Dear Colleagues:

Happy holidays from all of us at the Joan Ganz Cooney Center! We have had a productive and busy fall, and wanted to share some highlights from the past few months. We're proud to announce our first resource for parents is now available in the iBook Store. We've also released the full report detailing the results of our national survey of teachers who use digital games in the classroom, and have launched the National STEM Video Game Challenge. And we have some more reports that we’re preparing for the New Year. Be sure to check out our blog and follow us on Facebook and Twitter for more updates!

Families & Media

Family Time with Apps: Now Available in the iBook Store!

We know that the reality of modern life means that kids are spending more time on devices than ever before. Our new guide, Family Time with Apps: A Guide to Using Apps with Your Kids, provides tips on how apps can be a part of family learning, communication, and connecting to one another. The book is based on research that the Cooney Center's Families and Media Consortium has underway and features comic strips depicting eight scenarios of family life that can be enjoyed by parents and children together, as well as resources to help parents find the kinds of high-quality apps that help transform screen time into family time.

The guide is currently available as a free download from the iBook Store, and is best viewed on an iPad or Mac desktop with iBooks and the latest OS.

Learn more about Family Time with Apps »
Download from the iBook Store: itunes.com/familytimewithapps »

Coming Soon: A Focus on Hispanic-Latino Families and Media Use

Next month, the Cooney Center and members of the Aprendiendo Juntos Council (AJC) will begin releasing a series of studies that take a closer look at the way Hispanic-Latino families engage with media. Aprendiendo en casa, by June Lee and Brigid Barron, zeroes in on data about Hispanic-Latino families collected during our national survey of parents on educational media use. Digital Media Use and Latino Families, by Bruce Fuller, José Ramón Lizárraga, and James Gray, takes a close look at the ways families adopt and use digital media and offers recommendations for producers of digital media, those hoping to engage Latino families, along with the growing range of nonprofits, schools and funders that hold faith in digital technologies. Also forthcoming is a policy brief by Vikki Katz and Michael Levine that analyzes the impact of digital equity programs such as the public-private partnership Connect 2 Compete that is bringing affordable high speed broadband and devices to low-income communities.

Learn more about the Aprendiendo Juntos Council »

Games & Learning

Busting Barriers, or Just Dabbling?

The idea that games can be fun and educational is starting to take hold in the educational community. That these fun learning experiences can come in the educational adaptations of commercial games like Minecraft and Sim City or research-based entries like iCivics, rather than "skill and drill" games is icing on the cake for students and teachers. Our recent report, Level Up Learning, by Lori M. Takeuchi and Sarah Vaala, reveals the results of a survey of nearly 700 K–8 teachers about their use of digital games in the classroom. What kinds of games are they using? What are their goals? What kinds of outcomes are they observing among their students? Download the full report for an in-depth analysis of how teachers are using games in the classroom.
The 4th National STEM Video Game Challenge is Underway

We are thrilled that the National STEM Video Game Challenge is open for its fourth year! The Challenge, presented with our partners at the Smithsonian and E-Line Media, aims to motivate interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) learning among youth by tapping into their natural passions for playing and making video games. The competition represents an ongoing partnership with founding sponsor the Entertainment Software Association. We are also so pleased to have generous support of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the Grable Foundation, AARP, and Mentor Up.

This year’s Challenge is open to U.S. students in grades 5–12. Students can enter as individuals, or as teams of up to four students. Check the stemchallenge.org website for more information on platforms and prizes, as well as game design workshops that will take place in approximately 20 cities. The website also features game development tools, resources on game design and STEM skills for students and mentors, and information on STEM Challenge events.

Please help us spread the word among all the talented students you know. We’re looking forward to making this the best National STEM Video Game Challenge ever!

Learn more at stemchallenge.org »

Literacy by 10

Seeding Reading: Investing in Children’s Literacy in a Digital Age

Today’s children are surrounded by digital media of all kinds. How will they ever learn to read?

Our Seeding Reading project, a partnership with New America, continues to uncover some of the most innovative early education and parenting initiatives that are harnessing new technologies around the country. We have been publishing a series of blog posts that offer a preview of our in-depth analysis of the marketplace of digital “reading” products in the iTunes, Google Play, and Amazon app stores, and highlighting new research that may illuminate how communications technologies and digital media are affecting the learning of reading, the act of reading, and the reading brain, in both good ways and bad.

- At the White House: Mapping Innovations to Bridge the Word Gap
- Unlikely Ally: How ‘Orange is the New Black’ is Promoting Early Literacy
- What’s in Store Today: A Snapshot of Kids’ Language and Literacy Apps, Part 3

White House Summit on Early Education

Last week, President Obama hosted the White House Summit on Early Childhood Education, gathering a coalition of philanthropic, business, education, advocates, and elected officials committed to expanding access to high-quality early education.

We are proud to support the President’s commitment to ensuring that children from all socio-economic backgrounds have access to the kinds of early learning programs that will provide them with the solid foundation that they will need to succeed in school. Studies have shown that investing in a young child’s early education provides benefits that can help prevent an achievement gap due to lack of access at a critical stage in a child’s development.

The Cooney Center’s Founding Director Michael Levine presented remarks on Equity and Excellence in the Earliest Years at a panel hosted by Megan Smith, Chief Technology Officer of the United States and Shannon Rudisill, Director of the Office of Child Care. As part of this effort, the White House has highlighted our forthcoming Map, Think, and Relink project. Over the next few months, will be working to create an interactive map of initiatives around the country that are working to modernize parent outreach and early learning. The tool will define initiatives by key dimensions such as: age, demographics, the types of tools used, the geographic range of their programs, and the incorporation of high-touch mentorship or on-the-ground programs. Our goal is to drive improvements in program quality by documenting the importance of evidence-based research.

Read Michael Levine’s remarks at the White House Summit panel on Equity and Excellence »

See the White House Fact Sheet »

Technology and Digital Media in the Early Years: Tools for Teaching and Learning

Team Work

Congratulations

Please join us in congratulating Anna Ly for her recent promotion to Senior Manager of Business and Creative Ventures. Anna is responsible for strategic planning and growth, forming partnerships, producing media and publications that inform and raise the sector, staying aware of trends, influencers, and innovation in digital media and learning, and building out game and media development projects. She is also part of the Content Innovation Lab group at Sesame, which develops innovative learning experiences for preschool age children using emerging technologies.

Join us!

We hope that you will join us as an active contributor and a member of our growing community on the web and on Facebook and Twitter as we partner with foundations, policy, industry and academic leaders to advance learning in our digital age!

Comments or questions? Write to cooney.center@sesameworkshop.org. Subscribe to this newsletter by writing to cooney.center@sesameworkshop.org with the subject line 'subscribe'.

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