iPad and Young Children with Disabilities

What's Inside...

♦ Questions to Consider
♦ Pros and Cons
♦ Differences between devices and technology
♦ Choosing Apps
♦ Parental Controls
♦ Tips & Extras

In 2010, the iPad exploded onto the market. It is the most popular tablet computer today. It can be said that when it was revealed we did not understand the possibilities that this device could lend itself to. More and more parents are investigating the iPad as tool to support their child's communication, fine motor, engagement, cognitive skills, academic skills, including pre-math and pre-writing, and social skill development to name a few. However, the iPad is not the answer for everyone or an accepted special education tool. It is seen as a general use device. Parents and providers must carefully consider the use and benefit to the child's education when interested in including such a device as a special education tool.

This bulletin will attempt to explore different facets that you might consider when deciding upon the purchase or use of an iPad as a tool for the education of young children, specifically for special education. However, this exploration is not all inclusive, particularly when considering which device or apps will be most helpful to your individual child. With over 500,000 apps available through Apple alone, it is impossible to review even a fraction. This is something best suited to reviewing with your child, your educators, and your therapy team.

Questions to Consider...

...when choosing an iPad as an educational tool

The iPad is only as good as its ability to be used!

♦ Have a goal. Why is your child using the iPad? To learn an academic concept? To chill out? To communicate? To listen to a story?
♦ What is my child's greatest educational need, does the iPad meet this need?
♦ What area of development is my greatest concern? Does the iPad support this concern?
♦ Does the device help integrate my child's IEP goals into daily programming and curriculum?
♦ How will the iPad utilize my child's strengths and support his/her challenges?
♦ How will the iPad assist my child in building new skills and maintaining consistency of growth?
♦ Does the device support my child's maturational level?
♦ Will the iPad be a source of frustration or motivation for my child?
♦ Why the iPad and not a laptop or other device?
♦ Who will be using the iPad with my child, can these individuals provide technical assistance as needed?
♦ Do the people working with my child have experience working on an iPad, do they know how to program it?
♦ Will there be a person assigned to coordinate and organize the use of the iPad, who can see the big picture of my child's goals and progress among the variety of teachers and therapists working together?
♦ Will the school district and providers be able to advance the use of the iPad over time and through the years as my child grows and moves through the curriculum and from grade to grade?
♦ What do you want to accomplish and how will your child's instruction change?
♦ Will it be used throughout the day? Or just for specific activities or purposes?
♦ What provisions does the school have for safety, loss or theft of the iPad?
♦ Will the school's wireless network be able to support the increased use of iPads in the classrooms?
♦ Will your budget allow you to update and purchase new devices as technology and software change over time?

Pros & Cons

There are several pros and cons when considering the purchase of an iPad for use with your young child. Here are some things to consider prior to purchasing a device as an educational tool:

PROS

- Inexpensive, compared to other communication devices
- Extremely portable
- Lightweight
- Long battery life
- Built in speaker and microphone
- Unique and wide variety of free or inexpensive apps
- Easy to create content and update on the fly
- Touch screen provides an easy way to interact with and switch between applications
- Qualified apps provide learning skills, in addition to hours of entertainment
- Faster processors and cameras are available on the iPad 2 & 3
- Can be customized to each child's needs
- Video can be used to practice social skills
- Aids in communication
- Easy to use for children with fine motor delays
- Fewer steps equals a higher rate of engagement and usefulness
- iPad can be used by everyone, so everyone is part of the crowd!

CONS

- Expensive, compared to a laptop computer or other tablet device
- With a glass screen and metal exterior, can be easily damaged without some type of protective cover/case
- Using in public can be an invitation to theft
- More like a cell phone than a laptop computer
- Getting files onto the iPad can be difficult
- Can only run and view a single app at one time
- No Flash support
- Without 3G, what happens when your internet goes down? If losing connectivity would harm your experience, then you may consider the extra expense of the WiFi+3G model
- In bright light, the screen will pick up the glare
- Lack of a USB port or SD card slot for increasing storage capacity
- iTunes dependent for syncing the system
- Easily manipulated touch screen makes it easy to unintentionally exit programs they are working in and open others

Source: Proffitt, 2012

Comparison of tablet devices and technology

Device	Price	Apps available	Wireless & Cellular	Size
iPad, iPad 2, iPad3	Starts at $399	Approximately 500,000	Wi-Fi 3G or 4G available with AT&T or Verizon Data package extra	Display 10 x7 inches 16G, 32G, or 64G
iPod Touch	Starts at $199	Approximately 500,000	Wi-Fi	Display 3.5in (diagonal) 8G, 32G, or 64G
iPhone4 iPhone4S	Starts at $99 Starts at $199 (with contract)	Approximately 500,000	Wi-Fi 3G or 4G available with AT&T or Verizon Data package extra	Display 3.5in (diagonal) 16G, 32G, 64G
Kindle Fire Nook	Starts at $199 (Both)	Over three hundred thousand android apps (Both)	Wi-Fi (Both)	Display 7 (both) 8G OR 16G (Nook only) SD card expandable memory (Nook only)

About Choosing Apps…

There are hundreds of thousands of apps out there. Many are geared to assisting children with special needs. How do you choose? Do you choose based on cost? Some are free and range up to hundreds of dollars. But is the cost worth it if it helps your child to be able to communicate and interact with the world around him. Here are a few more things to consider:

✼ Know your child—what are your child's needs? If not entirely sure, look at your child's IEP under the Present Levels of Performance where his/her needs and strengths are identified. These will help you to choose.

✼ Talk with your child's team about your child's abilities and needs. Match these to the descriptors of the apps.

✼ Connect with other parents who also have children using iPad or iPhone apps, maybe you can test some before you purchase.

