

# HEAD START ON TABLETS

LETTING youngsters use a tablet computer could give them a head start in the classroom.

According to new research, access to the devices at home is associated with the development of early literacy skills. But it's quality — not quantity — of screen time that appears to be the key.

The Griffith Institute for Educational Research study, involving preschoolers aged between three and five, found those with greater access to tablets at home had higher letter sound and name writing skills.

Researcher Dr Michelle Neumann said such skills were vital for so-called emergent literacy — a child's knowledge of reading and writing before they begin formal instruction.

"Letter sound knowledge is a critical emergent literacy skill to help children decode words," she said. "And name writing has a relationship with their future writing ability. They are key skills."

More than 100 children and their parents from 11 Queensland preschools were part of the study, published in the Australian Journal Of Education.

Almost half of children spent time on tablets at home — on average using them for 20 minutes a day.



Sage, 4, is one youngster benefiting from access to a tablet.  
Photo: Josie Hayden