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Growing Up Digital: Adults Rate the Educational Potential of New Media and 21st Century Skills

Common Sense Media & the Joan Ganz Cooney Center
Conducted by Insight Research
Presenters

Michael Levine
Executive Director
Joan Ganz Cooney Center

Jim Steyer
CEO and Founder
Common Sense Media

Amy Henry
Vice President
Insight Research Group
Background

• Who we are

• Why we commissioned the poll together

• Poll supported by the John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and PBS
Methodology

Insight conducted two online surveys:

- One nationally representative survey of parents
  - Recruited to the online survey via phone (i.e., via random digit dialing) to ensure a representative sample of US households, with a margin of error of +/- 3.5% overall and +/- 9.7% for the ethnic samples.

- One survey of teachers of grades 1 through 8
  - The surveys were fielded online with nationally representative samples, with a margin of error of +/- 6.7%

The parents survey was segmented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of child</th>
<th>6-7 years old</th>
<th>8-9 years old</th>
<th>10-11 years old</th>
<th>12-14 years old</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>n=177</td>
<td>n=172</td>
<td>n=165</td>
<td>n=181</td>
<td>n=695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents: African American</td>
<td>n=103</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents: Hispanic</td>
<td>n=105</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teachers survey was segmented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of child</th>
<th>Grades 1-3</th>
<th>Grades 4-6</th>
<th>Grades 7-8</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>n=79</td>
<td>n=104</td>
<td>n=81</td>
<td>n=264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3/4 of Parents Believe That Digital Media Is As Important As Traditional Skills

Nearly all parents agree that knowing how to use digital media is as essential as learning traditional skills.

Knowing how to use digital media is as beneficial for kids as learning traditional skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Parents Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total Parents Somewhat Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

75% Net Agree

Q17. The following statements relate to your feelings about your child’s use of digital media and how they are currently using it. To what degree do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?
And See Digital Media As Critical to Kids’ Success...

Digital media gives my child the skills he or she needs for life in the 21st century

- Total Parents Strongly Agree: 19
- Total Parents Somewhat Agree: 64
- Total Parents Strongly Disagree: 83% Net Agree

Digital media is a waste of my child’s time

- Total Parents Somewhat Disagree: 31
- Total Parents Strongly Disagree: 52
- Total Parents Somewhat Agree: 83% Net Disagree

Q17. The following statements relate to your feelings about your child’s use of digital media and how they are currently using it. To what degree do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?
Parents Recognize That Digital Media Platforms Offer Different Educational Benefits For Kids

Q19. For each of the following digital media platforms, please indicate if you think this device currently helps teach your child the following skills:

- Internet
- Video Games
- CD-Roms
- Computer Programs

The Internet is about exploring interests and learning about other parents of the new world.
CD-Roms tend to be focused on specific subjects, often math and science, which explains their high rating on this quality.
Video games promote critical thinking as well as hand-eye coordination.

Learning about different cultures and ideas: 76%
Using a computer: 74%
Curiosity and interest in learning: 62%
Math and science: 54%
Reading and writing: 54%
Problem solving: 50%
Creativity: 48%
Collaborative learning: 47%
Critical thinking: 47%
Hand-eye coordination: 46%
Self-expression: 46%
Gaining confidence: 46%
But, the Majority of Parents Are Skeptical About Digital Media’s Ability to Help Kids Learn Important 21st Century Skills

No digital media platform is perceived to teach kids how to successfully engage with others or teach social responsibility.

Further, two-thirds (64%) of parents disagree with the idea that because of digital media, kids can communicate better with people.

Q19. For each of the following digital media platforms, please indicate if you think this device currently helps teach your child the following skills:

Perceptions of digital media platforms “communication and collaboration benefits” are low among parents.
And They Discourage Social Networking Activities

Parents report discouraging their kids from using digital media, particularly their computers, for social networking purposes.

Activities Parents Discourage

- Posting content, joining social networking sites, and sending instant messages are the top three activities that parents report discouraging the most for their kids.

