

Living in the digital age

Putting the 'fun' in fundamentals with educational entertainment



As the summer comes to an end, it will be tough to pry the kids away from the gadgets that have kept them company throughout the holidays. But educators in the UAE say harnessing the power of tech and edutainment materials, for more effective learning, is the future of education.

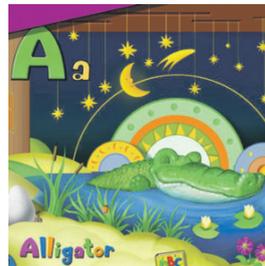
PRE-SCHOOL PLAY

Monica Valrani, CEO of Ladybird Nursery & Early Learning Centre, says research has shown that technology integrated into a curriculum for early childhood education can enhance learning.

"We have successfully used iPads and Smart Boards at preschool age in our nurseries and believe products are both appealing and appropriate at that age," Valrani says. "We believe the right software offers a perfect combination of entertainment and education regardless of a child's incli-

nation towards technology. Valrani makes it clear however, that while tech can enhance learning, gadgets should not be a substitute for classroom-style learning, which is important for getting kids ready for school.

One app she suggests for the little learners are Goodnight ABC (pictured inset left) that teaches alphabet, numbers and colours through interactive play and animation. MoMa Art Labs also brings out the artists in kids with activities like creating sound composition and poems inspired by the Museum of Modern Art pieces.



THE RIGHT MOVES

Principal Graham Beale of The Arcadia Preparatory School says parents must ensure children get valuable edutainment materials: "Sifting through what is appropriate and educationally beneficial can be a challenging proposition for parents.

"Parents should look carefully at reviews

on apps and sites, ahead of downloading, subscribing or providing access for their children. Review sites will often include feedback from a parental perspective with practical advice on what to look for in edutainment options for children."

He suggests interactive sites like pobble.com, a site that encourages children to write and provides a showcase for their creativity. And The Eric Carle Museum, a site dedicated to the author of classic children's book, The Hungry Caterpillar. glaiza@7days.ae

