

## Gill's Notebook

### A Screen Is No Substitute for You

Since my area of expertise is children and movement, I'm sure you can guess where I stand on the subject of television, video, computer screens, smartphones, tablets, and so on for young children. Instinctively, anything that takes children away from active play doesn't sit right with me. But in fact, research has shown that screen time negatively affects natural development processes in many ways. One in particular is language and communication development.

### Is All Language Stimulation Good Stimulation?

Common sense tells us that any type of language stimulation must be good for learning. But in fact, research shows that exposure to language from television screens and audio tracks does *not* enhance a young child's ability to learn language during the critical period of development from six to eight months.<sup>23</sup>

Children learn language mainly through personal, human interaction.

The research goes on to say that children learn language mainly through personal, *human* interaction. Chances are, you're doing exactly what children need every day when you talk, laugh, sing, whisper, and giggle together—dialogue in real time vs. the monologue of digital/virtual experiences. Put simply, when it comes to language, there is no substitute for you!

### Distractions Interrupt Concentration

Once again, common sense might argue that while screen time isn't an effective teacher of language skills, it doesn't really do any harm, so it's no big deal. Right? Actually, wrong. Other researchers have found that lights and sounds coming from television and video programs can *distract* children, preventing them from delving deeply into play, which in turn may inhibit their ability to concentrate.<sup>24</sup>

Concentration means shutting out distractions. Many adults can do this even with noise all around them. But we can't expect the same of young children. They simply don't have the experience to filter out unimportant visual or auditory "pollution" in their environment.

Further, when you're distracted, it's hard to stay on task, no matter how old you are. Frustration can set in and may even make you want to quit

Continued →