

Christine's Chronicles: Advocating for Assistive Technology

Christine describes her quest for assistive technology apps for iPads and tablet PCs that can be customized for her son's individual needs.



Christine and Luke

It's been over a year now that I have been advocating for my son to get a new assistive technology device that he will use as his primary means of communication. With tight budgets and limited resources, it has been a struggle. As my frustrations grew, I decided I had to do something more than continually badger school personnel. With a price tag of \$8k, I just couldn't cough up the cash myself. My husband and I had already spent over \$5k on various devices for Luke in the past and enough was enough. Something had to change. And if the school system was going to continue to drag its feet, then I decided I would step in and make a device for Luke myself.

Not that this is a new idea exactly – speech therapists and families have always been resourceful creating fantastic paper communication systems made from software like BoardMaker, or simply snapping photos around the house. But technology is always changing and the options increasing. With tablets like the iPad at a much more reasonable price point compared to the traditional communication devices, suddenly a new world has opened up for augmentative and assistive communication. There are well over 50 applications already and more coming out every day to help those without a voice communicate. And many of those have been written by parents trying to find a better solution for their children.

So after doing some research on the current apps available, and deciding that even the most advanced apps out there, like the Proloquo2Go, wasn't enough for my son, I bought a book on writing apps. And a few months later, I'm happy to report I've got something working. I still have a ways to go, but I'm thrilled at my new found ability to be able to tailor make a device for my son at a level even the most customizable device couldn't support.

I can see a change coming for therapists and parents who will spend less time printing pages and laminating pictures, and spend more time customizing or writing their own apps. It truly is an exciting time for us.

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