

PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES TO USE SCREEN TIME FOR SUPPORTING EARLY LANGUAGE AND LITERACY



Overview

Technology use is rapidly increasing, creating questions from families and teachers about screen time limits, technology's use in education, and how to support children's learning with educational apps. An article by Burcu Tatar-Ozkum and Hope K. Gerde, titled "Partnering with Families to Use Screen Time for Supporting Early Language and Literacy," identifies benefits of technology in language and literacy development for children, along with ways teachers can help families support their children's skills through quality educational apps.

Pros and Cons of Screen Time

As of 2020, the American Academy of Pediatrics (2020) recommends:

- No screen time for children under age two with the exception of video chatting, and
- No more than 1 hour of screen time per day for children ages two to five.

Too much screen time is related to adverse effects on children's cognitive, physical, and emotional development such as...

- Higher risk for obesity
- Poor sleep quality, and
- Low behavioral control.

Teachers can help families maximize the educational benefits of screen time through quality app selection and meaningful engagement.

What makes a quality app?

Apps should be...

- **Interactive** - Promotes active engagement by letting children make decisions through tapping, swiping, etc.
- **Multisensory** - Uses sound, animations, pictures, and text to engage students in various learning contexts
- **Explicit** - Defines words, visually demonstrates examples, and explains new concepts
- **Feedback Providing** - Provides instant feedback to motivate exploration and promote skill acquisition and engagement
- **Adaptive** - Adjusts difficulty to challenge and support learning for children of varying skills
- **Appropriate** - Matches the child's age, skills, interests, and cultural background, free from negative content like violence, bias, or inappropriate language.

Teachers can provide resources such as Common Sense Media, which vets educational apps for families and educators.

Examples of Quality Apps



Wonder Red's Rhyme Racer



LetterSchool



Khan Academy Kids



Family Involvement with Children and Technology

When adults use technology with their children, children learn more and are able to build positive adult-child relationships. Teachers can provide families with educational technology resources, such as recorded videos demonstrating usage of educational technology or a technology section in their newsletter.

Using Tech to Promote Language and Literacy Skills

Ebooks/storyapps and e-learning apps support children's development of important language and literacy skills: oral language, phonological awareness, letter and sound knowledge, and writing. Families can talk, read, and write with their children while engaging with the technology.

Talking

Teachers can offer digital resources that promote meaningful conversations during shared app experiences. **Adults enhance children's app/storybook experiences by introducing vocabulary and improving language through encouragement, instruction, feedback, and conversation.**

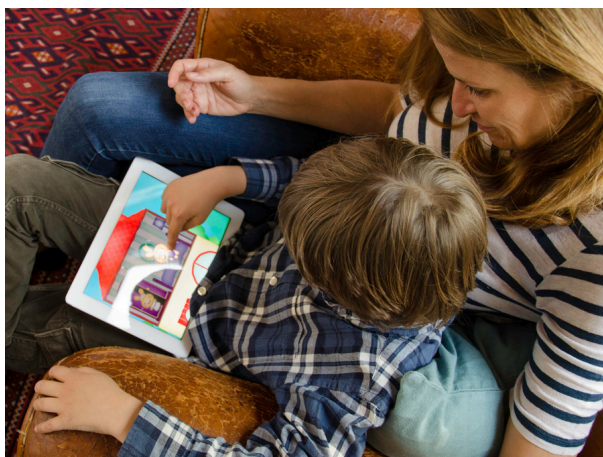
Refer to Figure 2 in the article to see a handout to share with the families in your classroom.



Writing

Families may miss early writing attempts like scribbles and drawings. **Teachers can suggest apps like Bookcreator for children to generate and record ideas.** Families can guide children to copy letters/words and encourage sound identification. Teachers can model classroom writing experiences for families to replicate at home.

See Figure 4 in the article for more writing tips.



Reading

Teachers can recommend apps that allow reading and listening at the same time. Apps should label objects, provide rich vocabulary, and highlight text, while avoiding features that distract from the story.

See Figure 3 in the article for a family handout with quality ebooks and additional reading tips.

