



FIRST ANNUAL JOAN GANZ COONEY CENTER SYMPOSIUM UNVEILS NEW RESEARCH, REPORTS AND ANCHORS DISCUSSIONS ON THE POTENTIAL OF DIGITAL MEDIA'S ROLE IN EDUCATION

Report By Gaming Expert and Professor James Paul Gee Urges Adult Mentoring to Leverage Technological Know-How and Decrease Digital Gap

Leading Innovators, Educators, Journalists and Researchers Convene At Day-Long Event Sponsored By Electronic Arts and McGraw-Hill Education With Support From Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and PBS KIDS Raising Readers

New York, May 9, 2008 – At today's first annual [Joan Ganz Cooney Center Symposium](#) called "Logging Into The Playground: How Digital Media Are Shaping Children's Learning," thought leaders from across research, communications, education and policy convened to set a new benchmark for the way in which digital media is used to improve children's literacy, learning and development.

As a launching point for this critical dialogue, the symposium featured panels moderated by journalists and experts in the field and revealed the results of three compelling special reports: [The Power of Pow! Wham!: Children, Digital Media and Our Nation's Future](#) focusing on the recommendations of over 60 industry leaders who identified key research and policy to accelerate children's learning; [Getting Over the Slump: Innovation Strategies to Promote Children's Learning](#), a report by Arizona State University professor and gaming expert James Paul Gee, featuring potential strategies to promote children's literacy and learning; and finally, a national survey, (commissioned in association with Common Sense Media) exploring the perception of parents and educators about new media's educational potential. The day's events were streamed and viewers were invited to participate on the [Global Kids website](#) and in [Second Life](#).

The invitation-only event, sponsored by [Electronic Arts \(EA\)](#) and [McGraw-Hill Education](#) (in association with the [Corporation for Public Broadcasting \(CPB\)](#) and [PBS KIDS Raising Readers](#)), was held at the McGraw-Hill Building in New York City and featured a keynote speech by Bing Gordon, in one of his last appearances as EA's Chief Creative Officer. It was announced last week that Gordon would be joining the premier venture capital firm Kleiner, Perkins, Caufield & Byers.

The event also marked the addition of a new Center sponsor, Mattel, Inc. In a brief presentation, Gabriel Zalzman, SVP and General Manager, Fisher-Price, announced the partnership and presented Executive Director Michael Levine with a check for one million dollars.

Michael Levine, Executive Director for The Joan Ganz Cooney Center, said: "Digital media is driving what is now a multi-billion-dollar business that shapes the learning and entertainment experiences of most school-age children." He added: "It is our mission to counsel the industry's movers, shakers and policymakers and provide a needed bridge to what has become traditional education's fourth and fifth

“Rs”, reform and research. Wise and informed investments will harness the growing power and full potential of digital media’s use in educating young children.”

Gee’s report indicates that the so-called fourth-grade slump, the point where students fail to develop reading comprehension, consistently leads to educational failure while the digital gap leads to a failure to develop 21st-century skills, especially the ability to use knowledge to solve problems.

Gee’s report finds that:

- Digital media has the potential to increase vocabulary and the concepts attached to such words, for children whose families are unable to do so.
- Digital media naturally elicits problem-solving behaviors and attitudes in students.
- Digital media can also be used to track and individualize how people learn.

Gee’s recommendations include: **funding digital research and development to invest in what works; establishing a digital teacher corps for the nation’s lowest performing schools; designing alternative assessments and new standards; creating community-based literacy tech centers across the country; establishing Governor’s digital partnership schools; and finally, modernizing public broadcasting investments in digital platforms for the next generation.**

The potential and limitations for digital media’s use in education are also explored in *The Power of Pow! Wham!* report. Featuring 60 of the industry’s most respected leaders in child development, literacy, family policy, digital media production and global knowledge and skills, the report provides a blueprint to accelerate and deepen learning for elementary school children who are immersed in new technologies. Furthermore, the paper underscores that no single person, organization, or program can meet these challenges and that it will take coordinated efforts by researchers, educators, parents’ groups, designers, business leaders, policy-makers, and child advocates.

