From the Director's Desk by Suzanne Bowers - "Technology in Balance"

I truly feel that if I want to learn how to utilize my technology to its fullest potential, I just need to ask my children! Today’s youth seem to have been born with an innate ability to not only use technology but to manipulate it to meet their every need. There are some wonderful benefits to the use of technology but like everything, there needs to be a balance, and parents need to be the ones to help our children with this balance.

The sheer volume of educational information available to students through the use of technology is amazing. Students can access online information about absolutely anything, including articles, video tutorials, live-streaming videos, data…..the educational opportunities are endless! Social opportunities have also changed through the use of technology. Everyone can now connect online with friends, family, and mutual interest groups like support groups, service organizations, and online gaming groups. This offers students who struggle with friendships and socialization skills to “level the playing field” through mutual skills and interests.

But with all these benefits, there are some downfalls to the excessive use of technology, especially for our children. Pediatricians have warned about the effects of too much screen time on a child’s health and cyber danger. In addition, there is definitely still a need for face-to-face interactions to balance a child’s development, so what can parents do?

Well, let’s go online and find out! The Global Student network has a great article that discusses setting a healthy balance for children’s use of technology. The article can be access at: https://www.globalstudentnetwork.com/technology-and-kids-the-good-the-bad-and-the-balance/. So enjoy your children, let them explore all of their opportunities afforded to them, but don’t forget to teach them how to set a healthy balance with everything in life, including technology.
Tecnología de Asistencia al alcance de sus manos

¿Sabía usted que la mayoría de los teléfonos inteligentes, las tabletas y otros dispositivos tienen funciones integradas que pueden ayudar con las dificultades de aprendizaje y atención?

El rango de tecnología de asistencia varía entre las diferentes marcas. Pero los iPhones, iPads, iPods, dispositivos Android y teléfonos Windows tienen funciones integradas que pueden ayudar a las dificultades de aprendizaje y atención.

Hoy en día existen computadoras, tabletas de todo tipo, los celulares iPhones y otros aparatos que usan un sistema de operación conocido como iOS o OSX para los teléfonos que no son de marca Apple. Estos sistemas de operación tienen un acceso tecnológico ya incluido en sus sistemas que pueden ser de gran ayuda para niños que tienen dificultades de lectura – estoy puedo funcionar ya sea resaltando palabra por palabra al mismo tiempo de pronunciarla. Existen una variedad de órdenes que pueden ser dadas a estos aparatos inteligentes, como por ejemplo leer en voz alta, invertir los colores para poder enfocarse en el texto, libros de audio – todo esto puede ser de gran ayuda para niños, estudiantes e incluso adultos que tienen dificultad siguiendo el texto al leer.

Para los niños que tienen problemas de escritura, el auto-texto hablado puede ayudar si su hijo que tiene dificultades tipeando o deletreando. Otra función de reconocimiento de voz, Siri, puede ser usada para dictarle mensajes de texto y recordatorios que su hija quiere agregar a su agenda. Tenga en cuenta de que la tecnología de auto corrección y reconocimiento de voz no son perfectas. Se debe estar atento a los errores, que a veces pueden ser muy divertidos.

Como ya habíamos mencionado, este tipo de aparatos electrónicos pueden ser de gran ayuda y beneficio para aquellos ya sean niños o adultos con dificultades sensoriales y de atención que se distraen fácilmente más conocidos como ADHD/ADD. Si su hija se distrae fácilmente, el Lector Safari de Apple puede remover todos los avisos del motor de búsqueda del internet. El retirar los avisos puede ayudar a su hija a concentrarse en el artículo y su contenido. El Lector Safari es compatible con Speak Selection, Highlight Text y VoiceOver.

Asistive Technology in the Palm of your hand

Did you know that most smartphones, tablets and other devices have built-in technology that can help with learning, writing, reading and attention issues?

The range of assistive technology features varies among the top major brands such as Apple, Android and Window devices but they all have features that may make life easier for people with learning, writing, reading and attention issues.

These days’ computers, iPads, iPhones and other devices use a multitude of operating system each with their own built-in accessibility features. These features can be a big help for children with reading difficulties and help by highlighting each word of the text as it is spoken out loud. There are different options in which the users can use such as read-aloud, zooming, inverting the colors or audiobooks which can help struggling readers follow along.

Children that have writing issues can also benefit from built-in functions such as speak to text which allows users to realize their errors in the typing or spelling. Another voice-recognition feature, specifically on Apple products is Siri which can help by users to dictate text messages, notes or reminders in a quick and easy manner. The built in features are great for everyday use, plus there are a large variety of free applications that exists in at the apple store or in the Google store that focus on helping children to do better at school and learn in a fun way.

As mentioned above, easily distracted children or children and adults with ADHD/ADD can benefit from these types of built in features in today’s modern devices. Using tools such as Apple’s Safari Reader can remove all the ads and other clutter from the web browser. Stripping away these items can help your child focus on the content of the article instead of getting distracted by the ads. Safari Reader also works with Speak Selection, Highlight Text and VoiceOver.

I believe there needs to be a balance between using technology and using standard books with regards to working with children that have difficulty with reading, writing and focusing. Schools and teachers should be able to provide electronic devices to be more interactive with its students and provide effective ways of learning but meanwhile also try to incorporate more traditional strategies that can help children and adults with their difficulties. Today’s children are lucky to have access to the large range of assistive technology to help them improve and overcome their learning disabilities.
Mental Health Corner by Caroline Gendelman - "More 'Tech' Support = Bigger World"

We all enjoy having many ways to express ourselves. How many ways do we let out our feelings and opinions? We speak; we have body language and facial expressions. We write and we can paint and draw to express ourselves. When we feel heard we feel validated, useful and information is shared. Learning occurs.

