Quality ChildCare
For Registered Home-Based Providers

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ **Provide a language-rich environment**
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care
Provide a Language-rich Environment

Language Development in the Media Age

How many times do you check your smartphone, watch TV, or send a text message or email? It's no doubt that technology has become an essential part of each day. We are living in an age of mass media exposure, when children and adults are both spending more time looking at video screens and less time talking to one another. This is concerning since the more that parents and providers talk to children, the faster children's vocabularies grow and the higher the children's IQ test scores are at age three and later. A 2013 study commissioned by Common Sense Media showed that 38 percent of infants younger than age two use mobile devices like smartphones. For several years, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has discouraged any amount of screen media and screen time for children ages two or younger and recommended no more than one to two hours of total screen time per day for children older than two. In May 2015, the AAP convened a Media Research Symposium to re-examine their policy, in light of young children's interest in and easy access to technology tools. Attendees discussed the existing evidence about how media affects children's health and well-being. While the AAP has not yet changed its recommendations, they published some suggestions for responsible use of technology which will be highlighted in this issue.

It's important for providers to establish a policy about their technology use during child care hours and share that policy with the families in the program. For example, you may communicate with families daily by documenting their child's progress and routines through email and text messages. In this newsletter, we will share tips on how you can use technology in a way that promotes children's learning, in particular to build their language development, using technology intentionally as a tool for learning within the context of activities.

Media Use that Supports Language Development

Co-engagement with Infants. Adult participation with children during media use encourages social interactions and learning. Your questions and discussions are essential for the children's understanding. Talking to babies doesn't just promote language development, it promotes brain development. Every time a parent or caregiver has a positive, engaging verbal interaction with a baby – whether it's talking, singing, or reading – neural connections are strengthened within the baby's rapidly growing brain. Very young children learn best by relating to real people, moving around, and interacting with their surroundings. A child is more likely to engage in higher level interactive play – exploring, experimenting, and interacting and learning with others, when there are no electronic media distractions (TV, tablets, etc.). However, if you choose to introduce electronics to the child, here are some activities that integrate technology while promoting the infant's language development.

- Reading an e-book – When reading together, read with expression, ask questions, and talk about what you are seeing. Keep in mind that e-books should be used only as a supplement to actual printed books; infants need the experience of holding a book and turning the pages.

- Viewing digital photos – Show children photos of people and/or objects that are familiar to them. As you view them together, talk about the photos. For example, describe the person, say who it is, how the child knows him/her, and recount what is happening in the photo.

Content Matters with Toddlers. The quality of content is more important than the amount of time spent with media. It may be common to see toddlers push buttons and flip switches, and respond to bright lights and noises. With all the colors, movement, and sounds of technology, toddlers are drawn to TV, tablets, or smartphones. However, to use technology tools effectively with toddlers, integrate it within the context of conversation and interactions with an adult rather than allowing them to passively watch TV or videos or play mindless games on a tablet or smartphone. The following is one way to integrate technology with toddlers' language learning.

- Connect screen time with play time and language learning. For example, take photos of premade block towers on a tablet and use descriptive words to talk about how they are made. Have conversations with the children related to the towers. Then bring out blocks and have the children make their own towers and describe what they've made.

Technology as a Tool for Preschoolers. Developmentally appropriate media can be a beneficial learning tool for children over age two. Digital media can be used to build self-control and problem-solving skills, and improve children's ability to follow directions when used with intention and in conjunction with other traditional tools and materials. However, electronic media use should not replace activities such as creative play, real-life exploration, physical activity, outdoor experiences, conversation, and social interactions which are all important for children's development. If you choose to introduce electronic media to the children, it's important to be an active participant with their learning. Try the following strategy for integrating language learning with preschoolers' technology activities:

- Digital cameras – Encourage children to take digital photos to document their learning interests, favorite books, activities, and special friends. Use their photos to have them create journals and storybooks. Ask them to tell you their stories so you can enter the captions. You can also help them capture photos of their artwork or video their dramatic play to replay for them or their parents.
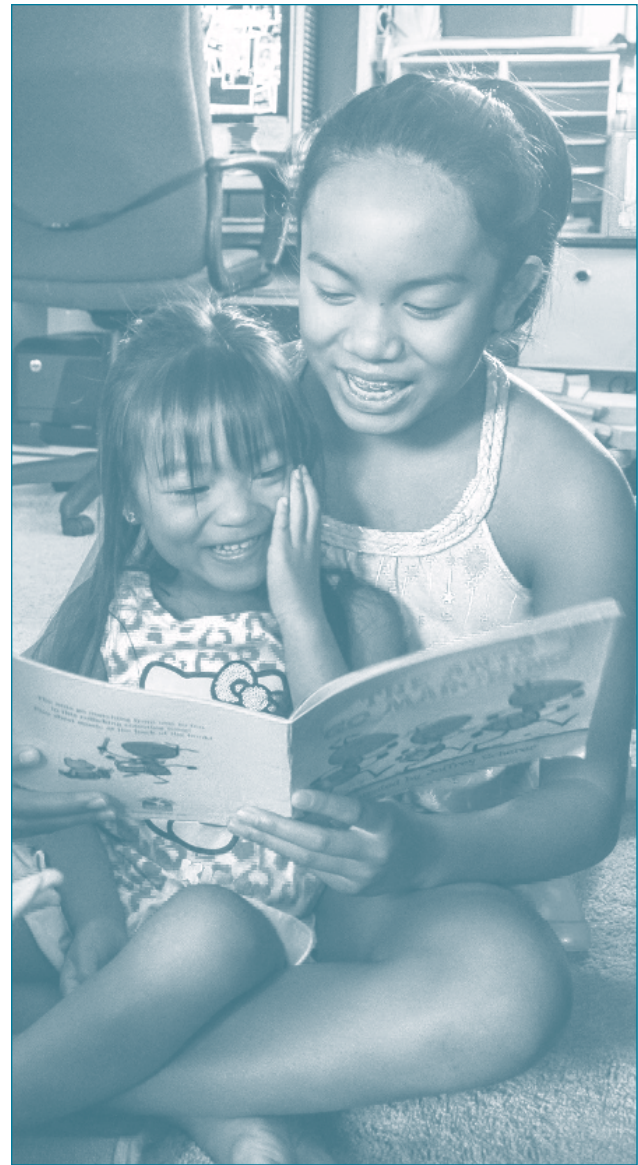
Other Suggestions for Responsible Media Use in Child Care

- **Playtime is important.** Unstructured playtime stimulates creativity. Prioritize daily "unplugged" playtime (playtime with no electronic devices), especially for the very young.

- **Create tech-free zones.** Mealtime and naptime, with no technology devices, encourages healthier eating and sleeping habits.

- **Modeling is critical.** Limit your own media use when children are around.

Citations:

Brown, A., Flinn, S., Jana, L., Hill, D. Shifrin, D. (2015). *Growing up digital: Media research symposium.* American Academy of Pediatrics. [Retrieved on-line 10/05/15 https://www.aap.org/en-us/documents/digital_media_symposium_proceedings.pdf]

Colker, L. (2014) The word gap: the early years make the difference. *Teaching Young Children.* Vol. 7, No. 3. [retrieved on-line 12/07/15 http://www.naeyc.org/tyc/article/the-word-gap]

Shankar, M. (June 25, 2014). *Empowering Our Children by Bridging the Word Gap.* Blog from the White House Senior Advisor for the Social and Behavioral Sciences at the Office of Science and Technology Policy. [Retrieved on-line 12/07/15 https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/06/25/empowering-our-children-bridging-word-gap]

Suskind, D. (2013). *Thirty Million Words Initiative*. University of Chicago. [Retrieved online 12/07/15 http://thirtymillionwords.org/]

Reflection Sheet and Award Book

- To receive the award book for this month, fill out your caregiver's reflection sheet and return it to the Learning to Grow Program in the postage paid envelope by the deadline posted.

- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.

- Update your address or contact information if any changes have taken place.

REMINDER: Registered QCC participants can use their participation in the program to fulfill the relicensing requirement of "increased knowledge." Ask your DHS Licensing Social Worker about the requirements today.

DID YOU KNOW?

Any time that you are submitting more than one reflection sheet at the same time, feel free to enclose them in a single envelope. It will save postage costs for our funder and facilitate efficient data entry when they arrive.

Join us on Facebook!
University of Hawaii Learning to Grow
www.facebook.com/learningtogrowhawaii/