



## JOAN GANZ COONEY CENTER CALLS FOR NEW NATIONAL STRATEGY TO INVEST IN MOBILE LEARNING AND A DIGITAL TEACHER CORPS

### Model Programs Spark New Opportunity to Transform Children's Education

New York and Las Vegas, January 9, 2009 – Mobile device use is exploding among children worldwide, cell phones and iPods are this generation's preferred form of social communication. More than half of the world's population now owns a cell phone and experts project that people will use cell phones as their primary means of accessing the Internet by the year 2020. However, most educators and parents have been skeptical, until now, about mobile devices' value in learning. [The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop](#) issued a new study today documenting the untapped potential of mobile learning. The report, drawing on market trends and model programs, outlines the first-ever national mobile learning strategy, urging the Obama administration to make new investments in digital learning technologies and teacher training.

The findings and recommendations of [Pockets of Potential: Using Mobile Technologies to Promote Children's Learning](#), were unveiled by [Gary E. Knell](#), President and CEO of [Sesame Workshop](#) at the [Kids@Play Summit](#) at the [2009 International CES®](#) in Las Vegas.

The study found that just as [Sesame Street](#) transformed television into a revolutionary learning tool for preschoolers, mobile learning technology may represent the next frontier. *Pockets of Potential* includes an inventory of over 25 notable examples of mobile's power to transform learning including MIT's Augmented Reality Games which use GPS technology to help students solve real life environmental problems. Others promote essential reading skills, such as PBS Kids' Learning Letters with Elmo, which used video and text messaging to send literacy tips to parents of preschoolers, successfully engaging lower-income families. In the United Kingdom, Wolverhampton Local Authority's award-winning Learning2Go initiative delivers 24/7 personalized learning to over 1000 students by giving them the choice to do science and critical thinking projects on their own schedule.

The report, by Center Industry Fellow [Carly Shuler](#) offers a review of scientific literature and a blueprint for national action. Major recommendations include:

- **New Investment in R&D** - New government and philanthropic investment is needed to assess the impact mobile technologies have on children's learning and development, including brain and behavioral functioning. New industry designs and educational applications must be created rather than "shrinking" existing tools to fit mobile devices.
- **Establish a Digital Teachers Corps** - Most teachers and after school staff have little training in the uses of mobile technologies for educational benefit. The report

recommends the establishment of a digital teacher corps which would prepare educators to use digital media to promote 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy.

- **Create a White House Initiative on Digital Learning** - The report calls for a White House Summit and a digital investment fund to accelerate and promote mobile innovation to help benefit the economy.
- **Modify Classroom Access** - Most school districts limit cell phone use in classrooms and some have banned their use altogether. The report recommends steps to gradually introduce mobile devices in schools, beginning with an experimentation phase in which teachers are trained for integrating interactive mobile media and students learn skills and appropriate behaviors.

“Mobile devices are part of the fabric of children’s lives today: they are here to stay,” said [Dr. Michael Levine](#), Executive Director of The Joan Ganz Cooney Center. “It is no longer a question of *whether* we should use these devices to support learning, but *how* and *when* to use them. *Sesame Street* introduced children to the educational potential of television. A new generation of mobile media content can become a force for learning and discovery in the next decade.”

*Pockets of Potential* outlines key challenges that must be overcome for mobile learning to take hold, including the lack of large-scale evaluation evidence, public concerns about their disruptive nature, widely varying technologies, the need for consistent design standards and privacy issues.

The report is available for download at [www.joanganzcooneycenter.org/publications/index.html](http://www.joanganzcooneycenter.org/publications/index.html).

*Pockets of Potential* was supported by the [Pearson Foundation](#), the [Corporation for Public Broadcasting](#) and [PBS Kids’ Raising Readers](#).

The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop ([www.joanganzcooneycenter.org](http://www.joanganzcooneycenter.org)) is an independent, non-profit research center that examines the role of new technologies in learning and literacy development both in and out of school. The Center conducts and supports research, creates educational models and interactive media properties, and builds cross-sector partnerships. The center is named for Sesame Workshop's visionary founder, who revolutionized television with the creation of *Sesame Street*. Core funding for the Center is provided by the generous support of Peter G. Peterson, Genius Products, Mattel, Inc. and Sesame Workshop.

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