
DNAATWORK' MAGAZINE

Opinion: Growing up with Apps, an Addiction



A girl playing Pac Man, photo courtesy by Lars Frantzen.

It is just another regular day after school and my 8-year-old brother, Cody has started his quest of collecting coins and rewards, just in the nick of time before getting caught by

our Mother, Leticia. Despite this, discipline is an everyday routine, and she occasionally reminds Cody to complete his chores and homework, before playing video games (1). In fact, Cody is not the only child that has had these difficulties. Families and friends have spoken about these issues. My family, of course, has become conscious of the effects of gaming.

To begin with, early in Cody's childhood at the age of 2, he was introduced to his first iPad. As the fourteen-year-old babysitter, it was my intentions to introduce puzzle and strategy types of games for his development. Although there were not many education applications at the time, they began to grow throughout the years.



Photos of elementary students using iPads at school to do amazing projects. Photo taken by Lexie Flickinger.

At three years of old, Cody fascinated our family. He spoke and read Spanish; he vacuumed vocabulary and with the precision he provided excellent reasoning to his comments and intuition into different opinions.

At this age, he was introduced to the computer, where he played Minecraft and picked up his second language, English all within a year.

Family and friends asked my Mother all the time, what was her secret? That, when compared to other children around his age, his intelligence was remarkable. Without hesitations, it was explained. It was not long before our families began to purchase tablets for their children. It seemed that each Christmas party, more children played on mobile devices.

My intermediate family, as a result, embraced the technological revolutionary wave. With the pricing of mobile devices decreasing and the market of educational applications increasing, purchasing mobile devices was an effortless advantage.

At the next intermediate family gathering, mixed opinions about children on mobile devices began to emerge. My uncle, Moises Rodriguez mentioned, in one of our intermediate family dinners that his 4-year-old and 8-year-old daughters are known to stay up all night, if not watched carefully (2). In a different perspective, my 14-year-old cousin Tyler voiced his opinion, which apps are not just fun, but they are addicting (3). The frustration of playing too many games was a new problem, even at home with Cody. It seemed that his daily routines changed. Instead of following Mom's rules, doing homework first — Mom had to reinforce these rules occasionally.

At that instant, applications intents become more transparent of how they truly function. The learning based games, they aided in a child's education. The other games that were for entertainment, they affected kids in different forms. Just to put it, these two types of apps either increase the opportunity of learning or pose health problems in children.

Some apps have risks for causing health related problems. After all, Application coders' intents are to make their games as addicting as the gambling games found in casinos, according to In Dr. Young from the Psychiatric Times (4). In an article for kids in KidsHealth Organization, Mary L. Gavin, MD describes that extreme gaming has the potential of health problems that include less



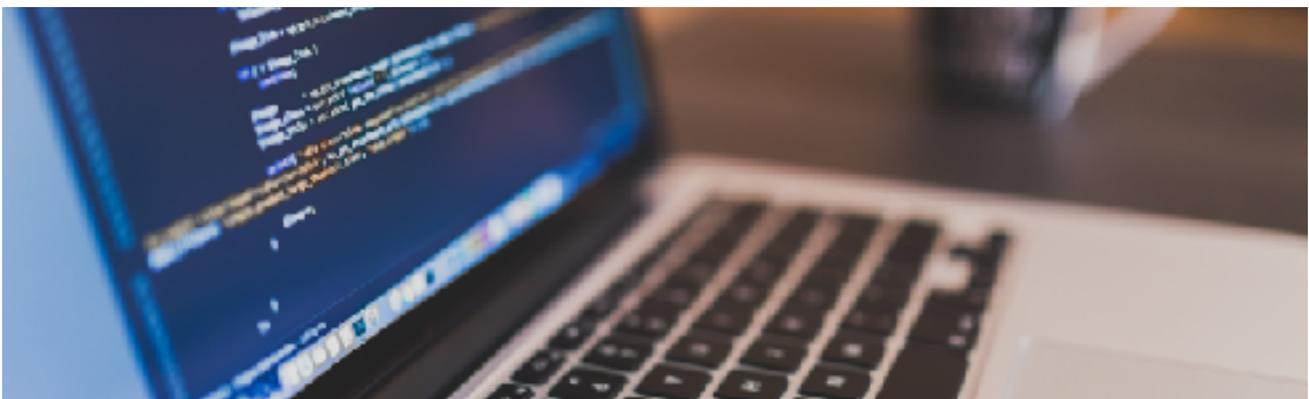
Photos of elementary students using iPads at school to do amazing projects. Photo taken by Lexie Flickinger.

exercise and linking violent based games to behavioral problems (5). The games that are chosen for children to play may indirectly affect children.

The other Apps as mentioned, they have the potential to increase the opportunity of learning for all children. In *Using Math Apps for Improving Student Learning*, a small pilot study demonstrates improvement of teaching mathematics (6). In Australia, different education researchers and application developers that have worked together to create an App that accelerates reading within one week, according to Australian

Broadcasting Commission. (7). These examples are just a few, and they demonstrate the potential use of learning-based apps in general. That with the work of educational researchers and developers, these Apps differ from those that are entertainment based.

What is certain — has been the recognition and distinction of these different types of applications within our family. With Cody growing, his use of his iPad becomes less concerning. We also have simple discourse and education for what games to look for. This in return provides Cody with an environment to learn and eventually, fully understand the intents of these games.



Photos of MacBook with JavaScript. Source from negativespace.co

When Cody began schooling this year, we were given a new opportunity of reducing his time on computers at home. However, once more we decided to allow the use of these devices. Of course, by becoming conscious of how these technologies affect his development. Are we worried? With educational development, yes. With physical or mental health, no. In the Utah's education

legislation, less public funding is driven to adapt a tech program, according to Morgan Jacobsen and that would increase the technology use within the classroom (8). It seems that technology in the classroom has improved for qualifying schools, but not for all schools. This leaves us with little sense to remove these devices, for now. These devices provide an environment that Cody uses to learn and new responsibilities—with the help of us, his family.

This school year, Cody was introduced to a new coding app. It was created by Apple, called Swift Playgrounds. After a few days, he was learning a new computing language. He now knows what variables and functions are. With his high grades, I find myself having fewer reasons to gift him with a new desktop computer for this Christmas.

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