As a parent, it can be difficult to see our most wonderful creation struggle in any area of her educational career. She may struggle just to get her thoughts understood. Information may not come to her the same way. She may not be sharing the gifts inside her mind. What do we do? How do help her hear, understand and be heard?


This article is a wonderful place to start when considering how technology could assist your child. It is an area that has brought down barriers and opened the world among our children in the classroom. As you read the article it is a glorious example of how an alteration for a few can benefit many.

“Soundfield systems were originally created with students with hearing impairments, tied directly to the hearing aid, which would help a child know who to listen to,” she explains. Now, the Pajaro Valley School District can build soundfield systems directly into classrooms. “Having it in the classroom makes it so the hearing impaired student isn’t different, but instead everybody can focus more--kids with ADD, or just distractible kids, know who to tune into,” she says.

When a child feels more comfortable in her surrounding she is more able to process information. Children do not present reactions to stressors the same as adults. If a child does not feel connected to the lesson being presented she may act out and be distracting where an adult would daydream. The “unconnected” child, or one who has thoughts and feelings trapped inside, will feel frustration build. How do we, as adults, feel when we are bored at work or when we know we have talents to contribute but no outlet?

Assistance from technology is a valuable tool for all children. It can be an enormous asset to those whose education career walks a different path. It is the duty for those tasked with developing the minds of children to provide the best avenue for growth and expression. Each is a gift, which may unwrap differently from one another, to reveal wonderful potential and talents for us all.

PEATC On Demand and In the Spotlight by Kristin Kane - "Technology"

Creating and sharing resources here at PEATC is just one of the ways we are able to serve our Virginia families. This month we celebrate technology in the school, and we would like to share a fairly new online resource: The Center on Technology and Disability.

The Center on Technology and Disability (CTD) is funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The Center is designed to increase the capacity of families and providers to advocate for, acquire, and implement effective assistive and instructional technology (AT/IT) practices, devices, and services.

To learn more, please navigate to: http://ctdinstitute.org/.
Early Childhood Corner by Lakeshia Yancey - "Technology Today"

We are currently living in a world where we do not have to work as hard as we used to in order to obtain and convey information. As an adult think about how your life has changed from the days when you had to locate a payphone and then scrounge around for a quarter to call home, to now just verbally speaking the command “call home” in your car and your loved one is on the other end.

In addition to all of the great advancements in technology that make our day to day lives easier, some of the greatest improvements have been to tools that assist our children in their home and academic lives. We have come so far from simply offering Braille and large print books as accommodations. These days we are looking at many creative ideas that we can start using in a child’s early life. When we think about assistive technology in the early childhood classroom we may not be focusing on high tech digital devices. We are looking more into teaching functional skills that will assist with academic skills.

Check out some of the great ideas parents and teachers are using:

• Book tabs for fine motor development https://www.pinterest.com/pin/528680443726647755/
• Assistive technology iPad apps http://www.amsvans.com/blog/great-ipad-apps-for-special-needs-kids/
• Visual timers http://www.friendshipcircle.org/blog/2012/11/06/20-visual-timers-for-children-with-special-needs/
• Seatbelt guard https://www.pinterest.com/pin/129830401729888206/

Family Engagement Corner by Tina Norris - "Technology and Family Engagement"

Daily software companies are unveiling apps to simplify our lives through the use of technology. Anything we want to know can be googled at an instant. School administrators and teachers are utilizing technology to bridge gaps and strengthen family engagement through the use of technology. Creating weekly emails, daily tweets, texting, and other educational apps allow parents to be informed and engaged in their child’s education.

Research on family engagement has definitively shown that students do considerably better in school and life when schools and family partner for the success of the child. Schools can engage parents by offering training on the latest software. Technology can be used to boost communication and learning. Technology can help parents monitor their child’s school attendance and performance. Technology provides access to a wide range of learning resources that parents can use with their children at home.

While technology is ever growing, and has its place, it should never become a replacement for personal relationship building. Family engagement is the key component for the total success of our children.
PEATC Workshops and Events - September 2015

Friday, September 18, 2015 to Saturday, September 19, 2015 – 2015 PEATC Parent and Youth Empowerment Summit at the Hyatt Fairfax at Fair Lakes, 12777 Fair Lakes Circle, Fairfax, VA 22033. Opening Reception: Friday, 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm, Summit: Saturday, 8:00 am - 3:30 pm. REGISTRATION FULL.

Monday, September 28, 2015 - PEATC will be a presenter and exhibitor for "Dyslexia: Insights, Resources and Current Understandings", 9:00 am - 1:00 pm at The Hampton Inn, 1204 Berryville Ave, Winchester, VA 22601. REGISTRATION REQUIRED: http://aimva.org/support/training-support/dyslexia-regional-training.

Tuesday, September 29, 2015 - PEATC will be a presenter and exhibitor for "Dyslexia: Insights, Resources and Current Understandings", 9:00 am - 1:00 pm at The Hampton Inn, 380 Arbor Drive, Christiansburg, VA 24073. REGISTRATION REQUIRED: http://aimva.org/support/training-support/dyslexia-regional-training.

Wednesday, September 30, 2015 - PEATC will be a presenter and exhibitor for "Dyslexia: Insights, Resources and Current Understandings", 9:00 am - 1:00 pm at The Hilton Garden Inn, 1624 Richmond Road, Williamsburg, VA 23185. REGISTRATION REQUIRED: http://aimva.org/support/training-support/dyslexia-regional-training.