✼ Give your child time to explore and adjust to using the iPad or a particular app. Nothing works overnight!

✼ Ask yourself, does the app meet a purpose?

✼ Does it reinforce the targeted skill or concept?

✼ Are targeted skills practiced in an authentic and problem-based learning environment?

✼ Is the feedback specific? Does it result in improved student performance?

✼ Does it offer complete flexibility to alter a wide range of important settings to meet your child's needs?

✼ Can your child launch and navigate the app with little to no instruction or support?

✼ Is your child highly motivated by the app?

✼ Do you choose based on the recommendation of a friend who has a child with similar learning and developmental challenges?

Remember, every child is an individual. What works for one, may not work for all!

SOURCE: Walker, 2010

Parental Controls

With all the splendor of technology also comes risk. As parents, it becomes your responsibility to make sure your kids remain safe, not access inappropriate content or rack up bills purchasing apps, movies and music. As Apple devices have been upgraded, so have parental controls. Through the devices parents can set restrictions that limit access to movies, music, the iTunes store, the internet, YouTube and more. You can also limit the ratings of music, movies or TV media, as well. Aside from the built-in parental controls, developers have also created many "safe browsing" apps to further limit the content which their child can view. However, there is no substitute for good communication and talking with your kids about what is safe and acceptable.

SOURCE: http://www.ikidapps.com/2010/09/ parental-controls-for-iphone-ipod-touch-ipad.html

6 Tips for Downloading Family Friendly Apps

1. Try out some free apps. If it's free, know WHY it's free. Understand WHY an app is free before you download it. Is it ad supported? Is it free to download, but with In App Purchases? Is it on sale? Is it no longer being updated?

2. Know your options under Settings > General > Restrictions when setting up your iDevice. YOU have the ability to turn OFF IAP, or Push Notifications, activate a password, or even restrict apps by rating. Becoming familiar with your settings can optimize your device for your family's specific needs.

3. Decode the iTunes App Description, and PREVIEW the app before "hand off." Use your own discretion before downloading. Look closely at an iTunes App Description: Is it written clearly? Are the learning goals listed? Has the app been updated recently? What do the reviews say? Even better, check out the app yourself before letting kids "play." Are there pop-ups and purchase options? What about social media buttons?

4. Don't be shy. Do you have a question about the app? If you are curious about an app, try reaching out to the developer directly. Their contact information is linked in the iTunes App Description under "support."

5. Leave a review in iTunes. If there is ONE THING you can do to "vote" for great family-friendly content, it would be to leave a review on iTunes for the app making a positive difference in your home. That star recommendation, and specific words of endorsement, go such a long way for making a developer stand out on a crowded store.

SOURCE: http://momswithapps.com/2011/12/22/app-friday-10-tips-for-downloading-family-friendly-apps/

Helpful Links to Lists of Apps

http://momswithapps.com/apps-for-special-needs/

http://babieswithipads.blogspot.com/

http://mobilelearning4special needs.wikispaces.com/App+Lists

http://bridgingapps.org/

http://appstore.ikidapps.com/

Extras that add to the price

You may be tempted by all of the nifty-looking accessories. Just remember each one comes with a cost!

✓ iPad Smart Cover (can also serve as a stand)
✓ Protective Cases
✓ Stands
✓ Screen shields
✓ Stylus
✓ Switches
✓ Dock
✓ Compatible Wireless Printer
✓ Camera Connector
✓ SD Card Reader
✓ Wireless Keyboard
✓ Earphones with Mic
✓ World Travel Adapter Kit

SOURCES

Proffitt, B. (2012) iPad for Kids. Boston, MA: Course Technology CENGAGE Learning.

Walker, H. (2010) Johns Hopkins University: Evaluation Rubric for iPod/iPad Applications, Appendix B.

Parental Controls for iPhone, iPod Touch and iPad—http://www.ikidapps.com/2010/09/parental-controls-for-iphone-ipod-touch-ipad.html

10 Tips for Downloading Family-Friendly Apps by Lorraine at Moms with Apps— http://momswithapps.com/2011/12/22/app-friday-10-tips-for-downloading-family-friendly-apps/

Looking for more copies of this bulletin? You can find it on our ECDC website or contact us.

Mid-State Early Childhood Direction Center

Syracuse University
805 S. Crouse Avenue
Syracuse, NY 13244-2280
Phone:
315-443-4444
1-800-962-5488
Fax:
315-443-4338

E-mail: ecdc@syr.edu

http://ecdc.syr.edu

WHILE WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN, THEY TEACH US.

30 Years
Caring for All Children

Workshops of Interest

The ECDC can provide information and workshops on a variety of topics tailored to the interests and needs of parents and early childhood professionals. Resources are available on such topics as general child development, developmental issues for children with special needs, coping strategies, and specific disabilities.

Workshops include:

- **Including All Kids**
- **Making Parent Partnerships**
- **Early Childhood Development: The Meaning of Red Flags**
- **Positive Guidance and Behavior Strategies**
- **Moving On: Children and Families Facing Transition**
- **What Are Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education?**
- **What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?**
- **Getting Ready for Kindergarten**

Who We Are

The Early Childhood Direction Center (ECDC) is a regional technical assistance center for the State Education Department providing information, referral and support to families, professionals, and community agencies concerned with young children birth to five. We are located at Syracuse University's Center on Human Policy.

ECDC services to families are free and confidential.

ECDC Staff

Tracey Menapace, Director
Maria Gill, Education Coordinator
Glenda Criss-Forshey, Community Outreach Educator
Cyndy Colavita, Office Coordinator
Rachael Zubal-Ruggieri, Coordinator of Computer and Technical Applications