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Study Finds Preschool Use of Educational Video and Games Prepares Low-Income Children for Kindergarten

New York, NY and Menlo Park, CA—October 14, 2009— Low-income children were better prepared for success in kindergarten when their preschool teachers incorporated educational video and games from public media, according to a new study. The study, conducted by Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) and SRI International, was commissioned by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) to evaluate video and interactive games from the *Ready to Learn* initiative, which creates educational programming and outreach activities for local public television stations and their communities.

The study examined whether young children’s literacy skills—the ability to name letters, know the sounds associated with those letters, and understand basic concepts about stories and printed words—increased when preschool classrooms incorporated video and games. Children with the most to learn in the study gained the most, learning an average of 7.5 more letters than children in a comparison group during the brief, intensive curriculum.

In the study, 398 low-income children in 80 preschool classes in New York City and San Francisco were taught with a special curriculum that included active video viewing and hands-on play with letters, sounds, and books. Since most of the teachers had little prior training in literacy instruction or the use of digital media in the classroom, they were given coaching and support to help them conduct the curriculum successfully.

Most children in the study were from traditionally economically disadvantaged communities where children are often far less prepared for school than their more affluent peers. The research, conducted from January through June 2009, found that early literacy skills—the ability to name letters, know the sounds associated with those letters, and understand basic concepts about stories and printed words—all increased significantly compared to children who did not participate in the curriculum.

“Many studies have shown that computer technologies can improve learning for students in kindergarten through grade 12, but using digital media in preschool has been controversial,” said lead researcher Shelley Pasnik, director of EDC’s Center for Children and Technology. “To make these kinds of gains after preschoolers and their teachers use technology, we think is especially significant,” she said.

In the study, preschool teachers were randomly assigned to use either a technology-supported literacy curriculum or a technology-supported science curriculum for 10 weeks. (The students in

the classrooms with the science curriculum served as the study's comparison group.) Children who participated in the literacy curriculum outscored children in the science curriculum on all five of the study's measures: the ability to name letters, know the sounds associated with those letters, recognize letters in their own names, and understand basic concepts about stories and printed words.

"We know public media can improve literacy skills when kids watch at home; what we didn't know is that content from multiple shows could be effectively integrated into a curriculum and implemented by teachers," said William Penuel, Ph.D., director of evaluation research for SRI's Center for Technology and Learning. "If media can be harnessed to help close this literacy gap, as this study has shown, it's a powerful new tool for preschool teachers."

The study was commissioned by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to evaluate video and interactive games from the programs *Super Why!*, *Between the Lions* and *Sesame Street*, produced for PBS KIDS as part of the *Ready to Learn* initiative, which creates educational programming, web content, and outreach activities. The evaluation was funded by the U.S. Department of Education and CPB, in partnership with PBS, the Public Broadcasting Service.

To access the full study, sample content from the curriculum, and a video interview with a teacher who participated in the study, go to: <http://cct.edc.org/rtl>.

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About Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC)

EDC is a global nonprofit organization that develops, delivers, and evaluates innovative programs to address some of the world's most urgent challenges in education, health, and economic development. EDC manages more than 300 projects in 35 countries. Visit www.edc.org. EDC's **Center for Children and Technology** investigates the roles technology can play to improve teaching and learning. Its work covers a range of activities, from prototype design of technology applications to professional development for teachers, to strategies for ensuring equitable access to technology resources. Visit <http://cct.edc.org/>.

About SRI International

Silicon Valley-based [SRI International](http://www.sri-international.com) is one of the world's leading independent research and technology development organizations. SRI was founded by Stanford University as Stanford Research Institute in 1946 and became independent in 1970. The nonprofit institute performs sponsored research and development for government agencies, businesses, and foundations. SRI's [Center for Technology in Learning](http://www.sri-international.com/center-for-technology-in-learning) (CTL) evaluates large-scale technology innovations, designs assessments that enhance teaching and learning, develops tools to help students master complex ideas, builds online communities of learners, and offers strategic learning consulting services.

About Ready to Learn

Ready to Learn is a national literacy initiative which supports PBS KIDS Raising Readers, a campaign to increase literacy skills for kids ages 2-to-8, with an emphasis on children from low-income families, through the use of multiplatform content developed with scientifically-based reading research and targeted, local community engagement activities. The effort is funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, part of a cooperative agreement with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, PBS, and the *Ready to Learn* Partnership.

