

iPads for Multiple Disabilities

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A full outline of today's presentation will be available at www.AssistiveTechWorld.net.

iPads have become a powerful tool for students with disabilities to access educational opportunities. iPads are being featured more and more on the news, and parents are excited by simple, easy-to-use devices and educational apps. iPads are not the "solution" for all disabilities but can be a valuable resource for reaching our kids with motor, speech, communication and social skills difficulties.

Information for iPads changes on a daily basis, and prices for apps vary by the hour. The apps in these handouts are not endorsed by APS or supported by Assistive Technology; This is simply a list of apps that have been tried by therapists and teachers who have rated them highly.

For links to these and more WONDERFUL apps go to

www.assistivetechworld.net.

Research on Students with Disabilities and the iPad

Until recently there has not been much research conducted or data release showing the effectiveness of using iPads with students with disabilities, but recently two studies have shown positive results with students with Cortical Visual Impairments (CVI) and students with autism.

A recent study from the University of Kansas about the therapeutic effects of utilizing an iPad with students with CVI has shown that CVI students responded to the iPad and demonstrated significant improvements. Further details about this study are available at <http://www.news.ku.edu/2011/october/5/ipad.shtml>

Rhonda McEwen at the University of Toronto is currently conducting a study entitled "Mobile Technology for Social and Communication Support Among Students Identified on the Autism Spectrum." The autistic students' ability to use symbols to communicate has improved, as has communication with students with a range of disabilities and problems with social skills. Further details about this study are available at <http://individual.utoronto.ca/rmcewen/research.html>

Why it's Good for Students with Disabilities

- It requires only a light touch on a sensitive screen and only a limited range of motion.
- Cognitively, it is simple for our students to understand -- just touch and it happens.
- Appeals to a person's way of naturally interacting with our environment.
- It's simple interface leads to maximum independence
- It is light to carry and hold. It can be mounted in many ways for convenient access.
- Many apps are developed for users with disabilities and for improving developmental skills.
- It offers the ability to change font size and have items read out loud.
- Most of all, it is a "cool" piece of technology that ALL populations love to use, so it is not stigmatizing and it looks much more "normal" than large adapted devices.

The iPad's Limitations

- You cannot change some accessibility options like touch sensitivity or keyboard access.
- iPad apps are still not as powerful as a computer or an Augmentative Communication device.
- Communication apps are not research-based, nor do they use a sophisticated language system like some devices.
- Word prediction and voice recognition software on the iPad is not as strong as it is on a computer, and the iPad programs do not yet “learn” the user’s voice or vocabulary.
- Long-term use of a keyboard difficult.

The iPad's Physical Weaknesses and How to Prepare for Them

- Protect the iPad -- it is fragile! Use a “Bounce-able” case to protect it from a fall.
- Use a Ziplock bag, a vacuum seal bag or a waterproof case for saliva and water protection.

How to Make it Easier for Students to Use

- Place a cover over the “home” button.
- Use fingerless gloves for students whose palm often touches the screen.
- Try the iPad in alternative positions such as in a stander, tilted on a stand, or on the floor with the student laying on their stomach.
- Try using a stylus for writing activities, be aware that adaptive mouth-sticks need special adaptation to work with an iPad screen.
- Look for apps that allow for the screen to be locked. Many programs for “babies” have made it accidentally hit the wrong thing and exit a program.
- For students who don’t engage initially, I have turned off the lights in the room to help them focus in on the iPad; then when the lights are on they begin to visually attend.
- Some students are afraid of a touchscreen at first; try starting with something fun and calming at first such as a pond app or an animal app.

How to Make it Easier for You to Use

- Remember, almost all iPhone apps work on the iPad, just bigger. Just click the bottom right corner of the screen.
- If you have an iPad 2 and a projector or a Promethium Board, use an adapter to share an interactive activity with the whole class!
- Categorize your apps -- they multiply quickly...
- Keep all the apps you want to use with students on a separate page of the home screen.
- If your iPad is running slowly then close programs to increase working memory

Websites for Apps

- Teaching Learners with Multiple Special Needs teachinglearnerswithmultipleneeds.blogspot.com/
- <http://www.lilliespad.com>
- <http://a4cwsn.com/>
- <http://www.geekslp.com/>
- <http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/resource-library/autism-apps> <http://www.snapps4kids.com/>

Websites for Support to Fund an iPad

- Lilli's Pad -- an ongoing support document for possible iPad funding options and what you will need and a guide on how to fund raise. <http://www.lilliespad.com/articles/>
- Apps for Children with Special Needs -- <http://a4cwsn.com/ipad2-4u/>
- <http://babieswithipads.blogspot.com/>
- <http://conovercompany.com/grants/>
- <http://www.letschatautism.com/ipads-for-autism-application/>
- http://www.ihelpforspecialneeds.com/iHelpWelcome/Need_An_iPad_App.html - for schools
- <http://www.itaalk.org/fundingsources.html> -- an amazing downloadable list of resources
- State program for funding technology in the classroom -
http://www.abilityconnectionnewmexico.org/Technology_Initiative.php
- Funding for an iPad http://atmac.org/getting-ipad-iphone-itouch-for-communication?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+atmac+%28ATMac%29

Please remember to keep sharing!!