

## **Is it me or you? : The use of popular media apps to enhance communication experiences and social-emotional relationships of children with complex communication needs.**

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Children with complex disabilities as for example children with motor disabilities or children diagnosed on the Autistic Spectrum are challenged in communicating what they feel, think or believe. In the last years specialized applications for building communication boards on the iPad have been developed to allow these children to express themselves and interact in broader communication circuits. Yet, even though they use these specific apps on a daily basis, the focus of teachers, parents and therapists is frequently on communicating basic personal needs related to their daily schedule (Binger and Light, 2006). As a result, from a very young age these children do not enjoy mutually rewarding social communication and they develop throughout their lifespan a passive attitude in social contexts. Interventions to promote social-emotional growth in young children need to involve parents, caregivers, and/or peers in social contexts in a natural, enjoyable way (Case-Smith, Clark and Schlabach, 2013).

In this presentation the use of popular apps for making movies, stories and photo collages on mobile devices will illustrate how it is possible to enhance the “emotional presence” of the child with complex communication needs in social contexts by “mirroring” his experiences and interactions with others through pictures and movies. In addition, apps will be explored to offer support of interactions by prompting those that relate to social and emotional learning. It will be demonstrated that mediation of children’s interaction within natural contexts can be reinforced by using those simple apps and the experience of taking pictures together provides implicit support by embedding turn-taking and cooperation within a social setting. Various case studies will be presented to demonstrate the use of applications that encourage “the embodiment” of the child, Theory of Mind (TOM) development, and participation in social media experiences in order to shed a light on how to use simple media opportunities to enhance the child's engagement and well-being in social interactions (Brady, Thiemann-Bourque, Fleming and Matthews, 2013; Miller, 2014). It will be proposed that the potential of using apps is not just in their content but also in how they can be used in various contexts to augment and facilitate the emotional and social interactions of children with complex disabilities.

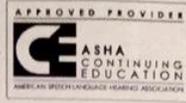
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Date