Dear Colleagues:

It may be summertime, but the Joan Ganz Cooney Center team has been as busy as ever. We’re working on making some big news as our students go back to school this fall, including the release of our national survey of teachers who use digital games in class and the launch of the National STEM Video Game Challenge (stay tuned!). In the meantime, here are some updates on our current projects. Be sure to check out our blog and follow us on Facebook and Twitter for more updates!

**Games & Learning**

**Teachers and Digital Games**

It seems that hardly a week goes by without a news story touting that digital games like Minecraft are gaining a stronger foothold in American classrooms. Publishers and game developers are eager to make headway in the educational technology marketplace, and school districts throughout the country are rolling out one–to–one computing and BYOD classroom programs. But what do the teachers themselves have to say?

The Games and Publishing Council, a project of the Joan Ganz Cooney Center with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, recently conducted a survey of 694 U.S. K–8th grade classroom teachers to find out if, when, and how they use digital games in the classroom. Building on our first national survey of teachers who use games (2011), this year’s survey makes recommendations for future game development for both industry and educational leaders. The overall goal of this research, led by Lori Takeuchi, is to connect the documented experiences of teachers with other research about video games and learning.

This summer, we are sharing some of the highlights of the forthcoming report about teachers’ experience using games in the classroom.

So far, we have revealed that a majority of the teachers surveyed use games in the classroom at least once a week (55%) and another quarter have kids play games at least once a month.

We also asked teachers whether they found games to be useful in assessing student knowledge. We found that about 43% of teachers who use games in the classroom use the built-in assessments that come with these games. And of those teachers who use the in-game assessments, the majority use what they learn to modify their lessons, choosing to emphasize areas where students struggled and condensing material that they already understand.

Learn more about the survey results here and here. And look for the full report and analysis, to be published this fall.

**The MindShift Guide to Games and Learning**

If you’ve missed our new series on games and learning with our partner, KQED’s MindShift, it’s not too late to check out the out! Jordan Shapiro’s weekly posts document the perspectives of pioneers in game–based learning, and offer a fresh “behind–the–scenes” analysis of the best work and some of the energetic debate in the sector.

The weekly articles not only help analyze some of the available research and provide suggestions for practical use, they talk candidly about the pros and cons of game–based learning. The post series, produced in part by the Games and Learning Publishing Council, will evolve into a downloadable guide that can be used as a touchstone for thoughtful consideration of best practices for teachers and parents.

- Tapping Into the Potential of Games and Uninhibited Play for Learning
- Social And Emotional Benefits Of Video Games: Metacognition and Relationships
- Math, Science, History: Games Break Boundaries Between Subjects
- How Games Lead Kids to the Good Stuff: Understanding Context

Check out the The MindShift Guide to Game–Based Learning »
Families & Media

Studying Broadband and Digital Media Use Among Low-Income Mexican-Origin Families

The Families and Media Project is well under way, with regional studies taking place in the field and several in the analysis stage. One project we’d like to highlight now is the work that Dr. Vikki Katz of Rutgers University and her team have been conducting in Southern California, Arizona and Colorado among low-income families, mostly of Mexican origin. The study is generously supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to understand how these families make decisions about adopting broadband and related technologies—and how these technologies get integrated into daily routines and learning activities. So far her team has interviewed more than 100 families with school-age children to learn more about family priorities in terms of adopting home-based broadband and related devices. The goal is to provide a robust dataset capable of informing and advancing national policy debates in this critical and rapidly changing arena.

Learn more about the study, Leveraging Technology for Learning in U.S. Latino Families ».

Seeking Parents for a Survey: Parenting Young Children Today!

If you are a parent of children age 6 or under, our friends at The Center on Media and Human Development (CMHD) at Northwestern University want to hear from you! The Center is seeking parents of 0- to 6-year-olds to participate in online survey to learn more about what it is like to be a parent of young children today. They are asking parents to take some time to complete an online survey to share more about parenting, media use, and social support. As a thank you for their time and participation, parents who complete the survey will be entered into a drawing to win one of 25 $100 Amazon gift cards.

The Center on Media and Human Development, directed by Dr. Ellen Wartella, was created with three primary goals: training future researchers to participate in the field of human development and media studies; research on a variety of topics, from family media use in the home to teachers’ uses of technology in the classroom; and public policy, recognizing the interdisciplinary world we live in requires collaboration and communication across fields in the form of workshops, conferences, and round table discussions to inform and influence public policy.

Take the survey now ».

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?

That question is at the heart of Seeding Reading: Investing in Children’s Literacy in a Digital Age, a new series of articles and analysis brought to you by New America’s Education Policy Program and the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop. Over the next six months, we will be exploring early education and parenting initiatives that are harnessing new technologies; scrutinizing the marketplace of digital “reading” products; 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.

- Pediatricians Use Video Tools to Help Children Get Ready to Read
- Could Text Messages to Parents Help Close the “Word Gap”?
- Parent Voices: Doubts, then Excitement on Texts to Promote Literacy
- Q-and-A with Alexis Lauricella on Parenting Texts and Language Development

Team Work

Congratulations

Please join us in congratulating Michelle Miller on her recent promotion to Managing Director. Michelle oversees strategic planning, communications and operations for the Joan Ganz Cooney Center and leads industry-focused work. And Lili Toutounas is now Senior Manager, Administration. Under Lili’s watchful eye, the Cooney Center is a tightly run ship that continues to operate as smoothly as possible.

We’d also like to give a big cheer for Industry Fellow Anna Ly on being named a Fred Rogers Center Early Career Fellow. Throughout the next year, she will focus on exploring how innovative and new technologies can provide fun, socially-driven play experiences that spur socio-emotional development while inspiring mindfulness and reflection among young children. Check out her blog post about the Fred Forward conference that took place last month.

And congratulations to Vikki Katz on the publication of her new book, Kids in the Middle: How Children of Immigrants Negotiate Community Interactions for Their Families by Rutgers University Press. Check out David Kleeman’s interview with Vikki in the Huffington Post.

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!