

May I Have a Word?

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One-Dimensional Speech/Language Therapy: Is the iPad Alone Enough?

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Smart phones, iPods, e-readers, webcams, iPads and more...my humble listing does not even touch the surface of the plethora of hard-to-pass-up gadgets introduced by technology.

We undoubtedly live in a digital era. I just co-authored a digital songbook for speech, language and hearing goals. I am in the process of developing an app for the iPad for language intervention. My 3-year-old daughter could easily become an iPad junkie if allowed unlimited access. I've also been guilty of texting my husband from the upper level of our home because I was too lazy to walk downstairs. I understand emails and text messages have become primary modes of communication, and I am not opposed to the reality in which we live.

My concern today is that I have heard of SLPs who are abandoning all traditional or old-school therapy materials and methods and beginning to strictly incorporate the iPad in most if not all of their therapy sessions.

I cannot deny the iPad is a powerful motivator, a versatile and effective therapy tool if used appropriately, and a great time-saver in multiple ways, but can I deny the effectiveness of other tried and true therapy tools? Have flashcards, markers and paint, manipulatives and hard copy storybooks become obsolete? My personal and professional opinion is a resounding NO!

When recently perusing a long list of available apps geared for speech/language pathologists, I was amazed to find that there truly seems to be an app for everything—articulation, phonology, minimal pairs, wh- questions, following directions,

predicting, inferring, pragmatics, categorization skills, verb usage, homophones, comparing and contrasting, story starters, goal-writing, and on and on and on. While these resources are great and I commend the innovative SLPs creating these wonderful apps, my only caution is that we not become one-dimensional in our provision of services.

Allow me to clarify that I love my iPad and use it regularly with various children I work with, however, I don't believe any one tool will ever be sufficient or appropriate for every child or for every intervention goal regardless of how technologically advanced it is.

The crux of the matter is, in addition to our digital reality, the other reality I see is that children still must learn to interact with *people* in addition to machines. There is still much to be said for the meeting of the eyes, for the exchanging of words between humans, for appropriate physical contact, for the manipulation of objects in one's hands, and so forth, so we must not write-off valuable non-techie resources and materials that are still available to us.

This is not a call to put away our iPads, it is merely a call to evaluate and utilize all of the effective tools we possess in order to provide excellent speech and language services to the individuals we serve.

Let's not sacrifice all traditional therapy materials and methods on the altar of technology!