referral.

REMEMBER: No child is too young to be referred to the Haldimand-Norfolk Preschool Speech and Language Program!

May is Speech and Hearing Month & Get Caught Reading Month!

May is one of our favorite months!! It makes sense to us that reading is part of speech and hearing month. Developing early literacy skills is an important part of learning to use language and speech.

You are your child's best teacher. We're here to support you! We hope you enjoy the information about technology apps in this issue of Communication Matters, but don't forget to "get caught reading." Sharing books with your child, and letting your child see how much you enjoy reading yourself, is a first step to literacy.

So in honour of May, and with thanks to authors Jane Yolen and Jane Baskwill, here are a couple of poems dedicated to sharing books with young children.

Read to me

by Jane Yolen

Read to me riddles and read
to me rhymes
Read to me stories of
magical times
Read to me tales about
castles and kings
Read to me stories of
fabulous things
Read to me pirates and read
to me knights
Read to me dragons and
dragon-book fights
Read to me spaceships and
cowboys and then
When you are finished-
please read them again.

Open A Book

by Jane Baskwill

Open a book
And you will find
People and places of every
kind
Open a book
And you can be
Anything that you want to be:
Open a book
And you can share
Wondrous worlds you find in
there
Open a book
And I will too
You read to me
And I'll read to you.



Communication Matters is published biannually by the Haldimand-Norfolk Preschool Speech and Language program. It has been developed to increase awareness for services available and tips on the prevention of speech, language or hearing disorders in the preschool population. This newsletter is intended for parents, teachers and caregivers of preschool-aged children. You are invited to contact the Health Unit with your articles and ideas.



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