

Tech at TELI

As an organization serving children of all abilities for over 53 years, The Early Learning Institute's (TELI) therapists understand that sometimes finding the right piece of Assistive technology can make a world of difference in a child's development. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania defines an Assistive technology as any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. Because of its impact on the lives of children and adults with disabilities, Pennsylvania proclaimed November as Assistive Technology Awareness Month.

When TELI's Director of Early Intervention Services, Deborah Uram, thinks of technology for children with special needs, she thinks of assistive technology as any "means in which we can adapt toys or other types of equipment for children with delays or disabilities and give them an opportunity to successfully interact with typically developing children."

This can be something as simple as adding a switch to a game for a child who has physical limitations. A switch attaches directly to a toy and allows it to operate correctly by the simple touch of a button. This teaches children about cause and effect, which is important in the development of all children.

Assistive technology can be simple or complex. It can include specially designed spoons, cups, or plates for children with feeding issues. For children with sensory issues, special pressure vests or weighed vests can be used to help children self-calm and focus. For children who need just a little extra help in learning to walk, shoes can be adapted and orthotics may be used until a child is ready to walk on their own.

Beginning this July, TELI's Developmental therapists and Speech therapists began using NOOK Color™ devices and their applications with children enrolled in both the home-based Early Intervention Program and the center-based Social Butterflies Program. TELI's focus with the NOOK Color™ is to emphasize pre-literacy and



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the importance of reading to children. It encourages social interaction and can be used as a basic communication tool through its various applications. For example, a child who is not yet speaking can express their wants and needs through the touch of the screen. By touching the milk button, the child is telling his/her caregiver that they would like milk. "Our goal is to teach children how to communicate by showing them how powerful a word can be" says Uram.

The NOOK Color™ is also being used in TELI's Social Butterflies socialization groups for young toddlers. The children are treated to group story time with the NOOK Color™ and then are able to explore books on an individual basis with the assistance of Early Childhood teacher and Social Butterflies Coordinator Melanie Hathaway. "Parents and children are enjoying this piece of technology."

Sometimes there is apprehension by parents and caregivers that using Assistive technology will hold back a child's development. However, research shows that Assistive technology not only enhances a child's overall receptive language, but their IQ and vocabulary base as well. Uram says,

"You're supporting the child's developmental needs by giving them alternative ways to meet those developmental goals. When they don't need the support that Assistive technology offers, it usually fades out all by itself. Assistive technology allows children to fully participate in activities with their peers and nothing makes a child happier than being like everyone else."

8th Annual All Abilities Camp Fair

Saturday, February 4, 2012

10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

The Mall at Robinson
100 Robinson Centre Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15205

Exhibitors include:

- Camps for typical children and those with disabilities
- Inclusion friendly camps
- Full and half day programs
- School and preschool age camps
- Information regarding extended school year (ESY)



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www.autismconnectionofpa.org

The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center is looking for parents of children age 10-16 to participate in a research study on depression.

Parents with and without a history of depression, and children with no history of depression, may qualify.

The study involves 3 visits and 1 phone interview over 18 months.

Compensation provided.

For more information and to see if you qualify,

Call (412) 624-7991



> For more information about how The Early Learning Institute (TELI) is using Assistive technology, visit www.telipa.org or call (412) 922-8322.