Q12b. In general, do you encourage, are neutral towards, or discourage this activity? [Discourage It] [Out of those who use each platform]
In Addition, Some Parents Remain Skeptical About How Educational Digital Media Really Is…

While they believe digital media can offer their kids educational benefits, 1/3 of all parents are not convinced of its true educational potential.

Q17. The following statements relate to your feelings about your child’s use of digital media and how they are currently using it. To what degree do you agree or disagree with each of these statements? [Net Agree]
...And Wind Up Trusting Their Own Instincts

Most parents rely on their own instincts, or familiar resources, to figure out if a digital media product has educational value for their kids.

How They Discover Digital Media's Educational Benefits

- Test it out myself: 61%
- My child's teacher or school: 53%
- Parents of other kids of similar ages: 45%
- News sources: 34%
- Organizations that provide media ratings and reviews: 29%
- Information from a specific product's website: 20%
- Advertisements: 6%

**Q23. What are the top three sources that you use to determine if a specific kind of digital media has educational value for your child?
In Sum...

Parents see digital media as providing a variety of educational benefits...

...but they feel it doesn't help as much with social/communication skills.

Therefore, they underestimate its full educational potential.
When It Comes to Digital Media, Parents and Teachers Are Generally On the Same Page

Q17/16. The following statements relate to your feelings about digital media and how they are currently using it. To what degree do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?

Knowing how to use digital media is as beneficial for kids as learning traditional skills

- Total Parents Strongly Agree: 32
- Total Teachers Strongly Agree: 22
- Total Parents Somewhat Agree: 48
- Total Teachers Somewhat Agree: 53

I’m skeptical about the educational claims that some digital media products make

- Total Parents Strongly Agree: 12
- Total Teachers Strongly Agree: 49
- Total Parents Somewhat Agree: 55
- Total Teachers Somewhat Agree: 61

80% 75% 61% 63%
But Teachers Are More Optimistic About Digital Media’s Ability to Teach Certain Skills Than Parents

Unlike parents, teachers give digital media more credit for the potential ways it could help kids with communicating, collaborating, and taking responsibility.

- They particularly feel that the Internet could be a good resource when it comes to helping kids learn to communicate with others.

Q18. For each of the digital media platforms below, please indicate if you think this device helps teach your students the following skills.
Teachers see the Internet, computer programs, and CD-Roms as having more educational potential than other forms of digital media, likely because they require kids to use their reading and writing skills.

- More than half of teachers see MP3 players as entertainment devices (54%) and feel they have no place in school (69%).
- Similarly, 85% of teachers see cell phones as distractions, with 64% agreeing they have no place in school.

A Lot of Potential

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Digital Media</th>
<th>Potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Internet</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer programs</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD-Roms</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video games</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP3 players or mobile music devices</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell phones</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q19. How much potential do you feel the following kinds of digital media have as educational tools? [A lot of Potential]
In Sum…

Teachers, like parents, recognize digital media’s potential for helping teach kids valuable skills.

They are more optimistic of its educational benefits, especially when it comes to social/communication skills.

But, they don’t think that certain platforms (i.e. MP3 players and cell phones) have much potential as educational tools.
Recommendations

• **Policy-makers should support media education** and the integration of **digital media into classrooms**, a nationally consolidated effort to fund **research** on the learning potential of digital media, **professional development** for teachers as well as a **public awareness campaign** for parents.

• In addition, policy-makers in both the public and private sector should create **evidentiary standards** to help make sense of products marketed as “educational.”

• **A national public awareness effort should be mounted to help parents** understand that the full range of 21st century skills goes far beyond the traditional “3 R’s.”
Recommendations, continued

• Research on the added value of digital media to teach both traditional and 21st century skills needs to be conducted. We also need to look at the critical role adults can play in guiding learning for students who are at academic and social risk.

• The technology industry should create educational products for digital media platforms— including the Internet, video games, and cell phones— that help elementary and middle school age children gain important 21st century skills.

• Schools should integrate digital media into classrooms in order to engage and educate students as well as help them acquire skills that allow them to create, collaborate, and communicate. Training on how to maximize the use of educational technology must be offered to teachers.
Where You Can Find More Information

www.commonsensemedia.org

www.joanganzcooneycenter.org