

App for children with severe, non-verbal autism available on Android

February 19 2016

SPEAKall!, a tablet application developed at Purdue University that facilitates communication and language development for children and families affected by severe, non-verbal autism, is now available on android tablets.

The app helps children communicate by using photos and graphic symbols that represent what a child wishes to say and helps the child construct sentences. The app works by speaking the word or sentence, which allows a child to communicate a thought and encourages natural speech and language production. Before now the app was only available through iOS compatible tablets.

SPEAKall! as well as SPEAKmore!, a second app designed for children who have advanced beyond the initial app and now need to expand on vocabulary and complexity of messages, are being commercialized by SPEAK MODalities, a company in the Purdue Startup Class of 2014. The company was co-founded by Oliver Wendt, a Purdue University assistant professor of speech, language, and hearing sciences and educational studies; Michael Zentner, an Information Technology at Purdue senior research scientist who assists faculty with research projects through the Purdue Foundry; and Diana Hancock, Purdue ITaP commercialization director.

Wendt was awarded the "2015 Outstanding Research of the Year" award by the Autism Society. The company received the 2015 Best of Education Tech Mira Award from the Indiana TechPoint initiative,

placed second in the 2015 Purdue InnovateHER competition and won the International 2014 GAIN-TEN Business Pitch Challenge, an award for startups that have the potential to make an impact on both sides of the Atlantic. In 2013, the SPEAKall! application was recognized with the Focus Award for outstanding contribution to the furthering of Purdue's commitment to disability accessibility.

Wendt said the company has recently received more requests for an Android version of SPEAKall!, which prompted the company to enter the Android market.

"Requests for an Android version of our app have been coming in from various market segments including classrooms, speech-language clinics and individual users," he said. "With the Android market continually growing, we wanted to be able to provide a technology that works with both major types of devices so that Android users also could benefit from our award-winning technology."

Jennifer Kogan, a speech-language pathologist at Bright Beginnings Learning Center in New Jersey, said having an [android](#) compatible SPEAKall! app would significantly help her students.

"I reached out to SPEAK MODalities after learning about their SPEAKall! app because I work with several students who are minimally verbal and wanted to know if an Android compatible version was in the works," she said. "There are very limited, well-made communication applications for Android devices and being able to use SPEAKall! would make a great difference in my students who are in need of augmentative and alternative communication."

Zentner, company CEO, said that launching the Android version will make the [app](#) more accessible for not only schools but caretakers and clinicians as well.

"Many school districts have policies to purchase Android-based tablets and with a more flexible financial ecosystem of the Google play store, it's becoming a more popular choice," he said. "It also seems to be a more cost-efficient solution for caretakers and clinicians as Android devices tend to be more affordable than iOS counterparts."

More information: The app can be downloaded via the Google Play store or at play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.flora.speakall&hl=en

Provided by Purdue University

Citation: App for children with severe, non-verbal autism available on Android (2016, February 19) retrieved 21 September 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-02-app-children-severe-non-verbal-autism.html>

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