

New Directions for Educational Media



The Ready to Learn Initiative is a program funded by the U.S. Department of Education to invest in public educational media for children and families, especially those living in communities with high concentrations of poverty. Since 2006, Education Development Center Inc., (EDC) and SRI International have worked together on a series of efficacy studies and evaluations of Ready To Learn resources. Our research has found that digital media and technology can help families and teachers enhance the math and literacy learning of young children in low-income households. In 2016, we interviewed 26 children's media researchers, producers, and thought leaders and identified eight new directions that educational media producers can take to better foster all children's school readiness and success.

1. Gain a deeper understanding of families' languages, cultures, and media and technology habits. To guide meaningful innovations in content and technology, draw upon empirical research on how families from diverse communities and cultures engage with educational media and technology, as well as how media can catalyze families' existing routines to support children's healthy development.

2. Focus on adult support as a major catalyst for children's playful learning. Develop tools that help families, teachers, and librarians foster children's social, emotional, cultural, and cognitive growth and that deepen these caring adults' understanding of high-quality, media-rich learning environments.

3. Engage families as partners in making new public educational media. Support children and adults in interacting with media content as makers and remixers, rather than solely as viewers or consumers. Use texting and social media networks to cultivate and sustain meaningful relationships with families.

4. Embrace the social nature of educational media. Design learning experiences that promote and enhance social interaction. Learning deepens when you provide children with modeling, guidance, constructive feedback, and opportunities for playful challenge.





5. Connect educational media to learning that is physical and outdoors. Move digital media and technology-enhanced learning out of living rooms and classrooms. Digital tools and devices, such as wearables, will bring new and different possibilities for bridging the divide between real and digital experiences.

6. Focus on storytelling, character, and new forms of play to create powerful learning opportunities across content areas. Innovations in educational media need not be the product of technological developments only; story and character will define next-generation educational media.

7. Identify the features of educational media that contribute to high-quality experiences. As delivery systems continue to morph and multiply, there will be an even greater need to pinpoint the specific features that lead to children's and families' successful engagement and learning.

8. Involve educators and learning scientists in creating captivating media that also support learning. Include animators and game designers, as well as those steeped in instructional design, formative research, child development, content expertise, and learning science, in design teams. Given the maturity of these fields and their willingness to work together, the pairing will be powerful.

From: Pasnik, S., Llorente, C., Hupert, N., & Moorthy, S. (2016). [Reflections on the Ready To Learn Initiative](#), 2010 to 2015. New York, NY, & Menlo Park, CA: EDC and SRI.

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