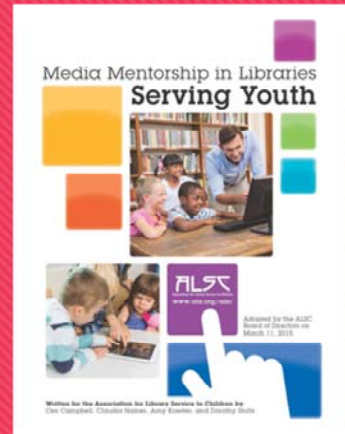


Media Mentorship

Best Practices for Helping Families Navigate "Screen Time"



Is All Screen Time Bad?



- The key is to get away from the negative connotation of “screen time” and the false metric of time being the only indicator when we know now that the quality of media, the level of engagement and the opportunity for interactions with others are more significant indicators of the value of the experience ~ Chip Donohue in *Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8*

For a long time we’ve been told that screen time is bad and letting our children have too much screen time makes us bad people. But the thinking on screen time is changing because screens are becoming more interactive and the programs and apps on screens are becoming more flexible, dynamic, and inspiring. And what I mean by inspiring is that they are inspiring people of all ages to make their own media.

Carisa Kluver, the author of the blog *The Digital Media Diet*, and the founder of Digital-Storytime.com, suggests that as Media Mentors, we should help caregivers understand that the amount of screen time is less important than creating helping children learn to have healthy interactions with screens. To do this, Kluver suggests that caregivers should answer the following questions about their children’s screen use. The questions fall into 3 categories: Balance, Quality, and Engagement.

Balance



- Does this media use balance other activities today?
- Have we been using more media than we want lately?
- Is this a break from another type of activity?

In order to evaluate how much time is healthy, caregivers should ask themselves how their own and their children's screen time balances out with the other activities they and their children participate in. Time on screens shouldn't be the only thing a child does. Screen time should be balanced with time outdoors, time reading or being read to, social time, and time exercising. Balance will look different for any child within the context of daily life, for example, weekday and weekend time is structured differently, if the child has homework or afterschool activities. Even the child's age and current attitude could impact the balance of media use.

Quality



- Is the media high quality, educational, or meaningful?
- Will my child learn something meaningful from this media?
- Is there a better way for my child to learn this information?

The quality of the apps, games, and programs a child uses make a difference in how long they should be using them. While brain candy can be fun, it's not the best stimulation for young minds. Selecting high-quality, educational apps, games, and ebooks is a good way to assuage concerns about screens detracting from learning and concentration. Some apps and games are the best way to learn certain things, and certainly, media opens up access to knowledge and skills that otherwise are hard to engage with.

Of course, it can be tricky to find quality apps with the huge number of apps being created, but I'll make some recommendations later. And, we'll talk about how to evaluate new apps you discover.

Engagement



- Will this media enhance a relationship with a friend or family member, help a peer bond, or build togetherness with real people?
- Will this media connect my child to someone far away or expand my child's social world in important ways?
- Are there better ways to be together? Are there alternatives or ways to connect to other activities?

One of the biggest fears educators have is that media time takes away from social time and the development of interpersonal relationships. When screens are used as baby-sitters, this can have an unhealthy impact on children's language development and social/emotional development. However, screens can be used, much like books, to create opportunities for interaction. Caregivers should look at media interaction as an opening they can use to engage with their child on a topic of interest to their child. Screen time can also allow children to interact with their peers both virtually and in person if they are playing multiplayer games. Finally, screens allow long-distance communication between family members who are living or traveling far away.

The 3 Cs:



- “We need to focus on the *content* on the screen. The *context*: how we’re interacting with children around that media, and making sure that they have good interactions when they’re not with the media. And then the *child*, our children: we understand our kids, we know what’s going to delight them, we know what kinds of questions they might ask from it, we need to just tune in to see what they understand from it.” ~ Lisa Guernsey

Another way to discuss this with caregivers is to bring up the 3 cs: content, context, and their child. “We need to focus on the *content* on the screen. The *context*: how we’re interacting with children around that media, and making sure that they have good interactions when they’re not with the media. And then the *child*, our children: we understand our kids, we know what’s going to delight them, we know what kinds of questions they might ask from it, we need to just tune in to see what they understand from it.”

Content



- High-quality, age-appropriate content. . .[has] the potential to entertain as well as to compel users to make decisions and use critical thinking skills in new ways" ~ Claudia Haines & Cen Campbell in *Becoming a Media Mentor: a Guide for Working with Children & Families*

While the passive consumption of electronic media content has been linked to negative outcomes, interactive consumption of high-quality media content has the “potential to entertain as well as to compel users to make decisions and use critical thinking skills in new ways” (p. 21). Additionally, many apps and websites now offer users the opportunity not just to engage actively with content but to create their own content. Media creation allows children to share their learning and present their own narratives. It also provides the opportunity for users to develop digital skills so that they can better evaluate the media they select and think critically about the media they utilize.

Context



- As part of a balanced daily routine, screen time can be beneficial, especially if caregivers are interacting positively with their children in relationship to the media.

Families should consider their individual situations. Is screen time part of an active, diverse set of daily events? Does their child spend more time on screens than with people? Do the parents talk to their child about what s/he is playing or play with the child? Are screens interfering with communication or enhancing it? As part of a balanced daily routine, screen time can be beneficial, especially if caregivers are interacting positively with their children in relationship to the media.

