



## **The Importance of Early & Special Needs Education – a Chance for Technology**

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If you talk to teachers nowadays and ask them how they perceive their students, they will – most likely – tell you that the level of children's development has decreased. That the number of students and the diversification of the class makes the teaching process very hard, almost impossible. Also the number of children with disorders seems to be growing and there are more and more children classified as having Special Needs. The recent discussion over the Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) major review of special educational needs and disability arrangements revealed that there is a big problem not only with the classification but also with the definition of Special Needs. But there is one common voice coming out of all that commotion: Special Needs NEED special attention.

So what seems to be wrong?

We are educating our children too late or not adequately and sufficiently enough. Children have an amazing potential and the earlier we start the bigger the potential. But I am not talking about teaching children to read and write when they are 2 years old. Quite the opposite – I am talking about an overall enhancement of all the developmental skills, adjusted to the pace of individual path of a particular child. The way eduSensus has been prepared.

The software – recently adapted to English speaking market - has been in use in Poland for almost 10 years and has been appraised by therapists, teachers and parents.

Originally developed for specialists' market of therapists, the product has proven to be an irreplaceable tool for early education and special needs' prevention.

Because Special Needs can be – in many cases – prevented if we start the education process early enough:

Children learn by watching, listening, babbling, imitating, analyzing, playing, repeating, trying and interacting with the world and manipulating it. They should be allowed to follow that path in their own pace but they should also be guided properly and provided with necessary tools. The child is ready to accumulate, associate and transform the inputs it receives from the world but it is also ready and prepared to receive help from adults. And the adults are naturally equipped to give that help. It's just that recently they do not have enough time or resources and so maybe this is the reason for the recent decline.

If the child's development is not stimulated then they may never have an opportunity to fully develop their potential. The adults need to guide the play, lead the path. A child left to their own devices will develop certain skills but they will not develop all areas and skills required later on in the next stage for example. Certain skills like hearing sensitivity, music, speech, motor coordination and audio coordination can be shaped in one way only – through hundreds of repetitions. Making all the areas of development attractive for a child and remembering about all of them is the base for a thorough and comprehensive development.

Learning through play needs to be coordinated, stimulated and guided.



Why do so many kids have problems at schools nowadays? Because some areas of their development have not been stimulated, have been neglected. The child was left to their own devices or there was not enough motor stimulation or simply because parents did not have time to read to a child on regular basis.

When we have certain knowledge we can ensure to do it right. Almost 20 years of experience has given Young Digital Planet the necessary knowledge. The secret lies in individualizing the educational process. One teacher cannot possibly teach each child separately when the class size exceeds 4-5 students. Unless...

Unless the teacher is provided with necessary tools. Tools that will allow a better recreation of reality. Multimedia and technology provide us a chance to bring the real world onto a student's desk. Alive and buzzing just as it would be if it was actually happening. And what's most important – that technology will allow the students to interact with that reality, not just watch it. Books are still and world around us is not. Movies get closer to reality but they can only be watched which – as it turns out – puts our brain cells in a “sleep mode”. And there is also another issue – the trust. Children need to believe in what they are taught. Just like they believe in the power of Google... Since computers and mobile devices is what they are surrounded with, that is what needs to be the carrier of the education as well. Guided by thoughtful but technologically savvy teachers. Internet seems to be an unquestioned source of truth so getting better filters will definitely be a task to deal with in the near future.

We have realized early on that Early Prevention is of utmost importance. The education of children between 0 and 6 years old lays down the basis for their future development. And by education I mean a fun but wise play. Learning that's engaging and does not kills the natural curiosity of children.

It is even more important now – since the civilization changed the way we interact with the world. The visual images are replacing all the other communication. And a child needs to interact with the world, not watch it. The need for reading is declining, the need for any kind of effort is diminishing, everything is at a hand's reach and the children are getting used to instant gratification. Even the need to walk and meet other people seems to be disappearing in some families. And there seems to be shortage of time as well. The parents' engagement has decreased and that has impacted the emotional development, which in turn impacts the memory and the ability to learn in general.

We can change that: every minute spent with a child on wise play is the best invested time of your life.

Designing eduSensus we wanted to cover all the areas of child development to make sure nothing is missing. The education process is fun and provides endless chance for repetition. The impact of the product goes well beyond the computer world as it contains hundreds of printable materials, videos with physical exercises to be followed, musical activities to be performed, recitation and even sign language to stimulate all areas of the brain. It is a different approach to education, one that takes the individuality of each child into account.