Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Apps

Tips and Recommendations
With the easy availability of apps for communication, many families are looking to go out and purchase their own systems for their child. If you are interested in doing this, here are some tips to keep in mind:

1. Did you know that the Assistive Devices Program (ADP) provides 75 per cent of the cost of an AAC device if it is prescribed through an ADP Authorizer? To find an authorizer in your area go to ADP's website (https://www.ontario.ca/page/communication-aids), check the ADP clinic list (http://web.cepp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/AAC-Clinic-Mandates-2017.pdf) or talk to your child's Speech Language Pathologist for a referral. In Windsor, there is an augmentative communication clinic at the John McGivney Children's Centre. Please note that ADP does not reimburse for systems already purchased.

2. If you would like to purchase a system on your own:
   a. You will want to make sure that the app or system that you select is able to be easily programmed.
   b. It should have vocabulary that your child needs today as well as access to vocabulary that will help your child develop better language and communication skills in the future.
   c. Vocabulary should be arranged so that it makes sense and is easy to locate on the screen and within the system.
   d. It should support a good motor plan (i.e. it keeps vocabulary in the same location on every page).
   e. You should also look for an app that offers good support for programming, trouble shooting and ideas on teaching the system. Please note that if you buy your own system it will be your responsibility to add vocabulary and support the device. If you get your communication system through an ADP authorizer, they will help you with the above.
   f. Apps and systems should be developed in consultation with AAC specialists, Speech Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Educational workers and or researchers.
   g. The following are some of apps that meet these criteria:
      i. LAMP – Words for Life
      ii. TouchChat
      iii. Proloquo2Go
      iv. Speak for Yourself
      v. Snap + Core First
      vi. The Grid
      vii. Go Talk
3. Check out the following websites for more information on how to select an AAC app. These are just a few of the links that are available:
   a. https://www.smilestherapy.com/5-things-to-think-about-when-choosing-an-aac-app/
   b. https://praacticalaac.org/video/video-of-the-week-choosing-the-right-aac-app/

4. Once you have a system you will want to safeguard it.
    a. Make sure that it is in a protective case (ideally with a stand and handle or strap for ease of transporting).
    b. Make sure that it is labelled with either your name or your child's name with a contact number readily available in case it gets lost or stolen (you could put this on the home screen or wallpaper).
    c. Try not to put any games, videos or curriculum related apps on the child's device that has a communication app. Games and videos will compete with your child's use of the system for communication. Communication is already difficult and takes time and concentration, therefore avoiding the addition of games and videos will limit distraction.
    d. When you send the communication device with your child, make sure that it is fully charged and that the charger is available.
5. Please keep in mind that the app or the system is just another tool. To see growth in language and communication, this needs to be supported through modelling, shared experiences and opportunities. Communication develops best between two people in natural and fun environments.