Child



- "The best way to ensure that a child is having healthy interactions with screens is to engage with the child and, ideally, participate in his or her screen interactions." ~ R. Stevens & W.R. PenueI in *Studying & Fostering Learning through Joint Media Engagement*

People of all ages use screen time for different reasons: to escape boredom, to learn new things, to practice skills, even to interact socially. Caregivers need to consider both what their child is interacting with and why they have selected that game, app, or website. This means they need to be aware of what their child is interacting with and ideally, engage with their child's interaction. This doesn't mean that the caregiver has to actively participate in all of their child's media. It means that they should converse with their child about the media the child is using; ask questions about what happened in the app or game and how the child responded; talk with the child about what they like or dislike about the media; and occasionally or even frequently participate in their child's media use.

Joint Media Engagement



- "Joint media engagement (JME) refers to . . . experiences of people using media together."
- "Modes of JME include viewing, playing, searching, reading, contributing, and creating, with either digital or traditional media."
- Not Coviewing: "Coviewing refers to occasions when adults and children watch television together, sharing the viewing experience, but not engaging in any discussion about the program."

So, what does this term Joint Media Engagement mean? Joint media engagement is the experience of people using media together. It can include viewing, playing, searching, reading, contributing, and creating together. JME supports learning by providing resources that help children make sense of what they are interacting with and make meaning in particular situations that can be transferred to future situations.

Joint Media Engagement is different from simply coviewing. Coviewing is when adults and children watch television together, sharing the viewing experience, but not engaging in any discussion related to the content of the program. Although coviewing is better than independent use by the child, it isn't as healthy as joint media engagement.

Empowering the Child



- The experience of a child understanding how a game or device works to a higher degree than the adult understands the game or device can be "a valuable opportunity if adults step out of typical authoritative or mentor roles and allow children to take the lead in guiding the activity. As such, slight disruption of the balance of power between children and adults can be a powerful motivator for sustained participation."

One interesting thing that can come out of joint media engagement is that of the child being either a co learner or even the coach for the adult. This experience is empowering and motivational for children and can help them remain engaged in the learning experience longer and increase the chances that they will pursue such learning in the future. The agency this gives children helps them become independent learners and set their own learning goals in other contexts.

More about Joint Media Engagement

- Joint Media Engagement is often initiated by the child.
- Learning Interactions do not always relate to the learning goals of the show or app.
- Joint Media Engagement occurs more when the device is kept in a central area of the home.
- Joint Media Engagement also occurs with siblings and peers.

When talking to caregivers about healthy screen interactions, it might be useful to point out that:

- Joint media engagement is often initiated by children rather than parents, so it's important to be open to stopping what you're doing and engaging with your child when they request it.
- Learning interactions do not always relate to the learning goals of the show or app and may occur even when using "non-educational" media. Whenever you put something from the media source into context for a child, you're engaged in a learning interaction.
- Joint Media Engagement occurs more often when the device is kept in a central area of the home, such as the living room or kitchen, rather than in a separate media room. This also allows caregivers to better monitor the programs a child is using and the amount of time they are on the device.
- Joint Media Engagement occurs with siblings and peers as well, not just adults. Establishing a family culture where talking about what is happening on the screen is not only acceptable but encouraged is a great way to increase the likelihood of JME.

Best Media for Joint Media Engagement

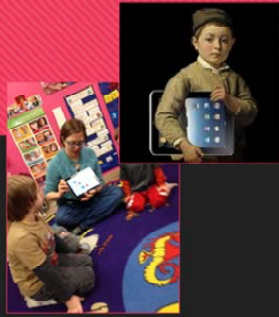

- Kid-driven
- Multiple planes of engagement
- Differentiation of roles
- Scaffolds to scaffold
- Previous/Next
- Co-creation
- Fits the schedule

Some apps, games, and programs are better for JME than others. Caregivers should think about these aspects of the media their children are using to help them attain JME experiences. Media should:

- Be kid-driven focusing on what the child is interested in and following their lead.
- Have multiple planes of engagement with something for the parent and something for the child so it's entertaining to both.
- Have differentiation of roles with partners working toward a common goal, but not having to use the same tools to get there. This means they don't have to negotiate who controls the experience.
- Have scaffolds for different levels of skill and knowledge, providing guidance for how adults can help child without adding a lot of prep work and resources.
- Engage with previous knowledge and experiences and stimulate next interests based on current curiosities across platforms.
- Allow for co-creation by providing opportunities for partners to work together to build something.
- "Easily slot into existing routines" rather than being some new chunk of time that needs to be added to already busy days.

Librarians as Media Mentors

- Little eLit: <https://lilleelit.com/>
- Carissa's Apps for Kids (Madison Public Library): <https://goo.gl/fsaqv1>
- Common Sense Media: <https://www.commonsensemedia.org>

Librarians are in a unique position to help caregivers understand healthy screen use and to recommend programs, books, shows, and apps that are best suited for Joint Media Engagement. Just like with recommended book lists, we can create recommended app lists. We can also demonstrate good apps and games by using them in programs such as storytime. The websites on this slide are good places to find app, game, and website reviews.

- Little eLit was a project that is no longer being updated, but it continues to share all the previously recommended apps. It's also a great resource for ideas for library programs using apps and other electronic media.
- Carissa's Apps is an ongoing project of a youth services librarian at the Madison Public Library. She shares information about cost, age range, educational purpose, and platforms in her reviews.
- Common Sense Media reviews apps, games, educational media, and websites. They have their own staff who review media as well as having teacher reviews from in the trenches educators. This is a searchable site.

I've included in your folder a rubric for evaluating apps, both book/story apps and toy/game apps. It has some guidelines for deciding if an app is good based on 2 types of criteria:

- 1) The technical/user experience aspect which relates to all types of apps and
- 2) The additional content criteria for either a story app or a toy/game app

As you are looking at these evaluative questions, it seems a little overwhelming at first, but many of the questions can be answered quickly, and I think, as you evaluate apps, these criteria will become routine and easy to remember.

We're going to take a lunch break next, but following lunch, I'll share some great apps for use in library programs.