

New Speech Evaluation Tool

By Amy Saschuk and Michael Burke

One of the newest evaluation tools that speech therapists are using, is the Apple iPad, including Tammy Taylor-Mastropietro, MS, CCC-SLP. Taylor-Mastropietro has been working with both Pathways and the Sollar Wellness Center's Day Program as a speech consultant since this past November. She is also the owner of the Speech Language Pathology Center in Hanson, MA.

Not only is the iPad the newest rage on the technological market, it is a phenomenal tool being used to help people communicate. Tammy has been working with Joshua Hood, a participant at the Sollar Wellness Center's Day Program.

Before the iPad was introduced to the public, Tammy was using a smaller version called the iTouch for communication. She then worked with the Hingham Apple store to set up specifications for the device so it could be used for augmentative and alternative communication. Josh's iPad was set up and custom tailored for his specific needs and interests.

When asked about the iPad Josh responded by navigating to the feelings categories, then used the touch screen to say "I feel happy" while using the verbal approximation.

Using the "Proloquo2go" application, Tammy was able to program photos of Josh's family, friends, and peers, as well as photos and information about some of his favorite things (including World War movies). Along with the photos, there are folders within the program that allow people to communicate their thoughts and feelings, such as "I want" or "I need". A full keyboard can be used to type out words that aren't stored in the program. Through the use of the iPad, Josh has been able to communicate with his peers with ease. He enjoys discussing things such as his routines as well as things he does at home. Having a point of reference has increased Josh's communication exchanges. Staff working with Josh are thrilled with the opportunities that have opened up for him.

Speaking to the Hanson Express, Tammy said. "In this format (the use of the iPad) it's a communication system for people who may suffer from autism, apraxia of speech (trouble communicating), traumatic brain injury, stroke or oral motor issues."

Tammy has also been using the iPad in her work with the individuals in Pathways, where staff are witnessing a whole new world of possibilities open up to the individuals.

"It is absolutely amazing", said Jenna Mastro, Paraprofessional at Pathways. "Just seeing Tammy work with Carlos and Bobby, and how well they responded to the programs she was using with them—it was just amazing seeing their faces light up. I wish we could have one for each of our programming rooms here, it would be more than worth it."

There are many different approaches Tammy can use with the iPad when she is evaluating the individuals, including the use of visual schemes, which seem to be appropriate when working with autistic individuals. With the iPad, individuals could also use an application for sign language with a full video translator.

The iPad generally retails for \$599 for the 32G model and \$699 for the 64G model, the applications (programs) are an additional cost.