- The three interrelated challenges highlighted in the report are:
 - **Build a coherent research and development effort.**
 - **Use digital tools effectively and safely to help students read well, think critically, broaden geographical and cultural knowledge, and participate in collaborative learning communities.**
 - **Advance digital equity to reach all children.**

Also presented was a national study, commissioned by Common Sense Media and the Center, available on both www.common sense media.org and www.joanganzcooneycenter.org, which indicated that American parents agree by wide margins that digital media skills are important to kids’ success in the 21st century. They also expressed skepticism about whether digital media contribute to the development of informal social skills like communicating and working with others.

“Forty years ago, in a paper about the untapped potential of television that became the foundation for *Sesame Street*’s creation, I noted that children are conditioned to expect a *pow! wham!* factor...highly visual, and expensively produced material that inspires them to learn,” Joan Ganz Cooney said. “Now, the *pow! wham!* factor has taken a different form, in interactive and electronic games, but the challenges are the same. The Center’s mission to fund research, to prod industry leaders in the development of quality products and to bring together some of the industry’s greatest minds, will hopefully help the next generation learn the skills they need to be successful in the digital age.”

The agenda for the day-long symposium also featured child-led demonstrations of new technologies and a hands-on forum promoting two dozen of the best digital media initiatives in the world. Attendees were shown one of the first demonstrations of BOOM BLOX, a new game for Nintendo Wii developed by EA in association with director Steven Spielberg along with promising emerging technologies from exhibitors including: Community Building with Google Earth by Google Earth

creator and Google Chief Technology Advocate, Michael T. Jones; Web-based books in English and Spanish by the Center for Applied Special Technology, to help individuals, especially those most at risk, to gain knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for reading; IBM's Traducelo AHORA! ("Translate Now!") that uses IBM WebSphere software to translate web sites from English to Spanish for schools, community organizations, as well as parents so they can correspond directly with teachers no matter what language is spoken at home; and an Apple in the Classroom demo by Kathy Shirley, an Apple Distinguished Educator, on using iPods to strengthen reading fluency and comprehension.

Journalists and experts in the field of digital media for children including *Time* Magazine's Claudia Wallis, author Lisa Guernsey and *Children's Technology Review* Editor and New York Times columnist Warren Buckleitner, moderated and participated in panels on a variety of topics including the ways in which digital media shapes literacy development, critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness. In addition, they discussed how to meet the new challenges that come with the growth of digital media, emerging learning technologies and which priorities the next President and the critical sectors should tackle first.

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About McGraw-Hill Education

McGraw-Hill Education, a division of The McGraw-Hill Companies (NYSE: MHP), is a leading global provider of instructional, assessment and reference solutions that empower professionals and students of all ages. McGraw-Hill Education has offices in 33 countries and publishes in more than 40 languages. Additional information is available at <http://www.mheducation.com>.

About Electronic Arts

Electronic Arts Inc. (NASDAQ: ERTS), headquartered in Redwood City, California, is the world's leading interactive entertainment software company. Founded in 1982, the company develops, publishes, and distributes interactive software worldwide for video game systems, personal computers, cellular handsets and the Internet. Electronic Arts markets its products under four brand names: EA SPORTS™, EA™, EA SPORTS BIG™ and POGO™. In fiscal 2007, EA posted revenue of \$3.09 billion and had 24 titles that sold more than one million copies. EA's homepage and online game site is www.ea.com. More information about EA's products and full text of press releases can be found on the Internet at <http://info.ea.com>.

About the Joan Ganz Cooney Center

The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop (www.joanganzcooneycenter.org) is an independent, not for 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 to scale-up best practices. Based at Sesame Workshop, 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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