Dear Colleagues:

Are you ready for a more playful summer? Schools are nearly out on the East Coast and our team got ready for the transition by playing some fantastic video games designed by middle school and high school students from across the country. We are thrilled that we will be announcing the winners of the fourth National STEM Video Game Challenge on June 27th. You can read about the winners at [www.stemchallenge.org](http://www.stemchallenge.org) on June 29th. We’re also translating our *Family Time with Apps* iBook, with a fun comic strip format, into Spanish, so watch for that too later this summer.

The Cooney Center team and our partners are working on some exciting new projects that we think you will be eager to hear more about, so check out our blog and follow us on Facebook and Twitter for more updates about forthcoming reports scanning the market for literacy apps and digital equity in America.

Families & Media

Families and Apps

We are thrilled that our parent resource, *Family Time with Apps: A Guide to Using Apps with Your Kids*, has been so well received by our readers! Parents, educators, and librarians have shared some great feedback with us about how much they have enjoyed the tips on how apps can be a part of family learning, communication, and connecting to one another. Thanks to Apple, Inc. for their generous support for the work.

We are also pleased to announce that a Spanish-language version of the iBook is in the works and will be available later this summer. Watch for an announcement on our blog, Facebook, and Twitter feeds!

Our blog series has continued, with experts like Top Tech Mom [Jeana Lee Tahnk](http://www.jeanaleetahnk.com), who shares a wonderful piece about how technology makes it easy for her kids to stay close to their grandparents. [Melina Gerosa Bellows](http://www.nationalgeographic.org/), chief education officer of the National Geographic Society, writes about how apps make it easy for curious kids to really dig into nature. [Teri Rousseau](http://www.readingrainbow.com/) from Reading Rainbow shares some tips for raising kids who really love to read. [Jason Boog](http://www.bornreading.com/), author of *Born Reading*, offers some of the apps that have helped his own young daughter prepare for important milestones and transitions. And [Jordan Shapiro](http://www.mindshiftguide.com/), author of *Free Play* and the MindShift Guide to Games and Learning, goes on a road trip to Niagara Falls with his sons. Armed with Nintendo DSi’s, and some audio books, he finds that more than tech time, kids really want uninterrupted family time.

We’d love to know what YOUR favorite apps or tips for making the best of family time together. Please let us know by sharing it on Twitter or Facebook with the hashtag #familytimewithapps.

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.

Games & Learning

Update: The 4th National STEM Video Game Challenge
The entries are in for the National STEM Video Game Challenge! This year we received more than 4,000 entries in the following categories: Gamestar Mechanic, Gamemaker, Scratch, Unity, Open Platforms, and Written Design Documents.

The STEM Challenge has hosted more than 35 game design workshops across the country for youth and educators. The energy at these workshops was amazing—read more about a youth workshop that took place at the Science Museum of Virginia. And we are thrilled to be hosting a series of intergenerational game design workshops with our partners at the AARP Foundation and Mentor Up. Check out this blog post about a workshop that took place at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City, and see some amazing photos of three generations designing together from another recent event at the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Matt Roth for AARP)

The winners of the fourth National STEM Video Game Challenge will be announced at Fred Rogers Studio at WQED in Pittsburgh, PA on June 27. The Family Game Day afternoon is open to the community—see more information and register for the event here: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/family-game-day-tickets-17170407150

Learn more at stemchallenge.org »

Mind the Gap: Improving Access to High Quality Digital Media

We are thrilled to launch a new initiative in collaboration with First Book, an organization that has distributed more than 130 million books and educational resources to programs and schools serving children from low-income families throughout the United States and Canada. Thanks to the generosity of the Susan Crown Exchange, the Cooney Center and First Book will explore opportunities to deliver high-quality digital content to underserved youth through First Book’s vast network of over 185,000 pre-school, schools and community-based programs. We will also analyze market data and funding opportunities related to afterschool and other informal learning spaces, as well as produce case studies of developers and investors and the professionals who use digital media in their instruction of underserved youth.

We want to know what you think!

It’s been about a year and a half since the Center launched GamesandLearning.org. The site offers daily analysis, multimedia features, topical explainers and deep reporting on the growing game-based learning sector.

Please take a minute to take a survey. We want to know what you think! Where else do you get your information about games and learning? What else would you like to see more of on the site? We know you’re busy, so we’d like to offer a chance at winning an Amazon gift card for taking the time to complete our survey.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GBL2015

View gamesandlearning.org »

InTEL: Integrating Technology in Early Literacy revealed at CGI-America

As smart phones and tablets gain an ever stronger foothold in American homes, it is inevitable that more children are being exposed to media and technologies than ever before. All across the country, there are initiatives and programs that are working to harness these new digital tools in order to help young children who are learning early literacy skills.

Over the past few months, New America’s Education Policy Program and the Cooney Center have been collecting information to create a map of where these programs may be located and how they are going about their work. InTEL: Integrating Technology in Early Literacy aims to identify, categorize, and examine initiatives underway across the country targeted at supporting young children (ages 0 to 8). We have just presented a beta version of this project at CGI America, a meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative, in Denver. We encourage you to click around and take a look as we improve the map and profiles over the summer and let us know what you think. We will be adding information to the map through the end of September. If you represent a program that you think should be included in our database and on the map, please complete our survey.

Learn more about the project »

Congratulations and a fond farewell
Last month we bid adieu to an esteemed colleague, Dr. Lewis Bernstein, as he retired from his position as Executive Vice President of Education, Research, and Outreach here at Sesame Workshop. Dr. Bernstein played a key role in the founding of the Joan Ganz Cooney Center as an independent research organization based at the Workshop. He has been an invaluable advisor to our work over the past seven years. We are so grateful for his many contributions and wish him the best.

Team Work

Announcing Our Senior Cooney Center Fellows

We are proud to announce a brand new fellows program at the Joan Ganz Cooney Center. Unlike the Center’s traditional Fellowship, which is annually awarded to early-career investigators, the Cooney Center Senior Fellowship program honors individuals for their past contributions as well as ongoing collaborations with the Cooney Center. Drs. Vikki Katz, and Sarah Vaala, and Jason Yip—all of whom have worked devotedly to advance the Cooney Center and its mission—have been selected as inaugural Senior Fellows for the Spring 2015 – Winter 2016 term. Please join us in congratulating Vikki, Sarah, and Jason and read more about how each will work with the Cooney Center in the year ahead.

Lori Takeuchi, Stanford Visiting Scholar

Congratulations to Lori Takeuchi, our Director of Research and Senior Learning Scientist, who has just headed out to Stanford University as a visiting scholar for the summer! We are thrilled that she will be working so closely with our partners at Stanford on some exciting new projects, including helping us establish a stronger presence on the West Coast.

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@sesame.org.

To prevent mailbox filters from deleting mailings from The Joan Ganz Cooney Center, please add cooney.center@sesame.org to your address book.
