

PBS KIDS Transmedia Suites Gaming Study

Findings

In this CPB-PBS *Ready To Learn Initiative* study, EDC and SRI used a descriptive, qualitative design to understand better the roles that PBS KIDS transmedia games play in children's non-school learning experiences. We made two site visits to two *Ready To Learn* Transmedia Demonstration Station grantees to conduct observations of children and educators, interview parents, and engage in informal conversations with children as they engaged with PBS KIDS transmedia.

Children's Perspective

- Children perceived the PBS KIDS transmedia and digital games to be fun and engaging.
- Children could not identify the learning content within a game.
- Children often required adult facilitation to recognize the learning goals embedded in a PBS KIDS transmedia game.

Adults Perspective

- Parents and educators reported that transmedia games from PBS's KIDS Lab provided both educational content and an opportunity to practice 21st-century skills.
- Parents and educators noted that children made connections to the characters and narratives within the PBS KIDS transmedia games, and these served to support engagement.
- Some adults recognized and acted on the need to facilitate children's understanding of the PBS KIDS transmedia learning goals.

Context

- The game play environment, including technical supports and logistics, play a substantial role in determining the kind of experience children have with PBS KIDS transmedia.
- Contexts where adult support and engagement is minimal allow children free rein, and this may result in minimal time spent on a specific game or task. Environments where adults are engaged with children and address the PBS KIDS game content are more likely to support prolonged focus on a particular game activity and are more likely to result in children understanding the learning goals of a game.
- Some PBS KIDS transmedia game play contexts allow children to wander from property to property without substantial engagement in any one game. These contexts can be modified in ways that will keep children from wandering from one game property to another through random clicking.

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Game Design

- PBS KIDS transmedia game design can encourage sustained engagement by providing increased challenges as play proceeds, and by facilitating children's log-in ability so that each return to a game does not require a return to the game's first level of play.
- PBS KIDS games that included different levels of play appeared more challenging and engaging to children ages 6 to 11.
- The process for logging into PBS KIDS games appeared to be highly challenging for children ages 4 to 6.
- Children across all age levels displayed differences in cognitive, social and motor skills and technical accommodations can be made to support these variations in development in order to facilitate PBS KIDS game play by all students.

Interested in more?

For readers interested in a more detailed look at these findings, including: illustrative examples, recommendations, and a detailed description of research methods, the full-length report and executive summary for this study are available:

cct.edc.org/rtl

There you'll also find other current and past *Ready To Learn* summative research studies. And, to speak with the evaluation research team, please contact:



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