

Newsletter for January 2012

News from Chatty Corner, by Stacey Saveth, M.A., C.C.C.

In the days of technology running our lives it seems like verbal face-to-face communication/conversation is a dying "art." To keep our "digital natives" interested and stimulated more and more time is spent using technology as a teaching tool. Research shows that this tech-savvy generation is fast losing its ability to engage effectively and appropriately in face-to-face communication. Those younger children just growing up may not be having the opportunity to learn this skill as their face-to-face communication time is limited by constant video gaming.

Facial expression and gestures are becoming a foreign language. The important element of emotional connection through face-to-face communication is being usurped by emoticons on screen. The spoken word is being replaced by cute icons.

Students in school get plenty of screen time. At home most get more than advisable. What many are not getting enough of at home is face-to-face communication time. In our busy lives this is one critical element we often neglect because we run out of time. As a speech-language specialist and a communication "expert", I feel a growing sense of urgency to promote and defend non-digital face-to-face interaction as the highest and most "endangered" form of communication. Technology is in many ways, the easy way out, like television was for the older generation.

My professional suggestion to all is to try (if not daily, then as often as possible) to plan family conversations. Encourage your children to share what is going on in his/her life. A favorite game I always enjoyed was worst/best. Have each family member talk about the worst thing that happened during the day and then end with the best thing that happened during the day. Encourage active listening and asking questions. Help prevent the extinction of verbal communication as we know it today.